

The Local Church and Incarnation Theology:

**The convergence of inculturation and liberation in two Roman
Catholic Dioceses - Zomba (Malawi) and Infanta (the
Philippines)**

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Doctor of Philosophy
The University of Edinburgh
1998



Abstract

Since Vatican II, Roman Catholic Theologians from the Third World have been arguing for the creation of their own indigenous or local theology. Traditionally this has taken one of two forms, liberation or inculturation theology. The first concentrates on a political or economic analysis of society and addresses it with the message of freedom from oppression in the Bible; the second considers the “colonialism of the mind”, reinterpreting western Christianity in the framework of other cultures and religions. Both forms of theology emphasise the importance of the grassroots Christians owning and determining the local manifestation of the church.

This thesis takes the people as its starting point. It uses sociological methods of data collection and qualitative analysis to examine closely the local expressions of what it means to be church in two Third World countries. Through interviews with the local congregations and an investigation of the activities of the local church it paints portraits of these churches. The two dioceses chosen for investigation were the diocese of Zomba in Malawi and the Prelature of Infanta in the Philippines. Both are “post-revolutionary” countries where the Catholic hierarchy took a significant role politically and they were chosen to discover how this has affected faith at the grassroots.

The thesis investigates to what extent inculturation and liberation have occurred in the two situations, suggesting that the old division between inculturation and liberation is no longer valid in real-life circumstances. In place of this dualism, which could be seen as a further legacy of Western colonialism, the case studies suggest that inculturation and liberation are part of the same process, and can be expressed by Vatican II’s understanding of “Incarnation Theology”. This refers not only to a past event but interprets incarnation as an ongoing process which gives a new understanding and value to history. From the portraits, the analysis that follows examines models of incarnation, taking the issues presented by the case studies to suggest three themes that are important in the process towards a local church. Through the voices of the congregations of these diverse churches, the thesis discusses the position of history in faith, the emphasis on the liturgy of life in addition to the liturgy of the church, and the new models of church emerging in the Third World.

The final chapter draws out the implications of such socio-historical methods for the study of local theology. It argues that they are valuable tools for discovering the concerns of people of faith in local church situations as a source of theology, which the Church must address for Christianity to become inculturated as a liberative faith. The thesis suggests that reproducing such case studies will enable wider interpenetration of ideas from different situations, this being an effective way of doing theology “from below” rather than presuming the validity of a meta- or grand theology.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself and that the work contained therein is my own, except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text.

(Sophia Marriage)

Abbreviations

ACT	Apostles in Contemporary Times - a local congregation in Infanta
AMECEA	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa
ARIMA	Association of Religious Institutions of Malawi
ASI	Asian Social Institute, Manila
ATISCA	Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa
BCC	Basic Christian Community*
BH	<i>Balik-Handog</i> - a tithing system introduced to the Prelature of Infanta
CBCP	Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines
CCAP	Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
CIIR	Catholic Institute for International Relations, London
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
COs	Community Organisations
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
EDSA	Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, the Manila ring road where the 1986 demonstrations took place.
FIDES	Forum for Interdisciplinary Endeavors and Studies, Manila
HS	Hope in Struggle - the publication of the Prelature of Infanta's Mission Statement.
IMBISA	Interregional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LIC	Low Intensity Conflict
MCP	Malawi Congress Party, the ruling party 1964-94
MSKs	<i>Munting Sambayanan Kristianyo</i> , Small Christian Community (Tagalog)*
NASSA	National Secretariat of Social Action, the Philippines
NPA	New People's Army, the Philippine underground resistance to President Marcos
OCD	Order of the Discalced Carmelites
PAC	Public Affairs Committee (set up in the aftermath of the 1992 Catholic Bishops' letter in Malawi)
PCP II	Second Plenary Council of the Philippines - held 20 January-17 February 1991
PISA	Priests' Institute of Social Action
SAC	Social Action Centre
SCC	Small Christian Community*
SDS	Sisters of the Divine Saviour
SECAM	Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar
SK	Sambayanang Kristiyanano - Christian Community in Tagalog
SPI	Socio Pastoral Institute, Manila

*The local name for basic christian communities has been used whenever possible. SCC and BCC are used interchangeably.

Vatican II documents:

AG - *Ad Gentes* - The Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church (1965)

GS - *Gaudium et Spes* - The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (1965)

LG - *Lumen Gentium* - The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (1964)

SC - *Sacrosanctum Concilium* - The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963)

Glossary

Babad - immersion or exposure as part of the Prelature's formation programme

Barangay - village or part of a main town

Cluster - a group of barangays

Limana - Small Christian Community (Chichewa)*

Mayohen - a Maytime festival to the Virgin Mary, with daily prayers, songs and processions.

Mphakati - Small Christian Community (Chichewa)*

Pahayag - mission statement

Puroc - a subsection of a barangay

Tao - human (used in the phrase 'to be (fully) human')

Yapak ng Panginoon (shortened to *Yapak*) - Footsteps of the Lord - the formation programme and orientation of the Prelature of Infanta

Acknowledgements

The nature of a study such as this means that there are many people who have helped me, to whom I offer profound thanks, here I can mention only a few of those who have helped in this journey:

In Malawi: Thanks to Chancellor College, to Dr KR Ross and Dr JC Chakanza, for enabling me to spend three months at the university, to Dr Ross for his comments on early drafts and communications. Especial thanks to the librarians of the Malawi Collection, for their humour, encouragement and help during the library work at the university.

Thanks to those who welcomed me, gave me their time during their busy lives, at St Peter's Seminary, Zomba, Balaka Intercongregational Seminary, Mua Mission and Alex Chima. Thanks also for those who corresponded by letter with me, especially Sr Sangalala of the Poor Clares in Lilongwe. Catherine Loti's help in translating and introducing me to local Catholics was invaluable.

In the Philippines: Thanks especially to Fr Carlos Abesamis SJ who facilitated the three months in Infanta, to Mario Van Loon and Bp Julio Labayen who coordinated the trip and enabled me to have free access to many parts of the Prelature. Particular thanks to the Apostles in Contemporary Times for welcoming me into their home, sharing their joys and sorrows, and for teaching me so much. Thanks also to the Salvatorian Sisters in New Manila who opened their door wide to me for six weeks and allowed me to enter their life, to Sr Maria Terese Kong, for her love and friendship.

To all I met in the Prelature, especially in the parish of General Nakar, their friendship, honesty and openness.

In both countries I was very affected by the warmth with which interviewees received me and made themselves open to my questioning. This thesis is a tribute to that openness and I hope I have done them credit in the following pages.

In UK: Many thanks to Fr Bill Turnbull WF and Dr Peggy Owens of Cambridge University for making many primary documents relating to the transition in Malawi available to me. I am also grateful for help received from the Philippine Resources Centre (London), SCIAF (Glasgow), Church House and Ian Fraser (Dunblane) and the Catholic Institute of International Relations (London). All welcomed me and helped me find relevant material.

This thesis was made possible by a grant from the University of Edinburgh, and the university was also generous in helping towards the travel costs.

Such a thesis receives much help from supervisors and I would like to thank Dr John Parratt, Dr Jack Thompson, and especially Professor David Kerr, whose quick reading, valuable comments and patience encouraged me through the writing period. In the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, many thanks to all the staff who helped me in the forming of the thesis, especially to Margaret Acton and Liz Leitch in the Centre Library for keeping me calm.

Most of all I thank my family, Hugh, Alwyn and Zoë, and Granny, whose love has supported me through the research in more ways than I could describe and given me the motivation to continue. To Dilip, for his proof-reading, cooking, twice weekly letters while abroad, love and encouragement throughout and to many friends, in Edinburgh and outside, who have given me hope, encouragement, humour, friendship, support, much dancing and many a distraction to keep me going - Many thanks.

I hope this thesis reflects some of those who have helped me, but the final draft and the conclusions are my responsibility.

Dedication

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.... And the Word became flesh and lived among us.

John 1: 1,3,14

This thesis is dedicated to all who struggle and dream to discover a Church relevant to their life.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

Christian history is made up of shifts and balances across nations and cultures - the centre of the faith altering as circumstances dictate¹ and at the close of the second millennium the church stands on the brink of another such shift. In the 'Non-Western World' Christianity is spreading rapidly whilst in the previously 'safe' christian heartland of Europe and North America "religion has ceased to be a dimension in the natural, everyday life of most people, and has become instead something private, a club for those who like it"². Meanwhile theologians in the 'Third World'³ are questioning the western formulations of doctrine handed to them, and have been re-reading the Bible in ways relevant for them and for the people they serve. The church and theology are in a constant state of flux, ever changing; if they failed to be so, they would become antiquarian and irrelevant to today's world.

Christianity as handed to the churches of the Third World was closely linked to western civilisation and culture. It answered questions which non-western societies did not ask, whose own questions often found little resonance in the theology brought by missionaries⁴. Deviations from the "basics" of an "unchangeable faith" were frequently

¹Walls 1985 and Walls 1982:100

²Dawes 1992:11

³Although there has been concern over the last few years about the use of the phrase 'Third World', many theologians from the southern hemisphere continue to use it in preference to politically correct alternatives since it denotes the third rate citizenship they feel. This is institutionalised in the formation of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), founded in Dar es Salaam in 1976. Bühlmann talks of the coming of the "Third Church", using the increasing number of christians in the developing countries as proof that this will be the centre of Christianity (Bühlmann 1976:19ff).

⁴E.g. Schreiter 1985:2-3: "How was one to celebrate the Eucharist in countries that were Muslim theocracies and forbade the production or importation of fermented beverages? ... how was one to celebrate baptism among the Masai in East Africa, where to pour water on the head of a woman was to curse her infertility? ... How was one to understand church-state conflict in the repressive regimes of parts of Latin America, where the church was not a power equal to the state, but was now a church of the poor? Or what was one to do with the discipline of celibacy among the clergy in cultures where not to marry and have children was a way of cursing one's parents? Or how was one to understand polygamy in rural

seen as heresy and therefore discouraged. This created a religious ‘schizophrenia’⁵ as people often continued with their traditional customs and practices clandestinely, while maintaining a western appearance of christian faith.

The political independence of many African and Asian countries after World War II and the wind of change brought into the Roman Catholic Church by Vatican II (1962-5), prompted theologians in the former mission territories to question their faith⁶. Their first battle was to encourage the church to accept that there was a need for indigenised African or Asian theologies. It is now recognised by many theologians that there is a legitimacy in local theologies⁷, although the nature of the inter-relationships among them is not yet established. This thesis considers the process of local theology and assesses whether, and to what degree, grassroots’ Christianity reflects or is reflected in that of the academic theologians.

Vatican II rediscovered an ecclesiology which stressed the position of the local church in the universal church and local theologies are the direct consequence of papal requests for local churches⁸. In the last thirty years two main forms of such local theology have grown up: liberation theology which addresses political and social conditions, often through social analysis, and inculturation theology which addresses the cultural and pre-christian religious mentality. Both theologies look to the experiences of the people as a primary source. Therefore a basic premise of this thesis is that what

Africa, where it seemed to be more a matter of economic security for women than a matter of male lust?” On the other hand, Bediako 1992 looks at the similarities between the patristic period and modern Africa.

⁵Tutu 1987:47

⁶The issues surfaced earlier, especially in India, see Amaladoss 1981:322ff

⁷The tension which such theologies created in some circles in the Vatican will be discussed. Although this tension has in main since be resolved, some believe that a level of fear of liberation theology, of less traditional theologies and of Asian and African theologies continues (Plá 1997:2).

⁸The term ‘local’ will be explored through this chapter. Schreier 1985:6 explains that although ‘local theology’ is not an ideal term since it fails to translate easily and has parochial connotations, it does however reflect the concept of the local church (the most usual English translation of *ecclesia particularis* in Vatican II) and saves the phrase ‘contextual theology’ for those theologies which show greater sensitivity to context and culture. In other words, it provides a useful generic term for the movement which is increasingly concentrating on the role that circumstances play in shaping one’s response to the gospel (Schreier 1985:1), a theology which emerges from the engagement of the people with their own situation.

the local community says and does is an expression of theology. It is grounded in the way in which Vatican II declared that the Universal Church is made complete in the particular or local churches⁹.

This thesis has three main hypotheses. The first is that the two branches of local theology, liberation and inculturation, are complementary, not only in theory but especially in practice when christianity is lived by people in daily life. The second hypothesis is that the relationship between these two theologies can be expressed in the term “Incarnation”, and that such an understanding of the process of faith being lived in reality may increase the success of liberation and inculturation in the church. Based on the premise mentioned above that the words and actions of the local community are expressions of theology, the third hypothesis here is that social studies of local christian communities is a legitimate way of doing theology, providing useful tools for the articulation and understanding of local theology. Therefore through an in-depth study of two local communities, one in Malawi and the other in the Philippines, the aim of this thesis is to examine the relationship between inculturation and liberation in action, and to use the insights, perceptions and opinions of selected people from local churches as a springboard for theological reflection.

Clearly this is a vast field, since it hinges on the twin blocks of third world theology: liberation and inculturation. Through the study of two local churches, which forms the main section of the thesis, I will challenge the conventional method of theology which concentrates on philosophical reasoning or scriptural exegesis. This thesis starts with the reality with which Christians are faced, and considers how the living out of their faith alters or challenges the theological task.

2. Terms and Definitions

Before I describe two dioceses which will provide the basis of theological reflection, there is a need to limit and define the terms used.

⁹*Lumen Gentium* 26

a. The Roman Catholic Church, and Local Churches

i. Vatican II

Although theology from the Third World comes from all christian traditions, there was a need to narrow the focus of this study. The Roman Catholic Church¹⁰, which operates from a central organisation in Rome, continues to advocate, at least theoretically, uniformity in doctrine and belief and in practice, uniformity in liturgy. Large areas of the Third World continue to espouse catholic doctrines and it was from within catholic circles that many new theologies were born.

The Second Vatican Council prepared the ground for a new orientation of the church¹¹ and opened the routes of dialogue with the modern world and with other religious traditions. Called by Pope John XXIII and continued by Paul VI, this council, for the first time, recognised the position of the church in a changing world and allowed for dialogue and change. Many have called the Council a “miracle”¹² or “a salvific event in the Church”¹³; certainly it gave legitimacy to third world theologians and the process of local theology. The Council published four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations, covering a wide range of theological doctrines from the liturgy to revelation, from ecumenism to mission, from christian education to directives on priests, the laity and religious. For third world theologians, three documents have proved the most fertile and these will be briefly discussed here as a backdrop for the theology which emerged from them, especially the theology of the “local church” and “incarnation”. These were *Lumen Gentium* (November 1964), *Ad Gentes* (December 1965) and *Gaudium et Spes* (December 1965). Other documents will be mentioned as they become relevant to the discussion.

Lumen Gentium (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) defined the church

¹⁰Throughout this thesis, “Catholic” or “Church” will refer exclusively to the Roman Catholic Church, unless otherwise stated.

¹¹Baum 1987:4. For a good history of the Catholic Church’s process towards a more open attitude towards the world, see McSweeney 1980.

¹²Bosch 1991:462

¹³Kyeyune 1987:113

as the People of God (No 4 and 9ff), thereby making all the catholic faithful responsible for the mission and activities of the church¹⁴. This highlighted the importance of the local church¹⁵ as the full embodiment of the universal church (No 26). Whereas previously churches established outside Rome had to resemble Rome as closely as possible, *Lumen Gentium* stated that the universal church finds its true expression in the local churches (No 26). It allowed for a more pronounced diversity in the church which it saw as the “demonstration of the catholicity of the undivided church” (No 23). These local churches were the embodiment of the church of Christ throughout the world (No 26). In them and born out of them is the “one, sole Catholic Church” (No 23). Local churches were called to have regional episcopal conferences (No 23). Bosch sees this new definition of church in *Lumen Gentium* as a breakthrough for mission: “The church is no longer described as a societal entity on a par with other societal structures like the state, but as the mystery of God’s presence in the world, ‘in the nature of’ a sacrament, sign, and instrument of community with God and unity among people”, for “[t]he church is not presenting itself imperiously and proudly but humbly; it does not define itself in legal categories or as an élite of exalted souls, but as a servant community”¹⁶. It recognised the responsibilities of the laity in the church and called for an acknowledgement of the universal priesthood of all believers (No 10-11).

The Decree also opened the subject of the involvement of the church in the world with the acknowledgement that the alleviation of poverty was the duty of the church (No 8). This obviously became an important point in those areas where social injustice had caused poverty and oppression. In this way the church engages with human history (No 9), a departure from previous teachings which presented a polarity between the city on earth and the city of God. This document also accepted that there are elements of value and truth in non-christian religions and in other denominations (No 13, 15, 16), accepting that revelation can be sought in pre-christian cultures and recognising the

¹⁴LG 10, 17, 40

¹⁵Bosch reminds us that in the catholic setting, local church is a diocese under one pastor, the bishop, rather than a local parish or congregation (Bosch 1991:endnote p531) - it is in this meaning that the phrase will be used throughout this thesis.

¹⁶Bosch 1991:371-2 - see LG No 1

“good seed found in ... national rites and cultures” (No 17).

The Decree of the Missionary Activity of the Church (*Ad Gentes*) was the major conciliar document to elaborate this understanding of local churches in terms of mission. Its vision of mission was to establish churches which “under a hierarchy of their own, together with the faithful people, and adequately fitted out with requisites for living a full christian life, [...] should make their contribution to the good of the whole church” (No 6). The church’s prophetic mission is to be “especially with the poor and the afflicted” (No 12).

Chapter 3 of *Ad Gentes* is the main section of concern for this thesis in its discussion of the “particular churches” (*ecclesia particularis*). It affirms that a goal has been reached when the new church “is already equipped with its own supply (perhaps still insufficient) of local priests, religious, and laymen, and is endowed with these institutions and ministries which are necessary for leading and expanding the life of the people of God under the guidance of their own bishop” (No 19). The Council goes on to describe how the laity become involved in “civic and apostolic activity” so that the presence of the church has an effect on public and family life. It finished by requiring that “the Faith is taught by an adequate catechesis; it is celebrated in a liturgy in harmony with the genius of the people, and by suitable canonical legislation, it is introduced into upright institutions and local customs” (No 19). It falls to the bishop to study the customs, thought patterns and social change of his people so that he can be a “herald of Faith” (No 20). However, “the church has not been really founded, and is not yet fully alive, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ among men, unless there is a laity worthy of the name working along with the hierarchy”¹⁷.

The establishment of the lay faithful is seen as vital to the building of church as they witness to Christ “in the home, in their social milieu, and in their own professional circle” (No 21). The Council then affirmed the need for inculturation:

¹⁷No 21: It was comments like these that helped to reaffirm the church as the People of God, and have led to the Council being called the “Council of the Laity”.

They must give expression to this newness of life in the social and cultural framework of their homeland, according to their own national traditions. They must be acquainted with this culture; they must heal it and preserve it; they must develop it in accordance with modern conditions, and finally perfect it in Christ, so that the faith of Christ and the life of the Church are no longer foreign to the society in which they live, but begin to permeate and to transform it (No 21).

This is expressed in terms of the “economy of the Incarnation” (No 22) and borrows “from the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and disciplines” (No 22).

Ad Gentes acknowledges that to do this, theological speculation must be encouraged in “each major socio-cultural area”, so that the traditions of the church and scripture may undergo new scrutiny. The vision is that “the young particular churches, adorned with their own traditions, will have their own place in the ecclesiastical communion, saving always the primacy of Peter’s See, which presides over the entire assembly of charity” (No 22).

Gaudium et Spes (The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) opened the door for the church to recognise elements of truth in other religions and cultures. It accepted “all who acknowledge God and preserve valuable humane and religious elements in their traditions” (GS 92), recognising “those who cultivate the splendid human values without acknowledging their Author” (GS 92). Most of all this document reaffirms present culture, since it is impossible to achieve true and full humanity except through culture (GS 53), and acknowledges the advances of natural and social sciences, humanities and technology (GS54). The Council speaks of the responsibility this places on everyone to build a “better world in truth and justice” (GS55). Since “the world ... is the theatre of human history, marked with man’s industry, his triumphs and disasters” (GS 2), in the process of carrying on the work of Christ “the Church must continually examine the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel” (GS4). The Council summarises the events of modern society:

Humanity is passing through a new phase of its history, in which profound and rapid changes are gradually affecting the whole world.

Prompted by man's intelligence and creative industry, these changes recoil on man, his judgements and desires, individual and collective, on his manner of thinking and acting towards things and towards his fellows. We can in fact speak of a social and cultural transformation, which reacts also on religious life. (GS4)

The importance of *Gaudium et Spes*, lies in its reintegration of the church in the matters of the world and in its recognition of christians' responsibility for the world. The acknowledgement of truth in other religions and denominations offered potential for dialogue in areas where catholics were a minority.

Thus at Vatican II the Catholic Church recognised that there was a world church¹⁸, not only by the make-up of the Council delegates¹⁹, but also in the direction it espoused for theology in the future. It emphasised the importance of the *ecclesia particularis* (local churches) and their right to their own theologies, moving the church from a papal-centric theology espoused in Vatican I. It asserted that Christ is the Word in whom all has been created and is therefore at the heart of all human cultures²⁰ and thus advocated an "Incarnation theology"²¹, which accepts that Christ enters each culture to challenge and build it. Incarnation was no longer restricted solely to a theology concerning the Incarnation of Christ in Jesus, but also involved the Incarnation of Christ in each 'major socio-political area'²² and was taken as the starting point for a theology of inculturation and liberation²³.

Through the Vatican II documents there are differing understandings of what constitutes a local church; "at times it means the diocese, with a hint even of the real local community, the parish, at others it means the patriarchate or national group of dioceses. But at the root of it is the sense of the Church growing up from its local

¹⁸Rahner 1980:324

¹⁹See Bosch 1991:371 - it was not simply a western church meeting in Rome.

²⁰Shorter 1988:78

²¹AG 22

²²AG 22

²³Shorter 1988:79

eucharistic roots instead of coming down from its central administrative headquarters”²⁴. Generally in catholic understanding the local church is considered to be the whole diocese as the faithful community under one pastor, the bishop²⁵. On the other hand,

The character of the local church is not primarily determined by geography but rather by anthropology and morphology and thus by its make-up and its theology. The decisive element is not the place but the people with their legitimate national pride and their culture, who are brought together to celebrate the Eucharist and to shape *their own* lives strengthened by the word and the bread of Christ.²⁶

It is clear from Conciliar documents that the identifiable feature is its existence as an altar-community²⁷ and hence its “theological formulation often fits better with the reality of a single parish or small group of parishes than with some vast modern dioceses, which do in fact exist as little more than administrative units”²⁸. The rediscovery through Vatican II of the bishop’s role in the church, and consequently of the diocese as a self-standing entity, increased the importance of the local church.

The concept of the local church is thus seldom defined but usually refers to the outcome of the inculturation process²⁹. It springs directly from the image of the church as the People of God, all of whom everyone play an important role in the church. Conciliar deliberations concerning the eastern churches ensure that there must be an acceptance of equality with other local churches.

The New People Media Centre in Nairobi has highlighted nine characteristics of the local church:

1. it must have local personnel in all positions from the bishop to the laity;
2. the entire christian faith must be incarnated in and enriched by the local mentality;
3. it must be missionary both to itself and to other communities;
4. it should be self-reliant;

²⁴Hastings 1968:227

²⁵Bosch 1991: endnote 1 p531

²⁶Bühlmann 1976:284.

²⁷Hastings 1968:126

²⁸Hastings 1968:126

²⁹See for example Chiromba 1996:9-13

5. it should have its own theologies;
6. it should have its own indigenous forms of religious life, priestly formation and family spirituality;
7. it should develop a communion with all sections of the church, the institutional part of the church being oriented to building up the laity;
8. it can co-exist creatively and respectfully with those of other traditions and religions;
9. it identifies with its society especially with the poor and marginalised³⁰.

Such a definition discusses more what a local church should do and be rather than what it is. Much of the writing of the local church has grown out of missiology surrounding the question of when the overseas missionary should return. Thus to become a local church requires a process of change³¹. In Chapter 4 we will look at two understandings of the local church, those of Verstraelen in his 1975 study of the church in Zambia and Pieris in his lessons to be learnt in the process of inculturation³². They both see the establishment of the local church as the result of inculturation. In this thesis we will be discussing two local churches, i.e. two dioceses, with the understanding that “the presence of a local bishop in a diocese does not automatically make a church local”³³. There is a need for a change of mentality in all sections of the church, to encourage the church to be from the community in which it exists rather than from the overseas headquarters of the church. Thus although both churches investigated here may be technically local churches (i.e. with indigenous personnel in a single diocese) the aim of this research will be to assess the degree to which they have made the change in mentality which is needed for the recognition of their local-ness. A local church in the Catholic Church is thus dependent on the eucharist, and therefore on the bishop as the instigator of this sacrament, but in each community which meets together to share the word and sacrament, the true church is present³⁴. This thesis will keep within the confines of such a definition by using “hierarchy” to refer to the local hierarchy, the bishop, clergy, religious and administration of the diocese, unless otherwise stated.

³⁰New People Media Centre 1996:14-15. A centre based in Nairobi, the article was written for a collection of reflections on the African Synod.

³¹Verstraelen 1975:568

³²Pieris 1993

³³New People Media Centre 1996:16

³⁴Hastings 1968:85

ii. Since Vatican II

Vatican II's definition of Incarnation highlighted a new understanding of inculturation as opposed to the prevailing model of adaptation. As the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar concluded at their 1974 Synod, they "consider as being completely out of date the so-called theology of adaptation. Instead they adopt the theology of incarnation"³⁵. This thesis will explore the use of the term as faith becomes incarnate in the daily life of people and is reflected in the concrete tasks of the local church. Vatican II's catch phrase has become *aggiornamento* which is normally interpreted as 'bringing up to date'. De la Costa however sees it as also 'putting in context'³⁶. Thirty years after Vatican II, this research investigates to what extent the church has been put into two specific contexts.

Ad Gentes recognised that theology must occur in each "major socio-political area", thus advocating that each local church should articulate its own theology. Local theologies of the past thirty years are thus the direct consequence of calls for a local church and aim to take the lived reality of the faithful into account. An underlying assumption of local theologies is a change in approaches to "theology". No longer is it the preserve of an educated male élite (normally clerical and celibate), but an interdisciplinary subject, *done* and lived by people in their situation³⁷, for which training is only needed for the articulation of the ideas. People live theology in their circumstances. These theologies are founded on an understanding that acts of history are the arena in which God operates, where we find God. History, the study of the evolution of human activities, is therefore the raw material of theology; therefore there is a need to read history. The direction of theology has also undergone a shift so that "the point is not to contemplate the world but to change it"³⁸. Such an understanding of theology is presented by Gutiérrez, for whom theology is a reflection on praxis, *orthopraxis* being the sign of obedience to God, rather than simply *orthodoxy*³⁹. Theology is thus derived

³⁵Quoted in Shorter 1988:80

³⁶De la Costa 1972:99

³⁷Okullu 1974:53

³⁸Abesamis 1980:135

³⁹Gutiérrez 1988:5-8, right action rather than right belief.

from reflection on life, the outcome of the inter-action of culture and Gospel, rather than the imposition of seemingly universal propositions of faith *to* the culture.

This thesis takes such ideas and concentrates on theology from the grassroots. It has therefore needed to develop an appropriate methodology⁴⁰. As we shall see, the theologies discussed here use the context as the main source for reflection. By listening to the people, it recognises that anecdote and story are important expressions of faith in their lives. C. S. Song sees this as an 'interaction' of stories, those of Jesus and of people, as we come to see the story of the Reign of God. He goes on:

As the story of Jesus and the stories from Asia interpenetrate each other, a theological space is also opened for the stories of Hebrew Scripture. Stories from other parts of the world also come into play. What takes place is a theological feast of stories - the story of Jesus, stories from Asia, stories in Hebrew Scripture, and stories from the rest of the world, told as stories of God's Reign. What we encounter here is a theological world of stories, or better, the divine-human world of stories.⁴¹

This is a different methodology from traditional theology which tends to concentrate on official texts and documents⁴². Such an emphasis runs the risk of forgetting the lay faithful and the way in which the doctrines espoused in the documents are lived out.

Today there is the potential for a conflict between the traditional, Latin, universal church embodied in the Magisterium, and local churches as they take the freedom promised by Vatican II and recognise their own responsibility in theological reflection. The plurality insisted upon by popes from John XXIII forward is beginning to come into being and theologians are beginning to see the cultural bias and influence in theological thought⁴³. The developments in third world theology are dependent on the local church rather than institutional theologians⁴⁴. This thesis therefore takes the promises of Vatican

⁴⁰Schreiter 1985:4

⁴¹Song 1994:132

⁴²See for example, Giordano's comprehensive book on the Philippine Church 1988:2-3.

⁴³Schreiter 1985:4

⁴⁴As Romy Tiongco said: "Where the institutional church is weak, liberation theology has more chance of success" - private conversation 1995.

II as the backdrop and looks to the concrete circumstances to see how those ideas are translated into specific reality. It will also reflect on the interaction between the stories of two local churches and consider the issues raised by the methodology.

Vatican II formally “rediscovered” the importance of the local church, allowing that differences were necessary in liturgy and church structure depending on the situation. Although Vatican II never precisely defined the local church geographically, catholic doctrine has understood it as a church under one bishop-pastor, i.e. a diocese. The undertones of Vatican II as we discussed are that a local church also denotes a change of attitude within the diocese so that the impetus for the church comes from below rather than above. Vatican II has also encouraged that each local church produce its own theology. We will now go on to explore what kinds of theologies have been emerging from the local churches in the Third World.

b. Two Types of Local Theology

As has been mentioned two main forms of local theology have emerged: liberation and inculturation. We cannot mention all their features here. The aim is simply to provide a background and show how their ideas will be used in the thesis. The eucharist as a symbol used by both inculturationalists and liberationists may be useful for describing how the ideas can be translated into the concrete situation.

Generally the ‘liberation’ theology emanating from Latin America is political compared with the cultural bias of ‘inculturation’ theology of the African continent. Asia, with its christian populations in a minority, has long openly grappled with the issues of other religions⁴⁵. In this chapter we examine these two main strains of theology in the Roman Catholic Church, showing that there is more that unites them than separates them. I will identify theological lessons from different continents that may be helpful to each other and to the western churches of today.

⁴⁵Amaladoss 1985:177

i. Liberation Theology

The first local theology to be brought to the attention of the western world and therefore the most famous was that from Latin America, which responded to the political and economic situation and relied on a methodology influenced by Marxist analysis. Liberation theology challenged the status quo, not only religiously, but also politically and economically⁴⁶.

The term 'liberation theology' was coined to respond to the emerging ideas⁴⁷. It was firmly rooted in the concept of conscientisation which allowed people at all levels of the church to articulate their own faith and challenge oppression. The church in Latin America had to respond to the situation of a series of failed development plans and "[Liberation theology] proclaimed a concept of development that challenged the power of élites and stressed the importance of people being in control of their own destiny"⁴⁸. It saw the need to challenge social and political macrostructures, through a process of reflection on experience in the community. These new ideas of development emphasised a "revolution" of society, changing the analysis from development and underdevelopment to domination and dependency⁴⁹. People became increasingly sceptical of gradual change in society and looked to a radical break with the past.

Liberation theologians were often priests working in the slums of Latin America. The mixture of personal involvement in the lives of the poor and the exposure to the emerging social teaching of the Second Vatican Council through the 1960s was the catalyst of this theological awakening⁵⁰. Its firm emphasis was on the people as "an

⁴⁶Küng 1992:13: "But now from Eastern Europe and East Germany through South Africa to South America and the Philippines it has proved that religion can be not only a means of social appeasement and consolation but also - as already in the North American civil rights movement - a catalyst of social liberation: and this without that revolutionary use of force which results in a vicious circle of every-new violence".

⁴⁷Strictly a "theology from the underside" - in the last thirty years in different historical situations, different manifestations of liberation theology have emerged, from the black civil rights in the United States to feminist theologians, from *Dalit* theology in India to *Minjung* theology of South Korea.

⁴⁸Linden 1997:3

⁴⁹Bosch 1991:433-434

⁵⁰Flynn 1990:1

attempt, primarily by the poor themselves, to reflect in a religious way on their experience of poverty and injustice⁵¹ and then to challenge structures within both society and the church, which cause and perpetuate the oppression. Thus the poor themselves become the makers of theology. Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the founding thinkers of liberation theology, calls this process “the irruption of the poor”⁵², as the poor in society became more visible through unions and demonstrations during the 1960s.

The starting point for liberation theology is the present, which re-appropriates a history and tradition which has been brushed aside and suppressed⁵³. It is grounded on the conviction that God is on the side of the marginalised, drawn from an interpretation of the commandment to love God is to love one’s neighbour. As Juan Alfaro said, “We cannot continue in our indifference to the fate of the marginalised and oppressed. If the love of man is the great commandment of Christ, selfishness and injustices are the great sin of the world, *the very negation of Christ*”⁵⁴. However for Boff, as for many liberationists, theology must have ‘two eyes’, one looking to the past ‘where salvation broke in’ and the other looking at the present ‘where salvation becomes a reality here and now’⁵⁵. The church must focus on ‘the Christ of faith who continues his passion today in his brothers and sisters who are being condemned, tortured and killed for the cause of justice’⁵⁶.

Liberation Theology stresses the wholeness of salvation. Latin American theologians turned to scripture to discover how God wants people to behave in the repressive systems in which they found themselves. There they found a carpenter of Nazareth who, following in the footsteps of the other prophets of scripture, was killed at the hands of an occupying political force for speaking out against social, economic

⁵¹Linden 1997:5

⁵²Gutiérrez 1995 - lecture given at Stirling University, Scotland.

⁵³Witvliet 1985:36

⁵⁴Quoted in Hennelly (1979:2) see also Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan - Luke 10:25-37.

⁵⁵Boff 1978:viii

⁵⁶Brown 1986:616

and religious oppression. Reading the Bible in this light, they encountered a God who sided with the widow and the fatherless, who required the Israelites “to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke” (Is. 58:6), and whose spirit anointed Jesus “to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (Luke 4:18-19).

However liberation theology does not take the New Testament as its starting point. The God of the Old Testament was active in history and led the “Chosen People” out of the political domination of Egypt to new life. The Exodus story has become for the liberation theologians the paradigm of God on the side of humanity in the struggle against oppression. The exodus freed the Israelites from a specific situation of domination in Egypt, and is seen to foreshadow the Passion of Christ which freed the whole human race from all forms of domination. God did not simply take the Israelites and transplant them to the Promised Land; they had to work and struggle in the wilderness. God acted because of the injustice which Israel was suffering. The prophets make it abundantly clear that the destruction of Israel and Judah was because of their economic exploitation and mistreatment of the poor⁵⁷. Jeremiah and Micah both stress that to know God is to act rightly towards the poor and to seek justice (Jer. 22:13-16 and Micah 6:8). God is increasingly considered “not so much the object of human speculation or the source of divine revelation but the Great Liberator from human oppression, the primary instigator of social change”⁵⁸. The emphasis is not so much on the existence of God, as in western theological circles, but on the activity of God in the world⁵⁹.

Liberation is not simply theological reflection. It seeks the transformation of society; as Gutiérrez points out: “the theology of liberation offers not so much a new

⁵⁷See especially Amos 2:7, 5:10-15, 6:1-7

⁵⁸Ferm 1987:6

⁵⁹Ferm 1987:14

theme for reflection as a *new way* to do theology”⁶⁰. As he stressed at a lecture, the goal of theology is not an intellectual one, rather it is to announce the Gospel, and since poverty is not simply an economic condition, but physical and cultural death, a human condition, this is the situation that needs to be addressed. Liberationists interpret the biblical term “poor” not in a limited economic sense, but in a way which includes all those marginalised from mainstream society; “the poor is the insignificant, the irrelevant person in the church, in society ... the absent who becomes present”⁶¹. This is not simply *reflecting* on the issue of poverty, but also *acting*: “[t]he ultimate criterion determining the truth of any and all theology is whether it produces a life of faith, hope and charity”⁶².

Theology as action is the major thrust of liberation theologies. “According to liberationist theology, action precedes the entry into truth, practice precedes theory, - or, more concretely, solidarity with the poor is the presupposition for the authentic grasp of the Gospel”⁶³. Such a link between theology and action is intricately bound up with the saving of the community. “The secular and sacred spheres of life which are cohesively and intrinsically interrelated to form one reality are lived in a dynamic community context”⁶⁴. Thus it is only in the community that these two dimensions of life can fuse together in a meaningful way. Liberation theology is the affirmation of the precedence of practice over theory, the linking of life and faith, of the body and the spirit in the oneness of life. As Walls has shown, theology at all creative times in history has linked itself to action⁶⁵. Action with the poor causes reflection on poverty which then inspires further action⁶⁶.

Latin American theologians thus forced the issue of the poor onto the theological

⁶⁰quoted in Hennelly 1979:27

⁶¹Gutiérrez 1995

⁶²Boff 1978:vii

⁶³Baum 1987:7

⁶⁴Afagbegee 1985:279

⁶⁵Walls 1982:101, see also James 2:14-26

⁶⁶Linden 1997

agenda of the world. In the phrase “preferential option for the poor” there is the recognition that God’s attention is first and foremost focused on the poor and that therefore the church must also demonstrate solidarity with them. The poor are history makers, not simply objects and victims of history. Gutiérrez has continually stressed the need for the solidarity of the entire ecclesial community - the church - with the movements of the poor in the defence of their rights⁶⁷.

For Gutiérrez, spirituality is following Jesus, and like Jesus we are called to pitch our tent in the midst of human history and there to give witness to the Father’s love⁶⁸ (incarnation). The dichotomy between faith and life no longer exists; theology is action, for “liberation is an all-embracing process that leaves no dimension of human life untouched, because when all is said and done it expresses the saving action of God in history”⁶⁹; or to put it another way, salvation “embraces every aspect of humanity: body and spirit, individual and society, person and cosmos, time and eternity”⁷⁰. Salvation for Latin American theologians, “which is the realization of the Kingdom of God, involves the liberation of all men, the progress of each and all from a less human condition to one more human”⁷¹.

Christologies in all disciplines are torn between the divinity and the humanity of Christ. Liberation Theology stresses the latter and the way it can transform the insignificant and uninfluential:

Authentic Christian contemplation, which crosses through the desert, transforms contemplatives into prophets and heroes of commitment. Christianity brings about the synthesis of the militant and the mystic, of the political and the contemplative, overcoming the false contradiction between the ‘contemplative-religious’ and the ‘committed-militant’⁷².

⁶⁷see esp. Gutiérrez 1984:21

⁶⁸Gutiérrez 1984:41

⁶⁹Gutiérrez 1984:2

⁷⁰Gutiérrez 1988:85

⁷¹Juan Landazuri Rickets, Cardinal archbishop of Lima at the Medellin Conference 1968, quoted in Hennelly 1979:25

⁷²Galilea quoted in Ferm 1992:18

Galilea believes that “one cannot be a contemplative without having an experience of Christ and of his reign in history”⁷³. In liberation the transcendent is brought together with the immanent, for the whole world is interconnected and shows the life and humanity of Christ. In *Minjung* theology “transcendence is not reference to some other metaphysical order, but a deepening of the here-and-now, the historical expansion of human justice. And the Messiah is the one ‘who comes from the bottom’ to incarnate justice in human lives”⁷⁴.

A major theme in liberation theology is the way in which the marginalised interpret their own situation and thus do their own history, their own theologising. In this context basic christian communities have grown up, to bring the suffering of people into the midst of reflection, and reflection into the toil of everyday. In this theology the communities are the teachers, the theologians the students who articulate the ideas as they emerge from the poor. The leaders are ‘organic intellectuals’ who contribute their skills of analysis to the community’s discernment of the way of life, for it is the community that authorises this theology⁷⁵. Such theology is a challenge to individualistic and privatised views of salvation in the West, the emphasis for salvation is no longer scholastic *orthodoxy*, but *orthopraxy*. From experience comes faith and that faith then reflects upon experience. As the Japanese theologian, Koyama, has pointed out, there are two approaches to theology - the living room, the theology of the comfortable, the intellectual, unconnected to real life - and the kitchen, informal but where the seasoning takes place, where there is action and praxis; life and faith need no longer be separated⁷⁶.

“Liberation theology has helped the Church to rediscover its ancient faith in Yahweh, whose outstanding qualification - which made him the wholly Other - was founded on his involvement in history as the God of righteousness and justice who

⁷³Quoted in Hennelly 1979:30

⁷⁴Ferm 1987:12

⁷⁵Thistlewaite and Engels 1990:2

⁷⁶Koyama 1974:83

championed the cause of the weak and the oppressed'⁷⁷. Thus Bosch summarises the contribution that liberation theology has made to the theological world. The optimism in which it germinated in the 1960s had disappeared by the 1970s in dictatorships and oppression, and by the 1980s a new direction was needed for liberation theology. The founding members of Latin American theology have failed to inspire the younger generations with the necessary courage or inclination to do the work⁷⁸.

Since liberation theology encourages people to challenge the forces that oppress them in society, a number of different theologies are said to come under this label. This includes the feminist movement, Dalit theology from India and Minjung theology from Korea. Both the later two are the expressions of the people at the bottom of the social system. Black theology in South Africa responds to a similar need.

Liberation theology has had its critics, especially for its use of Marxist theory. The official church has been unsure and inconsistent in its response to what it saw as the 'politicisation' of the faith. As Bruce Kent discovered when he found his faith compelling him to speak out against nuclear weapons in Britain, there was a deep-seated paradox within the Vatican:

If there was a problem for the Church it lay in the contrast between the official idea of what a priest ought to be and what a priest actually was in many parts of the world. Support for *Solidarnosc* in Poland was priestly. Support for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua was not. To be a Bishop of HM Forces was not political. To be CND Chairman was⁷⁹.

As Baum puts it, the pope demands that priests do not assume leadership positions in politics, but this does not mean they should be silent on political affairs⁸⁰. It was this paradox which liberation theologians helped expose. Liberation theologians used Marxist tools of analysis for society and this brought criticism from the Vatican. Reactions have concentrated on the threat of secular, anti-christian communism and

⁷⁷Bosch 1991:442

⁷⁸Gutiérrez 1995

⁷⁹Kent 1992:204

⁸⁰Baum 1987:23

have involved silencing and recriminations⁸¹. As Dom Helder Camara said “When I build houses for the poor, they call me a saint. But when I try to help the poor by calling by name the injustices which have made them poor, they call me subversive, a Marxist”⁸². However liberation theologians are mostly critical of the irreligious aspects of Marxism.

There have been other reasons for the silencing liberation theologians. In May 1984, Leonardo Boff was charged with distorting old doctrines and reinterpreting them in new contexts. His latest book, *Church: Charism and Power*, stressed the challenge the Holy Spirit posed to the present ecclesial structures. His purpose was “to nourish faith in the strength of the Spirit that is capable of awakening the dormant heart of the institutional church, encouraging the living presence and the dangerous yet powerful memory of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ”⁸³.

In summary, liberation theology is theology which is no longer “God Talk” but “God Walk”⁸⁴. It stresses God’s liberating activity in history and “offers a new understanding of human existence through the centrality of praxis and a new interpretation of Christianity through Christ’s solidarity with those who suffer”⁸⁵. “Whatever theology and religion is about [...], it is related to the quest by people to rise above the limitations of their captivity”⁸⁶. This is the process liberation theologians have forced on the christian world, the communities at the grassroots are the embodiment of such a salvation and are seen as the source for further reflection. Liberation theology “gives religious value in a completely new way to the action of man in history, Christian and non-Christian alike”⁸⁷.

⁸¹Most famously Ratzinger 1984, which reasserted the primacy of individual sin and condemned liberation theologians’ over-reliance on Marxist thought.

⁸²quoted in Bosch 1991:440

⁸³Boff 1985:48

⁸⁴Frederick Herzog in Thistlewaite and Engels 1990:8

⁸⁵Chopp 1986:4

⁸⁶Cape Town 1989:4

⁸⁷Gutiérrez in Hennelly 1979:28

ii. Inculturation Theology

In Africa and Asia where indigenous and world religions have played a key role in the culture and society until very recently, there has been a criticism of liberation theology for its lack of concern with culture. Theologians from these continents have therefore highlighted the cultural colonialism and neo-colonialism which has accompanied the political domination. "Inculturation" has come under many names in the last thirty years, including "indigenisation", "adaptation" and "acculturation", the latter two denoting a more superficial changing of the church, which does not affect its structure or formal theology. Shorter makes the distinction between inculturation as "the creation of indigenous patterns" and acculturation "the insertion of indigenous elements into patterns that are basically western"⁸⁸. This is the distinction which will be used in this thesis. Here we will understand inculturation to be a sensitivity to the context of the church which will affect all aspects of the church, the way it is organised, its liturgy, its education and homilies. However, it is a process which takes time; since culture is constantly changing, the witness of the church must also change. The term "inculturation" was first used in 1962⁸⁹, although ideas of inculturation were espoused far earlier, especially in nineteenth century India⁹⁰.

African theologians in particular see inculturation as one of their major tasks, although there have been criticisms that the energy spent on this work has distracted the church from tackling issues of tribalism, poverty, corruption, political instability and economic crisis, endemic in Africa⁹¹. Inculturation is a process which occurs everywhere, but in the West, it has been so 'successful' that Christianity is the religious dimension of the culture⁹² and thus fails to challenge culture. Inculturation theology recognises that faith and doctrine are always "translated into a culture"⁹³, responding to the anthropological poverty brought by colonialism and modernity, rather than the

⁸⁸Shorter 1988:266

⁸⁹Bosch 1991:446-7

⁹⁰Parratt 1996:44

⁹¹Cox 1991:141

⁹²Bosch 1991:455

⁹³Bosch 1991:146

economic and political poverty addressed by liberation theologians.

The basis for the inculturation debate is the acknowledgement that “the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14). Christ the Word, in whom all was created, adopted and challenged the cultural concepts, symbols and behaviour of Israel in his earthly ministry. In the same way that inculturation was necessary for Jesus to transmit his message, so inculturation is also necessary for the church to evangelise effectively⁹⁴ for “if the divine Logos becomes flesh, there is no more and can never be an incompatibility between divinity and humanity”⁹⁵. The translation of the scriptures into the vernacular, which is shaped by the culture, has helped to make the ‘secular’ culture ‘sacred’. Culture is seen to be intrinsic to every human life, it “is the way in which a community humanizes itself and the world in which it lives”⁹⁶. Christ was recognised in each culture and therefore a knowledge of human culture can lead to a knowledge of God.

Inculturation is not a new phenomenon. Shorter points to the Old Testament and the way in which Judaism was influenced by the customs of those around them⁹⁷ and the way in which God interacted with the Jews in history so that the Incarnation of Jesus was “the final and most devastating of God’s intrusions into Jewish culture, the glory of God shining forever in the human and Jewish flesh of Jesus”⁹⁸. In the early church, believers faced the problem of extricating the Gospel from the religious culture of Judaism. In such a situation, each local church grew with its own personality and customs “without this harming the unity of faith and the communion of them all in charity and respect for the order established by Christ”⁹⁹. In the medieval Roman Catholic Church, Christianity was seen as synonymous with western civilisation, and

⁹⁴Shorter 1988:78-80

⁹⁵Meyendorff 1985:254

⁹⁶Amaladoss 1985:171

⁹⁷See Shorter 1988:109, for example the psalms borrow themes, style and rhythm from Canaanite hymns.

⁹⁸Shorter 1988:119

⁹⁹Pope Paul VI (quoted in Shorter 1988:140). Paul VI holds the early church as a good example for today’s multi-cultural church.

the Reformation of the sixteenth century could be seen as an attempt to inculturate Christianity for northern Europe. In the Vatican this early “inculturation” was met with the rigid liturgical and theological uniformity imposed by the Council of Trent (1545-63)¹⁰⁰.

The escalation of missionary activity which accompanied the “voyages of discovery” forced the Vatican to found the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* in 1622. This centralised missionary work, taking it from the hands of European monarchs. In 1659 the Congregation had its first test case when missionaries in China allowed Confucian values and customs to be practised alongside the christian faith. The Congregation advised them not to force people to change their customs: “What could be more absurd than to carry France, Spain, or Italy, or any part of Europe into China? It is rather the Faith, which does not reject or damage any people’s rites and customs, provided these are not depraved”¹⁰¹. Unfortunately this position was not held by the church for long and for subsequent missions the adoption of Christianity usually meant the adoption of western civilisation and life-style, justified by the desire for a universal church.

After the Second World War, with the decolonisation process in sight, the church had to finally recognise that a multi-cultural church was becoming necessary. In 1959 Pope John XXIII in *Princeps Pastorum* called for the increased training of local clergy, decolonisation and the training of lay leaders in the community. Once cultural diversity had been acknowledged, adaptation could be seen as a necessary condition of catholicity. As we have seen, Vatican II continued this process. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* legislated for the translation of the scriptures and liturgy, allowing the Bible to be read for the first time by the laity. *Ad Gentes* spoke of the need for dialogue between Gospel and Culture and hinged on the analogy of the incarnation. The encyclical *Africae Terrarum* (1967) acknowledged that non-christian cultures have some moral value and can be teachers for the christian faith, and on a tour of Uganda in 1969,

¹⁰⁰Shorter 1988:146

¹⁰¹Quoted in Bosch 1991:449

Paul VI asked the African bishops to join the “chorus of voices”, telling them that “a certain pluralism is not only legitimate, but desirable”¹⁰². However catholic awareness of multicultural plurality was not formally represented until 1982 when the Pontifical Council for Cultures was formed¹⁰³.

Early attempts at inculturating Christianity were often limited to accidentals such as liturgical vestments, non-sacramental rites, art, literature, architecture and music¹⁰⁴, although there was some attempt at changing the symbols of the sacraments¹⁰⁵. The adoption of Christianity continued to be measured by the adoption of western civilisation and

“[t]he evidence that you were saved was not whether you were a believer in and follower of Christ, and accepted all men as equal: the measure of your Christian love and charity was in preserving the outer signs and symbols of a European way of life; whether you dressed as Europeans did, whether you had acquired European good manners, liked European hymns and tunes, and of course whether you had refused to have your daughter circumcised”¹⁰⁶.

Inculturation forces the theologian to take the past and the present together, as two conditions of culture. Ela emphasises the need not for antiquarianism, but for liberation. Thus the two branches of theology merge for “at a time when Africans, like other peoples, are facing the shock of technological and cultural modernity, liberation of the oppressed must be the primary condition for any authentic inculturation of the Christian message”¹⁰⁷. Increasingly there is the recognition that culture is determined by socio-economic conditions as well as by religions and traditions¹⁰⁸.

Cultures are continually changing and within each culture there are many

¹⁰²Shorter 1988:209

¹⁰³Bosch 1991:452

¹⁰⁴Bosch 1991:448

¹⁰⁵Donovan 1982:119-128

¹⁰⁶Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1972:31-32

¹⁰⁷Ela 1988:xvi

¹⁰⁸See for example Pieris 1979:228

subcultures, especially for those on the margins of society. Inculturation asks that the christian message purify culture rather than simply accept it, transforming and challenging its presuppositions for “in becoming Christian, people are not invited to abandon their cultural identity. Rather, that identity is challenged and enhanced”¹⁰⁹.

By allowing the *Logos* to enter each society a process of renewed creation will take place: “the Christian mission is a mission of renewal of creation, precisely because the same *Logos* was the Creator in the beginning and now comes again into the world, as its saviour, and because, for God, speaking and acting is the same thing”¹¹⁰. For example, the *Dalits* “insist that they do *not* want to indigenise Christianity into a culture whose myths and epics legitimate caste. They want to *challenge* that culture, root and branch”¹¹¹. The Inculturation of the Gospel thus renews and challenges culture, especially where there are elements at odds with christian doctrine. We have seen that Vatican II documents called the process of inculturation “incarnation” which extended the term beyond the unique Christ-event. It is a term, however, which is closely bound with that event. Liberation theology calls christians to pitch themselves in the midst of human history as Jesus did¹¹² and inculturation remembers how Christ took on a particular culture to convey his message. We will therefore explore later whether incarnation adequately expresses the theology of both these strands and process when the process is actually lived, away from theological treatises. Both theologies teach how God is present with his people in the struggle towards liberation or inculturation; he has made himself incarnate in their lives.

At catholic institutional levels there have been mixed responses to inculturation.

Paul VI declared in 1970:

Just as Jesus Christ shared the condition of those who were his own, so the man of Asia can be a Catholic and remain fully Asian. As we declared a year ago in Africa, if the Church must above all be Catholic,

¹⁰⁹Shorter 1988:26

¹¹⁰Meyendorff 1985:250

¹¹¹Cox 1991:140-141

¹¹²Gutiérrez 1984:41

a pluralism is legitimate and even desirable in the manner of professing one common faith in the one same Jesus Christ¹¹³.

At the 1974 Synod of Bishops the African bishops took Vatican II overtures further. Bishop JD Sangu of Mbeya, Tanzania recognised that “it is ... necessary to foster the particular incarnation of Christianity in each country, in accordance with the genius and talents of each culture so that a thousand flowers may bloom in God’s garden”¹¹⁴. The Bishops of Africa and Madagascar called for a move from adaptation to incarnation, advocating a “theological pluralism within the unity of faith”¹¹⁵. These ideas, however, were condemned as dangerous by Paul VI, although a year later he wrote more positively: “the Kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures”¹¹⁶.

John Paul II has been cautious about inculturation throughout his pontificate, and has often given conflicting signals. On the one hand he has repeatedly spoken of the interrelation of faith, culture and history, while on the other hand, speaking about the need for the universal church to remain intact and uniform. In 1982 he wrote, “the synthesis between culture and faith is not just a demand of culture, but also of faith. A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not fully lived out”. However some believe that most “concrete attempts at inculturation are blocked by Rome with the pretext that they are ‘not in accordance with the Universal Church’”¹¹⁷. The calling of the African Synod in 1994 was a big step towards the recognition of a local church, although there were criticisms that it was held in Rome rather than in Africa. At that Synod, inculturation was seen to be a priority for the church, it was understood to be a *process*, occurring “in an on-going manner” and involving “the personal, cultural, economic and political

¹¹³*Speeches of Pope Paul VI on His Visit to the Philippines, November 27-29, 1970. Quoted in Mercado 1975:5.*

¹¹⁴quoted in Shorter 1988:212

¹¹⁵Shorter 1988:213

¹¹⁶Shorter 1988:213

¹¹⁷Bühlmann 1996:1

levels” in society¹¹⁸

Through the process of inculturation a potential for tension has been created between the local church and the central church. This tension arises through uncertainty, for although the church exists primarily in particular churches (LG23), it is also “in *virtue of the Church’s catholicity* that the particular churches exist”(LG13). Thus inculturation combines both the micro and the macro; the theologies must not be too local, for otherwise a church would find it impossible to communicate with other churches. The universality and catholicity of the faith would thus be destroyed and exclusive beliefs about one’s own perspective of the Gospel allowed to grow¹¹⁹.

However Blomjous believes that the church needs “the continuous tension between its fundamental unity and its pluralistic reality, between centre and periphery”. The present transition occurring in mission thinking forces Christians to ask, “Are we aware that the Church’s mission must first of all be realised in and through the local church, while at the same time tending towards unity in the Church Universal?”¹²⁰. In the following research we will be aware of this tension and will attempt to assess whether local churches threaten the universality of the church.

Inculturation consciously follows the model of incarnation recognising that the church does not simply take Christ *to* the people, but allows faith the chance to start its own history *in* the people¹²¹. Since inculturation engages with the culture and situation of the people, it has to occur at the local church level and therefore is the responsibility of all members of the local community¹²². This will involve the lay and the clergy, as they live their faith in their situation. The process involves them as the bearers of their culture, as the ones who live in both the situation and in the church, thus “inculturation is essentially a community process. It can never be the responsibility of a few experts

¹¹⁸John Paul II 1995:No 62

¹¹⁹Bosch 1991:456

¹²⁰Blomjous 1980:396

¹²¹Bosch 1991:454

¹²²Shorter 1988:217

who then have the task of ‘selling’ it to the people”¹²³. The relationship between the grassroots and the hierarchy is thus very similar to that in liberation theology.

c. Incarnation Theology

We have seen that the focus of both inculturation and liberation theology is on the people, whether they are the bearers of culture or as the poor. This brings us to the third hypothesis of this study which suggests that although these two forms of theology look distinct, they are in fact two sides of the same coin. Some theologians have long joined them. For example, the Sri Lankan theologian, Aloysius Pieris writes that the Asian church “must be humble enough to be baptized in the Jordan of Asian *Religiosity* and bold enough to be baptized in the Cross of Asian *Poverty*”¹²⁴. Here he asks that the church addresses what he sees as the two defining parts of Asian culture, its poverty and its overwhelming religiosity. In a similar vein, the Cameroonian theologian Jean-Marc Ela writes “liberation of the oppressed must be the primary condition for any authentic inculturation of the Christian message” and then he goes on to discuss this through the ancestors, African understandings and the eucharist¹²⁵. We shall explore this through the thesis. Inculturation inherently involves the people in the struggle for justice¹²⁶ and it is equally true that liberation theology is founded on the liberating of cultures and history. There are many who see that “the search for cultural identity is closely related to the Third World’s liberation movement”¹²⁷. Concentration on the political aspects of liberation theology has the danger that the traditional beliefs of the people will be ignored and for inculturationists “while people wallow in misery, we are cankering our concerns on religious rites and customs”¹²⁸.

However, I have suggested that instead of using the two words interchangeably the language of Vatican II, papal encyclicals and other official documents should be

¹²³Shorter 1988:254

¹²⁴Pieris 1979:228

¹²⁵Ela 1988:xvi

¹²⁶Shorter 1988:248

¹²⁷Chupungco 1976:1

¹²⁸Ela 1994:137

employed. These have recognised that to inculturate the Gospel is to allow Christ to become *incarnate* in the society; it is to take the Word of God and make it flesh in the circumstances of daily life. Faith is not simply some arbitrary spiritualisation of life but must also include the action of the body; knowledge is dependent on experience. “Wherever [Jesus] is taken by men in any time and place He takes that nationality, that society, that ‘culture’, and sanctifies all that is capable of sanctification by his presence”¹²⁹.

For Christianity, the Incarnation was the prime example of God acting in history, affirming human society and culture by taking the form of a man. Jesus’ life centred on the marginalised and culminated in the crucifixion by which God has given believers the promise of salvation. However God also chose a particular culture in which to appear and live as a typical Jewish man according to the culture of the day. The Christ of faith continues this “incarnation” in the lives of believers in every time, place and culture.

‘Incarnation’ theology thus participates in present history (real life) linking it to past history (by the Incarnation) and to future history (through salvation). For cultures without a sense of linear history the historical facts of Jesus of Nazareth need not present a stumbling block; what matters is the effect of the incarnated God in their society and culture. Incarnation joins the mystical and the practical. It is the Great Mystery on which christian faith is founded. Thus it can incorporate the whole of life, uniting the political, the social, the cultural and the spiritual; “spirituality [...] is that of the contemplative in liberating action”¹³⁰. The Incarnation of God in Jesus prefigures the incarnation of God in people in today’s world. Incarnation thus forces the Gospel into the present, continuing the events of 2000 years ago in the lives of normal people. It is in the struggle for human rights that faith can become truly inculturated; as Arellano writes of the revolutionary process in Nicaragua: “faith here enters history and becomes incarnate in the process of the daily life of the people’s struggle”¹³¹.

¹²⁹Walls 1982:97

¹³⁰Topel 1979:152

¹³¹Arellano 1988:135

Thus incarnation brings together history and the present reality, uniting inculturation and liberation. The Word was made flesh, making spirituality tangible, real and relevant in the struggles of daily life. The dualistic ideas inherent in much of western theology with its roots in Greek philosophy dissolve and people can be both body and spirit without conflict.

The phrase “incarnation” would also link the theology firmly with the local church. The *ecclesia particularis* of Vatican II stressed how each local church represents the Body of Christ (i.e. the church) in the specific situation. It is not only part of the church, it is the fully incarnated universal church. Perhaps in these concrete situations, it will be found that the distinctions between liberation and inculturation cannot be made, but that instead a church has become incarnate in a community bringing a local church into existence.

3. Traditional Places for Incarnation

It is becoming clear in this discussion that the course of inculturation and liberation will be different in each local church. We have discussed general characteristics of the two theologies and here we will look at three aspects of these theologies which overlap and also suggest a relationship between them.

a. The Liturgy

We have seen how Vatican II documents stress the way in which the local church is an “altar-community”. Both liberation theologians and inculturation theologians have also studied how the liturgy, as the central part of Roman Catholic doctrine, can be celebrated meaningfully in each context. The liturgy, especially the eucharist, “express[es] ... the mystery of Christ” and recalls his death and resurrection (SC1, 6), i.e. the incarnation of Christ. In the following discussion I will use liberation and inculturation theologians as the basis and will summarise their writings where necessary.

The liturgy is a public expression of a believer’s faith. Through it a link is

established between God, Christ and humanity, and also between humanity across time and space. Third world christians are increasingly calling for local liturgies to “express and profess Jesus Christ, celebrating salvation in Christ, in terms of who they are and how, in their daily lives, they perceive Jesus”¹³². Liberation theologians argue that “liturgy will have to echo the crying aspirations of the oppressed as much as the joy of every step toward their liberation”¹³³.

The institution of the eucharist refers back to the Jewish celebration of the Exodus, the meal that reminded Jews of their past, their liberation and the continued care of their God. Liberation theologians look to the Passover as it celebrates “a political action as the only revolutionary means of a breakthrough from slavery”¹³⁴. Translated into christian experience, the eucharist is a memorial of Jesus’ Passion in this Exodus tradition, the celebration of life triumphing over death and the breaking of Christ’s Body to symbolise God’s presence with humanity in bread and wine. The eucharist is only meaningful and devoid of magic when the liturgy is translated and the eternal values and mysteries it portrays are given in a culturally understandable way, for “the Eucharist was meant to be a symbol, a commemoration and a participation in Jesus’ liberative action”¹³⁵.

Even though the eucharist is by nature liberating (from sin) and inclusive (Jesus shared it with the man who was about to betray him, “on the night when he was betrayed”¹³⁶), it has become a symbol of exclusivity and division. The eucharist also calls into question the meaning of the community. It is offered as a community meal, and is therefore not simply a matter between the individual and God, since it unites the communicant with believers in all times and places.

Once people read the Bible in their own language, once the liturgy begins to

¹³²Lumbala 1994:78

¹³³Mananzan 1990:111

¹³⁴Manus 1985:200

¹³⁵Balasuriya 1979:6

¹³⁶1 Corinthians 11:23-26

speak to them in a meaningful way, the traditional passivity of the eucharist is shown to be false witness. As the remembrance of the life and death of Jesus, the breaking of bread brings together the strands of past and future and then sends the communicants back into the world, "*ite, missa est*".¹³⁷ It is a communal act of remembering and of offering oneself and society to God's mercy and use, propelling believers on the quest for justice. Throughout this chapter we have been examining how experience and faith must always be combined: "if the sacramental experience does not lead to the real experience in the world, it may become irrelevant. At the same time, without the sacramental experience the quest for experience in the world may become a purely humanitarian exercise without the power of God"¹³⁸. As John Paul II said at the 43rd International Eucharistic Congress in Nairobi in 1985;

The love of Christ that is received as a gift must in turn be given as a gift. Christ's love poured out upon us abundantly in the one bread and the one cup must be shared with our neighbour: with the neighbour who is poor or homeless, with the neighbour who is sick or in prison, with the neighbour who belongs to a different tribe or who does not believe in Christ¹³⁹.

Jesus' presence in the eucharist combines in the sacrament of christian life and action, and liberation theologians believe that christians will necessarily be led to social action as a result of partaking¹⁴⁰.

Each time this meal is shared, believers remember the sacrifice Christ made, his resurrection and ascension. It is a memorial of *our* redemption and of *his* coming again in glory. It links people with Jewish and christian history and with the promises of the world to come and enables them to draw closer to Christ, recognising the part they have to play in his kingdom and will on earth¹⁴¹. The act involves humanity in the liberative

¹³⁷Paraphrased by Donovan (1982:119): "For half an hour or so you have come apart from the world and your life to a holy place to perform a holy act, to fortify yourselves for your return to that life. Now the Mass is over. Go back to that life" and "May your Mass never end ...this Mass is continuing" (1982:128).

¹³⁸Chandran 1984:124

¹³⁹John Paul II 1985

¹⁴⁰Manus 1985:202

¹⁴¹It was in the breaking of bread that the travellers to Emmaus recognised the Risen Christ - Luke 24:13-32.

action of Christ: "In saying 'Do this as a remembrance of me', Jesus not only inaugurates a rite, he invites his faithful, the people of God, to do what he has done - that is, to break themselves, to be willing to die to themselves, and to share themselves in thanksgiving to God ... as the indispensable condition for becoming the body of Christ in the Eucharist"¹⁴², for the words of Institution are not "say this" or "believe this" but "*do* this in remembrance of me"¹⁴³. The eucharist demands liberation, since "in a sense, the church is built up around shared bread"¹⁴⁴.

Food is the basis of life as God is the basis of christian life¹⁴⁵. The struggle for food is at the heart of any struggle for justice, in which all share when they pray "Give us this day our daily bread". It is on the supply of food that oppressors and dictators often base their power and influence. Conversely it is through lack of food that whole populations can be forced to work in virtual or real slavery and it is through the confiscation of food that capitalist nations of the North continually impoverish the South. The lack of food, hunger, is the "most basic experience of dependence, of contingency, of the need for others" and thus is a global experience, for "the hungry know that they cannot be fed without the collaboration of others"¹⁴⁶. The use of european foodstuffs for the eucharist can alienate the communities whose lives are threatened by forced export crop growing and for whom the presence of bread and wine simply reminds them of the adverse trade conditions of the world¹⁴⁷.

There have been a number of attempts to inculturate the mass into local cultures, examples being the Ndzon Melon Mass of Cameroon¹⁴⁸, the Zaïrean Mass and a mass written for the pastoralists of northern Kenya¹⁴⁹. All celebrate the festive moments of

¹⁴²Ela 1988:1

¹⁴³Luke 22:19

¹⁴⁴Ela 1994:147 and De la Torre 1986:23, 31-2

¹⁴⁵Rayon 1981:220-227

¹⁴⁶Hellwig 1976:15-16

¹⁴⁷Ela 1988:5

¹⁴⁸Abega 1978:60ff

¹⁴⁹Shorter 1988:194 and 263

African life, the primacy of life and use the role of the body as a primary symbol - an African traditional symbol. Such African masses stress the unity of the community and its relationship with God leading to conversion, which carries an obligation to act to change the world. However it is only the Zaïrean eucharistic prayer that has received the official Roman blessing¹⁵⁰. The incorporation of the ancestors, the “living dead” into African liturgical prayers recalls the memory of the resurrection and Christ’s dynamic power in today’s world¹⁵¹. Filipino theologians have also attempted to write their own mass¹⁵², however the Magisterium has failed to officially sanction this attempt to express the most important sacrament of faith in indigenous ways.

The issue of what elements should be used is a very real problem in the church. Donovan was thankful that the Masai people accepted bread and wine¹⁵³, but Ela frequently claims that by using these western elements, the mass illustrates the domination of Africa by the West, rather than the liberation that is offered through Christ¹⁵⁴. Uzuoku Eugene advocates the use of local elements in the mass. At present the Vatican insists that wheat or barley bread and grape wine are integral to the eucharist, suggesting that “the profound reality of Jesus’ personality effectively withdrew these elements from the merely local, the transitory, and took them into the domain of the sacred as revealed by him.”¹⁵⁵ Uzuoku reminds readers that the eucharist was instituted at a common meal and Jesus therefore used the food and drink specific to that culture. Nowhere in scripture does it suggest that the specifics used are imbued with any sacredness¹⁵⁶. Christ “does not find repugnant to eat what we eat, drink what we drink”, the issue of elements therefore becomes an issue of affirming the culture in much the same way that the translation of the liturgy into the vernacular affirmed the

¹⁵⁰Uzuoku 1994:99-105

¹⁵¹Uzuoku 1994:107

¹⁵²Chupungco 1976

¹⁵³Donovan 1982:128

¹⁵⁴Ela 1988:6-7

¹⁵⁵Uzuoku 1980:380

¹⁵⁶Uzuoku 1980:380

culture¹⁵⁷.

Thus there is no scriptural or even doctrinal reason why European foodstuffs should be used. Uzuokuw urges the church to use food and drink that has been integral to religious practices for centuries, enabling the eucharist to reclaim history and symbolise “the recapitulation of all sacrifices of the past in Christ, and an establishment of the unique and acceptable sacrifice, the ‘pure offering’ pleasing to God”¹⁵⁸. Uzuokuw seems to be afraid of inculturated symbols becoming too local, but surely that is the nature of the inculturation of symbols even if the truths and meanings behind the symbols are universal? The permission to use local foodstuffs to symbolise Christ’s body and blood would be one further step towards the recognition of the validity of every culture.

Over the last 2000 years the eucharist has been much misused by the church, which has made the priest the sole mediator between humanity and God, and by the state, as oppressors and dictators have taken the body and blood of Christ without questioning its significance of equality and freedom from oppression. The church has often preferred to concentrate on individual forgiveness of sins rather than the communitarian and social sins against which Jesus rallied. “Whereas it began with the sacrifice of self for the liberation of others, it has for long been a means of enslavement and domination of believers”¹⁵⁹.

As we have seen in passing, inculturation and liberation theology both have a firm understanding of history. This will be discussed further in the next section. A few words about the eucharist will prepare for that discussion, since the eucharist celebrates the central historical event of the Incarnation in the memory of a historical meal. In the eucharistic sacrament the spiritual and physical worlds combine and the dimensions of time merge into one as “Time is recalled in its three dimensions of past, present and

¹⁵⁷Uzuokuw 1980:381

¹⁵⁸Uzuokuw 1980:381-2

¹⁵⁹Balasuriya 1979:2

future”¹⁶⁰. The eucharist links everyone throughout time and space as part of the Body of Christ. It is a representative act, offered on behalf of the whole world and involves the faithful in the central events of the world’s history¹⁶¹. Through the eucharist humanity enters into the death and resurrection of Jesus. This “not only leads to a deepening of experience, but also involves a declaration or public commitment to an oppositional stance in the world”¹⁶².

This leads to a new understanding of liturgy. According to Martinier, liturgy includes both God’s action in history through Christ and the human response to that liturgical action, linking the present community with the historical events of the christian faith and the future kingdom of God’s promise. Therefore since Christ’s “liturgy” was based on redemption, salvation and especially liberation, ours must mirror that as we continue to live in the memory and history of Christianity¹⁶³. Pieris sees the potential of the *liturgy of life* to reunite the spirituality and liturgy of the church¹⁶⁴. This definition of liturgy, which includes all of life, is evident amongst people who have found it difficult to share communion with dictators¹⁶⁵. It has also led to people who struggle and suffer together experiencing a new meaning in the eucharist¹⁶⁶. Such an understanding of liturgy clearly embraces ideas from both liberation and inculturation theologians.

With the numbers of Roman Catholic priests decreasing especially in the former mission territories, local churches are often dependent on outside help for the sharing

¹⁶⁰Mbiti 1971:91 and 104

¹⁶¹Manus 1985:207

¹⁶²Hellwig 1976:60

¹⁶³Martinier 1986

¹⁶⁴See especially Pieris 1988:4-7

¹⁶⁵For example, Ernesto Cardenal in 1986: “It is intolerable that the medals of honour which the government of the United States has offered to Cardinal Obando in order to make a political tool out of him should be accepted. If the attitudes of certain Bishops don’t change, we Christians will one day find ourselves in the painful position of asking ourselves: ‘Can we celebrate the Eucharist in communion with those who use their religious influence against our people?’” - O’Brien 1990:179.

¹⁶⁶For example, Miguel d’Escoto: “I have never celebrated the Eucharist more meaningfully than when I celebrated it with my fellow freedom fighters ... for me the whole war was a great Eucharist, because, in all my comrades there was this disposition to give all, to give their lives. It wasn’t just one person ready to give up his or her life for all the others. Every one of us had to be ready for death. Every one of us knew that death could come at any moment” - Cabestrero 1983:112-113.

of the sacrament at the centre of catholic faith.

We experience absurd situations in the churches of Africa. The minister who summons a community to hear the word is not authorized to preside at the Eucharist by which Christians are nourished by the power of the cross. In current practice, ministry of the word and ministry of the Eucharist are dissociated in the name of a dogmatized practice that reserves the presidency of the Eucharist to a priestly class¹⁶⁷.

The Masai people in the 1960s suggested to Donovan that they could celebrate the eucharist without him;

I had to admit to them that they were right. It was not scripture or theology which prevented them from doing what they thought they had a right to do, but simply the history of a church imbedded in a single culture, with its own ideas, coming from that culture, as to what number of years of seminary training were needed to lead a community in the simple act of celebrating the Lord's Supper, as he told us to do¹⁶⁸.

Thus in the catholic tradition where a priest is required for a eucharistic celebration, a tension can arise between the particular churches, whose lack of staff prevent many priests, and the universal church. Conciliar documents allowed "for legitimate variations and adaptations" in liturgy "provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved" (SC38). The description of the opening mass of the African Synod bears witness to the encouragement of the pope to new forms of liturgy:

Africa brought to this historic assembly the most deeply felt expression of the efforts at inculturation in which the whole people participates with a joy that is faith in life itself. St Peter's Basilica reechoed with the sound of tam-tams and xylophones, of castanets and gongs, which for us mark the rhythm of the struggle between life and death¹⁶⁹.

However, on the other hand, we have seen a reluctance of the Curia to sanction local liturgies submitted for approval.

The connection between liberation and inculturation, between faith and life, can be theologically seen in the eucharist, a sacrament at the heart of catholic devotional life, which is both a mystical experience and an experience that unites a community to social

¹⁶⁷Ela 1986:3

¹⁶⁸Donovan 1982:122

¹⁶⁹Message of the Synod No 6 (AFJN 1996:73)

action. It is also a symbol of the denominational, gender and status divisions in society. The dependence of the eucharist in catholic tradition on right belief and the lack of priests has led some theologians to reinterpret liturgy to include life as well as ritual. Through the case studies we will explore how important this sacrament is to the faithful, a sacrament called by Vatican II the fount and summit of faith¹⁷⁰, whether there is a desire to incarnate it into daily life, whether it inspires a liberative faith in the recipients and whether it is the locus for the incarnation of faith.

b. Basic Christian Communities (BCCs)

Both inculturation and liberation theology have been seen to be community enterprises. During the 1960s, basic christian communities grew up in areas where conscientisation encouraged the laity to question their own situation. In the larger parishes of the Third World, they have an important role as the first point of contact for faith, discussion and action. They are small familial groups of christians who meet for prayer, bible service, or community action, as the leaven of Christ's body in the community.

If inculturation must occur at the grassroots level and if it is a process for the entire community, then BCCs are the ideal means of inculturation. In 1973 the Bishops of Eastern Africa adopted the building of small christian communities as a pastoral priority to safeguard human values and to root the church in the life and culture of the people¹⁷¹. We saw earlier how these communities are also seen as the basis for the education needed for liberation to occur.

Basic christian communities have grown up all over the world; in Latin America these communities have been actively involved in the struggle for justice, whereas often in Africa they have taken a solely pastoral position. In Asia, the predominance of other religions has brought one theologian to call these units "basic *human* communities"¹⁷².

¹⁷⁰SC9 and LG2

¹⁷¹Shorter 1988:264

¹⁷²Pieris 1988:126

True inculturation can only come from the grassroots since “the community provides the criteria of authenticity and success, because it is the life of the community which is in question. The community also provides the means of implementation”¹⁷³. It is clear that a clerically inspired inculturation is too cerebral and there must be full participation of the laity of both sexes in the church¹⁷⁴. Thus these communities question the structure of the church, calling for a “new way of being church”. The messages from basic christian communities is that people are coming together to make their faith more meaningful in their life, and use life as the starting point for theological reflection.

The future of the theology of inculturation clearly lies in the basic christian communities who will become the new heart of the church¹⁷⁵, while some believe the official church declines to match praxis with theology¹⁷⁶. True inculturation needs the issues of the society to be expressed in the phrases and symbols of that society. African writers ask that “instead of gearing inculturation efforts solely or mainly towards liturgical adaptations or innovations, we should rather be seeking ways and means of making the Christian message *relevant* and *alive* for the African”¹⁷⁷. Afagbegee goes on to point out that since the African world view does not divide the sacred from the secular, any attempt at inculturation must include the totality of life.

In both the following case studies, basic christian communities are present and their role in liberation or inculturation will be studied. Many liberation theologians, for example Pieris, have seen BCCs as the basis for inculturation/liberation¹⁷⁸. We will test this in these two situations.

¹⁷³Shorter 1988:266

¹⁷⁴Shorter 1988:266

¹⁷⁵Marins 1989:2

¹⁷⁶Shorter 1988:270, Bühlmann 1996:1

¹⁷⁷Afagbegee 1985:279 - emphasis in original

¹⁷⁸Pieris 1988:125-126

c. Christianity as History and Memory

Our discussions of incarnation theology and the liturgy have touched upon the issue of history and memory in the christian faith. An understanding of history is a common undercurrent to both inculturation and liberation, both touching similar issues. Here we will consider how liberation and inculturation theologians deal with history in their struggles for freedom from oppression and for renewed social and individual identity. Christian preoccupation with history is not new, and all theologians have had to ask historical questions of some sort when approaching the Bible or the traditional distinction between secular and sacred history.

In the West “modern society is [...] becoming increasingly divorced from history and memory”¹⁷⁹. On the other hand many third world theologians have pointed out that history gives a nation or an individual an identity. Christianity offers a historical religion, firmly grounded in the historic person of Jesus. The scriptures tell of the specific time and place of God’s intervention in human history (incarnation) and contain the promises of Jesus to be with his followers, to struggle with them, bear their burdens and provide God’s strength to destroy the power of sin and death. Thus, the historical character of Christianity is not only based on the past, but also realises Christ’s promise to act within the historical present and anticipates the reign of God in the historical future. This memory of past, present and future history has been termed “a dangerous memory that threatens the present and calls it into question because it remembers a future that is still outstanding”¹⁸⁰. Christian faith recalls the memory of Jesus Christ, his death for the sins of the world, and his struggle against the dominant social, religious, political and cultural powers of the day. As J. Metz puts it:

In faith, Christians accomplish the *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi*. In faith, they remember the testament of Christ’s love, in which the kingdom of God appeared among men by initially establishing that kingdom between men, by Jesus’ confession of himself as the one who was on the side of the oppressed and rejected and by his proclamation of the coming kingdom of God as the liberating power of unconditional love....[I]t anticipates the future as a future of

¹⁷⁹Metz 1980:201

¹⁸⁰Metz 1980:200

those who are oppressed, without hope and doomed to fail.¹⁸¹

Liberation and inculturation theologians look to the Bible for reflection, rather than relying on traditional church doctrines. With the translation of the Bible encouraged after Vatican II, it was open to the majority of the faithful. The education which accompanied much of the early work in Latin America has been called conscientisation, since it seeks to make the people conscious of their situation, of what God says to them in that situation and what is their role in the change of society. Thus liberation and inculturation theologians reinterpret the Bible directly into the present situation and historical context. Traditionally,

In much of Christian preaching and teaching, including the theological tradition, the Bible has been tamed. The subversive memories are left in the margin; and the passages that occupy the centre of attention are those that stabilise the present, integrate society, and summon people individually to greater love and holiness¹⁸².

However, a different perspective stressed by third world theologians emphasises the God of the poor and the marginalised. In scripture Christians discover their connection to the historical nation of Israel and thereby link themselves to the Exodus victory. In the Incarnation God entered history, showing that the Creator of all is translatable into every culture and time.

Conscientisation reminds people of the history of Jesus Christ and rediscovers their own historical consciousness, enabling the oppressed to re-acknowledge their worth and to understand that God is with them. This humanises history¹⁸³ and reaffirms that “part of the Christian message was that people were called by God to be the subject of their own history”¹⁸⁴. Once a people realise how they are oppressed they are empowered to start the process of change. The recapturing of the memory of the scriptures, of the person of Jesus Christ, is thus a dangerous moment for those in authoritarian churches.

¹⁸¹Metz 1980:90

¹⁸²Baum 1987:6

¹⁸³Seikaly 1998:1

¹⁸⁴Baum 1987:34

Liberation theologians have been rediscovering the historical basis for Christianity, most especially in the humanity of Christ where the divinity of Christ had been emphasised before. They have shown how the church has often presented a false view of the historical reality of the Bible, for example in the selective memory in traditional biblical hermeneutics concerning women in the Bible.

History has traditionally been written from the standpoint of the powerful, the victors. As those on the margins of society rediscover their own history, they gain a stronger understanding of their own identity. "The man with amnesia is lost, unsure of relationships, incapable of crucial decisions, precisely because all the time he has amnesia he is without his past"¹⁸⁵. Churches in the Third World have grown in areas where the traditional religions were condemned by missionaries and where the people's identity is submerged by increasing European culture and church; the past of the indigenous people has been denigrated and thus the Europeans have often forced their colonies to lose their own historic identity. This process has continued in the post-colonial situation and has led to the coining of the phrase "decolonisation of the mind" which seeks to address the way colonial powers have influenced the mind set of their former colonies¹⁸⁶. As Sr Mairead Butterly has written, "Today we are aware that we have no identity either individual, group, community or collective unless we have a memory and a story", for stories "provide a treasury of identity". There must be, she says, "a sharing of history so that this history may be written anew"¹⁸⁷.

Schreiter shows how local history reshapes the articulation of the past, for "histories of suffering cannot be forgotten. This is leading not only to a transformation of the present, but also to a reconstruction of our understanding of the past"¹⁸⁸. Perhaps through the encouragement of local theology, Christians will gain a new sense of their own identity and their place in history and thus become subjects and agents in the

¹⁸⁵Walls 1982:103

¹⁸⁶For a fuller discussion see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1985.

¹⁸⁷ARIMA 1994:foreword

¹⁸⁸Schreiter 1985:4

movement of history. As Archbishop Tshibangu writes:

We must remember that human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, are fulfilled and realized in history through their world-transforming labor according to the spirit of Christ. "World", here, is intended in its positive, good sense. It signifies the created realities here below, where human beings have been placed by God as the center of these things and as God's lieutenant. It is concrete African human beings, then, rooted in their history and their culture, who have been redeemed by Christ.¹⁸⁹

Such a rediscovery is fundamental to the struggle for liberation as indigenous groups take responsibility for their local societies. It gives an understanding of the past culture to decolonise the mind and thus enhance inculturation. We have come full circle to one of the sources of local theology, stories, discussed with reference to C.S. Song above. In many rural cultures, history is oral and it is through the telling of personal and collective stories that belief patterns and aspirations emerge. In this thesis we aim to listen to the people's stories, to hear their articulation of present conditions and their aspirations.

Vatican II's extension of the term incarnation to include inculturation shows how an event often limited to the past continues in the changing circumstances of the present. Its call to take note of the signs of the times and its rediscovery that revelation can occur in history¹⁹⁰ reclaims human actions in the world. The two local theologies discussed here are reinterpreting history from the stance of the periphery. They search for biblical events which mirror their own experiences and can therefore help in the struggle to transform the future. At a theoretical level it is clear that a liberative understanding of history may lead to a clearer view of both inculturation and liberation. In the process of the following case studies, we will be assessing whether an understanding of history helps or hinders a local congregation.

¹⁸⁹Tshibangu, T: "L'engagement des laïcs dans la croissance et le développement intégral de l'Afrique" in *Actes de la troisième assemblée plénière du Symposium des Conférences Épiscopales d'Afrique et de Madagascar* Kampala 1972, p97. Quoted in Mushete 1994:21-22.

¹⁹⁰*Dei Verbum* 2

4. From theory to *praxis*: towards a new method for the study of local theology

a. The theory

So far we have seen how Vatican II called for the recognition of the local church. The Council understood each church to be fully the church rather than simply a part of the universal church. It also saw the need for the local churches to undertake their own theological reflection. Encouraged by such openings, local theologies have emerged, which we have discussed in reference to both liberation and inculturation theology. Through these discussions, and the investigation of the concept of the liturgy of life, of BCCs and of the treatment of history, we have seen that the two generic strands of theology may be the same process when they are lived out in reality. We have suggested that “incarnation” covers the common aspects of the two theologies and may offer a useful phrase for the process when it is not tied to theological books.

To address the issue of the relationship between inculturation and liberation this thesis will test a third hypothesis that the social study of local christian communities is a legitimate way of doing theology. In the discussion above about Vatican II (section 2a) we considered the way in which local theologies have reinterpreted the meaning of theology. We saw that it is a community enterprise, more associated with how people live and “do” theology rather than “think” it. I therefore suggest that it is to the local community that we must look for the basis of theological reflection. This is so that we can really understand what the laity and their priests do and think as they live out their faith. Since inculturation and liberation are processes that take place in the local church, an in-depth study of that context may provide valuable insights in the discussion of these two theologies. Through such local studies, using oral interviews, it is hoped that the opinions and actions of the laity and other sections of the local church will be reflected to further inspire theoretical frameworks for inculturation and liberation found at the heart of where they are meant to happen.

Third world theologians often do not rely on the traditional methods of theology

acknowledging “the importance of social analysis for their theology.... Social analysis and theology are seen as being together when they both make an option for the poor and the oppressed. These theologians place action and experience before analysis and theory”¹⁹¹ and if those in the West are to learn from them, they must do the same. If a church is to allow the people to own it, if it is to allow indigenous beliefs and imagery into its institutions and if it is to take a relevant role in the political life of the nation, it is only right that attempts are made to understand it with whatever tools come to hand. Since theology is “an articulation in language, in a more or less systematic manner, of the experience of God within the context of human experience”¹⁹², qualitative research offers an important tool to uncover how the church is lived in real situations and thus provides an important source for local theology.

An accusation that could be levelled at traditional academic theologians concerns the often wide gap between “theology talked” and “theology acted”¹⁹³. The theologies of inculturation and liberation from the Third World attempt to ground their ideas amongst the people. This grounding takes account of the past and present realities of the community and aims to incorporate their aspirations and dreams for the future.

Thus a methodology based on a premise taken from the “many theologians [who] speak of doing theology ‘from below’ (human experience as the starting point) rather than ‘from above’ (church doctrines as the starting point)”¹⁹⁴ has been developed. Theological reflection here will be “based on contemporary life-situations and history”¹⁹⁵. This thesis attempts an inter-continental analysis of two dioceses, one in Africa and the other in Asia, by a researcher from a third. It is hoped that in this way a cross-cultural hypothesis of the relevance and role of the church in modern society will allow a deeper understanding of the link between inculturation and liberation.

¹⁹¹Oduyoye 1985:146

¹⁹²De Mesa 1995:251

¹⁹³Fiedler 1995:1

¹⁹⁴De Mesa 1995:252

¹⁹⁵Abesamis 1980:128

The benefit of such a close study is illustrated by Von Doepp in his research of the church and politics in Malawi. He believes that the involvement of the church in politics can be in three spheres¹⁹⁶. First there is the official and external involvement, through the publication of letters and the establishment of committees. Then there is the internal face of their work, through the sermons and organisation of the local priests in their parishes and how they conscientise their congregations. Lastly, there is the “hidden” involvement. This is how the structure and activities of the church undermine or support the freedom and democracy advocated by the church. It is clear that these last two spheres of the church’s involvement in politics are difficult to assess from official church documents, which do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the laity. Is there, therefore, a gap between a theology and history which relies on official documentation and the living of the faith that inspires the theology at the grassroots level?

b. The *praxis*

The thesis relies heavily on the primary source of interviews collected by the author on two expeditions of three months each. The first was conducted between September and December 1995 in Malawi, and the second between April and July 1996 in the Philippines. The objective on both trips was to collect as much material as possible to construct a picture of the local catholic church. Since the main interest was the relevance of the church to the village people, it was important to interview many people from the locality. Local documents were collected and, especially in the Philippines, there was a constant alertness for anecdotal evidence. There was an attempt to keep the style of fieldwork similar in both places, so that a cross-cultural analysis could be made, but this was dependent on the situations whose differences are vast. The differences have provided useful points of departure for the discussion of theology in different contexts in Chapter 4. Fifty interviews were conducted in each country, a mixture of educated and uneducated, men and women, old and young, lay and clergy,

¹⁹⁶For a more detailed discussion of this, see Von Doepp 1998.

vernacular and English speakers, alone and in groups¹⁹⁷. In each country I concentrated on one diocese; in Malawi, the diocese of Zomba, the old capital, dominated by the university and old parliament buildings; in the Philippines, the Prelature of Infanta, one of the poorest, most rural and inaccessible dioceses, but one with a vocal bishop and traditionally at the forefront of the radical church in the Philippines. I also collected material to compare the chosen diocese with other dioceses.

Although I contend that studies of local communities will allow theologians to articulate a more relevant theology, churches never stand in isolation. Since they are not only part of the national church, but also of the universal church, Asian and African as well as general catholic documents play a part in this thesis. Although there are very few theologians from Malawi, there are many in the Philippines and local theologies are more evident. In each country the hierarchy has been active in the publication of views and I used the relevant documents in the last few years issued by them. I have consulted many primary political documents from the Malawian transition¹⁹⁸ and from the Philippines I investigated various local liturgies and prelatural documents relating to the lay programmes and development schemes in which the church is involved.

Schreiter has identified many of the issues involved in the construction of a local theology¹⁹⁹. Since he is concerned with the actual process rather than the investigation of the result, much of his work looks at the way to read one's own culture and traditions and how that could feed into a church. He looks at the roles of various members of the community, the priest, the prophet and the people and defines local theology as "the dynamic interaction among gospel, church, and culture"²⁰⁰. This takes into account the tradition and history of the church and the community's culture. He uses the term "gospel" to denote the "quality of the community's praxis, its worship, its other forms of action" and the division of labour within the church. Throughout this thesis I will use

¹⁹⁷See Sources for lists of interviewees, brief biographical notes and the circumstances of the interviews.

¹⁹⁸Thanks to Bill Turnbull WF.

¹⁹⁹Schreiter 1985

²⁰⁰Schreiter 1985:22

these as a broad basis for the presentation of the material.

i. The Local Churches

To consider the relationship between liberation and inculturation theology it was necessary to investigate churches whose hierarchy at least had been involved in the political process. One of the main issues of the local church is its integration and relationship with other local churches, therefore two different dioceses were chosen so that the issues and questions which arose from one could shed light on the other. This thesis takes two radically different countries, one in Asia and the other in Africa, to consider the process of becoming a local church.

The Roman Catholic Church in Malawi issued a pastoral letter in 1992 which began the process of democratic reform and the death of Hastings Banda's thirty year dictatorship. At the African Synod (1994), the African bishops called for increased inculturation and liberation in their churches. The country was also chosen because of the numerous links between the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-western World, Edinburgh, and the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Chancellor College, Malawi.

The overthrow of President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, the only christian country in Asia, in 1986 also involved the church. The dynamics of this 'revolution' were completely different. Here there was an armed struggle for a number of years, with many exhortations from various religious leaders and an underground movement which involved many clergy and lay Christians in combat to death. In the Philippines there has been a much greater proliferation of theological writings than in Malawi. The concept of a theology of liberation is not new and has been adapted for local conditions to a theology of the church of the poor. The country was chosen as an example of the way in which Asian theology has begun to think of these issues and because initial advances to the Catholic Church there were very encouraging.

Obviously a church is capable of being very different in different areas of the

same country depending on the personnel involved. It was therefore felt that in order to make the study manageable, a single diocese or a local church should be chosen.

The diocese of Zomba was chosen because the University of Malawi was based there and therefore an initial entrance, often the most difficult part of qualitative research, was available. In the Philippines approaches to a Jesuit academic encouraged me towards the Prelature of Infanta for its accessibility from Manila, its openness to inculturation and liberation and for contacts he had there. In the event both were good choices. In many ways Zomba Diocese is representative of the Roman Catholic Church of Malawi; it is less progressive than somewhere such as Mzuzu Diocese, and yet not so conservative as the Archdiocese of Blantyre. Although it would be interesting to see the effect of a particularly strong academic or missionary such as Chima or Boucher²⁰¹ on the churches around them, the objective here was to gain an insight into an 'ordinary' local church.

In the Philippines it is clear that Infanta is in the vanguard of the theology that is becoming the norm for the rest of the Philippine Catholic Church. It has had to survive heavy militarisation and in many cases persecution, and the New People's Army was strong in the mountains which separate the prelate from the rest of Luzon. However it is not as progressive and war-torn as dioceses further south and the bishop has been able to steer through the chaos of the last thirty years.

ii. Methodology of Interviews

As has been noted the hypotheses for this study are strongly connected with the idea of a local church. Since the words and deeds of the local community were deemed to be important in that study, there is considerable emphasis on fieldwork and the use of oral evidence, collected from time living with the people²⁰².

Before embarking on the field work, use was made of sources in the United

²⁰¹See Chapter 2, section 3b for details

²⁰²England 1993:69

Kingdom. Fr Bill Turnbull, a White Father living in Birmingham and Dr Peggy Owen of Cambridge University were very helpful in making primary material of the political transition in Malawi available. The SCIAF library (Glasgow) and ACTS (Dunblane) were also very useful, the latter housing much material collected by the well-known interviewer of small christian communities, Ian Fraser. CIIR and the Philippines Resource Centre, both based in London also made their archives available, yielding many newspapers, magazines and reports. In both chosen countries the Episcopal Conferences have been active in the publication of views, and I have used the relevant documents issued by them.

Considering the exploratory nature of the thesis, and the aim to draw two pictures of the local church from which to consider the questions of the grassroots christians as they lived their faith in daily life, a qualitative methodology was used²⁰³. The primary source for the testing of the hypotheses was the collection of interviews gathered by the author.

If members of the local church are the theologians and also the source of theology, studies of local theologies, for example inculturation and liberation, must occur at this level. The formal theology of the church is relatively straightforward to analyse through published materials. Less easy to collect are the thoughts, actions and life-stories of the lay faithful. It is their words and actions which show how theology is being lived in the local church. Therefore in the following case studies there is an attempt to investigate how the people in the local church are given a voice, how they organise themselves and how they involve themselves in the church. We shall ask questions in their situation to discover how politically aware they are, how much they question authority or the system and what influence they feel their faith should have on politics. With a discussion of the national hierarchical (the bishops) involvement in politics, this should help to assess how far liberation has progressed in the diocese. To assess the presence of inculturation, we shall ask how integrated their life is with the

²⁰³For good descriptions of the qualitative methodology and its advantages see Marshall and Rossmann 1995, Boulton and Hammersley 1996.



church, whether church is something that happens only on a Sunday, whether it is felt to be a special occasion away from daily life and we will look at the way in which the local church is organised at the village level. Does the priest retain tight control of the church or is he allowing the people to “own” the church and play a role in the decisions? All these issues, I believe, are clues to the understanding of faith and theology in the locality. Since every church is also part of the universal church we will consider how the thoughts and writings of theologians shed light on the complex situation which unfold through qualitative research. Time living in the community²⁰⁴ will form the backdrop to the theology as it emerges. Many third world theologians have highlighted the importance of praxis above orthodoxy, and there have been a few local studies of the religious convictions of a small christian community using oral methodology²⁰⁵. We will therefore look at the meetings, services and activities of the catholic community.

Prior to the field work, the relevant background literature was covered and questions developed in broad categories, such as views of political liberation and the church's/Christian's role in it, how indigenous was the church and the meaning of the eucharist. Through such questions I hoped to build up a picture of the local church, the opinions of the laity and how theological ideas were lived in the individual diocese. It was felt that any further honing of questions would need to happen in the field.

Although the broad site, i.e. the diocese, had been chosen, there was clearly a need to further determine where the information would best be sought. I did not arrive in the field with fixed ideas of who would be representative of the church in each place. During the first few weeks in both churches I familiarised myself with the issues involved and identified groups of people from whom I wished to draw information and opinions. In Malawi, I was not staying with African catholics. I first interviewed the catholics members of staff at Chancellor College to acquaint myself with the issues involved, then introduced myself to the priests and the bishop. To reach individual

²⁰⁴England 1993:69

²⁰⁵Those that have been undertaken are from places which have a definite or unusual contribution to make to theology, for example, Solentiname in Nicaragua (Cardinal 1976-82). See also work on American denominationalism - see Wind and Lewis 1994, Carroll, Dudley and McKinney 1986.

parishes and outstations, sometimes I went with a priest on his rounds, sometimes I visited alone, and met people in and around the church. Here the groups identified included men and women, those directly involved in the church (eg catechists, priests, choir members, church school teachers), those who attended mass and carried out their sacramental duties in the church (gathered from people in and around the church) and the educated²⁰⁶. In the Philippines, I was staying with a group of Filipino sisters, who ran a school in one of the parishes, General Nakar. Here the sisters would arrange interviews with types of people as required, eg a catechist, a lay worker, someone on the edge of the church, someone against the progressive church. I also spent time in the parishes of Real and Maria Aurora to balance the interviews.

There is always the problem of whether the interviews are representative. On both field trips a conscious effort was made to ensure a broad mix of people, brief bibliographic notes were made after each interview and people with different backgrounds were sought. The nature of the study in the Philippines meant that there are more active members of the church in the sample, but an attempt was made to interview others as well. The identification of groups of people in Malawi has ensured that these are representative of the grassroots Christians. Clearly with any sample, there may be biases, but with fifty interviews in each place, it was hoped that these biases would be decreased.

In Malawi due to language problems and to lack of access to the outlying villages, I also interviewed the educated, especially university lecturers. This allowed me to see how they saw the changes in the church. It must be remembered that the educated people are also members of the church community and will have their own opinions and grievances. In Infanta this was less of an issue, but of course, I could not easily go to a parish without talking with the parish priest and educated people offer a critique of the Prelature's programmes that I was unlikely to get from the grassroots.

²⁰⁶In Malawi, the "educated" were those who had received a university education. For a breakdown of categories of interviewees see Chapter 2, Part B, section 1.

Sociological research stresses the necessity of the researcher in each situation knowing her own role. In Malawi, I was an observer. Although a westerner, the presence of a Malawian interpreter helped enormously. In the Philippines I was a participant-observer, taking full part in services, fiestas and meetings and being part of the general life of the parish. The interviewing method of this research relied upon the "creation of a permissive environment"²⁰⁷ in the hope that that would lead to the interviewees expressing doubts, ideas and a critique of their church; this was felt to have been achieved more in the Philippines than in Malawi.

A small flat tape recorder was used whenever possible. In the Philippines the Americanisation of the culture meant this was unobtrusive, whereas in Malawi caution was taken and on a few occasions, either notes were taken or the conversation was noted down immediately after leaving the interview. If a tape recorder was used, permission was received by the informant and comments made after the tape was turned off were recorded.

The interviews were structured in broad categories of interest so that questions were placed into main headings, covering politics, social justice, the church - local and universal, personal faith and the eucharist. Within such broad sections, questions were phrased in an open-ended manner allowing the voice of the interviewee to be heard. Within these subjects, other issues such as the position of the clergy, the 'marriage' of clergy, the small basic communities and the position of women were touched upon²⁰⁸. The initial time spent in both countries was used to identify other issues that were relevant to the laity. The aim was to draw a picture of how the church and people were responding to political issues (liberation in all its aspects) and cultural ones (inculturation) and to see how these were lived in reality. As the interviews were conducted the nature of the methodology allowed new ideas to emerge. The interviews were conducted in a variety of settings, some at home, some with those coming to church to register children, people at work, and as I travelled with others to church

²⁰⁷Marshall and Rossmann 1995:84

²⁰⁸See Appendix 1 for examples of questions.

events. In addition to individual interviews, group interviews were conducted, and participation in church activities was undertaken when opportunities presented themselves. The analysis of the interviews involved clustering them around issues and responses to ensure as far as possible that those used as a basis for conclusions here were representative. Cross-checking then occurred with other more conventional sources to build the pictures of the churches presented in the following chapters.

When using two case studies, it is clear that the same questions will not be relevant in each setting. For example, the question of the formation and marriage of priests was a key issue in Malawi, but was seen as peripheral in the Philippines. Likewise, issues could have different connotations; in both areas, poverty was a major concern, but in Malawi it was an evil which necessitated funding from elsewhere whereas in the Philippines it was understood to be part of the world system which must be used constructively.

In each place, new ideas emerged. For example, after a few interviews in Infanta, it was clear that the *Yapak* formation seminar was crucial to the Prelature's orientation, so I began to ask people if they had done it and what they had learnt from it. Whilst I was in Malawi, Pope John Paul II declared that he was speaking infallibly when he denied the possibility of ordaining women²⁰⁹. Since this was reported in the Malawian national papers, as well as on BBC World Service (listened to extensively), it was interesting to raise the issue with the clergy to see their reaction. If the conversation naturally led away from the categories I had identified, yet remained relevant to the place of the church in society, I allowed it to flow, bringing it back to the categories when necessary. It was felt that this broad approach ensured that the interviewees were able to find a space for their own comments and agenda. The interview data were checked with others at a later date; in Malawi this was with a translator and the university lecturers, in the Philippines this was with the ACT sisters in the evenings. Any services or meetings attended during the visits were noted during them or after in the case of services. In all noting there was an attempt to be inconspicuous. Thus the

²⁰⁹See *The Tablet* - November 1995:1529

four methods of qualitative data collection were attempted - participation in the setting ("participant observation"); direct observation; in-depth interviewing; and document review.

In both countries translators from the local catholic community were used. In Malawi the main interpreter was Catherine Loti, a 20 year old girl who had recently finished at St Mary's secondary school. Her English was adequate and she quickly grasped the issues of interest to the thesis. The researcher was often dependent on her grasp of the issues, simply because of the desire to allow the conversations to flow freely. There were a few occasions when Catherine went into villages alone with the questions and the tape recorder. Each time she transcribed an interview, the translation was checked with her to correct the English and ensure that the issues raised had been understood fully. This process also served the purpose of showing her the kind of rigour and questions needed for PhD research and the detail required. In many ways her knowledge had to be slowly built upon during the three months through the checking process.

In the Philippines the relationship with translators was less formal. Cherry Lynn Feliciano, a recent graduate of Mount Carmel High School, came with me on excursions through the barangays, the ACT sisters translated any services we went to, Grace Astrera and Naomi Francisco ACT also translated interviews for me and the other ACT sisters checked the accuracy of translations. On the whole their English was of a high standard and Naomi Francisco's own academic work enabled her to explain in the detail required.

All the interviews were transcribed while in the field and were indexed to allow easy access. The list of interviewees with a brief biographical note is included in the bibliography and throughout the main text of the thesis this index system has been used to reference individual interviews. For qualitative research, data analysis and collection go hand in hand²¹⁰ and although time constraints prevented this happening to a great extent, clearly as points emerged interview questions were modified to verify other

²¹⁰Marshall and Rossmann 1995:112

material. All the interviews were typed up on return to the United Kingdom and have been bound²¹¹, they are in chronological order so that the way that issues emerged during the fieldwork can be seen.

When information cannot be reviewed in a laboratory with fixed conditions, there is often the accusation of untrustworthiness of the data. It was felt that the information I received from the people in the Philippines was mostly accurate, the data was constantly checked with the ACT sisters and with official Prelature documentation. In Malawi, I checked things with the translator and with more conventional sources such as the newspapers, magazines and more academic books. It is hoped that such triangulation of sources will enable the data to be reliable. Early drafts of the case studies have received comments from people living in the situations. The information and views gathered from the informants were collated and compared, with a clustering of issues and common points. The interviews have however formed the primary source for the following thesis, and although every effort has been made to ensure that the views expressed are more than simply personal opinion and similar views are held by different people, it should be borne in mind that the pictures drawn in these case studies are on the basis of the opinions of the people selected for interview.

iii. The Problems

There were clearly going to be problems in such field work. In Malawi the main problem was the drought which affected much of southern Africa in 1995. I was hoping to enjoy input from the students of the University of Malawi, but due to the drought, term-time was delayed by three months. Transportation was also more of a problem than anticipated. It had been hoped that I would have relative freedom in travelling to outstations and parishes, however, due to financial constraints, transport had to be limited to areas on the main bus route between Balaka and Blantyre or dependent on priests going to villages. The result was that the intention of visiting the vast majority

²¹¹ Available for consultation in the library of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, Edinburgh.

of parishes was not realised²¹².

In the Philippines the Prelature was used to hosting foreign visitors, but they usually came to do a programme of exposure as directed and organised by the Prelature. They were not used to dealing with people who came with their own agenda and who needed to get specific material for academic purposes. This was countered as I became more at home in the situation.

In both places there was a problem of time. Due to the nature of doctoral study and to finances, the fieldwork could be no longer than three months in each place. The first month was spent acclimatising, setting up interviews, assessing the situation and working out what was going to be possible. There was also a need to do literature studies. In Malawi this was done in the Malawi Collection of the University Library and at the National Records Library (also in Zomba). In the Philippines the library work was done during the second half of the visit, although during the first few weeks, the documents of the Prelature and the ACT sisters were studied. The main literature work was in Manila, when there was an opportunity to visit the libraries and academics of all the major catholic universities.

iv. After the Fieldwork

The fifty interviews from each country were indexed, and then grouping of the responses was undertaken to ensure representativeness. In the following descriptions of the result of the field work, opinions on doctrine, faith, the role of the church etc, were the result of a significant proportion of informants' views. Where someone has expressed a view significantly at odds with the general view, this has been explained. I was looking for clues as to whether the definitions of inculturation and liberation discussed earlier had any validity for the dioceses under study. For example, how were the people expressing their faith? Were inculturation and liberation advances being welcomed in the area or were there hesitancies? How did theological ideas materialise into reality and structures at the local level? Problems in the diocese, criticisms or

²¹²Material was gathered from 6 out of the 15 parishes.

conclusions about the diocese were checked with other people in the context where possible. This happened especially well in the Philippines, where my work overlapped considerably with the aims of the ACT sisters with whom I was staying. If one person criticised or highlighted a problem which no-one else mentioned, their opinion has been stated as of one person and later assessed on what I concluded in the field.

v. Underlying Assumptions and Motives

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the cultural standpoint of the researcher also plays a part in projects²¹³ and that researchers must be explicit about where they are coming from, and what questions they are asking, and state areas of subjectivity.

Although a believing Christian, the author is not a Roman Catholic, nor is she from either country, nor does she speak either vernacular language. I am a sympathetic observer of the Catholic Church whose questions have arisen from reading catholic documents and who can ask those questions of others with no feeling of obligation to the Magisterium. This has been an advantage, especially with people who realise their ideas might differ from traditional doctrine. The issue of language was in part addressed by use of translators in both churches. Both countries have adopted English as a near-national language, and as in many third world countries there is no single indigenous language.

As Schofield has pointed out the goal of qualitative research

Is *not* to produce a standardized set of results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issues would have produced. Rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of that situation²¹⁴.

The issue of the outsider has attracted debate, for “Marginality can mean ignorance, [but....] as sociologists have long emphasized [...] marginality also liberates”²¹⁵. I was

²¹³Parratt 1996:17

²¹⁴Schofield 1993:202

²¹⁵Goyder 1987:8

aware of the potential pitfalls of coming from outside both cultures, but in the event, I think this allowed a freer approach to questioning and it has been pointed out that for ideas to be communicated to the outside, there is a need for an outsider to question the situation²¹⁶.

vi. Summary

Thus the third hypothesis, that the study of local communities, with a methodology borrowed from social sciences, is a legitimate tool for theology, springs out of the first two hypotheses. Vatican II encouraged local churches to undertake their own theological reflection. The two generic local theologies looked at here appear to share many similarities when they appear in reality. The third hypothesis arises from this and suggests that the most suitable place to explore local theology is in the local community. Through the field study, we will assess whether such case studies can form a basis for theological reflection. Do local churches have anything to offer other churches or to our understanding of the universal church, or are their case studies illuminating only to themselves? Thus we move from case studies being a way of researching local theology to include the idea that they may also be a way of engaging in the task of theology, which is the process of understanding and interpreting the lived faith of the local churches for the benefit of the church as a whole.

This thesis is therefore studying a major source of third world theology (the people) in their own setting and their own history, recognising that setting plays a role in the formation of their thoughts and aspirations, which are discovered through oral material. There is an attempt to discover what the methodology could show, and clearly, there is a need for others to take it further²¹⁷.

²¹⁶Schreiter 1985:19-20

²¹⁷This is part of what Balasuriya calls for: "A consideration of the situation of the church in Asia can help us see what its impact in Asia has been in the past. From a reassessment of this position in the light of our understanding of Christ and the christian mission in the world we can see what directions the church should take in Asia and elsewhere - at least in relation to the Asian problems" - Balasuriya 1992:41.

5. Conclusion

In this first chapter we have looked at the issues which will be discussed in the following thesis. They hinge on the concept of the local church in Vatican II documents which portray the church as present in all its fullness in each local altar-community. Here we acknowledge that strictly it is the diocese that is the local community, but it is laity which are the source for that local church. The two local theologies which have grown since Vatican II, liberation and inculturation theology, have been discussed and it is the hypothesis here that when a local church, which is the result of these two processes, lives them in reality, they are one and the same thing, which could be called incarnation theology. Through the study of local churches it is hoped to explore this relationship and to see how the two processes occur in specific situations. The social scientific methodology of qualitative research employed in this thesis has been described and a further aim of this thesis is to discover whether such a methodology is an appropriate tool for theology. This methodology will now be used to draw pictures of the two local churches in post-revolutionary situations²¹⁸. We will look then for common issues that arise and with the help of two other researchers in third world theology, consider the process of becoming a local church. It will be on the basis of the interview and observation data that we will address our three hypotheses.

The new theology which is arising from the Third World is interdisciplinary and less philosophical as “social, economic, and political questions engaged the energies that had once been devoted to philosophical or metaphysical questions”²¹⁹. It also concentrates on the place of local theology. This thesis will therefore attempt to discover, through analysis of two different situations, the ways in which local theologies bridge the gap between theologians and the laity.

We have seen that theoretically a humanising view of history leads to people

²¹⁸Defined solely in terms of a change of government. The extent to which both countries have not experienced a revolution will be discovered in the course of the discussion.

²¹⁹Schreiter 1985:4

becoming agents in history which leads to the birth of a local church, relevant to the society in which it is placed. Since Vatican II third world theologians have stressed the importance of the local church, the grassroots and laity in the paradigm shift. We will now use the stories, experiences and activities of two local churches to consider the practical implications of these theological ideas and the new understandings of the local and universal in the church. Through such a methodology the questions, lives and thoughts of grassroots Christians will inform, direct and inspire theological reflection²²⁰. The aim is to listen to the community as theologians and articulate common understandings and questions²²¹.

In Chapters 2 and 3, the data collected on the two field trips will be presented. In Chapter 4, through the words, thoughts and actions of the people, I will attempt to discover empirically how theology is lived out in the community and what such theology adds to the traditional understanding of inculturation and liberation. The last chapter will consider how appropriate local study is for theology and the way to proceed. Although the data from each country is different, due to differing circumstances, both case studies offer the chance to describe the theology occurring in non-western communities, allowing the people to be the true sources of theology in their own natural setting and history. This process involves a Pastoral Circle. This involves reflection on the specific situation, leading to conclusions and action; through the theological and pastoral reflection on each situation, resolutions are made and then a new situation arises, so the process starts again²²². Quevedo takes this more usual pastoral circle and suggests that it is more like a spiral since the new situation is not the

²²⁰“It is incumbent on these communities, incarnated and rooted in the life of their peoples, before anyone else at all, to plumb the depths of the gospel and to nourish the reflections of theologians by their life and their questions” - Mushete 1994:24.

²²¹See Schreier 1985:16-18 for a discussion of the community as theologians, as they become agents in history, and the relationship between them and traditional academics: “it is helpful to make a distinction between the role of the whole community of faith, whose experience is the indispensable source of theology, and whose acceptance of a theology is an important guarantor of its authenticity, and the role of smaller groups within the community who actually give shape to that theology”.

²²²See Ballard and Pritchard 1996: In a way this thesis is a Pastoral Circle on a Pastoral Circle. I am reflecting on the grassroots situation to consider where academic theology ought to go in future. In the individual dioceses, the people were doing their own Pastoral Circle as they discovered where the church should move.

same is the original one. A spiral captures the sense of returning almost to the last stage, but further progressed²²³. It is envisaged that this thesis is part of a Pastoral Spiral. Asian and African theologians have articulated the local theologies which we have discussed in this chapter. The way in which these theologies are lived in reality will now be investigated and the findings of this thesis may provide an alternative methodology to unearth new ideas about the nature of faith-understanding. In this way, the process of theology will continue.

²²³Quevedo 1994:100

Chapter 2: The Church in Zomba

1. Introduction

We have noted earlier that Schreiter sees the interactions between gospel, church and culture nurturing local theology. In the following case studies the description of the churches are divided into these subsections, with an emphasis on inculturated and liberative elements which may be the seeds of a local theology. These categories are not watertight with many subjects falling across the divisions, but they offer some useful categories. Through them it will be possible to compare the impression of the national churches gleaned from academic and official sources with the faith and opinions of some of its members.

We will start the discussion of the local church of Zomba diocese with a brief overview of recent political events in which the Catholic Bishops played a key role. We will then look at the wider catholic church in Malawi before going on in Part B to discuss the diocese of Zomba.

Partly because of 30 years of dictatorship, there are very few Malawian theologians resident in the country. However in the last six years, the Catholic bishops and Catholic missionaries have been prolific in their publications.

Part A:

2. Context and Culture

The culture and context of Malawi provides a background in which the Malawian Catholic Church and therefore the church in Zomba operates. In Schreiter's methodology this raises questions both of identity and social change.

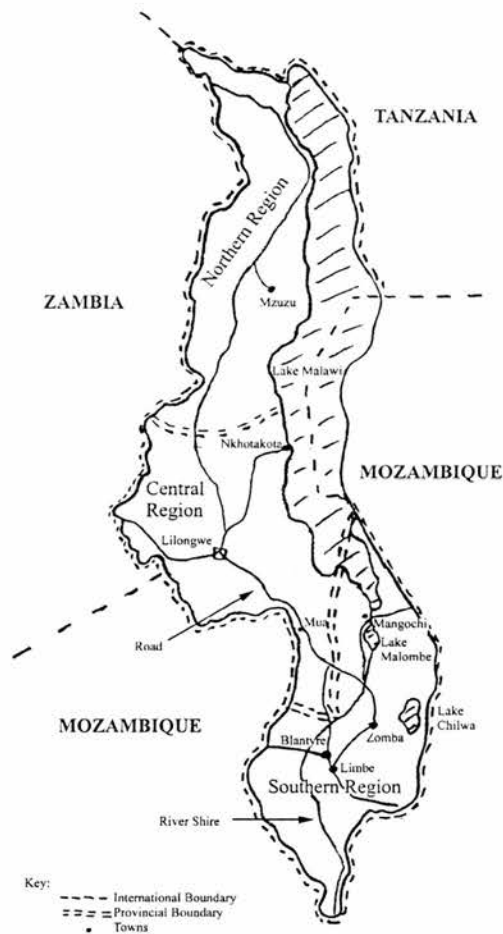


Figure 1 Map of Malawi

Malawi, formerly Nyasaland, is a landlocked country in southern Africa, which became independent from Britain in July 1964. The final independence struggle was led by a western-trained doctor who entered the movement at a late stage unifying the

various organisations. Within a month of independence Dr Banda's government was becoming authoritarian and the government crisis of 1964 expelled members of the cabinet who did not agree with government policy and introduced repressive measures to curb intellectuals. The human rights abuses of Banda's thirty years are well-documented¹. The low point of government duplicity came in 1983 when four government ministers were involved in a 'car crash'. Many felt betrayed by the church; two of those killed were Catholics and yet the church had remained silent.

Banda's 'reign' was surrounded with a quasi-religious feel². He clearly saw himself as a political Messiah³, continually referring to his credentials of jail service before independence and the fight for liberation. When trying to ascertain how Banda was able to rule for so long, many have commented on the patience of the Malawian people⁴, who only reacted once the process towards democratisation had begun.

The human rights abuses, killings and appalling conditions of detention in Malawi during this time began to receive open recognition in the 1990s. First Amnesty International and then Africa Watch published allegations against the government, provoking Banda's government to dispute them point by point in its own booklet⁵. In March 1992, the Catholic bishops of Malawi surprised interested parties worldwide with a pastoral letter read on the first Sunday in Lent, in which they commented on the conditions of fear and betrayal in the society, calling on the government to rectify the

¹See Africa Watch 1990 and Lwanda 1993.

²Elaborated in Ross 1995D:38 and Nazombe 1983:392-393

³Nazombe 1983:392-393 "Dr Banda's standing as a political messiah. This nascent sense of nationhood was shattered by the Cabinet crisis of 1964, an event which created animosity between the intellectuals and the masses, brought about repressive measures to curb all forms of opposition to Dr Banda's dictatorship, soured relations with neighbouring independent African states and drove Malawi into the arms of apartheid South Africa. With Malawi's attainment of a republican status in 1966, the installation of a one-party state, the transfer of overwhelming powers to 'traditional' courts and the imposition of Banda's mother tongue as the national language, the scene was set for the transformation of the country into a polity akin to the precolonial Chewa empire, in which the ruler had absolute authority over both public affairs and personal morality. Hence, for instance, the stringent censorship laws, designed to preserve 'traditional Malawian morals', which Malawian poets have had to put up with". In Chapter 5, we will return to the way in which Banda used his own interpretation of history.

⁴Called by Lwanda the 'Malawian factor' (Lwanda 1993:49-51) and Kalilombe 1994:129.

⁵See Africa Watch 1990 and Banda 1992

situation with multi-party elections.

“Rarely in modern times can any church document have had such an immediately explosive effect in the life of a nation”⁶. The ruling Malawi Congress Party convened an emergency meeting to condemn the bishops, but in the following few weeks the bishops were given support from other religious groups⁷ and the international community. Threats on the bishops’ lives were made at private meetings involving John Tembo, Banda’s right hand man, but some of the secretaries taped the proceedings and publicised the threats, enabling the international community to pressurise the government by linking aid to the human rights situation⁸. The support from the Vatican was almost non-existent until November 1992, despite pleas from the Catholic bishops⁹. In the meantime, John Roche, an Irish acting-bishop, believed by the government to be the master mind behind the letter, was expelled, along with another Irish missionary, and the letter was banned.

The letter provoked the government to threaten the church, and the papal nuncio, not wanting to upset the government, angered many Catholics in the country by watering down the bishops’ criticisms¹⁰. After a year of procrastination the Banda government was forced to bow to popular desires for democratic changes. The following year, a national referendum was held to decide whether to move to multi-party democracy from the one-party state, and in 1994 the first democratic elections forced Banda from power and Bakili Muluzi was instated as President. Throughout these

⁶CIIR 1993:3

⁷The muslim community in Malawi joined their voice to the struggle the day after the letter was released.

⁸See unpublished ‘Points of interest in the three tapes from Malawi’.

⁹See especially *ANB-BIA Supplement* - June 1, 1992, which contains an interview with John Roche: “Some have been asking themselves where has the Vatican been until now? The fact is, the Holy See has preferred to use diplomatic channels. What interests us is that the Vatican should loudly and clearly declare its support for the bishops and its solidarity with the people of Malawi”. Reported in the *Universe*, May 17, 1992, Roche said: “Their silence is giving a message, and to me it is not giving the right message” - page 11.

¹⁰See letter from Nuncio - 3 April 1992. The bishops also wrote to Banda on that day emphasising that “an intention to show that something is going wrong somewhere or to point out errors or defects with a view to their reformation is not a seditious intention” - Letter from bishops 3 April 1992.

crucial two years catholic organisations continued the pressure and the education of the electorate, helping to ensure that the changes were smooth and peaceful. After the change of government, catholic bishops considered it necessary to re-iterate the letter's message reminding people that it was relevant to all governments past, present and future¹¹.

We will look in detail at the letter later. It is clear that for many in Malawi this letter is perceived as the beginning of freedom, but it was not the only force operating at the time. For example, in Sam Mpasu's autobiography of his time in detention, the introduction gives no mention of the bishops' letter, merely stating that the changes were forced by a growth in opposition parties¹². Others have seen the influence of the changing international scene (the unification of East and West Germany, the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa) and the 1989 papal visit as important to the timing of this letter. On the other hand, even official commonwealth papers see the Pastoral Letter as "an important catalyst of change"¹³.

The political developments after 1992 led to a sudden increase in the number of newspapers and journals as well as the growth of a more critical style of journalism. Thus before the elections in 1994, one newspaper could carry the following advert without fear of retribution:

WANTED: Fugitive tyrant, murderer and plunderer of Malawi just having escaped from Sanjika mental cell after a brain operation in Johannesburg through which they removed one and half pints of neocolonialist fluid. Under the spell of cilope on behalf of thousands he murdered for his crocodiles, he is desperately trying to cross the Shire quaguest at Chikwawa to escape charges for illegal possession and thousands of arms in equally illegally acquired so-called state lodges and

¹¹Press Statement by the Episcopal Conference of Malawi, 23 June 1995 - *Religion in Malawi* No 5.

¹²Mpasu 1995:ii - there were campaign groups outside Malawi, but they tended to suffer recriminations from assassins and bombings. There had been a few attempts to start political parties, but again lack of freedom of speech had made their tasks difficult. Clearly in this PhD we will be concentrating on the role of the Catholic Church in that transition.

¹³Commonwealth Observer Group 1994:3

for arming political thugs to thwart the forthcoming general election¹⁴.

1992 also lifted the self-imposed academic curfew, since when there has been a proliferation of textbooks and studies on the events of the previous thirty years and the events leading to democratisation. So far these have tended to remain largely non-analytical, describing the fast moving events of the last few years¹⁵. There have been few cultural studies of the Malawian people¹⁶, although there are good tribal histories¹⁷. As yet cultural histories have tended to concentrate on traditional culture in the pre-colonial period¹⁸. One academic told me how difficult it had been to find subjects acceptable to the Malawi Congress Party, and in theology this had led to a great deal of attention being channelled towards African Traditional Religion¹⁹, rather than towards a political theology such as in South Africa.

By 1995, people in the villages were questioning whether anything had changed. They realised the empty promises of the election campaign and were becoming disillusioned with the new system. However, most recognised that the major benefits such as the abolition of party cards and the increase in freedom of speech outweighed the disadvantages²⁰. Prices of commodities, especially fertilisers, had also risen rapidly²¹, but most of the ill-treatment of the people had stopped²² and the Public Affairs Committee established by religious leaders and lawyers soon after the Pastoral Letter

¹⁴*New Voice* Feb 21-27, 1994:p4 (sic)

¹⁵See especially Cullen 1994, Lwanda 1993, Nzunda and Ross 1995, CIIR 1993

¹⁶Exceptions include Sindima 1991, and Musopole 1992 and 1993, which were written outside Malawi. The Dutchman Matthew Schoffeleers has done valuable work on the *Mbona* rain rituals (his latest publication Schoffeleers 1997) and has also collected oral literature (Schoffeleers 1985). Linden's definitive early history of Malawi (1974) includes material about the *nyau* secret society, partly because of its resistance to the Catholic missionaries and on some of the Chewa customs around Mua Mission. In the field of theology, J Chakanza is working on a book of Chewa proverbs which has the potential of opening up the subject much further.

¹⁷See for example, Vail and White 1989 and Pachai 1973.

¹⁸With exceptions, e.g. see Linden 1974, Schoffeleers and Linden 1982, Vail and White 1989.

¹⁹Zomba 25

²⁰Zomba P4

²¹Europa Publications 1997:596, Zomba P6

²²Zomba 2

now works as a watchdog to the government²³.

In 1995, the PAC sent an open letter to the government voicing concerns with the situation: they mentioned the rising prices and the way that ministers and government servants were receiving pay increases and bonuses while the rest of the population suffered economic deprivation. They drew attention to the way the government “has chosen to be accountable to [...] international institutions rather than to its own people” and the violence with which a recent demonstration had been met by the government²⁴. The catholic bishops’ 1996 Pastoral Letter also drew attention to the decline of security in Malawi, the failure to create job opportunities and institutes for developing skills, the lack of educational initiatives, and corruption throughout society²⁵. The data for this thesis was collected after the Muluzi government had been in power for just over a year. The climate of fear and silence described by so many authors of the Banda years had largely disappeared, but there was a general clamour for the church to repeat its intervention in national affairs.

Today’s reality in Malawi is important for the theology emerging in the church as it seeks to be relevant to the world in which it lives, a world of rising prices, extreme poverty, shortage of land and the AIDS pandemic.

Before independence, the culture of Malawi was a mélange of different ethnic groups some of which had immigrated in the nineteenth century²⁶. In the South the British supported the Yao tribe above the Lomwe and others, but at independence, Kamuzu Banda slowly made Chewa culture the Malawian culture. This centred around the Central Region and was firmly based on the *nyau* secret society, which had caused such problems for Catholic missionaries²⁷. Banda had a very western education and as

²³See Von Doepp 1998:110 for a good appraisal of the pit-falls of the present government and the work of the PAC.

²⁴See *Malawi Update*, No 15, Nov 1995, p1-2.

²⁵Bishops 1996:7.5-7.8

²⁶For a detailed history see Vail and White 1989

²⁷Linden 1975. See Schoffeleers and Linden 1972 for a detailed description of *Nyau* society.

we will see later, mixed this with his own understanding of Malawian culture.

3. Context and Church

What Mbiti has said generally about the church in Africa as having no theology, is particularly true of the churches in Malawi. They still live on 'historically stale' confessions which were formulated, not only elsewhere, but alas! a long time ago. Believing that the theological canon is fixed and the new theological insights have now ceased, the churches have failed theologically to engage the problems facing them at the present time in a creative way. This being the case, the churches portray a foreignness which still smacks of colonial and Christendom-missionary mentality and a conservatism more suited to museums than to an organization with a mission to declare the new life in Christ²⁸.

The religious context of the church in Zomba will also have a bearing on the emerging local theology and faith. Malawi is predominantly christian with Catholics making up 22% of the population²⁹. One academic put the Catholic Church as the largest church in Malawi³⁰, as you travel the country it is clear that the church is well-founded, with large churches, priests' houses, schools, hospitals and so forth. The Catholic Church in Malawi comes under the area covered by AMECEA and it has its own Episcopal Conference. There are seven dioceses, six of which have a Malawian bishop, and there are a growing number of Malawian priests. The old pockets of White Fathers and Montfort Missionaries are still present. The majority of "other Christians" are Presbyterians divided into the three synods of Livingstonia, Nkoma and Blantyre³¹; there are also a small number of Anglicans and Seventh Day Adventists.

²⁸Musopole 1992A:247

²⁹AMECEA 1995: 16.6% Muslim, 22% Catholic, 42.6% other Christians, 15% Traditional Religion.

³⁰Zomba 35. In Zomba Diocese the Catholic Church makes up a third of the population. Due to the historical accident of the arrival of the Lomwe people from Mozambique at the turn of the century when the Catholic Church was expanding southwards, the area around Lake Chilwa, to the east of Zomba, but within the diocese, has an even higher Catholic population, e.g. in Matiya parish near Chilwa there are 24,132 Catholics in the parish -Directory p95.

³¹Blantyre and Livingstonia synods founded by Church of Scotland and Free Church of Scotland missionaries, and Nkhoma Synod by Dutch Reformed missionaries from South Africa.

The White Fathers first attempted to settle in Malawi in 1889-1891, but due to illness they left and returned in 1902. The Montfort Missionaries arrived in 1901³². The presence of the Scottish missionaries, who arrived in the 1870s³³, meant that the Catholics did not find an “evangelistically virgin land” and constantly acted with reference to the Protestant missionaries around them³⁴. They opened bush schools immediately, although since many catholic missionaries did not know English, they did not seek to promote it³⁵ and from the beginning this led to their relative ignorance of political affairs compared to Protestants³⁶. The Catholic Church arrived in Malawi mostly through French and Italian missionaries, who were fleeing from the anti-religious laws of Europe. Their mentality was shaped by the enlightenment criticisms of faith and the post-Vatican I conditions in the church and thereby brought denominational strife and a rather conservative and non-political Catholicism to Malawi³⁷.

By a series of historical circumstances, the Catholics concentrated in the south³⁸, where the population was largely immigrants from neighbouring Mozambique, people who were thus refugees and outsiders. The Lomwe were a mixture of the various refugee groups and because they were mostly unevangelised, offered a rich source of converts. Not only were they displaced from their homes, but they were also a mixture of different cultures and groups. Their culture was effectively destroyed by the time they settled in the country and since it was to their advantage to adopt the patterns of the

³²For a detailed history of the Catholic missions in Malawi see Linden 1974.

³³McCracken 1996:49

³⁴Kalilombe 1983:80

³⁵Chisemphere 1994:133 and Linden 1974:142 - with the consequences of the lack of English amongst the Catholics.

³⁶Chisemphere 1994:135

³⁷Linden 1974:71, 90 and 111. For the Catholic Church and its background at the time see McSweeney 1980, and for the Catholic Church and its denominational struggles in Malawi see Linden 1974. “In Malawi, as in no other part of British Central Africa, the Catholics conceived their work as an attack on the Protestants, and, as schools were the means of attracting converts, it was over the schools that the bitterest battles were fought” (Weller and Linden 1984:108-9). Linden (1974:71) sees the home situation of the missionaries as the main reason for the denominational strife and rather conservative and ahistorical catholicism brought to Malawi. The advent of Catholicism was also soon after the First Vatican Council which had declared papal infallibility and completed the retrenchment against the Protestants - See McSweeney 1980.

³⁸See Linden 1974.

British, their distinctive culture was unlikely to resurface. Since they did not achieve stability and security until they settled in the south of the country, many see the new cultures (British and Catholic) as their unifying and identity-giving culture. They also arrived at the time when the British were increasing the hut tax and forcing the Africans into a cash economy. In return for a place to stay the Lomwe came to an agreement with the British to work the area around the Shire. Instead of settling in the villages these people settled on the colonial farms where they worked³⁹. Some interviewees maintained that since it was the British who first gave the Lomwe security⁴⁰, they have no desire to return to "African roots"⁴¹. The most represented tribe in the Catholic hierarchy is the Lomwe⁴², and some see this as another reason for conservatism towards inculturation in the Malawian Catholic Church⁴³.

It is widely recognised that the form of Christianity introduced by the Catholics in Malawi was politically compliant, taking root in the villages while by the 1950s the Presbyterian Church had gained a virtual monopoly of the growing urban and middle class population⁴⁴. The Catholics preached a respect for authority, seeing their work as purely spiritual and refusing to comment on secular affairs. In the Chilembwe rising of 1915 very few Catholics were involved⁴⁵. During the 1940s and 1950s, Catholic education slowly increased⁴⁶ and in the emerging independence movement, one bishop came out in support of the Christian Democratic Party⁴⁷, giving the Catholic Church a

³⁹For a good history see Vail and White 1989: the uncertain status of the Lomwe people was exploited by both the British and Yao as long as they needed them, but as the population expanded the immigrants become a liability.

⁴⁰Vail and White 1989, Zomba 24, 30, 37.

⁴¹Zomba 24, 30, 37, which included two Lomwe specialists.

⁴²Of the Episcopal Conference, there is one Chewa, one Ngoni, one Tumbuka, one Italian and three Lomwe.

⁴³see Zomba 30 and 24

⁴⁴CIIR 1993:10

⁴⁵Weller and Linden 1984:103 - Linden, among others, sees the links between biblical knowledge and the articulation of grievances in this rising and since the Catholics had little biblical education, they were not involved: Linden 1974:142.

⁴⁶Zomba 26

⁴⁷Weller and Linden 1984:111(i.e. against Banda)

rocky start to relations with the independent government. During the 1970s, the Catholic Church had what some consider its most progressive and charismatic Malawian bishop, Patrick Kalilombe⁴⁸, who in the Diocese of Lilongwe initiated the growth of small christian communities. He was exiled in 1978 by Banda for his work, which seemed to build an alternative power base to that of the Malawi Congress Party⁴⁹. Some believe that his exposure to western education radicalised his Christianity⁵⁰ and this left him marginalised from the rest of the Malawian Episcopal Conference. In the context of the Cold War, SCCs could be likened to communism, making Kalilombe vulnerable to Banda.

a. The Political Activity of the Catholic Church

The politically compliant Catholicism introduced into the villages⁵¹ continued during the thirty years of Banda, reinforcing the status quo. Both the government and the church were happy with a strict division between sacred and secular matters. The church tended to see freedom of worship as a gift from the government rather than a right, so they were silent, even in the face of the persecution faced by the Jehovah's Witnesses⁵².

The main way that the Malawian Catholic bishops commented on political events was through Pastoral Letters⁵³. In 1961, on the eve of internal self-government,

⁴⁸Zomba 24

⁴⁹I am aware that there were many reasons for Kalilombe's exile, culminating in personal smears.

⁵⁰Zomba 26

⁵¹See CIIR 1993:10

⁵²The persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses stemmed from their refusal to join political parties (CIIR 1993:14). "What happened, especially in Malawi, over the past 30 years and the church saying 'Oh everything is alright' and the bishops, the most reverend what-what, sitting there and praying, saying, thanking God for the gift we have, what a wonderful country, and someone here languishing, being killed, that I think is very difficult. I would rather stand idle, but not all these prayers" - Zomba 1.

⁵³In the aftermath of the Mwansa accident some bishops did disobey the government's injunction against them giving those who died Catholic funerals. This discussion of the Pastoral Letters will concentrate on the 1992 one, but will not be in great detail - there are many other sources for the further discussion, see CIIR 1993, Lwanda 1993, Cullen 1994, Ross 1995A, Nzunda and Ross 1995, amongst others.

they published *How to Build a Happy Nation*⁵⁴, in which they addressed the question of church-state relations and “put before [the people of Nyasaland] certain principles to enlighten and guide [them] in the building up of a happy community”⁵⁵. The theology espoused is traditional Thomism on origins and functions of Church and State and drew on earlier papal encyclicals, especially Leo XIII’s *Human Liberty* of 1888. The bishops advocated that the two authorities work together in “agreement and harmony”. They wrote that both authorities are from God and that they work towards a common goal; the church working specifically towards spiritual ends, and the State “does not strictly speaking carry out any religious duty, but it must so order its government and temporal administration that the action of the church may be facilitated, and that no obstacle may impede the members of the State in their spiritual liberty”⁵⁶. The letter stressed cooperation and then put forward guidelines for the emerging state:

- civil society must acknowledge God as Founder and Father and must obey and reverence his power and authority.
- justice and reason itself forbid the State to be godless or to adopt a course of action which would be godless.
- the State has the duty to care for religion but cannot legislate on it. It has no right over the religious convictions of its subjects.
- the Church must strictly admonish rulers to be mindful of their duty, to govern without injustice or severity and to rule their people kindly and paternally.
- subjects should be obedient to lawful authority as to the ministers of God, with reverence and affection.

The problems in Malawi during the following thirty years could be exposed only by those on leave in the West. For example, Kalilombe’s 1983 PhD thesis on the growth of small christian communities believes that the concomitant “development in attitudes and intentions will surely bring changes in the type of impact the Church will make on

⁵⁴Zomba 11 also saw this as a precursor to 1992.

⁵⁵Bishops 1961:1

⁵⁶Bishops 1961:7

society”⁵⁷. This prophetic voice was continued by another Malawian academic Mnemba in 1986 who saw “signs that the role of the church in society is changing from being a provider of services to being a ‘catalyst for development in society’”⁵⁸. He used the Yaounde manifesto of SECAM, “Seeking Gospel Justice in Africa”⁵⁹ to explore the role of bishops in politics. The document stated “the bishops are convinced that the church is not being faithful to its mission if it does not set as its highest priority the establishment of justice and its implementation”. They saw that against dictatorship, totalitarianism and the resultant injustice, “it is becoming apparent that the church is the only non-governmental force with adequate strength and courage to contribute towards the defense of human rights”⁶⁰ even if that means martyrdom. Mnemba was more specific: “It is certainly true that the masses welcome a prophetic voice from their church leadership, courageously crying out for the rights of a citizenry that lacks a unified voice speaking on its behalf. *The Catholic leadership in Malawi, for example, would do well to accept this challenge*”⁶¹. “Following Jesus’ prophetic stance, the Catholic Church in Malawi must be invited to fight secular lords and princes. The choice seems to be for the Church to confess or not to confess. If it decides not to act then it is allaying (sic) itself with the ‘world’, thereby joining that other, rival unity, the world’s unity with the Evil One”⁶².

Within Malawi, a few voices advocated a tougher stance against the government. An article in the magazine of a major seminary from 1991 questions liberty. The writer’s phrases have strong undertones:

No tyrant has ever been able to do more than commit some murdering, prevent more or less certain actions, enforce the telling of some lies and the with-holding of some truths. No one has ever been able to deprive the finite spirit of the liberty which is the texture of its existence ... No oppressive and exploitative establishment will last long, in a situation

⁵⁷Kalilombe 1983:95

⁵⁸Mnemba 1986:54

⁵⁹1981 - see *Spearhead* 69, AFER Vol 23, 1981.

⁶⁰Mnemba 1986:212

⁶¹Mnemba 1986:212 - my emphasis

⁶²Mnemba 1986:215

where no finite spirit wakes up to itself and discovers that it existentially has liberty ... Politics have, from the dawn of human history, been managed by the minorities, the élites, whatever their origins and character, and their primary object is the consolidation of power⁶³.

However these were exceptions:

From the time of independence in 1964 the ministry of the churches in Malawi was effectively restricted to matters of personal morality and spirituality. Under the government of Dr Kamuzu Banda and the Malawi Congress Party the only social and political comment which was tolerated was lavish praise of the life President. So far as social criticism was concerned, the churches were silent.⁶⁴

For example, *Moni*, the magazine of the Malawian Catholic Church (although theoretically ecumenical), joined with the nation in congratulating Banda on 25 wonderful years of independence:

We are a proud nation because we have succeeded where others have failed.... It must be pointed out that when Malawi became independent we were poverty stricken, everything around us reminded us that we were a poor nation not worthy to be independent.... We have every reason to congratulate His excellency the life President, Ngwazi Dr H Kamuzu Banda for his practical and not theoretical politics and economics. We cannot narrate the details of the strategies he adopted, but briefly, he created a political atmosphere which allowed people of all races to live together harmoniously and without civil or foreign strife.... Indeed, Malawi is what it is because of the Ngwazi. Montfort Press and Popular Publications salute His Excellency the Life President, Ngwazi Dr H Kamuzu Banda for the peace, progress and prosperity Malawi has witnessed during the past 25 years of independence. We wish him good health and long life. Long live Kamuzu⁶⁵.

It was therefore a surprise when in Lent 1992 the bishops issued their Pastoral Letter *Living our Faith*⁶⁶. The letter is divided into fifteen sections. Although by some external standards the letter seems moderate, to those with knowledge of the Malawian

⁶³Chigona 1991:3-4

⁶⁴Ross 1996:162

⁶⁵Moni July 1989:3

⁶⁶The letter was originally entitled 'Living our Faith', but has become known in the west by the name under which CIIR published it 'The truth shall set you free'. (Bishops 1992).

situation it was a bombshell. Many people remember the fear they had for their priests after they had heard the letter⁶⁷ and all interviewees remembered the specific date, 8th March 1992, as the beginning of freedom.

The letter was written in utmost secrecy, and the impression given that they were simply preparing a normal Pastoral Letter. It seems that the bishops commissioned others to write it although John Roche, the Irish acting bishop of Mzuzu, is believed to have been the mastermind⁶⁸ since it is not written in Malawian English⁶⁹.

The letter was in the tradition of liberation theology and the wave of political thought influencing the southern Africa churches at the time. The season of Lent provided the ideal backdrop for a letter of repentance and change of direction, calling people to “repent and believe the Gospel”. The bishops went on: “in this conviction, we, your leaders in the faith, come to share with you what this faith invites us to as a church in the Malawi of to-day”⁷⁰. They saw themselves in the tradition of rethinking the interpretation of the gospel for the needs of their flock in the modern world - an idea central to both liberation and inculturation theology.

The underlying motif of the letter from the first paragraph is the “oneness of the human race [...which] implies equality and the same basic rights for all”⁷¹. This must be respected by every society, culture and constitution. Having established this principle the bishops remind the faithful that “the Church is certainly not willing to restrict her action only to the religious field and disassociate herself from man’s temporal problems”⁷², recognising that they would “fail in [their] role as religious leaders if [they] kept silent on areas of concern”⁷³. This is a serious confession after thirty years of

⁶⁷Zomba P5

⁶⁸Zomba 24

⁶⁹Zomba 2

⁷⁰Bishops’ introduction

⁷¹Bishops No 1

⁷²Bishops No 2 (quoting Paul VI The Evangelisation of Peoples No 34)

⁷³Bishops No 2

silence in the face of Banda's government.

Having established their credentials for speaking, the bishops addressed specific problems; the growing gap between rich and poor, deplorable wage structures, unfair prices to agricultural producers and the growth of bribery and nepotism in political, economic and social life. Sections 4-5 dealt with falling educational standards, congratulating the government on improvements made to education since independence, but seriously criticising them for recent policies and the shortage of teachers. Section 6 looked at the need for church-state cooperation in education, hinging on mutual trust and partnership between the two institutions.

The next three sections (7-9) look at the other basic service provided by church and state - health, calling for equal access to health care regardless of age, possessions or position in society⁷⁴. These principles of equality are elaborated in section 8, and the letter then looks more specifically at the question of AIDS⁷⁵. The bishops call for more information, personnel and resources for treatment and counselling. However they strongly criticise the stress on condoms rather than fidelity in the propaganda being circulated, thus sticking to traditional Catholic doctrine.

Up to this point the bishops criticised government policies on issues in which the church was directly involved. The next three sections deal with public life. Based on the christian ideal that all have some part to play in the activity of the body, the bishops undermine the foundation of Banda rule: "no one person can claim to have a monopoly of truth and wisdom. No individual - or group of individuals - can pretend to have all the resources needed to guarantee the progress of a nation"⁷⁶ and insist that "nobody should ever have to suffer reprisals for honestly expressing and living up to their

⁷⁴Bishops No 7ii

⁷⁵CIIR 1993:18 put the figure at 20% of the adult population and 20% of pregnant women HIV positive. Other estimates range up to one in three of the population.

⁷⁶No 10

convictions: intellectual, religious or political”⁷⁷. The next paragraph is perhaps one of the most daring of the whole letter:

We can only regret that this is not always the case in our country. We can be grateful that freedom of worship is respected; the same freedom does not exist when it comes to translating faith into daily life. Academic freedom is seriously restricted; exposing injustices can be considered a betrayal; revealing some evils of our society is seen as slandering the country; monopoly of mass media and censorship prevent the expression of dissenting views; some people have paid dearly for their political opinions; access to public places like markets, hospitals, bus depots, etc, is frequently denied to those who cannot produce a party card; forced donations have become a way of life.⁷⁸

This is the climax of the whole letter as they challenge “each one of you to respond to this state of affairs and work towards a change of climate”⁷⁹: participation in the life of the country is a duty of each Christian and “people in positions of authority, in government and administration, have a particular duty to work for the restoration of a climate of trust and openness”⁸⁰. They call for “an independent press, open forums of discussion, free association of citizens for social and political purposes, and the like...” as they criticise the “slogans and half-truths - or untruths” circulated by government representatives.

The letter, although strictly a letter to all the faithful, seems in many respects to be written to those in authority. It is not the normal pastoral letter extolling the virtues of increased prayers and attendance at mass. The last paragraph in section 13 reads:

Let us add here that people in positions of responsibility have an obligation to know the actual conditions in which their people live and to work tirelessly for their betterment. They should be willing to allow their performance to be judged by the people they serve. Accountability is a quality of any good government. People are entitled to know how their representatives fulfil their duties. No disrespect is shown when citizens ask questions in matters which concern them⁸¹.

⁷⁷No 11

⁷⁸No 11

⁷⁹No 12

⁸⁰No 12

⁸¹No 13

The last section of the letter dealt explicitly with the justice system. Under Banda this was brought into disrepute by the excessive use of the traditional courts where he could influence the outcome. Detention without trial was commonplace - the notorious Mikuyu prison, called "Chingwe's Hole"⁸² by the Malawian poets in exile, was filled with those 'awaiting' trial. The bishops state "we cannot ignore or turn a blind eye to our people's experience of unfairness and injustice, for example those who, losing their land without fair compensation, are deprived of their livelihood, or those of our brothers and sisters who are imprisoned without knowing when their cases will be heard"⁸³. They called for the administration of justice to be separated from external influences. They also recognised the need for justice within the church, the need to hear complaints and grievances of its members.

The bishops end their letter by quoting Micah 6:8 "Love tenderly, act justly, walk humbly with your God" and sum up by calling the church to "show in action a preferential love for the economically disadvantaged, the voiceless who live in situations of hopelessness". They recognise that the church is not a perfect community and call for "the experience of conversion and the desire for the truth and the light of Christ" in the preparation for Easter. In the risen Christ "we see ourselves as a risen people with dignity restored"⁸⁴.

Under Banda no one had been allowed to raise the general subjects of poverty, health and education, since it might dispel the myth that Malawians were all prosperous⁸⁵. This letter therefore came as a shock⁸⁶. John Roche noted to a friend that on reading the Pastoral Letter in Mzuzu Cathedral there was stunned silence and even

⁸²Chingwe's Hole is a natural drop in the Zomba Plateau. In recent folklore it has been the place used to throw people down and they would never be seen again.

⁸³No 14

⁸⁴No 15

⁸⁵Ross 1995C:30

⁸⁶"Many Catholics were similarly surprised, having long written off their leaders as maintenance men for an institution from whom no effective prophetic initiative could ever be expected" (CIIR 1993:23).

hostility during the English service mostly attended by government officers, workers and the educated, but at the later Tumbuka service there was jubilation⁸⁷. One woman who heard the letter in Zomba described that morning:

It was quite an experience. I remember, I think like the first paragraph I missed it, because I didn't believe it anyway, and this person who was reading it, he didn't even explain, he just said we are reading the letter, the bishops' letter to Catholics at this time of the year, Lenten time. So it was just a regular thing and then you know people were grumbling because it was going on and on and then I realised that this was something that was quite interesting so I stayed, some people were walking out, they were grumbling, but I stayed on, and fortunately I managed to get a copy⁸⁸.

The government-dominated newspapers sided with Banda, calling the letter "poisonous and seditious", with an aim "to import IRA terrorism into this country to spread here the chaotic situation now existing in Northern Ireland by non-conformist and satanic Catholics"⁸⁹. Banda's Independence Day speech that year concentrated on the conditions of drought and lack of aid from the West⁹⁰, but then proceeded to claim that there were no human rights violations in Malawi and that the style of government was fashioned on traditions. He argued that the letter represented a desire to introduce "foreign concepts ... to our rural populations" and that there had been no oppression of the bishops⁹¹.

In the year that followed, with international pressure in the form of suspended aid, and continual pressure from church and pro-democracy groups, Banda was eventually forced to move towards a multiparty democracy. In February 1993, the bishops published *Choosing Our Future*, which educated people about their options and duty to vote in the coming referendum. The following year (1994) *Building Our Future* laid out the principles of democracy, different parties, how the government would work,

⁸⁷Private conversation with Alex Chima

⁸⁸Zomba 31

⁸⁹Editorial: *Malawi News*, March 14-20, 1992, p6, referring to John Roche, an Irish missionary.

⁹⁰The West suspended aid in May by linking it to human rights improvements - Commonwealth Observers Group 1994:3.

⁹¹Banda 1992:3-6

and voter discipline through elections. In the meantime, the Montfort Missionaries published two series of cheap booklets entitled *Mau a Mpingo* (Word of the Church) and *Education for Democracy*, through which they educated people about democracy, some liberation theology, social concerns and the like.

The 1995 Pastoral Letter concentrated on more traditional ideas of widows and orphans, and there were calls from the laity during my fieldwork for the bishops to speak again about the declining economy. In 1996, the long-awaited criticism of society and government came in the Pastoral Letter, *Walking Together in Faith*. It looked at the state of the church in the aftermath of the African Synod and the timescale for the transformation of the church to bring an inculturated church by the year 2000. It criticised the prevailing misconceptions of freedom and democracy, the corruption in all levels of society and the lack of security in the community. It was instantly condemned by Muluzi⁹².

JC Chakanza has argued that by concentrating on 1992 as the only contribution of the Catholic Church to politics we “undermine the Catholic action and thinking which has gradually led to the issuing of the Pastoral Letter”⁹³. He charts the course of the Catholic Church’s relationship with the Malawi Congress Party throughout Banda’s time from the original rebuke by Aleke Banda, then editor of *Malawi News*, that “[the Catholic Church] should remember that the African people of this country who are members of the Roman Catholic Church are Malawi nationalists first and if they have any allegiance at all to the Pope, that comes after they have performed their duty to their country”, and his threat that “we shall not tolerate any church to meddle in Malawi politics. The pulpit should be distinct from the political platform”⁹⁴.

This is not the place to reproduce Chakanza’s arguments. However he ends by

⁹²See *ENI* 3 October 1996: “President Muluzi ... said publicly that without evidence of corruption, innocent people would be victimised by the accusations”.

⁹³Chakanza 1994:8

⁹⁴*Malawi News* 22.10.1960, p118, quoted in Chakanza 1994:8

looking at the importance of the churches as opposition groups in the pro-democracy movement throughout Africa⁹⁵, implying that this shows the church played a part in Malawi as well. Although this might be valid for the Catholic Church in general, it does not carry much weight as an argument for the Catholic Church **in Malawi** being involved in politics. The catechism of the Catholic Church, written in the local language of Nyanja in the late 1960s and aiming to disseminate Vatican II to the grassroots, stressed the similarity of allegiance to government to allegiance to parents, not radical political language⁹⁶.

According to Chakanza the years leading to 1992 were full of developments in catechetical and liturgical renewal and he claims that “the Bishops have not been totally silent. They did speak out from time to time in sermons and pastoral letters, criticizing the system and giving suggestions”⁹⁷. However Chakanza gives few examples to support this claim and most interviewees remembered it otherwise. The examples given include the presiding of the Bishop of Chikwawa at the funeral of one killed in the Mwanza ‘accident’ despite government directives. Clearly the bishop took a huge risk in conducting this service, but I would question whether it is right to allow the idea of a continuous Catholic action against the government to hinge on such isolated examples.

Can 1992 however, be seen as liberation? The role of the Roman Catholic Church in politics is a difficult issue; like traditional Catholics most informants said that the church should not be involved in politics, but agreed that the Pastoral Letter was appropriate. For them this was not politics, it was simply advice. Interviewees saw the role of the church to be to educate people and enable democracy to work. There was also no lead up to the letter, except through universal Catholic doctrine. Some priests complained that the church structures did not allow them to disseminate a liberative message at the grassroots⁹⁸. As we shall see later, the majority of the interviewees

⁹⁵Chakanza 1994:12

⁹⁶Newsletter 1968:3

⁹⁷Chakanza 1994:12

⁹⁸Zomba 34

looked to the church hierarchy to act, suggesting that they as laity have a passive role in the church. The publications of Pastoral Letters, although courageous in their own right, do not constitute a church grounded in liberation theology which through conscientisation encourages the people to question authorities. As Von Doepp comments, even church pronouncements have remained limited in the issues addressed, concentrating mostly on the behaviour of parties or on government priorities, and failing to opt for the poor or provide a “voice for the voiceless”⁹⁹. It could be argued that such a policy merely gives the appearance of political involvement but is not in itself grounded in a liberation theology.

b. Attempts at Inculturation in the Catholic Church in Malawi

i. General

As we saw in Chapter 1, one of the main policies pursued by the church in relation to inculturation is the formation of BCCs. With this in mind AMECEA adopted small christian communities in 1977 as its pastoral strategy to a newly evangelised Eastern Africa. During the late 1970s, Bishop Patrick Kalilombe tried to make this a reality in his diocese of Lilongwe. He has written a lot on the subject¹⁰⁰, but was expelled in 1978 through manipulation by bishops and government. He is still remembered by priests who are trying to implement his ideas in their parishes and they see him as the most African and intelligent bishop Malawi has had.

After Vatican II there was a drive to indigenise the clergy and in today’s church with 7 dioceses, there is one Italian bishop¹⁰¹. However the seminary training in the opinion of one catholic theologian continues to concentrate on traditional philosophy and theology to produce “carbon copies” of the priests¹⁰². The church is wary of

⁹⁹Von Doepp 1998:116-117

¹⁰⁰Especially his PhD thesis 1983, see also Kalilombe 1984, 1991.

¹⁰¹Bp Alessandro Assolari of Mangochi, bishop since 1969. The diocese is entrusted to the Montfort Fathers.

¹⁰²Chakanza 1996:126

academic pursuits: the bishop of Zomba claimed that bishops prefer to send their priests for further study to Nairobi, which they consider theologically safer than the University of Malawi and the church has failed to motivate the laity to study theology¹⁰³. Kalilombe's brother believes that priests who have a western education in Malawi are more conservative than those who have experience of theological progress elsewhere in the world since Vatican II¹⁰⁴, thus creating an interesting paradox.

Attempts at inculturation have been isolated. During Banda's time there was no political drive to make things indigenous, the president believing that culture was only external activities rather than philosophy as well¹⁰⁵. For example, the archbishop refuses to allow basic christian communities or drum beating in his diocese¹⁰⁶. Some people felt that inculturation is pushed from above¹⁰⁷ especially by expatriate priests. We will now discuss three examples of this isolated inculturation.

ii. Alex Chima, Mzuzu Diocese: The Liturgy

Alex Chima first became interested in inculturation as a young priest in the 1960s when he discovered the idea of Africanising hymn tunes. After further study, involving anthropology and liturgy at both Oxford and London, he taught at Kachebere seminary, where one of his students remembers him asking them to think about the

¹⁰³Zomba 20

¹⁰⁴Zomba 26

¹⁰⁵Zomba 2. For the way Banda appropriated cultural symbols for his own political ends - Forster 1994, Lwanda 1993:86-89, 206-209.

¹⁰⁶The 'Drum debate' started in 1960s. An editor of the *Newsletter of the Catholic Church* (No 3, 1969) summed up the main points of the debate: "Because the drum majors in many traditional dances and rituals, which have been described as pagan in Christian circles, it has consequently been branded an 'evil' instrument by some. Since the drum has been utilised for both so-called 'evil' and decent dances and rituals ... 'is the instrument per se evil?' or 'is it the type of drum or beat that should be judged?' ... How are the Christians who have been taught by the early missionaries that the drum pertained to pagan ideas, going to convince themselves against their consciences?" (sic). In the late 1960s, the archbishop published a pastoral letter forbidding the use of drums and expressing disapproval of ululating in Mass (Newsletter No 4, May 1969). The archbishop continues to forbid the use of drums in his diocese and other parishes realise that they must temper down their celebration whenever he comes to visit (Zomba 4). However all the parishioners that I spoke to remarked how much they enjoyed the fact that they can express their faith and worship in the traditional rhythms of their culture (Zomba P5).

¹⁰⁷E.g. Zomba 1

liturgy in an African way¹⁰⁸. Although Chima has written articles and presented papers at AMECEA conferences, he admits that his interest is not academic. He considers himself a *practitioner* of inculturation rather than a *theoretician*, as he puts it a *liturgian* (a doer) rather than a *liturgiologist* (a theoretician)¹⁰⁹. He writes: “the combination, in my teaching years, of liturgy and pastoral anthropology kept compelling me to go for the experimental approach in my teaching - for movement from ‘orthodoxis’ to ‘orthopraxis’, translation of theory into practice”¹¹⁰. For him inculturation is “a way of life”¹¹¹, and is a justice or human rights issue, since “one of the greatest sins of social injustice is to prevent someone from being themselves”¹¹²:

[I]n the area of liturgy, for example, it is encouraging to see ‘justice-oriented’ liturgies being celebrated, more justice is inserted, often reduced to homilies on social issues, socially sensitive hymns, intercessions for the troubled parts of our world or continent, or even liturgies connected with demonstrations or protests.... But what about a ‘just liturgy’ itself?... for example, if leadership remains restricted to male celibates, or in connection with inculturation, the liturgy suggests the superiority of one culture over others, isn’t it at that point a form of oppression?... Or, even if we are forced to regard it as beyond discussion, insisting on wheaten bread for the Eucharist in a maize culture is a form of injustice - denying the assembly the opportunity to be and to express **them-selves**¹¹³.

Inculturation is a multi-faceted task, different people concentrating on different aspects of it. Chima, probably Malawi’s leading inculturationist, concentrates on the liturgy. Many of his ideas were incorporated into his own Jubilee Mass in 1990 and the enthronement of the new bishop of Mzuzu in 1995. Both ceremonies are outlined below. In liturgy, it is prayer that is especially important: “prayer, public or liturgical as well as private, is an important shop-window of the Church. If it appears foreign, the Church itself is judged to be foreign. If it has to conform to African culture, it must take account

¹⁰⁸Zomba 18

¹⁰⁹at AMECEA August 1992 - Chima 1992.

¹¹⁰Chima 1992:1- echoing the phraseology of Latin American liberation theologians.

¹¹¹Chima 1992:1

¹¹²Chima C:2

¹¹³Chima 1992:1

of the traditional elements”¹¹⁴. At a workshop on “African Traditional Prayer and Christian Prayer”¹¹⁵ he stressed that he is concerned with the concrete rather than the intellectual and the academic, against which he is especially vehement, “[t]his, one may add, tends to be today’s favourite game in the Church: theorising without preparedness to translate those theories into practice”. On this occasion he took as his theme “Deliver us from fear and uncreative rigidity”.

Chima sees the root of the problem as the panic that missionaries felt when confronted with rituals and practices that they did not know or understand, which led them to denounce the practices; “the far-reaching results which have followed too sweeping a condemnation of tribal customs cannot be denied - artificial sins have been created, tribal life dislocated, and in seeking to root out the tares/weeds, so much of the wheat has been destroyed that the old social life has in some cases starved and died”¹¹⁶. These results became even worse when the new converts welcomed the new religion because of the prestige and status of the colonisers so that “efforts at conserving and enriching all that is best in African life are regarded as nothing more than a plot to keep them back, because Europeans are jealous of admitting the Africans into the fuller life that is theirs”. This recalls that inculturation is not taking the present culture into the past: “a living people cannot be treated as a dead ruin, like an antiquary would treat the uncovered ruins of some ancient temple - afraid to move even a single stone. On the contrary, a living people are dynamic, not static” and he reminds us that “real remodelling of such customs can most safely be undertaken by the bearers of the culture themselves”¹¹⁷.

In 1990 Alex Chima celebrated his Jubilee Mass in St Peters Cathedral, Mzuzu (August 26, 1990)¹¹⁸. He made a video of the celebration which was shown at the

¹¹⁴ Chima A:1

¹¹⁵Chima A

¹¹⁶Chima B:3

¹¹⁷Chima B:4

¹¹⁸See also *Malawi Update 24*, it describes a 25th anniversary mass for Bishop Kalilombe in Mwa, during which he dressed in Chewa costume and poured libations of beer.

AMECEA meeting in Lusaka, August 1992, and caused some I interviewed to condemn him as having overstepped the mark¹¹⁹. In the ceremony he took the idea of the traditional Ngoni warrior returning home after a victorious battle, interpreting it as his spiritual battle of twenty-five years service as a priest. In full warrior gear he was led into the church by the army, in typical warrior celebration dancing while singing the Gloria. The victorious warrior would have been presented to his chief at this point and Chima was presented both to his tribal chief and to Mgnr John Roche, then acting bishop of Mzuzu, as the spiritual chief.

As a sign of a warrior's entry into full adult life he would have been re-presented with his children to raise by his example. In the ceremony, Chima was presented with a 'son' and 'daughter' from the community to 'raise'¹²⁰. Since the church service was celebrating a spiritual rather than traditional leadership, Chima put on chief's clothes for the celebration of the eucharist. The altar, bare until this moment, was now decorated with flowers, fruits and staple foods, by those who were past child-bearing age¹²¹, senior sisters and the married men. In Ngoni society, maize flour is the symbol of life and purity, so the sacrificial space was cleansed with maize rather than with western imported incense.

The actual eucharistic prayer followed the Roman rite, but it was led by the congregation humming in agreement throughout. Chima also officiated in traditional musical style, singing the thanksgiving to the traditional tunes. At the doxology, as the climax of the eucharistic prayer, the congregation rose and broke into song and dance. In a traditional sacrificial meal, the meal would be taken in silence. Likewise in this celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice, the bread and wine were taken in silence, and the recessional followed as the priest rejoined the *impi* (Ngoni army) to exit into the village celebrations¹²².

¹¹⁹Zomba 2, Chima also said that AMECEA delegates were shocked by it.

¹²⁰As a sort of godfather.

¹²¹Not the young children seen in many Malawian services.

¹²²From the video of the occasion seen October 1995

Five years later Chima had the opportunity of putting his ideas into practice again at the consecration of the first northern bishop of Mzuzu on 6 May 1995 at Mzuzu stadium attended by about 25,000 people¹²³. The diocese had been without a bishop since 1987, since when John Roche had been acting-bishop. In the eight years before the consecration of Bishop Zuza, there were complaints in the national press about the continued vacancy¹²⁴. The service had an important effect on the church in general - it became talked about in all parts of the country¹²⁵ and in a way may have signalled the rehabilitation of Chima back to the church hierarchy.

The ceremony started early in the day with singing and movement among the waiting congregation in the crowded stadium. The senior clergy processed in to the accompaniment of a brass band, followed by dancers in traditional dress performing warrior dances to the sound of ululation and drums. The excitement was visible as the bishops slowly wended their way through to the podium. There was a mixture of the traditional Roman Catholic ritual and the traditional Malawian ritual, with the altar and then the Gospel scented with incense. John Roche, introduced the proceedings. The stadium was decorated with a range of symbols, including a western crucifix. Traditional dances were performed throughout the long service, and the dancers carried spears, shields and gourds. The acclamation at the readings ("This is the Word of God" and "Thanks be to God") were sung with jubilation, followed by a dance of joy after the Gospel. New clothes were bought for the occasion in typical Malawian style with the specially designed cloth, a blue and green swirling pattern, making up the dresses for the women, the shirts for the men, the decoration for the white surplices of the priest, the covering for the service book and the altar, and the cloth and pillow on which Zuza prostrated himself and knelt.

¹²³From the video of the occasion, lent to me by Alex Chima

¹²⁴For example, an article in *The New Voice* Sept. 14-20, 1994; "No Bishop for Mzuzu Diocese yet". The opening paragraph declared, "Time is not yet ripe for the Mzuzu Diocese of the Catholic Church to have a Bishop of its own and will continue to be led by a Monsignor for the time being, Pronuncio Archbishop Joseph Lianza has said". In January 1994 the *New Voice* called for Roche to step down and leave room for an indigenous bishop.

¹²⁵Partly because videos were made of the occasion. For example, the sisters in Zomba had a copy.

Throughout the occasion, the crowd was involved in constant singing and as Zuza was blessed in consecration the ululation of the women increased. The atmosphere was relaxed; people moved around while the speeches were taking place, even while Chima read the papal letter. The commissioning of the bishop was in English, read in an unclear Italian accent by the pronuncio, and emphasised the traditional role of the bishop as the centre of sacrament, without whom there would be no priesthood, no eucharist and no community. The promises made by Zuza were all in English, but were accompanied by ululation. The prayers and the laying on of hands by the other bishops were also in English¹²⁶. Then all the bishops were led by Chima to the VIP stand, where the new bishop received a big hug from Muluzi to the accompaniment of wild dancing.

There was then a full scale offering of gifts at the altar and a full eucharist. The thanksgiving response (“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God” “It is meet and right so to do”), was recognised with three handclaps, the traditional Malawian sign for thanksgiving and respect. At the moment of the consecration of the host, there were bells at different pitches. The thanksgiving and eucharistic prayers were straight translations of the Roman rite. After the communion there was a second offering of gifts to the new bishop, including a live sheep, before Zuza addressed his flock, accompanied by ululation in agreement. Muluzi then addressed the crowd briefly, welcoming the new bishop and reminding him that if he ever sees any wrong-doing in the government he is to report it to the President, and that he himself welcomes all denominations and religions in Malawi.

Some of these experiments have the potential to become well-known in Malawi. Both services were videoed and made available, especially to religious communities. Chima is also involved in IMBISA¹²⁷ and with them has produced a set of videos

¹²⁶Since the bishops were from different areas and countries, English was probably the only option. In Malawi ChiChewa and English are the official languages, in Mzuzu, however, they would speak the local language ChiTumbuka. However, clearly use of the vernacular is an important part of inculturation and Chima confessed that the service was not wholly inculturated. He treats it as a start, with a big important and well-attended event (Zomba 8).

¹²⁷Inter-Regional Meeting of Bishops of Southern Africa

entitled “Gospel and Culture”. Each looks at a different part of African life, for example, “Coming of Age in Africa” and “Getting Married in Africa”. There are also specific videos on inculturation in Malawi, each of which takes a different Chewa proverb and expands on it¹²⁸. As yet these examples are in their early stages. Obviously the technology needed to access them makes it difficult for many, but members of the clergy will be able to get ideas from them and thus the ideas become more widely known¹²⁹.

Chima’s philosophy is to act. This may invite resistance from the Catholic hierarchy, but is allowing interesting ideas to be circulated. As he says:

When all this is said and done, the imperative of inculturation remains, whether accepted or resisted, or whether only very few are ready to meet the challenge. The people - the Christian community whose task this is primarily, must be taken into confidence, enlightened, briefed and provided with materials and programmes for their education. They should be consulted both at planning and implementation stages¹³⁰.

As we shall see in Part B of this chapter, what he does in Mzuzu is becoming known elsewhere and offers inspiration to others who are trying to incorporate the local culture into church liturgy.

iii. Mua Mission, Dedza Diocese: Artwork

The work of the Roman Catholic Mission at Mua in the diocese of Dedza, is famous throughout Malawi¹³¹. Here in the hills just south of Lake Malawi, the White Fathers are involved in the work of inculturation among the local people. The work of the parish is mostly the child of the Canadian priest, Claude Boucher, who came to Malawi immediately after ordination in the 1960s. On arrival he realised that the visual materials used among the Malawian people were completely foreign to their culture and hence gave a distorted view of the Incarnation.

¹²⁸For example, the “Kachere Tree and the Maize Field”, “To live is to change” and “No one can carry the roof by himself”.

¹²⁹For example, it was the bishop of Zomba who lent me the set of three.

¹³⁰Chima 1992:3

¹³¹Heavily dependent on Zomba 24 throughout this section.

Boucher decided that his skills of art and craft were to be used to rectify this situation. Between 1968 and 1972, he spent time learning the culture. He presented a Malawian Jesus who was a travelling preacher, part of Malawian culture and who travelled from the north to the south¹³², spent time on Lake Malawi, ate *Chambo* (the local fish) and spent time at local ceremonies¹³³. Boucher then began to encourage the local artists to take these ideas into their carving and painting. At the same time, he began to train people, especially the Poor Clares of Lilongwe, to look at their liturgies and worship. By 1972, the Gospel in his home parish of Nsipe was being danced and sung, and the Poor Clares were writing their own music. The liturgy for special occasions, especially Christmas, was being altered to take local patterns of celebration into account.

After further education in anthropology abroad Boucher was posted to Mua. He conducted more research, taking part in the local Chewa customs, which included his own initiation so that he could be closer to other rituals. His strongest desire was to dismantle the western division between the sacred and the profane, to encourage people to be themselves in church rather than conforming to western propriety.

For the last ten years he has concentrated on art and liturgy, as he has been relieved of most, although not all, of his pastoral duties. The Kungoni Arts and Craft Centre at Mua was established soon after his return to Malawi. Here Boucher trains local artists in painting and carvings for churches and christian centres. Images of village life are carved round lecterns and candlesticks, altars and tabernacles. All the characters are African, doing traditional African work such as building huts together, playing games or pounding maize. The paintings from Mua show similar themes, in traditional mediums like banana leaf¹³⁴.

¹³²Trying to respect the same geography as used by Christ in Palestine.

¹³³One person had lived in Mua at the time of the change. He remarked that some people had left the church when the black Christ was introduced (Zomba 9), but another said that if the village heard that Boucher was celebrating Mass in the neighbourhood, they would make an effort to get there (Zomba P5).

¹³⁴Which means that people with little money can also do them - Zomba 2.

Artifacts and paintings from Mua are used throughout the country by all denominations¹³⁵. In Zomba alone there were 16 buildings thus decorated in 1993, two of which were commissioned that year. They are seen in parish churches, outstations, seminaries, and the Anglican and Lutheran churches, some of which will be described in Part B of this chapter¹³⁶.

At Mua the White Fathers are also involved in the inculturation of the liturgy. Boucher explained that there is little freedom from the church when it comes to liturgy, and therefore he has tended to concentrate on para-liturgies and sacramentals, such as funeral services, baptisms and marriages. In each case the actual eucharistic prayer remains the same, but the externals change to rediscover the imagery behind the celebration and enable a parallel to be found in local culture. For example, with the Good Friday liturgy the imagery of mourning is prevalent, and therefore Boucher sees the importance of looking at the local customs surrounding burial and mourning to produce the same feeling. Boucher understands the central point of Pentecost as the unity of all people, therefore ethnicity must be worked out in the African context¹³⁷.

Sunday Mass at Mua Mission has also taken cultural elements into the celebrations. The congregation was first sprinkled with water from a branch as the priest went down the central aisle (wearing a tie-dyed cloth). The service was mostly sung and the dancing fairly formalised, which Boucher explained is different in the outstations. The intercessions were started formally by the choir, but then became open to the congregation. The sacred space was blessed with flour before the thanksgiving. A greater proportion of the congregation were communicants than elsewhere and the

¹³⁵For a full discussion of the inculturation of art and the Mua impact see Ott 1993.

¹³⁶Also see figure 2

¹³⁷Other examples: Ash Wednesday, everyone comes to church with a reed, a few then come forward to the front of the church to confess publicly the sins of the community, placing their reeds in an earthen pot at the centre. Then everyone places their reeds in the pot and this is then burned and the ashes used for the foreheads of the congregation. All Saints' Day roughly corresponds to the time of planting and therefore it is an appropriate time for the blessing of the seeds. At Mua they have joined the two celebrations, emphasising that the seed must die for it to bear fruit (Jn 12:24) and linking this with the ancestors who continue to live after death. The ceremony involves the blessing of the seeds in the church, a walk to the fields to bless the soil and then a visit to the graveyard.

priests freely admitted that they give to those who officially should not receive. The White Fathers are conscious that at the parish centre where a priest is, there is often less incentive to develop local leadership than at the outstations. They therefore have mass only every two weeks.

Boucher's latest venture is the establishment of a cultural museum, which aims to preserve the history of the Chewa. Around the outside of the museum is a series of painted panels which records the Chewa history period by period¹³⁸. It begins with the myths and legends, going through the arrival of the Arabs in the area, the first Europeans and the subsequent battles, up to independence. Inside he has a collection of photographs, mostly from the mission, but the best collection is of masks from the *nyau* secret society, which in themselves tell the history of the Chewa people¹³⁹. Around the outside, Boucher has also put together a "zoo" with different Malawian animals which have proverbs written about them. The proverb is displayed with the animal to show the connection and build culture¹⁴⁰.

Boucher has used his base at the Mua Mission to build a ministry of inculturation through art and liturgy. He believes that part of his success has been that he is within an international community and therefore enjoys some immunity from the Malawian hierarchy. He clearly works with the people, listening to them, and joining them in their rituals, doing things quietly, unlike Chima. Since he does not write, his ideas are not exposed in any finite or dogmatic way and therefore he is not condemned so much. Some have questioned whether painting is an African form of art¹⁴¹, but there is clearly a market for the artifacts produced in the craft centre.

¹³⁸See figure 2

¹³⁹For example, when the pope visited Malawi in 1989, the *nyau* dancers made a mask of him. At the time of the Pastoral Letter, the mask was used again in rituals to show thanks to the Bishops.

¹⁴⁰When I was in Mua, this was in its very early stages.

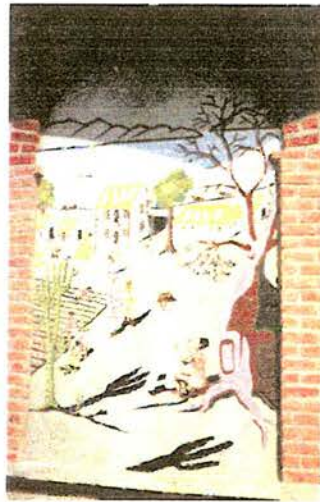
¹⁴¹Zomba 7



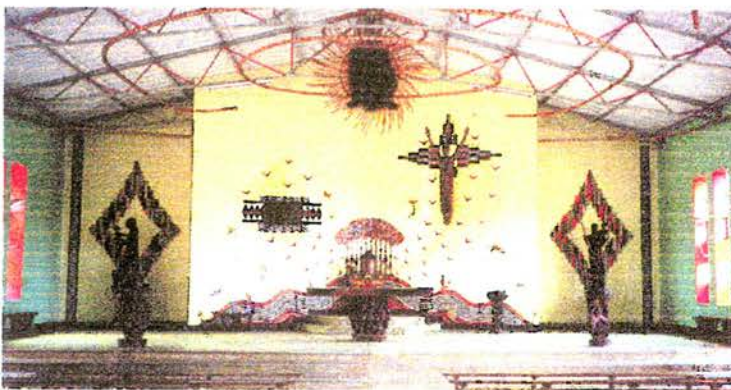
Creation Myths from the Museum



Early priestess with the serpent (depiction of god)



The whites come to Malawi



The inside of the church at Mua

Figure 2: Pictures from Mua Mission

iv. The Poor Clares, Lilongwe: Religious Formation

The Poor Clares began inculturation in the 1970s, and formalised efforts in the 1980s. From the beginning the convent's aim was "to establish a Malawian Monastery not a French nor a European Monastery"¹⁴². The first sisters stayed in local communities to learn the language and culture. After a couple of visits to Poor Clare Communities in Cameroon¹⁴³, the former abbess of Lilongwe encouraged the group to incorporate their culture gradually. From their own literature, they seem to have been rather unwilling to do this, but were convinced to experiment in stages and "little by little the drumming, singing and dancing went on with some improvements year after year"¹⁴⁴. The visit of the Mother Foundress to Malawi in 1971 enabled them to think more deeply about the experiments and the convent became engaged in research, incorporating symbols and gestures into worship. They began with the internal transformation of monastic life rather than external adaptation and this was facilitated by the insistence from the beginning on the use of the Chewa language alone, which forced the sisters to translate the liturgy and expressions of worship¹⁴⁵.

In the garden outside, they have a shrine or sacred grove, in traditional Malawian style, where they receive communion. Today their ceremonies use traditional incensed pots, symbols which involve the presentation of the Gospel in an earthen pot, and the incorporation of sounds from village life. During mass they invoke the ancestors and saints with singing and dancing, they present all of life as an offering and sanctify the sacred place with flour. However, they continue to have a priest called in from outside for the consecration and in many ways they can be isolated from the rest of the church because they are a group of enclosed women. Their music has inspired the "Alleluia Band", which travels around Malawi and has recorded music from the convent. Baur sees them as an inspiring model for the rest of the country¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴²Poor Clares 1988:1

¹⁴³Who were inspired to inculturated liturgy and symbolic gestures by the Jesuit artist, Engelbert Mveng - Baur 1994:470.

¹⁴⁴Poor Clares 1988:2

¹⁴⁵Weinrich 1978:572-3

¹⁴⁶Baur 1994:431

v. ARIMA

The context for the Poor Clares in Lilongwe can be set by the Association of Religious Institutions of Malawi (ARIMA) who have become very interested in inculturation in the last fifteen years. In April 1994, they held a conference with the title "Towards Inculturation of Religious Life". The conference started the same day as the African Synod and was attended by women religious, attempting to find a way in which their vows and lifestyle could be brought more in line with the African world-view. They met aware that the task of rediscovering the past to give a true identity in the present through the process of inculturation was one that had to be embraced by women. The position of women religious in the debate for inculturation is an important one, since sisterhood provides education and status well beyond what most women can expect to achieve in Malawi, a phenomenon that is not peculiar to Malawi, but prominent in many parts of Africa¹⁴⁷. The conference started with this question:

Do those entering religious life realise the continuity between the values they were given in their families and the values outlined in their religious rule or constitutions? Or do they see religious life as divorced from their past, as something quite other, something new to be learned, largely outside of them and so having little effect on their feelings and attitudes?¹⁴⁸

The sisters called for everyone to be involved in the process of the research and education needed for inculturation to happen.

At the conference the sisters discussed the general trends and needs for inculturation. They called for a new Christology, for ideas to grow at the grassroots, considering themselves to be members of the grassroots. They used names from traditional religion to refer to Jesus: such as *Mlangizi* - the Wisdom-teacher, *Nganga* - the Healer, *Umboni-Nkhoswe* - the Voice of the Oppressed and Champion of the Poor, and *Mlandu* - Reconciler¹⁴⁹. They recognised the links between the various rites of passage found in village life and the sacraments in the church. This was an early venture

¹⁴⁷ Weller and Linden 1984:107-8

¹⁴⁸ ARIMA 1994:3

¹⁴⁹ Reconciliation in Malawian traditional religion was symbolised by drinking from the same cup, eating *nsima* from the same dish, and also various blood rituals (see ARIMA 1994:10).

into the field, raising as many questions as answers. Especially pertinent for the situation in Malawi a paper by Sr Nielson recognised that there are two tasks for inculturation: a) to affirm what is good in the culture instead of shunning culture for being 'not modern' and b) to challenge what is evil or undesirable in that culture. In an area where the emphasis on the clan and extended family often causes problems¹⁵⁰, she advocated the small christian community usurping their role, enabling a wider community than that produced by blood-relations. She sees the SCCs role to empower members in both worship and society, liturgy and memory. Nielson concluded with a call to clergy to give up their power and for everyone to embrace a new concept of power which is shared by all and which includes a willingness to make mistakes.

Dr Francis Moto spoke in his paper about Chewa creation myths, showing how the ideas can be used in conjunction with symbols central to Christianity, such as fire and water producing *nsima*¹⁵¹ in proper balance. He opened the discussion around the *nyau* dances, showing that the church must take such formerly discouraged practices into account. The workshops then looked at traditional imagery, including that of the metaphorical connection between semen and rain. After three talks on the traditional stages of initiation, the conference ended with an attempt to make sense of the choice of chastity in the Malawian context, which insists on chastity before marriage and allows unmarried women to be the village peacemakers¹⁵².

During this conference the women religious recognised that inculturation is not a choice, but an imperative, and that they (even though culture may give a subservient role to women) had a vital role to play. They ended with objectives for the future¹⁵³:

- ▶ to establish an ad hoc committee to look at inculturation in the formation programmes (i.e. in initiation and in sister formation).

¹⁵⁰ Such as nepotism, undue expectations etc.

¹⁵¹The maize porridge staple of Malawian life.

¹⁵²Franciska Moyo in ARIMA 1994:69

¹⁵³Unfortunately, I was unable to get ARIMA to respond to my questions regarding whether these objectives have been met.

- ▶ to study the images of Christ in Africa.
- ▶ to conduct a questionnaire on the role of women in traditional society, including a comparison between the different tribes.
- ▶ to follow up the conference on the regional level.
- ▶ to reflect on the integration of traditional and christian values and vows.

4. Conclusions

This section has looked at the “official church” or the “external face” of the church¹⁵⁴. It has shown that the Episcopal Conference is mainly traditional, with the archbishop of Blantyre still forbidding the use of drums in his diocese. The political history of Malawi has been highlighted with reference to the role of the church in that history and we saw a political blip in a normally passive and élitist church. The Pastoral Letter brought about a change of government, but there was little evidence that this was based on liberation at the grassroots. However, the political nature of the 1992 letter creates an anomaly for such a traditional and passive church.

We have discussed attempts to inculturate in the country and how those involved can be isolated, although as we shall see, some in Zomba had heard of the practices of both Chima and Boucher. These experiments are part of the “gospel” of the church in Schreiter’s differentiation and come from the poets and prophets. However since we are dealing here with a local church in a different diocese, they form part of the context of the church.

Most of all, it seems that in Malawi, the marginalisation of those involved in inculturation and the confinement of political comment to the bishops’ letters have ensured that inculturation and liberation are not linked at the official level. The bishop of Zomba readily admitted that the Episcopal Conference was cautious with both

¹⁵⁴Von Doepp 1998

inculturation and liberation, but cautious to the point of inaction¹⁵⁵. Such views were also more vigorously expressed by Catholic academic theologians¹⁵⁶. We will now move on to the discussion of the state of the church in Zomba.

¹⁵⁵Zomba 20

¹⁵⁶Zomba 2, 8, 15, 28

Part B: Zomba Diocese

In Part A we explored the history and society of the Malawian Catholic Church at the end of the twentieth century. This provides the background for the case study of Zomba diocese, through which a picture of the belief structures of Catholics at the grassroots can be painted. Through this methodology a fuller picture of the changing Malawian church can be seen. True, such changes occur at the institutional level, but the daily struggles at the grassroots determine whether various projects are relevant or irrelevant¹. It must be remembered that much of the data expressed here is from interview material, the reliability and representativeness of which has been discussed in Chapter 1. This is a mainly descriptive chapter of the results of the fieldwork and in Chapter 4 we will begin to analyse these results.

1. Background to Zomba Diocese

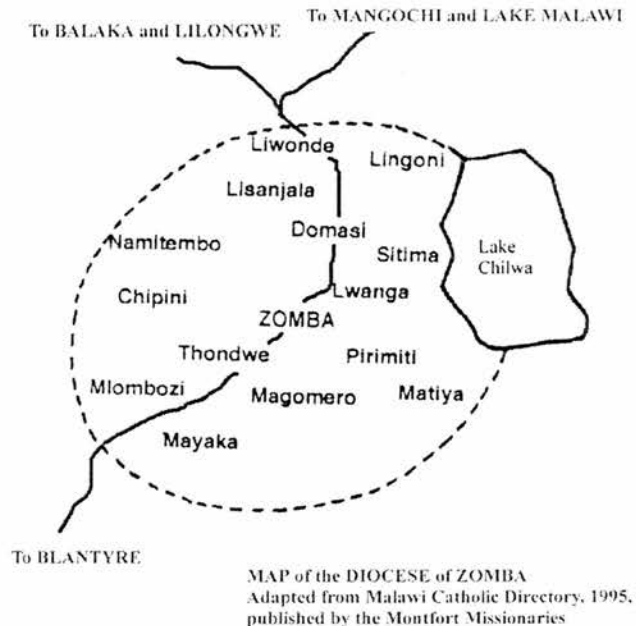


Figure 3

¹Von Doepp 1998:108

The town of Zomba is in the southern region of Malawi, about 70 kilometres north of the growing industrial town of Blantyre. It is overlooked by the Zomba Plateau which rises to 2087 metres above sea-level. The cool climate on the Plateau has ensured that this has long been a favourite rest place for the élites. Zomba diocese includes Lake Chilwa which borders Mozambique and this proximity to the Mozambican border has brought immigrants throughout history. Zomba is the old capital of Malawi and hence houses the parliament although there are plans to move this to Lilongwe. The town is home to the University of Malawi, which together with St Peter's Major Seminary and Zomba Theological College, ensures a large academic population in the town. The present diocese is largely equivalent to the administrative district of Zomba, but also includes a little of the administrative district of Machinga. Banda's top security prison, the infamous Mikuyu prison, is within the diocese about 10 km north of the town.

The town is dominated by the main road running from Lilongwe to Blantyre. Along this road are the individual parishes and away from the main road lie the outstations of the old mission territories. Together with much of Malawi, Zomba is dominated by the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), but the town has a noticeable Catholic presence, especially around the cathedral, bishop's palace and secondary schools to the south of the town. The Catholic Church makes up about a third of the population², slightly higher than the national average. There is a convent of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and a seminary dominated by expatriate Jesuits. The university has a disproportionately large number of Catholics on its staff³. All these institutions have an impact on the local Catholic community.

Zomba diocese was erected in 1958 with the Right Rev Lawrence Hardman SMM as its bishop⁴. The present bishop, Allan Chamgwera was consecrated in May 1981. The diocese is divided into 15 parishes, the most recent created at Domasi in

²Malawi Catholic Directory 1995

³Zomba 11

⁴Malawi Catholic Directory 1995:93

1995, and has a Catholic population of 174,625 (with 2,538 catechumens)⁵. In the diocese, there are two parishes run by Montfort Missionaries (Sitima and Pirititi). People from the following parishes were interviewed for this project: Lwanga Parish (Zomba town), the Cathedral Parish - outstations Nankhunda, Chiluwe and Mkumbira, Sitima Parish, Liwonde Parish, Thondwe Parish and Mayaka Parish. The interviewees are therefore divided between rural and urban christians. The breakdown is as follows:

Urban	University Educated ⁶	16
	Other Educated ⁷	3
	Uneducated	5
Rural	Semi-educated ⁸	17
	Uneducated	75 ⁹
Priests		28
Expatriates	Lay	3
	Priest	7
TOTAL		154 ¹⁰

The parishes are divided into outstations which the priests visit on a rota system. Thus for many Catholics, mass is a rare occasion. When the priest does not visit the outstation church, the local groups conduct a prayer-worship service. The outstations are divided into small christian communities, in Chichewa *limana* or *mphakati*. However, these communities are not yet fully fledged SCCs in their political and social awareness, they seemed in many ways to be administrative units to help the priest.

⁵Total population: 534,972; area:3,522km²; catechists: 30; voluntary catechists: 1,493 - Malawi Catholic Directory 1995 - Montfort Missionaries.

⁶University staff.

⁷English speaker, professional.

⁸Education up to primary school.

⁹Plus a general interview with a large group of women in Mayaka.

¹⁰Divided between 46 interviews, including many group interviews.

As we shall see later, in Infanta there were many documents produced by the diocese which explained doctrine, practice and new ideas, which were important to many in the church. In Zomba, none of my informants referred to such documents. This has meant that clues to the local theology of the area have been gleaned solely from observation and oral evidence.

a. The Bishop

There was general consensus among the educated interviewees that although the process towards inculturation had not progressed very far, Zomba diocese was further ahead than most¹¹ (excluding parts of Mzuzu and Mua). This they attributed to a more progressive bishop¹².

Talking to Bishop Allan Chamgwera, it was clear that he had a firm understanding of the issues and the imperatives involved in inculturation. He was however wary of making mistakes. He claimed that expatriate priests tended to be too quick at inculturation, seeing much to change and wanting to do so overnight, thus accepting everything from the culture into the church uncritically. On the other hand Malawian priests tended to be too cautious, since they had been educated with western ideas and taught to look down on their own culture. Chamgwera himself recognised that the Vatican has given the go-ahead for inculturation, but that the inertia comes from the people - from the Secretariat down to the laity. He believes that as a people they have been used to accepting things as they are, instilled with the idea that the elements of the church are sacred and must not be changed. He advocated the need for research into how the “ancestors did things”¹³, followed by educating the people. Although he stressed that he liked the work Alex Chima was doing, he had not tried similar liturgies, but he is one of the few bishops that have invited Chima to speak in their diocese.

¹¹Eg Zomba 11

¹²Zomba P5

¹³Zomba 20 - although throughout the interview with the bishop, I was aware that he was simply looking into the past, rather than critically assessing the worship and values of the Malawians in previous ages. He seemed to have a nostalgic view of ancestral worship.

Having emphasised the need for research, Chamgwera listed all the major rites of passage to show how they could mirror christian rites of passage. He had clearly thought about the issues of inculturation, and in 1989 there was a Zomba workshop at which Chima spoke. It was a mixture of catechists, priests and sisters, with the intention that the message could then go into the local parishes. The workshop ended with an inculturated mass which he videoed, and he was keen to show me how false it looked as people were so unused to moving in an African way. He has thought carefully about how to include baptism with the traditional presentation of mother and child in the village, the traditional symbols of initiation, celebrations of marriage and pregnancy in the community and the way in which Malawians have traditionally used stones, mountains and trees as their worship places rather than formal buildings with the pews facing the same way. However, although he has clearly thought about these things, he told me that he had not tried any.

Chamgwera takes communication seriously. Before the African Synod, prayers were said in all the churches in the diocese. Soon after the final document was produced, he called together the catechists, priests and sisters, for them to learn what it involved and to spread the message. He soon realised however that this was not happening. So between May and September 1995 he visited all the parishes in the diocese explaining the main issues of justice, communication, dialogue and inculturation. However, few people I spoke to knew anything about the Synod. He has now established a committee to propagate the Synod and when I spoke to him he was frustrated at its slowness, which he associated with the conservativeness and lack of incentive for change amongst the priests and laity.

Chamgwera was emphatic that the African Synod reminds the church to look at itself, recognising that there is much injustice. He realised that in the church there were huge injustices towards women and children and only a couple of weeks after the pope declared infallibly that there would never be any women priests¹⁴, this bishop told me

¹⁴See the full text of the letter from Joseph Ratzinger concerning issues arising from *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* (May 1994) in *The Tablet* 25 November 1995, p1529.

that he had not closed the door on the possibility of women priests¹⁵. He was aware that the church was too centred in the clergy, but as he said “we don’t know where or how to start the change”. He is saddened by the fact that Malawians have associated theologians with priests and that the lack of theologians has prevented the Malawian church from saying “this is our church”. He claims that in two villages he has used a pot of fire with maize flour instead of incense to purify the area, but without catechesis he thinks the people do not appreciate such changes. He would like a change in the method of catechesis, returning to traditional storytelling to convey meanings¹⁶.

Although it is clear that the bishop has thought about these issues and realises that things are not perfect in the church, his ideas of inculturation continues to link it to “tradition” or precolonial culture and his closing remark to me sums up his position: he expressed great fear that the older generation would die before they had passed on the culture to the young who have grown up despising tradition and culture.

Not all the bishop’s priests had such a good impression of him. One described all the Malawian priests as “fools”, and it was clear that this was not omitting the bishop of Zomba. There seemed to be a feeling amongst the educated clergy that the bishop meant well, but was not educated and therefore did not have the intellectual resources to be dynamic. One priest went so far as to say that the priests often have to get together and do things without him. Other priests¹⁷ suggested that the bishop at least listened to people and was prepared to change things. Some suggested that the bishop normally allowed experimentation in the diocese¹⁸, and it is clear that the ordination in Mayaka, which will be discussed later, had to be authorised by Chamgwera.

¹⁵See *The Tablet* 25 November 1995:1520. His remarks could be associated with the understanding that women had once taken a strong lead in Malawian culture, it is more likely that Chamgwera is simply responding to thought patterns and publications concerning women’s rights. However, amongst the Chewa people, a matrilineal culture, the christian church brought a male hierarchy into existence. Within the larger cultural scene, such opinions on women’s equality could also been seen as a cultural desire to return to traditional ways.

¹⁶As collected by Schoffeleers and Roscoe 1985.

¹⁷Zomba 18

¹⁸Zomba P6:4

The bishop of Zomba realises that the church is in the process of change, but, at the time of fieldwork, he emphasised research and caution over action and experimentation.

b. The Laity

The laity in the diocese is divided between the educated people in the town and the uneducated in the villages. Generally those in the town were willing to criticise the church, commenting on the drinking of the priests and the boredom and monotony of services, realising that there was very little of the African culture in the services. In the villages there was acceptance of the situation. As many pointed out to me, Malawian culture is fairly forgiving until something goes seriously wrong when they rise up and complain. Their ideas and opinions will be further discussed in the rest of this chapter.

2. Gospel

In Part A we looked at the culture and church tradition as factors in the growth of local theology. The third factor at work in Schreiter's experience is the gospel, which he implies means 'faith' or at least the local church's expression of the christian gospel, in praxis and worship¹⁹. The primary material for this section is the interviews which illustrate how the people in Zomba viewed their faith. This brings the discussion to the 'hidden' politics of the christian church, the way in which the structure and organisation of the church influence the community²⁰. In this chapter we will simply look at what the local Catholics **said**. In later chapters we will interpret those words. The aim here is to build up a picture of the church. By necessity, sections will overlap or pre-empt later sections, that is the nature of the descriptive and qualitative process. The country is at the moment in a state of transition and this makes it difficult to assess faith. The quiet acquiescence of the past forced by repression appears to be slowly giving way to a desire to question structures, which seems to include the church²¹. The externals will be looked

¹⁹Schreiter 1985:22

²⁰Von Doepp 1998

²¹Zomba 26

at before the more fundamental attitudes to faith and church activities. Although theologians have decried the concentration of inculturation on externals and superficial elements, they do offer an immediate picture of the local church and an accessible point to start the exploration of the way people in the area are celebrating their response to the gospel.

a. Decorations

Lwanga parish is the main parish in the centre of town. It is a small church with many services on a Sunday both in Chichewa and in English. Since it is in the centre of town it is felt that there is a need for English services to serve the many visitors who pass through²². This parish, although it has three priests, has only one outstation. As the name suggests it is dedicated to the Ugandan martyr St Charles Lwanga and this is reflected in the decorations. On the front wall is a picture of St Lwanga baptising St Kizito and another of the martyrdom of Lwanga, in paintings produced by Mua. The quotations are in Chichewa: “*Ngodala amene azunzidwa chifukwa cha ine ufumu wa kumwamba ndi wao*”²³ and “*Ambuye anga ndi mulungu wanga ndikupembezeni*”²⁴. In other ways the inside of the church appears as any other; rectangular with forward-facing wooden pews and an altar and tabernacle at the front, there are local flowers and by necessity of the local economy, the priest’s chair is a large second-hand armchair.

The uniqueness of Lwanga’s paintings is made apparent by a few visits to other churches in the area. In Nankhunda outstation there are traditional western paintings of an Italian Christ sitting at the last supper with his Italian disciples. Round the outside were stations of the cross, clearly taken from a poor-quality western text book.

²²Chichewa is still not universally spoken within Malawi and so English is often taken for that purpose.

²³Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven - Matthew 5:10.

²⁴My Lord is my God, I worship you.



The altar wall in St Lwanga Parish, Zomba



The altar wall in Nankhunda Outstation, Zomba

Figure 4 Two different altar walls in Zomba Diocese

St Peters seminary is also decorated by Mua. A few years ago, members of Mua mission came to Zomba to inspire the seminarians to decorate their own chapel. This has involved banana bark pictures mostly on the theme of Peter the fisherman and the feeding the sheep image from John 21. The main crucifix shows the suffering Christ and the glorified Christ laid on top of each other and the altar depicts women pounding maize carrying the table on their heads. The lectern shows a small community gathered around a central figure, all have flames of Pentecost on their heads, while the holy spirit descends as a dove. A candlestick is carved in the shape of a shepherd carrying a lamb, the tabernacle is a traditional basket, but made in wood, not woven. There are African stations of the cross, an African St Peter, and Mary challenges the Malawian society by smiling although she is pregnant²⁵. Although St Peter's is not a public chapel it is clear that such images have an effect on the seminarians before they return to the world.

²⁵Zomba 35



Luke 5:4 - "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch"



The Crucifixion, with the suffering and glorified Christ.
Below: John 21:15-19



John 21:18 - "Feed my sheep"



The Altar, with women pounding maize



The Lectern: anointed by the Holy Spirit

Figure 5 The decorations of the chapel at St Peter's Seminary, Zomba.

Mua paintings are growing in popularity, despite some academics' doubts as to whether painting is a traditional Malawian medium of art²⁶. In a 1993 thesis looking at the growth of commissions from Mua throughout Malawi, Martin Ott has recorded seventeen Catholic Churches in Zomba Diocese which have received artwork from Mua, including a minor and the major seminary and six outstations²⁷.

b. External Parts of Services

Many see the eucharist as a useful external sign of how inculturated a local church has become²⁸. In many churches in Zomba, African dancing and singing were being introduced, troops of young girls, often dressed in white with red flowers danced in with the offertory, for the *gloria* and the eucharistic prayer, while the rest of the congregation sat still, although one man commented on how he felt included in the dancing²⁹. In some churches there was the use of three hand-claps for the recognition of the transformation of the bread at the eucharist and for the acclamation after the Gospel reading³⁰. Ululation is also fairly widespread in the churches as the symbol of thanksgiving and excitement, giving a local flavour to the service. The offertory often includes local gifts. This forces on people the way that their own gifts are relevant to the church and how the church will accept the fruits of their labour. It also enables the church to support itself: each week a different community provides the food for the priest's table, hence it is not unusual to see a live chicken on the altar, a jar of peanut butter, a bottle of oil and a loaf of bread. Some priests had begun to use African prints on their vestments.

One of the major differences from western services is the segregation of the

²⁶Zomba 7

²⁷Ott 1993 - appendix. I am grateful to Klaus Fiedler for translating relevant passages of this PhD for me.

²⁸Chima 1996:121, Zomba 11 (lay delegate to the African Synod), 18 (priest in charge of liturgy in Zomba Diocese).

²⁹Zomba 12

³⁰Indeed in Mayaka parish youth service, the congregation were taught how to clap properly, and it was rehearsed several times (as was the three crosses on forehead, mouth and heart at the beginning of the Gospel reading).

sexes. This is a long established custom in many African cultures and mirrors traditional seating patterns at funerals and other public gatherings. However, in the church services attached to St Mary's school, a more educated congregation, partly nurtured by the Jesuits from the seminary, have dispensed with the practice.

Different services obviously had different priorities, depending on the language and the congregation. At Lwanga church, intercessions were open to the congregation, but during the first two services on a Sunday, not widely taken up. The second Chichewa mass was much more of a family service than the first and here there was greater African input. Individual small christian communities would take it in turns to do the readings, provide the dancers and present their offerings.

At the time of research the major inculturated service attempted by the diocese was an ordination in Mayaka parish, in the south of the diocese, in August 1994. Although one western academic had doubts about how inculturated the proceedings were³¹, others felt that it had been a success³². This service had been run like a marriage ceremony, the two ordinands were escorted into church with their 'witnesses', as usual a maternal uncle and their parents. The two symbols of firewood (normally taken by the groom) and flour (normally taken by the bride) were used, to show that the ordinand should bring light where there is darkness and should distribute the eucharist to all the people, binding them together. The Bible was processed in with singing, and the Gospel was recited in song responsorially. As in secular special occasions, there was a special cloth produced³³ for the clothes, altar cloths and it also covered the ordinand's face while he was sitting amongst the christians with his parents. He was then led up by his parents to the altar, where they took off the veil for him to prostrate himself and make his vows. Instead of incense, a clay pot was filled with flour and firewood, and used to bless the people. The whole occasion lasted about 4-5 hours, nothing was rushed and the general

³¹Zomba 7

³²Zomba 38 - from which most of the description of the events has come.

³³These are very common in Malawi, usually making up the *chitenje* (the wrap-round skirt worn by women), but also being used to aid unity to proceedings, altar cloths, other decorations, even invitations etc.

response was positive, because there was an explanation throughout about the symbols being used.

Linden has recorded complaints from the early Catholic missionaries that the African Catholics had not realised the need to support the church³⁴. In churches in Zomba, the collection plates were held at the front of the church while the people filed up to put in their money. Some complained that this forced people to give³⁵. In Mayaka, this concept had been taken one step further. It had been realised that the leaders of the church were not contributing enough to the church collection, so three plates were added either side of the church, one was for the leaders and then they separated out the men and women. Apparently this had had the effect of increasing the amount given by the leaders!³⁶

Zomba Cathedral altered the services on World AIDS Day. However, the majority of the celebrations happened after the service as the congregation moved outside to watch drama and songs educating people about the way to look after AIDS victims and those left behind. Such exposure ensures that the churches take the people's problems seriously³⁷. How frequent such attempts are was difficult to establish during the fieldwork.

c. The Church

When discussing the lack of independent churches emerging from the Catholic Church, Chakanza attributes importance to the way in which local Catholics have developed a sort of "church of the people" since they experience the priest's presence so rarely³⁸. His research finds that liturgies and hymns in outposts are more "down to earth" than at parish centres and often include elements of witchcraft and sorcery

³⁴Linden 1974

³⁵See Zomba 12, 38 and P6

³⁶Zomba M1

³⁷See Van Doepp 1998:121

³⁸Chakanza 1982:154

attached to official hymns. The present researcher could find no hint of this, but felt that the people were not fully open on some of these matters, pointing to where a native speaker would have found it easier to gain an entrance. The data collected for this thesis tended to stress the conservatism of the outstations and a legalistic attitude towards attending mass and meetings.

Whenever I questioned the position of the church in society, most Catholics thought of the national church hierarchy. Questions of whether the church should get involved in politics were answered in the negative because of Vatican directives that priests should not become government ministers. This suggested that my informants not only did not see their role in the political community, but as yet, they do not see themselves as part of the church. Politics remains the domain of ministers while issues that affect people, such as poverty, are not considered political³⁹.

Many informants were concerned about what they saw as ecclesiastical injustice. This was mainly concerned with the wages that were paid to the church workers, which were often below minimum wages⁴⁰. It was linked to the increasing poverty of the Malawians as prices of general goods rose. As one catechist said:

The church clearly has that money. I know that they receive donations from outside the country, but nothing is happening. We are suspecting that if the country has changed then the church should also change. But still we see now the government is in a big change, because we are freely talking, you can walk here and there talking, even the policeman standing there can talk as much as we can. But now in the church, though we may explain about democracy, there's no change at all.⁴¹

In many areas, when different ways of being a christian were mentioned, there was a hesitancy to comment, suggesting that many people had not begun to question the church. Indeed, this occasionally led to rural christians not wanting to criticise the

³⁹Von Doepp 1998:116

⁴⁰Zomba 18, P5:1, P5:7, P6

⁴¹Zomba 27

church or the priest, but they were content to criticise the lay-led *limana* system⁴², and one of the reasons given for the halting of lay distribution of communion was that the christians would not take the eucharist because they knew the sins of the distributor⁴³.

Punishments are accepted in the Zomba Catholic Church. For example, if a boy attends initiation rites, there may well be punishments such as cleaning the mission station⁴⁴ or attending weekly mass and having a card signed by the priest⁴⁵. However, there were complaints, since occasionally a *limana* could exclude a whole family for the misdeeds of one member (normally for initiation rites or marital problems)⁴⁶. Generally punishments were accepted. Some felt that if you wanted the benefits of the church, it was reasonable to be expected to play by the rules⁴⁷. The issue of death will be looked at later, when it will be seen that many of the laity interviewed believed that by obeying church laws an individual could be assured entrance into heaven. This remains for many the main role of the church in their lives and it must offer the sacraments to aid the journey.

Most rural christians interviewed felt that the church was African. This was usually due to the fact that the prayers are in Chichewa. Some could remember when they were in Latin, which one academic felt maintained the mystery well⁴⁸. A number believed that the church was from both cultures, in that “at first we were not knowing or recognising God” but now we do, or that the Europeans brought the church, not the

⁴²Zomba P3 - “It’s in the *limana* that we have freedom of expression”.

⁴³Zomba 38

⁴⁴Zomba P1 and P4:B - “Others say that the church had been brought by the Europeans, but I think the case is that the Europeans didn’t bring the prayers but the church. The prayers were there before, even when the Europeans were not yet here and they themselves are not the ones who created them”.

⁴⁵Zomba P6

⁴⁶Zomba P8 where a woman was excluded after her parents had encouraged her nephew, whom she was looking after, to go for tribal initiation.

⁴⁷Zomba 1 and P5

⁴⁸He felt that one of the reasons that Islam was appealing to Malawians was that it retained the idea of a sacred language, since he believed that mediums did not speak in the common language when communicating with the spirits - Zomba 1.

faith or prayers⁴⁹. There was a strong feeling that “we all pray to God”⁵⁰, and that the particular expression of this was the legacy of the Europeans.

These understandings open the possibility of an inculturated faith. There seems to be the soil for the seed of continuity between the faith of the ancestors and their own faith. One woman wanted the church to allow people to go to traditional herbalist doctors without being barred from the sacraments⁵¹. There was thus an acceptance and a willingness for inculturation. The emphasis on the hierarchy as church has the potential to prevent initiatives from becoming more than the priest’s projects, a concern which Kalilombe voiced about his SCCs in the early 1980s, whose failures he blames on the bishops failing to do adequate conversion and education for themselves⁵².

d. What it means to be a Christian and the Role of the Laity in Church

The attempt to assess how christians saw their faith is difficult. In this research this was attempted in two ways. First the interviewees were asked what being a christian meant in daily life and second, I have interpreted responses to other questions to distil the thoughts behind the answers.

Many rural christians interviewed responded with answers which appeared to be based on what they had been taught, appealing to the authority of the church. In reply to what is meant to be christian, informants tended to stress being honest and happy⁵³, playing a part in church⁵⁴, going to church on Sunday⁵⁵ and dressing correctly⁵⁶. A few

⁴⁹Zomba P5 and P7

⁵⁰Zomba P5

⁵¹Zomba P7:3

⁵²Kalilombe 1983:77

⁵³E.g. Zomba P7 and P7:6

⁵⁴Zomba P4

⁵⁵Zomba P9:3

⁵⁶Zomba P9:3 and P9:1

acknowledged the importance of prayer⁵⁷ and being born again⁵⁸. The majority of rural interviewees claimed that their role in church was to sweep, mop the church⁵⁹, to keep discipline in church and contribute money. None of my informants spoke of the need to influence society or change the church to suit local conditions.

In looking at attitudes behind other answers, the overriding impression is of an apprehension of death and sickness. Not only is the reality in Malawi such that death is a frequent occurrence, but the church has since its arrival, “tended to preach a gospel of fear with emphasis on evil and fires of hell instead of on the God of love”⁶⁰. This was expressed in an overemphasis on the world to come, manifested in the frequent mention of heaven⁶¹, which manifested itself in the common belief that one should confess so that “on your death day the church will witness you as a Christian”⁶², so that you can be recognised by the church and can have a proper funeral⁶³. Being a Christian for many rural interviewees means that you are searching for eternal life⁶⁴ and helping others to get to heaven⁶⁵.

Between 1990 and 1992, KR Ross of the University of Malawi conducted

⁵⁷Zomba P9:3 and P4

⁵⁸Zomba P8:4 who mentioned how it meant that you had removed the sin from Adam and Eve.

⁵⁹E.g. Zomba P4

⁶⁰Bishops 1996:11

⁶¹An old Catholic hymn expresses this: “*Dzijo lathu labwino lili kwa Mulungu / Ndife alendo pano kumwamba ndi kwatha*” - “Our homeland is with God, we are strangers/Here on earth, but heaven is our true home” - quoted in Mnemba 1986:30. Ross discovered that of a number of benefits promised by Jesus, the most frequently chosen amongst northern Malawian Christians was ‘eternal life after death’, 86% of men and 72% women, giving some corroboration to the thesis that Christianity’s appeal in Africa is related to its answer to the problem of death. Ross also found the least chosen (only 6% of respondents) was the power to change society. His conclusion “It is what Jesus Christ offers at the personal rather than the social level which clearly predominates” seems to contradict the common African theologian’s argument that the African is essentially a community-orientated person. This contradiction was born out in the present researcher’s work, it was the priests who would consider that the African thought communally, and the lay Christians who did not. - Ross 1997:165-6

⁶²Zomba P4

⁶³E.g. Zomba P4 and P6:3

⁶⁴Zomba P7:6, P9:1

⁶⁵Zomba P9:2

research into preaching in the mainstream churches in Malawi. His interviews attempted to establish what issues the laity felt were important in the sermons and what the priests believed they were preaching on. Dr Ross allowed me access to the completed questionnaires of this survey and through them we can have a glimpse of another measure of how the laity saw the church. In general, very little attention was given to social issues in the sermons, although the figures are consistently higher for the Roman Catholic Church than for the CCAP⁶⁶. The interviews conducted during 1992 show very little concern with the political events unfolding within the church: out of the 136 notes of sermons from Catholic sermons only two touched on wider political issues, and eleven touched on oppression, justice or corruption. The majority of the sermons continued to concentrate on heaven, prayer, sin, and the need to follow rules⁶⁷. Church members were asked whether the preaching in their church was concerned with the personal life alone or whether it also touched on the national. Of the 98 Catholics who replied to this question, 81 thought that it was also concerned with the national life. However, when any of the respondents elaborated, it was clear that national life meant assisting the self-help projects of the government, getting involved in primary health projects, and the church supporting the government. One respondent said that the preaching was concerned with the national life because the church preached the same message as the government! Another reason for preaching being connected to the national life was that “we pray for the president”⁶⁸.

These three measures suggest that my informants claimed that as laity, they should fulfil their obligations to the priest and they openly answered with what they had been taught to believe by the Catholic Church. Of course, how deeply faith has penetrated is difficult to ascertain for anybody, but there was little evidence that it had

⁶⁶Ross 1995:7

⁶⁷From the interview questionnaires: although the questions were not set by me and therefore did not explicitly address my issues, they were useful to discern general trends and provided a clearer picture of the breakdown of answers than is evident from the research findings presented by KR Ross.

⁶⁸As one priest cynically put it during my stay in Malawi; all we did during Banda's time was pray for his long life, and God clearly heard and answered our prayer.

mixed significantly with their daily lives⁶⁹. My evidence suggested that the importance of life after death and the lack of political and social awareness may make it difficult for the church to advocate change in this world.

e. The Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Marriage

As we saw in Chapter 1, the Sacraments, according to Catholic doctrine, are the symbols of grace from Christ to the church. The eucharist is the “source and summit of our faith”⁷⁰, symbolising an inner reality, and as such could be seen as a valuable starting point for inculturation. With the Malawian life being punctuated with various rites of passage, it would seem that it is a good place to start.

According to church doctrine⁷¹, most adult Malawian Catholics cannot receive communion since they have not been married in church or have had a divorce. However, it was difficult to determine how many of those interviewed fell into this category, since they did not advertise that they had fallen from the church’s grace. Most people interviewed felt that the sacraments were from God and therefore could not be changed in any way. In contrast, one respondent linked the sacraments to belief in traditional religion, when she stated:

The sacrament which is good to change is the first of God’s commandment ‘You shall have no other Gods before me’, because many people’s goods are being stolen, you need to confer so that you could know who has stolen your things. Or when you are seriously sick from something you don’t know and that which you have never heard of it. You visit the traditional doctor in order to know its cause. And it is said that, doing that is a sin to God himself⁷².

In this section we will use the church’s accepted use of ‘sacraments’, and since death will be dealt with later, we will concentrate on the eucharist and marriage.

⁶⁹As evidenced in Zomba P4, when it was claimed that there was no link between faith and tribal life.

⁷⁰LG 2

⁷¹Zomba 2

⁷²Zomba P7:3

The majority of the rural informants expressed the happiness they felt when they received the eucharist. It is difficult to establish whether this was due to the lack of theological vocabulary to express deeper ideas, or to the catechetical training they had received, or to their feelings. Most believed that when they received the mass they were receiving Jesus Christ who stays with them for the rest of the day⁷³. Some felt confusion or lack of freedom if they did not receive⁷⁴. In contrast to the more educated people interviewed in the town who claimed to no longer attend confession⁷⁵, those in the outstations were concerned that the person receiving needs a good confession before they receive⁷⁶. Others had so low an opinion of their parish priests that they were beginning to wonder why they should confess to them⁷⁷. There was a recognition by many christians and a few priests that priests who have a bad reputation create an impediment to christians receiving communion⁷⁸. All those questioned in the villages expressed a desire to receive the communion every day if there were enough priests.

At the time of research there had been few experiments with catechists taking the reserved sacrament to the villages, in the meantime, the outstations were dependent on the priest coming to them. Whenever people were questioned about lay distribution, it was seen as desirable only in so far as it helped the priests, rather than for any intrinsic value of its own⁷⁹. One informant said that it had been tried, but other communicants knew the sins of the lay person and so refused to receive⁸⁰. The experiment had had to be abandoned.

Those who are concerned with the inculturation of the eucharist have looked to

⁷³See Zomba P5, P4

⁷⁴Zomba P8:2

⁷⁵Zomba 2, 8, 9, 12, 23

⁷⁶Zomba P7 and P8:4

⁷⁷Zomba P7

⁷⁸Eg Zomba P7.

⁷⁹Zomba 26, 27.

⁸⁰Zomba 38

traditional sacrifices for inspiration⁸¹, and there are a number of lessons which could be learned from them. Christians in the town were more willing to talk about their opinions of traditional african sacrifices than in the rural areas. Amongst these informants there was the belief that the ancestors' sacrifices had clearly worked⁸². However they felt that unlike the weekly action of the eucharist, traditional sacrifices were for catastrophes⁸³, often with much preparation⁸⁴ and tended to be spontaneous in format rather than following a set formula⁸⁵. One of the big problems expressed by these Catholics was that the sacrifice of Christ which was being celebrated was a once-for-all sacrifice⁸⁶, something that was not part of the traditional sacrificial ritual. However the way that the ancestors had concentrated on the symbol of sharing⁸⁷ was seen to be valuable in the search for common ground with the eucharist.

The issue of marriage was problematical. In Malawi, as elsewhere in Africa, there is difficulty in pinpointing the precise point when marriage occurs. Traditionally marriage is an on-going process, starting with a series of rites involving both families. From early missionary work,

The church did not take the wedding ceremony as the blessing of an existing marriage, but as the real thing. Therefore a marriage without the church ceremony can not be a real marriage, or at least not a Christian marriage. This in turn means, that because of either the high bride price or the expensive wedding feast or because of both, a Christian marriage is out of reach for most Christians, however faithful Christians they might be otherwise⁸⁸.

Those who have married in the "African" way may not receive communion until they

⁸¹See Chima and Zomba 20

⁸²Zomba 12 and 13

⁸³Zomba 18

⁸⁴Zomba 13

⁸⁵Zomba 8

⁸⁶Zomba 9

⁸⁷Zomba 20

⁸⁸Fiedler 1998:52 - all this leads Klaus Fiedler to the conclusion that "For the Sake of Christian Marriage, Abolish Church Weddings". See also Hastings 1973.

have had a church wedding, which is often rather expensive both in time and money⁸⁹. However, those in the villages and outstations did not question these rules. When asked the difference between an African marriage and a Christian marriage typical responses were:

In a non christian marriage it is like you are still hiding the matter from people while in a christian marriage it is in a christian way, for you have blessed it before God, so it is like you are asking God to bless you so that your love should continue⁹⁰.

A christian marriage is a real marriage, in a non christian marriage they are just friends⁹¹.

I don't receive. According to the Catholic faith, I haven't been to church for a long time, I haven't had a proper wedding ... so I'm no longer a practising Catholic, so I don't go to the service..⁹².

In a non-christian marriage, when they quarrel they just separate anyhow, while in a christian marriage it is difficult to separate for everyone remembers his/her vows and has faith to each other and they forgive each other's sin for the remembrance of the vows they made in front of the priest and God's altar⁹³.

Such quotations suggest that unless one has received a church marriage one is regarded as a non-christian. However, some urban informants and rural christians who dared to say things that they had not been taught in their catechism, said that, "There are

⁸⁹One outstation visited in the research was due to have a marriage blessing at the same time. However it did not happen because the woman was late. She and her "husband" had been working together in the fields, he had finished earlier and had gone to get ready, but she had never finished. They had failed to make the day a special day (Mkumbira outstation).

⁹⁰Zomba P7

⁹¹Zomba P8:5

⁹²Zomba 1, this man had been with his "wife" for 20 years and is still intending to get married when he has fulfilled all the preconditions. His attitude is that this is the church's game so one must follow their rules. When asked about why he hadn't got married: "all the preconditions to get married are inconvenient. I have to do classes, I've gone through so many schools, I have to go through instructions, I don't mind doing all that. I have to announce in church for three consecutive weeks, everyone here knows me.... The one thing I don't want to do is standing there in front of the people".

⁹³Zomba P8:3. It appears that for some of these interviewees "non-christian" may simply be "non-Catholic". However it normally refers to the African traditional marriage rather than a church wedding. The picture portrayed in these remarks is different from the traditional marriage, but it may be that the proximity of the town and rapid change had altered the meaning of traditional marriage, which had come simply to mean non-church wedding.

no differences, they are just the same, but it is simply a question of how you celebrate it”⁹⁴. Many women from Mayaka parish thought that marriage rules should be changed, not so much the rules concerning marriage recognition, but those of divorce. These women were indignant that a man could leave a woman and then neither would be able to receive communion, or if the man remarried, they felt that although the man should not receive, the second wife should be able to, and even the man should be able to if there had been good grounds for divorce⁹⁵.

f. Biblical Knowledge

As Weller and Linden have written⁹⁶, catholic missionaries were far less dependent on the Bible than protestant missionaries, and the way in which the Catholics have come to understand the Bible will have an important impact on the way their faith is lived. In Latin American liberation theology there is a stress on the liberative passages of the Bible, the way in which God led an oppressed people out of Egypt and the care that the prophets extolled for the poor and marginalised. Although biblical knowledge was not explicitly questioned in this fieldwork, it was interesting to note the allusions to it in conversations. Thus these points are based mainly on anecdote, a valid source of data for qualitative research, but one which must be used more cautiously than other sources.

Amongst the educated informants, knowledge of the Bible was surprisingly limited, as one lady expressed when she mentioned a visit by a group of christians to a mourning friend. Before they entered the house to express their condolences, they sat around trying to think of a Bible passage to offer, after half an hour they could not remember one, she compared this with the use of the Bible by the Protestant churches⁹⁷. A priest understood Jesus’ request that his disciples leave everything to follow him, to

⁹⁴Zomba P3

⁹⁵Zomba P5:5

⁹⁶Weller and Linden 1984:103

⁹⁷Zomba 23

indicate that they left their wives, in a similar way to divorce⁹⁸.

The birth of multiparty democracy has coincided with a rapid rise of prices through the suspension of aid, poor harvests and a declining economy (amongst other things). Although many people blamed the 1992 Pastoral Letter for this rise in prices, one man said, “It was written in the Bible before the bishops themselves wrote that letter ‘buyers shall not be happy, but sellers shall be happy’. So we can’t say it has been caused by the Pastoral Letter, but it is God’s plan for it is in the Bible”⁹⁹. Perhaps there are glimpses here of a fate-driven faith. Another understood the commandment “You shall have no other gods beside me” to forbid the use of traditional doctors, a commandment that she wanted to have changed¹⁰⁰. Other unorthodox understandings cover the position of the priest (“he is like an apostle because he wears a robe”¹⁰¹), to the celibacy of a priest (“they cannot marry because you cannot combine two sacraments, i.e. ordination and marriage”¹⁰²), or that Paul wrote that “for a person to be a good servant of God he should not marry”¹⁰³.

Although these examples may be anecdotes, together with other interviews they indicate a widespread lack of knowledge of the Bible. This is a problem that many hope the small christian communities will address, but unless the priests display a firmer grasp of the Bible and the message of liberation in the Scriptures, it is likely to remain an impediment. It is a problem which the bishops have urged their priests to address and “to make the Bible available and accessible to all the faithful”¹⁰⁴.

The Montfort Missionaries are starting the education process and people were asking for better education on matters of inculturation, and for better homilies and

⁹⁸Zomba P7

⁹⁹Zomba P7:6

¹⁰⁰Zomba P8:3

¹⁰¹Zomba P8:2

¹⁰²Zomba P8:3

¹⁰³Zomba P6:3 - this person seemed to be well informed about the church and the Bible.

¹⁰⁴Bishops 1996:7

biblical studies from the priests. This seems another indication of the gap between the hierarchy and the laity. On the one hand, Pastoral Letters contain biblical quotations and scriptural theology inspired by Latin America, on the other, what is perceived as a lack of thought-provoking sermons keep the population ignorant of the Bible¹⁰⁵. This is an issue which the *limana* system will address.

g. 1992 and Politics

Von Doepp concludes that the church hierarchy in Malawi does not consider poverty to be a political matter¹⁰⁶. To many rural Catholics interviewed, the Pastoral Letter was not political, it was simply advice to the government. This may explain why they normally felt that the church should not be concerned with politics. By and large the Catholics felt pleased that the bishops had, “out of their mercy and love for the people”, spoken out in 1992. Most of the language indicated that the people themselves had been passive in the liberation that had occurred and had not questioned their own role in it; for example, the world has been changed¹⁰⁷, the ill-treatment has stopped¹⁰⁸. Many mentioned the freedom of expression and movement that had come with the change of government, and the disappearance of party cards which were needed at arbitrary times under Banda and were used by officials to obtain money from people¹⁰⁹. The economy had gone into disarray since the change of government and at street level prices of basic commodities were rising. Thus many blamed their increased hardship on the Pastoral Letter¹¹⁰.

People in Nankhunda stressed that the letter had enhanced their faith and had

¹⁰⁵Zomba 3, 26, P5:3, P6

¹⁰⁶Von Doepp 1998:116

¹⁰⁷Zomba P5

¹⁰⁸Zomba P7:5

¹⁰⁹E.g. Zomba P4, P8:4, P9:1

¹¹⁰E.g. Zomba P4, P7, P8:5 - some going so far as to say that it was only the working people who benefited from the Pastoral letter because everyone else was getting poorer - P8:2. Europa Publications 1997:596.

made it easier to show others that their church was strong¹¹¹. However to the town people it seemed that the church had returned to silence, that 1992 was a blip on the history of the Catholic Church in Malawi. Many laity and priests alike felt that although the Pastoral Letter had not led to further action from the hierarchy, it had encouraged the priests to realise that they could speak out in homilies and look at the real situation. This was increasingly happening, although was still not a regular feature in many churches¹¹².

Most of the comments suggested that the church was seen as the national hierarchy, and that any political action must come from them. Rural informants felt that the church should not be involved in politics, but did have a right to comment or advise occasionally. When asked which part of faith spoke of liberation, most village Christians did not answer the question, or commented that no part did¹¹³. A few, however, saw the homilies and the interpretations of the Gospel as liberative¹¹⁴.

h. The Priesthood

For the majority of village Catholics interviewed there was a tension between their ideal understanding of the priesthood and their practical experience of it. Their idealised view held that the priest should be a light to the people, a brother, part of God, “a visible Christ” or in the position of Jesus¹¹⁵. However, in their experience the behaviour of the priests presented problems. Although there was no means for me to establish the truth of these allegations, for this thesis it is simply important to discover people’s **perceptions**. These individuals clearly felt that the priests had failed them and

¹¹¹Zomba P4 and P5

¹¹²E.g. Zomba 9 and 28. The Letter also changed the situation sufficiently for the Montfort Missionaries and their printing press to print further education for the laity and to encourage the publication of political and religious press.

¹¹³Zomba P3

¹¹⁴See for example, Zomba P4:2

¹¹⁵See Zomba P5:F, P2, P4:A, P6

their congregations¹¹⁶. Their main complaint was that priests were womanisers¹¹⁷ and that they kept control of decision-making policies¹¹⁸. In their opinion this had led to a decline in the number of confessions or to people seeking mass in areas where they did not know the misdeeds of the priests. There were complaints that the priests no longer did what they were supposed to, in terms of providing the sacraments and visitations¹¹⁹.

Some felt that the root of such problems lay in a seminary training system which cut the ordinand off from the people and was irrelevant to parish life¹²⁰. This, they felt, led to a feeling of alienation between them and their priests, especially marked in priests' seeming refusal to stay in the villages and eat local food¹²¹. Although the laity interviewed in villages believed that the priest should be an example to the people, they felt that his wealth and his dishonesty over women placed a great chasm between them¹²².

At ordination the priest achieves greater status and wealth than his peers, even his parents look up to him¹²³. This led to many respondents believing that the majority of priests were not motivated by spirituality but by the power that accompanied their ordination¹²⁴. The bishop himself, saw one of the chief obstacles to inculturation to be the attitudes of the priests. Although permission has come from Rome, he sees the

¹¹⁶Zomba 24

¹¹⁷This has been mentioned previously, some advocate marriage to rectify the secrecy that now surrounds it. Most newspaper short stories containing a priest emphasise his sexual sins and hypocrisy (Fiedler 1995:4).

¹¹⁸Zomba 25

¹¹⁹Zomba P5:7, P6 - the priests no longer take people to hospital, and no longer spend time with the people. One of the biggest arguments against priests marrying was that they would no longer have time for the congregations - I believe this points to the growing problem already there which people feel would be exacerbated if priest's families were widely recognised.

¹²⁰Zomba 2, P5:2

¹²¹Zomba 1. Also P6, where the cook complained that he had two priests to cook for, one of whom refused to eat western food and the other refused to eat Malawian food, he had to cook two meals each day.

¹²²Zomba P6

¹²³Zomba 13, 15, 23, 25

¹²⁴Zomba 23, 15, 8, 21.

priests as failing to take the opportunities. As he said, “if you could change the priests, the bishops, the religious ... things would go faster”¹²⁵.

Such complaints suggest that a change in the idea of the priesthood is needed to prevent the church from maintaining double standards¹²⁶. Some informants suggested that the laity are beginning to assert themselves and to point out to their priests what they expect of them¹²⁷. The problem of priests’ behaviour was highlighted in the 1995 AMECEA Assembly: “Let us avoid giving scandal to our people by our extravagant style of life. Let us be accountable and *transparent* to those we serve and those who support us”¹²⁸ and in June 1995 thirty Malawian priests in Mua attempted to work out “how can we restore our image as priests? .. the image of the priest is at its lowest ebb nation-wide”¹²⁹.

i. Africanisation

We have seen that church services were beginning to incorporate new ideas and attempts at inculturation, especially with music and dance. Many rural informants felt that the church was already African, mostly due to the fact that prayers were in Chichewa and that the priests were Malawian. Although first impressions seemed to

¹²⁵Zomba 20

¹²⁶The problem was evident to ordinands in the Kachebere African Way of Life Club in 1970; “We have impressed upon many people to look at us ministers as if we were demigods, well-polished human beings, inerrable, first-class people, indisputable, more important than doctors or presidents, more wise than scholars or diplomats, more worthy of respect than police or even parents. We are looked at as ingenious spirits of initiative, mini-super-men, factotums and amateur theologians. Are we in fact so much? Do we need to be all that? Is that the notion of minister?”

Our relationships with people are, therefore, frequently insincere. People call us ‘Father’ and they pay us no compliment. They regard us as men who see but half of life and seldom hear the truth. Others have been taught to fear us, to make few demands, to give us the benefit of the doubt. We can preach badly and make no effort to solve man’s problem or to reach his heart, and poor deluded fools will praise us for our words. Even the more intelligent are apt to excuse us our meaningless words with pity for the abundance of our work. Yet we were not too busy to preach well.

What sort of ministers are we? We have been a sort of island in the middle of the sea, a theological isolation; we have ceased to be ‘men’, no more real priests and of course no true alter Christus” - Kachebere 1970:4.

¹²⁷Zomba 33, and P5

¹²⁸AMECEA 1995: 42

¹²⁹Unpublished letter dated 30 June 1995 from Ntcheu Parish.

indicate a lack of traditional culture in the services and in church, it was clear that many of those interviewed in the outstations and parishes felt otherwise. They welcomed the girls in white clothing dancing¹³⁰, the different gestures now employed¹³¹, and the songs and drumming in church¹³².

However, some of these interviewees had suggestions to the church: one felt that there was a need to increase the faith of the people by stressing the continuity of prayers from the ancestors¹³³, and another that it was often the expatriate priests who were initiating change rather than the Malawian priests, whose education and raised status made them despise their own culture¹³⁴. Some believed that the drums used in church were a concession, and that they needed to be used more, especially instead of clapping after gospel readings¹³⁵.

The issue of funerals is a pertinent one for the Malawians. One man was experiencing difficulty because the church had tried to replace the traditional *sadaka* ritual with the mass. This was a ritual which involved food and drink to lay the spirit of the lost one to rest, necessary before the surviving spouse could remarry. This man had met someone he wanted to marry, but although he had sent requests and money to the parish centre for this mass for the last six months, there had been no mass and he was considering simply arranging a *sadaka* and getting married¹³⁶. In Mayaka there had been discussions between the laity and the priest to explore the issue of funerals, and it had been decided to change the laws governing who could have a christian funeral. The first child of an unmarried couple would now be included and if a person died outside a church marriage, their deeds should determine whether they had a christian funeral,

¹³⁰Zomba P4

¹³¹Zomba P4, P8:4 - this includes gestures for the Lord's Prayer.

¹³²Zomba P4 and P5

¹³³Zomba P6:3

¹³⁴Zomba P6:2

¹³⁵Zomba P6:3

¹³⁶Zomba P8:5

rather than the status of their marriage¹³⁷.

However, to many it seemed that inculturation was being imposed from above. One, when questioned about inculturation and the way in which the pope was in favour of it said “Who is he to tell us? ... The problem actually ... it’s not the people, we’re being told by outsiders ‘Do this, this is your culture, this culture is foreign ...’”¹³⁸. Although this was not a frequent comment, generally expatriate priests were more vocally in favour of experimentation than Malawian priests¹³⁹. Members of Nankhunda outstation claimed that they simply followed what they were told, they made no choices because they did not have the education to decide and to work out what would be good¹⁴⁰. A choir master expressed the concern that although he would like to see more African songs, drumming and ululating, the priest was constantly asking him to play more traditional music. This seemed to suggest that in this parish at least, there was an attempt at inculturating into a past culture rather than taking the modern day situation seriously¹⁴¹.

There seemed to be a division in the diocese on this issue. For example, in Mayaka, the priest was clearly thinking about the issues in a critical way, trying to work out how to appeal to the youth and to the culture. In 1994, the parish had seen what many described as a fully inculturated ordination and we have mentioned the attempts to bring funeral rules more into line with the life situation of the people. However, at Sunday service the congregation practised how to make the sign of the cross several times and how to clap after the gospel¹⁴². The bishop appears keen on the idea of inculturation and claims that he always permits whatever is presented to him for

¹³⁷Zomba P6:3

¹³⁸Zomba 1

¹³⁹As the Bishop Allan Chamgwera said, often the expatriates are too enthusiastic and want everything to be included and the Malawians are too cautious and want nothing included - Zomba 20.

¹⁴⁰Zomba P4

¹⁴¹Zomba P5

¹⁴²For the priest’s ideas see Zomba P6:1, for the author’s impressions of the Sunday morning masses see Zomba M2.

approval, but he is still convinced that more research is needed and he has done little experimentation¹⁴³. Here there is the problem that, strictly, inculturation should not come from the hierarchy, but unless the hierarchy are educated and willing to experiment, it will be difficult for the people to think about it and take the initiative.

As has been mentioned in passing, initiation continues to be seen as a problem by the church and in Zomba, a Catholic boy will normally be punished if he decides to be circumcised by going into the village for the traditional ceremony. The abhorrence of the initiation process was widespread amongst the educated¹⁴⁴. The church has begun to recognise that there must be a replacement rather than simple condemnation. In some churches there are experiments to bring the boys into the church centre and encourage the people who carry out the task in the villages to come to the church. There they extract the 'unsuitable' (normally the sexual) side of the initiation and try to teach the boys how to live in society. However, both the parishes in Zomba where I came across the church initiation ideas, were still punishing boys for going to initiation¹⁴⁵, although the issue might be a pertinent one, the church clearly does not yet know how to fulfil the need.

j. The Community

African scholarship has often stressed the communitarian nature of african society¹⁴⁶, claiming that unless the christian religion incorporates this aspect of society, it is destined to remain un-inculturated. The interviews conducted suggested an individualised faith - going to mass will get the individual to heaven, even if the whole family is punished when one goes to initiation rites¹⁴⁷. A few educated people saw the eucharist as something that enhanced the community¹⁴⁸, but in the main it was

¹⁴³Zomba 20

¹⁴⁴Even amongst those who were pro-inculturation in other respects, and one who had anthropological training - Zomba 13.

¹⁴⁵Sitima and Mayaka

¹⁴⁶Dickson 1984:47

¹⁴⁷Zomba P8

¹⁴⁸Zomba 11, 18

understood as an individual occasion. As KR Ross discovered “it is what Jesus Christ offers at the personal rather than the social level which clearly predominates”¹⁴⁹.

k. The *Limana* and other Church Organisations

In the Pastoral Letter of 1996 the bishops stressed that “[i]t is in the ... SCC’s that the Universal Church is incarnated”, using the language of incarnation theology and recognising that SCCs are one of the main ways forward. Most parishes and outstations in Zomba diocese were divided into *limana* or *mphakati* and normally these were run by the local laity holding meetings about twice a month in different peoples’ houses. It is here that one would expect the local theology to arise.

Kalilombe believed that the SCC network found resonance with the Malawians because of the MCP network which stretched into the villages¹⁵⁰. Others in Zomba saw it as the resurgence of an Ngoni practice used for administration, communication and social development, which the Chewa adopted¹⁵¹. The *limana* were also seen to respond to the African community spirit¹⁵². I suspect there is some truth in these remarks and the future growth of the *limana* will confirm whether they appeal to Malawian culture. This may be a sign of inculturation.

These *limana* were more evident in the rural areas than in the town of Zomba itself. Those who were active in them, especially in the rural parishes, seemed to benefit enormously. At meetings they would revise the Gospel reading from the Sunday service and talk about what it meant to them personally. The main benefit was that it was here that the community was realised: the group would help each other in daily tasks, in weeding and farming, in visiting and helping the sick¹⁵³.

¹⁴⁹Ross 1997:166

¹⁵⁰Kalilombe 1983:360

¹⁵¹Zomba 11

¹⁵²Zomba 16

¹⁵³Zomba P5, P5:5 and P7:6

Occasionally it seemed that the *limana* had taken the role of the priest and local parish. As one man who was ill told me, although he is in the centre of the parish, it is the *limana* who visits him, not the priest¹⁵⁴. For others the church was good now that they had these small christian communities¹⁵⁵ since they had freedom of expression and women and men were on an equal footing (normally). Through the *limana* one would receive the permission and facility to get married, baptised and confirmed¹⁵⁶, it was the *limana* which conducted the funerals and there were *limana*-based groups such as Catholic Women's Associations and choirs.

Many mentioned the fact that if you were backsliding in your faith, and not going to church, the *limana* would come to you and support you¹⁵⁷. For those who did not attend church, the *limana* provided a means to hear the Gospel¹⁵⁸ and to help people understand how to follow Jesus¹⁵⁹. One interviewee went as far as to say "it acts as the source of our faith"¹⁶⁰.

It seemed that there was little discussion of a political nature in the *limana*, but this may have been due to the difference of understanding of politics between the West and Malawi¹⁶¹. They clearly helped each other socially and contributed financially to the parish¹⁶². Many suggested that during the run up to the referendum, there was discussion

¹⁵⁴Zomba P6:2

¹⁵⁵Zomba P7:6 and P5:5 "there is justice in the church, everything is in order. When there is any problem we will solve it, the *limana* will help. The *limana* see the problem and they send leaders to the parish council and this helps".

¹⁵⁶Zomba 10: "among the duties of that committee in the basic christian community is to see to it that all the Catholics have ... have followed whatever requirement is needed".

¹⁵⁷Zomba P4 and P5

¹⁵⁸Zomba P6:6

¹⁵⁹Zomba P5:3

¹⁶⁰Zomba P5

¹⁶¹For many Malawians, politics was the actual business of being a minister, thus the 1992 Pastoral Letter was not an indication that the bishops were involved in politics.

¹⁶²E.g. Zomba 10 relates how the parish in Lwanga made the decisions about the expansion of the church by motions going between the parish council and the *limana*.

of politics through the booklets produced by the Montfort Missionaries¹⁶³, and that the *limana* were prepared to discuss such matters again if it were needed.

As any structure has its critics, problems with *limana* were mentioned. One group of women could not criticise the parish priest and the church, but felt fine about criticising the *limana*¹⁶⁴. A frequent complaint was that they were too large, one man estimating that his was five villages¹⁶⁵ and another that the one he attended was about 40 families¹⁶⁶. At that point it was simply another administrative unit, as some of the priests remarked. There was also no evidence that the lay leaders received any training for their role in the *limana*. In one outstation visited, it appeared that the group of twelve leaders would have a meeting before the main community meeting at which the decisions would be made and then presented to the others¹⁶⁷. However, others felt that at least with a *limana* you could choose another chairman if things were too bad¹⁶⁸. Others suggested that if things went wrong in the *limana*, then it was really difficult to continue in faith¹⁶⁹.

In the towns, the *limana* are not as visible, presumably because of the working conditions of the town people and because of the proximity of the priest. Some who were very active in the church had not heard of them¹⁷⁰, others saw them as far too large to be useful¹⁷¹, and others felt that it was a successful secular movement which worked despite the priests¹⁷².

¹⁶³Zomba P6:3

¹⁶⁴Zomba P4

¹⁶⁵Zomba P4 - he was the leader of the group.

¹⁶⁶Zomba 12 - with the size of a Malawian family this could be in excess of 150 people.

¹⁶⁷Zomba P4

¹⁶⁸Zomba P4

¹⁶⁹Zomba P8:5

¹⁷⁰Zomba 23

¹⁷¹Zomba 12

¹⁷²Zomba 33

It seems clear that a potential for real inculturation and local theology is possible with the setup of the *limana* system, since it gives an opportunity for people to discuss their faith. However, the emphasis continues to be on the position of the priest in the church and until there is a more precise training and encouragement of *limana*, which are small enough to know everyone well, they are unlikely to fulfil their potential as the cells for the growth of local theology. At present they simply continue the universal theology of the Catholic Church. Bennett¹⁷³ has suggested that the *limana* in Mkumbira outstation of Zomba Cathedral have moved the catholics from passivity to activity. This was not evident from my research in Mkumbira. I have therefore had to make comparisons with interview material from other parishes, and on the strength of that, I would suggest that his limited number of informants, most of whom were leaders, overemphasised the *limana* activity¹⁷⁴.

Other than the *limana* system, the Catholic Women's Association was strong. However, this performed a fairly traditional role, cleaning the church, pounding the maize for the priest or saying the rosary. A group of christians, especially women, had created the Zomba Action Group. This group raised funds for hospitals, made people aware of issues and worked ecumenically for education.

3. Issues which Concern the People

So far this case study has given a description of how interviewed Catholics expressed opinions about various parts of the church. The method of interviewing in ways which enabled the thoughts and concerns of the interviewees to emerge, allows attention to issues which concern the grassroots so that the church and theologians address the right questions, and avoid providing elaborate answers to the wrong questions. In the rural district this was more difficult than in the towns since the people interviewed expressed the opinion that the church was "perfect". However, it is possible

¹⁷³Bennett 1991

¹⁷⁴His interviewees were confined to a husband and wife, a mother and sister, his own family and one other.

to read between the lines to discover some of the issues which were important to them. Here, I will need to base conclusions and implications on many different answers, drawing together the main points.

a. Death

One of the issues emerging throughout this discussion is that of frequent and sudden deaths in Malawi¹⁷⁵. The preoccupation with eternal life, seen especially in interviews with rural Catholics, was clearly a manifestation of this concern. Life in Malawi, as in much of the continent is punctuated with deaths, especially with HIV infection estimated at a third of the population. Often complaints about priests' behaviour were associated with sickness, that they should take the sick to hospital¹⁷⁶ and there were complaints that the priest did not visit people when they were ill¹⁷⁷. There were complaints about how long it took for funerals to be conducted and there has already been mention of the issue of *sadaka*¹⁷⁸. The most common reason given for priests not getting married was the fact that they would have split loyalties if one of their family was sick¹⁷⁹.

This frequent mention of death, of the next life and of sickness, indicates to me that the church has not yet addressed this important concern of the people. The traditional belief system had special rites of passage such as the *sadaka* and a healing tradition which has been condemned by the church, but not replaced. However, as the 1996 Pastoral Letter wrote, the Catholic Church in Malawi has often emphasised eternal life above earthly life¹⁸⁰. Such a gap was less evident in ancestral religious beliefs. De Gabriele sees this obsession with death as a result of the traditional belief in spirits and

¹⁷⁵The preoccupation with death is also mentioned by Ross 1997:166

¹⁷⁶Zomba P5:7

¹⁷⁷For example, Zomba P6:2

¹⁷⁸In the villages the catechist or leaders may conduct the funeral and then the relatives can go to the parish for mass at a later date.

¹⁷⁹E.g. Zomba P6:3

¹⁸⁰Bishops 1996:7.3

the need to receive good treatment from them during this life¹⁸¹. He carried out detailed interviews in Sitima parish of Zomba diocese, and found that although belief in spirit possession was widespread, the official church continued to ignore it and thus drive the belief underground. De Gabriele believes that this issue must be addressed to ensure that the dichotomy between church and daily life does not continue¹⁸².

b. Priests and Celibacy

Although the majority of the parish priests in Zomba diocese are Malawians, they have been trained in St Peter's Seminary, which continues to teach traditional scholastic and philosophical theology. Many educated people and a few priests recognise that they are not prepared for the conditions of the rural village when they emerge from the seminary¹⁸³. Together with this, there is a status associated with the priesthood since ordination often brings a large house, a car, comfortable living and respect far quicker than in most other jobs.

There was a lot of dissatisfaction beneath the surface with the priests, especially evident in Mayaka at a meeting of all the church women. There they were asked whether a priest should be allowed to get married, and at first there was the general feeling that they should not, using the traditional formulations of catholic doctrine. However, then one lady stood up and said that the way that priests have women in secret now, the way in which they were breaking up families and spreading AIDS, meant that they should be allowed to have the choice, so that they would learn to respect women. This opened the discussion into loud clapping and ardent agreement, everyone wanting to have their say¹⁸⁴. Amongst the educated many called the priests "hypocrites"¹⁸⁵.

There were frequent complaints about the priests' distance from the people. We

¹⁸¹De Gabriele 1995:1

¹⁸²De Gabriele 1995:5. Although further research may show that the dichotomy is felt only by academics and clerics rather than by the people.

¹⁸³Zomba P6:4

¹⁸⁴See Zomba P5:5

¹⁸⁵Zomba 1, 23, 25, 31

have noted already the belief that seminary training put a gap between the priests and the laity. Other complaints included that “unlike the European priests, [Malawian priests] don’t have the time or the inclination to listen to the people”¹⁸⁶, except when they want more money, for which some of them use shaming the congregation to ensure a good collection¹⁸⁷. The ostentatious wealth of the priests was also criticised. Some of the priests also felt that they should be above the people¹⁸⁸, that they did not need to stay in the villages and eat their food. Only one priest neared an expression of equality when he advocated that as a priest you “need to sometimes live in the village, associate with them and if you do this, the people won’t mind that you’re rich”¹⁸⁹.

The most frequent complaint against the priests was their womanising¹⁹⁰. It was often commented that they had women in secret, and the majority of lay people, although they did not want married priests in an ideal world, recognised that they would be better than the non-celibate priesthood presently in existence¹⁹¹. Although the laity interviewed clearly felt embarrassed that their priests were creating scandals¹⁹², some priests continued to believe that people would forgive them if they were seen to be serving the people¹⁹³. The priests’ comments for not wanting marriage hinged on the financial impossibility with the present stipend¹⁹⁴, whereas many rural christians pointed out that it would be difficult for a married priest to have sufficient time and energy to devote both to his family and to them. Perhaps this demonstrates how the priest is expected to serve the people, and how dependent they have become on him to do various jobs which perhaps they could take on themselves. This suggests the ‘clerical disease’

¹⁸⁶Zomba P7

¹⁸⁷Zomba P7

¹⁸⁸Zomba 27, P6

¹⁸⁹Zomba 28

¹⁹⁰As one priest remarked “Of course, most of us are failing to be true celibates” Zomba P6.

¹⁹¹This reply was mostly given from women (eg Zomba P4, P5:5, P7).

¹⁹²Zomba P7

¹⁹³Zomba 16 - and these were the young seminarians, the priests of the future!

¹⁹⁴E.g. Zomba P6

that Baur sees as threatening the very fabric of the African Church¹⁹⁵ and must be addressed if an inculturated church is to survive. The response of the people varied, for some it was the job of the *limana* and the laity to tell the priest how to behave¹⁹⁶, for others the only option was prayer¹⁹⁷.

Von Doepp sees this abuse of priestly position to be threatening the political community and the understanding of democracy amongst the people. He believes that the perceptions of corruption and abuse of women undermine “the development of local level habits of cooperation and social trust” and leads to the credibility of the churches being diminished. Since in Malawi the churches continue to be the only formal institutions outside the state with a viable presence, the potential impact of such undermining is far-reaching¹⁹⁸.

c. Education

Change needs education, whether it is simply literacy or conscientisation. This is as valid for changes in the church as for changes in society and after almost a century of the church negating local culture in Malawi, there is a need to educate people giving them permission to use that culture¹⁹⁹. This was especially evident in the difference between the interviewees from the town and those from the villages. As yet there was no evidence of any training for the *limana* leaders²⁰⁰ and there were complaints that the priests’ sermons did not try to educate the laity²⁰¹. In the meantime, the uneducated people will favour a continuation of traditional patterns of the church²⁰² or will simply rely on the church structure to tell them what to do²⁰³.

¹⁹⁵Baur 1994:370

¹⁹⁶Zomba P5

¹⁹⁷Zomba 34

¹⁹⁸Von Doepp 1998:125

¹⁹⁹Zomba 2

²⁰⁰Although Bennett 1991 claimed there was.

²⁰¹Zomba 3

²⁰²Zomba 19

²⁰³Zomba P3

The bishop sees the need for education to further the cause of inculturation in particular,²⁰⁴ and in society the PAC is also accepting the challenge. In the transition period, the Montfort Missionaries tried to fulfil the need for education about the rapidly changing political situation with the publication of their popular *Mau a Mpingo* (Word of God) and *Education for Democracy* series of pamphlets which made available documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, liberation theology from Latin America and debates about democracy. In 1995, they launched a magazine *The Lamp* which aims to open the debate on politics and the church. The PAC programme for education began in 1996 and attempts to educate about contemporary matters²⁰⁵. Although it will not address the question of inculturation and change in the church, it is clear that changes in attitudes in society affect the church and it will be interesting in future years to chart the link between the two.

For change in the church there is a need to give the laity the tools to forge the future. As Chima writes: "When all this is said and done, the imperative of inculturation remains whether accepted or resisted, or whether only very few are ready to meet the challenge. The people - the christian community whose task this is primarily, must be taken into consultation, enlightened, briefed and provided with materials and programmes for their education. They should be consulted both at planning and implementation stages"²⁰⁶. The bishop of Zomba had realised this and the way in which he implements the suggestions of the African Synod will rely on an education process.

d. Finances

As has been mentioned, at the time of data collection the economy was experiencing large rises in prices²⁰⁷. This led to many complaints from the villagers that the church was doing nothing about it. Many interviewed believed that the priests were spending much of the offertory on cars, luxuries and especially women, rather than

²⁰⁴Zomba 20

²⁰⁵Von Doepp 1998:115

²⁰⁶Chima 1992:3

²⁰⁷Europa Publications 1997:596

helping their parishioners.

The collection of the offertory caused discontentment to some. In many churches the offertory plate was held at the front of the church, which some felt forced them into giving²⁰⁸. In Thondwe there were accusations that the priest tried to humiliate those who gave less than a *tambala* in the plate²⁰⁹. Such actions, if accurate, suggest that some priests abuse their positions, and recalls Von Doepp's findings of political statements from the institutional church. He highlights the paradox between the church's statements on government excesses and corruption and the lack of concern for the accumulation and distribution of wealth in the country²¹⁰.

In Chapter 4 we will discuss the concept of a local church, especially in reference to Verstraelen's research in Zambia²¹¹. One of the criteria he used to discover a local church was whether it provided for their own church and priest. In Zomba, although the weekly offertories were beginning to be used for the priest's food, there continued to be emphasis on receiving money from overseas²¹².

e. Ecclesiastical Justice

The African Synod and the 1992 Pastoral Letter reminded Catholics that as well as justice in government, there must be justice in the church²¹³, and many interviewees perceived a problem with ecclesiastical justice. This correlated strongly with education: very few educated informants thought the Catholic Church was a just institution, whilst

²⁰⁸Zomba 12

²⁰⁹Zomba P6:5

²¹⁰Von Doepp 1998:116

²¹¹Verstraelen 1975

²¹²Zomba 27, 28 and P6.

²¹³John Paul II:1995 No 106: "The Churches in Africa are also aware that, insofar as their own internal affairs are concerned, justice is not always respected with regard to those men and women who are at their service. If the Church is to give witness to justice, she recognizes that whoever dares to speak to others about justice should also strive to be just in their eyes. It is necessary therefore to examine with care the procedures, the possessions and the life style of the Church".

the majority of the villagers interviewed felt it was “perfect”²¹⁴. The issues that interviewees felt were unjust covered the position of women and the laity, formation training, oppressiveness of church tax and offertories, the position taken on African marriages and divorces, and the church’s eucharistic doctrines.

However, the most frequently cited issue was the wages paid to church workers. The national minimum wage in 1995 was set by the new government at K300 per month with accommodation or K330 without. Many church workers earned less than K100 and were able to survive simply because they lived close enough to be able to tend their gardens as well²¹⁵. Some excused the church claiming that it would pay more if it could²¹⁶. In comparison very few regarded the rules of the church as a problem, although clearly there was disagreement with some of the marriage stipulations, especially concerning divorce²¹⁷.

4. Links with the Universal Church

Since this thesis is concerned with the establishment of the local church, it is necessary to look at how the church in Zomba sees its relationship with the universal church or worldwide Catholic Church. This will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 4, but here we will make a few points. On the whole, the opinions gained through interviews with village Catholics is limited by the lack of education. Thus as one lady remarked “at first when people spoke of Egypt or France, we thought that those countries are in heaven”²¹⁸. Amongst the interviewees in the town, there was knowledge of the work of Chima and Mua, but outside the parish centres, the church was viewed

²¹⁴Of the 27 people I asked whether the church was just, there were 14 educated and 13 uneducated. 15 people said No - of which 13 of those were educated and 12 said yes - of which 11 were uneducated. It should be noted that for the purpose of this rather broad classification, priests and sisters count as educated.

²¹⁵Zomba P6

²¹⁶Zomba 16, P5:3

²¹⁷Zomba P5, rules which seemed to favour the men.

²¹⁸Zomba P3

as a unified whole. Although church services and activities are clearly different in every setting, general education was such that there was no knowledge that for example, drums were not used in western services. There was a reliance on the clergy, so that “Inculturation is a **must** because it is what the Holy Father wants”²¹⁹. Although the churches brought western denominationalism to Malawi²²⁰, most interviewees believed that Anglicans and Catholics were very similar²²¹.

The interviews conducted in the church of the diocese of Zomba suggest that there is little knowledge of the universal church here, and the nature of community life and educational standards have created a church congregation which cannot be anything but locally orientated. However, the church is not yet consciously local, and the majority of the laity continue to look to the church hierarchy or foreign centres for guidance. The vestiges of universality remain while the villages have not the courage or inclination to demand change. In Zomba, universality does not refer to communion with Catholics throughout the world since there is little knowledge of other Catholics, but to the way that mass is said and the church is orientated. It will be interesting to return to this point after we have looked at our next case study.

5. Conclusions

The methodology employed by this study has allowed a deeper insight into the Malawian Catholic Church than given by official documents from the national hierarchy. At the external level, the church appears western trained and western looking. The Episcopal Conference was silent during thirty years of dictatorship, but has since published Pastoral Letters which have helped the country in the transition to multiparty democracy. Since 1992, the bishops have failed to live up to the expectation of the laity that it would continue the pressure on the government, although the PAC has to a certain degree taken that role. Internal to the church there were a few lone voices during

²¹⁹Zomba 13

²²⁰Linden 1974

²²¹For example, Zomba P7

Banda's time, and since the 1994 election they have been empowered to address the political situation through their sermons. On the whole, however, the interviews gathered here gave little evidence of a linking of the political and social situations and the church as a whole continues to be organised in a traditional western manner²²². Groups or individuals who have tried to introduce inculturation have been marginalised by the mainstream. In the diocese case study presented here, the bishop has thought about some of the issues and at the point of fieldwork was considering how to implement the African Synod in the diocese. At the local or "hidden", level, the people are often disillusioned with the actions and attitudes of the "official church". The numerous anecdotes about the behaviour of the priests indicate an underlying concern with church personnel. As yet, few people used language which portrayed the laity as the church.

In the villages, people are used to being told what is expected of them. They tend not to question the authority of the priest and the state of the church is thus dependent upon the attitude of the priest. At parish level, there was an unwillingness to pressurise the church towards inculturation, with a strong desire to keep things "as we know". However there are experiments, and the ordination in Mayaka in 1994 shows that the process is beginning. Increasingly people in the villages have heard of Mua and Chima, and many of the young people are aware of the "Alleluya Band" which sings music from the Poor Clares in Lilongwe. During weekly services in some of the parishes, local dancing and music are being introduced and groups in the parishes are learning to support their priests with offertory gifts in kind. The *limana* system, although in its infancy, appeared to offer christians a smaller group in which to discuss faith and maintain some leadership and autonomy. Although the structure of the diocese has remained western and inculturation and liberation tentative, the seeds have been planted.

Thus there are tensions within the Malawian Catholic Church in the 1990s. On the one hand, there is an attempt to show the Vatican that the Episcopal Conference is

²²²The bishop's palace is on a hill away from the town and the parishes are organised into "outstations" - we will discuss this phrase in chapter 4.

concerned with justice and liberation theology. On the other hand the grassroots christians are not conscientised to have a liberative faith. There was no evidence of village based education other than during the transition, most people portraying a detachment from political means. The 1992 Pastoral Letter was not grounded in **their** action, even if Roche argues that the bishops were merely voicing the concerns of the villagers²²³. At the grassroots there is a paradox since they have welcomed the Pastoral Letter, but have failed to internalise the theological implications of it as it stresses a church which works for justice as a “voice of the voiceless”. It seems that there is a passive majority of christians who look to their leaders to be political rather than liberative.

The methodology has allowed the issues that affect the lives of the people to emerge and has developed a picture of what is happening to the church at a local level. The 1996 Catholic bishops' Pastoral Letter *Walking together in Faith* indicates that the suggestions of the African Synod have already started to be implemented. However, unless there was a radical revolution in the ten months between this research and the publication of the letter, this is an over-optimistic view of life at the grassroots in Zomba. Nevertheless it was clear that under the surface there lay the seeds of a liberative and inculturated church, especially if the *limana* are encouraged to become more than administrative units to help the clergy.

First impressions indicated a laity which was passive and unimaginative in faith since they expressed traditional formulations and doctrine and appeared to look to their priest for guidance. However, closer analysis of the interview material revealed that they were more critical of the priests, and of the inculturation process. Many of those interviewed voiced a desire for education and awareness, but it was a desire that required action from others rather than from themselves. Some of the laity were aware of the issues of inculturation, either asking for it, claiming it was imposed by the pope, or voicing concern that in a continent already divided by ethnic problems, a church policy

²²³Roche 1993

which emphasised those differences would only exacerbate divisions²²⁴. Perhaps the role of the church is to show that local theologies can exist side by side without fuelling antagonism, it is only by each locality formulating its own theology and future, that the church can be truly Catholic and Universal.

There were indications of a belief among the laity that the hierarchy were the church and that they would dictate subsequent inculturation and liberation. The potential of the small christian communities as a forum for discussion at the local level of their needs and aspirations is evident, but unless there is proper training and education, the mandate to develop a local theology will not be given to the laity. Clearly Zomba has an advantage over many towns in Malawi in that it is home to the University. With the large number of Catholic staff and the Theology Department, the influence on the town cannot be overlooked. However, this study has shown that outside the town more conventional beliefs and practices are still adhered to.

There are many obstacles to inculturation which are not confined to the Catholic Church, including:

Education in western schools and curriculums often results in acceptance of European values; that we often have grown attached to western music, liturgies, and art through their popularity and dominance; that there is a general conservatism in African churches which distrusts Africanisation and liturgical renewal; that there is often an otherworldly emphasis in our churches which prevents us from making Christianity relevant to the specific social, political, and economic problems of the day, including the problems surrounding gender, ethnicity and class²²⁵.

Many of the changes in the church in Zomba are instigated by priests, often expatriates, and many of the rural christians interviewed found it difficult to answer questions of faith. I would tentatively conclude that such opinions indicate that the church is not “owned” by the people. By this I mean that the clergy are concerned with their traditional roles, and often status, rather than encouraging education and change. There

²²⁴Zomba P6

²²⁵Spencer 1993:2

was no evidence that the parishes or outstations were involved in education or consciousness raising. However, some of the laity questioned such a set-up and wanted to be more involved in the church. This included requests that the lay be allowed to preach²²⁶.

Malawian society is in the process of transition. As such the role of the church will also change. Increased freedom of speech and the campaign for government accountability appeared to affect the attitude of the laity to the church, especially in the calls for church accountability. From the evidence presented, it would appear that it is not the Catholic Church which is spearheading a liberative attitude amongst the people, and inculturation in Zomba is limited to the arena of externals and church worship rather than to the structure and organisation of the church. Local culture has always played a part in the church. One african theologian believes that the segregation of the sexes in church is an example of how African culture has affected church practice in parts of the continent²²⁷ and the increased use of dance, drums, music and cloths shows a heightened awareness of traditional culture. However, many of the Malawian cultures are matrilineal and have traditionally used priestesses as the mediums for communication with the High God²²⁸; as the bishop confessed, there is still far to go on equality between the sexes in the church²²⁹. Such cultural practices have not yet been accepted into the church. The *mphakati* or *limana* system has been shown to be a reflection of a traditional discussion group and the authoritarian nature of the Catholic Church with its regulations and punishments system, is supported by a traditional respect for authority. The case study of the church in Zomba thereby challenges an easy definition and identification of inculturation, and forces theologians to reassess the criteria and ideas for such a process.

CIIR foresaw a dynamic role for the Catholic Church in the future of the country

²²⁶Zomba 38, P4:A, 10.

²²⁷Mombo 1998

²²⁸Phiri 1992:47 and 67

²²⁹Zomba 20

because “they are in touch with the people, and day-to-day experience in the parishes gives church leaders an understanding of the real facts of life in Malawi. At a time of crisis this places the churches in a position of decisive political importance”²³⁰. From this case study it would seem that instead there is often a gap between the laity and clergy both socially and within the church. The vast differences in educational standards, wealth and lifestyle, encourage separation.

This case study has allowed research to go beyond the official documents of the church and the theologies which are beginning to emerge at academic levels²³¹. It has shown how these theologies often have little impact at the local level and therefore questions whether they are ‘local theology’. There were signs that the church was local simply because there was little understanding of life beyond the local community, but this has not yet been translated into a conscious theology or activities of the local church. A traditional theological education continues to dominate the church, not only at clerical levels, but also in the villages, and on the whole, any inculturation impetus comes mainly from expatriates.

In the next chapter, we will use a similar methodology to look at a very different local church and then return to the diocese of Zomba in Chapter 4, when we look at the implications of the two case studies presented.

²³⁰CIIR 1993:27

²³¹See especially journals such as *Religion in Malawi* and *The Lamp*.

Chapter 3: The Church in Infanta

1. Introduction

The second case study looks at the church in the Philippines and concentrates on the Prelature of Infanta on the eastern coast of the island of Luzon. The same subsections of context and culture, context and church, and gospel are used, but in this church the local theology is more formulated and articulated. Thus the divisions are more blurred since the three elements identified by Schreier have begun to interplay in the formation of a local theology. The following chapter is descriptive of the events that are occurring in the prelature, but these allow discussion of the way in which a diocese can forge its own programmes.

Unlike the previous study, the Philippines has flourishing academic theologies. In the first part of this chapter only the salient points for the Prelature of Infanta will be mentioned. The chapter will begin with a brief discussion of the wider context in which the church of the Prelature operates.

Part A

2. Context and Culture

a. Politics

The Philippines are a group of 7100 islands in the Pacific Ocean, of which 880 are inhabited and only 462 have an area greater than a square mile. They are scattered and diverse in language and culture. In the May 1990 census the population was 60,664,887¹. Some of the islands, particularly Mindanao in the south, are at war, chiefly with the Muslims who call for administrative independence². Other islands such as Negros are wholly dependent on one industry, for example, the sugar industry, and control by the landlords has reduced the majority of the population to abject poverty.

After a history of colonialism and domination by the Spaniards (1565-1898)³ and then the Americans (1898-1945 - with a brief Japanese occupation), the Philippines began their history as an independent republic heavily dependent on the United States. In 1965 President Ferdinand Marcos was elected president.

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the emergence of student activism demanding social justice and national sovereignty. This, coupled with increasing pressure from the Muslims for more autonomy and the rise of the communist party, were cause for a growth in acts of political intimidation and violence especially after 1969⁴.

¹Demaine in Europa 1994:837

²In 1990 the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao was established - see McAmis 1992:116. However, terrorism and violence restarted at the end of 1995 and in November 1995, Mindanao was placed on red alert by the military - Philippines Daily Inquirer, 26/11/95, p1, 1/12/95 p1 and in March 1996 - 28 were dead after attacks by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front - Philippines Daily Inquirer - 18/3/96 and the Manila Times, 17/3/96 p3, reports on the sixth bomb in seven days in Zamboanga City blamed on Muslim extremist groups.

³Magellan landed in 1517 and the first permanent colony was established in 1565 on the central island of Cebu (McAmis 1992:111).

⁴Brown 1994:841



Figure 6 Map of the Philippines

President Marcos suspended *habeas corpus* in 1971 and in 1972 declared martial law, arresting many opponents. During the 1970s and '80s the communist movement of the Philippines grew, and armed underground struggle affected most parts of the country. Those who spoke against the government or for the poor were instantly labelled communist and thus made fair target. The church was often implicated in the underground movement, and many, including priests, went to the hills⁵. One of the main opponents to Marcos' government, Benigno Aquino, was released from jail in 1980 and moved into exile. In August 1983 he returned and was shot as he got off the plane. This act of violence provoked large-scale demonstrations and labour strikes, demanding Marcos' resignation. Rumours of the extravagant wealth of the Marcos family circulated, and Amnesty International and the US Congress documented human rights violations, while capital fled the country and investment dried up⁶.

In a surprise television interview Marcos announced an early election for February 1986. Opposition parties were divided during most of the election campaign until the Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Sin, called people to unite behind the wife of assassinated Benigno Aquino, Corazon. After the election there was confusion over who had won and Marcos declared himself the returned president. However on 14 February 1986 a pastoral statement was issued by the Roman Catholic bishops declaring "the polls were unparalleled in the fraudulence of their conduct"⁷. They legitimised the struggle for human rights, encouraging people to take justice into their own hands in non-violent protest. Two days later Corazon Aquino announced a campaign of non-violent civil disobedience in protest at the conduct of the elections. After the arrest of two former government officers who had resigned in protest, Cardinal Sin appealed to the people to come out into the streets to block the paths of Marcos' troops. Supported by the USA and sustained by religious symbolism, the people of Manila blocked the capital and by the time of the formal inauguration of Cory Aquino as president, Marcos

⁵These so-called rebels, communists and enemies of the church (by official church and state sources) continued to request mass from the priests among them and as we shall see later were instrumental in the birth of a new indigenous theology.

⁶Brown 1994:841

⁷CBCP in Bacani 1992:100

had fled to Hawaii.

In the late 1980s there were a series of unsuccessful coup attempts by the military, and legislation, especially concerning land reform promises made during the 1986 elections, were not implemented⁸. Since the “revolution” of 1986, conditions in the Philippines have not improved dramatically, and in February 1992 Amnesty published a report criticising the acquiescence of the Aquino administration in violations of human rights perpetrated by the armed forces. They alleged that there had been 550 extrajudicial killings between 1988 and 1991⁹. In 1992, President Ramos, a Protestant, was elected into office.

The Filipino economy is dominated by vast multi-national companies. Although logging and dynamite fishing are illegal, both continue to destroy the country’s natural resources and thus the livelihoods of many people. Recent plans by the Philippine government to develop the whole country to take its place in world trade, have brought much criticism from the sectors¹⁰ and the church. These plans have included in the area under study, Infanta, an extensive project to bring the five fringe municipalities of Metro Manila, all of Rizal Province, 7 municipalities of Laguna, and 8 municipalities of Quezon Province into the “Marilaque Growth Area”¹¹. The far-reaching plans include tourism and industrial development, airports and seaports, improvement of telecommunications and transportation, mineral resources development, the creation of an intensive agricultural farming and food basket, and large scale housing plans. The concern of many in the Prelature has been that these plans are made with little consultation with the people and there is an indifference towards the livelihood of those

⁸2% of the population own and control 75% of the land and capital (Mananzan 1990:102), as one priest in the Prelature of Infanta remarked, how can the church congregation offer a thanksgiving with such land ownership patterns as that (Infanta 6).

⁹Amnesty International 1992 and Youngblood 1989:61

¹⁰In the Philippines ‘sectors’ are groups with a common interest, usually their occupation, who have the capacity to be organised to work for their own rights. The most usual sectors are fisherfolk, farmers, farm women, women, youth and the indigenous people. Traditionally the sectors have been seen as communist and against the church, but as will be made apparent later, this attitude is beginning to disappear.

¹¹By Executive Order 197 of President Ramos - see “Marilaque Draft Concept Plan” 1995.

living on the land and towards ecology¹².

In the Philippines the whole of life is considered christian because of the predominance of Catholics, and it is not unusual for political rallies to start and end with prayers. However, many have argued that it is a superficial Christianity with a strong reliance on miracles¹³. The coloured jeepneys, the most common form of transport, are decorated with religious symbolism, and some bus tickets carry the logo 'God is Love'.

In some ways the revolution of 1986 is considered a failure¹⁴. At the time the far left distanced themselves from it, standing by their commitment to armed struggle and thus relinquishing their claim to be part of the reconstruction period. Even today the promises of the struggle are not realised and in many areas 87% live below poverty line. From speaking to people in Quezon it seems that militarisation and injustice continue to increase¹⁵.

The situation faced by the church has been summed up by the delegates to the Third Asian Theological Conference:

The concrete life situation of the people in the Philippines, or in the Third World in general, is one of struggle to survive and to obtain the basic necessities of life. It is also a struggle to liberate themselves in the political and cultural spheres by opposing structures and forces that do not promote wholeness of life. The social dimension of the struggle

¹²This became clear during a symposium organised by the subregion of Real, Infanta and General Nakar on 1st May 1996. The Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates and the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines have documented cases of violations in relation to the Philippines 2000 plans of President Ramos - Manila Chronicle 1/12/95, p7. Labayen 1995:16 also speaks forcefully against the western style of development imposed with all the "adverse effects on the masses and on our natural resources".

¹³Mulder 1992, Dagmang 1987

¹⁴Mananzan 1990:102; "This even, impressive as it was, did not end the misery of the people. There was a change in the head of the nation but there was no change in the class of those who rule. The oppressive political machinery and its armed component remains".

¹⁵Infanta 1-5. Also Infanta 12, the priest in General Nakar, told of some of his problems in administering to the distant barangays because of the militarisation. Dulay 1989:5 - "The same military machinery remains intact. And perhaps better oiled since it has weathered the transitions from Marcos to Aquino, and is still enjoying a certain degree of popularity because of its participation in the EDSA incident". Church persecution also continued after EDSA (PCPR 1989).

gives it added strength¹⁶.

b. Culture

The history of the Philippines is dominated by colonialism, and the culture is a complicated mixture of indigenous, Spanish and American cultures. This has to be borne in mind in the search for an inculturated and relevant faith. One of the problems for all those searching for an inculturated faith is what is the culture now? After 400 years of Spanish colonialism, it is unsurprising if much of the church continues to appear western. Tribal people, mostly in the mountains, have traditionally been oppressed by the dominant Tagalogs, but recently there has been a movement to further integrate them into society and there are signs that many look to the indigenous people to rediscover their true unwesternised identity¹⁷.

Since pre-colonial Filipino culture has been so successfully wiped out by Spanish and American cultures, many writers who are rediscovering it look to language and local practices¹⁸. The customs of the religious groups on Mount Banahaw, a traditional pilgrimage centre, have been researched to uncover ideas of indigenous religion¹⁹ and increasingly folk catholicism, the assimilation of Catholicism and the traditional culture, is seen as a valuable source for indigenous religion²⁰. Mercado concludes from a study of the language that traditionally Filipinos held belief in an apersonal god, which was removed by the personal god of Catholicism, causing cultural

¹⁶Abesamis et al 1990:9-10

¹⁷Partly this is seen as indigenisation from within to look for culture, contrasted with indigenisation from without - i.e. looking at how outside cultures have been adapted. From a talk organised by SPI and Kairos South, Vicky Apuan spoke of two main sources for indigenisation from within - the *Babaylans*, native priestesses, with great responsibility and community leadership and the *Pasyon*, the Passion Songs sung at Easter time which kept the revolutionary ideas alive amongst early Filipinos. R Iletto has written extensively on this and many today see how little the progressive groups in the church have used the history to help them in their struggle. The indigenous people are seen to have "maintained the closest links direct to our ancestral past" and can therefore provide the clue to remember what Filipinos are in the face of the media and values from elsewhere - Dulay 1989:5-8.

¹⁸For example see Demetrio 1983, De Mesa 1990

¹⁹Obusan 1989

²⁰See for example possession in the Santo Nino cult - Dagmang 1987 and the position of saints in the context of spirits - Mulder 1992.

displacement²¹. There has also been research on the negative effects of some of the cultural norms²².

3. Context and Church

The Philippines are dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, and the church is considered to be the major institutional force shaping the Philippine nation today²³. The Catholic Church in the Philippines grew out of the triumphalist period of the Spanish Inquisition after the defeat of the Moors and their expulsion from the Iberian peninsula²⁴. The association with the colonial government must be seen as the backdrop to the present church.

Pieris contends that in the process of becoming christian, the Philippines were forced to cut off their Asian roots²⁵, and in private conversations many people remarked that it would be difficult to find the Filipino culture unadulterated by the Spanish or the Americans. Fernandez has remarked aptly, “Perhaps more than other third world peoples, [the Filipinos] despise their own selves, their culture, their heritage, and the product of their own hands”²⁶. Pieris asks whether such a Christianity that has lost its ‘Asian Sense’ can presume to create an Asian Theology, especially since in his opinion Asia “will remain always a non-Christian Continent”²⁷.

The Philippine Catholic Church has developed an extensive theology in the last

²¹Mercado 1991

²²For example, De Mesa 1990

²³ Embree 1988. Giordano 1988:1 puts the population at 85% Catholic.

²⁴Arriving first in 1521 and establishing a colony in 1565 (Giordano 1988:8)

²⁵Pieris: 1979:211

²⁶Fernandez 1994:4

²⁷Pieris 1979:212

twenty years²⁸. The church today is split between the traditional and progressive church, between Christendom and the Church of the Poor, or the Redemption and the Passion Church²⁹. This split grew during the 1980s, but the convening of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) in 1991 has to a certain degree begun the process of reconciliation. The theology born in the Philippines in recent decades comes under different names, but all could be seen to be moving towards the “Church of the Poor” model adopted by PCP II³⁰. This model, associated with the bishop of Infanta, provides the context for the Prelature’s programmes and the faith of the laity.

a. The Official Church and the Hierarchy

The official church hierarchy is also split. Throughout the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) advocated a policy of ‘critical collaboration’ towards martial law and the government. This translated as supporting “all that is genuinely good in the new direction being taken”, whilst asking “whether indeed development is taking place with justice, with truth, and above all with Christian charity”³¹. This policy manifested itself in the criticism of the escalation of violence, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, and the human rights violations occurring throughout the Marcos years. However, the church’s failure to structure policy for real change weakened the fine words from the bishops³².

However, some bishops advocated a more confrontational approach to the abuses of the government and the division became explicit when a group published the pastoral

²⁸Not only evident in the publications reaching the western world, but see also Infanta 52 which speaks of the progress in theological concepts, pastoral approaches and the interpretation of the gospel from 1965-1985.

²⁹“Divided and torn, the Filipino Roman Catholic Sphere is, until today, stretched between two poles: that of achieved redemption, imposed from above, and that of passion, experienced and sublimated below” - Verlet 1992B:24, echoed by Hornsby-Smith 1986. Varela in *Hope in Struggle* p4: “the prevailing model of the church in the Philippines today is still that of Christendom. A church that is entangled in economic and political powerplay, thus, the church becomes an easy victim of ideological manipulation .. the church of the poor has yet to be built.”

³⁰CBCP 1991:#122-136

³¹CBCP 1973:545

³²See Giordano 1988:186 for further details.

letter *Ut Omnes Unum Sint* in 1976 which confessed that the bishops are “divided about the very things they speak of in the statements and pronouncements they have been issuing. And so the Gospel message becomes blurred to our people”³³. The letter claims “the Conference kept its silence for the sake of ‘unity’”:

The Bishops’ pronouncements present a picture of a unified hierarchy, critical, unafraid, concerned. But what were not too apparent to the public eye (at least until recently) were the seething contradictions between official pronouncements and the lack of support of a good number of Bishops for those pronouncements in their pastoral action³⁴.

The letter was written to respond to the accusations of being too political levied against the seventeen bishops who signed the document, one of whom was the bishop of Infanta.

A Pastoral Letter written in 1977 was unique in that it was signed by every Philippine bishop rather than by the President of the conference alone, and committed the church to human promotion in their mission. The bishops stressed:

This is evangelization: The proclamation, above all, of salvation from sin; the liberation from everything oppressive to man; the development of man in all his dimensions, personal and communitarian; and ultimately, the renewal of society in all its strata through the interplay of the Gospel thrust and man’s concrete total life. This is our task. This is our mission.³⁵

The main issues which divided the official church throughout the Marcos years were the extent to which the church should be involved in political issues and what methods should be employed. On the one hand, some local priests became freedom fighters in the growing communist underground movement. On the other, their bishops prohibited priests from joining organisations “that espouse violence as the road to social transformation”³⁶. However, the bishops, opting in the main for ‘critical collaboration’, were equally critical of right-wing vigilante and local militia initiatives.

³³Bishops 1983:14

³⁴Bishops 1983:16

³⁵Quoted by Varela 1991:10

³⁶Quoted in von der Mehden 1989:215-218. On the other hand, in a Pastoral Letter of 1979, the bishops left the decision to individual conscience (Hardy 1984:210).

Verlet sees the official church supporting national security, and thus the “total war” waged in many parts of the Philippines during Marcos’ time. The phrase that some opted for in the 1986 EDSA revolution, the ‘Power of the Church’, he sees as underlining the Christendom model of a power-based church. Eventually NASSA, the National Secretariat of Social Action, was deprived of its director (Bp Labayen) who was considered too radical and NASSA eventually became part of the status quo³⁷.

Not only is the hierarchy divided, but it also gives conflicting statements. “While mouthing a discourse on the option for the poor and social justice, the ‘Power Church’ identifies itself to the rich”³⁸. The Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Sin, is almost an enigma, on the one hand he encourages social action centres, and basic christian communities in the city³⁹, and on the other (with the CBCP) he isolates radical bishops⁴⁰ and writes grand eulogies to the Spanish legacy⁴¹. The CBCP continues today to publish traditional doctrines⁴², but a sermon delivered in Manila Cathedral on June 10, 1996, called for people to “exorcise the demons of corruption and electoral fraud”⁴³. The luxury and glamour of the Manila churches are in stark contrast to the way of life for most Filipinos⁴⁴. In general this part of the church is mostly apolitical, but it is beginning to be a socially orientated church, dealing with poverty, housing, employment, land, environment, tribes etc. Leading up to and in the aftermath of the 1986 revolution this section of the church was at the height of its political involvement.

During the early 1980s the church was divided in its response to Marcos, and by 1983 was increasingly critical, especially after the death of Benigno Aquino; at his

³⁷Verlet 1992b:22

³⁸Verlet 1992a:29

³⁹Speaking to religious sisters involved in building BCCs in Manila, it was clear that this was often simply lip service.

⁴⁰Labayen 1995:4

⁴¹Sin 1992:672

⁴²See the Journal *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*

⁴³Sin 1996:3-4, where he personifies corruption and therefore fails to deal with the real issues of poverty - see Von Doepp 1998.

⁴⁴In the air conditioned Manila Cathedral it costs c.10,000 pesos for an hour long wedding!

funeral, the prayers were openly critical of the government⁴⁵. The church during this time retained its moral credibility while that of other institutions decreased⁴⁶, and church thinkers and writers clamoured for the institution to do something, reminding it that in the past, the christian message has been privatised and “the church cannot be involved in partisan politics but must take a stand when human dignity and basic human rights are violated”⁴⁷. When it became apparent in the 1986 elections that the results were being manipulated, the bishops moved quickly and published their pastoral letter, declaring that the government had no moral basis. They went on: “if such a government does not itself freely correct the evil it has inflicted on the people then it is our serious moral obligation as a people to make it so do”⁴⁸.

The events of the February ‘EDSA’ revolution⁴⁹ caught the imagination of the world as pictures of nuns and other religious people were shown standing in front of army tanks with rosaries and crucifixes as “weapons”. This was a unique occasion and it is difficult to speak about the church in the Philippines without mentioning it. In many ways it epitomises the theology of the official Catholic church in the Philippines in its orchestrated demonstrations and church leadership.

Christian overtones were present throughout the election campaign. Cardinal Sin had encouraged the opposition parties to unite behind Aquino⁵⁰, and election billboards read “God loves Cory”⁵¹. The bishops’ call for the Filipino people to come out in support of the army generals who deserted Marcos in the aftermath of the elections, seemed to indicate that the church was taking a dynamic place in society, allowing itself

⁴⁵Carroll 1984:9

⁴⁶Carroll 1984:3

⁴⁷Gorospe 1987:45

⁴⁸CBCP 1986

⁴⁹So-called after the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, the Manila ring road where the meetings and demonstrations which precipitated the collapse of the Marcos regime, took place.

⁵⁰Some believe that the support for Aquino was not solely because of her political credentials: “people called around [her] not for what she said, but for what she symbolized - a fellow sufferer and the hope that the nation’s woes could be relieved and violence stopped” - Kerkvliet 1986:48.

⁵¹See Nagliliyab 1986:9

to play a role in politics. The involvement of the church in the formation of the new government has been well documented⁵² and Cory Aquino was clearly recognised as the saviour of the country's problems, a devout Catholic 'saint' and a widow avenging her husband's murder.

Since then, theologians, sociologists, historians and current affairs writers have tried to understand these events. Bacani wrote "you cannot explain the February 22-25 event unless you put God into the picture"⁵³, although others believe that "it was an orchestrated scenario, a remake of the 1896 ilustrado takeover, with a new cast of characters and the US as the main actor and producer"⁵⁴. Many theologians welcomed a revolution which looked solely like a peaceful-church-led event, but history has confused the issue. Some have called it "a mythical event"⁵⁵, others take this idea further and called it an initiation rite of passage, "a spontaneous ritual experienced by millions, articulating a vision of life evolving out of decades of suffering and centuries of faith"⁵⁶. AG Nudas has called it an 'Exodus', dramatising the experience of coming out of the captivity of a tyrant⁵⁷ and Gonzalez called it an 'Epiphany'⁵⁸. These events "symbolize Filipino social consciousness and social commitment at their best"⁵⁹. One writer speaks of a "spirituality of risk" for which the bishops opted when they published their post-election statement:

In this way, the Bishops of the Philippines offered to the Universal Church a model of real leadership within the institutional structures: a model in which dialogue and true collegiality enables the local church to speak out clearly on matters which are proper to them and thus, provides hope to the Universal Church⁶⁰.

⁵²Youngblood 1989:56, 68.

⁵³Bacani in Nagliliyab 1986:39

⁵⁴Jose Arrucha in Nagliliyab 1986:40-41

⁵⁵Belita 1991:iii

⁵⁶Arbuckle 1987:125

⁵⁷Nudas 1986:8

⁵⁸Gonzalez 1991:3-4; "an epiphany is an event or a series of events which clearly manifest something about the character of a person - in this case, a society - through highly meaningful events."

⁵⁹Malley 1989:68

⁶⁰Hardy 1986

Others are more sceptical. One, in the confusion of all the writings surrounding the events, put his ideas into comic form in which he imagines he is eavesdropping on a hotline conversation between God and a contemporary theologian. The theologian is reprimanded by “God” for claiming that the events of February 1986 were completely God’s doing, thus spiritualising the experience. As God says;

EDSA was a political event. It was an explosion of the people’s rage against an oppressive situation and against the people who are causing that situation .. so, yes, in responding to a political situation, people had a religious, meaning a deeply human, experience. That doesn’t make EDSA a religious event - a miracle, as you are anxious to call it⁶¹.

To those in the rural areas however, EDSA was a middle class happening, “a fiesta affair of Manila”⁶², a catharsis for the middle and upper classes⁶³, which was brought about by the church to pre-empt the communist party, rather than being a spontaneous event. The Left was surprised by events, and they found that they could not fight a widow and a devout Catholic. Edicio de la Torre has pointed out the ambiguous legacy” left by the revolution;

On the one hand, even though the rebellion ousted Ferdinand Marcos from power, it still left in place many of the political structures and social inequalities on which his dictatorship was built ... on the other hand, the rebellion brought to the fore a legion of popular grass-roots movements. Inspired by their initial success in helping to overthrow Marcos, they have continued to expand their activities, thereby keeping open the political space for democracy⁶⁴.

For many interviewed in the Prelature of Infanta, EDSA made no difference to their lives. They remember the unity of the people and the fact that the people and church can make a difference, but they lament that the situation really did not improve⁶⁵, and in this

⁶¹Moraleda 1987:10

⁶²Infanta 41. The Favali Foundation also recalled the fiesta atmosphere of the event (1986:11), this is important since the fiesta is often seen as the secular festival marking a religious date, and is very popular in traditional religiosity.

⁶³Gaspar 1986:1

⁶⁴de la Torre 1987:1

⁶⁵Infanta 9, 10, 12

area, militarisation actually increased⁶⁶.

Much was made in the immediate years after EDSA about 'People Power'. This was believed to have ousted the President, the people uniting to form a powerful block. The 'Theology of People Power' could be seen as a merging of officialdom, which had controlled the events of February 1986, and the theology of struggle. At times one proponent, Douglas Elwood, seems to be engaged in a liberal attempt to reclaim theology before it gets dangerously left-wing. This theology comes out of history "the 'raw material' out of which indigenous theologies are shaped - that is, a unique experience of the presence and power of God in our midst"⁶⁷. It is a theology which is cross-denominational and aimed at all sectors of society "as indeed the Church is meant to be"⁶⁸, struggling with those who struggle for justice and freedom. However, "a theology of people power is theology of non-violent power, committed as it is both to the people and to the option for creative nonviolence"⁶⁹, this is where it divides from elements in the theology of struggle. Nevertheless, the theology of people power was one attempt by the official church to respond to the historical conditions of the people.

Whether one agrees with the concept of a theology being constructed around an event such as EDSA or not, it is clear that "if the element of religious faith is excluded in any analysis then the experience of the revolution cannot be grasped"⁷⁰. The thousands on the streets of Manila saw themselves acting out some religious drama; their faith images of Mary, rosaries, religious songs, and prayers, were an integral part of their experience and it is probably true that had that religious element not been present, many would not have found the strength to confront the military.

A year after EDSA, the church retreated to traditional teachings. 1987 was

⁶⁶Infanta 34, 12 and also Verlet 1992b:19

⁶⁷Elwood 1988:4

⁶⁸Elwood 1988:4

⁶⁹Elwood 1988:6

⁷⁰Arbuckle 1987:125

declared a Eucharistic Year as a thanksgiving for the peaceful revolution of the year before. However, documents from the bishops' conference at the end of the year urged inculturated liturgies⁷¹. Other than this, the church retreated to supporting Aquino and her policies⁷², while more radical bishops continued to advocate change. This group of bishops were unafraid of being political: as Labayen wrote in 1985 "the issue of poverty and injustice, however you look at it, is a political issue"⁷³.

In 1992 Verlet concluded that the institutional church would expel the progressive church (and thereby dismantle the BCCs). A few months after his article was published, the most important council for Philippine church was underway, a council which would be for the Philippine church what Vatican II had been for the universal church⁷⁴ - the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines.

b. The Unofficial Church and the Growth of Filipino Theology

The calls for change in the Philippine church echo calls in many parts of the Catholic Church throughout the world, and are rooted in the call to discover a new way of being church. As Dingayan wrote in 1990;

A new way of being church must be discovered in our time. It is not only because of the way the Church in history has scandalously acted out itself as a cultural adjunct of the élite, but more importantly because of the challenges being posed by the grassroots as they seek to express the christian faith in a surprisingly new way⁷⁵.

It is this new way of being church with which many in the 'unofficial church' are experimenting.

A militant Catholic laity grew after the second world war and with their more radical clergy consolidated the struggle against martial law declared in 1972. Local theology emerged from this struggle as "untrained" people grappled with how their faith

⁷¹CBCP 1987:20

⁷²Gaspar 1989:311

⁷³Labayen 1985C

⁷⁴Lansangan 1995:49

⁷⁵Dingayan 1990:3

could be lived in their reality and articulated the struggle through poems, stories and biographies⁷⁶. The local nature of these theologies have led to some differences between them, but there is normally a strong emphasis on the basic christian community as a means for people to strengthen and support each other in the struggle⁷⁷. These grew from 1973 and caused contention between the hierarchy and those at parish levels, and also between the church and the government, due to their potential for radicalism⁷⁸. At the same time, more secular Community Organisations (COs) emerged, and although in some areas the two were synonymous, in others they were sharply divided. These communities encompassed a wide range of community action programmes, many attacking the Marcos regime. The COs tended to be far more intimidated by the military, but by the end of the 1970s the two groups were beginning to come together, a union finally occurring around 1982⁷⁹. Initially the hierarchy encouraged BCCs, but as they became more political it began to ignore them. However government repression of the communities increased and with church workers and priests being ‘salvaged’⁸⁰, the hierarchy was forced into taking a more positive stand.

During the 1970s and ’80s the Philippine situation nurtured at least two theologies which could be termed “indigenous theology”: the theology of struggle, which fuelled the theology of people power and the events surrounding EDSA in 1986⁸¹ and the Church of the Poor theology. Both are expressions of the ‘Passion Church’⁸² and

⁷⁶See Gaspar 1988 for a collection of such symbols.

⁷⁷See especially Hornsby-Smith 1986

⁷⁸Article by Col. Galileo Kintanar 1979: describes BCCs as “the most dangerous form of threat from the religious radicals” through which “they are practically building an infrastructure of political power in the entire country”. They must therefore be counteracted (54).

⁷⁹Hornsby-Smith 1986:356 - although I feel that his assessment of the union between the church and the sectors is slightly idealised. Even today there is a strong suspicion of the community organisations in parts of the church and a desire amongst some church workers to keep basic christian communities more spiritual than either social or political.

⁸⁰Killed without trial and for no legal reason.

⁸¹Hardy (1986) and Tiongco (private conversation) have argued that the bishops would not have had the courage to speak against Marcos if it had not been for the basic christian communities and struggles by the laity for the preceding years.

⁸²Verlet 1992 - the Redemption Church supports the status quo and for the Passion Church redemption is still to come and therefore it struggles with God against conditions which prevent people being fully human.

part of their struggles have been with the institutional, official church and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines⁸³. Each arose in a particular context; the theology of struggle mostly from communities in Mindanao and Negros, and the Church of the Poor has been associated chiefly with the Bishop of Infanta, Julio X Labayen. Both theologies have relied on the BCC.

The political theology of the Philippines, the 'theology of struggle', emphasises that it is a theology which emerges **out of** the struggle, rather than being a theology of liberation⁸⁴. It comes from those who are involved in the struggle for human rights, freedom from the military and freedom from grinding poverty. As such it is a theology of doing, rather than of thinking, and this characteristic explains why until recently there has been little written from these theologians of struggle - they are busy in the struggle and the majority of them are not writers⁸⁵. They look to intellectuals to articulate their problems and needs⁸⁶. This theology has traditionally been associated with Mindanao, especially with Edicio de la Torre, "perhaps the first liberation theologian among Filipino priests"⁸⁷. 'Ed', as he is known, has written thoughts and meditations on his time in the struggle, especially his time in prison, published in *Touching Ground, Taking Root*⁸⁸. These are not so much a structured theology as a series of talks, articles and snippets gathered together. The theology of struggle has been linked with communist thought, and struggles concerning the legitimacy of violence are visible in de la Torre's writings. The theology was born out of the womb of history⁸⁹ and has strong undercurrents of inculturation since "Christ must be a Filipino if Filipinos are to be

⁸³Many of the progressive church in Mindanao were labelled outside the church, Bp Fortich was forcibly retired in 1989 many believe for his role in the basic christian communities of Negros (Verlet 1992a:31), and Bp Labayen has been isolated from the CBCP and branded a communist. There have been attempts to kill both these bishops and many priests, religious and lay people have been murdered by the military during the period of 'critical collaboration' by the church.

⁸⁴Cariño 1990:5

⁸⁵Cariño 1990:4

⁸⁶De la Torre 1970

⁸⁷Lambino 1977:21

⁸⁸De la Torre 1986

⁸⁹Fernandez 1994:4

Christians”⁹⁰.

The issue facing Christians was how they could participate in the struggle in the Philippines, leading to a theology that is not ‘about’ struggle, but ‘of’ and ‘in’ the struggle. It is the articulation by various church groups of their experiences of struggle, of jail and military persecution, of their hopes for a new order. “[I]t is theology directed against oppressors, and it is the theological response of those who are oppressed to the Philippine church and its mission”⁹¹. It is the face of Christians and the church joining with those who struggle for self-determination and national liberation, for peace, justice and the integrity of creation⁹². Much of the writing has been through biographies or diaries⁹³, which bring to life the hopes and dreams of the community, show how they work to improve their living conditions, how they learn that poverty is the result of large-scale injustice and “that the problem was not only Marcos, not only martial law but much deeper than that, reaching all the way to our own willingness to collaborate in so many ways”⁹⁴. Such writings bring to life the workings of one of the mainstays of the theology of struggle, basic christian communities, and the way in which they were accused of communist infiltration and subversion.

Fernandez sees this theology as a fusion of christian tradition, Filipino suffering and reality. For him this is a truly inculturated theology which aims to interpret the Filipino experience in the light of christian tradition and the christian tradition in the light of the Filipino people’s suffering and struggle⁹⁵. The theology is expressed in popular liturgy and symbols⁹⁶, in everyday language, so that “theology has become interspersed with political talk”⁹⁷.

⁹⁰de la Torre 1986:73

⁹¹Cariño 1990:6

⁹²Fernandez 1994:3

⁹³For example, Gaspar 1990, a diary of his work in the community of San Fernando, Mindanao.

⁹⁴Gaspar 1988:vii

⁹⁵Fernandez 1994:5

⁹⁶For examples, see Gaspar 1988 - a collection of poems, posters and paintings from the struggle.

⁹⁷Cariño 1990:7

Not only does the theology of struggle fight the landowners, those who deal unjustly with the poor, but there is also a struggle against the church. As Fernandez put it:

If the theology of struggle is a theology that claims to view reality from the epistemological privilege of the poor and struggling people, it presupposes that there is also a kind of theology that is supportive of the reigning social arrangement. The theology of struggle shows that theology is one arena in which a struggle has to be waged.⁹⁸

Although this has, I believe, over-spiritualised the issue, there is some truth in it. The division in the church between the conservative church and the progressive church was strikingly evident in the Philippines, and although “the theology of struggle is neither anti-ecclesiastical nor non-ecclesiastical”, it clearly works towards a renewal of the church which takes the historical reality into account⁹⁹. It is a theology and a faith-commitment that helps the people make themselves the subject of their lives and their history, “it is theology in other words that is part of a journey ... the journey of the people to their promised land”¹⁰⁰. The theology of struggle challenges the clergy to participate in daily life as prophets, protected by the church, who can struggle full-time, without being the sole guardian of the mysteries of the mass¹⁰¹.

The theology of struggle thus links the transformation of Philippine society with the transformation of the Philippine church. There is throughout de la Torre’s writings a reliance on the eucharist and its interlinking with the theology of struggle¹⁰². Cariño believes that “the struggle in this sense is a ‘sacrament’ - a point and a place where God is encountered and where his redeeming love and grace for the world is experienced”¹⁰³, an idea which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

⁹⁸Fernandez 1994:2

⁹⁹Cariño 1990:10

¹⁰⁰Cariño 1990:7

¹⁰¹De la Torre 1986:46-47

¹⁰²De la Torre 1986:23, 31-2. Also Fr Balweg who joined the rebels: “Being linked to the daily activities of the people to liberate them from oppression and exploitation, that to me is the essence of the Mass, when you offer your life to the people” quoted in Fiel 1982).

¹⁰³Cariño 1988:xiii

The theology of struggle is part of Verlet's Passion Church, the church from below, and to him "it appears that the social impact, the efficacy of struggle theologies originate from their being rooted in a historical tissue, in a culture"¹⁰⁴. The culture, the struggle, the history and the liberation are all interlinked to make this church-theology relevant to its society. As Christine Tan wrote: "The mission of liberation is a cultural task. We define 'culture' as a pattern of life, created by people, precisely to cope with life. We define liberation as the elimination of that which threatens life, and the building of that which enhances it"¹⁰⁵. Thus the unofficial church emphasises the link between inculturation and liberation outlined in Chapter 1.

Cariño finishes his treatise of Philippine liberation theology with this warning, which is a good description of the theology:

Expect no new theological dogmatics and volumes of theological books from the theologians of struggle. Expect on the other hand Christians who are always prepared and willing to be where people are struggling to be free, against oppressors and oppressive structures, for a new society and a new church. Their resources come in part from the inexhaustible resources of faith and hope that are found in the Christian story; they come also from the inexhaustible resources and energy of people, who somehow even in their suffering, struggle, and seek to be free.¹⁰⁶

c. Church of the Poor

The Church of the Poor model was born at the Asian's Bishops Meeting in Manila in 1970, presided over by Pope Paul VI¹⁰⁷, although it can be traced to Vatican II¹⁰⁸. Bishop Julio Labayen has been until the 1990s its main exponent in the Philippines and has attempted to introduce the ideas into his Prelature of Infanta. These ideas therefore form the backdrop to the church activities in Infanta. Here we will look at the theological ideas, in Part B we will see how these ideas are translated into reality, a theology made flesh.

¹⁰⁴Verlet 1992B:23

¹⁰⁵Tan 1982:617-618

¹⁰⁶Cariño 1990:12

¹⁰⁷Labayen 1990:6

¹⁰⁸Labayen 1995:2

This section of the Passion Church also sees the transformation of society and the transformation of the church together¹⁰⁹, in other words it is another theology of struggle, born, not in the situation of war, but in the situation of poverty¹¹⁰. The theology of the Church of the Poor has much in common with traditional liberation theologies. It concentrates on the poor, the marginalised and aims to help them make their own history. It recognises that Jesus sided with the poor, the widow and the fatherless, those outside the mainstream of society. The church must do the same, not simply to give charity, but “to make them aware of themselves and their responsibility to act on behalf of their human dignity and destiny”¹¹¹.

Labayen has written much over the last twenty-five years and his ideas were brought together in 1995 in his major work *Revolution and the Church of the Poor*¹¹². Here he elucidates his call for a renewal of the church, marked by the change of name to Church of the Poor, which is called for “whenever the nature of the church falls short of, or whenever her nature is in contradiction to, the mission of her Founder”¹¹³. His argument uses revolutions throughout history which he sees concentrating on the political or economic spheres. Using examples from the Chinese revolution and its cultural revolution, he recognises that such narrow spheres cause revolutions to fail. He argues that a revolution can succeed only through the cultural sphere, and since the church is an important bearer of culture, it must be involved¹¹⁴. This he sees as imperative. Since history cannot shape itself, it must be shaped by humans and “one truth is certain. While the church may be historically conditioned and shaped by history, the same church was founded by Jesus Christ to shape history”¹¹⁵. Only through a

¹⁰⁹Cariño 1988:xiv

¹¹⁰SPI video - Mindanao’s chief problem is militarisation, for Luzon it is poverty. However, as we shall see in Infanta, there are areas in Luzon which must also deal with militarisation.

¹¹¹Labayen 1985C

¹¹²Labayen 1995

¹¹³Labayen 1995:26

¹¹⁴“History records the shift of the revolutionary struggle from the economic to the political to the cultural. Consequently, the churches, the apparatus of culture, have become the battle ground of revolution”, Labayen 1995:150.

¹¹⁵Labayen 1995:60

revolution of the human heart and human spirit will a true revolution take place in society¹¹⁶. To achieve this, the church needs to conscientise the people, making them subjects of their own history, architects of their own destiny¹¹⁷ and making them more human. To this end, the story of liberation and Exodus is used. This paradigm shift which he calls for in the church hinges on a pastoral method which embraces all of life, “socio-historical, psycho-theological, interdisciplinary, ecological and global”¹¹⁸.

One of the many catch-phrases of the Church of the Poor is “integral evangelisation”, an evangelisation mixed with a liberationist approach. This is an evangelisation that touches all of life, it seeks the restoration of the integrity of humanity and creation, conscientising and organising people to transform the unjust structures in society¹¹⁹. It is committed to the marginalised of the society, for example the tribal people whose faith emphasises nature and creation. The strong emphasis in the Church of the Poor on the proper use of land and resources and an attempt to intervene when development threatens to destroy the land could therefore also be seen as inculturation.

However, “the church of the Poor is not simply a part of the whole church. It is a new expression of the Good News in the church which is ever old and ever new ... it is the old church that is rejuvenated by the Spirit of Jesus as it rediscovers the deep meaning of the church in the openness, simplicity and struggle of the poor of this world”¹²⁰. The Church of the Poor sets itself up in contrast to the Christendom model of the church, which relies on a relationship with state power, whose structures are heavily dependent on the hierarchy and whose “exaggerated regard for the law makes her legalistic, stiff and unyielding in handling human situations”¹²¹. The former model relies on the power of the Gospel rather than the state, assuming the perspective of the

¹¹⁶Labayen 1995:94

¹¹⁷Labayen 1995:4

¹¹⁸Labayen 1995:110

¹¹⁹Giordano 1988:54-57, CBCP 1991:59 and 126

¹²⁰Labayen 1990:1

¹²¹Labayen 1990:10

oppressed and the victims of injustice. It encourages everyone to participate, making service to the oppressed a priority. The conflict between the two models is not seen simply within the universal church, but is also being played out within the Philippine church. It is a model of church which will bring revolution, not only to the church, but also to culture and the society in which it exists, founded on the revolution that was started by Jesus Christ¹²².

The Church of the Poor also looks at world issues. Poverty is not seen as a personal problem, but as a result of unfair trade conditions and exploitation. The propaganda linked with this exploitation and the concomitant ideological conflicts between East and West (much of this theology was written during the Cold War), is called “low intensity conflict”¹²³. To combat this the “church promotes interior conversion of heart and mind to meanings, values and world-views that are the essential underpinning of the new society that is to be created within a historical matrix”¹²⁴. Instead of the Newly Industrialised Nation (NIC) which the Philippine government aims at, this church looks for a Newly Evangelised Nation (NEC), changing hearts and minds to be more attuned to God’s will in the world.

The theology of the Church of the Poor clearly necessitates a paradigm shift in the church. Labayen sums up the various shifts he sees as important:

- ▶ from being **objects** to becoming **subjects** of the history of salvation.
- ▶ from the **God of christians** to the **one God of all peoples, all cultures all religions** (from household of Christian believers to God’s household).
- ▶ from *mission* to **pagans** to *mission* to **God’s peoples**.
- ▶ from *salvation* of **peoples** to *salvation* of the **whole cosmos**.
- ▶ from a **dominant dehumanizing** consciousness to a **humanizing consciousness**.
- ▶ from **patriarchal culture** to a culture of **care and nurture (eco-feminism)**.

¹²²“A revolution of loving as Jesus loved”, Labayen also looks at the difference between the revolution of Jesus and those of the zealots at the same time: “The zealots aimed to take over political power from the rulers. Jesus pointed to the Reign of God. The zealots contemplated their own political reign. Jesus desired the conversion of heart of his adversaries. The zealots wanted to get rid of them” (Labayen 1995:94). See Bosch 1991:434 for the revolution intended by liberation theologians.

¹²³Labayen 1990:13

¹²⁴Labayen 1990:15

- ▶ from the **Christendom Church** *model* to the **Church of the Poor** model.
- ▶ from the perspective of **reason alone** and of its **idols**, to that of **reason enlightened by faith**. (1 Cor 1:18-25).
- ▶ from reason that **disregards the human spirit** to reason that **listens to the human spirit**.
- ▶ from **politico-economic relationships alone** to **basic human relationships** (justice, compassion, love).
- ▶ from **rearrangement of relationships after** the revolutionary take-over of government to rearrangement of **relationships now** through participation of people at the base (Basic Christian Communities-Community Organizing [BCC-CO], Basic Ecclesial Communities [BEC], communes, etc.)¹²⁵

This theology clearly shares many elements with the theology of struggle: both side with the poor, both conscientise the people, both look for a new ecclesiology founded on the participation of all the faithful and stress the importance of the basic christian community. This version of the new ‘people’s theology’ has been successful mostly outside the war zones of the Philippines, but since 1991 the Church of the Poor has been the official model for the entire Catholic Church of the Philippines. It explores the human reality, reading the signs of the times. It looks to recognise the aspirations of those at the base of society, thereby necessitating liberation (it is solidly against Philippine plans to develop vast areas of the islands to the detriment of the environment and the tribal people), it responds to the inclusivity and holistic nature of the Filipino, recognising that there is much to be gained from engagement with other religions and cultures. By taking the perspective of the poor, it aims to take on the culture of the poor, to understand their aspirations and thoughts and thus to side with them “not because they are better than the rich; nor because they are holy and the rich are not; much less because they are the majority. We simply follow God’s lead”¹²⁶. Perhaps here is a theology and the necessary ecclesiology which is relevant to the end of the twentieth century, combining liberation and inculturation.

The Church the Poor sees itself within christian history and firmly anchored in the traditional doctrines of the Catholic Church:

¹²⁵Labayen 1995:160-161, emphasis in the original.

¹²⁶Labayen 1985C

Consequently, one with the Universal Church and with the Bishops of Asia and of Latin America, we feel that today we are called to become the CHURCH OF THE POOR: a Church that has a special concern and love for the poor masses, for the victims of injustice and for those whose dignity and rights are trampled upon. On the other hand, we recognize that the deeper meaning of being poor is to remain open, trusting and hoping in the Lord of history¹²⁷.

As we shall see in the next section, the official Philippine church has now opted for this change in mentality and has therefore begun to look to the Prelature for methods of implementation. Although Labayen has published his book, which tends to the theological, he has also invited people from other parts of the Philippines to undergo 'exposure'¹²⁸ in the Prelature to discover the church for themselves.

d. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines

In 1991, the Philippine church held the *Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (PCP II)¹²⁹. Its conclusions were "certainly more of a breakthrough of the Holy Spirit than a human achievement"¹³⁰ and are still to be realised in many dioceses. The monumental decision of this council is expressed in the message delivered by its President, Leonardo Legaspi, the Archbishop of Caceres, on the final day, 17 February, 1991: "As we approach the year 2000, Christ bids this community - ourselves, the laity, religious and clergy of the Catholic Church in the Philippines - to be a Church of the Poor"¹³¹ - thirty years after Vatican II and 25 years after the Asian Bishops Conference had recommended this action.

In many ways the direction and programmes of the Prelature of Infanta were vindicated by PCP II, to the extent that parts of Infanta's mission statement¹³² were

¹²⁷HS No 13

¹²⁸See section 2b in chapter 3b for details.

¹²⁹The Acts and Decrees are published - CBCP 1991

¹³⁰Lansangan 1995:53

¹³¹CBCP 1991:XCVI

¹³²See section 2a in chapter 3b.

echoed in the documents¹³³. PCP II mentioned the need to “progress from external rituals to internalized values” (pXCVII), for which the BECs are the ideal instrument, and the need to “be involved in those tasks which lead to the transformation of our society” (pXCVIII). It speaks of the need for a new integral evangelisation of a country so often presumed to be completely christian, recognising the barriers that violence, conflict and corruption in society, put in the way of peace and love. Here is a church looking forward, confessing its past, “that we have barely analyzed the severity of the problems our church and country face” (pXCVIII). The conciliar document speaks of renewing the church, allowing unity in diversity and re-examining the roles of the various parts of the church members, leading to a renewed integral evangelization¹³⁴ (which incorporates a section on inculturation) and announcing a message of liberation (which involves political and social concerns) and a consideration of each sectoral group. Obviously the decrees of the council will take many years to implement, and one theologian thought that setting it in writing may have been an attempt to prevent the progressive church from pushing the official church too far¹³⁵. However the turn-around that PCP II offers to the church of the Philippines should not be underestimated. With the growing depletion of the Philippine natural resources the church is increasingly emphasising the ecological situation and the link between the liberation of people and the liberation of the whole of creation.

The Mission Statement was produced by the PCP II Secretariat a year after the main council with notes to help church leaders publicise the findings¹³⁶. The acts and decrees cover all parts of the church’s life, from the bishops to the grassroots, looking at liberation, inculturation, catechesis, and worship. It reestablishes the BCC as the way of the future for the church, seeing them as a cause for hope in a church¹³⁷ which “has

¹³³Varela 1995:14

¹³⁴So often in the Philippines people mentioned that the government was wanting a NIC (newly industrialised country) whereas they as church wanted a NEC (newly evangelised country).

¹³⁵Infanta 52

¹³⁶See Appendix 4

¹³⁷Article 226

failed in many ways to satisfy the spiritual hunger of many of the faithful”¹³⁸.

Quevedo has pointed out the different approach to theology that PCP II took. This he calls the ‘Pastoral Spiral’. It began with the analysis of the present situation, theological and pastoral reflection was then undertaken in response to that situation and then resolutions to respond to the situation were made¹³⁹. The decrees finished with a review of the contemporary Philippine situation, sweepingly criticising the government of Aquino¹⁴⁰. They conclude that the church must be renewed;

In order to be renewed as a church, we must leave behind many ways of thinking, speaking and acting which no longer serve and perhaps even obstruct our evangelizing mission. This will mean an unsettling pain, a disengagement from what is cherished but is now obsolete or obstructive, a dying to what is sinful, that we may come to newness of life¹⁴¹.

Quevedo sums up the vision of PCP II as “everything that Filipino Catholics are not”:

... a Church that is truly a community of Disciples,
a Church of the Poor,
a Participatory Church,
an Inculturated Church,
a saving and liberating Church
that serves and mirrors the kingdom of God¹⁴².

e. Other Elements in Filipino Theology

i. The Indigenous or Tribal People

The tribal people of the Philippines have traditionally been isolated by the Tagalogs or lowlanders. Their physique is different and their language and nomadic customs have discouraged them from being integrated within the culture. Their own customs and traditions are still strong and have been relatively unaffected by colonisers.

¹³⁸Article 223

¹³⁹Quevedo 1994:99

¹⁴⁰CBCP 1991:277

¹⁴¹Article 143

¹⁴²Quevedo 1994:102

Many Tagalogs look to the study of tribal people to regain ideas of their pre-Christian culture and religion and their own national identity.

Mercado has investigated the nature of God amongst tribal people, believing that for them there is often an overarching impersonal god who interacts with spirits, who interact with humans. There is a deep faith in the one God who has created all, and they have a deep reverence for nature, which they see as the manifestation of God. Thus they have a fierce reaction to the development plans which cut into their unspoilt homelands. He has also begun, through proverbs, to uncover the natural religiosity of the lowland Filipinos, which again has pointed to an impersonal, Providence-type god, and ancestors/spirits to mediate for the people¹⁴³. He claims that because Christianity has foisted the idea of a personal God on the Filipinos, a tension has arisen within the Filipino who has not been completely westernised. To allow full inculturation the personalists must go back to their apersonal roots¹⁴⁴. Women have looked to the native religion, since in it there are native priestesses, '*Babaylans*', who would organise the religious and often social functions of the community¹⁴⁵. As the Filipino delegation to EATWOT said in 1995:

We thus recognize the need for deeper integration in the lives of our indigenous peoples in order to retrieve our primal roots and reread the texts of our lives. We need to learn the wisdom they have that nourishes and sustains them through generations. As our indigenous brothers and sisters say, "As the tree needs sap and human beings need blood, so spirituality keeps us truly alive." We have come to conclude that the religious cultural heritage of our indigenous peoples and our faith tradition are both essential for a Filipino theology and spirituality that is life-giving to our people.¹⁴⁶

In the Prelature of Infanta, where they have many tribal groups in the mountains, they now refuse to convert them. Instead they aim to ensure that they express their own

¹⁴³Mercado1991:409

¹⁴⁴Mercado 1991:415

¹⁴⁵A seminar on July 3, 1996 in the Titus Brandsma Center in New Manila, by Vicky Apuan, mostly to seminarians, religious, charity groups and priests.

¹⁴⁶EATWOT 1995:11

religion and culture and their ways to be fully human¹⁴⁷. Labayen is very keen to let the tribal people know that the lowlanders can learn from them. The links between popular religiosity and ecology are very important. Many continue to believe that *dwindies* (dwarves) populate the earth, especially present in trees, rivers, rocks and forests, whose permission must be sought to pass by¹⁴⁸. The paraphernalia surrounding funerals, which often includes a long wake, is conducted by people, normally women, who are never otherwise seen in the church¹⁴⁹. Such beliefs indicate that the church is not responding fully to the needs of the people, so that they look to non-church rituals for some spiritual events.

ii. Popular Religiosity

Linked with the growth of interest in the tribal people, there is also a growing recognition that popular religiosity is a source for inculturation in the christian church¹⁵⁰. As the official church recognises, “for most of our people today the faith is centered on the practice of the rites of popular piety. Not on the Word of God, doctrines, sacramental worship ... Not on community. Not on building up our world unto the image of the Kingdom.. [they are] ‘unchurched’”¹⁵¹. Reynaldo Ileteo has made an inspiring contribution with his book charting the influence of the dramatic reading of the Passion during Lent on the revolutionary movements during the late nineteenth century. He showed that the people naturally inculturated the biblical stories and the result could not be challenged by the friars even if there were strong political overtones, many of which were subtle, dress-related or circumstantial¹⁵².

Traditionally, theologians have left the study of popular religiosity to

¹⁴⁷Infanta 21

¹⁴⁸These *dwindies* or *diwi* are believed in by many within the progressive church as well as those engaged more in traditional religiosity - Infanta 22, 24 and private conversations with ACT sisters.

¹⁴⁹Infanta 22

¹⁵⁰Vergote 1982:6 differentiates folk catholicism from the ‘church of believers’ - i.e. the group of strong personally engaged believers for whom faith is the practical result of a personal conversion. It is described as a habit religion.

¹⁵¹CBCP 1991:Art 13

¹⁵²Ileteo 1979

anthropologists, but in 1987, EATWOT committed themselves to the idea that popular religiosity is a source of liberation¹⁵³. One writer believes that “popular religiosity, through its stories and rituals, puts us in touch with the deep mysteries of life, interprets the manner in which we live and stimulates the imagination for change and renewal”¹⁵⁴ and “without forms of folk catholicism, the community would be alienated from the church and the human shelter of folk culture would be desecrated”¹⁵⁵. In the Philippines the pageantry and festivity of popular religiosity are celebrations of the encounter of life and faith, and should be welcomed as tools of evangelisation rather than discouraged as irrelevant¹⁵⁶. Kroeger’s study of the *salubong* of Easter morning¹⁵⁷ has shown him that through it, the vast majority of Filipinos from an early age are aware of the fact that Jesus is alive on Easter morning¹⁵⁸.

Leonardo Mercado has written much on Filipino philosophy and religious beliefs. In 1991 he looked into the Filipino image of God, which despite all the best efforts of both the official church and the progressive church continues to be heavily dependent on traditional popular religiosity:

A Filipino devotee in Quiapo Church piously wipes with a handkerchief the feet of the Black Nazarene statue. He uses the same handkerchief to wipe his ailing head. The critic who watches the whole scene will dismiss the devotee’s action as plain superstition and will further find fault with the whole popular religiosity in Quiapo Church. Each one, the devotee and the critic, has his own model of the sacred. It is clear that the model of sacred which a people takes has implications in their image of the Absolute and, in turn, practical repercussions in their lives¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵³Belita 1991:ii

¹⁵⁴Belita 1991:i

¹⁵⁵Vergote 1982:26

¹⁵⁶Kroeger 1990:90

¹⁵⁷A dramatised meeting between the mourning Mary and Jesus, involving angels taking the veil from Mary’s face. Often this starts at dawn in two processions, one male (behind the statue of Jesus) and one female (behind Mary), which meet in the marketplace and then all proceed into the church for Easter morning mass.

¹⁵⁸Kroeger 1990:94

¹⁵⁹Mercado 1991:401

iii. Liturgy

Anscar Chupungco has been most associated with the rise of inculturated liturgies. In 1975, a CBCP Pastoral letter allowed the use of native values and traditions in devotions and in 1976 it approved the *Misa ng Bayang Pilipino* (the Mass of the Filipino People)¹⁶⁰. His 1976 book is a treatise advocating true indigenisation, not “returning to primitive or discarded ways. But neither does it mean futuristic approaches or cultural forms that are still in the process of being assimilated”¹⁶¹. Chupungco argues,

The use of the vernacular has underlined the alarming fact that the translation of Latin texts has not improved liturgical communication ... the most profound values of Filipino culture still escape the language and ritual of the reformed Roman liturgy. Although Filipino Christians are deeply imbued with christian catechetical truths and moral imperatives, and claim to be *Romano*, a whole section of their native thought and language pattern are nowhere reflected in their imported worship¹⁶².

The *Misa ng Bayang Pilipino* was presented to Rome for approval in 1979, but was rejected. Ten years later, a group of students from the Maryknoll School of Theology in Manila revised the text and resubmitted it, again it was rejected¹⁶³. Chupungco in his subsequent writings advocates that the liturgy must continue to be renewed, it is an ongoing task¹⁶⁴.

The Jesuit community in Manila has a very strong music ministry based at Loyola House. The music of E.P. Hontiveros, in particular, has become very popular and successful throughout the Philippines. These settings of the mass, of psalms and hymns with traditional imagery, use Filipino musical traditions and fluidity, so that it is common to hear different versions as one travels around.

¹⁶⁰Chupungco 1976:2

¹⁶¹Chupungco 1976:56

¹⁶²Chupungco 1976:83

¹⁶³Conversation with the parish priest of Maria Aurora.

¹⁶⁴Chupungco 1982

iv. Inculturation in the Philippines

Although inculturation has been touched on throughout this part of the Chapter, it is necessary to draw a few more details into the picture of the Philippine church. It is very difficult for outsiders, and many insiders, to work out what would be involved in a truly inculturated church. It is however, clear that the people have a need to rediscover their own culture and religion. The new forms of theology, especially the Church of the Poor, are clearly one way in which inculturation will be allowed into the church. As Julma Neo has written, it is the BCC which is the most promising concrete area of inculturation in the Philippines¹⁶⁵.

In some respects, inculturation has been hampered by historical circumstances. The church that arrived in the Philippines in the sixteenth century was a triumphalist church which had recently driven the Moors from Spain, and it came at the height of the counter-revolution and the inquisition. The explorer Legaspi was accompanied by three Augustinian monks when he arrived in 1565 and was entrusted by the viceroy in Mexico to show the natives "the allegiance every Christian owes Rome; to teach them also to obey their natural masters, to live in communion with the Holy Spirit, to reject all superstitions ... He was especially asked to forbid any innovation in the matters of rites or dogma"¹⁶⁶.

There has been some inculturation and local theology in the Philippines during the last thirty years, however, maybe because of the martial law persecutions and the divisions in the church, it is only recently that serious attention has been paid to the problem. The scene has been clearly set by PCP II, although the document dwells on the dangers of inculturation and the need to go slowly¹⁶⁷. It is clear that it is a priority for the church in the Philippines to ensure that it becomes relevant to a society as it makes the transition into an industrial nation. As Oscar Ante has written:

Not only are the immense majority of the people plunged in poverty, but

¹⁶⁵Neo 1981:330

¹⁶⁶Verlet 1992B:22 - NB this was in the wake of the Chinese controversy (see Bosch 1991:449).

¹⁶⁷Articles 202-211

their beliefs and cultures belong neither to Christianity nor to the west. Those religions and cultures have been deformed, marginalised by colonialism, missionary action, and traditional theology. If Christian theology wants to make sense, to fit a context, it has to open up to the contributions of those religions and cultures, and develop in communion with them. It must shed its Western, élitist rags and find a new expression in the cultural language of the people¹⁶⁸.

In the Philippines we see the political liberation of the people and the cultural liberation of the church intertwined. Filipino society is infused with religious belief, so the church must be with the people in their struggles, hopes and disappointments. It is interesting that Martin Verlet's paper on the 'Political Stakes of Religion in the Roman Catholic Sphere of the Philippines' ends by reminding his readers that any political liberation must have cultural elements in order to remain relevant to the society¹⁶⁹.

Leonardo Mercado has brought together his years of writing about Filipino religious belief and philosophy in *Inculturation and Filipino Theology*¹⁷⁰. He lays out the following criteria for an inculturated theology: 1) it must be communal, the people are the theologians, 2) it is interdisciplinary, relying on social sciences as well as theology, 3) it is ecumenical, 4) it is faithful to the apostolic tradition, showing continuity, 5) it should be open to the world, intelligible to the contemporary people and committed to the poor¹⁷¹. At the end of the book, he explores how his theories of inculturation can be applied to some key issues, the Bible, liturgy and Christology. It is clear that many of these points are similar to those we discussed in chapter 1 and also speak of both inculturation and liberation.

The divisions within the church are still present, there is an enormous difference between the church in the rural areas, a wooden shack, and the air-conditioned, gilded cathedral in Manila. Such divisions within the church hierarchy and the CBCP may well

¹⁶⁸Ante, O, *A Filipino Theology. A Case Study of Edicio de la Torre's Theology of Struggle*, STD dissertation, 1988, at Nijmegen, Catholic University. Quoted in Verlet 1992b:23-24.

¹⁶⁹Verlet 1992b:23-24

¹⁷⁰Mercado 1992

¹⁷¹Mercado 1992:vii-viii

take many years to heal.

In many ways little consensus has been achieved in theology and in 1988 Douglas Elwood could write “Until now, ..., the Philippines church’s theology has been largely an adaptation of European, North American or, more recently, Latin American theologies”¹⁷². In 1994, Eleazar Fernandez called on his Philippine compatriots to stop being theological compradors and start to articulate a theology that best expresses their identity, dreams and struggles¹⁷³.

4. Conclusions

We have seen from the brief discussion of the theology of struggle and from Verlet’s analysis of the two churches in the Philippines, that the unofficial church in the Philippines often links liberation and inculturation. Labayen’s book presents a reasoned argument through economic and political revolutions that a cultural revolution is needed for a revolution to be successful. This is the theology which will provide the backdrop for the next part of this chapter. Labayen brings cultural and political revolutions (inculturation and liberation) together, placing them firmly in the historical story of salvation and the Incarnation. This last aspect we shall explore as a theological concept in Chapter 4. Here we shall investigate how the paradigm shift which Labayen calls for in the church is being actualised in his diocese.

¹⁷²Elwood 1988:3

¹⁷³Fernandez 1994:2; it is however unclear whether Fernandez is writing to his fellow Protestant theologians or to Filipino theologians in general.

Part B - The Prelature of Infanta

Part A included a discussion of the theology of the Church of the Poor, summarised in Labayen's *Revolution and the Church of the Poor*¹, and expressed in the mission statements of the Prelature of Infanta in 1983 and 1995². These provide the theological basis for the Church of the Poor, which was vindicated in 1991 in PCP II. What is rare about the Prelature of Infanta is that this paradigm shift in understanding at church and theological level has been closely connected to a shift in the reality and life of the local church, where there are active programmes to make the shift³. As was seen in Chapter 2, 'Gospel' in the context of local theology means the way in which 'church' or 'faith' is lived out. This section will therefore first look at the translation of Labayen's ideas into the Mission Statement, and then at the various programmes and manifestations in the church. The problems, hopes and achievements in the Prelature have gone on to inspire Labayen further. This is a theological method of Church of the Poor, the Pastoral Spiral, not simply a theological model. During the fieldwork in Infanta there was no drought and the activities of the church were more visible than in Zomba. These two factors have meant that the following description of the church is based on observations at meetings, mass and conferences, as well as the interviews.

In the Prelature the growth of the progressive church, one that seeks to be relevant to the people, is spearheaded and blessed by the bishop. However, there are many within the prelature who continue to stick with the more traditional church structures and practices and who disapprove of the new directions that the church is taking. Thus there is, in this small area of the Philippines, the battle between the progressive and traditional church which is occurring not only throughout the country, but in many ways throughout the world.

¹Published by SPI in 1995.

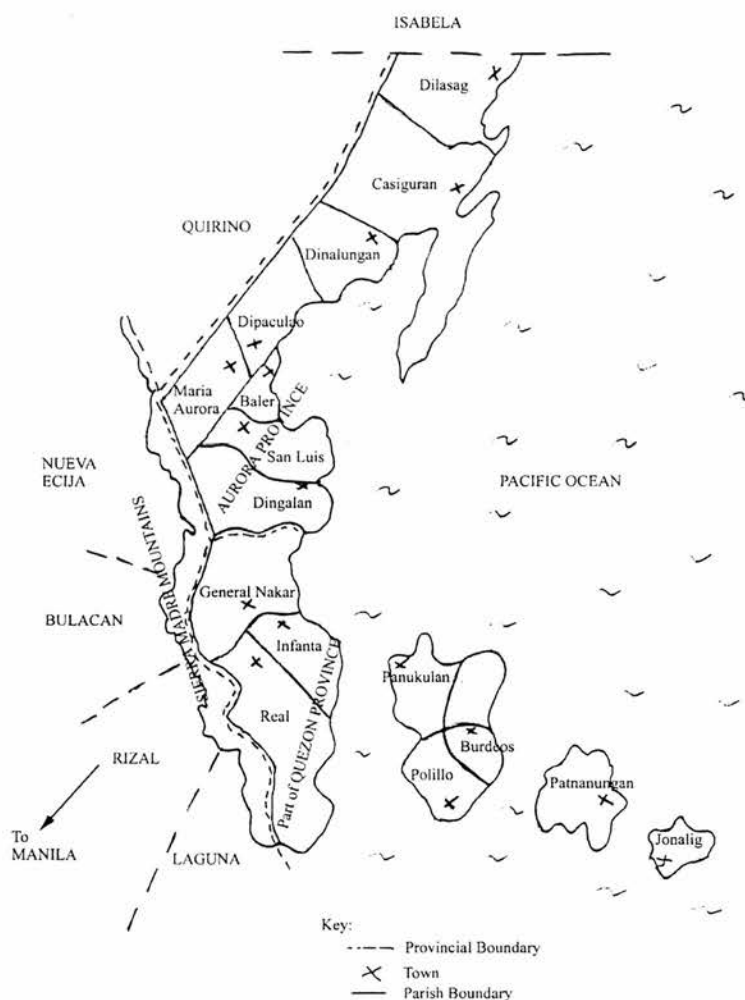
²See below, Labayen is the Bishop-Prelate of Infanta.

³There are other dioceses in the Philippines, especially in Mindanao, which are also making the shift.

1. Background to the Church in Infanta

a. The Geography

The Prelature of Infanta is a recently established diocese (1965) on the eastern side of the main island of Luzon in the Philippines, bordered by the Sierra Monte Mountains on the west and the Pacific Ocean on the east. It is geographically divided, split by mountains and sea. The southern part is part of Quezon Province, the northern part is the small province of Aurora, and passage between the two involves going



Map of the Prelature of Infanta

Adapted with thanks from Sr Neomi Francisco, ACT.

Figure 7

through Manila. The episcopal see is in Infanta⁴, to reach it from the farthest northern town (Dilasag) one has to travel by land or sea for at least three days. The diocese is made up of seventeen parishes, all of them are rural, five of them on islands. The Prelature became known in the Philippines during the martial law period because of the New Peoples Army in the mountains and the resultant military presence.

Most of the data for this thesis was collected while staying with the ACT Sisters⁵ in General Nakar, a poor parish north of Infanta whose mountains continue to give life blood to indigenous groups and have given cover to the NPA, still active in the area. The parish was created in 1965 with a radical priest as the first incumbent and its historical accidents have ensured that it is more politically aware than other parishes in the Prelature. Interviews were also conducted in the slightly wealthier Infanta town, where the progress of the various programmes is less developed, and in Real. In the northern part of the Prelature, interviews were conducted in the relatively unpolitical parish of Maria Aurora where the ACT have a house, and Dingalan, a parish isolated from the rest of the Prelature by mountains, which was run by lay leaders for much of the last 20 years. The breakdown of the interviewees was as follows:

Indigenous	Priests	6
	Sisters/Brothers	6
	Uneducated ⁶	23
	Semi-educated ⁷	10
	Educated ⁸	13
Expatriate	Priests	1
	Sisters	2

⁴It will become apparent during this study that phrases such as “episcopal see” and “hierarchy” have little significance in the Prelature of Infanta, and are used in the thesis simply for western understanding. NB the definition of “hierarchy” used in this thesis from chapter 1 section 2ai.

⁵Apostles in Contemporary Times - See below

⁶Not an English speaker.

⁷English speaker, with secondary education.

⁸Professional.

	Lay	2
TOTAL		63

The parishes are divided into barangays (villages), some of which can be very isolated⁹. They tend to get mass said in their barangay once a month, although in some of the larger parishes (e.g. Infanta) they are clustered together and will receive within the cluster. There is a tradition of lay leaders in the Prelature and many barangays send a member to collect the Host for a dry mass. Nevertheless many parishes remain “very much centred to the priest”¹⁰. As a generalisation, programmes tended to be more prevalent in the central barangays where organisation was easier, and in the far barangays there was, as yet, little understanding of the nature of the Church of the Poor.

b. The History

Marcellino Prudente has divided the history of Infanta into six periods¹¹. The first period, 1578-1945, was marked by missionary control passing between the Franciscans, Augustinians and the Recollect Fathers, culminating in the first Filipino priest in 1929.

The second period is that of the Carmelites; 1945-1950. Infanta town was greatly affected by the Japanese occupation and all the records were in disarray at the end of the war. In 1946 Patrick Shanley OCD entered the area, finding it poor with many in the mountain territories not having seen a priest for over 25 years. However, knowledge of Christianity had not died and Stephen Buckley speaks of the rituals of Holy Week in Catablingen (a barangay of General Nakar) in the early 1950s with the traditions of the Spanish intact¹².

⁹One priest to whom I spoke pointed out that some of the barangays to which he had to travel were accessible only on foot through inhospitable countryside for days and under the threat of the NPA and military - Infanta 12.

¹⁰Infanta 18

¹¹Prudente 1982: 11-39

¹²Stephen Buckley OCD “A Man Shall Scatter” - quoted in Francisco 1996:9.

The number of Carmelites in the area gradually rose allowing the separation of the territory from the diocese of Lipa, the creation of a Prelature Nullius on 25 April 1950¹³, and the start of the third stage. Patrick Shanley was first made Apostolic Administrator (1951) and then bishop (1953). Missionary records from the time show that all the Carmelite priests stressed prayer, a personal and loving encounter with the living God, laying the groundwork for the future Carmelite bishop, Labayen. Before 1963, catechesis was top priority and each priest had a high school and a team of catechists, a 'learning community'¹⁴. 1954 saw the first ordination of a Filipino from the Prelature, and a year later three Carmelites were ordained, amongst them Julio Xavier Labayen.

Prudente identifies 1960-1970 as the social action phase of the Prelature. This was precipitated by the appointment of Julio Labayen as Apostolic Administrator in June 1961. Over the next five years Labayen, encouraged by Vatican II¹⁵, laid the foundations for social action in the prelature. In 1965, the Priests' Institute of Social Action (PISA) held a month long seminar-workshop on social action. As Bp Jesus Varela recalled in 1991, "for most of us, it was our first honest-to-goodness exposure to social action as part of the church's mission. In the past, the social apostolate as a pastoral imperative was commonly perceived as an adjunct only, not a constitutive element of evangelization"¹⁶. This conference changed Labayen's understanding of the role of the church in society and when he presented to the Bishops' Conference the following year, they responded by establishing the National Secretariat of Social Action (NASSA), appointing him National Director¹⁷. The Prelature itself saw the need for the laity to have greater responsibility for building the community and to have an integrated

¹³Prelature Nullius is a legal ecclesiastical term. It designates an ecclesiastical territory which is independent of any diocese. Though governed by a Prelate (usually a bishop), it is not yet a diocese. It is considered young in faith and its church institutions and organizations are not fully developed. In its more mature stage it will become a diocese. (Prudente 1982:17) Although Infanta is now formally a diocese, it continues to use the name "Prelature".

¹⁴Prudente 1982:18

¹⁵See Labayen 1985A

¹⁶Varela 1991:9

¹⁷Varela 1991:9

formation touching on economic, political, spiritual and cultural aspects of life. They began various socio-economic projects and cooperatives, supporting such community development programmes with a one-kilowatt radio station in Infanta¹⁸.

During Lent 1964, the priests of the Prelature explained the documents emerging from Vatican II and other social doctrines through evening masses. Official church documents continue to play a large part in the knowledge of the laity¹⁹. Meanwhile Labayen lectured on, and helped establish, cooperatives in parishes. He introduced a five-pointed programme of catechesis, school ministry, vocation promotion, liturgical renewal and social action, encouraging the growth of an active church²⁰. In September 1966 he was installed as bishop. The late 1960s saw the establishment of many self-help and community development schemes including agriculture, irrigation, rice farming and transport infrastructure. As Prudente wrote, “The learning community of the Prelature had now expanded into a doing and working community for the improvement of their own livelihood towards self-reliance”²¹. Some priests interviewed by Prudente claimed that numbers in church dwindled as people became too involved in social action.

1970-1975 saw the evolvement of the *Sambayanang Kristyano*²² or christian community when the decline in Carmelite priests in the diocese exposed the need for lay leaders, especially in the rural villages. The Carmelites withdrew finally in 1980. The 1970s were rooted in the following orientations:

- a) the establishment of basic christian communities, through increased and wider participation of pastoral conferences of catechists, teachers and other laymen coming together from various walks of life.
- b) the updating and deepening the various liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations and the formation of the liturgical committees to prepare for Sunday

¹⁸SPI 1980:1

¹⁹Francisco 1996:16

²⁰Francisco 1996:14

²¹Prudente 1982:22

²²Prudente 1982:25 explains the epistemology of this phrase.

masses.

c) the increased and widespread use of para-liturgical celebrations, such as Bible services for the dead and for the sick²³.

d) meaningful preparation and participation in the liturgy of the sacraments e.g. ordinations, weddings, baptisms and confirmations.

e) formation of the neighbourhood groups for Bible study and fellowship.

The 1973 Pastoral Conference was a turning point in the thrust of the Prelature. There was a general realisation that everyone had a role in evangelisation, and the three previous thrusts of the Prelature - catechetics, social action and liturgy - were integrated into the one programme - building of basic christian communities, which were recognised to be not only spiritual but also social, economic, political and cultural. The Silver Jubilee of the Prelature in 1975²⁴ was the perfect time to clarify this vision when two themes were emphasised; "*Tao: Katuwang at Kawangis*" (Humanity: Co-creator and made in the image of God) and "*Ang Yapak ng Panginoon sa Ating Buhay*" (The Footprints of the Living God of History²⁵).

The final stage Prudente identifies is 1976-1979, which he labels 'Social Action on Justice'. This was epitomised by forming the priests into a community, making them co-responsible for all the parishes in the Prelature. Conscientisation became a priority, and the increase of lay leaders and activities highlighted the need for better training, including the birth of the lay formation programme, *Yapak ng Panginoon*²⁶. It was based on the elements of prayer, Scripture, liturgy, celebration, and action towards christian transformation of society, which were identified at the 1973 Pastoral Conference.

²³Services for the dead and the sick without communion.

²⁴The Prelature has celebrated its Silver Jubilee twice - once in 1975, 25 years after the establishment of the Prelature Nullius and in 1990, 25 years after the consecration as a diocese.

²⁵The phrase was commonly used to mean the different manifestations of God's presence in the life of the different communities. It refers to God's interventions in our life in the history of salvation - Prudente 1982:32.

²⁶The Tagalog phrase translates "Footprints of the Lord" and the programme is commonly called *Yapak*.

The first few years of *Yapak* were under martial law (declared in 1972) and when failed development plans of the 1960s were beginning to take their toll on the people. At the same time liberation theology gradually became more widely known within church circles, not only at clerical levels but also at village level²⁷, “thus, a new breed of rural poor who were critical of their dehumanized situation and eager for self-determination started to emerge at this time”²⁸. Through *Yapak*, participants were encouraged to process their experiences and integrate faith, prayer and action in the political and religious arena.

Prudente suffered from writing his thesis during the heyday of the Prelature. When he wrote in 1982, the *Yapak* formation programme was going from strength to strength and the people were being equipped to serve the church both in social action and in contextualised liturgies. 1979 was a second turning point for the Prelature when, at its Second Pastoral Conference, it elected to become the “Church of the Poor”. However, the early eighties were turbulent. Throughout the Philippines there was growing communist insurgency and many, both in the Prelature and in the main body of the Philippine church, accused the church of collaborating, especially when Labayen held radio interviews and debates with the communists in the mountains. This eventually led to confusion amongst the laity and priests within the diocese.

A survey conducted by the Prelature in the early 1980s suggested that 87% of those in the Prelature lived below the poverty line²⁹. *Yapak IV*³⁰ therefore concentrated more on social analysis and attempted to develop the sensitivity of the participants to the needs of the marginalised. However, martial law was intensifying and those who had been formed by the Prelature were often ‘salvaged’ (summarily killed). This experience, like all the experiences of the Prelature, was taken into the process of *Yapak*, for “we

²⁷Partly due to the publishing work of the Socio-Pastoral Institute, and the various documents were discussed in BCC’s and church councils.

²⁸Francisco 1996:25

²⁹HS p8

³⁰The *Yapak* seminars are a progression through different stages: the first stage or course that a person will do being *Yapak I*, the second *Yapak II* and so on.

consider them as martyrs of the Church of the Poor and we remember them in a special way at a liturgy dedicated to them when we hold our twenty-four days live-in formation program for the Prelature of Infanta”³¹. Black propaganda from government machinery and conservative forces in the church alleged communist infiltration and created mistrust and factions³². The rumours were often vicious. One involved the Carmelite nuns, who were supposed to have a tunnel from their convent to the bishop’s house (a distance of about 5 miles). They were accused of harbouring young girls and training them for the NPA, sending them direct to the bishop when they were ready³³.

The divisions widened and in 1983 led to a “walk-out” at the fourth in a series of *Yapak* IV seminars. The bishop had been called away from the seminar by urgent business and when he returned three days later, a couple of priests had led a group of antagonists away from his side. Some believe that these priests had attended the seminar for this sole purpose³⁴. The bishop was personally devastated by this event, describing it as “one of the most purifying trials of my faith”³⁵.

The immediate fruit of the crisis was the writing of the Prelature’s Mission Statement (*Pahayag*) at the Third Pastoral Conference in 1983 to address the perceived problem of the communication of aims. In the following years the Prelature, aided by the Asian Social Institute, investigated what had gone wrong. *Yapak* was suspended until 1989 and the regression of those six years is obvious to those who have worked with *Yapak* since the beginning³⁶. The evaluation was presented at a Prelature Pastoral Consultation in 1988; it affirmed that critical confrontation is salutary for the growth of the prelature, and that there was a need to make the social teaching of the church part

³¹Labayen 1995:4

³²Francisco 1996:26

³³Infanta 16 - it became so dangerous that the Carmelites had to suspend their exposure programme which had formed an integral part of their formation.

³⁴Infanta 38

³⁵Labayen 1995:4

³⁶Infanta 41

of the Prelature Formation Programme³⁷. Naomi Francisco summarised the report:

It showed that the conflict which arose within *Yapak* was a repercussion of the shift in focus from the religio-cultural aspect in *Yapak* I and II to the economic-political aspect in *Yapak* III and IV, aggravated by personality differences of and approaches used by the formators.... The difficulty arose in the living of [the] principles since no levelling off has been achieved in the understanding of the political situation and the roles played by the various groups which claim to belong to the umbrella of the Christian community of these times³⁸.

The ASI research proposed the creation of a Prelature Formation Team with representation from all the basic sectors who would set the direction of the programme and ensure the flow of communication.

To these poor peasants and fishermen the so-called EDSA revolution of 1986 made very little difference. When the world was rejoicing after the peaceful revolution, military intervention actually increased in this part of Quezon, not an uncommon experience throughout the Philippines³⁹. The fear instilled by the military is still present today.

c. The Bishop

Bishop Labayen is central to the Prelature, maybe too central. His understanding of the calling of humans to life permeates all the programmes and he is much loved and revered as a father throughout the Prelature. He is clearly the unifying figure, not only within church circles but also between the church and the sectors. His views have isolated him from the CBCP and in 1986 the Prelature as a whole took an anti-election stance (the position normally associated with the communists). Labayen travels much in Asia and the West, thus linking the Prelature to the wider church community, bringing back insights and telling of the Prelature's journey⁴⁰. He also travels widely in the Prelature, engendering enormous loyalty from the people. He uses long sermons to

³⁷Hope in Struggle p9 (Henceforth HS).

³⁸Francisco 1996:33

³⁹Verlet 1992B:19 and Cunningham 1989

⁴⁰Infanta 6

explain the teachings of PCP II and Vatican II, speaking directly to the people he serves. His friendliness and fun-loving spirit make him easily accessible to people from all walks of life⁴¹. The bishop's 'palace' in Infanta is a wooden house, *Bahay Kubo*, the traditional coconut wood hut from the villages⁴².

Through the teachings and vision of Vatican II, Labayen sees his role as helping the church to realise its vision, "a vision of a church that is decentralized, open, respectful of the autonomy of the secular and the laity's competence, a servant church, but one with a clear and uncluttered view of what its task in the world is: evangelization of the whole of life - economic, political, social, cultural"⁴³. He speaks of the problems of institutions and how once they have been established they rarely fulfil the need for which they were established⁴⁴. He therefore advocates a continuously changing church⁴⁵. The church of the poor involves a continuous conversion. As he said in a video "I love the church. The church can never be properly corrupt, but she must change herself to become a force for change"⁴⁶. This thinking is now shared by many in the Prelature and allows them to move forward in confidence regardless of the reactions from the more authoritarian sections of the church.

For Labayen "spirituality is everything"⁴⁷ and this linking of the religious and the secular enables him to maintain good relations with the people's organisations. In his words:

If the BCCs are the religious concretization of the vision of Vatican II, then true people's organisations are the secular concretization. They are two sides of the same coin [they are] the prime actors in social change

⁴¹For example, after the fiesta mass in Infanta, he was immediately surrounded by fishermen and farmers, wanting to be with him and have a photo taken with him, from all accounts this is wildly different to the situation when he arrived when these people would not even have attended mass.

⁴²Many of his flock also appreciate the way in which they can turn up at the bishop's house without an appointment to see him, and can simply walk in (Infanta 17, 34, among others).

⁴³Labayen 1985A:276

⁴⁴Infanta 8

⁴⁵Infanta 2

⁴⁶Video - SPI 1990, *Julio X: Towards the Church of the Poor*

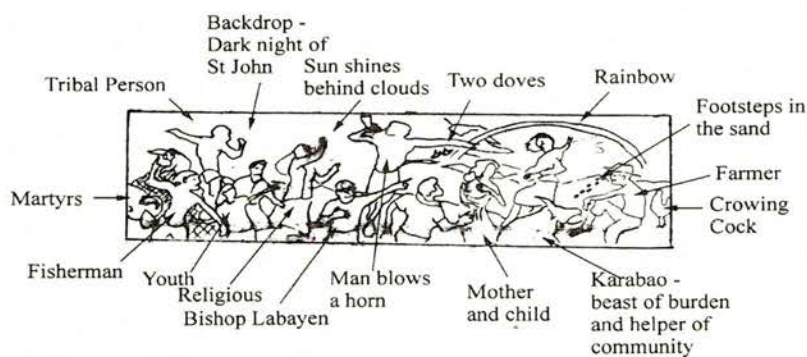
⁴⁷SPI video 1990.

... they are to be independent in making their decisions. The church supports their decisions, and is in turn free to suggest, criticize and even withhold support in extreme cases, though I cannot now think of what such a situation might be⁴⁸.

In 1991 Labayen celebrated his Silver Jubilee as a bishop and his 65th birthday. For the occasion a mural was painted on the west wall of the cathedral church of Infanta by a Prelature religious sister. In many ways “Hope in Struggle” represents the history and theology of both Labayen and the Prelature.



Figure 8 Hope in Struggle - mural from Infanta Parish Church



The backdrop to the painting is the dark night of St John, recalling Labayen’s Carmelite roots, and yet behind the dark clouds the sun continues to shine, breaking through scattered openings. On the horizon, the light breaks through, dark yielding to light, death succumbing to life. On the right is a crowing cock, the symbol of the

⁴⁸Labayen 1985A:277

Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, announcing the dawn of the hoped-for day. In the centre, barely visible, are two doves, flying towards the light, symbolising the lasting peace that is born of the reign of justice in the hearts of people and in the way they organise their life in community and society. They fly towards a rainbow, the symbol of the New Covenant and a symbol close to the hearts of the people of Infanta. Disappearing into the rainbow is a track of footprints in the sand, the footprints of the Lord (*Yapak ng Panginoon*) who walks with humans, the living God of, and in, human history. His footsteps will lead to the promised land. The man in the top centre of the mural blows a horn (the *tambuli*), traditionally used to mobilise self-defence against a common enemy, and calls the community to join in a common task. The people surrounding him represent a cross-section of the people of Infanta, particularly those the Prelature has helped to organise; the fishermen, tribal people, youth, teachers, religious, workers, mothers, women and the farmers. At the left hand edge those who have been killed as victims of the violence are represented. In this mural all the parts of the Church of the Poor are recognised, “a church in pilgrimage struggling against the idols of this world prestige, wealth and power”⁴⁹ (sic). At the centre bottom of the mural, pointing towards the light, “the realization of our Father’s Dream”, is Labayen dressed in the shirt and trousers of a worker. He is the Prophet who announces ‘*Dominus est!*’ proclaiming that the risen Lord walks with his pilgrim people. Labayen explains how the bishop “thinks and feels with the living Church that he may lead and guide the Prelature of Infanta in the ways of the Spirit of Jesus who is the giver of the life to the living church and the assurance that ‘the powers of death shall not prevail against her’”⁵⁰. He sees himself anointed and sent to build the Church of the Poor by being its **servant**⁵¹, standing with the people, seeing the world from their perspective⁵². The model of bishop in the Prelature is thus very different from a traditional one.

⁴⁹Labayen 1991:2

⁵⁰Labayen 1991:3

⁵¹HS 41-43

⁵²Infanta 8

2. Gospel

In the Prelature, alongside the progressive church, there is also the more traditional side of Catholicism. Although the Church of the Poor is clearly inspired from above (the bishop and the religious) it is responding to the needs of the community and the present historical situation. The local study in this case can show how the ideas of Bishop Labayen are implemented in living history. The orientation of the Prelature is that of the Church of the Poor explained earlier.

Inherent in the church of Infanta is the understanding that humans are called to become fully human (*tao*) and this is what it means to be christian. This leads to the Prelature's inclusivity of other denominations and faiths. The bishop has concelebrated mass with a Buddhist monk and when the tribal people partake in Prelature programmes they are welcome to receive mass regardless of whether they are Catholic or not. In Maria Aurora, there are regular communion services with the Methodists, although throughout the area the exclusivity of charismatic "born-again's" is leading to difficult relationships⁵³.

Each year the Prelature aims to emphasise a different aspect of the faith community. In 1996 "the family" was stressed as the important foundation within society and within the christian community. Posters and banners expressing such centrality were put in many churches and in seminars there was increasing stress upon family strengthening.

The people of the Prelature are aware of their place in history and they see their role to develop a "new way of being church", to "be church" in the world. Many interviewed, especially those traditionally on the fringes of the church, for example those working with the sectors, saw the real sacrament as being church⁵⁴, rather than

⁵³Eg Infanta 51

⁵⁴See Infanta 46-49

attendance at mass, for as one worker put it, while the emphasis remains on the eucharist, the importance of the priest is intact⁵⁵.

a. The *Pahayag*⁵⁶

After the walk-out in 1983, the Prelature realised that they needed to explain the orientation more fully. This was done through the publication of the *Pahayag* or Mission Statement.

The first edition of the *Pahayag* was produced in 1983⁵⁷. The Bishop describing the statement in 1992 wrote that “it mirrors the prelature’s historical pilgrimage as a community of believers whose faith in Jesus of Nazareth brought the prelature to recognize and accept its responsibility for, and in, the world”⁵⁸. The concept of individual mission statements for each diocese emphasises the new model of a local church. Since PCP II other dioceses are following suit by writing their *Pahayag* and within the Prelature all the individual organisations such as schools, congregations and sectoral groups have their own *Pahayag*, largely reflecting the main Prelatural one.

The Prelature’s *Pahayag* sets the tone for the whole statement from the beginning by placing the future of the Prelature firmly with the laity: “the church in the world today is at the stage of coping with the new consciousness brought about by the 2nd Vatican Council (1962-1965): Consequently, there is a greater need for the laity to know their responsibility for building community and for an integrated formation touching the economic, political, spiritual and cultural aspects of life.”⁵⁹ This also sets the church of Infanta within the context of the wider church and within the context of the world, its problems and responsibilities.

⁵⁵Infanta 46

⁵⁶Both copies of the *Pahayag* are produced in Appendix 3.

⁵⁷Published in a glossy booklet “Hope in Struggle” (HS) in 1991.

⁵⁸HS p2

⁵⁹HS p6

The Preface to the *Pahayag* when it was published in 1992, is a good expression of the ethos behind the Prelature:

Integral to the historical journey of the Prelature of Infanta are its characteristic compassionate care for the poor, the oppressed and exploited and its response to the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel, as it follows the footsteps of the living God of History.

The concrete expression of this discipleship is participation in the mission of Jesus-Christ. This is enfolded in the Prelature through the involvement of the laity, priests and sisters under the leadership of Bishop Julio Xavier Labayen, OCD. Their co-pilgrims are the basic sectors - the fisher-folks, farmers, tribal filipinos, women and youth - in transforming the present situation towards a more humane, compassionate and just society.

Through the years, the Prelature has learned to consult, listen and feel with the downtrodden. They participate in Pastoral Consultations and Conferences, mechanisms that have served as basis in shaping the formation program of the Prelature.

Of primary importance in the Prelature is the formation of all baptized members by means of 'immersion' with the self, others, society and nature, as a necessary component in a deeper heart-to-heart relationship with the God of History.

Fruit of this is the quest among men and women, events and situations, for the Word of God that was proclaimed since the beginning of the world and, more so, when this Word took on a human form (Jn. 1:1-3, 14). Because of this, the Prelature opens itself to relating with all persons, with all religions, and with different forms of culture.

The Prelature of Infanta prays that in the Spirit of Jesus, it be united with Jesus-Christ in realizing the Father's Dream: in him and under him God wants to unite, when the fullness of time has come, everything in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1:10).⁶⁰

As a result of the fourth Pastoral Conference (1995) the *Pahayag* was re-written in the light of the historical changes of the previous 12 years⁶¹. It was more inclusive than the earlier draft and encompasses the whole community rather than simply the Catholics⁶². The first *Pahayag* was written in 19 clauses, whereas the second statement

⁶⁰HS p2

⁶¹Published in '*Yapak Pahayagan*' December 1995:5-9; to be referred to as the section number followed by the clause number (e.g. 1,1).

⁶²For example the first clause in 1983 read, "We are the Christian Community of the Prelatura (sic) of Infanta which comprises of DICALDI, BALER VALLEY/DING, PRIN, PULO a community of baptized catholics". In 1995 the same clause was phrased "We are the Christian community of the Prelature of Infanta composed of four sub-regions of DIBICADI, VALLEY-DING, RIN and PULO,

is ordered into 30 sections in 7 groupings showing a progression of thoughts through identity, situation, challenges, vision, the mission, objectives and strategies, and finishes by remembering the inspiration of the martyrs of the Prelature, the tribal people and Mary. It includes issues of feminism and ecology, and sets out strategies for the fulfilment of the vision. These include the standardisation of programmes and formation throughout the Prelature, raising awareness of ecological issues, forming the people and the community “from being mere passive recipients to active and dynamic subjects who will shape history by means of the formation”, involving the sectors, promoting “self-nourishing, self governing, discerning and witnessing basic christian communities”, aiming for the partnership of all, and using media and other forms of communication responsibly⁶³. It concludes:

In the spirit of Faith we continue our journey in history, as the Church of the Poor, with a clearer and a stronger commitment as we tread the trying and difficult path of the cross towards the promised fullness of life, fullness of our humanity and integrity of creation. We go forward with a firm hope trusting in the wise guidance and lead of the befriending Spirit of the Risen Lord⁶⁴.

To ensure that everyone knew about the new *Pahayag*, the parish of General Nakar paraded it around the central barangays, stopping to explain it in each of the centres it passed through.

The 1983 *Pahayag* is rather tentative in its approach, in several passages it is simply a re-write of Vatican II documents⁶⁵ and it includes the phrase “*ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia*”⁶⁶, absent from the 1995 statement. In 1983 the church confronted militarisation and repression, but by 1995 history had changed and they faced the “ill-

together with all peoples, sectors, institutions and communities who strive towards fullness of life and humane relationships”.

⁶³*Pahayag* 1995:6

⁶⁴*Pahayag* 1995:7.7

⁶⁵For example, paragraph 9: “Under the guidance of the church we make our own the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of human beings today, particularly of the poor and the afflicted”. *Ad Gentes* paragraph 12: “the Church ... is one with men of every condition, but especially with the poor and the afflicted. ... sharing in their joys and sorrows, knowing of their longings and problems, suffering with them in death’s anxieties”.

⁶⁶Where there is a bishop, there is the church.

effects of the so called development program⁶⁷, [which] emphasise[s] economic gains over human promotion [and] ignore[s], even sacrifice[s], the general welfare of the majority of our people and the vital importance of our environment”⁶⁸. The goal in 1995 was to “discover relevant, effective and efficient means to become a church which is imbued by the Spirit of the Risen Lord”⁶⁹. In this second *Pahayag* their objectives are concrete, for example, in section six they detail the process of levelling-off and the formation of a unified Comprehensive Pastoral Plan that is needed in the Prelature.

b. *Yapak ng Panginoon*

The orientation and the *Pahayag* are propagated chiefly by the lay formation programme *Yapak ng Panginoon*⁷⁰. *Yapak* “is commonly referred to in the Prelature ... to mean the different manifestations of God’s presence in the life of the different communities of the Prelature. As used in the program, ‘*Yapak ng Panginoon*’ refers to God’s intervention in man’s life in the History of Salvation. It also has been used to designate the program as a whole”⁷¹. The phrase has therefore become slightly confused in its usage and now tends to refer exclusively to the formation programme. This is how it will be used in this thesis, although its more general meaning should be remembered. The name connotes **action**, but action in step with God, the action of the God of history in and through humanity. “As a formation program, ‘*Yapak*’ is a program of training lay leaders to be sensitive in God’s action in history and hence to become God’s ‘*Yapak*’ in our history, that is, more and more His image and His partners co-creating history”⁷².

The lay formation programme is unique to the Prelature, although now they are being asked to take it further afield. Being firmly rooted in the idea of the God of history it has undergone much change in the last thirty years. It is designed to be undertaken by

⁶⁷See Chapter 4a, Section 2a for details of the development programmes.

⁶⁸*Pahayag* 1995:2,1

⁶⁹*Pahayag* 1995:3,2

⁷⁰Footsteps of the Lord

⁷¹Cruz 1979:41

⁷²Cruz 1979:21

all sections of the church, from the bishop to the layperson, and any form of leadership within the church community requires it as training. Thus school teachers, catechists, sectoral leaders, youth leaders and those with no initial responsibilities, are encouraged to participate. It is funded from Austria so that the participants pay nothing, and there are ways to enable a family's breadwinner to attend. It is a 28 day programme which starts with seminars and group sessions, encouraging participants to look into who they are, who is God, and what is history, through Bible study and para-liturgy. Since one cannot side with the poor unless one has been alongside them⁷³, the second part of *Yapak* is "immersion" (*babad*). The immersion experience involves the participants going into the community and living alongside them for a period of up to five days, followed by the processing of experiences. Groups from other parts of the Philippines, especially seminarians, and from elsewhere in the world have also been sent on immersion.

The programme aims to build on participants' life experiences and thus by exposure give them other pastoral experiences, helping them respond to their own situation⁷⁴. There is emphasis on community building within the context of a faith-prayer life. A catchphrase used to designate the process of *Yapak* - '*kinipan*' - has been created from three Tagalog words '*kilos*' (action), '*nilay*' (reflection) and '*panalangin*' (prayer); thus '*kinipan*' is "*Yapak's* way of knowing"⁷⁵.

The idea of *Yapak* was born during the first Pastoral Conference in 1973, when the Prelature elected to have a preferential option for the poor, and was actualised in 1976. The first seminar was biblico-theologically based. There were relatively few priests in the Prelature at the time and the Pastoral Conference realised that if they were to have meaningful christian communities they needed trained lay leaders. The following year analysis was added to the curriculum and in 1978 *Yapak* III tackled specific issues. Following the 2nd Pastoral Conference, there was analysis of what it meant for the Prelature to be the Church of the Poor. Meanwhile *Yapak* graduates

⁷³See Infanta 8 - exposure is necessary for formation.

⁷⁴Infanta 8

⁷⁵Cruz 1979:28-36

echoed the programmes in the localities on an ad hoc basis.

In 1989 *Yapak* was relaunched after the break caused by the walk-out. One formation leader recalled the difference in orientation, which she illustrated by citing a participant who had been on the *Yapak* seminars in the late 1970s and then again in 1989. He commented that within a week the participants had become much closer to each other and did not consider political affiliation a problem in working together. There is now a stress on starting from the experiences and positions of the participants rather than from church or biblical doctrines. This is seen to lead to the understanding that it is the heart that is important rather than the ideology espoused⁷⁶.

In 1989 there was a desire to reach *Yapak* IV at least, and preferably *Yapak* VI, by 1995. However, they were cautious not to create the same atmosphere of suspicion as previously. In 1991 the formation team realised that there was a need for more people to propagate the ideas, so the seminar graduates were trained to conduct mini-*Yapaks* in their own localities⁷⁷. These last for 3-7 days and are taken as a foretaste of the main *Yapak*.

Mini-*Yapak* has now emerged into a programme in its own right. Through it the organisers can reach more people and it enables people to gain understanding of the Prelature's orientation before they attend the *Yapak* seminar. Mini-*Yapak* covers the same ground as the main *Yapak*, looking into the history and mission of the Prelature, their own history as a people, grace and salvation, and Mary. Since the teaching is done by those who have done the longer course, it can be haphazard, but most interviewees who had done it found it very useful for leading them closer to God, and for getting to know oneself and one's relationships in community and nature⁷⁸. What people learnt from mini-*Yapak* was obviously personal, many of those interviewed learnt about who

⁷⁶Infanta 38.

⁷⁷The decentralised nature has led to differing implementation across the Prelature - see the syllabus.

⁷⁸Infanta 37

they were and how to conduct themselves in relationships. One woman expressed the political nature of the programme most clearly;

I learnt especially that the church has to be involved because she is also part of the society. So that she has a role to play in building up society. According to the history of the church itself, you can see that she has a role to play. I was especially challenged by the church to take up this challenge and also, because we experience that a lot of people in the church are so closed, to help them open their eyes⁷⁹.

Yapak II was introduced in 1992 and by 1996 the Prelature had conducted *Yapak* I nine times and *Yapak* II twice. Although there is a desire to tread carefully, the present vision is to reach *Yapak* IV by the year 2000. This seminar will reinstate the permanent lay diaconate, full-time workers, male and female, with special functions and activities⁸⁰. In view of the Vatican's rulings on women in worship, there will clearly be problems concerning the inclusion of women in this project, but as Naomi Francisco writes, this will not stop the Prelature. If necessary, the women will be blessed rather than ordained⁸¹.

The aim of *Yapak* is to train lay leaders from each parish to help in building basic christian communities. *Yapak* II builds on *Yapak* I, covering similar material in greater depth and concentrating more on structural analysis, salvation history and prayer practices. In the first seminar, there is an introduction to scriptures, looking at the creation story, the covenant and salvation history, especially in relation to the experience of Exodus. There are sections on the church, the role of the laity and mariology, the *Pahayag* is studied and there is emphasis on the vision of the new heaven and new earth. Prayer teaching looks at both personal and communal prayer and experiments with the writing of liturgy. After exposure there is a section on structural analysis. *Yapak* II looks at the four relationships between God, Nature, Community and Society and the call to holiness in our quest to be fully human. There is also more depth on the sacraments of

⁷⁹Infanta 47

⁸⁰Infanta 1

⁸¹Francisco 1996:39

the Catholic Church and the orientation towards *Kinipan*⁸².

One of the most important emphases of the *Yapak* formation is the concept of faith-experience. This encourages the participants to enhance their faith from where they are, on the premise that faith comes from and is dependent on, one's experience and will naturally lead to action. This theory of 'faith-experience' emphasises that without a firm faith foundation, the task facing the lay leaders is virtually impossible - it is "the essential integrating factor of all pastoral activities"⁸³.

A formation programme will be difficult to assess, especially for a researcher in the field for a limited period, during which no *Yapak* seminars were undertaken. In 1995, as a follow up to the Fourth Pastoral Conference, the Socio-Pastoral Institute⁸⁴ conducted a survey of the effects of *Yapak*, dividing the respondents into those who had not done *Yapak*, those who had done Mini-*Yapak* and those who had done the full *Yapak*⁸⁵. The report concludes that the peak moments of the programme are the modules on the self, consciousness-raising, and the atmosphere of brotherhood/sisterhood⁸⁶. Through *Yapak*, the participants, especially the laity, discover a new perspective on life and faith, as they are taught to analyse the structures of poverty around them, to remember their history as Christians, as Filipinos and as individuals and to come to an awareness of the action of God in history.

People's own experiences of *Yapak* were difficult to gauge, but on the whole amongst my informants, it was seen as the beginning of their real involvement in the church. It was during the seminar that they could discover who they are and address

⁸²*Yapak* syllabus

⁸³SPI 1980:1

⁸⁴See below section 4.

⁸⁵See Narito 1995

⁸⁶Narito 1995:32 - her table of the differences before and after the seminar is reproduced in appendix 4.

their shortcomings⁸⁷, one claimed “it was the best thing that has happened to me”⁸⁸. Some people spoke of how, through *Yapak* they understood that the prelature’s vision is in step with that of the history of the universal church⁸⁹ and that treating other people as God’s children is an important part of being a Christian⁹⁰. However, it is clear that as yet only a small percentage of the Catholic Church has undertaken the seminar (including very few priests⁹¹) and there is very little follow-up so people get subsumed by the system with no clear tasks or responsibilities, and fail to establish basic christian communities⁹². Although creative liturgies are encouraged during the formation programme and at other seminars, there is little opportunity to continue these when the graduate returns to the parish⁹³. Most acknowledged the potential of *Yapak* for levelling the clergy and empowering the laity, although some recognise that this leads some priests to resent or oppose it⁹⁴.

This formation programme is the main means of training people in the establishment of small christian communities, for although few can attend the 28 day seminar, those who can are expected to return, establish the christian community, and through it and 3 day *Mini-Yapaks*, continue the teaching.

c. The Pastoral Conference

Integral to the formation and orientation of the Prelature is the Pastoral Conference, which has been held regularly since 1968. Labayen has described it as

The nerve center of our pastoral growth of the life of the Prelature of Infanta. Through evaluation and enrichment we strive to acquire a new viewpoint (that of Jesus of Nazareth who opted for the poor). The Pastoral Conference provides the policy guidelines for our on-going

⁸⁷Infanta 23

⁸⁸Infanta 27

⁸⁹See especially Infanta 50

⁹⁰Infanta 19

⁹¹Infanta 38 - who co-ordinates the programme.

⁹²Infanta 12, 38, 40 and from the unpublished syllabus.

⁹³Infanta 38. And Infanta 27 said this meant they were not convinced of the Church of the Poor.

⁹⁴Infanta 7, 17

formation program towards shaping the Prelature of Infanta into becoming the Church of the Poor⁹⁵.

The Pastoral Conference is a residential meeting, usually in Manila since it is the most convenient place to reach from all parts of the Prelature. The participants are drawn from the educational institutions, the religious congregations, the sectoral organisations and other lay pastoral workers, gathering people from all walks of life to explore and assess the direction of the Prelature. The aim is to promote greater lay participation and orientation in the formation and development of the Prelature's programmes. The vision is that eventually each parish will also hold pastoral conferences, and indeed the most socially active parish of the Prelature, General Nakar, held its fourth in 1994.

Each of the Prelature's Pastoral Conferences have been distinctive and decisive in the course of the Prelature's history. Influenced by theological writings emerging from Latin America and the Medellin Conference⁹⁶, the first Pastoral Conference in 1973 took the preferential option for the poor. It looked at the nature of christian community and attempted to become acquainted with the Word of God and the history of salvation⁹⁷. The conclusions centred on the interconnectedness of relationships between God, creation, society and community, and it was recognised that without these interrelationships there is no *Sambayano Kristyano* (SK)⁹⁸. The Conference confirmed that a christian community existed where there was a group of baptised people, with or without a priest. It was the responsibility of all baptised people to build faith communities and to renew the face of the earth, and they must be trained to enable them to do that⁹⁹. Basic christian communities emerged from these developments, and there was a recognition of the importance of the teaching of other Asian religions, especially

⁹⁵HS page 11

⁹⁶Bosch 1991:327: "In 1968 the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops met in Medellin, an event that provided the setting and stimulus for the emergence of Latin American liberation theology, which finally ended the hegemony of western mission's cultural and ideological assumptions".

⁹⁷Labayen 1981:1

⁹⁸Christian community

⁹⁹Infanta 38

Buddhism, and the culture of the Filipino tribal peoples¹⁰⁰.

In 1979, the second Pastoral Conference evaluated the growth of the basic christian communities. This was during the height of the social action period¹⁰¹, and the Social Action Centre became the main arm for promoting the on-going services of the formation programme, incorporating the growing *Yapak* programme¹⁰². The main turning point of this Pastoral Conference was the recognition that the church must not only have a preferential option for the poor, but must **be** the Church of the Poor. Labayen looking back sees this being the time “people discovered their own potential and broke out of the culture of silence in which they had been trapped”¹⁰³.

The third Pastoral Conference in the wake of the walk-out (1983) wrote the Mission Statement and this was then revised during the fourth Pastoral Conference in 1995.

d. Laity, Pastoral Workers and MSKs and other Projects of the Prelature (SAC)

Lay leaders are central to the Prelature’s orientation and programmes. Not only are the *Yapak* seminars established to give people the necessary training to build communities, but there is a common feeling that there are not enough priests; on one of the islands, there is no priest in the parish at all and everything is conducted by a layman. What the laity are able to do in the parish depends very much on the mindset of the priest, some allowing all the jobs to go to the laity, some keeping tight control. Although most people felt that men and women were given an equal role in the church, it was clear that women made up the greatest workforce within the church, but tended to be in non-front line positions. This was emphasised to me when a woman worker in

¹⁰⁰In Luzon, there are very few Muslims. Labayen has, for the moment, concentrated mostly on Buddhism, whose outlook and methods he sees as similar to the Church of the Poor.

¹⁰¹Prudente 1982:20

¹⁰²SPI 1980:2

¹⁰³Labayen 1981:1

the church at General Nakar who had been working in the church for fifteen years and was a very loved and respected leader, told me that, although she is the only woman worker in the parish licensed to distribute communion, she will not do so if there is a man present¹⁰⁴.

The *Yapak* programme mirrors the 1980 vision of building the Church of the Poor which envisioned

Leaders who are rooted in prayer, who bring together the elements of action for justice and participation in the transformation of the world, who incarnate the meaning of existence, of life and the world, who vibrate with the thinking and feeling of the living Church, who try to follow faithfully the steps of the living Lord of History, making these steps his own by immersing himself in the life-realities of his fellow poor, by his faith-action, faith-reflection, faith-prayer¹⁰⁵.

The role of catechists in third world parishes has been discussed by many¹⁰⁶. In Infanta, they play a vital role in the development of the laity. The Prelature brings the catechists together for conferences such as one in Dingalan in April 1996, where they discuss the issues they confront in their work and explore new directions and ideas for teaching and for liturgy. At the 1996 catechetical conference they also discussed the new catechism of the Roman Catholic Church and looked at its implications for them. Their discussion concluded that it was out of date with reality and was not in line with the orientation of the Prelature. Therefore, although parts may be useful, it should not become the basis for their own catechetical programme. Such a conclusion shows the Prelature's understanding that the teaching of the papacy is offset by local circumstances and reality¹⁰⁷. There is an attempt at the moment to standardise catechists' work, responsibilities and pay across the Prelature, but organisation tends to be within the individual parish rather than on the wider scale. The recent shuffle of priests around the Prelature (see section g) and the recent report into the working of *Yapak*¹⁰⁸ have also

¹⁰⁴Infanta 10

¹⁰⁵SPI 1980:14

¹⁰⁶e.g. Hickey mid-1980s:40-41

¹⁰⁷From observation at the conference.

¹⁰⁸Narito 1995

emphasised that there is a long history of catechists in many parishes and that the history must be collected for the shared wisdom. One of the ACT sisters has started this process of collection¹⁰⁹.

The training of the catechists was rather haphazard. Some of them had attended *Lumen Christi* in Manila, a lay formation college, but the majority, due to lack of finances and family responsibilities emerge from the community and are trained on the job. All do the *Yapak* programme and encourage others to do *Mini-Yapak*.

Their work is divided into two main aspects. The first is school-based, teaching in local public schools for about 30 minutes a week. This form of catechetics is gradually giving way to a more community based approach which concentrates on the building of MSKs¹¹⁰. In some parishes, pupils from Mt Carmel Schools (the Prelature run schools) now teach the school-based catechetics. The catechists are also responsible for the smooth running of liturgies when the laity take part. For example, catechists aim to go to a barangay a few days prior to their fiesta to train and help the people to express their faith in the service¹¹¹. Some of the catechists are part-time, and others full-time. In many parishes the laity are running the parish¹¹².

The *Munting Sambayanan Kristiyano*¹¹³ are clearly seen by the Prelature to be the way for the church for the twenty-first century. There is a concerted effort by the religious leaders of the Prelature to encourage the communities to meet together once a month, regardless of whether a priest or sister is present. At the moment the majority of the members are mothers. They learn herbal medicines, discuss local issues and worship together¹¹⁴. Liturgy tends to be informal, often outside where there is more

¹⁰⁹Infanta 14

¹¹⁰*Munting Sambayanan Kristiyano*, basic christian community.

¹¹¹Infanta 14

¹¹²Including General Nakar (Infanta 21), Dingalan (7) and some of the islands.

¹¹³Basic christian community

¹¹⁴Infanta 32, 13, 29 and observations.

space, and the local people plan and conduct the service. The catechist or pastoral leader from the main parish will bring the consecrated host when necessary, but s/he is well-known by the community¹¹⁵.

Some parishes, for example General Nakar, had basic christian communities in 1975, but the extent of militarisation and underground movement made them disappear until after 1989. Today they are still in their early stages and although at the moment they tend to be synonymous with the barangay rather than a smaller unit, they are clearly fulfilling a need. As one catechist remarked people feel closer to the church “because of the MSK, the priest can go to their place and give mass. And the people feel that the church needs them and they are part of the church. Before they felt that the church was very far from them”¹¹⁶. One lay worker noticed that the present aim of the MSK is awareness building in contrast to the traditional christian community that was centred more around prayer¹¹⁷.

In the northern part of the Prelature the training of catechists is more systematic, the MSKs have survived from the early days of the Prelature, and the catechists are well trained for distributing dry mass at Bible Services¹¹⁸. In Maria Aurora for example, each of the 46 barangays has a weekly bible service with communion. There, the MSKs are further advanced and tend to involve about 10-12 families so that there are 3-5 in a barangay. However, although on the surface this parish appeared to have an organised system of MSKs, it was clear from talking to a number of people that when the official church workers such as the ACT sisters were not present, attendance decreased¹¹⁹. Those working with MSKs believed that the southern parishes were more politically aware,

¹¹⁵While conducting interview 18, an old man came to collect the consecrated host from the priest’s house where we were talking. There was no ceremony for it. The consecrated host collected in this way was commonly referred to as a “dry host” and it would be shared at a “dry mass” (without consecration or wine at the point of distribution).

¹¹⁶Infanta 32

¹¹⁷Infanta 36

¹¹⁸Many people however did not feel that there was a difference between a bible service with consecrated host and the normal mass with a priest, even though all the priests claimed that they did!

¹¹⁹For example, Infanta 38

while the northern parishes concentrated on their spiritual lives¹²⁰. There is an attempt to standardise understanding of MSKs across the Prelature, partly in preparation for the changes which a new bishop will bring in 2000.

*Balik-handog*¹²¹ (BH) is the new way of financing the church in the Prelature, inspired in part by PCP II. Previously each sacrament was paid for by those taking part, for example, the parents and sponsors of a child when it is brought for baptism. BH is a system of pledging - the family pledges to the parish a certain amount each month (or harvest) which can be as low as one *peso*, and they then give regularly. This system is taking time to catch on and will be difficult in places where MSKs are weak.

It seemed that most people who spoke of the increasing use being made of the laity in the Prelature perceived it to be a necessity *because there were so few priests*. Such reasoning included one of the most conscientised priests in the prelature¹²². Thus it appears there is no firm theology of the laity and there was little thought that only through the laity being involved in the church could the church truly be. Although MSKs are formally part of the Prelature's mission plan, it is clear that the stages of development are still varied and that they continue to be 'organised' by the priests and sisters.

Since the 1960s Bishop Labayen has worked for the transformation of society and the conscientisation of the people¹²³. The Social Action Centre, established in Infanta in the 1960s, expanded in research, data collection and health projects during the late 1960s and 1970s. It was severely affected by the 1983 walk-out and at the time of research was in moratorium through lack of a director. With the rise in social action amongst the MSK groups, there is a need for the centre to change its mandate from being a separate but related institution, to being fully integrated into the mainstream

¹²⁰Private conversations with the ACT sisters.

¹²¹From *Balik* 'returned' and *Handog* 'given'.

¹²²Infanta 6,7 and 15: "that is why we have lay leaders, to help the priest".

¹²³See Giordano 1988:54-57 for a good account of the bishop's writings on the subject.

church. The SAC's work has mostly been taken over by the community organisers, a group of five workers who go to the sectors, and this has brought a slight distancing from the church. When the SAC closed, its work in the north was taken over by fully developed sectors, but in the south such institutions did not exist, and so in recent years the church has concentrated on the more spiritual side of life.

For those interviewees involved in church life, there was a clear understanding of the orientation of the Prelature, partly because the *Pahayag* makes it clear¹²⁴ but also because of the exposure which comes from *Yapak*¹²⁵. Lay informants understood the Church of the Poor to be returning to the early church tradition¹²⁶, encouraging people to be inclusive¹²⁷, and recognising that the poor give themselves to the church while the rich just give money¹²⁸. They had noticed a difference: as one man said, before the homily was based solely on the Gospel, while now they tend to be situational¹²⁹, and another commented that in the Prelature decisions are taken on human needs and rights rather than simply dependent on religious doctrines¹³⁰.

The Prelature has also taken the sectors seriously. It supports work by the Franciscans among the tribal people, and pastoral workers also work with fishermen, farmers and women to educate and join in their struggles¹³¹. In Baler, in the north, the Calama group¹³² has established *Bataris* - a centre for the training and consolidating of the sectors in the area and a place for dialogue between the sectors and the church. For those working with the sectors, Christianity is understood in their lives and in the

¹²⁴Infanta 23

¹²⁵Infanta 27, describes how *Yapak* has made him aware of the injustices against the poor in his locality.

¹²⁶Infanta 33, 37

¹²⁷Infanta 12

¹²⁸Infanta 23

¹²⁹Infanta 36

¹³⁰Infanta 50

¹³¹See Infanta 34

¹³²A Dutch based international lay worker movement.

struggles of their people, without any guilt that they rarely attend church¹³³.

Thus Catholicism espoused in the Prelature of Infanta is not concerned with the rubrics of the traditional church. It recognises, teaches and encourages the experience of God in each person and in each situation.

e. Seminars

The Prelature runs a wide variety of seminars. For example, courses for married couples, 'Family and Life' explore how to be effective and responsible parents and how to have relationships with one's partner and children. Lay leaders also do regular seminars to update training. At this creative time in the Prelature there were also seminars for the catechists to discuss MSK's and BH. One such meeting was held in May 1995, and catechists welcomed it for teaching how the MSK is built and the theological foundations for them¹³⁴.

Seminars are also conducted on a parish basis. In Maria Aurora, for example, the priest did a series of seminars each year in the different barangays on liturgy and the sacraments, etc. The seminar attended by the author looked at the eucharist and followed its history in the church. The previous parish priest in General Nakar was remembered for the way in which he expounded Vatican II documents and recent papal letters¹³⁵.

The current government plans for the development of the Philippines into an industrial economy are the most pressing concern of the church, not only within the Prelature, but throughout the Philippines. In the Prelature, MSK meetings have been devoted to information about "Philippines 2000" and how the plans will destroy natural resources, ancestral land and the lifestyle of the people¹³⁶. On 1st May 1996, the southern

¹³³Infanta 46-49.

¹³⁴Infanta 27, 32, observation.

¹³⁵Infanta 3

¹³⁶As the bishop pointed out in an SPI video - such multi-national development plans seem to aim at "progress to the rich, death to the poor". The Prelature insists that development must rest on the farmers' production.

part of the Prelature held a symposium in Infanta attended by about 200 people, to explain the new plans, with representatives from the government and from independent organisations. Some people in the Prelature remember when Marcos devised similar plans¹³⁷.

Cooperatives established in the 1960s are still popular as barangay shops run by local women. In Real, the system of *Grameen*¹³⁸, whereby small loans are given to groups of women, is being operated from the church with much success. The groups of women who have clubbed together for their business venture, meet regularly (normally every week) to discuss the matter. This time is increasingly used for formation, teaching literacy, numeracy and conscientisation.

f. Liturgy and the Mass

Sunday services in General Nakar are conducted by the MSK groups in turns. They choose the theme of the service, compose the prayers and divide the roles between them. This is still in its early stages, and one of the ACT sisters suspects that the lay worker often leads the group rather than allowing them to make their own decisions¹³⁹.

There is a growth of experimental liturgy and contextualised understanding¹⁴⁰, but this was another area adversely affected by the set-backs of the 1980s¹⁴¹. Today, creative liturgies are encouraged at seminars or conferences, and in such settings there is little deference to the clergy or tradition. Often the liturgy is the unifying feature of the day, starting with the confession in the morning, the readings at midday and the communion in the evening¹⁴². The youth in General Nakar had also started to do drama

¹³⁷Infanta 10

¹³⁸Started in Chittagong, Bangladesh, in 1976. Grameen "provides credit to the poorest of the poor in rural Bangladesh, without any collateral" - from their web site.

¹³⁹Infanta 14

¹⁴⁰Infanta 6, where the priest tells of role plays for eucharistic prayers.

¹⁴¹Francisco 1996:20 - the growth of contextualised liturgies from 1973 which encouraged people from all the sectors to participate. Private conversation with her, this diminished in the confusions in the early 1980's.

¹⁴²Observation at the 2nd Catechetical Conference.

and dance in the mass to educate the congregation as to the effects of environmental damage¹⁴³.

Other special occasions such as Christmas and Easter have their own liturgies, and during fiesta time the local christian community will prepare the liturgy for the mass. For example, during the fiesta in Ramada barangay (27th June), Maria Aurora, the local community had prepared the whole service, the priest simply presented a sermon on the topic chosen by the community, and consecrated the host. The community met together beforehand to discuss and practise their ideas. The main alteration was the joining of the offertory and intercessions, for which they composed prayers and presented gifts symbolising their lives:

- ▶ Candles for “our desire to follow the footsteps of your only son, ... by the flame of his candle continue to light our way in our journey in life and in our desire to build the church that really cares for the inspiration of the poor”.
- ▶ Flowers, to symbolise the beauty of the world, praying for ecological responsibility.
- ▶ Rice, as a symbol of the care God gives them and prayers for the struggle of farmers.
- ▶ Coconut seedlings, a symbol of the way the MSKs will grow towards full humanity and right relationships.
- ▶ Earth, as an acknowledgement of God’s goodness, “may we continue to value our ecology”.
- ▶ Vegetables and fruits, gifts from God’s goodness, a symbol of the value of life and everyone’s duty to get involved in their society and neighbourhood.
- ▶ A broom, symbolising the way different people come together in an MSK and the need for organisation and unity for strength.
- ▶ A cross and a Bible, signs of humanity’s continuous sharing of sacrifice, death and resurrection, “may we be faithful in the building of the MSK”.
- ▶ A family presented to the front, symbolising the MSK, “may we strengthen the

¹⁴³Observation 19 May.

family to realise the new heaven and the new earth”.

- ▶ Finally the bread and the wine, labour of the farmers and workers, may they be liberated from their oppressors, and the bread and wine lead to unity and faith in the MSK¹⁴⁴.

The priest will usually go to a barangay for their fiesta. Often the fiesta is the time for baptisms, and many will postpone baptism until the priest comes for the occasion, which can result in their being 50-80 baptisms at the fiesta¹⁴⁵. When a barangay does not have a chapel, the barangay hall or band stand will be transformed with an altar (a table), candles and flowers.

Sunday services varied greatly across the Prelature. General Nakar had begun contextualisation. General accusations are used instead of the formal confession, each week there is a theme for the liturgy which draws together the readings and the homily, usually challenging the people, presenting the word of God and exploring how it affects christian life. The thanksgiving after mass, composed and read by the MSK leading the worship, touches on all parts of life: the community, friends, nature and of course the body and blood of Christ. In General Nakar at the Easter Vigil, they dramatise the light coming from the people, each of the sectors bringing a light to the bonfire outside the church, and from that fire the paschal bamboo and oil candle is lit and taken into the church¹⁴⁶.

Music is an area where contextualisation is occurring. The Jesuit School in Manila, and especially the Jesuit EP Hontiveros, is producing many settings for the mass, widely used in the Prelature. It is music for the mass which uses traditional harmonies in local languages. Its free style allows it to grow with the community using it. A popular song which grew in Infanta, visualises a river with waves, comparing it to human life, hit by typhoons, but also flowing through quieter moments. It expresses the

¹⁴⁴Observation

¹⁴⁵E.g. Real, May 1995

¹⁴⁶Infanta 38

way people cannot leave their problems, but must face them¹⁴⁷.

g. The Clergy and the People's View of it

The role of the priest in the community is changing rapidly in the Prelature of Infanta. Whereas traditionally the priest was viewed with awe, increasingly the people question his authority and his ideas. This is one reason for the lack of concern over priests' marriages amongst interviewees. In conversation, people tended to see the priests as human, as men who are weak and in need of comfort¹⁴⁸. There was a general feeling amongst informants that it would be good for the church to allow honesty in regard to their women.

As the laity take an increasing role in the day-to-day running of the parish, as they teach their neighbours and children the faith, coordinate seminars and lead worship, the priest's role will increasingly be one of facilitator¹⁴⁹, someone who conducts the sacraments and disseminates his knowledge¹⁵⁰.

However, his position as the "sacrament-giver" is safe. Although relatively few people regularly attend Mass except at fiesta time, those that do consider it important for their faith. As one catechist put it "in my experience, mass is a mystery for serving the people"¹⁵¹. One fiesta in an outlying barangay of General Nakar that I attended was at a time when the priest was out the parish and there were many complaints that there was no priest to give communion, since in many barangays this is the only time they receive mass¹⁵². The great distances involved in the priests' jobs are a real hindrance to correcting this situation. Many barangays are difficult to get to, often reachable only by walking through the mountains for three days. In some areas, militarisation prevents free

¹⁴⁷Infanta 42

¹⁴⁸Infanta 7 and 13

¹⁴⁹Infanta 6

¹⁵⁰Infanta 9, 11, 13, 39

¹⁵¹Infanta 13

¹⁵²Infanta 13

access to unknown faces.

The Prelature likes to move the priests around the parishes periodically. This is to prevent individual priests making their parish a “mini-kingdom”. Unfortunately, in practice the moving of priests does not happen as often as would be liked. In 1995 there was a major shuffle, which showed that the outgoing priest often did not hand on information and knowledge to the incoming. The laity are therefore setting up subregional committees in liturgy and celebration, formation, *diaconia*, and administration, to ensure some continuity. If this system of moving the priests was to be fully implemented, it would force the priests to rely on the laity more since they would provide the continuity. There were hints in some interviews of some ill-feeling amongst lay leaders who had worked for many years in the parish, and were pushed aside when a new priest arrived.

Although those questioned claimed that people are no longer in awe of the priest¹⁵³, the priest is still seen as the model for the community, although it was felt this rarely happened¹⁵⁴. The priest was expected to support the church of the poor, but the work is done by the laity, especially in the sectors, where the priest gives courage to the people¹⁵⁵.

Since the Prelature’s orientation is different from other dioceses, some younger priests called for their own seminary, to enhance their vision. This dream is slowly being realised and all priests do exposure in the Prelature before ordination. It was felt that Infanta received better priests since they knew when they applied to work there that there was little money, and thus they would move to the Prelature because of the orientation¹⁵⁶. The Prelature also emphasises community training and orientation in the

¹⁵³Infanta 29, 34, 37

¹⁵⁴Infanta 27

¹⁵⁵Infanta 33 and 18

¹⁵⁶Infanta 5

formation of the clergy¹⁵⁷.

h. Religious Congregations

The orientation of the Prelature is seen at all levels of the hierarchy including in the religious congregations, even the long established, western-based ones.

The main religious congregation is the Apostles in Contemporary Times (ACT). This is an indigenous group which embodies the spirit of the Prelature. It was set up in 1972 by a group of women from different traditional religious communities who wanted to be led by the Holy Spirit rather than by traditional church rules, hence Pentecost is their feast day. The ACT is firmly committed to the spirit of Vatican II, wanting to truly respond to the needs of the church to work with and for the poor towards human dignity, justice, peace and solidarity¹⁵⁸. They were formally recognised by the church in 1984 after they had fully established themselves. They then chose to live and work in the Prelature with Bishop Labayen. The community moved to General Nakar, one of the poorest parishes of the Prelature in 1987, and, after exposure, to Maria Aurora in 1992. Today they have eight fully professed members and two affiliated members. Their education, like that of the lay leaders, is in the barangays rather than at theological college. Their main work is education, through the Catholic high school in General Nakar, and they are responsible for the lay formation there and in Maria Aurora. They travel to the various barangays to lead bible services, fiestas, MSKs and seminars on a range of topics including herbal medicine and general self-help. One of the sisters is responsible for the prelature-wide *Yapak* seminars. They are aiming to be the church of the poor and are therefore very much part of the community in which they live and work¹⁵⁹.

The other main group of sisters in the southern part of the Prelature are the

¹⁵⁷Infanta 12

¹⁵⁸From their own archives "A brief history of the Apostles in Contemporary Times" p1.

¹⁵⁹In an SPI video produced in 1990, it is clear that the bishop sees the ACT as a leading embodiment of the theology of the Church of the Poor - SPI video 1990.

Carmelite sisters, an enclosed community who nevertheless share the prelate's orientation. The sisters were called together by Labayen in 1981, after consultation with the local church¹⁶⁰, and drawn together from three different Carmelite convents. The bishop sees them as the heart of the Prelature, praying for its programmes and activities¹⁶¹. These early volunteers had to readjust from the seeming "poverty" of their convents and learn exactly what the condition of rural life was. The majority of the sisters were from middle to upper class families, consequently Labayen asked them all to do exposure¹⁶². This was a shock for many of them, as one sister put it; "When I went and saw our Filipino people that poor, you know many times I was crying at night without their knowledge. I did not expect that they did not even have fish for meals, they just have vegetables and the quantity was really not enough and the quality was really very low, ...I would see one bowl of vegetables for four of us, but I was accustomed to eat that all on my own."¹⁶³. As a result, the Carmelites, who have established their convent on the outskirts of Infanta, are careful not to alienate themselves from their compatriots by their eating or living habits¹⁶⁴. Every Saturday one of the surrounding barangays joins the convent for mass, and shares what is going on in their situations. The sisters also attend Prelature seminars and the Pastoral Conferences.

In the northern part of the Prelature there are two groups of relatively conservative congregations concentrating mainly on education, and in Real two western Sisters of Sion are engaged in lay formation and pastoral work. A group of brothers called *Alagad ni Maria*¹⁶⁵ are involved in youth work in Tonguhin, Infanta. The Franciscan brothers run a school for the Katutubu people in the mountains above

¹⁶⁰Labayen 1982:282

¹⁶¹Labayen 1982:283, "They will be the prayer-heart of the diocese. They will know the hopes and problems of the people and the things social action workers are struggling for, and bring them to God. They won't join our mass actions but they'll pray for their success".

¹⁶²Immersion in village life, see section b.

¹⁶³Infanta 16

¹⁶⁴For example they continue to eat rice as their staple and for many years washed their clothes in the river nearby, in the city Carmelite nuns would tend to eat more western food and have special wash areas.

¹⁶⁵Tagalog for Anointed of Mary

General Nakar, aiming to help preserve the culture regardless of how much they mix with the Tagalogs. A dramatic presentation of their struggles and history has toured the Prelature and Manila, raising awareness of the plight of the indigenous people¹⁶⁶.

i. The Radio Station

The Prelature radio station (DZJO¹⁶⁷) was established in 1969 as a “radio school” to disseminate information about agricultural improvements. During the militarisation and intimidation of the 1970s and 1980s, the bishop used it to educate people about the conflict in the Philippines. He would interview both military men and the underground, and would use the radio to explain issues like Marxism and multinationals.

Today, there are two transmitters, one in Infanta and the other in Baler, providing an essential communication link, especially for church workers, in an area where telephones are still rare. They transmit services and discussions so that lay leaders can lead services in the barangays, and they carry a weekly message on current affairs from the bishop entitled “*Komusta Bishop?*” (“How are you, Bishop?”). There are programmes on family, life, development, health, ecology, basic christian communities, *Yapak*, the orientation, catechesis and news. The *Pahayag* carries the Prelature’s commitment to the radio, having an objective

Towards a committed involvement of the Church of the Poor in the responsible use and promotion of social communication media. In this field special importance is given to the community-based approach or the communal strategy in the promotion of a more comprehensive and just relationship among people and between people and environment. We believe in the impact of mass media in the transformation and humanization (evangelization) of culture¹⁶⁸.

j. Decoration

There are two ‘indigenous’ murals in the church of Infanta, one of which has already been described. The other is the image of the Filipino Mary, which will be

¹⁶⁶See Infanta 21 - like with the ACT, the Franciscans moved to the Prelature because of the orientation and openness of the bishop.

¹⁶⁷No-one seemed to know what the name stood for.

¹⁶⁸*Pahayag* 1995:6,7

discussed later. Other than these two exceptions, the inside of churches have retained their western images. However, there were differences between the parishes. For example, in Maria Aurora, the church, although open-walled, was more western in its layout than General Nakar, which, as well as the white Holy Family, had incorporated an arrangement of plants and wood.

Karl Gaspar, who is famous for his work in Mindanao during the martial law period, also mentioned the lack of artwork involved in the struggle. He argues that it would have been a much more dangerous activity than drama, since it can be confiscated and used later as evidence of subversion¹⁶⁹. In the Prelature of Infanta at this time, it seems more likely that the workers are busy with the Church of the Poor, and have spent little time with artwork. According to one ACT sister, the Prelature has no indigenous picture of Christ because they are concentrating on the image of Christ **in** the community, in the transformation of relationships with self, with community and with creation, rather than trying to portray him¹⁷⁰.

k. What it means to be a Christian

The official understanding of a Christian in the Prelature is to be fully human¹⁷¹. This is the belief that underlies the sharing with tribal people and those from other denominations and is the guiding principle in the struggle for people's rights. Thus it was a valuable way to assess the extent to which the orientation is being internalised. Interviewees believed that "faith that is not translated into action is not faith"¹⁷², and there was disapproval of people who think that the church should pray rather than get involved in politics¹⁷³. The expression of faith naturally altered depending on circumstances, from encouraging colleagues not to charge too much for their work¹⁷⁴ to

¹⁶⁹Infanta 52

¹⁷⁰Infanta 38

¹⁷¹Infanta 8 and 12. *Payahag* 1995:iv, 2, "it is our common dream to have fullness of life as individual persons and as a community of persons".

¹⁷²Infanta 30

¹⁷³Infanta 13

¹⁷⁴Infanta 39

campaigning against wealthy landlords taking away fishing rights¹⁷⁵. All informants seemed to be concerned with giving an importance to life, to enabling people to be more fully human¹⁷⁶, to being a mother or a father to all in need¹⁷⁷.

Few people interviewed for this study believed that God is only in church. In a country which is overwhelmingly catholic, but of whom perhaps only 60-70% go to mass regularly, there was no hint that those not attending did not believe, they simply felt closer to God in the fields, on the sea, or elsewhere¹⁷⁸. Interviewees thought they may find that the mass is not important for them¹⁷⁹, since Christianity is closely linked to nature¹⁸⁰. Others expressed it as “God is in our hearts”¹⁸¹, a faith in a Living God who guides¹⁸².

As will be elaborated further later, there are groups of people who have more conventional views of Christianity. One lady bemoaned the passing of the rosary and proudly announced that she taught it to her grandchildren¹⁸³. The *Cursillo* movement¹⁸⁴ operates within the Prelature, and tends to concentrate on traditional novenas and prayers, rather than social action. Their understanding of the priest was more sacramental and emphasis was laid on the financial condition of the church, its ability to have proper construction work and pews, and getting people to go to mass, rather than conscientising people to play their part in history¹⁸⁵.

¹⁷⁵Infanta 9

¹⁷⁶Infanta 12, 19, 33

¹⁷⁷Infanta 27

¹⁷⁸Infanta 34

¹⁷⁹Infanta 13

¹⁸⁰Infanta 17

¹⁸¹Infanta 27

¹⁸²Infanta 10

¹⁸³Infanta 15. She was emphatic that God had guided and supported her throughout her life.

¹⁸⁴The *Cursillos in Christianity* are a world-wide lay movement to help people share the Gospel with those around them. This witness is supported through the establishment of local (Cursillo) communities.

¹⁸⁵Private conversations with ACT sisters who had encountered some resistance from *Cursillo*. Also Infanta 11, 15.

For the majority of active church members interviewed, however, there had been a shift to a faith which was more than following a set of rules, hence the lack of concern about priestly relationships, non-attendance at mass and rules over who was allowed to receive communion.

I. The Virgin Mary

The development of the image of the Virgin Mary is a good example of another way in which the Prelature hopes to influence the understanding of traditional beliefs and practices among the laity.

As a Carmelite, Labayen is firmly devoted to the Virgin Mary and he dedicated the Prelature to her as “*ina ng Sambayanan ng mga Dukha*”¹⁸⁶ in 1995. The emphasis is on Mary, the peasant woman, mother of us all, who knows our needs and fights with us. This new understanding of Mary is explained in the *Yapak* seminars. As Zone Narito discovered in her report on *Yapak* in 1995, before the seminar the commonly held image of Mary is that with an aquiline nose who is touched with one’s handkerchief, a queen and a mother who gives help, is affectionate and good, to whom one can run in times of need. After the seminars, Mary is seen as a woman who struggled for the rights of people and has an important role in salvation. Some people said she was a simple and humble woman who mediated between humans and God, and who takes care of her children¹⁸⁷.

This radical understanding of Mary is portrayed graphically in the only inculturated picture of a traditional christian figure; depicting Mary dressed as a peasant woman (with big working feet) crushing a crocodile. The symbolism is rich. Two rivers of salvation history, one from humanity and the other from God, merge where Mary stands as she gave her consent to bear Jesus. She is near life-giving nature and the scenery is Filipino, with the traditional *bahay kubo* (bamboo house) in the background. However the countryside has been blighted by logging and a parched earth. The

¹⁸⁶Mother of the Church of the Poor

¹⁸⁷Narito 1995:35 - see appendix 3 for more details.

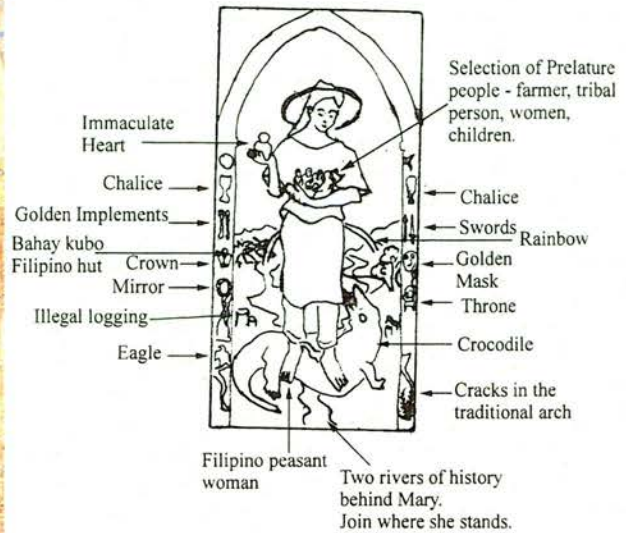


Figure 9 The Virgin Mary in Infanta

crocodile is the traditional Philippine symbol of greed, avarice and selfishness, equivalent to the serpent, which Mary is seen crushing in western art, and instead of lying peacefully, the crocodile fights back. In her arms, Mary cradles the people of the Prelature. In her right hand she holds the Immaculate Heart as a beacon. Mary's heart outside her bosom tells of her openness to God's will. She is the model of the Prelature in following God's footsteps. In the background joining the two salvation rivers is the rainbow, a symbol of promise in the Old Testament and a traditional symbol of hope in the Philippine context. Round the outside the symbols of traditional Christianity, symbols of power, wealth, prestige and domination are smashed and in ruins, as Mary crushes the evil of the crocodile and gives her consent to be part of salvation history. Christendom is smashed as the Church of the Poor is born.

The picture was painted for the fourth pastoral conference in 1995 and was put

on the Prelatural Calendar for 1996. It is therefore found in the majority of houses of all those connected with the church. On the calendar there is also an explanation of the images, one image per month and a copy of the *Pahayag*, all in Tagalog, an extremely effective way of publicising the issues with which the Prelature is concerned at the moment. Slowly people will become aware of the ideas that are incorporated in the Filipino Mary. Many interviewees had already taken the imagery on board¹⁸⁸.

Since many of the Marian devotions are traditionally western there is a Prelature prayer to accompany the picture. It is said during most services and is unique to the Prelature, having a unifying effect.

MARIA, INA NG SAMBAYANAN
NG MGA DUKHA

O, Mahal na Birheng Maria, Ina ni Hesu-Kristo at ina rin namin, kinikilala namin at pinasasalamatang ang iyong kabukasan at ganap na pagsang-ayon sa kalooban ng Diyos. Ikaw ang aming inspirasyon at huwaran sa pagsunod sa Yapak ng Panginoon.

Sa gitna ng umiiral na kawalan ng katarungan na masasalamang sa timitinding kahirapan, pagkasira ng kalikasan, paglabag at pagyurak sa dangal at karapatang pantao, inaamin namin ang bahagi namin dito at ang aming kahinaan na kumikilos taglay ang pakikipagsandiwaan.

Kami, ang Prelatura ng Infanta na nagtataguyod ng Sambayanan ng mga Dukha ay nagtatalaga ng aming mga sarili sa iyong Kalinis-linisang puso, na may buong pagtitiwala sa iyong makinang pagkalinga at sa iyong pakikiisa kay Hesu-Kristo at sa Kanyang misyon.

MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH
OF THE POOR¹⁸⁹

O, Dearest Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ and our Mother, we acknowledge and thank you for your openness and full acceptance of the will of God. You are our inspiration and model in following the footprints of the Lord.

In the midst of the unjust society that can be seen in poverty, destruction of nature, disobedience and distortion of honour and human rights, we accept our part here and our weaknesses inspired by the spirit towards integration.

We, the Prelature of Infanta in supporting the Church of the Poor, are committing ourselves to your Immaculate Heart, with all our trust to your motherly care and to your collaboration with Jesus Christ and his mission.

¹⁸⁸E.g. Infanta 23

¹⁸⁹Translated by Sr Maria Terese Kong SDS.

Sa pamamagitan mo, O mahal na Ina at sa paggabay ng Banal na Espiritu, tulungan mo kaming kumilos upang mabago at madalisay ang aming sarili, sambayanan at lipunan taglay ang pakikipagsandiwaan sa lahat ng tao lalo't higit sa mga dukha tungo sa makatao, makabayan at maka-Diyos na sandaigdigan. AMEN

Through you, O dearest Mother and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, help us to change and purify ourselves, the Church and society, as we integrate with all the people especially with the poor towards a world that is *for human being, for the country and most of all for God.*
AMEN

Throughout the Philippines there is great devotion to the Virgin Mary, especially seen in some forms of popular religiosity, for example the *Mayohan* festival, a Maytime festival when Mary's statue is adorned with a wreath of flowers and taken from house to house, amid prayers and traditional songs (some still in Spanish). The participants tend to be those on the periphery of the church, the older and unconscientised women. The Prelature workers through *Yapak* and other seminars are attempting to dispel the more traditional views of Mary.

m. What is the Church and what should it be doing?

The understanding of the church and its duty in society has been covered in many sections of this chapter, here we shall simply distill the salient points.

There was a broad consensus amongst informants that the church is a group of believers or the people of God¹⁹⁰, but there was also recognition of the particular duties of the clergy. Their job was education, awareness-raising, teaching the importance of ecology and campaigning¹⁹¹. As one priest recognised:

We provide them [the poor, community organisers etc] an atmosphere for dialogue, the place for them, then when they need moral support, especially here in the Philippines, if a group is with the priest, because of the blessing of the church, ... they are more .. emboldened by the presence of the Church, so materially we don't have things to provide them, but its more morally and organising skills for them, and when they have issues, for example, they're going to Manila to face the secretary

¹⁹⁰Infanta 30, 32

¹⁹¹Infanta 33, 19, 34, 36

of other agencies, department heads, we support them by giving some finances and encouraging other people to join, so that's how we support them as far as we can¹⁹².

Many of the older people questioned for this thesis, noted the difference in the church now from when they were younger. They told how the church used to be top heavy, but was now coming from the bottom up¹⁹³. A sister phrased it as moving from a pyramid church, with a large group at the bottom to a small hierarchy in power, to a circular church, with people moving in concentric rings around a centre¹⁹⁴.

The church is to celebrate life and since there was an understanding that politics is part of life, the church must respond to it. It was clear that this involved everyone. The church should be "with the people"¹⁹⁵.

n. Traditional Religiosity

As we have mentioned, the Philippine culture and religion have been dominated by those of other nations. Therefore many claim that traditional religiosity (i.e. pre-Christian) is no longer present among the dominant Tagalog group. We discussed how Mercado is investigating Filipino language and philosophy to unearth their understanding of the world, but in the main, research on "traditional religiosity" has concentrated on "popular religiosity". It is in this context that this section is written.

We have seen that there are those in the Prelature who are not fully supportive of the "new way of being church". These include the priests who led to the 1983 walk-out. There is also the *Cursillo* movement, a conservative Catholic movement, interested in the external structures and doctrines of the church¹⁹⁶. In most barangays there is also the continuation of traditional religiosity, especially among those on the periphery of the

¹⁹²Infanta 18 - in many ways what it means to be Church of the Poor.

¹⁹³Infanta 36

¹⁹⁴Infanta 38

¹⁹⁵Infanta 19

¹⁹⁶Infanta 11, 15

church¹⁹⁷. Although the hierarchy is not opposed to such practices they aim to educate and raise awareness so that the laity will find fulfilment in the Church of the Poor.

There has been much interest recently in traditional religiosity amongst scholars¹⁹⁸, and it is clear that regardless of the prelate's vision, out-lying barangays will always be isolated from the main sources of new ideas and theologies. Traditional religiosity includes the celebration of *Mayohan*, and some in General Nakar (recognised as the most socially active parish in the Prelature¹⁹⁹) continue to attend the novena of the Mother of Perpetual Help every Wednesday, although this is mostly the older women. Mandated organisations were phased out there in the 1960s and early 1970s to make room for the more socially aware and inclusive christian communities²⁰⁰. Fiestas, often considered part of traditional religiosity, are celebrated in all the parishes of the Prelature, and many move between parishes to celebrate the fiestas in other barangays.

The links with pre-christian religion are difficult to gauge. On the one hand it seems that there is little knowledge of or even interest in such beliefs and religions, on the other hand, belief in *dwindies* or dwarfs and a white lady is widespread. These spirits live in trees and in the environment, and can be both good and evil. Many people, including the bishop, ask permission from the *dwindies* to pass certain areas. In 1994, there was an occurrence at Mount Carmel High School in General Nakar, which people believed was linked with *dwindies* inhabiting the bodies of the pupils. Belief in *dwindies* does protect the environment since cutting a tree harms a good one, and there seems no contradiction between Catholicism, even of the progressive variety, and belief in them.

One parish priest pointed out that pre-christian or cultural beliefs affect when

¹⁹⁷In Real, women who lead the traditional wakes, a theoretically religious occasion, are never seen in church - Infanta 22.

¹⁹⁸E.g. Ileta 1979, Vergote 1982, Kroeger 1990, Belita 1991.

¹⁹⁹ACT sisters.

²⁰⁰However, some of the more conservative churchgoers believe they disappeared because there was a lack of leadership within the organisations - Infanta 11.

people get married or have funerals²⁰¹. Although the official Prelature understanding of Christianity is different from the more passive religiosity that occurs in the villages, the policy is one of conscientisation rather than condemnation.

3. Issues which Concern the People and Weaknesses in the Prelature

As I have done with the previous case study, I will now draw together the issues expressed in the interviews and my observations of the activities of the Prelature, to highlight issues of concern in the diocese and assess how well the vision is implemented.

One of the chief weaknesses in the Prelature of Infanta is the gap between the articulated vision and praxis. The *Yapak* formation programme suffered a huge set-back with the 1983 walk-out, and the 1983 vision of the Prelature's programmes shows that in 1996 it is only just achieving the same level of lay formation and MSK building²⁰². As Sr Carmella told me we are "updated only in intention, not in reality. We are still crawling"²⁰³. *Cursillo*, and traditional religiosity is still strong in many parishes, and Prelature workers admit that relatively few people have taken the Prelature orientation fully to heart²⁰⁴. The Church of the Poor works alongside such practices as an alternative church.

From my observations and those of people working in the Prelature the rhetoric of egalitarianism seemed exaggerated²⁰⁵. For example, although women made up the vast majority of congregations at Sunday services, their roles tended to be the less

²⁰¹Infanta 18 - most marriages will occur when the moon is waxing, and the people do not want funerals on Mondays because it is the first day of the week.

²⁰²Infanta 41

²⁰³Infanta 16

²⁰⁴Infanta 17

²⁰⁵ACT sisters

visible roles in the church. Slowly the power in the church is being given to the laity, but when there was a decision in 1996 to establish a steering group for MSKs, out of the catechists and lay workers, it was made up of two priests and two sisters!

There was a belief that what had been planned had already come into existence and occasionally I felt that they were trying to convince themselves that the church was on target. For example, I was told that basic christian communities were a strong feature, however on investigation it was clear that except in a few central areas, especially General Nakar, they were still at the inception process. It was a similar occurrence with *balik-handog*. The system had been implemented in one parish in the northern part and a few barangays in the southern part, penalties in Maria Aurora for non-payment were not echoed elsewhere²⁰⁶. There was a difference in emphasis between parishes, in General Nakar, the main emphasis of the MSKs and the general church life was on prayer life, awareness and social action, whereas in Maria Aurora, there was more emphasis on organisation and the church structures.

Regardless of the rhetoric, the parishes in the Prelature are still dependent on their priests. Many priests do not fully support the idea of Church of the Poor and some are openly antagonistic²⁰⁷, leading to discrepancy in implementation. Since Mini-*Yapaks* are organised on the parish basis, some parishes, such as Infanta itself, are behind others in their lay formation. *Yapak* organisers are beginning to combat this by encouraging the growth of regional councils which enable mini-*Yapaks* to take place between three or four parishes, however, if the *Yapak* graduates do not have the support of the priest when they return to the parish, their work in community building can be severely hampered.

Yapak itself, claims to teach the participants social analysis skills; it seemed to me that it tended to teach rather than explore the issues, but this is something that in a society with little schooling it would be difficult to see how to change. There are

²⁰⁶Infanta 50

²⁰⁷These divisions were hinted at many times, but people were loathe to give concrete examples.

attempts to put more women's issues into the *Yapak* seminars. As one theologian put it after a visit to General Nakar in 1998: "I was surprised that after years of *YAPAK*, their understanding was quite primitive. It seems that only the cream of the crop got the education and the rest got practically nothing"²⁰⁸.

Differences between the parishes could be discerned in the services of the two parishes where the ACT are working, General Nakar and Maria Aurora. In General Nakar, the priest admitted that he did not follow the Roman rite verbatim²⁰⁹ and women were able to give communion not only in church, but also out in the barangays. The Sunday Mass was very informal, with a lay reader helping the priest and a youth music group leading the worship. On the other hand, in Maria Aurora there were six sacristans all robed, carrying candles, congregation members I spoke to said that the sermon was divorced from the reality and there was someone telling the people when to stand and kneel. In Dingalan, by historical accident a woman pastoral leader was virtually running the parish, including baptising, marrying, conducting funerals and distributing communion. The Fourth Pastoral Conference, "voiced strongly ... the need for a comprehensive Pastoral Plan, for the entire Prelature to have a unified strategy in order to implement its mission and goals. A consensus emerged that this plan must be the fruit of a participatory process"²¹⁰.

The other potential weakness is the dependence of the Prelature on Bishop Labayen. The bishop is a strong unifying figure and is also the embodiment of the orientation of the Prelature, very much the mastermind behind the church of the poor. There is fear amongst those who implement the orientation that once the bishop retires in the year 2000, the orientation may change and the church be forced to follow more traditional, non-progressive lines. The bishop is loved by the vast majority of the people in the Prelature, but there were criticisms of his administrative skills, that he leaves too much to his clergy so that policies are implemented half-heartedly or not at all, and that

²⁰⁸Private email.

²⁰⁹Infanta 12

²¹⁰Labayen 1995:127

he tends to let everyone do what they wish regardless of their skills or background²¹¹.

There is also great emphasis on Catholic education amongst Prelature leaders, which has to be private education. There is concern amongst church leaders that parents are increasingly sending their children to the state schools where the leaders consider standards to be lower and values not taught. This is a policy which stands at odds with other policies and the orientation of the Prelature, since poor children cannot afford its schools, regardless of the various scholarship schemes. One of the most active members of the church community in General Nakar, told me that although she clearly sees the importance of a religious training for her children, since she is paid only P750 by the church, has six children and fees at the local catholic school are P160 plus uniform and books, she cannot consider sending them there²¹². It seems to me that the Prelature must realise that in its emphasis on catholic schools it is depriving the state system the chance to improve. Otherwise, the Catholic Church in the Prelature could end up creating two societies, one the catholic and better educated (and wealthier) and the other the people outside the church.

However, with all these drawbacks those interviewed in this research felt that the Prelature of Infanta is making the church truly relevant to its people. There was a growing awareness that church is not simply for the rich and powerful and that she will help the oppressed learn their rights and stand up for them. Church leaders and teaching here is open to the people, it does not condemn practices which might be considered contrary to traditional doctrine elsewhere, such as the use of *Shibashi*²¹³, *pranic* healing²¹⁴, herbal medicines and receiving the sacraments when not married in a church. Leaders I spoke to understood that people are different and can worship within the more

²¹¹Infanta 12 - "Sad to say, the structure of the Prelature is not very, very systematic, that I feel the concentration is very much on the bishop, my fear is that, especially now that the bishop is retiring, how do we now, ... how to come up with a systematic structure in order that the values and orientation that we have now, it will go on".

²¹²Infanta 13

²¹³A simplified form of *Tai Chi Ch'uan*, which is practised by many, especially the ACT who have incorporated it into their morning worship and it is also used at prelatural seminars.

²¹⁴A healing technique which aims to manipulate the person's aura.

conservative traditions of *Cursillo* or the more popular religiosity of *Mayohan*. The Church of the Poor has taken the traditional fiesta, condemned by some as popular religiosity, and allowed people to have an experience of community celebration through it, recognising its religious and secular functions.

Although the Prelature might not seem as far advanced in its vision as it claims to be, the church workers interviewed all recognised that the concept of church of the Poor is a *process* which will take time and effort. The weaknesses outlined above are weaknesses only in so far as the Prelature sees its own mission and vision. Here in the Prelature they have begun to concretely articulate and live this process.

The majority of informants wanted to see the Prelature truly the Church of the Poor. The parishioners could see the splits amongst the priests, and the way in which many were not completely behind the Church of the Poor²¹⁵ and others saw this as a reason to increase the commitment and involvement of the laity²¹⁶.

As feminist issues become more widely known in the Prelature there will also be greater emphasis on women's needs. To this end there are plans, especially in the south, to establish a woman's desk at the subregional level, to raise the consciousness of the woman's role in society, in family relationships and in development. Not only are the majority of the church-goers and workers women, but the bishop is also introducing the concept of "Mother God" into his services, which seems to echo with people's natural (cultural?) understanding of God²¹⁷. Some church workers recognised that there is a need to concentrate on experimental and creative liturgies, so that they are able to play a role in weekly services as well as at special occasions.

²¹⁵Infanta 12, 17, 34, 51, 39

²¹⁶Infanta 27, 18

²¹⁷Infanta 8 and 34

4. Links with the Universal Church

The Prelature's programmes are being used by people from the progressive church from all over the Philippines, after years of isolation and criticism from other members of the CBCP. It is difficult to assess how different the Prelature is to other dioceses, but impressions were that it differed in timing of implementation and quantity rather than direction. Many of the Manila churches have clearly not attempted to incorporate the ideas of the Church of the Poor. The Cardinal's cathedral is air-conditioned and gold plated. In areas away from commercial and ecclesiastical centres, however the Church of the Poor is beginning to grow. The Prelature has formal links with the Philippine dioceses of Sorsogon and San José.

Some research was also conducted in the diocese of Alaminos in the north of Luzon, mostly in a priestless parish of seven barangays, Bolinao. Here MSKs are emerging, since often a priest attends only for fiestas. A religious congregation²¹⁸ working in the area conducts a weekly Bible Study, which although still in its embryonic stage, promises to naturally progress to include other activities, such as nutrition and medical projects. Membership of the communities depends on the lay leader, whose training is not as organised as in the Prelature. The lay leader journeys to the nearest parish for the dry host and, using books from the diocese and a radio broadcast, preaches on the Sunday. However, there is a strong emphasis on catechesis and the traditional doctrines of the church, which are still to some extent clouded in mystery. The area is also affected by the government projects for Philippines 2000 and demonstrations by the out-lying barangays are organised by the lay leaders. Here the diocesan calendar was a picture of the traditional white Jesus, Christ the King, in a red robe and golden crown, holding a gold sceptre with a burning heart in his chest. Slowly the diocese is holding various seminars to try to increase the faith-knowledge of the people, but there has not been the history that Infanta has in this regard.

²¹⁸The Sisters of the Divine Saviour

In October 1995, the Diocese of Alaminos held its first Pastoral Assembly where it committed itself to “total human development” and saw itself “as a Church of the Poor journeying to become a community of Christ’s disciples”²¹⁹. The basic christian communities envisaged by this diocese have a seven point focus: believing, worshipping, serving, nourished by the Word of God, strengthened by the sacraments, guided by the church authorities and animated by the Holy Spirit, - all slightly more traditional than the guidelines of the Prelature. The bishop asks “Why is faith marginalised and blocked from entering and influencing our life? How can we put the two together so that we may be a whole person, healed from all our inner tensions and guilt-feelings, born out of this unnatural separation and exclusion of our faith from our life?”²²⁰

The Prelature of Infanta is also a supporter of the worldwide church²²¹. Although to many people interviewed the Vatican and the pope are irrelevant and distant²²², the bishop is the link to the wider community, especially through his travels. Many realised that he can not only tell their story around the world, but also bring other ideas back to them in the Prelature.

Labayen’s belief that Filipino people naturally tend to the Asian religions has led to special ties being forged with a group of Buddhist monks in Thailand who have visited the Prelature twice²²³ and included the bishop “concelebrating” mass with their leader²²⁴. Together the two religions can progress in the “Footprints of our Lords

²¹⁹Alaminos 1995:4

²²⁰Alaminos 1995:6

²²¹Throughout the misunderstandings that Labayen has encountered, he has maintained his love of the church. As he stressed, the local church must walk with the universal church and must not set themselves up as greater or better than them - Infanta 8. The Church of the Poor is also a link to the wider communion - not only do Latin American theologians share their concerns, but John Paul II in 1981 exhorted the Church to become Church of the Poor - *Laborem Exercens* No 8.

²²²The encyclicals “are teaching, they are basically theology, but they are not in the situation” - Infanta 18.

²²³June 10-28, 1995 and January 23 - February 10, 1996.

²²⁴Although according to Catholic doctrine, it would not be possible to concelebrate mass in this way, this is how both the bishop and the local people expressed the occasion to me.

(*Bhagaya*) Buddha and Christ”²²⁵, together they can encounter the poor and oppressed and work for liberation, learning from each other’s traditions. The monks visited many projects in the Prelature and stayed with local families. I was struck by how much their visits had affected people, increasing understanding about other belief systems. Everyone had stories to tell of the challenges they presented. In a way the understanding that has developed is a little academic since there are few Buddhists in the Philippines, but it has broadened the outlook of the Prelature and *Shibashi* is practised and taught at many seminars and schools, while others practise Buddhist breathing techniques as part of their prayer life²²⁶. It has developed a stronger view of the oneness of God regardless of the religious expression and this may have a role in the understanding and acceptance of the faith of the indigenous peoples.

Further afield, the Prelature has developed partnerships with Onamichi diocese in Japan and Wiener Neustadt in Austria. These partnerships encourage friendship and exchange visits. The exposure programme is experienced by the visitors, in the belief that this is the only way that true understanding and partnership can occur. Seminarians from all over the Philippines are also participants in exposure. One course was happening while I was there, and appeared to be opening the ordinands’ eyes to the poverty around them. The increased use of the programme has led to the formation team being forced to think carefully about control of the exposure and how to ensure that the host family also benefits from the experience. The partnerships are remembered in another Prelatural prayer, said at all important occasions, and in General Nakar prayed at the end of every Sunday Mass:

Prayer for Solidarity and Partnership:

Our living God,
 Father and Mother of all humankind,
 thank you for the gift of life,
 that comes in different forms:

²²⁵Santikaro Bhikkhu - HS p3

²²⁶Infanta 6

in nature, in people, in events.
 Through Your Son, Jesus-Christ
 You have revealed in a very special way
 Your loving concern for human history.

We, people from different parts of the world
 are making special efforts to proclaim your love
 by sharing human and material resources
 through solidarity groups and partnerships.
 The Prelature of Infanta in the Philippines
 and Wiener Neustadt in Austria/Onamichi in Japan
 are united in this solidarity and partnership
 that is based on love and faith.

May Your blessings continue to purify our hearts
 enrich our relationships as brothers and sisters
 in becoming One-Church-One World
 united in mind and heart in One-Mission.
 This we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ
 and the power of the Holy Spirit
 now and forever. Amen.²²⁷

One lady expressed her concern that it often seems that the Prelature forgets that it is part of the universal church²²⁸ and it was clear to many informants that the Prelature is more radical than other dioceses. However, Labayen himself has long stressed his own love for the church and the hurt he feels when he is considered to be away from its doctrines²²⁹. *Yapak* seminars teach the documents of Vatican II and some priests teach other encyclicals as they are published²³⁰. However most interviewees admitted that they have little connection with the Vatican and are willing to express their distance from Rome and the lack of influence the pope has on their own faith²³¹. For most, the church is the locality, that is where they celebrate life and the charismatic figure of the bishop links them in some unknown way to the wider church, but they do not need to think about that link. The way in which the Prelature catechists rejected the whole-scale use

²²⁷Translated Mario Van Loon

²²⁸Infanta 50

²²⁹Varela 1991:11-12 - also Infanta 18: "in Manila the Prelature of Infanta is a symbol you are communist".

²³⁰Infanta 13

²³¹Infanta 33, 36, 39, 37, 12, 13

of the latest Vatican catechism is a further example of the local church.

An institution set up to maintain links with the universal church and with other dioceses in the Philippines is the Socio-Pastoral Institute (SPI). This is a research and publishing centre in Manila, linked to Bishop Labayen and the Prelature. It was set up in 1980 and ran summer seminars, especially for updating the religious and providing the justice and peace orientation they needed. It publishes booklets on contemporary theology, ideology and history. The personnel lead exposure programmes to encourage other dioceses to promote the Church of the Poor, originally this started as short-term work, but now there is a realisation that there is a need for follow-up seminars. In 1994 SPI started to do its own research, the first project looked at the impact of *Yapak* in Infanta, future plans are to research the growth of MSKs²³². It is through SPI that research into the Prelature's programmes can be undertaken, and it helps people in the Prelature stay up to date with what is happening in the universal church²³³. In many ways it is the Church of the Poor on the national level. Sharing offices with the SPI is Asian Rainbow which is newly established to forge links between Infanta and other parts of Asia.

5. Conclusions

In this chapter we have seen how the ideas of Bishop Labayen are translated into reality in the Prelature of Infanta, through various programmes. We have seen how there are discrepancies between parishes and programmes, but perhaps that is simply another manifestation of the local church. On the whole it is a top-down approach to the paradigm shifts, which aims to educate the grassroots to take control, but the overall impression of the church in Infanta is a local church with its own theology and structure. This theology is articulated academically by the bishop, but it is also articulated in the lives and actions of many of the grassroots christians. It is this latter enunciation which

²³²Infanta 40

²³³Infanta 6

creates the local theology. Such a theology incorporates a holistic attitude to life and religion. Thus the church programmes fall across political, economic, social and religious boundaries. Some of the more enlightened laity interviewed were aware of the paradigm shift in the church and were eager to advance it²³⁴. The movement towards the Church of the Poor described here, although clearly led by a charismatic bishop, is not fully supported by everyone, even amongst the priests, so much so that it led to the walk-out which threatened to destroy the Prelature and its programmes.

Shorter has distinguished between acculturation “the insertion of indigenous elements into patterns that are basically western” and inculturation “the creation of indigenous patterns themselves”²³⁵. Others have also urged Christians to move beyond the external forms of indigenisation towards the inculturation of structures²³⁶. In Infanta, it seems that inculturation has occurred without acculturation. External signs such as the liturgy and artwork have remained mostly western, but internally the more traditional hierarchical structure is gradually giving way to one which trains the laity to be co-creators and actors within history and the laity are seeing the clergy as humans for criticism and friendship. It would be difficult to determine whether real **political** liberation is occurring through the actions of the Prelature, for example whether they will change the government’s development plans, but it is clear that the church is conscientising the people about their situation and the issues facing them. Church liberation may be occurring, as people move from the traditional treatment of priests and church doctrines, and the bishop sees his role as that of a servant rather than as a “prince of the church”²³⁷, this could be classified as both liberation and inculturation. The gap between vision and actuality in the Prelature on the one hand points the church forward, but on the other it could be argued that liberation is being imposed from above, since it is often the religious and clergy spearheading the education and experimentation and there was evidence that when the ACT sisters were not present, programmes were less

²³⁴Infanta 7

²³⁵Shorter 1988:266

²³⁶Bujo 1992

²³⁷See Labayen 1991

successful.

Priests are increasingly choosing to be part of the Prelature, where they will not be paid as well and facilities are much lower than in more traditionally oriented dioceses. This indicates that the vision is seen as the way for the church to move²³⁸. Lay leaders told me of their pride of being part of the Prelature and its programmes²³⁹. Church leaders are less concerned with the rules and regulations of being a Christian, they accept each other and each others' differences and emphasise becoming fully human (*tao*).

The lack of original Filipino culture was emphasised to me repeatedly, and some look to the rediscovery of that to precede any inculturation. However, the stress on the Church of the Poor, starting in the Prelature of Infanta, and slowly being taken up by the other dioceses, is in many ways the inculturation of the church, and as the Prelature itself recognises, this is an on-going process in which all must play their part.

In this chapter we have used the methodology of Chapter 1 in a further case study. Here it has been useful in assessing how a well-articulated theology from a bishop is implemented in a diocese. The interviews have enabled a balanced view of the projects in the Prelature, which if we had relied solely on written sources would not have been open to us. The people interviewed for this study were mostly aware of the bishop and his theology, of issues in society, especially the development issues and were involved in church. In the next chapter we will examine whether in the theology and activities of Infanta we gain any insight into how inculturation and liberation work in a specific situation. We will look for lessons from both local studies, to discover how academic theologians can be inspired by the local situation to articulate the desires and anxieties of the catholic faithful.

²³⁸Infanta 40

²³⁹Infanta 13

Chapter 4: Analysis

1. Introduction

In Chapter 1 we discussed different understandings of inculturation and liberation, the twin pillars of third world theology, in the light of Vatican II's understanding of incarnation theology. The two processes were seen to lead to the local church called for by Vatican II. The emphasis and dynamic of the local theology depends on local circumstances, but the two main strands concentrate either on identity (inculturation or ethnographic approaches) or the need for social change (liberation approaches)¹; as one African theologian has written either "who we are" (Africanisation) or "what we have" (liberation)².

The fieldwork for this study started with three hypotheses: a) that inculturation and liberation theology are part of the same process, b) that this process can be expressed by the phrase incarnation theology and c) that a legitimate way to investigate and further such theology is through a social scientific methodology applied to local church-communities. This thesis has therefore sought to discover how these theologies are lived out in two Roman Catholic dioceses which are at different stages of the process of incarnating the Gospel. The two situations were very different in context and theology, and therefore comparisons have been avoided. Together they show how catholic congregations are moving in different ways towards a local theology. From the two case studies we can now extract what such local studies add to our understanding of theology in third world churches at the end of the twentieth century, which takes account of the way in which the local congregations see the church. We will first explore the state of inculturation and liberation in each diocese from the interview material collected, and then, with the help of two theologians in the field, discuss issues which have arisen through the case studies and may shed light on our hypotheses. We will then

¹Schreiter 1985:13

²Martey 1993:38

in chapter 5 assess whether the case study is a useful tool for the study of the post-Vatican II paradigm shift in theology with its emphasis on the production of local theology.

From case studies it would clearly be possible to draw many interpretations³, and emphasise different aspects of the faith of people at the grassroots. In this thesis we have concentrated on inculturation and liberation (as defined in chapter 1) in the two countries. The following chapter explores what this particular researcher believes are important in the way that inculturation and liberation are lived out in reality, and the specific questions raised by this research.

In their study of American Congregationalism, Wind and Lewis have argued that congregational studies have the potential for being “mini-versions of great theological debates”⁴. As we will see later, in these two dioceses, the debates of inculturation and liberation far away from the corridors of the Vatican.

2. The State of Inculturation and Liberation in Zomba Diocese

a. Liberation

At the national hierarchical level, the Malawian bishops in 1992 saw themselves acting within the tradition of liberation theology: “It is the Church’s mission to preach the Gospel which effects the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation, be it hunger, ignorance, blindness, despair, paralysing fear etc”⁵, to be a voice for “the voiceless who live in situations of hopelessness”⁶. The promises of democratic government have taken a long time to be implemented and the church’s role in Malawian politics has declined since 1992 with some of the work taken over by

³Schofield 1993 acknowledges the way in which the same case study will yield different interpretations depending on the standpoint of the researcher.

⁴Wind and Lewis 1994:11

⁵Bishops 1992:15

⁶Bishops 1992:15

the PAC⁷. Among the priests who were interviewed, many remarked how the Pastoral Letter and the subsequent debates have encouraged them to speak out as they realised their role to conscientise and educate the people⁸. However, the interviewees for this study suggested that the majority of Christians at the grassroots have separated their faith from political involvement and see no connection between the two. This confirms KR Ross's findings in Northern Malawi which suggest that few Christians see the importance of social justice and tend towards a transcendent understanding of christian faith which, for example, accentuates the divinity of Christ over his humanity⁹.

On the other hand we noted that there have been some changes in the church structure which encouraged a degree of liberative thought. Chief amongst these was the *limana* system. Small christian communities in Zomba had four main purposes. First, there was the growth of lay participation. Through *limana*, the lay could lead and could envisage situations in which they would preach¹⁰.

Secondly, *limana* provided a forum for religious and civic education. The meetings could remind people of the Bible readings from the mass, especially for those who had not attended, and encourage and revive backsliders in the faith. In the aftermath of the Pastoral Letter, a booklet series published by the Montfort missionaries encouraged discussion of issues raised in the Pastoral Letter within these *limana* groups and many believed that if the situation necessitated it, such discussions would take place again¹¹.

⁷Public Affairs Committee, a powerful engine for reform which was organised by the churches and included representatives of the Muslim community, the Malawi Law Society and the business community. See Ross 1995C, Von Doepp 1998:113-20.

⁸Zomba P5:1. Several women from the main Lwanga parish in the centre of Zomba town complained that the priests did not try to educate the people. Zomba 2 and 31: before 1992 "sermons were just you will go to heaven if you do this. At least now they try, once in a while, you see a priest commenting on social issues".

⁹Ross 1997:167-172

¹⁰Zomba P4A:2

¹¹Zomba P5

Thirdly, it may have been the *limana* groups, which, in a few instances, promoted a sense of unity among those who participated, empowering them to speak out on issues of sensitivity. For example, concerns about the behaviour of priests were repeatedly expressed. The structure of basic christian communities also gave a means whereby these concerns could be expressed through petitions to the priests. It also gave grassroots Christians the means to enforce right behaviour on their own leaders¹². Through such activities, people were learning to express their needs and expectations and to start acting to correct those situations.

On the other hand, it was clear that some priests saw the *limana* system as merely an administrative unit for the parish, facilitating liturgy and worship. At the time of research, *limana* involvement in the church tended to be financial, either directly through contributions or through the weekly church offertory. However, one group had refused to give money to the African Synod because they believed that the bishops had more money than they did¹³, demonstrating that decisions were beginning to be made at the level of the basic christian community.

The present research suggests that education in the *limana* system was limited to specific circumstances and that there was little direction or guidance in formation of the leaders or the groups. In the meantime, many rural christians interviewed continue to be “other-worldly” in their spirituality and attitudes to life. Under such circumstances, it seems reasonable to expect that the *limana* will find it difficult to fulfil their potential to enable the church to become liberative. In a wider understanding of liberation, the constant questioning amongst informants of the morality and behaviour of the priests could be seen to be a response to conscientisation. Not only do they have the courage to voice their concerns about it, but also to question those in authority. This may have been the effect of the increased freedom brought about by political change. This led some of the lay interviewees to adversely compare the freedom of expression in the church to that in society at large: “now in the church though we may explain about

¹²Zomba P5

¹³Zomba 38

democracy, there's no change at all"¹⁴.

There was a paradox in the Malawian church at the grassroots as the Christians accepted the benefits of the Pastoral Letter but had not yet internalised the liberation promised by the church. There was little evidence that my informants had linked faith with liberation or had become conscientised to accept their role in politics. Many replies implied that rural Christians especially looked to their secular leaders to be political rather than liberative, in other words to make political judgements rather than to educate the people to play their role in society. We noted the idiosyncrasy between a theologically conservative conference of bishops and their 1992 letter which was a catalyst for the downfall of Banda.

b. Inculturation

In Chapter 1 we saw the distinction between inculturation, "the creation of indigenous patterns" and acculturation "the insertion of indigenous elements into patterns that are basically western"¹⁵. The case study evidence of a growing acceptance of traditional symbols in churches, such as decorations, drums, African music and offertories points to a degree of acculturation, but the continuing dependence on models of church fashioned in the West indicates far less progress in terms of inculturation.

Partly this is due to the way in which some of the interviewees saw the church as European, pointing to its failure to become really part of the culture. On the other hand others believed that although the particular way of worshipping had come from the Europeans, knowledge of prayer and the gods had always been part of the culture of the people of Malawi¹⁶; as one interviewee put it, being a Christian in Malawi means

¹⁴Zomba 27. Verstraelen (1975:540) also found in Zambia that the independence struggle increased the Zambians self-esteem and self-confidence, which were then taken into the church.

¹⁵Shorter 1988:266

¹⁶Zomba P7: "Things have now changed, for at first the church was for the Europeans, but now African cultures are being brought in, e.g. dancing and gestures; at first when we had European priests we didn't have those things and now we are just bringing in the things which Africans are doing". Zomba P8 - Is the church European or African? - "Both, because they all belong to God or they all pray to God, but we just take the Europeans as our leaders". P4: "Others say that the church had been brought here by

continuing “our ancestors’ way of praying”¹⁷. Members of the church in Mayaka actually knew the term “inculturation”¹⁸, suggesting that the issue had been named in discussions.

There was also an unquestioning dependence on church law, part of the structure of the church which one writer sees as a potential obstacle to the paradigm shift towards a local church¹⁹. The church was surrounded by rules - for confession, for marriage and divorce, for the priest’s status, for registering for baptism. Punishments were meted out on those who failed to live by these rules: for example, the woman who was excluded because her nephew attended circumcision²⁰, the boys who had to attend mass every week, getting a card signed, as a punishment for going to initiation rites²¹, the man who could not remarry because mass had not been said for his deceased wife²². Although there were complaints about certain rules, including the strictness and seeming arbitrariness of the divorce rulings²³, the following response to the suggestion that they are too harsh was typical: “If I want to receive what the church is offering, I have to follow what they say, and if I don’t follow them, why should I force them to, that’s their game. I’m following their rules”²⁴.

Although in theory, many interviewees would like to see further africanisation of the Catholic Church in Zomba, when it came to ideas of changes, these were resisted because the people were not “used” to it. This response suggested a view of culture as rooted in the past, the tribal days before colonialism, which would form the basis of

the Europeans but I think the Europeans didn’t bring the prayers but they brought the church. The prayers were there before, even when the Europeans were not yet in and they themselves are not the ones who created them”.

¹⁷Zomba P7:4

¹⁸Zomba P5

¹⁹Verstraelen 1975:551

²⁰Zomba P9:1

²¹Zomba M2

²²Zomba P9:6

²³Zomba P5:5

²⁴Zomba 1

inculturation. However changes in contemporary habits meant that people were no longer “used” to their own culture²⁵. Ross in his research in Northern Malawi, on the other hand, found that biblical phrases for Christ and his work were more prevalent than cultural ones, leading him to ask whether the culture has been so much influenced by the Bible that a name such as Messiah is more meaningful than Ancestor²⁶. This issue will be explored later since it points to a fundamental understanding of culture which will affect the outcome of any inculturation.

The bishops’ 1996 letter encouraged individual dioceses to implement the suggestions and findings of the African Synod as they saw fit²⁷. It reminded the catholic faithful of the influence of the church on the history of the nation, calling for ecumenism, appreciation of culture, renewed evangelisation and for more commitment to being the “voice of the voiceless”. The letter provoked the anger of the government as it exposed corruption at all levels of society²⁸. All these aspects suggest that the Episcopal Conference in Malawi recognises the need for individual directions for the church, including mini-synods in each diocese, and the continued need for the church to liberate people from all that oppresses them. However, the letter only briefly mentions small christian communities, even though they write that it is in them “that true evangelization takes place”²⁹. This leads one to question the degree to which their plans for an inculturated and liberative church, outlined through the rest of the document, are really grounded in the reality of the small community. It appears that there continues to be a gap between the laity and clergy, partly created by the seminary training and the increased status and wealth of priests which comes with ordination. Perhaps, space for inculturation will occur only when this gap is lessened.

As for acculturation, traditional african culture is being brought into some

²⁵Zomba 20

²⁶Ross 1997:175

²⁷Bishops 1996:8 - and 1996:5.5 - “Each diocese will adapt the national plan to its local situation”.

²⁸ENI 1996

²⁹Bishops 1996:5

churches through music, art and vestments. But there was little understanding that the present culture (especially of the young, who made up the majority of the church³⁰) probably now involves guitars and amplifiers³¹. Some of the priests were concerned that there was a need for research into how the ancestors did things³², before any changes could be tried. This translated into a concern that the young had no interest in traditional culture and there was a fear that mistakes could be made³³. Many interviewees who were interested in inculturation were looking to an idealised past, an utopia as the basis for the attempt to make the church more relevant to today's society, seeing inculturation as a definite project to be undertaken. Others, however, raised questions about the value of traditional culture, and urged a more contemporary and spontaneous form of worship³⁴.

Further down the social scale, interest in inculturation and change seems to be hampered by a lack of education³⁵. Faulty catechism may be to blame for the imperfect picture of catholicism seen in the villages, but this was joined to a more basic, perhaps cultural dependence, on tradition. In the church such tradition has been sanctified, so that the sacraments are seen as tradition which cannot be changed in any form³⁶, and what the people were used to determined what was possible³⁷. The 'Malawian factor' spoken of by Lwanda³⁸ may have been the cause of a passivity towards the church. This encouraged people to be hesitant about attacking authority, keeping the country subservient to Banda for thirty years. It may also manifest itself in the way the village

³⁰Schreiter 1985:13 - this is a trend throughout the Third World.

³¹Zomba 5

³²See especially Zomba 20

³³Zomba 18

³⁴See Zomba 8, 17.

³⁵This was mentioned many times, from the women who said they simply followed the educated in the changes (Zomba P4:1), to those who complained that nothing could be changed because of the gap between the educated and the uneducated on the parish council (Zomba 19) and the bishop's desire to educate his people. As usual the conservativeness of the uneducated was noted - Zomba 28.

³⁶Zomba P4 and 3, Musopole 1996:3

³⁷For example, phrases such as "priests shouldn't get married because that's what we're used to", "we're used to the rules so it doesn't matter".

³⁸Lwanda 1993:49-51, Kalilombe 1994:129

Christians looked to the hierarchy, to the educated or to Rome, to tell them what they should do³⁹.

Enoch Timpunza Mvula was the Malawian lay delegate to the African Synod. An academic at Chancellor College, he attends the Cathedral in Zomba each week. He believes that Zomba diocese is very progressive compared with other dioceses in Malawi⁴⁰. Examples of such progress was seen in my research in the way in which the diocese was allowing priests, especially expatriates, to inculturate symbols and rites (especially initiation rites) and to find a relevant faith. This suggests that there may be ways for a church to become inculturated other than the traditionally assumed bottom-up approach. It appeared that the priests and bishops who had been exposed to influences from other countries were more open to inculturation and change than those, such as the priests in Thondwe parish, who had not had such influence and therefore could not envisage change⁴¹. There are interesting paradoxes here that will be explored later, and suggest that many normal methods for assessing inculturation in a church need to be rethought.

To conclude, the church in Zomba diocese has hints of inculturation and liberation in its theology. The grassroots appear to still look to the clergy for guidance relating to the faith. However, the gradual introduction of the *limana* system, yet in its infancy, is allowing the laity increasingly to see that they have a role in the church. For a few, that involves the confidence to voice criticism of the priests and make decisions locally. For the majority of my informants, their role in the *limana* and in the church, tends to be passive, feeding the priest or cleaning the church. On the other hand, many interviewees hinted that their priority in faith is to ensure their entry to heaven, and so a passive role is no barrier to what they want out of the church. There was the impression from many in charge of inculturation in the diocese that this was a project

³⁹See Zomba 11 and P3: "We are just being taught like this and that, so we can't know that things are going on wrong. When they change anything, we just follow them, but it's the educated ones who know how they can change things".

⁴⁰Zomba 11

⁴¹See Zomba P6:1 among others.

to be carried out⁴², causing one man to say that inculturation is mostly done⁴³. Such an approach fulfils one of Schreiter's key reservations with the ethnographic approach⁴⁴. It is clear, however, that Zomba diocese challenges any easy definition or identification of the inculturation process.

From the bishops there is more thought of inculturation than liberation despite the 1992 Pastoral Letter. The political liberation that occurred in Malawi has not significantly educated the grassroots of the Catholic Church. The Episcopal Conference continues to occasionally voice its opposition to various problems in government⁴⁵. The rules of the Catholic Church have not been reinterpreted in the modern Malawian setting, which has meant at the grassroots a literal understanding of those rules. The behaviour of the priests and the payment given to workers creates a discrepancy for many people between the church's advocacy of transparency and accountability and their actions. The Pastoral Letters, especially 1992 and 1998, while speaking of human rights in the political sphere continue to emphasise traditional Catholic doctrines on family planning. In Zomba, changes are occurring in the church to bring a past culture into the church with traditional dancing, singing and other cosmetics, and the real changes in the structure are expected to follow later. Thus on the evidence of this survey we could conclude that liberation or inculturation has barely begun in the church of Zomba. The informants on the whole were not conscientised to act in response to their situation and so the potential for change lies with a few - especially women - to challenge society and the church. The seeds of a local theology were present in the complaints about the morality and behaviour of priests, but as yet the space for genuine local theology has not been granted. The *limana* system has a potential to fulfil this role, once it becomes more important both to the laity and to the clergy.

⁴²Zomba 18, 20

⁴³Zomba 33

⁴⁴Schreiter 1985:14

⁴⁵Bishops 1996 and Von Doepp 1998

3. The State of Inculturation and Liberation in the Prelature of Infanta

Asian theologians have written of the need for freedom from all cultural, religious, social and political constraints⁴⁶. The Philippines has this as a background to its own theology and to the theology emerging from the local church of Infanta. When discussing this local church it is more difficult in this situation to distinguish between inculturation and liberation.

a. Liberation

The overview of Filipino theology showed that there was little unity amongst the Catholic bishops of the Philippines, and Archbishop Sin often gives contradictory messages. However, in the south especially, theologies of struggle were seen to incorporate ideas from traditional liberation theology and enhance them with their own experiences.

The 1986 “peaceful revolution” would appear to some to be an example of the link between the church and liberation in the Philippines. The case study showed that in the Prelature of Infanta, the new government established by the EDSA event actually *increased* the levels of militarization in the area. It could be argued that the intervention of the church in the elections was to prevent radical communists from gaining too much power⁴⁷. After Corizon Aquino was elected President, the church set her up as a model and refrained from criticising her, losing much of the respect that it had gained through February 1986⁴⁸.

In the local church, the language of Bishop Labayen concerning the Church of the Poor, reflects that of the original Latin American liberation theologians. This is

⁴⁶See for example, Pieris 1988, which although ostensibly about liberation, is concerned with religious oppression and culture.

⁴⁷Infanta 52

⁴⁸Gaspar 1989:311-2

especially clear in the title of his book where he links the church to ‘revolution’, a term used by liberation theologians to show the true nature of development⁴⁹. Political struggles are increasing, mostly against loggers, illegal fishing and the huge impersonal development plans of *Philippines 2000*, but there are also economic struggles of landless people against local and distant landowners⁵⁰. The involvement of the church in these struggles emerges from the desire to make the church part of the culture of the people and to allow the grassroots Christians to own the church, regardless of their income. Thus, the church is helping the people rediscover who they are⁵¹, bringing about a change in their lives, and enabling them to take responsibility for their lives. In Infanta, we saw how a local church can live by and expand on the theologies from above.

To effect this conscientisation, we looked at the *Yapak* formation programme and the way many in Infanta were trying to bridge the gap between the church and the sectors. *Yapak* teaches the laity about larger organisations such as the IMF and World Bank and how to analyse their situation in relation to these macro-structures. When it therefore comes to analysing the effects of the recent development plans, the hope is that they will be able to think clearly, without recourse to false hopes of trickle-down theories. The case study showed that although these were the principles of the *Yapak* programme, often there was a gap between the articulated and the real situation⁵². On the other hand, *Yapak*, although not reaching large numbers of people, was seen to encourage participation in church activities and a change in understandings of traditional doctrines⁵³. It had clearly changed informants’ perceptions so that they acknowledged their part to play in bringing about a new full humanity, or in the words of Infanta, to “co-create” with God⁵⁴. The small numbers of *Yapak* graduates were noted, but it is clear that the process towards a local theology in this regard has begun.

⁴⁹Bosch 1991:434

⁵⁰See especially Infanta 6, 9, 46-49

⁵¹Recalling Martey 1993

⁵²Also seen by Carlos Abesamis- private correspondence, 11 April 1998.

⁵³See Narito’s table in Appendix 4

⁵⁴Infanta 31 for example, but most interviews are based on this premise.

As we saw in Chapter 1, basic christian communities are often seen as a sign of liberation. The findings of this survey suggested that they were not as influential in the growth of local theology as thought. MSKs were in their infancy and in the majority of areas were not in existence. Where they were present, they encouraged everyone to get involved in the preparation of the liturgy. However *Yapak* provided a means of educating the MSKs leaders and issues to be covered in the meetings involved both spiritual matters (Bible Study) and more practical education such as herbal medicine.

b. Inculturation

On initial encounter with the church in Infanta, the church appeared to be still largely western. Imagery to a large extent has remained european, with white statues of Mary with long fair hair. However, in the parish church of Infanta there is the exploration of a more Filipino depiction with the picture of the Virgin Mary and the symbolism of the Hope in Struggle mural. There was hope that the establishment of MSKs would lead to increased lay involvement and would enable the transformation of church finances, but at the time of research, it was only the pilot schemes that were really operational. Seminars were common, especially for the catechists and lay workers, often full time workers in the church, and *balik-handog* promised to move the church away from 'payment for sacraments'. Chapter 3 noted the paradox between the introduction of these innovations from above and the desire for inculturation to be from below.

In internal church relations, the success of the lay formation programme can be seen in the breaking down of the traditional barriers between priest and congregation, noticeably illustrated in the availability of the bishop to whoever presented themselves⁵⁵. There was a concerted effort to make the church primarily for and of the poor, with local people leading and setting the agenda. Homilies were situational rather than concerned with heaven. In this way the church was making an effort to inculturate the structure of the church, affecting the general running of the parishes and the relationships between

⁵⁵Infanta 34

everyone from the bishop downwards.

It was suggested that the increasing links between the Prelature of Infanta and the Buddhist community of Thailand were attempts to rediscover the 'Asianness' of the Philippines in a time when the Filipino people are increasingly aware of the legacy of colonialism and the domination by the American and Spanish cultures. The whole concept of the Church of the Poor takes the situation of the people in the present-day seriously, allowing the culture, hopes and aspirations of the poor to be the determining influences on the church. The bishop portrays the Apostles in Contemporary Times as the personification of the orientation of the Prelature⁵⁶. In private conversations with them, their openness to other spiritualities, to being with everyone regardless of their faith and the emphasis on being fully human rather than "good Christians", were uppermost⁵⁷. This concern with right living rather than right belief (according to traditional catechism) was evident in many who worked for the Prelature⁵⁸.

The *Yapak* programme has enabled an extensive and effective network of lay leaders to grow, especially in the larger parishes. It will take time for such a version of christianity to reach further flung barangays, where from all accounts, folk religiosity with its miracle beliefs continue. Away from the major centres of the church, although vestiges of christianity are dominant, the lack of time to go to church and other such activities means that people often continue to hold traditional passive views of the church and the priesthood⁵⁹. Since so few people have undertaken the *Yapak* formation, parishes continue to be dependent on the priest. In areas where the priest is fully committed to the Church of the Poor, for example General Nakar, lay liturgy committees have been established and Sunday mass gives an opportunity for the orientation to be

⁵⁶SPI Video 1990: *Julio X: Towards the Church of the Poor*.

⁵⁷As Bühlmann said, we should expect a *Mysterium Revelationis* from Asia which depicts the identity of the christian church within the cosmic dimension of revelation - 1996:5.

⁵⁸And translated in the catechist conference (April 1996) in Dingalan to a rejection of the new Roman Catholic catechism as irrelevant.

⁵⁹See Infanta 28

taught. Where the priest is not committed⁶⁰, e.g. Maria Aurora and Infanta, the orientation and thus the shift of church perspective is little known to the majority of the people. This difference may also be linked to the urban-rural divide. For example, General Nakar is a small village, and barangays of Real are also very informed of the Church of the Poor, whereas in the towns of Maria Aurora and Infanta, there is a more traditional split between life and church.

With the disjointed culture of the Philippines, the temptation to adhere to the culture of the past is not so strong. Here a relevant christianity means that the church takes the situation of the poverty of the vast majority of the people seriously and sacrifices its own wealth by struggling with and for the poor. This is epitomised in the accessibility of the bishop. After mass on the normally ritualistic fiesta day in Infanta, the people who crowded round the bishop were the farmers, fishermen and workers who would previously have been overawed by the church⁶¹. Inculturation in a country which has lost most traces of its pre-colonial culture, focuses on people's contemporary life and therefore takes today's culture seriously.

As the church takes more interest in the plight of the tribal people, for whom traditional culture has not disappeared, and as it realises the effects of ecological destruction on the lives of rural people, it is rethinking its theology in line with ecological stewardship. Along with african and asian theologians in Colombo in 1992, the churches declared that the "earth and nature are seen as a focus of God's salvific concern"⁶². Infanta itself, heavily dependent on the fishing industry and the forests of the Sierra Monte Mountains, is experiencing the drastic effects of pollution, illegal logging and dynamite fishing. Hence in services prayers for the environment, recognising our place within it, and the interdependence of life, could be seen as another expression of a Filipino principle in inculturation⁶³. As the Filipino delegation to EATWOT wrote in

⁶⁰And some believe that this is the majority of the parishes - Infanta 17.

⁶¹Infanta 8, observation.

⁶²Colombo 1992:10

⁶³Observation at the fiesta in Ramada, Maria Aurora.

1995; “We have come to conclude that the religious cultural heritage of our indigenous peoples and our faith tradition are both essential for a Filipino theology and spirituality that is life-giving to our people”⁶⁴.

The holistic nature of tribal religions and asian cultural identity has encouraged Infanta to address the whole person, to close the gap, perceived to have been created by the Spanish, between the body and soul⁶⁵. Thus cultural identity and the need for change⁶⁶ have merged. In the process, it is evident from the commitment many give to the church, that Christianity is incarnate in their daily lives as they take part in MSKs, liturgy and political rallies. It is a church journeying towards a vision, led by a charismatic bishop.

The church of Infanta, on the evidence of my fieldwork, is changing its structures, although we noted a need for a solid theology of the laity to emerge. Liberation theology is influential in the bishop’s writings, and in the way the church educates people to analyse their situations and campaign for their rights. It is born out of the situation of poverty and responds to that poverty, recognising poverty as the culture of the majority of its faithful. It advocates the integration of humanity and nature, a theme from traditional tribal religions. It is making links with Buddhists, using some of their prayer techniques and thus connecting with their “Asianness”. Thus inculturation and liberation are achieved without a concerted drive to inculturate the externals of the faith, most typically the liturgy. These it is hoped will follow. There were reservations about the way in which the programmes are led by the bishop and the sisters rather than by basic christian communities ;the aim is to motivate the laity to take a stronger role in history and in the church, since the future of the church lies with them. In the meantime, this top-down approach means that there is a gap between the official documents which articulate the vision and the way in which that it is lived in reality.

⁶⁴EATWOT 1995:11

⁶⁵See for example, Infanta 1, 24, 30, 35. “*Pranic*” healing and other forms of alternative spirituality were fully accepted and widespread in the Prelature.

⁶⁶Schreiter 1985:13

Nevertheless the Prelature gives a good example of how taking the reality of the present situation seriously and encouraging the laity to lead, brings inculturation and liberation into convergence. Our interviews indicate that it is difficult to distinguish between these two theologies. In responding to the situation of the majority of its population, Infanta has been forced to use insights from both. In the process, the church is moving towards becoming incarnate in the lives of the people. The Prelature of Infanta is journeying towards a new model of "being church". The movement in the Prelature has had an effect on the Philippine Catholic Church seen in the acceptance of the model of Church of the Poor by PCP II.

Infanta theology is in many ways a living theology which cannot be classified under either inculturation or liberation since it is clearly both - a truly Incarnational Theology. The links with Buddhism, and other eastern religious practices, the incorporation of fiestas into the normal run of the progressive church, the campaigning for ecological issues inspired by tribal religions, the engagement of political problems and education, and pre-eminently with the condition of poverty, illustrate the liberation and inculturation aspects of this holistic theology. All place the church in the daily life of the people, rather than as an added extra in life. In the Prelature of Infanta, the prevailing official line remains that the church must experiment and risk making mistakes⁶⁷.

c. Summary

In this section we have been examining the first hypothesis put forward in Chapter 1. We have seen that in Zomba, the conscientisation process, often associated with liberation theology, is not a structured or major part of the activities of the church. Acculturation is happening in those parishes where the priests are open to new ideas. It appears that changes in society are permitting people to question authority and this was becoming evident in some of the informants' attitudes to their priests. At a theological level, it seems that inculturation and liberation have been separated from each other,

⁶⁷Infanta 8

inculturation referring to pre-colonial culture and liberation referring only to political statements, which are written from above with little consultation with the grassroots Christians⁶⁸.

Are inculturation and liberation linked in Infanta? The Church of the Poor is clearly in the tradition of liberation theology⁶⁹ and is influenced by Latin American theological developments. But in the grassroots reality it appears as inculturation, as the church takes on the culture of poverty⁷⁰. It explores the long term structural reasons for that poverty and tries to find local ways to support challenges to them, dovetailing into liberation theology.

For both studies, something different from either inculturation or liberation is occurring. This was especially evident in Infanta where neither name adequately describes what is happening, but also in Zomba where neither inculturation nor liberation is really fully attempted. It seems that another process is needed. Part of that process is the creation of the local church.

4. Previous Models for the Process of Incarnation

So far this thesis has attempted to use the methodology of studying a local church to enhance theologians' understanding of the issues that occupy people, and to assess how academic ideas of inculturation and liberation are translated into the grassroots church. Chapters 2 and 3 have given snap shot pictures of two churches as seen through the eyes of a first world researcher, who has tried to reflect the views and opinions of members of the church congregations. As such the discussion so far has been dependent on the interview material. We will now look closer at the issues that emerge from the case studies which I believe shed particular light upon the question of inculturation and liberation theology and the search for relevance at the end of the

⁶⁸See Zomba 2

⁶⁹See Giordano 1988

⁷⁰Pieris 1988:113

twentieth century. In this quest for a model of incarnation we will begin by looking at two authors who have written in the field. FJ Verstraelen conducted research in a qualitative manner in Zambia during the 1970s and investigated the process of becoming a local church. A Pieris is a Sri Lankan theologian whose writings often join inculturation and liberation. After we have explored their “models”, we will consider what further light the two case studies have shed on the process of incarnation.

a. F. J. Verstraelen⁷¹

Verstraelen’s aim in his analysis of an *African Church in Transition* (1975) was to investigate the Catholic Church in the transition from a missionary to a local church. He uses Vatican II as a starting point for the analysis which is conducted mainly through oral interviews which he analyses both qualitatively and quantitatively. His work is based on the premise that “to become a Local Church in all its dimensions and functions involves a process of change”⁷². Verstraelen emphasises the importance of a dynamic local church as the prerequisite for a church which takes an active role in inter-church relationships⁷³.

His research covered a wide variety of issues and here we have isolated certain questions which he raises in determining whether a church is in the process of becoming a local church, strong enough to interact with others⁷⁴.

- 1) Is the church aware of their own responsibility for building a local church? What direction do the people wish the church to move in?
- 2) Is the church seen as a church from elsewhere or as a local church responding to their own problems and aspirations?
- 3) Is there a concern for building up local personnel and a church that is self-supporting?
- 4) What is the biggest problem envisaged in the church, is it a concern for the quality of christian community and the quality of its service and witness?
- 5) Is there a superficial return to the traditional expressions and ways, especially when dealing with inculturation?

⁷¹Verstraelen 1975:538-569

⁷²Verstraelen 1975:568

⁷³See Chapter 1: section 2ai, for the discussion on the phrase of “local church”.

⁷⁴Verstraelen 1975:538-579

- 6) Is there an integrated understanding of the different ministries of the church - lay, religious and ordained? Is there a search for local ministries that respond to local needs?
- 7) Are they dependent on the law of the church?
- 8) What are the criticisms of Rome from the local church?
- 9) What is the relationship between local and expatriate clergy? And between laity and priests?
- 10) Is the standard of living of the priests an obstacle to a self-supporting church?
- 11) Is there knowledge of the Roman Catholic Church outside the immediate area? How does the church use ideas from outside? Are they adapted or adopted in their entirety?

Clearly some of these issues are determined by the time in which Verstraelen was writing and many have been outlined in earlier sections. In the early 1970s, the Zambian church was undergoing the change from a missionary-centred priesthood to an indigenous clergy (at the time more than 80% of the clergy were expatriate⁷⁵).

In the two case studies investigated in this thesis, there were very few missionary priests. In Zomba, there were two parishes that were under western priests, and they were considered separate from the other parishes partly because they were believed by some to receive more money for development projects than Malawian priests. There were discrepancies between local and expatriate priests when it came to enthusiasm for inculturation⁷⁶; some thought that the expatriates were more in favour of inculturation while others that they were outwardly in favour but not inwardly. In Infanta, the presence of one expatriate priest and a few sisters was not an issue since they were seen to be working for the local church, under the guidance of the local bishop. Thus to a large extent, the changeover to local personnel had occurred in both places, even if in Zomba, some argued that the formation of priests created “African westerners”.

The church in Infanta is to a large extent already self-supporting. From the interviews there was little differentiation between the “Church” and the “Prelature” and since it is such a young diocese, born in the wake of the changes of the 1960s, many

⁷⁵Verstraelen 1975:549

⁷⁶Also seen by Verstraelen 1975:553

have never known a different church to the one taught by Labayen⁷⁷. The ideal for the church was a change or revolution of the heart, and the sign of a Christian was the way in which one worked for the people, rather than the following of particular rules and regulations. As one interviewee remarked, since the priest often did not know who had been married in church, the sacraments could not be barred from those who had not been⁷⁸. There was an emphasis on Spirit before law⁷⁹, and a widespread use of the laity for sacramental purposes. In terms of vision for the church and being a Christian, there was more talk of “God” than “church”, such that fidelity to God, caring for others and for the environment was more important than the observance of church law⁸⁰. Information obtained suggested a definite vision of a local church which spoke to local problems and sought to enhance the christian community rather than follow a set of pre-ordained rules. In general, there was an understanding of the Roman church as a local church for a different situation. The twinning with two other dioceses and with the Buddhists, has enhanced the understanding of faith outside the diocese and Roman doctrines are questioned before they are adopted. There was in the main a unity of action between the various church ministries, such that many lay workers felt they knew the bishop personally. The importance of good leadership in the process is highlighted by Verstraelen and seen in actuality with the charisma of Labayen. His continual theological reflection, institutionalised in the Socio-Pastoral Institute, promises to ensure that such ideas continue to evolve as the situations change, even if in the prelature itself, a new bishop alters the vision of the church.

In Zomba, many interviewees emphasised that the lifestyle of the priests was an obstacle to the growth of the local church. They them as distant from the people, in their morals and wealth and they were portrayed as not caring for the people as they refused

⁷⁷Naomi Francisco on Infanta 39

⁷⁸Infanta 20

⁷⁹Infanta 42

⁸⁰This was especially so amongst those involved with community organisations (e.g. Infant, 34, 47-50), which although officially blessed by the church, were often isolated by church people. Those who worked with them clearly saw their work as part of their faith in God, even if they did not identify clearly with church mass.

to spend time with the villagers⁸¹. This was combined with a more legalistic way of being church, with people barred from communion for not being married in church, for going to local initiation ceremonies, and there was a greater dependence on the priest for the sacraments. However, even here, although the law had been created elsewhere, local knowledge of the universal church is scant. Inculturation was attempted only because it was what the pope wanted, rather than because it arose from the wishes of the people. From the discussion earlier, it appears that inculturation to be successful can be driven by either group, but it has to be accepted by both. In Zomba, inculturation often appeared to involve superficial actions and art from the past, rather than assessing the true meaning behind such customs and their role in contemporary society. The growth of the *limana* has also helped in the slow process of bringing the church to the people, but as was pointed out earlier, often it is simply an administrative unit to aid the priest in his work.

Although Verstraelen's questions were addressed to a specific situation, they shed light on the growth of the local churches examined in this thesis. Infanta, which has a clear consciousness of being a local church, has benefited greatly from mutuality with other local churches. In Zomba, there was occasionally knowledge of Boucher and Chima's experimentations, but such knowledge was not widespread and although the bishop claimed he had visited each parish to take an understanding of the African Synod to the people, such perambulations were not mentioned by other interviewees, the vast majority of whom had little knowledge of the documents. One of the issues raised by the African Synod was that of communication which Verstraelen saw as a problem in 1975 and which continues to hamper knowledge of the church outside the individual parish or diocese.

⁸¹Zomba P6

b. A. Pieris⁸²

The other model for the process of incarnation⁸³ to be considered arises not from a specific qualitative research project, but from many years' experience amongst the local churches. These experiences have led one asian theologian to conclude that there are eight necessary lessons to be learned which can be taken as a starting point for other studies in inculturation:

- 1) Inculturation should not be forcing external paraphernalia or difficult postures that embarrass people who are not used to them.
- 2) Liturgical renewal is a 'change of life' not a 'change of rite'.
- 3) The eucharist is a sign, not the starting point of inculturation. Inculturation cannot begin with the eucharist, but it rather culminates in it.
- 4) Inculturation begins, not with the liturgy of the church, but with the liturgy of life.
- 5) The liturgy of life presupposes a constant communitarian hearing of the Word of God in the midst of the Poor of Yahweh. The Liturgy of Life and the Liturgy of the Word go hand in hand.
- 6) Inculturation cannot and should not be the conscious target of any action. It is something that happens unconsciously and spontaneously in the course of our struggle to bring in God's Reign in our local context. The liturgy of life is primary and inculturation is a by-product.
- 7) Inculturation is a misnomer for the process by which each church forges its local ecclesial identity, without which it will not be the *ecclesia particularis* that Vatican II speaks of. Is our church still "an extension of the local church of Rome" or a "truly local church in communion with Rome"?
- 8) Inculturation is the process of acquiring the power to announce the mysteries we celebrate in the language and the culture that all people in and outside the church can understand.

In the process towards becoming a local church, the primacy of the liturgy of life is the theme underlying much of Pieris' writings⁸⁴. This is a holistic approach which includes political, social, cultural and religious aspects of humanity, a term which necessitates what is traditionally seen as liberation as well as more conventional inculturation. This will be discussed in greater detail in a later section, here we look

⁸²Pieris 1993:135-136

⁸³Although Pieris does not use this specific phrase he sees inculturation and liberation as "two names for the same process" (Pieris 1988:111), which in this thesis we are calling incarnation.

⁸⁴For a good discussion of Pieris' concept of "liturgy of life" see Pieris 1988:4-8. He uses the phrase to denote the attitude behind the liturgy, which is a "mutual enveloping of liturgy, spirituality, and secular action" (p5).

more generally at how the above criteria could be applied to the two case studies.

The research in Infanta showed a church which was not concerned with the external paraphernalia of church life. Although creative liturgies were growing, they were still rare and were being spearheaded in situations where there was more concern with fundamental changes in attitude as taught at the *Yapak* seminars or catechetical conferences. In the more progressive parishes, local MSKs would lead the mass each week, so that the people were beginning to own the service. However, this emerged from a situation where people met together for education and bible study first. It was also seen that MSKs are not the only vehicle for the changes in the church, although they are being built up alongside other programmes.

The underlying assumptions in Zomba were different. Here there was more of a concerted effort to inculturate the externals of faith. Sometimes this was perceived to lead to embarrassment as people were not aware of their own culture⁸⁵. Some priests called for more flexibility in the order of service, especially in calls for spontaneity. Although there were the seeds of small christian communities which are what Pieris sees as the foundation stone for liberation/inculturation⁸⁶, there was little evidence of their dynamic presence in the lives of the christians or of the church.

The case studies have illustrated what Pieris' views on the liturgy of life mean in concrete circumstances. Through the programmes in Infanta, the church concentrated on the process of becoming the Church of the Poor, changing the orientation and thereby the makeup of the church through a change of life; hence the importance of working with one's neighbour, rather than obeying church regulations. Interviewees expressed the hope that such a change of viewpoint amongst lay leaders would lead to new expressions of worship. Under an understanding that faith is not defined by belief, but rather by the quality of one's life, it is possible for a catechist, whose faith experience

⁸⁵See Zomba 20, the bishop's comments on a service held during a workshop on inculturation in 1989.

⁸⁶Pieris 1988:125-126

involves him in the church, not to be able to answer theologically about the nature of the church, the priesthood or God⁸⁷. To bring in changes of music, vestments and paintings is not inculturation. What is needed is an acceptance that all of life is integrated and belongs to the activities of the church. However, to conclude that no inculturation has occurred in Zomba because they have started with the decorations, gestures and music from the culture, would be premature. It was clear in Chapter 2 that although things were happening very slowly, there were seeds for the further establishment of an african church and the introduction of *mphakati* recalls the role such groups played in pre-christian society⁸⁸.

Pieris sees the need for this liturgy of life to be based on the liturgy of the Word, to counteract the frequent division between the “ministry of the Word” and the “ministry of the Communion”. Such a division was evident in both Infanta and Zomba, where the priest entered the community simply for the fiesta or mass. In Zomba there were comments that the priest would not stay with the congregation. Pieris has warned that “our liturgies remain mere rituals because the Table of God’s Word is not given equal importance with the Table of God’s Bread”⁸⁹. We saw in our case studies that in those parishes where priests had involved the laity in the running of the church, Bible study was emphasised, while the mass was no longer in a supreme role in the living out of faith. Ela criticises the sole control which some clergy retain over the eucharist, arguing that it is this that separates the Word and the Table⁹⁰.

An emphasis on the reading of the Bible is essentially part of the protestant tradition and the Catholic Church, since Vatican II, has increased its use. Clearly in countries where literacy is low, individual reading of Scripture is more complicated. However, for many in Infanta, the sermon was the most important part of the service as

⁸⁷See Infanta 27

⁸⁸Zomba 11

⁸⁹Pieris 1993:142

⁹⁰Ela 1986:3.

it helped people to discover what faith should mean in daily life⁹¹. As one lay worker put it, when she explained why she did not attend mass regularly: “most important for me [in the mass] is the sermon, often that is not inspirational in the sense [that] it makes clear how the church involves myself in society”⁹². Amongst Malawian informants, liberation and the Word of God were also linked. One academic urged the integration of the Table of the Word and the Table of the Mass⁹³, partly because of the rules and thus exclusions from mass. When asked which part of faith spoke clearly about liberation, most people did not reply. However, to some villagers, it was the gospel and its exposition that was liberative⁹⁴. On the other hand, there was a dependence on the mystery of the mass and the desire for this “prayer” to be possible every day⁹⁵. One of the main benefits of the *limana* system was seen to be the revision and subsequent discussion of the Gospel reading (the Table of the Word) from the Sunday service, so that it could be seen in one’s own situation⁹⁶.

In Infanta, lay workers were increasingly conducting the sacraments. The priests continued to believe that the laity saw a difference between the mass with a priest and a Bible service with a lay leader⁹⁷. However, it seems that for most lay interviewees the only difference was the quality of the homily, due to the priest’s theological education⁹⁸.

One of the hesitations about the Church of the Poor seen in Infanta was that it was spearheaded from the hierarchy. It is in many ways a concerted programme to introduce the ideas to the lay faithful through *Yapak*, MSKs and sermons. If we were to take a literal interpretation of Pieris we would question whether this is inculturation

⁹¹See Infanta 43, 47 among others.

⁹²Infanta 47

⁹³Zomba 15, 16

⁹⁴Zomba P4

⁹⁵Zomba P7 for example.

⁹⁶E.g. Zomba P5:2

⁹⁷Infanta 18

⁹⁸Infanta 44

since it appears to be “the conscious target of ... action”⁹⁹. We have however, concluded that this drawback in the Infanta model does not negate its achievements. From the case study it is clear that if the priests allow a space to be created for inculturation to take place, then the congregation takes the initiative; but this space needs to be given by those in authority rather than assumed by the grassroots. To therefore say that the process towards a local church must necessarily be unplanned is clearly missing nuances of different situations and fails to recognise the role of prophets and poets in the process¹⁰⁰.

The whole search for a local theology is part and parcel of the search for a relevant and truly catholic church. In many ways, the Zomba church was simply “an extension of the local church of Rome” with its imported customs, chanting (Lwanga parish), vestments and chalices, while the church in Infanta aimed to be a “truly local church in communion with Rome”. Those interviewed in Infanta saw the link with Rome to be provided by the bishop, who was able to make local decisions and be the local representative of the catholic church, while the pope remained a distant figure or questionable relevance to the people. Only by allowing each church to be individual in its formation of church life and liturgy can the principles of Vatican II be brought to fruition and it must be remembered that a local church also includes the bishop, priests and sisters who have their own tasks to perform. Thus a concentration on such movements coming solely from the grassroots laity is simplistic.

Pieris offers lessons for inculturation, which is a process, and by necessity, differ in every situation. Infanta portrays many of the features of his lessons, although their implementation is clearly planned by those in authority. By Pieris’ criteria, on the other hand, the evidence of Zomba, would suggest that no inculturation is taking place. However we have seen seeds of inculturation present in many of the Zomba parishes, coming about despite their lack of conformity with Pieris’ model. The model

⁹⁹Pieris 1993:136. Schreiter also expresses the fear that ethnographic or inculturation projects to becoming a local church become a *project* (Schreiter 1985:14).

¹⁰⁰Schreiter 1985:17

concentrates how to enable others to become fully human and through making faith relevant to the people, changing the whole church. From Labayen's writing, liberation is emphasised, but a liberation that is holistic and all embracing and this therefore includes processes normally associated with inculturation. Pieris' emphasis on what he calls basic human communities is seen in neither situation to be the dynamic of the changing process, and his lack of planning in inculturation does not correspond to the Infanta situation. Thus, both case studies in some way challenge the lessons Pieris has isolated and suggest more general themes are present in the process of incarnation.

5. Towards a New Model

The models offered by Verstraelen and Pieris, add valuable insights to the question of the growth of the local church. Clearly, an all-embracing model for a process which is by definition dependent on specific and different situations would be impossible. Nevertheless, by drawing on both the previous models and from the issues and questions raised by my case studies, I shall attempt to put forward some suggestions for the process of incarnation and consider whether there are any central motifs. My aim is to move behind the specific questions which will by necessity be different in each situation and consider the ideas and thought patterns behind those questions, thought patterns which could be present in many different circumstances, although articulated in different ways.

a. The Place of History in Faith

"[T]heology aims to recover, slowly and painfully, the past which has been suppressed by the oppressor, specifically as a tool to build hope in a liberated future"¹⁰¹. Throughout this thesis, a recurring theme has been that the present reality needs to be taken into account, a "reality which is to be located in time and space" and which is therefore in history¹⁰². As de Mesa put it: "culture and history are the crucible where new

¹⁰¹Grey 1994:512

¹⁰²Martey 1993:36

ways of perceiving reality are forged”¹⁰³. As we discussed in Chapter 1, history has been written from the standpoint of the colonisers and victors, who have often wiped out indigenous culture. We saw how, without a history, people have no sense of their identity. History itself has three interlinking parts: the past, the present and the future. Therefore we postulated that in the dynamic of history, inculturation and liberation are brought together. Is an understanding of history a crucial factor in the evolution of a local church?

i. Zomba

Linden’s work on the history of Malawian Catholicism 1889-1939, raised issues of past, present and future history at work within the Church. He argued that “the Church in Malawi needs an objective historical consciousness. Without this, the real needs of peasants and subsistence farmers cannot be served, nor will the local leadership be forthcoming that will enable them to ‘make their own history’”¹⁰⁴. He argued that this historical understanding was missing in Catholic teaching which concentrated on the adoration of Christ in the consecrated Host, and the veneration of Mary, leading to a preoccupation with “the timelessness of God in a synchronic dualism of immanence and transcendence”¹⁰⁵. This led to an important difference between Protestants and Catholics:

Malawian Protestant pastors who read their Bible from cover to cover were able to associate an experience of the colonial situation with the Jewish nationalism of the Old Testament. Many saw in the history of Israel a reflection of colonial Malawi and the possibilities of a different future Although Catholics had a promise of a future held out to them it was in heaven rather than in the political kingdom on earth.¹⁰⁶

Likewise, Sindima, looking at Chewa spirituality, found that when Africans became Christians, they lost their identity; “by cutting ties with one’s community and the past, the candidate no longer had a sense of solidarity with the present or the past,

¹⁰³De Mesa 1987:188

¹⁰⁴Linden 1974:xi

¹⁰⁵Linden 1974:87

¹⁰⁶Linden 1974:88

since he or she ‘was a new person in Christ’. In effect the candidate had lost her/his identity”¹⁰⁷. This theme is echoed by Andrew Walls for “it is the past which tells us who we are; without our past we are lost”¹⁰⁸.

The history of the early catholic missionaries to Malawi goes a long way in explaining the position they took with regard to history. They were largely escaping from the history in Europe at the time, emigrés within their own countries and on the edge of colonial society in the British Protectorate¹⁰⁹. They were also late arrivals, which meant that “they clung to the past for security, taught a Gospel of other-worldliness, and staffed their stations with the most down-to-earth of men”¹¹⁰.

According to Linden, the lack of historicism which such attitudes engendered, was a main cause of the rapid decrease in church membership during the period 1910-15, as peasants rejected a religion which had only given them a distant future to replace the very real sense of past that ancestral religion had given them. “Catholicism had not replaced an African past with an African history of salvation, it had merely opposed that past with a heavenly future”¹¹¹. In many ways catholicism and pre-colonial religions were incredibly dissimilar: “If traditional religion with its cult of ancestral spirits offered peasants an explanation of life in terms of the past, catholicism offered one in terms of an other-worldly future. What neither gave was an adequate explanation of the present”¹¹². This lack of the present is one factor which may have prevented Catholics being involved in political activities since then. It is interesting that Ross found that for northern Malawians it is the Christ of faith rather than the Jesus of history that is important in their understanding of Christology¹¹³. This he believes leads to “the great

¹⁰⁷Sindima 1991:7

¹⁰⁸Walls 1982:103

¹⁰⁹Linden 1974:90

¹¹⁰Linden 1997:208

¹¹¹Linden 1974:91

¹¹²Linden 1974:90

¹¹³Ross 1997:165

majority relat[ing] to Jesus Christ as a contemporary rather than a historical figure”¹¹⁴ and might point to a lack of understanding of christian history.

In Malawian secular history, the issue of the past is also strong. While Banda was in power, he was always reminding people of his own history - the way he had led them all to freedom, how he had spent time in jail during the independence struggle, and how all this therefore legitimised his rule. His failure to realise that African culture was more than simply a way of life, but included a whole philosophy, allowed him to concentrate on women’s dancing and on the index of censored material rather than try to reestablish an African culture after the rule of the British. He used a particular version of African tradition to give himself a high degree of legitimacy throughout his reign¹¹⁵. Dates in the Malawian culture are very important, and everyone interviewed could remember 8th March 1992, seen as the beginning of the second liberation. In many ways this was beginning to serve as a dangerous memory for the future, as people remembered the power of the church and were beginning to call for the church to act again.

Amongst the interviewees, “culture” was understood to be from a past era, especially evident with the bishop and the priest in charge of liturgy for the diocese:

There is the question we are just trying to study **our** culture as it was in those days. That’s the biggest challenge that I think I have. You have to rush to meet the right people before they actually disappear, because that’s what you would want to do, study things from the way things were and see how they can be expressed, because that’s really our life, the way things were¹¹⁶.

This priest continued, “it would be *wishful* thinking to say that we can actually relive the past in the present”¹¹⁷. This holding on to the past as the source and encouragement for inculturation contains the risk of turning inculturation into a project rather than a process

¹¹⁴Ross 1997:167: 9% saw Jesus as living long ago, 44% saw him primarily as someone who is active today, 49% saw him as both.

¹¹⁵Forster 1994:492. Through this article, Forster looks at the way in which Banda appealed to tradition, often alienating the educated, but retaining his following amongst rural Malawians.

¹¹⁶Zomba 18

¹¹⁷Zomba 18 - my emphasis.

and threatens to exclude the culture of today. There needs to be an understanding of the changing nature of history, culture and faith.

Under Banda, the idea that things could change (the movement of history) vanished as people submitted to the dictatorship¹¹⁸. Under such conditions a loss of understanding in the concept of the historical process was natural, and probably went some way towards destroying hope. The natural conservatism of un-educated people in a country with poor schooling probably also added to the problems of today¹¹⁹.

The Catholic Church, when it arrived, had failed to realise the past-oriented nature of the Malawian people. As Mnemba, a Malawian theologian, writes,

Being oriented towards the past, the African finds justification and meaning of his actions not in the future, but in the time already elapsed. His reasoning is 'regressive', 'I do this because my forefathers did it' ... this line of thought reveals on one hand the role played by tradition in African culture and, on the other, the meaning which is given to action¹²⁰.

Even today lack of incentive to change if 'we're not used to it' was noted constantly in the interviews. This in itself raises an interesting paradox for inculturation. Slowly people were recognising that christianity could be seen to be coming from their ancestors¹²¹, a change from seeing cultural elements as paganising the church¹²², and yet there is clearly a need to consider christianity in today's culture.

Thus a tension develops between not wanting to change anything because it was left by Christ¹²³, while keeping firmly rooted in the future of eternal life. People have

¹¹⁸Zomba 9

¹¹⁹Zomba 28, also Zomba 19, who says that there is a big problem trying to push innovations through the parish council because of the uneducated people on it.

¹²⁰Mnemba 1986:135

¹²¹Zomba P6

¹²²Reported amongst priests - Zomba 2.

¹²³Zomba P8

been told that their past was bad, and that they must lose it¹²⁴, so they exchanged this past for a future. For example, one man when asked what it meant to be a Christian in daily life, replied “it means you are searching for eternal life”¹²⁵. The promise of a future, traditionally not present in African Religions¹²⁶, motivates the Catholics to follow rules laid down by a distant church.

The Malawian Catholic Church in its Pastoral Letter of 1996 reminded the Christians of the history of the church as they near their centenary, and enjoined them to celebrate the number of Catholics in the country. “However, the causes of appreciation and rejoicing depends more upon whether Christian values have become part of us and whether our lives influenced and shaped our social and cultural values”¹²⁷. Thus the past sheds light on the present situation and together they shape the future. The constant request by the laity for the priests to get married, was simply them asking the church to respond to the signs of the times. Few people considered priests’ marriages a good thing, but many recognised that the world is not perfect and the present situation of priests having women in secret, spreading AIDS and splitting up marriages (regardless of whether these conceptions are an accurate picture of priests’ lives) was increasingly unacceptable to many who would prefer priests to have the choice. The present historical climate, which in this case will have been influenced by cultural views on marriage, allows these Catholics to call for changes.

It seems that at this point we are uncovering a vital difference between the past and history. History is not simply the recalling of the past, but involves an interpretation on that past especially when used in the ways we are advocating here. As Avila has written:

The conservative mania to preserve the past - as if this were preservation - impedes the vital impulses of the past and fossilizes it, thus provoking an abortion of a gestation that was begun with great difficulty. The

¹²⁴Zomba 2

¹²⁵Zomba P8:2

¹²⁶Mbiti 1969:159, see also a good review in Parratt 1977.

¹²⁷Bishops 1996:3

mania to preserve the past also manifests a kind of necrophilia, because to bring gestation to a standstill is to abort it¹²⁸.

Thus the Bishop's concern that people will die before they have passed on the knowledge of the culture does not serve inculturation if it is simply a desire to preserve a past which has by definition passed away. Inculturation demands that the present culture is researched, with the influences of colonialism, westernisation and african tradition joined together. This leads to an understanding of the process of changing history which in turn must be incorporated into the church.

Thus an understanding of history as past also affects the understanding of culture. Is culture dynamic and changing with different historical conditions, or is it static, fixed to an idealised past, which must be recovered before it is possible to discover the true identity of the people? Rome itself has encouraged this process of interpretation of culture¹²⁹, for it sees culture is a living entity. It was also shown in Chapter 2 that some believed expatriate priests to be further forward with inculturation ideas than their Malawian counterparts. This may have had something to do with the nature of conversion which involves leaving the old and taking on a new life. Perhaps Malawians as yet have been unable or unwilling to integrate the two, because of the increased status of accepting the new christian (and western?) way of life. For the expatriates the issue is not so firmly fixed, for african culture is not their own history from which they are trying to escape¹³⁰. History might be very important for an inculturated and liberative faith, life and culture, but there is a danger of romanticising, and even of sanctifying, the past.

In Zomba, the historical understanding of many interviewees looked to heaven and the future of the soul. This permeated any understanding of the church, and gave it

¹²⁸Avila 1981:3

¹²⁹Rome 1987:-"the young Church **interprets** its ancestral culture in a new and creative manner". emphasis added - i.e. the ancestral culture is not to be adopted in the church as is, it has to be thought about - this goes back to the first lesson learnt by Pieris that uncomfortable or embarrassing gestures and postures should not be introduced into church - see earlier.

¹³⁰Ross - private conversation in November 1995.

its *raison d'être*. Those interviewed who had thoughts of bringing in the culture of the people to the church portrayed a nostalgic view of society, which failed to realise that culture had changed as historical circumstances have moulded it. An emphasis on tradition is also prevalent in the attitude of the local Catholics to the church, such that rules and regulations made in other lands, in different times, are obeyed. Such an understanding of the historical process can lead to the concentration on an external inculturation, which does not integrate the present day.

ii. Infanta

The overarching impression of the theology emerging from the Prelature of Infanta was that of a *process*. This pervades the language of the Church of the Poor. The main formation programme, *Yapak ng Panginoon*, is a movement word denoting the Footsteps of God. The connotation is that God moves and acts within history, and that it is the responsibility of humanity to see God's footsteps and work with them in bringing about a new creation. Thus the name alone highlights humans' interaction with history to bring about change and the syllabus encouraged participants to think about their own personal, church and national history. Labayen was emphatic that history creates culture, which in turn creates us, and we have to be in charge of that process as actors not victims¹³¹. As one priest put it, "if you always look at the vision and then check yourself against the vision then you'll be frustrated again and again. But if you check yourself against your vision and against your starting point, then you are happy with the little bit, the process has started", the concept of a process enables you to keep going¹³².

In the Philippines, the Pastoral Letter of 1986, which initiated Marcos' downfall, was seen by many as vitally important in voicing the concerns of the Filipinos - it called for the people to play their part in history, to become real actors rather than passive agents in history. In their action the established church fused their current situation with liberation theological ideas. Labayen himself "emphasises that the theology coming

¹³¹Infanta 2

¹³²Infanta 42

from the grassroots can be a recovery of what was there in history, but was never taken up with sufficient seriousness before"¹³³. Thus theology in the Philippines recognises that the Gospel must allow people to become co-creators with God in the world and the events that shape and affect their lives. The different theological traditions of the Philippines examined in Chapter 3, were all seen to give prominence to people's life and each was shaped by particular historical circumstances. For example the theology of struggle grew out of the situation of struggle in the southern islands, while a less militaristic theology of poverty emerged in the less war-torn Luzon. As Karl Gaspar quoted in his memoirs from prison:

the word became light
 the word became history
 the word became conflict
 the word became indomitable spirit
 And sowed its seed upon
 the mountains near the river
 and in the valley.

And those-of-good-will
 heard the angels sing¹³⁴.

The struggle for freedom can be put into poetry, taking the pain of history and turning it into the struggle for tomorrow¹³⁵.

In *Infanta* itself, the *Yapak* formation programme, which aims to produce workers for the church who are conscientised to think about large scale development and economic policies and to question how injustices are present in daily life, spends the first few days orienting the participants to their history. Comments from those who had attended *Yapak* indicate that it helped them "know who I am", to trace the history of oneself and of the country and church¹³⁶. Although there are modules on the Old Testament histories and on the history of the early church, these are to nurture faith in

¹³³Labayen 1981

¹³⁴Gaspar 1984:110-111, by the Guatemalan poet, Julia Esquivel

¹³⁵Gaspar 1988:118 - "But I can still fight/though my limbs might be sinewy?/my fists might be bony/my sword might be rusty/they can still be honed and whetted on the/sandstone of history/dampened by the blood/nourished by the tears/shed by my forebears."

¹³⁶*Infanta* 33

the Living God of History. Such a knowledge is designed to orient people to co-create with God in the present reality, aiming to allow each person to have fullness of life, to be fully human. Many Filipino theologians realise the need to know the past and hold the promise of the future to allow a change in the present¹³⁷. This concentration on history was present in many of the seminars conducted in the prelatore. For example, in one, attended by the author, on the liturgy in Maria Aurora, the lecture from the priest concentrated on the history of the church and therefore the development of the liturgy, with the aim of encouraging the catechists to move forward to creative liturgies for today.

The Philippines have been dominated by different cultures for four hundred years, and yet this did not seem to be a preoccupation of the church. In Infanta, a charismatic and creative bishop looked into the heart of the Gospel to see how it could be relevant to his people in their daily struggles. The first 'inculturated' picture in Infanta, that of Mary, roots her firmly in present history, dressed as a peasant girl, cradling the people of the Prelature. In the background the two rivers of history, the divine and the human are brought together when she says 'yes' to God's plan¹³⁸. One priest who has been influential throughout the Prelature saw this coming together of divine and human history as a process occurring worldwide:

[T]here is a trend all over the world, no, I mean especially among the poor churches, they already make this shift to this salvation history, to this rootedness in our historical process vis-a-vis, against the two history approach, the idea is different.¹³⁹

Those who have been thus historically conscientised in the Prelature see it as their role to help the church give fullness of life to all people. They want to spread the message of a Living God of History who is with the people in their daily struggles. At the time of fieldwork, the main issue confronting such people was the government development plan. A faith which sees God acting in history and wanting fullness of life

¹³⁷See Infanta 42

¹³⁸Infanta 8

¹³⁹Infanta 42

for all, requires and encourages Christians to get involved in such political struggles. Those working in the Prelature have a sense of present history and consider the will to change society as a central part of being a Christian. *Yapak* involves exposure, taking a traditional Filipino way of learning by experience¹⁴⁰ and processes that learning to understand the situation faced by others in society. This understanding of present history is based on listening to people's stories, a task necessary for everyone in the church, including the bishop¹⁴¹.

On a bureaucratic level in the Prelature, the awareness of the importance of a creative view of history is evident in the publication of the 1983 Mission Statement. The official name of the booklet in which it was printed was *Hope in Struggle ... its historical expression*. This title expresses the essence of christianity¹⁴², recognising that christian faith must be rooted in history to be meaningful to those around them. This "Hope" that the christian faith espouses will therefore have different expressions in different historical situations. Also the emphasis on the Servant-Church and the Servant-Bishop, in the mission statement, suggests that the institution and hierarchy should be directed towards those amongst whom they live.

Labayen clearly sees the new church structure in the prelature as emerging from definite historical circumstances. He places this movement of the church into a wider movement in the universal church, arguing that,

[T]he shaping of the Church of the Poor, as a new historical model is in itself the outcome of historical processes and conditioning within the context of revolutionary change and people's struggles. This new historical model is, in a way, a historical revolution vis-a-vis the old traditional model: the Christendom model of church, which emerged from a Euro-centred Christianity during the era of Euro-cultural

¹⁴⁰De Mesa 1995:255

¹⁴¹Infanta 47, who was impressed when the bishop came to them and listened.

¹⁴²Metz 1980:3 states that "Any Christian theology [...] can be defined, at least in its task and intention, as a defence of hope [T]he solidarity of hope in the God of the living and the dead, who calls all [...] to be his subjects. In our defence of this hope, we are concerned not with a conflict between ideas unrelated to any subject, but rather with the concrete historical and social situation in which subjects are placed, with their experiences, sufferings, struggles and contradictions".

imperialism and colonialism.¹⁴³

The historical circumstances at the end of the twentieth century call for a new way for the church to express itself in the world, and this need is especially evident in the former mission territories. The challenge to the local church is to recognise the past, allowing it to influence present culture, and to incorporate the ideas of liberation and revolution in the emergence of a new understanding of the church.

Some of this echoes other Philippine documents, and clearly would be similar to the view of history expressed through the theology of struggle. As Abesamis has written, “another name for Reign-Kingdom of God is the ‘age-to-come’, which refers to a **new and alternative history**”¹⁴⁴ and the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines also reminds Christians of the present culture and history in which they live their faith; “This Jesus is not only a Jesus of history or a Jesus up in heaven but lives among us today as our contemporary challenging us to follow him in faith”¹⁴⁵.

The sense of history in Infanta is one which recognises the importance of the present situation and looks to salvation as a liberation from the oppressions faced by the poor. The duty of each Christian is therefore to care for humanity and creation and to campaign for justice in this world. The lessons of history are to explain the present situation and to give examples of how life can be improved.

iii. Implications for Incarnation and the Local Church

The issue of history was one which featured significantly in the interviews, especially in Infanta. The method in this thesis has been to take this issue, explore it in the situation in which it arose and in different church situations to consider what light it throws on the inculturation-liberation debate. Clearly, “Incarnation” has historical connotations, not only for the past in the Christ-event, but also in the present as faith is

¹⁴³Labayen 1995:13-14

¹⁴⁴Abesamis 1993:75, his emphasis.

¹⁴⁵Linsangan 1995:51

lived in different circumstances, and in the future as Christians strive to a future made possible in Christ.

The understanding of history is clearly different in each situation and goes far to explain different approaches to church change. This theme in liberation-inculturation does not seek to understand the actual process or activities of the church, but tries to investigate the thought-patterns behind them. We have explored how history has been understood in the case studies. In this section we will look for a new paradigmatic understanding in other writers, drawing on their writings to consider the place it holds in the shift towards a local church taking place.

The Judeo-Christian tradition is firmly centred on the history of God's people and the action of God within history. This has led to the idea that "the Bible can be read as the memory of the excluded ones, as the memory of resistance and suffering"¹⁴⁶. Throughout the Bible the common exhortation is to "remember" the covenant with God as God will remember promises to the people. The action of memory on history is "far from being a rational recall of information, a learning by rote of forgotten facts. It is rather, the activity which keeps the spark of hope alive"¹⁴⁷. As such it can be used by theology "as a tool to build hope in a liberated future"¹⁴⁸. Through memory, history is humanised and returned to the people. This is especially pertinent in countries where one nation has attempted to destroy another and in the process has obliterated its history¹⁴⁹. Through repetitive recall, the young gain the memory of the past and the old can keep going in times of trouble. This history of suffering leading to a future of hope in this world, is the mainstay for the struggle of liberation theologians.

"The Bible is about history: history is its basic and over-arching 'theme'"¹⁵⁰ for

¹⁴⁶Grey 1994:517

¹⁴⁷Grey 1994:519

¹⁴⁸Grey 1994:512

¹⁴⁹Seikaly 1998, Sabeel Conference, which concentrated on the way in which Israel has obliterated the history of the Palestinian people.

¹⁵⁰Colombo 1992, No 39

“the biblical God who certainly exhibits ‘metacosmic’ characteristics ... is understood as also very much ‘incarnate’ in historical events” in the Old and New Testaments¹⁵¹. Thus biblical spirituality takes as its starting point the history - past, present and future. The past shows the biblical history, the national and ecclesiastical history as well as the individual history of the believer, allowing understanding and analysis of how the present situation occurred¹⁵²; the present anchors the faith in the life situation ensuring that it remains relevant to the people; and the future allows people to have a vision and a dream for a changed society¹⁵³.

The christian faith is based on the Incarnation of God in Christ, often seen as the intersection of faith and history as God acts dramatically in history. The records of the early church as seen through the New Testament books continue to inspire and guide people today. The Christ-event for Christians involves looking back to the life of a specific man, acknowledging and working with God in the present through the inspiration of Jesus, with hope of a future in God made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus the term incarnation intimately binds together the past, present and future.

Vatican II opened the gates for Catholics to take history seriously. *Gaudium et Spes* entered a debate concerning the course of history and the church’s role in it¹⁵⁴. It required Catholics to read “the signs of the times”, thus recognising human events in the contemporary world to be worthy of note for Christians and theology. In this way “[Vatican II] reconstituted a **recognition** of history - that every historical moment has

¹⁵¹Colombo 1992, No 41

¹⁵²Richard von Weizsäcker: “whoever closes his eyes to the past becomes blind to the present. Whoever does not wish to remember inhumanity becomes susceptible to the dangers of new infection” 1985 on the 40th Anniversary of the ending of the Holocaust.

¹⁵³Maya Angelou at the inauguration of President Clinton of the USA: “History, despite its wrenching pain/cannot be un-lived, but if faced/with courage need not be lived again” (*On the Pulse of the Morning*).

¹⁵⁴GS 5; for the debate in Catholic circles see McSweeney 1980:101 - talking of Marie-Dominique Chenu “for him the fundamental theological problem since the modernist crisis was the relationship of faith and history, and this required the re-examination of the relationship between the Church and the world ... the problems relevant to theological inquiry were raised in dialogue with the world outside Catholicism, and history provided the most fruitful method for such inquiry”.

a dynamic of its own which is of value and is a place where the imminent presence of the kingdom of God may be perceived”¹⁵⁵.

The question of history is also a question about the source of revelation¹⁵⁶. If one sees the Incarnation as the culmination of God’s historical revelation, subsequent history has little meaning. However, since the middle of the twentieth century, theologians have been advocating the position that God acts within history, and that history is therefore an important medium of revelation. This was explicitly portrayed in Vatican II’s *Dei Verbum*.

Dei Verbum went further to reaffirm the dual nature of revelation as both the Word of God through Scripture and the deeds of God in history¹⁵⁷. As one Asian theologian has interpreted the document; “The Scripture is NOT the Word of God. It is the Sacrament of the Word of God ... The Scriptural History and our History are together the Revelatory Word ...The Liturgy of Life (our involvement in the history of our locality) and the liturgy of the Word (as exemplified in the history of Israel) cannot be separated”.¹⁵⁸

The emphasis on the local church also raises the question of the relationship between a “young Church” and Rome with its long church history. A 1987 International Theological Commission discussed this problem and concluded:

In virtue of the Catholic Communion, which unites all the particular Churches in one history, the young Churches consider the past of the Churches which gives birth of them, as part of their own history. However, the majority act of interpretation which is the hallmark of their spiritual maturity consists in recognising this precedence as originatory and not only as historical. This signifies that in receiving in faith the Gospel which their elders announced to them, the young Churches welcomed the ‘initiator of the faith’ and the entire Tradition in which the faith is attested, as also the capacity to give birth to new forms in which

¹⁵⁵Sheldrake 1991:29

¹⁵⁶See Dulles 1970

¹⁵⁷No 2

¹⁵⁸Pieris 1993:142

the unique and common faith would find expression.¹⁵⁹

This merging of the two histories of the main church and the 'young church' recognises that the young churches have an equally valid history, but that they must also take on the weight of church tradition. However, as the document goes on to say "the young Church **interprets** its ancestral culture in a new and creative manner"¹⁶⁰. Thus, although the Magisterium recognises that the new churches must incorporate their cultures and histories into the christian faith, that incorporation is one which is conducted critically and with thought, rather than without any interpretation. The problem of universal versus local will be addressed at a later stage.

Thus the two sources of revelation hinge on an interpretation of history. The Word of God is heard "in the history of Israel and the first Christians (by reading the **Bible**) and in the history of our people (by reading the **signs of the times**)"¹⁶¹. Through such a reading, the Word becomes flesh in the concrete situation (Incarnation).

In this way, Vatican II opened the door for third world catholic theologians to interpret their own history. Liberation and inculturation theologians both turned to the history of their people and "helped the church to rediscover its ancient faith in Yahweh, whose outstanding qualification ... was founded on his involvement in history as the God of righteousness and justice who championed the cause of the weak and the oppressed"¹⁶². The Latin American theologians called for "a different, very concrete way of looking at the historical process, that is, of perceiving the presence of the Lord in history, who encourages us to be artisans in this process"¹⁶³. The acceptance of secular history allows Christians to realise that it is made not by divine intervention but by the actions of humans¹⁶⁴, enabling people to become actors in history. In the two case

¹⁵⁹Rome 1987:no 16 (sic) - in Scherer and Bevans 1992:159.

¹⁶⁰Rome 1987:no 18 - emphasis added.

¹⁶¹Pieris 1993:140

¹⁶²Bosch 1991:442

¹⁶³Gutiérrez 1988:86

¹⁶⁴Said 1998

studies, there were still people who saw the 1992 Pastoral Letter in Malawi or the 1986 EDSA “revolution” as miracles (of divine intervention). Such an opinion was more widespread in Malawi and contributes to a passive relationship with the state¹⁶⁵. The emphasis on history in the *Yapak* formation programme and conscientisation throughout liberation writing teaches an active view of history and our position in it, enabling an “irruption of the poor in history”¹⁶⁶. In Infanta, this joining of the traditionally separate rivers of history is graphically portrayed in the picture of the Virgin Mary (see figure 9).

In Chapter 1 we saw that without a history, a people lacked an identity. Most of the third world countries are former colonies:

Their souls bear deep scars from their colonial past. They have been uprooted from their history and culturally distorted. It is as if they had been hijacked and forcibly taken to some strange land and left, stripped and broken, in a wilderness from which there is no egress.¹⁶⁷

An account of history written by the dominant classes often negates the history of those at the bottom of society. Interviewing people at the grassroots of the church is one way in which to address this imbalance and allow their voice to be heard¹⁶⁸. Without that voice, their history will not be written¹⁶⁹ and

There is no liberation without their historical presence, since they have been expelled from the field of history by their oppressors. Liberation, if true, must be historical liberation; if not, there is no liberation.¹⁷⁰

In the sphere of religion, if we concentrate on one aspect of that history, the cultural or the political for example (such as might happen in inculturation or liberation), that history is distorted and complete liberation jeopardised¹⁷¹.

¹⁶⁵Said 1998

¹⁶⁶Cadorette 1992:12

¹⁶⁷Rayan 1985:129

¹⁶⁸Martey 1993:36

¹⁶⁹Said 1998

¹⁷⁰Abraham 1990:47

¹⁷¹Martey 1993:37

Philip Sheldrake draws a distinction between “a universal historical process, which involves everyone, and recorded history in which only *some* people are active participants”¹⁷². He writes; “as new groups emerge into self-consciousness, or those who have been marginalised recover their sense of identity ... they demand not only a present but also a history”¹⁷³. It is through history that people remember their identity¹⁷⁴ and “to know the past is to know that things have not always been as they now are and that, presumably, they need not remain the same in the future”¹⁷⁵. Thus the discovery of a history is important in the forming of actors in present situations, not only in regard to political and economic action, but also in regard to changing church structures.

African theologians, in an attempt to justify inculturation theology, have often denounced the missionary history of the continent; reminding their readers that Christianity has deep roots in Africa¹⁷⁶, they frequently emphasise “how our ancestors did things”. However, this often fails to consider the present conditions of the people and in the process “[they] failed ... to translate the traditional dimension of liberation into the modern situation and so achieve a balanced life”¹⁷⁷. An overemphasis on past history will be in danger of forgetting how the dynamic of history has moved with colonialism, westernisation and other global and local forces.

Inculturation theology takes the culture of a people as the basis for church change. As we saw in Zomba and Infanta, there is a difference between taking the culture as it has evolved into the present situation and taking it as it was before colonialism. Through the view of history, a view of culture emerges which determines how inculturation is implemented, i.e. the difference between a static pre-christian culture and an evolving one. Thus a dynamic view of history, one which has a

¹⁷²Sheldrake 1991:57

¹⁷³Sheldrake 1991:18

¹⁷⁴Walls 1992:103

¹⁷⁵Sheldrake 1991:25

¹⁷⁶See Bediako 1992

¹⁷⁷Bujo 1992:73

legitimacy to change and in which everyone participates, will facilitate communities of people to move the church to become relevant.

An acceptance of this world and its role in revelation also integrates faith with creation. As we saw in Infanta, such a concern for the environment is important for inculturation, since tribal religions often involve a concern for creation and a spirituality rooted in life. The Bible also “promotes a ‘this-worldliness’ and commitment to history and the earth without degrading material things through atheistic contempt or idolatrous greed”¹⁷⁸.

Since the incarnation of the Gospel demands a holistic approach to the church and lives of the Christians, its component parts, inculturation and liberation, must address the relationship of Christianity to past (past culture, colonialism), present (structures and political ideas) and future history of the country and humanity (the dream of where the political process might be taken and the promise of eternity). The phrase “Incarnation” thus joins these issues of history which we have seen are important to the liberation-inculturation process. It also encourages the view of theology becoming reality (flesh) in daily life, i.e. theological reflection becoming lived in the liturgy of life. In the case study in Infanta we have seen how this process **can** happen, and shown that, although theologians have stressed the bottom-up method of implementation of inculturation and liberation, incarnation can start from the top as a project, so long as the clergy comes to serve the people (Matt 20:28)¹⁷⁹.

iv. Eschatology

We have been arguing that a holistic understanding of history involves the linking of the present, past and future. This naturally leads to doctrines of eschatology. A full discussion of the doctrine of eschatology is outside the scope of this thesis and further research would be needed to understand how the people interviewed understood these issues. Here we will briefly mention where the arguments in this thesis potentially

¹⁷⁸Colombo 1992 No 38

¹⁷⁹NB Labayen’s phrase “Servant-Bishop”.

lead. Such a discussion clearly takes us out of the realm of the material gleaned from the interviews.

Vatican II overcame the separation of individual and social eschatology which had developed during the preceding centuries. It asserted that “the end of the ages has already reached us” (LG48) although it also looked forward to the new creation at the end of time. However, “expectation of a new world should not water down but rather stimulate our eagerness to better this one, for here there is growing that body, the new human family which in some degree foreshadows the world to come” (GS 39). Medieval eschatology saw the course of history as a linear progression which would climax in the reign of the kingdom of God. Theology since the Enlightenment has found different ways of looking at the concept of the kingdom of God spoken of in the New Testament. This McGrath has called the “rediscovery of eschatology” and is chiefly associated in biblical scholarship with Charles Dodd who argued that Jesus referred to a kingdom of God which had already happened, and is thus “realised”¹⁸⁰. Therefore through knowledge of the Christ-event, the believer has knowledge of the end of time. It is this theology which is echoed in Vatican II documents.

This returns to Verlet’s description of the church in the Philippines. As we saw in Chapter 3, he compared the Passion Church, one which struggles today, to the Redemption Church, one which believes the redemption has already happened and therefore remains outside the struggle for humanity¹⁸¹. Clearly, an understanding that this world is redeemable and an understanding based on a belief that all people have the potential to be saved, will enable the church to have the hope to struggle. One African writer describes the difference that liberation theology has made to the eschatological debate:

For traditional theology, eschatology is an event which only God will usher into history without any human participation. In other words, all man has to do is endure whatever deprivation his society metes out to him with the hope that in God’s good time the *ecshaton* will arrive and

¹⁸⁰McGrath 1997:547. See Dodd 1963, especially p79-96.

¹⁸¹Verlet 1992

his tears will be wiped dry. In the meantime, the oppressors continue to wax strong and enjoy the goods of the world with abandon. For the liberation theologian, this concept of eschatology is defective and is a product of a subtle desire on the part of the theologian not to upset the apple cart. It is a device to ensure that the social structure remains intact because any suggestions that God expects man to participate in ushering in the *eschaton* entails a change in the social structure.¹⁸²

Through the belief that in Christ the *eschaton* is made a reality, salvation can be used to reconstruct the present. The stress for liberation theologians is therefore on God acting in history (also the foundation of many activities in the Prelature of Infanta) and the need to discover God's direction for abundant life in this ambiguous and conflict-ridden history¹⁸³. Christian doctrines of eschatology are thus brought away from "the last things" into the present and near future, an understanding which may allow reconciliation with African concepts of time¹⁸⁴.

In the two case studies, the interviews were not structured to enable a fuller understanding of the Christian's beliefs of eschatology. However, in Infanta, the painting of the Virgin Mary joined the rivers of history, the human and divine, at the point of the incarnation. A subtext to many interviews was the way in which the sacred and secular were no longer separated in the church, and virtually no-one claimed to be a member of the church simply for eternal life. Being a Christian in Infanta, required the believer to struggle for the rights and dignity of the poor, and enable people to become fully human. In contrast, interviewees from the Malawian Catholic Church stressed the way observing rules and regulations ensured entry to heaven. There was little evidence in Zomba of a social doctrine which would suggest a realised eschatological viewpoint. The over-dependence on the future, which was seen at many stages of the development of the Catholic Church in Malawi, also suggested an eschatology which looked to

¹⁸²Imagogie 1983:40-41

¹⁸³Thistlewaite and Engels 1990:11

¹⁸⁴Mbiti 1969. Parratt in his critique of Mbiti, argues that African concepts of time include a future, but do not include the idea of the *teleos* (Parratt 1977). Thus doctrines of eschatology which do not rely on the progression towards the perfect future, but instead contain a more holistic system of the past, present and future interlinked in Christ, could be closer to African thought patterns. Clearly, further research is needed.

salvation as an event which occurs in the future.

This brief look at eschatology suggests that Vatican II brought into the Catholic Church modern interpretations of the kingdom of God preached by Jesus. A realised eschatology forces a new creation in the present which necessitates action for social change. At a theoretical level, the incorporation of realised eschatology may enhance efforts towards the joining of African thought patterns and christian doctrine. At the practical level, further research would be needed, but it is clear at this stage, that in Infanta, history involves the need to live in the “now” and “not yet” (1 Corinthians 10:11). A more conservative view of history seen in Zomba is mirrored by a doctrine of eschatology which looks only to salvation in the future. An over-dependence on the future may be as much a hindrance to incarnation as an over-dependence on either the past or the present already discussed.

v. Summary

Where the church concentrates on understanding local and religious history, including the present situation, differentiations between liberation and inculturation become meaningless. The desire to address the dynamic of history empowers people to become actors in that history and encourages the church to become relevant to the people, without the need for the question “is this liberation or inculturation?” This has to a certain degree occurred in the church of Infanta. From that case study, we saw that the process of conscientising people is slow; *Yapak* has been in existence for almost fifteen years and has reached only a small number of people. However, the few who have attended and those they speak to afterwards, are taking a more active role in the church and thereby facilitating the leadership of the laity and the building of the local church.

Thus in the understanding of the dynamic of history, inculturation and liberation converge. “Incarnation” is a term used by Vatican II to express this convergence, but it is also a term which links the local church to the three parts of history to encourage those who work for a relevant church not to emphasise one aspect over the others. In the

Incarnation a historical event brings together faith and history. It allows the memory of the past to be reenacted, but within the present day reality in the hope of a changed and fulfilled future.

Both inculturation and liberation concentrate on the power of the people to forge their circumstances. The empowerment of the people enables them to rediscover their own history and in the process to become actors rather than victims of the evolving history.

We saw in the picture of the Virgin Mary in Infanta that the two rivers of history merge at the point of consent by Mary to the Incarnation of Christ. Theologians from the Third World have emphasised that in their cultures there is a holistic understanding of life and its activities¹⁸⁵. Thus, it is impossible to speak of liberation from political and economic oppression without liberation from cultural and religious oppression, all parts of life are linked, reflecting the interaction between divine and human history in the Incarnation. In Infanta, there was a concern about the way in which the traditional church had overemphasised the dichotomy between the soul and the body, thus turning people away from engagement in the world. In many parts of the Philippines flagellants are a common sight during Holy Week, but in the Prelature there is a concerted effort by the lay and ordained leaders to stress that there are other ways to show faith in God and that there should no hatred of the body¹⁸⁶. In Zomba, our interviewees expressed rather little concern there was concern that daily life should be brought into church¹⁸⁷ and little understanding of how ancestral beliefs and tribal customs could be integrated with faith. Uzuoku has argued that it is only through dialogue between the past, present and future that a *Theologia Africana* will emerge¹⁸⁸. Here we have seen that this should be accompanied by an awareness of the dynamic process between the three and is needed both at the grassroots and amongst the hierarchy.

¹⁸⁵Dickson 1984:47, Afagbegee 1985:270 among others.

¹⁸⁶Infanta 1

¹⁸⁷See for example, Zomba 16

¹⁸⁸Uzuoku 1977:162

The case studies have shown the priority of local Christians reclaiming history in order to get the courage and ideas to work for liberation. Both studies illustrate that for a true inculturation-liberation-incarnation to occur, there is a need to concentrate on an holistic analysis of history (inclusive of past, present and future) rather than solely economics, politics or culture. Such a priority will enable the present reality to be considered in the church, without an overemphasised link to the past, enabling the emerging churches to redefine themselves as Passion Churches rather than Redemption Churches. The church has a responsibility and God-given mission towards history, to interact with human history and to work out how that is linked to salvation history. In this process the task of historian and prophet are inextricably linked - if the church takes a position in society which is founded on a realistic view of the past, and a realisable understanding of the future, then the church will be truly prophetic¹⁸⁹.

History is determined by struggles (political, economic etc) and by cultures and religions. Therefore in the process of understanding a society's links with its history, the processes of inculturation and liberation merge. The three aspects of history need to be joined in a process-oriented theology, which understands divine action and human action to be co-creating history. This in itself calls for an end to the dualism which splits the body from the soul, and which has in the past split religion from politics in the church. This western division in itself may have been the source of the division between inculturation (religious and cultural) and liberation (political and economic). Incarnation is a historical event, which happened in the past, but always promises to occur in the present and the future. Each local incarnation of the Gospel must reference the three spheres of history, to enable a holistic approach to becoming a local church.

Thus although some theologians have hesitations about using the term Incarnation Theology to refer to the process of Inculturation and Liberation¹⁹⁰, it does express the historicism which we have laid at the heart of the process. For "the doctrine

¹⁸⁹Fykenberg 1996:200 -The main focus of his book is the historian's task rather than how history plays a liberating role in belief.

¹⁹⁰Especially Shorter 1988:79-83

of the incarnation itself is the early church's affirmation of the reality of divine interaction with man in history"¹⁹¹. In the Incarnation, "God became man in human history to show us how to live abundantly and victoriously in a world like this"¹⁹². In the christian understanding of the Incarnation there is the dramatic fusion of human and divine history in the central event of salvation history. Both inculturation and liberation have to make sense of history to prevent them becoming irrelevant to where people are. Through a dynamic understanding of history, Incarnation (an historical and a current process) becomes the fulcrum for inculturation and liberation.

b. The Liturgy of the Church and the Liturgy of Life

The process of interpreting history involves reading the "signs of the times", with an aim to incarnating the church in the life situation of the people. In this task, the liturgy of life is employed to interpret how the church should function. In this section we accept Pieris' view of the difference between the liturgy of the church and the liturgy of life (i.e. the way of doing things in the present day reality of society and church), and consider his hypothesis that unless the liturgy of life changes, the changes to worship are superficial and merely acculturating.

We have discussed the presence of the liturgy of life in the two case studies in Section 4b of this chapter. Although we concluded that Pieris' model may be too idealistic in specific situations, it is clear that through a change of lifestyle of those in the church, a dynamic church can evolve. Changes to external paraphernalia risk elevating the past culture above the present as we discussed in the last section. By concentrating on the liturgy of life, the church is encouraged to incorporate the present situation and read the "signs of the times".

In Infanta the church has concentrated mostly on changing the way of doing things, empowering the laity, which it is envisaged will lead to a change towards creative liturgies. On the other hand, in Malawi there was an attempt to change the

¹⁹¹Imagogie 1983:48

¹⁹²Imagogie 1983:86

church liturgical rites before a change towards a more lay-centred church had taken place. This difference may in part be due to a few influential people; for example, many interviewees in Infanta recognised that Bishop Labayen is the leading edge of change, and his conscientisation seems to have been firmly rooted within the poverty of Asia. In Malawi, the few people who experiment with indigenising the Catholic faith are outside the church hierarchy, and are therefore fairly limited in their scope. Alex Chima, Claude Boucher and the Poor Clares have therefore stayed mainly with liturgical or external changes.

As we saw in the two case studies, opportunities for altering the Roman rite remain limited. The Vatican has continued to withhold its permission for the Filipino rite prepared initially by Chupungco and then revised in 1989. In the villages of Infanta, the MSKs lead parts of the service, including setting the theme, composing and reading the prayers and often dictating the order of service. As lay ministers such as Yolly Cristomo and Divine Padua become more numerous, there will be a recognition of the fact that in the far barangays, the requirement to stick to the specified words of the mass is irrelevant. As one priest told me, he rarely took the missal to the barangays for mass and simply remembered the rite, making minor changes as he went along¹⁹³. He felt however, that he was still reciting the main parts of the mass, but saw this as an important and necessary step in his own freedom and journey towards a relevant mass. The popular music of Hontiveros has given some unity to the different churches in Luzon, whilst allowing the diversity of different areas to shape the fluid music. There were, however, vast differences even across the Prelature of Infanta, with a service in Maria Aurora being very western, with numerous altar boys dressed in colour coordinated and clean cassocks. Although conscientisation of the people allows them to see the priest as human, with weaknesses, and perhaps to joke with him in some parishes, the laity are still dependent on him for a relevant mass. In Infanta, with the folk religion of fiestas, those who were convinced of the Church of the Poor were trying to merge popular religiosity with the new movement. The catechists took the occasion to

¹⁹³As observed at a 21st Birthday Party in Catablingan, General Nakar, 21st May 1996, at which a mass was said.

go into the barangay beforehand, encouraging people there to become involved in the religious side of the holiday and helping them form MSKs to inspire the liturgy. Although there continued to be a strong emphasis on at the fiesta time (sometimes up to 80 baptisms after Mass), the church was trying to combine such traditional interpretations of the festivals with a more progressive understanding. In the barangay of Ramada, where there is a relatively conservative parish priest, the people had, with the help of the Apostles in Contemporary Times, composed their own intercessions and offertory prayers.

To many of the key church workers interviewed in the Prelature, the mass was seen as an encouragement for their work, but they did not feel dependent upon it. They were relatively unconcerned whether they were able to attend mass or not, realising that there were other duties as a Catholic. It was their role as church workers to encourage different people to be part of the service. Although the priests seemed aware of various rules about who could receive communion and who could not, these were rarely applied and confession was virtually non-existent.

In Zomba, there was a stronger reliance on the effects of the mass. Most people when questioned mentioned that they would like to receive it everyday. The rules of the church were applied strictly to the mass, so that people who were living together, but were not church-married, were barred from taking communion. It seemed that the eucharist could be seen as a punishment or innocence symbol; visibly receiving in church was seen as a sign that one felt innocent¹⁹⁴.

However, some parishes in Zomba had begun to introduce various cultural elements into the mass. Although Gregorian chant was sometimes used for the thanksgiving and consecration, other singing was to African music and ululation. There was some attempt to ensure that gestures from the culture were brought in, although their success with the congregations was mixed, since the necessary education and

¹⁹⁴Also noted by Mbiti 1971:114.

preparation was not always forthcoming. The exception to this was the Mayaka ordination when each part of the new order of service was explained to the congregation. It seemed that many of the priests were unwilling to experiment with new ideas in the mass, such as those from Mua and Chima, for fear of making mistakes. The priest in charge of liturgy in Zomba was short of real ideas for the future. Although he had been in the job for three years, by his own confession he had done or thought about it very little¹⁹⁵.

In the two case studies chosen here, the way in which the church liturgy is developing is very different, and one measure of how the liturgy of life is understood in the congregations can be found in the consideration of what it means to be a Christian in daily life. The effect of the *Yapak* formation programme was clearly evident on many of those interviewed in the Prelature, often regardless of whether they had actually done the 27 day seminar. They saw their Christianity encouraging them to seek and enhance the human in everyone. It was not a rigid faith which relied on religious paraphernalia, visualising its difference from the paraliturgies of folk religiosity. Encouraging the local community and community learning were considered to be as religious as attending mass.

In contrast, many Malawian informants presented a model of the institutional church which suggested that the church was the clergy rather than the people. The laity's role in such a model was to assist the priests (normally with domestic tasks) and to follow modes of conduct developed in the western church. The siege mentality mentioned in chapter 2 and the ensuing conflict with other denominations at that time, has led to denominational segregation. Verstraelen's criteria for a local church, discussed in section 4a recognised how an over dependence on rules of the church can lead to a diminished responsibility for forging one's local church. As we saw then, the Catholicism prevalent in Zomba tends to be legalistic and orientated towards eternal life. Such an emphasis in faith may lead to a dependence on the "source and summit" of the

¹⁹⁵Zomba 18

faith, the liturgy of the church as the primary element of Christianity.

In Zomba the onus of inculturation was to change the external parts of the church rather than changing the structure of the church. To those charged with inculturation in the diocese of Zomba “the eucharist is something that people celebrate every Sunday so it’s the beginning point in every diocese [for inculturation]”¹⁹⁶. Education is needed to allow people to accept acculturation, and in the process of education or as some have called it, conscientisation, life styles and commitments will be affected. On the other hand, a concentration on acculturation can lead to a faith with only limited relevance to daily life.

In addition, some of the theologians mentioned in the course of this thesis suggest that with a change of lifestyle and underlying attitudes, a change takes place in the understanding of “liturgy”. In this way “the struggle ... is a ‘sacrament’ - a point and a place where God is encountered and where his redeeming love and grace for the world is experienced”¹⁹⁷. On the other hand, in our discussion on local churches in Chapter 1, we concluded that the defining feature is that of an altar-community. The christians interviewed in rural Zomba considered the mass to be vital to their lives and many wanted to receive it every day, even if their analysis of the mass was not expressed beyond “it is the body of Christ”. In contrast, in Infanta, although the majority of informants were regular communicants, most frequently it was simply another part of their faith-life rather than central to it. Perhaps it is in the attitude to the mass and therefore the unity given by the bishop, that a local church can avoid becoming too local and separating from the catholic communion.

To Latin American liberation theologians, basic christian communities are seen to be important in the changing of the liturgy of life. Through the groups, people are conscientised and gain courage to become actors in history. In both the case studies there are clearly similarities. However, in Infanta, the MSKs are in their early stages and

¹⁹⁶Zomba 18

¹⁹⁷Cariño 1988:xiii, also see Martiner 1986.

are not spearheading the changes in the church. In Zomba, the *limana* system has the potential for civic education and to encourage the laity to participate in the church. As we saw in Chapter 2, there was a willingness on the part of some interviewees to question the church on some matters; however, there was little evidence of the system taking more than a social and spiritual role for its members. Pieris' emphasis on basic human communities may be an idealistic framework for the liturgy of life to change: in the actual situation with which Labayen is faced, they have not led the paradigm shift towards a local church. On the other hand, an awareness of the liturgy of life, rather than an over-concentration on the liturgy of the church, allows the paradigm shift in the church to emerge and prevents superficial inculturation or liberation.

c. Models of the Church - Universal v Local

This thesis began with the Vatican II concept of local churches. The aim was to discover how those local churches were realising their potential thirty years after the Council and whether through the local church, rather than through meta-theology, academic theologians can understand further the interrelationship of inculturation and liberation. The two case studies have presented very different pictures of the local church and the vast differences question the value of comparison. However, they have both given valuable insights into the workings of these theologies. In Infanta it appeared that both inculturation and liberation ideas were present and had become a change in the liturgy of life for many people. This was linked to the building of a new model of church in the local situation. Through engagement in the world and its struggles, the church will be renewed¹⁹⁸. The church in Zomba, although a local church in Vatican II doctrine, had not realised its potential and saw itself as a definite subsection of the universal church. Its structure, orientation and outlook was fashioned on those created in the West.

In the last section of the model I propose for incarnation theology we shall consider the local church and its relationship to the universal church. This issues is raised by Verstraelen in his analysis of the Zambian church and its progress towards

¹⁹⁸Gutiérrez 1988:148

becoming a local church. At this point, it will be worth recalling the conclusions of our discussion of the local church in chapter 1. There we saw that the local church is rarely defined, but strictly refers to the altar-community which in catholic doctrine means the diocese. The phrase however also implies a change in mentality and is the result of the inculturation-liberation-incarnation process. Thus under the understanding of Vatican II, both the churches in Infanta and Zomba are local churches, although they clearly have different opinions as to how that status affects them. There are many different models of church and ecclesiology¹⁹⁹ and here is not the place to enter the debate other than mentioning the points valid for our case studies.

Traditionally the universal church has been based on a Christendom model of church, which denotes an authoritarian church which continues to look to Rome for guidance²⁰⁰. In this study we have looked at one example of a recognisable local church, the Church of the Poor.

Having looked at the different concepts of history in these two case studies and discussed the implications for incarnation theology, we turn to the church as the 'Sacrament of History'²⁰¹, for "the primary task of the Church [...] is to celebrate with joy the salvific action of the Lord in history"²⁰². At this stage it seems that a rethinking of history as envisaged earlier, requires the church to examine the image it has of itself, how it embodies the past, struggles for the present and prepares for the future. It is within the church that the celebration of the great historical remembrance of the eucharist is celebrated and it is within the church that Christians interact with present history and society. Many third world theologians have been anxious to show that the old model centred on Rome is no longer viable for the post-independence countries and

¹⁹⁹See for example, Dulles 1974, Boff 1985

²⁰⁰The term Christendom is not used here in its original mediaeval meaning, which denoted the church's political and juridical authority. Here it is used to refer to the model or section of the church which emphasises the dominance of the papal curia rather than the autonomy at national or diocesan level. Such a model advocates uniformity in structure, regulation and liturgy.

²⁰¹See Gutiérrez 1988: especially Part 4 - p81-173

²⁰²Gutiérrez 1988:160

that further autonomy must be permitted. However, the influence and following of the pope continues to be high amongst some grassroots Christians.

From the previous discussion, it is clear that incarnation is a *process*. It is a journey which is never completed as Christians seek to work with God to create the new earth promised by the history of Jesus. This in turn presupposes different ways of conceiving the church. To take it back to the Philippine experience, the difference is between a Passion and a Redemption Church²⁰³, where the first model sees itself in a continual struggle in life and the second upholds a church which has already arrived at Redemption.

Although this study is not a comparison, the evidence of the two case studies presents two different models of church, each diocese having a different way of understanding their identity as a church. Zomba is grounded in the traditional, Christendom model; it listens to those in authority and continues to obey the rules so that the future promise of eternal life may be secured. Infanta has reversed this position. The philosophy in this church is that the laity will run the church, taking Bible services and organising groups to spread the influence of Christian love throughout society, while the bishop is a 'servant'. There could be criticisms that at present the church in Infanta is still dominated by the role of the hierarchy. It is the bishop's writings which have been so influential and his centrality is clearly seen in the fears of many that when he retires the 'church of the poor' concept may retire with him. It is the established church people, the priests and the sisters, who are on the whole leading the education process and encouraging the laity to have a place in the church. On the other hand as the church of Zomba illustrates, unless the parish priest allows change, inculturation and liberation are difficult to implement. This was also evident in those parishes in Infanta where the priest was not fully behind the Church of the Poor model, since the laity found it difficult to change the church without his blessing. In Infanta the people themselves were being taught to think about what sort of church it should be, and they were

²⁰³Verlet 1992

encouraged to look for ways to put this into practice. This is the first important step for the empowerment of the laity who lead the church forward to be relevant to them.

The 'new way of being church', a term coined by the Latin American church leaders in the 1960s was given encouragement in 1981 when John Paul II called for the church to be the 'church of the poor'²⁰⁴. It is unclear from the document whether the pope was calling for a new way of being church, or was simply reminding people that the church must look to the oppressed and disadvantaged in society. Either way, this could be said to support the change which Labayen believes is necessary for the church to really become that 'church of the poor'.

Vatican II dramatically altered the way that people looked at the church by stating that the church is 'the People of God'. Even in the villages of Zomba this teaching has been influential in that some of my interviewees argued "the priest is not the church but the church is a group of people"²⁰⁵. As Labayen has shown "[t]he issue today is not to opt out of the church, but to opt out of a historical model of church that has become irrelevant, if not obsolete and an obstacle, and to opt for a new and relevant model"²⁰⁶. Just as culture must be allowed to grow and change, so must the church in order that it becomes new and relevant.

Discussing the failures of the early church, Bosch sees one of the principle factors to be its transition from a movement to an institution. He lists the differing characteristics of an institution and movement: one is conservative, the other progressive; one is more or less passive, yielding to influences from outside, the other is active, influencing rather than being influenced; one looks to the past, the other to the future; one is anxious, the other is prepared to take risks; and one guards boundaries, the other crosses them²⁰⁷. At the risk of simplifying the issue, it seems that the new way of

²⁰⁴*Laborem Exercens* 1981:No 37

²⁰⁵Zomba P4

²⁰⁶Labayen 1995:12-13

²⁰⁷Bosch 1991:50-51

being church in Infanta has rediscovered the nature of the church as a movement and this has enhanced its sense of mission. The older, perhaps original institution - in many ways the church which is present in Malawi - may have lost much of its verve²⁰⁸.

As Bosch points out, any movement in history either disintegrates or becomes an institution²⁰⁹. The interviewees in Infanta feared that this might happen to the movement of the church of the poor. There is obviously a need for any church to have some institutional aspects. Infanta with its strong emphasis on the role of the bishop and the part played by the hierarchy may have placed too strong a role in the institution. The perceived need to ensure that there were histories of all the parishes and their catechists was taking time away from the actual organisation of those activities. However, the approaching retirement of Labayen and the thought of a new bishop, emphasised how much this movement must continue to be part of the institution of the church and offers a test as to whether a new model of church, built on the laity, has really been born.

As we have stressed many times in this thesis, the route to inculturation and liberation is a journey, a process whereby the local church rediscovers its history and learns to act in its present society and culture. These two case studies have illustrated two different stages of the process, and have enabled us to rethink the categories of theology and the issues involved in the process. The understanding of the church's role in life must change for both these processes to grow. Inculturation, without a change in church direction, remains acculturation and liberation could affect one part of life alone.

If we return to the model of incarnation put forward by Verstraelen which we discussed earlier, we noted that for him, it was important whether the local church looked to the universal for identity and direction or whether it looked to its own resources and personnel. As far as Infanta was concerned, the *Pahayag* and *Yapak* were built on the concept of the local church. Through an understanding of church history, how it has been formed and developed, there is greater understanding of the position of

²⁰⁸Bosch 1991:53

²⁰⁹Bosch 1991:52

Rome. Rome is seen as far away and irrelevant to the national people, so that encyclicals and other decrees have to be translated in concept as well as language, and may end up being rejected by the local church²¹⁰. Many Christians spoke of a change in understanding of the church and the knowledge that all must play a part²¹¹. Any questions of change within the church were geared to the Prelature rather than Universal matters.

Infanta theology aims towards a unity from the bishop to the people, including those not traditionally associated with the church. The *Yapak* programme and the proximity of the bishop ensure that all lay workers feel that they know the bishop as a friend since each of the Prelature's groups have briefing sessions with him. It is a theology which seeks to stay in step with the universal church, but recognises that for that to occur, there must be a freedom of ideas and programmes. Although not spelt out by Infanta's programmes or statements, a new theology of the universal church is also growing. Infanta is a conscious local church, which uses insights from other local churches and sees Rome a unifying, but ultimately another, local church.

Zomba Diocese was beginning to look to the local community in its attempts to instigate small christian communities. However, dependence on outside funding was necessary in order to keep the church in the manner to which it has become accustomed, and this tended to encourage the application of church regulations regardless of whether they were suitable to the indigenous conditions. Thus any criticism of the church often led to a criticism of Rome rather than the local situation. Some even advocated inculturation *because* it is what the Pope wants²¹². As the bishop admitted, "it is not yet **our** church"²¹³.

Thus, both churches are local churches, and in Zomba Diocese especially, there

²¹⁰See for example, Infanta 12, 13, 18, 36 and the reaction to the Catholic Catechism.

²¹¹Infanta 45, 27

²¹²Zomba 13

²¹³Zomba 20

was little knowledge of the church outside the diocese. The twinning system in Infanta enhanced knowledge of specific dioceses, but the relevant church was seen to be in the locality. The real difference between the two local churches was that Infanta was *conscious* of being a local church. It had no difficulty in forming committees and policy, programmes and orientation to suit the local conditions. On the other hand, Zomba, although slowly establishing *limana*, tended to act as though it was merely an extension of the Roman church. Verstraelen asked whether a church was aware of its responsibility to build the local church²¹⁴. This awareness is the key to understanding the new models of church. Therefore we need to ask whether the church is aware that it is a local church rather than simply a transplant of a church from Europe. If church members were to perceive of themselves as the local church, perhaps they would be more inclined to look to their own context rather than to the Magisterium for their inspiration. There is also a question of language. In Zomba, the outlying congregations continued to be described as “outstations”, a legacy of the missionary era. In Infanta this had been changed to “*barangay*” (village), recognising their autonomy.

The fieldwork in Infanta adds a further dimension to the issue of the local church. We have seen how there were great variations in the implementation of the orientation across the Prelature. Concern about this amongst the lay interviewees was also expressed in the comments that priests sometimes make “mini-kingdoms” for themselves²¹⁵. This suggests a sense of failure to become a true local church which is a church under a pastor, i.e. a bishop, and should therefore include the whole diocese. Perhaps there is a danger that a church can become too local, destroying the unity and link to Rome that is provided by the bishop. This argues that a church can only be truly local if it is also linked to the universal. This is also linked to language used in the two sets of interviews. In Infanta all the interviewees referred at some point to the Prelature or the bishop, which they clearly saw as the focus of their church-world. On the other hand, in Zomba, it was very rare amongst the lay Christians, both in the town and countryside, to refer to the bishop or diocese. This enhances the view that in Zomba

²¹⁴Verstraelen 1975:538

²¹⁵Private conversations with ACT sisters.

there was not yet a consciousness amongst members of the church of being a local church under the bishop.

This brings us the last difference between the two models of church which is best described through the words of two workers from the case studies. One, a catechist in Real, Infanta, said that it frustrated him when people sat around complaining that they were poor and did nothing about it²¹⁶. The other, an educated Catholic in Zomba, commented that since the 1992 Pastoral Letter, people were expecting the church to do more²¹⁷. Thus one historical model advocates *action* in the world and in the church, and the other implies *passivity*. As one lay leader in Infanta commented, what is needed is a shift from a triangular church with a small hierarchy going down to the many grassroots christians, to a circular church where all have an equal and vital part to play²¹⁸.

This thesis has discussed two models of church, as they are lived out in two dioceses. However, it is recognised that neither of the case studies accords with only one model. Together, they show local communities in the shift in understanding from a universal to a local church, called for by Vatican II, each at different stages of the process. It is clear that the different circumstances in which the church finds itself in the two dioceses will dictate that they follow different paths to become local churches.

d. A Model of Incarnation

In this section, we have considered a new model for the understanding of the process of incarnation in local churches. It was argued that a dynamic understanding of history gives each member of the church a specific role in the evolution of a local church, with the laity playing a full role. It was also proposed that a balanced view of history, which incorporates the past, present and future, brings the concepts of inculturation and liberation together. This finds suitable expression in the term

²¹⁶Infanta 27

²¹⁷Zomba 11

²¹⁸Infanta 38

incarnation which in christian understanding holds these three parts of history in dynamic and creative tension. This task of looking at history springs from the reading of the signs of the times and involves a change in the liturgy of life of the faithful. In relation to the case studies we saw how, without a change in the liturgy of life, changes in the liturgy of the church have little meaning other than acculturation. It is possible to change the liturgy of the church, without taking the needs and conditions of the people into consideration. We have also considered how the two case studies shed light on the tension between universality and locality in the Catholic Church in the 1990s. We saw that although both churches are actually true local churches, the change in structure and understanding occurs when they consciously perceive themselves to be a local church. The realisation that the church is local leads to the realisation that it should therefore address local needs rather than traditional western ones.

The model presented here is not the only way for a church to become local, but the principle at work with all three of the points raised is that they were raised in the context of the case studies and then looked at on a wider scale. All three consider the actual thought patterns behind the process rather than the patterns that the process takes. While it is clear that historical conditions in each country will make the path towards a local church different, the thoughts presented here give some understanding as to how the process occurs.

6. Conclusions

This chapter has explored some of the themes which arose from the two very different case studies and the process of becoming a local church. The themes of inculturation and liberation were considered in two different historical models of the church, "Christendom" and the "Church of the Poor". The use of history in each of these models has been investigated. The Christendom model involved a more deferential view of tradition and church history, with a fear of change and questions. The Church of the Poor involved a more radical approach, which encouraged its members to explore their own personal, national and ecclesiastical history, and thus to take an active role in the

present history they are faced with. History can therefore be seen as a common denominator in the theologies of inculturation and liberation. The historicism of traditional incarnation theology encourages the link between inculturation and liberation under the umbrella term of incarnation (much as Vatican II has done). The symbol of the incarnation and the symbol of christian history, past, present and future is the eucharist. Although theologians in Latin America have noted the liberative function of the eucharist when it is inculturated, the link was rarely made in either case study. Slowly in Infanta, local culture is shaping the celebration of the sacraments, especially when they are conducted by the laity far from the central barangays, but “creative liturgies” as such are still reserved for special occasions. In Zomba, traditional forms of service continue (sometimes with Gregorian Chant²¹⁹) and tight rules govern who can receive communion, although externals are increasingly africanised in some churches. There is potential for change.

However, drawing on Pieris’ distinction between the liturgy of life and the liturgy of the church, we examined how the two historical models approached these issues, showing that there can be no blueprint for the incarnation process. In Infanta where the structures of the church are changing, there were hesitancies over the formation process coming from the bishop, priests and sisters. Although the Church of the Poor has been the official direction in the Prelature since 1979, problems in the early 1980s have meant that traditional indicators and causes of an incarnated church, chiefly small christian communities, have appeared relatively late. Time and again it was *life* which was important rather than the church; God rather than the church was to be followed and to be a Christian was to be concerned and active with the poor. Faith involved a life orientation; for example, one lady’s husband gave up a job with a multinational pharmaceutical company²²⁰ and another lay worker had ethical problems when working for a logging firm²²¹. It was not important whether you attended mass, for

²¹⁹Witnessed in Lwanga Parish Church.

²²⁰Infanta 23

²²¹Infanta 25

prayers could happen where you were - on the sea, in the fields etc²²². Thus the liturgy of life was given priority over the liturgy of the church.

In Zomba, historical circumstances inflicted by a dictatorship and a generally conservative clergy have meant that although the framework of small communities are present, they seem to be mostly for administrative functions. Grassroots Christians, inspired perhaps by the added freedom of expression since 1992, are beginning to question the parts of the local church structure. However, promises of eternal life continue to dominate, suggesting a regulation and punishment-driven religion, the ancestral past replaced by a utopian future with seemingly few implications for the present.

The issues discussed here are what I believe are interesting for the study of theology: the use Christians make of history, past, present and future, how this is lived out in the liturgies of life and church, and institutionalised in the models of the church. The blending of religion and life in the church brings inculturation and liberation together in an incarnated Gospel.

In the discussion of the state of inculturation and liberation in the two dioceses, we noted that neither conformed entirely to the models of inculturation or liberation. In Infanta, there was a fusion of issues occurring which have traditionally been put in both theologies. In Zomba, it appeared that neither process was occurring, although there were signs of change. This has led us to the conclusion that neither inculturation nor liberation is an entity in its own right, but must occur as a joint project, as sub-sections of another process. In the second half of this chapter we have explored three issues which became prominent during the fieldwork. Through the discussion of these important aspects on the evidence of our two case studies, it has been argued that the phrase “incarnation theology” includes these general issues behind the process of change in the church, or the change in mentality needed to create a local church. Such a phrase

²²²See Infanta 28, 34

has five advantages. First, it links the process of localising the church with the universal church by recalling Vatican II documents. Second, it encompasses all three aspects of history. Third, it talks of theological reflection becoming flesh, a process which should constantly happen in the church as it moves forward in history listening to the prophets in each generation. Fourth, incarnation implies a change of outlook from a church which is served to a church which serves. Lastly, the Incarnation of Christ came to infuse existing religious structures with new meaning which involved a change of lifestyle, Christ concentrated more on the liturgy of life rather than the liturgy of the church²²³. Thus incarnation commends itself as a way of embracing the aspects of inculturation and liberation and the thought patterns and issues beyond these two more traditional phrases.

This thesis is about the local theology of the church and what it means to be church in each of the two case studies. The Roman Catholic Church is in a process of change and here we have viewed this change from the bottom-up rather than concentrating on texts. Such a methodology is bound to paint a confused and at times inconsistent picture. However, the process towards a local church will create *theologies* of the church rather than a *theology*. In Chapters 2 and 3, we looked at the relationship between the universal church and the local church and we have discussed how the Christians interviewed saw the relationship. Imagogie has written,

Theology, if it is authentic, must participate in universality. However, the aim is to stress that no theology is authentic and universal if it does not meet the integrated needs of a particular people in a particular historical context²²⁴.

From the discussion of models of incarnation above, we can conclude that the process towards a local church is individual to each situation. Infanta, with a conscious local church and a dynamic bishop, feels linked to the Vatican through the college of bishops, and gladly shares their experiences with other churches throughout the world. At the same time, it does not regard messages from the Magisterium as valid for every situation. As this thesis has shown, each local theology although separate from others,

²²³Or of the synagogue - see his tirades against the Pharisees, eg Mt 15:1-9, 23, Mk 12:38-39.

²²⁴Imagogie 1983:19

can shed light on others, feeding into their situations, however different, in a similar way to the process behind this thesis.

These two case studies show that the route to inculturation, which must include liberation²²⁵, is not straight forward to determine and depends a great deal on the local church. It must take history in all its aspects seriously, so that it does not try to inculturate into a culture of yesterday, but takes the recent historical conditions into account, and responds to the political situation of today. The multiplication of case studies of local churches will enable mutual learning and facilitate the cross-fertilisation of ideas and practice. We have discussed how the two case studies shed light on the incarnation process. In the last chapter we will address the third hypothesis of the thesis and consider whether this case study approach is a valid method for doing theology.

²²⁵See Abesamis 1980:134

Chapter 5: Conclusion

1. Introduction

In Chapter 1 we explored how Vatican II rediscovered the concept of the local church and named the process towards it “incarnation”. We showed that such a church is not closely defined, but is usually an altar-community, i.e. a diocese, under a bishop. However, the phrase also connotes a change of attitude. *Ad Gentes* recognised that theological reflection is a task of the local church. We then discussed the two main strands of third world “local” theology and put forward the hypothesis that the two were part of the same process. Using the language of Vatican II we set out to consider whether this process would be better expressed in the phrase “incarnation theology”. Since such theologies are coming from the local churches, we suggested that social scientific study of local church-communities may not only be the way to research what is happening in the theology of daily life, but might also give food for thought about the process of theology. With this in mind a sociological methodology was constructed and the results of this method were put forward as pictures of the church in two contrasting countries in Chapters 2 and 3. It was recognised that many different aspects of community and church life could have been highlighted, but we concentrated on the expressions of inculturation and liberation and how the church was thus becoming a local church and articulating a local theology. In Chapter 4 we drew together the interview material to see how it added to our understanding of the process of the liberation-inculturation process. We concluded, on the basis of the issues arising from these two case studies, that the two strands of third world theology considered above could indeed be subsections of a larger process and that “incarnation” was a valid way of describing this process since it included many of the issues that were deemed important in the fieldwork.

2. The Method

Vatican II called for a new mentality in the Roman Catholic Church, one which laid an emphasis on the local church, for the “Church of Christ is truly present in all lawful, local congregations of the faithful. These congregations, in attachment to their pastors, themselves have the name of Churches in the New Testament”¹. A year after *Lumen Gentium, Ad Gentes* called the laity throughout the world to use the “economy of the Incarnation” to illuminate the gospel with their own culture. It called for theological speculation in “each major socio-cultural area”². This thesis has looked at the growth of local theology in the church to consider the implications and implementation of such Vatican II doctrines.

“Today many social scientists face the challenge of humanizing their fields, by drawing on the oral narratives from memory, and so verify and enlarge the myriad interpretations of the past”³. This thesis has attempted to create a methodology which allows the humanising of theology, perceiving of theology as an ongoing process, in different localities. It has taken the idea from liberation theologians that the grassroots christians do theology which can then be articulated by others.

Third world theologians address different concerns from those in western countries and there is therefore a need to use a different methodology. Third world theologians themselves have advocated a theological method which analyses the life-situation, society and action of the congregations⁴. The methodology used in this study was one inspired by oral history and developed through sociological qualitative studies. It was based on the assumption that the texts of oral history are as valuable as those from conventional sources⁵. In each case study, a slightly different methodology was

¹LG 26

²AG 22

³Seikaly 1998:1

⁴Abesamis 1980:128

⁵Thompson 1996:140

employed. In Malawi, there was more emphasis on a random interview selection after the initial groups to be interviewed had been identified. This was partly dictated by circumstances, and because there were relatively few active lay members of the church. In the Philippines, a definite church structure with specific lay formation and leadership allowed a more selective approach to be taken to build up a picture of the church in the area. Clearly, in Infanta, staying with members of the official church meant that the selection was more biased towards the official policy of the Prelature, whereas in Zomba, such a bias was not present.

The next step was to “sift out what seems valid and what relevant, and to develop, in the light of [my] own problems and perspectives, the ideas which [I see] struggling to be born in the words of others”⁶. Dulles sees this as a maieutic process, the process by which the outsider, or the academic theologian, articulates the aspirations and thoughts of the community⁷. This thesis has presented a “picture” of two local churches, using the activities and thoughts of the interviewees. This enabled their concerns to emerge, and from the two case studies ideas of the process of incarnation were formed. The words of the informants were linked with those of published theologians to explore the process of becoming a local church and to gain an insight into incarnation by looking at the thought patterns behind it.

The methodology of local study is one tuned to the demands of the ‘new way of being church’. It is based on the premise that individual dioceses are different in their outlook and programmes. In this thesis it has also proved useful to take questions asked in one context and test them in the other. My intention has not been to create a new meta-theology of the church, but to seek to discover “the inter-action aspect of the various forms of Christianity”⁸. It hinges on the church recognising that all theologies, including Vatican theology are local theologies, which are dependent on time and

⁶Dulles 1970:11 - his definition of the theologian’s task.

⁷Also the task in Liberation theology e.g. Gutiérrez 1988:12, the theologian’s task “is to penetrate the present reality, the movement of history, that which is driving history toward the future”. Schreier 1985:17-18, De la Torre 1986:44.

⁸Verstraelen 1996:xi

geographical area for their dynamic, impetus and authority. Through local study we investigated local theologies of the church which were in the process of realising the economy of the incarnation through the convergence of liberation and inculturation.

3. The Results

The methodology yielded much valuable material which has clearly been used selectively in the thesis, enabling very detailed pictures of the local church to emerge. The process of data collection in each case study was by necessity different; more structured in Infanta, and less so in Zomba. Each reflected ways in which the Catholic Church is changing in the post-Vatican II world.

Through the interviews, we found new insights into the long-standing relationship between inculturation and liberation. These were discussed in the last chapter. We also saw that previous models of incarnation, although giving valuable insights, cannot be seen as a blue-print for theology. Many have presumed that small christian communities are the driving force behind the incarnation of the gospel⁹, and it is clear that they do have a unique role to play in the theory. However, in both our case studies, these communities are either latecomers to the church scene or have failed to break away from being useful administrative sub-units for the parish, the “virtual parish community”¹⁰. Although further research would be needed to determine why the small christian community movement is so passive in Malawi, we might be led to agree with Hastings that one of the reasons is that they have been imposed from above, modelled on a movement from another country and were simply designed to supplant the debate about the shortage of priests and consequent ‘eucharistic starvation’¹¹. On the other hand, community organising in Infanta is well developed, but in many places has

⁹Uzukwu 1982 and AMECEA 1974, see BCCs as the key to making the church local. Pieris 1988:125-6.

¹⁰Comblin 1994:206

¹¹Hastings 1989:133

separated from church activities, to form “social movement” communities¹². In Infanta, the Prelature policy is to reform these basic communities as MSKs.

The two case studies have also challenged our ideas of what makes an inculturated church. The works from eminent inculturationists, for example Mbiti and Uzukwu¹³, suggest that in inculturated churches a new form of language, using traditional concepts such as “Proto-Ancestor” and a mass which is stripped of its fidelity to the Latin rite, are needed. We saw that neither church investigated had incorporated such language. However, in Infanta, a concern with the people in their present state ensured that the church spoke directly to their cultural norms. In Zomba, people were beginning to voice their own concerns, but this was often not for a more “Africanised” worship, since many wanted to retain the mystery of the Latin language¹⁴. The *limana* system on the other hand was something present in traditional society, which still had resonance today, and promised to bring people together to own the church, which I believe is the sign of an inculturated church.

The sociological methodology exposed the views of the congregations of local churches to consider to what extent ideas of published theologians were being implemented. In Infanta this was helped by a very clear enunciation of the bishop’s position through his latest book, and by the recent Second Plenary Council of the Philippines which spelt out the way forward for the whole Philippine Church. If a theological-researcher was to rely solely on these official documents, there would be a failure to take into account how the local community thinks about the issues discussed in the documents. The drawbacks and gap between the vision and practice would not be seen and thus an inaccurate picture of how the Catholic Church lives in the local situation would emerge. If we are to take the idea of the local church seriously, we must attempt to discover how that local church grapples with the issues of theology, change and circumstances.

¹²Comblin 1994:207

¹³Mbiti 1971, Uzukwu 1994

¹⁴Zomba 1 argued that Islam was growing because they retained their religious language.

In the case of Zomba, the advantage of this methodology is even more striking. Malawian theologians are rare, the main ones being Patrick Kalilombe who has not resided in the country for twenty years and Alexander Chima who has written widely on inculturation. However, Chima is isolated by the Malawian Episcopal Conference and has failed to be promoted, so that his field of influence beyond his own parish is limited to personal contacts. The methodology used in this thesis has allowed a more detailed and more accurate picture of the Catholic Church in Malawi to be painted, which allows for local variation and lack of education at the grassroots. Such a picture adds to our understanding of the realities of christianity, away from the academic circles and conferences. Through this methodology, we were able to see, for example, how the bishop in Zomba was attempting to cope with the demands of the African Synod. He saw inculturation as being the use of the culture from pre-colonial times, and was visiting all the parishes in his diocese to teach about the issues raised at the Synod. Such personalities are the backbone of theology, since it is through people who are grappling with the issues that a new vibrancy has the potential to be born.

The two case studies were chosen because they came from a particular historical situation: that of societal change or transition. It was shown, however, that the events of 1986 and 1992 had not yet changed the grassroots society. This was more obvious in Infanta, where oppression increased after the end of Marcos' martial law. In Zomba, it was becoming increasingly clear to people that although the government had theoretically changed, those who had been in parliament with Banda were taking positions in the new government. In both cases, the Catholic Church had played a pivotal role in the transfer of power, but had failed to continue the pressure to change the society underneath.

Should other such local studies be conducted, a rich tapestry of local expressions of theology could be woven to take into account each situation. By studying two completely different countries, issues and questions from one situation have shed light on the other, pointing to the new model of universality which dictates inter-action rather than uniformity. In this new model of universality the Vatican will remain a central

point of unity. Verstraelen suggested that the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples should become the Congregation for Inter-Church Assistance, providing a meeting place for the local churches¹⁵. Perhaps this would have the effect of institutionalising such contact more than necessary. However, it would be a first step to recognising the mutuality of local theologies. Local theologies, away from the centre and separate from the former mission-sending cultures, will have autonomy, not only in their local church, but also in discussion with other local theologies¹⁶.

The theological method in this thesis takes both the culture and the political reality seriously. It hinges on two points, that of praxis and that of experience. Along with liberation theologians, I believe reflection of praxis is done in the light of the gospel, but that reflection is not solely on the present economic and political order. There is also reflection and analysis of the situation of the people, their religious and cultural past. The past is then assessed and examined to discover what principles and movements are still relevant today: do villagers in Malawi still have a reverence for the “Ancestor” or has European phraseology taken over to such an extent that western names for Christ are more meaningful?¹⁷ With an understanding of the movement of history can come hopes of a changed future. Thus the past illuminates the present and together they build a future.

This thesis has not attempted to create that theology. It simply describes what is happening in the local situations and attempts to use the material to shed light on theological debates. The material from Infanta shows a concern with the movement of history and the co-operation between humans and the God of history. Through the close interpretation of the interviews the view of history was seen to be fundamental to the action of the laity in the church and in society. The Zomba interviews were then considered in the light of this understanding. The national histories of the two countries are very different, but this approach allows for such differences, since it sees the

¹⁵Verstraelen 1975:577

¹⁶In such regional organisations like EATWOT.

¹⁷Ross 1997

historical understanding of the people as important rather than their specific historical experiences.

4. Theological Reflection

Chapter 4 used the material from the case studies to explore theological themes which I felt were relevant to the debate on inculturation and liberation. It rested on the interaction of local churches with each other and with the universal church. It was clear that Labayen had greatly used the thoughts of Latin American theologians in the development of his own theology and the emphasis which he laid on praxis. The political climate of the last thirty years in Malawi has prevented much contact with ideas from elsewhere in the world. It was evident here, that contact with other ideas often increased creativity.

Generalisations about the two processes, inculturation and liberation, were not the goal of this thesis; rather its concern has been to explore how churches are taking the opportunities presented by Vatican II and increased theological activity in the Third World. However, the research also aimed to investigate both these processes in their real life situations.

It became clear, especially in the description of the church in the Prelature of Infanta, that the dichotomy between inculturation and liberation is a false one; liberation involves freedom from all forms of oppression, cultural, social, economic, religious and political. Thus analysis of the culture and pre-christian religions is as important as analysis of the economic and political spheres. Both are needed for a church which truly speaks to the people, in the situation with which they are faced. The placing of the Gospel in a specific situation is also called incarnation and this term has been favoured in this thesis because it allows for a holistic understanding of the local church which includes liberation and inculturation. Traditional theology of incarnation also involves the three stages of history, past, present and future, which were seen to be important in the process towards a local church. In Infanta "culture" was difficult to define. In a

country which was so successfully colonised by the Spanish, the pre-colonial culture and beliefs are in many ways irrelevant to the people of Infanta. More important is the rural culture, where there is poverty, but not the overwhelming poverty of urban slums. Thus this is the backdrop to the theology and the outlook of the church.

Schreiter's descriptions of how a local theology can emerge suggest that acculturation is often a precursor to true contextualisation¹⁸. Many in Zomba also believed this. However, the most inculturated church in this study, Infanta, had not yet inculturated the symbols, rituals and imagery of the church. Thus, Pieris' point that it is through a change in the liturgy of life that inculturation of the liturgy of the church occurs, is born out in the two case studies taken here. Where this is not so, there is a danger that the ritual becomes empty and irrelevant to the faith and daily lives of the people¹⁹.

Inculturation and liberation theology hinge on the concerns and thoughts of the community. Theoretically, there is a need for the people to *own* the church, to have some initiative in the development of programmes. However, as we have seen, there is also a strong need for education, greatly desired in Zomba, and clearly occurring in Infanta, before the laity will take that lead. In the nature of life in many third world countries, it is the priests and religious who have that education, and therefore they have the duty to conscientise the people. Thus, there is paradoxically a need for the local hierarchy to make the first move in incarnation, and then enable the laity to play their part, allowing the space for lay involvement to develop.

Infanta raised the question as to whether inculturation truly occurs if the change comes from above, or whether this is simply another form of the imposition of a grand theology. This question would need much more study and knowledge of the local

¹⁸Schreiter 1985:10-11

¹⁹This is not to say that this had happened in Zomba. Here, most interviewees, especially in the "outstations" laid stress on the eucharist, but at the same time, the conversations strongly suggested a gap between church and life.

customs and culture. However, immersion and exposure are decreasing the gap between the priesthood and the laity. So long as the changes in the church emerge from praxis with the people, then incarnation is occurring and the local hierarchy thus has an important role to play in the process.

The democratisation of the church will also increase inculturation. This conclusion is based on the exposure programme in Infanta which enabled the laity to question the clergy, but was also seen in Zomba where societal changes are forcing many at village level to question church authority. The gap which continues to separate the laity and priesthood in Malawi, partly a result of ostentatious wealth and changed lifestyle at clerical formation, make it difficult to ensure that changes brought into the church are those needed by the people.

Pieris has written about the change that is needed in the liturgy of life. This is in many ways central to the concerns of both inculturation and liberation. Uzuoku has argued that there is a need to go beyond adaptation, which he sees as changes to the liturgy of the church without the concomitant changes to life²⁰. This thesis has shown that without changes in the structure of the church, formation of the laity and clergy, and orientation of the church, true incarnation occurs only very slowly. Christ did not become incarnate solely to change the rites which were used in the Jewish religion, but to challenge the very lives of those who participated in the rites and thereby to add new meaning to the rituals. We argued in the last chapter that the phrase "incarnation theology" is, for biblical, linguistic and ecclesiastical reasons a useful label. Incarnation theology provides important lessons and concepts in the process of making christianity and the church more relevant to those in different situations.

Thus the thesis has added to our understanding of local theology. It is not a local theology in isolation from all other local churches, but it receives its insights from those in similar conditions rather than directly from the Vatican. Thus the catechists from

²⁰Uzuoku 1982

Infanta can reject the Roman Catholic Catechism as irrelevant to their work and life²¹. A local church emerges when the gap between the priesthood and the laity diminishes, and the laity can own their church, participating fully in it. We also saw that the bishop's job to link the diocese to the universal church and to establish the unity in the diocese is important to becoming a truly "local church". The method of local study of these churches has enabled a much more detailed picture to emerge of the checks and balances at play within the local church.

The actual process of change was different in each country. This was to a certain degree due to the very structured and organised shift which is being implemented in the Prelature of Infanta. Although there were attempts to inculturate various aspects of the liturgy of the church in Zomba, it was seen that the impetus was mainly from groups in the church isolated from the bishops. For those in control of the changes, it seemed that the inspiration came from the past which had not journeyed to the present. Meanwhile, among the people, the changes that had been occurring since the defeat of President Banda and the resultant increased freedom of expression, were encouraging them to speak about oppression within the church. It was clear that they were beginning to question why some aspects of the church were as they were, from the immorality of the priests (which was perceived as widespread) to the new life that the *limana* system had given. However, as yet, the laity were only involved when a priest was unable to be present and even then only for specific functions. The geographical positioning of the bishop's palace, up the hill away from the town, symbolised the gap between the people and the priesthood²², in contrast to the centrality of the house of the bishop of Infanta.

In Chapter 4 we discussed the work of two theologians who have investigated the local church and put forward a new model which placed importance on issues which emerged from the case studies; namely the development of historical understanding, the importance of the liturgy of life and the relationship between the local and universal church. We showed how these ideas came from interview material, were elaborated by

²¹At the 2nd Prelatural Catechetical Conference - Dingalan, April 1995.

²²Which the bishop himself lamented - Zomba 20.

reference to other authors and demonstrated that incarnation theology is a suitable phrase for the emergence of the local church. The model uses changes in mentality for the process of incarnation employing ideas traditionally associated with either inculturation or liberation. Through the use of case studies, we were able to consider the practical side to incarnation. For example, we saw that although some theologians believe that it should come completely from the grassroots and not be a planned project from the clergy, in reality, the space, education and support of the clergy were vital to the process.

5. Implications and Questions

It appears from the above that this methodology has been suitable for the task of using the way that the church lives in reality as a theological source. It is impossible from case studies of two local churches to establish whether the ideas put forward would be applicable to other situations. Further case studies would be necessary for those kind of conclusions.

The methodology and results of this study also raise questions and implications which are not answerable by the research here. One thread running through the thesis has been ecclesiology and the new model which is emerging. The extent to which the church is influenced by society or vice versa has been mentioned and has implications for the extent to which the church can be a mover in redressing societal injustices (liberation theology) or be altered by the growth of societal freedoms (which appears to be happening in Malawi). Both issues ideally require their own targeted research to explore properly.

This research has repeatedly questioned the role of the Universal Catholic Church in the future of local theology. The Catholic Church lays stress on its universality and is only very slowly lessening its grip on uniformity. As Tutu reminds us, theology is neither universal nor eternal, rather “the true insights of each theology must have universal relevance, but theology gets distorted if it sets out from the very

beginning to speak or attempt to speak universally”²³. The question of how a theology remains a christian one will need further research by biblical and moral theologians, both from the Third World and the West. In this thesis we have been considering the practical nature of Christianity as the church attempts to live in today’s society.

The growth of local theologies will question how the church remains Catholic, rather than changing into a congregational polity. The bishop of Infanta stressed the influences from elsewhere in the world, showing how the communion of churches remains important for the spread and evolution of ideas. Although incarnation stresses a less power-dominated church, the Prelature also highlighted the vital role of the bishop. The person of the bishop has moved from the western “prince of the Church” to a servant who develops within the society and situation of the church and who does not hold the traditional authoritarian vestiges of power. He meets with the wider community of bishops so that the diocese remains part of a wider grouping and ensures unity across the whole diocese. Perhaps the European model of church is no longer useful to those in the third world, although the communion of churches is, however, useful to the bishop who gains insights and ideas from it. Clearly this is a different concept of catholicity than is traditionally espoused, but the case studies question whether there can be a universal church when historical references to such universality are in the concepts and context of the West. These important questions are raised by the issues in this thesis, but need further research to address them fully.

This thesis also has implications for the formulation and discussion of theology. The method has proved useful to discover how grassroot christians are living their life and formulating their theology. It shows that one important method for theology will involve an inter-disciplinary approach which will occur in the context of the people. In the context of different local churches in a loose interacting communion, an important task for the theologian is to carry out local studies and build up histories from the bottom of society, drawing out themes, and publicising the material. This will ensure

²³Tutu 1987:52

that researchers do not simply accept portrayals of the church from the local hierarchy, or take the hierarchy's views as indicative of those for the Christians in the diocese. As the theologians of struggle in the Philippines experienced, those involved in the changing face of the church have little time to collate the material for others. In such a task, the theologian from the culture has a particular insight into the attitudes and assumptions underlying the church, and can work in the language which is the medium of the theology. The theologian from outside also has a role, especially in relating the issues to other contexts

The future of the Roman Catholic Church is in the hands of those who are attempting to make it relevant to people at the end of the twentieth century. The conditions in the Third World have encouraged theologians to address questions of the relevance of the church and they have shown that a new model of church is needed for the changed circumstances. As McSweeney put it, "there must come a time in a long voyage when the replacement of the ship is the only guarantee of moving in the right direction"²⁴. The seemingly contradictory idea that those theologians and priests who had had exposure to the international academic setting were more willing to experiment with local ideas must be taken into account. It is clear that theological ideas should interbreed, and shed light on other situations, rather than being dependent on doctrines formulated by one group in the church. Through interviews in Infanta it became clear that one of the major attitude differences between the two case studies was their views of history. Thus, although the local church is being created in both countries to differing degrees, the extent to which it is being realised is related to the extent to which the movement of history, "that which is driving history toward the future"²⁵, is being engaged with. As changes emerge at the local church level, there will be a need for change at the Vatican level. If the local church is as important as the Magisterium suggests, they must be given autonomy. As local churches pay less attention to the law

²⁴McSweeney 1980:261

²⁵Gutiérrez 1988:12

and more to the gospel²⁶, those very laws will need to be rethought to enable the Magisterium to retain a place within the new Catholic communion.

As has been mentioned Labayen's work depends heavily on Latin American theologians, which he has interpreted in the context of the Philippines, rejecting parts of their work. On the other hand Zomba diocesan workers seem to have little theological contact with the outside world, some of its priests seeing the West simply as a source of material aid. In the context of this thesis we have continued this interconnecting process by taking the theologies and insights from one part of the world to another. With Verstraelen and others, I suggest that this will be the new form of universality that will emerge in the coming generations of third world theologians. The thesis rests on the assumption that each local church has a right and a duty to forge its own theology, but argues that there is a need for interaction between these former mission territories, perhaps without the need to go through the centre. The concept of a universal theology or even a grand scheme of running a local church is clearly outdated after the promises of Vatican II and the localisation which has begun in most third world countries.

In Chapter 1 we briefly discussed Quevedo's theory of the Pastoral Spiral. In *Infanta*, the way in which the bishop's writings inspire and then reflect the actions at grassroots level, points to the way in which a Pastoral Spiral can work in the activities of the church. In terms of this thesis, we took two theologies from the third world and looked at the implementation of these theologies in two specific situations. Through the case studies I have proposed a new model for looking at the birth of the local church and a different methodology for studying theology. There is now a need for other case studies to assess whether these findings are applicable in other situations. Thus the pastoral spiral of theology continues.

²⁶One of the signs of a local church found by Verstraelen 1975.

6. Conclusion

Qualitative research is based on a heuristic methodology, since it is developed through field work as a means of engaging with the local situation. In many respects, incarnation is also a heuristic process; if authorities are too fearful of making mistakes, there will be no attempt at inculturation²⁷.

From the study of what two individual dioceses are doing and saying, it has been possible to draw out the effect of different models of the church, the interpretation of history and the liturgy of life in the activities of the church. On the strength of the interview and observation material we concluded that inculturation and liberation are part of the same process and the discussion which followed suggested that the connotations of incarnation are useful in understanding the development of the local church. These categories discussed in Chapter 4 drew heavily on ideas from previous models for the local church, chiefly from A Pieris and FJ Verstraelen, although they are broader and I hope, more universal. I believe their universality stems from the fact that they consider the attitudes behind the process of incarnation, rather than concentrating on the particulars of the processes. It would be impossible to say how a local tribal religion is to be used in the present church, unless those who are trying to introduce change have a critical understanding of the movement of history, of the changing church and of a changed future.

This thesis began with the shift in the centre of Christianity from the old northern Christendom churches to the former mission territories. This is the “transition of Christianity from one historical and theological situation to an essentially new one”²⁸. This shift *will* happen and this research suggests that it will help local churches if they are aware of the transition and understand the course of history through which they pass. This paradigm shift in the church was shown to be linked to a growing shift in theology,

²⁷Chima 1992:3

²⁸Rahner 1980:329

which in the last hundred years has been recognised to be influenced by the culture, perspectives and agenda of the theologian and society. For the Catholic Church, Vatican II marked a watershed, and its own paradigm shift offers a challenge to the very structure of the church. Liberation and inculturation theologians have in common a desire to see the church respond to the real situation, not to live in an out-moded or foreign culture. This is a theology which is a journey, with many companions on the way, and as inculturationists will continue to remind us, will include those from other religions. It is the shift in the church from a Redemption Church, to a struggling, journeying Passion Church. This involves a complete change of perspective towards creation, humanity and especially the church. Concentration on these aspects of theology and church life will make redundant debates on inculturation and liberation theology, just as in Infanta the emphasis was on becoming fully human and rarely were issues of inculturation and liberation mentioned. They are seen as part of life, nurturing a faith which has become incarnate in the life of the community.

We shall end with Labayen's challenge to the church which illustrates the change of attitude in each area. It is the ideas behind change, rather than the precise change itself, which will be similar throughout the world:

Bear testimony in your life and ministry to the revolution of Jesus Christ. Make the world feel the presence and see the face of Jesus of Nazareth in you! Ensure that the earth's history will always be the place of encounter between the earth and her Creator and Savior, and will continue to be the wellspring of the salvation that Jesus Christ came to bring on earth at the price of his own blood. In other words, following the footsteps of the Savior, ensure that history will continue to be the history of salvation, and will not be misdirected towards fragmentation, alienation and damnation.²⁹

²⁹Labayen 1995:167

Appendix

Appendix 1

List of Interview Questions

A selection of interview questions taken with me which were then adapted to suit the situation:

1) Political Justice

- Do you see the Catholic faith as having any relevance to politics or liberation?
- Which part of your faith speaks to your most of politics?
- What about in 1992 (in Malawi)?
- Do you see God working in the events of 1992 (Malawi)?
- What did the bishops' letter mean for you (Malawi)?
- Did the letter alter your behaviour in any way (Malawi)?
- Do you think the involvement of the church in politics is over?
- What can you remember about the EDSA event?
- Should the church be involved in campaigning against government development plans?

2) Social Justice

- What is your definition of social justice?
- What you like to see the church doing in society?
- What impact does the Catholic church have on society?
- What do you see your own role in the matters tackled by the church in society?
- Is it just up to the hierarchy or officials in the church?

3) Ecclesiastical Justice

- Do you see the church as a just institution in her own right?
- If not, why not?
- Is it freedom to be a Christian?
- How do you feel about the church tax (Malawi)?
- Do you think that men and women are treated equally in the church?
- Do you feel you can go directly to the priest if you want to speak about matters arising in the church?

4) Faith

- How long have you been a Catholic (Malawi)? What made you become a Catholic?
- Do you feel part of the diocese, or of the wider church?
- What does it mean to be a Christian in daily life?
- What does it mean to be Church of the Poor (the Philippines)?
- What would make the Filipino a better Christian?
- What does church of the poor mean to you (the Philippines)?
- The bishop is always saying that the church is not perfect, what is it not doing

that it should be (the Philippines)¹?

What is the role of faith/the church in daily life?

Is the church western/Spanish or Malawian/Filipino?

5) The Eucharist

How often do you receive the Eucharist?

What does the Eucharist mean for you?

How do you feel about being excluded from receiving (Malawi)?

What kind of Malawian/Filipino elements would you like to see in the Mass?

Is there any difference when a lay person performs the Mass rather than a priest?

6) Others

What is a priest?

Why don't people want to become priests? Should we allow them to marry?

What is the role of the priest in a church where the laity have such a big role (the Philippines)?

What happens in the Small Christian Communities?

¹The fact that the bishop said this in many sermons and pamphlets gave me an excellent opportunity to hear people's grievances, an opportunity that was not presented in Malawi.

Appendix 2

The *Pahayag* of the Prelature of Infanta From Pastoral Conference III August 1-6, 1983

1. We are the Christian Community of the Prelature of Infanta which comprises of DICADI, BALER VALLEY/DING, PRIN, PULO¹ a community of baptized catholics.
2. True, this community is part of the world but it is not created by the world. It is created by the Lord Jesus-Christ: out of this world for the world's life, perfection and unity.
3. Jesus-Christ founded this community on an unshakeable rock: Peter with the eleven apostles in collegial communion with him². The Pope, with the catholic bishops in collegial communion with him, succeeds Peter and the Apostles in the generations to come.
4. For this reason, we recognize and accept our bishop as the basis of unity for the whole prelature³. He is also the bond of our unity with all the Christian Communities that constitute the universal Catholic Church.
5. Jesus-Christ is our life and center. Growth in knowing Him and in being united with Him depends on a heart-to-heart relationship with Him; at the same time, it depends on scrutinizing and analyzing the signs of the times which are found in persons, processes and events that make up history.
6. Wherefore, we believe that He is alive, among us, and walking with us. He is the Lord of heaven and earth, and of history.
7. It is our duty to look for, and discover the "footprints of the Lord" by scrutinizing the history and environment (situation) in the light of the Good News⁴. These footprints give light to the Mission the Lord has entrusted to us: to promote and to bring to realization the Father's Dream, to proclaim the Good News of the reign of God, or in other words, to make this world God's home among His people.
8. Since the Church is the living Body of Jesus-Christ, it is also our duty to think with the mind of the Church and to feel with its heart.
9. Under the guidance of the church we make our own the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of human beings today, particularly those of the poor and the afflicted.

¹Dinalungan, Casiguran, Dilasag, Baler, San Luis, Maria Aurora, Dipaculao, Dingalan, Polillo, Burdeos, Real, Nakar, Infanta, Patnanungan, Jomalig, Panukulan.

²Mt. 16:18

³"Ubi episcopus, ibi ecclesia" ("Wherever the bishop is the church is there") St Irenaeus.

⁴Gaudium et Spes, no. 4.

10. For this reason, we should continue to immerse ourselves in the world of the poor and the afflicted that we may understand their aspirations and expectations which have to do with their human dignity and with the Father's Dream for all.
11. Here we discover that sin that is in the human heart has already been structured and continues to be structured on a world scale. One with the church, we recognize that injustice is not only the prior problem of the world, but it is also a manifestation of sin⁵ that is spreading and is gaining strength through structures and systems. The fruit of injustice is poverty and affliction for the masses.
12. Our situation in the Prelature reflects the situation of the Philippines in the context of the world. Indeed it is clear from our social investigation that 87% more or less of the people within in the Prelature are poor and oppressed. They live below the poverty line. Underemployment is widespread. Fear and apprehension prevail due to militarization and its accompanying repression.
13. Consequently, one with the Universal Church and with the Bishops of Asia and of Latin America, we feel that today we are called to become the CHURCH OF THE POOR: a Church that has a special concern and love for the poor masses, for the victims of injustice and for those whose dignity and rights are trampled upon⁶. On the other hand, we recognize that the deeper meaning of being poor is to remain open, trusting and hoping in the Lord of history⁷.
14. Although we have a bias for the poor, our goal is to bring together the human race through reconciliation to unity according to the covenant of God and humankind: "I will be your God, You shall be my people"⁸. Herein lies the Father's Dream.
15. The mission entrusted to us by the Lord is to liberate the human race from sin and from all its consequences. In other words, to renew the face of the earth, that is, to work for transition from injustice towards justice, from hatred and envy towards fellowship, from deception towards sincerity. This mission includes the structuring and consolidation of the human community according to the divine law⁹.
16. Therefore, we recognize and accept that the Christian Community does not live for itself alone but for the world's life, perfection and unity according to the Father's Dream.
17. Mary is crucial to the Father's Dream. She was chosen by the Father to be His son's mother. Wherefore, while proclaiming Mary as the mother of Jesus-Christ we claim her also to be our Mother: Mother of the Church, the living Body of Jesus-Christ.
18. Also, we recognize Mary as our model. She lived united with Jesus-Christ and with His mission. In the same way, the Christian Community is called and sent.

⁵Social, Structural sin.

⁶Lk. 6:20

⁷Mt. 5:3

⁸Jer. 31:33; Ez 36:28; Pah. 21:3

⁹Gaudium et Spes, No. 42

19. We pray to the guiding spirit the Spirit of Jesus who guides us in following the footprints of the Lord in the midst of difficulty and persecution, that He abide in us so that He will be our fortitude and make us faithful in carrying our the mission of Jesus-Christ towards the realization of the Father's Dream.

[From "Hope in Struggle - Its historical expression" - the Mission Statement of the Prelature of Infanta (Servant - Church for the Life of the world) - published 1992]

The *Pahayag* of the Prelature of Infanta
From Pastoral Conference IV
Saint Joseph's Parish, Polillo, Quezon
April 18-24, 1995

(spelling and grammar as in original: see *Yapak Pahayagan* - December 1995)

I. IDENTITY

1. We are the Christian community of the Prelature of Infanta composed of four sub-regions of DIBICADI, VALLEY-DING, RIN and PULO (1), together with all peoples, sectors, institutions and communities who strive towards fullness of life and humane relationships.

2. Jesus Christ is our center and our life. He was sent by God, our Father and Mother, to proclaim Gods dream as Creator and redeemer. He became a human being to accompany us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in our journey through history.

3. We are the pilgrim church who journey in the state of urgency and mission. We respond to the challenge of the times for the transformation and unification of the whole creation. The living Word of God and the thinking and feeling of the living are the foundation-stones of our life and action.

4. As we journey through history, we recognize and acknowledge the Pope, the successor of the vicar of Christ, Peter and the college of bishops who are in communion with Peter, as successor of the college of Apostles. We look to their leadership in, teaching of, and witnessing to, the mission of Jesus Christ entrusted to them. For this reason, we consider the bishop as the servant-leader and prophet of the living church, and the source of the unique in the whole Prelature of Infanta.

II. SITUATION

1. As we approach the third millennium at this juncture of our history, we perceive our situation in the prelature as mirroring the national scene which, in turn, reflects the global situation. We witness and experience the ill-effects of the so called development program. Such program comes under the name CALABARZON (2) and AURORA 2000. Both emphasise economic gains over human promotion. Both ignore, even sacrifice, the general welfare of the majority of our people and the vital importance of our environment.

2. We accept that we have share in the proliferation of poverty, violence, injustice, and destruction of the environment. Such negative effects-are brought about by the destructive power of evil, which is reinforced and strengthened structures and system of culture, economics and politics, both on the global and national level.

3. Despite our deteriorating situation, we are encouraged by the increasing awareness, growing organisation, liberating struggles and enlivening spirit of solidarity of the different sectors. These are reliable and hopeful signs of a movement towards a genuine transformation of society which is a god-given legacy to all peoples.

III. CHALLENGES

1. Together with all those who have a humane aspiration for genuine freedom and authentic fullness of life, we are challenged to immerse ourselves among the dehumanised victims of an unjust system in order to feel with them, to analyse and to understand their situation, to own their point of view, and to be responsible to their situation.

2. We value the challenge to place the church in a state of urgency and mission. We will strive to be purified, transformed and clarified in the direction of our journey. We will seek to discover relevant, effective and efficient means to become a church which is imbued by the Spirit of the Risen Lord.

3. We acknowledge the challenge to learn and be transformed towards a more compassionate way of caring, upholding and promoting the living church in the level of awareness, struggle and relationships.

IV. VISION

1. With living faith, hope and love of God, our creator and Savior, we commit ourselves to the transformation of our actual situation towards a new heaven and a new earth where all peoples will enjoy a life of bounty, equality, justice, caring and nurturing relationships, freedom and peace.

2. It is our common dream to have fullness of life as individual persons and as a community of persons, and to shape our history responsibility mindful, under God, of our environment, all peoples, the family, and our country.

V. MISSION

I. For the above reasons, in union with the whole catholic church in the Philippines, in Asia and Latin America, we wish to reinforce the decision we made in the second pastoral conference in 1979 to be really and truly the Church of the Poor.

2. Consequently, we do not consider the poor as companions in our journey, but we continue to form the whole church to a loving preference of the poor. As the church of the poor, we own the point of view (world view) of the poor, and we will courageously defend and vindicate the rights of the poor even when doing so spells for itself alienation and persecution from the rich and powerful. (3)

3. We put the poor at the center of our awareness, activity and organization. One with the catholic churches of Latin America which gathered at Pueblo, Mexico in 1979, we

consider the poor as the privileged carriers of the Lord, the principal heirs of the kingdom with a potential to evangelize all nations and the church as a whole. (4). We live by a preferential reliance on the poor.

4. We strive to place the church in solidarity with the poor by the simplicity and poverty of our lives. We opt to live according to the spirit of evangelical poverty which combines detachment from material possessions with a profound trust in the Lord as the only source of salvation. (5). We readily follow the footsteps and life of Jesus-Christ through evangelical poverty and lowliness (humility) to make our salvation and liberation authentic and complete.

VI. OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Renewed in our consciousness of the church of the poor, we wish to promote a renewed and creative approach to transform the present culture towards a culture that supports and promotes fullness of life, and nurtures humanising relationships. To attain this objective we resolve to bring the church:

1. towards the communion of all committed people, especially the key leaders and responsible people in the mission of becoming the Church of the Poor. We propose to accomplish this goal through a process of levelling-off and the formation of a unified Comprehensive Pastoral Plan of the Prelature;
2. towards a heart-to-heart relationship with the living God of history through the awareness-raising process, meaningful communion with nature, and through relevant and creative community celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus-Christ in the Eucharistic sacrifice;
3. towards a Christian education that would form the people and the community from being mere passive recipients to active and dynamic subjects who will shape history by means of the formation is the Yapak ng Panginoon formation program. Sufficient attention and the importance are given to the family, the youth, the basic sectors and the small Christian communities;
4. towards full solidarity with the different sectors of society through immersion in, coordination with, participation in and support of, their struggles;
5. towards the formation and promotion of self-nourishing, self governing, discerning and witnessing basic Christian communities (BCC), and other structures of nature and care;
6. towards a creative and renewing process of becoming the church which



promotes the principle of participation, subsidiarity, and solidarity, together with pastoral leadership and management, transparency, and partnership of equals.

7. towards a committed involvement of the Church of the Poor in the responsible use and promotion of social communication media. In this field special importance is given to the community-based approach or the communal strategy in the promotion of a more comprehensive and just relationship among people and between people and environment. We believe in the impact of mass media in the transformation and humanisation (evangelization) of culture

VII. INSPIRATION

1. We are inspired by the depth, courage and life-offering of our heroes and martyrs today in and out of the Prelature, who contribute to the continued shaping and enrichment of our history.



2. The vision, values, tradition and way of life of our indigenous peoples (Tribal Filipinos), particularly their personal relationship within the community and with the natural environment are valuable sources of inspiration and strength for the Church of the Poor.

3. We recognize the special role of Mary in Gods plan of redemption. God chose her and she freely accepted to be the mother of Jesus-Christ. For this reason, with joy and courage we proclaim her as our model in following the footstep of the Lord and the Mother of the Church of the Poor. We strive to deepen our communion with her as the mother of Jesus-Christ and our mother of life in the work of salvation

4. Mary inspires and instills in the church the fullness, praiseworthiness and nobility of womanhood. It is through Mary and all the other great women of history and those whose valor and heroism are recorded in Holy Scriptures, that the Church of the Poor grows, purified and transformed, towards a just recognition of women and of the whole of creation.

5. We recognize the significance of the PAHAYAG 1983 which sprung from the history of the prelature and guided her through the vicissitudes of our times, particularly during the martial law days. It proclaims the feeling and teaching of the church, in the context of the purification of the church in the prelature as it experienced the crucible of crisis, persecution and suffering. It serves as an inspiration and a reassuring testimony as we of the prelature commit ourselves a new to become the Church of the Poor.

6. With his quite and solicitous care of the Holy Family in abiding by Gods Holy Will, we recognize St. Joseph as the patron of the universal church and of the workers. He is the faithful spouse of Mary, the ideal father, the inspiration of men and the model of faith-life.

7. In the spirit of Faith we continue our journey in history, as the Church of the Poor, with a clearer and a stronger commitment as we tread the trying and difficult path of the cross towards the promised fullness of life, fullness of our humanity and integrity of creation. We go forward with a firm hope trusting in the wise guidance and lead of the befriending Spirit of the Risen Lord.

(1) DIBICADI - Dinalungan, Bianoan, Casiguran, Dilasag Valley-DING: Baler, San Luis, Maria Aurora, Dipaculao, Dingalan. RIN: Real, Infanta, Nakar, PULO: Polillo. Panukulan. Burdeos, Patnanungan, Sur, Jomalig.

(2) CALABARZON: Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon

(3) Message of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP) to the People of God.

(4) Puebla Document, n. 1147

(5) Message of the PCP II to the People of God

Appendix 3

The Effect of the *Yapak* Programme

The difference made by *Yapak* through study of interviews with participants before and after the formation programme.

THEN	NOW
<p>General Values Faithfulness to and love of God are in the interviewees even before they went through <i>Yapak</i> Formation. They value the life and honor of the person and respect for the elderly. They also have a special love for the country and look at Nature as a blessing that has to be used</p>	<p>Their valuing of God, humans, and Nature was deepened in <i>Yapak</i>. The role of Nature was clarified and their role in nurturing Creation as well.</p>
<p>God Some said that the God they knew was a God who got angry and punished. He is a powerful and distant Creator, worshipped and lives in sacred places. While for the indigenous, God (Makidyapat) is like the God of <i>Yapak</i></p>	<p>To the indigenous peoples, God, now is a companion in history and in their journey. He is a brother to the little people as well as a God of love and justice.</p>
<p>Mary Mary has different images - Mother of Jesus and God, an image with aquiline nose and is touched with one's handkerchief. Some see her as queen on the throne and is worshipped. She is also a mother who gives help, is affectionate, good, and someone they can run to in times of need.</p>	<p>Mary is a woman who struggled for the rights of people and has an important role in salvation. Some said she was a simple woman, humble, she mediated between humans and God. Some interviewees see her as a mother who understands their needs and takes care of her children.</p>
<p>The Church The Church is seen as building where one prays and whose primary role is spiritual. They also say that she is rich.</p>	<p>The Church is seen as people and not as building; giving guidance and dynamism to society and social transformation. She is also perceived as a community that works for justice, likewise, a formidable institution with people that takes action.</p>

<p>The Bishop The bishop, for them, is the highest priest, far from the people. He is only seen when he administers confirmation at fiestas; he has a cane to make people fear him.</p>	<p>He is the center of unity of the Prelature and the father of the community who listens to the poor, oppressed and deprived.</p>
<p>The Priest He is the one who is holy and says Mass; assistant of the bishop. Others say he guides and focuses on the community.</p>	<p>Assists the bishop in organizing the Church of the Poor; gives guidance and direction.</p>
<p>Women Religious (Sisters) They are not well-known, but for those who know them, they are pious/holy; the partner of the bishop in church concerns and work.</p>	<p>Partners in guiding, and in spreading the Good News. They have a different image because they are women have a particular charisma.</p>
<p>Laity The word lay is not part of the interviewees vocabulary.</p>	<p>They now recognize that they are partners in spreading the Good News to the Church of the Poor wherever they are - in their own profession or work place. Likewise, awareness building and organizing are also their responsibility. They also perform functions which are beyond the reach of the priests.</p>
<p>Women Women are looked upon as weak and of inferior status in society; they are only for the house; do not need schooling since they will get married and their husbands will look after them. They are respected but should be prim and proper.</p>	<p>They have equal rights with men in earning a living and in decision-making; looked upon as partners.</p>
<p>Nature It is seen as God's blessing for all. It used to be very rich but now depleted.</p>	<p>The perception that Nature is a blessing created by God that must be cared for did not change even after Yapak. According to the indigenous, Nature is related to life that should be used/taken.</p>

From *Report on Yapak in the Prelature of Infanta* by Zone Narito, SPI 1995, pp34-36.

Appendix 4

VISION-MISSION STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES - 23 July
1992

Immersed in a society
fragmented by divisive conflicts
and afflicted by widespread poverty
yet deeply aspiring for fullness of life in God:

We, as Church in the Philippines,
with total trust in God's love,
envision ourselves
as the community of disciples,
who firmly believe in the Lord Jesus
and joyfully live in harmony and solidarity
with one another, with creation, and with God.

Following the way of our Lord,
we opt to be a Church of the Poor,
which demands evangelical poverty of us all
and harnesses the transformative power
or the poor among us
towards the justice and love of God in this world.

To achieve this vision,
under the leading of the Spirit of God
and with Mary as our guide,
we shall embark on a renewed integral evangelization
and witness to Jesus Christ's Gospel
of salvation and liberation
through our words, deeds and lives.

As Bishops, Priests, Religious and Laity,
we together commit ourselves
to implement the spirit and decrees
of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines
in order to inculturate Gospel values in our milieu.
By this shall *kaayusan* (order in harmony) be achieved
through persons who are *maka-diyos, maka-tao,*
makabayan and *maka-buhay*.

Ours will then be a civilisation of life and love,
a sign of the in-breaking of the Father's kingdom.¹

¹PCP II Review 1993, p1 - in fulfilment of Article 1,1 of PCP II "After the promulgation by publication of the decrees of the Plenary Council, the Church in the Philippines, through the Catholic Bishops Conference, shall put itself in a more active state of mission to inculcate the spirit of this Plenary Council in all the faithful".

Sources

Given the unusual nature of the methodology employed in this thesis, documents do not fall into the normal bibliographic sections. There has therefore been a need to structure the bibliography differently. All the interviews contained in the text have been numbered chronologically and in each country, for example, “Zomba 1” was the first interview conducted in Zomba and “Infanta 52” the last one in Infanta. Since the primary material for this thesis was the interviews conducted on field work, a numbered list of the people interviewed make up the first part of this list of Sources. The actual texts of the interviews are held at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, New College, Edinburgh and are available on request.

After the interviews, the list of sources has been divided into three broad sections: General, Malawi, and The Philippines. To avoid too many subdivisions and difficulty in finding references I have included theses and articles with the books. Other written sources, including local material and official church documents, have been put into the second section. This section also includes those sources consulted which do not readily fall into the first category, and in the nature of this thesis contains emails, videos, local newsletters and such like.

The division of sources is thus as follows:

1. Oral/Observation Material
 - a. Malawi
 - b. The Philippines
2. Written Sources
 - a. General
 - i. Books, Articles and Theses
 - ii. Ephemera and local material
 - b. Malawi
 - i. Books, Articles and Theses
 - ii. Ephemera and local material
 - c. The Philippines
 - i. Books, Articles and Theses
 - ii. Ephemera and local material

All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless included in quotations by other authors.

1. Oral/Observation Sources

A. Malawi

Fieldwork conducted 20 September to 7 December 1995

1. Peter Lino

26th October.

Lecturer in the Psychology department, Chancellor College. An occasional church-goer. Married with two young children. Conducted in his office.

2. Joseph Chakanza

28th September, 6th November, 13th November, 6th December.

Theologian at Chancellor College, Catholic priest.

3. Moira Chimombo

2nd October, 29th November.

Lecturer in English Literature at Chancellor College. A British woman married to a Malawian.

4. Owen O'Donnell

2-4th October.

A Montfort Missionary and parish priest of Sitima Parish.

5. Patrick Phalawala and Leonard Namwera

5th October.

Patrick Phalawala is the parish priest of Lwanga parish, Zomba. Leonard Namwera is a lecturer in Nairobi Catholic University and editor of African Christian Studies.

6. Francis-Xavier Loughran

11th October.

An Irish priest at Zomba Cathedral.

7. William Loyens

11th October, 3rd November.

A Jesuit anthropologist from Alaska, teaches at St Peter's Seminary, Zomba.

8. Alex Chima

13-17th October.

Parish priest at St Peters Cathedral, Mzuzu. Interviews conducted during a three day visit.

9. Francis Moto

23rd October.

Vice-Principal of Chancellor College, University of Malawi. Conducted in his office.

10. JC Matoga27th October.

Lecturer in the department of Classics and Psychology, Chancellor College. Member of the Church Disciplinary Committee of St Lwanga parish.

11. Enoch Timpunza Mvula27th October, 6th December.

Head of Chichewa and Linguistics at Chancellor College. He was the only lay delegate from Malawi at the African Synod in 1994. Worships at Zomba Cathedral.

12. Matteas Chiwaya30th October.

Librarian in the Malawi Collection at the University of Malawi library. Worships at Lwanga parish church.

13. Gemma Kapola31st October.

Sister of the Blessed Virgin Mary at St Joseph's Convent, Zomba. Has studied anthropology in Uganda.

14. Mrs Kazambwe1st November.

(In Chichewa) A mother who had attended All Souls' Day Mass at Lwanga parish church.

15. J Mtima Cisemphere1st November.

A Malawian priest visiting Zomba. Has an Masters from London University on the Church in Modern day Malawi.

16. St Peter's seminarians

Felix Kalawe, Simon Nyalugwe, Servasio Miseka, Kosmos Namphimba, Frank Chingale, Patrick Nsoloma, Thomas Muhosha, Henry Chaona.

3rd November.

A group interview conducted during a free period at the seminary.

17. Vincent Nzolima7th November.

The priest-in-charge at Zomba Cathedral. Conducted over lunch after he had taken me to Nankhunda Outstation where he was registering people for baptism (see P3).

18. Benedict Liyao8th November.

A mathematics teacher at Nankhunda Minor Seminary and the priest in charge of liturgy in the Diocese of Zomba.

19. Steve Mwiyeriwa8th November

The University Librarian, who worships at Lwanga. Has three children aged between 6 and 14.

20. Allan Chamgwera

10th November and 28th November.

The Bishop of Zomba. Conducted at his house, just outside Zomba.

21. Piergiorgio Gamba

13th November.

An Italian priest working for the Montfort Missionaries Press in Balaka. Conducted during a visit to the press.

22. Balaka seminarians

13th November.

A group interview of the seminarians from the Inter-congregational seminary in Balaka. Conducted during a break in their studies.

23. Flora Nunhkuni

14th November.

Lecturer in the Economics Department, Chancellor College. Grew up in the Catholic Church, but has almost left it now after a spiritual experience.

24. Mua Mission

Claude Boucher, Andrew Edele

18-20th November.

The White Fathers at the mission in Mua, who are experimenting with indigenous artwork and paraliturgies. Interviews conducted during a three day visit to the mission.

25. Hilary Mijoga

24th November.

Lecturer in Biblical Studies at Chancellor College.

26. Peter Kalilombe

26th November.

A local government minister and the brother of the expelled Catholic bishop, Patrick Kalilombe. He is very involved in local self-help groups.

27. Atnasio Peter Mwandama

27th November.

The catechist at Lwanga Parish Church, Zomba. Married with children.

28. Leonard Namwera

28th November.

A priest, originally from the area, who now teaches at Nairobi Catholic University.

29. Isabel Phiri

28th November.

A lecturer in the Theology and Religious Studies department at Chancellor College. She wrote an article exploring gender issues at the university in the months preceding my visit and she had received much antagonism for it.

30. Mr Matiki

29th November.

Head of the English department in Chancellor College who has done much research into the Lomwe language.

31. Linda Semu

1st December.

A lecturer in the Sociology department of Chancellor College. Worships at Lwanga parish church.

32. Fr Luca

3rd December.

A Jesuit at St Peter's Seminary. Conversation with him after Mass at St Mary's.

33. Anthony Nazombe

5th December.

A member of the English department at Chancellor College, whose collection of Malawian poets was banned during Banda's time.

34. Mrs D Saiti

6th December.

Secretary to the Economics Department at Chancellor College. Also a member of the Zomba Christian Action Group and a *Limana*.

35. Klaus Fiedler

A member of the Theology and Religious Studies Department at Chancellor College. Comments and Conversations conducted throughout the time in Zomba.

36. Flosi Matenje

A member of the University Library, whose father had been killed in the Mwansa accident of 1983.

37. Pasco Kishindo

A member of the Linguistics Department of Chancellor College, who has done research into the Lomwe language and customs.

38. Catherine Loti

My translator throughout the time in Zomba. Her opinions and comments were gleaned through working with her. A twenty-year old girl, who had just finished school.

List of Parish Interviews

P1. Sitima

2-4th October.

Interviews conducted as the parish priest took me around his rural parish.

P2. Lwanga

2nd November.

(in Chichewa) Mary Gularo, Lexa Kamanda, Rose Chengwala, Mrs Zomba.

Married Members of the Catholic Women's Organisation. Interviewed as a group in the parish centre.

Translator: Catherine Loti

P3. Nankhunda Outstation

7th November.

In Chichewa: Monica Margo, Sophina Kanyndo, Esther Hal, Mrs Kanulu, Eliza Macre, Mrs Valet, Maria Nicholas, Maria Zachariah, Mrs Renard, Helen Waya, Mrs Wilson, Agnes Augusto, Agatha Misomali, Ronne Molina, Erenatta Bazirioti, Beatrice Madson, Mary John, Anne Sande, Mr Liposa, Mrs Peter, Regina and Anne Gusto.

Nankhunda is an outstation of Zomba Cathedral. We had gone out with the parish priest (see 17) and spoke to these mothers as they left the church having registered their children for catechism or baptism.

Translator: Catherine Loti

P4. Liwonde

8-9th November

In English: Fr Elias Njaidi, Mr J Milanzi, Mrs E Muhura, Mrs P Manyamba, Mrs RB Chagunda, Mrs PC Kachere, Mr A Kaunda, Mrs Christian Kasale.

In Chichewa: Mary Masiyano, Esther Chaongala, Mphatse Wandolo, Esther Chikopa, Thomas Tailos, Evason Chitibu, Roderick Masangwi, Siderick Augustine, Steven Nandolo, Dennes Nandolo, Joseph William, Augustine Genar.

This parish is on the main road between Zomba and Balaka. The interviews were conducted by Catherine Loti. The English speaking interviewees were teachers at the secondary school in the town, those who were interviewed in Chichewa were members of the choir who were having a practice at the time.

P5. Mayaka

11-12th November

Hermes Chimwala (Parish Priest)

Francis Loti (Catherine's brother)

George Kabri, Maxmas Mulase, Amos Atanasio Kadiwere (Three leaders of

the church)

Sr Rose Anne Doherty (a Scottish midwife working in the hospital)

Grace Kuyere (a young married woman who had been born an Anglican but had married a Catholic)

the women of the church (a group interview conducted after church service)

This is Catherine Loti's home village. Interviews conducted over a weekend spent in the area. It is an isolated parish, far from the main road.

Translator: Catherine Loti

P6. Thondwe22nd November

In English: Hermes Nangwiya, Igatius Bokosi, Fr Kapesi, John Chimoma.

In Chichewa: Earnest Elias, Alfred Willison, Amos Nichorus.

Nangwiya is the elderly priest in charge of the parish and Bokosi is newly ordained. Kapesi is the priest for the youth in the diocese who called while we were visiting the area. After calling at the priest's house, we walked up to the Thondwe Pastoral Centre, the other interviewees were employees at the centre.

Translator: Catherine Loti

P7. Chiluwe Outstation26th November

In Chichewa: Marigalita Henry, Elizabeth Kalembo, Dorophy Simon, Mrs Maunsa, Mrs Matola, Mrs Amos, Mr Walsi, Mr Masamba, Mr Amos, Mr Enoch Samson.

An outstation of Zomba Cathedral. Interviews conducted by Catherine Loti as people left church.

P8. Mkumbira Outstation28th November

In Chichewa Mrs Simon, Chrispin Frank Manaseh, Grant Makungula, Mercy Mawuka, Mrs James, Mrs Mainda, Tereza Chigwenembe, Margaret Mpola, Mrs Nkoma, Yonasi Petro, James Kovina.

An outstation of Zomba Cathedral. Interviews conducted by Catherine Loti. Manaseh is the BCC secretary and Makungula the chairman.

Masses**M1: Lwanga Parish**1st October, 29th October, 1st November**M2: Mayaka Parish**12th November**M3: Zomba Cathedral**3rd December, A special presentation for World AIDS day.

B: The Philippines

Fieldwork conducted 14 April to 10 July 1996.

1 Mario Van Loon

15th April.

A Dutch missionary priest - working with Bp Labayen, conducted in an informal way over a day of acclimatisation.

2 Bishop Julio X Labayen

15th April.

Bishop of Infanta since 1965, writer and academic, Carmelite. Comments made when I visited him while he was doing a seminar with a group of international sisters.

3 Rolanda Biraguy (Yonni)

15-20th April.

ACT sister - formation committee for Prelature of Infanta. Conducted while I was staying with her in Manila.

4 Naomi Francisco (Neng)

16th April.

ACT sister, studying at IFRS. Conducted over dinner.

5 Hermosilla Mitaran & Oonah O'Shea

17th April.

Hermosilla is an ACT sister and Oonah a Sister of Sion, (Australia), working with the laity. Conducted at a coffee break at the 2nd Prelatural Catechetical Conference in Dingalan.

6 Osee Molde

17th April.

Parish priest of Dingalan - former head of the Social Action Centre in Infanta. Conducted after a day at the Catechetical Conference in Dingalan.

7 Divine Padua

18th April.

Catechist in Dingalan parish, wife of fisherman, mother of 6 children. Conducted after a day at the Catechetical Conference in Dingalan.

8 Bishop Labayen

25th April.

Conducted at his house after the Mass for Infanta's fiesta.

9 Andrew Boncayao

16th April.

Young teacher at Mt Carmel High School in General Nakar, married with a very young child. Conducted at the school during the holidays while he was in to catch up on some work.

10 Yolly Cristomo27th April.

Middle-aged, primary school teacher and church worker in General Nakar, organises the sectors and distributes the reserved sacrament. Conducted at her house in the evening.

11 The Cuerdo family2nd May.

Cursillo member of the parish of General Nakar, interview with her and husband, Acton. Conducted at their house in the evening. The whole family was around.

12 Israel Gabriel3rd May.

Parish priest of General Nakar. Conducted during the walk from General Nakar centre to Minahan Sur barangay for their fiesta.

13 Juliet Nolleto3rd May.

Catechist of General Nakar, wife of a fisherman, mother of 6 children. Conducted when we had returned to General Nakar after the fiesta in Minahan Sur.

14 Hermosilla Mitaran (Hersie)5th May.

ACT sister and coordinator of the MSKs and catechists in General Nakar. Conducted at the ACT house in General Nakar one afternoon.

15 Estel Ruidadaera7th May.

Elderly lady in General Nakar, whose late husband was the mayor, chairperson of the liturgical committee. Conducted at her house.

16 Carmella6th May.

Head Carmelite Sister in Tonguhin, Infanta; one of the first in the Prelature. Conducted at the Carmel over breakfast after morning mass.

17 Lilaine Escueta8th May.

Bishop's secretary in Infanta. Conducted in the evening when I was staying in Infanta at the prelature's guest house.

18 Mario Estabelecida10th May.

Parish priest of Infanta. Conducted at the priest's house in the morning.

19 Sixto Avellaneda9th May.

Elderly man in Catablingan, General Nakar, coconut grower. Conducted outside his grocery store.

Translator: Cherry Lynn Feliciano and Naomi Francisco

20 John10th May.

Dutch agricultural worker in Infanta. Conducted at his house just outside Infanta.

21 Pete and Beni11-12th May.

Franciscan monks who do school work amongst the Katatobo people in the mountains above General Nakar. A report of a visit to their house in the mountains and the conversations that ensued.

22 Oonah O'Shea and Anne Brittain12-16th May.

Sisters of Sion, Real, Sr Oonah is Australian and Sr Anne, British. A report of a visit to their home in Real.

23 Tessie Sale13th May.

Active member of Real parish, leader of the marriage group, pharmacist, mother - children ready for college. Conducted in her pharmacy shop in the morning.

24 Edna Beguia14th May.

Non-active member of Kiloloron barangay, Real. She has five children and is the midwife for the barangay. Conducted in the evening at her house.

25 Juanita Atendido14th May.

Long time lay worker and catechist for Real parish, facilitator of the Grameen project there. Conducted at the house of the Sisters of Sion, when she came for briefing.

26 Yvette Renmora14th May.

Separated mother-worker in Kiloloron, Real. Conducted at the house of the Sisters of Sion, when she came for briefing.

27 Earnesto Combalicer14th May.

Father, only male Catechist in Real, works a lot with the fishermen. Conducted at the house of the Sisters of Sion, when he came for briefing.

28 Fishermen of Real

14 May.

Conducted in the squatter village of the fishermen halfway between Kiloloron and Real Poblacion.

(translated by Earnesto Combalicer)

29 Ewin and Azon Juniara16th May.

Elderly couple in Catablingan, General Nakar. Conducted at their house in the afternoon.

Translator: Cherry Lynn Feliciano

30 Omeng Romantico16th May.

Elderly man, General Nakar. One of the original lay leaders from the 1960s. Conducted at his house in the afternoon.

Translator: Cherry Lynn Feliciano

31 Josephine Cuerdo16th May.

Agriculturalist for the municipality and mother of 3 young children, Anoling, General Nakar. Conducted at her house in the evening.

32 Merle Francia19th May.

Catechist in Catablingan, General Nakar, mother of 5? children, eldest is 21. Conducted at her house with her husband coming and going.

Translator: Rosie Orozco

33 Rosie Orozco20th May.Catechist and pastoral worker in Anoling, General Nakar, mother of one boy. Teacher at the *Yapak* seminars. Conducted at her house.**34 Alma Avellano and Yolly Cristomo**20th May.

Sector organisers in Anoling, live together, two elderly ladies. Alma is head of community organising for the area of General Nakar, Infanta and Real, for Yolly see interview 10. Conducted late one evening after they had had long meetings all day concerning the community organising programme.

35 Venus Buendicho21st May.

Worker in the social action center, Infanta. Sister of Osee Molde. Conducted in the old social action centre.

36 Rudy Calzabo21st May.

Tricycle driver from Catablingan, General Nakar, MSK member, active in parish. Conducted at the house of the priest.

Translator: Israel Gabriel

37 Mercy and Grace Astrera24th May.

Mother and daughter, Anoling, General Nakar, Grace about to go off to college in Manila. Conducted at their house near the ACT house, Grace had befriended me early in my stay.

Translator: Grace Astrera

38 Sr Yonni25th May.

see No 3. Conducted after evening prayers at the ACT house in General Nakar.

39 Efren Tano26th May.

Communion distributor in General Nakar, Apostle. One of the original lay leaders from before the walk-out. Conducted during the party to mark Pentecost the day of the ACT fiesta, at their house. Efren was a guest from the parish.

Translator: Naomi Francisco ACT

40 Zone Narito13th June.

Researcher at SPI, Manila, who has conducted research into the *Yapak* programme - see bibliography. Conducted in the SPI offices.

41 Leny Dee13th June.

Worker at SPI, Manila. Involved with *Yapak* from the beginning. Conducted in the SPI offices.

42 Nonong Pili17th June.

One of the first priests in the Prelature, instrumental in the establishment of the Prelature's ideas, now working in SPI, Manila. Conducted in the SPI offices.

43 Connie Villaruz26th June.

Cluster coordinator and lay minister in Maria Aurora. Conducted at her house.

44 Charlie Delarna27th June.

Tricycle driver, about 20 - Maria Aurora. Conducted after an MSK planning meeting at the ACT house in Maria Aurora.

Translator: Sr Vicki ACT

45 Linda Ladia27th June.

Member of MSK, Maria Aurora. Conducted after an MSK planning meeting at the ACT house in Maria Aurora.

Translator: Sr Vicki ACT

46 Alfons van Zijl28th June.

A Dutch missionary with the Calama movement. Conducted round a huge table during a training session the sector organisers were having at Bataris¹.

47 Janing Diaz28th June.

Provincial Chairperson of the organization of Peasant Women in Aurora, Bataris. Conducted round a huge table during a training session the sector organisers were having at Bataris.

Translator: Alfons van Zijl

48 Bogs Baldivia28th June.

Provincial auditor of organisation of the peasant movement in Aurora, Dilasag parish. Conducted round a huge table during a training session the sector organisers were having at Bataris.

Translator: Alfons van Zijl

49 Ating Cecile28th June.

Director of Bataris, Baler. Conducted round a huge table during a training session the sector organisers were having at Bataris.

50 Delan Domingo29th June.

Balik-handog coordinator, Maria Aurora, single mother of one son. Conducted in the morning at the ACT house in Maria Aurora.

51 Cluster meeting -Dimanpudso29th June.

A group of about 7 women, who are catechists and lay workers in the cluster. A group discussion conducted after an educational meeting on the liturgy.

Translator: Sr Vicki ACT and Fr Nilvon

52 Karl Gaspar5th July.

CsCR, writer, and academic in Manila, originally from Mindanao, latest book 'A People's Option: To struggle for creation'. Conducted at the Redemptorists compound, Manila.

¹A formation and resource centre for the sectors in Baler, attempting to bridge the gap between the sectors and the main stream church.

Events for Observation in the Philippines

1. **2nd Prelatural Catechetical Conference**

16-20th May, in Dingalan

2. **Fiesta**

25th April, in Infanta town

3. **Mass**

Sunday mass in General Nakar

4. **Bible Service for fiesta**

29th April, in Minahan Norte, a barangay of General Nakar.

5. **Symposium**

1st May, "Para kanino ... para ano?" (Development for who ... development for what?) for the discussion of the Marilaque and Philippines 2000 project, Organised by church members in the Mount Carmel High School, Infanta.

6. **Fiesta**

3rd May, at Minahan Sur, a barangay of General Nakar.

7. **MSK meeting**

5th May, in Pulo Banglos, an island barangay of General Nakar.

8. **Funeral**

7th May, of a schoolteacher in General Nakar.

9. **MSK Facilitator's Meeting**

17-18th May at the youth centre in Tonguhin, Infanta.

10. **Mass**

21st May, in Catablingan barangay, to mark the 21st birthday of the daughter of the lay worker.

11. **Mayohan**

24th May, the festival of Mary, in Anoling, General Nakar.

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* - material donated by Fr Bill Turnbull, WF.

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