CONTEXTUALISATION AND GLOBALISATION IN THE BIBLE TRAINING MINISTRY OF THE CHRISTIAN BRETHREN CHURCHES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA (PART 1 OF 4)

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PART 1: DEFINITION OF TERMS

In the course of researching about the Bible Schools of the Christian Brethren churches in Papua New Guinea (CBC), I needed to think about the balance between global influences, and how they should adjust to be more effective in the Melanesian context. To what extent are Bible Schools a "global" concept, or a foreign import? How appropriate are they to the local needs of Melanesian churches today? In what areas, and to what extent, do they need local adaptation?

What follows in this article is an adaptation of a chapter of my Master of Theology thesis[1] that is soon to be published in book form. I clarify and define the two important concepts employed in this study of the CBC Bible Schools – contextualisation and globalisation. We examine the historical development of each concept, and adopt a working definition we can apply to the theological training of the CBC in PNG. Then we look briefly at

[1] Oswald C. Fountain, "Some aspects of globalisation and contextualisation in the Christian Brethren Bible Schools in Papua New Guinea", MTh thesis, Auckland NZ: Bible College of New Zealand, 2000.

how contextualisation and globalisation relate, and we note some aspects of their interplay in Brethren mission generally, which affect the Bible schools that have been established.

A. CONTEXTUALISATION: TOWARD A WORKING DEFINITION

Contextualisation is a complex concept, and many scholars have contributed to developing one or other of its aspects.[2] For our purposes,

[2] In theological education, for example, besides numerous articles in *Theological Education*, important contributions through the period, and from a variety of viewpoints, include: Emerito P. Nacpil, "The question of excellence in theological education", in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third-world Theologies*, Gerald H. Anderson, and Thomas F. Stransky, eds, New York NY: Paulist Press, 1976; Bong Rin Ro, "Contextualisation: Asian theology", in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 2 (1978), pp. 15-23; Anil D. Solanky, "A critical evaluation of theological education in residential training", in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 2 (1978), pp. 124-133; Lyle Darnauer, "The volitional domain", in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 2 (1978), pp. 134-137; Peter Marshall, "Gospel and culture in the early church", in *Interchange: Papers on Biblical and Current Questions* 25 (1979), pp. 43-50; Avery T. Willis Jr, "Contextualisation of theological education in Indonesia", in *Discipling Through Theological Education by Extension*, Vergil Gerber, ed., Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1980; Tite Tiénou, "Contextualisation of theology for theological education", in *Evangelical Theological Education Today: 2: Agenda for Renewal*, Paul Bowers, ed., Nairobi Kenya: World Evangelical Fellowship, 1982, pp. 42-52; Chung-choon Kim, "The contextualisation of theological education", in *Missions and Theological Education in World Perspective*, Harvie M. Conn, and Samuel F. Rowen, eds, Farmington MI: Associates of Urbanus, 1984, pp. 41-54; E. A. Judge, "The reaction against classical education", in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 9 (1985), pp. 166-174; Don Carrington, "Theologians struggling to cope at the end of an era: theological educators confronting a multicultural world", in *The Cultured Pearl: Australian Readings in Cross-cultural Theology and Mission*, Jim Houston, ed., Melbourne Vic: JBCE, 1986, pp. 12-27; Max L. Stackhouse, *Apologia: Contextualisation, Globalisation, and Mission in Theological Education*, Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans,1988; Roger Kemp, ed., *Text and Context in Theological Education*, Springwood NSW: ICAA, 1994 (contains contributions by Michael Griffiths, Don Carson, Henri Blocher, Rolf Hille, Tite Tiénou, Randy Bell, Bong Rin Ro, and Tom Houston); Hwa Yung, "Critical issues facing theological education in Asia", in *Transformation* 12-14 (1995), pp. 1-6; "Institutional development for theological education in the two-thirds world: summary of findings of the 1995 Consultation at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies", in *Transformation* 12-14 (1995), pp. 18-32; Paul G. Schrotenboer, "Christ and Culture", in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 22-4 (1998), pp. 316-336; Andrea M. Ng'weshemi, "Doing justice to context in theology: the quest for a

five seem of particular importance – Shoki Coe, Charles Taber, David Bosch, Paul Hiebert, and Stephen Bevans. Each of these theorists has made a distinctive contribution to the development of contextual theory.

In 1991, David J. Bosch summarised the development of the concept of contextualisation. He argued that "from the very beginning, the missionary message of the Christian church incarnated itself into the life and world of those who had embraced it".[3] However, the "essentially contextual nature of the [Christian] faith" has only fairly recently been recognised. The reason for this, he claims, is that an epistemological breakthrough was necessary, since, from earliest times, Christian theologians and churches thought only in terms of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, or even heresy, the result of Greek spirit and ideas infusing the Christian faith, at least in the West.

Bosch attributes the foundation of the new epistemology to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who became aware that the church is "always in a process of ***becoming***".[4] However, he claims the real breakthrough came only with the emergence of various forms of "third-world theologies", so much so that "[c]ontextual theology represents a paradigm shift in theological thinking".[5]

1. Shoki Coe and Contextualisation

One of the significant early descriptions from the non-Western world was that of Shoki Coe, in 1976,[6] who distinguished contextualisation from its predecessor: indigenisation. Coe faulted indigenisation for its rather static connotations of "taking root in the soil", relating the gospel to traditional culture, and, therefore, becoming past-oriented. The term

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Christian answer to the African condition", in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 23-2 (1999), pp. 163-173.

[3] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1991, p. 421.

[4] Ibid., p. 422.

[5] Ibid., p. 423.

[6] Shoki Coe, "Contextualising theology", in *Mission Trends No. 3: Third-world Theologies*, Gerald H. Anderson, and Thomas F. Stransky, eds, New York NY: Paulist Press, 1976, pp. 19-24.

"contextualisation" helped third-world Christians face the realities of overlapping and multiple contexts. Coe proceeded further to distinguish "contextuality" and "contextualisation". Contextuality, for Coe, "is that critical assessment of what makes the context really significant, in the light of the *missio Dei* (the mission of God)".[7] It is a process of conscientising, through participation, out of which, critical awareness may arise. Coe believed that contextuality should lead to contextualisation, as an inseparable, but distinct, activity.

> This dialectic between contextuality and contextualisation indicates a new way of theologising. It involves not only words, but also actions. Through this, the inherent danger of a dichotomy between theory and practice, action and reflection, the classroom and the street, should be overcome. Authentic theological reflection can only take place . . . [by] discerning the contextuality within the concrete context. But . . . contextuality must be matched by contextualisation, which is an ongoing process, fitting for a pilgrim people.[8]

Coe went further. Not only did he see contextuality-contextualisation as "a missiological necessity", he saw it as fundamentally true to Christian theology, because it was modelled on "the divine form of contextualisation", namely, the incarnation, expressing for him the catholicity of the gospel. Human approximations to the divine model demanded that contextualisation should be "an ongoing process of the pilgrim people" of God.[9]

2. Charles Taber and Contextualisation

In 1978, Charles R. Taber raised the question, "Is there more than one way to do theology?"[10] Working on the assumption that faith comes

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[7] Ibid., p. 21.

[8] Ibid., p. 22.

[9] Ibid., p. 23.

[10] Charles R. Taber, "Is there more than one way to do theology?", in *Gospel in Context* 1-1 (1978), pp. 4-10. Taber was the founding editor, and contributed the leading article to the premiere issue.

before theology,[11] Taber claimed that Western theology was shaped by philosophy and law, and he saw great potential for alternative forms of theology. He then outlined a two-way, hermeneutical task that related scripture to culture, with culture being translated back into categories that can be compared with scripture. He took a further step, when he asked, "Whose hermeneutic is orthodox?" He concluded that every theology, and every hermeneutic, was profoundly conditioned by the culture in which it arose. He made a case for non-Western theologies being quite different from Western ones, but that "all theologies: Western or non-Western, must be continually brought into subjection to the inspired scriptures, responsibly interpreted".[12]

There were 28 scholars, from a range of disciplines, who responded to Taber's paper.[13] While most responded to the primary question affirmatively, it was clear that, at that stage, the contextualisation debate was in full swing. Respondents questioned how any unified Christian theology could to be achieved if culturally-specific contexts gave rise to such diversity. Taber's principal contribution was to ask some very pertinent questions.

Taber's view strongly affirmed Coe's insistence on the plurality that results from contextualisation among the diversity of cultures. He touched on an important issue, when he recognised the significance of the hermeneutical process. He challenged the hegemony of Western theology over others, but, like Hiebert (see below), and many other evangelicals, he sought to limit endless plurality, and dangerous syncretism, through adherence to an inspired scriptural text. Many theorists, though, see that the contextuality of these very scriptures seems to militate against a simplistic use of them as supra-contextual authority. Taber's "two-way hermeneutic" is not spelled out in sufficient detail for us to be sure of how it operates.

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[11] A presupposition that several respondents challenged. At stake are the issues of the nature of faith, as cognitive assent, or existential commitment, and the process of theologising, as an internal mental exercise, an act of interpersonal communication, or even communal formulation.

[12] Taber, "Is there more?", p. 10.

[13] "Dialogue", in *Gospel in Context* 1-1 (1978), pp. 11-18, 22-40.

3. David Bosch and Contextualisation

Bosch follows Upkong[14] in identifying "two major types of contextual theology, namely, the indigenisation model and the socio-economic model". He continues:

> Each of these can be divided into two sub-types: the indigenisation motif presents itself, either as a translation, or as an enculturation, model; the socio-economic pattern of contextualisation can be evolutionary (political theology and the theology of development), or revolutionary (liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, etc.).[15]

In Bosch's view, however, only the enculturation and revolutionary models "qualify as contextual theologies proper". Bosch then outlines seven "ambiguities" of the contextualisation model.[16] Later, he treats enculturation at length,[17] outlining the background history of the term up to the 20th century.[18] It would seem that evangelical missions in PNG, and the Brethren mission, in particular, encapsulate many of the issues of earlier periods elsewhere. Bosch argues for an addition to the famous

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[14] Justin Upkong, "What is contextualisation?", in *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 43, pp. 161-168, cited by Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 421.

[15] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 421.

[16] Ibid., pp. 425-432. These are worth noting: "Mission, as contextualisation, is an affirmation that God has turned toward the world. . . . [I]t is the essence of the Christian faith that, from its birth, it, again and again, had to seek, on the one hand, how to be relevant to, and involved in, the world, and, on the other, how to maintain its identity in Christ. Mission, as contextualisation, involves the construction of a variety of local theologies . . . [leading to] the danger of relativism. There is . . . also the danger of absolutism of contextualisation. We have to look at this entire issue from yet another angle, that of 'reading the signs of the times'. . . . In spite of the undeniably crucial nature and role of the context, then, it is not to be taken as the sole and basic authority for theological reflection. Stackhouse has argued that we are distorting the entire contextualisation debate if we interpret it only as a problem of the relationship between praxis and theory. The best models of contextual theology succeed in holding together in creative tension, theoria, praxis, and poesis."

[17] Ibid., pp. 447-457.

[18] Ibid., pp. 447-452.

"three-selfs" of Anderson and Venn,[19] of a fourth: "self-theologising",[20] an important issue for our topic.

Bosch acknowledges that there are several variations of the enculturation model. To the "dynamic equivalence" model he adds the anthropological, praxis, synthetic, and semiotic ones (compare with Stephen Bevans' models below). He identifies the following six common dimensions of the model:

1. The primary agents are the Holy Spirit and the local (Christian) community, particularly the laity.
2. The emphasis is on the local situation, involving the entire context.
3. It has also a "regional or macro-contextual . . . manifestation". In this, he points out that theological disputes, arising in the process of enculturation, are to "be attributed, at least as much, to cultural as to genuine doctrinal differences".
4. It follows a model of "incarnation".
5. The coordination of gospel and culture should be understood "christologically".
6. Enculturation should be all-embracing, since that is the nature of culture.[21]

Bosch has contributed some helpful distinctions, and a useful overview of the nature of contextualisation, and, specifically, the version of it he calls enculturation. But enculturation has not been a particularly popular term among evangelicals, partly, perhaps, because of its link with Catholic usage. However, two other aspects raise concerns for evangelicals.

[19] Self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 450.

[20] See also Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1994, pp. 82, 96-97.

[21] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 453-455.

Firstly, it has the popular connotation of something external entering "in", and becoming absorbed by the culture. Secondly, enculturation seems to put an undue weight on the sanctity of culture over the Christian gospel. For these and other reasons, evangelicals have preferred the more-diffuse term, "contextualisation".

4. Paul Hiebert and Contextualisation

The use of the term "contextualisation" presupposes a non-contextualised theology. It is against this background that Paul Hiebert discussed "critical contextualisation" in 1987.[22] He described the period from 1800 to 1950 as the "era of non-contextualisation",[23] during which, colonialism, the theory of cultural evolution, and the rise of science, contributed to the blind assumption that Western theological formulations, and the resulting Western applications in church life and mission, were a form of non-contextualised Christianity.[24] Hiebert was at pains to point out, however, that the opposite reaction into a total, "postmodern" contextualisation, where every form of adaptation, acceptable to local culture, was thereby deemed valid, led only to total relativity and syncretism. This, too, is unacceptable. Hiebert's third alternative was to construct a third option of "critical contextualisation" that provided a method that was faithful to scripture, and avoided syncretism, while carefully studying the local cultural context.[25]

Hiebert's "critical contextualisation" incorporates most of the dimensions of Bosch's "enculturation", while avoiding its negative connotations. Critical contextualisation, however, adds a further dimension. Hiebert,

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[22] Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical contextualisation", in *IBMR* 11-3 (1987), pp. 104-112, subsequently republished in Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, pp. 75-92.

[23] Ibid., p. 104.

[24] Hiebert here considerably over-simplifies. Many sensitive missionaries, and their sending agencies, throughout the colonial period, were aware of the need to contextualise the gospel. But the influence of colonial attitudes coinciding with Christian evangelism greatly compounded the way the gospel was perceived in other cultural contexts, and biased the form of Christianity towards adoption of that of the colonial power.

[25] Ibid., pp. 109-110.

relying on the earlier work of Jacob Loewen,[26] and John Geertz,[27] proposed a three-step process to forge a third way between non-contextualisation and syncretistic contextualisation.

Step 1: *Exegesis of the culture:* involving a study of the culture, phenomenologically, where church leaders, assisted by the missionary, gathered and analysed traditional beliefs and customs "uncritically",[28] that is, withholding critical evaluation at this point.

Step 2: *Exegesis of scripture, and the hermeneutical bridge:* "[T]he pastor or missionary leads the church in a study of the scriptures related to the question at hand."[29] Hiebert further comments that, in order to do this task, "[t]he leader must have a metacultural framework that enables him or her to translate the biblical message into the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of another culture".[30] He does not develop the issue here, but the danger of distorting the gospel at this point, is so crucial, that, without it, many leaders will assume a non-contextual bias, and compromise the process.[31]

Step 3: At this stage "the people corporately . . . evaluate, critically, their own past customs, in the light of their new biblical understandings, and . . . make decisions regarding their response to their new-found truths".[32]

Hiebert's proposal, here, models a process that has the strength of retaining the essentially-corporate, decision-making process of the non-Western world, in tandem with the insights of the biblical specialist or gospel advocate. One weakness is that it implies a once-only dialogue with traditional culture, whereas Coe and Bosch insist that

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[26] Jacob A. Loewen, *Culture and Human Values*, Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1975.

[27] Hiebert does not further identify Geertz as a source.

[28] Hiebert, "Critical contextualisation", p. 109.

[29] Ibid., p. 109.

[30] Ibid., p. 109.

[31] Fortunately, Hiebert develops this point in chapter 5 of his *Anthropological Reflections*, referred to above.

[32] Hiebert, "Critical contextualisation", p. 110.

contextualisation involves an on-going process. Hiebert's article seems to address the initial evangelisation process, but an on-going dialogue of "double exegesis" seems essential, if the reality of socio-cultural change is going to make the challenge of the gospel continually relevant. The comprehensiveness of both synchronic and diachronic modes are necessary for a thorough contextualisation.[33]

5. Stephen Bevans' Contextualisation Models

In 1997, Stephen Bevans[34] offered a significant outline of five models[35] of contextualisation.

(a) The translation model

The translation model attempts to preserve the integrity of the essential content of the Christian faith, and to *translate* this from one context to another. This "gospel core" is seen as a supracultural message.[36] Translation extracts that delineated core from its cultural "husk", and then rewraps it in the "receptor culture", by means of appropriate terms, actions, or story.[37] Bevans points out that this model takes the "supracultural, essential doctrine" as its starting point in the process of contextualisation and regards the role of culture as a subordinate one.[38] This low view of culture implies, according to Bevans, that all cultures are viewed as having the same basic structure.[39]

The translation model is ambivalent about culture. Scholars differ, but many would see non-Christian cultures as generally evil, and in need of the "salt and light" of the gospel for renewal.

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[33] A synchronic perspective views culture in all its aspects at any one time whereas a diachronic one accepts culture change through time, with new issues emerging.

[34] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

[35] Bevans quotes, with approval, Avery Dulles' definition of a model as "a relatively simple, artificially constructed, case, which is found to be useful and illuminating for dealing with realities that are more complex and differentiated", *Models*, p. 24.

[36] Scholars, however, differ about the content of that core.

[37] Ibid., p. 33.

[38] Ibid., p. 34.

[39] Ibid., p. 35.

(b) The anthropological model

Bevans points out that the anthropological model is "anthropological" in two senses – that of the value and goodness of *anthropos*, the human person, and of making use of the insights of the social science of anthropology.[40] Practitioners of this model regard human cultures as "good, holy, and valuable,"[41] and take human culture as their starting point, seeing each culture as unique. They seek God's revelation within that culture, rather than as a given set of propositions, introduced from without. Therefore, this model looks for insight from the ordinary person within the culture, not from specialist theologians, often located elsewhere, because "[t]he people are the best contextualisers".[42] Therefore, learning to listen is a more important skill than proclamation of an inherited message.

The anthropological model holds the integrity of a specific culture as essential, and is less committed to scripture, or tradition. Its view of contextualisation, therefore, tends to conservatism and stability, rather than change and renewal within a culture.

(c) The praxis model[43]

Unlike both the translation and anthropological models, with their rather static views of culture, the praxis model focuses on the inevitability and necessity of social change. It seeks to discern God's revelation as "the presence of God in history".[44] It also tries to incorporate, not merely "right thinking" (*orthodoxy*), but also "right acting" (*orthopraxy*), and, in fact, finds its fulfilment in the latter. This model begins with committed action, then leads on to reflection, incorporating both analysis of action and situation, and a rereading of the Bible, to gain relevant insight. This, in turn, leads on to further committed and intelligent action, commencing a

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[40] Ibid., pp. 47-48.
[41] Ibid., p. 49.
[42] Ibid., p. 51.
[43] "Praxis" is used by Bevans as a technical term, rooted in Marxist thought, denoting "a method or model of thinking in general, and a method or model of theology in particular", *Models*, p. 64.
[44] Ibid., p. 68.

spiralling process, and active community change, from a Christian perspective.[45]

While both scripture and culture are part of the givens of this model, far more stress is put on active participation, both in group reflection, and, especially, in positive action, followed by reflection, before further action is taken. This action-reflection process creates a dynamic environment for community and individual participation, with the process of culture change.

(d) The synthetic model[46]

The synthetic model is composite, taking account all three emphases of the translation (scripture/tradition), anthropological (culture), and praxis (social change) models. In relation to culture, it recognises, not only particular cultural uniqueness, but also commonalities with other cultures, so that borrowing does not destroy uniqueness. Intercultural dialogue is a key feature of this model. In relation to God's revelation, this is recognised as operating within the particular cultural contexts of scripture, but "at the same time, to be operative in one's own context. . . . From this perspective, revelation is both something finished, once for all, of a particular place, ***and*** something ongoing and present, operative in all cultures."[47] For this model, theology is best done by dialogue, understood as the interaction, both of participants in the culture, and specialist outsiders, who have, admittedly, a "limited and auxiliary" role.[48] Bevans notes that Robert Schreiter's "semiotic" model is a synthetic one, and points to his diagrammed proposal, as a way of dealing with the complexities of this model.[49]

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[45] Ibid., p. 69.

[46] Bevans points out that the term "synthetic" is used, ***not*** in the sense of artificial, but as a synthesis of models already described. He offers "dialectical", "dialogical", "conversational", and "analogical" as alternative descriptors, ***Models***, pp. 82-83.

[47] Ibid., pp. 84-85.

[48] Ibid., p. 85.

[49] Ibid., pp. 85-86. See Schreiter, ***Constructing Local Theologies***, pp. 22-38.

The dialogic nature of this model clarifies that contextualisation is ongoing,[50] and "witnesses to the true universality of Christian faith". However, Bevans points out that this is at the risk of "selling out" to the power and influence of a dominant culture.[51]

(e) The transcendental model

According to Bevans, the transcendental model emphasises that all truly Christian theologising involves a radical shift in perspective, a conversion. The transcendental method proposes "a basic switch in the process of coming to know reality", from beginning with a world of objects, to "beginning with the world of the subject, the interior world of the human person".[52] This "transcendental subjectivity" of oneself, and one's experience, is not in a vacuum. It is extremely contextual. We are what we are, because of all the influences in our total environment. The model rests on four important presuppositions. Firstly, it asks a whole new set of questions about such matters as personal self-knowledge, the genuineness of the religious experience one is trying to interpret, how well the experience is expressed in words, and how free one is of bias.[53] Secondly, that which might seem private and personal can articulate the experience of others, who share one's context. Thirdly, revelation is not "out there", since God is revealed within human experience. Fourthly, despite everyone's historical and cultural conditioning, the human mind operates in identical ways in all cultures and periods of history.

The transcendental model operates like a pair of scissors, one blade being the person as subject, the other being "that subject's experience of God, illumined and deepened in the content of the Christian symbol system".[54]

All five models deal with the four critical issues of contextualisation – the Bible, tradition, culture, and social change – in quite different ways. Each

[50] Ibid., p. 87.
[51] Ibid., p. 88.
[52] Ibid., p. 98.
[53] Ibid., pp. 98-99.
[54] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

of them has strengths and weaknesses. But each of them raises different sets of concerns, and produces quite different outcomes.

From the perspective of this study, the synthetic model seems to offer a way forward. It attempts to do justice to the evangelical concern to retain a focus on the revelation of God in scripture, and the anthropological concern for the variety, but integrity, of culture. It is open to the praxis model's conviction that an action-reflection process must be used to deal with, on the one hand, the on-going process of culture change, with the stresses, and even oppression, that this brings about. On the other hand, the transcendental model's concern that theology must attend to one's personal experience of God's revelation to oneself need not be ignored. However, the dialogic process that Bevans enunciates is critical to the success of this synthetic model.

6. A Definition of Contextualisation

The following working definition of contextualisation attempts to draw on the strengths of all these approaches, along with the insights from earlier scholars, who balance one another in significant ways. For example, the "critical contextualisation" of Hiebert can be developed, I believe, to direct the dialogic approach required to give insight and corporate decision-making. This should result, both in personal discipleship, emerging from internalising the Christian message, and constructive action, in addressing community issues. My thesis attempts to demonstrate how this approach is applicable to the theological education process of the Bible schools of the CBC in Papua New Guinea.

In summary, contextualisation, as used here, refers to the on-going process of interaction between the Christian gospel, understood as a universally-applicable, but contextually-variable, message, and the local Christian community, in its whole cultural context – local and regional. Contextualisation incorporates the movement of the culture towards transformation, so that the Christian faith is embraced incarnationally and christologically. This process of contextualising the gospel will continually seek to avoid the twin pitfalls of uncritical adoption of inappropriate formulations and applications from other cultures, and syncretistic accommodation to the local one.

B. GLOBALISATION: TOWARDS A WORKING DEFINITION

Globalisation is a more-recent term than contextualisation, even though, like it, its manifestations were around for many years before the term was coined, and applied to a variety of fields. By the time it was applied to theological education, it had already been used extensively in such "secular" disciplines as geography, economics, sociology, and political science. In these fields, globalisation emerged as a result of several factors, including the telecommunications and electronic revolutions that have vastly speeded up communication and travel internationally. One impact of this has been to heighten awareness of events around the world, and, more importantly, to make people realise that such events increasingly impact daily lives of others, on a global scale.

Three effects of the whole process have been to: (a) "shrink" the physical distances between vastly different cultures; (b) heighten the consciousness that the world is becoming an interconnected unit, where, for example, an economic crisis in one place can affect political and religious reactions in others; and (c) begin a global process of worldview change that regards the whole globe, despite its ethnic, political, and socio-economic diversity, as the context and arena for activity.

In the educational and theological fields, increasing opportunities for non-Western students to study in the West have heightened a growing awareness that Western-style education did not prepare students from other parts of the globe for repatriation and effective ministry in their own countries. Questions were raised in the West, as staff and students became increasingly aware of the cultural biases of Western education and theology.

Voices from Asia, Africa, and Latin America emerged to protest the assumptions being made by Western experts and teachers about the exportability of the American and European models of the educational process. Questions about the best way to "do theology" have also stimulated uncertainty in the West about how effective its products are, in terms of cross-cultural ministry.

The concept of globalisation, therefore, developed from a complex set of sources. Like other emergent terms, it has a growing history, making a single definition difficult. On the one hand, it was seen to supersede universalism and multiculturalism. The term "globalisation", and its cognates, globality and globalism, unlike the term "universal", incorporate a sensitivity to local cultural contexts. But they also include a holism that is missing from the older term "multiculturalism". On the other hand, there is a real sense in which contextualisation and globalisation are complementary, non-conflicting terms. Indeed, some authors have recently attempted to introduce hybrid terms, such as "glocal" and "glocalisation", to represent the important field of study and praxis "between the global and the local", or the idea of "thinking globally, acting locally".[55]

Non-theological definitions of globalisation have been employed in a number of disciplines to describe phenomena, transformations, and the epochal transitions taking place in the present world, among them geography, political science, and social history.

1. Geographic Definitions

Geographically, many people have been forced to think that the world has entered an era of unprecedented change, both in its impacts, on a global scale, and in the rate of change, making globalisation a qualitatively new phenomenon.[56] Taylor, Watts, and Johnson consider that the term "globalisation" is the sum of global processes in five different areas – geopolitical, geoeconomic, geosocial, geocultural, and geoenvironmental, in each case, using the prefix "geo" to embrace the whole world. Changes in these five spheres, they claim, "constitute a single holistic movement".[57] Nigel Thrift acknowledges that the world is one in which "economies,

[55] Roland Robertson, "Glocalisation: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity", in *Global Modernities*, Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, eds, London UK: Sage Publications, 1995, pp. 25-44; Robert J. Schreiter, "Christian theology between the global and the local", in *TE* 29-2 (1993), pp. 113-126; Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Between the Global and the Local*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

[56] P. J. Taylor, Michael J. Watts, and R. J. Thompson, eds, *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World in the Late 20th Century*, Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1995, p. 4.

[57] Taylor, Watts, and Thompson, *Geographies of Global Change*, p. 6.

societies, and cultures are becoming ever more closely intertwined",[58] but also insists that local networks exist alongside global ones, and, in fact, such networks are always both "global" and "local".[59]

In the same work, Kevin Robins, in discussing global media, as they relate to the European scene, notes that, while "the logic of globalisation" is "pushing toward the greater standardisation and homogenisation of output, and detaching media cultures from place and context . . . there is another, and contrary, force at work". He identifies this as "a resurgent interest in regionalism . . . appealing to the kind of situated meaning, and emotional belonging, that seem to have been eroded by the logic of globalisation". He continues, "[t]his new regionalism puts value on the diversity and difference of identities . . . and seeks to sustain and conserve the variety of cultural heritages, regional and national".[60]

Another aspect must include its relationship to urbanisation. Paul L. Knox acknowledges that globalisation is not a new phenomenon in the urban world, but identifies three key late-20th century developments. They are, firstly, a movement towards greater transnational economic activity. Secondly, there has been a significant change in the structuring of such transnational economic activity away from international trade to flow of goods, capital, and information, within and between, conglomerate corporations.[61] Thirdly, new worldviews, with particular emphasis on global environmental issues, and "the postmodern condition of pluralistic, multicultural, non-hierarchical, and decentred, world society".[62] Knox believes that these bring about an intensification of global connectedness, and the constitution of the world as one place. This changed perception of the world produces a redefinition of interconnected roles, and a reordering

[58] Nigel Thrift, "A hyperactive world", in *Geographies of Global Change*, Taylor, Watts, and Thompson, eds, p. 18.
[59] Ibid., p. 32.
[60] Kevin Robins, "The new spaces of global media", in *Geographies of Global Change*, Taylor, Watts, and Thompson, eds, pp. 259-260.
[61] Paul L. Knox, "World cities and the organisation of global space", in *Geographies of Global Change*, Taylor, Watts, and Thompson, eds, p. 233.
[62] Ibid., pp. 233-234.

of time and space in social life.[63] The vast majority of people, impacted by globalisation, resides and works in urban areas.

A geographical definition of globalisation, then, focuses on the spatial, temporal, and relational interconnectedness of people in social, economic, and political groupings with their environment: physically, ecologically, and technologically. It is a holistic definition, but acknowledges the diversity, as well as the increasing interdependency, of each aspect on all the others. But it is not a static definition. Globalisation is an on-going, and increasingly rapid, and intensifying, process.

2. Economic Definitions

According to Geoff Fougere, Jane Kelsey distinguished between two senses, in which the term "globalisation" is used.

The first, as "ideology", is "the grand vision, a metanarrative that imagines an independent and self-regulating global economy, where goods, capital, and ideas flow freely, irrespective of national borders, social formations, culture, or politics". But the actuality is different: "globalisation, in practice, describes a highly-contested process, where the competing interests of people, companies, tribes, governments, and other groupings, overlap and collide; alliances form and more-drastic revisions are made; and new contradictions arise. The process is dynamic, and the outcome is far from certain."[64]

The first definition, while clearly addressing the economic situation, is ideologically driven. The second is much more descriptive of the interplay of "forces" in an increasingly globalised world. Kelsey demonstrates a postmodern mind-set that has little patience with "ideology", or "metanarratives", believing in the reality of the present, and the indeterminate nature of the future. But one cannot escape that easily from a web of assumptions and biases. They are inevitable.

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[63] Ibid., p. 234.

[64] Geoff Fougere, "Unfortunate experiments", in *The Listener*, October 9, 1999, p. 43.

Kelsey's definitions highlight a wider issue. At least some forms of economics are driven by a vision of the future, others by the description of the present. However, both, in fact, make assumptions about reality. Once these assumptions are made, both versions are driven by an ideology. A future-oriented economics is guided by the conviction that decisions about the present can be influenced to shape that future in certain directions. A descriptive economics is similarly guided, but, this time, by the conviction that only a description of the past and present can be adequate to make decisions, which will helpfully influence the future.[65]

Christianity also makes assumptions about reality, which cluster together as worldviews, and involve allegiances to a metanarrative, or, perhaps, a bundle of metanarratives. These, in turn, become a globalising force. How they relate to contextual "realities" is a topic for later discussion.

3. Socio-political Definitions

Jan Aart Scholte[66] acknowledges that the term "globalisation" is often used vaguely and inconsistently.[67] He defines it as "*processes whereby social relations acquire relatively distanceless, and borderless, qualities*, so that human lives are increasingly played out in *the world as a single place*" (Scholte's emphasis).[68] He distinguishes the term from "internationalisation", which he defines as "a process of *intensifying connections between national domains*". He goes on to describe the international realm as "a patchwork of bordered countries, while the global sphere is a web of transborder networks" that are "supraterritorial".[69] Scholte regards the concept as applying to organisations, ecology, production, and the military sphere, but also to many norms, and everyday

[65] The belief that only observable facts, and empirical decisions, based on these, are reliable, and the inevitable selectivity, involved in deciding relevant "facts", is driven by a pluralist "metanarrative" that the writer seems unaware of.

[66] Jan Aart Scholte, "The globalisation of world politics", in *The Globalisation of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, John Baylis, and Steve Smith, eds, Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 1997.

[67] Ibid., p. 14.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., p. 15.

thinking, so that the process has, in some way, touched every aspect of social relations.[70]

Scholte qualifies his definition of globalisation by making five significant points. Firstly, globalisation is uneven. Secondly, it is not a simple process of homogenisation, and has not obliterated cultural diversity. Thirdly, cyberspace and electronic communication, while adding new dimensions to geography and to social relations, has not eliminated the significance of place, distance, and territorial borders. Fourthly, globalisation "cannot be understood as a single driving force". Fifthly, people have unequal access to the benefits of globalisation, depending on their sex, class, race, nationality, religion, and other social factors.[71]

4. Historical Definitions

The social scientist, Martin Albrow, offered a careful analytical definition of globalisation. Firstly, it refers to "making or being made global". In individual instance, this could refer to "the active dissemination of practices, values, technology, and other human products, throughout the globe"; the increasing influence on people's lives of global practices; when the globe acts as a reference in "shaping human activities"; or to "the incremental change of the interaction of such instances". Sometimes, globalisation is a general reference to such instances, or a reference to them, viewed abstractly. Secondly, some definitions see globalisation as a process of being made global. Or, thirdly, it may refer to the "historical transformation, constituted by the sum of particular forms and instances".[72]

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[70] Ibid., p. 16.

[71] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[72] Martin Albrow, *The Global Age*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1996, p. 88. Albrow is anxious to place several caveats on this definition. Firstly, it is, he claims, "nuanced to do justice to both to the ambiguities and complexities bound up in the daily use of the term and to the scholarly issues" he raises. He does not claim scientific validity for these formulations, and states, in fact, that he thinks "meaning (2) is both widely current and misguided", and, further that (2) is "not identical with meaning (3)".

Albrow considers globalisation to be "the most significant development and theme in contemporary life and social theory to emerge since the collapse of Marxist systems",[73] but it is essentially indeterminate and ambiguous. It is indeterminate, because it is not possible to delineate the final outcomes, or direction, of globalisation. For that reason, Albrow rejects the idea that it is a "process". He states:

> The debates surrounding homogenisation versus diversification, or hybridisation, reflect, precisely, this ambiguity. They concern the issue of whether culture, and all forms of social activity, are becoming more standardised, or whether multiple cultural contacts lead to an ever-increasing variety of new forms.[74]

Albrow claims the "epochal significance" of globalisation. The period from 1945 to 1989 is, for him, the period of transition from the modern into the global age. Globalisation represents a phenomenon, equivalent to the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, or the Age of Imperialism. All those countless instances, in which the globe is taken into everyday life, where national economies merge with a global economy, where satellites provide news on the world, world-wide, where protests erupt in one part of the world about conditions in another – putting them all together, and recognising the way in which the one reinforces the other, we can see a transformation, which is of our time and is unique. It may not penetrate absolutely every aspect of social life, but its scope and pervasiveness is sufficient for us to say that it both represents the specificity, and dominates our experience, of our time.[75]

In summary, then, geographic, economic, socio-political, and historical definitions assist our understanding of globalisation, by describing the changes overtaking the world in worldview and perception, technology and communications, leading to an interconnectedness of localities, cultures, and even academic disciplines that have previously been regarded as distinct and separate.

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[73] Ibid., p. 89.
[74] Ibid., p. 92.
[75] Ibid., p. 95.

5. Globalisation and Christian Missions

While globalisation is a new term, the church has a long history of grappling with this reality, ecclesiologically, as the terms "catholic" and "ecumenical" convey.[76] Our interest is in a definition of globalisation, applicable to cross-cultural theological education, in particular, but, understanding how globalisation is being perceived in Christian missionary structures, is relevant to our purpose.

Some missionary structures are addressing issues of globalisation.[77] The pressure for adjustment comes from several sources – international memberships, multinational and multicultural fields of service, and the recognition of the non-viability of traditional structures that do not change.

(a) Operation Mobilisation: A mission undergoing globalisation

David Hicks, a leader in Operation Mobilisation (OM) claimed, "Globalisation of Christian missions is not only biblically correct, but also strategically important."[78] He maintains that this "mentality is rooted in the truth that *Jesus Christ has destroyed every barrier*" (italics, Hicks).[79] "The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is global in perspective. The church, by nature and purpose, is meant to be global. Mission agencies, as authentic expressions of the church,[80] preach the gospel to the nations, and incorporate the nations in their composition."[81]

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[76] John Hitchen, personal communication.

[77] See David Hicks, *Globalising Missions: the Operation Mobilisation Experience*, 2nd revn, Miami FL: Editorial Unit, 1994. While not focusing specifically on globalisation, *IBMR* 23-4 (1999) published three significant mission development surveys that address the globalising world of mission agencies – Paul E Pretiz, and W. Dayton Roberts, "Positioning LAM for the 21st century", pp. 153-155; Jim Plueddemann, "SIM's agenda for a gracious revolution", pp. 156-160; Stanley W. Green, "How Mennonites repositioned a traditional mission", pp. 161-163.

[78] Hicks, *Globalising Missions*, 1994, p. 8. See also Hicks, "Biblical rationale for globalisation: Promise of things to come", chapter 5 of an unpublished supplement to *Globalising Missions*, Tyrone GA: Operation Mobilization, 1993.

[79] Hicks, *Globalising Missions*, p. 8.

[80] Hicks, here, confuses his readership by claiming an identity between mission agency, as church, that he, elsewhere, is at pains to distinguish.

[81] Ibid., p. 32.

Hicks, drawing from Luis Bush, stated "four new realities of our world, which plead for globalisation of . . . mission personnel, strategies, structures, and initiatives" are:

> **A shrinking of our world**. Technological and communication advances are rapidly reducing our world to a global village, calling for an ever-greater dialogue and interdependency between the various parts.
>
> **The emergence of a Christian majority in the two-thirds world.** An estimated 75 percent of the body of Christ lives outside the Western world today.
>
> **The emergence of a two-thirds world mission force and leadership.** Today, over 35 percent of the world's Protestant missionary force originates in the two-thirds world.[82]
>
> **Partnership with the national church** is recognised increasingly to be essential to the advance of the gospel, in the decade of the 1990s.[83]

Hicks defined globalisation thus: Globalisation is the process by which organisations move beyond merely operating internationally, from a single, or dominant, national base, to operating transnationally, not tied to one particular country or region. Globalisation, in missions, involves not only carrying out missions across cultures, but also accomplishing the resourcing, governing, planning, and organising of missions, by involving the church in diverse regions of our planet. This enriched concept of missions acknowledges "that God has now raised large and thriving churches in nations, where, sometimes, the Bible was not even translated 100 years ago. In these churches of the south, churches of the poor, churches of the third world, God is raising a new missionary force. . . .

[82] Some estimate the figure is now over 50 percent (John Hitchen, personal communication).
[83] Ibid., p. 8.

Every church, old and new, rich and poor, has something to contribute to mission, in the global village of tomorrow."[84]

Each church, presenting its gifts; that is true globalisation. But internationalisation is the term most frequently used in mission circles to refer to multinational partnership for accomplishing the Great Commission. Internationalisation is, however, only the starting point for globalisation.[85]

Hicks claimed that the movement from international cooperation, through internationalisation, to a globalised phase, demands a new psychological and philosophical orientation, involving a commitment to "denationalise their affairs, and develop a set of values, shared by their managers around the world".[86]

Hicks proceeded to identify the characteristics of globalisation, in terms of common values, common language, and common culture. He also identified three major barriers to globalisation – cultural predominance, economic predominance, and leadership predominance.

(b) OM and CMML

Hicks' definition of globalisation bears the marks of a multinational Christian mission structure that is fundamentally distinct from both its supporting and cooperating churches. Its definition is, therefore, useful,

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[84] Samuel Escobar, "The elements of style in crafting new international mission leaders", in *EMQ* 28-1 (Jan 1992), pp. 6-15, cited in Hicks, *Globalising Missions*, p. 13.

[85] Hicks, *Globalising Missions*, p. 13.

[86] Globalisation in missions is "the transcending of national boundaries, not only in reaching the goals of our mandate", quoting Peter Hamm, "Breaking the power habit: imperatives for multinational mission", in *EMQ* 19 (1983), pp. 180-189. Globalisation requires a qualitative shift from being international. Globalisation is the process, by which mission agencies move beyond merely operating on the field, from a single, or dominant, national base, to operating transnationally, above, and not tied, to any particular nation. International agencies cross national barriers; global organisations transcend them. The ultimate differences are often subtle and conceptual. They involve a paradigm shift, a new way of looking at the world, the task and the church. Genuine global enterprises are ***network organisations*** (italics, Hicks), in which our vocabularies and categories change. (Hicks, *Globalising Missions*, p. 16.)

but limited, for application to a denominational mission in Papua New Guinea like Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML).[87] With the latter, the structures of mission have been a powerful influence in developing cooperative structures among local Brethren churches. However, a fundamental difference between OM and CMML is that it is hard to avoid the impression that the organisational structure of OM, driven by its own ethos, is the means of linking churches, internationally, and modelling globalisation to them. CMML, on the other hand, until its demise, and the incorporation of its functions into a churches-related administration, always saw itself as a temporary and servant structure for coordinating missionary activity, and not a permanent umbrella over the churches.

We focus now more specifically on globalisation, as it relates to theological education.

6. Globalisation in Theological Education: The ATS Literature

Much of the discussion about globalisation in theological education emerges as a challenge in the West, and particularly in the United States. This is where the pace of technological change, the benefits of free-market economies, and the intercultural contacts, on a personal and institutional basis, have been at their height. It is theological institutions, located in the US, and the rest of the Western world, that are confronted by the phenomena of interconnectedness on a daily basis, and they attempt to respond theologically to these phenomena, in their teaching and research. But globalisation has also impacted the US theological schools, because of the continuing attraction and status attached to theological study by individuals, churches, and para-church organisations, in the rest of the world. In so doing, it has focused attention on multiculturalism, internationalism, and the struggle within a dominant culture to be sensitive to those from other cultures.

[87] "Christian Missions in Many Lands" was the name adopted in 1953 by the first Brethren missionaries working together in Papua New Guinea to plant Christian Brethren churches.

Following on from this, it is easy to understand why non-Western theological schools have reacted negatively, when confronted by the prospect of an apparent neo-colonialism, under the garb of globalisation of theology. Their struggle is often to interpret the world, where financial globalism has disturbed the fragile economic balance, internationally, wreaked havoc on emerging industries, at the margins, and exploited mineral and agricultural resources for the benefit of the powerful, rather than the poor.[88]

Sometimes this has been compounded by financially-powerful institutions, theological training ones included, who have made overtures of partnership to institutions in the East/South.[89] The complications of financial power, academic credibility, and insensitive assumptions about Western educational methodology, seem not to have always been handled with sufficient care.

As part of the recent ATS study of globalisation in theological education,[90] William Lesher[91] offered a descriptive definition of globalisation. He put forward three ways to discuss the term.

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[88] Fumitaka Matsuoka, "The changing terrain of 'globalisation' in ATS conversations", in *Theological Education* 35-2 (1999), pp. 17-25 – an article written from an Indonesian perspective.

[89] The use of East-South, in contrast to West-North, recognises a shift from the traditional perspective of East-West to North-South. It is significant that, while the Christian "centres of gravity" have moved away from the West to Latin America, Africa, and Oceania, the political and economic centres are moving toward Asia, where China and Korea seem exceptional, with strong Christian minorities, and increasingly strong economies. From an Australasian perspective (including Papua New Guinea), neither East-West nor North-South distinctions make automatic sense.

[90] The American-based Association of Theological Schools (ATS) has recently reviewed the completion of a 20-year study of globalisation in theological education (*Theological Education* 35-2, (1999)). Besides the literature in the ATS journal, *Theological Education*, a number of monographs have been spawned in the process. One of these is *The Globalisation of Theological Education*, Alice Evans, Robert Evans, and David Roozen, eds, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1993.

[91] William E. Lesher, "Living the faith under the conditions of the modern world", in *The Globalisation of Theological Education*, pp. 33-50.

Firstly, *globalisation is a basic personal perception or stance*. In this sense, it involves a paradigm shift (my term, not Lesher's), which some will take, and others will not. For those who shy away from it, it is personally frightening, and institutionally threatening. I understand this as an increasing awareness of the diversity of cross-cultural perceptions, and interpretations of the theological task. It implies an on-going process of reevaluation, rather than a static understanding, emerging from a single contextual enmeshment.

Secondly, globalisation is described as four faith responses to the condition of life, today. Lesher quotes Don S. Browning:

> The word "globalisation" has at least four rather distinct meanings. . . . For some, globalisation means the church's universal mission to evangelise the world, i.e., to take the message of the gospel to all people, all nations, all cultures, and all religious faiths. Secondly, there is the idea of globalisation as ecumenical cooperation between the various manifestations of the Christian church, throughout the world. This includes a growing maturity and equality between churches in the first- and third-world countries. It involves a new openness to, and respect for, the great variety of local concrete situations. Thirdly, globalisation sometimes refers to dialogue between Christianity and other religions. Finally, globalisation refers to the mission of the church to the world, not only to convert and to evangelise, but also to improve and develop the lives of the millions of poor starving, and politically-disadvantaged people.
>
> [W]e are all challenged, by the current discussion, to see a larger framework. The common element among all theological traditions and educators is the awareness that the context of theological education is the entire world.[92]

[92] Ibid., p. 35.

It is significant that later discussions saw this fourfold "typology" as starting points, a floor, on which to build, and even, as the contexts, which globalisation impacted, rather than as defining criteria.[93]

Thirdly, globalisation can be related to the concept of transformation, or to its more religious synonym: conversion.[94] To become "global", in theological education, is to be transformed by four realities:

- the interdependence of the unique peoples and cultures of the world;
- the all-pervasive presence of poverty and injustice, as fundamental evils[95] that must be addressed by Christian, and other groups of goodwill, locally and globally;
- the need to inform our ministries, and service, with an understanding of economic realities; human rights issues; oppressive structures of gender, race, class, and violence; and the global environment crisis;
- the universal significance of the reign of God, as the call to discipleship and servanthood, and the substance of hope for the future.

To confine globalisation to these three areas – personal perception, faith responses to the present world situation, and Christian transformation – although they are important dimensions, seems inadequate.

The ATS has had 20 years of discussions about globalisation, but has failed to come up with a more-precise definition of the term. Its leaders have noted significant developments in the usage and understandings of the concept,[96] and have more recently taken account of the strong criticism of globalisation, generally, as it has impacted so-called third-world nations.[97] Part of the failure is due to the complexity of the globalising process,

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[93] William E. Lesher, and Donald W. Shriver, "Stumbling in the right direction", in *Theological Education* 35-2 (1999), pp. 3-16.

[94] Lesher, "Living the faith", p. 36.

[95] Many Christians, evangelicals included, see poverty and injustice as a result of human sinfulness. For them, sin is an equally-fundamental issue.

[96] Lesher, and Shriver, "Stumbling", pp. 3-16.

[97] Matsuoka, "The changing terrain of 'globalisation' ", pp. 17-25.

involving a wide range of secular forces, as well as theological and interfaith responses.

Despite the extensive discussion on globalisation in the US, and other Western nations, there are aspects of globalisation that have been largely ignored in the dialogue. One of these, is the impact of international marketing of Western-based theological education. The developing of "partnerships" with non-American and non-Western institutions has encouraged the exporting of Western-style of theological education that, in the power-play of globalisation, has imposed Western (and American) criteria on indigenous institutions elsewhere, and enhanced the already-powerful Western-based institutions, and styles of theological and biblical training. R. Paul Stevens, as long ago as 1992, offered a valuable critique of the trend, but his comments are still important, and the trend continues.[98] Stevens offered the following as a definition of globalisation:

> the full partnership of churches, in the developed world, with those in the developing world, involving mutual learning and interdependence, whereby the rich cultural and spiritual contributions of each can be appropriated by the other. . . . In theological education, globalisation . . . would involve learning, educationally and spiritually, from younger churches, as well as contributing, with cultural sensitivity, Western resources, perspectives and the fruits of Western scholarship.[99]

Another inadequately-treated dimension of globalisation is the role of Christian denominations. One instance, significant from an evangelical perspective, is a perceptive report by Robert Stivers on the impact of globalisation on the Conservative Baptist-related Denver Seminary.[100] In a process of globalising transformation, Denver has lost some of its denominational distinctiveness, in order to survive.

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[98] R. Paul Stevens, "Marketing the faith: A reflection on the importing and exporting of Western theological education", in *Crux* 28-2 (1992), pp. 6-18.

[99] Ibid., p. 7. Stevens then demonstrates why globalisation works against a necessary process of contextualisation, a topic we address below.

[100] Robert L. Stivers, "Evangelicals in transition", in *Theological Education* 27-2 (1991), pp. 33-50.

Denominational affiliations, as religious institutions, look set to become less significant in the postmodern era.[101] But the "denominational"[102] loyalties of the Brethren are central to the Brethren mission, and its activities in Papua New Guinea, as elsewhere. While the Brethren are becoming numerically less significant, and more diverse, in the West, there are far more distinctively Brethren churches in the non-Western world.

7. A Definition of Globalisation

With this range of statements and definitions in mind, we now attempt to frame our own definition. We use the term "globalisation" specifically, as it relates to theological education, but nuanced to free it from a Western-based, and, particularly, US-based focus. For our purposes, **globalisation refers to the tendency to view the world as a single place – a tendency that has emerged over time, but has assumed major importance in the latter part of the 20th century. Globalisation is thus, firstly, a mental construct that regards one or more aspects of human culture as transferable, and, therefore, applicable, with minimal modification to all human social contexts. Secondly, globalisation is a process of social transformation, whereby diverse cultures are brought into meaningful interaction and interdependence, on a worldwide scale. Thirdly, globalisation refers to the personal transformation in attitudes and relationships that commits a person or group to creating interconnections beyond local cultural boundaries with people and communities in other places, resulting in networks of connectedness.**

This definition includes dimensions that are personally interior (mental attitudes, worldview, and ideology), interpersonal (relationships, communication, social networks), and structures (communities, institutions, and social groups). They combine to give cohesion and direction to the processes involved in globalisation. Like contextualisation, the process is dynamic and ongoing, rather than static.

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[101] Jonathan Campbell, "Postmodernism: Ripe for a global harvest – but is the church ready?", in *EMQ* 35 (1999), pp. 432-437.

[102] I use this term to indicate the ethos and structures that hold the Brethren churches together, despite Brethren commitment to a non-denominational form of church polity.

Theological education, generally, views the ideological level as foundational, since it orients and undergirds theological education. It is an essential ingredient of Bible-school education. Structures carry the ideology, and provide the framework that implements it. Personal worldviews, and interpersonal and intercommunal relationships, are the arena for ministry of the graduates of the institutions. Our definition incorporates all three levels.

The Christian faith is a universal religion, with a global mission. Its message is for all people of all cultures. In fact, Christians feel a sense of incompleteness about the task of carrying the message to all people, when the process is seen to be incomplete, or resisted, in certain parts of the world. Inevitably, then, there are aspects of the faith that are felt to be both global and sacrosanct. Christians do not agree among themselves as to what this core of global aspects of the faith is, and this disagreement has led to division and diversity.

In using this definition, we limit ourselves to the Christian religion, although other religions may also display globalising tendencies. But the following points should be noted:

- Globalisation is more than what is usually embraced by the term "universal". It recognises that a process of interaction and acceptance may take place in the receptor community, to accommodate the global tendency. But the phenomenon remains largely sacrosanct and intact through the process.
- It is more than "multicultural" or "multiethnic". A basic assumption of globalisation is that authority and power lie primarily at the source, or sources, of the process. For some development to be right, it must not only mesh with the immediate setting, it must be seen to be in continuity with the same process elsewhere.
- It is more than "pluralism", understood as an acceptance of diversity, in an atmosphere of tolerance.

C. HOW CONTEXTUALISATION AND GLOBALISATION RELATE

Having arrived at working definitions of our two key concepts, it is important to ask how they relate. Some have assumed that they were simply opposed to one another, and pulling in opposite directions. There are points at which this is true, but, fundamentally, they are complementary, not in opposition.

In 1994, Robert Schreiter identified four important aspects of the way contextualisation and globalisation relate.[103]

(a) Contextualisation, from a world perspective, becomes essential, because of the inevitability of globalisation. The impact of globalisation in reducing the spaces between cultures, makes it imperative that the Christian message continually confronts the changes that are going on in society.

(b) Contextualisation and globalisation are interdependent. They exist alongside one another. Globalisation brings certain pressures toward homogenisation, but local cultures persist and, in fact, increase, in diversity.

(c) Globalisation is currently, profoundly asymmetrical. As Schreiter explained in an earlier contribution to the discussion, some theorists "argue that a global culture is not a culture in a true sense", but, in Arjun Appadurai's words, are more in the nature of "-scapes" such as "ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. These give the illusion of being complete cultures, but rely on connections with local cultures to maintain their illusion."[104]

(d) Contextualisation is coming about more slowly than globalisation. Schreiter attributes this to the strong legacy of colonialism. Theologically, colonialism assumes that theological formulations, formed in the West, and in Western

[103] Robert J. Schreiter, "The ATS Globalisation and Theological Education Project: Contextualisation from a world perspective", in *Theological Education* 30-2 (1994), pp. 81-88.

[104] Robert J. Schreiter, "Christian theology between the global and the local", in *Theological Education* 29-2 (1993), p. 115.

> church history, are the only right ones, and are to be accepted worldwide. This is an important concern.

In a more recent study of global and local aspects of theology, Schreiter[105] has pointed out that, for a variety of reasons, religion and theology, although pervasive, do not qualify as global movements, in the same way as do multipolar politics, modern economic capitalism, and communications technology. They do not aspire to the same Enlightenment values that contribute to globalisation. Nor do they operate with the same compulsive mechanisms of the global systems. Instead, they operate "between the global and the local", in two principal ways. Firstly, they act as global theological "flows",[106] of which he identifies four – theologies of liberation, feminist, of ecology, and of human rights.[107] Secondly, they are ways that cultures choose to respond to globalising pressures. Schreiter identifies three of these "animating theological strategies" – antiglobalism (of which fundamentalism is one version),[108] ethnification (rediscovering a forgotten identity, based on one's cultural ties), and primitivism ("an attempt to go back to an earlier premodern period, to find a frame of reference and meaning, in order to engage the present").[109] Schreiter points out that primitivism might also be called "revitalisation". The Brethren, while strongly espousing a fundamentalist theology, at least in their early history, can be regarded as an example of this latter type of movement.

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[105] Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997.

[106] Schreiter defines the term "flow" to denote a cultural or ritual movement, a circulation of information that is patently visible, yet hard to define, moving across geographic and cultural boundaries, and, like a river, changing the landscape, and leaving an enriching sediment. Ibid., p. 15.

[107] Ibid., pp. 15-21.

[108] From one perspective, fundamentalism can be viewed as a globalising movement. Schreiter sees it as antiglobal here, in its reaction to other globalising pressures.

[109] Ibid., pp. 21-25.

D. GLOBAL ASSUMPTIONS AND THE CONTEXTUAL PROCESS IN BRETHREN MISSION

Missionaries of the Brethren Movement come to their task with a set of global assumptions. What are these assumptions, and at what points do they require adaptation to local contexts, such as those in Melanesia?

Firstly, a set of strong convictions could be broadly termed *evangelical*. The missionaries came from a tradition that strongly affirmed the truth, and universal applicability of the gospel as good news about salvation in Jesus Christ, and the truth of the Bible, as inspired holy scripture. Secondly, they also served with a cluster of global *missionary* convictions. They strongly believed that every person on earth needs a real opportunity to hear, and to make an intelligent faith response to the Christian gospel, to receive the offer of eternal life in Christ, and, thereby, become members in the true body of Christ, His church. The compassion to meet physical, health, and educational needs was balanced by the conviction that, without the gospel, people are lost eternally. Another global missionary motivation was also the belief that the return of Jesus Christ was imminent, and all, therefore, should hear the good news, as a matter of urgency. On a more pragmatic level, Papua New Guinea, with its great range of local languages, and its recent "pacification", was seen as a ripened harvest field. From a practical viewpoint, as well, it was realised that, given the nature of the country, and missionary commitment to a range of specialist ministries, any one missionary could reach only a few hundred people.

Global convictions and assumptions of the Brethren also included some denominational factors. Brethren missionaries shared the belief that their movement carried a form of New Testament ecclesiology and practice that was not only biblical, but universally applicable. In this regard, Roy Coad has expressed the following sentiments:

> However it came about, the form of Christianity, developed by the Brethren, has proved *viable* and *adaptable* to the needs of thousands in lands of emerging Christianity. Its capacity for *free adaptation*, and its emphasis on the free exercise of gifts of all members of the churches, within a framework of thought that retains essential orthodoxies of doctrine, have established it as an

> important and constructive element in modern expansion of the church (italics mine).[110]

This introductory statement by Coad illustrates the balance he wanted to draw between the global view that the form of Brethren Christianity is applicable in all places, cultures, and times, and the need for this form to be contextualised in each community it confronts. A further balance is drawn between the Brethren experiment in church practice as embracing "global" convictions about the priesthood of all believers, the individual spiritual giftedness of all, and the responsibility to exercise those spiritual gifts, on the one hand, and the claim to retain "essential orthodoxies" in doctrinal stance, on the other. In claiming Brethren as theologically orthodox, the statement acknowledges that the Brethren are part of a wider whole, and, therefore, less than "global". It is part of the purpose of my thesis to examine this theological and ecclesiological balance, and how that impacts Bible school training.[111]

The Brethren missionaries in PNG, armed with these global convictions, faced three major contextual issues in trying to establish Brethren churches there. Firstly, there was a necessary process of "decontextualisation". They needed to determine which aspects of Brethren theology and ecclesiology were universal, and, therefore, globally applicable, without essential change. The temptation, common to all cross-cultural Christian mission, is to assume that virtually all of the versions of the faith in the country of origin were applicable in the new one. Decontextualising the gospel source involves reexamining what is core to the faith, and what is adaptable.[112]

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[110] Roy Coad, "The early history of the Brethren Movement in Britain", in *CBRF Journal (NZ)* 125 (1991), p. 7.

[111] Rex A. Koivisto, in *One Lord, One Faith*, Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1993, attempts a more-comprehensive approach to the global applicability of Brethren ecclesiology, and its implications for all Christians.

[112] Brian D. McLaren's paper, "Rewriting Brethren distinctives", presented at the conference on the Brethren Movement at Regent College, July 1990, is a valuable step in this direction. Reproduced in *CBRF Journal* 125 (August 1991), pp. 39-42.

Secondly, a process of *translation* of the determined core needs to be undertaken. The issue is: what functions and meanings are being understood by the participants in the new context? As theology and ecclesiology are being developed in the receiving culture, is the developing Christianity still retaining the "essential orthodoxies"?[113] Vital to this process, is a sensitive dialogue between the missionary change agents and the local "new believers", in a way that respects and values the insights of the latter.

Thirdly, there is a necessary process of "recontextualisation". The new cultural environment is not merely a receiver of an alien tradition. It needs to reform and recreate a version of Christianity that is compatible with, and integral to, the host culture, as it sifts what is valid and retainable from this new cultural context, and what is to be rejected or adapted.

A healthy range of national and regional discussion papers, emerging out of the first 20 years or so of CMML, as a mission, demonstrate the depth of concern over these three processes.

E. CONCLUSION

Globalisation meets the observer of Christian missions at a number of levels. At the theological level, evangelical Christians would agree there is a common core of doctrinal beliefs and commitments that are "global" – necessary to be a true Christian. Christian ceremonies, like baptism and the Lord's Supper, are commands of Christ, and, therefore, are to be practised globally.[114] Ecclesiastically, denominational and mission structures, originating in the West, have encouraged global networks that have often proved unnecessarily divisive in local contexts.

In this study, we limit ourselves to the Christian (or Open) Brethren. Something of the living tension in Brethren missionary activity is seen in debate over what is global, or universal, and what can be changed, and

[113] See Eugene A. Nida, and William D. Reyburn, *Meaning Across Cultures*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1981; and Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message,* for different aspects of this process.

[114] The local forms, such ceremonies take, are impacted, both by the immediate culture, and by the globalised ecclesiastical tradition, and its theological history.

contextualised. Brethren would identify themselves worldwide by a common core of local church commitments and practices (see chapter 1 of the thesis). It is often these that are used to identify Brethren congregations.[115]

The Christian Brethren Bible schools of PNG form an interesting case study, in the context of globalisation and contextualisation. The churches of CBC, and their Bible schools, have been established in the post-war era (since 1950), within parts of a country, evangelised rather recently, as measured on a world scale. The insights about contextualisation, and the pressures emerging from globalisation, have coincided and overlapped in an unusual, perhaps unique, way for the study of these two phenomena.

In relation to the CBC Bible schools of PNG, globalisation affects the process in a number of ways. The participants, both expatriate and national, come with assumptions about what is universal, and what is contextual. The Christian Brethren movement itself can be seen as a globalising movement, seeking to apply some convictions about the nature of the gospel and the church to all cultures, where evangelism by them is taking place. In terms of Brethren theological education, however, we question whether, in three significant aspects – curriculum, theology, and educational method – this universalism is a non-contextual transfer, or whether it is sufficiently sensitive to the local, and rapidly-changing, Melanesian contexts.

Political, economic, and communications pressures impact the young nation of Papua New Guinea, as a result of the globalisation process.

[115] Service organisations that wish to identify themselves as Brethren, such as land-holding bodies, training institutions, and missionary-service agencies, frequently use a statement of beliefs and *practices* as a means of legal identity. It is often the practices, rather than the beliefs, which distinguish Brethren, and their institutions, from other evangelicals.

Developing a context-sensitive, biblical, and theological response that will serve the CBC churches in the modern world is, therefore, an urgent issue for their Bible schools.