

One Significant Solution: How Anthropology Became the Number One Study For Evangelical Missionaries

Part II: Anthropology and Mission: The Incarnational Connection

by Darrell L. Whiteman

The Journal Practical Anthropology

One index that an academic field is reaching maturity is when a journal in that field is published. This was the case with missionary anthropology and the publication of *Practical Anthropology*.

Malinowski's article entitled "Practical Anthropology" published in 1929 was a call for anthropology to move beyond the sterile confines of academia and enter the world where cultures were clashing with one another, where colonialism was impacting indigenous cultures. Malinowski was not a man of faith, so it is perhaps ironic that his call for a practical anthropology was a harbinger of the practical application of anthropology to mission work.

It is interesting to note that following World War II and the proliferation of Protestant evangelical missionaries and the beginning of the decline of colonialism, a new journal titled *Practical Anthropology* was launched in 1953. Its humble beginning began when Robert B. Taylor, anthropology instructor at Wheaton College, prepared and distributed two initial issues to test the level of interest in a journal on applications of anthropology in Christian thought and practice. The response was favorable, mainly among those interested in cross-cultural communication of the Christian message.

At Wheaton, Taylor typed the mimeograph masters and had them reproduced by the College copy center. Both at Wheaton in 1953–1954 and in Eugene, Oregon in 1954–1956, he continued to develop the journal, keeping the subscription cost at \$1.00 per year by doing all the work with the help of his wife Floris, except for the mimeographing and, later, multilithing. Within a few years there were 250 subscribers. During these years of development, the project was helped along, perhaps indispensably, by the counsel and writing of articles by William Smalley, William Reyburn, Marie Fetzner Reyburn, Eugene Nida, and James O. Buswell, III. When Taylor left the University of Oregon campus for doctoral field research, William Smalley became editor, and *Practical Anthropology* developed into a journal primarily for missionaries and Bible translators needing the insights from anthropology and wanting a forum where they could share their ideas and their anthropologically informed

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experiences of mission in the field. This conformed to a vision Smalley had held for some time for just such a publication, and, with the help of others, he built effectively on the journal Taylor turned over to him to realize this vision.

Practical Anthropology ran for 19 years, continuing as an outlet for anthropologically minded missiologists like Nida, Smalley, Loewen, the Reyburns, and Charles Taber, all of who were committed to cross-cultural mission and Bible translation. The pages of the early editions of this journal are full of stories and examples of how anthropology can illuminate the cross-cultural complexities of effective mission work. It is interesting to read letters to the editor wishing that the reader had had this kind of anthropological insight when he or she began their missionary career. For example, Herbert Greig writing from Batouri, Cameroun lamented, “If only I had this before I went to Africa, what a difference it would have made. With regret I look back upon the embarrassments and the lost opportunities, and would like to save others from like mistakes” (Greig 1957:204).

After 19 consecutive years of publishing six issues a year, *Practical Anthropology* ceased publication and merged into *Missiology*, the journal of the American Society of Missiology in 1973. At this time there were over 3,000 subscribers to *Practical Anthropology* (Shenk and Hunsberger 1998:17) indicating the tremendous growth this journal underwent in a relatively short span of time. The need for insights from anthropology applied to the problems of cross-cultural mission was significant, and *Practical Anthropology* responded with timely helpful articles. The last editor of *Practical Anthropology*, Charles Taber noted that,

From the beginning, PA took for its scope the entire field of cross-cultural communication, viewed from an anthropological perspective. Its potential audience included anyone interested in such communication, especially of the Christian gospel. Such concepts as ethnocentrism,

cultural relativity, accommodation, identification, and so forth were introduced and discussed, and their implications for Christian mission explored. We believe that PA has served an important function and has been helpful to many by making *practical* applications of *anthropology* to their work in all parts of the world. (Taber 1973:7)

The first editor of *Missiology* for six years was anthropologist Alan Tippett from Fuller Theological Seminary’s School of World Mission. He promised to continue the emphases in *Practical Anthropology* in the new journal *Missiology* (Tippett 1973). And I, as an anthropologist and the fourth editor of *Missiology*, from 1989 to 2003, also kept the *Practical Anthropology* legacy alive. William Smalley captured the best of *Practical Anthropology* in two books entitled *Readings in Missionary Anthropology* (1967) and *Readings in Missionary Anthropology II* (1978).

At the time that *Practical Anthropology* was launched in 1953 the common understanding among most Bible translators and missionaries was that if we could just get the Scriptures into indigenous peoples’ languages then they would come to think like us in the West. And so anthropology was pressed into the service of Bible translation and other aspects of mission. It would not be until the 1970s that we would come to appreciate the importance of contextualization and to realize that people in different cultures should not only not come to think like us once they have the Bible in their own language, but that they should have the mind of Christ within their own culture. This new insight would usher in the field of ethnotheology (Kraft 1973) and contextualization (Whiteman 1997).

The Contribution of Roman Catholics to Missiological Anthropology

While evangelical missionaries, anthropologists, and Bible translators were writing in the pages of *Practical Anthropology*, Roman Catholic missionaries were being introduced to the writing of Fr. Louis Luzbetak, in whose name this lecture series is given.

Luzbetak, trained in anthropology under the famous Wilhelm Schmidt, differed from his mentor in believing that anthropology should be applied to and integrated with mission instead of being a separate enterprise. In the midst of his mission and fieldwork in New Guinea, Luzbetak came to the conclusion that academic anthropology needed to be better connected with mission. He notes,

...I became so convinced of the importance of cultural anthropology for the mission of the church, and so frustrated was I by the fact that so little attention was being given to the relation between faith and culture, that I was determined to do everything in my power not to return to my original specialization but rather to devote all my energy in the future to the application of anthropology to mission. (Luzbetak 1992:125)

Luzbetak sketched out his ideas in an essay entitled “Toward an Applied Missionary Anthropology” in 1958 and then delivered on his promise with the publication of *The Church and Cultures: An Applied Anthropology for the Religious Worker* (1963). This work was met with enthusiasm by missionaries in the field and by missionary anthropologists. I remember reading the second printing (1970) as a graduate student in anthropology, and saying to myself, “This is exactly what I want to do with my life—make anthropology understandable and useful for the missionary enterprise.” After two printings with Divine Word Publications, William Carey Library reprinted the book four more times. Luzbetak’s ecumenical spirit spilled over into Protestant missionary circles, hungry for deeper understanding of how anthropology could relate to mission. Then, twenty-five years after the original publication of *The Church and Cultures*, Luzbetak published his *magnum opus*, a complete revision of *The Church and Cultures* with a new subtitle: “*New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*” which as of today has sold 7,500 copies. In his lavish review of this book, Charles Taber (1990: 103) rightfully calls Luzbetak the dean of living missiological anthropologists and says that *The Church and*

Cultures, “is one of the most significant missiological books of the last quarter of this century” (1990:104). Luzbetak’s subtitle, “New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology” breaks new ground conceptually, by moving us beyond *missionary* anthropology tied to the previous era of colonial missions, to *missiological* anthropology that is more appropriate for the present age of global Christianity.

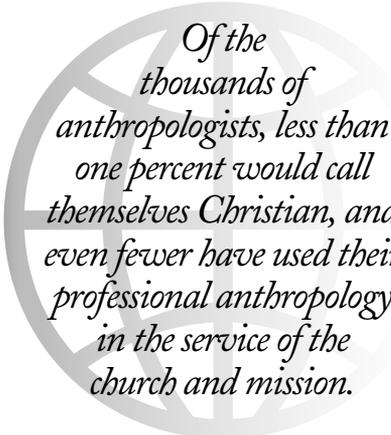
Several other Catholic anthropologists have made significant contributions from anthropology to mission. First is Gerald Arbuckle, a Marist priest from New Zealand who has written and lectured widely. Applying anthropological insights to the church, Arbuckle has focused especially on inculturation and the refounding of religious communities. His popular books *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers* (1990) and *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (1993) capture much of his anthropological insight for mission.

Another significant Catholic-missiological anthropologist is Aylward Shorter, a British White Father, who studied under E. E. Evans-Pritchard at Oxford. Drawing on his extensive mission work in East Africa, Shorter has brought to bear anthropological insights on the church in Africa, notably his *African Culture and the Christian Church: An Introduction to Social and Pastoral Anthropology* (1974), *African Christian Theology* (1977), *Jesus and the Witchdoctor* (1985), and *The Church in the African City* (1991). Shorter’s more theological work is *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (1988).

Anthony Gittins, is a third Catholic missiological anthropologist who was trained at Edinburgh and has had mission experience in West Africa and is presently teaching at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. His book *Mende Religion* (1987) is an in-depth anthropological study of the belief system of the Mende in Sierra Leone. His other works, which draw on his anthropological perspective, include *Gifts and Strangers* (1989), *Bread for the Journey* (1993), *Life and Death Matters: The Practice of Inculturation in Africa* (2000), and *Ministry at the Margins* (2002). And finally, anthropologist Stephen Fuchs

SVD (1965, 1977) has published extensively from his experience in India, contributing substantially to Catholic missiological anthropology.

Three other books, these written by evangelical missiological anthropologists, have become important landmarks on the road of anthropology’s journey in the service of mission. Marvin Mayers, with a Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of Chicago and experience in Guatemala with Wycliffe Bible Translators, was professor of anthropology at Wheaton College when he wrote *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Cross-Cultural Evangelism* (1974).



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Combining anthropological theory with missiological case studies, this book has gone through ten printings of 12,000 copies.

Charles Kraft, trained in anthropology at Wheaton College and Hartford Seminary’s Kennedy School of Missions, broke new ground with his monumental *Christianity in Culture* (1979) published by Orbis Books. Today Kraft’s book has sold 20,000 copies, but it was not initially welcomed with open arms by the more conservative fundamentalist wing of the missionary enterprise. One particularly vicious attack on Kraft was a book entitled *Is Charles Kraft an Evangelical?* (Gross 1985). Kraft was castigated for his anthropological perspective on mission but he clearly demonstrated how much our culture shapes and influences our theologizing, and how so often the form of Christianity communicated by the missionary does not connect deeply with the culture of the receptor.

The third important book that connects anthropology with mission is Paul Hiebert’s (1985) *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* published in 1985. In its 18th printing with over 48,000 copies sold, this may be one of the most widely read missiological anthropology books in print today. Paul Hiebert is the most prolific writer of evangelical missiological anthropologists and his work on epistemology and mission (Hiebert 1999) has broken new ground for missiology.

The Under Utilization of Anthropology in Mission

As we have seen, there is a growing contribution of and appreciation for anthropological insights and perspectives applied to mission. But having said this, and noted the significant books and key players, the application of anthropology to the missionary enterprise is still rather insignificant. Of the thousands of anthropologists, less than one percent would call themselves Christian, and even fewer have used their professional anthropology in the service of the church and mission. In 1989 I founded the Network of Christian Anthropologists and we gather each year at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. There we discuss the challenges of relating anthropology to Christian faith and to mission. I’m pleased to report that we have over a hundred people in our network. These are small gains in a world where anthropology and mission, or should I say anthropologists and missionaries, have more often than not been enemies instead of colleagues.

Nevertheless, the number of North American missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, who have any kind of training in anthropology is very small. Over a thirteen-year period I worked with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and helped train about 3,000 of their 5,000 missionaries. My two-day intensive crash course on anthropological insights for crossing cultural barriers with the gospel was frequently met with an astonished comment like, “Why have I never heard this anthropological perspective before? Here I am, six weeks away from getting on an airplane to

fly off and spend the rest of my life ministering to people in a different culture, and I've never heard anything like this." Eugene Nida once said to me in the mid-1990s that he thought missionaries were more poorly trained today in the area of cross-cultural understanding than at any previous period of mission history.

Anthropology and the Training Non-Western Missionaries.

Moreover, as the center of gravity for the Christian Church moves south and east, the number of European and North American missionaries is declining as the number of non-Western missionaries is increasing (Pate 1989). For example, today there are over 10,000 Korean missionaries found all over the globe (Moon 2003). As part of their missionary training and orientation they seldom if ever are introduced to the insights of anthropology that would help them discover the nature of their cross-cultural interaction and ministry (cf. Choi 2000). And because Korea is one of the most homogeneous societies in the world, Korean missionaries easily confuse Christianity with their Korean cultural patterns of worship, so their converts are lead to believe that to become a Christian one must also adopt Korean culture. If we Americans are guilty of wrapping the gospel in the American flag, then Koreans metaphorically wrap the gospel in kimchi (a potent symbol of their culture). This pattern of confusing the gospel with one's culture is being repeated throughout the non-Western world and missionaries from these cultures are making the *same* mistakes that Western missionaries made in the age of Colonialism when the gospel was first brought to their cultures. There is a growing literature on the training and problems of non-Western missionaries. For example, William Taylor's edited volume *Internationalising Missionary Training* (1991) focuses on training non-Western missionaries. In *Too Valuable to Lose* (Taylor 1997) the problem of attrition of missionaries from Korea, Brazil, and Ghana, along with missionaries from some Western countries is discussed. The journal *Training for Cross-Cultural Ministries*, that ran from 1990–2001, also features

the training of non-Western missionaries (cf. Harley 1995, Davies 2000).

So the need for training missionaries from the West as well as training non-Western missionaries in cross-cultural understanding has never been greater, especially in this age of "the coming of global Christianity," as Philip Jenkins (2002) puts it in his book, *The Next Christendom*.

Why Anthropology has Not Caught on Among Missionaries

Given this long rich history of anthropology's interaction with mission, the wealth of information published in books and journals on how anthro-

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pological insights can inform mission practice, and the establishing of significant schools of world mission for training, one can only wonder why anthropology has not caught on more among missionaries? Why are so many missionaries, Protestant and Catholic, Western and non-Western, unaware of the value of anthropology for their work and ministry? I have been pondering this question for many years, and a few ideas come to mind.

First, one's theology influences greatly one's appreciation of culture. Missionaries who see human beings and their cultures as totally depraved, will be slow to see any reason why they ought to understand the webs of meaning behind the behavior and customs of the people among whom they live. They will see their "cultural mandate" as bringing change to the culture, but unfortunately it is usually change in the direction of the missionary's culture more than toward the kingdom of God. In contrast, a missionary who has a strong theology

of creation, and sees God's prevenient grace at work in the lives of people and their cultures, will more likely desire to understand cross-cultural differences and will therefore be more open to the insights from anthropology.

Another reason missionaries have not taken anthropology more seriously is because they are in too much of a hurry. Either their eschatology tells them that Christ's return is imminent and therefore it would be a waste of time to study in depth the language and culture of the people, or they are on a fast timetable to plant so many churches, or baptize so many converts, so they really don't have time to bother with all this anthropological stuff. Jon Kirby (1995), however, argues, that in the present age of mission and the world church, language and culture learning are more important than ever, and in fact are forms of ministry themselves.

A third reason missionaries don't take anthropology seriously is that they see it as concerned, if not consumed, with the exotic, and so they perceive it to not be of much practical value. There have been too few missiological anthropologists to function as cultural brokers and bridge builders between the missionary enterprise and the anthropology academy. Pragmatic missionaries don't want to waste their valuable ministry time on something that they believe will yield few dividends.

Another reason I believe anthropology is not taken more seriously is because fewer and fewer missionaries are spending a lifetime among a people. The average length of time for a "career" missionary is now seven years. If one is not intending to spend 10–25 years in a culture, it is easier to conclude that one can "get by" with very little linguistic and cultural knowledge, and so who needs anthropology?

Of course, all these reasons for not taking anthropology more seriously are also contributing factors that lead to missionary ineffectiveness and burnout. For example, just understanding the phenomenon of culture shock would have saved many missionary careers, but without having a framework for understanding the source of culture shock, many have

concluded in their depths of despair and depression that they must not have been called to these people after all. An enormous challenge remains to give missionaries from every culture a sense of curiosity for cultural differences, an appreciation for the insights that anthropology can provide, and a determination to pursue cross-cultural understanding when in their busyness they don't feel they have time.

Connecting the Gospel to Culture: How Anthropology Can Help

In 1999 I spent part of my sabbatical in Paraguay, one of the poorest countries in South America. There I encountered the phrase, "Paraguayans speak in Spanish, but think in Guarani." Guarani is the language spoken by the indigenous people of this region before the Spanish Conquest, and it is still alive and well today. I immediately asked, "In what language do Paraguayans worship and read the Bible?" The answer was "Spanish, not Guarani." In other words, Christianity is expressed through the medium of Spanish, rather than in the heart language of Guarani. More recently I learned that when the Jesuits came to this area in the 17th century they asked for the local name of the highest God in the Guarani cosmology, and were given a name for God which they used instead of the Spanish *Dios*. Only recently has an anthropologist researching the Guarani cosmology learned that the Guarani had a god that was higher than the god whose name they gave to the Jesuits, but that god was so high in the sky that no name was given to it. In other words, here was the Unknown God, alive and well in the Guarani cosmology, but because the missionaries did not adequately research and understand the Guarani cosmology, the Christian God they introduced was confined to a subordinate position to the unknown god of the Guarani.

The missionaries also searched for a word that they could use to convey the meaning of baptism. It was not easy, but they came up with a term they thought captured the essence of baptism for the Guarani. Anthropological investigation, hundreds of years later, discovered that the term used for

baptism meant, "becoming Spanish." Mistakes like this could be avoided if missionaries were properly trained in anthropological methods of research, and if they had an anthropological perspective to help them cope with and understand cultural differences.

There are many other "horror stories" that could be told of missionary mistakes made because of a lack of cross-cultural understanding and the absence of an anthropological perspective. Nevertheless, let me briefly note seven areas in which I believe anthropology can help us connect the gospel to culture:

1. Anthropology deals with people in all dimensions of their existence--socially, culturally, and ecologically. Anthropology takes a holistic approach to studying human beings.
2. Anthropology deals with people's actual behavior, as well as what they say, how they think, and how they feel. It is a behavioral science, and a dose of realism is good in any ministry.
3. Anthropology seeks to generalize about human behavior and looks for cross-cultural universals and patterns. This gives us a greater appreciation for distinguishing what is unique to one culture and what is more characteristic of all human beings.
4. Anthropology uses an approach to research called "participant observation" that is particularly useful for cross-cultural ministry. It gives us tools for knowing how to discover deeper cultural understanding while living with the people we serve.
5. Anthropology focuses on the elements in human interaction that relate to communication. It helps us appreciate the need to learn in depth the language of the people, and to recognize that most communication is more non-verbal than verbal.
6. Anthropology helps us distinguish between cultural forms and their meanings. This is particularly important when we want to communicate Christian meanings in forms that are

appropriate for the culture of the receptors of our message.

7. Anthropology focuses on how cultures change. Missionaries by definition should be agents of change, but too often the change we introduce is disruptive and counterproductive. We need to understand thoroughly the cultural dynamics of the society in which we serve.

This is a brief list of why cross-cultural witnesses should incorporate anthropological training into their preparation for ministry and why they should use anthropological insights as part and parcel of their ministry.

The Incarnational Connection

I now come at last to what I call the incarnational connection between anthropology and mission. I have argued above that for reasons of pragmatism and efficiency, anthropology should inform mission, but there are also important theological reasons for doing so. The Incarnation is our model for cross-cultural ministry, and the biblical reason why anthropology needs to inform mission. As a theological concept the Incarnation is about God becoming man, but in the mystery of the Incarnation God did not become a generic human being. God became Jesus the Jew, shaped and molded by first century Roman-occupied, Palestinian Jewish culture. This meant that Jesus spoke Aramaic with the low prestige accent spoken around Galilee. He avoided eating pork and other foods prohibited by the Torah. He believed the earth was flat and the center of the universe with the sun revolving around it. Jesus did not know that germs cause disease because germs would not be "discovered" for at least 1,870 years. In other words Jesus was thoroughly shaped by his Jewish culture at that particular time and in this particular location. The God of the universe was manifest through Jesus who was embedded in this particular culture. For as Philippians 2:6-8 says,

He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain or become equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a ser-

vant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross.

Ogden Nash in his whimsical style once wrote, “How odd of God, to choose the Jews.” But God *did* choose the Jews at a particular point in time to reveal something about God’s character. John Donne, in his *Holy Sonnet* has written,

T’was much that man was made like God, long before. But that God should be made like man, much more.

In the preface to Jesuit John Haughey’s book, *The Conspiracy of God: The Holy Spirit in Us* (1973) we read,

With justification, the author points out that in the past we have given in to the tendency to present the mystery of Jesus in terms of a Divine Theophany—God coming to us under human appearance rather than *from among* us in the mystery of the Incarnation. We must meet the authentic Jesus, a man among men, conditioned by the relativity of time and space as men always are. (Haughey 1973:7)

The Incarnation tells us something important about God. God chose an imperfect culture with its limitations for making known God’s supreme Revelation. From the beginning of humanity God has been reaching out to human beings embedded in their different cultures. And God’s plan for the salvation of the world has been to use ordinary human beings, like ourselves, to reach others who are immersed in a culture different from our own. The Incarnation tells us that God is not afraid of using culture to communicate with us. S. D. Gordon once said, “Jesus is God spelled out in language human beings can understand.” This language that human beings can understand is the language of human culture. The Incarnation shows us that God has taken both humanity and culture seriously. So the Incarnation tells us something about God’s nature. It also becomes a model for ministry in our own time. In the same way that God entered Jewish culture in the person of Jesus, we must be willing to enter the culture

of the people among whom we serve, to speak their language, to adjust our lifestyle to theirs, to understand their worldview and religious values, and to laugh and weep with them.

But how do we do that in cultures that are so different from our own? We cannot go back into the womb and be born again in another culture. This is where the power of anthropological insight comes to bear on our ministry. I submit that without the insight of anthropology that helps us understand and appreciate cultural differences, we will automatically revert to our ethnocentric mode of interpretation and behavior. We will fall into the cultural trap of assuming that what works well for ministry in our own culture will also work well in a different culture, but it seldom does. We will tend to assume erroneously that all human beings see the world essentially the same as we do, but they seldom do. We will likely believe that cultural differences are not that significant since we are all human beings created in God’s image.

But cultural differences *are* significant, very significant, for theological reasons as much as anthropological ones. The various cultures of the world are gifts of God’s grace. We get a picture of the biblical importance of cultural diversity in Revelation 7:9. John writes:

After this I looked, and there was an enormous crowd—no one could count all the people! They were from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they stood in front of the throne and of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding branches in their hands. (Rev 7:9)

One may ask, how did John know this? How did he draw his conclusion that this crowd around the throne of God was so diverse? He must have seen the many cultural and linguistic differences apparent among the people. So, the image we get here is one of cultural diversity, not cultural uniformity. People from every ethnolinguistic group will surround the throne of God, worshipping God, not in English, or even English as a second language, but in their own language shaped by their own worldview and culture. The view we get of the

kingdom of God is a multicultural view, not one of ethnic uniformity. Cultural diversity around the throne of God is united in praise to God as the Lord of Life, but it is expressed through a diversity of languages, cultures, and worldviews. We can count on hearing about 6,809 languages around that throne (Grimes 2000; see <www.ethnologue.com> for the latest number of known languages). One of the things we admire most about the gospel is its ability to speak within the worldview of every culture. And this to me is the empirical proof of its authenticity.

The same process of Incarnation, of God becoming a human being, occurs every time the gospel crosses a new cultural, linguistic, or religious frontier. If the mission of God was achieved by the Incarnation of Jesus, and Jesus in turn said to his disciples and to us, “As the Father has sent me into the world so send I you into the world” (John 20:21), then what does this mean for a model of mission, of cross-cultural ministry? I think we can assume that we are bound to work within the limitations of the cultural forms of the people to whom we are sent. This is not rigid or static because culture changes, but it means we start with the confines and limitations, as well as opportunities, imposed by their culture. We start with where people are, embedded in their culture, because this is where God started with us in order to transform us into what God wants us to become. When we take the Incarnation seriously as a model for mission it frequently means downward mobility. Incarnation for Jesus led to crucifixion, and this means for us that there will be many things in our life that we will have to die to—our biases and prejudices, our lifestyle, our agenda of what we want to do for God, maybe for some of us even our physical life. When we take the Incarnation seriously in ministry it means we bow at the cross in humility before we wave the flag of patriotism. The Incarnation as a model for mission means we must give up our own cultural compulsives and preferences, and we must not insist that the cultural expression of the gospel in another culture be the same as it is in our own.

Incarnational identification with the people among whom we live and serve does not mean we try to “go native.” Try as we might, we can’t. We cannot go native because our parents weren’t “native.” That is, we already have been shaped and molded by another culture, so we can never completely rid ourselves of it. And we don’t need to. Pathetic attempts to “go native” are often met with disgust by those we are trying to impress. Moreover, if we were to succeed in “going native,” then we would no longer be a conduit for ideas and values from outside the culture that come with the gospel. I must admit, that in over thirty years of studying missionaries I have yet to find anyone who “went too far.” We normally have the opposite problem of not going far enough in our attempts to identify with the people.

So, what does it mean to be Incarnational in our approach to cultural differences? It frequently means at least the following seven practices:

1. We start with people where they are, embedded in their culture and this frequently requires downward mobility on our part.
2. We take their culture seriously, for this is the context in which life has meaning for them.
3. We approach them as learners, as children, anxious to see the world from their perspective.
4. We are forced to be humble, for in their world of culture we have not yet learned the acquired knowledge to interpret experience and generate social behavior.
5. We must lay aside our own cultural ethnocentrism, our positions of prestige and power.
6. We will be very vulnerable; our defenses will have to go, and we’ll have to rely more on the Holy Spirit than our own knowledge and experience.
7. We make every effort to identify with people where they are, by living among them, loving them, and learning from them.
8. We discover, from the inside, how Christ is the Answer to the questions they ask, and to their needs that they feel.

Conclusion

In summary and conclusion we have seen how over the past century or more anthropology has slowly been appropriated by mission for service in the kingdom of God. And we have briefly discussed the contribution that missionaries have made to the field of anthropology. Today, some of us perhaps understand the value of anthropological insights for mission better than we ever have, because of the missiological and anthropological research and writing that have transpired over the past century. But we continue in a situation where the majority of missionaries, both Western and non-Western, are still largely uninformed by anthropological insights. Without cross-cultural understanding we will miss the richness of other cultures, for one who knows only one culture, knows no culture (Augsburger 1986:18). There is a wonderful Kikuyu proverb from Kenya that captures the blinding ethnocentrism that comes from knowing only one culture. It says, “He who does not travel, believes his mother is the world’s best cook.” With proper anthropological training missionaries can overcome their ethnocentrism and feast on a smorgasbord of cross-cultural experience prepared by many good cooks.

I have argued in this lecture that the Incarnation as a model for cross-cultural ministry helps us make the important connection between anthropology and mission. I want to close this presentation on anthropology, mission, and Incarnation with an ancient Chinese poem that captures the essence of the Incarnation.

GO TO THE PEOPLE,
LIVE AMONG THEM,
LEARN FROM THEM,
LOVE THEM.
START WITH WHAT THEY KNOW,
BUILD ON WHAT THEY HAVE.

This is the incarnational way of doing and being in mission, but we need the insights of anthropology, the humility of Christ, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, to be in mission in this way.

Notes

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² Not wanting to perpetuate the myth that all early anthropologists were only armchair theorists, it should be noted that there were a few anthropologists in this early era who did fieldwork such as, H. C. Haddon, W. H. R. Rivers (1864–1922), and C. G. Seligman in the Torres Strait Expedition of 1898; Baldwin Spencer’s work among the Arunta of Central Australia in the mid-1890s; and Franz Boas (1858–1942) among the Eskimo (1883–1884) and thirteen times among the Northwest Coast Native Americans between 1886 and 1931. It was Bronislaw Malinowski’s fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands (1914–1918) that would bring fieldwork into the mainstream of anthropological research.

³ Either books by or about these early missionary ethnographers include the following: for Las Casas (Hanke 1951, Parish and Wagner 1967, Gutiérrez); for Sahagun (Sahagun 1950–1982); for Lafitau (Lafitau 1724, 1974); for Sagard (Sagard 1632, 1939); for Ricci (Spence 1984); for De Nobili (Rajamanickam 1971, 1972a, 1972b).

⁴ This is a slight overstatement because, as noted above in note two, there were some early anthropologists who did in fact have some first-hand field experience with the people about whom they wrote. Even Morgan spent time with the Iroquois (M. Harris 1968:169). This statement is most true of James G. Frazer and Herbert Spencer, but less true of A.C. Haddon, W.H.R. Rivers, C. G. Seligman, Baldwin Spencer, Franz Boas and others who in fact did do research among the people about whom they wrote.

⁵ In this statement Goldschmidt ignores the fact that anthropologists also “spoil” when they enter a culture to study it, and that anthropologists also have a mission. For example, Bruce Knauft (1996:5, 38 ff) a postmodern anthropologist with evangelistic zeal calls for the need for passion and clear mission in anthropology.

⁶ As Wheaton College’s anthropology program waned in the early 1960s, Bethel College, St. Paul, MN, began to establish a program in anthropology for training Christian missionaries, practitioners in development and other applied fields, and

academics. Building on an already strong Sociology Department under the guidance of David Moberg, Claude Stipe established the anthropology program that became part of a blended department of Sociology and Anthropology. Soon linguistics was added and the department became known as the Department of Anthropology, Sociology, and Linguistics. Some of the key professors during this time period were Thomas Correll, Don Larson, William Smalley, Ken Gowdy, and Paul Wiebe. This team added James Hurd in the early 1980s. The department attracted a relatively small number of majors but the graduates of this program in this era created careers of distinction. The anthropology graduates included Thomas Headland, Michael Rynkiewich, Stephen Ybarro, Richard Swanson and Douglas Magnuson. Between 1986 and 1988 all but Ken Gowdy and James Hurd took early retirement or left for other opportunities. Today the Department of Anthropology and Sociology has a major in Socio-cultural Studies with four “tracks” that allow a student to specialize in anthropology, sociology, cross-cultural missions, or urban studies. The program attracts almost 70 majors a year (around 60% in the anthropology and cross-cultural mission tracks, 20% sociology, and 20% urban studies). The faculty consists of three anthropologists, Harley Schreck, James Hurd, and Jenell Paris Williams, and two sociologists, Samuel Zalanga and Curtis DeYoung.

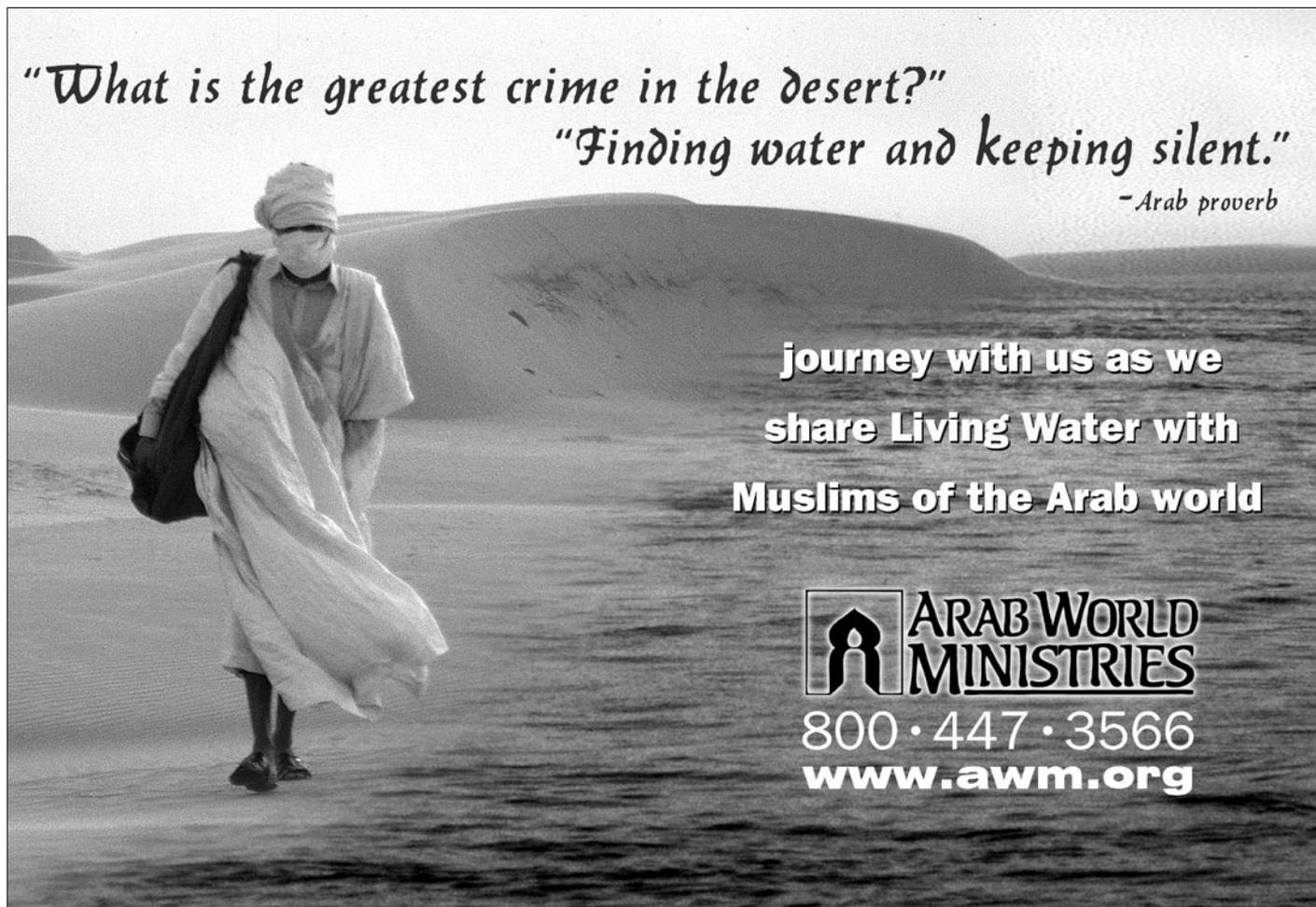
⁷ The Kennedy School of Missions was a direct response to Edinburgh 1910, and especially the Report of Commission V *The Preparation of Missionaries* which was chaired by W. Douglas Mackenzie, president of Hartford Theological Seminary. Attending the Edinburgh conference in the summer of 1910 was Mrs. John Stewart Kennedy, who when approached by Hartford Seminary, agreed to give \$500,000 toward the new School of Missions. The school was named in memory of her late husband, John Stewart Kennedy of New York (Geer 1934:202-218).

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"Finding water and keeping silent."
 - Arab proverb

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