

itual formation and SVD missionary formation guaranteed by our own team of specialists under the direct dependence of the Society?

In -

Joachim G. Piepke (ed.)
Anthropology and Mission,
S.V.D. International Consultation
on Anthropology for Mission,
Stedica Institutii Missiologici
SVD, (Nettel; Steyler
Verlag - Wort und Werk,
1988).

WHAT CAN ANTHROPOLOGY OFFER TO THE MISSIONS?

Louis J. Luzbetak

As I see it, there are three major areas where cultural anthropology might be of special service to mission action: (1) in communicating and contextualizing the Gospel; (2) in carrying out the social mission of the Church; and (3) in training for mission.

But first a point of clarification. It should be noted that what I have to say basically holds for *all* local churches, including those of the West, and not only for newer or so-called mission churches. All Christian communities, after all, live by a culture distinctly their own; all have cultural needs; all have a right to their culture. All must incarnate the Gospel; all must tailor their social action to their particular social context; all must train their church workers for the specific cultural context in which they will carry out their ministry. In a word, what we have to say may be addressed to missionaries and missionary needs but what is said makes as much sense on all six continents.

1. The Role of Anthropology in Cross-Cultural Communication and Contextualization

1.1 Communication and Contextualization in Mission

As far as anthropology is concerned, the concepts communication and contextualization are like the two sides of the same coin; they will, therefore, be treated as one. To me, contextualization is in the last analysis nothing more than effective communication. And that is exactly what missiological anthropology is all about.

We are really not preaching the Gospel effectively unless we preach in the cultural "language" of the community in question, that is to say, in the local symbolic system. That sounds a bit abstract. Let me put it this way: as some Paraguayan Indians described the chief mistake of their missionaries to mission anthropologist *Jacob Loewen*, "The trouble with Christian missionaries is that they scratch where it doesn't itch."¹ Contextualization - incarnation or inculturation, if you will - is scratching where it does itch. The Gospel message when proclaimed or witnessed must be tailored to the here and now, whether in Rome, New York, or Bombay, and at the same time must remain the true message of the Gospel, truly representing "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). Father Samuel Rayan in a workshop on mission spirituality put it well when he complained about the messengers of the Gospel

coming .is native land, India, "You say that you bring Jesus and new humanity to us. But what is this 'new humanity'? We would like to see it, touch it, taste it, yes, feel it inside our very selves. Jesus must not be just a name but a reality. He must be humanly illustrated." Very well put! Human beings are cultural beings, a most obvious fact only too often overlooked by us missionaries. What our people do not see, touch, taste, yes, feel within their innermost selves they really do not understand or experience. Contextualization means experiencing the Gospel.

Why, one might ask, do we speak of contextualization? Why are we not satisfied with the age-old word accommodation? Let me touch only on a few major differences between the two concepts.

Contextualization is a big step beyond missionary accommodation. Accommodation used to be a household word in missionary circles in pre-Vatican II days. Contextualization, in which modern applied anthropology has a central role to play, goes a step beyond accommodation - in fact, a big step beyond. Contextualization is the process by which a local church integrates its understanding of the Gospel (the "text") with its culture (the "context"). Contextualization implies that the local Christian community blends its understanding of the Gospel with actual life. Unlike accommodation, which in practice has usually touched only the surface of a people's ways and values, contextualization means integrating the whole lifeway to its very depths with the Gospel. *Evangelii nuntiandi*, the Magna Charta of modern mission action, speaks of incarnating the Gospel "right to the very roots" of the culture (no. 20). This must, of course, be done without in any way compromising the Gospel, not an iota of it (Mt 5:18), even if it means cutting off limbs and gouging out eyes (Mk 9:43-49).

Another important difference between contextualization and accommodation is the following. In accommodation it was mainly the universal and the sending-church that "from the abundance of its heart," so to speak, was expected to bend over backwards and tolerate whatever was neutral or good in the particular culture. In contextualization, however, we are speaking not of toleration but of a basic right of a local church to express its faith in terms of its own soul.

A third difference between accommodation and contextualization is the fact that in accommodation the sending-church translated its own culturally defined understanding of the Gospel into a cultural language which it often did not quite understand. Accommodation therefore implies that the local church is a transplant rather than a plant that grew out of the soil. The caution taken in accommodation was, of course, understandable; the overriding concern was orthodoxy and faithfulness to the Gospel.²

A still further difference between contextualization and accommodation is the fact that the concept of contextualization is much more in harmony with the spirit of the New Testament churches than is accommodation. From

our present-day perspective, traditional accommodation as a rule did not really trust the local Christian community as did the Infant Church; nor did accommodation, as generally practiced in recent centuries, show real trust in the Holy Spirit. The principle upheld by both the Infant Church and contextualization is: "Caution ever, timidity and distrust never! Full trust in the Holy Spirit, and full trust in the local Christian community!" We mention these differences in order to highlight the areas in which anthropological theory might be particularly useful in mission work.

1.2 Anthropology in Communication and Contextualization

Having touched on some of the basic differences between the accommodation and contextualization, we are now ready to look at the role that anthropological concepts, principles, and theories might play in contextualization.

Pope *John Paul II* likes to speak of "evangelizing cultures,"³ a good synonym for contextualization. It is here that anthropology, "the Science of Human Beings," makes its greatest contribution to mission. Cultural anthropology is the science that can show what it means to get "to the very roots" of a way of life, how to "scratch where it does itch," and how to present the "new humanity" of the Good News in such a way that Christ might indeed be illustrated "humanly," so that the hearers might indeed "see Christ, touch him, taste him."

In contextualization, we said, the primary agent is the local community. Only those who feel the culture can contextualize. Such are first and foremost the members of the local community. "Outside" facilitators (the sending-church and missionaries), guides and specialists (theologians and social scientists) are just that - guides and facilitators - and play only the second most important role, a role that presupposes a lot of listening. Outside facilitators must be good listeners. In accommodation, it was the other way around: the primary agent was the sending-church and the missionary, and it was the sending-church and the missionary who did the accommodating and translating, while the local church had to do the listening. The fact is that the members of the local Christian community are the main evangelizers; they are the "yeast" that must penetrate the whole society, the whole "mass of dough" (Mt 13:33). Applied anthropology suggests ways how to listen and how to activate the yeast and to make it more effective.

Underlying the concept of contextualization is the fact that evangelization is ultimately self-evangelization. This is good theology and the only sound anthropology I am aware of. No metanoia takes place and no direction of cultural change occurs unless the people themselves want the change. Moreover, nothing is truly understood except in terms of one's previous knowledge and experience; all knowledge of Christ is therefore filtered

through one's culture. I am, of course, not denying the existence of human commonalities. Nor am I denying the possibility of education - the possibility of proceeding from the known to the unknown, from the appreciated to the still-unappreciated. But to admit such procedure is an admission of the existence of a cultural filter. Applied anthropology teaches us how in communication and contextualization we must take this filter into consideration. What we are saying is that the best evangelizers are not the best preachers but the best listeners. The Greek philosopher *Epictetus* observed that the Creator has given us two ears but only one mouth so that we would listen twice as much as we would speak. Wise ol' chap, that Epictetus, wise especially as far as mission action is concerned. Every so often I get a letter from missionaries asking me for some guidance with their cultural-pastoral problems. I must sound like a cracked gramophone record because the advice I give is simple and the same: "Get the solution to your pastoral problem from and with your people." They are the ones who know their culture best. This advice also holds for indigenous pastors and religious educators as well. Yes, the best evangelizers are not the best preachers but the best listeners.

The good listener realizes that God has been active in the non-Christian heart long before the Church or missionary appeared on the scene. The sending-church and missionary must listen to the local culture and help the local Christian community build a local church not on a new translated foundation but on the one the God of History in his loving Providence and in his desire for the salvation of all humankind has built.

Anthropology tries to show us how to understand a way of life *emically*, that is, from the insider's point of view. Missionaries untrained in anthropology and unguided in their cultural investigations may be good journalists but more often than not they turn out to be poor ethnographers. Cultural anthropology is the science of culture studied from the insider's perspective. It would be just as foolish for us today to rely exclusively on common sense when dealing with health or illness as it would be for us to rely in mission work on anything less than on a science of culture.

Although there is much that anthropologists do not know about culture, and there is much that is disputed, the greatest contribution made by anthropologists to human knowledge and to mission is their concepts, principles, and theories regarding (1) the nature of culture and (2) its dynamics. Both the nature and dynamics of culture are basic to contextualization. You understand contextualization to the extent that you understand the nature of culture and how culture works.

It is generally recognized in anthropology that culture is a system of ideas learned from and shared with one's society, ideas that enable the society to cope with life's problems affecting all aspects of life, the physical, social, and ideational. Anthropology tells us that culture is the underlying code for behaviour - how one is to think, speak, act, react, and be motivated. Anthro-

pology tells us that there are three levels of culture, while applied anthropology tells us that anyone, like the missionary, whose task is to help direct culture change must keep all three levels in mind. There is, first of all, the surface level of forms or symbols; there is also the second level of culture, that of meaning; and there is the deepest or third level, the psychology of a society, the basic assumptions, attitudes, and goals, the starting-points in reasoning, reacting, and motivating - the so-called "mentality" or "soul" of a people.

The "language" that both God and creature prefer and understand best of all, is the "language" we call "culture." Love of God and love of neighbour is never so genuine as when it is expressed in terms of the society's true symbols, be they verbal or nonverbal. God not only does not insist on uniformity in symbolic expression but actually delights in cultural diversity. With only the essential core of faith unalterable (e.g., the Bible as the revealed Word of God and the essential dimensions of the Church) our obedience to God's law and our love for God and neighbour are usually best expressed in terms of our particular culture. God therefore prefers local forms and symbols.

However, that is not where God's interest lies. He is primarily concerned not so much in the who, what, when, where, how, and what kind (that is, in forms, the type of symbol used, Zulu or Fijian) but much more in the why of culture. The more immediate why, the meanings and functions, occur on the second level, while deeper, underlying whys occur on the third or psychological level. The main concern of contextualization should likewise be the second and third levels of culture. However, most pastors, religious educators, liturgists, and other church workers - indigenous as well as expatriate - and so-called practical missiologists only too often are lost in the first level of culture and tend to overlook the two deeper and more important levels of culture, precisely the two levels stressed in applied anthropology.

Cultural anthropology can be of great assistance to all engaged in mission in getting at the immediate whys of culture - the meanings of symbols - the functions, purposes, prerequisites, presuppositions, reasons for, repercussions, associations with, and any other relationships that a particular form of symbol may have in the given culture.

Cultural anthropology also shows us how to get at the third level of culture - how to analyse the psychology of a people, the rationale underlying the immediate whys, the particular society's set of basic premises, values, and drives.

Anthropology does not stop here: it shows how all constituent parts of culture are tied to one another and work together as a more or less single system. Anyone dealing with the direction of culture change or contextualization must deal with culture as a system.

But cultural anthropology goes even further, well beyond the study of structure. Culture is viewed not only as a system but as a more-or-less living and organic whole. By understanding cultures as a living system, we are able better to direct the integration of the Gospel with the rest of culture - in other words, we are better able to contextualize.

The Gospel, we said earlier, must not merely be translated, not merely transplanted but sown, that is, it must be planted in such a way that faith grows out of the soil with its truly unique characteristics, as unique as the culture itself. Anthropologists refer to this process as integration. What I am trying to emphasize is that the local Christian community must be imaginative and generative, that is, it must be able to express faith values in ever-new, local, and indeed creative ways, constantly adjusting, coping, creating. Faith must reflect a creative imagination and inspiration corresponding to the given time and place, relevant to the local-felt needs, tied in with a people's ways on all three levels of culture. In fact, the Gospel must become the very heart and center of the culture. We are dealing with what anthropologists call "integration" and "the symbolic system."

Some years ago anthropologist *Ward Goodenough* wrote a very enlightening book on community development, a book he entitled *Cooperation in Change* (1963). Is not that what evangelization is, cooperation in change? Applied anthropology, although ignorant about many things, has nevertheless much to offer.⁴ Applied anthropology has much to say about "cooperation in change," a principle as valid for evangelization as it is for community development. In fact, "cooperation in change" is basic to mission action. Not by force or manipulation but by following the promptings of grace and sound socio-cultural principles, the local community must itself become the "leaven" and bring about change from within. Sound missiology and sound anthropology tell us that true conversion, like any form of culture change, is essentially the work of the local people; evangelization is essentially self-evangelization. Applied anthropology tells us that a people will accept as much of the Gospel as it feels it needs and wants.

On the other hand, not the local culture but the Gospel is the ultimate norm of right and wrong. How can this dilemma be solved? In the last analysis it is the culture that must be Christianized, not the Gospel culturized. The answer suggested by applied anthropology is cooperation in change (*Goodenough* 1963) and a tri-polar dialectic (*Schreiter* 1985). Let me explain.

The Christian community under the guidance of sound theology and other fields of knowledge, in communion with the rest of the Body of Christ, and humbly listening to the Holy Spirit enters into a dialogue, into a three-sided dialectic, into a threefold challenge and counter-challenge between its understanding of the Gospel as one pole, the universal Church tradition as another pole, and the local tradition and values as the third pole. This dialectic should not be antagonistic in nature, although it involves considera-

ble tension. It should be deeply cooperative. Like three friendly fellow-students or researchers working on a common problem, the three challenging and counterchallenging each other in a cooperative quest for the answer to the question "What would Christ do and teach if he were born into this culture at this time?" The Christian community is not simply told what the answer is but itself seeks to find the true answer - that is to say, the community sincerely seeks to be fully of the time, fully of the place and fully of "the mind of Christ."

2. The Role of Anthropology in Social Action

Cultural anthropology has an important role to play not only in cross-cultural communication and contextualization, as we have just seen, but also in another major area of mission action, the humanization of peoples.

A Christian, while on earth, is a citizen of two cities; the Christian is in the world even if not of it. A basic constitution of the Kingdom of God, which Christians try to extend, is charity. Concern for building a better world is not a kind of appendage to the Constitution of the Kingdom; it is rather half of the Constitution and a matter of justice. This second part of the Constitution of the Kingdom, we are told, is "like unto the first" (Mt 22:37-39). Social concerns are constitutive. A distinguishing characteristic of God's People must, therefore, be concern for others.

The compassion the Gospel speaks of, and which modern applied anthropology strongly upholds, is not paternalism (i.e., "charity" that humiliates the "beneficiaries" and keeps them in a state of dependence) but charity that offers opportunities for self-reliance, self-respect, and self-fulfilment. That is precisely the basic assumption of modern applied anthropology. As a Chinese proverb has it, "If you give a fish to a hungry man, you feed him once; if you show him how to fish, you feed him forever." Applied anthropology shows us how best to achieve this goal. A whole new field of applied anthropology, for instance, has been developed called Urban Anthropology.⁵ Techniques for analysing social needs of a community are now also available.⁶ A sizable anthropological literature now exists that can be of assistance to missionaries and local Christian communities in their efforts not only how most effectively to preach charity but also how best to live it.⁷

3. The Role of Anthropology in Training for Mission

The third major contribution that Cultural Anthropology might make to mission action is in the area of missionary training and local (clerical and lay) leadership development. Since this topic will be specifically discussed in this conference, I shall be brief. Applied anthropology does not offer mis-

tionary educators recipes for resolving specific problems the way a cook book offers countless recipes to the cook. Rather, the main contribution consists in sensitizing the church worker to the cultural context in which he or she must solve pastoral problems and face mission challenges.

But before I go any further, let me stress the fact that cultural sensitivity is not only for pastors and religious educators in the missions but also for decision makers (bishops and religious superiors), for seminaries and other missionary training programs whether expatriate or indigenous.

But there is one special group in the Society of the Divine Word that should be mentioned that needs cultural anthropology more than perhaps anyone else. I am referring to our missiologists. In my opinion, a missiology degree should not be given to anyone who has not had at least a minor in cultural anthropology - and I mean more than just a smattering of it. In any case, missiologists need anthropology the way our Divine Word anthropologists need missiology, and there must be close communication and cooperation between the two groups. Needless to say it is particularly encouraging to see our Superior General, despite his heavy schedule, taking time out to join us in our deliberations and discussions. We also have missiologists in our midst; mission superiors and key people in missionary training are also represented. This is a good beginning. We are on the right road.

Our present question is: How does anthropology enter into training for mission? I would be the first to admit that anthropology is not a panacea, but I would lay down my life in defense of the claim that it is extremely vital and basic.

Let me once again do what I have often done⁸ and compare training for mission to a triangle. Unless a triangle has three angles it just is not a triangle. The same holds for training for mission: unless the training has three angles it is not the type of training the mission challenge calls for. (1) The first angle we might call "suitability on the personnel and spiritual level." (2) The second angle is "proficiency on the occupational level." (3) The third is what we might call "cross-cultural adaptability." Cultural and applied anthropology play the key role in the third task just mentioned. Let me explain.

You can send a Nobel prize winner to an African village. The Nobel prize winner may be a saintly person and possess an ideal personality in every other way. The Nobel prize winner, being a topnotch agronomist, physician, or educator, would certainly be occupationally and professionally prepared. This promising individual could nevertheless turn out to be a dud as far as mission work is concerned precisely because he or she is unable to apply his or her knowledge and skill to the given socio-cultural context in which the mission action must take place.

Let me say the same thing from a slightly different perspective. Cultural anthropology is indeed a "missionary science" par excellence. There is no other art or science that can help those committed to mission action to divest

themselves of cultural prejudices more surely than this science. No matter what our particular task may be, we are all builders of God's Temple, and as in the case of all builders our two basic tools are the plumbline and the level. The Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn 14:6), the Divine Text, is the plumbline that makes sure that the wall we are constructing is vertically straight. Our level is the particular cultural context. Both of these tools must be applied again and again during the construction, otherwise our building will surely be lopsided and in fact may come tumbling down. Anthropology teaches us how to use that indispensable tool called "level" or "culture." We may be expert educators, agronomists, nurses or doctors, expert theologians, canonists, or scripture scholar - unless that third angle has been taken care of, we might turn out to be very dangerous "experts" indeed.

Conclusion

Anthropology offers us the key to effective communication and contextualization; it offers us the key to directing socio-economic change; and it offers us one of the three basic aspects of mission training. Let's use that key.

Notes

¹ Jacob A. Loewen, "Religion, Drives, and the Place Where It Itches," in *Practical Anthropology* 1967, 14:49-72.

² The opposite of inculturation is translation. Inculturation, however, does not make translation unnecessary. Even today a certain amount of translation from one culture to another is unavoidable and necessary, especially in the initial stages of church planting and in interfaith dialogue.

³ See, for instance, Joseph Gremillion, editor, *The Church and Culture since Vatican II* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985) and H. Carrier, *Évangile et culture de León XIII à Jean-Paul II* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana/Paris: Mediaspaul, 1987).

⁴ Examples of some outstanding, very readable works in applied anthropology are such classics as: Edward H. Spicer, editor, *Human Problems in Technological Change* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1952); Benjamin D. Paul, editor, *Health, Culture, and Community* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1955); Ward Hunt Goode-nough, *Cooperation in Change: An Anthropological Approach to Community Development* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1963); Conrad M. Arcensberg and Arthur H. Niehoff, *Introducing Social Change* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1964); George M. Foster, *Applied Anthropology* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969); George M. Foster, *Traditional Societies and Technological Change* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973). See also infra, Note 7.

THE ROLE OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN SVD FORMATION

James Knight

Introduction

Theoretically, the importance of anthropology for the members of the Society of the Divine Word is easy enough to demonstrate. The number of our men working cross-culturally demands that our members have a solid background in anthropology. The long tradition of the Society in the field of anthropology recommends anthropology as an obvious pursuit for the members. And the greatest reason, the reality of the Incarnation forces a member of the Society of the Divine Word to take the human condition with utter seriousness and, surely, to pursue the study of that condition through a science like anthropology.¹ If this is so, why are so many SVD confreres indifferent, and a few even opposed, to the study of anthropology?

Some indifference and opposition comes from the fear of having well-established positions and practices challenged by the findings of anthropological research. Some is the result of bewilderment. How does a pastor or lecturer use the explosion of highly specialized and often contradicting information with which earnest anthropologists keep him supplied? And, then, amongst SVD confreres there is the feeling of having been betrayed by our SVD anthropology. Rightly or wrongly, many confreres perceive our SVD anthropologists and anthropological enterprise as having deserted the missionary in the field for the pursuit of recognition in the halls of academia.

The above attitudes are either corrected or reinforced in our formation programmes; and hence it is timely to take a harder look at the role of anthropology within our initial and ongoing formation. Because so many of the difficulties we face are in the area of attitudes, I have decided to proceed by trying to mark out the common ground amongst confreres and then venturing to more controversial subjects.

1. The Common Ground

From my discussions with missionaries in the field and missionary formators, I believe there is a set of concepts dealing with social, political, economic and religious realities which must be the property of every missionary. A solid understanding of kinship and how it affects marriage and family life is an absolute necessity. Similarly, the elements of leadership and political organizations, as they affect a clan, tribe or nation, are essential to effective missionary work. In the area of economic life, a missionary needs

⁵ Aidan S. Connall, editor, *Urban Anthropology: Cross-Cultural Studies of Urbanization* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁶ Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J., *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983).

⁷ For more recent information on the state of the art and future directions of applied anthropology we refer the reader to such works as: Erve Chambers, *Applied Anthropology: A Practical Guide* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1985); the American Anthropological Association's Special Publication, *Training Manual in Development Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: 1984); Walter Goldschmidt, editor, *The Uses of Anthropology* (1979); Elizabeth M. Eddy and William L. Partridge, editors, *Applied Anthropology in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); Peggy Reeves Sanday, editor, *Anthropology and the Public Interest: Fieldwork and Theory* (New York, San Francisco, London: Academic Press, 1976).

⁸ See the author's earlier publications, "Cross-Cultural Missionary Preparation," in *Trends and Issues*, no. 1, *Missionary Formation* (Epworth, Iowa: Divine Word College, 1985) and "Understanding 'Cross-Cultural Sensitivity': An Aid to the Identification of Objectives and Tasks of Missionary Training," in *Verbum SVD*, 1975, 16:3-25.