

PART I

THE PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER 1

WHY ANTHROPOLOGY FOR CROSS-CULTURAL WITNESSES?

INTEGRATIONAL THOUGHT

A key question for Christians who study anthropology is, What is God's view of culture? I believe we have our answer in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22, where Paul articulates his (and God's) approach to cultural diversity:

I am a free man, nobody's slave; but I make myself everybody's slave in order to win as many people as possible. While working with the Jews, I live like a Jew in order to win them; and even though I myself am not subject to the Law of Moses, I live as though I were when working with those who are, in order to win them. In the same way, when working with Gentiles, I live like a Gentile, outside the Jewish Law, in order to win Gentiles. This does not mean that I don't obey God's law; I am really under Christ's law. Among the weak in faith I become weak like one of them, in order to win them. So I become all things to all men, that I may save some of them by whatever means are possible.

From the very beginning of Scripture, God has shown Himself willing to work with people *within* their cultural frames of reference. He has always worked in terms of Jewish culture to reach Jews. Through Paul, He states what is illustrated

in the Book of Acts—that He wants to accept Gentiles within their cultures also, without the necessity of their changing cultures in order to do things in a way that is acceptable to Him.

If we are to take a scriptural approach, we are to adapt ourselves and our presentation of God's message to the culture of the receiving people. If we demand that they become like us in order to be acceptable to God, we, like most of the early Jewish Christians (see Acts 15:1), have misrepresented God. We, the witnesses, are to make the cultural adjustments, not they, the potential respondents.

As we begin this study of anthropology for Christian witness, we are seeking to learn how to be as open to cultural differences as God is. As we see from 1 Corinthians, the desire of God is that we adapt to cultural differences. The early believers, however, were Jewish. They, therefore, naturally believed that the cultural context in which they received the Gospel was to be normative for all others. That is, if one is to come to Jesus, he or she must also convert to Jewish culture.

The Apostle Paul, though Jewish himself, learned otherwise. As pointed out in the above text, he chose to live like a Gentile when working with Gentiles, lest they get the impression that God's message was simply about culture change. And in Acts 15:2ff we find him arguing fiercely against the majority position of the early Church for the right of Gentiles to follow Jesus within their own sociocultural contexts. God Himself had shown first Peter (Acts 10), then Paul and Barnabas, that this was the right way by giving the Holy Spirit to Gentiles who had not converted to Jewish culture (Acts 13–14).

But the Church has continually forgotten the lesson of Acts 15. We have continually reverted to the assumption that becoming Christian means becoming like us culturally. A major component of the Protestant Reformation was the discovery that God would accept people who spoke German and worshiped in German ways. They did not all have to convert to Roman language and customs. The discovery that God was pleased to use English language and custom was a part of the Anglican break with Rome, and when Wesley moved away from Anglicanism, it was to a great extent in recognition of the fact that God accepted the common people of England as they were culturally.

One of our major aims in this approach to the study of anthropology is to learn to protect the people of other societies from our own inclination to make them like us. It is a sad fact that, though Paul learned from the Holy Spirit to be a Jew to Jews and a Gentile to Gentiles, many of today's cross-cultural witnesses have not learned that approach. We pray that the Holy Spirit will use anthropological insight in our day to show us how we are to go about adapting ourselves and our presentation of the message of God to those immersed in other cultures.

INTRODUCTION

For many Christians, the term *anthropology* is either an unknown term or one that they associate with those who attack Christianity. It is often seen by them as a discipline that advocates evolution and ethical relativism and is often regarded as anti-Christian. In fact, I often have people ask me, "How can you be both an anthropologist and a Christian?"

Anthropology has not ordinarily been a part of Bible school or seminary curricula, either in Euroamerica or in the Two-Thirds World. For many Christians, it has an anti-Christian reputation. Why, then, require it for contemporary mission-

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aries, national church workers, and others whose primary concern is to communicate the Gospel and lead God's people in the Two-Thirds World?

I once asked this question myself. In my first year at a Christian college, I began to inquire of upperclassmen concerning what I should specialize in. I wanted a subject that would prepare me for missionary work. After receiving a number of suggestions, I came upon a student who was planning to become a missionary himself. In response to my question, he replied simply, "There's only one subject for a prospective missionary to specialize in." I said, "What's that?" "Anthropology," he answered. And I said again, "What's that?" I had never heard of anthropology before. His answer, though, showed me that he had thought this thing out and really knew what he was talking about.

He pointed out that our western college curricula are pretty out of balance. Though things have improved a bit now, at that time (early 1950s) every subject except one dealt almost exclusively with the western world. If we studied history, we studied European and American history, as if the rest of the world had no history. If we studied philosophy or literature or languages, we studied Euroamerican philosophy or literature or languages. Even specializing in Bible meant we were specializing in the interpretation of the Bible from a Euroamerican point of view. Only one subject, my friend said, aims at dealing with the other thousands of cultures of the world: anthropology. That, he said, is the only subject that will give a prospective missionary the help needed in preparation for going "into all the world."

I regard this as some of the most important advice I have ever received, and I'd like to pass it on to you in the form of the following ten reasons why anthropology is a crucial area of study for cross-cultural witnesses like yourselves.

Before I do, though, let me say a word to those of you who are not Europeans or Americans. You may assume that since you are already from the Two-Thirds World, you don't need a subject like this. After all, you are working in your own language and culture and so don't need to learn about other cultures. Or perhaps you have already learned and worked in several languages and cultures. So you wonder what a subject like this could possibly contribute to your ministry.

You will discover a number of things on your own, but let me just mention two benefits that past generations of international students have shared with me.

(1) Even though you come from non-European languages and cultures, you have been rather thoroughly westernized through the schooling you have received. Usually this schooling (plus the tremendous impression western societies make in the area of technology) leaves internationals with some sort of inferiority complex. This study will help you to overcome many of the harmful effects of that inferiority complex and realize that your own culture is not inferior to western culture. One Chinese student said to me recently, "You're making me proud to be Chinese!" I pray that this book has the same effect on you.

2. Though you may be communicating the Gospel to "your own people" in "your own language," one result of your western schooling has been to separate you culturally from the traditional people around you. The way this works in many parts of the world is that there develops a westernized segment of the population that is in most ways quite distinct from the traditional segment of the population. They all speak the same language but live on opposite sides of a very definite cultural boundary. You may wonder why you have such a difficult time really communicating with the traditional people in your society. In fact, you may find yourself look-

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ing down on them and expecting them to become like you before they can really experience Christianity. This is, of course, the way the early Jewish Christians felt about the Gentiles. They didn't realize that they were imposing cultural, not spiritual, requirements on the Gentiles in the name of Jesus.

In this book we are just as much concerned with such cross-cultural (or cross-subcultural) problems between members of the same language group as we are with the problems faced by those of us from the West who call ourselves missionaries. Both westernized internationals and we from the West are faced with the problems of cross-cultural witness. This book is, therefore, directed to all of us.

Let's, then, begin answering our question, Why anthropology for cross-cultural witnesses?

1. ANTHROPOLOGY ATTEMPTS TO DEAL WITH WHAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY DO AND THINK

Anthropology is a *behavioral science*. This means that anthropologists attempt to study what human beings do, how they behave. We try to avoid (not always successfully) simply philosophizing about what people ought to do. Anthropologists try to discover and describe what is there before they start theorizing about what ought to be there. Other sciences classified as behavioral sciences are sociology, psychology, linguistics, and communication science.

Anthropologists are interested in people's total behavior, not just how people think. Many academic disciplines spend almost all their time dealing with how people think. Anthropologists are interested in how people think but also in what people do in their everyday activities. This includes their work, their rituals, their child rearing, their play, their music and art, their religion, their philosophizing, their education, their politics, their food getting, their family organization. In short, we are interested in everything people do and think in their ordinary lives. There is nothing that people are involved in that anthropologists aren't interested in.

This kind of realism is very important to cross-cultural witnesses. We are (or ought to be) concerned with people *as they are*. We want, then, to communicate Christian messages (messages from God) to them in those terms.

Unfortunately, many of us have gone out to work with peoples of other societies with rather unrealistic (often negative) views of what people in these societies do and think. Without trying to understand the reasons behind their customs, we often simply say, "People shouldn't practice such a custom." We take a negative attitude toward that custom, condemn it, and act as if we know God's will in the matter. This is done without even attempting to understand or to show the kind of love and acceptance that God has showed us in spite of some of the things we practice.

God wants us to treat others as we would want to be treated if we were in their position (Lk 6:31). We need, therefore, to find out where people actually are, try to understand them, and accept them as God has accepted us. Anthropological study is a human tool that enables us to start where God wants us to start. We thus gain freedom from our own cultural biases to be the kind of cross-cultural witnesses God desires.

Such study can enable us to learn about the people we seek to reach before we make too many mistakes. It can help us find out their point of view, their understandings of life, and to approach them with the Gospel in terms of what their per-

ception of reality is, rather than in terms of our understandings. Anthropology can be a great help in this area since it is a behavioral, not a philosophical, science.

As a footnote to this discussion, let me note that anthropologists are not always successful in their attempts to observe and record correctly what people actually do and think. Anthropologists make many mistakes in their work. We, like all other people, are often misled by our presuppositions. Many of you from the Two-Thirds World have read anthropological descriptions of your cultures that are quite inaccurate at many points. It must, however, be said that usually descriptions of nonwestern cultures done by non-anthropologists (travelers, government officials, and even missionaries) are even less accurate than those done by anthropologists. Anthropologists are not always right, but their insights can often be very helpful to us as cross-cultural communicators of the Gospel.

2. ANTHROPOLOGY HISTORICALLY HAS DEALT PRIMARILY WITH NONWESTERN PEOPLES

As my college friend pointed out to me, the division of labor in western academics is a very strange one for our present world. In western universities we have a wide variety of academic specialties. Among them are philosophy, religion, literature, history, sociology, psychology. These all deal largely with one small group of societies, often referred to as if they practiced one culture called "western culture." Judging from the number of distinct languages that have been counted in the world (approximately 6,000), we can estimate that there are at least 6,000 separate cultures in the world, and I suspect this estimate is quite low.

But western academic interest developed before westerners were much concerned with studying the rest of the world, so each of these disciplines was developed within the very limited perspectives of this handful of western societies, with little or no concern for the rest of the world except as westerners bumped into its peoples (in conquest, trade, or missionary work) or as those peoples bumped into the West (as when some nonwestern group would attack a western group).

Such a very limited perspective on the world has been particularly damaging in two respects:

① It has tended to perpetuate the ignorance of westerners who have sought to relate to people in other societies. We fall into all kinds of misunderstanding of other people's customs and the myth of the presumed superiority of our customs to those of other peoples.

② When exported as has been widely done through western schools, such western perspectives have led many nonwesterners to look up to western societies and to look down on their own. Indeed, nonwesterners studying in western schools have often learned more about the history, literature, technology, music, language, economics, education of the colonial power than they have of these aspects of their own society.

As westerners came into more frequent contact with peoples of other societies, whether through colonialism, trade, travel or missionary endeavor, some began to develop a new academic discipline called anthropology. The purpose of this new discipline was to study the remainder of the 6,000 sociocultural entities not dealt with by the other disciplines. The division of labor is a strange one in our day. We have many academic disciplines dealing with one small group of closely related societies, while only one academic discipline deals with all the rest. Anthropology

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is, therefore, particularly important to those of us who work in any of these other societies or languages, since anthropology has been the only academic discipline focusing specially on them.

Having said that, I should note that there has been a change fairly recently. You'll find, for example, that in good-sized universities nowadays history departments that once only dealt with western history sometimes have specialists in the history of the Orient, the Middle East, or other nonwestern areas. Sometimes they will have someone who specializes in "ethnohistory." This is history from a perspective that is influenced by anthropology. Likewise with music. Sometimes you will find an "ethnomusicologist," one who studies the music of nonwestern societies. Occasionally you will even find people specializing in ethnobotany, ethnomedicine, ethnoart, ethnopsychology, oral literature, and the like. Such scholars have usually been influenced by anthropology.

Anthropology is important to cross-cultural witnesses because it deals primarily with these other thousands of societies in the world.

3. ANTHROPOLOGY HAS DEVELOPED THE CULTURE CONCEPT

As Louis Luzbetak has said, "The concept of culture is . . . the anthropologist's most significant contribution to the missionary endeavor" (1963:59). All down through history there have been very important discussions about whether people are more influenced by their biological heritage or by their environment. When anthropology came along, we began to discover that we must take biological heritage seriously. Then there is the environment around us. That also has to be taken seriously.

But there is something in between the physical and the environmental, something intangible but very real and very influential in human life. This is the thing we call "culture." It consists of all the things that we learn after we are born into the world that enable us to function effectively as biological beings in the environment. We are each carefully indoctrinated from before birth into the patterns of behavior that the adults around us feel to be appropriate. By the time we become aware of what's going on, we have already been pressed into a cultural mold. Though anthropology is not the only discipline that deals with culture, anthropologists have contributed most to our understandings of the concept. In fact, one definition of anthropology is that anthropology is the discipline that studies human culture.

As we learn our culture, we organize ourselves biologically and environmentally according to it. Human biology requires that we eat. Each environment provides a certain range of edibles and imposes limitations (no bananas in the Arctic) that tend to keep us from obtaining other edibles. But it is in terms of our cultural patterns that we choose to eat certain things (e.g., beef) provided in our environment and refuse to eat other things (e.g., cat meat). We ordinarily follow cultural guidelines concerning what to eat, where, how often, at what times, and with what implements (fingers, forks, chopsticks, tortillas).

Human biology requires that we sleep. Our environment provides various possibilities and limitations (darkness, different types of material on which to sleep). But we follow cultural structuring, not biology or environment, in deciding when, where, and on what (if anything) we sleep, as well as who (if anybody) we sleep with and in what positions. Environment often dictates that we protect our bodies.

(e.g., from weather). But it is cultural patterning that we follow in deciding what (if any) clothing and housing we use and when and how we use it. Furthermore, with respect to any given aspect of environment or biology, it is the values of our culture that we follow when deciding either to submit to such forces or to try to master and rearrange them.

As we will learn later, anthropologists regard cultures as essentially equal to one another. They find no evidence of any given cultural structuring that is superior to any other in every respect. It looks, rather, as though one structuring can be rated superior to another in certain aspects but will fall below that other structuring in other aspects. Anthropologists don't believe it is right to line cultures up in a sequence from supposedly "inferior" to supposedly "superior" as westerners have tended to do.

Popularly, however, westerners have looked at the cultures and the peoples of the Two-Thirds World and often called them "primitive" or "underdeveloped" because they don't do things the same way we do. We have often then lined up the cultures of the world so that those that look technologically most like ours are considered "superior," while those that look technologically least like ours are at the bottom end of the scale. This is our ethnocentric way of looking at things. Anthropologists, of course, cannot agree.

Well-functioning societies appear to be reasonably adequate for meeting the needs the people within the culture consider to be important. Even healthy societies, however, do not ever seem perfect or without flaws. Nor do they provide for meeting every conceivable need. There always seem to be loose ends, areas where people are left dissatisfied, even when the cultural structures are working well. Increasingly, though, the intense culture contact of modern days is resulting in widespread inadequacies in the patterns of life (cultures) people have been taught. People are left, then, with customs that don't work in modern situations and develop social and psychological problems that defy the best efforts of scientists and governments to solve.

Whether the people we deal with live with adequate or inadequate cultural structuring, cross-cultural witnesses for Christ need to know all they can about culture and its relationships to people. Most of the rest of this book will be devoted to this subject.

4. ANTHROPOLOGY TAKES A HOLISTIC VIEW OF PEOPLE

To deal adequately with culture, anthropologists must be concerned with the people who live according to cultural patterns. Most other academic disciplines, of course, deal with people. But anthropology treats people in what we call a "holistic" manner. That is, we try to deal with the whole range of human behavior within one discipline. Rather than segmenting humans into various compartments such as psychology, religion, philosophy, history, language, science, and so forth, anthropologists try to look at the whole spectrum together. What we try to do is to discover and integrate all that can be known about the relationships between human beings and the cultural patterning in which they live. We try to be holistic and integrative with respect to human behavior, rather than specializing in a single aspect of it.

In many ways, anthropology may be called interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in comparison to the more traditional "monodisciplinary" approaches to

studying human beings. We who have been through western schooling have traditionally studied specific topics related to human life in the West. Our scholars have led us to specialize in subjects such as the philosophy of western people, the religion of western people, the literature of western people, and so on. In the West, we are fond of dividing even human beings into such compartments.

Anthropology, however, tries to reverse this trend to a certain extent and to deal with human beings in a holistic sense. This is partly because anthropology is more focused on human beings as its subject, whereas the other disciplines are focused primarily on their topics. It is, however, also because anthropology has taken a cross-cultural approach to the whole curriculum (see next point). Whatever has to do with human beings, especially cross-culturally, is a part of anthropology. This makes anthropology perhaps the most holistic and comprehensive discipline there is.

One part of anthropology even deals with the biological and physical aspects of human beings: "physical anthropology." We will only deal with a part of this subdiscipline (in chapter 7). Another part of anthropology, "anthropological linguistics," deals with the languages of people. Other subsegments of anthropology deal with archeology (the cultures of people in the past), ethnology (or cultural anthropology), and applied anthropology. We will be primarily concerned with the last two of these subdisciplines.

People are like fish swimming in cultural water. Whether it is us or God dealing with people, the cultures in which people exist must be taken into account. People must, furthermore, be treated holistically. The holism of anthropology is, therefore, another crucial dimension for cross-cultural witnesses.

5. ANTHROPOLOGY IS A PERSPECTIVE, NOT SIMPLY A SUBJECT

It follows from what we have been saying that anthropology is consciously different from other academic disciplines in a number of ways. I would say, though, that the most important of these differences (at least for our purposes) is the difference in perspective. By dealing holistically with people in terms of their involvements in culture, and by being informed in this quest primarily by the experience of studying people in nonwestern societies, anthropologists come to look at people from a different perspective, a different point of view. This we call a *cross-cultural perspective*.

So, the fifth thing we want to say is that anthropology is valuable to cross-cultural witnesses because it seeks to generalize about human behavior from the vantage point of this cross-cultural perspective. That is, it seeks to generate insights into how human beings behave based on experience with people in many cultures. *A cross-cultural perspective is a point of view that attempts to understand and make generalizations about what people are like based on what we have discovered about the interactions of the thousands of peoples of the world with the thousands of distinct cultural structurings in which they live their lives.*

This perspective contrasts with what we call a *monocultural perspective*, in which the point of view is based on the limitations imposed by one's own culture, with little or no attempt to get beyond those limitations. We will deal more with this contrast in chapter 5.

As indicated above, most western academic disciplines work from a monocultural perspective. Those specializing in these areas have typically had no experi-

ence in another culture, so they generalize on the basis of the experience they have had within western culture(s). One example of this is the generalization that has often been made (both by scholars and nonscholars) that teenagers just naturally rebel against their parents. By this they mean that such behavior is a biological given for all teenagers of all societies. There is, of course, a good bit of evidence to prove that teenagers do rebel against their parents within western societies. A monocultural perspective, having no understanding of data from nonwestern societies, generalizes that this is a basic human characteristic.

Anthropologists, however, have found that such rebellion, though very real in western (and westernizing) societies, is not a biological phenomenon but a cultural one. They collected data on this topic from a wide variety of different societies, assuming that if teenage rebellion is a part of inherent human nature (biologically produced), it would be found in each of these ways of life. If, however, teenage rebellion is a cultural thing, it will only be found in those societies that in some way produce it.

They found that in many of the traditional societies they studied, the transition to adulthood was a fairly smooth one. Indeed, the teenagers in those societies wanted so much to be like their parents that, far from rebelling against them, they were actively and happily imitating them. Since they wanted to be like them, rather than unlike them (as is true with many western young people), the transition was very smooth.

The conclusion, then, is that western teenagers *learn* to rebel against adults. Somehow, in the process of growing up, they are taught patterns of behavior that lead them to challenge their parents and, often, others of their parents' generation. This ideally results in constructive self-determination on the part of the adolescents. It causes no end of consternation for the parents, however.

Learning to look from a cross-cultural perspective at how we train our youth (as we will do in chapter 17) would at least alert people to some of the major causes for this situation. Hopefully such an approach will suggest possible solutions, as well. We will be employing this cross-cultural perspective to attempt to analyze and point to solutions for quite a number of the problems of cross-cultural witness and cultural life in general as we proceed through this book.

Overall, we can expect major benefits from a cross-cultural perspective in at least four areas:

1. Understanding and interpreting ourselves in our own sociocultural matrix.
2. Understanding and interpreting those to whom we go in their sociocultural matrix.
3. Understanding and interpreting the Bible, couched as it is in the cultural patterns of other times and places. Since all that is reported there happened in societies other than our own, interpreting the Bible is a cross-cultural problem.
4. Understanding how best to communicate a message given to us in cultural forms other than ours to people who live by customs and assumptions other than ours.

Since everything we do with people and with the Bible faces us with cultural issues, we all can profit much from taking a cross-cultural perspective. Westerners and the westernized can especially be helped, since most of the cultures of the world (including those of the Bible) are more like each other than any is to western cultures. There is, however, much in contemporary cultures that helps us to better understand the events recorded in the Scriptures. Anthropology, then, becomes a

very important tool in arriving at helpful interpretations both of life in general and of the Bible itself.

6. ANTHROPOLOGY FOCUSES ON COMMUNICATION

A sixth important contribution of anthropology to cross-cultural ministry is its focus on the elements of human behavior that relate to communication. Anthropology tries to understand people in relationships, and a major part of human relationships is communication. In fact, the quality of the relationships is tied closely to the quality of the communication. Communicational topics such as perception, felt needs, acceptance and appreciation of people of other societies and the like are, therefore, important focuses in the study of anthropology.

As cross-cultural workers, our aim is first to understand the people to whom we go. When we come to understand the people in their culture, then we are in a better position to communicate the Gospel in such a way that they will not misunderstand it. We hope that understanding will bring acceptance of the Gospel, but this does not necessarily happen. Indeed, understanding may result in them rejecting the message. As with the man called the Rich Young Ruler (Lk 18:18-22), they may reject the message not because they misunderstand but precisely because they understand and are not willing to pay the price.

Unfortunately, as we look at Christianity around the world, we find there have been many people who have responded positively on the basis of misunderstanding. There are also many who have rejected Christianity because they misunderstood it. It is our desire to apply the insights of anthropology in such a way that people will understand the message. Whether they accept or reject, it will be on the basis of understanding, not misunderstanding.

Anthropology can help us go even farther: it can help us communicate the Gospel in a way that our hearers will feel meets their felt needs. Anthropological study of a people can expose to our view needs that the receptors already feel and alert us to ways in which the good news from God can be applied to the meeting of these needs. It can enable us to communicate the Gospel to them in such a way that they will say, "Here is the answer to a need that I am already feeling."

7. ANTHROPOLOGY DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN FORMS AND MEANINGS

A seventh important contribution is that anthropology deals with the relationship between cultural forms and their meanings. There has been a considerable amount of confusion among Christians (and others) concerning the nature of the cultural forms (e.g., rituals and ceremonies) that we use regularly. Many assume that forms such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, and even preaching and other church customs are sacred in and of themselves. But an anthropological perspective helps us realize that the form or ritual is important not because the form itself is sacred, but because the meanings that may flow through that form are sacred. It is idolatry to exalt the form to a position where our focus is on it rather than on what God seeks to communicate through that form. An anthropological perspective can, therefore, provide protection against idolatry.

As an example, let us take the cultural form called monologue preaching. Many have gone to a people and sought to communicate to them through mono-

logue preaching, assuming that that cultural form—standing up and monologuing—is a Christian thing. They do not realize that lecturing like that is simply a cultural form that may be used for Christian purposes or may be used for non-Christian purposes. There is nothing sacred about the cultural form we call “preaching.” Likewise with the cultural forms we call “baptism,” “The Lord’s Supper,” and “sacred music.” Any sacredness lies only in the meanings that can flow through these forms when they are properly used. Though the proper forms must be chosen if the meanings are to be right, that choice needs to be based on how the receptors interpret the form in their context. Forms that properly convey given meanings in one cultural context often convey different meanings in another culture. We will deal with this matter in considerable detail as we go along (especially in chapters 2 and 9).

8. ANTHROPOLOGY HAS DEVELOPED THE CONCEPT OF WORLDVIEW

Culture consists of two levels: the surface behavior level and the deep worldview level. At the core of culture and, therefore, at the very heart of all human life, lies the structuring of the basic assumptions, values, and allegiances in terms of which people interpret and behave. These assumptions, values, and allegiances we call worldview.

With regard to *assumptions*: When we from the West assume that the only personal beings in a given room are the ones we can see, we are following a worldview assumption taught us as we learned our culture. Or, when those from the Two-Thirds World assume that in a given room there are many very active personal beings that we cannot see (spiritual beings), they are following a different worldview assumption—one taught them as they learned their cultures.

With regard to *values*: When we from the West value individual rights and freedoms, capitalistic economics, democratic government based on 51 percent votes, high mobility, interpersonal competitiveness, and so on, we are following our worldview values. When members of other societies value family loyalty above individual privilege, government by consensus requiring 100 percent votes by certain leaders, bartering that places a high premium on the developing of a personal relationship between the barterers, the suppressing of competitiveness, and so forth, they are following the worldview values of their own cultures.

With regard to *allegiances*: When we in the West commit our loyalty primarily to ourselves, secondly to our jobs, thirdly to friends, fourthly to country or some organization, fifthly to family, and only sixthly (if at all) to God, we are following our worldview prioritizing of allegiances. For members of other societies, allegiance to family often comes first, with allegiance to job or nation far down on the list.

Whether in the area of the assumptions from which behavior springs, or in the area of what is positively or negatively valued, or in the area of allegiances, worldview provides the structuring in terms of which people govern their behavior. As such, it is of primary concern to anthropologists.

Christian anthropologists are especially concerned about worldview, since it is a person or group’s worldview that is at stake whenever an appeal for conversion (whether to Christianity or any other ideology) is made. When people become Christians, they make certain changes in their deep-level worldview assumptions,

values, and allegiances. The importance for cross-cultural witnesses to understand such a concept and approach people in terms of such an understanding cannot be overestimated. We will devote chapter 4 and several of the later chapters to various aspects of worldview and worldview change.

9. ANTHROPOLOGY HAS DEVELOPED THE RESEARCH METHOD MOST HELPFUL TO CHRISTIAN WORKERS

A ninth area where anthropology can be of great help to us is in discovering insight into human behavior on the field, for anthropology uses the field method that is of greatest usefulness to cross-cultural workers: *participant observation*. It has been traditional for scholars to do their research either in libraries or, in the case of the laboratory sciences, in laboratories, but anthropologists find it very difficult to study people that way. You can't put people into test tubes or into books. Long ago, anthropologists discovered that there aren't books written on most of the peoples they sought to study, so they had to develop a way of learning about people by studying people themselves in field situations.

Anthropology has said that in order to study people, we have to observe people by living with them and participating with them in their everyday life. We must live with them, learn their language, and do as much as we can to learn to look at the world from their point of view. We need to discover what their assumptions are concerning reality and ask ourselves questions such as, "If I assumed reality to be what they assume it to be, how would the world look to me? And if it looked that way to me, how would I behave?" On the basis of the understandings gained through seeking answers to such questions, applied anthropologists (including missionaries) have often been able to help people discover answers to problems they previously could not solve.

This field method is particularly appropriate for Christian cross-cultural workers. We want to find out what the world is like from their point of view. We also want to discover what they feel to be needs not now solved by the cultural practices they have been taught. We then want to communicate the Gospel to them in ways that will be meaningful to them from within that point of view and in relation to those needs. We will deal further with this anthropological field method in chapter 28.

10. ANTHROPOLOGY DEALS WITH CULTURE CHANGE

The final thing that I want to mention is that anthropology has come to a good bit of understanding of the processes of culture change. It used to be thought that traditional peoples do not change their cultures much, if at all. Even now we occasionally read in the newspapers about some society that has supposedly remained unchanged for thousands of years. But such reports are not written by anthropologists. Anthropologists know that no people has left its culture unchanged for even one year, much less for a thousand years.

There are, of course, societies that change their customs more rapidly (like western and westernizing societies) and those that change less rapidly (like societies that are more or less isolated from contact with other peoples). But there is no such thing as a culture that has not been changed over a given length of time. All

peoples are changing their cultures at all times. The only things to be investigated, then, are the hows and whys of change.

As Christian witnesses, we are eager to see certain changes take place among the peoples with whom we work. It is important, however, that such changes take place in ways that will be less disruptive rather than more disruptive to the people. The wrong kinds of change or too rapid change can often be seriously disruptive even if brought by well-meaning people. A study of anthropology should enable us to understand the processes of culture change so that we can work for the kinds of change that Christianity asks for in ways that are less disruptive rather than in ways that are more disruptive. By learning what anthropology has to offer in this area, we can learn to work constructively and often in terms of the change processes already going on, rather than destructively and counter to those processes. In this way, Christianity can be built on the foundation already provided by the society rather than in opposition to what the people are already familiar with. Chapters 22-26 deal with issues of cultural and worldview change.

These are ten reasons why it is important for all who seek to witness wisely in cross-cultural contexts to study anthropology. You will discover many more reasons as we go along. Many of us who train people for cross-cultural ministries feel that anthropology is both the most important and, usually, the most neglected of the areas that should be required. Since everything we do and think, plus everything done and thought by those to whom we go, plus everything recorded in the Scriptures, is totally affected by culture, we can at least contend that no one should attempt to work cross-culturally for Christ without a pretty solid understanding of culture. And that is what anthropology is about.

So we seek in this text to develop from a Christian perspective certain crucially important anthropological insights into three areas:

1. The people to whom we go in their cultures,
2. Ourselves within our culture, and
3. The biblical message presented within the biblical cultures.

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