



One Significant Solution: How Anthropology Became  
the Number One Study For Evangelical Missionaries  
**Part I: Anthropology and Mission:  
The Incarnational Connection**

by *Darrell L. Whiteman*

“**G**ood missionaries have always been good ‘anthropologists,’” is the opening line of Eugene Nida’s classic text, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions* (1954), published nearly a half century ago. In this address I will explore why Nida’s comment is so profoundly true, and why anthropology still has an important role to play in 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian mission.<sup>1</sup>

God’s mission to the world in the present era of globalization takes on forms that are very different from yesterday’s missionary activity in the heyday of colonialism. In fact, appropriate forms of mission today are so different from yesterday that some people believe that because we are becoming a global village, we no longer need the insights from anthropology that help us understand and appreciate cultural differences. The erroneous assumption is that the world is quickly melding into a homogeneous global village with capitalism as its economic engine and English as its language of discourse. But this is not happening, at least not very quickly. Cultural diversity is heightened, not flattened, and so I will argue that the present era of mission needs insights from anthropology as much, if not more, than any previous period of missionary activity (cf. Whiteman 1996). Moreover, I’ll propose that there are biblical and theological reasons for maintaining a close connection between anthropology and mission. We’ll begin with a historical overview of the relationship between anthropology and mission, proceed to discussing the importance of anthropology for mission, and conclude with a discussion of the Incarnation as a model for mission and why anthropology, therefore, has an important role to play in mission today.

***In the Beginning: The Emergence of Anthropology as a Discipline***

Anthropology began as armchair social philosophers in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century speculated on the origin of human beings, their religion, and their culture. Evolutionary thought was in the air, and belief in human progress was undaunted. The Enlightenment that followed on the heels of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries created an intellectual climate of religious skepticism. The Divine role in the creation of human society and its institutions was now questioned. Culture was seen as contingent

---

*Darrell L. Whiteman is Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Dean of the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism at Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. His cross-cultural research and mission have been primarily in Central Africa and Melanesia*

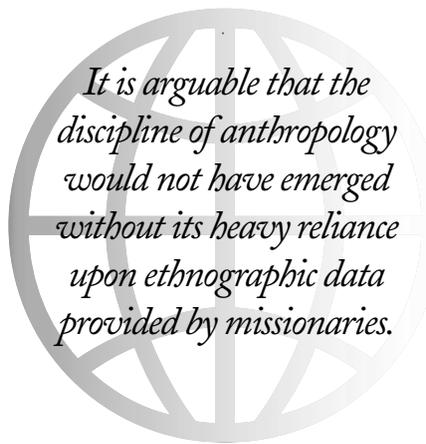
rather than absolute, historically created rather than eternal, and humanly designed and managed instead of divinely given (Taber 2000:18). With advances in exploration of the globe and the colonization of exotic places in the world, the sheer enormity of human and cultural diversity called for some kind of “scientific” explanation.

Anthropologists rose to the occasion. Literalist interpretations of biblical explanations for the origin and diversity of human beings were increasingly called into question. Early anthropology was driven by an evolutionary paradigm that conjectured that human societies, including religion, marriage, kinship, and other aspects of culture, evolved from homogeneous to heterogeneous, from simple to complex (Spencer 1873). Within this evolutionary framework, anthropologists attempted to make sense out of the bewildering and exotic diversity of peoples and their cultures being discovered around the world.

For example, Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917), recognized today as the founding father of anthropology, partly because he occupied the first chair of anthropology at Oxford, developed a scheme where he proposed that religion evolved from initial animism, which is the belief in spirits, to polytheism, and eventually to monotheism. Tylor had no personal use for religion and in fact derided theologians. As a product of the Enlightenment, he was convinced that through rational thought “primitive” people would evolve into civilized people. Lewis Henry Morgan (*Ancient Society*, 1877) developed a universal evolutionary scheme that put humanity on three rungs of the evolutionary ladder: savages, barbarians, and civilized. James G. Frazer argued that human beings progressed from belief in magic, to belief in religion, and eventually to science. E. B. Tylor’s 1871 book, *Primitive Culture*, gave us the first definition of the concept of culture in English, and although it was a static unilinear view of culture, it nevertheless helped establish the concept and the beginnings of scientific anthropology.

### *Missionary Contributions to Anthropology*

It is important to remember that the early anthropologists drew data for their speculative theories initially from explorers and travelers and later, missionaries, not from first hand encounters with “the natives.” They would not have deigned to get themselves dirty by doing first-hand fieldwork, which did not come fully into anthropology until the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>2</sup> Instead, they sat in the comfort of their Victorian studies, reading the reports of others’ initial contact with non-Western peoples. The journals of explorers like Captain James Cook in the Pacific provided



the grist for their intellectual mill. E. B. Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan, among others, corresponded with missionaries, inquiring about the people among whom they lived and outlining areas of research for missionaries to pursue. It is noteworthy that anthropologists have been loath to recognize the great debt they owe to missionaries, not only in the early stages of anthropology’s development, but even today as missionaries provide hospitality, vocabulary lists, and other aids to fledging anthropologists in the field. It is arguable that the discipline of anthropology would not have emerged without its heavy reliance upon ethnographic data provided by missionaries. Despite the fact that there was little application of anthropology to mission during this period, it is ironic that much of the ethnographic data used by anthropologists to spin their theoretical designs came from missionaries.

This 19<sup>th</sup> century use of missionary writing began a long stream of mission-

ary ethnographic contributions which was anticipated several centuries earlier by Catholic missionary ethnographers such as Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566) and Bernardino de Sahagun (1499–1590) in Latin America; Joseph-Francois Lafitau (1681–1746) and Gabriel Sagard (c.1590–c.1650) in North America; Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) in China; and Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656) in India.<sup>3</sup>

To demonstrate how anthropologists like Tylor and Morgan stimulated missionaries’ ethnographic research, let us look briefly at the writing of missionaries in Melanesia. Lewis Henry Morgan, author of *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity in the Human Family* (1871), sent his kinship questionnaire all over the world to missionaries, asking them to fill in the data and send it back to him. One of his contacts was Lorimer Fison (1832–1907), the Australian Wesleyan missionary in Fiji, who got hooked on anthropology and developed a deep appreciation for how it helped him to understand the Fijian worldview and the changing Fijian society under Western contact (1907). Fison corresponded with Robert H. Codrington (1830–1922), an Anglican missionary with the Melanesian Mission in the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides who then also became an ethnographer, writing a book on Melanesian languages and producing his landmark book, *The Melanesians: Studies in Their Anthropology and Folklore* (1891). Codrington’s work influenced another Melanesian Mission missionary, Charles E. Fox (1878–1977), who wrote an important ethnography entitled *The Threshold of the Pacific: An Account of the Social Organization, Magic, and Religion of the People of San Cristoval in the Solomon Islands* (1924). Several other Anglican missionaries of the Melanesian Mission made significant ethnographic contributions, including Alfred Penny (1845–1935) (1887); A. I. Hopkins (1869–1943) (1928); and Walter Ivens (1871–1939) (1927, 1930).

Although the Melanesian Mission is outstanding and unusual for the number of missionaries who made ethnographic contributions to anthropology, other missionaries should also

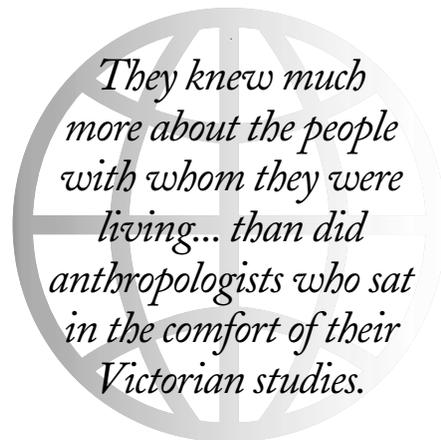
be noted as well. For example, John Batchelor (1854–1944), an Anglican missionary among the Ainu of Japan for 20 years, reduced their language to writing, translated the entire Bible, and planted a church. He wrote *Ainu Life and Lore* (1927). Maurice Leenhardt (1878–1954), the French Protestant missionary to New Caledonia (1902–1927), wrote the classic *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World* (1947). “The author of one of the finest anthropological monographs yet written,” according to Evans-Pritchard (1964:114) was Henri Alexandre Junod (1863–1934) of the Swiss Romande Mission, who published *The Life of a South African Tribe* in 1912. *Behind Mud Walls* (1930), a pioneer work in Indian anthropology, was written by William Wiser (1890–1961) and Charlotte Wiser (1892–1981), Presbyterian missionaries in India.

We cannot leave this topic of missionary contributions to anthropology without mentioning the substantial contribution made by Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt (1868–1954). Although never a field missionary himself, as a trainer of missionaries he nevertheless encouraged and organized members of his own Society of the Divine Word and others to produce carefully researched ethnographies of the people among whom they worked. He himself produced more than 650 publications. In 1906 he founded the ethnological journal *Anthropos* as a venue for publishing the many ethnographic reports he received from missionaries, and later he established the Anthropos Institute as a center for anthropological research (cf. Brandewie 1990; Luzbetak 1994). Luzbetak, who studied with Schmidt says,

To him, ethnology was a pure *Geisteswissenschaft* and a strictly historical field. As a scholar who believed in the purity of his discipline, he would not allow the journal [*Anthropos*] or his [Anthropos] Institute to depart from this concept, insisting that concentration on strictly scientific, rather than applied, ethnology would assure the needed respect of the world of science. (Luzbetak 1994:478)

This list of missionary contributions to anthropology, both ethnographic

and theoretical, could go on and on, but space does not permit (cf. Burridge 1991, especially Chapter 7 and Appendix; Taber 1991:150–155). The point I want to emphasize is the significant contributions missionaries have made to the field of anthropology, and I think today there is more acceptance of that fact in mainstream anthropology. For example, in November 2003, at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago there will be a symposium entitled, “Homage to the Missionary Anthropologists.” Presentations will be made by many of us who are missiological anthropolo-



gists, but secular anthropologists will also be making contributions to this symposium.

One reason early missionaries were able to make substantial contributions to ethnography as well as anthropological theory is because they knew much more about the people with whom they were living and about whom they were writing than did anthropologists who sat in the comfort of their Victorian studies and theorized about how societies had evolved over time. Charles Taber captures well the mood and situation of anthropologists of this early era and their relationship to missionaries. He notes:

The first explicit interaction between missionaries and anthropologists occurred in the 1860s, when missionaries served as sources of field data for the earliest anthropological theorists, who were armchair scholars. This represented a significant advance over the prior situation in which anthropologists merely used as grist for their mills whatever data

they could glean haphazardly from missionary and other writings. But anthropologists such as Edward B. Tylor actively corresponded with missionaries, asking them specific questions and suggesting specific lines of inquiry. The anthropologists involved had no personal experience of the exotic,<sup>4</sup> little or no respect for the persons and cultures of the “primitive” world they theorized about, and little or no sympathy with the religious aims of the missionaries whose data they were using. (Taber 2000:95)

### *Anthropology's Early Interest in Solving Human Problems*

After slavery was abolished in Britain in 1807 and the Emancipation Act of 1833 was passed, those in the abolitionist movement turned their attention to the general welfare of native peoples within the British Empire. In 1838 an Aborigines Protection Society was founded in London. The Society had not been established for very long when a serious division arose about the proper way to protect aborigines. One of the factions associated with missionaries argued that the best way to protect aborigines was to bestow the benefits of Western civilization on them. The more academically inclined faction wanted to study the natives first as a way to raise their standards of living and protect them. This faction left the Aborigines Protection Society and founded the Ethnological Society of London in 1843. They envisioned a marriage between scholarly study and humanitarian interests. In 1856 Sir B. C. Brodie wrote in the *Journal of the Ethnological Society* (4:294–297),

Ethnology is now generally recognized as having the strongest claims in our attention, not merely as it tends to gratify the curiosity of those who love to look into Nature's works, but also as being of great practical importance, especially in this country, whose numerous colonies and extensive commerce bring it into contact with so many varieties of the human species differing in their physical and moral qualities both from each other and from ourselves. (Brodie 1856:294–295)

It did not take long for the Ethnological Society to also experience division within its ranks. The debate was over the slavery question and whether or

not human beings were one or more species. In 1863 the divergent group who believed there was more than one species of human beings left the Ethnological Society and formed the Anthropological Society of London. The new society was very successful and within four years had a total of 706 members, in contrast to the Ethnological Society that never grew to more than 107 members. Members of the Anthropological Society of London while believing in the inequality of races, nevertheless championed the use of anthropology for practical, humanitarian causes. While wanting to be scientific and academic they nevertheless believed that applied anthropology was ultimately more important. In 1866 the society published *Popular Magazine of Anthropology*, noting

Anthropology, independently of its scientific interest and importance, may and should become an applied science, aiding in the solution of the painful problems which human society and modern civilization proffer, and tending to the bettering of the conditions of man in the aggregate all over the world. (*Popular Magazine of Anthropology*, 1866:6)

Conrad Reining (1962) has called this period of the 1860s, "The Lost Period of Applied Anthropology." It is interesting to note that the earliest call for using anthropology in the service of mission was made during this same period by George Harris in an address to the Manchester Anthropological Society, Monday the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, 1868. Harris notes,

...if the information communicated by missionaries is valuable to anthropologists in the pursuit of their studies, I venture to assert that the study of anthropology, if correctly and comprehensively considered, is of no less value to missionaries in pursuit of their arduous and often perplexing undertaking... Anthropologists and missionaries ought, therefore, instead of ever opposing each other, to be always the closest allies, and should derive important aid from each other's efforts. (1868:4-5)

Members of the London Anthropological Society had heady confidence in anthropology's ability to be both scientific and hence dispassionate, as

well as very practical with almost limitless potential for bettering humanity. But the Anthropological Society with its focus on applying anthropology to human problems was not embraced without controversy. Two groups in particular opposed the anthropologists at this time. One was evangelicals whose literal interpretation of the biblical stories of the Garden of Eden and the Flood caused them to affirm that all of humanity was one, not diverse species, and that there were not moral or physical inequalities inherent in the human race. The second group who opposed anthropologists was composed of political liberals whose commitment to social justice caused them to object to the notion of the inequality of human beings. The Anthropological Society of London after eight years of existence fell on hard times and its members combined again with the Ethnological Society in 1871. Thomas Huxley took the lead in creating a new organization out of the old ones, and the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in 1871. Huxley did much to establish the new discipline of anthropology as a respectable science, and in the process moved away from the previous emphasis on application of anthropological knowledge to ameliorating human problems.

For the next thirty years the focus was on getting anthropology accepted as an academic discipline in universities, and the practical value of anthropology was rarely mentioned. In 1883 E. B. Tylor was appointed as the first professor of anthropology at Oxford, and the next year a separate section for anthropology was created in the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The first faculty position of anthropology in the United States was established at Columbia University with Franz Boas in 1890. Certainly, in this era there was no one advocating that anthropology and mission could benefit one another, neither anthropologists nor missionaries.

From 1870 onward the subject matter of anthropology became increasingly more esoteric, and avoided applying anthropology to everyday problems.

It was during this time frame that anthropologists began to earn their reputation as peddlers of the exotic whose study is of no earthly good. James G. Frazer, author of the popular book, *The Golden Bough* (1890), is characteristic of this era when he claimed that anthropology should not be concerned with application and instead should focus on studying preliterate people in order to illustrate the history and evolution of society. The early anthropologists' interests were in the past, their research was centered on the evolution of society.

The following diagram attempts to show the various strands of anthropologists and missionaries as they have converged and diverged over time. It includes key players and events but is far from exhaustive. Some of the events and persons in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in this diagram will be discussed below.

### *The Ambivalent Relationship between Anthropology and Mission*

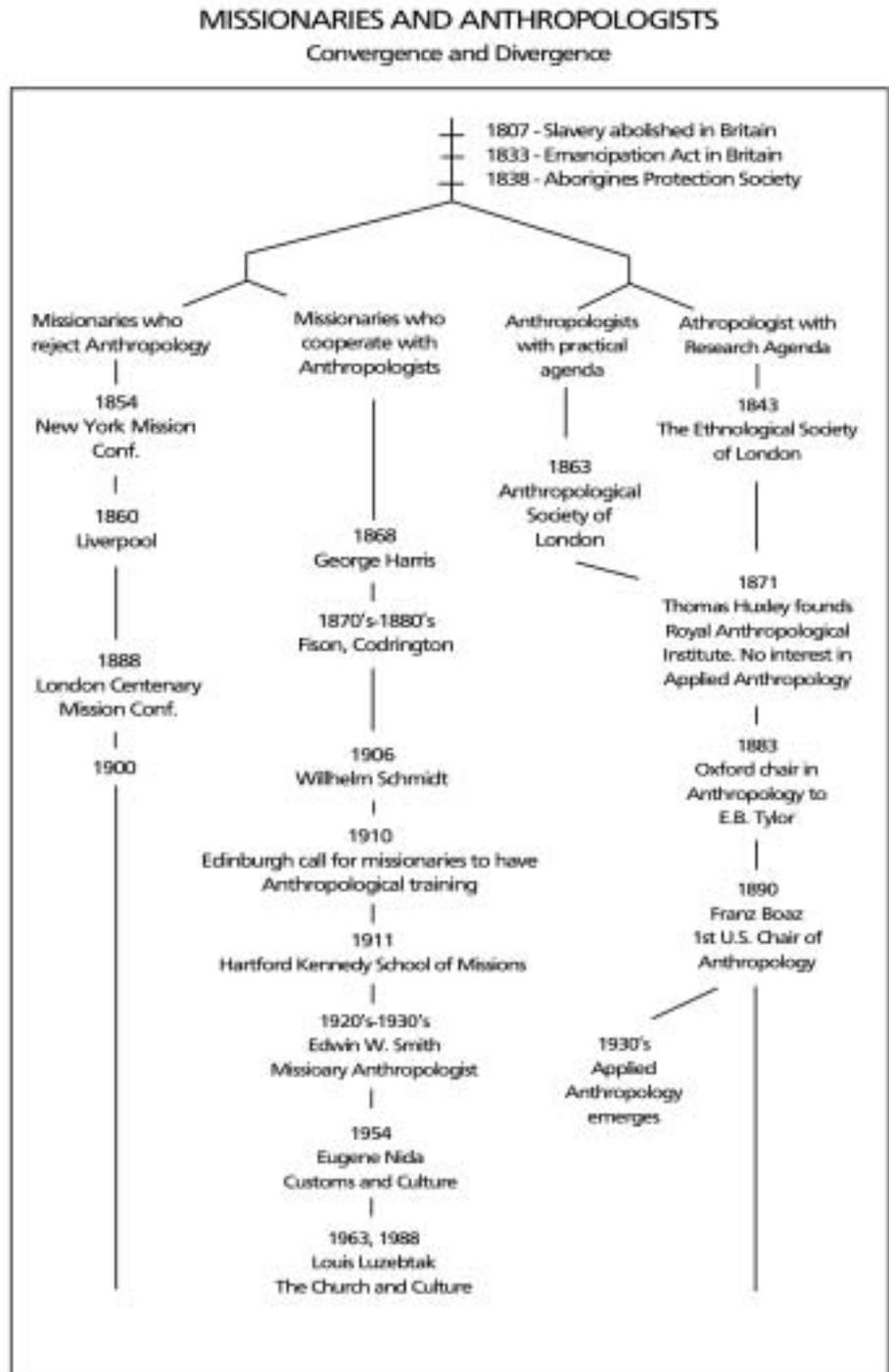
The relationship between anthropology and mission has been an ambivalent one for over a hundred years (cf. Hiebert 1978; Stipe 1980; Luzbetak 1985; Sutlive 1985; Salamone 1986; Van Der Geest 1990; Burridge 1991; Priest 2001). Committed to the doctrine of cultural relativism most anthropologists view religion only as an epiphenomena of culture, as a mere reflection of society (Durkheim 1915). They therefore conclude that Christianity is no different than other religions. It is simply a cultural byproduct; it is human-made, they argue; not God given. Because there are so few anthropologists with personal Christian faith, it is not surprising that a fair amount of antagonism toward missionaries has come from anthropologists. For example, in his presidential address to the American Anthropological Association in 1976, Walter Goldschmidt (1977:296) declared, "Missionaries are in many ways our opposites; they believe in original sin, the moral depravity of uncivilized man, and the evil of native customs. Because they wish to change the people we wish to study, we view them as spoilers." <sup>5</sup> This lack of appre-

ciation for or understanding of missionaries by anthropologists has been well documented and discussed by Robert Priest (2001) in a recent provocative article in *Current Anthropology* entitled, "Missionary Positions: Christian, Modernist, Postmodernist" (cf. Stipe 1980; Sutlive 1985; Salamone 1985, 1986; Franklin 1987; Bomsen, Marks, and Miedema 1990; Van Der Geest 1990). Anthropologists have frequently stereotyped missionaries as narrow-minded destroyers of culture. And, unfortunately, some missionaries must confess, "guilty as charged," but the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that missionaries have often contributed to the preservation of languages and cultures more than to their destruction (Whiteman 2002). Lamin Sanneh (1989) has argued persuasively that through Bible translation into vernacular languages, missionaries have done much to preserve rather than destroy indigenous cultures.

If anthropologists have been suspicious of missionaries, missionaries in turn have been slow to show appreciation for the insights that anthropology has to offer them. Paul Hiebert (1978) several years ago described the relationship between missions and anthropology as a Love/Hate relationship. Twenty years ago Louis Luzbetak (1985) called for a better understanding and a closer cooperation between the two antagonistic groups of anthropologists and missionaries, and offered some practical suggestions as to how this could come about. Kenelm Burrige (1991), who is more sympathetic and understanding of missionaries than are most anthropologists, documents this long history of ambivalence between anthropologists and missionaries, and notes the significant ethnographic contributions many missionaries have made.

### *A Turning of the Tide in Anthropology and Mission*

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, anthropology as a discipline was becoming established and recovering from its obsession with evolutionary thought. Other theories were advanced to explain the diversity of human beings and their cultures. In reaction to the 19<sup>th</sup> century evolutionary schemes,



several different theories of cultural diffusion were pressed into explaining cultural diversity. The devastation left by World War I and the expansion of colonialism called for the application of anthropology to human problems. For example, in 1921 proposals were made for the establishment of a School of Applied Anthropology in Great Britain, suggesting that "the anthropological point of view should permeate

the whole body of the people" and that the lack of this "was the cause of our present troubles" (Peake 1921:174).

In 1929 Bronislaw Malinowski published an article in the journal *Africa* (2:23-38) entitled "Practical Anthropology." He noted at the time the huge gap between the theoretical concerns of anthropology and the practical interests of colonial adminis-

trators and missionaries. Writing from the African context, Malinowski notes,

Now I think the gap is artificial and of great prejudice to either side. The practical man should be asked to state his needs as regards knowledge on savage law, economics, customs, and institutions; he would then stimulate the scientific anthropologist to a most fruitful line of research and thus receive information without which he often gropes in the dark. The anthropologist, on the other hand, must move towards a direct study of indigenous institutions as they now exist and work. He must also become more concerned in the anthropology of the changing African, and in the anthropology of contact of white and colored, of European culture and primitive tribal life. (1929:23-24; 1970:13)

Despite the colonial tone of his words, Malinowski was calling for anthropologists to study people as they are now, undergoing change from the impact of colonialism and to stop pursuing a speculative anthropology that seeks to reconstruct the lives and cultures of people from a bygone era. In contrast to this salvage anthropology, Malinowski was calling for the creation of a new kind of anthropology, which would later come to be called applied anthropology. Malinowski, perhaps more than any other anthropologist in Britain, helped to popularize anthropology and get it into the hands of non-professional laypeople. From the London School of Economics, Malinowski trained a generation of anthropologists who slowly took up his challenge and conducted research that was helpful in the context of changing cultures under colonial influence. Later postmodern critiques of anthropology would be very critical of anthropology's cozy relationship with colonialism.

Applied Anthropology emerged in the 1930s, both in Britain and the United States. American anthropologists such as Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, Melville Herskovits, and Margaret Mead, etc. sought to merge practical anthropology and academic anthropology while at the same time distancing themselves from missionaries and their concerns. Postmodern anthropology would later attempt to "expose" both

anthropology and mission for having an agenda.

Malinowski began calling for the practical use of anthropology as early as 1929, and in 1938 argued that the time had come to make anthropology practical:

...the anthropologist with all his highly vaunted technique of field work, his scientific acumen, and his humanistic outlook, has so far kept aloof from the fierce battle of opinions about the future and the welfare of native races. In the heated arguments between those who want to "keep the native in his place" and those who want to "secure him a place in the sun," the anthropologist



has so far taken no active part. Does this mean that knowledge serves merely to blind us to the reality of human interests and vital issues? The science which claims to understand culture and to have the clue to racial problems must not remain silent on the drama of culture conflict and of racial clash.

Anthropology must become an applied science. Every student of scientific history knows that science is born of its applications. (Malinowski 1938:x)

Bronislaw Malinowski did much to take anthropology beyond the academy and into the real world. His theory of functionalism, which is sometimes maligned by people critical of the church growth movement, was a helpful schema for understanding how change introduced into one part of a culture would impact all other aspects of the society. As a theory, Malinowski's functionalism is not particularly fruitful, but as a guide for

research and for interpreting the impact of one culture on another it is excellent. This perspective would become very important for colonial administrators and, of course, for missionaries.

Missionaries after the turn of the century also started to get in touch with the value of anthropology for their work. Ecumenical mission conferences were held in New York in 1854, Liverpool in 1860, and in 1888 the Centenary Conference on Protestant Missions was held at Exeter Hall in London, with 1600 representatives from 53 mission societies. Over this thirty-year period the missionary movement had grown statistically in a remarkable way, but they had also become more paternalistic, with more vested interests. There is little evidence of either awareness of or need for anthropological insight coming out of these conferences.

But Edinburgh 1910 was a different story. The report of the commission was a large series of nine volumes, with one devoted completely to the preparation of missionaries (vol. 5). The importance of understanding the cultures and customs of the people to whom missionaries go was stressed from this time onwards. Edinburgh is important because it shows that missionaries were struggling with all the points of criticism that anthropologists would make, long before they ever started to speak on the matter. One of the features of this conference was the recognition of the fact of socio-cultural change, as well as the need to move beyond ethnocentric evaluations of cultural differences. The call for anthropological training of missionaries was clearly sounded at Edinburgh. The report says,

It is, therefore, clear that the missionary needs to know far more than the mere manners and customs of the race to which he is sent; he ought to be versed in the genius of the people, that which has made them the people they are; and to sympathise so truly with the good which they have evolved, that he may be able to aid the national leaders reverently to build up a Christian civilisation after their own kind, not after the European kind. (World Missionary Conference, 1910: vol. 5, p. 170)

Edinburgh differs from other missionary conferences because it was the first time that a particular voice was heard. Both the speakers at the conference and the reports that had come in from all over the world articulated what many missionaries were feeling very strongly, namely, a need for better education of the religion and the values of the people among whom they were working. They were beginning to realize that sympathy was not enough, that empathy and understanding was required, and that their evangelism would be far more effective if it took place within a worldview other than their own.

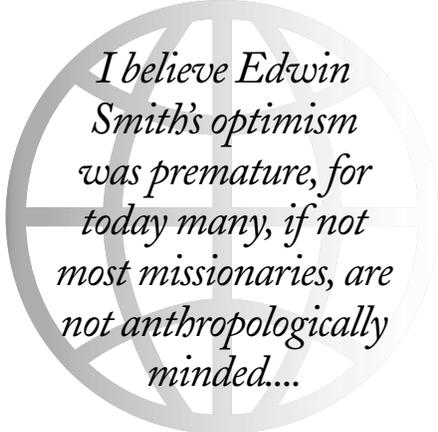
The leading advocate for applying anthropological insights to mission was Edwin G. Smith (1876-1957). Smith, born of missionary parents of the Primitive Methodist Mission in South Africa, served as a missionary in Zambia among the Baila-Batonga people from 1902 to 1915. Although he often thought of himself as an amateur anthropologist he nevertheless was held in high esteem by contemporary anthropologists of his day. He was a member of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain from 1909 until his death in 1957, and served as president from 1933 to 1935, the first and only missionary to do so. He contributed substantially to anthropology (1907, 1920) and wrote frequently in the *International Review of Missions*. In 1924, in an article entitled "Social Anthropology and Missionary Work" Smith (1924:519) argues that, "the science of social anthropology [should be] recognized as an essential discipline in the training of missionaries." He goes on to note that we need to understand people from their point of view, not just our own, if mission work is to be effective. He notes in language characteristic of his time that,

a study of social anthropology will lead the young missionary to look at things always from the native's point of view, and this will save him from making serious blunders. Tact is not enough; nor is love...Tact needs to be based on knowledge; love there can hardly be without understanding. (Smith 1924:522-523)

Ten years later in his 1934 Presidential Address to the Royal Anthropological

Institute entitled "Anthropology and the Practical Man," Smith connected his Christian faith and missionary work with his anthropological perspective. He notes,

I think that too often missionaries have regarded themselves as agents of European civilization and have thought it part of their duty to spread the use of English language, English clothing, English music—the whole gamut of our culture. They have confounded Christianity with western Civilization. In my view this is a mistaken view of the Christian mission. I am convinced that essential elements in Christian belief and practice are of universal value—that in other words, there are fundamen-



*I believe Edwin Smith's optimism was premature, for today many, if not most missionaries, are not anthropologically minded....*

tal needs of the human soul that Christ alone can satisfy. But in the Christianity which we know there are unessential elements, accretions which it has taken on from its European environment and which it is not part of the Christian missionary's duty to propagate. (Smith 1934:xxvi-xxvii)

Smith goes on to note, in language that is similar to contemporary discussions of contextualization, that Christianity must take on appropriate cultural forms in each culture it encounters. And then with a spirit of optimism he claims,

Here and there in the field academically trained anthropologists are to be found on the [mission] staffs. Some of us will not be content until such qualified persons are at work in every mission area and every missionary has had some anthropological training. In short, there are signs that the modern missionary is becoming anthropologically minded, without being any the less zealous in his religious duties. (Smith 1934:xxix)

I believe Edwin Smith's optimism was premature, for today many, if not most missionaries, are not anthropologically minded, even though we see there was a call for this as far back as Edinburgh 1910.

Another early advocate for connecting anthropology and mission was Henri Philippe Junod, missionary in South Africa and son of the missionary ethnographer Henri A. Junod mentioned above. Writing in 1935, he says, "I wish anthropologists would realize what they owe to missionary work. Many scientists do acknowledge this debt, but others forget the contribution of missionaries to science itself. It is not accidental if missionaries have sometimes proved to be the best anthropologists..." He then bemoans the fact that "Mission policy, however, has had too little to do with anthropology..." (1935:217). He goes on to say,

I believe that anthropology can help us greatly. It can widen our views, it can open our eyes, it can teach us to understand, it can improve our educational policy and point out to us the dangers of the way. But we are not here to preserve native custom as a curio for some African museum. We are dealing with the realities of the present. (H. P. Junod 1935:228)

Missionary anthropologists like Edwin W. Smith and Henri Junod had more impact on European missionaries from mainline denominations than on American evangelical missionaries. The first post World War II era book on anthropology in the United States was written in 1945 by Gordon Hedderly Smith entitled *The Missionary and Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Primitive Man for Missionaries* (Moody Press). This is a very inadequate book, drawing too much on E. B. Tylor and John Lubbock, 19th century evolutionary anthropologists. Smith argues for the importance of anthropological training as part and parcel of missionary preparation, but given the shortcomings of this book, it is not surprising that it had limited influence.

During the 1940s and continuing well beyond the end of WW II, Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, became a center for preparing missionaries. The distinguished and popular

Russian-born Dr. Alexander Grigolia developed a strong anthropology major and course program, and he was succeeded at Wheaton by a series of young anthropology instructors committed both to providing balanced undergraduate anthropological training and teaching the conceptual and practical tools required for effective communication across cultural boundaries. Perhaps the most famous anthropology major from Wheaton was the renowned evangelist Billy Graham, who graduated from Wheaton in 1943 and who had chosen anthropology partly because of an interest in becoming a missionary (Graham 1997: 64-65). Graham drew on anthropological concepts for his evangelistic ministry. Students such as Charles Kraft, Henry Bradley and William Merrifield (class of 1953) would all go on to make important contributions to missiological anthropology. As of 1953 Wheaton had graduated over 200 majors in anthropology, many of whom were serving or were destined to work as missionaries.<sup>6</sup>

The Kennedy School of Missions of Hartford Seminary<sup>7</sup> was the equivalent graduate program where anthropology was taught and used in the advanced training of Protestant missionaries. Edwin W. Smith, upon his retirement in 1939, was a visiting lecturer of African anthropology and history at Hartford until 1943, and Paul Leser served as Professor of Anthropology. Charles Taber, and Charles Kraft, two well known anthropologically trained missiologists, received their Ph.D. degrees from Hartford before it closed the mission program in the mid 1960s, reflecting the decline in missionaries being sent by main-line Protestant mission boards. As the Kennedy School of Missions at Hartford was folding, Schools of World Mission with an emphasis on applying anthropological insights in missiology and employing trained professional anthropologists on their faculty, opened at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1965, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1969, and Asbury Theological Seminary in 1983.

A high water mark in the history of anthropology and mission came in 1954 with the publication of

Eugene Nida's *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions*. Although Nida's Ph.D. is in linguistics more than in anthropology, as a translation consultant for the American Bible Society, Nida traveled widely, working in some 200 languages in 75 countries. From this vast experience Nida saw first hand the problems and challenges faced by missionaries and translators, and his anthropological perspective enabled him to make keen observations and write copious notes from which *Customs and Cultures* was written in a brief six-week period while Nida was in Brazil between translation workshops. *Customs and Cultures* is conceptually so rich and well grounded anthropologically that it is still used today in colleges and seminaries, although many of his illustrations are dated, especially those from pre-Vatican II Latin America. Nevertheless, I have had students tell me they wished they had read Nida's book before they had sallied forth into cross-cultural ministry.

*To be continued in Volume 21:2 of IJFM.*

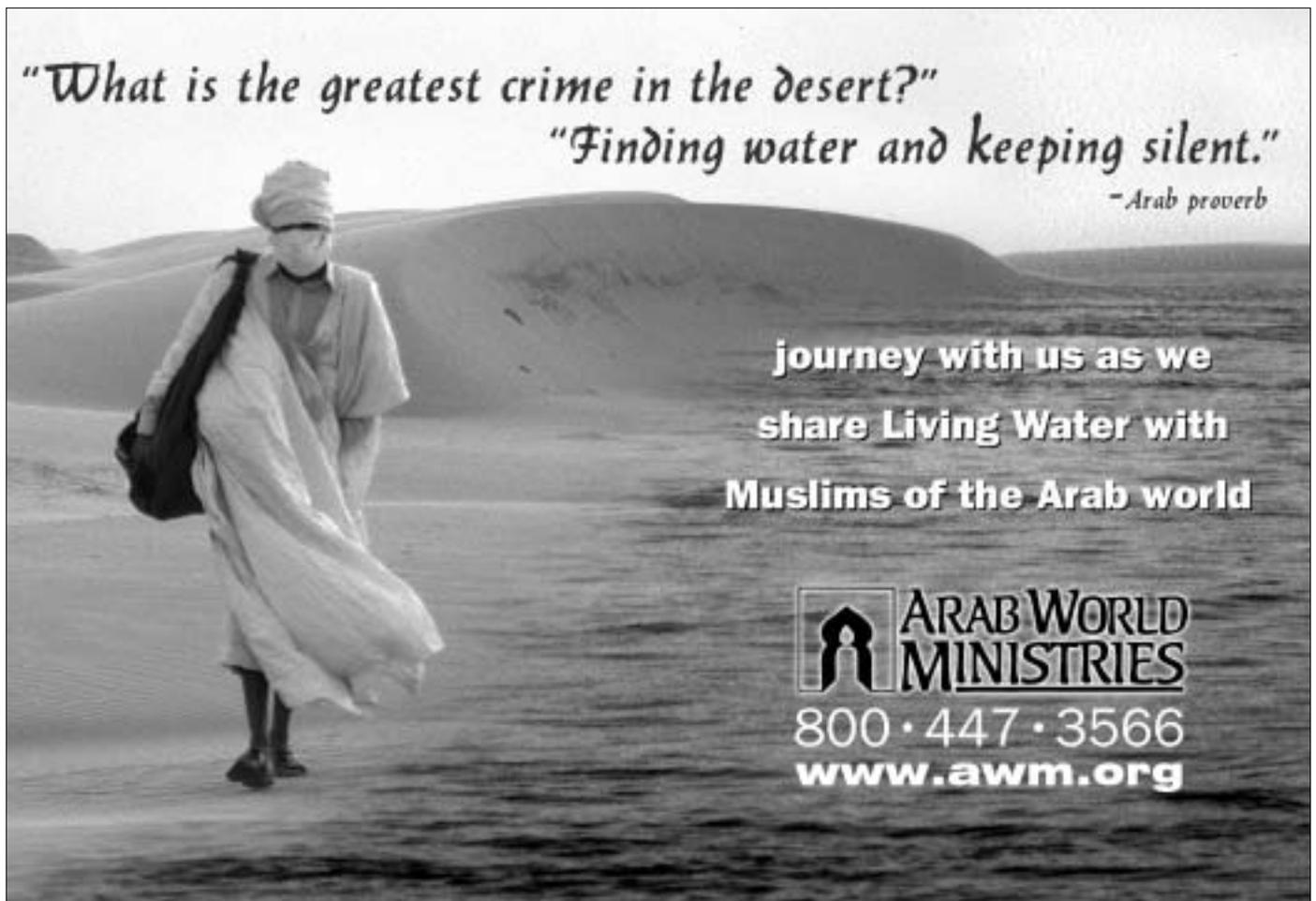
### References Cited

- Batchelor, John  
1927 *Ainu Life and Lore: Echoes of a Departing Race*. Tokyo: Kyobunkwan; New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1971.
- Brodie, Sir B.C.  
1856 "Address." *Journal of the Ethnological Society* 4:294-297.
- Burridge, Kenelm  
1991 *In the Way: A Study of Christian Missionary Endeavours*. Vancouver, BC, Canada: University of British Columbia Press.
- Codrington, Robert H.  
1891 *The Melanesians: Studies in Their Anthropology and Folklore*. Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press.
- Durkheim, Emile  
1915 (orig. 1912) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. J. W. Stain, trans. London, UK: Allen & Unwin.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E.  
1962 *Social Anthropology and Other Essays*. New York: The Free Press.
- Fison, Lorimer  
1907 *Tales from Old Fiji*. London, UK: Alexander Moring.
- Fox, Charles E.  
1924 *The Threshold of the Pacific: An Account of the Social Organisation, Magic and Religion of the People of San Cristoval in the Solomon Islands*. London, UK: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co.
- Franklin, Karl, ed.  
1987 *Current Concerns of Anthropologists and Missionaries*. International Museum of Cultures No. 22. Dallas, TX: The International Museum of Cultures, Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Frazer, James G.  
1890 *The Golden Bough*, 2 vols. London, UK: Macmillan and Co.
- Goldschmidt, Walter  
1977 "Anthropology and the Coming Crisis: An Autoethnographic Appraisal." *American Anthropologist* 79(2):293-308.
- Graham, Billy  
1997 *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Harris, George  
1868 "On Foreign Missions in Connection with Civilization and Anthropology." London, UK: Bell and Daldy.
- Harris, Marvin  
1968 *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company.
- Hiebert, Paul G.  
1978 "Missions and Anthropology: A Love/Hate Relationship." *Missiology* 6: 165-180.  
1985 *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.  
1994 *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.  
1999 *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World*. Christian Mission and Modern Culture series. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Int.
- Hiebert, Paul G.  
and Eloise Hiebert Meneses  
1995 *Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches in Band, Tribal, Peasant, and Urban Societies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Hopkins, A. I.  
1928 *In the Isles of King Solomon: Twenty-five Years among the Primitive Solomon Islanders*. London, UK: Seely, Service and Company.
- Ivens, Walter G.  
1927 *Melanesians of the Southeast Solomon Islands*. London, UK: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company.

- 1930 *The Island Builders of the Pacific*. London, UK: Seely, Service and Company.
- Junod, Henri A.  
1962 (orig. 1912) *The Life of a South African Tribe.*, 2 vols. New Hyde Park, NY: University Books Inc.
- Junod, H. P.  
1935 "Anthropology and Missionary Education." *International Review of Missions* 24(94): 213-228. Kirby, Jon P.  
1995 "Language and Culture Learning IS Conversion...Is Ministry: Toward a theological rationale for language and culture learning as a part of missionary formation in a cross-cultural context." *Missiology* 23(2):131-143.
- Kraft, Charles H.  
1973 "Toward a Christian Ethnotheology." In *God, Man and Church Growth: A Festschrift in Honor of Donald Anderson McGavran*. Alan R. Tippett, ed. Pp. 109-126. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.  
1979 *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.  
1996 *Anthropology for Christian Witness*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Laftau, Joseph Francois  
1724 *Moeurs des Sauvages Ameriquains Comparees aux moeurs des Premiers Temps*. Vol. 1. Paris: Chez Saugrain l'aîne.  
1974 *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*. 2 vols. Edited and translated by William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore. Toronto, Canada: Champlain Society.
- Leenhardt, Maurice  
1979 (orig. 1947) *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World*. Trans, Basia Miller Gulati. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Luzbetak, Louis J.  
1958 "Toward an Applied Missionary Anthropology." *Anthropological Quarterly* 34:165-176.  
1963 *The Church and Cultures: An Applied Anthropology for the Religious Worker*. Techny, IL: Divine Word Publications.  
1985 "Prospects for a Better Understanding and Closer Cooperation between Anthropologists and Missionaries." In *Missionaries, Anthropologists, and Cultural Change*. Studies in Third World Societies, No. 25. Darrell L. Whiteman, ed. Pp. 1-53. Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary.
- 1988 *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. 1992 "My Pilgrimage in Mission." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16(3): 124-128.
- 1994 "Wilhelm Schmidt, S.V.D. 1868-1954: Priest, Linguist, Ethnologist." In *Mission Legacies: Biographical Studies of Leaders of the Modern Missionary Movement*. Gerald Anderson, et al, eds. Pp. 475-485. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw  
1929 "Practical Anthropology." *Africa* (2:23-38). Reprinted in *Applied Anthropology: Readings in the Uses of the Science of Man*. James A. Clifton, ed. Pp. 12-25. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970.  
1938 *Methods of Study of Culture Contact*. Memorandum 15, International African Institute, London, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Morgan, Lewis Henry  
1871 *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity in the Human Family*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution.  
1877 *Ancient Society*. New York: World Publishing. Nida, Eugene A.  
1954 *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers. Parish, Helen and H. R. Wagner  
1967 *The Life and Writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Penny, Alfred  
1887 *Ten Years in Melanesia*. London, UK: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co.
- Priest, Robert J.  
2001 "Missionary Positions: Christian, Modernist, Postmodernist." *Current Anthropology* 42(1): 29-70.
- Reining, Conrad  
1962 "A Lost Period of Applied Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* 64:593-600.
- Sagard, Gabriel Théodat  
1632(1865) *Le Grand Voyage du pays des Hurons situé en l'Amerique vers la mer douce, es derniers confines de la Nouvelle France dite Canada*. Paris: Emile Chevalier, Tross.  
1939 *The Long Journey to the Country of the Hurons*. Edited with introduction and notes by George M. Wrong; translated by H.H. Langton. Toronto, Canada: Champlain Society.
- Sahagun, Bernardino de  
1950-1982 *General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex*. Translated from the Aztec into English by Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble. Salt Lake City, Utah: School of American Research, University of Utah.
- Salamone, Frank A.  
1986 "Missionaries and Anthropologists: An Inquiry into the Ambivalent Relationship." *Missiology* 14: 55-70.
- Sanneh, Lamin  
1989 *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Smith, Edwin W.  
1907 *Handbook of the Ila Language*. London, UK: Oxford University Press.  
1924 "Social Anthropology and Missionary Work." *International Review of Missions* 13(52):518-531.  
1934 "Anthropology and the Practical Man." Presidential Address. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 64: xiii-xxxvii
- Smith, Edwin W. and Andrew W. Dale  
1968 (orig. 1920) *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*. 2 vols. 2nd ed. New Hyde Park, NY: University Books.
- Smith, Gordon Hedderly Smith  
1945 *The Missionary and Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Primitive Man for Missionaries*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.
- Spencer, Herbert  
1873 *The Study of Sociology*. New York: D. Appleton.
- Stipe, Claude  
1980 "Anthropologists versus Missionaries." *Current Anthropology* 21:165-168.
- Sutlive, Vinson H.Jr.  
1985 "Anthropologists and Missionaries: Eternal Enemies or Colleagues in Disguise?" In *Missionaries, Anthropologists, and Cultural Change*. Studies in Third World Societies No. 25. Darrell L. Whiteman, ed. Pp. 55-90. Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary.
- Taber, Charles  
1973 "Change and Continuity: Guest Editorial." *Missiology* 1(1):7-13.  
1990 "Review of *The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology*." *Missiology* 18(1):103-104.  
1991 *The World is Too Much With Us: "Culture" in Modern Protestant Mission*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.  
2000 *To Understand the World, to Save the World: The Interface between*

44 Anthropology and Mission: The Incarnational Connection

- Missiology and Social Science.*  
Harrisburg, PA: Trinity.
- Tippett, Alan R.  
1973 "Missiology: 'For Such a Time As This!' –Editorial." *Missiology* 1: 15-22.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed.  
1973 *God, Man and Church Growth: A Festschrift in Honor of Donald Anderson McGavran.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Van Der Geest, Sjaak  
1990 "Anthropologists and Missionaries: Brothers under the Skin." *Man* 25:588-601.
- Whiteman, Darrell L.  
1996 "The Role of the Behavioral Sciences in Missiological Education." In *Missiological Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Book, the Circle, and the Sandals.* J. Dudley Woodberry, Charles Van Engen, and Edgar J. Elliston, eds. Pp. 133-143. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- 1997 "Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21:2-7. Reprinted in *New Directions in Mission & Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture.* James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans, eds. Pp. 42-53. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999.
- 2002 "Does Christianity Destory Cultures: An Interview with Cultural Anthropologist Darrell Whiteman." *Heartbeat* 23 (summer):1-8.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed.  
1985 *Missionaries, Anthropologists, and Cultural Change.* Studies in Third World Societies No. 25. Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary. Wiser, William and Charlotte Wiser
- 1930 *Behind Mud Walls.* New York: R. R. Smith. Revised edition, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971. World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh
- 1910 *The Preparation of Missionaries.* Report of Commission V. Edinburgh, UK: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier.



*"What is the greatest crime in the desert?"  
"Finding water and keeping silent."  
- Arab proverb*

**journey with us as we  
share Living Water with  
Muslims of the Arab world**

 **ARAB WORLD  
MINISTRIES**  
800 • 447 • 3566  
[www.awm.org](http://www.awm.org)