

THE EVANGELIZATION OF ANIMISTS

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The title given to me seems to imply the existence of a concrete religious system, called *Animism* — something which might be set over against, say, Hinduism or Buddhism, not only for purposes of description and study, but also as a subject requiring a strategy for evangelistic approach. Because the greatest number of currently open doors for the Gospel are among animist people, the inclusion of the topic is certainly appropriate, in spite of any intellectual problems the title may raise. Therefore, to avoid the loss of time in debating semantics in our sessions, this preamble seems desirable.

1. Animism

Some scholars prefer to subdivide Animism and to deal with the sub-units — Shamanism, Fetishism, Ancestor Worship, and so on — treating each as a religion in its own right, thus avoiding the term Animism altogether. This may have some descriptive advantages, until one discovers that the sub-units are not discrete: several may be found interwoven together, and their practitioners may have multi-functional roles. These "religious systems" are thus found to be merely functional distinctions within what certainly looks like a general religious system, with no more diversity than Hinduism or Buddhism; and now we are back again to the notion of Animism.

The term Animism is certainly to be preferred to *Tribal Religion(s)*, because Animism is active in great cities like Los Angeles, New Orleans, or São Paulo, and has many non-tribal aspects. It is preferable also to *Primitive Religion(s)*, as it is neither chronologically nor conceptually primitive; indeed, it is currently much alive, and frequently quite sophisticated. Nevertheless, we should recognize that we are using the word as a term of convenience to provide a frame of reference for our discussions, presupposing that Animism is a discrete enough philosophical "system" among the religions to warrant our consideration of an evangelistic strategy for winning its followers to Christ. This is precisely the same position the members of our other groups will find themselves in, for Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism may also be manifested in a great diversity of systematic forms.

The popular use of the term Animism comes down to us from E.B. Tylor (1871). He did not give it the technical meaning it acquired from the comparative religionists, of a "kind of religion," but used it to signify "the deep-lying doctrine of Spiritual Beings, which embodies the very essence of Spiritualistic as opposed to Materialistic philosophy." It was, for him, a "minimum definition of religion" which saw the animistic way of life as accepting the reality of spiritual force(s) and beings, over against the materialist outlook on life. "In its full development," Tylor

agreed, it formulated concrete beliefs in such notions as the soul(s), the future state, controlling deities and subordinate spirits, especially when these beliefs result in "some kind of active worship."

I believe this is a realistic approach, because it permits us to talk about animism and biblical religion in the same philosophical or conceptual structure, and to weigh one over against the other; and therefore to understand the meaning of commitment when a present-day animist comes to his "moment of truth" and makes his decision for Christ. Thus the very term "evangelizing animists" puts us into an identifiable category of communication and response. We are not dealing with secularists or scientific agnostics, whom we would need to approach by means of a different path in order to witness. But Animists and Christians have one thing in common — they accept the spiritual view of life. They do not need to be convinced of the existence of the supernatural. This opens many ways for dialogue; even though, at the same time, it exposes us to many problems and dangers, which we shall examine in a moment.

In spite of the wide range of categories, forms, and functions that may be identified in the study of animistic communities, and which compel us to admit that perhaps every animist community is different from every other one, I firmly believe that Animism can be examined as a cohesive thing, and that enough universals can be identified to permit us to discuss the evangelization of this kind of community in general terms. I believe we should be able to deal with tribes in the forests of Africa, in the highlands of New Guinea, or in the hogans on the mesas of New Mexico under this head — and to a large extent also the drug cults of Hollywood. My purpose, therefore, is to generalize as far as I can, and to delineate some common problem areas for discussion, rather than diversify one form of Animism as over against another. But I hope the diversity will be apparent in our discussions.

Whether the evangelist be from an old or a young church, if he is witnessing cross-culturally he will be hoping to leave some kind of an indigenous church behind him. The fellowship group will have to be the Body of Christ ministering the mind, touch and heart of Christ in its cultural and animist world; for evangelism is not merely the winning of individuals, but also their incorporation into relevant local fellowship groups. Therefore, before I enumerate my common problem areas, I must examine the biblical data base from which I operate.

2. The biblical theology of Animism

From the biblical point of view there is really no such thing as a taxonomy of religions for comparative study. Not even Hinduism or Buddhism has any biblical standing as a religion. For the people of God there is only one God, and all those who do not serve him are grouped together in a single category. Although there is sufficient data in the biblical narrative for a whole textbook on Animism, the common practice of classifying religions, with Animism at one end and Christianity at the other, as if in an evolutionary scale of development, is not in tune either with Scripture or with the anthropological data.

Of course, I may turn to the Scriptures and read about the deities with whom the people of God came into contact from time to time on

their pilgrimage — of Dagon, of Chemosh, of Molech, of Tammuz, and of Bel. I also learn of their confrontations with fertility cults, of heathen sacrifices and libations, of ceremonial inhumanity like infanticide, of making cakes to the Queen of Heaven, and of worshiping the smooth round stones of the valley. We have everything — from individual and domestic ritual acts to national assemblies and the worship of national war gods — rites performed in the fields, by the wayside, in groves and high places, and in great temples. We have divination, necromancy, and sorcery, and numerous other ideas covered by the biblical word "idolatry." We could break down the whole animistic system of the biblical world into categories for study, but in the last analysis the Bible disposes of them as a single category in the first two commandments (Exod. 20:2-6) — anything that would usurp the Lord's place in the life of his people and set itself in God's place is grouped together as "over against Him" and idolatrous.

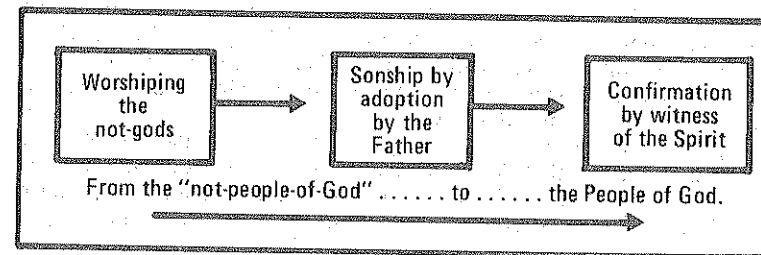
Nevertheless, when we consider the world of biblical times — the first two millennia before Christ and the first Christian century afterwards — we find it very similar to that of our own. The people of God stood over against all the forms we meet in Christian mission today, on all the various levels — private individual, domestic, peasant, and national. The characteristics of each of these levels recur through history with the kind of lives people live on those respective levels, and do not fit into a chronological evolutionary scale from the simple to the sophisticated. The Bible deals with both tribal and great religions, with both simple and complex, with both oral and written religious traditions — and it treats them all under one rubric both in the Old and New Testaments (Exod. 20:2-6; Rom. 1:19-25).

In the same way Walter Freytag had argued for the notion of the *people of God*, a biblical concept, as set over against the biblical counter-concept of the *Gentiles* — the "not-people-of-God" — because they are nations serving other gods, and have not yet come to the life of faith that makes people new creations and permits them to belong to the community of faith. This lines up with the concept coming from the Old Testament where "Gentiles" or "heathen" is *goyim* (the plural), for which the Septuagint adopted *ethnos* in many places — *ethnos* being the original root of the word "heathen" (again "ta ethnē," plural). Canaan was occupied by heathen nations, but was to become the possession of the seed of Abraham, through whom all the *goyim* of the earth would be blessed. The heathen would come to seek the Messiah (Isa. 11:10), who would minister judgment to them (Isa. 42:1), and offer light and salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6). In the New Testament also, "ta ethnē" is used of the nations who are over against the Lord (Matt. 24:9; 25:32, etc.) and as the object of evangelization (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:47; Rom. 16:26; Rev. 18:3; etc.).

The people of God are the Chosen Ones. But they always have a *responsibility* to the Gentiles. The latter were not excluded from Israel. Even in the Old Testament times they had their rights as resident strangers under the Law. The doctrine of the rights of the resident stranger in Israel is expressed in the Deuteronomic source and in the narrative of the book of Ruth, which is a practical demonstration of the

Deuteronomic Laws — Deut. 1:16; 10:9; 14:21; 24:17, etc., and Ruth 2:2f; 2:8-10, etc. But in the New Testament, when the notion of the people of God is separated from the historical people, and we meet the new Israel, we also see the universal purpose of God for the whole human race. The possibility of incorporation into the New Humanity is there, but the Gentiles, or heathen, are still not yet incorporated (Eph. 2:11-22), because they are still living in opposition to God, worshiping "not-gods" (Gal. 4:8), deifying themselves, and they are classified as under the realm of the prince of this world (Eph. 2:1-3; I Cor. 10:19-21). This is why the Christian mission must continue "until the end of the age" as the Great Commission indicates.

In this paper I wish to speak of evangelization in a somewhat wider sense than just bringing individuals to an act of "decision for Christ." It is this, of course — but more. It involves both a step of commitment and an experience of consummation, in which the Spirit witnesses with the convert's spirit that he is now a son of the Father, and if a son, then an heir through Christ (Gal. 4:6-7) — that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, or heathen through Christ, receiving the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:14). This is a process, bringing folk out of heathenism — here defined by Paul as "worshiping not-gods" (Gal. 4:8). The picture we have here of conversion from heathenism is that of a *process* — an *on-going experience*.



Adoption into the household of God brings the convert into a *group experience*. Some kind of incorporation into the fellowship group is always part of the evangelization process. This comes out clearly in the opening verses of I John, where witness (vv. 1-2) leads up to joining in the fellowship (v. 3), and from that verse on, John is dealing not with an individual in isolation, but one in context, i.e., in a state of fellowship (vv. 6-7).

Now, as we consider the evangelization of animists, it should be remembered that we are not dealing with individuals in isolation, but with men brought from death unto life — life *within a fellowship group*. We cannot escape the truth, that to give a man the Gospel of personal salvation demands incorporation into a fellowship group as a concomitant. Evangelization implies the existence of, or planting of, a church.

3. The evangelization of Animists

The conversion of animists and their incorporation into fellowship

groups involves us in each of the following problems, which I have conceptualized anthropologically because I think that such a treatment best opens up the subject for our discussions. I am reminded of the question of Henri Maurier, "Does not every theology have to be accompanied, in counterpoint, by as concrete an anthropology as possible? It is not enough for the apostle to learn what God has said; he also has to understand the men to whom he is bringing the Word."

a. *Pay attention to the problem of encounter.* Animists cannot just drift into the Christian faith. True, they may attach themselves to the fringe of some congregation as interested spectators, and maybe even become what we sometimes call "sympathizers," and it may well be that by so doing they will fall under the influence of the Spirit of God and be brought to vigorous commitment; but the passage from heathenism to the Christian faith is a definite and clear-cut act, a specific change of life, a "coming out of something" and an "entry into something quite different," a change of loyalty — or in the biblical analogy, a change of citizenship (Eph. 2:12-13).

The notion of making a definite act of commitment to the Lord is a biblical concept in both the Old and New Testaments, and was normally accompanied by some kind of ocular demonstration of the commitment. The book of Joshua ends with such an episode (24:14-15) — "Choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Here, there is a definite encounter of religions. There are three options — the ancestral animism, or the current environmental animism of the land, or the Lord God. Then, after the public discussion (for no pressure is brought to bear on them) the decision is made, and Joshua then demands a demonstration of that decision. "Then, *put away* the foreign gods and incline your hearts to the Lord" (v. 23). A covenant is made at Shechem (v. 25), and a stone is set up as a *witness* to the act of commitment (vv. 26-27).

Was it not the same in the days of New Testament Ephesus? The people movement among the workers of magic led to the public burning of their magical literature — and so large a bonfire it was that the value of the books burned was recorded as 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:18-19). Be it noted that this demonstration was both an *act of commitment* and an *act of rejection*, a spiritual encounter. Indeed, the anthropologist, Van Gennep, would have called it a *rite of separation*, because it marked a precise cutoff from an old life and status, before entering into a new one. Was it not to these same Ephesians that Paul so articulated it? Put off the old man (4:22), and put on the new man (4:24) — "put-off" and "put on," as one changing clothes.

The biblical evidence of this demand for commitment to Christ in some form of dramatic encounter shows the convert(s) demonstrating that the old way no longer has power over him (them), and henceforth he is "God's man" (the collective, "people of God"). Thus Paul, seeking to encourage the young man Timothy, addresses him, "O man of God," committed now to fight the good fight of faith, and to strive for Christian perfection (I Tim. 6:11; II Tim. 3:17).

In the animist world today the public demonstration, or *rite of separation*, varies with the cultural climate — fetish-burning, burial of an-

cestral skulls, casting the sacred paraphernalia into the sea or river, eating the forbidden totem fish or animal, according to the pattern of their animism. These are cultural equivalents of Joshua setting up the stone of witness, and the Ephesian magicians burning their books. This is symbolism, but more than symbolism. Psychologically men are strengthened to keep their covenant by having made a public confession and having done it as a *company of converts*. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!" said the Psalmist (107:2).

The symbolic rejection of the old way not only involves a religious encounter, but thereafter it serves as a continual reminder of the act of rejection that alone can save the convert from syncretism or polytheism. It was just at this point that Paul had trouble with the Corinthian Christians, who found it easier to incorporate Christ into their heathen pantheon, than reject that pantheon for Christ. "No way!" says Paul, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils" (I Cor. 10:21). And it is precisely at this same point that the modern mission among animists is really Christian or just another kind of Animism.

b. *Pay attention to the problem of motivation.* Animists may be interested in Christianity for many and varied reasons — some good, others bad. Many factors may bring a field to ripen unto harvest. Of course, we are interested in all enquirers, but problems are bound to arise if the evangelist accepts all such inquiry at its face value without really evaluating the basic motivation; which may be for as materialistic a reason, for example, as the fact that the power of western armies and navies in war surely makes the religion of these powerful foreigners better to have on your side than against you.

Many supposed converts misunderstand both Christianity itself and the salvation it proclaims. They misunderstand their own needs also. The book of Acts (Ch. 8) supplies us with a good example of the problem. On the surface, the conversion of Simon, the sorcerer, at Samaria was quite genuine when he came to Philip (vv. 9-13) and believed. However, shortly afterwards, when confronted with Peter's ministry and the gift of the Spirit, it is immediately apparent that Simon had a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the Gospel, due to his wrong motivation: he thought he could buy the gift of God with money (vv. 18-24).

Animists sometimes respond because the Christian mission offers a ministry of healing which seems to be more effective than that of their own shamans and medicine-men. Animist chiefs have even invited missionaries to live in their midst in order to have a trade store in their community — this meaning a regular supply of steel knives, fishhooks, nails, and axe-heads, all of which are not only utilitarian, but are also symbols of wealth and status for both this chief among other chiefs, and this tribe among other tribes.

The motivation for accepting Christianity naturally affects their view of Christianity, the character of the Gospel, the nature of their Christian ethics, and their concept of Christian responsibility.

Let me give you an example of the problem as I met it repeatedly in Papua, New Guinea. One of the real problems there is that of the Cargo Cult. It even occurs where there have been prolonged pre-baptismal training programs. Indeed, perhaps the unduly long period of training has itself made baptism appear as a goal rather than an entry into an experience of nurture and growth. It gives the impression that converts

"have arrived," as it were. They came enthusiastically in the first place, but now they want to "back out" in syncretistic cults which deny much that they have been taught. I met a young New Guinean who put it this way to me, "A few years ago I became a Christian because I wanted to achieve the white man's status and wealth. I wanted a good job, with a good wage and a house like the white men have. I worked hard in mission educational institutions, and I was baptized. But now it is all empty and worth nothing." The young man was thoroughly disillusioned with Christianity because his motivation had been wrong in the first place. His spiritual advisers had not detected this. They had interpreted his industry as a behavior-change due to conversion, and now he is a potential trouble-maker.

I also picked up a report from a missionary who had shared his all with a New Guinea colleague — a national pastor — whom he trusted implicitly. After many years, the pastor, recognizing this missionary's openness, asked, "Now we have shared everything, won't you tell me the secrets Jesus gave you?" The missionary was staggered to discover that even his pastoral colleague had what they call "the cargo mentality," which must have been there in his mind from the very motivation of his first attraction to Christianity. One major cause of Cargo Cults is the wrong expectation converts have had of Christianity.

I do not want to give the impression that all conversions from Animism are like this — that would not be true. There are thousands and thousands of wonderful warm-hearted Christians who really know Jesus as Lord. But, nevertheless, it remains quite true that we have never really faced up to the problem of motivation when the convert first comes for instruction. We ought to be asking the question — what is the role of the pastoral counselor when the would-be convert first moves forward to respond to the Gospel?

c. *Pay attention to the problem of meaning.* Paul and Barnabas cured the cripple at Lystra in the name of the Gospel after proclaiming the Word, thinking thereby that the name of God would be praised. The people took the incident to mean that the two evangelists were the Greek gods, Mercury and Jupiter, anthropomorphized; and they brought forth their approved religious paraphernalia and the sacrifice, to worship them — the very last thing Paul and Barnabas wanted (Acts 14:8-13) — and, indeed, the people could hardly be restrained from this intention (v. 18). Here we are confronted with the problem of meaning. The proclamation, no doubt, was faithfully given, but alas, quite misunderstood.

Anthropology has a number of suggestions to offer the evangelist in this area of communication — at least to indicate why this kind of thing can happen. Let me enumerate a few, for purposes of discussion.

The biblical case I have just cited represented a confusion which arose from the *world view of the listeners*. Seeing the miracle, which was beyond the normal powers of science as they knew it, and therefore had to be due to supernatural factors, they interpreted it in terms of their own mythology. Every cross-cultural missionary runs into this problem sooner or later. It is the problem of translation and of Scripture interpretation. Every word selected — the word for God, for the Spirit, for the Son of God, for sin, for love, for pray, for forgive — comes from a

non-biblical world view, and is a potential for misunderstood meaning. If it is a problem for the evangelist who speaks in the language of his listeners it is doubly so for the evangelist who does not learn the language, but uses a third party to come between him and his audience.

The meaning of the message can be distorted also by *the image of the evangelist* in the eyes of his audience. It was for this reason that western missionaries to China before the Communist days, were often heard as imperialists and capitalists, even though they did not think of themselves in that way. As one scholar put it, they became essential to the Revolution, so that Christianity could be rejected. I know the documents of one place where missionaries worked for sixteen years without a convert, living devout, industrious lives, and by their very industry giving the impression that salvation was merely a Gospel of hard work and trade — the very last thing they desired to do.

Then again the *evangelist's conceptualization of his message* can condition the meaning ascribed to it. Is he proclaiming a faith prophetically, or a teaching philosophically? Does the teaching of Scripture come through in a foreign or denominational garment? Is it presented as a moral, legal code, or oriented to the joy of the Lord and the glory of God? Is it directed to the problems of the evangelist, or to the felt needs of the listeners? The animists have come from a world of power encounter and presumably they therefore need a God who speaks and demonstrates with power. The preaching of a purely ethical Gospel is hardly likely to inspire such a people; but a life transformed by a God of power will lead to a new ethic. Why do the charismatic figures of so many nativistic movements retain the use of the Bible in their cultic practices? Several prophets have spoken on the point. Recognizing the power of the Word, they have pointed out that the missionaries of each denomination interpret the Word in their own way, and asked, "Why cannot we do it in our way?" And this they then do — in terms of their mythology.

Thus there are three points where the message of the Word may be blurred in communication: (i) *at the "advocate end"* (evangelist), (ii) *at the "accepter end"* (convert), and (iii) *in the message itself* (the theological emphasis of the evangelist). We can no longer run the risk of sending out missionaries (westerners or nationals) without some cross-cultural training, and, of course, it follows also that they should be competent interpreters of the Word.

d. *Pay attention to the problem of social structure.* At first thought we may wonder what social structure has to do with evangelization. This is because many of us are individualists, and we assume that everyone should do things the way we do. But the peoples of the world do not have identical social behavior patterns, and this creates problems when evangelization is cross-cultural. The people to whom the evangelist goes may organize their daily life very differently from him, and he should remember that the process of evangelization should lead to the formation of fellowship groups, and that these should be indigenous and not foreign in structure. At least, the evangelist ought to be aware of social structure, and reckon on the Holy Spirit being able to use ways of life different from his own. Let me cite two examples of the importance of social structure for evangelization.

(i) Most animist societies are communally orientated: i.e., they tend

to operate in homogeneous groups. These groups, of course, do not ignore the individual; but he is always an individual within a group context. Groups are multi-individual. Discussions of important issues for decision go on and on until a *consensus* is reached. This may take a long time but it eliminates the problem created by "majority decision" which denies some of the rights of the minority that is out-voted. These communal societies have a high degree of social responsibility, and often the individualistic foreign evangelist has trouble with group decision-making. Groups exist at different levels of social organization, and authority for decision may lie at different levels — e.g., decision-making in domestic affairs, agriculture, religion, politics, and war may be the responsibility of household, extended-family, village, or clan. It is important for the evangelist to identify these because the manifest behavior of the multi-individual group in turning from heathenism to Christ will have the appearance of *group movements* — households, villages, age-grades, extended-families or clans, according to their normal social organization. Unless it is so, it will not be meaningful to the people.

There is nothing strange or unbiblical about this. The apostles found that the rural villages and townships of Palestine often "turned to the Lord" as whole communities, like Saron and Lydda (Acts 9:35), whereas in other cases, like that of the centurion at Philippi (Acts 16:30-34) and Crispus, the chief of the synagogue at Corinth (Acts 18:8), the groups became Christian as households. They were acting within the regular operative social mechanisms of daily life.

(ii) In the same way, those who respond in these group movements have to be formed into fellowship groups or churches; and the operating character of these should either reflect or, at least, be compatible with their familiar structures. This applies especially to any leadership patterns introduced. For example, a common blunder in church-planting across cultures has been to appoint a young Christian leader (on the grounds that he can read and has had some education) over a new Christian community in a gerontocratic society, normally led by a council of elders, where the basic values are maturity, experience, and grey hairs. In this way the evangelization of these people brings an unfortunate and unnecessary bone of contention.

These two illustrations, at the levels of decision-making and leadership, will serve to make the point that effective evangelization requires a church indigenous from the beginning; and the more foreign organizational structures imposed on a church-planting situation the more problems will be created for the subsequent generation which has to find the passage "from mission to church," which can be a painful experience.

e. *Pay attention to the problem of incorporation.* One of the tests of valid biblical evangelism is the provision of a way for incorporating converts into the fellowship of believers. The Bible demonstrates this in several ways. First, there are passages, like the introduction of John's first letter, wherein the notion of *witness* (vv. 1-2) is associated with that of fellowship (v. 3); and the Great Commission itself, which does not end with "Go and make disciples," but continues "baptize and teach." For the purpose of study, we take these texts separately, but in reality they are wholes. The analysis must be adjusted by synthesis, or our evangelization is only partial.

Second, the notion of the fellowship is crucial in biblical argument. True, we can speak of evangelism as bringing individual men face to face with Christ, but we cannot leave it there, because the New Testament did not leave it there. Christ is, of course, the Ultimate, and in that sense we need no more than to be with him. But for this present point of time in which he has been born, the convert has to be incorporated into some precise fellowship group, the Church, which is Christ's Body. In the records of the early Church (Acts) and the letters which tell us so much of its inner life, the configuration which holds it all together structurally is the church — be it theologically the Church Universal, or practically the local church. Remove that concept from the New Testament and look for a disembodied collection of isolated people who had met Christ, and you will soon be disillusioned. Christian activity and theology are always spoken of in collective figures — Christians are "fellow citizens," "members of the household of God," a "priesthood," a "nation," a "flock," a "fellowship," the "members of the Body," or "the church which is at..."

Fellowship-forming or church-planting is thus part of evangelization. Right at the beginning of Acts (1:13-14), we have a fellowship group in prayer, and immediately a worshipping, witnessing, growing body (Acts 2:46-47), meeting for instruction, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (v. 42). Thus is the Church his Body, fulfilling his ministry in this world in this day, and if evangelization does not mean that, it is defective.

To pass from this biblical base to the situation in the animist world, where men are being won to Christ in communities completely different in both social life and values perhaps from that to which the evangelist belongs, the latter has to consider what a convert from animism needs to find in the fellowship group into which he is incorporated. How does he get his new experience of Christian *belonging*, so that he becomes a participating, worshipping, witnessing, and serving member of the Body of Christ *in his own kind of world*? I hope for a profitable discussion of this issue, not only to provide us with some worthwhile directions for ministry in such situations, but also to help cross-cultural evangelists at large to appreciate a problem which many of them have never thought about at all.

f. *Pay attention to the problem of the cultural void.* Over the last ten years I have been able to visit a great many young churches whose members have come to Christ out of animist backgrounds. Apart from their wide range of cultural differences, there are also manifest spiritual differences. Some of them, though quite strange to me culturally and linguistically, have nevertheless been obviously vibrant with life, creative in their worship, using their own indigenous forms of music and art with enthusiasm, and performing significant service ministries in the animist world about them. On the other hand, others have been the very opposite. They have tried to worship according to patterns more familiar in the West, and sing hymns in Western music and to have many quite obvious accouterments of European denominationalism. These churches have been misfits in their own worlds. They limp along as if almost ready to die; as if trying to be what they really are not. In some cases they are even led entirely by a foreigner, and there is little, if any, congregational participation; and financially their work is possible only with the aid of

foreign funds. If they have a national pastor, he is a little replica of the foreign missionary. How is this church ever going to see itself as the Body of Christ, ministering the mind and heart and Word of Christ to the animist world outside? In a hundred years of history it has no more than a hundred members, and is currently static. The truth remains that the Christian programs of evangelization used over the last century of Christian missions produced these two kinds of churches. And I believe that in each case their characters were, more often than not, formed in the early periods when the first fellowship groups were being formulated. I believe that the majority (I did not say all) of our second generation problems have their roots in faulty follow-up of the original religious awakenings. In church growth parlance we say, "The people movement has to be effectively consummated."

One of the problems of following up a great movement of the Spirit of God in bringing many persons to Christ, is not just to incorporate them into a Christian group, but to be sure that it is an indigenously structured and meaningful group, in which they can participate in their own way. Thus, for example, a New Guinea convert should not have to become American or Australian to be a Christian: linguistically and culturally he should be a *New Guinea* Christian. Likewise the fellowship group should be New Guinean. The members' participation, praying, worship, and service ministry should be New Guinean. A gifted New Guinean animist musician, on becoming Christian, should be a *New Guinean* Christian musician — and so on.

If we get into this kind of a situation where evangelists dispose of all cultural values and creative arts on the presupposition that they are all incompatible with Christianity because they have been used previously for heathen purposes (as many evangelists do argue), we find ourselves with creative people who can no longer create, and would-be participants who become non-participant, and before long the cultural voids we have created begin to be felt. Cargo Cults are only partly due to foreign domination; they are also due to cultural voids. Those who believe they are called to evangelism should remember that evangelization does not take place in a vacuum.

The problem of *maintenance* (as the anthropologist, F.E. Williams, called the preservation of traditional techniques and values in a situation of changing culture), of course, involves a value judgment — can this or that element be preserved and be made truly Christian? Or will its maintenance involve the church in syncretism? The New Testament warns us that we are bound to meet this problem and that it must be faced squarely. This is why I began this statement with "The Problem of Encounter." But, even so, when the basic commitment to Christ has been effectively faced, there will yet remain an indigenous way of life which is also worth winning for Christ. It should be possible for a tribal man from, say, Africa or New Guinea, to be a Christian without having to reject his tribe. It must be so or we could hardly hope for the "great multitude which no man can number of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples and tongues (standing) before the throne and before the Lamb" in that day.

I asked a tribal man whose people had come into Christianity from animism, but whose Christian life was largely innocuous and foreign,

making little impact on its surrounding world, "What happened to your tribal skills?" He told me sadly that they had "melted away" and that life was empty because of it. He was feeling the cultural void. Something within him was crying out to be creative. He had discovered another Christian church in his country which utilized the indigenous arts and crafts to the glory of God, and he felt his own tribe had been robbed of something precious. A basic question recurs: What does it mean to a Christian convert from animism to be a Christian in an animist world, and to be a participating member in a fellowship group of converted animists? This applies to more than arts and crafts. How does the converted animist meet the physical and spiritual needs that spring from the tribal way of life — problems of danger, of death, of sickness, or sorcery — and how does one discover the will of God for him?

Evangelization does not end with an offer of the Gospel, or with the conversion of an individual, but with the coming into being of an ongoing fellowship, which is the Body of Christ in that kind of world.