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MISSION, LOCAL CULTURE AND THE 'CATHOLIC ETHNOLOGY' OF PATER SCHMIDT

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I

WITH the adoption of the principles of accommodation, inculturation or contextualization of Christianity within the diversity of cultures (Luzbetak 1988), the attention of missionaries and missiologists has turned to anthropology. There is now a missiological anthropology, understood as a 'specialised form of applied anthropology' (ibid.: 43). This concern for anthropology among missionaries is foreshadowed by the work of Pater Schmidt, who for Luzbetak represents the 'real beginnings of modern mission anthropology' (ibid.: 50).

Indeed, Pater Schmidt (1868-1954) was the founder of a formidable tradition of anthropological research. Starting from German historical anthropology,[1] he

This essay is a shortened and revised version of a paper originally written during a stay at St Antony's College, Oxford, during the academic year 1989-90. I wish to express my thanks to the Stiftung Volkswagenwerk which made that stay possible. The translations from original German and Dutch texts are mine. A copy of Ernest Brandewie's book on Pater Schmidt (Brandewie 1990) reached me only after this essay had been prepared and accepted for publication. While I do not always agree with Brandewie's conclusions about Schmidt's work, the present essay would have benefited in places from a prior reading of his book.

1. I use the term 'ethnology' for culture-historical anthropology and the term 'anthropology' for the wider perspective within which 'ethnology' represents a specific approach.

developed his own theory, *Kulturkreislehre*.[2] In addition, he was the driving force behind the establishment of a complete research infrastructure, consisting of a journal (*Anthropos*), a monograph series, an institute ('Anthropos-Institut'), a museum ('Pontificio Museo Missionario-Etnologico Lateranense') and a workshop ('Semaine d'ethnologie religieuse').[3]

While the concept of missiological anthropology did not exist in his time, he nevertheless envisaged a relation between anthropology and missiology. Then as today, the project was an 'anthropology at the service of the faith' (Luzbetak 1988: ch. 8). Or, as Pater Schmidt himself emphasized, 'the *cooperation of ethnology with the mission is one of the most effective means* used by divine providence' (Schmidt 1928: 118; original emphasis). The historical context seemed right. During the period in which Pater Schmidt's ethnology developed, the Roman Catholic Church adopted the principle of accommodation, or adaptation (see Pickering above). The missions were exhorted to respect the 'inalienable rights of the non-Christian peoples' in their own culture (Thauren 1927: 23). The concept of accommodation represented the first stage of a more 'respectful approach' (Masson 1967: 9) towards local cultures, later taken further at the Second Vatican Council.

The aim of the present essay is to outline some features of Pater Schmidt's ethnology, and then to assess briefly its importance for missionary practice.[4] I shall argue that Schmidt's ethnology was irrelevant for mission work, or rather that it did not go any further than existing theological–missiological concepts. Schmidt's ethnology was projected not so much as a tool for missiology, as it was a forward defence of Catholicism on the European 'front'. For that purpose, it was built on theological assumptions. It was this assimilation of world cultural history into theology that reduced the role of ethnology in the mission field, since it could not add to what theology already provided.

2. *Kulturkreislehre* literally means, and is usually translated as, the 'theory of culture circles', a 'culture circle' (*Kulturkreis*) being something like a 'culture complex'. Sometimes Pater Schmidt spoke simply of a *Kultur* ('culture'), and I shall follow this usage here.

3. On the life, work and ethnology of Pater Schmidt, see Andriolo 1979; Beckmann 1954; Bornemann 1954a, 1954b, 1954c, 1956, 1979, 1982; Brandewie 1983; Henninger 1956, 1967, 1979; Mühlmann 1953; Pajak 1977; Rahmann 1956; and Rivinius 1981.

4. I shall refer to material from the island of Flores (East Indonesia), one of the many mission fields of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) (see Piskaty 1963), of which Pater Schmidt was a member.

II

Schmidt had studied Oriental languages while he was enrolled at the University of Berlin for three semesters (1893-95), but in anthropology he was an autodidact. Apart from the actual stimulus of contacts with missionaries at St Gabriel and correspondence with missionaries in New Guinea, there was a more general intellectual impetus for moving into anthropology. This had nothing to do with concern for overseas missions but was rather an attempt to provide a forward defence for Catholicism against (real or imagined) adversaries in the academic world.

First, there was the defence against criticisms of Catholics as being backward and anti-intellectual. In the nineteenth century, the Church had drifted away, and distanced itself critically, from public social and cultural life, against which it built 'a separate religious, intellectual, artistic subculture [*Sonderwelt*]' (Maier, quoted in Rivinius 1981: 18; see also ibid.: 15-20; Berger 1973: 171; Hoffmann 1982). In theology, movements that tried to break out of this self-imposed isolation by adapting to nineteenth-century thought were suppressed (Rivinius 1981: 31-2; Brandewie 1983: 31-7; McBrien 1980: 216-19). On the secular side, such organizations as the Görres-Gesellschaft (founded 1876) aimed at raising the standard of scientific knowledge among Catholics, thereby assuring Catholics a respected place in public life (Rivinius 1981: 22). Pater Schmidt's ethnology was part of this forward movement into science.

The journal *Anthropos* (founded 1905), then, could represent 'a brilliant refutation of the charge of benightedness [*Geistesfinsternis*] and suppression of science, which is so often raised against the Church and Her servants' (Schmidt 1905: 11). Through their articles in *Anthropos*, missionaries could contribute to gaining the respect and recognition of the scientific public for the achievements of Catholics in ethnology and linguistics (ibid.: 8), provided that scientific standards were observed (ibid.: 14-15; Schmidt 1923: 46; see also Knecht 1988: 28-9).[5]

Secondly, there was the defence against 'naturalistic' theories of religion (see Preus 1987: 152). Anthropology, in particular, had produced various theories on the origin and evolution of religion and society that were regarded in Catholic circles as representing a veritable attack on the teaching of the Church, since they 'explained, without supernatural intervention, the origin of the true religion' (Bouvier 1914: 25). In a letter, written several years before he began his career in anthropology, Schmidt expressed the same concern, whereas, he continued, 'the proper study [of comparative religion] puts in an even stronger light the supernaturalness of our Holy Religion, as well as the excellence [*Vortrefflichkeit*]

5. A 'Guide for Ethnographic Observations' (Schmidt 1905: 21-37), the journal *Anthropos* itself (especially the contributions on data collection and systematization (listed in Rahmann 1956: 3)), and such workshops as the 'Semaine d'ethnologie religieuse' (see Semaine 1913, 1914) were meant to assist the missionary in producing professional ethnographies.

of Her inner essence and outward validity' (Schmidt to Janssen, 5 March 1895; quoted in Bornemann 1979: 279).

This was, more or less, the programme of his later work and leads directly to the apologetic element in Pater Schmidt's ethnology (see Brandewie 1983: 24-31). The combination of science and apologetics in a 'Catholic science' (Bornemann 1954b: 678) or a 'Catholic ethnology' (Utsch 1922) followed from a theological position that insisted 'on the possibility of religious knowledge won by the reason as well as by revelation, and on the necessity of rational proofs of the natural foundations of religion' (Schmidt 1931: 34; see also Brandewie 1983: 36-41). Positing reason and metaphysics as sources of religious knowledge, proposing that reason and revelation cannot contradict but must support each other, and preferring to rely on reason in the defence of supernatural truths made it possible to require science to adduce proofs for religious truths (see Schmidt as quoted in Bornemann 1954b: 679).

Schmidt required of the missionaries a 'religious reverence for facts', not because of a notion of empiricism, but out of precisely this idea of the unity of the empirical and the revealed: 'filled with the conviction that *nature and revelation can never really contradict each other*, the missionary will never describe a fact with less accuracy, or indeed suppress it, out of religiously apologetic considerations' (Schmidt 1905: 17, my emphasis; see also Brandewie 1983: 13).

Countering 'infidel' evolutionism had become possible because of two circumstances: scientific criticism of evolutionist theories, in which respect Pater Schmidt was to take up culture-historical anthropology but, for obvious reasons, ignore functionalism; and the publication in 1898 of Andrew Lang's *The Making of Religion*. It was most probably this work that made Pater Schmidt see, as Bornemann writes, the connection between 'ethnographic data on the belief in a Supreme Being and a primordial revelation which is part of the official Catholic teaching' (Bornemann 1954b: 675; see also Bornemann 1954c: 337, Brandewie 1983: 14-20, 41). The profane science of anthropology, this 'weapon against revealed religion', could now be turned against the 'infidels' in order to show, on their very field, the falseness of their theories and the truth of Christianity.

To sum up. Schmidt's ethnology was, at various levels, addressed primarily to the European public, both academic and non-academic. It was meant to be a scientific discipline, proving the ability of Catholics to work in this field, and an apologetic discipline, proving the natural foundations of Catholic doctrine. These two aspects were unified in the concept of 'Catholic ethnology', which assumed, in the tradition of scholastic philosophy, that nature and Catholic doctrine cannot contradict but must instead support each other. Through his ethnographic contributions, the missionary was taking an indirect part in a 'struggle' fought out in Europe.

III

Let me now circumscribe a few substantive elements of Schmidt's ethnology in order to show how 'science' and 'theology' were fused in such a way that the product, *Kulturkreislehre*, became a useless tool for the missionary in the field. Schmidt produced a 'therapeutic theory' of mankind (see Berger and Luckmann 1979: 130-32). That is, he posited a healthy state (primordial culture), provided a pathology or theory of deviance (decay, degeneration), a diagnostic apparatus (the culture-history method) and a therapy (Catholicism). Or as Paul Arndt, the missionary ethnographer of Flores, wrote, the missionary is the 'physician', the heathen is the 'patient', ethnology provides knowledge about the 'illness' (Arndt 1954; see also Gusinde 1958: 12). The problem was that ethnology diagnosed conditions that were already predicated on theological assumptions—it only expressed 'scientifically' what was already known theologically.

Schmidt's methodological approach was culture-historical and decidedly anti-evolutionist (see Brandewie 1983: 60-110). Like the evolutionists, he operated with a concept of 'our contemporary ancestors', who in the *Kulturkreislehre* were called the 'ethnologically most ancient peoples', since they were assumed to represent the earliest form of human culture and society, i.e., contemporary hunter-gatherer societies (especially the Pygmies). They were regarded, however, not as representing the starting-point of universal evolutionary development but as representing the beginning of historically divergent developments.[6] That is, from the earliest or primordial culture developed three so-called primary cultures: (1) the patriarchal totemistic hunters, (2) the matriarchical agriculturalists, and (3) the patriarchal nomadic cattle-breeders. From these, further developments, brought about by migration, conquest, diffusion etc., led to the development of three secondary cultures through a simple one-by-one mixing of the primary cultures (1+2, 2+3, 1+3). After that, a mixing of all three primary cultures brought about the tertiary cultures and the rise of state and civilization (presented schematically in Schmidt 1931: 240-41, 1964: 3-11, 60).

Along with universal evolutionary stages, Pater Schmidt also rejected the principle of increasing complexity as a measure for developmental stages. He replaced it with the old theological notion of degeneration (see Schmidt, F., 1987). First, religion is radically decontextualized, as an independent reality *vis-à-vis* 'profane civilization'. The former is a matter of the soul, of man's ability to recognize his true relation to God. The latter relates to technology, economy, politics and the 'formal-intellectual realm'. Second, religion is defined in terms of dependence (Schmidt 1931: 2) and worship takes the form of acts of homage, supplication and gratitude. Third, the Christian assumption of the primacy of religion as the foundation of society and ethics, and especially of the family and marriage, is established. Before this scheme, the history of cultures unfolds itself as deviation from the original, pure state, as degeneration of religion caused by

6. See works cited in note 3 above, especially those of Andriolo, Brandewie and Pajak.

original sin (Schmidt 1964: 298) or man's hubris, a 'change in the religious feeling of dependence' (ibid.: 179).

The primordial cultures were monotheistic and had, based on religion, the nuclear family, permanent monogamy and an exemplary moral code. They received monotheism through primordial revelation, for which they were prepared by their intellectual faculties. Although their technology, or civilization, was simple, they possessed a 'high' form of religion. From there on, progress was limited to profane civilization, whereas there was no trace of 'any positive evolution of man in the realm of morals, religion and aesthetics' (quoted in Bornemann 1954b: 672-3; see also Schmidt 1931: 85, 1964: 177-8, 293, 297-9). With increasing technological abilities and growing productivity, man's dependence upon nature decreased, his self-confidence grew, and he began to deny his dependence upon God (Schmidt 1964: 179). He then invented all kinds of false and irrational 'doctrines' (animism, ancestor cult, idolatry, polytheism) and, worst of all, magic, the extreme opposite of religion (Schmidt 1931: 155). With false doctrines (the latest of which were socialism, materialism, Bolshevism etc.), morality and the family also experienced a 'decline'. The evolutionists' notion of progress was, therefore, an illusion; the degenerative development of religion, after all the basis of society and ethics, could only lead to the downfall of civilization (see Schmidt 1964: 298-9).

IV

In 1928, Pater Schmidt published what one reviewer called a 'programmatic article' (Beckmann 1954) on 'the significance of ethnology and science of religion for mission theory and mission practice' (Schmidt 1928). It was to remain his only contribution of this kind. As I have indicated above, the real 'relation of support' was not from the ethnologist to the missionary, but rather the reverse: the missionary as ethnographer had to support the ethnologist for debates on the home front. More than that, the conceptual framework of *Kulturkreislehre* ethnology was largely useless for the missionary in the field.[7] The ethnologically negative evaluation that is so apparent in Schmidt's writings on primary (1 and 2), secondary and tertiary cultures was already well enshrined in the theological imagery of the 'heathen' (see Rzepkowski 1979).

The Dutch anthropologist Henri Fischer quoted approvingly C. C. Berg, who had underlined the importance of anthropology for the missionary: 'He can, of course, observe a lot during a long stay in the mission field, but to understand the

7. I should stress that I am not concerned here with the whole spectrum of accommodation by missionaries and I refer only to those instances that relate to the *Kulturkreislehre*. For a different situation, see e.g. Bekkum 1954.

meaning of what he observes is only possible through intensive study' (Fischer 1932: 62-3). In *Kulturkreislehre*, however, it was not the point 'to understand the meaning' of the observed culture, because, as a whole, it had none. A culture was the end-product of a long mixing of traits originating in the (reconstructed) primary cultures, making it into an arbitrary, 'disordered and virtually meaningless' array of elements (Huber 1988: 86), or a melting-pot of such conflicting elements as a moon cult and a sun cult (see e.g. Arndt 1929, 1931, 1936, 1937; Bader n.d.). The elements became meaningful only in so far as the observer could relate them to their provenance (totemistic culture, matriarchal culture etc.). Otherwise, there was not much else to be understood: 'In most cases I knew no better way for compiling [the ethnography] than simply to list the various accounts of each topic one after the other. This method produces a colourful mixture of bits and pieces...yet it comes closest to reality' (Arndt 1932: 3). The missionary could at least refer to origins, and origins constituted the meaning of the elements. To the native, however, his culture remained meaningless: 'As to sun and moon myths, nobody any more has the slightest idea that they have anything to do with sun and moon' (Arndt 1931: 738; see also Vroklage, as quoted in Verheijen 1951: 35, n. 1). The people 'live off the capital of previous millennia' (Arndt 1938: 23).

Apart from locating the origins of various elements, the role of ethnology remained very unarticulated. Of course, Pater Schmidt stressed (1928: 130), it can help to isolate the good elements in a culture. These are, not surprisingly, the traces of primordial revelation. Ethnology can help to understand the 'ancient fact: Anima humana naturaliter christiana' (Gusinde 1958: 14), and to unearth the 'seeds of the word', which had been buried by deviant developments (Bouvier 1913: 29).

On the island of Flores in Indonesia, much missionary ethnography was directed towards the study of the Supreme Being. Where it was found that it indeed reflected original monotheism, its name was adopted for the Christian God. But was painstaking ethnographic study necessary for this? Not always. Two years after his arrival on Flores, Arndt published a small article on the Supreme Being (in the Ngadha region) containing all the major points of his later extensive publications on the topic (Badjawa 1925a; see also Badjawa 1925b).[8] Was ethnology necessary at all for this? It seems not. Nineteenth-century missionaries came to the same conclusions as the missionaries on Flores without the help of *Kulturkreislehre* (see Raison 1978: 540-42). The necessary theological concept, indeed, had long been available; the missionary had only to apply his ingenuity.

8. While the articles are actually signed 'Paulus Badjawa' they cannot be by anyone else than Arndt. His first name was 'Paul', he was stationed in the Ngadha district whose administrative capital is Bajawa, and the content of the articles fits very closely with his later writings. It should be noted that Arndt always followed closely the framework of *Kulturkreislehre*. Ironically, Schmidt was not convinced by the conclusions of the missionary ethnographers concerning the supposed traces of primordial monotheism on Flores (see Bornemann 1956: 649-59). The study by Verheijen, who had linguistic training, on the Supreme Being in west Flores (Verheijen 1951) is a different matter.

Apart from this 'contribution' to accommodation, *Kulturkreislehre* could not offer much more to the missionary. It did remind him that, even after original sin, man was capable of producing naturally good, or morally indifferent but in other respects good, things (Schmidt 1928: 131; Gusinde 1958: 14, 19); hence adaptations of, for example, indigenous house forms for churches and missionary houses, songs, dances and melodies. Especially with regard to the family, however, it carried a generally negative message—almost everywhere: 'sad corruption of the essential duties and functions of the family' (Schmidt 1928: 121-2). And the same went for 'brideprice', that 'monstrous product of mother right' (Arndt 1950). But was it necessary for missionary practice to know the *history* of the corruption of the family, and the origin of marriage payments, when missionaries opposed local family forms and marriage payments anyway?[9]

Again the question arises, 'Did missionaries really need ethnology for their practical work?' Having read a purely ethnographic article by a colleague, one all but anonymous missionary comments:

> All this study of ethnology should not really be our final goal, but it must be used very consciously and clearly for our pastoral work...I am little interested in [ethnographic facts] in themselves, except as an illustration of, e.g., permanent fear, *Angst* psychosis, or as proof that all heathen cult ritual is without spirit and soul. (S 1949: 158)

It should not be surprising, therefore, to read Pater Arndt complain: 'several times people have told me that ethnological studies serve no purpose; and where there are books [about ethnology], they are not read' (Arndt 1959: 98; see also Knecht 1988: 34 and Kirby 1990).

The need to acquire knowledge of local culture focused on the practical, pastoral level. Further, precise ethnographic knowledge was needed about what was going on among the Christians in order to act correctively. This was very much stressed by Arndt. He complained: 'One of [the missionaries] once told a newcomer that he shouldn't ask too many questions, otherwise he would have too much to forbid his Christians' (ibid.). Precise knowledge was not only necessary for monitoring generally the Christian communities but also for teaching and confession. Beliefs, names of spirits and associated practices had to be known by name so that catechumens could be instructed more precisely about what was forbidden (Arndt 1954), as well as so that during confession questions could be put correctly for a proper formation of conscience (Anonymous n.d.; Swinkels 1952: 251).

9. On the problem of traditional versus church marriage, see Prior 1988. On 'nuclear' and 'extended family', see the exchange between Mitan (1956), who prefers to see family forms as purely civil institutions, and Tol (1957) and Pehl (1959), who see the 'extended family' as 'wholly founded on heathenism'. See also Arndt 1950.

V

This essay has dealt with a specific period of mission history and its involvement with anthropology. I have tried to reveal the fundamental problems of this 'cooperation': the rootedness of Pater Schmidt's ethnology in theology or, to put it in Verheijen's (1953) words, the construction of ethnology as an 'ethno(theo)-logy'. The *Kulturkreislehre* could not solve anything in the confrontation between missionaries and local cultures. It could only provide quasi-solutions to missiological or theological problems. Because Pater Schmidt's ethnology was formulated on theological foundations, it could only give the same answers as theology, disguised in ethnological terminology. Hence also its non-contribution to the missiological notion of accommodation.

Since the 1950s, missiological thinking has gone in new directions, and in that respect the period I have discussed is closed. Yet I wonder if some of the problems of using 'anthropology in the service of the faith' have not remained. The notion of 'primordial revelation' has persisted as a theologically useful concept. Today, it is related to the idea of the 'anonymous Christian' that is widely accepted in theology (Luzbetak 1988: 124-5; see also Shorter 1983: 188-90), and for which it provides one of the theological foundations (Fries 1970: 349-50). In common with Pater Schmidt's thinking, this new concept also looks for the 'seeds of the word' and the 'preparation for the Gospel', and thus to the manifestation of God's universal salvific will in other cultures. For testing the authenticity of these 'seeds', an evaluation of cultural elements 'in the light of the Word of God' (Shorter 1983: 177) is necessary. I suspect that this just repeats the dissociative approach of the *Kulturkreislehre*, isolating elements and choosing those that lend themselves to a positive theological evaluation. Seen from the perspective of anthropology this may be problematic, but it remains a purely theological problem—it does not, like *Kulturkreislehre*, turn theology into a theory that is then presented as anthropology. Anthropological insights may be useful, useless or simply distracting, for they are rooted in a different interpretative framework and because such insights change.

Accommodation theory was as dissociative as Pater Schmidt's ethnology. It regarded cultures as something like supermarkets with good, harmless, not so good but useful, and bad things, according to Christian values, from which one could choose for moral (right in own culture) or tactical (make conversion easier) reasons (Thauren 1927: 25). The gradient was from clothing, ways to build houses and good manners at the positive end, to social values, beliefs and religious practices at the negative end. Although the notion of accommodation has been replaced by inculturation and similar notions, the question remains whether a new missiology, informed by modern anthropology, can escape such distinctions. Looking at the examples given by Luzbetak (1988), my impression is that it cannot. Missiology must maintain the distinction between the 'essentials' and 'non-essentials' of Christianity, defined theologically, and prescribe what must change in a culture and what need not. When anthropologists look at 'accommodation' or 'inculturation'

they do so rather differently. They observe the process of 'inculturation' among Christians themselves, trying to explain and understand what has been observed, not prescribing or recommending policies.

As early as 1928, Pater Thauren pointed out that 'external accommodation' (buildings, dress, etiquette) was becoming increasingly irrelevant with the spread of Western civilization and, one might add, the Christianity frequently associated with it (Thauren 1928: 967-8). Later, various writers noted that the younger generation of indigenous Christians, who wanted to be 'modern', was much less linked to 'accommodated' elements from traditional culture. Under these circumstances, it was recommended that the Church should not tie itself to old forms that are bound to disappear— perhaps to be appreciated only from a distance (Bettray 1967: 39-45; Meot 1980: 54; Djawa 1970: 19; Anonymous 1957).

The question arises, 'What is the "indigenous standard" applied in "accommodation", "inculturation" etc.?' For example, what about those societies of whom it is said that analysis of the structural variety is particularly apposite, that is, the structure represents a relatively unified picture of the culture, or a sector thereof, but is also an abstraction subsuming variations (Arndt's 'colourful mixture of bits and pieces': see above) of the empirically observed (see Allen 1990)? But the missionary can hardly work at the level of structure as a 'standard'; he has to struggle at the practical level with the variations and pragmatics of a culture.

Situations of change are even more intricate. Again, I would point to the process of 'inculturation' performed by societies themselves, or by sectors or classes of societies. The history and sociology of Christianity in Europe, with its religious fissions, unorthodox movements, heresies, syncretisms, renewals, reforms and theological schools, is suggestive in this respect. These differential 'inculturations' of Christianity, as some of the very terms imply, have been generally disapproved of by the churches. The novelty of European religious history, according to Gladigow (1988: 23), is the assumption that one system of meaning (religion) ought to be obligatory for all sectors of a complex society. As a rule, however, as far as is historically traceable, societies have been characterized by an 'over-supply of different, alternative, cooperating or complementary' systems of meaning. Is the notion that Christianity can be inculturated in a generally valid culture a transfer of a European perspective? Or is it, within that same framework, a method for maintaining unity by preventing 'wild', uncontrolled inculturation?

In the last decade or so, there has been some discussion of the relation between 'missionaries' and 'anthropologists' (see Stipe 1980). The formulation is itself somewhat unfortunate since it suggests a personalization of a problem that is located at a different level, i.e. that of the relation between missiology and anthropology, their approaches and aims, and whether anthropology can sensibly be a 'servant of the faith'. Even more unfortunate has been the isolation of the bases of what is seen as a 'problematic' relation: social change and religion as illusion. The former need not be discussed since there is no anthropologist who prescribes non-change. The idea that anthropology treats religion as illusion

reflects, I think, the threat felt by theology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from the 'profane sciences'.

There can be no doubt that religion in anthropological analyses is very 'real', whether in its social function, or as an intellectual system or system of meaning, or even as an independent variable in social processes. The point is that social and human sciences treat religion as a 'human product' (Gladigow 1988: 16), that they look at religion, as Peter Berger (1973: 177-80) says, *sub specie tempore.* The question of whether one might look at religion *sub specie aeternitatis* or theologically, is a question that does not concern anthropology as a discipline. Berger's distinction needs further discussion, but it may suffice here to underline the different methodological approaches of theology and anthropology. Claims of absolute truths are, for anthropology, empirical data of a given culture that by themselves do not require approval or denial from within anthropology. Berger has coined the term 'methodological atheism' to characterize the approach to religion as a human product without any implications of falseness or truth. Just to mention the word 'atheism' seems to have been provocative. Shorter opposes 'methodological atheism', since it involves a denial of the object of belief, and juxtaposes it to an acceptance of 'religious determinants, or divine reality itself, as an independent, non-empirical category or variable in social analysis' (Shorter 1983: 2). Seen in that way, anthropology within theology may make sense, but Shorter does not represent the basic contrast properly. The expression 'denial' may have been motivated by the term 'atheism', but it should refer, in the first place, to a (necessary) methodological stance ('human product'). Religion can, nevertheless, be treated as an independent variable, though non-empirical categories like 'divine reality' have no place in anthropology.

To insist on the radical difference between the approaches towards religion of anthropology and theology brings to mind an indirect connection. The description, study and analysis of religions began in theology. It produced terminologies and classificatory and analytical schemes that continue to be used even though they have been emptied of their theological contents (Bernand and Gruzinski 1988, Gladigow 1988: 22). The theological 'origins' of terminologies does not, of course, mean that they are not of use in human sciences—but caution is required if we are to avoid introducing distinctions that have arisen within the history of a particular tradition, the sort of caution noticeable in the reluctance in present-day anthropology to distinguish sharply between 'religion' and 'magic'.

Given their different aims and methodologies, can anthropology and missiology cooperate at all, and in what? Or rather, can anthropology serve missiology? On the whole, I would say not, except perhaps in the superficial sense of giving anthropologically phrased support to missiological positions. Of course, if a missiologist or missionary studies anthropology, then it can become a valuable intellectual stimulus for reflecting on questions, the answers to which will, however, always be theological. To put it differently: anthropology cannot answer theological questions, but perhaps it can be used by theologians to help in framing well the questions—and, in consequence, the answers.

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