
Anthropological Insights and the Early Voices of Ethnodoxology

Elsen Portugal

“Whither Bound in Missions?”— In Which Direction is the Missions Movement Going? Missiologist Daniel Fleming formalized this question in his book, *Whither Bound in Missions?*, published in 1925. This and several other publications in the early to middle of the 20th century demonstrate the engagement of the missiological community with anthropological perspectives seeking to understand and support the direction of missions for the upcoming century. In doing so, they have contributed as well to practiced anthropology through missions.

This article explores the contributions of three authors who were learning the value of incorporating anthropological perspectives into the missionary enterprise. They were also forerunners of the discipline of ethnodoxology, encouraging the application of local music and art for the communication of the Christian faith when the topic was not yet of great concern within the broader missiological movement. They often demonstrate a perception ahead of their time, and courageously call on their constituency—and even on us in the 21st century— to learn and apply principles that can strengthen the Mission of God in the long run.

Introduction

The modern missionary movement was spring-boarded largely from the British Isles and North America thrusting forth thousands of cross-cultural workers into fields all over the globe throughout the 19th century. Those following their divine call had great zeal and passion for proclaiming the Christian faith to nations which had not yet heard and received the gospel of Jesus Christ. Missions had gained great momentum throughout 19th century and many people were brought to faith in Christ. But the general Western mindset of continual progress of the era, the technical advances and economic growth of their nations, coupled and hampered by a limited and frequently biased knowledge of the local cultures missionaries encountered around the world, had “engendered a feeling of superiority” (Fleming 1925, 1) towards nations viewed as less technologically, educationally, and spiritually advanced. By the turn of the 20th century, the protestant missionary community in North America had begun to realize that this general attitude “would . . . be ruinous” (21).

As Westerners—missionaries or secular researchers—encountered more and more divergent cultures

around the world and shared their experiences in their homelands, the discipline of anthropology began to take shape. Although humans have sought to document and understand other cultures for millennia, the development of anthropology is a product of the 19th century. The first course in the United States was offered in 1879 at the University of Rochester, New York (Haviland et al. 2008, 65). As we entered deeply into the 20th century, not only did missiology learn from anthropology, but several authors became major contributors to the conversation between anthropology and missions. Among the best-known ones are E. A. Nida, W. A. Smalley, J. A. Loewen, W. D. Reyburn, Charles Kraft, and Paul Hiebert (Allison 1996, 31). An anthropologist associated with SIL, Kenneth Pike, for instance, was responsible for the model currently used in anthropology “contrasting the *etic and emic perspectives*” (35). The institutions, both cross-cultural agencies and schools, to which these writers were related—SIL, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Wheaton College, and Fuller Theological Seminary, to name a few—also helped support the study of anthropology within missiology. The experiences in multiple fields shared by missionaries enriched the

discipline and developed a space of collaboration that has continued until today. In spite of the “creative tension” that exists between anthropology and Christianity, anthropology has been “successfully integrated into . . . colleges, universities, seminaries, and missions training programs” (Howell and Paris 2011, 18-19).

Ethnodoxology—An Applied Anthropology: Early Voices in the Twentieth Century

Anthropological perspectives have also had a particularly strong influence on the development of ethnodoxology. Combining content and a number of research practices from anthropology, ethnomusicology, missiology, theology, arts, and social sciences (to name a few), the term *ethnodoxology* is the recent label (turn of the 21st century) to a growing focus of research: the vast world of worship expressions found in the cultures of the world. Although ‘art’ is not part of the construct of the word *ethnodoxology*, artistic expression of the Christian faith is at the core of its focus. The applications of this discipline naturally provide greater insights into the very fields that provide its resources as well as a new interdisciplinary vision for a number of studies. Through the practices of participant observation, interviews, and other actions, cultural anthropology has been particularly helpful in creating interaction between faith and art, and ultimately the scope of the discipline.

As with every cultural aspect of a new missionary ‘field’, the local society’s art, be it music or other artistic modalities, have been deeply criticized by Western missionaries along the course of the centuries. Bringing with them the natural bias of an elevated state of their own culture’s art forms, local expressions were often ignored, disliked, maligned, or even condemned as satanic at times for fear of association with ungodliness (an understandable but simplistic and dismissive stance), and often for the simple fact that they were not perceived to be as ‘good’ as the missionaries’ art forms. Although, sadly, this attitude still persists in some circles, well-informed missiological communities in this century have distanced themselves from this *modus operandi*. Along the course of the 20th century, cross-cultural

workers with an eye for artistic expression have increasingly perceived the depth and the power of local music and art and have advocated for their integration into communicative strategies (Dye 1985, 110; Chenoweth 1972). It is unlikely that we would be able to put an exact birth date for the newer, more respectful, and missional perspective of the arts within missiological spheres. But what we can do is to explore the manifold manifestations of God’s wisdom among missiologists along the course of the last century.

The particular authors addressed in this article provided support for the agency of local communities in developing their own artistic language in the expression of the Christian faith. The recent development of the discipline of ethnodoxology is indebted to voices who addressed this need when the topic was not yet of great concern for the missiological movement at large. These authors influenced the spread of this perspective in their particular spheres of influence. Although lesser known than Nida, Garvan, Kraft, Hiebert, and others, these missiologists and missionaries have also pronounced an “Eureka!” about the value of the anthropological perspective in missions and have contributed to the understanding of the value of local art forms. Even now, learning about them can strengthen our own resolve to apply these practices in current missionary strategies.

In their own circles, these ‘lonely’ voices of the 20th century—some theologians, some missionaries—began to look for possible applications of local ‘traditional’ music and artistic genres in worship settings. Daniel Fleming, professor at Union Seminary in the early part of the 20th century,¹ encouraged contextualization in missions and the use of local forms. The English missionary and missiologist John F. Butler proposed similar approaches (Butler, *Christian Art in India*). Raymond Buker, a missionary, published an article which touched on the value of local musics in the very first edition of the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* in October of 1964 (Buker). He encouraged the perception of the value of local music for proper communication based on an experience in the Ivory Coast. Although relatively few calls for artistic contextualization were made throughout the early 20th century, this outlook began to have deeper traction in the 1970s and has developed into a growing appreciation of local worship arts and a recognition of

¹ This is a relevant topic addressed in Daniel Fleming’s books such as *Whither Bound in Missions* (1925).

their importance for the practice of the Christian faith.² Today, the literature on ethnodoxology and its practices can be found in many parts of the world.

Authors such as Daniel Johnson Fleming, John Butler, and Raymond Buker addressed not only the local music, but also other artistic modalities such as architecture, painting, dancing, etc., to name a few. Much of the initial thrust in missiological ethnodoxology came from practitioners trained in ethnomusicology, especially up to the turn of the 21st century. In the earlier years, the rather closed dichotomous view of Western versus traditional musics (Chenoweth 2013),³ featured prominently in ideas concerning cultural and individual ‘heart music(s)’ (later also ‘heart musics and arts’) (Chenoweth 2013). More recently, however, ethnodoxologists have become considerably open to a combination or fusion of internal and external characteristics to form new ‘heart’ arts (or ethnoarts) or genres. Brian Schrag, former SIL ethnoarts coordinator, proposes that the artistic potential of community can include all those forms in which it “can create, perform, teach and understand from within, including its forms, meanings, language, and social context” (Schrag, 296). Regarding the adaptation of the message to a local context, without doing harm to the actual content or meaning, music and the arts are co-participants and encourage a deeper understanding of a Christian worldview among the members of a given community.

With this promising recent development of ethnodoxology in mind, I would like to pay tribute to the early vision of 20th century missiologists in this article. In their own generations they bravely published ideas that were still being dismissed—often even despised—by their academic and ministry peers. Today, we can rejoice and be motivated by seeing once again that God is at work and speaking to his servants even when the “messenger” seems to be simply a lonely voice.

Daniel Johnson Fleming

Even though most missionaries and the missiological community may not have seen it as relevant at the time, some missiologists did indeed highlight the value of local music and art for cross-cultural and intracultural communication. Daniel Johnson Fleming, of Union Seminary in New York, is representative of this subset of missiologists and missionaries who were envisioning positive developments in missions towards the ‘naturalization’ of the Christian faith. Three of his publications provide clear glimpses of his missionary vision, and, in two cases, illustrated descriptions of local artistic forms that were already in use: *Whither Bound in Missions* (1925), *Heritage of Beauty* (1937), and *Each With His Own Brush* (1938).



Nativity

by Indian Christian, Frank Wesley
(Fleming 1938)⁴

²The present-day broader validation of the importance of the arts in Christian worship probably received impulse from a variety of global evangelical conferences such as the one held in Lausanne, Switzerland in July of 1974. See: Lausanne Movement at <https://www.lausanne.org/our-legacy> (Accessed October 11, 2019).

³This and some other sources used in this article were drawn from the electronic Kindle format. The books for which Kindle does not provide physical page numbers use place markers called ‘Kindle Locations’. To abbreviate the reference, I use the letters KL followed by a number for references from Kindle Edition books.

⁴ Permission for reproduction of photo granted by Friendship Press.

In his 1925 book, *Whither Bound in Missions*, Daniel Fleming, who had “caught his first enthusiasm for the Christian enterprise overseas” (Fleming 1925, v) in the home of Rev. James C. R. Ewing in India, described his perspective and drew attention to a growing movement towards adaptation and indigenization in missions:

We have slowly come to realize that the people of India can *play on their own home instruments chords of religious music that touch and move their own hearts*. They love their melodies. We now see that we have come with our foreign instruments; and, though the music has been that of the great Master, our inability to appreciate their instruments and our rough handling of them has left much to be desired. Certain it is that in most fields we have not waited for the outer forms of religious expression to arise as the natural growth of the religious consciousness of the indigenous group. We have gone into lands which have known only individual worship, and have introduced congregational worship after a western pattern with synods and presbyteries and conferences, with paid pastors, with deacons and elders, with standing committees and the like systems wholly unlike what the native religious consciousness would have created if left to itself.

In the past fifteen years, however, the devolution of initiative and powers and responsibilities from the foreign missions to the young Churches has received an immense amount of attention, and many missions have taken radical steps in the way of transfer of authority and leadership. For the most part it is a consciously accepted principle of missionary work that Churches should be developed among different peoples according to their genius and culture rather than presented readymade by westerners. (Fleming 1925, 163-164). (emphasis mine)

It would take more than half a century before missionary and missiological communities would broadly respond to this call. Along the way, many other voices—such as Nida, Smalley, Loewen, Kraft, and Hiebert, to name a few (Allison 1996, 31)—were raised in favor of this local value and agency that would assist the missiological community to wear more

anthropological lenses in their cross-cultural works. Nonetheless, Fleming’s enthusiasm for the possibility that Christian worship could and should adapt to local cultures nearly a century ago is stimulating to those of us who are seeing his vision being fulfilled across the globe.

In India, Fleming had observed how “home instruments” could move hearts. Like contemporary ethnodoxologists, he envisioned local worship and witness to come from the community’s locus of conscience, and music and arts to be developed in local artistic languages. He conceded that the importation of foreign styles of worship into new communities as a normative practice, as had been generally practiced since the rise of the modern missionary movement, had serious potentially weakening effects for the “naturalization” of the gospel message. At the same time, Fleming expressed hope that the trend he had observed since around 1910 of entrusting the “initiative and powers and responsibilities” to the “young [local] churches,” an approach currently described as ‘local agency’,⁵ would become “the prevailing thought movements of [their] age (Fleming 1925, viii)” and that it would bring a profound change “in attitude and method” (Fleming 1925, viii). Although this perspective still meets with resistance from those who find safety in their own worship and witness artistic practices, we can rejoice that, by the grace of God and the contributions of these missiological servants, great progress has been made along the course of the last 100 years.

Daniel Fleming’s *Heritage of Beauty* (1937) focuses on Christian architecture in several eastern countries. The book records and illustrates through photographs a number of examples of architectural attempts at presenting the Christian faith in local styles. For instance, he describes a church building in Samoa that he encountered in 1935 built by local workers and consisting only of local materials. Fleming reports that the congregation that meets in that building has responded highly favorably, and that the “world-wide Christian fellowship” in that area of the Pacific was already self-supporting (Fleming 1937, 24). In Honolulu, a Japanese-established Christian church had celebrated its 25th anniversary with a new building in 1929. The construction resembled “an old feudal castle in Japan” (34). Although it may come as a

⁵ Global Ethnodoxology Network (GEN), “Core Values,” Value No. 5. <https://www.worldofworship.org/core-values/>. (Accessed May 14, 2024).

surprise to us, he also informs us that “the oldest known Christian church structure in China, built by Franciscan friars in 1383, reveal not only Chinese details in roof eaves but also a Chinese grouping of all the monastery buildings” (38). Only later did Gothic architecture replace such contextualized examples of church buildings.

In Japan itself, Daniel Fleming stated that there were examples of contextualized architecture. They had typical curved roofs such as those found on Japanese Buddhist temples, used translucent paper on the windows, and contained other features that signaled the sacred meaning of the building. In spite of the cost of the construction, “the American missionary who designed a ‘contextualized’ chapel and presides over it, noting how his congregation prefer even the cold chapel to the warmer parish house, and how non-Christians bow or say a prayer as they pass, feels that the cost has been abundantly justified” (Fleming 1937, 52). Fleming does make it clear that the responses to this contextualized architecture were not always positive in Japan. Some had become interested in Christianity when they saw “a real Japanese church!” (55). However, many Japanese Christians—pastors and laymen—in an effort to lay aside “their religious past” (55), preferred choosing a non-traditional structure. In response, Fleming remained hopeful that, in future generations, “an expression of Christianity in Japan may evolve which shall be neither Western nor a slavish copy of old Japan,” committed “to bodying forth what God has spoken to Japan” (55). His reflection and vision for arts within the context of engagement with God and the local community is impressively accurate to current ethnodoxological perspectives.

Fleming also provides a number of illustrative instances in China where buildings used for Christian worship were intentionally built in accordance with local cultural artistic styles. Measuring the influence of these constructions on the growth of the church is nearly impossible to gauge. But the intention has always been clear: to enable “Chinese Christians to feel at home in their churches (Fleming 1937, 40), or to convey the idea of a house of God “in the architectural language of the people who would use it (44), or even “to interpret Christian truth through Chinese art and construction” (46). A Roman Catholic authority in the 1930’s stated that “if Christianity is to be at home in China it must not be lodged in buildings of Western pattern, totally at variance with the Chinese

temperament, climate and landscape” (39). Almost a century later, considering the growth of the Chinese house church, we can confirm that this prelate was correct. As it turned out, the key was not found in contextualized church buildings, but Christianity came to be ‘at home’ in China, constantly under persecution, by finding itself in the home environments that were regular part of Chinese life.

Heritage of Beauty also provides descriptions and photo illustrations of indigenous art found in other countries where only a minority of the population identifies itself as Christian. Fleming believed that visual art possessed a psychological property that could influence human behavior towards the reception of the gospel message” (Fleming 1937, 92). Local perceptions, he stated, need to be considered when using any type of symbolism because “there are dangers in an uncritical introduction of the Christian symbolism of the West, for it is not easy to know what is going on in the mind of the user of a new form” (95). He asked:

What is the relation of culture to religion? Granting that the church possesses universal truth, should this truth express itself through universal symbols, or should it take on local cultural modes? In introducing Christianity to a new social group, in helping a people to build and decorate its churches and to choose its hymns and pictures, should one strive to conform to existing local tastes, or aim to develop appreciation for traditional ecclesiastical art which came to acceptance in other ages and areas? (Fleming 1937, 10)

Fleming’s discussions surrounding these examples demonstrate his belief in a tendency in human history towards forming a unified culture, not unlike the general Western mindset of the age. On the other hand, this likely “trend toward a common world culture,” was, in his view, yet a long way from being realized. He observed that local communities continue to communicate “in certain peculiar and well-defined artistic ways,” and that these ways “constitute for that people a living language. Sometimes these native moods and gifts become consecrated to our Lord, thus naturalizing Christianity. When this comes about the Christian churches of Asia and Africa speak to their own as they never could through Gothic, Greek or other Western forms, ritual and architectures. The message becomes embodied not only in words but also

in music, color and stone” (Fleming 1937, 11).⁶ Although the missionary community still protested in the early 20th century that Christianity was “still an alien religion (13),” Fleming was hopeful that, in time, this status would change. He referred in particular to the previous 15 years, during which “much has been done since the World Missionary Conference of 1910 to rectify this impression of foreignness” (13).

John Butler

Writing around the middle the 20th century, John F. Butler is another excellent representative of a forward-looking missiological perspective grounded in positive anthropological principles of respect for local cultures and of advocacy of local leadership in ‘mission fields’. John Butler was an English Methodist missiologist and missionary who received his Ph.D. in Manchester in 1936. He served as professor of philosophy at the Madras Christian College (India) and as literary editor for Madras' Christian Literature Society for an extensive length of time (489).

In *Christian Art in India*, Butler discusses how foreign influences, not only from the West but also from India’s middle-eastern and Asian neighbors, had a profound effect on the artistic development of its Christian art. Two of his main Indian areas of focus are the Agra Mission in northern India, where many paintings and engravings were used (Butler 1986, 64), and the Mar Thoma Church in the state of Kerala. He insists, however, that even before Christ, the Greeks had left their imprint through the conquest of Alexander the Great and the subsequent Hellenization of the region. Along the centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese in the 15th century, Arab traders also left their mark among Indian people groups (24-25).

Syrian Christian influence in the early centuries after Christ is still noticeable in the Mar Thoma church in the state of Kerala, a church with “Orthodox affiliation but Reformed Protestant influences” (Wickeri 2007, KL 878). Philip Wickeri describes it as “an Indian ethnic church with a strong commitment to ecumenism and social justice” (KL 913-914). Compared to the overall 2.3% Christian population in India, the region of Kerala boasts a much higher 30%, according to a 1991 census (KL 935-936). Wickeri makes no specific reference to intentional contextualization efforts among these Christians, but he does identify visible traits of “Indianness” such as

norms of dress. In essence, rather than loading the burden of influence fully on the ‘West’—first the Portuguese with papal Christendom, then the British—Butler describes a much larger pool of influencers on Indian art to include Greeks, Syrian Christians, Arabs, as well as the Chinese, who may have had the greatest impact on India by means of Persia until the arrival of the Portuguese (Butler 1986, 27).

Focusing mainly on architecture and visual art, however, Butler sees the arrival of the Portuguese as the most significant moment in the development of Christian art in India. “The Portuguese began their church building in India almost as soon as they arrived,” he states (Butler 1986, 44). The designs were practically all European, “except in a few respects” (48). In spite of the common perception of the inculturation of that era as a “destructive force” since it interrupted “the natural development of Indian art with the intrusion of alien and incompatible styles” (60), John Butler suggested that Indian art, in that time in history, lacked innovation, and he questions whether it would have developed positively if the Portuguese had not brought in Western art.

The British rule in India for two centuries was certainly the most significant influence on Indian art until the more recent explosion of global communication through radio, television, and the internet. During the time of British domination, “most of the early work was for Western expatriates” (Butler 1986, 117). Butler explains the dynamics of conquest, art, and conversion during that age:

The ethos of the age accepted that conquerors brought their art with them: the Muslims had done just that, centuries before. The theology of the age distinguished sharply between the one true religion and false ones. The early converts were subjected to so many social forces pulling them back from Christianity that they dared not flirt with forms which might look like, or might ease the way to, unchristian compromise . . . Yet Indian nationalism, both political and cultural, was beginning to stir (Butler 1986, 117-118).

In a nutshell, Butler identifies legitimate psychological, theological, and social reasons for the acceptance of imported artistic expressions as standard during that period. The church’s longing for a move away from Western styles is a development of the 20th

⁶ All citations in this paragraph up to this point.

century which has been slowed and often stalled both by foreign missionaries and conservative Indian believers. Nevertheless, rather than criticizing believers of that age, Butler accepts the difficulty they faced in disregarding earlier associations of their art with heathenism:

This feeling, I am given to understand, is now much less widespread than it used to be; but as long as it exists *it calls for brotherly understanding*. The fact that we do not share certain fears and scruples, even the fact that we consider them false and obstructive, does not give us the right to domineer over those who feel them strongly as matters of conscience (Butler 1986, 123). (emphasis mine)

Throughout the 20th century, Christian artists in India produced wonderful works and have often helped shift the tide towards what Butler called ‘Indian-ness.’ Although he saw himself as one who preferred “ancient beauty and emotion-soaked tradition” (Butler 1986, 159), Butler believed that Indian Christian art, by challenging and compelling people to look for the right answers, was “in line with God’s purposes for the church today” (159).

In a 1956 article, “The Theology of Church Building in India,” Butler outlines his philosophy on Christian art outside the West in eight theses before proposing ideas of contextualized church structures. While a thorough discussion of all eight theses is not possible in this article, two of Butler’s theses discuss facts and perspectives that are of great relevance to the understanding of the place of arts in Christian faith expressions.

The heading of the first proposition states: “Christian art is necessary” (Butler 1956, 1-20). He explains that “the side of human nature which makes art is (for the community, even if not for every individual) an essential side which like the rest of human nature must be redeemed and used to God’s glory, or else it will remain as sin and as a centre of the personality’s disintegration” (1). In his second proposition he explains the historical aspects of contextualization of culture and art in Christian expansion. Although it was true that, until the 1920s, Western missions had “exported its own art into the newly evangelized areas” (2) (with notable exceptions, he says), during the “first great expansion” of the Church Christians had actually taken over “local art-forms and used them freely, till gradually out of them it developed forms uniquely its own” (2). Thus, with

anthropological keenness and by the employment of historical facts, Butler affirms the value of arts as an integral part of human culture and calls on practitioners to reconsider the practices of the “first great expansion” of the Church.

Daniel Fleming and John Butler, as scholars of the development of Christian art in Asia, suggested that each situation could call for either the rejection or acceptance of local forms. Through their writings they attempted to impress on the readers the importance of trust in divine guidance, addressing not only missionaries, but primarily the local population. The implication of their suggestions is an affirmation of the need for a solid discipleship that leads to maturity among the new Christians, and a diminished dependence on outside leadership. Christian faith and love are testified in missions’ efforts that hold to the relevance of obedience to the divine mandate of proclaiming the gospel and discipling the nations. They are accompanied by the assurance in the associated promise of Jesus’ presence with his emissaries on their journeys and of the Holy Spirit as guide (Matthew 28:20). Likewise, they imply that a demonstration of love towards the people whom missionaries serve includes the validation of their creative spirit in culture—maintaining discernment as to sinful practices—and of their voices as newly incorporated partners in ministry.

Raymond Buker

Missionary Raymond Buker addressed the applicability and advantage of local musical tunes in cross-cultural settings in an article of the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* in 1964. The example he cites from Donald McGavran related to church musical practices in the Ivory Coast in 1962 leads him to conclude that, “this example of adopting the local cultural situation to the need in Christian development of a given group is indicative of what may well be done in any culture” (Buker 1964, 16). This particular article has the distinction of being featured in the very first edition of the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ)*. (The EMQ is now published by Missio Nexus.) In the article, well in line with cultural anthropological principles, Buker points to seven cultural areas to which the missionary *must* give attention. The seventh—Hymnology—is portrayed as “a specific example of cultural adaption” (16).

Firstly, the missionary needs to “learn the factors of his given locality” (Buker 1964, 10). He affirms the

unchangeability of the Gospel but understands its versatility in the area of communication. The missionary, he states, “must know not only the past, but also the present” (10). The second area is linguistics. Honoring the achievements of organizations such as Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) during the early part of the 20th century, he acknowledges their immense contribution towards “the right use and knowledge of a given language to enter into the life of the people” (11). Thirdly, he mentions the importance of communication, focusing on the value of transportation, radio, and television as achievements that have made “the possibilities of reaching every person of every tongue and nation . . . within reason” (13).

Urbanization is the fourth area of attention. Transportation and life opportunities have allowed for the development of centers including “great unassimilated populations in our urban areas” (Buker 1964, 14). In classic anthropological fashion, Buker understands that, in order to “minister to the souls of these replaced, misplaced, peoples,” there is not a single “technique . . . for each and every country. These people must be approached in terms of their particular cultures and needs” (14). Fifthly, Buker refers to McGavran’s term, “*cultural overhang*” (15),⁷ warning missionaries against applying their own cultural habits and understandings to the new culture where he or she is now living. The sixth area is that of social reforms. Buker acknowledges that remedial measures concerning social needs of a society are efforts that “Christians cannot oppose in principle” (16). However, he calls on missionaries to “implant the Gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that the layman of each cultural situation will be doing their part to fulfill God’s will” (16).

Finally, very much in line with the topic of this review, Buker illustrates cultural adaptation, to which he is calling missionaries in a number of ways (the first six areas), by encouraging missionaries to apply anthropological principles in the area of hymnology. By “hymnology” he refers to the creation, collection, and utilization of hymns, i.e. Christian songs of worship and faith. Buker does not criticize the use of Western hymns as a whole and considers them “an

integral part of the life of the Protestant church in Europe and America” (Buker 1964, 16). However, the method of translating these hymns “into the languages of the Orient and Africa, using tunes that have been written for the Western church” (16), have demonstrated a disregard for “anthropological rules and findings” (17). As a positive alternative to the 150 years (in round numbers at the time of the article—1964) during which “the representatives of Christ from the West have been teaching the Christian church of Asia, of Africa and of South America the hymns of the European and American church,” Buker directs our attention to “the peoples’ movement” described by McGavran about the Ivory Coast (16).⁸ In this environment, after unsuccessful attempts by missionaries to help the local communities “retain the tunes or the words” (17), being unaware of the local culture’s 5-note musical scale and its correlation to their tonal language, it was an indigenous leader who, stirred to share the gospel through song in the surrounding villages, “made up his own theme song,” singing “it to a tune of his own people” (17). He relates that, “during the next few months the Africans composed many hymns to their own tunes. Now the tribes of these parts are edified in their own worship and aided in the spread of their faith by the indigenous music directly related to the Gospel” (17). Buker concludes: “This example of adapting the local cultural situation to the need in Christian development of a given group is indicative of what may well be done in any culture” (17).

Conclusion

This article celebrates the contributions of three missiologists of the 20th century who encouraged best anthropological practices in missions, in particular touching the use of local music and arts. Their spiritual insights, supported by respectful and thorough consideration of cultural diversity, provide an early vision of the potential of local church creative artists to develop artistic works that communicate their faith in ways that can best engage their own cultures. Their discussions spoke strongly to cross-cultural

⁷ Reference to Donald McGavran (1959, 85).

⁸ Reference to Donald McGavran (1955, 13).

workers of supporting the local agency of believers as they engaged with their communities.

These three representatives are a very small sample of missional thinkers around the world that were/have been/are in essence, under this label or not, ethnodoxologists. In fact, they are all from the English-speaking world although with a broad vision for the whole world. There are certainly many other missiologists and/or anthropologists from all continents who have key insights and an understanding of ethnodoxological principles. Their work and inspiration, even though often limited to their local spheres of influence, will hopefully be broadcast to the missiological and theological community as well as the churches in the near future.

Bibliography

- Allison, Norman E. 1996. "The Contribution of Cultural Anthropology to Missiology." In *Missiology and Social Sciences*, edited by Edward Rommen and Gary R. Corwin, 30-46. Pasadena, CA: EMS - William Carey Library. EMS Series Number 4.
- Buker, Raymond B. 1964. "Missionary Encounter with Culture" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 1 (1): 9-18.
- Butler, J. F. 1986. *Christian Art in India*. Madras, India: The Christian Literature Society.
- Butler, J. F. 1956. "The Theology of Church Building in India." *Indian Journal of Theology* 5(2) (Oct.), 1-20.
- Chenoweth, Vida. 1972. *Melodic Perception and Analysis*. Ukarumpa, Papua New Guinea: Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- . 2013. "Spare Them Western Music." In *Worship and Mission for the Global Church*, edited by James R. Krabill, KL 3894-4008. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library. Kindle Edition.
- Dye, T. Wayne. 1985 (1980). *Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*. Dallas: Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- Charles E. Farhadian, ed. 2007. *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.
- Fleming, Daniel Johnson. 1923. *Contacts with Non-Christian Cultures*. New York: George H. Doran Company.
- . 1925. *Whither Bound in Missions?* New York: Association Press.
- . 1937. *Heritage of Beauty*. New York: Friendship Press.
- . 1938. *Each with His Own Brush*. New York: Friendship Press.
- Haviland, William A. et al. 2008. *Cultural Anthropology: The Human Challenge*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Howell, Brian M., and Jenell Paris. 2011. *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Kraft, Charles H. 2005. *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective, 2nd edition*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. Kindle Edition.
- . 2011. *Anthropology for Christian Witness*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. Kindle Edition.
- McGavran, Donald. 1955. *The Bridges of God*. New York: Friendship Press.
- . 1959. *How Churches Grow*. London: World Dominion Press.
- Schrag, Brian. 2018. *Make Arts for a Better Life: A Guide for Working with Communities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wickeri, Philip L. 2007. "The Mar Thoma Christians of Kerala: A Study in the Relationship between Liturgy and Mission in the Indian Context." In *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices*, edited by Charles E. Farhadian, KL 877-1140. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.



Elsen Portugal is a Brazilian-born pianist who has served in missions since 1994. He holds both a bachelor's and a master's in music, post-graduate studies in World Arts, and a PhD in Ethnodoxology. He and his wife have 4 children and 9 grandchildren. After almost 3 decades of ministry on 3 continents he “discovered” ethnodoxology, thus revolutionizing his perspectives on the value and functions of arts, as well as what all belongs within what we call ‘missions’. His doctoral work discusses the authenticity of the current fusion music of Xerente Christians in Brazil. Currently he serves as Academic Dean at Champion Christian College, as Board member of the Global Ethnodoxology Network (GEN), as collaborative pianist at his local church, and as head of the Theology and Arts in Ministry Initiative (TAM) under ACT International, focused on facilitating the integration of the biblical foundations of arts into seminaries and other ministry training institutions.

Author email: elsenpp@gmail.com
