

**Theology Co-op. June 2019**  
**CHRIST AND CULTURE**  
**Various Mission Engagement Styles**

**i. The Treasure Hunt (indigenisation model)**

Max Warren famously said that when we meet another culture we must ‘take off our shoes’ in veneration of the God who is already within it. This style of mission assumes that from its beginnings a culture will have had within it the seed of God’s word and so the Christian is there to listen, look and stand in awe of God’s incarnation in all things. This approach sees God’s love writ large in a world which is full of God’s glory and acknowledges revelation as not so much a message to a culture as an encounter with the ever-present God of love already there in the ordinary things of life. The Christian in mission therefore digs down into the culture to find a series of local revelations hidden in ordinariness. *Culturally naïve & romantic?*

**ii. God on the attack. (prophetic or counter-cultural model)**

This style of prophetic engagement begins from the assumption that there is in some sense an alternative world – that which is described in the foundation documents of the faith – and with this in mind, there is then an inevitable confrontation with any human culture. Each culture must therefore be fully analysed and understood so that it can be transformed into the likeness of the alternative Christian culture. *Paints God’s creation as evil?*

**iii. Planting the Gospel (adaptation model)**

The Christian’s task, according to this model, is to distil the essence of the message from the context of first century Palestine and then to think of ways that the receiving culture can hear that message and believe. Many speak of taking the essential core of the Gospel out of the first century cultural husk that presently contains it, and re-planting that into the new soil. There is inevitably some disagreement among Christians of this genre about what the essential core precisely is – be it allegiance to the Lordship of Christ, the fall and salvation of humanity, the Church, the Trinity, or a specific teaching of Jesus – but once the core is decided upon, the next stage, according to this model, is to search the receiving culture for an

appropriate story or situation in which this core of the Gospel can be rewrapped.

*Can we discern an agreed kernel as propositional? Naïve about cultures?*

#### **iv. God in the mix (Synthetic Model)**

Here we acknowledge that God can indeed be in a culture and that God will be also in the traditions of the faith and that by giving rapt attention to both, and holding them in tension, each will learn a great deal from the other. Some have called this a ‘synthetic’ or ‘cross-pollination’ model for the two perspectives remain valid. In this conversation, the cultural themes and the local Christian understandings are never allowed to lose their distinctiveness – both are respected for what they are and they learn from one another without one taking control or having precedence over the other. It is a model very suited to our post-modern age where multiplicity is understood to be of importance in itself and compromise and false unity are not believed to do justice to the evident reality of diversity. This style of mission asks that the two cultures speak the truth in love to one another. *[Might be a sell-out of Christian faith and be wishy-washy?]*

#### **v. The Praxis model (Kingdom Action/reflection model)**

Here we seek to live like Jesus by being alert to all our traditions and experience of him, and doing that within the most profound understanding we can gather of the world we’re in. It acknowledges that revelation is to be found in the world and in our traditions and so seeks to amalgamate that wisdom and determine from that what should be our responsive action. Then, as we live out how we think Jesus would have us be in our context, we ‘learn on the job’ more about the reality of God in Jesus and more about how God is suffering or is glorying in the world. Mission then is engaging ourselves and others in this collective process and coming alive with God through that process – and acknowledging that we are seeking to live the Kingdom and enhance it. *Could this be more like Christian community development than ‘discipling’?*

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