

# Apache Indians and Anglo Missionaries: A Study in Cross-Cultural Interaction

By Dr. William B. Kessel

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In 1860 approximately four thousand Western Apache Indians occupied an enormous portion of the present state of Arizona (Goodwin 1935:55). Ranging from the Sonoran desert environs to the ponderosa pine forests, the Apache subsisted on wild plant foods which they collected; corn, beans, and squash which they grew; animals which they hunted; and livestock which they stole in raids south of the border (Goodwin 1935:61; 1942:155-160; Basso 1971). Within forty years, however, the Apache way of life was inexorably altered as a result of contact with the Whiteman. Following a series of bloody skirmishes with federal troops as well as savage massacres, the Apaches were confined to reservations for their own protection (Ogle 1970; Thrapp 1967; Kessel 1974, 1976). Soon new words entered the Apache vocabulary—words like smallpox, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, trachoma, gonorrhea, and syphilis. Binge drinking, violence, and homicide increased in Apache culture. The Indians watched helplessly as prime sections of their reservation were appropriated by Anglo miners and Mormon farmers. In response to threats from without and from within, medicine men desperately and unsuccessfully sought relief in religious cult movements (Kessel 1976, 1982).

It was against this backdrop that the first Christian missionaries set foot among the Western Apaches. The very fact that missionaries were allowed and encouraged to work among the Apache was in keeping with federal policy. In order to prepare the Apache for assimilation into Anglo culture, the government pursued a three-pronged program. First, the Indians were to be taught to be economically self-supporting through agriculture. Second, schools were to be opened and the children taught to read, write, and display “proper etiquette.” Finally, Apaches were to be converted to Christianity (Spicer 1967).

In 1893 the advanced guard of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod missionaries set foot in Apacheland. For the most part the early missionaries labored diligently among the Apache. However, for nearly two decades the unforeseen variables of loneliness, illness, culture shock, the complexities of the Apache language, fear, and even infidelity took their toll on some of the pastors, and the rate of clergy turnover was high. This situation was to change with the arrival of the Guenthers in 1910 and the Upleggers in 1918 who made the conversion of the Apache a lifelong commitment (WELS Board of Education 1947:68-95; WELS Centennial Committee 1951:229-250; Kiessling 1990:153-162; Kessel 1987:9-26).

Today approximately 3,000 of the 16,000 Apaches located on the White Mountain and San Carlos Apache Indian Reservations are Lutherans. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod maintains ten congregations and six pastors, four parochial schools with 22 teachers, and an orphanage.

This paper is neither a history of the Western Apache nor a chronicle of Lutheran mission work among these people. Instead, it is an examination of cross-cultural understanding and misunderstanding. The anthropological theories, missionary observations, and critical analyses are intended to make a contribution to mission methodology and provide direction for mission policy makers. The paper itself is divided into three parts (1) Contrasting Cultures, (2) Contrasting Languages, and (3) Mission Ideology.

## Part I—Contrasting Cultures

In sharp contrast to animals, human beings “live in a world of symbols and conventional understandings” (Barrett 1984:54). As people go about the tasks of daily existence they are constantly called upon to interpret the world around them and to act in an acceptable and predictable fashion. The sets of symbols and conventional understandings which make such behavior possible is called culture. Culture can be defined as that set of mental models or mental road maps which are shared by the members of society and which allow them to produce socially acceptable behavior. Goodenough (1957:167) elaborates. Culture “is the forms of

things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them as such. The things people say or do, their social arrangements and events, are products or by-products of their culture as they apply it to the task of perceiving and dealing with their circumstances.”

The foregoing definition indicates that culture is not artifacts but mental patterns for perceiving reality and behaving responsibly. Culture is not innate or biological. It is learned and shared by group members. Since culture is socially transmitted, different groups have different cultures. Thus the Whiteman and the Apache are culturally different, and they behave differently.

We now turn to various sets of examples which illustrate the differences between Apache and Anglo cultures. This is followed by a discussion of the implications this has for mission work.

### **Cultural Perceptions of the Intangible Universe**

*Time.* The timepiece as we know it in Western tradition can be traced back to the collapse of the Roman Empire and the rise of Catholic monasticism. By the thirteenth century, clocks were in common use both as a means of keeping track of the hours as well as synchronizing the actions of people (Mumford 1934:12-18). Members of Anglo culture today have become time servers. The time regulates when they eat, work, and sleep. Artificial time (clock time) is seen as a reality.

Apaches, on the other hand, have operated under a nature time frame. The changes from day to night, cycles of the moon, and progression of the seasons have been the basis for ordering time. To Apaches, hours and minutes are abstractions which do not precisely regulate life. An Apache wishing to meet a friend mid-morning, for example, might point with his lips at the approximate position in the sky where the sun will be at the desired meeting time.

*Nature.* Most Anglo Americans share a view of nature which can be traced back to the Old Testament. There God told Adam to “Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it” to “Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Genesis 1:28, emphasis added). Consequently most Americans consider themselves rulers and guardians of nature.

The Apaches view nature as simply something which is there. They feel no burning desire either to rule over it or to subdue it. Nature is the means by which they satisfy the basic requirements of life.

*Being/Becoming.* White parents begin asking their children at an early age what they wish to become when they grow older. Often the success of an individual is measured on the basis of what, after much time and effort, he becomes. In the school systems teachers try to “motivate” students to achieve in school so they can make something of their lives. Thus Anglos live in a state of becoming.

Apaches have traditionally felt more comfortable saying “I am” rather than “I will become.” At any stage in life they are more content in being than in becoming. An Apache child, acting as a child, is being a child, and does not worry about becoming an adult.

*Social Distance.* Anglo and Apache cultures also differ with regard to social distances. Every individual has a “zone of personal space in which he or she is uncomfortable if others intrude” (Jackson and Hudman 1990:416). Space close to the individual is reserved for personal relationships while social and public encounters require greater distance from the individual.

In Anglo American culture two people standing and talking face to face usually are separated by two or three feet. Contact at closer distances is reserved for close friends and family. Impersonal space ranges from three to ten feet.

Personal and impersonal space for Apaches are generally much more distant. Esber (1972:144) explains: When guests arrive at an Apache home, the behavior that ensues is expected to follow certain patterns. Initially, the people present tend to sit peripherally around the room, remaining a considerable distance apart from one another. In the event of too small an area, some individuals may sit in an adjacent room, preferring this as opposed to remaining in the same room with other persons at too close a distance.

### **Cultural Perceptions of the Human Body**

*Body, Sexuality, Modesty.* The differences between Apache and Anglo cultures are even more pronounced in their respective mental models of the human body, sexuality, and modesty. To some extent beauty and even pornography are in the eyes of the beholder.

Television programs and commercials, movies, magazine advertisements, billboards, record jackets and other visual presentations identify for Americans the ideal female body. The stereotypic woman has an hourglass figure, slender yet shapely legs and arms, and an oval-shaped head.

In the early 1960s the school board of Alchesay High School (Whiteriver, Arizona) agreed to have a beauty contest to name Miss Apache. A panel consisting mostly of White males served as judges. They selected a female high school senior who fit the criteria outlined above. The Apaches, however, were less than enthusiastic about the decision. To the Apache, a beautiful woman has a somewhat barrel-shaped torso with small breasts, a relatively thick waist, a rather unobtrusive buttock, slender arms and legs, and a round head. Such biological features are quite typical of White Mountain Apaches.

Anglo American culture defines the breasts, buttocks, and genitalia to be a woman's private and erotic parts. The Apaches add the elbows and heels to this list. They reason that when a woman goes about her business her elbows and upper arms come into contact with her breasts. When she kneels or squats her heels touch her buttocks.

*Dating Behavior and Sexual Relations.* Dating behavior is culturally determined. As if acting out a dramatic performance, the male and female each respond according to mental models of predictable and socially acceptable behavior. In Anglo American culture dating behavior progresses in clearly defined stages: hand-holding, single kiss, prolonged kissing, light petting, heavy petting, and sexual relations. During the dating ritual the boy is expected to be the aggressor who tries to advance from one stage to the next. The girl, meanwhile, is expected to deny or permit the behavior. It is important to note that in Anglo culture one stage does not inexorably lead to the next. A relationship between a young couple may involve handholding and nothing more.

This model of dating behavior was completely alien to the White Mountain Apache as late as the 1960s. Prior to this time courtship was closely regulated by adults. Young men and women were quite shy. They might stare at one another for a long period of time, being too embarrassed to speak (Kessel 1969:8). Any touching was considered tantamount to sexual relations.

*Incest and Adultery.* According to Anglo American culture, incest and adultery stem from two different emotional conditions and result in two different sanctions. Incest, defined as sexual relations between close blood relatives, is seen as perversion, and adultery as unbridled passion. Persons found guilty of incest are often incarcerated and undergo psychiatric treatment while adulterers are often exposed in gossip but seldom punished.

During early reservation days and extending well into the 20th century, the Apaches took a much different view of such deviant behavior. Incest, defined as sexual relations between individuals with close clan relations, was often equated with witchcraft, and witches were to be put to death (Basso 1969). In cases of adultery, the end of the woman's nose would be cut off and the man would be ostracized (Kessel 1969).

### **Cultural Perceptions of Human Interactions**

Between 1965 and 1975 a cultural anthropologist and linguist, Keith Basso, conducted extensive field research among the White Mountain Apache Indians at Cibecue, Arizona. During the course of his investigations he collected data on Apache humor—more specifically on how and why Apaches ridicule the Whiteman in jokes. His findings, presented below, illustrate how Apaches interpret the behavior, or cultural patterns, of the Whiteman (Basso 1990:48-55).

Whitemen make liberal use of the word "friend." They even occasionally use it in order to get something from someone with whom they are scarcely acquainted. Apaches, on the other hand, reserve the term for individuals whom they have known for many years and toward whom they have strong feelings and deep respect.

Whitemen often solicit information about people's health and emotional state. They ask, "How are you doing? How are you feeling? Are you feeling okay?" Apaches consider such unsolicited questions as a violation of their personal privacy.

Whitemen often call attention to a person who is coming to or going from a social gathering. According to Basso (1990:50) "When an Apache joins or leaves a social grouping, he or she prefers to go about it unobtrusively..."

Whitemen frequently address one another by name, such as, "How are you doing today, John?" Apaches consider personal names individual property. To call someone by name "is likened to temporarily borrowing a valued possession" and therefore is used sparingly (Basso 1990:50).

Whitemen often shake hands, pat one another on the back, put an arm around the shoulders of another. As noted earlier, Apaches carefully avoid touching one another in public. Such physical contact is viewed as an invasion of personal space, an act of aggression, a challenge, or even a homosexual advance.

Whitemen invariably respond to a knock at the door by inviting the person to come in and sit down. Apaches view such behavior as "bossy." The guest is expected to ask permission to come in or may opt simply to state his business on the front porch.

Whiteman etiquette calls for an exchange of questions and answers. "Would you like something to eat? Would you like something to drink?" Apaches consider it rude to ask many questions and leave little time for thoughtful response.

Whitemen think and speak of what might be. "You may get sick if you go out in the rain." To an Apache such a statement "can increase the chances of its occurrence" (Basso 1990:53).

Whitemen like to draw attention to one's physical appearance or emotional state. An acquaintance might comment on a person's clothing. A friend might note that someone has gained or lost weight. Apaches feel uncomfortable when someone draws attention to them.

Whitemen speak English at an established speed, a particular pitch, and a certain volume. Apaches feel that Anglos speak too rapidly, too high-pitched, and too loudly.

From these examples it is clear that Anglo Americans and Apache Indians have quite different cultures. What is acceptable and predictable in one society may seem immoral, boorish, and even capricious by the other group of people.

### **Cultural Perceptions and Mission Work**

When missionaries are asked, "What is it like working among the Apache?" they often respond that it is challenging, interesting, but above all, "different." They then explain what they mean through the use of anecdotes. To a great extent their effectiveness as missionaries stands or falls on how successfully they respond to the Apache culture. The following illustrations of cross-cultural differences between the Anglo missionaries and Apache Indians are provided by the Rev. Arthur Alchesay Guenther who has been a missionary in Whiteriver, Arizona, since 1947.

Services at the Church of the Open Bible, the Lutheran Apache Mission, have been held on Sunday mornings since the early 1920s. Attendance is usually good, with several hundred Apache men, women, and children gathering for worship. For years, however, Pastor Guenther has noted particularly high attendance during midweek Lenten services. The fact that such services are held on Wednesdays is less significant than their starting time. They are held at night. Apaches traditionally conducted religious rituals and discussed spiritual matters after the sun set (Basso: 1966; 1970a). The more traditional Apaches, therefore, feel more comfortable with nighttime worship.

Pastor Guenther notes that church attendance is higher during the winter months than in summer. There are several possible explanations for this. In the summer many Apaches can take advantage of recreational opportunities such as fishing and traveling. There is, however, a culture-specific explanation for this phenomenon. Apaches traditionally discussed religious matters in the winter months, "when the snakes are in the ground."

Once inside the church building, Apache Christians often display behavior which is unnerving to Anglo visitors. Until recently the Apache sense of modesty did not prohibit Apache mothers from nursing their children during the service. Meanwhile young children in church not infrequently run up and down the aisles. Their fathers, for the most part, ignore their behavior. The explanation for such parental inaction is culturally prescribed. In Apache culture the father does not belong to the mother's or the child's clan. It takes a clan member, preferably a mother's brother, to exercise proper discipline (Goodwin 1942).

Then there is the matter of starting the service on time. Pastor Guenther has been criticized by White church members for being lax in starting services promptly at 9:45 a.m. Many of the Apaches, however, like their pastor, prefer to start when a reasonable number of people arrived. As we have seen, the Apache and Anglo concepts of time are not the same.

Perhaps at no time is the missionary's awareness of Apache culture put to the test more obviously than in the ritual of greeting people as they leave church. If the pastor calls Apache members by their proper names and speaks too rapidly or too loudly he can make them feel self-conscious. One Sunday after church a visiting mission board official was seen shaking an Apache woman's hand while grabbing her elbow with his other hand. As previously noted the Apaches consider this tantamount to a sexual advance.

One summer day in 1968 this author asked Pastor Guenther to identify his greatest challenge in the mission field. He immediately responded, "to marry the young couples before their children are born." Pastor Guenther estimated that approximately 85 percent of the young women getting married for the first time during the 1960s were already pregnant. There were several possible explanations. First, the Apaches were a promiscuous people. This was patently false. Throughout their history the Apache had highly valued chastity and had strictly punished infidelity. Second, the youth were rebelling against the traditions of their parents. This explanation, likewise, fell short. Young Apache men and women were not deliberately discarding the language and customs of their parents. Rather, the explanation for this phenomenon involved the youth who were caught in a cultural cross fire. The Apaches had mental models for dating behavior which suggested that any physical contact was a part of the sex act. Meanwhile on television, in the movies, in magazines, and in the lives of their White schoolmates, the teenage Apaches witnessed Anglos holding hands and kissing. When Apache couples imitated such Anglo behavior they invariably ended up "going all the way."

While the list of missionary anecdotes is legion, one further example of different cultural patterns will suffice. One day while Vacation Bible School was in progress, an owl crashed into Pastor Guenther's front door. Pastor Guenther picked up the stunned bird, an action observed by an Apache passing by in a pickup truck. Within minutes many parents came and removed their children from Bible School. For an Apache the behavior was predictable. Owls are thought to harbor the ghosts or spirits of the dead. As such they are spiritually dangerous. The parents did not wish to expose their children to such risk.

## **Conclusions and Applications**

Apache Indians and White missionaries may live in the same towns and even on the same streets, but they occupy two different worlds. The Whiteman views reality through one set of cultural lenses while the Apache sees the same things from an alternative perspective. Neither is right or wrong. They are different. This does not mean that the Whiteman cannot work effectively among Native Americans. The apostle Paul hints at the solution. He claimed, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Likewise the Anglo missionary working among the White Mountain Apaches must take cultural differences into account in order to effectively minister to an Apache congregation.

Lutheran theologians note that it is God who calls a pastor to minister to a particular congregation or group of people. As Luke writes, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseer" (Acts 20:28, emphasis added). Yet Lutherans also contend that God uses people as His instruments in the calling process. Thus in the first chapter of Acts, Peter and the disciples were involved in the selection of a replacement apostle for Judas Iscariot.

What, then, are the qualifications which the board or committee issuing a call should look for in a missionary to the Apaches? Likewise, what can missionaries do to make their ministries more effective? The following list of recommendations is based on the realization that Apache culture is intact and is categorically distinct from Anglo American culture.

**Goal:** For the missionary to effectively share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the Apache Indians. **Objectives:**

1. Train the mission candidate in cross-cultural awareness by having him take a course in cultural anthropology.
2. Train the mission candidate to function in Apache culture by having him:
  - a. Study the history and culture of the Apaches through extensive readings.
  - b. Study the history of mission work among the Apaches through extensive readings.
3. Train the mission candidate to overcome culture shock and function in Apache society by serving a period of internship under a seasoned missionary.
4. Train the board or committee members who issue mission calls in cultural anthropology, Apache history and culture, and Apache mission history, so they can select candidates with the proper personal qualities and characteristics to work effectively among the Apache.
5. Call individuals to the mission field who are willing to make a lifelong commitment to the Apache. Ordinarily it takes years for a pastor to learn Apache culture and labor effectively in their society.
6. Call a candidate to the mission field whose wife and family can learn to adapt to the mission situation and whose personal qualities and characteristics are in compliance with Apache expectations.

From the foregoing one might conclude that the most qualified missionary to work among the Apaches would be an Apache himself. For decades Missionaries Edgar and Arthur Guenther have proposed that Apaches be trained to be native pastors among their own people. Such a suggestion is consistent with current world mission philosophy and policy. Kiessling (1990:190) writes, "One of the primary goals for all our world mission fields is to train witnesses, workers, and leaders from among the people to whom the Lord has sent us with his gospel...The seminary in Zambia supplies the fully-trained pastors for the church in both Zambia and Malawi."

As is the case in other foreign mission areas, the training of Apaches to be native pastors, however, is fraught with difficulty. First, Apache children are in a state of being not becoming. It is difficult, therefore, to motivate Apache boys to consider becoming pastors. Second, Apaches do not place a great value on higher education. Third, Apache culture dictates that each Apache should strive to be like every other Apache. This author, for example, once witnessed an Apache high school student intentionally missing answers on a history test in order to earn a "C" grade which was consistent with the achievement of his classmates. Fourth, Apaches wish to maintain their identity as Apaches. Many years ago an Apache family in Whiteriver planted grass in their front yard. They were criticized by fellow Apaches for "trying to be like Whiteman." It was only much later that Apaches accepted the idea of having lawns. Fifth, while Apache medicine men deal with violations of the laws of nature, Christian pastors deal with sins. Through the process of confession and absolution Christian pastors often learn facts about people's lives. Apaches believe that White pastors can be told things without cultural repercussions but that Apache pastors could use such information in witchcraft accusations or for various nefarious purposes. Sixth, Apaches believe that they can be Christians and Apaches at the same time. There is less cultural certainty as to whether an Apache can be a Christian missionary and still remain a true Apache. Seventh, Apache culture dictates that an Apache respond and interact one way with certain categories of relatives and another way with other categories of relatives. Likewise, Apaches interact differently with relatives than they do with non-relatives (Goodwin 1942). Pastors are called upon to treat all people equally and without regard to kinship or social organization. Eighth, Apaches look with suspicion upon one of their own who leaves the reservation for an extended period of time and then returns "home." Seminary training requires a young man to leave home for years.

## **Part II Contrasting Languages**

People communicate through language, transmit their culture through language, and think in language. Consequently, people with different languages not only speak differently but may think differently as well.

During the first half of this century anthropologist Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf carried this argument one step further. They hypothesized that language affects how individuals actually perceive reality (Sapir 1931, 1949; Carroll 1956:65-86). Whorf noted that individuals were more likely to smoke cigarettes in proximity to “nearly empty” gas drums than “mostly full” ones. In fact, the gas fumes which mix with oxygen in the partially empty containers are more likely to be ignited from cigarette sparks than full gas containers. Whorf speculated that people felt secure smoking near the empty gas drums because the word “empty” carries with it the connotation of safe, not hazardous, void, and inert. The concept of “nearly empty” in another language may not carry such a connotation.

One other example will suffice to demonstrate the connection between language and perception of reality. Consider the following English sentences. “He dresses. He is young. He is carrying a round object” A speaker of Navajo (a language closely related to Apache) would say “He moves into clothing. He moves about newly. He moves along handling a round object.” The universe is in motion in the Navajo language. Objects not in motion at a particular time are at rest. The linguistic notion of a world in motion finds its way into various aspects of Navajo life and culture. The gods and culture heroes in Navajo mythology seek to perfect the universe by moving from one place to another (Hoijer 1964).

We now turn to various illustrations which show the connections between Apache language, culture, and perceptions of reality. They will be contrasted to the language and cultural categories of native English speakers.

### **Language and Silence**

Each culture defines when it is appropriate or inappropriate to speak. Often quoted statements like “Children are to be seen and not heard” and “Don’t you know when to be quiet?” betray underlying standards for verbal communication. Western Apaches likewise have cultural rules or mental models for when it is appropriate not to speak. Basso (1970b) identifies six situations in which Apaches feel “it is right to give up on words.” Ironically these are the very times when English-speaking Anglos would engage in a flurry of speech.

Apaches refrain from speaking when “meeting strangers.” Two Apaches who have not previously met or engaged in a verbal exchange often let considerable time elapse, perhaps days, before they begin to speak. Anglos, on the other hand, feel compelled to introduce individuals who are unknown to one another. According to Basso (1970b:218) “Strangers who are quick to launch into conversation are frequently eyed with undisguised suspicion.”

In the early stages of courtship, young Apache couples forego verbal communications. This is a far cry from the “lines,” light talk, probing questions, or repartee generally associated with White teenagers on a date.

When an Apache child has been gone from the reservation, perhaps to school, and then returns, there is a silent reunion with his or her parents. The adults prefer to observe the child’s behavior for some time before speaking. Under similar circumstances Anglo parents would begin interrogating their children, and vice versa, almost immediately.

While attending a drinking party an Apache might become angered or enraged and shout insults and invectives against others. Those on the receiving end generally refrain from speech. They reason that the person “cussing them out” is irrational or “crazy” and the situation is best handled by silence. Non-Apaches would likely say something under such conditions.

Anglos; often feel compelled to express their sympathies and condolences to family members who have lost a loved one. Apaches greet the bereaving with silence. They maintain that speaking to the survivors will intensify their grief and perhaps cause them to react in a volatile outburst.

The final example of silence in Western Apache discussed by Basso is culture specific. Apaches do not speak to an individual undergoing a curing ceremony.

### Language, Meaning, and Reality

We have already suggested that people categorize reality in terms of their language. When peoples with two different languages attempt to communicate, imprecise understanding or downright confusion may result. An Anglo Head Start teacher held up two construction paper balloons and asked an Apache child to identify the colors. The first was “blue” and the child correctly identified the color. The second was “green” and the child said that it too was “blue.” The teacher was perplexed. The Western Apaches have only six color terms: white, black, red, green, yellow, and brown. The color term *dukliizh* includes both green and blue and especially turquoise. The Apache child had the visual capability to distinguish between green and blue but because of the language did not discriminate between them.

To understand the Apache’s mind is to understand his language. Like other speakers, Apaches not only use words which correlate with reality, but they make comparisons between seemingly unrelated categories of objects. Anthropological linguist Keith Basso (1976) has drawn out the meaning of various Apache metaphors.

‘Lightning is a boy.’ Boys and lightning dart around fast and are unpredictable.

‘Ravens are widows.’ Both are poor and do not have anyone to bring them meat.

‘Carrion beetle is a white man.’ They both waste much food.

‘Dogs are children.’ Both are always hungry.

United States history is filled with place names which conjure up a variety of social meanings. “Remember the Alamo” makes a statement about tenacity, patriotism, and sacrifice. “Ellis Island” stands for freedom, and so it goes. Likewise, Apaches have incorporated meaning into their place names. For example, near the present community of Cibecue is a site which the Apaches call ‘a porcupine sits.’ Apparently porcupines used to gather there in the early winter. Western Apaches believe that direct contact with this animal or anything contaminated with porcupine hair, urine, or feces may result in sickness (Basso 1984). Simply by saying the place name, the Apache is reminded of the native health theory, ritual pollution, and the like. Place names can also remind Apaches “not to be so much like Whiteman” or convey any number of social meanings (Basso 1988).

The taxonomic structure of the Apache language regulates the way the Indians view life occurrences. Everett (1971) notes that the Western Apache realize a close connection between going to jail, having bad luck, being viewed by an owl, receiving a gunshot wound, getting a cut, fighting, being the victim of witchcraft, having sores, and illness. While English speakers might not readily see what such conditions have in common, to the Apache they are all sub-sets of the medical domain *naonk?lek* roughly translated as ‘evil’ or ‘trouble.’ Obviously, Apache medical decision-making is closely tied to such linguistic categories.

Finally, objects which may seem totally disparate to speakers of one language may be quite similar in other tongues. The Western Apache see an almost one-to-one correlation of the human body to the automobile (Basso 1967). Their taxonomic structures are as follows:

<u>Man’s Body</u>	<u>Automobile’s Body</u>
Fat	Grease
Chin and Jaw	Front Bumper
Shoulder	Front Fender
Hand and Arm	Front Wheel
Thigh and Buttock	Rear Fender
Mouth	Gas Pipe Opening
Foot	Rear Wheel
Back	Bed of Truck
Eye	Headlight
Face:	Face:



Nose	Hood
Forehead	Front of Cab, Top
Entrails:	Machinery Under Hood:
Vein	Electrical Wiring
Liver	Battery
Stomach	Gas Tank
Intestine	Radiator Hose
Heart	Distributor
Lung	Radiator

### **Language Acquisition and Mission Work**

In the early years of work among the Apaches, the missionaries had only two options. They could either learn to speak Apache or communicate through interpreters (Koehler 1970:198-203). For some, either task was too great. Missionary Adascheck worked among the Apaches for one year (1893-1894), then at his own request he was recalled due “to his difficulties with both the English and the Apache languages” (WELS Centennial Committee 1951:233).

Many of the early missionaries were fluent in English and did learn to use interpreters. Apaches such as Jack Keyes, Joe Ivins, and Ranking Rogers will long be remembered not only as skilled and dedicated interpreters but as lay evangelists as well (Kessel 1979). Such native assistants did more than merely convey Biblical messages into the local vernacular however. They also taught the missionaries about Apache life, customs, and beliefs. Pastor Edgar Guenther, for example, wrote in his diary:

...Jack Keyes once told me that long, long ago when a man grew very ill the Medicine man would boil a large quantity of venison in a large kettle. Then all of the sick man’s friends were asked to pass by in single file and the Medicine man would hand each one a piece of meat and say, “Take it and eat it. The sickness is gone; I don’t know where.” Each morsel of the meat was supposed to contain a part of the patient’s illness. In this way he would be freed of it while his friends could each absorb a little with no harm (Guenther 1957:132-133).

The practice of using interpreters was not without risk. In 1911 Pastor Edgar Guenther arrived in East Fork and began mission work. He enlisted the help of Silas John Edwards, a very bright Apache youth. Guenther first taught Silas about the Bible through the use of liberally illustrated Bible history books. The story of Moses and the brazen serpent particularly impressed Silas. In time the Apache became an interpreter for the Lutherans. Eventually, however, he severed relations with the Lutherans and began a religious cult which incorporated traditional Apache beliefs with Christianity (Kessel 1976:142-185). This syncretistic rattlesnake cult seriously threatened the advance of Christianity for years. Likewise, Apache teacher and interpreter, Alfred Burdette, after years of faithful service became disenchanted and frustrated with the Lutherans and assumed a leadership role in a different denomination.

Eventually several of the missionaries (especially Alfred and Francis Uplegger, and Edgar and Arthur Guenther) put forth the time and effort to learn Apache. This enabled them not only to converse with the Apache, but to adapt Christian liturgics and hymnody to predominately Apache congregations. Dr. Francis Uplegger, more than anyone else, translated a wealth of religious material into the Apache language (Kiessling 1990:160).

### **Conclusion and Application**

The Apaches and the Anglo Americans live on the same finite earth, yet they exist in entirely different worlds. The Apaches live in a world defined by their language. Their thoughts, perceptions of reality, and even their actions are integrally related to their mother tongue. The English language has the same powerful effect on its native speakers. Edward Sapir (1949:162) explains:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone...but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society...the fact...is that the “real world” is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.

When compared to English, the Apache language is neither inherently right or wrong, better or worse. It is simply different.

Today almost all Apache Indians on the Ft. Apache and San Carlos Reservations speak both Apache and English. Children attend English speaking schools. Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and especially the schools all promote the standard American language. Likewise, the Lutheran churches on the reservation, for the most part, use English in their services, hymns, prayers, and rituals. One might, therefore, ask if it is necessary for missionaries to learn the Apache language. Arguments can be made either pro or con.

Some might contend that from a cost-benefit analysis it is poor stewardship of time to learn Apache. Apache is an extremely difficult language to learn. Its phonology, morphology, and syntax are totally unlike English. In addition, while there are some analyses of Western Apache dialects (Basso 1968; Greenfeld 1972; Hoijer 1945-1949), they are mostly written for linguists. There is another factor to consider. “Native American languages are fading fast” as one newspaper headline recently stated (Shaffer 1991). Today nearly half of all tribal council meetings conducted on Arizona Indian reservations are conducted exclusively in English. Furthermore, only one in ten of that state’s 130,000 Native Americans under the age of 30 is fluent in his or her native language. American Indian languages are rapidly being superseded by English.

On the other hand there are compelling reasons why Anglo missionaries to the Apaches should at least try to learn Apache. First, by learning the language the pastors also learn the thought patterns of the people to whom they minister. Second, learning the native language is consistent with WELS world mission policy. Kiessling (1990:188), describing the WELS missions in Central Africa, writes:

The Board for World Missions insisted that the missionaries must learn the native language. This imposed a heavy, extra burden on the men, but once the language had been learned, the preaching and teaching program was brought under the control of the missionaries. Since interpreters were no longer needed by the missionaries, the interest and response of the people improved dramatically.

Third, as this statement suggests, native people respond favorably to the Gospel proclaimed in their native language. Fourth, when the missionaries invest the time and effort to learn the native tongue they are no longer looked upon as change agents bent on destroying the traditional culture. Hopi Indian and University of Arizona anthropology professor, Emory Sekaquaptewa, was recently interviewed by a news reporter. In the resulting newspaper story he suggested that television and popular music are in part responsible for the demise of Native American languages. The report continued:

Sekaquaptewa acknowledged the influence of the mass media. However, he said he feels that Christian churches, which have sprung up on the reservations in large numbers in recent years, also are to blame.

“Language depends heavily on cultural institutions, customs and ceremonies,” Sekaquaptewa said. “The Christian concepts have nothing to do with our roots. You see it all over. The Tohono O’odham [formerly the Papago] incorporating the Catholic Church. The central Arizona Pimas and Presbyterians. These are big factors in the loss of language” (Shaffer 1991).

Once again we return to the matter of missionary qualifications. What should the board or committee issuing a call to the Apache mission field look for in a missionary? The following recommendations are based on the assumption that the Apache language at the present time is viable and will remain that way for years to come.

**Goal:** For the missionary to effectively share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the Apache Indians. **Objectives:**

1. Prepare the candidate to understand the phonology, morphology, and syntax of an unwritten language by taking anthropology courses in descriptive linguistics.
2. Prepare the candidate to understand the connection between language and culture by taking anthropological sociolinguistics; courses.
3. Prepare the candidate to work among Western Apaches by having him:
  - a. Study the extant literature on Apache linguistics.
  - b. Take Apache language classes or lessons from trained personnel.
4. Prepare and call individuals to the mission field who have an aptitude for language learning.
5. Call individuals to the mission field who are willing to make a long-term commitment to the Apaches. Ordinarily it will take many years before an Anglo pastor is conversant in Apache.

The importance of using the natives' language is underscored in the Scriptures. The great miracle of Pentecost involved the presence of the Holy Spirit and instantaneous language acquisition. "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues [languages] as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). Thus the Gospel was spread.

### **Part III Mission Ideology**

When two groups of people with different cultures collide, acculturation most often takes place. "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Linton 1972:6). The culture change which takes place as societies interact can be labeled according to three outcomes.

*Assimilation:* X culture comes into continuous firsthand contact with Y culture. The dominant culture, X, basically absorbs Y culture. This is known as assimilation.

*Fusion:* X culture comes into continuous firsthand contact with Y culture. Neither culture dominates, and, instead, they merge into Z culture which incorporates aspects of both X and Y. This is known as fusion.

*Pluralism:* X culture comes into continuous firsthand contact with Y culture. Both X and Y maintain their own identities and exist side by side. This is known as pluralism or composite society.

The history of Indian/White relations in this country reveals a confusing array of United States government policy shifts. Initially Indian groups were viewed as foreign nations and negotiations with them resulted in treaties. Thus, cultural pluralism was promoted. In time federal policy makers looked upon the Indians as wards of the government, and assimilation policies were written. The Indians were expected to merge into the dominant society as fast as possible. Today, for the most part, there is a return to the pluralism philosophy (Spicer 1969).

For many years anthropologist Edward Spicer, along with his associates and students, examined the phenomenon of culture change (1971; Spicer and Thompson 1972; Castile and Kushner 1981). He noted that in acculturation situations some societies merge with the dominant society (assimilation) while others maintain their own cultural patterns (pluralism). Spicer convincingly argued (1971) that the nature of persistence is inseparably linked to the nature of the contact with the dominant society. One would expect that if the policy of the dominant society is pluralism then the two societies will remain distinct. If the policy is assimilation then the weaker society will merge with the dominant one. In fact, Spicer argued that the opposite takes place. Cultures which undergo extreme pressures to assimilate often turn inward. The people firmly cling to symbols of their societal identity. The native language, features of the landscape, music, dances, ceremonies, religion, and the like, can all become symbols of their culture onto which they tenaciously hold.

This hypothesis has implications for mission work. It suggests that people are less likely to change their religion if there is an attempt to force them to do it. On the other hand they will be predisposed to change if the dominant religion is presented as an option.

## Mission Philosophy and the Apache

Christianity, by its very nature, is confrontational. It presents only one Savior and only one way to be saved—through faith in Christ Jesus. Other saviors and means of salvation are rejected. Thus Christianity is in conflict with all other religious systems including that of the Apache. Pastor Edgar Guenther noted this fact clearly when he wrote:

To be sure, there was opposition here. It would have been a bad omen if there had been no opposition. The Gospel was also in Apacheland a two-edged sword, dividing the hearts into those who were for the Lord Jesus and those who were against Him. The Apaches had their own self-appointed spiritual leaders—the medicine men. Their claim of being responsible for the physical and spiritual well-being of their people had never before been challenged. The Apache medicine man also claimed by his prayers and incantations to be able to drive out the evil spirits which cause disease—of course, for a goodly fee of money, cattle or ponies. He at once recognized our missionaries as his enemies in this field, for, when once a patient has learned “to call upon Jesus in every trouble,” he will hardly pay out hard-earned money or entrust his life into the hands of one who operates in open defiance of the Second Commandment (WELS Board of Education 1947:75).

Even though the doctrine of Christianity is confrontational, there are various methods of presenting its message. Since the first Lutheran missionaries set foot on the Apache reservations in 1893 various mission approaches have been tried. Some of the missionaries directly confronted the “paganism” of the Apaches hoping that the Apache would realize the bankruptcy of their religion and adopt Christianity. This philosophy is suggested in a 1919 publication of the Wisconsin Synod’s Commission for Indian Missions. There they note that the Apache does not know how to deal with right and wrong for his conscience is asleep. The Whiteman has the duty to enlighten the Indians. And Indians should verbally reject the medicine man whose religion and rituals are a sin against God and man (Kommission fur Indianermission 1919:19, 20, 58).

Other missionaries chose a different strategy. They presented their way of life and religion as an option for the Apaches, albeit the right option. For example, Missionary Paul Mayerhoff (1937) in a series of articles written for a Beatrice, Nebraska newspaper described an incident which occurred during his tenure on the reservation. It seems that his Apache neighbor became deathly ill one day. The patient had a high fever and great pain. Mayerhoff diagnosed the problem as stricture of the bladder and provided remedies to clean the intestinal tract. A medicine man, on the other hand, attributed the trouble to an evil spirit which had “launched a toad into the patient’s abdomen” and treated the ailment accordingly. Mayerhoff chose not to interfere. Later he wrote, “Next day I visit my neighbor again. He is recovering. No doubt the toad bethot himself to behave and come out, after H. 1. [the medicine man] and I had joined forces to lay him low.” This quotation is telling. While Mayerhoff disavowed the Apache diagnosis and treatment, he, nevertheless, did not oppose it.

Other missionaries, especially Pastor Edgar Guenther, followed a similar strategy when it came to spiritual matters. Pastor Guenther was careful to present Christianity in a positive light. In his preaching and teaching he seldom mentioned the Apache religion or condemned Apache customs. Like Mayerhoff his predecessor, Guenther believed that his job was to present Christ to the Apaches and the Holy Spirit would lead them to accept Christianity (Kessel 1976:119; 1987:12). Indeed this approach to interpersonal relations in a cross-cultural setting was a lesson he learned shortly after he became a missionary. In his autobiography Guenther (1957:110) recounts...

Very early in my “career” as a teacher I learned a most important pedagogical principle that has stood me in good stead ever since. And to think that it came to me not out of the pages of Pestalozzi but from the lips of a little Apache first grader. It came in this way: On one of those days when an atmosphere of restlessness and indifference permeated the school room I let loose in terms that left no one in doubt what I thought of them at the moment, collectively and individually. During the following recess Charlie Garland went over to the house, and, without preamble, said to Mrs. Guenther, “When somebody talk mad to me I feel like fight in pieces,” then turned on his heel and left the room. The former could have no idea what he was driving at, but I having calmed down in the meantime, knew only too well. As far

as Charlie was personally concerned, I had, with my anger, injected my subjectivity into an objective issue that could have had no other result but to arouse his resentment over having been publicly humiliated before his schoolmates. To me Charlie's statement was even clearer than my attempted analysis of it. Too bad that to this very day one runs across teachers and professors who have not learned that a fatherly or brotherly heart to heart talk in private will accomplish more than a dozen public "dressing-downs" which betray only cowardice at their best.

It was only when Apache medicine men directly confronted Christianity or when a religious confrontation was unavoidable that Pastor Guenther launched a direct attack on the Apache religion.

In retrospect Pastors Mayerhoff and Guenther were not trying to force religious assimilation but were following a pluralism model. They full well believed that the Indians would be won over to their religion by the power inherent in the religion itself.

### **Conclusion and Application**

The Bible contains examples of both confrontational as well as nonconfrontational mission methods. Elijah challenged the 450 prophets of Baal to a spiritual battle (1 Kings 18:16-40). St. Paul, on the other hand, addressed a crowd containing Epicurean and Stoic philosophers by saying, "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To an unknown God. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you" (Acts. 17:22-23).

In recent years the theological battle lines have been drawn between mission strategists. For example, Charles Wimber and his California-based Vineyard ministry emphasizes confrontation. Based in part on his studies at the Fuller School of World Missions, Wimber sees Satan and Jesus as involved in a power struggle. Satan, for example, causes illnesses. The pastor's task, therefore, is to challenge Satan and his hold over the person, and in the name of Jesus works a faith healing. Wimber claims that such direct confrontation is the most effective world mission strategy (Wimber and Springer 1986; Stafford 1986:18). On the other hand, some mission societies emphasize the use of redemptive analogies. The missionary is expected to learn the native language and culture and look for native analogies which can be used to proclaim the Gospel (Richardson 1976, 1984).

What mission strategy is most effective for Christian mission work among the Apache? The nonconfrontational approach is to be preferred. There are two compelling reasons for this. For one thing, a careful reading of mission reports and historical summaries reveals that the most effective WELS missionaries to the Apaches have been nonconfrontational. Such missionaries include Paul Mayerhoff, Francis Uplegger, Alfred Uplegger, Edgar Guenther and Arthur Guenther. What was written of Edgar Guenther might also have been written about the others as well:

By about 1914 he [E. Guenther] had established good relationships with most of the Apaches living near East fork. The reasons for his acceptance were several. First, he rarely openly condemned Apache customs and practices...Second, he made a serious effort to learn the Apache language. Finally, he played a role functionally analogous to that of a medicine man—praying for the people, diagnosing, and curing their ailments (Kessel 1976:119).

Another reason for preferring the nonconfrontational mission method involves the acculturation theory previously discussed. When the dominant culture tries to force itself upon another culture the latter is likely to resist assimilation by going underground with identity symbols. If Anglo missionaries condemn the Apache religion, the Apaches will likely define being an Apache with the Apache religion. This will seriously jeopardize the mission effort. Once again to quote the Apache first grader Charlie Garland, "When somebody talk mad to me I feel like fight in pieces."

Finally the nonconfrontational approach is consistent with Lutheran theology. Lutherans believe that conversion is effected by the Holy Spirit operating through the Means of Grace. When the Gospel is presented or baptism takes place it is God who creates and sustains faith. Conversion is not brought about by the

eloquence or logic of the pastor. From this perspective if the pastor simply proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit can and will accomplish God's purpose (Isaiah 55:11).

The following recommendations are based on the assumption that the most effective missionary is one who presents the Christian message and when possible avoids challenging and confronting the traditional Apache religion.

**Goal:** For the missionary to effectively share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the Apache Indians.

**Objectives:**

1. Alert the mission board and missionaries to the studies of culture change which have been made by cultural anthropologists.
2. Conduct a study of mission methods used by pastors among the Apaches to determine which worked best.
3. Develop a mission strategy for effective work among the Apaches which is based on the appropriate acculturation model.
4. Train the missionaries to use the most effective culture change model.
5. Call individuals to the mission field whose personalities are in keeping with the mission method chosen.

**Conclusions**

The Apaches and the Lutherans have coexisted for nearly 100 years. During this time thousands of the Indians have come to believe in Jesus Christ. In recent years, however, the missionaries have been looked upon with growing disfavor. The Red Power Movement and recent publicity in the media have stereotyped the Whiteman as ruthless and self-serving. Meanwhile the Indian has been portrayed as a victim of White aggression. At the same time federal policies encourages multi-culturalism and cultural pluralism. In order to compete with these forces, the Lutheran missionaries—who, like it or not, are change agents—must come to grips with their role and plan an appropriate strategy. The basic findings of this paper are that the missionary should learn as much as possible about Apache culture, try to learn the language, and adopt a nonconfrontational and nonthreatening posture. Then the gospel can be proclaimed most effectively.

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