

Theology of Missions

Date

Your Name

Peace Child SNU media center call number: BV3373.53P42
Video

The principle of "redemptive analogy" -- the use of customs and traditions within a culture to present the Gospel in an understandable and non-foreign way as a logical outcome of what that culture already believes -- is at the heart of this story.

Key Words or Concepts

This video helped fulfill the purpose of this course by . . .

What struck me most . . .

For centuries, the Sawi lived as cannibal-headhunters, each Sawi village warring with the others. Ordinary murder was nothing to them. To be a "legend maker", you had to create a special scenario in which you pretend to make peace with someone, then kill him when his guard is down. This Sawi ideal is called "tuwi asonai man" which means "to fatten with friendship for unexpected slaughter" as one would fatten a pig. When missionary Don Richardson told the Sawis the story of Jesus, to his disappointment they brightened at the account of Judas' betrayal of Jesus. To them, Judas was a super-Sawi and the hero of the biblical account.

Because of dangerous, ongoing tribal warfare in the area, Richardson and his wife finally decided to leave the Sawi area even though they hadn't found the key to effectively announcing the Gospel there. Distressed at losing their source of such things as modern medicine and steel axes, the warriors said they would make peace.

Because the Sawis idealize treachery, Richardson wondered if there could be a guaranteed real peace. Then he found out that the one guarantee the Sawi would honor was an exchange of infants between villages. An exchanged infant was a "Tarop Tim" or "Peace Child". As long as the Peace Child lived, peace was guaranteed. That's the kind of key idea or redemptive analogy which Richardson had been looking for. He saw that Jesus could be proclaimed as God's Peace Child who will never die and who therefore could guarantee everlasting peace.

When first published, the book *Peace Child* created quite a stir. It even became the Book Section of an issue of *Reader's Digest*. The book covers in detail many topics not shown in this brief half-hour video. Sawi culture was full of customs disgusting even to the Sawi themselves. One person could impose his will on another by means of a "waness" bind. Closely related to the "waness" bind was the practice of "gefam ason," a mourning ritual practiced over dead bodies of relatives. And Sawi boys were deliberately raised not to obey their fathers. Fathers knew that this "discipline in reverse" would create violent, strong-willed men who would beat their wives, bristle at every real or imagined injustice, and be ready to go to war at a moment's notice.

Sawi tradition also contained prophecies that someday the Words of "Remon" [Regeneration / Immortality] would come to them. Richardson realized that the revolting customs the Sawi practiced could be a sincere attempt to reach the fullest measure of collective sorrow so that the Words of Remon would come more quickly. Therefore, for those who believed that Richardson's message was in fact the Words of Remon, the old customs became unnecessary -- an old covenant that was now supplanted by a new one.

The principle of preserving everything that is good and valuable in another person's culture, and of finding keys within that culture to make the Gospel more understandable is Biblical. The Apostle Paul often quoted Greek authors as a means of bridging cultural gaps or of just "fitting in". At Mars' Hill Paul quoted or alluded to Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, Plato's *Republic* and Plato's *Phaedo*, as well as Epimenides, Aratus and Euripides. By knowing -- and by showing that he knew -- what his hearers already believed, he was able to lead them from familiar concepts to unfamiliar ones. In Acts 21:39, moments after being nearly killed by a mob, Paul got a Roman officer's attention by quoting Euripides (using the phrase "no mean city"). In his letter to Titus, Paul quoted Epimenides of Knossos, a Cretian who had unflattering but true things to say about his own countrymen.