Interaction Paper - Rynkiewich Ch. 2

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CS501: People as Social and Cultural Beings

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In chapter two of *Soul, Self, and Society,* Michael Rynkiewich takes a look at the history of anthropology over the years, and then zooms in on how Christians have approached anthropology, both on its own and in relation to mission. The chapter is a study in how, despite the fact that "there are no people on earth who are able to step completely outside their own culture in their evaluation of other people's ways - not even anthropologists," there is great value in knowing one's own cultural blindspots, and how they affect your worldview.[1] Rynkiewich begins by looking at people's perception of themselves, followed by a definition of anthropology, and the history of how the discipline of anthropology developed it. He then goes into various stumbling blocks people encounter when looking at cultures other than their own. Lastly, he discusses how the Bible and Christians have dealt with cultural tension and anthropology over the years.

As I was reading, one particular paragraph struck me, and I had to sit for a second and think on it. Rynkiewich states: "the problem seems to arise when Christianity gets stuck in a particular culture so long that the church forgets that the forms that it uses to identify Jesus Christ are not universal and thus not appropriate for other cultures, and perhaps not even appropriate for the church's own youngest generations."[2] This is something I have felt, both as someone who had a different culture than the majority of my church growing up, as someone who has experienced the generational divide in church, and someone who is currently involved in a ministry reaching out to those who have experienced church hurt and left the church, but still consider themselves Christians. I had not seen something that stated my frustrations so clearly. My questions for this topic are: what are the benefits and dangers of treating intergenerational

1 Rynkiewich, 43-44
2 Rynkiewich, 27

interactions as cross cultural interactions? I would also love a more in-depth look at the ways

American culture prioritizes certain things while displacing others as discussed on page 33.