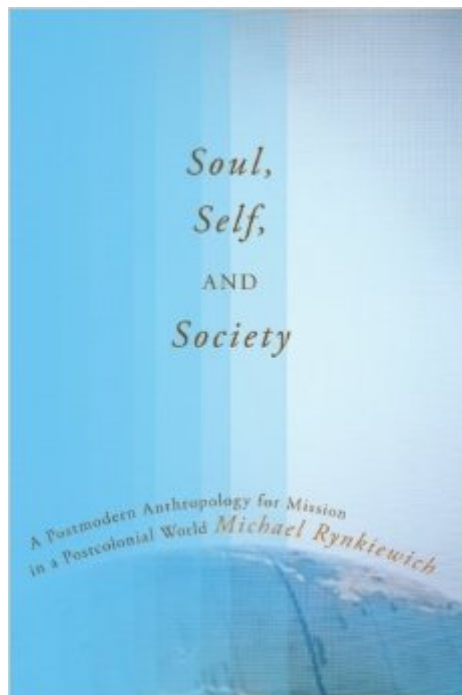


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Soul, Self, And Society: A Postmodern Anthropology For Mission In A Postcolonial World



Synopsis

Globalization and urbanization are twin forces that are powerfully shaping economics, politics, and religion in the world today. Traditional anthropological theories are inadequate to recognize and analyze trends such as global migration, diasporas, and transnationalism. New departures in anthropology and the social sciences seeking to address these and other phenomena can help us critique and reshape the theology and practice of Christian mission. Today most societies are no longer monocultural. In such multicultural contexts any given individual may be competent in several cultures, several languages, several social networks. What does it mean to be in mission with people on the move--people who present themselves in one social identity, language, and culture within a particular setting, and then in another setting, even on the very same day, present themselves in another social identity, language, and culture? In the face of widespread, rapid movement of peoples and their increasingly fluid and multifaceted identities, will the missionary settle down somewhere or be itinerant along with the people? How are perplexing new questions in particular contexts to be addressed, such as: In what ways is the Nigerian who is founding an AIC congregation near Houston a missionary too? How will Brazilians and Koreans be trained for cross-cultural ministry? The world is changing faster than missionaries can be retrained for service. And yet ethnographic tools are still crucial to missionary practice. This important work seeks to draw on recent developments in anthropology to bring valuable perspective and tools to bear on equipping missionaries for work amidst the rapid shifting and complex shaping of peoples by the forces of today's globalized world.

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Customer Reviews

Michael Rynkiewich is one of the most insightful authors of missiological anthropology that many missiologists have never read. Until this book, Rynkiewich's writing was notably found in two extraordinarily good articles appearing in *Missiology* in 2002 and 2003, in which he critiqued common anthropological models and theories employed in missiology. In 2011, he published another excellent article in *Mission Studies*, addressing the importance of postmodern anthropology for contemporary missiology. Knowing these articles, I had high expectations coming to his book. Although *Soul, Self, and Society* did not meet all my hopes, it provides a helpful introductory textbook and a useful resource addressing the intersection of missiology and anthropology. The book covers most of the concepts expected of an introduction to cultural anthropology - e.g., kinship, politics, economics - and several often not covered, such as transnationalism and diaspora. Accounts of his missionary work in Papua New Guinea make this a valuable introductory book for prospective missionaries. There are a few striking omissions, such as any discussion of gender, and a few bits that seem tacked on (such as two paragraphs on "business as mission" and a 6-page final chapter on "The Anthropology of Christianity"), but overall the coverage is thorough. As the author of an introductory anthropology textbook myself, I appreciated the practical help Rynkiewich provides those in mission work. Unfortunately, while he promises a "postmodern anthropology," he does not interact with contemporary theory much. The most prominent theorists typically associated with postmodern culture theory appear briefly, if at all, and receive no sustained attention.

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