

Conversion and Belonging

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January–March 2013

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Longing for Community Church, *Ummah*, or Somewhere in Between?

David Greenlee

Understanding the strength and unity of the *umma*—the worldwide Muslim community—and its role in an individual's identity is essential in comprehending the struggles that Muslims undergo as they turn to faith in Jesus Christ. It has been a place of security, acceptance, protection, and identity; turning away from it entails great sacrifice. Where, then, will Muslims who choose to follow Jesus find their longing for community fulfilled: *umma*, church, or somewhere in between?

Longing for Community compiles the research and reflection of twenty missiologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and linguists—among them Muslims who have become believers in Jesus Christ—presented at the second Coming to Faith Consultation in February 2010. The contributors explore the multiple levels and hybrid nature of social identity, pointing to the need to free our discussions from single-dimensional scales, which are far from adequate to describe the complex nature of conversion and lived-out faith. Beyond the issue

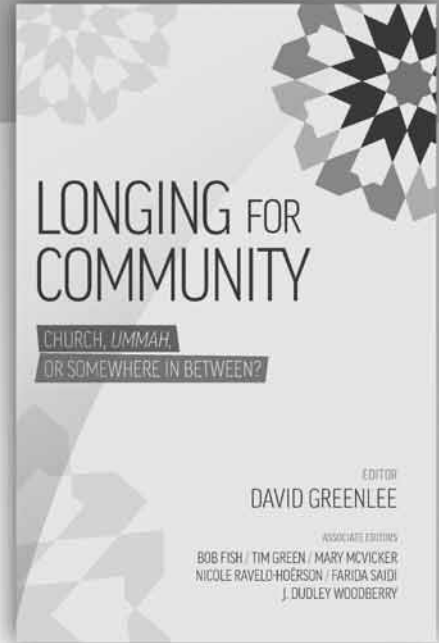
of identity, the contributors offer important lessons from mission history, explore liturgy as an appropriate vehicle for teaching, discuss appropriate means of communication, and point to both the need and contextually appropriate possibilities of greater involvement of women in training and ministry.

I found the book very thought provoking in the very issues that many missionaries are facing in the field. Our cultural ways as Latinos or Westerners are sometimes obtrusive of how God sometimes deals in His way with them. We need to be open to the manifold wisdom of God manifested in the East. Miracles, dreams, visions, and allowing the Holy Spirit to apply the revelation of the Scriptures in different homiletical categories that we have learned in the Systematic Theology.

Pablo Carillo

Founder, PM International

In the present day, sharing the Gospel to Muslims [or to anyone else] is different than the "mission compound" methodologies. I highly recommend this book to be read by readers who are striving to share Christ to anyone, especially to Muslims. It is also a thoughtful reading for general Christ followers [Christians] who are interested in understanding the issues in a mission field context. This book



will encourage all of us to pray for those who are involved every day in helping people to understand the Injil.

K. Rajendran

World Evangelical Alliance Mission
Commission; Global Roundtable

An excellent presentation of how to achieve a proper balance between sociological and spiritual realities within the challenge of outreach to Muslims. The concept of "Ummah" (community) is explored and suggestions made on how to integrate believers into a new grouping that preserves biblical integrity while not denouncing Muslim culture and life. A valuable resource for practitioners on the front lines.

Phil Parshall

SIM, Missionary at Large

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The Anatomy of Conversion

Sometimes a book frames an entire subject for us. David Greenlee and his team of editors have done so with their new book, *Longing for Community: Church, Ummah or Somewhere in Between?* (William Carey Library, 2013). The twenty articles in this book are a sampling of the contributions from 60 participants in the 2010 Second Coming to Faith Consultation (CTFC2),¹ a forum that focuses on the issues of conversion and belonging on the frontier between Muslim and Christian worlds. Along with Greenlee's book, the articles in this issue offer new insights and models on the subject of conversion that we think are quite applicable to the borderlands between any two religious worlds.

Quite honestly, our journal is reticent to use the word "conversion" because of all that this term can insinuate. Writing back in the 70s, the eminent mission historian Stephen Neill articulated his own reticence:

For years I have been looking for a word which will take the place of the now very unpopular word 'conversion,' and have not found it. I am well aware of all the possible objections to the word. . . . There are countless ways of saying Yes to Christ which fall short of the surrender that leads to salvation. It seems to me that the time has come when we ought to be done with circumlocutions and not be ashamed to say exactly what we mean.²

I'll also push through my reluctance and use the term, but we're dependent on a multi-disciplinary approach like we find in Greenlee's book to help us discover "exactly what we mean."

In this volume, Greenlee has shifted the discussion towards the subject of identity and how a new believer must *negotiate his identity in Christ* across that tortured zone between Muslim *Ummah* and Christian church. His book helps our thinking progress beyond older categories by addressing the more subtle and complicated nuances of identity and belonging.³ Both the articles in his book and those in this issue of the journal offer three new lenses on the human dimensions of identity formation evident in the conversion narratives across the Muslim world.

Identity is multi-layered. We've known that the social forces of urbanization and globalization are increasingly intersecting the more inclusive categories of family, clan and tribe and are creating multiple identities in any one individual. In our modern world, individual identity is not just one, but many. Greenlee has included the recent insights of Tim Green and Kathryn Kraft on the different dimensions of identity

Editorial continued on p. 4

The views expressed in **IJFM** are those of the various authors and not necessarily those of the journal's editors, the International Society for Frontier Missiology or the society's executive committee.

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that operate in a young believer who has "come to faith."⁴ Identity is worked out personally (the inner self), socially (relations and roles), and collectively (group belonging) in what is a three-tiered model. Adams, Farah and Greenlee each approach identity from this perspective in this issue.

Identity is dialogical. We're gradually admitting that Muslims who turn to Christ must mediate between two conflicting religious traditions in a longer and more sustained inner conversation. Jen Barnett's contribution in Greenlee's volume is the finest explanation I have seen on this "dialogue within the self between many identifications, roles and belongings."⁵ A "coming to faith" introduces one into a tension that may require strategies of suppression, indecision, synthesis or innovation for its resolution.⁶ This hybrid tension is certainly evident in the autobiography of Lamin Sanneh (p. 38).⁷ These narratives force us to confront the uncomfortable notion of "dual-belonging," which is an increasing reality in our globalized world. This duality violates the mindset that sees all religions as irreducible, comprehensive and bounded collectivities.⁸ But

conversion narratives indicate long inner conversations that negotiate the duality of "Muslim" and "Christian" worlds.

Identity is constructed. Greenlee's entire volume is witness to the great variety of ways that persons construct their newfound identity in Christ, but Farah's article in this issue also suggests we're getting closer to understanding the common features in conversion narratives across the Muslim world (p. 13). However, one phenomenon is absent in Greenlee's volume, and we want to introduce it in Ben Naja's case study of a movement to Christ among Muslims in Eastern Africa (p. 27). It's when identity in Christ is constructed corporately over time, as "Muslim followers of Christ" come to faith and together define their identity on the frontier of *ummah* and church. Naja's groundbreaking research is encouraging and will stimulate reflection on how God is moving in the Muslim world today.⁹

The factors surrounding conversion, identity and belonging are getting ever more complex in a globalized world, and the increasing diaspora of unreached peoples has delivered this complexity right to our doorstep. This year's ISFM

gathering on "Global Peoples" (Dallas/Plano, September 18-19, 2013) promises to continue this very discussion on identity in transnational communities. I hope you'll be part of the conversation.

In Him,



Brad Gill
Editor, *IJFM*

Endnotes

¹ Greenlee's first volume, *From the Straight Path to the Narrow Way* (Authentic Media, 2006), published the addresses of his first Coming to Faith Consultation.

² *Church Growth Bulletin*, May 1971, Vol VII, No 5.

³ John Travis' C-Scale was originally a one-dimensional categorization of different contextualized church expressions in Muslim settings and was not intended to completely answer the question of identity.

⁴ Kraft's book was reviewed in *IJFM* 29:2, April-June 2012, pp. 102-4.

⁵ Barnett doesn't feel the popular "Kingdom Circles Model" captures the dialogical nature of identity formation (Greenlee, p. 25).

⁶ Green (p. 56f) and Barnett (pp. 30-32) in Greenlee, *Longing for Community*.

⁷ A full outline of this new autobiography was reviewed in *IJFM* 29:4, pp. 148-50.

⁸ Kang San Tan articulates this in the Buddhist world in *IJFM* 29:1, p. 26.

⁹ Also see this research at missionfrontiers.org, July 1, 2013.

The **IJFM** is published in the name of the International Student Leaders Coalition for Frontier Missions, a fellowship of younger leaders committed to the purposes of the twin consultations of Edinburgh 1980: The *World Consultation on Frontier Missions* and the *International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions*. As an expression of the ongoing concerns of Edinburgh 1980, the **IJFM** seeks to:

- ☞ promote intergenerational dialogue between senior and junior mission leaders;
- ☞ cultivate an international fraternity of thought in the development of frontier missiology;
- ☞ highlight the need to maintain, renew, and create mission agencies as vehicles for frontier missions;
- ☞ encourage multidimensional and interdisciplinary studies;
- ☞ foster spiritual devotion as well as intellectual growth; and
- ☞ advocate "A Church for Every People."

Mission frontiers, like other frontiers, represent boundaries or barriers beyond which we must go yet beyond which we may not be able to see clearly and boundaries which may even be disputed or denied. Their study involves the discovery and evaluation of the unknown or even the reevaluation of the known. But unlike other frontiers, mission frontiers is a subject specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas and ideas and insights related to the glorification of God in all the nations (peoples) of the world, "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." (Acts 26:18)

Subscribers and other readers of the **IJFM** (due to ongoing promotion) come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Mission professors, field missionaries, young adult mission mobilizers, college librarians, mission executives, and mission researchers all look to the **IJFM** for the latest thinking in frontier missiology.

Living Out an “In Christ” Identity: Research and Reflections Related to Muslims Who Have Come to Faith in Jesus Christ

by David Greenlee

An earlier version of this article was presented to the ACI 2012 Consultation held July 2012 at St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya.¹

One day the son of a wealthy South Asian businessman told his father, a Muslim, of his decision to follow Jesus. The son was given six months to recant or be disinherited and die in all but the physical sense of the word. Having made clear his decision, overnight he went from being the heir of a prosperous businessman to cleaning toilets at a Christian orphanage in exchange for food and a place to sleep. The nature of his subsequent experience gave rise to the title of the recently released book *Longing for Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere In Between?*²

Around the same time, and not far from his city, a cluster of villagers came to trust in the one they call *Isa al Masih*, and did so without large-scale rejection by the rest of the town. I asked an acquaintance from that area to tell me what differences the neighbors saw in these followers of *Isa al Masih* as a result of this new faith. “They see that they don’t beat their wives anymore and don’t go to the prostitutes. They provide money so that their children can remain in school. In the markets they offer a fair price, and when selling they don’t cheat with the scales.” And, he emphasized, the other villagers recognize that these changes are related to their relationship to Jesus.

As these brief stories suggest, Muslims who have turned to faith in Jesus Christ form and live out their new identity in diverse ways. Yet within this diversity exists a foundational, unifying reality from God’s perspective. For whatever else we may say, these brothers and sisters—and indeed all of us who believe—have an “in Christ” identity.

What does it mean to be “in Christ?” Paul describes it as being blessed, chosen, and included *in Christ*. We hope *in Christ* and are marked *in Christ* in accord with God’s plan purposed *in Christ* to bring all things in heaven and earth together *under Christ*. We were once far away but now *in Christ Jesus* we are brought near to God, Gentiles together with Israel-sharers in the promise *in Christ* (Ephesians 1:3–14; 2:12, 13).

*Raised in South America, David Greenlee has served with OM since 1977 and has been based over the past 20 years in Spain, Cyprus, and since 2006 in Switzerland. David’s PhD dissertation (Trinity, 1996) focused on conversion in North Africa, and he’s known to frequently ask people, “How did the good news become good for you?” His publications include three books on conversion, the most recent being *Longing for Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between?* (William Carey Library 2013), which is based on the second Coming to Faith Consultation in 2010.*

Identity Expressed

But how do we live this out in practice? In terms of our witness, finding an appropriate expression of our identity in Christ may either be a door-opener, or a door-closer. Describing a tribal setting in northern Ghana, Dan McVey asked why, after an initial period of significant growth, a movement reached a plateau.

The single greatest obstacle to church growth among the Jijimba (as he called the tribe) has been communicating the concept that one can be a follower of Jesus while maintaining identity as a Jijimba.

Faithfulness in persecution and lived-out, biblical contextualization have won the confidence of many and given hope that the community of believers will grow in numbers beyond the current plateau.³

A German researcher notes that the reason only a small number of Turks in Germany have “committed their lives to Jesus Christ” may be that many German Christians lack awareness of “the multicultural character of the Body of Christ,” their conventional forms and traditions “creating barriers between Germans and foreigners.” In neighboring France, John Leonard observed that

the church must develop an approach that values what the immigrant values even if this is not what the church believes is best for the immigrant.⁴

Mogens Mogensen reports a similar barrier in northern Nigeria, where

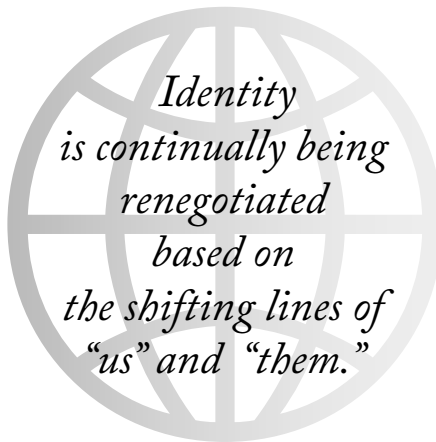
a significant percentage of the Fulbe converts complained that they felt that the Christians did not welcome them in the church during the decision and incorporation phases.⁵

The German study further observes that “conversion to the Christian faith does not end in betrayal of the oriental culture [nor] threaten Turkish identity” but, in fact, holds a high chance for the development of a healthy Turkish or Kurdish identity. This reaffirmed my own finding that a by-product of coming to faith for young Moroccan

men was a heightened, positive sense of national identity.⁶

David Radford’s work has gone into depth along these lines. Following independence in 1991,

upwards of 20,000 Kyrgyz embraced the Protestant Christian faith, striking at the heart of Kyrgyz ethnic identity and challenging the normative identity construction ‘to be Kyrgyz is to be Muslim.’ . . . Through a process of reconstructing identity, Kyrgyz Christians are finding continuity between their new religious faith and Kyrgyz traditional values, history, and community, beyond a strictly Muslim framework. They are Christians but still feel deeply ‘Kyrgyz’ and affirm that identity.⁷



Who Am I?

“Who am I?” may be one of the most basic questions humans ask. If I were to wake up with amnesia, as Lucy did repeatedly in the 2004 movie “50 First Dates,” it might be the first question I would ask myself each morning.

Knowing my identity—identity being defined as “the fact of being who or what a person or thing is”⁸—goes beyond the basic data embedded in a passport or birth certificate. It entails a complex and more-or-less changing web of experience, behavior, belief, values, and relationships.

If I desired to understand the identity of someone I meet in Zurich, where I live, how would I go about it? I would likely

explore a variety of themes that link the individual to certain groups while setting him or her apart from others. The questions I raise would at first include less sensitive (or obvious) issues such as nationality. If the person is European, I might ask about employment, if Asian, about family. Depending upon where the individual is from, I might ask about mother tongue as a hint concerning tribe and ethnicity. If I recognize that the person is not native-born Swiss, I might let them know that, like one third of all people in Zurich,⁹ I also am a “migrant,” an expression of shared identity that has helped to energize many conversations.

Such an interaction illustrates the important point that identity is continually being renegotiated based on the shifting lines of “us” and “them.” In some settings I identify myself as American, in others as Swiss. If I say, “I am a migrant,” I do so to emphasize an aspect of my identity in order to include an “other.” This can be especially significant in times of hardship and trouble, not just to extend the boundaries of “us,” but to also define a clear “them.” In this way identity is a narrative construct. Different aspects are emphasized by retelling the story differently.¹⁰

What Can Change?

We can readily change some aspects of our identity, while others, only with difficulty or not at all. When I desire to change aspects of my identity, the society in which I live may tolerate or encourage that change, or it may exert significant pressure to prevent it.

To illustrate, let us (informally) consider a few categories that help mark one’s identity. Some identity markers, such as gender, are physically inherited, although there is now significant discussion on just what gender identity actually is. Other markers, such as those related to religion or to economic class, may be considered by some to be inherited, but by others as something we learn or achieve through our effort (or, in Christian thought, by God’s

grace). Other markers are attained, such as membership in that distinctive group known as the alumni of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (or wherever you happened to have studied). Below are a few other markers of identity, including how we get them and the difficulty we face in changing them:

- Birth order: inherited, impossible to change
- “First-born” status: inherited, can change by legal action
- Marital status: achieved through specific actions, can change
- Nationality: inherited or achieved, possible to change
- Race: inherited, impossible to change
- Tribe: inherited, but can in part be abandoned or conferred
- Economic class: inherited at first, can be changed but how hard depends on society
- Caste: inherited, for Hindus impossible to change
- Fan of a sporting club: learned, can change

As we consider these markers, do any necessarily preclude a lived out faith in Jesus Christ? Each can certainly be distorted, perverted, and expressed in an ungodly way. But other than caste (which is beyond the scope of our discussion here), none by its nature runs counter to biblical instruction on how a disciple of Jesus should live.

Identity and Religious Change

Let us think a bit more about the question of identity, especially as it relates to the question of those who turn from Islam to faith in Jesus Christ. In this connection I am especially appreciative of the work of colleagues such as Tim Green, Jens Barnett, David Radford, and Kathryn Kraft. They have combined a solid commitment to the Bible with helpful insights from sociology and related fields, and have coupled that with their own research among Muslims who are coming to faith in Christ.¹¹

When we consider identity change, it is legitimate to ask whether “religion” is even an appropriate word to use.

Our underlying presuppositions concerning religion affect how we approach the question of identity change. While presenting this paper at a conference in Kenya, the scholars and students present confirmed with laughter my suggestion that most of them find Western secular thinking a bit strange, and in particular the separation of so-called “spiritual things” from the rest of life. Their views concur with Philip Harland’s observations regarding the gatherings of associations in New Testament times:

... what we as moderns might distinguish as ‘religious’ (sacrificing to the gods) and ‘social’ (meals) were intimately tied together in antiquity.¹²

Thus, as we consider identity change, it is legitimate to ask whether “religion” is even an appropriate word to use. Indeed, it means many different things to many different people, and its use may suggest that things having to do with God (or gods) can actually be categorized separately from other aspects of life.¹³ That said, I ask the reader to indulge my use of the word for the time being!

Most religions accept some change, or conversion,¹⁴ into the religion, and most also resist change away from it. Andreas Maurer noted that “conversion” is toward us, while “apostasy” is towards “them,” whoever the “them” might be.¹⁵ While most Protestant Christians are not happy at the prospect of others turning away from the faith—whether in an intentional, clearly-marked act or by a slow progression we might call “backsliding”—such change is more or less tolerated. Meanwhile, most Muslims deny the possibility of conversion away from Islam, and many respond forcefully should it actually happen.¹⁶

What is it that Muslims object to changing when the theme of “conversion” comes up?

First, it is important to note that significant differences exist in the way Islam is lived out by different individuals and communities, with differences as well in their resistance to change and conversion. Such differences might be counter-intuitive. For example, I have observed a high tolerance for a broadly secular lifestyle of a young Muslim man in Europe, but a near violent response when he announced he had become a Christian. Meanwhile, a rather conservative father in the Middle East or Southeast Asia may give quiet assent to such a change, provided at least that no public dishonor is brought on the family.

Thus, conversion and the formation of a new identity need to be seen in reference to the prior identity of the individual and his or her community. Questions driving the response of opposition to conversion and faith might include the following core issues (stated briefly here):

Theological truth. In recent years we have heard of many cases in Pakistan involving charges of blasphemy.¹⁷ While such abusive court cases too frequently stem from personal disputes, they point to a central concern for theological purity. Evelyne Reisacher, reporting on her research among women of North African origin, observed that women are more concerned with social relationships and less concerned with theology than are men.¹⁸

Salvation. Is some opposition raised because of a sense that the apostate is abandoning his hope of salvation? For some, that may be indeed the case. Yet Andreas Maurer, writing about conversions in South Africa both to and from Islam and the Christian faith, indicates that Muslims who turned to faith in Christ were more likely to refer to hope and assurance, while converts to Islam were likely to refer to it as being more “practical” and reasonable than Christianity, and not in terms of salvation.¹⁹

An issue of honor. Is conversion seen primarily as a shameful rejection of tradition, as something that brings dishonor on the family? Such would be the case described by Sabatina James, born in Pakistan but raised in Austria. Her conversion, coupled with rejection of an arranged marriage, has led to a decade of hounding and opposition from her family.²⁰

Loss of family. Related to the issue of dishonor is the sense of loss of family. In a discussion with the leader of the Islamic community in a large South American city in the early 1990s, we first spoke of inter-faith issues of theology. But eventually, as trust grew between us, he described the marriage of the young adults of his community to Catholic-background neighbors. His pain was not expressed in religious terms or in reference to a loss of salvation but in a phrase any parent could understand, "We are losing our children."

Economic loss. Demetrius and the silversmiths of Ephesus seemed primarily concerned with their loss of income (Acts 19:25), not the fine points of Paul's preaching. In recent years, evangelical believers among the Saraguro tribe of Ecuador (and in certain Mexican villages) have refused to participate in traditional festivals. Perceived as a challenge not only to the religious system but also to the interwoven structures of politics and economy, the angry response to this refusal has all too often been violence against the new Protestants.²¹ In the case of conversion to and from Islam, my experience is that economic issues most often involve questions of alleged or actual financial gain as an inducement to conversion, or conversely are used to draw the convert back to his roots.

Features of Identity

When we speak of identity, we need to consider in whose terms the identity is being described. Is my identity what society, or my family, calls me? Or is it how I identify myself? Or, and this is

of the greatest eternal importance, is my identity primarily based on what God says about me?

One of the helpful contributions from researchers Tim Green and Kathryn Kraft is their work exploring three layers of identity:²²

- my core identity—"who am I in my inner self?"
- my social identity—"who am I in relation to my group or groups?"
- our collective identity—"what is my group's identity in the eyes of the world?"

Using these layers as categories of description is helpful, although, as Kraft wrote to me recently, they should not



be treated as if identity were a monolithic thing with multiple components. Instead, identity can be viewed from a variety of angles in which those components play different roles. With that caveat in mind, these categories help us understand the different ways converts from one religion to another go about shaping their new identity, an identity that in a sense is also shaped for them.

Kraft notes that some reject their past entirely. This process leads many to depression and anxiety. Ziya Meral, reporting on the experience of twenty-eight former Muslims, says that

when alienation and anomy [sic] is internalized by the individual, along with the knowledge that his own

[family] has turned against him, and that his society, government and security forces will not protect him, a lifelong struggle with depression, loneliness, fear and anxiety can result. All the converts interviewed for this report spoke of their anxieties and deep sense of loneliness.²³

Others try to cling to the past identity.

The most successful, Kraft argues, are those who find a way to merge the two identities, to keep the good and not deny their past. This is illustrated in Radford's description of Kyrgyz Christians quoted above.

But let us move on. What other features are important in our understanding of identity?

First, *identities can shift.* Those of us who are dual nationals easily switch between passports, depending upon which national border we are crossing. "Border crossing" decisions become more complicated, though, when these borders reflect our inner being and values. Some years ago in Southeast Asia my friends and I went on a bird-watching tour with a guide whose birth name, James, had officially been changed to Hassan. Why the shift? Conversion, at least in a formal sense, was the only way he could marry the girl he loved. Yet, as we told him on our walk through the forest, his behavior in our presence was more "James" than "Hassan."

Mark R. J. Faulkner explored the shifting that regularly occurs between multiple layers of identity among the Boni of Kenya, a traditionally animist tribe now converted to Islam. Such analysis is "messy," he says, and evades the application of distinct boundaries that outside observers might desire to apply.²⁴ The collective memory of the Boni remains strong and, as demonstrated in Faulkner's ethnography, those memories are revived and applied both in times of crisis and in the traditional domains of daily life (e.g., men in the hunting fields, women around the homestead). Meanwhile, Islamic religious practices are

applied where they are advantageous. Faulkner's study is helpful in that it reminds us that conversion involves transformation at multiple levels, both in the individual and in society. Outsiders may observe only surface change (perhaps in some ritual behavior), but not recognize the absence of deep change.

Second, *identities are highlighted in times of crisis and rites of passage*. Jews and Muslims were outraged at the July 2012 German court ruling banning circumcision, a court interpretation of "the rights of a child" deemed an affront to Jewish and Muslim identity. Television interviews with the secular-minded judges and lawyers involved displayed a combination of ignorance and arrogance on their part vis-à-vis this millennia-old marker of religious and ethnic identity. Expectations surrounding marriage and burial further highlight questions of identity, both in terms of how one perceives one's own core and social identity and how they are perceived by one's family and, to a lesser extent, the wider society.

Third, the questions of identity so difficult for parents are greatly *magnified in the lives of their children*. In most Muslim-dominated countries, Muslim young people who become believers in Jesus Christ will not likely be able to change the religion category on their identity papers. And no matter how they refer to themselves or are labeled by the government, what about their children? Jens Barnett describes the dilemma of Awal, a Middle Eastern man who has been faithfully following Christ for over twenty years, enduring imprisonment and gaining the respect of Christian pastors who know him.

My concern is for our kids. No one is doing anything for them and they are having an identity crisis . . . I call them *MBBKs*, "Muslim Background Believer Kids."

A while ago my daughter asked me, "Dad, what am I really? Am I a Muslim or a Christian?" . . . I said, "You're a Muslim that follows Christ. Our Muslim identity is written on our identity

T*he questions of identity so difficult for parents are greatly magnified in the lives of their children.*

[cards], it's our extended family, our heritage, our people—but we follow Christ as a family. Although it has made life difficult for us, I will never regret my decision to follow Christ. . ."

But, that is so hard for them. My daughter—who is now a teenager, you know—asked me, "Dad, what is going to happen to me? Will I ever get married?" It's a very difficult time. They need to find their own way. . .

We are not Christians . . . We are Muslims. It is among Muslims we find acceptance and belonging . . . We have experienced so much love from Muslim society and so much rejection from Christians. Our children have felt this and it is hard for them to understand.

I no longer care what Christians think. I care what Muslims think. However, even if our president asked me, "What is Christ to you?" I would tell him my faith. I will not compromise Christ, ever—but I am not a Christian . . .²⁵

Lest this brief, personal excerpt be misinterpreted, note that Awal has made known to his extended family that he is a Christian²⁶ and, as Barnett has told me, has spoken out against "insider movements." Knowing that makes his words even more poignant as a reflection on the sensitive, at times painful, issue of identity as worked out in families such as his.

Fourth, and this is linked to the previous concern, whatever identity is worked out at the social and collective level, *the impact at the core level may be complex and painful*. Sufyan Baig, who writes from personal experience, expresses the loneliness and longings of believers who face rejection, not just by the *ummah*, but also by the church:

Muslim background believers endure struggles including fear of physical danger, the grief of rejection from the *ummah*, feelings of isolation and loneliness, and feelings of shame and guilt as they realize the struggles of their family to

explain their actions. In addition, they often struggle to find sufficient support and understanding in the Christian community. For the Christian community to be able to nurture and care for Muslim converts, it is essential that it grasps the depth of struggles common in the stories of Muslim background believers.²⁷

Fifth, Barnett²⁸ reminds us that we need to *consider the narrative nature of identity formation*, and not treat it in a merely paradigmatic manner, as if we were conducting an autopsy on a dead body. That is, we are talking about people, individuals with real stories. While it can be helpful to gain some common understanding of factors affecting conversion and how people live out that faith, people can only truly be understood through their ongoing story, or narrative. Barnett suggests that this should also affect how we go about witness and making disciples. Conversion, discipleship, and identity formation are not just a matter of facts, but of observing, learning, and even copying others.

And this points to a final and foundational observation: our *identity must be built on God's perspective*. This is not to deny the importance of our own self-understanding, or even what others say about us, but what God says about us is more important than the labels derived from various human understandings of who we are.

Working it Out

Muslims who come to faith in Jesus Christ will work through a number of issues as they live out that faith, such as whether to participate in festivals and fasts; how to find fellowship and express the Body of Christ; and how to handle both the legal (identity documents) and informal questions of religious identity, first for oneself and eventually for one's children.

As we consider identity in the light of these and other life-application questions, there are other issues that we who are concerned outsiders especially need to consider.

First, I would suggest that we differentiate between what I call “contextualized approaches” and what Paul Hiebert first referred to as “critical contextualization.” The former is something that well-informed, well-intentioned outsiders—some call them “inbetweeners”—should do in terms of ministry, living and communicating in ways that are appropriate to the setting. The latter, however, occurs only when the local church and its leaders engage in the process of evaluation, biblical reflection, and response.²⁹ While “inbetweeners” have a significant contribution to make in contextualization and questions of identity, they can easily place too much—or too little—emphasis on particular matters or misunderstand certain elements of society and culture in need of transformation or the personal issues that believers are going through.

Second, we must approach these issues, and those with whom we disagree, with humility. We should also try to discern the filters we use to observe the world and interpret the Bible, something we might not be able to do without asking others to help us see what those filters are.

Third, we should recognize and profit from differences in perspective. In my own research on conversion, I have often seen a difference between the insights of missionaries (whatever their national origin) and those of Muslims who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, even when describing the same group or individuals. Tomas Sundnes Drønen’s narrative of the mid-1900s conversion of the Dii tribe of Cameroon illustrates this well. For example, while Norwegian missionary journals of the time focused on baptisms and schools, they never touched on the factors that most deeply touched most of Drønen’s informants who “constantly” spoke of the missionaries’ charity and “firm stand against the oppressors.”³⁰

Fourth, let us be wary of setting up the experience of any one individual or group as the norm to which all should adhere. Just because some Muslims (or Hindus, Buddhists, or secular Europeans) have come to and live out faith in Jesus in a certain way does not mean that this is the standard by which all should be measured. While believers have a core “in Christ” identity, big differences in perspective and in how identity is practiced at the social and collective levels certainly exist. Among my acquaintances are those who reject terms such as “Muslim background believer” declaring, “We are not Muslim anything, we are Christians!” Others continue to refer to themselves as Muslims, *not* in the sense of



allegiance to Islam or Muhammad, but in terms of ethnicity, family, and social relationships. Many others naturally fall somewhere in between. And all of them—indeed, all of us—may be better understood through a narrative approach to identity, especially those who do not appreciate being “labeled” or pegged to some arbitrary scale as if they can be described on a single-dimensional spectrum.

Four Areas of Discontinuity

No matter what our social, cultural, or religious background, new believers face a constellation of issues that must be worked through as the “in Christ” identity emerges. This process will reflect

varying levels of continuity and discontinuity³¹ between our “before Christ” and “in Christ” behavior and belief.

In many areas of our lives, most of us exhibit a great deal of continuity with the past. Coming to faith in Christ may have had little impact on the way we wash our hands, select what to eat, or our passion for our country’s athletes during the Olympics. At a deeper level, the new Kyrgyz Christians described by Radford have intentionally worked through areas in their history and values to foster continuity between their Kyrgyz and Christian identities, something I like to describe in terms of congruence of values.³²

Depending on who I was and how I lived before knowing Jesus, being “in Christ” may correspond to a significant change in how I treat my spouse, children, and parents and the way I go about my work or fill out a tax form. (Of course, many who do not follow Jesus treat their families with love and handle their financial matters with integrity.)

Whatever we conclude about such issues (and whatever levels of continuity we may consider appropriate in various areas of our lives), there are four key areas in which I believe we need to experience major discontinuity between our “before Christ” identity and our transformed “in Christ” identity, areas which I believe underlie the other transformations that will take place.

- First and central to these four areas is *our understanding of and faith in Jesus Christ* (John 20:31). Whatever else we know or practice, eternal life is promised exclusively to those believing in him. The question of believing, or not believing, is the core discontinuity between those who are “in Christ” and those who are not.

Space limitations preclude our exploring this further, but we need to keep it clearly in mind and give it priority above any insights we may gain from social sciences. Through God’s gracious call and our response in faith, a transformation takes place

that brings us into his family. We are justified by his grace; we are heirs, having the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7). Because we believe and are “in Christ” we are no longer aliens but fellow citizens with God’s people, members of God’s household, part of that holy temple he is building (Ephesians 2:19–22), the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), with a mutual responsibility of service (Galatians 5:13) and fellowship (Hebrews 10:25).

Related to this core issue are three other areas of discontinuity.

- *Acceptance of the Bible* as God’s uniquely inspired, sufficient, and authoritative Word. While there is some truth in other books, whether scientific or religious, philosophical or practical, being “in Christ” involves a lived-out recognition of the Bible as uniquely inspired by God.
- *Grace rather than legalism.* Before coming to faith in Christ, some of us worked hard to please God. Having come to faith, some of us still think we can get a bit more divine favor by our actions. We should live godly lives; we should do good deeds and seek to please God. Yet we fulfill God’s commands, not because we are driven to win his approval, but as a result of receiving his grace.
- *Allegiance and submission to God alone.* For some, issues of spiritual allegiance and power are overt and obvious. For others, the world and the devil exercise more subtle control. A fourth key area of discontinuity involves renunciation and victory over the Evil One and rejection of the world, with intentional submission to the loving power of God.

Conclusion

The question of identity is complex and patterns of faith expression not simple to describe. While identity is multi-dimensional and not adequately captured on single-dimensional scales or simple grids, it can be helpfully viewed in

T*he question of believing, or not believing, is the core discontinuity between those who are “in Christ” and those who are not.*

terms of core, social, and collective layers. Approaching identity in terms of dialogue or multiple narratives helps us see its personal and changing nature.

Our identity is centered on being “in Christ.” The object of our belief is not a set of facts, but a person, Jesus Christ. As E. Stanley Jones is reported to have said, “In conversion you are not attached primarily to an order, nor to an institution, nor a movement, nor a set of beliefs, nor a code of action—you are attached primarily to a Person, and secondarily to these other things.”

No matter what our religious background or social setting, working out what it means to be “in Christ” takes on many forms. Not surprisingly then, the churches of Algeria appear quite different from *jamaats* of Isa-followers in South Asian villages. What *should* be consistent among followers of Jesus is not conformity to rules and customs but, in every aspect or layer of identity, a lived out “in Christness” as described in Galatians 5:22–26.

In the present climate of missiological discussion, I observe two dangers, both of which are illustrated in the experience of the early church at Antioch. The gospel had been proclaimed and people were coming to faith in Christ. Barnabas came and found “signs of the grace of God.” He then sent for Saul and together they taught the new believers, helping them grow in grace and knowledge (Acts 11:19–30).

Imagine what would have happened if, instead of Barnabas, someone else from the Jerusalem group had been sent, someone who deeply loved God, trusted in Jesus the Messiah, *and awaited a turning of the Gentiles to faith* (as discussed by Chris Wright³³ with regard to Isaiah 66:18–21), but who also held a legalistic approach (in the Jewish sense) to living out this faith.

Imagine, on the other hand, the danger if Barnabas—a Levite and by no means a theological novice—had simply left them on their own to figure out their theology for themselves, with no guidance from what God had already revealed to the apostles in Jerusalem and to Saul.

For Paul, making disciples included a “deep concern for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28), a concern that they not fall prey to the savage wolves that were sure to arise among them (Acts 20:29). As God grants us the privilege of joining in the commission to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:18–20) we should share Paul’s concern. At the same time, we run the risk of improperly imposing our culture and experience-rooted expressions of faith on new believers, rather than allowing them to develop their own. As Edwin Zehner has helped me to see,³⁴ the risk of syncretism exists in tension with the risk of an inadequately inculturated church and expression of the gospel.

Jean-Marie Gaudeul has observed that

As we discover the many ways in which Christ, “lifted up from the earth, draws everyone to himself” (John 12:32), we are struck by the extraordinary variety of the ways in which people, finding new faith in him, discover their new identity: they are changed and yet the same. And we know that this diversity is only a small part of God’s infinite skill in leading us to his house where Unity will combine with the fulfillment of each person’s originality.³⁵

We celebrate our diversity, but remember that it is not of an undefined variety. Our identity—whatever its outward expression—is given, grounded and deeply rooted in Christ that we might be “to the praise of his glory,” living carefully and wisely as children of light (Ephesians 1: 12–14; 5:15–16). **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ I am grateful to Jens Barnett, Kathryn Kraft, Tim Green, and Bob Fish for suggestions incorporated in this version.

² In his chapter in this book he describes the experience he and other Indians have faced as they work out their identity and look for community as followers of Jesus. Sufyan Baig, "The *Ummah* and Christian Community," in David Greenlee, ed., *Longing for Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between?* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013), pp. 69–78.

³ Dan McVey, "Hindrances to Evangelistic Growth among Muslim Background Believer Churches of the 'Jijimba' People of West Africa." In *From the Straight Path to the Narrow Way*, ed. David Greenlee (Waynesboro: Authentic, 2006), pp. 199–214.

⁴ John Leonard, "Oasis: An Ethnography of a Muslim Convert Group in France." PhD diss., (Deerfield: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2006), p. 292.

⁵ Mogens S. Mogensen, "Contextual Communication of the Gospel to Pastoral *Fulbe* in Northern Nigeria." Ph.D. diss., (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2000) p. 270; available at <http://www.intercultural.dk/index.php?mainid=51&subid=571>.

⁶ David H. Greenlee, "Christian Conversion from Islam: Social, Cultural, Communication, and Supernatural Factors in the Process of Conversion and Faithful Church Participation." PhD diss., (Deerfield: Trinity International University, 1996), pp. 125–27.

⁷ David Radford, "The Challenge of 'Coming to Faith' in Central Asia: Reconstructing Ethnic Identity Introduction," *Musafir: A Bulletin of Intercultural Studies*, 6:2 (December 2012), p. 8.

⁸ Oxford Dictionaries, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/identity>.

⁹ See http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/content/prd/de/index/statistik/in_kuerze.html.

¹⁰ I am indebted to Jens Barnett for these thoughts in response to a draft of this paper.

¹¹ See David Radford, "Fuzzy Thinking and the Conversion Process," pp. 1–10; Kathryn Kraft, "Relationships, Emotion, Doctrine, Intellect—and All That Follows," pp. 11–18; Jens Barnett, "Refusing to Choose: Multiple Belonging among Arab Followers of Christ," pp. 19–28, and "Living a Pun: Cultural Hybridity among Arab Followers of Christ," pp. 29–40; and Tim Green, "Conversion in the Light of Identity Theories," pp. 41–52, and "Identity Choices at the Border Zone,"

pp. 53–66, in Greenlee, *Longing for Community*. See also Kathryn Ann Kraft, *Searching for Heaven in the Real World: A Sociological Discussion of Conversion in the Arab World*, Regnum Studies in Mission, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2012), and Tim Green, "Identity Issues for Ex-Muslim Christians, With Particular Reference to Marriage," *St. Francis Magazine* 8, 4 (Aug. 2012), available at <http://www.stfrancismagazine.info/ja/images/stories/SFMAugust2012-3.pdf>.

¹² Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), p. 27.

¹³ See William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 58.

¹⁴ I use this term from the perspective described by sociologist Kathryn Kraft. While "aware of the sensitivities in many circles of the term 'conversion,' I use it throughout this paper, in recognition of its academic meaning, to refer to people who have broken with or weakened their loyalty to former beliefs and developed an allegiance to Christ." Kraft, "Relationships, Emotion, Doctrine, Intellect," footnote 28.

¹⁵ Andreas Maurer, "In Search of a New Life," in Greenlee, *Straight Path*, pp. 103–04.

¹⁶ For a scholarly analysis of this topic, see Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silenced: How Apostasy and Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ See Marshall and Shea, *Silenced*, for documentation.

¹⁸ Evelyne Reisacher, "North African Women and Conversion: Specifics of Female Faith and Experience," in Greenlee, *Straight Path*, pp. 121–22.

¹⁹ Andreas Maurer, "In Search of a New Life," in Greenlee, *Straight Path*, pp. 103–04.

²⁰ See <http://sabatinajames.com/> and Sabatina James, *Sterben sollst du für dein Glück: Gefangen zwischen zwei Welten* (Munich: Knauer, 2004).

²¹ Tom Stiles, "Almost Heaven: The Fiesta Cargo System Among the Saraguro Quichua in Ecuador and Implications for Contextualizing in the Evangelical Church," Ph.D. diss., (Deerfield: Trinity International University, 1996). See also Bettina E. Schmidt, "Fiestas Patronales in the Ecuadorian Andes," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 2006; 23; 54, <http://trn.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/23/1/54.pdf> and Deann Alford, "Mob Expels 80 Christians: Growing Number of Evangelicals Threatens

Liquor Profits," Oct. 17, 2005, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/november/6.22.html>.

²² See Kraft, "Relationships, Emotion, Doctrine, Intellect" and *Searching for Heaven*, and Green, "Conversion in the Light of Identity Theories" and "Identity Issues."

²³ Ziya Meral, *No Place to Call Home* (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2008) p. 68, available at <http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=report&id=94&search=>.

²⁴ Mark R. J. Faulkner, *Overtly Muslim, Covertly Boni: Competing Calls of Religious Allegiance on the Kenyan Coast*, Studies of Religion in Africa, Supplements to the Journal of Religion in Africa, vol. 29, (Leiden and Boston: Brill) p. 251.

²⁵ Barnett, "Refusing to Choose," pp. 23–25.

²⁶ Barnett, "Living a Pun," p. 38.

²⁷ Baig, "Ummah and Christian Community," p. 73.

²⁸ Barnett, "Narrative, Identity and Discipleship."

²⁹ Paul Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11,3 (July 1987), pp. 104–12.

³⁰ Tomas Sundnes Dronen, *Communication and Conversion in Northern Cameroon: The Dii People and Norwegian Missionaries, 1934–1960*, Studies in Christian Mission Series, Vol. 37 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), pp. 106–07.

³¹ By "discontinuity" I refer to changes that are more or less like the light on my desk: although the change is not actually instantaneous, there is a clear difference between the light being on or off. By "continuity" I do not mean that everything stays the same, but that change, to the extent it occurs, is more like the gradual change as dawn turns to daylight.

³² David Greenlee, *One Cross, One Way, Many Journeys: Thinking Again about Conversion*, (Tyrone, GA, USA: Authentic, 2007) pp. 51–65.

³³ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity 2006), p. 517.

³⁴ Edwin Zehner, "Beyond Anti-syncretism: Gospel, Context, and Authority in the New Testament and in Thai Conversions to Christianity," in Brian M. Howell and Edwin Zehner, eds., *Power and Identity in the Global Church: Six Contemporary Cases* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2009), p. 173.

³⁵ Jean-Marie Gaudeul, "Mission: Imitation of Christ," in Greenlee, *Longing for Community*, pp. 145–58.

Emerging Missiological Themes in MBB Conversion Factors

by Warrick Farah

Qaasid's¹ mother often reminded him that it was the Christians who "saved him from death" when he was treated as an infant at a Western-run medical clinic for a life-threatening illness. Growing up in a conservative Muslim society that lacks any indigenous church, Qaasid learned weekly at primary school that Christians were among those who had turned away from God. This deeply troubled Qaasid, "*How could people who did such great things for me be so misguided?*"

One day Qaasid happened across a Christian radio broadcast in his dialect, and he was hooked. He prayed and asked God for a Bible, but in his heart he believed he would have to travel to a Western country to learn more about Jesus. Surprisingly, not too long after his prayer, he was able to buy a Bible from a boy who, ironically, was selling them on the street near his home! The rarity of this experience twenty years ago in his country (he never saw that boy again), unheard of even today, led Qaasid to believe that God had destined him to become a follower of Christ.

Qaasid eventually met a foreign Kingdom worker living in his country who could answer his many questions. Qaasid's story doesn't end there, and he has grown in his faith since then. But as he did with Qaasid, God is indeed using many factors to draw Muslims around the world to faith in the Messiah.

The Growth of MBB Conversion Studies in Evangelical Missiology

David Greenlee (see article this issue, pp. 5–12) was among the first to do major missiological research into Muslim Background Believer (MBB) conversions² (Greenlee 1996).³ Since then, many have followed suit and many of their contributions can be found in two very helpful edited books on MBB conversions (Greenlee 2006b, 2013). Today, many others including myself, are writing theses and dissertations on conversions in their Islamic contexts. In 2014, David Garrison will be releasing a book in which he asked 1,000 MBBs around the world "What did God use to draw you to faith in the Messiah?"⁴ Research into conversion factors is extremely helpful for missiology, because

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as the axiom goes, “How we conceive of conversion determines how we do evangelism” (Peace 1999, 286). The “consequences” of conversion, another important aspect of conversion, have also recently been researched by Kathryn Kraft (2012), Duane Miller (2013), Tim Green (2012), and Roy Oksnevad (2012).

However, even though no two conversions are the same, it appears to me that MBBs throughout Asia and Africa tend to follow a similar pattern⁵ as they come to Christ. While it is anthropologically messy to compare contexts, it does in fact seem that different contexts are yielding similar results. Do we need more research into MBB conversion factors⁶ (cf. Miller 2012)? Or are we nearing a “saturation” point in conversion factor research, where we are not learning too much from new data?

This article is my attempt to offer a synthesis of the emerging missiological contours in MBB conversions. The various factors that influence Muslims to embrace Christ can be grouped into categories or themes. I believe we may be closer to forming a theory of MBB conversions from the extant literature on the subject. However, these eight themes (which are *not* ranked in order of prominence) are only preliminary suggestions and will need to be examined in various settings.

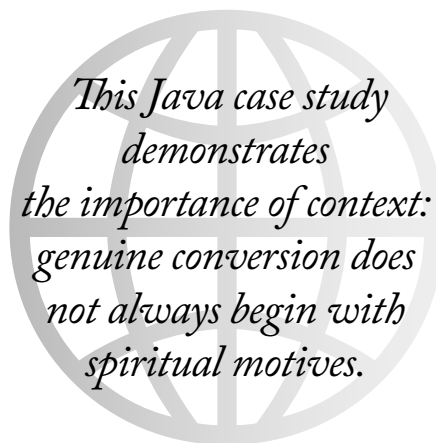
1. Conversion is a Contextual Process

Conversion and regeneration are two sides of the same coin (Stott 2008, 169). While united, the two are easily and often confused. There are three reasons the distinction between regeneration and conversion is necessary: (1) regeneration is God’s act, whereas conversion is man’s response, (2) regeneration is unconscious, whereas conversion is normally conscious, (3) regeneration is an instantaneous and complete work of God, whereas conversion is more a process than an event (168–71).

James Engle notes that although conversion can be regarded as sudden, unconscious, or gradual, gradual conversion is the most common form of conversion for those in unreached, non-Christian areas who come to Christ. Conversion

may climax in what appears to be sudden conversion, but the act of turning or decision is secondary to the process itself. (1990)

The idea that conversion is only an event (i.e., “one-step decisionism” (Conn 1979, 101)) is deeply embedded in the evangelical mind, and is a result of a “punctiliar” emphasis on conversion from the “revivals” in Protestantism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Smith 2010, 1–20). Although rare, point-in-time conversion experiences are



more common in Christian societies than in non-Christian societies where one could have a “revival” experience (Lutz 2007).

The overall experience of Muslims, however, is that conversion is a gradual process that takes place over many years (Haney 2010, 68; Larson 1996a; Teeter 1990, 307–08). Gordon Smith notes that Muslim conversions to Christ

do not tend to rest or pivot on a decision or a particular act of acceptance. Rather, it has been well documented that these conversions are slow and incremental. (2010, 84)

Qaasid cannot point to the moment of his conversion, but he knows he is a disciple of the Messiah. Thus, conversion is

a process that transpires over months or years. The sometimes apparently sudden decision to “follow Christ” is only one essential step in this process.

Yet the context where conversion happens plays a key role. Two million Muslims in Java converted to Christianity in the 1960s (Willis 1977). Initially, this began as a protest against tribal and village Muslim leaders in the aftermath of a massacre of communists by fellow Muslims; many of the converts had communist family members who had been killed by Muslims. “What had begun as an act of political rebellion... eventually took on a deeper meaning” (Hefner 1993, 117). These converts were further drawn into conversion by an experiential, personal encounter with Christ through prayer and Bible study that “had no precedent in the traditional village religion” (1993, 116).

Furthermore, when these converts professed faith officially, they did so without understanding the fuller consequences of their decision. “Public profession of the faith had inspired an interior rationalization quite unlike anything that would have occurred on a purely individual basis” (Hefner 1993, 120). Eventually the converts came to realize that many of “their local traditions [were] incompatible with their new Christian faith” (1993, 122).

Finally, the “social psychology” of the Javanese context in the 1970s had finally cleared away the perception that Christianity was a foreign (Dutch) religion thus making conversion more possible on a wider scale. The Javanese were, to some extent, “able to establish a free space in which conversion would not immediately result in severe social stigmatization” (1993, 120). In the conversion process, political motivations and social stigmas concerning religious identity are important contextual factors. This Java case study demonstrates the importance of context: genuine conversion does not always begin with spiritual or intellectual motives.

2. The Prominence of the Affective Dimension

The affective dimension of worldview is usually more prominent in MBB conversions than the cognitive.⁷ It is a subjective experience, often meeting a felt need, and often in the form of the supernatural such as a dream,⁸ a tangible answer to prayer, a miracle, a healing, or an overwhelming feeling of the presence of Jesus. Factors in the affective dimension are more frequent in MBB conversions than those in a cognitive/intellectual search for truth. Interest in Christ is sparked by affective experiences, and understanding seems to come later in the process.

Early one-dimensional evangelical models of conversion tended to be overly cognitive (cf. Tippett 1977; Hesselgrave 1990, 617–73). Engel and Sogaard revised the “Engel Scale” to include the affective dimension (Sogaard 2000), noting that conversion is not just about correct beliefs but also about positive feelings and attitudes towards Christ.⁹ The most comprehensive model that describes the process of conversion, especially for Muslims, is found in Reinhold Strähler’s article *A Matrix for Measuring Steps in the Process of Conversion* (2007; also in *Longing for Community*, Greenlee 2013).

Strähler has classified four *types of processes* involved in conversion for MBBs. Notice that cognitive or belief issues are less prominent at the beginning of the processes for types two, three, and four. The four types are (1) *intellectual*—cognitive issues are extremely high and the convert studies and compares various religious options; (2) *affectional*—characterized by personal relationships and emotional elements; (3) *mystical*—characterized by a passive convert who is “surprised by God,” usually in the form of the supernatural; and (4) *solution seeking*—asking Jesus for help with spiritual or practical problems (2010, 84–100).

David Fraser suggested that MBBs tend to be less rational or intellectual in their conversion experiences, so that

MBBs appear to bond themselves to Christ in a patron–client relationship as they initially begin to understand his lordship.

understanding of the fundamentals of the gospel is an event that comes after they have confronted Christ and decided he is indeed Supreme Lord. All they know at the point of conversion is that Jesus is powerful enough to deal with their problems. (1979)

During his childhood years, Yehia remembers an older American Christian woman who made sure he got to school safely each morning. She later befriended his family and helped out during several times of need. Yehia loved her like a mother. Later in life when he became very disillusioned with Islam while studying to become an Imam, he remembered this Christian woman. Additional positive experiences with Christians led him to investigate the Bible and eventually begin to follow Christ. Like most MBBs, Yehia’s conversion was a long process with many contributing factors in the affective dimension.

3. The Silent Witness of Love and Integrity

Although this is clearly related to the affective dimension theme, I believe the compassion and love from Kingdom workers to Muslims is significant enough to warrant inclusion. The godly lifestyle of Christians and the experience of genuine love significantly and positively change Muslims’ attitudes towards Christ and Biblical faith. This is perhaps true in every context, but even more so for Muslims. The lingering effects of the Crusades coupled with the war on terror create the lasting impression that “Christians” are imperialists who wish to destroy Muslims. Kingdom workers simply living lives of integrity and compassion among Muslims have done much to dispel this harmful misconception.

In Dudley Woodberry’s massive global survey of MBB conversions, the lifestyle of Christians was the most important

factor facilitating conversion (Woodberry 2006). Like the stories of Qaasid and Yehia, I have not personally found a MBB who did not have a positive interaction with “Christianity” and Christian believers somewhere in the past.

4. A Patron-Client View of the Gospel

Like Yehia, Hanaan grew up very disillusioned with the hypocritical lifestyles of some fundamentalist Muslims she knew. One night a man in a brilliant white robe holding a staff appeared in her dream and told her that she was correct to doubt Islam. The next morning she described this event to her loving and devout Muslim father, who told her the person from her dream was Isa al Masih. Eagerly she went to the Qur’an and read everything she could about Jesus, who continued to show up in dreams for many years at key moments in her life.

According to her testimony, Hanaan joined herself to Jesus long before she met another Christ follower who studied the Bible with her for the first time. Like Hanaan, MBBs appear to bond themselves to Christ in a patron–client relationship as they initially begin to understand his lordship and even the atonement.

A biblical, missiological view of conversion must take into account the social context of the first century Mediterranean world (Asia and Africa are much closer to this worldview today than is the West). Relationships were conceptualized around the concept of “patronage,” where “they saw their gods as patrons and benefactors and their own conduct as clients” (Crook 2004, 254).

In this hierarchical society, where the status of the person you follow and

to whom you give allegiance is very important, the position of Isa becomes the focus of reconsideration. (Edwards 2013, 84)

MBBs relate to Christ in ways that are difficult for Westerners to understand, but make sense in their worldview. Yet this understanding of salvation is commonly found in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Christ is our ultimate Patron (the Divine Lord), we must be found “in him” and part of the new people of God.

5. Conversion in Layers of Identity

Rebecca Lewis argues that we should

free people groups from the counter-productive burden of socioreligious conversion and the constraints of affiliation with the term ‘Christianity’ and with various religious institutions and traditions of Christendom. (2007, 76)

Georges Housney disagrees,

You cannot claim to be a follower of Christ and deny being a Christian. This would be dishonest, confusing and not true. To follow Christ is to be a Christian. (2011)

This debate concerning socioreligious identity often seems to be more based around semantics and one’s view of “Islam” than actual biblical exegesis and theology.

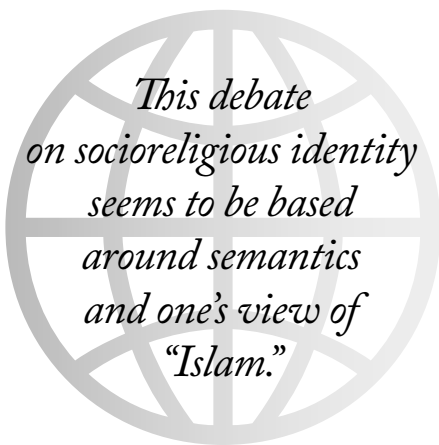
Muslims who consider embracing biblical faith and MBBs themselves often feel torn between the ill-defined, binary categories of “Muslim” and “Christian.” In light of this struggle, the sociological theories of identity put forth by Kathryn Kraft,¹⁰ Jens Barnett, and Tim Green in *Longing for Community* (Greenlee 2013) have the potential to significantly reduce the polarization of views in the current debates. (These theories are summarized in Greenlee’s article in this issue). Identity is far more complex and dynamic than is unfortunately portrayed by many evangelicals on all sides of the issues. Layers of identity abound for people in every culture,

and belonging to multiple traditions is a reality in today’s globalized world.

As the research seems to show, identity is multidimensional, the titles “Christian” and “Muslim” mean various things to different audiences, and new MBBs, especially in unreached contexts, inevitably need time and space for their identities to transition. Dissatisfaction with and rejection of “creedal” Islam precedes most MBB conversions, but many of these same MBBs remain in “cultural” Islam.¹¹

6. The Congruence of Cultural Values

Continuing with the sociological discussion of conversion, some missiologists



argue that a paradigm shift is happening in church planting and evangelism strategies (Gray and Gray 2010a). Previous strategies argued for an *aggregate* (or “attractional”) model of church planting, where new believers/seekers who do not previously know each other are gathered together in fellowship. In contrast, the *social network*¹² (or “transformational”) model seeks to implant the gospel into a group of people who have previously formed social relationships, and thus not try to introduce unknown believers to one another. “The ‘church’ meets when the normal social network gathers” (Gray and Gray 2010b, 278).

This idea of spreading the gospel through social networks is very similar

to the “homogeneous unit principle” (HUP) posited by Donald McGavran, who famously stated that “People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers” (1990 [1970], 163). Arguing against this as a strategy for mission, René Padilla declared that the HUP is not only counter to the example of Jesus and the apostles who intentionally worked with an aggregate model, but also fails to take the ministry of reconciliation seriously and has “no biblical foundation” (1982, 29).

However, since research shows that

facilitating the movement of the gospel through natural social networks [contra *the aggregate model*] seems to be correlated with planting more churches, (Gray et al. 2010, 94)

it seems best to think of *social network theory* as a provisional, temporary strategy until there are more robust forms of church that reach the biblical goal of the so-called “Ephesian moment” (Walls 2002), where people of different caste, race, gender, etc., who have little in common except Jesus are reconciled together in fellowship through him. In any case, a key theme in factors that influence conversion is the congruence of cultural values between the MBB and the values of the witnessing community.¹³

7. The Differing Female Experience

Unfortunately, most studies on conversion haven’t considered the importance of gender (Gooren 2007, 348). It does appear, however, that there are in fact significant differences. North African women MBBs in Evelyne Reisacher’s research felt that gender-related issues in the Muslim world created more barriers to conversion for women than men, but they also felt their faith was more resilient than male MBBs because of the price women paid to follow Jesus (2006, 110–13). Women are more concerned about how their conversion will affect their social

relationships, particularly with males in their immediate families. A positive factor influencing conversion was the honor Jesus gave to women. “Women were attracted to Jesus because they were touched by the way he dealt with women in the Gospels” (2006, 113).

Similarly, Miriam Adeney notes that Muslim women come to faith for many of the same reasons as men, but it is the “awareness of Jesus’ affirmation of women” that strongly influences women (2005, 287).¹⁴ Adeney also notes the significance of familial social relationships in conversion. In a study of South Asian Muslim women who were coming to faith, Mary McVicker found that while theology is important, “participation and experience are essential” (2006, 136). Strähler found that female MBBs in Kenya were shaped more by affective elements than were the males (2010, 67).

Thus, female conversions are strongly influenced by an awareness of Jesus’ treatment of women in the gospels, include greater degrees of practical and experiential factors, and are complicated by the role of males in their immediate families. Hanaan’s father, a devout Muslim and loving man, eventually became convinced that Jesus was revealing himself to Hanaan. He gave her the intellectual freedom she felt she needed to investigate further, although he never followed Christ himself. As with other female MBBs, Hanaan’s experience would be dramatically different had her father persecuted her curiosity of Jesus, rather than fostered it.

8. The Beauty of the Written and Resurrected Word

The hearing or study of the gospel in the Bible and a desire for an intimate relationship with God in Christ is central in MBB conversions. MBBs are fascinated by the beauty of Jesus’ personality and the cross. Once I watched the *JESUS* Film with a Muslim seeker. Afterward, when I asked for his thoughts, he replied, “Well, Jesus is everything.”

The researchable conversion factors may not represent the mass movements of Muslims into the kingdom that we are all hoping for.

Anthony Greenham’s study of Palestinian MBBs found that although conversion is influenced through various means, “the person of Jesus is always central” (2004, 227). Commenting on the centrality of Christ in conversion, Abraham Durán also speaks of attraction to the “beauty of Jesus” as a key evangelistic factor (2006, 274). In John Marie Gaudeul’s study of MBB testimonies, the most prominent factor was attraction to Jesus (1999).

David Maranz studied dozens of conversion experiences of Muslims born in 33 countries and concluded that all but two included references to the importance of the Bible. He concludes, “In most, the role of the Bible or some passages of Scripture were central to conversion. How could it be otherwise?” (2006, 61). Fruitful Practices research similarly notes that “Fruitful teams use a variety of creative means to communicate Scripture... It is their primary means of sharing the gospel” (Adams, Allen, and Fish 2009, 79). James Bultema’s research in Turkey was similar: “The written Word of God surpasses other causes of conversion to Christ” (2010, 28).

Implications for Research and Ministry

The last decade of ministry to Muslims has been very exciting. David Garrison reports that more than 86 percent of all the Muslim movements to Christ in the history of Islam have occurred in the last 12 years (2013). However, the fraction of MBBs around the world in the House of Islam is still very small. It could be that the firstfruits who are embracing biblical faith are more of the “fringe” people of Muslim societies, and thus the researchable conversion factors may not represent the mass movements of

Muslims into the kingdom that we are all hoping and praying for. Therefore, each of these themes will need continued contextual research for their validity in future Jesus movements among Muslims.

In any case, one of the reasons for the interest in discovering factors that facilitate conversion is because there is an easily discernible correlation between them and mission praxis. Here are some implications for Kingdom workers in frontier settings:

1. *Conversion is a Contextual Process.* Kingdom workers are only one expendable step in the process of conversion. This should promote both humility and anticipation. God is at work long before we “show up,” but he does use us.
2. *The Prominence of the Affective Dimension.* Without denying the essential need for truth encounters, we need to prayerfully depend on the Holy Spirit to impact the Muslim heart in whatever way our friends need most. Apologetics and rational persuasion have their place, but are not as prominent with Muslim seekers as divine interventions in their lives. Praying for and with Muslims in the name of Jesus seems to be quite impactful.
3. *The Silent Witness of Love and Integrity.* Live and love like Jesus. Enough said.
4. *A Patron-Client View of the Gospel.* There is only one gospel, but it is always expressed in only one of its various forms (Keller 2008). The legal, moral guilt presentation of the gospel, while definitely biblical, has been over-emphasized by Westerners in Muslim lands. Can we begin to use the Patron-Client form? Through faith, we are joined

with the glorious Messiah in his life, death, and resurrection. He gets our loyalty (praise, glory, and honor) and we get his life in us, removing our shame and defilement. Could this be the form of the gospel that is most relevant to Muslims?

5. *Conversion in Layers of Identity.* There are twin errors I see being made in mission praxis when it comes to the identity issue. The first error is to ask Muslims who are considering embracing biblical faith to identify as “Christians.” The other error is to insist that MBBs continue to call themselves “Muslims.” Both errors over-assume the role of the Kingdom worker in local theologizing. And both errors also point MBBs to socioreligious identity, when we should instead be making sure MBBs are grounded in the Christ of the Bible.
6. *The Congruence of Cultural Values.* Contextualization is not a dirty word. It is inevitable, and we need to work hard at it. But even more so, MBBs need to contextualize as they share the gospel through their social networks. We have much to learn from MBB local theologizing.
7. *The Differing Female Experience.* In ministry to Muslim women, we should tell the specific stories of Jesus’ treatment of women in the Gospels, pray with them and for their needs, and pay attention to their relationships with males in their families.
8. *The Beauty of the Written and Resurrected Word.* Above all else, effective mission among Muslims means pointing them to Jesus and the Bible.

Summary

The recent growth of conversion factor studies reflects the exciting fact that Muslims are embracing biblical faith more so now than any time in history. The broad themes of these factors facilitating conversion have important

implications for Kingdom witness that are relevant for diverse settings. The future of conversion research can investigate these themes more closely, as we continue to learn from precious MBBs like Hanaan, Qaasid, and Yehia. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ As with other informants of my personal research included in this article, their names have been changed to protect their identities.

² I define biblical “conversion” as the phenomenon by which people are spiritually transformed by God as they repent from sin, believe in the gospel, and follow Christ as their ultimate allegiance in community with other believers, demonstrating their new life with Jesus by a radical change in their life’s direction. Even though conversion is a “dirty word” in missions (because it is associated with colonialism, extraction, culture change, and force), “we have not found any single term that conveys the richness of meaning carried by the ten letters of *conversion*” (Greenlee 2006b, 6). Furthermore, conversion is used without reservation in the literature of psychology and the social sciences. I recognize the prevalent secular usage of the word conversion, and use “embracing biblical faith” when appropriate.

In order to properly understand conversion, it must be studied and analyzed from a variety of disciplines and perspectives (Rink 2007). Greenlee and Love suggest seven lenses through which conversion must be viewed: psychology, behavior, sociology, culture, spiritual warfare, the human communicator, and God’s role. “None of these lenses gives us the full picture, but each highlights aspects filtered out or overlooked when we study conversion from other perspectives alone” (2006, 37). The various factors contributing to conversion can be analyzed through this multidisciplinary perspective, which is why missiology is perhaps the most well-rounded discipline to study conversion.

³ Other major works that preceded Greenlee were Willis (1977) and Syrjänen (1984). See also Larson (1996b).

⁴ See Garrison (2014). A distinctive of his book is that all of the 1,000 and more interviews are derived from movements of at least 1,000 baptisms and/or 100 church plants among—a Muslim people over a decade’s time.

⁵ Scot McKnight notes that while all conversions go through the extremely valuable, theoretical framework model proposed by Rambo (1993), conversions of people from

common backgrounds fall into “similar patterns” even as no two conversions are identical (McKnight and Ondrey 2008). “Conversions from similar contexts into the same group take on a rhetoric of their own. In other words, patterns can be found that provide insight” (2008, 232).

⁶ I use the term “factor” in its broadest meaning. Factors can be internal or external, supernatural or cultural, social or psychological. Other studies differ between “factors” (external forces) and “motivations” (internal reasons) (Strähler 2009; Maurer 1999). Reinhold Strähler notes that “in a way one can say that the *reasons* are the main motives for conversion, while *factors* are the influences that, in one way or another, encourage or push the person on his/her journey to Christ” (Strähler 2010, 66, *emphasis mine*). For the purposes of this article, reasons and motives will be a subset of the various kinds of factors that influence conversion.

⁷ According to Paul Hiebert, at the heart of conversion must be a worldview transformation. There are three dimensions of worldview: (1) cognitive, (2) affective, and (3) evaluative. Consequently, conversion should involve a change in beliefs, feelings, and judgments. “There must be some minimum knowledge of Jesus and a desire to follow him. These must lead to a decision to follow him. Conversion is not simply holding an orthodox knowledge of Christ, or a love of him, but choosing to follow him” (2006, 29).

⁸ The influence of dreams in MBB conversions to Christ has been well-documented, with many popular level books being published such as *Dreams and Visions: Is Jesus Awakening the Muslim World?* (Doyle 2012). Tom Doyle postulates that “about one out of every three Muslim-background believers has had a dream or vision prior to their salvation experience” (2012, 127), although he does not cite the study he refers to. Dreams may be more spiritually significant for (non-Western) Muslims because their worldview is more attune to the supernatural world than the Western worldview (Musk 1988; cf. K. 2005). Greenlee notes that dreams tend to occur at the introductory stage of the conversion process, not at a later stage of confirmation or validation of the decision to convert (1996, 129). Anthony Greenham found that dreams among Palestinian converts did occur, but were not perceived to be significant factors by the MBBs who had them (2004, 174). It might be possible that MBBs’ dreams may be more significant to Western Christians than they are to MBBs themselves. Nevertheless,

dreams are an important psychological and supernatural factor to consider in research. Doyle concludes, "Dreams alone aren't enough. No one goes to sleep a Muslim and wakes up a Christian. Jesus' personal appearances are an incredible work, but he still uses godly people to share the gospel that brings salvation" (2012, 241).

⁹ Paul Hiebert was a pioneer in introducing the importance of the affective dimension. See Hiebert (1986).

¹⁰ See also *Searching for Heaven in a Real World: A Sociological Discussion of Conversion in the Arab World* (Kraft 2012).

¹¹ This section was adapted from my review of "Longing for Community" in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, July 2013.

¹² The social network theory should not be confused with "social networking" in cyberspace.

¹³ Greenlee's "Theory of Congruence of Cultural Values," reads, in part, that "[a]n individual tends to be drawn to Christianity by elements in the Christian faith and in the nature of the sources of witness that are congruent with that individual's personal values" (2006a, 55).

¹⁴ In a study of apostasy done by Muslims, the low status of women in Islam was a major factor influencing conversion out of Islam (Khalil and Bilici 2007).

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Heart Allegiance and Negotiated Identity

by *Eric Adams*

Abdullah decided to follow Jesus as Lord. His wife, father, mother, neighbours and friends were angry with him and treated him as an apostate, threatening to kill him if he continued in this way. Under extreme pressure he fled to a European country to find freedom to live as a Christian.

We've all heard similar stories. And for the average Western Christian, the ending to this one represents a reasonable solution to a tense situation. What's more, we value what we view as the bottom line: a believer has been given freedom to worship Jesus. Yet associated with this sequence of events are some tragic, often overlooked, consequences:

- The new believer is now perceived as a traitor, having betrayed his faith and people.
- He has been ripped out of his network of family and friends, essentially committing cultural and social suicide in order to follow Jesus.
- The best, culturally informed witness to Jesus has been removed from that Muslim community.
- The wrong messages are being reinforced, namely that becoming a Christian means joining a foreign culture (government) or that foreigners are luring the community's loved ones from the true *Ummah* (Muslim community of faith).
- Sadder still, while the foreign church receiving this believer is delighted to have a "Muslim convert" (and will perhaps even give him the opportunity to share his testimony repeatedly), the "convert" will rarely find wholehearted acceptance in that church. More likely, he will experience the same suspicion and mistrust on the part of the Christian community as Paul did after his conversion on the Damascus road.

Many believers go through this *extraction experience* for the sake of their new faith. A few make a successful transition and establish a new life in a new culture with a new identity. Unfortunately, many more suffer the loss of family, cultural identity and community, an experience that sometimes leaves deep psychological wounds.

Is extraction the only option for new believers from a Muslim culture? Are there ways for new believers to integrate their identity in Christ within their cultural and family identities, even in Muslim societies?

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A Three-Tier Model of Identity

There are models that convince me that extraction does not have to be the only option, and is even unnecessary in many cases. I have seen believers from Muslim backgrounds remain within their communities and retain their cultural identities while giving vibrant testimony to their new found faith in Jesus to those around them.

I recently came across a framework that defines the issues that Muslims struggle with as they come to faith in Christ. This three-tier model of identity is based on the parallel research of Tim Green¹ and Kathryn Kraft.² I will give a synopsis of this model, and describe some ways that I have observed it being lived out.

According to Green and Kraft, each person's identity can be viewed on three levels:

- *Core Identity:* This includes a person's heart level beliefs, values and worldview, all of which give meaning and direction to life. Put another way, it encompasses a person's "heart allegiances," where she seeks her worth, where she puts her trust, where she spends her time and resources. These can include family, career, status or wealth; or on a darker side, addictions or other "idols" she serves.
- *Social Identity:* This includes the many roles lived out within the various social circles to which a person belongs. He is a husband, a son, an uncle; he is a soldier, accountant, teacher, carpenter, pilot, student, etc. Each person also fills or is known by informal roles in his community: elder, gossip, good neighbour, confidant, volunteer, delinquent, etc.
- *Collective Identity:* This encompasses the labels given by groups with whom the person is associated. Commonly the person does not have an option not to bear the label. For example one might be Asian, White, British, Muslim, Pashtun, or from a certain class or

segment of society, etc. One can be born into such labels, or receive them at different stages in life, but once received they do not usually change quickly over the course of a lifetime. For example, a Korean born in America who maintains strong ties to a Korean community, or prefers a Korean lifestyle, can be perceived and labelled as Korean all their life despite their American citizenship.

What insights does this model give us for understanding the choices Muslims have when they choose to follow Jesus as Lord?

I recently attended an event that featured a diverse, multinational panel



of people who were all born into a Muslim family and had chosen to follow Jesus. To a person, all of them had shifted their core identity to that of someone who follows Jesus as Lord. They shared how the change in heart allegiance compelled them to seek changes in their social and collective identities. Their stories differed greatly. Some had made tragic choices, while others had successfully negotiated these transitions.

It has become increasingly common for Muslims to be drawn to the Jesus of the Bible, often through a combination of power encounters, truth encounters,³ and knowing a Christian who lives out the teachings of Jesus in a compelling

way.⁴ These experiences often precipitate a crisis of conviction through which such Muslims shift their core allegiance to Jesus and begin to follow him as Lord. Sometimes this is a quick process, other times it takes years to develop the courage and resolve to act on this deep core identity shift.

New believers commonly change their convictions at a core identity level to be consistent with their faith in Jesus, while their social and collective identities remain the same. As a result, they experience great psychological and relational dissonance. This dissonance pushes them to search for resolution.

One option is to hide their new allegiance from friends, family and community. However, failure to acknowledge this shift in core identity usually causes deep internal crisis. This inner turmoil can lead some to deny Jesus and turn away from him, choosing instead to "become Muslim" again.

Another option for those seeking resolution is to reject their social and collective identities. When they remain at home this rejection may manifest itself in various ways. They may call themselves a "Christian," indicating that their allegiance is with a community other than that of their family or close friends. They may stop taking part in community activities (religious or cultural) or start new behaviours (how they worship or dress or eat). Naturally, their family and friends will be confused or concerned for them. Regarded as "infidels," they will suffer social ostracism and persecution

Others who reject their social and collective identities may choose to flee to a community that allows them to maintain their new core identity. This results in the extraction profile illustrated in the story at the beginning of this article. While such a choice can result in deep psychological scarring due to the losses involved, some are able to make a home in this new identity and culture. As noted above,

many find this choice too traumatic and decide to return to their former culture, renounce their faith, and become Muslim again. A few are even able to mature in their new faith in a foreign culture, gain a vision to reach their own people, and then return to their home country to attempt to rebuild bridges to family and friends, while continuing in their faith and identity in Jesus.

Today there is a renewed interest in exploring options for new believers to integrate a core identity of allegiance to Jesus within their existing social and collective identities. What follows are just a few illustrative case studies of how individuals have successfully communicated their new conviction of faith within their existing relational networks.

Negotiating Identity: Some Examples

Let us consider a few true stories (with names changed due to security concerns) of some difficult but ultimately more satisfying journeys.

A Common Pilgrimage

Foreign Christians living in a Muslim community meet Muslims who want to know more about Jesus. Rather than work with these seekers individually, in isolation from their natural networks of family and friendships, the foreigners ask them to draw in their family and friends who might also be interested in knowing about Jesus so they can explore who Jesus is together. Gospel truths are discussed and processed within these natural relational networks and they begin to transform this subset of the community.⁵ As the members of this network decide to submit to Jesus and enter the Kingdom of God together, they maintain their pre-existing trust relationships. Even as they have been on their journey toward faith in Jesus, they have already begun to function as a community and to develop a new sense of identity on several levels.⁶

In this example, seekers share their exploratory journey towards Jesus

There's a renewed interest in exploring how new believers can integrate a core identity of allegiance to Jesus within their existing collective identities.

together and process their reactions to the claims and person of Jesus as a community. When, as a group, they decide to shift allegiance to Jesus, their relationships and community are retained, but their social identity with each other changes. With trust relationships intact, they follow Jesus together and function, in essence, as an *oikos*, or house-church. Many non-believing friends and family eventually accept them as "followers of Jesus" (largely because of the witness of their lives) and do not reject them as infidels. From the strength of community and demonstration of redeemed relationships among themselves, they attract others from the surrounding Muslim society to also follow Jesus.

When a new believer is encouraged to live out his changed heart within his network of family and friends, the transformation process, while it may seem slow, can be long-lasting and its impact profound, as in the next account.

Salt and Light

Rauf, after learning about Jesus and developing a desire to follow him, became friends with several belonging to an Isai Jamaat (fellowship of Jesus' people). The new friends asked him to not seek to leave town, but to return to his family and be "salt and light" to them in order to demonstrate his transformed heart and win them too to faith in Jesus. This he did faithfully. By God's grace, after a few years, first his brother, then his sister, and then his parents also embraced Jesus. They chose to all be baptized at one time, and would meet with other believing families and friendship groups nearby. This community of networked families is able to withstand persecution and even thrive in the midst of it. In fact, their perseverance has become a significant witness to the surrounding Muslim community.⁷

In this example (in which foreigners played no part), the new believer was encouraged to communicate with family his new allegiance to Jesus through serving them, not through aggressive apologetics. Although he was tempted to flee his situation, he continued within his relational networks and found many opportunities to demonstrate Christ-like living through forgiving, serving, and becoming a better husband/son/brother. By serving them he both gained a hearing and negotiated a new social identity.

Over time networked families and friendship groups of Jesus followers become more and more visible in a culture. The surrounding society recognizes the distinctives of this sub-group and often labels them as something different from a "normal" Muslim (e.g., those "Isa [Jesus] followers," as in Acts 11:26). Even with this label they are often allowed to co-exist within the larger Muslim community because they have retained a local cultural identity, are known and accepted, and often are even respected as moral and godly people.

Faith in the Fire

Often severe persecution acts as a pressure-cooker, forcing the believer to come to terms with identity issues, as in the following account.

Aisha told her family of her growing interest in and subsequent trust in Jesus. Her sister also wanted to believe, but her teenage son, during a bout of rebelliousness, reported his own mother to the authorities. Although he thought they would just scold and release her, she was thrown into prison, tortured, beaten, and pressured over many months to recant her faith. She later reported, "God was right beside me, giving me comfort and strength, even when I thought I might die from how they

were treating me.” She emerged with her faith deepened, conscious that she had not been alone in the midst of the suffering. Back at home, she now receives grudging respect from her neighbours, who know that she still believes despite the government’s claim that the region remains “100% Muslim.” With this small margin of tolerance, she and her now-believing husband continue to grow spiritually, experiencing God’s continuing help despite the lack of fellowship. They delight in explaining their faith to their neighbours and friends using passages from both the Qur’an and the Bible.⁸

In this example the believer had to endure intense persecution, yet God’s presence and help in the midst of that suffering validated her faith. This resiliency to harassment and torment that came from the experience of God being with her through her ordeal was a profound witness to her husband and others. The respect she earned not only allowed her to gain a new level of social acceptance within society, but also to continue her witness to draw others into the Kingdom.

Defending the Hope Within

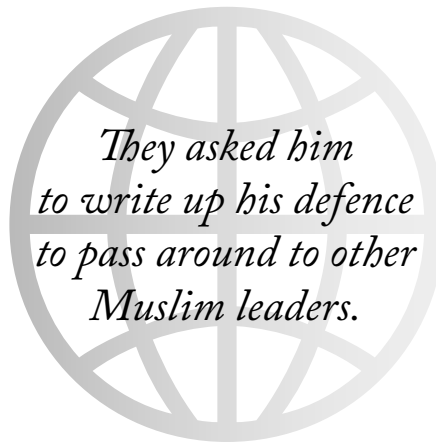
A few years ago Hassan, a middle-aged leader in his Asian community, was imprisoned for apostasy after a jealous co-worker (eager to disrupt a development project for personal gain) reported him to police as being a follower of Jesus. After months of imprisonment he was brought before a panel of Islamic leaders. He defended his allegiance to Jesus using verses from the Qur’an and the Bible in a way that demonstrated that he still valued his community—and that true Muslims should follow Jesus. At the end of his defence, the leaders concluded: “If you follow Jesus in this way, it is acceptable.” They asked him to write up his defence to pass around to other Muslim leaders.⁹

In this example the new believer, following months in prison, defended his new faith with apologetic reasoning. Through his defence the religious leaders could understand that he had not rejected his cultural identity by

following Jesus. They saw that he was no longer just a Muslim culturally, but even exhibited characteristics of godliness to which they aspired. They recognized his choice to follow Jesus as permissible within the bounds of their interpretation of religion. Their acceptance of his decision in turn allowed him the space to negotiate an acceptable social identity within his family and community, thus paving the way for others to believe in the same way.

Collective Identity

In these examples and many others that could be cited, the collective identity (“Muslim” label) remains in place by default. In societies where being “Muslim” is defined more by



one’s identification with a cultural way of life (by virtue of being a citizen of that society) than by a strict and narrow theological (e.g., Islamist) narrative, many committed new followers of Jesus have established a new social identity acceptable to their local Muslim community and remain vibrant witnesses of their newfound allegiance to Jesus. Judgment is often suspended as to whether they are still “Muslim,” (in the sense of still belonging to the society), while their transformed lives earn them a hearing.

Many believers who find themselves in this position greatly prefer this sequence of events. They believe that if they are given the label “Christian” (usually perceived as a negative, even

political, label in Muslim societies), they will forfeit the freedom to share widely the hope within them, and their testimony will be marginalized or rejected outright.¹⁰

However, because the identity of these groups is distinctive—their allegiance to Jesus forces a divergence away from a traditional Muslim identity, just as Paul’s allegiance to Jesus caused him to increasingly move away from a traditional Jewish identity—over time they are often given new labels by the Muslim community, such as “followers of Jesus.”

Within the “pale of Islam” exists a mystical group, the Sufis, who practice an Islam of a very different kind. While many strict orthodox Muslims regard them as heretics, most Muslims accept Sufis as members of the Muslim community because of this group’s values and deeply held spiritual beliefs. Jesus followers who continue to retain a collective “Muslim” identity of some kind may, like the Sufis, one day be able to maintain a cultural position within the pale of Islam, even as their new *collective identity* is tied to the person of Jesus.

Developing a Stable Collective Identity

Research based on surveys, discussions and interviews from a 2007 consultation on fruitful practices for work among Muslims¹¹ has discerned an interesting pattern. In places where hostility to the gospel and persecution of believers is most intense, believers choose to gather as small house churches of 4-30 members. Even as they establish a social identity with like-minded followers of Jesus, they stay small in number to avoid much of the attention of those who would persecute them.

However, as these small house groups begin to multiply and network together, they gain both strength in numbers and a more pronounced identity as a community. Once they reach a critical

mass where they are too large to ignore or intimidate by persecution, they take on a more visible corporate presence, negotiating a new collective identity within society.

This collective identity is forged in part by their efforts to be salt and light at the community level, doing good in the society around them and demonstrating that they are exemplary citizens, fathers, mothers, children and families. They use community events such as weddings, festivals and funerals as opportunities for witness. They challenge unjust laws in the courts and press for the rights of the oppressed. In several countries new believers have sparked debates as to whether their traditional cultural identity requires that a citizen be Muslim.

In short, these emerging faith communities are negotiating new labels, as necessary, for their collective identity within their societies, resulting in increasing acceptance and roles of influence within these societies.

A Biblical Pattern

We can observe a similar pattern in the New Testament book of Acts. The early church was small, caught between the Jewish and Roman cultures. Because they were fully committed to Jesus as Lord they found that they could no longer fully identify with either culture. A small group of Jesus' followers and disciples saw the power of this wholehearted allegiance to draw family, friends and eventually many thousands into their community. As these diverse communities banded together, they began to be recognized as a distinct group, and were labelled "the Way" or derided as "little Christs," or *Christians*. These fellowships of faith became established in the Roman Empire and, through their obedience of faith, God used them to take the gospel to other cultures, repeating this pattern over and over again throughout redemptive history until this day.

If we can empower them through the Word and trust that God can reveal the wise path to them, God can transform their cultures and societies.

After his conversion on the Damascus road, the Apostle Paul, former zealous persecutor of the followers of Jesus in his day, was shunned and mistrusted by the small community of Christians; in fact, we lose sight of Paul for fourteen years. While Paul was living in Tarsus, Barnabas was used by the Holy Spirit to seek him out and draw him into active work—taking the gospel to the Gentiles. Because of Barnabas (the "son of encouragement"), the world was changed.

Similarly, we need to be like Barnabas on behalf of those in the Muslim world whose heart allegiance belongs to Jesus. We need to understand how to help these believers negotiate their new allegiance within their social and collective identities in healthy, effective ways. If we can learn to support them to do this successfully—not prescribing or directing how they should do this, but empowering them through the Word and by our trust that God can reveal the wise path to them—God can work through them to transform their cultures and societies, and the world will again be changed. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ Tim Green, "Conversion and Identity," in David Greenlee, ed., *Longing for Community: Church, Ummah, or Something in Between?* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013).

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⁷ Based on description by Mohit Gupta, *Servants in the Crucible: Findings from a Global Study on Persecution and the Implications for Sending Agencies and Sending Churches* (soon to be published manuscript, 2013).

⁸ A case study from personal experience.

⁹ This case study is from personal communication.

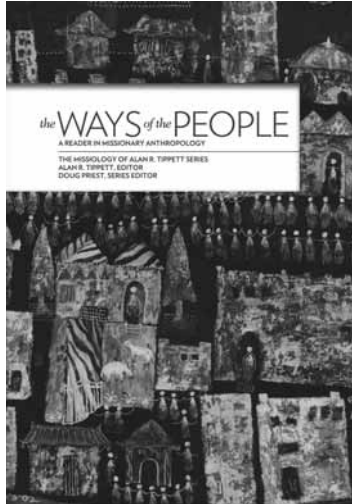
¹⁰ John Travis and J. Dudley Woodberry, "When God's Kingdom Grows Like Yeast," *Mission Frontiers*, July–August 2010.

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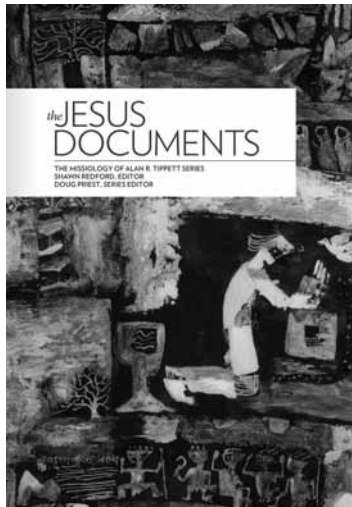
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A Jesus Movement Among Muslims: Research from Eastern Africa

by Ben Naja

Editor's note: In the following short account, the author briefly presents how a Jesus movement in eastern Africa began and then grew over a thirty-year period. He also shares the preliminary findings of an in-depth study that shows how these Muslim followers of Jesus spread their faith in evangelism, meet for fellowship, and relate to the wider Muslim community.

Sheikh Ali was a leader in a very remote rural area of eastern Africa, a man respected throughout the region. One Friday afternoon some thirty years ago, Sheikh Ali was in the mosque with many of his disciples when suddenly he heard a voice say: "You are in darkness and you lead all your people into darkness. I am *Ruh Allah*, follow me." He looked around. Where did this voice come from? It was not a human voice. Where did this light come from? It was afternoon. What about the message? According to the Qur'an, the very book he was teaching to his disciples, *Ruh Allah* (Spirit of God) was one of the titles for Jesus. Was Jesus calling him to become his disciple?

Over the next twenty-five years and to his best knowledge, Ali taught about Isa al-Masih (Jesus the Messiah). However, he did not have a Bible, he had never met a Christian, and he had never seen a church. After some twenty-five years, Jesus came to him a second time and said the exact same thing: "You are in darkness and you lead all your people into darkness. I am *Ruh Allah*, follow me." However, this time, the voice continued and said: "Send some of your disciples to the Christians so that you may learn the full truth about me." After this vision, he sent seven of his disciples to an evangelical church in a nearby town to ask for teaching.

Ted was general secretary of that church's denomination, a new role for him at the time. He had received a call to work with Muslims in the mid-seventies, and for almost thirty years he had been "pregnant" with this vision, praying and waiting for God to open the door for him to fulfill this calling. The Sheikh's seven disciples were led to a local church of Ted's denomination. The leaders of that church called Ted and said, "Some Muslims came and knocked at our door." Ted asked, "Did they come for trouble or for salvation?" "For salvation," they said. Recognizing that this was God's answer to thirty

Ben Naja has served among unreached Muslim people groups in different countries in northern, western and eastern Africa for the last 20 years. In partnership with local ministries, he has trained, facilitated and coached numerous church planting tentmakers for cross-cultural pioneer ministry in several African and Asian countries. He is currently also involved in training disciples and developing leaders in two emerging movements from a Muslim background. Together with his wife and children, he currently lives and ministers in eastern Africa. He is not a native English speaker.

years of prayer, Ted jumped into his car and rushed to that town to meet the seven disciples.

This was in 2006. Ted then began to give these seven disciples biblical teaching about Isa Al-Masih. Later, the Sheikh chose ten of his disciples and over a period of two years several expatriate workers partnered with Ted to regularly gather these ten for discipleship. After this first round of training, more than forty others were trained over another two-year period. In 2010, a similar training took place with fifty additional disciples. Many of these trainees are currently leaders of believers' groups in their respective villages.

Over the last seven years, much has happened. Many have come to faith, several hundred have been baptized, and dozens of home-based fellowships have been started. In two instances, Jesus mosques have been built and are being used for gatherings of Jesus followers. And this movement is still growing. The trainees of the discipleship gatherings are taking the gospel back to their villages where people are coming to Jesus and new fellowships are being formed.

Ted is my closest friend and partner. I meet regularly with him and the leaders of the movement for mutual learning, coaching, discipling, teaching, training, and leadership development.

Survey Results: Some Preliminary Findings

In December 2011, we conducted an in-depth survey of disciples in the rural areas. I present here some initial findings; a more thorough analysis will be forthcoming. This data is based on 322 interviews with believers from a Muslim background from 64 different villages and *ekklelesias* (fellowship groups) in several districts. I intentionally show the data with minimal commentary. [In this article, my working definition of the term *ekklelesia* is “the regular gathering of those who follow Jesus.”]

1. How long have you been following Jesus?

Less than 5 years	82%
Between 5 and 10 years	15%
More than 10 years	3%

2. Are you the only one in your family who follows Jesus?

No	65%
Yes	35%

Comment: Although the movement started around thirty years ago with a sovereign act of God, it is still growing. Most disciples have been following Jesus for less than five years. The gospel is mainly moving through family lines.

3. Why did you decide to follow Jesus?

Verses about Jesus in the Qur'an	64%
The love and witness of other followers of Jesus	57%
Some supernatural experience (dream, vision, healing, deliverance)	41%
The Bible	30%

Comment: Most disciples decided to follow Jesus through a combination of different factors, the most important factor being verses about Jesus in the Qur'an.

4. Beliefs

I believe that Jesus died on the Cross.	95%
I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.	96%
I believe that God forgives people through faith in Jesus the Messiah and his atoning death	96%
I believe that it is important to know the Bible.	98%
I turn to Jesus for the forgiveness of my sins.	99%
I am saved because of Muhammad's intercession on my behalf.	7%

Comment: The data shows that these believers clearly understand that their salvation is in Jesus alone. Although they primarily came to faith through verses in the Qur'an, they have now plainly reached a biblical understanding of Jesus and salvation. Only a tiny minority still holds to the folk Islamic belief that Muhammad's intercession can save them.

5. Identity

a. When Muslims ask me, I identify myself as follows:

A Muslim who follows Isa al-Masih	80%
A Muslim	13%
A Christian	4%
Other	3%

Conclusion

The findings in these ten areas (see *Survey Results: Some Preliminary Findings* below) open an important window on key aspects of this movement. Most striking is the high degree of faithfulness to biblical beliefs and practices and the high percentage of members who regularly meet in *ekklesia* gatherings, and who share their faith. Also remarkable is the high percentage of people in the movement who see themselves in their context as a type of Muslim and that almost two-thirds of the members feel that they are accepted as full members within the Muslim community despite the fact that they hold non-Islamic beliefs.

Sheikh Ali and many of these believers are perceived by their wider community as Muslims; however, they have joined us in the wider family of God by truly trusting in Jesus for their salvation and following him as their Lord. **IJFM**

b. Although I follow Isa al-Masih, I feel that I am still part of the Muslim community:

True	59%
Not true	41%

Comment: Although 95% or more of the disciples hold beliefs not generally accepted by the Muslim community, almost two-thirds still feel that they are part of the Ummah. When asked, most would maintain that they are Muslims, but in a qualified sense, namely, a Muslim who follows Isa al-Masih. Still 93% do identify themselves as "Muslim" in some sense of the word.

6. Practices

Participate in <i>ekklesia</i> (fellowship group) meetings	93%
Read or listen to the Injil at least once a week	88%
Of the leaders read or listen to the Injil every day	85%
Read or listen to the Qur'an every day	12%
Are baptized	81%

*Comment: Compared to the Qur'an, the Bible plays a much more prominent role in their lives. Almost all members of the movement are part of *ekklesia* gatherings, and most are baptized.*

7. Where does your fellowship meet?

In homes	78%
In a church building	11%
Other (outdoors, in the mosque, etc.)	11%

8. How many meet in your fellowship?

Less than 10 adults	63.0%
Between 10 and 20 adults	28.5%
More than 20 adults	8.5%

Comment: This is clearly a home-based movement of relatively small fellowships with generally less than 20 members per group.

9. Have you suffered persecution for your faith?

No	53%
Yes	47%

Comment: Although they are inside the Muslim community, about half of the disciples have suffered for their faith. Being part of the Muslim community has not eliminated persecution.

10. How do you share your faith with fellow Muslims?

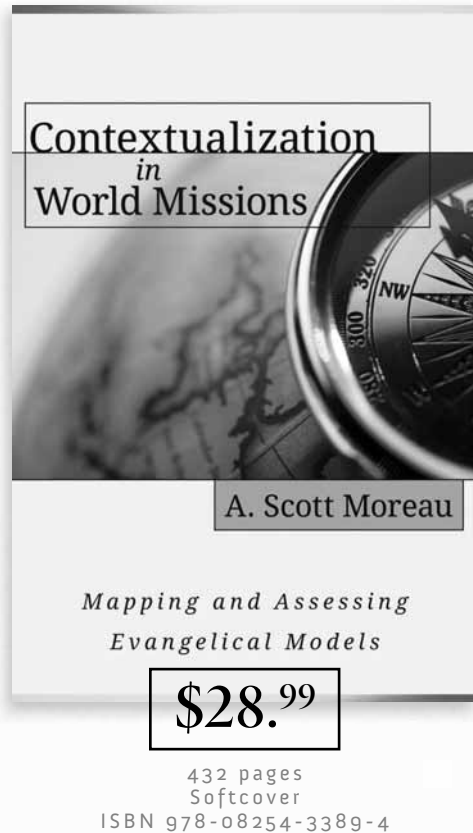
By using verses from the Qur'an	77%
By using the Bible	46%
By giving my personal testimony	30%
By praying for healing for the sick	27%
I have not shared	7%

Comment: Most disciples share their faith within their Muslim community. The Bible, the Qur'an, healing prayer and the witness of other Jesus-followers have been key elements in the growth of this movement. In most cases, a combination of several approaches is used in evangelism.

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Power and Pride: A Critical Contextual Approach to Hui Muslims in China

by *Enoch Jinsik Kim*

As one “lives and moves and has their being” among another people there develops a growing sensitivity to certain cultural themes that characterize how that people thinks, what they value and why they do what they do. This emerging sensitivity has been my experience over sixteen years with the Muslim Hui people of China, and in this article I want to explore the cultural themes I’ve become especially sensitive to among them. In my more recent research¹ I’ve isolated some cultural themes that suggest a biblical message that will speak to the Hui people and which provide the contextual stepping stones for more culturally appropriate church planting among the Hui.

The Significance of Culture Themes

People groups develop cultural themes through shared history and experiences, and express them through various forms—from art to language, from social structures to traditional events commemorating significant cultural passages (Hiebert 1985, Chapter 2). When missionaries enter a new cultural zone, they must be alert to the signs and symbols that typically express these underlying themes to discern these integrated and systematized structures of meaning, and to understand the social dynamics that undergird these themes. Insight into these cultural themes should be a primary focus because they represent a group’s history and are repeatedly practiced and confirmed in people’s lives. They provide the context for deeply rooted, familiar aspects of their lives, and inform us of the mental, spiritual and emotional identity of a people.² They move our understanding beyond mere lineage and ethnic origin and allow missionaries to competently develop a contextual insight into God’s deep, fundamental solutions to problems of pride, self esteem, and historical sentiments. Their message will be constructed on familiar cultural themes that enable the people group to both understand the gospel and to regard it as their own.

Enoch Jinsik Kim (Ph.D., Missiology) is an affiliate professor at Fuller Theological Seminary and a research associate for the Fruitful Practice Team. He has lived and worked in China, reaching Muslims for the past 16 years. With his wife Sarah H. Ko, Enoch is involved with HOPE Mission, Global Missionary Fellowship, and Frontiers. His recent publications are “A New Entrance Gate in Urban Minorities: Chinese Muslim Minority, the Hui People Case” (Missiology, 2011), and, “A New Mission Tool in Creative Access Nations: Christian Virtual Community in China’s Case” (IJFM, 27:4, 2010). He may be contacted at enochk2000@fuller.edu.

Critical Contextualization Method

From among the many contextual theories, I chose to use Paul Hiebert's critical contextualization method since it offered four clear guidelines for exegesis of both the Bible and the Hui context. Those four forms of exegesis are of the culture, Scripture, critical evaluation of past customs in light of new biblical understandings, and development of new contextual practices (1987, 109–11; 1999, 21–29).

As part of the contextualization process, I screened and collected Hui cultural symbols and signs which I interpreted as representative of their cultural themes. By analyzing the underlying meaning of those cultural expressions, I extracted the theme and clarified its meaning. Then I chose corresponding biblical terminologies and themes that addressed the same cultural meanings. The resulting message became a biblically-based cultural bridge, a new contextual message and strategy laying a foundation for contextual church planting, based on a Hui theme. In this way, the biblical message resonated with familiar, traditional, cultural themes without compromising the message or identity of either.

Who Are the Hui?

The Hui represent a population of Muslim Chinese, one of 56 ethnic groups in China. They have lived in China for about 1,300 years and have functioned in a variety of social and vocational roles, including merchants, nomads, and soldiers. The many cultural influences on the Hui originate in Central Asia and Middle Eastern regions, including Persia, Pakistan, Turkey, Mongolia and Uygur. Since the Hui mainly lived among Mongolians, Tibetans, Han Chinese, and other peoples in northwestern China, their culture, architecture, economic systems, worldview, and cultural habits reflect those cultures.³ During their more than

1,300 years in China, Hui Muslims have also developed many socio-cultural and religious sects based on the various origins of their ancestors.⁴

Paul Hattaway, whose report motivated me to undertake this research, noted, "The Hui are probably the largest people group in the world without a single known Christian fellowship group" (2002, 219). Similarly, the Joshua Project estimated that among the 12.6 million Hui, Christian believers comprise 0% of the population (2011). While I have actually had many experiences discipling and sharing the gospel with Hui believers, nevertheless, it remains that there are very few Christians among the Hui.



Cultural Theme from a Few Representative Hui Symbols

As I mentioned, the first step in contextualization is to carefully analyze a people's symbols and signs. Then, as similarities become apparent, meaning becomes more discernible. Public signs, symbols and cultural themes intersect with individual messages. For the research, I conducted interviews, reviewed research literature and drew upon my 16 years of field experience in China. Through these efforts I could extract the following six traditional Hui cultural themes, which I will summarize below: (1) *Qingzhen* (2) ethnic community (3) the restaurant and mosque (4) ceremonies and rites of

passage (5) spiritual power and sense of superiority, and (6) endogamy.

Qingzhen: Pure and True

Qingzhen [chingjun: 清真] is a Hui concept meaning "clean and true," or "pure and authentic." Beyond its symbolic meaning, *qingzhen* has been integrated into the Hui way of life in practical ways. As an example, the Hui use *qingzhen* as an adjective when referring to restaurants (*qingzhen canting*: 清真餐厅) and mosques (i.e. *qingzhen* temple: 清真寺). Likewise, they attach a small green *qingzhen* tag on house gates and even mark this term on food packaging.

Qingzhen differentiates Hui concepts and products from those of the majority and other ethnic groups. For example, when inquiring whether something is *halal* (or ritually pure), most will now ask, "Is this *Qingzhen*?" This cultural theme subtly assures people that their core identity is being preserved within their social control system. Additionally, in the larger context of the Hui's social rivalry with the majority Han population, the term is closely tied to the Hui's sense of ethnic superiority. For example, in mid-conversation, if the subject of the Han arises, a Hui might say, "Han are dirty but we are clean. They don't know the truth but we know!" So, *Qingzhen* is a complex cultural theme reflecting feelings of ethnic superiority and an assurance of community and ethnic pride.

Ethnic Community

Within the larger Hui community are sub-groups. Among these are the Sunni, who live in neighborhoods called *gedimu*, and the Sufi, who live in *menhuan*. Each of these communities also have their own religious systems and social networks within boundaries that overlap.

Outside of traditional rural communities, the population of Hui living in urban enclaves has also grown. These urban ethnic enclaves are not new, but have formed over several hundreds of years.

The ethnic community has provided a convenient system for the Hui lifestyle. Through a communal system of ethnic restaurants and markets offering pork-free ethnic foods, cultural and social necessities are readily available. Likewise, useful information, communication and reliable ethnic trade networks have grown and flourished. In the Hui community individuals can have a sense of belonging and feel united as a people, and I noticed that many of my friends who graduated from school, who had very nice job opportunities outside their communal system, actually hesitated to leave. This type of ethnic-centered behavior became obvious when conflicts between members of the Hui and the Han would erupt. A crowd would quickly gather with the two sides encouraging their own members.

The Hui have developed social control systems ranging from small-scale informal systems of praise and gossip between neighbors, to more complex social networks whether in relation to the government or independently (Shaw 1988, Chapter 7). The complexity of that control requires leaders who carry multiple roles. For instance, the Hui *ahong* is not simply a cleric, but also must serve as a schoolteacher, judge, counselor, political leader, and sometimes even a war leader (Leslie 1986).

The Restaurant and Mosque

Both ethnic restaurants and mosques carry deeper meaning among the Hui and in this sense must be considered cultural symbols. Two important functions of ethnic restaurants are to control the flow of money and to be the center of production and manufacturing. When the Hui establish a new community in a new area, a restaurant will be the first small business to open.

Food distribution closely follows cash flow. As previously mentioned, the Hui's concern with *balal* prevents them from frequenting restaurants outside of their communities. Conversely, this is not the case among the Han, who practice more liberal eating habits. One outcome of this cultural difference is cash flow.

Restaurants and mosques are not only places to eat and worship, but are fully-functioning social centers supporting their spiritual and social needs.

Among the Hui it is largely in one direction, building prosperity in the community. Therefore, their ethnic restaurants directly contribute to a reservoir of financial power for the Hui because of the community's eating habits.

As with Hui restaurants, mosques are centers for socioreligious activities and information networking. Erich W. Bethmann summarizes their function as religious and educational centers, shelters for the poor and migrants, and as philanthropic institutions where the sick may rest until they recover (1950, 98). The Hui also have educational programs, counseling, and community activities in the mosque. It is the center of their community.

People go to the mosque to meet with friends. People eat at the mosque and travelers sleep there. Community is experienced in the mosque. (Brislen 1996, 357)

According to one report, some Hui use ethnic restaurants to engage in Qur'anic studies. So, restaurants and mosques are not singularly eating places or sites reserved for specific religious activities, but are integrated, fully-functioning social centers supporting the Hui's spiritual and social needs.

Ceremonies and Rites of Passage

Like many Muslim regions around the world, Hui communities mingle religious and social activities. They do not display any interest in Han cultural ceremonies, but have developed their own rituals, commemorations, and life-cycle ceremonies. For instance, the internationally-celebrated Chinese New Year festival is officially recognized and celebrated by the Han, but not by the Hui.

As in many other cultures, Hui festivals fall into two general categories: religious ceremonies and individual rituals. Among religious ceremonies,

the Hui have developed three major social practices: Korban, the day of sacrifice, also known as *Kuerbangjie* (古尔邦节); or *zaishengjie* (宰牲祭); Ramadan, also known as *Fengzhai* (封斋); and the final day of Ramadan, *Kaizhaijie* (开斋祭).

Among individual rituals, every Hui engages in several rites of passage. For the most part, these are community activities with religious overtones. My research indicated that there are significant events to be celebrated annually in each community. Here are some examples:

- Parents invite the *ahong* (cleric) to celebrate the gift of a new baby, whose religious name is given thirty days after birth. This is called *qijingming* (起经名).
- On the fourth day of the fourth month of the baby's fourth birthday, the parents invite the *ahong* to witness the child reciting a few verses from the Qur'an. This celebration is called *yingxue* (迎学).
- At age twelve, parents invite the *ahong* and circumcise their son. They call this *geli* (割礼).
- A fourth type of ceremony is for engagements and weddings, which are both a social and religious activity.

The Hui recognize these as the four most important ceremonies in a person's life, and categorize them as *xidanaxin-gyisbi* (四大男性仪式).⁵ Of course funerals, which both the community and the family commemorate, are also part of Hui lifecycle rituals (Gladney 1998, 142–43). All these rituals and ceremonies have historically contributed to the Hui sense of belonging and ethnic pride.

Spiritual Power and Sense of Superiority

The Hui value a power-oriented religion. The Hui, especially the

Sufis, believe that *Baraka* (a spiritual blessing or force for power and enrichment) comes from the physical shrine and tomb of a saint. These enshrined tombs, called *gongbei*, hold the remains of the spiritual heroes or founders of various sects. Those seeking enhanced spiritual capability will pray in the mosque, but they will also pray at a *gongbei* because they believe the benefit is greater there, i.e., power flows more from the *gongbei* than the mosque. As traditional Islam accepted Sufism in the 17th century, some Sunni also came to be seekers of spiritual power. Additionally, some Muslims believe that religious ancestors, as well as mosques, have powers (Dillon 1996, 47–49).

Power-centered faith not only encourages the Hui to be more spiritual, but also gives them a sense that they are closer to supernatural realms and are therefore superior to the Han. Spiritual power defines strength and control over weakness as they face oppression and discrimination under the Han, and as they individually search for the means to overcome helplessness from problems arising in their daily lives (Geertz 1968, 79; Gladney 1987b, 516).

Endogamy

Most Hui prefer to marry within their ethnic boundaries.

Endogamy is one of the most important ways Hui in this community express their descent from foreign Muslim ancestry. They keep their community pure by not marrying their daughters to non-Hui and not bringing in Han women. (Gladney 1998, 249)

As in other communities, guilt, shame, logic, and gossip are well developed social control systems (Kraft 1996, Chapter 21) and the Hui use these systems to sustain their endogamic traditions (Shaw 1988, 97–102). Through endogamy, the Hui have been able to maintain their ethnic identity, sense of power and cultural pride through thousands of years.

The Dominant Cultural Theme: Power and Pride

The six significant cultural themes summarized in the previous section symbolize self-protection, unity for survival's sake, opposition to the majority, ethnic pride, power for daily survival, and a sense of belonging. However, I propose that these themes can be further abstracted into two categories: power and pride. These two concepts combine to comprise the dominant cultural theme. So, one may ask why the Hui culture has attached itself to the theme of power and pride? Of course, power and pride are basic human needs, and people rely on them in their daily lives in order to carve a place in society and to function



therein. But beyond this general need, the Hui seek power and pride in order to survive their sociocultural subjection under China's Han. Like many minority groups, their survival and cultural identity has been threatened through the years by conflicts and wars with the majority government and people.

In the early period of Hui history in China, during the Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties, the Hui maintained supportive relationships with those monarchs. Only a few small riots or highway robberies occurred in areas where the Hui settled: Yang Chow City, in Canton province (758–760), in Shansi province (1343), and in Chwan Chow City (1357–1368) (1986,

129–30). These harmonious relationships with the Han Chinese government functioned relatively well by all obvious accounts. However, during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), as the Hui population and its forces grew, conflicts increased (1986, 129–30) and the Hui and Chinese saw each other as competitors. Economic, social, and religious systems fell into conflicts (Leslie 1986, 129).

During the Qing Dynasty, several feuding sects developed conflicts with the government (1781, 84) and these sects evolved into warring factions against the rulers (Lipman 1990, 71–73). Recent political collisions include the 1975 conflict in Yunnan Province in which the Red Army shut down Hui religious activities during the nation's Cultural Revolution (Dillon 1999, 164). Over the years, continual ethnic conflict and a crisis of survival have driven the Hui to seek power.

When Muslims settled in China, they had to live among the majority Chinese Han, which the majority government counts as the only people (*minzu*: 民族) who “constitute the story of Civilization [and] Culture itself and thus represent the Chinese version of history” (Lipman 1997, xxi). Consequently, minorities were forced to assimilate into this “superior culture.” Throughout Chinese history, most minorities, including the Hui, were forced to accept *hanhua* (汉化), which means sinification, (i.e., the linguistic and/or cultural assimilation into the Chinese culture). This form of acculturation has been “one of the most common terms applied to the Hui and their relationship with the rest of the Chinese” (Dillon 1999, 4). This Han “big brother” mentality has provoked the Islamic Hui to search for internal sources of pride in opposition to the non-Islamic Han, who have tried to acculturate minority groups, including the Hui. In the past, when the pressure for sinification was strong and the Hui believed that they were

being forced to give up their identity because the government was transforming “all the people [groups] of China into Han” (Winters 1997, 39), they became rebellious and began riots (Israeli 1980, 122).

As the Chinese have proceeded into modernization, this traditional older brother dynamic has driven the Chinese government to find ways to civilize and modernize ethnic minorities (Gillett 2000, 8-14). For many generations, over thousands of years, the Hui have been shamed with the label of inferiority by the majority. To overcome this imposed identity, they have sought to establish themselves through power and pride. This effort to develop a sense of empowerment and cultural pride, formed within their inter-ethnic relations with the Han, has strengthened self-esteem among the Hui. Self-esteem, in turn, has served as a safeguard of their ethnic resources.

Biblical Concepts and Themes

To create a bridge to Hui cultural themes, I compare the specific concepts of power and pride in both Hui and biblical lexicons to learn which biblical terms share the closest meanings to the terms used today by the Hui.⁶

First, regarding the term “pride,” the Bible dips into a broad etymological family. In addition to “pride,” related terms may be “glory,” “honor,” “boasting,” and “shame.” Many words may denote negative situations, such as “arrogance” or “spiritual blindness,” while terms referring to “glory” may seem more neutral. In particular, it seems that both Hebrew terms *kabod* and *tiphà'ereh* share a similar denotation for the term “pride,” a familiar term in the Hui context. Though there are exceptions, *kabod*—translated into Greek as time (τιμη) and *doxa* (δοξα)—is usually used to refer to the “glory of God.” Since *time* generally denotes “dignity,” as associated with an office or position in society, it better aligns with the meaning of the Hui concept of “pride.”

The Bible offers a new and divine meaning to *qingzhen*—that Jesus is the core of this purity and truth.

Second, the terminology for “power,” as Colin Brown⁷ summarizes, can be divided into two categories: *exousia* (εχουσια) and *dunamis* (δυναμις). *Exousia* denotes unrestricted freedom of action, power, authority, or right of action. In contrast, *dunamis*, denotes any potential strength based on inherent physical, spiritual, or natural powers, and is exhibited in spontaneous action, powerful deeds and natural phenomena. Specifically, *exousia* denotes the power that may be displayed in legal, political, social, or moral affairs. It often means (a) official power, (b) despot, (c) the office appropriate for specific authority, or (d) office-holders and “the authorities” (Brown 1983, 606-07).

Between them, *exousia* is closer to the Hui concept of power than is *dunamis*. This is because the Hui concept of power denotes a more tangible concept found in the legal, political, and social arenas. The Hui’s search for power revolves around the political arena as they seek political power to ensure survival and ethnic identity.

Biblical Messages to the Hui

I suggest six messages from the Bible as appropriate responses to the Hui’s cultural themes to help the Hui embrace the gospel as their own. First, as an introduction to Jesus, it would be helpful to share that he was born to marginal members of society and lived among them. Rather than in the city of Jerusalem, Jesus was raised in a small town, Nazareth, and worked with people in Galilee who were oppressed and likewise marginalized (Hertig 1995; Karris 1990). Jesus’ experience mirrors the heartbreaking history of the Hui, that although they have lived in China for more than a thousand years, they are still familiar

strangers—a marginal group among the Chinese majority (Mt. 4:25, 5:3; 10:1-4, 11:19, Jn. 15:4-5).

Second, the representative symbol of the Hui’s power and pride cultural theme is *qingzhen*. By recognizing its meaning as “pure and true,” the Hui’s general sense of this concept (i.e., superiority and unity) is not lost, but the Bible offers a new and divine meaning to *qingzhen*—specifically, that Jesus is the core of this purity and truth (Jn. 14:6).

Third, Jesus is not only mighty enough to give the Hui power and prosperity to survive among the majority, but he also wants to lift the Hui up among the nations as he raised the Galileans from their plight. This is what the Hui truly want and need. They need a means to truly realize pride and power (Mt. 4:15-16).

Fourth, the Hui need to know that God has a father’s heart (Luke 15:11-32). The father’s heart is wider and deeper than that of any Hui’s, or of anyone else. God accepts the Hui with love before he judges them through religious legalism. The Hui need to know God, who can receive them unconditionally into his kingdom. Jesus wants to save the Hui from shame and recover their honor as the father recovered his prodigal son (Bailey 1973).

As a fifth point, the Hui must understand that Christ assumed the Hui’s sin and shame on the cross because he desires to give real *qingzhen* to the Hui. The antithetical message of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:3-6:18; Neyrey 1998), and the biblical lesson from Hebrews, can lead the Hui to despise shame, and learn true honor in humility, an “honorable disgrace” (DeSilva 1995). Moreover, fear of persecution from the Islamic community shall turn into absolute reward from God. If the Hui suffer persecution for

following Jesus, they can expect to receive true honor on the Day of Judgment.

And finally, the Hui need to know the divine paradox. Though they are a minority, it does not mean they are weak in Christ. As Paul experienced God's power through weakness (2 Co. 12:7–10), he confirmed that God will divinely reveal his power through the Hui's weakness. The Hui need to understand that God has a plan for them and he wants them to be strong by the power of God. Jesus saves and empowers people by the power of God, and he will do the same for the Hui.

These six contextualized cultural messages can set a foundation for church planting among the Hui.

Conclusion

After analyzing six significant symbols and signs, I believe that the Hui's major cultural theme is their high regard for power and pride, as a people and as individuals, a theme that's been nurtured through thousands of years through a variety of cultural expressions.

As one from a minority, Jesus experienced what the Hui experienced, He understands why such a theme developed, and he can sympathize with them. At the same time, Jesus recognizes this cultural distortion and wants to provide the Hui with a new message and solution to their helplessness and sense of alienation. In the gospel, there are answers that can fundamentally transform cultural themes. It is the responsibility of missionaries and local leaders to introduce the gospel by contextually building on their same tradition, thereby touching the Hui's deepest needs with new alternatives to their existing cultural themes.

I believe this cultural theme can serve as a contextual stepping stone for more culturally appropriate church planting. I hope and pray that this modest effort to bridge cultural divides will be refined further by Hui

local leaders in the Lord. My intention is that mission scholars and missionaries will embrace this initial strategy I have explored, and that this sociocultural study will serve as a resource for planting contextual churches among the Hui. **UJFM**

Endnotes

¹ This article is based upon a field survey undertaken for my Ph.D. dissertation on the Hui of China.

² Reminick 1983:13; Romanucci-Ross and De Vos 1995:13, 357.

³ Dillon 1996, 15–19; Broomhall 1966, Chapters 3–4.

⁴ Dillon 1996, 19–24; 1999, Chapters 7–9.

⁵ Data collected from my personal interview with a Hui friend in his own home (May 2005).

⁶ In addition to biblical dictionaries and encyclopedias, the interpretation of power and pride in a Muslim context is explained by Evertt W. Huffard, 1985, "Thematic Dissonance in the Muslim-Christian Encounter: A Contextualized Theology of Honor." (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary) 1985; and Dudley J. Woodberry, "Contextualization Among Muslims: Reusing Common Pillars" in *The World Among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today*, ed. Dean S. Gilliland (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing 1989).

⁷ Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan, 1983).

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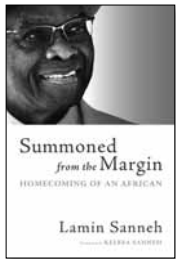
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Book Reviews

Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African, by Lamin Sanneh (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012, pp. 299)

—Reviewed by H. L. Richard

Editor's note: An earlier review of this book in IJFM 29:4 provides a more comprehensive review of its contents.



Lamin Sanneh's autobiography ushers the reader into a very different world, in fact a number of very different worlds, and into their respective views of the world. Truly entering into an alternate worldview is one of the greatest challenges (and deepest rewards) of cross-cultural service. Many cross-cultural workers never gain so much as an inkling

of resonance with the worldview(s) of the populations they work among, which is partly due to the lack of a guide to help them see and feel from alternate viewpoints. Sanneh's book is such a guide *par excellence*, and thus a priority read for all who teach and learn on cross-cultural encounter.

From growing up in a polygamous family to achieving education from among an illiterate population, to converting to Christianity without even the slightest tinge of cynicism towards his previous Islamic faith, to experiencing the West as an unprepared African, to rising in academia while remaining an outsider, to his conversion to Roman Catholicism, the whole expanse of Sanneh's life is exotic to the average reader of Christian mission. He is one of us, a devoted follower of Jesus Christ who celebrates the embrace of the gospel across multifarious cultures, yet not at all one of us in many of his experiences and perspectives. Sanneh's life story causes us to "mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice" and helps us to do so with peoples even further removed from our own experience.

This "review" is thus little more than an exhortation to read the book. I wish to present sufficient evidence of the familiar yet strange flavor of the text in order to entice readers to engage the full text, and the full text must be read to perceive all the nuances which are absent from the selective quotations that follow. Perhaps it is fitting to trace these select quotations from late in the book to early in the book, as an alteration in worldview is the end sought by this review.

Nothing is more shattering to the reader of this story of a convert from Islam who rises to great success as a Christian than this deeply ambivalent statement late in the book:

My children have asked me what bound me to Christianity after all I have gone through, and it's hard to know how to answer. A different form of the question has been asked by several Muslim friends, including inquirers who wished to join the church. They demanded to know why I converted, hoping my answer would be encouraging to them. My plea to them not to convert took them by surprise. I told them, "You must be out of your mind to contemplate such a thing." "Then why did you do it?" they pressed. To take my own medicine I rejoined: "because I was out of my mind." They looked me over, knowing that I had not lost my mind, and yet wondering what had really clinched it for me. My response to would-be converts was my clumsy way of indicating that I would not wish on anyone the exposure of conversion compounded by the ambivalence of church and Christian groups. (pp. 257-58)

Sanneh's entire story is of a person who never fit in. The "homecoming" of the subtitle and of chapter fourteen refers to entering the Roman Catholic Church, yet the quote above from chapter fifteen shows that Sanneh never actually found a home in Christianity, always remaining an alien in very fundamental ways. From a radically different cultural world, Dayanand Bharati recommends following Jesus as a Hindu rather than converting to Christianity, suggesting "Better a hostile home than a suspicious though friendly neighbour." Sanneh's experience of "ambivalence" from Christians runs throughout his book, and "suspicious though friendly" is a good commentary on his term. Whether Sanneh's Muslim "home" should be described as "hostile" is debatable as he maintained warm relationships with many Muslims.

This widely reviewed book is claimed to be more an intellectual than a personal autobiography. Sanneh's failures and finally success in marriage are barely mentioned (his son writes a striking and important foreword, but gets no space in the text), while his intellectual insights are highlighted and count as a very compelling reason to read the book.

Sanneh is a genuine voice from the new church of the global south. He suggests that true ecumenism will no longer be about doctrinal definitions, but rather multi-culturalism.

World Christianity overcame obstacles local and foreign to surge with the primal impulse of the gospel; as a source of renewal and hope, the movement should challenge us to overcome our cultural shibboleths and bring us into our true ecumenical inheritance. Christian unity is now a matter of intercultural openness more than a question of doctrinal axe-grinding. The way ahead lies in embracing that reality as a worldwide challenge. (p. 238)

But Sanneh is not optimistic about prospects in this direction, as evidenced in his constant dismay over his experience of Protestantism. "Home" churches continue to be condescending towards the newer churches of the former "mission fields."

Mission fields were once colonial domains, appropriately remote, but now they were to be considered frontiers of authentic Christianity? Many felt that to be nonsensical, and without a shred of credibility. In whatever formulation it occurred, the Christianity

They demanded to know why I converted, hoping my answer would be encouraging to them. My pleas to them not to convert took them by surprise. I told them, “You must be out of your mind to contemplate such a thing.”

of the non-Western societies was separated by too great a gulf from the Christianity of the West to amount to much theologically. Post-Western Christians forfeited the empathy of shared religion by virtue of falling short of the West’s cultural standards. The unwieldy term “Two-Thirds World” gives the illusion of the West surrendering the quantitative argument without budging necessarily on its qualitative reservations. (p. 228)

Protestantism in its missionary expression in the Islamic world is also scrutinized, with both colonial governments and local Christian developments being critiqued.

In the Muslim world Christianity was stumped by Western imperialism more than by any other force, with the accompanying Western-inspired modernization furnishing the Muslim world with tools with which to launch and maintain an anti-Christian cultural resistance strategy. (p. 167)

In the final analysis, Christianity has the status of a lower caste in Muslim lands. (p. 105)

Sanneh’s mark was primarily made in the realm of analysis of Bible translation, about which he shares this striking thought in the midst of broader discussion of bias, academic curiosity and translation.

. . . native tongues launched and accompanied the Christian movement through its history. I noted to my colleagues my surprise that Christianity seems unique in being a missionary religion that is transmitted without the language of the founder of the religion, and, furthermore, how the religion invests itself in all languages except the language of Jesus. It is as if the religion must disown the language of Jesus to be the faith Jesus taught. (p. 222)

A final lengthy quotation from the early, pre-Christian life of Sanneh will close this review of a book that needs to be deeply contemplated.

I was introduced to her [evangelical missionary Bednall] during one of her one-woman evangelistic forays at a tea event she hosted in her flat, but I couldn’t make sense of what she was saying. With a bubbly, outgoing personality, Sister Bednall pumped a Bible into my hand that I never opened — I thought no such thing existed, and here she was thinking her sunny, hugging disposition could pass off a fake as the real thing. I didn’t know if I should wash my hands for touching an unclean thing. I should state here that for penance, I kept in touch with Sister Bednall long after she retired and went to live in West Yorkshire to tend her ailing father. Until her death we maintained a faithful annual Christmas exchange of cards and gifts. In all that time Sister Bednall had no idea how strange charismatic religion was to Muslim society, and to the end she remained baffled and befuddled by the firm rejection of her message in spite of genuine affection for her. (p. 98)

And thus traditional mission work continues in the Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist worlds, grasping at straws

of hope while the reality is that audiences react warmly from deep traditions of hospitality while massive fissures in intellectual and spiritual perception leave non-Christians deeply perplexed at the strangeness of both messenger and message. Sanneh’s book doesn’t solve many problems, but it succeeds in lucidly presenting an alternate perspective that needs to be heard by Western Christians.

A Muslim Who Became a Christian: The Story of John Avetarianian (born Muhammad Shukri Efendi), Second Edition, by John Avetarianian with Richard Schafer, translated by John Bechard (Sandy, UK: AuthorsOnline, 2003, pp. 271)

—Reviewed by Duane Alexander Miller Botero

Note: This work was originally Published as Geschichte eines Mohammedaners der Christ wurde: Die Geschichte des Johannes Avetarianian (Potsdam, 1930).



I have devoted a good amount of time over the years to the topic of Christians who come from a Muslim background, and who once confidently asserted their Muslim identity. Such individuals rarely write explicit theological texts, so this means that if one wants to study such people, one must spend time with them and get to know them personally, or read what they do write. And what they do write, and have written, are usually their life stories.

Since the 1970s or so, when the number of (known) conversions from Islam to Christianity really started to increase and branch out into different places (i.e., Pakistan, India, Egypt, Iran), many such books have been published.¹ But I was quite interested to find this book of a Turkish Muslim who explicitly left the religion of his family when he turned to Christ. This original 1930 conversion narrative has been recently translated by John Bechard from the German, and to the best of my knowledge, it’s the earliest existing autobiography of a Christian from a Muslim background available in English.

Born Muhammad Shukri Efendi, as the complete title indicates, this writer and subject of the book lived from 1861 through 1919. Born into the prestigious Ottoman effendi class, Shukri was a descendent of the Prophet himself. He spent much of his early years traveling around with his odd and peripatetic father—a mystic who could not settle down.

As a follower of Jesus he was brought to a point where he could deal openly and honestly with anyone, be it one of his own people or a member of his own dervish sect, or Christians from a variety of backgrounds.

He became involved in the exotic Yologhli sect, and was a religious teacher in his town. Shukri found a New Testament in Turkish, and searched for its meaning, which he did not find on visits to the Armenian church. As he gradually came to believe in the message of Jesus, it caused no little anguish to him, and eventually, he writes, "it became clear to me that I could no longer perform the Muslim prayer rites with a clear conscience" (35). He resigned from his position.

Shukri was able to use his secretarial skills in drafting documents and official letters to make a living. Eventually he got to know some Protestant missionaries and found the fuller meaning of life and God he was looking for (though he is critical of their fear of publicly baptizing converts from Islam). He voluntarily took the name John Avetarianian: John, in recognition of John the Baptist as herald to his people, and who pointed them to Messiah; and Avetarianian because it is Armenian for *son of the Gospel* (41).

Avetarianian mastered Armenian and lived and ministered among Armenians for some time, and the rest of the book relates his lengthy and colorful missionary career. This career took him from living among Uigar people of Kashgar (in what is today west China), to Bulgaria where he saw the devastation of war first hand. His wide-ranging activities included preaching, personal evangelism, translation, apologetics and publishing. One of the main endeavors in his lifetime was to see Scripture translated into Kashgari. His recollections of living in the remote mountains of west China among the Kashgar people, translating little by little the Bible, interacting with the strange Catholic missionary living there—this is one of the most interesting parts of the book. We are finally informed, near the end of the book, that eventually his translation was printed and used in spreading the Christian message among the Kashgar people. After an adventurous and interesting life he died and was buried in Germany.

The original 1930 German-language edition was mostly written by Avetarianian, but the final section was written by his colleague and fellow missionary, Richard Schafer. But an immense amount of work has been done by John Bechard, who studied German language and literature at the University of Kansas. The book, in its second edition now, contains ten appendices, which make up a good quarter of the volume. Here are references to biblical and Qur'anic verses, recondite information on the Yologhli sect, and helpful geographical information whereby the reader can connect the 19th century map of Europe and Asia to that of today.

The book is not always easy to read, since three different hands have contributed to it extensively. Shafer's original foreword

and the translator's notes are in there, as well as his concluding reflection (Chapter 28). Then Bechard's concluding reflection (which is critical of Shafer's) is presented, And though a bit hard to follow at times, it is well worth the reading. Bechard was astute in not letting the book to end with Shafer's rather triumphalist conclusion. Shafer thought that Muslims would "be won for the gospel" and then stand with Christians in opposing the post-World War I unbelief which had "stripped our much-praised culture of its Christian character . . ." (188). In retrospect, this was naïve and clearly wrong. The places where Shukri ministered have indeed seen a growth in conversions from Islam to Christianity, but the numbers are quite modest and do not call for any sort of triumphalism. Nor is it clear that the conservative, evangelical Christianity of Shafer is triumphing over humanistic secularism in his native Germany. In fact, there is a good amount of evidence to the contrary.

Bechard, who has no qualms in acknowledging that he himself is a (presumably evangelical) Christian, is more astute in appreciating the texture and versatility of Muhammad Shukri Effendi/John Avetarianian, whom he describes as,

. . . a man from a very elite background who as a follower of Jesus was brought to a point where he could deal openly and honestly with anyone, be it one of his own people or a member of his own dervish sect, a young Jewish woman on a train, or Christians from a variety of denominations and backgrounds. (189)

I am of the opinion that this is a work of great value, even for scholars or readers who have little interest in the topic of religious conversion from Islam to Christianity. One learns a great deal about the everyday life in the Ottoman Empire and beyond, about various dervish tarikat (sects), the Balkan War, and the strategy and execution of Protestant mission during the period. If Bechard is sometimes over-zealous with detail that can slow down the pace of the story, and if the appearance of the book itself is not entirely attractive, these minor reservations should be ignored, for this is a valuable and fascinating work whose translation into English was well overdue.

Endnotes

¹ Examples would be: *I Dared to Call him Father* by Bilquis Sheikh of Pakistan (Chosen Books, 1978), *Iranian Christian* by Nasser Lotfi (Word Books, 1980), *The Torn Veil* by Gulshan Esther of Pakistan (Marshall, 1984), *Into the Light* by Stephen Masood of Pakistan (OM Publishing, 1986), *Against the Tides in the Middle East* by Mostafa of Egypt (International Evangelical Research Center, 1997), *The Unfolding Design of my World* by Iranian Anglican bishop Dehqani-Tafti (Canterbury Press, 2000), *Jumping through Fires* by Iranian migrant to the USA David Nasser (Baker, 2009), among others.

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In Others' Words

Editor's Note: In this department, we point to resources outside of the IJFM: other journals, print resources, DVDs, web sites, blogs, videos, etc. We welcome suggestions, but cannot promise to publish each one. Standard disclaimers on content apply. Due to the length of many web addresses, we sometimes give just the title of the resource, the main web address, or a suggested search phrase.

Please note that, due to production delays, we are reporting in this Spring 2013 issue on publications that took place later in the year. We again apologize in advance for such anachronisms and any inconvenience.

Over the past thirty years the *IJFM* has published in parallel with the mission periodical *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*.¹ The two journals have typically represented the two distinct streams of frontier mission and holistic concern that emerged from the Lausanne movement beginning in 1974. Four articles stretching over four recent issues of *Transformation* demonstrate the increasingly helpful intersection of missiological orientations (<http://trn.sagepub.com/content/by/year>).

Emerging Christianities, Emerging Churches

Paul Kollman's "Analyzing Emerging Christianities: Recent Insights from the Social Sciences" (October 2012, Vol 29, Nov 4, pp. 304–314) argues for the value of social and historical anthropology in understanding emerging Christianities across the globe. The author's own focus is East Africa, where Vincent Donovan's study of the Maasai movement, *Christianity Rediscovered*, became a missiological classic back in the 70s. Kollman values Donovan immensely, but he has come to some "uncomfortable conclusions" about Donovan's singular perspective on the complexity of emergent African Christianity. He appeals for a "Christianity Re-scrutinized" that would deploy a broader range of research disciplines, and gives special place to the new field called "the anthropology of Christianity." Anyone ministering in a context which is trying to discern the nature of a "frontier Christianity" will find Kollman's review an encouragement to dig deeper and move beyond our simplistic categories of "Christian."

Mathew Clark suggests that our method of researching these emerging churches will take exception to transitional practice. In his article "Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A View from the Global South." (January 2013, Vol 30, No 1, pp. 46–59) he insists we're beyond typical research methods, and that any research of an emergent ecclesiology

... will not adopt the traditional research methodology of accessing books and journals on the topic 'ecclesiology' under the discipline 'theology' or 'systematic theology.' The

expansion of Pentecostalism in the South has been relatively recent, and most of it is still finding articulation in terms of narrative and testimony rather than in literature studies. Any attempt to arrive at the theological essence of what 'ecclesia' means in the South will have to incorporate this fact into its search for sources and a relevant methodology. For this reason useful information is mainly derived using an eclectic approach in which descriptive and narrative sources play a major role.

While Clark's article focuses on the Pentecostal movement, he shapes our expectations of how a "theologically responsible understanding of the nature of being and doing church" might develop on the frontiers.

Network Theory

Anna Munster's article on "Transnational Islamic Movements" (April 2013, Vol 30, No 2) reviews the network aspect of Islamic movements, and examines their nature, structure and certain properties. There is a growing cross-pollination of social science fields on the subject of networks, and Munster helps us synthesize concepts such as social capital and the role of weak ties so that we understand just how networks carry "an underlying architecture guided by universal principles." She transcends popular notions surrounding Al Qaida and helps refine how we might imagine modern movements to Christ developing.

Paul's Idea of Ethnicity

William Campbell's article, "Differentiation and Discrimination in Paul's Ethnic Discourse" (July 2013, Vol 30, No 3, pp. 157–168) is a newer addition to this author's growing corpus regarding Paul's perspective on Christian identity and ethnic differences.² The holistic stream of mission studies represented by *Transformation* has a history of contesting ethnic difference in the church due to the unfortunate prevalence of discrimination across modern societies, but here Campbell is permitted to biblically establish how Paul maintains ethnic distinctions like Jew and Greek "in Christ." The author's biblical exegesis of the Pauline term "diastole" (distinction) unpacks the subtle nuances of discrimination and difference, and makes it very clear that Paul sees turning to Christ as a "revaluing" of ethnic identity (versus its devaluing), a realignment that happens in light of "knowing Christ." While discrimination and divisiveness are exposed as dehumanizing and in need of the redemptive power of God, ethnic distinctions will remain in redeemed form in the household of God. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ A Publication of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) and Sage Publications trn.sagepub.com.

² Campbell's book, *IJFM* review http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/27_3_PDFs/book_reviews.pdf, p157f.



Whether you're a Perspectives instructor, student, or coordinator, you can continue to explore issues raised in the course reader and study guide in greater depth in **IJFM**. For ease of reference, each **IJFM** article in the table below is tied thematically to one or more of the 15 Perspectives lessons, divided into four sections: Biblical (B), Historical (H), Cultural (C) and Strategic (S). *Disclaimer: The table below shows where the content of a given article might fit; it does not imply endorsement of a particular article by the editors of the Perspectives materials.* For sake of space, the table only includes lessons related to the articles in a given **IJFM** issue. To learn more about the Perspectives course, visit www.perspectives.org.

Related Perspectives Lesson and Section

	<i>Lesson 5: Unleashing the Gospel (B)</i>	<i>Lesson 10: How Shall They Hear? (C)</i>	<i>Lesson 11: Building Bridges of Love (C)</i>	<i>Lesson 13: Spontaneous Multiplication of Churches (S)</i>	<i>Lesson 14: Pioneer Church Planting (S)</i>
Living Out an "In Christ" Identity: Research and Reflections Related to Muslims Who Have Come to Faith in Jesus Christ David Greenlee (pp. 5–12)	X		X		X
Emerging Missiological Themes in MBB Conversion Factors Warrick Farah (pp. 13–20)	X		X		X
Heart Allegiance and Negotiated Identity Eric Adams (pp. 21–25)	X		X		X
A Jesus Movement Among Muslims: Research from Eastern Africa Ben Naja (pp. 27–29)	X		X	X	X
Power and Pride: A Critical Contextual Approach to Hui Muslims in China Enoch Jinsik Kim (pp. 31–37)	X	X	X		

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