

Not Inside, Not Outside

I well remember that moment when Abu Jaz stood and introduced his perspective on the debate surrounding “insider movements.” This East African was one of a global cohort representing MBBs from various Muslim contexts, and it was his turn to explain how his “Jesus movement” handled contextualization. Questions from the floor tried to pin him down on where he stood on the debate over remaining inside a Muslim religious culture. “We are not inside,” he said, “and we are not outside.” The silence in the room was noticeable and awkward. His refusal to surrender to an over-simplified polarity was unorthodox, but it launched our forum into more insightful exchange that afternoon.

Ever since he was interviewed by *Christianity Today* in 2013,¹ Abu Jaz has looked for an opportunity to further explain to others his identity in his own Muslim community. *IJFM* interviewed him a few months ago and made sure he got the space he needed (p. 61). His particular perspective on contextualization is only part of “bridging” a much broader divide with multiple controversies still festering, and the succeeding articles and responses (Farrokh, Waterman and Farah) are a sample of the range of complexity and possibilities of “insiderness” for Muslims who choose to follow Christ. For more of the very latest insider perspectives, readers will need to order the new 700-page *Understanding Insider Movements* (see ad p. 58), which clarifies the emerging realities among these movements across the world.

Much of the CITO discussion surrounds what it means to be “culturally inside,” and just how this plays out socially and religiously (e.g., CITO, SITO—the swash-buckling acronyms). In her ISFM 2014 address, “Why Culture Matters,” Miriam Adeney reflects on the development of anthropological theory over forty years, from its role in “recasting evangelization” at Lausanne ’74, to its new application in an age of globalization. Her presentation and Gene Daniels’ response (p. 93) together provide the cultural backdrop for how we might frame this CITO conversation. Anyone close to the controversy over insiderness knows that it can create a stultifying dichotomy. The use of new anthropological models, however, should help us make sense of the kaleidoscope of cultural realities that any mission theory (like CITO) faces today.

Religion also matters, no matter how you cut it. Street-savvy anthropology must be alert to religious consciousness. Fred Farrokh’s research in New York City (p. 69) indicates that a global “House of Islam” (*umma*) has its boundaries and sensibilities when it comes to the “theological outsiders” of a CITO movement.

Editorial *continued on p. 60*

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The *IJFM* felt it was important to let Farrokh raise this issue of Islamic sovereignty, for it shadows each setting where Muslims are turning to Christ. "Insider," CITO or Disciple-Making Movements (DMM) each must negotiate the theological tolerance of their own particular context, whether family, clan, tribe, community or state. This sovereignty is one of the reasons we can't publish openly all the statistics and field research on these Jesus movements: there is a religious power, a sense of the umma, that referees each and every Muslim context. One doesn't need to surrender to an essentialist view of Islam to admit that some sense of the umma operates in and around Muslims who are turning to Christ. So we welcome Farrokh's assertion of its veto power.

Waterman's response to Farrokh makes it clear, however, that we need to interpret these matters locally and contextually (p. 82). The Islamic umma is not monolithic, and any sound anthropology of religion should sensitize us to the local nuances of religious authority. The force of religious consciousness can vary, as can its scope across daily

life, making religious constraints anything but uniform.

But there is also a new umma arising.² The un-orchestrated cacophony of a "globalized Islam" is eroding and transforming old authority, and a traditional umma is feeling the torque of modern civilization. New Islamic voices gain power on the internet. Reactionary violence pops up all across the Islamic frontier, but paradoxically, Western secularization is creating more personal self-styled formulations of Islamic identity. We cannot assume a stasis to this umma. It's moving. It's reactive. Any veto power of the umma indicated by Farrokh is actually riding the roller coaster of globalization, but it remains formidable and real for brothers like Abu Jaz who must construct their local identity and philosophy of ministry.

ISFM 2015 hopes to continue this discussion of insiderness. This *IJFM* issue will be ready for those meetings, and Warrick Farah's model of insiderness (p. 85) would be a great place to start the discussion. We've joined with the Evangelical Missiological

Society's national meeting in Dallas on "Controversies in Christian Mission" (September 18-20). As president of this year's ISFM, I am excited to interact more on this subject with EMS members. Both editors of *Understanding Insider Movements*, John Jay Travis and Harley Talman, will be handling sessions in Dallas. Fred Farrokh will be present, as will Miriam Adeney. Leadership of the "Bridging the Divide" forum will be handling our plenary session, so this promises to be an informative and interactive experience. And we'll make sure that some of these sessions get into print in future issues of the *IJFM*.

In Him,



Brad Gill
Senior Editor, *IJFM*

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/january-february/insider-movement-islam-wheres-jesus.html?start=3>.

² See Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (Columbia Univ. Press, 2004).

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.