IJFM

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Debating Insiderness

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UNDERSTANDING
INSIDER MOVEMENTS

Understanding Insider Movements
Disciples of Jesus within Diverse
Religious Communities

For the first time in history, large
numbers of people from the world's major
non-Christian religions are following Jesus as
Lord. Surprisingly for many Western Christians,
they are choosing to do so within the religious
communities of their birth and outside of
institutional Christianity. How does this work, and
how should we respond to these movements?

This long-awaited anthology brings together
some of the best writings on the topic of
insider movements. Diverse voices explore
this phenomenon from the perspectives of
Scripture, history, theology, missiology, and the
experience and identity of insider believers.
Those who are unfamiliar with the subject will
find this book a crucial guide to a complex
conversation. Students and instructors of
mission will find it useful as a reader and
reference volume. Field workers and agencies
will discover in these chapters welcome
starting points for dialogue and clearer
communication.

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From the Editor's Desk

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.

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.

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 Cultural Insider, Theological Outsider (CITO)

A Conversation with Abu Jaz

A few months ago the IJFM *sat down with Abu Jaz on the matter of his (and his group's) identity as Muslim-background believers (MBB). In 2013, Abu Jaz was interviewed in* Christianity Today [1] *and since then he has looked for an opportunity to bring greater clarity to his philosophy of ministry — how he distinguishes the social, cultural and religious aspects of his group's Muslim context.*

IJFM: *A few years ago, at the Bridging the Divide consultation, you distinguished the identity of your MBB movement as "cultural insider, but theological outsider," and coined the term "CITO." This was your way of contextualizing your faith in a Muslim religious setting. What led you to this expression of your group identity?*

It all started about twenty years ago when Jesus came to me in a miraculous way, and I started to attend an evangelical church. I have my own Muslim cultural heritage from my childhood, which is distinct from the greater portion of our national ethnic group, so when I joined the church I encountered a real challenge. As I reflect on that experience, I see it both as a theological challenge, and a cultural challenge. An example of the theological challenge is that right from the beginning I couldn't find the name of Allah in the evangelical churches. The problem was that I didn't experience a continuity of terminology for referencing God even though I was with people from my own language group. Their Christian heritage had given them their own term for God. I was the only one from a Muslim background in the salvation class. Though we were not Arabs, in our context our Muslim identity was a combination of the national, ethnic culture and language, and our heritage is one that mixes Arabic terms into my national language, which had become our mother tongue. So it was natural for me to use the name Allah to address the Creator God. I remember my pastor saying to me, "Abu, you are not to use the name of Allah anymore, because that is the name of an idol. Allah is not the Father of Jesus!" The pastor thought he was helping me to disconnect from Islam, but unfortunately at the same time he was disconnecting me from my own knowledge of the general revelation of the concept of God—Allah, which I knew as the word for Creator God. So you see, at that time when I joined the church, I experienced a discontinuity with the way I previously knew and addressed God.

This was a real theological challenge, but it also influenced me socially, for example in the way I would greet people. This was a cultural challenge, too,

Abu Jaz is a Muslim-background believer who is presently giving leadership to evangelical churches in his region of East Africa by encouraging contextualization of the gospel in church planting and discipleship among Muslim people.

as I see it. When my pastor would ask me, "How are you?" I would say, *"Alhamdulillah"* (Praise be to God). But then he would say to me: "Abu Jaz, now you are a Christian, and do not use the Islamic name for God anymore!" The next day when he greeted me I wanted to respond the natural way, with "Alhamdulillah." Although I wanted to be polite and correct according to his advice, I couldn't use his way of greeting if I had to eliminate Allah. So instead I would greet him in a neutral and secular way saying, "I am fine." For thirty-three years I had never spoken this "Christian" way and it was so difficult for me, that I could not do it. Now I see that dropping Allah from my speech actually made my speech more secular. He told me to use the new name for God, which was the local tribal language name for God. This was introducing me to a new name and a new concept for God. It would have been better if I could have used the old name for God, but with a new biblical understanding, just like other people groups around the world continue to use their old name for God but with a new meaning when they become believers in Jesus.

IJFM: What were the theological implications as you reflect on that experience?

At this early point in my walk with Jesus, although he didn't realize it, the pastor was disconnecting me from a general revelation of God. Like I said, his intention was good in trying to disconnect me from the Islamic religion, but practically he was also disconnecting me from a knowledge of general revelation. Because when I said "Allah," I acknowledged that the supreme God is my Creator, sustainer, provider and the final judge. The term Allah doesn't only reflect my identity with Islam, but within me he was and is the creator God. So, the term Allah carries both the ideas of the Islamic religion and that of general revelation. When the pastor said "Don't use Allah," he was thinking that he could

disconnect me from Islam, but he was also disconnecting me from the theology of general revelation.

Let me say at this point that I thank God for this church, which was filled with such caring, kind and wonderful people. I will never forget the love they showed me and my wife. I often wanted to pull away because of the tension inside me, but because of their love I was able to remain. The challenge was that inside the church, I didn't find a single word, not even a single letter, that reflected my Islamic cultural background. I can't express the degree of tension that existed within me over those first few years. I was so hungry to understand and learn more about my newfound faith, that when

Our heritage mixes Arabic terms into the national language, becoming our mother tongue.

the opportunity came, I grabbed at the chance to attend a Bible College.

It was there that I started to pursue these questions more thoroughly, and discovered that throughout history there was continuity in the term used for God before and after a people come to faith. And many of those terms for God had been tied to idols. I'm very thankful to the teachers at the Bible College, and the many authors of books I read who helped me in this process. My question all those years, "Why couldn't I continue to use the name Allah?" was answered and it became clear to me. I discovered that it was a problem of tradition, that those believers did not want me to

continue with my cultural background. Since that time, some sixteen years ago, I have been working to assist the churches to contextualize their witness among Muslims, and this has borne fruit. And as I myself have continued to witness to my family, my parents, my relatives, and my village, I found that they were happy to hear and were more responsive to the message of the gospel with contextualized terminology.

IJFM: Where did this lead you?

Through our work, we found a growing need for a Bible translation, not a "Muslim-friendly" translation, but one which considers those terms that carry the theologies of general revelation. These would be terms from our mother tongue. The mother tongue of our people group is a combination of local words with certain Arabic terms, which we learn from early childhood. When I was born, Allah and other Arabic terms were already in my language, because they are part of our mother tongue. Using this indigenous terminology with biblical meanings is a more useful way to witness and teach Muslims about the new life in Jesus.

Another example was my baptism. I was the only one from a Muslim background in salvation class. They used "Christian culture" terms, and because I couldn't understand what they were teaching, my baptism was postponed three times. At the end of the class they asked, "Do you understand everything?" and I said "No." I refused to be baptized simply because I didn't understand the terms. But after some time, by God's grace, I finally was baptized. This was very difficult for me, and I didn't want anyone else from my community to have the same (difficult) experience.

IJFM: How did this lead to cultural insider and theological outsider (CITO)?

When we began successfully witnessing, discipling and church planting with a contextualized worship style, people from the outside would come and say with excitement, "Oh, this is

an insider movement." Even though I didn't know exactly what the term "IM" represented, I started using it because I thought it fit us since we were a movement within our community. It seemed for me like a practical and simple way to explain what we were doing. I even became a promoter of the term. But then I started to be rejected by those who had a better understanding of the IM concept. Finally I understood the philosophy behind some of these IM representatives and I could not agree with it. For example, we do not confess the *"shahada"* as the one, profound Islamic creed. We do not omit the filial term for the Son of God and the fatherhood of God as is done in certain "Muslim-friendly" Bible translations.

IJFM: So, you had contextualized certain terms and forms, but your group didn't fit what others called "insider"?

Yes, our movement didn't fit with IM. I realized it first when I had a chance to attend an international conference with people from around the world, focusing on working with Muslims. Most of the participants were promoting insider movements. I was there and for the first time I heard someone stand up and say, "I was a 'Christian,' but now I have become a 'Muslim.'" I was shocked that a Christian would confess the Islamic creed, the shahada, for the sake of evangelism. That was the first time I heard anything like that and it's then I discovered our group does not fit with this representation of IM.

During that week, I was asked to speak, and I told them very clearly that, "in our movement we are not saying the shahada." My statement brought me challenges and some hard exchanges over these matters. There I heard a lot of clear testimonies from IM people arguing that Muslims who start to follow Jesus should remain culturally, socially, and religiously "inside." I knew we did not fit this philosophy and it forced me to ask, "Who am I and who are the people of our movement?

*I*n urging me to drop the word "Allah" from my speech, he was disconnecting me from the general revelation of the Creator God.

Are we really insiders?" I knew we did not fit the existing mission approach toward Muslims either, which argues that Muslims who begin to follow Jesus should disconnect culturally, socially, and religiously. I call them the Outsider Movement (OMV), because they demand that Muslims who turn to Jesus come out or leave their culture and religion at the same time, and only accommodate to their new "Christian" culture and religion.

I had to really think this through. If Muslims must actually leave their religious beliefs and practices—and it was clear to me that they should—should they also leave their Muslim culture? Of course not, because their cultural context is part of their identity and it is the best point of contact to be a witness and to help them to grow in faith.

It was a critical time to figure out my own and our group's identity. Thanks be to God that I had this time to think deeply about all these issues, and finally I was able to determine that ours was a movement of "Cultural Insiders, but Theological Outsiders," which led to the abbreviation "CITO."

IJFM: Stepping back from this encounter you were able to put this CITO together?

Yes, this is the background. I was trying to deal with both the existing approach which I call OMV, which says "leave your culture, your mother tongue, your lifestyle and become culturally like us" and on the other hand, the IM approach, which says remain as you are—culturally, socially and religiously.

Our movement found a different path when we coined CITO—that is being culturally and socially insiders and at the same time fully theologically and religiously outsiders. When we are

"culturally insider," I mean we continue to use the terms and names for God according to our mother tongue. For example, we use the name Allah, and that identifies us as an insider. But when we come to the attributes and nature of Allah, we do not view Allah as before. We call Allah Father, Son and Holy Spirit, He is the father of *Isa al-Masih* (Jesus the Messiah), which makes us religiously outsiders. In the case of Jesus Christ, we call him Isa al-Masih because we are used to addressing him like that, and it makes us insiders. But we believe Isa is the Lord, the Son of Allah, and we believe he died for our sins, was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven and will come again to judge the living and the dead, which makes us religiously outsiders.

IJFM: How did this develop into a philosophy of ministry for you?

When I studied the Scriptures, particularly the book of Acts, I could see the distinction of cultural insider and theological outsider. Also in church history I found that whenever you find true disciples of Christ, you also find the same distinction. It's actually a part of the church's cultural and theological foundation. In the case of expressions like worship in the forms of dancing, music, clothing, eating, the "do's and don'ts," or the term we use for God, we should reflect the receptive culture as an insider, but we should interpret God and customs in a biblical way, which makes us an outsider. This CITO distinction will force us to examine the parameters of contextualization in our philosophy and strategy of ministry.

I like the way Dr. Rick Love categorized contextualization in the three aspects of the messenger, the message and the church. Let me put it in my own words. When I say that the messenger has to contextualize himself, it means

that he must look for opportunities in the context where he is witnessing. The greatest opportunity in every religious group is the testimony of general revelation, which means that the idea of the creator God resides in all human beings, because they are created in the image of God. And as I said before, the messenger recognizes that Muslims understand "Allah" as the bearer of general revelation. He cannot ignore this because he has the responsibility to find a starting point, that testimony of general revelation. In addition, there are also other opportunities for starting points besides general revelation to be found in the Muslims' theology.

This is the very teaching that Muslims have taken from us and given it their own image and meaning; but, just because Muslims use common terms such as Allah does not mean that we should ignore them. Yes, it is interwoven with the theology of Islam, but these are the basis of biblical theology of general revelation. Wherever you go, the name of God will carry two theologies: the theology of general revelation and the theology of their respective religion. This duality is all over, in Hinduism, in African traditional religions, and even with Paul among the Greeks. Paul saw both these aspects as he faced an opportunity in Athens and he said, "When I am with you, I found the unknown god." Paul the messenger was using the opportunity granted him by general revelation, and he knew and understood that every person is created in the image of God and has a concept, a general revelation, of God. Muslims are created in the image of God and they have a concept of God, Allah, as their Creator God, the giver and bearer of general revelation, but at the same time he is the god of their Islamic religion and bearer of Qur'anic revelation.

IJFM: But do some want to distinguish between the general revelation of God within African traditional religion and that of Islam?

Some say that with Islam this doesn't apply. You ask them, "Why?" and the

reason they give is that the background of African traditional religions is nature. They knew God from nature, but when it comes to Muslims, they do not know God from nature, but know Allah from their revealed book. The source of knowledge is different. They say that if the source of knowledge is nature, you can use that, but when it comes to Muslims their reference is a book. But I offer a challenge to that type of thinking. First of all, it is good to remember that all people are created in the image of God so that they know him as their Creator.

Both the African traditionalist and the Muslims have a preexistent belief in the existence of God, for both are created in the image of God. When

> *I see these Islamic terms as useful and an appropriate starting point for a conversation.*

people are created in the image of God, they receive general revelation, and this produces a search for God. Acts 17:27 explains that they will search for Him that they might find Him, and when people think they find him, there you have religion. So religion is their answer in their search for God. This is the knowledge of God from general revelation which is prior to the giving of special revelation. Whether they have a book or no book, God judges them by their religious practice. Both move away from God, for where there is no book there are oral traditions that carry a lot of wrong theology about God. This forms the God of their African traditional religion, the bearer of their oral tradition's

concept of God. People have religion and start worshiping because they know there is a God deserving worship. For both people from the tradition of a holy book and people from an oral tradition follow their knowledge of God.

People will often ask me if there is already a local/tribal name for God, and if so, why does the Muslim in that particular people group not use that existing tribal name. They wonder why Muslims prefer to use the name Allah from the Arabic language. You can see from their question that their reference is language, the Arabic language. My point is that it is not a linguistic issue, but it is theology! Most people who use Allah to refer to God do not know it comes from the Arabic, since it's the first and only word they know to refer to God in their mother tongue. When you ask them a question that is related to the theology of general revelation, like who created heaven and earth, or who sustains the universe, or who provides for the needs of the people, they will automatically respond with passion, "That is Allah!" Please understand that this general revelation is not sufficient for salvation, but it is sufficient for judgment (Rom. 1:18, 2:12).

IJFM: Doesn't the concern seem to be that the terms like Allah carry other meanings?

Yes, our usual concern is first the concept of general revelation. Not only this, but also there are other opportunities in Islamic teaching. Muslims have taken Christian teaching and given it Islamic meaning. But even if they misuse it, at least a portion bears a certain truth. Some of their theologies are not originally Islamic. For example, they believe that Allah created heaven and earth, and created Adam and Eve *(Hawa)* and that he gave them the command not to eat the fruit. And parts of the stories of Noah *(Nuh),* Abraham *(Ibrahim),* Joseph *(Yusuf),* Moses

(Musa), David *(Daud),* and John the Baptist *(Yahya)* are taken from the Bible and are helpful if we use and handle them properly. This is especially true of the story of Jesus Christ *(Isa al-Masih)* in the Qur'an, who was born without an earthly father, of the virgin Mary, is sinless, a miracle worker, is coming again a second time, will kill the Antichrist, and will rule as judge over the world. This is a biblical teaching, but sometimes they give it proper meaning and in some cases they don't. Some aspects are correct, but others have been given their own Islamic meaning, like that Isa did not die on the cross for our sin, or that he is not the son of Allah. But I would see these Islamic terms and concepts, although all is not really biblical, as another opportunity to share truth.

IJFM: It seems you are talking more about contextualizing the message than the actual messenger?

I would see the contextualization of the salvation message as going beyond this choice of terminology. I like to point out that in John 16:9-12 Jesus speaks of the benefits of the Holy Spirit coming and that He will convict the world of three things: sin, righteousness and judgment. About sin "because people do not believe in me," and about righteousness, "because you will not see me for I am going to the Father." But for Muslims, I like to point out that the Spirit will convict us of judgment, "because the ruler of the world has been judged." When we do mission we expect the Holy Spirit to convict in these three ways, but which one of the three do we expect to be more vital? Often with Muslims if I begin by saying that their sins will be washed by the blood of Jesus, they might think I am foolish, because of the theology of atonement of sin that they hold. From both Jesus' teaching and our own experience with Muslims we have found that they will listen attentively when we start by presenting Jesus' role on the Day of Judgment, that he will return as the sign of that

*A*nother thing really opened my eyes: the vital importance of acceptance. The evangelical community said, "We accept you as brothers."

day, and that he will kill the Antichrist and be the final ruler and judge of the whole world.

So, as a rule I have found that an emphasis on sin is more easily acceptable *after* I tell them that Jesus is the sign of the Day of Judgment. When I preach Jesus as Ruler and Judge, the one who will kill the Antichrist *(Masih ad-Dajjal),* it allows the Spirit to convict Muslims of judgment, because they are so afraid of the Day of Judgment. They more readily accept Jesus as their Savior from judgment than their Savior from sin. They accept the judgment part, and I find the conviction of sin follows automatically when they have accepted Him as a savior on the day of judgment, and the sense of righteousness as well. This is the biblical basis for expecting contextualization by the Spirit in different contexts.

IJFM: Please speak to how all this forms the church in a Muslim community.

This is where we need to reflect the CITO approach. All that I have been saying about these terms, about general revelation, and about these opportunities, should not be taken simply as a transitional bridge, but should be permanent in the church. The heavenly nature of the church has not been changed or adapted when we use these terms, but the earthly nature of the church allows us to adapt terminologies according to cultural values for local use. Truth must be expressed contextually. When a group gathers they come with Allah, with Alhamdulillah, with Isa al-Masih, with familiar food, with their cultural issues, and their own way of social interaction. This means the church becomes indigenous, it's from the land of the people, and it should reflect the cultural values of that people; otherwise, it will be foreign. At the same time, the church

must also relate to the larger body of Christ, to the rest of global believers, to Christianity, and not just to its local context. This raised for us the important question of how our church could contextualize locally and yet identify itself globally. And, again, this is where the concept of CITO is helpful to us.

IJFM: Can you give us an example of how you find your way with these two dimensions of the global church and the local Muslim context?

I'd like to answer this with a case study of how we chose to proceed with a new Bible translation for Muslims among our people. I am presently in charge of Christian and Muslim relations for the umbrella organization of the evangelical churches in our country. We felt a need for a new Bible translation, which used the terminology I have been advocating here, but the translation had to relate to this organization. I initiated the new translation because Muslims were coming to Christ who needed their own Bible. Those who come to the Lord through this contextualized approach need their own translation so the Bible will be clear and useful to them. When a Muslim turns to Christ and goes to the existing evangelical church there is a tension and a struggle. I pointed out how I had this struggle to find anything that reflects our Muslim background and culture in the existing evangelical churches. A Muslim will struggle to translate himself into the culture of the evangelical churches. So, as this Bible translation project was proceeding very well, there came a request to stop it by some in the evangelical community, because it was creating some problems. We agreed to stop the translation, and to make a long story short, we are now working together with a national committee on contextualization.

IJFM: That must have been very difficult.

Yes. Here I was in the process of trying to restore my own cultural identity as a MBB, and helping other MBBs so that a translation would be more natural for them, and this happened. Because of misrepresentation, I really felt rejected, and I wept, but God knew my reasoning behind it all, that my motivation was to reach my people. I really want to thank all those who wept and prayed for me and gave encouragement and comfort. And God really helped me and things became clear. Two things actually happened with this decision to stop the translation. First, a national committee was formed among the evangelicals to pursue contextualization. And it was this committee that took the step to develop a booklet that speaks to Muslims of the story of God from Creation to the second coming of Christ, using their own terminology and cultural concepts in a contextualized manner. Another thing that happened really opened my eyes: the vital importance of acceptance, and it's what lies behind this booklet. It's the evangelical community saying, "we accept you as brothers and sisters… we trust what God is doing among you." This approval creates a spirit of unity, something that comes automatically with acceptance. If the booklet was wrong theologically, they would not offer this booklet with their official logo on it. It tells us that behind the booklet there is theological acceptance. It's like that point in Acts 15 where the council in Jerusalem, the Jewish brothers in the church, sent a letter to the Gentile brothers and sisters to affirm their faith and establish a sense of acceptance. I thank God and our evangelical leaders for their wise decision.

IJFM: How does the booklet replace the function of a Bible translation?

When Muslims have spiritually accepted Jesus, certain issues come up immediately, like the issue of identity—who are we in relation to other Christians? When we disciple them with a Bible that uses the other term for God

from the national language, and not the term "Allah," while we use the term Allah with them, they think it is cheating. They think our use of Allah is some kind of fake. So, this booklet helps to answer this immediate concern. Another function of the booklet is these believers will have a chance to get biblical teaching in their own indigenous terminologies from their mother tongues.

There are so many questions like this that arise at this early point in the discipleship … so many, many questions.

IJFM: So the picture we have is that you have brokered Muslims coming to faith with the evangelical churches. Doesn't this cut them off socially from your community of birth?

When I use the term "culturally inside" I also mean "socially inside."
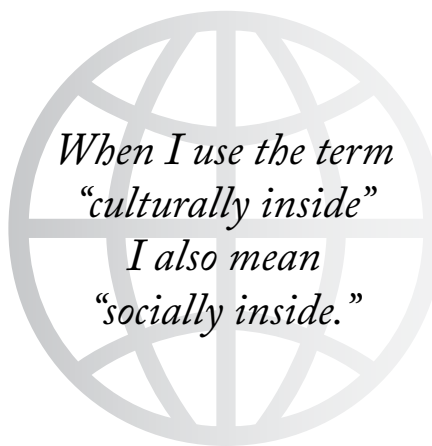
Actually, as I mentioned above, when we say we are socially inside, we are not total insiders; rather, we are both socially inside and socially outside. I am speaking here of the interaction between people, and the effort to maintain their social network. This would be their family, their friends and their significant groups in the community. There are some values and Islamic norms that they should respect, even if those issues are not necessarily fundamental to their new belief in Jesus. For the sake of belonging to the community they should maintain some customs of dress, of interaction, in attending funerals and public events, in respecting what is *hallal* and *haram*

(prohibitions). These will keep them socially attached to their communities.

IJFM: So they are still culturally and socially part of the community?

Let me clarify that when I use the term "culturally inside" I also mean "socially inside." I use them synonymously. But I don't want to indicate that by being "inside" that everything is acceptable to the unbelieving Muslim community because they are not identical in every aspect or activity. What makes them an insider is that they reflect and represent the culture they are from. That reflection should be seen in the CITO gathering of believers. It does not mean that they bring all their former culture into their new life in Christ. They develop their own CITO identity with their new social network. At the same time they may or may not preserve their old collective social network. The CITO churches will try to respect and maintain the social interaction with the Muslim community. To do this, they need to preserve the traditions that do not relate to their salvation. Though they have a social connection with the larger, unbelieving community, like the Jews in the early church, they are not identical with their culture. They are similar in customs, they are indigenous, but in the religious issues they are distinctly different. In CITO a cultural bridge is maintained for others who wish to come into the fellowship of the believers, the church.

IJFM: So they maintain a social connection even though they are theological outsiders?

Yes. But we do not do contextualization just to avoid being kicked out of the community. Actually, we see this [getting "kicked out"] as a normal part of the life in Christ. This effort at contextualization is primarily for the believer to sense and understand his true and biblical identity in Christ, and by doing so we also provide an indigenous way for Muslims who wish to come to Christ to hear the salvation message. That is a culturally comfortable and receptive context for Muslims. They

find a sense of home with familiar terminologies as they take on a new faith identity. They can maintain a cultural manner of thinking, or the way they socially greet, and can maintain the religious terminology from their non-believing Muslim community. When persecution comes, they have that solid and biblical identity in their own collective mother tongue, and this allows them to stand strong and to continue with the CITO form of church and their new identity in Christ.

IJFM: Speaking of those coming to Christ, are these MBBs expressing themselves culturally in similar fashion?

There is a wonderful unity and diversity in our country across those who are coming to faith from the Muslim community. There is a freedom for those who are ministering among Muslims in how they are witnessing, doing church planting and discipleship. We certainly do not want to bring another form of bondage. Some from a Muslim back-

*W*hen persecution comes, they have that solid, biblical identity in their own collective mother tongue—this allows them to stand strong.

ground will want to maintain certain cultural values and customs, but due to an overall freedom of expression, not all who come to faith will choose the same way regarding Islamic customs. A percentage will want to join the existing evangelical churches, and this may hinder or stop their social interaction with their [unbelieving Muslim] network. For us it is very important to consistently maintain indigenous terminologies because they are part of our mother tongue, and their usage maintains continuity with new biblical meaning. If they choose to continue to dress or look like Muslims, to a certain extent it will not hinder or stop their social interaction with their [unbelieving Muslim] network, but they must know it will not

bring them any special spiritual blessing, because it's just culture. The woman who is comfortable wearing certain dress is free to do so, but it might not carry the same religious meaning. This type of freedom allows for diversity and a healthy unity across the many Muslims coming to faith. It is what God is granting us in these days as we see a movement of Muslims now turning to Christ. **IJFM**

Endnotes

[1] Gene Daniels, "Worshiping Jesus in the Mosque: What it's like to follow Christ embedded in Muslim Culture. An Interview with a Muslim Follower of Isa," *Christianity Today,* January 14, 2013, http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/january-february/insider-movement-islam-wheres-jesus.html?start=3.

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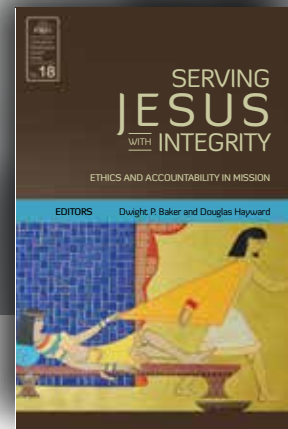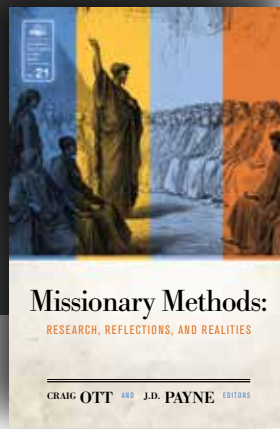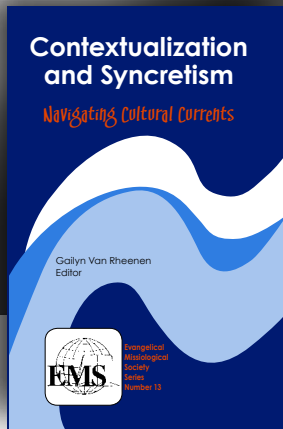
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CITO: A Bridging Conversation

Will the *Umma* Veto SITO?
Assessing the Impact of Theological Deviation on Social Acceptability in Muslim Communities

by Fred Farrokh

Fred Farrokh is a Muslim-background Christian. He is a missionary ordained by Elim Fellowship who currently serves as an International Trainer with Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples. He received a PhD in Intercultural Studies from the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary in 2014, with a dissertation on the topic of Muslim Identity. Previously, Fred served with Jesus For Muslims Network, in Metro New York, as well as with SAT-7 in the Middle East.

Editor's note: SITO stands for Social Insider/Theological Outsider and represents the author's modification of the original acronym CITO.

In the last few years, identity has emerged as a key facet of the missiological discourse regarding contextualization, insider movements, and interfaith relations in Muslim contexts. This article addresses the identity of Muslims who have come to trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In particular, I will take a look at missiological discussions regarding the important concept of "CITO," which is an acronym for believers in Christ from a Muslim background who are "cultural insiders but theological outsiders."

Three different authors have gone into print either suggesting this CITO model or critiquing it. I will be examining proposals by all three. Gene Daniels and co-author L. D. Waterman tackled this issue in their Summer 2013 piece in the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* (Daniels and Waterman 2013). The authors suggested that a reasonable outcome would be for these new believers to remain "culturally inside and theologically outside" (2013, 62). They attributed the term to "Abu Jaz," a sub-Saharan African church leader from a Muslim background, whom Daniels interviewed in 2013 for a *Christianity Today* article (see Daniels, 2013).

Daniels writes: "Thus in order to avoid syncretism, followers of Christ will be 'outside' generally accepted Islamic theology" (2013, 63). Daniels suggests that CITO believers may in fact deviate from "Islamic understandings of God, salvation, Jesus, etc." (2013, 66). Waterman adds, "I agree that CITO seems to be the best way forward (at least among options we're aware of at present" (2013, 63). A third author, Ben Naja, who researched East African movements, used similar terminology when he stated that participants in those movements pursue "a dual identity: social and cultural insider, spiritual outsider" (2013b, 156). The term CITO, therefore, appears to be fairly recent in missiological discussion.

But is CITO a viable concept? Will the *umma* (Muslim community) continue to extend cultural/social insider status to those who have become theological

outsiders? And what does it mean to be a theological outsider? A Turkish writer, Ziya Meral, himself a Muslim-background Christian, describes the plight of many Muslim-background TOs (theological outsiders), upon whom apostate status has been conferred by their communities:

> Apostates are subject to wide-ranging human rights abuses including extra-judicial killings by state-related agents or mobs; honour killings by family members; detention, imprisonment, torture, physical and psychological intimidation by security forces; the denial of access to judicial services and social services; the denial of equal employment or education opportunities; social pressure resulting in loss of housing and employment; and day-to-day discrimination and ostracism in education, finance and social activities. (2008, 6)

For these reasons Meral is more than a little skeptical that Muslims who have become theological outsiders can in actuality remain social insiders.

This missiological tension is real and poses valid questions that need answers. Those answers require more data and research, and I wish to introduce my own research as a contribution to this important discussion. I am writing from the perspective of a Muslim-background believer in Christ. I appreciate the efforts of all those who have set out to communicate the Gospel to Muslims, and I believe a closer examination of this CITO identity is a great way to begin.

In all the encouraging uptick of research on Muslim identity, I first of all want to distinguish between the terms "cultural insider" and "social insider." I then want to outline how my research focused on certain variables which I believe are central to this multi-study analysis of identity: Christology, Muhammad, self-identity, mosque attendance, and community perceptions of identity. I then will compare these variables from my own research with new field research by Ben Naja and

J. H. Prenger before offering any conclusions and future considerations

CITO or SITO?

Abu Jaz was, to my knowledge, the first to coin the term "CITO": he described the East African movement (of which he is a part) as made up of believers who are "culturally inside, theologically outside." In the 2013 *IJFM* article, Gene Daniels wisely introduces into the discussion yet a different term, the "social insider" which is a concept I think could prove helpful (Daniels and Waterman 2013, 62). However, he then links "social insider" to "cultural insider" in a way that makes the terms seem almost synonymous.

> *I want to distinguish between the terms "cultural insider" and "social insider."*
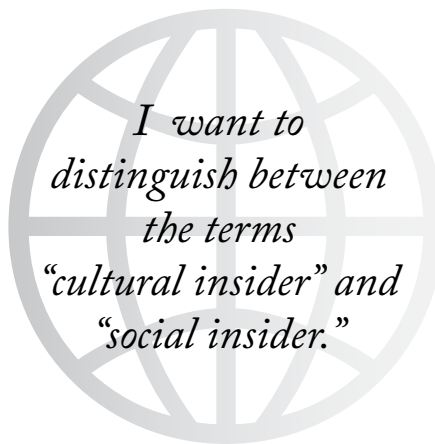
I wish to make, what I believe, is an important distinction between a cultural insider (CITO) and a social insider. Cultural insider status centers on communication issues, whereas social insider status centers on honor-shame issues. A cultural insider is able to communicate effectively in a given context, understanding at a deep level what is going on around him or her, and responding accordingly. A social insider is a person whom the community is honored to call one of its own. For Muslims coming to Christ, the issue is not whether they will be cultural outsiders; they are indigenous people and will remain cultural insiders. Rather, the question is whether their newfound faith in Christ will result

in the community (umma) imputing shame upon them, rendering them social outsiders. Neither term should be confused with the technical term describing "insider movement" believers who "remain inside their socioreligious communities, retaining their identity as members of those communities" (Lewis, *IJFM*, 2007, 24:2, 75).

Furthermore, as anyone can attest who has lived in another country, it is exceedingly difficult as a foreigner to become a cultural insider. Very few foreigners ever learn to speak a target language with the fluency and accent of someone indigenous to that culture. It is virtually impossible for an outsider to convincingly reproduce the idioms, facial expressions, gestures, thought processes, and mastery of spatial relations such that he might "pass" as indigenous. Beyond this are the external appearances that could likely expose someone as non-indigenous—even if he or she were to perfectly mimic all of the other elements of communication which God allowed every child raised in that culture to master with no apparent effort. Cross-cultural workers who have become—at least marginally—cultural insiders have earned my admiration and respect!

Likewise, in the same way that non-indigenous persons rarely acquire cultural insider status in another ethnolinguistic group, so too, do indigenous persons rarely lose it. It would take draconian efforts to bring this about, such as: a refusal to speak one's mother tongue for years; or the cultural disconnect from living for decades in a foreign land without visits home; or long stretches of time without much contact with compatriots. In a Muslim community, disowning one's culture could take the form of eating pork products in public, or of completely flaunting accepted dress mores. Short of these extreme measures, an indigenous person will most likely continue to be a cultural insider in the culture in which he or she was born and raised.

I believe what Abu Jaz is really pointing to (as referenced by Ben Naja and with clarification from Daniels) is the prospect of a person being a social insider, as compared to one who is SITO (a social insider, but theological outsider). By social insider, I mean a person who is accepted by and in good standing within the mainstream of that society. Missionaries obviously would not want to unnecessarily precipitate situations in which indigenous persons become marginalized as social outsiders. Nevertheless, it is very possible that cultural insiders might still be socially ostracized and no longer accepted as members in good standing and this might lead to the formation of their own sub-culture.

New Field Research on Muslim Identity

In order to help shed some light on these important questions, I will take a look at three recent field research studies done in Muslim contexts. The first was conducted by Ben Naja and published in *IJFM* in two parts: one in 2013 and the second in 2014 (although officially backdated to the latter part of 2013). Naja conducted his study in an East African country in December 2011 and features a control group and a primary group. The second study of field research data I will evaluate was collected by J. H. Prenger, who published his PhD dissertation in April 2014 on "Muslim Insider Christ Followers." Prenger did his field research in seven (unnamed) countries within four regions of the Muslim world. Lastly, I myself conducted field research on indigenous perspectives of Muslim identity as a part of my own July 2014 PhD dissertation. For my field research in late 2013, I interviewed forty people, all Muslims by birth, who currently reside in Metropolitan New York City, and who hail from eighteen different birth countries. Half of the interviewees were Muslims, including five Islamic scholars, and the other twenty were Muslim-background Christians.

I will highlight these studies in depth in particular because they ask questions

*I*t is very possible that cultural insiders might still be socially ostracized and no longer accepted as members in good standing.

germane to the viability of SITO.[1] I understand that space limitations make it impossible for researchers to present all the information they may glean on the field, and so I naturally welcome additional evaluations of these new sources of missiological data.

Prior to this windfall of recent studies, the only published field research on Muslim insider movements was that presented by Phil Parshall regarding "Islampur" (see Parshall 1998). This study of 72 Insider Muslim leaders indicated that "96 percent say that there are four heavenly books, ie, Torah, Zabur, Injil and Qur'an (this is standard Muslim belief)" and "66 percent say that the Qur'an is the greatest of the four books" (Parshall 1998, 406). Regarding mosque attendance, "50 per cent go to the traditional mosque on Friday," and "31 per cent go to the mosque more than once a day" (Parshall 1998, 406).

I also understand that new research may have been published very recently or in the lag time from the writing of this article (late 2014) to its eventual publication.[2] I apologize for overlooking any meritorious works in these categories. No doubt they can be addressed later as this important missiological conversation continues.

Scope of the Study

The issue of identity is reflexive—how people, individually and collectively, view themselves and how they are viewed by others. I will review the three field research projects through five questions. The first two deal more with the theological spectrum of SITO, while the final three focus on the social dynamic:

- *Christology:* What do believers in the movement believe about Jesus Christ?
- *Muhammad:* Do the new believers continue to esteem Muhammad as a

bona fide prophet (and therefore the Qur'an as a book of divine origin)?
- *Self-identity:* Do the new believers continue to identify themselves as Muslims, in the present tense?
- *Mosque Attendance:* Do the new believers continue to attend the Islamic mosque?
- *Community Perceptions of Identity:* Does their Muslim community continue to view the new believers as Muslims?

Naja's Research among East African Believers

Ben Naja undertook field research in an East African Muslim context beginning December 2011. Naja and his team conducted

> 322 interviews with believers from a Muslim background from 64 different villages and *ekklesias* (fellowship groups) in several districts. (2013a, 28)

Here are some of his results as they pertain to my five topics.

Christology: Naja reports that among his primary research group at least 95% of those who were interviewed believe that Jesus died on the Cross, that Jesus is the Son of God, and that they are forgiven through Jesus' atoning death (2013a, 28). Based on this data, the East Africans interviewed by Naja appear to be Christologically orthodox.

Muhammad: The majority of the 322 East African interviewees are TOs (theological outsiders, from an Islamic perspective) in that they reject the prophethood of Muhammad. Naja reports that only 34% of his primary research group consider Muhammad a prophet (2013b, 156). Naja also interviewed an additional 68 East African Muslim-background believers as a comparison group, and only 3% of this group affirmed the prophethood of Muhammad (2013b, 156).

Self-identity: Regarding self-identity, Naja states:

> 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….A smaller number, 41%, actually "feel" they are still part of the Muslim community. (2013a, 29)

Interestingly, the groups are referred to as *ekklesia*, which is the Koine Greek New Testament term for church. Though Naja mentions that this movement aspires to social insider status, it seems that only a minority (41%) of respondents feel they currently enjoy it.

Mosque Attendance: Regarding attendance at the Islamic mosque, Naja notes,

> Nearly 60% of the research group and more than 40% of the comparison group in these two movements never go to the mosque. (2013b, 157)

It would be interesting to know if those who attend the mosque are those who remain free from the persecutions mentioned below. Similarly, it would be illuminating to know if those who do attend the mosque attend it daily, weekly, or only during annual holidays. Another question that would be helpful would be to probe further into the views and rationales of the apparent cross-section of believers who still attend the mosque yet say they reject the prophethood of Muhammad (since Muhammad is affirmed as a prophet during the call to corporate prayer in the mosque.) However, this information did not emerge from a study that otherwise was chock-full of information.

Community Perceptions of Identity: The next question is how the wider Muslim community views these new believers. Since the movements are new, it is possible many Muslims are not aware of their existence. Indeed, Naja notes, "These informal ekklesia are 'invisible,' in that they do not actively seek public recognition…"

(2013b, 158). Nevertheless, 47% of the primary research group and 52% of the comparison group have experienced suffering for their faith in Christ (2013b, 157).

To summarize my understanding of Naja's findings, the groups in his recent field work in East Africa, as described, can be characterized as biblically orthodox and Islamic theological outsiders. They aspire to be social insiders, and 93% continue to self-identify as Muslims in some sense, yet about half are being persecuted by the Muslim community. In terms of the question posed in the title of this article, "Will the *umma* veto SITO?" more time is needed to evaluate whether the wider Muslim community

> *The majority of the insider movement leaders interviewed by Prenger are orthodox in Christology.*

will continue to confer social insider status on these believers or whether the umma will ultimately withdraw it.

Prenger's Multi-National Study of "Muslim Insider Christ Followers"

J. H. Prenger recently published a doctoral dissertation (in 2014) featuring a multi-national research that surveyed twenty-six "Muslim Insider Christ Followers" and five "alongsider" expatriate mentors. (I will focus solely on the indigenous respondents.) In his study, the indigenous interviewees are identified as members of "insider movements." Prenger's study was conducted in seven different countries within four separate regions of the Muslim world—South Asia, Central Asia, Southeast

Asia, and Africa. His research is the most expansive to date regarding the direct beliefs and practices of followers of Jesus who are part of insider movements. Dr. Prenger is to be commended for providing many direct quotes from the Muslim insider movement leaders.

Christology: The majority of the insider movement leaders interviewed by Prenger are orthodox in terms of Christology. Prenger states: "18 interviewees see Isa al Massih as divine" (2014, 113). Prenger provides direct quotes supporting their views of the divinity of Jesus. For example "Zach" (pseudonyms used throughout) from SE Asia states regarding Jesus:

> Some of the earlier prophets often spoke of the coming Messiah. He begins to take a shape in a human form. From one angle he is seen as fully man. But we also see in the theophanies and other revelations of God in the Old Testament that this figure is also seen as divine. He is 100% divine within the oneness of God. Like two faces of one coin, these are inseparable. This gives us a lot of difficulty in our context here. (2014, 114)

Their orthodoxy, however, is not unanimous and Prenger indicates this.

> Five members of insider movements see the relationship between Allah and Isa al Massih in a way that reflects a low Christology. Table 28 shows how each one of them says in their own words that Jesus is not God.

An example is "Axel" from South Asia:

> I do not believe that Isa and Allah are the same. The Isa that came to earth is not Allah. That is shirk [idolatry]. He was human and you cannot say that a human is Allah. (2014, 119)

In terms of the SITO/SITI discussion, the minority who do not affirm the divinity of Christ are much more likely to be viewed by the wider Muslim community as theological insiders than those who affirm Christ's divinity.

Muhammad: Regarding their perceptions of prophets, Prenger states that "Andy"

> was the only one who explicitly said in response to the question about prophets

in general that he believes that Mohammed was not a prophet. (2014, 85)

However, the direct quote attributed to South Asian Muslim Insider leader "Howard" seems to indicate he also rejects the prophethood of Muhammad, which would perhaps make two such indigenous leaders. Prenger provides helpful verbatim quotes on what these leaders feel about prophets, Muhammad, and the compatibility of the Qur'an and the Bible. For example, a Southeast Asian leader "Drew" conveyed his beliefs through an analogy:

> I am a university student now and Jesus is my professor, but when I was in elementary school Mohammed was my teacher, yet I don't find any of his teaching contradicting the teachings of Jesus. Jesus explains more about what Mohammed is talking about but they're not contradicting. There's nothing wrong with believing in Mohammed because it does not affect your salvation. (2014, 88)

Self-identity: My own research (below) indicates that the umma considers affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad as the indispensable variable for retaining Muslim identity. Therefore, the Insider Movement leaders interviewed by Prenger not only claim Muslim identity through the descriptor "Muslim Insider Christ Followers," but many continue to embrace Muslim identity through affirmation of the prophetic office of Muhammad.

The data presented indicate the Muslim Insider Christ Followers see themselves as Muslims. In fact, at least two of the South Asian groups identify themselves as "Completed Muslims" and urge their Muslims friends to likewise find the fulfillment of their Islamic faith in Christ. "Andy" of South Asia Region A states: "I can challenge the Muslims by saying that they are not complete Muslims if they don't believe in Jesus" (2014, 208). Similarly, in South Asia Region D, Prenger reports that "the chosen identity of insiders are Pro-Christ Muslims or completed Muslims" (2014, 210).

These Muslim insider Christ followers who attend the mosque have their own reasons and rationales for doing so, which are highly instructive.

Mosque attendance: Regarding attendance of the mosque, Prenger again provides insightful quotes which indicate a significant number of these Muslim Insider Christ Followers continue to attend the mosque. They have their own reasons and rationales for doing so, which are highly instructive.

Several of the Insider Movement leaders adapt something akin to Paul's marriage instructions in 1 Corinthians 7 in continuing mosque attendance. Prenger notes:

> [African IM leader] "Brad" explained their strategy in regard to the mosque system as continuing what you did before. If insiders attended the mosque before they came to faith in Isa, they encourage them to continue going. (2014, 213)

Prenger affirms that one of the South Asian Insider Movement leaders adheres to the same principle:

> Regarding mosque attendance,
>
> "Mitch" supports the idea that someone should not change their attendance habits after coming to faith in Isa. "He can worship in the mosque in the name of Jesus." (2014, 209)

It appears there is community pressure to attend the mosque in "Homer's" context, as he states: "Sometimes others would come to my house saying, 'You did not come to the mosque.' So you have to go" (2014, 104).

A number of the Insider Movement leaders seem eager to promote their movements from within mosques. "Monty" of Southeast Asia boldly states:

> We want to build a believer community inside the mosque. We want to build a Bible college within the Islamic boarding house. (2014, 301)

> "Axel" [of South Asia] has since left his Christian group and now operates

as a Muslim insider, with a beard. He attends the mosque and prays with his friends there. Axel said that he actually prefers praying like that over the way they pray in churches. (2014, 209)

Prenger notes a certain freedom among some Insider Movement leaders to operate freely within the mosque setting:

> "Angus" [of South Asia] reiterated that with the identity they have they can talk about Jesus with anyone. "People see us as a sect within Islam that observes all holy books and waits for the judgment day when Jesus is coming back," he said. They follow the month of Ramadan and other events on the Islamic calendar. "Arthur" [also of South Asia] is in somewhat of a different situation in that he is still very much part of the Mosque system and its leadership. He preaches from the pulpits in the mosques. (2014, 210)

In the case of one leader in South Asia Region D, the believers have withdrawn from the regular mosque and have started their own mosque:

> "Angus" referred to himself and other insiders as sheep among wolves. Their strategy regarding the mosque system is to be a Sufi-style group separate from the regular mosques, within which the scrutiny is high and the tolerance is low towards variations. 2014, 210)

Community perceptions of identity: For the most part, the umma sees the respective Muslim insiders as Muslims. "Homer," an Insider Movement leader in Africa, reports: "We worship together in the mosque but other Muslims are not aware that there is something special with us" (2014, 430). Prenger's research portrays the Muslim Insider Christ Followers as individuals who are seen by their communities in most cases as social, cultural and theological insiders. He summarizes:

Most insiders and even leaders from the second generation down are unaware of a Christian connection. Use of the Qur'an and mosque attendance is normal and insiders seek to be socially active, meeting real needs in their communities. (2014, 263)

Regarding persecution, some of the Muslim Insider Christ Followers have been persecuted by Muslims. "Tyler" of Southeast Asia even reports "many deaths" in his region at the hands of Muslims (2014, 219). Prenger notes,

Insiders face the challenge from Islam of being heretical. They have learned to respond to these challenges by starting from the Qur'an and the Hadith. (2014, 219)

Nevertheless, Prenger considers the church to be a bigger, though perhaps not lethal, threat to the Muslim Insiders:

The main ethical consideration in this study is the vulnerability of the insiders to negative exposure by traditional Christians in the same region. (2014, 46)
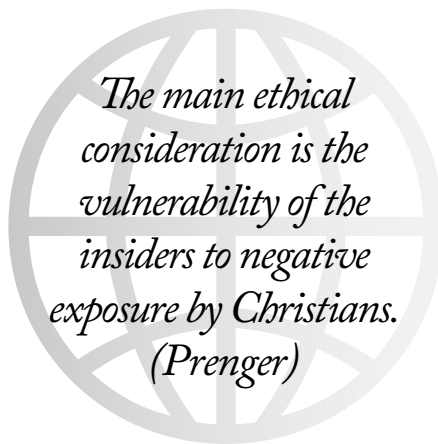
It is interesting to see that many IM leaders mention the traditional church as the main challenge to IM and insiders. (2014, 227)

In summary, the Muslim Insiders interviewed by Prenger most closely match with those that fit the SITI description (both social and theological insiders). For the most part, they attend the mosque, they do not reject the prophethood of Muhammad, and they identify as Muslims. Therefore, the umma naturally views them as theological insiders who are also social insiders (SITI). In several cases, where their heterodoxy to Islamic doctrine was revealed, persecution ensued from the Muslim camp. In other cases, the Muslim Insiders presented themselves as "completed Muslims" who by inference would be the best of Muslims. Existing Christians, as might be expected, were generally non-accepting of the Muslim Insiders, since they, in turn, felt they were theological outsiders (from the biblical perspective) due

to their stances regarding Muhammad, the Qur'an, mosque attendance, and retention of Muslim self-identity.

My Own Research: Indigenous Perspectives on Muslim Identity

I, too, have waded into the deep waters of this controversial topic with my own recent PhD dissertation (Farrokh 2014). My research, like that of Naja and Prenger, also assesses these five topics: Christology, Muhammad, self-identity, mosque attendance, and community perceptions of identity. Like Naja and Prenger, I, too, am involved in ministry to Muslims and cannot claim the pure neutrality that a non-participant might bring to a research project.

The main ethical consideration is the vulnerability of the insiders to negative exposure by Christians. (Prenger)

My research features several distinctives. It is the first missiological doctoral project I am aware of which also interviewed Muslims (i.e., those who might be considered traditional Muslims) regarding the possible retention of Muslim identity among Christ-worshippers. I also was able to capture the sentiments of non-participant interviewees, whom I met by chance; thirty percent of my interviews were conducted among women, which appears to be unique; and lastly, to my knowledge, this was the first PhD dissertation on Muslim identity, contextualization, and insider movements by a Muslim-background Christian.

My research considers the issue of Muslim identity from an indigenous

perspective. The main theoretical question is whether Muslims hold the term *Muslim* flexibly enough to include a person who has come to believe in the biblical narrative regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. In Rebecca Lewis' terms (2007, 75), my research sought to understand whether Muslims felt an individual could retain Muslim identity if he or she came to believe in the lordship of Christ and the authority of the Bible. The second aspect of the research elicited from people who were born Muslim just how they felt others in various Muslim countries would respond to faith deviations by a Muslim—deviations that included coming to faith in the biblical Jesus.

The research instrument and interviewee pool: To implement my research, I asked forty people who had been born into Muslim homes and who hailed from eighteen different nations, to respond to a vignette set in their home countries. I narrated a story to these interviewees in which a hypothetical Muslim strayed from the Islamic faith and came to believe in the biblical Jesus. Eventually that straying Muslim began to fellowship with other like-minded believers. The individual was introduced to the gospel through the internet; no direct missionary involvement was suggested.

Twenty of the interviewees were Muslims, including five Islamic scholars, of whom three were prominent imams. One had represented his country in the international Qur'an recitation competition in Medina, Saudi Arabia. The average age of the Muslim interviewees was forty years, with a mean of twelve years having been spent in the USA. Nineteen identified themselves as Sunni Muslim, and one as a Sufi.

The other twenty interviewees were Muslim-background Christians. Seventeen came from a Sunni background; three had a Shi'ite background. The average age of this cohort was forty-eight years, having served Christ an average of nineteen years,

and having lived in the USA an average of twenty-five years.

Thirty-five of the forty interviewees were foreign-born; all of the US-born interviewees had lived in or had visited their respective ancestral homelands as adults. It is likely, therefore, that such a sample of Muslims and Muslim-background Christians would respond accurately to a situation occurring in their home countries. All interviewees signed a consent form, signaling their understanding that I was a Christian seminarian doing research on Muslim identity.

Since I have lived and ministered in metro New York, I previously had met the majority of the Muslim-background Christians who comprised the interview pool. None of them had prior information about the nature of the interview. (I knew that one of the interviewees had strong sentiments against insider movements; I refrained from interviewing a second who shared those sentiments.) As for the Muslim interviewees, I had met none of them prior to their respective interviews, and fourteen of the twenty were interviewed through chance contact on the streets of Muslim neighborhoods. None of the Muslim interviewees indicated that they were aware of the Christian missiological debate regarding Muslim identity. The Uzbek scholar I interviewed surmised that my research was related to Christian missiology. Exasperated, he stated to me, "Jehovah's Witnesses are coming into my country, and trying to convert everyone to Christianity" (2014, 175).

The self-reported birth countries of the forty interviewees are: Bangladesh (3), Burkina Faso (3), Egypt (2), Guyana (1), Iran (2), India (1), Kazakhstan (1), Jordan (2), Lebanon (1) Morocco (2), Palestine (3), Pakistan (4), Sierra Leone (1), Saudi Arabia(1) Trinidad (2), Turkey (4), United States (5), and Uzbekistan (2).

Christology: In the vignette I narrated, the lead character (Ahmed if the

The interviewees overwhelmingly felt a biblical Christology would violate tawhid *and* shahada, *and trigger the revocation of Muslim identity.*

interviewee were a man, or Fatimeh if it were a woman)

> came to believe the Bible was true and that God visited the earth in the form of Jesus, who died on the cross and rose from the dead.

I then asked the respondents if they considered this to be the same Jesus that Ahmed/Fatimeh had been raised to believe in. Ninety percent of the Muslim interviewees felt this was a different Jesus—and all provided theological reasoning for their opposition. Ten of the twenty respondents (50%) objected to the essence of the biblical Jesus—God visiting the earth in the form of Christ. Eight of the twenty interviewees (40%) objected to the acts of Jesus—his dying on the cross and his rising from the dead. Likewise, all twenty (100%) of the Muslim-background Christian interviewees felt the Ahmed/Fatimeh character now believed in a different Jesus than he or she had believed in previously.

Muhammad: I asked the twenty Muslim respondents one additional open-ended question regarding what a person must do to become a Muslim. Fourteen of the twenty specifically responded, with either English or Arabic wording, that declaring the *shahada* was what a person needed to do to become a Muslim. Their responses indicate that the umma feels affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad to be a litmus test for obtaining and retaining Muslim identity.

Self-identity: As the interview vignette unfolded, I asked all forty respondents whether they felt a person who had come to believe what the Ahmed/Fatimeh character had come to believe would still be a Muslim. Eighteen of the twenty Muslim interviewees, and all twenty of the Muslim-background

Christians felt such a person would no longer be a Muslim. The reasons provided by these thirty-eight were all theological in nature, with an emphasis on biblical Christology being incompatible with Islam. An imam from Sierra Leone offered a representative comment,

> Anyone whose beliefs contradict the Qur'an and hadith is not a Muslim. (2014, 162)

A Turkish believing man replied,

> What does it mean to be a Muslim? It means [to be] submitted to Muhammad and Islam. (2014, 189)

The interviewees overwhelmingly felt that the adoption of a biblical Christology would be a violation of *tawhid* and *shahada*, and thus would trigger the revocation of Muslim identity.

Mosque attendance: Having established that the lead character had come to believe God visited the earth in the form of Jesus, who died on the cross and rose from the dead, my research vignette continued with the following question:

> Is it right for a person who believes what Ahmed/Fatimeh believes to continue attending the mosque? Why or why not?

The Muslim responses varied widely. A younger Bangladeshi man stated,

> No. People will not let him in the mosque. (2014, 167)

A Sufi Punjabi man from Pakistan took the opposite position:

> It's OK. If he wants to go to the mosque, he can do whatever he wants. (2014, 167)

Many of the Muslim interviewees felt that the wayward Muslim might find guidance back to Islam in the mosque. A young Saudi woman of Indian ethnicity stated,

Yes. She can go there to pray that Allah will guide her to the correct knowledge. (2014, 167)

A Moroccan Berber man replied,

If he goes to mosque, he may learn that there is only one God and that Jesus is not God. (2014, 168)

A Palestinian *hafiz* (someone who has memorized the entire Qur'an) stated,

He should continue attending the mosque to get the right information. But if he prays to Jesus, his *salat* (ritual prayers) will not be accepted by God. (2014, 168)

Others were less tolerant. A Jordanian man replied,

No. Maybe he is confused, but it would also be confusing to people in the *masjid* [mosque]. You're talking about a very confused person. (2014, 168)

Another Palestinian man rebuffed the idea:

No. He doesn't believe God. Why should he pray? He is a hypocrite. My Qur'an says Jesus is not God. (2014, 168)

In summary, some of the Muslim respondents were hopeful that attendance at the mosque might provide the Islamic re-education necessary to bring the straying person back to Islam. Others felt that the straying person was a hypocrite or deceiver for continuing to attend the mosque.

The Muslim-background Christian interviewees cautioned the lead character from continuing to attend the mosque. None of them condoned the practice. They also stated that continued mosque attendance would constitute spiritual compromise. One West African said that "Ahmed" would not have a choice about mosque attendance if he were young. (The story I related mentioned that the person was in his early twenties.) A Lebanese woman, in answer to a question about mosque attendance, said,

No. She is going on a new way. The old ways have to change. Even the Muslims will tell her, "Get out of here; it's not your place."(2014, 195)
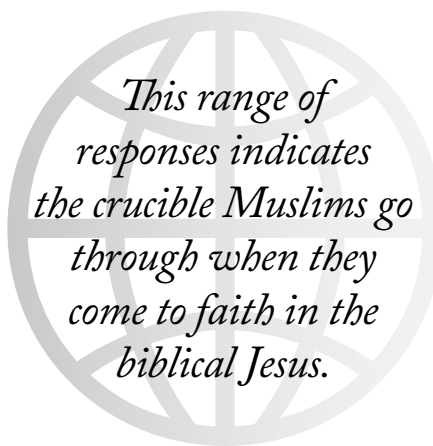
An Iranian woman stated,

No. She has to choose to honor the Lord and not deny Him by going to the mosque. You cannot serve the devil and serve God. (2014, 195)

A Pakistani man gave his theological rationale in this way:

No. He should no longer be worshipping a god he no longer believes in. (2014, 196)

Finally, a Turkish man said,

No. This person (Ahmed) will never grow in the faith! In the mosque, the imam reads a small portion of [the] Qur'an, then [of the] *Sura Fatiha.* Then he declares the *shahada,* and the people all say *"Ameen"* [amen]. Ahmed cannot say *ameen*

> *This range of responses indicates the crucible Muslims go through when they come to faith in the biblical Jesus.*

to Muhammad and *ameen* to Jesus. (2014, 196)

Several of the respondents articulated the travail facing a Muslim who comes to believe in the biblical Jesus. A Bangladeshi American woman stated,

She might spare her life in doing that, especially if she has no other options, like another place to go, if she breaks with Islam. However, at some point there are going to be some contradictions she is just going to have to face by staying in the mosque. I can understand her being consciously silent. I wouldn't judge her. It might be her only way of surviving. (2014, 195)

A Pakistani-American man suggested that Ahmed take the following course of action:

I would encourage him to develop an exit strategy. He should transition out. If he has an intentional missional mindset, I could understand him staying in the mosque as a covert witness. But witnessing in the mosque brings up a lot of grey areas. When the people in the mosque ask him about Jesus, he would have to make sure he was not being deceptive. I don't think there is something inherently wrong with doing prostrations, as long as he is praying to Jesus and praying for the people around him. But this is the exception to the rule. Normally he should transition out of the mosque. (2014, 196)

This range of responses indicates the crucible Muslims go through when they come to faith in the biblical Jesus. These new believers certainly need our prayers.

Community Perceptions of Identity: My research format looked at this question from two vantage points. First, the vignette described the Ahmed/Fatimeh character as coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As stated above, thirty-eight of the forty Muslim-born interviewees felt such a person was no longer a Muslim. I then followed up with this question:

Though he or she has come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, God and Savior, Ahmed/Fatimeh continues to state that he or she is a Muslim—telling people he or she is submitted to God through Jesus Christ…Do you think Ahmed/Fatimeh is right to continue identifying himself or herself as a Muslim? Why or why not?

This was effectively a nuanced form of the previous question as to whether the protagonist was indeed still a Muslim.

Only two of the respondents felt that the Ahmed/Fatimeh figure was justified in continuing to self-identify as a Muslim. One of the imams, an Indian, explained the reasoning of the majority:

We consider him not a Muslim in the technical sense of the word, even though he may consider himself a Muslim in the general sense of the word. However, he would not have the same privileges as a Muslim. He would get

no inheritance from Muslim relatives, while a Muslim would. He will not have a Muslim funeral. (2014, 164)

A leading Palestinian imam gave a linguistic explanation as to why Ahmed would no longer be considered a Muslim:

Anybody can say he is a Muslim through Christianity or a Muslim through Judaism. If I am an English speaker, then anyone will have to say that they are submitted to God. However, words like Allah and Muslim are not translatable... I think the problem is with translation. In English you say the word Muslim and then say it means submitted. In Arabic the word submitted is coming from the same word for Muslim. (2014, 165)

Others questioned the purpose behind the protagonist claiming to still be a Muslim. A Bangladeshi Muslim woman sat up in her chair, pointed her finger, and warned:

I will catch her! She is not honest. She is trying to manufacture the Bible and our Muslim stuff into one thing. (2014, 164)

Her compatriot, a Bangladeshi Muslim man, added:

No. He is not pure. He is holding out one thing, and believing another thing. That is never the sign of a good man. (2014, 164)

A Moroccan Muslim man responded:

We have *mu'minin* [believers] and *non-mu'minin* [non-believers] who are not strong in their hearts. But they are still Muslims. Ahmed is not a Muslim. He is a *munafiq* [hypocrite]. I don't know what you call it in English. He mixes religions... He has lost his way. (2014, 164)

Some of the Muslim-background Christians had gone through a similar situation as the protagonist. A young Malenke woman spoke about her conversion in Burkina Faso:

I was doing this for three or four years—telling people I'm a Muslim who believes in Jesus, not Muhammad. They said I was crazy. They

The Muslims were slightly more optimistic that a theological outsider could retain social insider (SITO) status than were the Muslim-background Christians.

said if you are a Muslim you have to believe in Muhammad. If you do not believe in Muhammad, then you are not a Muslim. (2014, 192)

Nineteen of the twenty Muslim-background Christians felt the lead character was making a mistake by continuing to identify as a Muslim. A young Pakistani believer explained it this way:

This is about semantics. He thinks he is a Muslim by his own interpretation. I would not agree with him doing this because he's disguising himself as a Muslim. He does not want to deal with the repercussions the Muslims are going to give him. He is trying to maintain allegiance to two different Gods. Fundamentally, the God of the Bible and the God of the Qur'an are not the same. (2014, 193)

The second vantage point of my research was the indigenous perspectives (specifically solicited) on how various Muslim communities deal with faith deviation. As noted above, I asked each interviewee to envision a hypothetical situation taking place in his or her home country. The vignette began with the lead character becoming interested in the Bible and Jesus through the internet. No missionary or indigenous church activity was mentioned. At that point I asked how the friends, and then family, of the lead character would respond. Supposing the friends and family had not found out, the interview progressed with the lead character coming to believe God had visited the earth in the form of Jesus who died on the cross and rose from the dead. Again, I asked how the friends and family would respond if they found out at this point. Finally, the vignette progresses (again with the assumption the friends and family have not found out) to the lead character now fellowshipping with

others who have the same beliefs he or she has come to hold. (Note: the terms church, Christians and Christianity were not used.) Once more, each interviewee was asked to project the reactions of his friends and family.

I then classified the responses into fifteen types, before grouping them into three major categories. (See Figure 1, page 78)

In terms of the SITO/SITI/SOTO discussion, Non-Negative responses seem to present hope that an individual (and his or her group) could retain social insider status after being discovered to be a theological outsider. The Shepherding responses were attempts by the Muslim family members and friends to bring the straying protagonist back into the fold of Islam without permanently severing the relationship. In actual practice, this meant that the umma would downgrade the offender's social insider status to that of "threatened," and then completely withdraw social insider status if the offender were to continue unrepentant. In the case of the Punitive/Expulsive responses, the protagonist would become a social outsider immediately.

Because of space limitations in this article, I must simply summarize the dissertation results below. I have excluded responses when the lead character was merely researching biblical web sites, since these merely reflected interest in the gospel rather than changes in beliefs or actions. The responses in Figure 2 (page 79) capture the stages when the lead character comes to believe the biblical narrative regarding Jesus and then fellowships with others who hold those beliefs.

Worth noting in this comparison is that the Muslim respondents were slightly more optimistic that a theological outsider could retain social insider

Figure 1. Responses to the Social Acceptability of Theological Deviation

Categories of Response	Type of Response	Description
"Non-Negative" Responses (Positive or Neutral)	Positive	Friends/family promote or encourage the protagonist's actions
	Condoning Exploration	Claim Islam allows Muslims to explore other religions
	Indifferent	Statements that the friends/family won't care, or they will respond indifferently, to what the protagonist is doing or believing
	Don't know/Unsure	Self-explanatory
"Shepherding" Responses (Negative and Concerned)	Critical Questioning	Friends or family question the protagonist about his/her notions in a non-affirming way
	Islamic Re-education: Formal	Friends or family members present Islamic doctrines/teachings in an attempt to bring back the straying protagonist
	Islamic Re-education: Formal	Insistence by the friends/family on Islamic counseling by an Islamic teacher, or recognized *sheikh* (elder)
	Verbal Warnings & Threats	The use of ultimatums or severe argumentation to bring the protagonist back into the fold
	Limiting Access to the Forbidden	Disallowing the protagonist to leave the home, go to meetings, access the computer, etc.
	Mocking	Friends/family ridiculing or laughing at the protagonist
"Punitive/Explusive" Responses (Negative and Destructive)	Arrange Punitive Marriage	Marrying off an apostate woman to a staunch Muslim man
	Ostracize	Marginalizing and excluding the protagonist from the social circles of family and/or friends
	Physical attacks	Beatings or other physical abuse
	Expel/Excommunicate/Disown	Expulsion from the family or the *umma*. In the latter case, this is known as *takfir* (imputation of infidel status)
	Killing the apostate	Self-explanatory

Figure 2. Comparison of Muslim and Muslim-background Christian (MBC) Responses ("Belief" and "Fellowship" Stages)

Category of Response	Muslim Responses		MBC Responses	
Non-Negative	28	26%	14	12%
Shepherding	58	54%	46	38%
Expulsive	22	20%	61	50%
Totals	108	100%	121	100%

(SITO) status in Muslim contexts than were the Muslim-background Christians. Indeed, one in four responses fall in this Non-Negative category for the Muslim respondents, while only one in eight responses fall in this category for the Muslim-background Christians. Two factors may explain this discrepancy. First, the Muslims knew they were talking to a researcher from a Christian seminary, and it is possible they wanted to portray a more tolerant face of Islam, especially since the interviews were done in a diaspora setting. Second, all of the Muslim-background Christians had gone through some version of the hypothetical vignette, and therefore could answer based on first-hand experiences, while many of the Muslims were shocked that a Muslim could even come to believe the biblical narrative regarding Jesus Christ. Also, there were no significant differences based on geography when I controlled for Islamic "heartland" versus "non-heartland."[3]

In summary, a small minority of responses—forty-two of 229 (18%)—lend viability to the SITO paradigm. To the contrary, eight of the forty respondents (20%) predicted that the lead character would be killed for his or her beliefs and actions. These responses came from eight different interviewees, who envisioned such a killing happening in Jordan (2 interviewees), Pakistan (2 interviewees), Burkina Faso, Kazakhstan, Palestine, and Yemen. A Palestinian Muslim interviewee invited me to sit in his SUV for the interview, perhaps to make sure others would not hear his answers, as

he smoked a cigarette and thoughtfully responded to my questions. He broadened the scope of his response beyond Palestine:

> It varies from people to people and from town to town. But they will beat him up real good; he might die. In Saudi they will kill him right away. In Egypt, the [Muslim] Brotherhood would kill him. (2014, 158)

My research confirms Ziya Meral's assessment that a Muslim who comes to believe the biblical narrative will likely be viewed by the umma as a theological outsider, and, as such, will have a difficult time retaining social insider (SITO) status. In summary, 18 of the 20 Muslim interviewees stated that a Muslim who comes to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, God and Savior is no longer a Muslim. Several expressed indignation that such a person would continue to claim Muslim identity. As for the Muslim-background Christians, a Turkish woman seemed to sum up the cohort's views of a person claiming simultaneously to be a Muslim and a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ: "You can't have it both ways" (2014, 192).

Assessing the Viability of SITO in the Muslim Context

Based on the data above, the implementation of SITO should not be considered simple or seamless in most Muslim contexts. The problem stems from the point of view of Muslims themselves—and specifically how they treat theological outsiders. Furthermore, most Muslim contexts are of the

Eastern, collectivist variety in which there is no separation of church, state, and society. Therefore, while attaining SITO status is a commendable missiological goal, it remains to be seen if the expulsive nature of Islam will allow Muslim-background theological outsiders to maintain their prior social insider status.

Gracious behavior, a discreet and tactful witness, and an exhibition of a life transformed by Christ may help delay the expulsion that often awaits apostates from Islam. Nevertheless, these actions may not ultimately enable the aspiring SITO to remain permanently as a social insider. It is difficult for a person who has experienced the discrimination and ostracism that Meral describes to be a social insider—at least one with whom others would want to associate.

Conclusions and Future Considerations

Daniels and Waterman indicate that the SITO paradigm (socially inside, theologically outside) may be preferable to other paradigms, such as the SITI paradigm (socially inside, theologically inside). Nevertheless, in light of the research above, it appears unlikely that the umma at large will tolerate, let alone embrace, believers in Christ as social insiders. It is therefore likely, at least in the near future, that Muslim-background believers in Christ will continue to endure some forms of social ostracism. In the parlance of this article, they would be considered by the umma as SOTO (social outsiders and

theological outsiders). This is based on the Islamic Law of Apostasy, which has influenced most Muslim countries and communities—even those which are not technically under *shari'a* law. Prayers should continually be made that God would provide these new believers with spiritual strength and courage.

Another ray of hope is beaming into the Muslim world in the form of a collective rejection of the prophethood of Muhammad. Each Muslim who receives and confesses the biblical Savior Jesus simultaneously weakens the grip of Muhammad over a community. From a wider perspective, some Muslim communities, such as Iran, are collectively beginning to reject the role of Muhammad as life's ultimate guide. (If so, they could begin to be evaluated as possibly post-Islamic.) This may open a different door for those who become theological outsiders to remain social insiders. In other Muslim communities, there is a polarization happening as some people react negatively to the actions of Salafi and Jihadi practitioners who vow they are literally fulfilling Muhammad's commands. This dynamic might create disaffection with the Islamic theological position regarding Jesus Christ, and might open up more people to becoming theological outsiders. Prayer and patience are continually needed as these trends continue to develop. **IJFM**

Endnotes

[1] I want to alert readers that there are several other recent research projects which may be of interest to them. As cited above, a Turkish Christian of Muslim background, Ziya Meral, has written on the topic of apostasy from Islam in an important 2008 piece titled, *No Place to Call Home.* In this short book, Meral focuses on the Islamic theological underpinnings of current apostasy laws, and how this impacts those who have left Islam.

[2] Tim Green recently wrote an article on how Muslim-background believers in Christ have navigated marriage issues (see Green 2012). Green then applied that research to the identity issue. Kathryn Kraft recently completed her own PhD dissertation on identity issues by interviewing

Muslim-background believers in Egypt and Lebanon. Kraft's 2012 book *Searching for Heaven in the Real World* is also recommended reading. Finally, David Garrison has contributed a popular survey on happenings in nine "windows" or regions of the Muslim world with his recent *A Wind in the House of Islam* (Garrison 2014).

[3] By Islamic "heartland" I am referring to the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East proper, not including North Africa nor East Africa.

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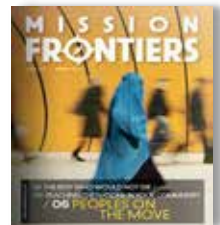Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics

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Response

God's Kingdom Advance is Stronger than Human Veto: A Response to Fred Farrokh's "Will the *Umma* Veto SITO?"

by L. D. Waterman

I want to thank Fred Farrokh for his significant contribution to our understanding of the identity of Muslims who come to trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It seems clear God is moving in our day in unprecedented ways to bring Muslims to saving faith in Christ. The better we understand what is happening in various parts of the world, the better equipped we can be to encourage, strengthen and catalyze additional movements in a Christward direction. I appreciate the fresh and helpful contribution to the discussion from brothers and sisters from a Muslim background as well as from some who are still Muslims.

Diversity in the Muslim World: One Size Never Fits All

I would like to underline one point that Farrokh mentioned in passing, in a quote from only one interviewee: "It varies from people to people and from town to town." With this very brief quote, the article seems to sidestep the huge issue of context. Soon after this quote, Farrokh concludes: "The implementation of SITO should not be considered simple or seamless in most Muslim contexts," implying that results from his study with diaspora Muslims in New York is comparable to those done in, for example, East Africa. My co-author,[1] Gene Daniels, notes that

> While it is completely valid to *compare* and *contrast* findings from different study populations, it is poor academic practice to use them in a critique. This points toward what seems to be a philosophical weakness in Farrokh's paper: the presupposition that Islam is a singular, unified entity; therefore a sample from any segment is a valid sample for the whole.

While the debate over the essential unity of Islam is a much larger topic, in the Bridging the Divide forum we have been hearing numerous case studies from around the world and have come to "recognize that each local Muslim context carries a unique configuration of Muslim political, cultural and religious authority."[2] It seems almost any attempt to make a global generalization about Islamic faith, practice, values or reactions can be contradicted through citation of counter-examples where that generalization would be untrue.

The fact that a certain ministry approach or identity stance is viable or impossible in one location does not guarantee the same will be true in other locations. Jerry Trousdale cites as one of "Jesus' Counterintuitive Disciple-Making Strategies," that we can "Expect the hardest places to yield the greatest results."[3] So rather than joining Farrokh's skepticism based on the limited samples in his research, I'm more inclined to praise God that what might not work in some places is *already* bearing great fruit in some others. CITO might not be viable in some places, but praise God that it's already happening in others.

Individual Converts Versus Movements: A Vital Difference

Farrokh cites a number of similarities and differences between his research and that of Naja and Prenger. One vital difference he does not mention is that Naja's and Prenger's research focused on *movements* to Christ consisting of significant numbers of people, whereas his own research was framed entirely in terms of the scenario of a single *individual* going through a journey to faith in Christ all by himself. David Garrison's research[4] also explicitly focused on movements as did that of Jerry Trousdale *(Miraculous Movements)* and the ministry of Abu Jaz, for which CITO was first coined as a descriptor. This difference does not nullify all the concerns found in Farrokh's research, but we do well to highlight the vital difference between an isolated individual coming to Christ in a hostile Islamic context and a group making that journey of faith together.

All the sources cited above (with the exception of Farrokh, who doesn't mention it) identify the group dynamic as a significant factor God is using to advance the gospel among the unreached in our day. This fits with the dynamics we can observe in the book of Acts, where the vast majority of conversions recorded (about ten times as many) are groups rather than isolated individuals. I would posit that Western individualism has been one of the factors limiting Kingdom advance among Muslims in years past—a hindrance the Lord is now correcting in the reaching of families and groups in various parts of the Muslim world. Farrokh's research gives us valuable insights, but by limiting its scope to the case of an isolated new believer he also limited its ability to compare well with the dynamics being described by others in movements of great numbers to faith in Christ.

Describing, not Prescribing

Farrokh seems to have misunderstood our goal in "Bridging the 'Socio-Religious' Divide,"[5] when he writes: "The authors suggest a reasonable outcome is for these new believers to remain "culturally inside and theologically outside." We were not trying to propose a particular "outcome" (a strategic ministry goal). We were aiming to identify helpful terminology to describe what is *already happening* in some movements of Muslims coming to faith in Christ in various parts of the world. It seems Farrokh's critique (examining "the viability of CITO") can be summed up as "CITO

probably won't work very well." We were citing it as a way to describe what *is already* happening in at least one place (and I would say many other places as well, though others have not used that terminology). I do feel very favorably about movements that are CITO, and I hope they will continue to proliferate. However, our presentation of CITO was not "Here's a great idea that you should try," but rather, "Here's a potentially useful way to describe an indigenous movement that's well under way."

Not Persecution-Proofing

Farrokh concludes:

> It appears unlikely that the *umma* at large will embrace believers in Christ as social insiders. It is therefore likely, at least in the near future, that Muslim-background believers in Christ will continue to endure some forms of social ostracism and persecution.

I would offer two rejoinders to this.

First, I don't see CITO making an appeal to "the *umma* at large." CITO is happening in some locations and cultural contexts, and I hope and expect it may happen in some others. However, I don't expect Islam as a whole to be transformed into a Jesus-following majority any more than (and likely less than) first-century Judaism was transformed. The book of Acts portrays a wide variety of Jewish responses to the gospel, by various groups and cities. As the gospel spread in diverse ways at that time, I'm encouraged to see and expect it to spread in diverse ways now as well, in the Islamic world.

Second, I agree entirely with the second sentence, concerning persecution. Neither Abu Jaz nor we have claimed that CITO is a form of persecution-proofing. Both 2 Timothy 3:12 and the book of Acts (not to mention recent reports such as *Miraculous Movements* and *A Wind in the House of Islam)* make it clear that great Kingdom advance in hostile religious environments will almost certainly be accompanied by some form of persecution. But again I would note the difference between the dynamics and results of persecution toward an isolated individual vs. persecution of a larger group.

Farrokh's title asks, "Will the *Umma* Veto SITO?" I would personally expect the final answer to be "yes." First-century Judaism ultimately vetoed the gospel as "theologically outsider," and Gentile predominance led to the church becoming culturally outsider as well. But what glorious Kingdom advance was made during the messy decades while the question was still being argued! The cultural sensitivity encouraged by early church leadership (e.g. in texts such as Acts 15 and 1 Corinthians 8-10) certainly helped maximize reception of the gospel in a variety of first-century cultures.

In a similar way, I see this time of great ferment in the Islamic world as a golden opportunity for the gospel to advance. Regardless of what verdict the umma as a whole

or any portion of it may reach about movements to Christ, I think it's healthy for those coming to Christ out of Islam to aim to remain socially connected with their context *as much as possible,* even while growing in biblical faith and practice. Using CITO as a descriptor for that effort doesn't solve all the questions or problems, but I don't yet see a better alternative.

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Endnotes

[1] In the article by Gene Daniels and L. D. Waterman, "Bridging the 'Socio-Religious' Divide: A Conversation Between Two Missiologists," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology,* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2013).

[2] Item 7 of Bridging the Divide 2014 Summary Report, available at http://btdnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Bridging-the-Divide-2014-Summary-Report.pdf.

[3] Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements,* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson (2012), Chapter 2.

[4] David Garrison, *A Wind in the House of Islam,* Monument, CO: Wigtake Resources (2014)

[5] Daniels and Waterman, "Bridging the 'Socio-Religious' Divide."

A Response to L. D. Waterman

by Fred Farrokh

I thank L. D. Waterman for his response to my article "Will the *Umma* Veto SITO?" In large part we are in agreement that we do not ultimately expect the Muslim community, or *umma*, to embrace CITO, or my preferred term, SITO. That is, Muslims in general will not continue to confer social insider (SI) status on those who have become theological outsiders (TO) through their adoption of belief in the Divine Savior Jesus Christ. I concur with his statement that "it's healthy for those coming to Christ out of Islam to aim to remain socially connected with their context *as much as possible.*" I also share his final assessment: "I see this time of great ferment in the Islamic world as a golden opportunity for the gospel to advance."

I also appreciate the opportunity by the *IJFM* editorial board for this brief response. Hopefully I can clarify some issues articulated by L. D., and his original co-author Gene Daniels, in their response, in case other *IJFM* readers share those concerns.

First, I do not suggest that the Muslim umma can veto or completely stop what God is doing in the Muslim world, as the title of L. D.'s piece seems to indicate. I simply imply

I *fear that in our chasing of movements, we may find ourselves skipping some steps in the slow, patient, and prayerful process of adequately discipling and pastoring converts from Islam.*

that Muslim communities do have the power to determine upon whom they will confer social insider status. Christ's Kingdom is indeed advancing today, even as it did in New Testament times. We can rejoice that God is now touching and reaching Muslims in greater numbers and in more diverse places than we have ever seen.

Second, regarding diversity, I realize the Muslim world is amazingly diverse and that Muslim contexts differ significantly. I have traveled and ministered widely in the Muslim world. In my article, I was not proposing a one-size-fits-all approach to ministry to Muslims. Rather, I was merely reviewing recent field research in Muslim contexts. Nevertheless, since L. D. brings up the missiological "debate over the essential unity of Islam," it is important to note that Muslims, at the very least, share the religion of Islam, regardless of their sectarian affiliation or level of observance. I believe we can speak of "the Muslim world" as an unreached bloc of people, without denying the diversity within that bloc.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, I address the charge that field research that focuses on "movements" is more important than field research that focuses on "individuals." From a social science research perspective, one cannot interview a movement. One can only interview people within that purported movement. (Perhaps a researcher could conduct a focus group interview made up of multiple individuals.) Ben Naja interviewed 390 *individual* believers in one East African country. J. H. Prenger interviewed 26 *individual* Muslim insiders in seven different countries, ostensibly to promote diversity. I interviewed 20 *individual* Muslims and 20 *individual* Muslim-background Christians, from a total of 18 different birth countries, also to encourage a diversity of responses.

If there is an insistence on movements, I would suggest that all Muslim-background Christians worldwide in this generation could be considered a movement. The Muslim-background Christians whom I know experience "group dynamic," including fellowship and church issues, as well as family concerns, community pressures, and shame-honor issues within all of those contexts. I don't know anyone in ministry to Muslims who is not dealing with these issues, or who is promoting radical Western individualism. At the same time, I believe that placing our hope in large group conversions can be a bit of a mirage in Muslim contexts.

Allow me to further explore this important discussion raised by Waterman and Daniels regarding "movements." I must confess I am still unclear about what constitutes a "movement," who determines when such a movement has

occurred, and how this single (extra-biblical) term has taken on such luminary importance in missiology. I fear in our chasing of movements, we may find ourselves skipping some steps in the slow, patient, and prayerful process of adequately discipling and pastoring converts from Islam. Jesus' Great Commission was to preach the Gospel and make disciples of all nations. I fear the new emphasis on creating fast-growing movements may reduce missions to McMissions.

Finally, I summarize why I believe SITO is not a preferred model in Muslim contexts. The Muslim community has decided, and has the right to decide, who is a Muslim and who is not. For 1,400 years the global umma has considered the affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad the essential ingredient to be a Muslim. The umma has also determined that those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, God and Savior are not Muslims, and any Muslim who comes to confess this belief is now an apostate. He or she will likely be persecuted to varying degrees—this is where the diversity lies—as I chronicle in my article. This is the historical challenge in ministry to Muslims—one which has limited fast-growing movements in Muslim contexts.

If missionaries promote the necessity of Muslims retaining social insider status in Muslim contexts (which the missionaries rightly understand is important for fast-growing movements) then they will frequently and invariably push their disciples into a continued affirmation of Muhammad as God's prophet. This is the same Muhammad who denied the Divinity, Lordship, Sonship, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus.

If SITO is not the answer, then what is the answer? Movements to Christ among Muslims hinge on the willingness of Muslims to embrace Christ as Lord and thereby break with Muhammad (thus becoming ex-Muslims). These new believers must be willing to deal with the umma's response to that break. The first believers in Christ in any Muslim context should be encouraged and prayed for, not simply pitied because they are perhaps only individuals who do not yet constitute a "movement." The encouraging trend is that we are indeed seeing larger numbers of Muslims rejecting Muhammad. Those among them who turn to Christ break free of a spiritually-binding *shahada* covenant which their communities have collectively affirmed for centuries. This opens the door for them to individually experience new birth in Christ and a new collective identity in the Body of Christ.

Like L. D. Waterman, I am optimistic regarding the future of ministry to Muslims. I also welcome other researchers providing information on what is happening in diverse Muslim contexts. **IJFM**

CITO: A Bridging Conversation
The Complexity of Insiderness

by Warrick Farah

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The term "Cultural Insider, Theological Outsider" (CITO) was first coined by Abu Jaz, himself a Muslim-background believer (MBB), to describe the way he and fellow believers integrate their lives and ministries as MBBs who remain inside an Islamic context (Daniels and Waterman 2013).[1] Like others, when I first heard it, I thought it was a helpful nuance in the discussion of contextualization and insider movements.

Most disciple-makers would agree that we want believers from any and all backgrounds (MBBs, HBBs, and CBBs, etc.[2]) to remain as salt and light inside their communities—culturally similar yet with a different, gospel-centered faith and worldview.[3] This is a biblical goal that is both healthy for the new believer and strategic for the kingdom. The CITO concept is also reminiscent of Andrew Wall's famous indigenizing and pilgrim principles, which few would contest (1996a). Dean Flemming states that "this tension between 'at-homeness' and prophetic transformation is the consistent pattern of biblical contextualization" (2005, 23).

Yet as we know in frontier missiology, the nature of tight-knit, traditionalist communities in unreached contexts makes faith change highly problematic, even for those who consider themselves insiders. But when we say "insider," what do we actually mean? Inside what? Their religion? The term "religion" is vexingly elastic and creates misunderstandings nearly every time it is used in the insider movement debate. For example, in Abu Jaz's interview in this issue of the *IJFM,* I can easily imagine others missing his point when he says certain Muslim "religious" customs are "just culture."

While CITO is helpful and biblical, it is still too simple to bypass the category "socio-religious insider." I propose that there could actually be four types of CITOs, all significantly different from one another (see chart below). All five of the aspects I'm using to describe the aggregate nature of insiderness (cultural, social, communal, ritual, theological) intimately interact with one

another. Reality is nowhere near as neat and clean as the chart suggests! But lest we make the (unfortunately) common mistake of thinking all insiderness is the same, I will try to outline how some insiders express their insiderness differently than others.[4] I will also attempt this with minimal reference to "religion," since the term clouds the issue rather than clarifies it.

The Danger of Sterile Debates

Sometimes it can be beneficial to use categories to make complex phenomena understandable (e.g. the Parable of the Sower). Models are approximate maps which cannot fully explain the actual terrain of reality itself, but are still helpful to

> outline complex phenomena to make their multifaceted nature more manageable in understanding the broad picture while providing direction for deeper investigation into nuances of the modeled event or system. (Trull 2015, 5)

However, I am extremely hesitant to provide an opportunity to perpetuate "sterile debates" in missiology which may be "virtually meaningless" (Accad 2009) to the lives of real people described. I do not intend to offer a new model that one could use to stereotype or objectify MBBs into distinct classifications. Neither am I advocating or promoting any type of insiderness. This is a descriptive exercise, not a prescriptive strategy. The examples I

share are types of believers who *already exist* in the Muslim world, and are not a hypothesis for different kinds of "insider movements."[5] Instead, what I aim to demonstrate is that there are layers of complexity embedded in the basic CITO idea. I believe this nuance is needed for our missiological discussion on insiderness to move beyond some of the unproductive (and often irrelevant) disputes of the past.

Five Expressions of Insiderness
0. Exile (or Refugee)

Before talking about insiders, it is important to remark on the existence of many "exiled" MBBs. This most often occurs in Muslim contexts where there is a previously existing Christian church. Sometimes new disciples may leave (or be pulled out) from their context because of a particular view of Islam or conversion.[6] But more likely, at this expression of insiderness, new Christians are ostracized from their communities through acute persecution or extenuating circumstances.

One example of this would be a Muslim who comes to faith and openly declares himself to be a "Christian." As life-threatening persecution comes (in this specific case), he flees to a nearby region where he may take a Christian name and may attempt to integrate into the Christian-background believers (CBB) church. In this instance, he must learn and use a new cultural system in his new context. Virtually all

ties to his natural social networks are severed, at least for a season. He becomes an "outsider" believer in Christ in all the aspects I have suggested on the chart (although after a period of time he may begin to develop insiderness in his new context).

Exiles are incredibly diverse in their faith journeys and in how they relate to their contexts, but they all typically pay a high price when they choose to follow Christ. As a result, their stories of faith are often quite remarkable and inspiring. They deserve our utmost respect as fully equal members of the body of Christ. The church needs to do a much better job of becoming a new family for them and utilizing their unique gifts.

1. Cultural Insider

The vast majority of new believers, however, do not necessarily leave their culture as they come to faith—indeed, they *cannot*. In this case, I am referring to culture in the absolute broadest sense, as the language, values, and behaviors that distinguish one people group from another.[7]

For example, a North African comes to faith in Christ but does not leave the context where she was raised. Desiring fellowship, she joins the North African church's social network and leaves her own social network behind. But she has not ceased being North African. Her new faith is expressed in culturally familiar ways. Since her church would be filled with other

Figure 1. Five Expressions of Insiderness

	Five Expressions of Insiderness	Cultural	Social	Communal	Ritual	Theological
	0. Exile (or Refugee)	o	o	o	o	o
	1. Cultural Insider	i	o	o	o	o
Movements	2. Sociocultural Insider	i	i	o	o/?	o
	3. Dual Belonging Insider	i	i	i	?/o	o
	4. Reinterpreting Insider	i	i	i	i	o
	5. Syncretistic Insider	i	i	i/?	?	i
i = insider; o = outsider; ? = occasional exception or ambiguous						

people culturally like herself, she could join without experiencing culture shock (depending on the church!).

This kind of cultural insider MBB (actually, there are endless variations[8]) would clearly also be a theological outsider (CITO), but would also be a social outsider, a communal outsider, and a ritual outsider. We will cover other types of CITO believers below.

2. Sociocultural Insider

In this issue of *IJFM,* Fred Farrokh makes a helpful distinction between a cultural insider and a social insider. In general, new believers should not and could not be expected to repress their cultural backgrounds as they come to faith in Christ. The issue is rather, can they remain social insiders (SI)? Is SITO a more accurate representation of the insider phenomenon than CITO? I welcome Farrokh's desire to distinguish social and cultural, but I believe the reality of insiderness is still more complex than either of these acronyms express.

At the sociocultural expression of insiderness, these new MBBs are able to remain in their own social networks in some contexts. They cease to identify as "Muslims," but certain contextual factors allow them to create the social space necessary to develop a Christian identity without resulting in harmful stigmatization from the broader Muslim society (e.g. Hefner 1993). They are cultural and social insiders but are not thought of as "Muslims" by other local Muslims.

Additionally, because they remain in their social networks, there are rare times when these types of insiders may take part in practices that would generally be classified as "Islamic." For example, members of the emerging church in this expression, even with a Christian identity, sometimes fast during Ramadan, either for relational solidarity with their neighbors or to show that they practice the spiritual discipline of fasting as well, albeit for a different purpose.[9]

*B*ecause they remain in their social networks, there are rare times when these types of insiders may take part in practices classified as "Islamic."

They integrate many parts of their faith (possibly including Islamic terminology for spiritual terms) with their society, and they are known generally as Jesus followers (but not Muslims) who remain socially inside their contexts. However, they are still theological, ritual, and communal outsiders.

3. Dual Belonging Insider

In this expression, insiderness is expressed at a deeper level than the sociocultural. Dual belonging insiders have a clear identity "in Christ" at the core level of their personal identity. But at the social level of identity, they maintain some sort of belonging to their Muslim community as affiliate members while *simultaneously* belonging to the body of Christ as full members. Dual belonging insiders have a communal insiderness[10] with the local Muslim community, even though they also belong to a local (house) church. They relate to the body of Christ and witness to other Muslims in ways that appropriately identify themselves with Jesus in that context (Green 2013).

This expression of insiderness highlights an important point that has been made recently in missiology in regards to identity (e.g. Greenlee (2013)). In reality, all people everywhere experience multiple belonging at the social level of identity. We all simultaneously relate to different groups in different ways, and we belong to many at the same time. Multiple belonging becomes an issue for Jesus followers when the groups to which we belong seek to create a competing, incompatible ideology at the core level of our "in Christ" identity. We must continually ask ourselves, is there something in this group I belong to that challenges my allegiance to Jesus or my integrity as a disciple?

Dual belonging (*not* dual allegiance) insiders believe they can be loyal to Christ and his body while also being active members in the local Muslim-majority milieu. They might not change their language or dress to express their spirituality. Because they are followers of Jesus who obey the Bible, they do not believe in the prophethood of Muhammad nor in the inspiration of the Qur'an. And perhaps like many other nominal Muslims in their context, they may never perform *salat* prayers nor attend the mosque.

However, their dual belonging means that they may be present at many situations such as a funeral or a ceremony where customary Qur'anic recitations take place, or the *shahada* is invoked ritually. In this case, they might alter the second part of the *shahada* and say, "Jesus is the Son of God" under their breath as the community prays together. But ultimately, while they maintain a sense of communal insiderness with their Muslim community, they are still theological and ritual outsiders.

For these insiders, their social label (i.e. "Christian" or "Muslim") is not an area of great concern for them (others who do know them well may even think of them as Christians). Of greater concern is the way they pass on their faith to the next generation, including challenges relating to marriage and parenting (Green 2012). In any case, these are believers who have an established core identity "in Christ," and for various contextual reasons have been able to negotiate a communal identity that is represented by dual belonging; in some sense a "Muslim" and yet also a biblical follower of Jesus. I hesitate to go into more detail because there are many contextual variations of dual belonging insiderness.[11]

4. Reinterpreting Insider

Often, the first thing many think of when they hear the word "insider" is this expression of insiderness. But I hope I have demonstrated that there are three other layers of insiderness that are expressed differently than this one. Reinterpreting insiders are most commonly referred to as MFCs (Muslim Followers of Christ) who could, in general, agree with a standard evangelical statement of faith, making them theological outsiders from the broader Islamic community. What makes this expression unique is that they also take part in common Islamic rituals, reappropriating them and filling them with new meaning.

Their ability to reuse rituals is possible because they also have a theology of Islam that reinterprets essential Islamic doctrines instead of rejecting them. For example, there are ways some MFCs refer to Muhammad as a "directive prophet" (e.g. Talman (2015)) and hold him in high esteem. They may frequent the mosque for evangelistic and social reasons, and have Holy Book studies where the Injil is read side-by-side with the Qur'an (which is not seen as special revelation but a helpful spiritual text), using whatever truth they find to point people to Jesus. *Salat* prayers are performed in line with other Muslims, and the *shahada* is recited but only as a cultural marker, in their view. For them, the real markers that identify a follower of Jesus are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22ff), not a label like "Muslim" or "Christian."

Some in the global church accept their local theologizing, while others do not.[12] Regarding the local Muslim community, however, their reinterpretations would at best be simply tolerated by those who do not accept them. However, throughout the Muslim world "orthopraxy is more important than orthodoxy" (Ess 2006), so theological insiderness might not be as essential of an issue as ritual insiderness in some Muslim communities.

The ultimate goal for some reinterpreting insiders could be to start some sort of reform movement within Islam, or instead to start a local transitional movement that ends with indigenous home fellowships. These CITO believers are very different from both sociocultural and dual belonging insiders.

5. Syncretistic Insider

Interestingly, "most American evangelicals hold views condemned as heretical by some of the most important councils of the early church" (Emmert 2014). We must be cautious about applying standards of "doctrinal purity" to new believers on the frontiers of the kingdom that don't exist in our own churches established in Christendom.

Deviant theology of any type is a matter of more or better discipleship, not ostracism or anathematizing.
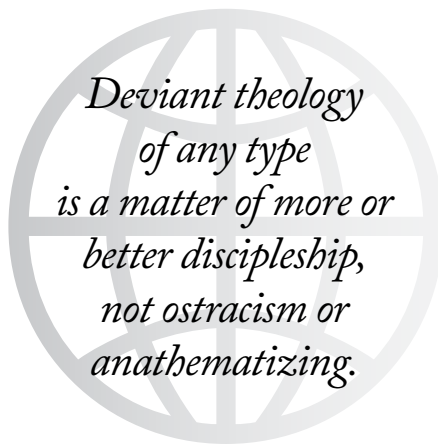
Each of us, including other MBBs at various expressions of insiderness, have unconscious weaknesses at some point in our worldview (we all have blind spots): the real issue is whether the *telos* of our lives points towards ever-increasing conformity to the Truth (Jn. 14:6; 2 Cor. 3:18).[13] This is the process of discipleship.

However, there are unfortunately some insiders who hold to beliefs that are clearly beyond standard Christian orthodoxy. Whether it is consciously done or not, their unorthodox theology usually makes it easier for those from their background to accept their message. For example, certain MFCs (not all!) have a theology that more closely

matches a Unitarian understanding of God, and they believe that Christ is not God incarnate or ceased to be divine at the incarnation.[14] This would make them closer to theological insiders, since they may also implicitly affirm the Islamic doctrine of *tawheed* which teaches that God is a singular monad.

Even though syncretistic[15] insiders might not completely align theologically with their Muslim community, the point is still that there is clearly an aspect of unhealthy theological insiderness at this expression. Of course, there are some who contend that the other kinds of insiderness described in this article are harmfully syncretistic as well. However, my classification of this expression is intended to describe what I believe a broad consensus among evangelical missiologists would identify as a negative form of syncretism. Insiders in this level are not theologically "outside" enough of their context to be biblical disciples of Jesus. We may disagree over what constitutes negative syncretism at other expressions of this model, but not on this one.

Other examples may include groups who believe that only the four Gospels are inspired and who also believe in the inspiration of the Qur'an. Another group of syncretistic insiders with an anemic ecclesiology would only gather for worship in (Bible-less) mosques with other non-MFCs, thus affirming their full belonging inside the *ummah*.

Syncretistic insiders do not necessarily have to be practicing Islamic rituals, and they might not be making any attempt to belong to the body of Christ. It is difficult to predict whether syncretistic insiders will likely transition into biblical movements—they could remain as they are, or be absorbed back into the local Muslim community, or they could turn in a healthy direction.

How syncretistic insiders are discipled is a very delicate subject. Deviant theology of any type is a matter of more or better discipleship, not ostracism or anathematizing. Inadequate discipleship

might encourage them in their syncretism or patronize them as children. It is imperative for some disciplers to remain in close relationship with them to help them with their hermeneutics and doctrine, among other issues.

Dynamic Transitions

Movements can be found in three kinds of insiderness indicated in the chart: sociocultural, dual belonging, and reinterpreting insiders. The cultural insider (who is not also a social insider) usually does not have the kind of relationships with unbelievers to see multiplication happen, and so movements have rarely been observed at this expression.[16] In any case, it is helpful to see the distinctions between different kinds of insiders lest we think they are a monolithic phenomenon.

As the chart may convey, insiderness is not a static concept. It is possible for groups of MBBs to move through various levels of insiderness over time. Like a movement, insiderness is dynamic and fluid. Yet,

> we have to ask whether it is fair to expect a movement to survive only as a movement. Either the movement disintegrates or it becomes an institution, this is simply a sociological law. Every religious group that started out as a movement and managed to survive, did so because it was gradually institutionalized. (Bosch 1991, 52)

This refers to a syncretistic insider movement as well.

Yet while movements are transitional in nature, insiderness can settle for a time. The vast majority of disciples of Jesus around the world obviously have some level of insiderness. There are even different insiders with different insiderness in the same context, so we need to be aware of the variety of expressions.

In all fairness, it often takes a thorough understanding of the specific insiders *and* their context to discern which insiderness they describe, but even then it might still be fuzzy due to the limitations

of the model itself. Yet my intention here is not necessarily to classify insiders but to grapple with insiderness which is complex and dynamic.

Diverse Contexts

In the incarnation, the Son of God became an insider. Christ expressed insiderness in his context, yet without sin.

> Jesus our example was an insider who never relinquished his outsider status that challenged people to see their world from an entirely new perspective. (Flemming 2005, 23)

This reflects how Paul saw his ministry of becoming all things to all people (1 Cor. 9:19ff), while avoiding harmful syncretism (2 Cor. 6:14ff). In this basic CITO tension, it is absolutely crucial to keep context in mind. Jesus' Jewish setting was different from Paul's Gentile mission, so we are not surprised to see them with different expressions of insiderness.

It is true that some reinterpreting insiders are trying to stay inside Islam for missional or theological reasons. However, it is incorrect to assume there is one entity called "Islam" that *all* insiders are trying to stay "inside."[17] It is much closer to reality to recognize that most insiders are simply trying to bear faithful witness to Jesus within their context, following in the footsteps of those in the New Testament.

And since every context is different, we cannot assess all insiders with broad strokes nor evaluate all insiderness with the same criteria. What we say in hermeneutics also applies in missiology: "context is king."

Conclusion

Here is a brief analogy of the main point in this article: if you want to join different cells of a table together in

*M*ovements can be found in three kinds of insiderness: sociocultural, dual belonging, and reinterpreting insiders.

Microsoft Word, simply click on a button called "merge." Much of the insider movement debate, including discussion concerning contextualization,[18] becomes obscured when different kinds of insiders and insiderness are *merged* together. Herein I have attempted to disentangle important concepts blended together by ideas like CITO. It should also be evident that the terms "insider movement" and "insider proponent" are vague and may create misunderstandings.

Significantly different expressions of insiderness exist for believers where the church of King Jesus is emerging today. Hopefully this article helps us communicate respectfully around the actual issues and embrace the insiderness complexity on the frontiers of the mission of God. **IJFM**

Endnotes

[1] This does not mean that culture and theology are divergent categories. All theology is contextual and expressed culturally (Netland and Ott 2006).

[2] I use examples from the Muslim world in this article. However, the same expressions of insiderness could apply to Hindu or Buddhist contexts as well, perhaps even a specific secular-progressive North American context.

[3] Unfortunately, the "inside/r" word itself has taken on a negative connotation for some in missiological circles. Yet insiderness cannot be talked about in a binary construct: something you're either for or against. As Don Little says, effective discipleship for new MBBs should "express uncompromisingly bold and culturally appropriate witness for Christ that remain inside Muslim communities" (2015, 125).

[4] Higgins (2006) and Waterman (2014) have done something similar in previous articles. It could be possible to link the "levels" in this article with certain portions of the C Spectrum (Travis 1998), but I believe doing so would make it overly complicated. I'm trying to be simple without being simplistic.

Jens Barnet insightfully remarks that while we need to develop better models to deal with the multifaceted, tangled, and layered nature of identity today, he is concerned that many of our approaches are still using the same kind of enlightenment thinking that failed to describe the complexity of reality in the first place (2015). (It is important to note however that I am not dealing with "identity" but "insiderness.") To the point that I might be steeped in dichotomist or modernistic thought, I enthusiastically welcome criticism and improvements of my proposal here. This is the exciting nature of missiology.

I want to thank Jens Barnett, Abu Daoud, Abu Jaz, Gene Daniels, Brad Gill, Tim Green, and L. D. Waterman for their help in formulating ideas and crafting this article. Any errors or weaknesses though are ultimately my own.

[5] I have learned about these believers through my own research, ministry experience, and also as a member of the Bridging the Divide Network (http://btdnetwork.org). The academic discipline of evangelical missiology would be strengthened if there were more empirical studies on specific communities of insiders that specifically examine their insiderness. However, recent empirical studies that provide examples of insiderness in this article can be found in the research projects of Kraft (2007), Green (2012), Oksnevad (2012), Naja (2013), and Miller (2014). Garrison also has many anecdotal examples (2014).

[6] An individualistic understanding of evangelism and faith change often drives this 'extractionist' approach to ministry. See L. D. Waterman's important insights in this issue of *IJFM.*

[7] I do not intend to suggest that the other variables of insiderness in this schema are independent from culture. For example, rituals are part of every culture.

[8] Additionally, Duane Alexander Miller has noted instances of Iranian MBB communities who left Islam and embraced Christianity in order to be "inside" their culture, because Islam was seen as Arabizing and Christianity was seen to affirm their own historical and ethnic peculiarity (2014, 189). In this case, Miller comments that Islam could be the "outsider."

[9] Notice on the chart that this level is marked with "o/?" on the ritual column. One weakness of my categories is that reality is indeed much more complex and fuzzy than I'm suggesting here. The point is that while this group is clearly recognized by others as ritual outsiders, they still have the flexibility to do an "Islamic" practice such as fasting, even during Ramadan, although it might not be in the exact same manner.

[10] There is a weakness with the term "communal identity" because "the term implies that Hindus and Muslims identify only with a community of Hindus and Muslims. Although some Indians may embrace and propagate such an identity, few Indians live with such a singular self-understanding. Overreliance on the communal notion is akin to examining identity with a very narrow view…. many Hindus and Muslims do not live within discrete and distinct religious worlds but practice faith lives that obscure clear identity boundaries" (Gottschalk 2000, 39). (I want to thank Barnett for sharing this insight with me.)

[11] The phenomenon of the "secret believer" (C6 on the C Spectrum) is probably found most commonly at this expression (even though they do not attempt to relate to the body of Christ or are unsuccessful in safely doing so), yet could be at other levels as well. As we know from experience, there are many new believers like this in frontier contexts, yet analysis on secret believers is outside the scope of this article.

[12] Barnett offers a helpful observation on the dynamic of syncretism: "Cultural change in a community is not instantaneous, nor is it uniform. Since transformation of a culture will *always* involve the contesting of cultural symbols, pockets of confusion in the initial stages seems, to me, unavoidable. If we define syncretism semiotically, as the association of a non-biblical meaning to a symbol or form, then some degree of syncretistic confusion may well be a normal stage on the way to good contextualization" (2015). This partially explains how some insiders could eventually transition to different expressions of insiderness, and thus we might appreciate or comprehend why these levels of insiderness exist for a period of time, even if it may be confusing or even troubling.

[13] Still, there is much theological diversity within evangelical orthodoxy.

[14] While the deity of Christ is obviously a huge stumbling block to Muslims, it is also a strong factor facilitating the faith journeys of MBBs. In my own study of MBB conversions, many Muslims are actually drawn to Jesus by his majestic position as the Lord God (c.f. Farah 2013, 17). I believe this reflects a central way Jesus himself made disciples: "he manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him" (Jn. 2:11).

[15] There are different ways the term syncretism is used in missiology (Farah 2010). I am primarily using it as an evaluative term to describe deviation from the broad consensus of historical Christian orthodoxy.

[16] Rodney Stark remarks that one of the criteria for the success of new religious movements is that they remain "an open social network, able to maintain and form ties to outsiders" (1996, 142).

[17] The essentialist fallacy is committed when an evaluation is made of an "insider" or MBB on the basis of some supposed "real Islam" and not on the basis of how the specific believer relates to the particular context, including his or her local Muslim community. Both insider proponents and traditionalists may sometimes commit the essentialist fallacy.

For persuasive cases against viewing Islam as a monolithic, coherent entity, see Ramachandra (1999, 13–46); Marranci (2008); and Jung (2011). I believe it is best to view "Islam" as simply being what people who profess it actually believe and do (Bates and Rassam 2001, 89). Biblically-based ministry in the Islamic world is not about engaging *Islam*, but rather about engaging *Muslims*. Romans 1:18ff does not refer to systems such as Islam, but to humankind. It is people who "suppress the truth by their wickedness" and thus need to be the focus of the gospel (Walls 1996b, 66).

So whether or not the Islamic State, Saudi Sunnis, or Hezbollah represent "real" Islam should not be a major concern. As ministers of the gospel, we start with people in the complexity of their contexts. It's not our job to define Islam, but to present biblical faith. Yet the complexity of people in their contexts must be embraced without resorting to reductionistic oversimplifications which often lead to the type of decontextualized approaches to Muslim ministry that can be commonplace in evangelical missiology.

[18] For many of the same reasons, I also think it is important to show differences between workers' approaches of contextualization. See "The 'W' Spectrum: 'Worker' Paradigms in Muslim Contexts" (Farah and Meeker 2015).

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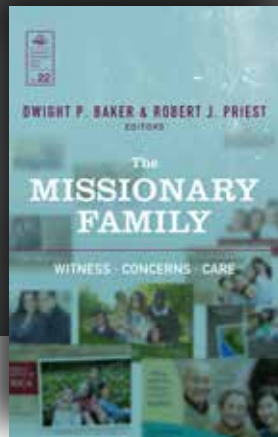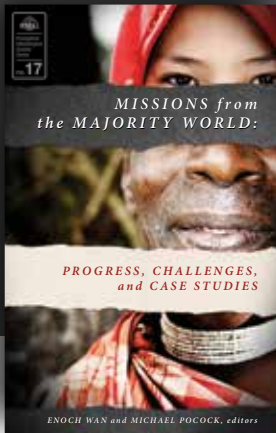
Missions from the Majority World (EMS 17)

Progress, Challenges and Case Studies

Enoch Wan, Michael Pocock (Editors)

Churches from around the world are joined in the effort to reach the whole world. Although it has been documented that Western missionaries serving outside their countries still comprise the majority of world missions workers, the growth rate of majority world missionaries far outpaces that of the West. In recent years, while Western missionary forces are shrinking in numbers and possibly in influence, missions from the majority world have proliferated, bringing amazing progress and some challenges.

Missions from the Majority World represents the thinking of 14 majority world mission scholars and 10 Westerners with lengthy experience in the missionary enterprise. The book shows the progress and challenges of missions from the majority world and illustrates this with case studies from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

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The Missionary Family (EMS 22)

Witness, Concerns, Care

Dwight Baker, Robert Priest (Editors)

The title of this book points to a feature—the missionary family—often considered to be a distinctive of the Protestant missionary movement. Certainly the presence of missionary families in the field has been a central factor in enabling, configuring, and restricting Protestant missionary outreach. What special concerns does sending missionary families raise for the conduct of mission? What means are available for extending care and support to missionary families? These issues are the focus of the chapters in part 1 of this book.

In recent years an increasing number of reports have surfaced of sexual abuse in mission settings. Part 2 serves the mission community by scrutinizing such matters, offering legal, historical, and psychological perspectives on the topic. Fourteen evangelical scholars participate in the discussion found in part 3.

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Effective Engagement in Short-term Missions (EMS 16)

Doing it Right!

Robert Priest (Editor)

Effective Engagement in Short-term Missions represents the single most ambitious effort to date to understand and improve upon patterns of ministry in short-term missions (STM). In six sections, the authors explore topics such as the links between STM and older patterns of long-term missions; engagement with people of other cultures; international partnerships; specialized ministries such as medical missions; legal and financial liabilities; and last but not least, the impact of STM on participants. The goal of this book is to improve both the ways in which STM is carried out and the understandings needed by all who engage in the ministry. In short, this book attempts to provide a knowledge base for leaders within the short-term missions movement. Youth pastors, mission pastors, lay leaders, college and seminary students, and missiologists alike will all find information that is helpful and relevant.

~~List Price $16.⁹⁹~~ • **Our Price $13.⁵⁹**

Why Cultures Matter

by Miriam Adeney

Miriam Adeney, PhD (Cultural Anthropology) is professor of World Christian Studies at Seattle Pacific University, has taught on six continents, and is the author of many books and articles on culture, gender, ethnicity, diasporas, development, and contextualized communication, including Kingdom Without Borders.

A t the Lausanne Conference in 1974, Ralph Winter and Donald McGavran turned Christians' attention to "peoples," to human groups in cultural contexts. "The Bible is not people-blind—Jesus did not die to make Muslims stop praying five times a day or to make Brahmins eat meat. People should not be invited into the church and all invited to play the violin," Winter quipped as he enlivened his serious arguments (Fickett 2013:6, 7, 90).

That emphasis on cultures and people groups changed Christian mission significantly. But is that era past?

Globalization scatters torrents of travelers—laborers, immigrants, students, refugees, businessmen—like a tsunami washing over every society. People mingle. The next generation often speaks English. They build new identities. Even those who stay home "live in a constant and daily tension between the global (CNN, McDonalds, Target, GAP, Microsoft) and the local, between the image (the TV sitcom groups we connect with, our internet relationships) and the real. So we constantly construct identities and create new tribes" (Harris and Schaupp 1994:383).

Amid this global whirlpool, how much do cultures matter? How much do peoples matter? Or are other priorities more important today?

Four reasons why cultures still matter may be suggested. First, understanding cultures helps to reduce conflicts. Sunnis and Shiites, Ukrainians and Russians, Palestinians and Israelis, whites and blacks in Ferguson, Missouri—all would benefit from listening to each others' stories.

Second, understanding cultures helps us do business. This includes mission business, microfinance, health and education projects, and even communicating the Christian story—any pragmatic project.

Third, cultures are not going away. Though travel and the internet may erode differences, paradoxically they also highlight cultural distinctives and reinforce separate ethnic connections. The members of an ethnic group may be dispersed and mobile. What they treasure from their culture may differ from their grandparents. Yet their loyalty to their roots can be fierce.

There is a fourth and particularly Christian reason why cultures matter. Before exploring that, however, we will trace understandings of culture through time.

Between Us and Them

Humans naturally make distinctions between our own people and others. During the Middle Ages, Westerners called others heretics. Or monsters. During the Age of Exploration, others were seen as pagans. Or potential slaves. During the Enlightenment, others were savages, primal or primitive beings. Chinese have viewed others as barbarians. Muslims have seen others as unbelievers, infidels.

Early anthropologists like Edmund Tyler and James Frazer were *evolutionists* who affirmed not only physical but also cultural evolution. Simple cultures were dominated by magic, they taught. More advanced cultures were structured by religion. The most advanced cultures were organized around science.

As anthropology developed, and more data was collected, these broad generalizations slipped from favor. Instead, some scholars came to emphasize the material components of culture, others the social structures, and others the symbolic elements of ideas and images. Among the *materialists,* Roy Rappaport defined culture as "an adaptive mechanism for maintaining material relations with the other parts of man's ecosystem" (1967:6). The resource base and the particular arrangements for balancing production and consumption were the realities that shaped

human lives. Ecological anthropologists continue this emphasis.

Marxist anthropologists have framed this material focus with a specific ideology. Whenever there is "private ownership of the means of production," class struggle will ensue and intensify, eventually provoking an explosion that will eventuate in a classless society where people share the proceeds of their labor, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

Classic British and American anthropologists have viewed family and social structures as the elements that are central to cultures. Around these structures, all the other parts of a culture form a system, including material

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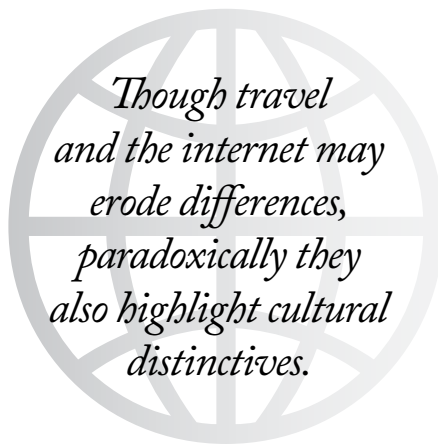
elements and worldview elements. These theorists are called *structural-functionalists,* and their influence on missionary anthropology has been great.

Besides the materialists and the social structuralists are the *symbolic anthropologists.* Claude Levi-Strauss propounded that cultures are systems imposed on the random natural world by the structure of the human mind. For him, the basic human mental structure involved binary contrasts. Other cognitive anthropologists have attempted syntactic and semantic analyses to discover what a people hold to be the constituent entities and taxonomies of the universe—the basic units and how they are organized in

categories. Clifford Geertz defined a culture as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in a system of symbols which grids action." Geertz also referred to culture as "webs of significance which we spin and in which we hang suspended" (1973:4–5).

All these theories are far more complex than is suggested here. Yet they also share significant commonalities. All envision regular patterns and processes, which are basic to science. All anthropologists want to be holistic. They want to study real behavior, not just ideals. Corporate groups, not just individuals. Culture in all its rich and confusing complexity, not just a few selected variables. And cultures throughout space and time. Attitudes that anthropologists cultivate include empathy, curiosity, objectivity, and tolerance for ambiguity. Within this context, they evaluate theories for their simplicity, their comprehensiveness, how well they generate significant hypotheses, and their elegance.

In our postmodern era, *deconstructionists* have arisen, particularly scholars influenced by the French philosophers Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Raising questions about the nature of truth and our ability to understand it, they call all our theories into question. Some of their revisionist ideas might be summarized in several points:

1. Truth is experienced in multiple and incomplete ways, including paradox and ambiguity.
2. There is no trustworthy, overarching story or metanarrative. (Life is fragmented, truth is constructed, and changes.)
3. Subjects and objects cannot be disconnected. (What is known is affected by who is knowing it or saying it.)
4. Fact and value cannot be disconnected. (Facts are not neutral.)
5. "Truth" is often a tool used by those in power to maintain their position in the hierarchy.

6. History is not necessarily pro-gressing.
7. Cultures are not necessarily ranked.

Such postmodern ideas draw from anthropology, and also help to shape it.

Applying Cultural Understanding in Ministry

All of these perspectives on culture can enrich our ministry. *Materially,* what is the people's resource base? That is one of the first questions to ask if we are learning about a society. What is an average meal? What is a rare luxury? If finances are tight, what strategies do they use? Beyond the immediate family, who do they regularly contribute to or share with? How do they get to work? What technology do they own? How do they get health care, and how do they pay for it? What multinational or government or foreign entities dominate the local economy, and is that influence increasing?

The material dimension matters. Recently, when some of my students surveyed Asian-American Christians, they included questions on this aspect of culture, such as, "What Asian-American economic habits reflect Christian values? On the other hand, where does the Christian faith critique Asian-American economic habits?" Good dialogues resulted.

Sensitivity to economic realities must shape our ministry. For example, if we require air conditioning, private laptops, and private jeeps, might that communicate the idea that one cannot be a top Christian leader without these things?

Similarly, the *social* dimension of culture has applications for ministry. Many missionary anthropologists have given attention to family patterns and community structures and their implications for witness, discipling, and church development (Nida, Kraft, Hiebert, Smalley in Winter and Hawthorne 2009).

The *symbolic* dimension of culture also contains useful resources. Consider

*C*ontinuity complements change. In spite of their faults, our cultures remain dear because it is our cultures that give us our categories.

"ethnotheologies." To minister authentically, we need to know indigenous fears and values and how local theologians tackle these. Evangelical Hispanic theologians, for example, emphasize community, the Holy Spirit, care for the needy, *mestizaje* or mixedness, marginality or exile, and God in everyday life with all its embarrassments and fights and failures. It takes time to absorb these themes, but is essential for ministry.

Change and Complexity

Deconstruction theory prods us to think about change and complexity. We should not assume that cultures are static. Most people wish life were a little different. They have dreams and aspirations, and would like new opportunities. Cultures always are on the move. Nevertheless, continuity complements change. In spite of their faults, our cultures remain dear because it is our cultures that give us our categories. "We do not contemplate reality face to face. From the moment we are born, things do not come before us in all their nakedness. They come dressed in the names some community has given them" (Alves 1985:26).

Besides emphasizing change, deconstruction theory also reminds us that individuals may have multiple cultural identities, and that these may shift around. A Filipino-American marries a Native American. Their children are Filipino-American, Native American, members of a specific tribe, and general American. One child may choose to emphasize one label. His brother may feel more connected with another. At different times they may move back and forth, switching identities.

Subcultural identities matter too, even though they may be overlapping or cross-cutting. In Drew Dyck's book,

Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults Are Leaving the Faith and How to Bring Them Back, he identifies five subcultures among young Americans, and suggests gospel bridges to each:

1. *Postmoderns* distrust explanations, analysis, and logical argumentation. Truth is too complex. So Dyck recommends telling stories, true stories—your own "mini-narrative" and the great "enchanted metanarrative." Be sensitive to nuance. Acknowledge mystery. Be humble. Build trust. And invite them to serve alongside you even before all the answers are spelled out.

2. *Recoilers* have been wounded or perhaps offended by hypocrisy. Empathize with their anger and hurt. Talk about how Christ joins us in our pain. Then enjoy your faith, and model hope beyond wounds and cynicism.

3. *Moderns* **do** want reasons. So discuss worldviews, and push them to defend theirs. Ask them: Why be good? Avoid triteness. Model a serious effort to think. And, in the course of your discussions, clear out bizarre misconceptions of Christianity.

4. *Earthkeepers* honor nature, women as the nurturers of life, and prayer. They approach the supernatural with awe and reverence.

5. *Rebels* want justice and freedom.

Finally, power is one of deconstructionism's most important themes. Multiculturalism is not a level playing field. In a plural society, stronger groups tend to dominate others. Inequality of opportunity results. Often serious oppression occurs. "White privilege" is the term used in the U.S. to refer to this unfair advantage. Although white people can be victimized by affirmative

action programs, generally they are in the default position of power.

In India, people at the bottom of the caste system are called Dalits. Successful Christian witness here does not build on beautiful ideas in traditional Hindu literature. What has Hinduism done for Dalits? Instead, these people want to hear about dignity, justice, and opportunity. Wise witnesses note the power relations in society.

Deconstruction theory reminds us that many people do not fit into traditional cultural categories: What is the identity of the biracial child? The Navaho who oscillates between the reservation and the city? The Filipino who labors for 40 years in Abu Dhabi but cannot retire there? The youth who buy and wear goods and watch media from everywhere? The refugee immigrant? Who are their people?

Whoever they are, the gospel offers them a home. God doesn't stereotype us, but meets us each as the exceptions we are, with our multiple and overlapping identities, our unique pilgrimages, our individual quirks. God doesn't slot us into pigeonholes. Whether we have permanently lost our community, or are temporarily adrift, or have patched together bits of several heritages, God welcomes us into his people, offering us a community that stretches even beyond the systems of this world.

Culture is a Gift of God

Here we come to the fourth reason that culture matters.

In the early 1500s, Bartolomé de Las Casas was a plantation owner in Latin America. He experienced Christian conversion, grew in grace, and then increasingly came to lament European exploitation of indigenous peoples. Over a period of years, he shared his concerns with the Pope. In 1537, Paul III issued the authoritative document *Sublimis Deus*. This affirms that native people everywhere are fully human. (As a result, when the Spanish came to Philippines

in the later 1500s, they could not exploit Filipinos quite as cruelly as they had the Latin American Indians because the Filipinos were seen as true human beings, at least in theory.)

A Christian theology of culture holds that although other peoples may seem strange, they are not monsters, or savages, or barbarians, or primal or primitive beings. They are not fundamentally pagans or heretics or potential slaves. They are human beings, made in God's image. This means, in part, that they are gifted with a bit of God's creativity. Using this gift, people in different parts of the world have constructed distinctive family patterns, economic exchange systems, cuisines, music, architectural styles,

Cultures must be valued as treasure chests of symbols for exuberant expression of the image of God.
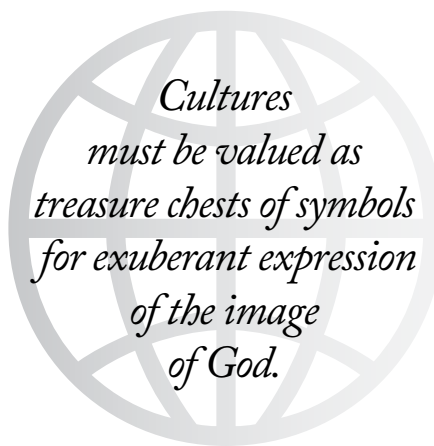
and philosophies. In other words, they have built cultures, employing God's gift of creativity. Cultures, then, must be valued as treasure chests of symbols for exuberant expression of the image of God.

Such cultures enrich God's world. Like a mosaic, like a kaleidoscope, this diversity appears in biblical texts about God's kingdom at the end of time, such as Isaiah 60. The God who creates billions of unique snowflakes and personalities, who dazzles with diverse colors and infuses our inhaling with aromas, who imagines a boggling array of tropical fish in the oceans and even varieties of granite hidden deep in the earth—this God delights in diversity.

He is the one who has generated the possibility for cultural variation.

Yet that is not the whole picture. To say we are in God's image does not describe our nature completely. We also are sinners. That is the tragic truth. Patterns of exploitation and idolatry pulse through our cultures. How well we know the corruption, the waste, the lust, the power-grabbing, the environmental degradation. Every culture reeks of selfishness, with people wounding each other continually.

In the middle of this dynamic tension between our creativity and our sin, the gospel arrives. It affirms the gifts of God's creativity. It critiques the patterns of exploitation and idolatry. The expression of this critique should be led by indigenous leaders who are immersed in the Word and the Spirit. Tragically, missionaries sometimes have dominated, and in the process have judged the local culture more harshly than their own. To correct that, we must bend over backward. We must acknowledge, "If you are a sinner in need of a Savior, so am I. If your people are sinners, and if your culture is exploitative, so are mine. We are in the same boat. And God in his mercy has reached out to all of us."

Culture Takes Time

It takes time to learn a language, to adapt to a way of life, to be a friend. It requires openness to ambiguity and even to failure. If we are going to absorb the historic continuity, the connotative richness, and the contextual integration of a culture—even a mixed culture—it will be hard work. To honor that culture, we will have to die a little to our own ways of thinking and acting. Like a seed falling into the ground, we will find it dark and uncomfortable. But then we will be reborn. At first ignorant and incompetent, almost helpless, we will have to practice and repeat, over and over, like a toddler.

A lot of mission workers want to avoid that death. So they just rush in and take action. But nobody deserves to be acted upon. Nobody should be our project. If, on the other hand, we *are* willing to go through the death and rebirth that is part of adapting to a culture, the yield in God's good time will be a hundred-fold—brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers. This is the pain and the joy of true global Christianity.

Today that Christianity is being lived in thousands of cultures by believers who are working to express their family and workplace relationships, their economic exchanges, their praise rituals, and their philosophical and theological ideas, in ways that are consistent with their heritage and also with the glory of God.

And when civil ties break down, as they do so often today, Christians who love cultures without idolizing them often can be found on the front lines. They step out into the margins

A lot of mission workers just rush in and take action. But nobody deserves to be acted upon. Nobody should be our project.

and reach hands across the chasms with true respect for God's image and true empathy for fellow sinners. They lead societies across bridges of reconciliation. This is one more way that a Christian understanding of culture may serve in our time. **IJFM**

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Response

A Response to Miriam Adeney's "Why Cultures Matter" (ISFM 2014)

by Gene Daniels

I remember when, as a budding anthropologist, I first read Dr. Miriam Adeney's article, "Is God Colorblind or Colorful?" So you can understand why it is a little unnerving to follow her at this podium. Dr. Adeney is one of the giants in the field and her presentation "Why Cultures Matter" was a *tour de force* on the topic.

The essential argument of her paper was that culture still matters in mission because it addresses fundamental issues of our humanity. Culture is critical to conducting the practical aspects of mission such as community development and microfinance. It hangs as a backdrop to globalization as peoples from distant parts of the world come into close and sometimes sharp contact with Christians here in the West. Perhaps most importantly, she pointed out that paying attention to culture helps us stay focused on the human dimension despite a trend toward what some have labeled "American managerial missiology."

Dr. Adeney also offered a brief survey of the different schools of anthropological thought that have influenced mission these past forty years. This part might have seemed a bit esoteric to those not steeped in the discipline. But I am amazed at how often these ideas lie at the root of our mission conversations. For example, whether or not a person has ever studied anthropology, their view of Insider Movements will usually conform to either a structural, symbolic, or deconstructionist view of culture. Yes, culture and the theories about it still do matter.

With her presentation as a backdrop, I will expand on one of the points Dr. Adeney raised and then tease out something she did not talk about explicitly, but which was certainly implicit in what she said, here as well as in many of her previous writings.

Hybrid Identities

In her discussion of deconstructionism and postmodernist thought, Dr. Adeney talked about changing and flexible cultural identities. Many anthropologists today are using the terms hyphenated- or hybrid-identities. Globalization is allowing for the blending and bending of cultures on an unprecedented scale. Do the children of Turkish emigrants to Germany think of themselves as Turks, or Germans, or German-Turks, or something else entirely? Or what about

the "pop idol" culture in Japan? The young people who follow it are still deeply Japanese, but in ways that render that word almost unintelligible to their elders.

In the circles I am a part of, a hot topic the past few years has been the identity of Muslims after their conversion to Christ. How do we refer to them? Are they Christians? Are they *Muslim Background Believers* (MBBs), *Believers from a Muslim Background* (BMBs), or even *Muslim Followers of Christ* (MFC)? Not only are each of these identity choices pregnant with complexity, but they also beg the question, "Who decides?" People like Jens Barnett (2013)and Katie Kraft (2007) have made a good start to explore these topics, but more research is needed.

However, the issue of cultural hybridity is not just a post-conversion concern. I saw this clearly in my dissertation work among Muslim converts to Christ in the former Soviet Union. The people in that study are what we call *Russified* Muslims. And I found that understanding their particular form of cultural hybridity was crucial to understanding what conversion and discipleship meant to them.

To view their culture as only Muslim masks the very significant part of their heritage rooted in Russian society. On the other hand, to focus on linguistics, that is to reduce them to simply another kind of Russian speaker, ignores the impact of growing up with even one foot in the Umma. The hybrid nature of their identity affected everything from evangelism, to conversion, to discipleship.

I distinctly remember the story of one Kazakh man. He grew up in a very non-religious home. He went to Russian schools and Russian was his first and most fluent language. He was led to Christ by another Kazakh, but later someone took him and his wife to a Russian-speaking missionary church. They attended that church for over a year, yet in retrospect he said:

> Of course, the Christians in that church smiled and were nice, and I liked that, but I couldn't go any further with them. They had their own world and I felt like I came from another world … They could not understand the difference between saying "Yesus" (Russian) and "Isa" (Kazakh) for me, especially since I knew they were the same person. So [they] were worried and suspicious of me.

The people around him were "worried and suspicious" because they did not understand that although he seemed to fit into Russian society just fine, there was a whole other side to his cultural identity. It is a classic case of what happens when a flat, two-dimensional missiology runs into the complexity of cultural hybridity.

There has been a beginning toward missiogical reflection on these pre-conversion hybrid identities. For example, at last year's ISFM Michael Rynkiewich presented a paper about peoples in the diaspora (2013). Although I disagree with

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e need people doing careful research into how the fusion of global pop culture with traditional Arab identity is affecting perceptions of the gospel, not just looking for quick new ways of using social media.

some of his conclusions, he did open up some important points for this conversation we should be having.

We need to be discussing how growing up as a Guajarati, but in the context of Los Angeles, might influence someone's conversion to Christ and subsequent discipleship. We need people doing careful research into how the fusion of global pop culture with traditional Arab identity is affecting perceptions of the gospel, not just looking for quick new ways of using social media.

The missions community needs to wrestle with this issue of cultural hybridity in all its forms, both pre- and post-conversion. Yes, the nuance and complexity of it can be frustrating, but that is just part and parcel of doing mission in our globalized world.

Anthropological Representation

Now I would like to tease out something that was not exactly explicit in Dr. Adeney's presentation, but it seems to me is implicit in her thinking. This is something the literature refers to as "anthropological representation," which is the way we use rhetoric and voice to shape people's perception of the cultures we describe.

A few years ago Daniel Varisco wrote a book entitled *Islam Obscured* (2005). In it he argues that most ethnographic writing is filled with *researchers* telling us what people say or do, and contains very little of what they themselves actually have to say. Thus, we end up with a view of people that is highly filtered by the researcher's perceptions of them.

At times I worry about this same problem in mission, a problem I would call missiological mis-representation. I am concerned that we often give the church back home carefully filtered perceptions of other peoples and cultures rather than honest representations of them.

For example, I constantly hear the word "Evangelical" used to describe the new, vibrant churches emerging on mission frontiers. I have a problem with this. I would argue that the term "evangelical" was coined for a certain kind of Protestant church which emerged to revive the faith of nominal Christians in a certain kind of nominal Christian society. Thus, when we apply it to young churches in somewhere like Uzbekistan, it is more an act of filtering for our audience's sake, than of accurate missiological representation.

During the years my family lived in Central Asia there was a push to develop national evangelical alliances in various post-Soviet countries. Many of the former Muslim church leaders in those organizations are my friends. I have spent

hours drinking tea and talking with these men on a wide range of theological topics. I am convinced that all of them are sound biblically, but as an anthropologist I would call few of them "evangelical." They and their churches are simply too different to place in the same category as my home church in Arkansas.

Nevertheless, missionaries often use this warm and familiar term because it is so much easier than struggling to give a truly authentic picture of the other. But accurate missiological representation is important for many reasons. One reason is that it helps move us from an orthodoxy built exclusively on Western theological ideas towards one that is informed by a globally-shared faith. Mission anthropology should help us paint accurate pictures, not just palatable ones.

Conclusion

So here we stand forty years after the sea change in mission brought by Lausanne '74. Dr. Adeney made a strong case that culture still matters in mission. As she said so well, it matters because "it keeps us seeing humans as humans; not projects, not souls to be saved, but humans created in the image of God." Or as an MBB in Central Asia once told me, "I am so tired of being some missionary's 'project.'" Paying attention to culture helps us fight this tendency, and for this reason it will continue to play a major role in Christian mission until we stand before the throne of the Lamb, and mission is no more. **IJFM**

Gene Daniels (pseudonym) and his family spent twelve years working with Muslims in Central Asia. He continues to focus on the Muslim world, now primarily through research and training. Daniels has a doctorate in Religious Studies from the University of South Africa.

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Book Reviews

Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants, by Sunil S. Amrith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013, pp. 1-285, 287-353.

—*Reviewed by Michael Rynkeiwich*
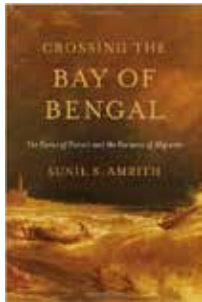
Between the Global (everyone's favorite concept) and the Local (the place where the narrative hits the road) lie several levels of organization such as the national (on its way out, but still a force). Lost in the rush among missiologists to leverage globalization and diaspora for mission is an old and still significant force called "regionalization." The region has its own dynamics, economy, politics, migration, order, and opportunities for mission. Understanding the region is a missional task. After all, was not Mediterraneanization the context for the spread of the gospel in the first centuries of the church?

The Bay of Bengal bordered now by Ceylon, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, is a region with well-worn seaways. The nations are modern, but the region is much older, fully as old as the Arabian Sea region on the other side of India, whose ports and routes are clearly described in the first century AD.

The Bay of Bengal region saw the migration of labor (especially from Ceylon and south India to Malaysia), the diffusion of products (e.g., Tamil merchants and products to Myanmar), and ideas (Islam, capitalism, Christianity). The earliest Malaysian autobiography begins with a Hadrami Arab migrating from Yemen to Ceylon where he married a Tamil Muslim woman; their children moved to Malaysia and Indonesia; and their children in turn met the Portuguese who sailed into Melaka in 1511. All the children and grandchildren were multilingual and multicultural—500 years ago. The next year, when the Portuguese druggist Tomé Pires walked the streets of Melaka, he recorded the names of 84 languages that he heard being spoken. The Portuguese did not create the network, they stumbled into a centuries old community. Globalization is no new phenomenon.

In *Crossing the Bay of Bengal,* Amrith works his way up to the present illustrating every era through Portuguese, Dutch, and then British dominance to today's independent nations. He pays little attention to Christian missions since economy and migration are his themes as he describes the ebb and flow of the Bay as an inter-connected region. However, he does address, not unexpectedly, the spread of Islam from west to east across the region, and there are lessons here to be learned. For example, he describes the conversion of the ruling family of Melaka in 1419 which
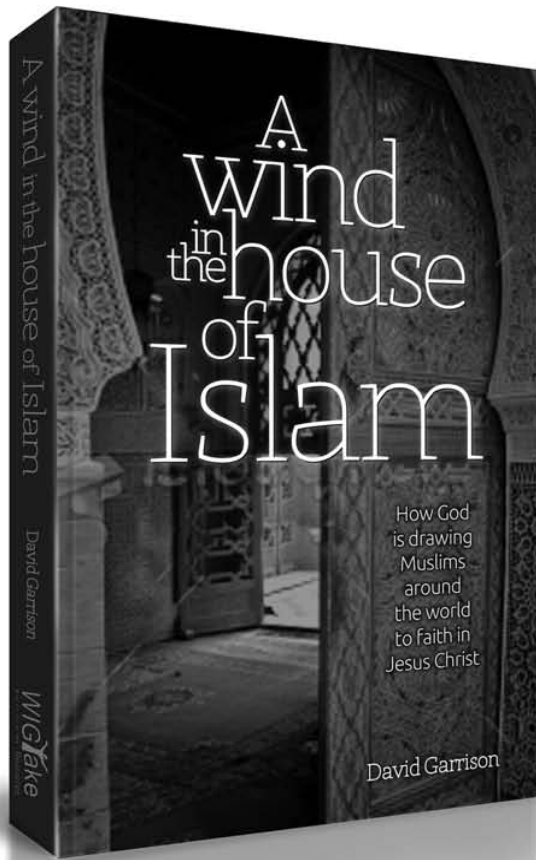
> cemented the relationship between Islam, trade, and the port polities of the Indian Ocean rim; port cities with Muslim rulers were hospitable to Muslim and non-Muslim merchants from across Asia. (p. 41)

Of what interest is this kind of book to missionaries? Every culture, every region has a history of shared understandings and embedded relationships as well as dueling narratives and ruptured visions for the future. For example, Amrith discusses the situation immediately after World War II: "New ideologies—more aggressive, more martial than before—claimed the postwar order, and few of them had room for people between homes, between countries, between journeys" (p. 214). The insight here is that, when the British Empire was in its heyday, movement was actually easier because it was "internal" in a sense. With the emergence of nation states, migration was slowed for several decades. The missionary arriving in the region in 1990 might assume that what's seen has been in place for hundreds of years, when in fact the social scene had only recently been frozen that way. As the new era of globalization after 1990 reveals new opportunities for migration and diaspora, we can now see that it isn't new at all, but a revival of old pathways. That means that there is much more depth to the beliefs and behaviors one encounters in the streets of Melaka or Penang or Chittagong today than imagined, a depth that must be understood if the gospel is to be heard in words and actions that local people understand.

There are not enough books like Amrith's available, and certainly not enough of these kinds of studies being carried out by doctoral students in Missiology. Fortunately, there are some works about labor migration in the Arabian Sea region. Two worthwhile reads are:

Andrew M. Gardner, *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, (2010).

Abdulhadi Khalaf, Omar AlShehabi, and Adam Hanieh, editors, *Transit States: Labour, Migration and Citizenship in the Gulf.* London: Pluto Press, (2015). **IJFM**

In Others' Words

Editor's note: In this department, we highlight resources outside of the IJFM: *other journals, print resources, DVDs, web sites, blogs, videos, etc. 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. Finally, please note that this April–June 2015 issue is partly composed of material created later in 2015. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience caused by such anachronisms.*

Is the Term "Unengaged Peoples" Just a Mobilization Gimmick?

Here's the link if you missed the provocative article by Ted Esler in the April 2015 *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* called "The Unengaged: An Engaging Strategy… or Not?" One of Esler's bones of contention is that "in defining unengaged, there is an unstated assumption that full-time missionaries are the only (or at least best) way to reaching the people group." Paul Eshleman notes that some may have mistakenly thought "full-time workers" in this definition meant expatriate workers. In "A 'Straw-man' Case?" he points out:

> 1,213 new people groups have been engaged since 2006… Nearly 295 churches and organizations have sent out 14,810 full-time workers and are coordinating the ministry of 47,514 bi-vocational workers and part-time workers. *Of these workers, 96% are nationals from the country of the UUPG [Unengaged Unreached People Group].* (Italics ours)

For the historical roots of the 50-year controversy over the very definition of unreached people group, see Greg Parson's article "Will the Earth Hear His Voice?" in *IJFM* 32:1.

Crowdsourcing Bible Translations

> Most of the men in the room had, up until recently, been bomb-makers, special operatives, and senior leaders of terrorist networks in the Middle East. Now, as disciples of Jesus, they had been appointed by their church leaders to translate the Bible.

When movements to Christ are multiplying fast, how do you disciple new believers quickly enough to prevent syncretism and the rise of cults? Surely access to excellent translations in mother tongue languages is critical. The newest *Mission Frontiers* (Sept/Oct 2015) takes up the theme of Bible translation and technology with its cover story "Setting the Scriptures Free in a Digital Age."

The Impact of the Explosion of Christianity in Nigeria

From a book review in *Books and Culture*, July 2015, comes a penetrating analysis by Philip Jenkins entitled "The Nigerian Jihad." In his critique of the book *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamic Insurgency* by Virginia Comolli, Jenkins commends her for her excellent historical research, but notes there is strategic information missing: data about the growth of Christianity in Nigeria over the past century—data that he feels helps explain why Islamic insurgencies have surfaced.

> We are in fact dealing with a religious revolution among Christians as well as Muslims. Back in 1900, the lands that became Nigeria had a population of some 15 million, of whom 25 to 30 percent were Muslim. Christians at that point scarcely existed, representing perhaps one percent of the whole, but they grew explosively over the following decades. By 1970, Muslims had grown to perhaps 45 percent of Nigeria's population, roughly the same proportion as Christians, and that rough parity continues today in a country with over 180 million people. Complicating this picture is that the religious groups are not equally distributed: the north of the country is chiefly Muslim, the east largely Christian… Now look at this transformation from the standpoint of northern Muslims. A hundred years ago, it seemed obvious that the whole region was naturally destined to be Muslim… History was clearly moving in an Islamic direction. By the end of the 20th century, though, growth, progress, and wealth were badges of the emerging Christian Nigeria, and aggressive evangelism even threatened to make inroads into the Islamic heartland.

Update on the Disappearance of Christianity in the Middle East

In the Spring 2015 issue, we mentioned the catastrophic demolition of world heritage sites and the murder of many Assyrian Christians on the part of ISIS. Fast forward to August 2015, and we have more daunting footage of the destruction of irreplaceable temples in Palmyra, the beheading of one of the foremost (Syrian) archaeologists in the 21st century, and the abduction of hundreds more Assyrian Christians in Syria. In an excellent article in the *New York Times*, July 22, entitled "Is This the End of Christianity in the Middle East?" author Eliza Grizwold puts faces and names to genocide. She also recounts a haunting history of Christian presence in the Middle East. Bookmark it.

Geopolitical Risk Predictions

Crisis plans, sudden missionary expulsions, kidnappings, or murders—geopolitical risks are rising and mission agencies are having to adapt. In its May 2015 issue, the *Atlantic* has an article entitled "The Disintegration of the World." Primarily focusing on what this means for large corporations, the author quotes Ian Bremmer, an expert in the assessment of global political risks, who characterizes our time as

> a period of geopolitical creative destruction—the glue that is holding the world together no longer sticks. The last time this happened was the end of World War II. The level of geopolitical risk as a consequence of this transition—which is just starting—is absolutely going to be a big deal. **IJFM**

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On the World Christian Movement

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Articles in IJFM 32:2	Related Perspectives Lesson and Section			
	Lesson 5: Unleashing the Gospel (B)	*Lesson 10: How Shall They Hear? (C)*	*Lesson 11: Building Bridges of Love (C)*	*Lesson 14: Pioneer Church Planting (S)*
The Cultural Insider, Theological Outsider (CITO): A Conversation with Abu Jaz (pp. 61–67)	X	X	X	X
Will the *Umma* Veto SITO? Assessing the Impact of Theological Deviation on Social Acceptability in Muslim Communities Fred Farrokh (pp. 69–80)		X	X	X
The Complexity of Insiderness Warrick Farah (pp. 85–91)	X	X	X	X
Why Cultures Matter Miriam Adeney (pp. 93–97)		X	X	