

Linking Missiology

# Letting Africa Speak: Exploring the Analogy of African-Initiated Churches and Insider Movements

by Gene Daniels and Stan Nussbaum

---

*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.*

*Stan Nussbaum, Staff Missiologist at GMI Research Services, has been involved with indigenous African church movements since 1979 when he began his doctoral study at the University of South Africa with M. L. Daneel and David Bosch. He was recruited by Harold Turner for teaching in Birmingham, England, at a research center devoted to the study of such movements. For almost two decades he edited the Review of AICs, a journal for specialist practitioners in this field. With three international colleagues he authored Mission in an African Way, reflecting on how African movements see and carry out their mission.*

Insider movements are raising a host of contentious issues for God's people working in the Muslim world,<sup>1</sup> and a vigorous debate continues to unfold. The normal framework for this debate has been to compare the faith and practice of these insider movements (IMs) to the early church model during and soon after the New Testament period. Many field workers and missiologists invoke this "Jesus movement" from Judaism into a Greek world as a single comparison for these movements today. While this early church correlation has been chosen for various reasons, it is most often the only one offered simply because missionaries have had no other model with which to compare them. Unfortunately, the singularity of this comparison has severely constricted the discussion, and we believe it's preventing an understanding of these insider movements that is robust enough to be theologically sound.

Furthermore, when we limit ourselves to this one comparison, we routinely overlook the possibility of a third model that could contribute greatly to our insight and evaluation. What if there were another time and place in history where "Greeks" became Jesus-followers en masse without adopting the cultural-religious package of the gospel messengers? What if we had another distinct Christian tradition to which we could compare insider movements, something well established and widely studied which offered multiple parallels? Would a different framework for consideration help alleviate some of the contention?

We believe there is a third option, hitherto unexplored because of the geographical and academic distance between different missiological fields—the Muslim World and sub-Saharan Africa. We wish to suggest some helpful comparisons and contrasts between insider movements and the African-Initiated Churches (AICs). These AICs rarely if ever come up as a point of reference in the evaluation of IMs, for seldom is someone familiar with both of the models. This article will attempt to overcome this predicament through

the combined experiences of two authors who happen to be friends: Daniels, a worker in the Muslim world, and Nussbaum, an expert on African-Initiated Churches.<sup>2</sup>

For the past century or so, in a wide variety of contexts across Africa, an incredibly broad spectrum of these African-Initiated Churches has emerged, ranging from the multi-million member ones like the Zion Christian Church of South Africa, the Kimbanguists of Congo, and the several Aladura movements in Nigeria, to thousands of tiny denominations, some consisting of just one congregation of fifteen to twenty people meeting in the home of their self-appointed “archbishop.”

These vastly differing movements have presented many of the same challenges to foreign missionaries and local Christians in older churches that insider movements are now presenting in the Muslim World today:

- Are they Christian at all?
- Are they “Christianity on the cheap,” allowing locally valued but unbiblical practices for the sake of acceptance? Is this syncretism or valid contextualization?
- If they are real Christians, why can’t they just join existing churches? What is their problem?

The difference between these challenges in Africa and the Muslim World is that in the African case, we have the benefit of a century of missiological hindsight. Issues that look totally new in the Muslim World actually have a long and complex history of debate in an African context.<sup>3</sup> Even though Africa and the Muslim World differ in important ways, the current discussion in the Muslim World can benefit from considering some of the parallels and their implications.

A major caution for us as we consider insider movements is to note the way the evaluation of African-Initiated Churches has shifted over time. For example, AIC drumming and dancing were rejected as pagan a century ago but now are seen as

essential by most of the churches that rejected them earlier. Roland Allen in his 1912 classic, *Missionary Methods*, had already raised the question very poignantly:

Our missions are in different countries amongst people of the most diverse characteristics, but all bear a most astonishing resemblance one to another. . . . There has been no new revelation. There has been no new discovery of new aspects of the Gospel, no new unfolding of new forms of Christian life. . . . There was a day when we rather . . . prided ourselves upon the fact that no strange elements had produced new and perhaps perplexing developments of Christian thought and life. But today . . . we desire to see Christianity established in foreign climes putting on



a foreign dress and developing new forms of glory and of beauty (Allen, 1912, quoted in Nussbaum, 2003).

This is saying, in effect, “Why don’t AICs exist? If the gospel is the gospel, they should be popping up somewhere.” They were just beginning to take root in southern Africa when Allen wrote but were scorned for several decades by people who had not taken Allen to heart.

About a century later, another Allan (Anderson), one of the foremost authorities on African-Initiated Churches, dares to write from a staunch evangelical perspective that AICs are,

living, radical experiments of an indigenized Christianity that has consciously rejected Western

ecclesiastical models and forms of being Christian. (2008, 5)

Although insider movements are not an identical phenomenon, it is not hard to see how Anderson’s description might reference some of them as well.

We believe there might be great benefit to introducing the AIC phenomenon into the current discussion and debate—especially in its application to insider movements in the Muslim world. In this paper we will explore some of the ways that insider movements in the Muslim world are both similar to and different from African-Initiated Churches. We will also suggest some implications for our understanding of IMs, in the hope that this analogy might reshape how we think and talk about these movements.

We assume that readers will be familiar with the basic contours of the insider movement controversy;<sup>4</sup> however, we also assume that those who are will not be as conversant with the African-Initiated Church phenomenon. In order to survey and understand the rather large body of knowledge collected about AICs over the past fifty years, we will begin with a four-part typology of AICs developed by Harold Turner,<sup>5</sup> a scholar who became fascinated with African-Initiated Churches while teaching religious studies at a Nigerian university in the late 1950s. He later founded a specialized research center on this phenomenon at the University of Birmingham (England) where he mentored one of the authors of this article (Stan).

### *Turner’s Crucial Category Distinctions*

Turner’s great contribution to this field of study was a typology of religious interaction movements that have occurred globally as a world (or missionary) religion entered the space previously dominated by a single traditional (tribal, primal) religion. Some indigenously people will leave their religion

and join the missionary's church, but often others will start religious movements of their own. For these movements, Turner introduced the four categories of *neo-primal*, *synthetist*,<sup>6</sup> *Hebraist*,<sup>7</sup> and *independent church*.<sup>8</sup>

Note at the outset that even though these categories are academic distinctions, they are made not for academic purposes, but deliberately practical because of their huge implications for the way that mainstream Christians relate to various categories of new religious movements in these settings. If they are not distinguished, all four are tarred and feathered with the same brush (and rejected), thus unnecessarily dividing the true Body of Christ. By rejecting the entire phenomenon, mainstream Christians actually separate themselves from one of the four types, the independent churches, that they would have embraced had they understood the distinctions better. That one type, and only that one, is what this article will refer to as the African-Initiated Churches.

Also, note that the label "insider movements" does exactly what Turner was warning against—it lumps all the categories together. We are digging into Turner because we believe the IM debate can benefit if we distinguish different kinds of insider movements by adopting his categories.<sup>9</sup>

Turner's constant emphasis was to consider the *intentions* of the movements when categorizing them. He identified three different intentions at work in these four types of movements: first, an intent to revitalize the traditional religion to counter the new Christian threat (neo-primal movements); secondly, an intent to create a new mix of Christian and traditional primal religious culture (synthetist movements); third, an intent to break with traditional, primal religion and become Christian—and this intent was represented in both the Hebraist movements and the independent churches (Turner 1997).<sup>10</sup>

*If the categories are not distinguished, all four are tarred and feathered with the same brush, thus unnecessarily dividing the true Body of Christ.*

The first two categories and their respective intentions are obviously outside the bounds of biblical faith. The term AICs should never have been understood to include movements from the first two categories, although at the popular level it often does. The distinction between the other two categories was a matter of theological judgment by outsiders. So-called "Independent churches" (more properly called AICs) passed the Christian theological test and were welcomed as fellow Christians, while the Hebraists are much more problematic. They intend and claim to be biblical but in the judgment of most Christians they fail to be so. Yet we must recognize that among African movements the distinction is not always so clear. There are Hebraists who are heterodox—that is they *almost* qualify as churches—and then there are AICs who share some characteristics with Hebraists but still fit within a generous biblical orthodoxy. This is why Turner believed the issue needed more missiological reflection. The tendency was to lump both categories together as Hebraists, and to fail to see that a large proportion of them actually belonged in an independent church category. It seems to us that a similar kind of overgeneralization is common in discussions about insider movements.

Going back to Turner's typology, we should be clear that as a theologian he was not a pluralist; he was not prepared to ignore nor excuse the unorthodox theologies of new movements.<sup>11</sup> As a theologian he would call a spade a spade, and theological failing was recognized as error. But as a scholar committed to the study of religion from a phenomenological perspective, he cautioned outsiders not to assume truth to be error just because they could not recognize it in unfamiliar cultural trappings. In

other words, Turner realized that many of the African movements were attempting to restructure the centuries-old, missionary-defined relationship between Christianity and African-ness. Turner's typology is an assessment of the African experience in what Andrew Walls has called the "serial transmission of the gospel": throughout history the gospel must "continuously enter into the vernacular culture and interact with it, or it withers and fades" (2005, 29). And it is this very point, the vigor or withering of gospel transmission, which suggests commonalities in the dynamics of African and insider movements that should help us in our evaluation of these newer IMs.

### *Similarities between African and Insider Movements*

To begin, we are not suggesting that all of Turner's categories have clear parallels within insider movements in the Muslim world; however, we do believe there are important similarities even if some of them are hiding a bit under the surface. A good example of this is the neo-primal category. While it does not have a parallel with IMs among Muslims, Turner's focus on motivation opens a very interesting space to be explored. Neo-primal movements are reactionary. They occur when a primal (or ethnic) religion has encountered a foreign, evangelistic religion, when that ethnic religion has reacted to the foreign religion, and when the primal or ethnic religion has then taken on new forms that will reinforce its ethnic identity as a defense against a religious invader.

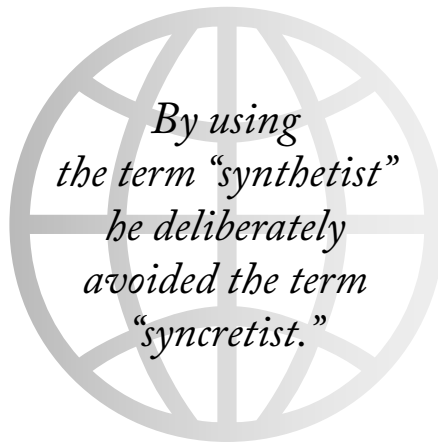
It is not hard to imagine a similar factor in the development of an insider movement, even those that are biblically sound. While this is yet to

be researched across a large sample, there are already a few examples of IMs which developed as a reaction against alien religious forms, such as in my (Daniels') interview with the East African insider, Abu Jaz (2013).

Turner's second category of intent describes those new movements which were attempting to synthesize religions, or in the case of IMs, those which might be trying to somehow reconcile the contradictions between two distinctly different religions that still share significant overlap—Islam and Christianity. But by using the term “synthetist” he deliberately avoided the term “syncretist.” Turner was trying to steer away from the more loaded theological judgment and develop a phenomenological classification. That said, in our comparisons on this point we are not restricted to Turner's phenomenological approach. We would feel it essential to recognize the obvious reality that *some* insider movements will tend towards the syncretistic. This is nothing new in Christianity throughout history, since various levels and kinds of syncretism have plagued new churches and church movements from the very beginning. Nor is it strictly a problem on the frontiers of mission. One is reminded that mature and established American churches can easily fuse with the American cult of wealth and prosperity. This syncretistic tendency is clearly indicated and addressed head-on in those New Testament epistles to the (church-planting) movements in places like Galatia (chapters 3 and 4) and Colossae (chapter 2).

The main advantage in acknowledging the potential problem of syncretism in some insider movements is that it helps us avoid a binary—right or wrong—dichotomy when discussing them. Turner's analysis of African-Initiated Churches reminds us that there will be a spectrum within the IM world, and that some movements will actually be syncretistic.

However, this raises a tangential but valuable point about the term “syncretism” that is worth briefly pursuing. This term seems to be used in different ways by different schools of thought in missiology. For those who lean more toward theological studies, the term has a pejorative connotation which indicates that something is heretical or sub-Christian. However, for those who lean toward the social sciences, syncretism is a somewhat neutral term that refers to the mixing of religious concepts that naturally results from cultural contact (Mullins 2001 in Richard 2015, 368). Thus, even when strong advocates of insider movements recognize the inevitability of syncretism (Lewis 2015, 543), they



are not necessarily talking about the exact same thing as their detractors. Perhaps the colloquial term “damnable heresy” would be helpful to clarify the differences in usage between the two camps, but this is beyond the scope of this article.

Perhaps the most appropriate and important commonality between African and insider movements is the third intent, which represents the attempt of believers to redefine the interplay of religion and culture. These movements which have sprung up across Africa affirm the ability to maintain their cultural identity while having a new religious loyalty to Jesus. Turner used the term “Hebraist” for this kind

of group because of the affinity that many Africans displayed toward the Hebrew patterns of life typified in the Old Testament. Obviously “Hebraist” would have a negative connotation for many believers from a Muslim background, so we would suggest a shift in terminology when associating this orientation to Islamic contexts. Perhaps “Semitic” might be a more accurate way to capture the essence of the majority of insider movements among Muslims. Like the “Hebraist” in Turner's typology, the term “Semitic” emphasizes the commonality these groups sense with the Semitic ethos of the Bible.<sup>12</sup> By using “Semitic” rather than “Islamic” we clarify that we are not indicating that these believers intend to continue in the religion of Muhammad. We would note that the practical expression this commonality takes is quite different between African and insider movements. In the case of the AICs, the believers often coin new ceremonies or institutions from biblical material, whereas for insiders in Muslim contexts this commonality is more of an affinity for, and a sense of affirmation by, the cultures depicted in the Bible.

Because most of us are vastly removed from these Semitic values and patterns of life, we need to remember Turner's advice and give this careful missiological reflection before making any judgments. As outsiders, it is easy to miss important nuances of difference between groups who are almost biblical (heterodox) and those that are truly biblical, but just in ways with which we are unfamiliar.

The most recent scholarship on insider movements seems to confirm this line of thinking. While never specifically using this term “Semitic” in the way we suggest, the new compendium *Understanding Insider Movements* argues for a deep, even intrinsic connection between Islam and the Jewish/Semitic faith (Talman & Travis 2015). In this volume, Talman devotes an entire

chapter to the relationship between insider movements and Old Testament theology, and Woodberry goes so far as to state that Islam is an Arab contextualization of Jewish monotheism (412). Obviously, not all Muslims are ethnically Semitic peoples, but it's important to recognize that the meta-narrative and universal cultural markers of Islam are clearly Semitic. Many believers who turn to Christ inside a Muslim people group will resonate with this Semitic ethos when reading the Bible. Their cultural filters are distinct from our Western cultural filters.<sup>13</sup> The implications of this are so huge we feel we can only scratch the surface in this article. Consider the following contentious issue as one example.

Many insider movements advocates have originally pointed to similarities between insiders and Messianic Jews (Travis 2000), which has in turn caused some opponents of IMs to accuse them of giving the religion of Islam a status similar to that of Judaism (McKeon 2014). However, by identifying IMs as Semitic instead of Islamic we could shift the perspective on this perceived similarity and encourage more objectivity on a highly-charged theological point. By recognizing that both spring from a common meta-cultural framework, perhaps both would agree on this: that both the modern Messianic Jewish movement and IMs are in their own ways a reaction to the lack of Semitic cultural values in the Evangelical Church, even though those values are present in the Bible.

This reaction parallels that of primal religious Africans when they realized that physical healing power and visionary experiences, both very prominent in African culture, were equally so in the Bible—but nearly totally absent in mission-initiated churches. The Africans resonated more strongly with the Bible than with the mission-initiated churches which looked sub-biblical from their African cultural perspective on power.

## **B**oth African movements and IMs usually emerge in the context of power cultures. Dreams and visions often play a significant role.

Also, one of the reasons both the Hebraist and the insider Semitic movements tend to develop is because neither of them identify with nor trust the Christian establishment (the churches of Christendom). It looks and feels like the unbiblical imposition of a foreign culture. In the case of the African movements, the source of this foreignness was the white missionaries. In the case of IMs, the sense of foreignness comes more often from the cultural distance between the language and ritual of a previously established Christian group in the host society and the new movement of believers from a Muslim background. For example, in Egypt, the Coptic church worships in the Coptic language—a language not even known by most Egyptians. African and insider movements alike regard that foreignness as a ball and chain that ought not to slow down the beautiful feet of those who bring good news.

A final point of commonality seems to be that both African and insider movements usually emerge in the context of power cultures<sup>14</sup>—dreams and visions often play significant roles in the beginning of these movements. Such supernatural encounters on the part of leaders project a charismatic rather than textual authority. These supernatural powers perhaps give leadership the confidence needed to launch new movements. As a general rule, this similarity to sub-Saharan African cultures exists in those contexts where folk Islam is strongest. Thus insider movements in folk Islamic settings may be expected to more closely parallel African-Initiated Churches than those IMs in more orthodox settings.

### *Points of Divergence between African and Insider Movements*

Although the thrust of this paper is to evaluate the potential similarities between African and insider movements,

our arguments would be superficial and even specious if we did not at least briefly touch on some of the contextual limits of this analogy. We suggest a few more obvious distinctions between these movements below:

1. African movements developed in a regional and ethnic context where an animistic religion involved the placating of spirits, and sometimes idolatry, whereas orthodox Islam is both monotheistic and universal.<sup>15</sup>
2. African movements have a strong element of anti-colonialism, whereas insider movements do not demonstrate this feature, *per se*.<sup>16</sup>
3. African movements make an open break with their previous religious identity<sup>17</sup> (African traditional religion) whereas insiders do not, because for them Islam is a cultural as well as a religious identity.
4. AICs and Hebraist movements in Africa set up formal church structures with names, offices, memberships, etc., and they see these institutions as alternate structures running parallel to the Christian churches identified with Christendom.

This list is not exhaustive, nor is it surprising. But our assertion is that while African and insider movements share significant commonalities, they do not display identical realities in different religious contexts. Major distinctions do exist. Nevertheless, we believe the commonalities detailed earlier in this paper are broad and deep enough to warrant a fresh new lens on insider movements, even one that perhaps might generate a new way of talking about them.

### *Insider-Initiated Ecclesias*

Our initial consideration of these parallels between African and insider movements has brought into sharp focus a problem with current terminology. Despite the fact that advocates have consistently argued to the contrary, the term “movements” seems to project—to us at least—an absence of locally gathered believers. This is unfortunate, since current field research in Africa indicates insider movements include a multiplicity of locally gathered fellowships of believers (Naja 2015). This terminology of “movements” is a serious problem that we believe unfairly prejudices many against insider movements that are actually quite biblical in their ecclesiology. Therefore, we propose a change of terminology to better reflect the patterns of faith in some of the groups in question—Insider-Initiated Ecclesias (IIEs).

Like all new terms, IIE may sound strange to the ear at first, but it might help dispel this unfortunate ambiguity. This new term makes it clear that the kind of insiders we are talking about are neither cowards trying to avoid detection and persecution from Muslim religious authorities nor naïve believers who think they can be primarily Muslims (in the full religious sense of the word) and only secondarily followers of Jesus. On the contrary, our point is that most IMs do consist of gatherings in ways that fit the biblical ideal of “called out ones.” Like all other believers, they are called out of darkness (1 Pet 2:9); and yet these insider believers, like most of those reading this article, do not feel that “called out-ness” means leaving their culture or society, but rather involves living a noticeably different life within it.

Some advocates of insider movements such as Rebecca Lewis have argued that many insider gatherings are close approximations of the extended Greco-Roman *oikos* (family unit), which was a fairly common early church pattern (Lewis, 2008). This new term

makes it explicit that those movements that gather under this rubric of *oikos* do, in fact, practice a form of gathering comparable to the biblical *ecclesia*, even if it is vastly different from Western models. Furthermore, this focus on the gathering of believers is consistent with the earliest discussions of insiders in the missiological literature. In his seminal article on the subject, “The C1 to C6 Spectrum,” John Travis offers a descriptive spectrum which

compares and contrasts types of “Christ-centered *communities*” (groups of believers in Christ) found in the Muslim world [emphasis ours]. (1998)

Although Travis and others have repeatedly tried to define the ecclesial nature of these insider movements,



a new terminology such as Insider-Initiated Ecclesias would make the issue of community more explicit. By simply appropriating a Greek word which is already part of our theological vocabulary, we can also avoid the entire debate about what exactly constitutes a church. It keeps the focus on the typical Pauline usage of *ecclesia* to indicate a local assembly or gathering of believers in Christ.

Of course not everything happening under the umbrella of the term insider movements will fit well with the term Insider-Initiated Ecclesias—and this is to be anticipated in a typology of movements. We propose to retain the term insider movements for the whole

spectrum but apply this new term to only one certain type of movement, the type that parallels the African-Initiated Churches in Turner’s typology. These would be the insiders we recognize and relate to as fellow members of the Body of Christ. Of course, we may still have some theological debates with them, but they will be akin to the debates between Presbyterians and Methodists, not between evangelicals and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

We believe that refining our categorization of insider movements, using the label Insider-Initiated Ecclesias for only some of them, is a good first attempt to establish some biblical boundaries without trying to force-fit groups into Western ideas of church. Gatherings of IIEs may be almost unrecognizable to outsiders as church services, for they may be daily rather than weekly, or they may be comprised of extended family groups rather than community groups; but, they will define the life of the group and its members in locally appropriate ways.

### *Conclusions*

In his landmark book, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, David Barrett described African-Initiated Churches as “the product of African spirituality stripped of support from other cultures,” a Christian way of life which expresses biblical theology in ways that are unfamiliar to Westerners (1968, 163). In this article we have asserted that insider movements in the Muslim world are doing much the same. To substantiate that claim we explored some of the commonalities between African and insider movements, three of which stand out:

- They both assert that religion and culture are separable, i.e., one can remain a loyal member of a society or culture without believing or practicing 100% of the religion traditionally associated with that culture.
- They both have what we might call a transitional zone where believers are attempting to redefine the

relationship between religion and culture as they affirm a new religious loyalty to Jesus.

- Many adherents of both African and insider movements have a deep affinity for Hebraic or Semitic patterns of life and thought. This suggests that rather than thinking about IMs maintaining Islamic culture, it might be more accurate to say that they are preferential to Semitic traditions and forms. As with many Hebraist movements, and especially many AICs, this preference causes them to read the Bible through a very different lens than most Western Christians.

In light of several points raised in the article, we suggest it is time to stop approaching insider movements as a single category. We might need to generate a more accurate typology in the spirit of Turner, and this seems promising with the increase of field research among these movements. We would suggest that a good first step in this direction could be the use of a new term “Insider-Initiated Ecclesias.” This term frames such groups within biblical orthodoxy and better captures their “gatheredness” without misrepresenting them as following the patterns of “church” with which we are familiar in the West.

As is obvious by now, the authors take a generally positive view of what is usually referred to as insider movements in the Muslim world. However, that does not mean we advocate an uncritical acceptance of everything which has been presented under that rubric. Rather, this article should be seen as an attempt to offer an historical analogue from Africa through which to reanalyze IMs. In so doing, we hope to bring a new perspective that promotes more objective discussion and analysis and that opens the door to new ways of comprehending, evaluating, and relating to what we are calling Insider-Initiated Ecclesias. This term intentionally pushes gatheredness to the forefront, thus setting them apart

**M**any adherents of African and insider movements have a deep affinity for Hebraic or Semitic patterns of life and thought.

from other IMs that are sub-biblical on this important point. It also leads us to consider how IIEs experience and articulate their mission, another area that has been profitably explored in Africa,<sup>18</sup> but is beyond the scope of this article.

Judging from the African experience, we would say that Western missionaries correctly rejected many of the sub-Christian movements, but they tended also to judge the truly biblical AICs too harshly and too quickly from the 1920s through the 1950s. This gradually shifted in the 60s, 70s, and 80s as closer investigation often revealed more true Christian substance than had been expected in the unconventional Christian practices of many African churches. Questions and concerns about some of these churches remain to this day, but they are fewer when compared to a century ago. Will this pattern of increasing discernment repeat itself with insider movements throughout the Islamic world? The African experience may offer a timely comparison. **IJFM**

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The ideas in this article are exclusively concerned with insider movements among Muslims. We neither affirm nor deny their relevance to insider movements among Hindus or Buddhists. (African traditional religion also qualifies as an “other religious tradition” and we want to assert we are indeed concerned with that tradition.) This is due to limitations of our experience: the lead author (Daniels) is reflecting on almost 20 years of involvement in ministry to Muslims, and the supporting author (Nussbaum) has more than 30 years of experience in research and ministry with African indigenous churches (and only slight involvement in the Muslim World).

<sup>2</sup> The AIC acronym has been variously unpacked in the past half century. First it meant “African Independent Churches,” then some writers used “African Indigenous Churches,” then some others pushed for “African-Initiated Churches.”

<sup>3</sup> Serious study was launched with Sundkler’s classic, *Bantu Prophets*, in 1949. Barrett’s *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, 1966, analyzed the movements statistically across Africa.

<sup>4</sup> In the past several years there has been a massive amount of ink spilled about insider movements. *Understanding Insider Movements* by Talman and Travis (William Carey Library) is a major new resource on the phenomenon. Also, *IJFM* has carried some very thoughtful articles in the past, including some well-written critiques, such as Tennent (2006) and Corwin (2007).

<sup>5</sup> Harold W. Turner, *Religious Innovation in Africa: Collected Essays on New Religious Movements* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979).

<sup>6</sup> Turner deliberately avoided the word “syncretist,” feeling that it was too loaded as a theological judgment. He was trying for a phenomenological classification, that is, classification by intention, prior to any theological judgment. Theology was used only to distinguish the two types of movements that both have the intention of being Christian, that is, Hebraist movements and independent churches.

<sup>7</sup> Hebraists were so called because they resonated so closely with the Old Testament and had such difficulty comprehending the way that the Messiah’s arrival reconfigured theology and practice. For example, prohibition of pork is common among Hebraists, and animal sacrifice may be practiced as a means of thanksgiving to God.

<sup>8</sup> In the African Independent Church context, the term “independent church” has a much different connotation than it does for many in the West where the term is usually synonymous with non-denominational Protestant churches. It is a stronger term—in some cases even placing such groups independent of or outside what can properly be called Protestantism, yet clearly still within the bounds of the wider orthodoxy of the historic Church.

<sup>9</sup> Turner’s personal experience was in Africa but his typology was global, and his Centre for the Study of New Religious Movements documented the phenomena globally in great detail.

<sup>10</sup> See especially Turner, *A Typology for African Religious Movements* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979) 79–108. Also see Stan

Nussbaum, "African-Initiated Churches" in *A dictionary of Mission Theology*, ed. John Corrie (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> He was, in fact, a good friend of Lesslie Newbigin and an ardent proponent of the "gospel and Western culture" movement after retiring to his native New Zealand.

<sup>12</sup> In the case of AICs, the believers often coin new ceremonies or institutions from biblical material, whereas for insiders in Muslim contexts this commonality is more of an affinity with the cultures depicted in the Bible.

<sup>13</sup> This issue is much broader than just insider movements in Islam; it is also noticeable in Western cultural bias deeply rooted in Protestantism. For example, Martin Luther's well-known disdain for the book of James still echoes in the neglect in our Evangelical pulpits for this most Jewish of the epistles.

<sup>14</sup> In the case of African movements we might say they have all emerged in the context of power cultures since power is a fundamental aspect of African life. However, although many Muslim cultures are also very oriented toward the supernatural, it is still too early to make such a categorical statement about the development of insider movements.

<sup>15</sup> Or course there is a great deal of folk Islam that is, strictly speaking, neither universal nor monotheistic. At this point the authors do not know of any research which considers if that plays a factor in the development of insider movements, although this would be a fascinating study.

<sup>16</sup> It could be that whereas we see African movements as a reaction to actual physical, political colonialism, IMs are a reaction to the psychological "colonialism" known as globalization.

<sup>17</sup> Here the focus is on three of Turner's categories: Synthetist, Hebraist, and Independent Church.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Oduro, et al., *Mission in an African Way: A Practical Introduction to African Initiated Churches and Their Sense of Mission* (Wellington, South Africa: BibleMedia, 2007), [www.biblemedia.co.za](http://www.biblemedia.co.za).

## References

Anderson, A. H.

2008 "African Initiated Churches" In *Global Dictionary of Theology*, edited by William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Karkkainen, 5–7. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

Barrett, David B.

1968 *Schism and Renewal in Africa*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.

Corwin, Gary

2007 "A Humble Appeal to C5/Insider Movement Muslim Ministry Advocates to Consider Ten Questions." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*. vol. 24. no. 1. Spring, 5–20. Accessed March 3, 2016 at stable URL [http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/24\\_1\\_PDFs/Corwin.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/24_1_PDFs/Corwin.pdf).

Daniels, Gene

2013 "Worshipping Jesus in the Mosque." *Christianity Today*. vol. 57. no. 1. January/February. 22–27.

Hoskins, Daniel G.

2015 "Russification as a factor in religious conversion." *Culture and Religion*. vol. 16, no. 4.

Lewis, Rebecca

2008 "Insider Movements: Honoring God-Given Identity and Community." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*. vol. 21. no. 2. Spring. 16–19. Accessed June 5, 2014 at stable URL [http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/24\\_2\\_PDFs/24\\_2\\_Lewis.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/24_2_PDFs/24_2_Lewis.pdf).

2015 "Possible Pitfalls of Jesus Movements: Lessons from History" In *Understanding Insider Movements*, edited by Harley Talman and John Jay Travis. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

McKeon, Donald

2014 "A Response to Some of the Insider-Movement Leaning Articles in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th edition Textbook." Biblical Missiology website, July 28. Accessed January 6, 2016 at stable URL <http://biblicalmissiology.org/2014/07/28/part-iii-a-response-to-some-of-the-insider-movement-leaning-articles-in-perspectives-on-the-world-christian-movement-4th-ed-textbook/>.

Naja, Ben

2015 "Jesus Movement: A Case Study from Eastern Africa" In *Understanding Insider Movements*, edited by Harley Talman and John Jay Travis. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Nussbaum, Stan

2007 "African Initiated Churches" In *A Dictionary of Mission Theology*, edited by John Corrie. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

O'Brien, P. T.

1993 "Church" In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin.

Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

Richard, H. L.

2015 "Religious Syncretism as a Syncretistic Concept" In *Understanding Insider Movements*, edited by Harley Talman and John Jay Travis. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Oduro, Thomas

2007 *Mission in an African Way: A Practical Introduction to African Initiated Churches and Their Sense of Mission*. Wellington, South Africa: BibleMedia.

Tennent, Timothy C.

2006 "Followers of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, vol. 23, no. 3, Fall: 101–115. Accessed March 3, 2016 at stable URL [http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/23\\_3\\_PDFs/Tennent.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/23_3_PDFs/Tennent.pdf).

Travis, John

1998 "The C1 to C6 Spectrum." *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*. Oct.

2000 "Messianic Muslim Followers of Isa." *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, vol. 17, no. 1, Spring: 16–19. Accessed January 6, 2016 at stable URL [http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/17\\_1\\_PDFs/Followers\\_of\\_Isa.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/17_1_PDFs/Followers_of_Isa.pdf).

Turner, Harold W.

1979 *Religious Innovation in Africa: Collected Essays on New Religious Movements*. Boston: G. K. Hall.

Walls, Andrew

2005 *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.