Testing Models, Shifting Paradigms
The Foreignness Spectrum:
Toward a Local Believer's View of Contextualization

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S ince the turn of the century, missiological discussions over appropriate approaches to contextualization have frequently focused on the C1–C6 Spectrum, a comparative model developed by John Travis.[1] It was originally drafted in a context of ministry to Muslims, but like many descriptive models it has been deployed in various ways. Generally, it seems to help gospel messengers in cross-cultural settings discern a biblical expression of the faith in evangelism, worship, and daily life. This was as true for themselves as it was for the emerging communities of believers represented across that spectrum. Ranging from very Western/traditional to more contextualized forms of faith in Christ, the spectrum is often employed as a template for locating the cross-cultural worker's religious identity and praxis.

However, the C Spectrum was never intended to serve such a singular missional purpose. Quite to the contrary, Travis sought to describe the various kinds of Christ-centered communities (represented by the letter "C" in the spectrum), specifically those he had seen emerge in the country where he was living. His intent was to bring rejoicing and encouragement in the diverse ways that God was working to advance his kingdom. He trusted that all could appreciate and respect the fruit of others who followed approaches different than their own, leading to greater unity among workers. Ironically, the opposite occurred. Controversy erupted as certain mission agencies began to draw the line on what they believed to be truly biblical.

In response to the controversies surrounding this model, John and Anna Travis have explained how the C Spectrum has been misunderstood and misapplied:

1. The "C" does not represent *contextualization* but Christ-centered communities, i.e., fellowships of Jesus followers or *ekklesiae* in the Greek New Testament.
2. The C Spectrum signified how Jesus followers who were born as Muslims expressed their faith and identity; it did not suggest approaches for Christian workers serving among Muslims.[2]

3. No one point on the Spectrum was intended as the ideal for all contexts or situations.

4. The Spectrum was not all-inclusive; in-between-points as well as other combinations were possible.

5. Communities of Christ followers did not need to remain at a fixed point on the Spectrum; they could change over time.

6. The "C" described *communities* of believers, not individuals who may have more than one socioreligious identity, depending on the situation.

7. The most egregious misuse of the C Spectrum has been to wrongly impute some unbiblical Islamic beliefs or practices to C5 fellowships which are *presumed* to be characteristic, providing a straw man for criticism.[3]

As with any model, Travis acknowledges that the C Spectrum has limitations, accounting for only the language, culture, religious forms, and corporate identity of a given fellowship. Moreover, it is only able to portray approximations of any given community. Travis has clear recommendations for the use of the C Spectrum and expresses the hope that other models and tools will be developed. Thus, in accordance with these limitations and to stay within the framework of Travis' model, this article proposes a revision to it which we call the *Foreignness Spectrum.* Its primary modification is a shift from the outsider perspective to that of the local community of believers.[4]

Beyond Identity

Perhaps the most complex, confusing, and controversial aspect of the C Spectrum has resulted from the application of studies on "identity." These studies have provided further nuance, as in Barnett's examples of the different forms of individual identity: multiple, hybrid, liminal, and syncretistic.[5] Tim Green identifies these three layers of identity:

1. Core/ego identity (who I am/we are in our inner core: a new creation, in Christ, etc.)

2. Social identity (my/our various social roles: father, husband, engineer, etc.)

3. Corporate identity (Who is my group/people as distinct from other groups?)[6]

Each new and emergent community of believers will have their own view of their corporate identity. However, the way others view them is largely the outcome of how they follow the way of life of their surrounding community—culturally, religiously, and practically. The more a group departs from the norm, the more foreign it becomes. This is generally perceived by the surrounding community as an increasing degree of "weirdness." It is not that believers purposely change their identity; the message itself will change their lives and relationships so dramatically that society seeks a label to describe that change.

This paper is not primarily about the complexity of individual and group identity. Instead, it focuses on how these same Christ-centered communities perceive their customs and the

Table 1. The C1–C6 Spectrum

	C1	**C2**	**C3**	**C4**	**C5**	**C6**
Christ-Centered Community Description	A church foreign to the Muslim community in both culture and language	C1 in form but speaking the language used by Muslims, though their religious terminology is distinctively non-Muslim	C2 using non-Islamic cultural elements (e.g., dress, music, diet, arts)	C3 with some biblically acceptable Islamic practices	C4 with a "Muslim follower of Jesus" self-identity	Secret Believers, may or may not be active members in the religious life of the Muslim community
Self-Identity	"Christian"	"Christian"	"Christian"	"Follower of Isa"	"Muslim follower of Jesus"	*Privately:* "Christian," "Follower of Isa," or "Muslim follower of Jesus"
Muslim Perception	Christian	Christian	Christian	A *kind* of Christian	A *strange kind* of Muslim	Muslim

degree to which the surrounding community perceives them conforming to their society's way of life. These customs were considered in the C Spectrum, but that spectrum is based on the perspective of the Christian worker—an outsider. As outsiders, we view this spectrum of believing communities in comparison with the churches from which we came (equivalent to C1 on Travis' Spectrum—see table 1, p. 152). We can be alarmed by the emergent communities at the high end, at the more indigenous side of the Spectrum: "Those believers are way over there!" Or, we might issue prescriptive judgments like, "C3 and we'll see" or "C4 and no more."

Essentially, there must be a change of perspective from that of the C Spectrum. We want to enable the missiological community to adapt to a fresh "inside look" at the level of indigenization wrestled within these same Christ-centered communities. The Foreignness Spectrum (F Spectrum) is a new taxonomy that represents a local community's perception of the degree of foreignness of the Christ-centered community in their midst. Across this spectrum, the seminal questions that believers will ask, explicitly or implicitly, concerning their community are, "How much do we need to change to be faithful to Scripture?" "How do we manifest the reality of our repentance?" In other words, "How do we best live our lives as disciples of Jesus Christ within our community and context?" The F Spectrum is intended to be a tool that captures the indigenous perspective on this question.

Sketching the F Spectrum

We will first describe the F Spectrum in a Muslim context for easy comparison with the C Spectrum. See table 2, "The Foreignness Spectrum," p. 154. Later we will explore what various points on the Spectrum mean to a local community.

But first we should point out a complication with the description of C6 on the C Spectrum. While that Spectrum displays a consistent increase in indigenization of language, cultural-religious forms, and identity from C1–C5, the description of C6 is a mixed bag in these regards. Whereas Travis does not advocate the superiority of one point on the Spectrum as inherently superior to others, C6 is usually perceived as lamentable due to the weakness in witness and fellowship, most often due to the lack of social or religious freedom. Moreover, individual believers may actually perceive themselves as (secret) Christians, as followers of Jesus, or as Muslim Followers of Jesus, while they actually are perceived by their society as Muslim.

C6 is easy to assign as the starting point for the F Spectrum, which focuses on the degree of foreignness as perceived by the society. Because these gatherings and their witness are invisible, the surrounding society does not perceive any degree of foreignness. Hence, on the F Spectrum, the C6 is F0 because the C Spectrum and the F Spectrum are numerically inverted and proceed from opposite sides of the continuum.

Secondly, F0 does not inherently indicate deficient witness and fellowship. While oppressive and intolerant societies may require believers to abstain from public witness and gatherings, this does not assume their absence. For example, the Communist revolution in China forced the church to go "underground" and the resultant lack of visibility led the world to assume its demise. However, these hidden believers did in fact meet regularly (in secret) and relied on the Holy Spirit to guide them to discretely share their faith with those who were spiritually open. As a result, within a few decades the numerical and spiritual growth of the underground church exploded.

Here, then, is the F Spectrum applied to a Middle Eastern Muslim community:[7]

- **F0:** Believers are meeting secretly and witnessing discretely as led by the Spirit, functioning as underground Christ-centered communities. (This may differ from C6 which most understand as a catch-all category for "secret believers" who do not meet and do not share their faith). They may or may not be active members in the religious life of the non-Christian community. They exhibit no publicly observable changes that would create a perception of foreignness. These believers would be perceived by the Muslim community as Muslims, though F0 believers may privately perceive themselves variously as "Christians" or "Followers of Jesus" or "Muslim followers of Isa."

- **F1:** Christ-centered communities display a minimum, and generally tolerable, degree of foreignness, as this designation does not require rejecting any beliefs, values, practices or communal identity unless they violate Scripture and cannot be adapted or reinterpreted. Members of the body of Christ differ over what can be retained, adapted or reinterpreted.[8] The surrounding community would perceive them as a different kind of Muslim.

- **F2:** Christ-centered communities might be regarded initially, or from a distance, as "Muslim" (nominally or culturally) in some contexts due to their abiding by key, biblically acceptable, Islamic cultural practices and taboos (e.g., abstaining from pork). However, once it is discovered that they do not claim any kind of Muslim identification (such as *Muslim* Follower of Jesus") they would be perceived as a different kind of Christian.

- **F3:** These Christ-centered communities are viewed as Christian (foreign) due to their rejecting all Islamic "religious" elements, despite keeping non-Islamic cultural elements (e.g., dress, music, diet, arts).[9]

- **F4:** These Christ-centered communities speak the language used by Muslims in their community, though their religious terminology is distinctively non-Muslim. Their culture is seen as even more foreign by the Muslim community.

- **F5:** These Christ-centered communities are foreign to the Muslim community in both culture and language.

Applying the F Spectrum to an American Context

In order to enable our American readers to better appreciate the sense of foreignness which emerges in new communities of Christ followers, we would like to simulate what it is like to "stand in their shoes." Admittedly, Americans do not have a direct parallel to the Muslim *umma* (worldwide Islamic religious community) or the state religion of many Muslim countries. The nearest analogy is perhaps a kind of *civil religion* that Americans hold to. We share values that allow us freedom to worship God (or not), respect individual and human rights, be kind to children (except the unborn), and allow freedom of sexual identity and practice (except adults with minors and children). Each American has a socio-religious sensibility as to what is familiar and what is foreign.

When Americans trust Christ as Savior and Lord, they do not become any less American. Their lives are reordered and transformed by the Holy Spirit according to the word of God, but they do not automatically become foreigners to their people and culture. Yet, their encounter with Scripture requires that they face some typical questions as they associate with other believers.

- Do they have to attend a church and dress and talk like other believers?

- Must they abstain from certain activities, like viewing certain things, or attending certain events?

- While they should give up drunkenness, do they need to give up alcohol entirely?

- What music should they listen to? All Christian? Their favorite secular music? Where is the line?

- Should new American disciples of Jesus continue to recite the pledge of allegiance to the flag?

To exemplify this Foreignness Spectrum, let us imagine that a Christian from an African Independent Church without any missiological training comes to the United States to evangelize secular or nominally Christian Americans and establish a church in a predominately white, conservative, middle-class community in the deep South.[10] Depending on the attitude of the African evangelist and that of the new believers, the degree of foreignness in the new "Afro-American" church might conceivably be located anywhere along the Spectrum from F0 to F5.

- **F0:** The United States has a constitutional safeguard for religious freedom, and it is usually an asset for someone running for office to claim some form of faith, in keeping with the diversity of American civil religion. Therefore, although there are cases of public discrimination against Christian institutions, F0 might be an appropriate way for a community of believers to live in relatively rare contexts—such as where outspoken believers face rejection by their social network or persecution from secular extremists (e.g., risk losing their job for publicizing their "politically incorrect" views rooted in biblical faith). In such situations, they might not talk about their church gatherings, but would share their faith in other private settings with those who seem open to consider the gospel.

- **F1:** This type of fellowship *(ekklesia)* of American followers of Christ observably shares the customs and values of America, including its civil religion. They do, however, view themselves as somewhat different from other Americans—they are disciples of Jesus. They may be distinct in their opposition to abortion, sexual immorality, and other practices which they label as sins. Their language may exclude certain crude expletives, but they maintain the same vernacular. They feel free to consume alcohol with those

Table 2. The Foreignness Spectrum

	F5	F4	F3	F2	F1	F0
Description of Christ-Centered Community	Foreign in culture and language	Speak common language but different religious terminology Foreign in culture	Reject all Muslim "religious" elements Maintain cultural elements	Abide by key Islamic cultural practices No Muslim identification	Only reject beliefs and practices that cannot be biblically adapted Minimum foreignness	Meet secretly Witness discretely No observable foreignness
Self-Identity	"Christian"	"Christian"	"Christian"	"Follower of Isa"	"Muslim follower of Jesus"	*Privately:* "Christian," "Follower of Isa," or "Muslim follower of Jesus"
Perceived as	Christian	Christian	Christian	A kind of Christian	A kind of Muslim	Muslim

outside the faith and fully participate in tailgate parties at sporting events, but they are careful not to get drunk. They listen to the same popular music as others but add Christian music to the mix. They show their patriotism by proudly displaying American flags on national holidays and honor military personnel on certain occasions, even honoring military personnel during church services. People around them may be aware they are evangelical in certain expressions, but this is seldom a cultural or religious bar to their social acceptance.

- **F2:** Members of this form of ekklesia are careful to avoid situations where drunkenness or immoral behavior is likely to occur, including some of the most common places of recreation. They still watch sports but only with other believers. Although their dress and diet are similar to that of their neighbors, they have few non-Christian friends. However, they are still seen as community members, though significantly different from ordinary Americans. They speak against some ideas of American civil religion, but still volunteer in libraries, voting booths, and other public services. They do not often wear caps or clothing that display patriotic phrases or symbols.

- **F3:** This form of ekklesia separates itself from much of American civic life, including its civil religion. They do not participate in elections and try to find ways to avoid community activities (which they see as *worldly*). They no longer display the American flag on their houses due to its association with civil religion which they view as compromising their loyalty to the kingdom of God. Some refuse to recite the pledge of allegiance or sing the national anthem; a few even stay seated while others stand.

- **F4:** This ekklesia is like F3, and their services are in English, but these believers express their faith differently than other Americans. They imitate the distinctive Christian comportment of this African Independent churchman who came to the different cultural context of America. The church he planted remains a branch of his African denomination. In order to be good, respectable Christians like the particular denomination of their African evangelist, the newly "converted" members begin to wear fancy robes instead of their usual khakis and polo shirts. In their church worship, they incorporate African dances with drums being the only musical instruments. Shoes are removed and left outside of the sanctuary and men sit in separate sections from the women. They speak openly against American civil religion as an idolatrous system.

- **F5:** This type is like F4 in its church worship that is similar in style to that of the African mother church; however, the songs and sermon are in the African native tongue of the evangelist. Church administration and governance follow that of the mother church in Africa, with family heads automatically being elders and serving for life. The major difference in the American daughter church is that most of the faces are white, not black. Other people in the community question their sanity and their loyalty to their country.

Answering the Missiological Question: Where on the Spectrum Should New Believers Be?

In our view, the missiological principle that answers such questions is quite simple: *there is no central form of biblical faith.* Modern Western Christianity is only one valid form of our faith. It is not the central, or exclusive, form. God does not have favorite cultures. He only desires that his people be faithful to him. Therefore, we do not ask new believers to change anything unless it is required by Scripture. We tell them,

> Prayerfully study the Bible together and think carefully about your traditional ways in its light. Change what you together sense the Spirit of God is asking you to change. Altering more than that is unnecessary and can hinder your witness to the people around you.

We say this because the Bible speaks prophetically to all peoples and cultures. Beyond that, however, there is no command to give preference to the foreign ways and practices of those who brought them the gospel. New believers do not become more godly by becoming more *foreign.* This missiological principle is biblically grounded in the book of Acts, especially in chapter 15.[11] The moral aspect of the principle is laid out in 1 Corinthians 8–10 and in Romans 14. Those who turn to Christ are added to the kingdom of God but not removed from their social networks and cultural contexts. The New Testament does not demand becoming a proselyte to another religious system.[12] It does not require leaving one's socio-religious birth community, but only its sinful practices. Their lives are reordered and transformed by the Holy Spirit according to the word of God, but they need not become foreigners to their people and culture.

The command to live as "aliens and strangers in the world" (1 Pet 2:11) refers to abstaining from sinful desires, not to becoming strangers to one's community by adopting a foreign language, culture, nationality, or ethnic, social, or group identity. The only changes called for are those which enable the believers to live out their new faith in Christ on the path of holiness within their community. Such changes will result from processes similar to Paul Hiebert's critical contextualization, in which changes are made only to the extent that the original custom or its underlying beliefs were contrary to the Bible.[13] As a result, the community does not perceive that those who follow Jesus are no longer members of the community.

Furthermore, the decisions about what needs to change, how those decisions should be made, and how and when they are introduced should be left to the local community of believers—not outside workers or *alongsiders.*[14] Spirit-filled local believers intuitively recognize both the degree and the kind of change that are needed, whereas even experienced outside workers are handicapped in their understanding of local cultural dynamics. The meaning of local customs and how the biblical principles can be appropriately applied is better understood by cultural

insiders. Thus, they should be the ones making the decisions—not outside teachers who too often control the process and result. Western missionaries, especially, have a long history of paternalism that they must guard against and overcome.

While some may fear that we are advocating that outsiders abstain from any involvement in the decision-making process, we are not asserting that they have no role to play. Travis has outlined many important roles for alongsiders to play in indigenous movements.[15] Additionally, they can mentor local leaders through Hiebert's critical contextualization process. To adequately examine appropriate roles for outsiders in these decisions would require another article or a book. The main point we want to make is that while it is possible to do too little, historically, outsiders have erred in the opposite direction.

Therefore, we seek a seismic shift in the mentality of mission, manner of leadership, and method of ministry of outside workers. May they view as their greatest goal and contribution empowerment of local believers and encouragement of those leaders closest to the situation. These leaders must trust their spiritual intuitions and the insights shaped by a process of biblically informed, prayerful, Spirit-guided consensus. Depending on the context and the particular case, local leaders may seek the input, assistance, or participation of an outsider. However, these locals should ultimately be in control of this process and the decision.

Defending the Principle of Minimal Change

There is an important missiological reason for a specific underlying principle in this Spectrum. We identify it as the principle of minimal change: *The greater the change, the greater the increase in resistance to the gospel.* The reality of this principle should be self-evident to our American readers when we consider our instinctively negative reaction to the African Inland churchman planting F4 or F5 churches in America. A second witness to its truth is the widespread acceptance in mission circles of the principle of contextualization. Although there are controversies about the appropriateness of, or application to, specific issues, the need to contextualize is widely recognized. Thirdly, recent data from field workers indicates that higher numbers of movements to Christ correlate directly with higher degrees of contextualization/lower degrees of foreignness.[16]

This means that the number on the F Spectrum should not go higher—unless it is necessary for biblical faithfulness and witness or in following the leading of the Holy Spirit.[17] A local community has a common way of life and norms for righteousness that should be maintained to the degree that the Scriptures permit.

We are not asserting that one particular level of indigenization is to be promoted as the ideal for all contexts. Travis and other mainstream defenders of C5 communities have repeatedly stated the same. (Unfortunately, this has seldom been heard amid the rancorous rhetoric over the C Spectrum).

For example, F3 (C3) or F4 (C2) may reflect the desired level of indigenization of many congregations of Iranian believers—who after four decades of suffering under an oppressive and often corrupt Islamic regime, are moving away from anything associated with Islam, and multitudes of Iranians are leaving their Muslim identity. Foreign customs may still seem unnatural to them, and a foreign visitor might perceive them as still Muslim. However, while they do not conform to norms of religious life and practice, in other respects they still live as normal Iranians.

> # The underlying missiological principle in this Spectrum is one of minimal change: the greater the change, the greater the increase in the resistance to the gospel.

In addition, in some Islamic countries, varying numbers of young adults are becoming Westernized or secularized—some even rejecting any religious affiliation with Islam. For them, F3 or F4 expressions of Christianity may be their choice for new religious expression. In applying the principle of minimal change (not going higher on the F Spectrum than is necessary for biblical faithfulness), the foreignness of the church (the F level) is evaluated in terms of how different it is from their former lives (F0). The socio-religious norm of the overall society and that of Westernized subgroups are different—they vary as to their F0. So, the foreignness of F3/F4 for the larger society is only an F1 or F2 for those already Westernized subgroups. This kind of variation was noted by Travis when he developed the C Spectrum, where he observed and then formulated the different types of Christ-centered communities existing in the same Muslim society.

Applying the Model to Other Religious Contexts

This model is a useful tool for recognizing how much cultural change is being introduced, not only in American and Middle Eastern Muslim cultures, but in any culture anywhere. The specific content of each of the change levels, and even how many levels it is useful to postulate, will depend on the particular cultural area. We will illustrate this principle as well as the usefulness of the model for evaluating changes with Hinduism.

In Hindu contexts, direct parallels are particularly difficult to establish, because Hinduism is radically different from both Christianity and Islam—and also because the socio-religious breadth of Hinduism allows for an extremely high degree of variation in practices. Rather than designating Hinduism as a religion (an extremely elusive and dubious concept among academics of religious studies), some describe it is as a civilization which encompasses hundreds of religions. A very rough approximation of the F Spectrum in a typical middle-class

Hindu context, *might* look something like the paragraphs below.[18] However, particular Hindu communities may evidence more or fewer categories. We hope those who work in Hindu contexts will experiment with this model, delineate clearer categories, and refine it for further use.

- **F0:** Due to the multi-centered, pluralistic, inclusivity of Hinduism, the pressures to F0 secret, underground ekklesiae would be absent from traditional Hindu contexts. Yet functionally, most Hindu devotional meetings are "hidden in plain sight"; no one knows or cares that a new group is worshipping a new god (such as Jesus), for they just hear the familiar devotional sounds. However, where Hindu extremism is resurgent, the association of Jesus with a foreign religion could provide pressure on a more familiar indigenous type of worship gathering.[19] Where pressured to participate in temple rituals, these Hindu disciples of Christ, like Naaman in 2 Kings 5:18, may bow down in front of idols, but their hearts are not engaged, and they pray for the day when such practice is no longer deemed wise or necessary.

- **F1:** Hindu disciples of Jesus who hold Christ-centered meetings use Hindu forms and terms whereby Hindus understand and appreciate the atmosphere of the meetings. These disciples of Christ also participate in family festivals and functions where other deities are acknowledged, based on a clear understanding that their involvement and appreciation for the event is due to love and respect for family, not for other gods (many secular Hindus also participate in exactly this way). Hindu disciples of Jesus will be interested in their familial traditions in ways that few other Hindus are, and will respectfully study Hindu texts from their (and other Hindu) traditions, while recognizing the centrality of the Bible for faith and life in Christ.

- **F2:** Believers refrain from bowing down to idols but uphold the Hindu cultural ideal of honoring parents by accompanying them into a temple as they worship. F2 believers refer to themselves as (Hindu) devotees of Jesus, and use language, terms, and symbolism common to their Hindu peers. In general, believers would at least attend Hindu festivals and celebrations and practice vegetarianism in vegetarian communities. Marriage ceremonies would not be held in a church and the bride would not wear a white dress.

- **F3:** Those in this kind of ekklesia may refuse to accompany parents to temple rituals, even if not required to participate. They maintain some biblically acceptable forms from the Hindu community. They use local language and may accept some Hindu terms beyond what is sanctioned by the normal Bible translations. Yet many key terms, such as the name for God, would be borrowed from an outsider language/dialect. Participation in corporate Hindu celebrations may vary from person to person and group to group. Most corporate gatherings of upper-caste believers are strictly vegetarian, as it would be for them at home among vegetarian families. Following modern permissibility of Hindu custom, individuals are free to eat even meat and fish (not beef, except perhaps abroad!) outside of the home.

- **F4:** Uses community insider language with outsider key terms but rejects any forms and symbols from the Hindu community that might be viewed as having any "religious" connotation. Participation in festivals and even life-cycle rituals would be reluctant and rare (for example, marriage ceremonies would take place in a church setting). Secular cultural forms such as dress and food are retained. Indigenous music genres are to be rejected for western genres, or for western hymns translated into local language. Vegetarianism is practiced by some, but it is a preference, not a dictum. These F4 believers no longer identify themselves as Hindu.

- **F5:** These believers eschew all things "Hindu" except traditional terms adopted in the Bible of their particular local language. All their practices would seem strange, confusing, or offensive to a Hindu: seeing men and women sitting intermingled, shoes worn in the place of worship, and Bibles allowed to be placed on the floor. Many of these F5 believers in Hindu contexts reject vegetarianism because of their understanding of biblical freedom. A decisive break with Hindu culture and identity is a hallmark of this level.

Conclusion

As a descriptive model, the C Spectrum enabled the mission community to distinguish key features of various Christ-centered communities. However, there was need for more practical tools for guiding contextualization and indigenization efforts, and the apparent void contributed to widespread misunderstanding and misapplication of the C Spectrum. Missiological discussions have become rather hardened and often unproductive, pointing to the need for a fresh perspective on the issues. The Foreignness Spectrum should be useful for this purpose.

The F Spectrum model may be beneficial for new believers, helping them to think clearly about the adaptations they wish to make in expressing faith, community, and worship.[20] It can help outside teachers and workers to identify conscious or unconscious expectations for what the ekklesiae should look like, prepare them to accept and encourage alternative expressions, and help them empower local leaders to make these decisions.

The F Spectrum can also benefit missiologists. It provides a set of parallel categories for comparing the contextualization choices made by various Christ-centered communities in a particular cultural region. Missiologists can compare the various descriptive categories of Muslim or Hindu ekklesiae to better analyze the missional dynamics, challenges, and fruitfulness associated with each.

The F Spectrum also speaks strongly against the tacit assumption that modern Western Christianity is normative and that other forms are to be measured as departures from that. We maintain that modern Western Christianity is only one of many valid forms of our faith. It is not the central form because there is no central form. God does not have favorite cultures. He only desires that his people be faithful to him. **IJFM**

Endnotes

[1] For convenience sake, we utilize here the C Spectrum diagram in Joshua Massey, "God's Amazing Diversity in Drawing Muslims to Christ," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 7.

[2] Kyle Meeker and Warrick Farah, "The W-Spectrum: Worker Paradigms in Muslim Contexts," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2015): 366–75. See this for contextualization paradigms for Christian workers.

[3] John Jay Travis, "The C1–C6 Spectrum after Fifteen Years: Misunderstandings, Limitations and Recommendations," in *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus within Diverse Religious Communities,* eds. Harley Talman and John Jay Travis (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015), 491–493. Note: In subsequent endnotes, we shorten the reference to this book as it appears several times.

[4] In our conversation with John Travis about our proposed modification to his model, he expressed enthusiastic support for the Foreignness Spectrum.

[5] Jens Barnett, "Searching for Models of Individual Identity," in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements,* 581–97.

[6] Tim Green, "Conversion and Identity," in *Longing For Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between?,* ed. David Greenlee (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 41–51.

[7] Other Muslim contexts may differ significantly from the Middle East. Richard Jameson observes that differences in religious terms and practices protect Arab Christians from Islamic incursion onto their religion, functioning like the tall walls in an ancient Arab city. In contrast, Muslims and Christians in Indonesia share religious vocabulary rooted in Arabic. Along with worldview values such as harmony, the boundaries between Christians and Muslims are more like a village that transitions into an open field. Thus, F1 and F2 identity in the Arab world requires clear distinction between Christian and Muslims so that it functions more like a fortress—either you are in or out. In South East Asia blurring is not so bothersome, so that the differences between F1 and F2 may appear more like colors on a spectrum of light. Richard Jameson, "Respecting Context: A Comparison of Indonesia and the Middle East," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 29, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 170–171).

[8] As Muslims they still seek to be submitters to God, but as Muslim Followers of Jesus (MFJ), they no longer trust in Muhammad as an intercessor nor do they view him as the model of sinless perfection to emulate. Many Islamic religious practices (e.g., fasting, ritual prayers) are transformed through new motivations and attitudes and by modifying or removing aspects that do not conform to Christ's teaching (e.g., Matthew 6); other practices are rejected. They gather in homes as an *ekklesia* though some may continue mosque attendance for outreach. All are committed to biblical faithfulness, but (just as with Christians), they may have different views or scruples about what beliefs and practices can be retained, what must be rejected, and what can be redeemed through reinterpretation or revision. Most of the controversy over C5 (F1) may be attributed to such differences.

Perhaps the most controversial issue in Muslim contexts concerns the prophethood of Muhammad. Contrary to assumptions of many critics, MFJs hold to a wide range of views (negative and positive), but which they deem to be compatible with biblical authority (Harley Talman, "Muslim Followers of Jesus, Muhammad and the Qur'an," in *Muslim Conversions to Christ: A Critique of Insider Movements in Islamic Contexts,* eds. Ayman S. Ibrahim and Ant Greenham [NY: Peter Lang, 2018], 123–138). Similarly, some prominent Christian theologians and missiologists are willing to concede various kinds of prophetic roles to Muhammad as compatible with Scripture (Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007], 41–44; Harley Talman, "Is Muhammad Also Among the Prophets," *International Journal for Frontier Missiology* 31, no. 4 [Oct–Dec 2014]: 169–190).

[9] Separating what Western workers view as "religious" from "cultural" is much less clear in traditional societies where they are often fused together. This distinction is much easier to make where non-Muslim communities already exist. The Islamic "religious" elements are those which are not shared with non-Muslims.

Western Christians hold firmly to unexamined notions of what constitutes a religion, whereas contemporary scholars of religious studies are unable to reach any kind of consensus defining the concept of "religion" (Seth D. Kunin, ed., *Theories of Religion: A Reader, with Jonathan Miles-Watson* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006], 1). Some argue that religions themselves are cultural systems (Kurt Anders Richardson, "Considering Religion(s): What Does the Word Really Mean?" in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements,* 357). See articles in Part 4, section 2, Harley Talman and John Jay Travis, "Religion and Syncretism," in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements,* 339–386.

[10] This hypothetical example is used for illustrative purposes only. In reality, most African Christians coming to the West would likely be more culturally sensitive than the average American Christian going to Africa.

[11] Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 43–53.

[12] In their study "Conversion in the New Testament," Roberts and Jameson observe that the Greek term "for one who changes from one religious system to another is *proselytos* (proselyte, convert), and it is used four times. . . . In every instance it refers to Gentiles converting to Judaism. It is not used to refer to someone who has come to Christ, repented from sin, turned to God, found new life or transformation in Christ, or put his or her trust in Christ as Savior and Lord" (Michael Roberts and Richard Jameson, "Conversion in the New Testament," in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 199–200). These latter meanings are conveyed through different Greek words (sometimes translated as "convert") but which do not connote changing to another religious tradition.

[13] Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 3 (July 1987): 104–11.

[14] John and Anna Travis delineate important roles that "alongsiders" can play in serving insider movement communities (i.e., Jesus movements outside of Christianity (John and Anna Travis, "Roles of 'Alongsiders' in Insider Movements: Contemporary Examples and Biblical Reflections," in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements,* 455–66). We believe these kinds of roles are appropriate

for any outsiders who work closely/alongside local believers to sensitively serve and strengthen Christ-following communities, regardless of their position in the C or F Spectrum.

Some insist that the apostle Paul dictated changes and therefore we ought to do the same, but Greer highlights the need for local communities to develop their own expressions of faith and thought; otherwise we risk continuing colonialist mission mentality and policy (Bradford Greer, "Moving Beyond: Frontier Missions in Our Postcolonial World," *International Journal for Frontier Missiology* 36, no. 4 [Winter 2019], 189–200).

[15] John and Anna Travis, "Roles of 'Alongsiders,'" 455–466.

[16] Field data is somewhat limited, but that collected from 280 workers at the 2007 Fruitful Practices Consultation indicates that "All three levels of contextualization, C3–C5, correlate with the formation of churches, but higher degrees of contextualization appear more conducive to the development of movements" (Rick Brown, Bob Fish, John Travis, Eric Adams, and Don Allen, "Movements and Contextualization: Is There Really a Correlation?" *International Journal for Frontier Missiology* 26, no. 1 [Spring, 2009], 22).

[17] A higher number than F0 would be appropriate in contexts which do not warrant secrecy.

[18] We are indebted to H. L. Richard for assisting us in modifying this taxonomy in light of his observations of on-the-ground realities.

[19] We thank Don Eenigenburg for pointing out the impact of Hindu extremists.

[20] There are many hindrances to faith in a resistant situation in addition to the life and worship style of believers. Therefore, it is not to be expected that a more appropriate form of Christian expression will necessarily cause resistance to melt away. However, the lives of believers are usually the first important information potential believers have about Christianity, and appropriate forms help weak believers to stay with and grow in their new faith. We therefore consider it an aspect too important to ignore.

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