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From the Editor's Desk

The Trail of a Footnote

It all started with a footnote. A missiologist friend recently shared how he had seen a reference thirty years ago to the field research of a former missionary to South Asia. That reference pointed to a strategic study documented decades earlier, of which only one document remains extant today. The study was historic, brimming with (potential) discovery, innovative in its day. That footnote sparked a search that spanned decades. Letters were written, phone calls made, and family members pursued. Sadly, in the end, it became evident the entire collection—with the exception of one document—probably lay molding in a chest somewhere in Asia.

A footnote can be a signpost at the head of a trail. Yet the pursuit to rediscover buried insights usually plays second fiddle in mission innovation. You've probably noticed there's no little talk of innovation these days,[1] but those efforts most likely pursue *originality*. We're less likely to dig for long forgotten innovation. My missiologist friend knew that something had been covered over, stored away, buried with time, and lost to our missiological memory. Could a former style of missiology have devalued valuable insights? Could our mission institutions in any way have restricted the capacity to recognize an innovation? Could we rediscover a lost innovation?

William Carey Publishers: An Open-Handed Missiology

This kind of research brings us to books—especially *academic* books—where extensive footnoting is normative. Back in the 1960s, Ralph Winter was prescient in recognizing they were on the front side of a wave of new missiological studies. He and his colleagues at Fuller's School of World Mission represented just one of the emerging faculties coalescing around world mission. Each was mentoring field-based mission personnel, students whose innovative insights needed to be diffused across a wider mission enterprise. But these dissertations—steeped in references that led down many trails—were not marketable. Publishing houses avoided them.

Winter pivoted and birthed William Carey Publishers in his garage. Originally titled a "Library," it rode the coattails of Donald McGavran's *Church Growth Bulletin*[2] and its monthly Book Club by offering more extensive research. This upstart mom-and-pop operation was a welcomed broker for the missiologist who believed he held an innovative dissertation in his hand yet who faced the daunting complexity of a publishing world. Winter came alongside and begged, leveraged, and collaborated with that world as a way to transmit missiological innovation.

Editorial *continued on p. 4*

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

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A half century later, WCP is still cranking out mission books. Denise Wynn, who has brought fresh technical and innovative leadership to this publishing house, believes "the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." It's all about the effective diffusion of missiological innovation across the church's global sending base. And, in that spirit, she has stiff-armed publishing propriety and made a generous offer to our journal.

WCP is allowing the *IJFM* to dip into their stacks and publish a handful of chapters. They recognize it's inevitable that good innovative thinking can get lost in the pages of a book. And, consequently, those venturesome footnotes leave no trail. These articles represent chapters from six different books, each addressing the potential for innovation in distinct missiological domains: partnership, diaspora, movements, theology, and corporate mission agency structure.

- ***Partnership***—Mary Lederleitner, who is widely published on the challenges of partnership in mission, offers a fiduciary's perspective on the more ethical realities of global and inter-cultural partnership.
- ***Diaspora***—Gary Fujino exegetes the anthropology of the global Japanese ethnoscape by highlighting the imperceptible barriers that divide this relatively homogenous population. And Tim Shultz reflects on how Hindu *Dharma* should sensitize us to the way Christ draws people experientially and devotionally.
- ***Movements***—S. T. Antonio has offered a rare, balanced and very comprehensive history of the collegial—but often contested—development of the missiology surrounding so-called "insider movements." (Follow the footnotes!)
- ***Corporate Innovation***—Derek Seipp, a keen consultant widely published on innovation science and mission, directs his thoughts to the mission agency and how it can cultivate an ethos of innovation.
- ***Theologizing***—Michael Cooper argues for the place of the missiological theologian with his deep exegetical dive into the role of the apostle John within the Ephesian movement.

We also offer a quiver full of book reviews in this issue. You'll note the varying persuasions and vantage points of our reviewers, and the freedom they take to engage and critique the issues raised by these authors. Such diversity keeps us alert and prevents us from settling comfortably into our own schools of thought.

Even as I write this editorial, plans have cemented for the ISFM program at this year's EMS annual meeting, September 17–18 (totally virtual, see ad for details on p. 2). You'll not want to miss our plenary speaker, Dr. Kang-San Tan, general secretary of BMS World Mission, and the ISFM sessions addressing issues in a Buddhist world. We apologize for the lull in production, but know we are very excited about an upcoming issue on emerging missiological perspectives within the Buddhist sphere.

In Him,

Brad Gill
Senior Editor, *IJFM*

Endnotes

[1] Ted Esler, *The Innovation Crisis: Creating Disruptive Influence in the Ministry You Lead* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2021).

Cultural Dimensions of Financial Accounting Systems

by Mary Lederleitner

Editor's note: This article is an excerpt from Christian Mission and Economic Systems: A Critical Survey of the Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Economies, *edited by John Cheong and Eloise Meneses (William Carey Publishing, 2018), taken from chapter 2. Reprinted by permission.*

Many countries are now involved in funding mission around the world, and each has its own legal, cultural, and ethical standards. When working cross-culturally it is a challenge to be fully aware of these differences, let alone comply with and somehow meet multiple standards, without imposing one's own culture upon others. Because of this reality, is it possible for missionaries and mission agencies to adhere to their own ethical and cultural standards regarding financial accountability without fostering neocolonialism while serving in other contexts? In matters of financial partnership, regulations and requirements in countries such as the United States or Canada pose a serious hurdle for organizations when funding is sent abroad (IRS 2014; Van Cleef 2003; Canadian Revenue Agency 2010). Stringent fiduciary requirements are being imposed in the very mission contexts where colonialism once reigned and past injustices have never fully healed; this raises the question of whether it is possible to partner as "equals" when financial disparities are so enormous and groups with vast sums of money require in-depth accountability from groups with far fewer financial resources.

This chapter is the reflection of an eclectic mix of academic research in the areas of intercultural communication and cross-cultural conflict, an array of dialogues that have spanned the last fifteen years, theological musings, and my personal training as a professional accountant. Much of my professional experience has been spent straddling the worlds of missiology and financial compliance, where I have felt the internal distress of trying to work in a way that is true to both disciplines. Instead of using financial resources as the trump card that shuts down discussion and demands compliance, I have wondered if a God who values both relationships and accountability might supply answers the global church needs to partner well together. As a result of this journey, I believe examining the tension and complexity through the broader ethical lens of the word of God will provide a place of deeper and more solid agreement. In that place I believe it is possible to find the grace and capacity needed to partner well in this next era of global missions.

Mary Lederleitner, PhD, is a consultant for the Wycliffe Global Alliance. She has written the book Cross-cultural Partnerships: Navigating the Complexities of Money and Mission *(InterVarsity Press, 2010) and has contributed chapters to other missiological publications. She has been a certified public accountant and has served as a tax examiner for the Internal Revenue Service and for the city of Cincinnati (USA), as well as serving as the Asia area finance manager and head of international audit for Wycliffe and SIL International. At present she also serves as a researcher and adjunct professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. She is also a conference speaker and serves on the advisory board of the* Evangelical Missions Quarterly.

What Is Neocolonialism?

Almost since the beginning of time, foreign governments have conquered near or distant regions of the world and ruled over them. Even Jesus had to deal with this phenomenon (John 19:12–15). Often the invading governments brought with them new laws and different practices. Under colonial rule some forms of progress occurred. At times roads were built, infrastructure was established, and schools were formed. However, what is often referred to as "development" came at the cost of people's freedom. Many who were indigenous to the area being "colonized" lost their voice and their ability to make decisions about what would happen in their own homeland.

A concern in missiology is how there can be effective cross-cultural partnerships without fostering a new form of colonialism now known as "neocolonialism" (Rieger 2004; Cooper 2005; Schwartz 2007). "Neocolonialism" implies that although physical occupation by a foreign power may no longer occur, wealth and resources are provided in ways that enable continued domination of others. This occurs when some on the receiving end of mission funding feel demeaned and controlled by the process; these partners have the sense that they are losing the right to make their own decisions and losing their voice. Neocolonialism raises the concern of whether true partnership, the kind that models genuine mutuality, can even take place between partners in the global church given such vast disparities of wealth.

How can there be effective cross-cultural partnerships without fostering neo-colonialism?

What Happens in Dialogues Involving Financial Partnership

When mission partnerships form, dialogues about issues of financial accountability can become polarizing. When concerns over excessive control or neocolonialism are expressed by partners who receive funding, wealthy partners can feel unappreciated. The tone of their response can be one of irritation or defensiveness. At other times accusations are hurled that the partners receiving funding are not trustworthy—otherwise they would willingly be "held accountable." For the partners who receive such funds, a different, almost instinctual, response may arise: when funds are received with all kinds of fiduciary requirements, many comment that the requirements are "just another form of colonialism" or "more evidence of neocolonialism." To these recipients, the sense that they are once again being controlled by elite foreign powers returns.

One possible way to explain many of these misunderstandings is through attribution theory (Elmer 2007; Mitchell and Green 2005; Nickerson 1998). When interactions occur between people from different cultures, and when ministry leaders juggle many different responsibilities, it is easy to erroneously attribute negative motivations and character traits to others. One temptation is to assume that an ideology from the past is the cause for current behavior. When this occurs, "yesterday's meaning becomes today's dogma" (Senge 1996, x). When this happens, a vicious loop is created that is hard to escape.

To be sure, with regard to the tension in the global church surrounding the issues of money and financial accountability, often yesterday's meaning does become today's dogma; there seems to be inadequate space for true inquiry, dialogue, and deep reflection. This general lack of awareness erects a barrier to recognizing tacit meanings assigned to financial accountability. In actuality, however, it is the meaning assigned to these financial dealings (Berger 1967, 3–28; Hiebert 1985, 141–69; Mezirow 1991, 1–36) and not financial accountability itself that determines whether such interactions will be a destructive or constructive force in missions. Yet the global mission enterprise often seems anesthetized to such contradictions (Bohm 1996, 5). Great disparities in expectations can arise when affluent churches in countries such as Singapore or Hong Kong fund, for instance, Papuan partnerships. Financial accountability can be assigned, especially by those in the global church with more financial resources, as being a "neutral" issue when it is anything but neutral.

Financial Accountability Critically Examined

Critical thinking is essential if partners desire to serve one another better in global missions, because when "habits of the mind go unexamined, they create limitations and form boxes" (Cranton 2006, 28) that constrain or impede people's ability to work fruitfully together. Joerg Rieger (2004) is a professor at Southern Methodist University whose research deals with issues of religion, theology, and economics. He supplies a starting point for necessary missiological reflection when he writes that "failure to consider our colonial heritage may result in failure to understand who we are today" (202). According to Rieger, "Reading the histories one gets the strong sense that the missionaries meant well…. So why did Christian mission end up as part of the colonial enterprise?" (205). In Rieger's view this happened because colonialism became, for all practical purposes, simply the natural backdrop for life. Many missionaries seem to have been unable to differentiate between "what was" and "what ought to be." Complaints and resistance often arose only when abuses by those in power became especially flagrant (206).

In *African Friends and Money Matters,* Maranz examines money and culture through the lens of cultural anthropology, describing the reasons why Africans and Westerners view money differently. He explains the process of financial accountability under colonial rule, writing that

> during the colonial period African leaders were not accountable to the people under them, but to their colonial masters. These in turn were accountable only to their home governments. The local people were there to be controlled, not informed. Surely this colonial pattern left indelible marks across the continent. (2001, 39)

Current Worldly Standards

Some might say that colonialism is long gone and it no longer influences mission organizations. Partners from wealthy contexts like the United States often like to quickly put the past behind them. Their focus is on what is "new" or "cutting edge." Consequently, many of these partners show little understanding about how financial accountability has been indelibly shaped by colonial practices and how it affects power and status in relationships within specific cultural contexts. For example, when someone with wealth supplies money to another with less wealth (often for altruistic reasons), the latter is now "held accountable" by the person with greater wealth. Almost always the accountability still flows in only one direction. Accountability is most frequently "upward" to those with financial means and not "downward" to those who have fewer resources. As a result, those with greater resources can set the terms and call the shots; those with greater resources set the standards. Proverbs such as "Beggars can't be choosers" or "The one who pays the piper calls the tune" become unexamined "habits of the mind" that guide behavior. Those with significant financial resources have "voice" and the greatest ability to determine outcomes. This value system is the foundation upon which most of the legal requirements regarding financial accountability are based. It is also often the default practice of most wealthy partners, regardless of their nationality, if they are giving funding to someone with fewer financial resources.

Biblical Standards and Values

Scripture sets forth a very different value system. Although Jesus uses parables in which people are held accountable for resources entrusted to them by persons of greater financial means (Matt 25:14–30; cf. Matt 18:23–27; 20:1–15), he also emphasizes that there will be eternal consequences and that everyone will be held accountable for actions toward those with fewer financial resources (Matt 25:40). The letter of James gives a scathing admonition not to show partiality to the wealthy, for it transgresses the Law (Jas 2:1–12). All people are to be treated with dignity and respect. The body of Christ should function in a way that models mutuality and interdependency (1 Cor 12:1–31). Paul explains that all Christians are part of the same body and Christ is the head, forcefully showing that one part of the body cannot say it has no need of another. In a human body, every part has a voice and can impact the whole. In the end, God will hold every partner accountable for each of his or her actions. The searing depth of his judgment will even apply to "every careless word" (Matt 12:36 NASB).

Why Are Partners Surprised?

The secular values governing financial accountability that are currently present in funding policies quite often reflect a very different set of values than those seen in Scripture. Why then are partners surprised when brothers and sisters in Christ feel demeaned by financial accountability requirements? If partners could step back and look at the bigger picture, they would find it odd if people did not feel demeaned by these processes. If accountability only goes upward to those with greater financial means, less wealthy partners may question whether ministry processes will ever model mutuality, dignity, interdependency, and voice for all.

Redeeming Accountability Processes

Partners have to comply with financial regulations imposed by governments. If there is no compliance, partners raising funds in contexts such as the United States, Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, or Germany, for instance, can incur criminal charges and possibly face jail time. If they do not comply with financial regulations, they will suffer a profound loss of credibility with their donors, their ministries will come to an abrupt halt, and they will severely hinder the witness of Christ. News media outlets will highlight these stories, and that will only cause greater cynicism in the hearts of unbelievers and believers alike. In the spirit of Romans 13:1–8, partners must adhere to the admonition to obey governmental laws regarding accountability. However, Christian love should compel partners to go further than mere compliance with external regulations.

Where Do Partners Begin?

Essential to the act of "redeeming" is trying to discern God's true purpose for something. Before partners can move forward, they need to begin to uncover the positive "meanings" for accountability. If partners start to address the blockages, one of which is the negative or secular meaning of accountability, they can begin to replace them and "create something new" between them (Bohm 1996, 5). Dialogue among partners is the pathway to finding redemptive meanings.

In addition, Satan has distorted the meaning of accountability. His presence is visible in the cross-cultural conflict about financial accountability in global mission. Satan causes partners to think accountability can "mean" only one thing, that those who are wealthier hold those without wealth accountable. However, is that true? Social science research offers a place to begin the search for alternative meanings. Research indicates that accountability is totally necessary for the growth and maturity of individuals in the workplace (Goleman 1998, 268–74). In this sense accountability is something positive. There are also strong parallels to be found in the growth and development of cultural intelligence (Peterson 2004, 89–90). Research also shows that accountability is a critical component in adult transformation (Mezirow 1991; Cranton 2006; Taylor 1994, 2000). Accountability also prepares all believers for the final day when they will stand before God and give an account of their lives (Luke 12:35–48). Biblical accountability means work environments that will foster deep maturity, growth in cultural intelligence, and lasting transformation.

Dialogue also offers a helpful way to begin uncovering better "meanings" for accountability. It fosters different types of questions: for example, as partners look around in the world—in government, in companies, and in the church—does a lack of accountability tend to bring good or bad outcomes? What happens when there is no accountability? People who have seen or been involved in a setting where theft or fraud has occurred know the extreme damage it does to a community of believers and to Christ's witness in a ministry. How might accountability be seen in light of these accounts?

Dialogue about this issue is of utmost importance, because accountability has to be everyone's idea. Financial accountability will not work if one partner assumes it is helpful and other partners believe it is only oppressive and controlling. If left solely to the dogma of each partner's culture, accountability will not be seen in its proper light. Without better meanings, it will be impossible to move forward.

Accountability Processes and Scriptural Values

Someone might ask, "Can accountability processes model scriptural values?" The amazing answer to that question is a resounding yes! Many governmental regulations stipulate that partners have to be able to confirm that funds are being used to accomplish the task or help the people for whom the funds were raised. In theory all partners agree with this or they would not be working together. Despite theoretical agreement, however, if partners seek to only meet that minimal legal objective of financial accountability, their partnerships will not model mutuality, for governmental accountability requirements tend to be in one direction. However, partners have within their power the ability to create a web or system of accountability that can model holistic mutuality.

Covenant/Presbytery Model

An example of a system or approach of holistic mutuality may look something like this: First, the system or approach needs to be designed and developed to fit each specific situation. One size does not fit all. John Rowell writes of utilizing a covenant relationship process in his partnership with Bosnians. In this partnership the parties involved have mutual accountability and mutual voice through a presbytery (2006, 160–61). This model can be helpful for smaller church-to-church or smaller church-to-agency partnerships. Use of this model becomes complicated, however, in a large multinational mission organization that has hundreds of diverse partnerships around the globe. Still, although some basic policies regarding financial reporting are necessary or required in larger agencies, it is feasible for individual regions working closely with indigenous partners to create more comprehensive and God-honoring local accountability structures that facilitate mutual respect and voice.

The key to building accountability processes that model mutuality and foster transformation is to work to level the playing field. In these accountability processes, every person has positions of strength and positions of vulnerability. That means that if one party is bringing funding, he or she needs to be accountable in areas of great vulnerability as well. Areas of vulnerability might include needs for personal maturity in various areas or growth in a professional capacity that the person does not already possess. This broader network of holistic accountability helps to keep everyone honest and to remind everyone in the partnership that all parties are being stretched and are being held to a standard that at times is quite difficult to keep. It is in areas of vulnerability and weakness that partners can pray for one another and stand together as brothers and sisters before their heavenly Father, all in need of growth and maturity.

Mutual Pledges

Partners International is one mission agency that may be highlighted as a positive example of cross-cultural ministry partnerships in many parts of the world. Daniel Rickett, in *Making Your Partnership Work* (2002), outlines some aspects of setting up and working through partnerships that Partners International has found helpful over the years. At the end of the book he highlights a pledge that Partners International makes to its overseas partners (131–38) whereby Partners International tries to convey clearly that it does not see accountability as a one-directional dynamic. They need their partners to be accountable with finances, but Partners International is willing to be accountable in many ways as well. This is an excellent step. Their pledge has been developed over the years in a context of rich and engaging dialogue.

One temptation or concern is that other ministry leaders might take this pledge and use it as a directive—in effect, dictating terms to their partners. Rather than coming together to create mutual accountability pledges, if not used carefully, this pledge might again become an instance of a wealthy partner dominating the relationship and setting all the terms. Dialogue is utterly critical to mutuality. Documents such as the one developed by Partners International can sometimes be a helpful way to start conversations as mutual pledges are crafted for different ministry contexts.

A Voice for the Most Powerless

In *Walking with the Poor,* Bryant Myers highlights the need for accountability in all directions. He explains that people "mar the identity of the poor" if there is no way for the latter to have a voice in the process (2007, 130). On the matter of evaluations, for example, which by nature are a part of accountability processes, it is essential that the poorest persons affected by a partnership also be able to hold others accountable. If the means for this to happen are not built into the process, partners can easily deceive themselves into thinking that their ministries have a greater impact and are more fruitful than they truly are. Also, by including the poor in the process, partners better prepare themselves for the day when God will hold each person accountable for how each partner has treated "the least of these" (Matt 25:40).

How Do Partners Contextualize Accountability Processes?

The field of intercultural communication teaches that the same practice in one setting can have a very different meaning in another (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998). Partners cannot "plug and play" a set of policies or practices designed for one cultural context and assume they will work effectively in another. "One of the goals of cross-cultural training is to alert people to the fact that they are constantly involved in a process of assigning meaning to the actions and objects they observe" (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998, 201). Direct and indirect communication, status issues, implications regarding the loss or building of face, tolerances for ambiguity, and the like all impact the meaning ascribed to certain behaviors. Individual personalities, leadership styles, and organizational cultures also vary greatly among partners.

If past behavior is any indication, invariably ministry leaders will want to cut this process short, copy what has been done somewhere else, and just "get on with things." The problem with this mindset is that it circumvents dialogue and substantially increases the likelihood that any new process introduced from the outside will not work or will not be sustainable over the long haul. In missiology, partners seem willing to invest much effort and time to ensure that ministry programs or church planting efforts are contextualized. As a whole, however, they seem to have little patience or awareness that the processes by which partners "do business" or "achieve financial accountability" also need to be contextualized if they are going to foster good meanings and outcomes.

Developing culturally contextualized processes for each partnership will take more time. For instance, in some partnerships it might be possible for partners to speak directly to one another. In other partnerships it might be wise to have many third-party go-betweens in place so voices from people with differing levels of power can truly be heard. In some partnerships, accountability processes from wealthier countries may be the best solution. In others, these same processes might encourage fraud because they are largely based upon paper receipts, which are worthless in many parts of the world.

Mutually developed and contextualized processes are much more likely to have redemptive meanings and sustainability, but creating them will not be a quick process. Things will need to be tried, evaluated, adapted, tried again, tinkered with, and then adapted further. Lest partners tire of the process of dialogue and building accountability structures together, they need to realize that they are establishing a process that has the potential to foster genuine unity and profound growth and maturity for everyone involved. Building processes is far more than a money issue. It is changing the way partners work so that the very processes themselves model the teaching found in Romans 12 as well as Romans 13.

Partners seem willing to invest much effort in contextualizing church planting efforts. As a whole, however, they seem to have little patience for contextualizing the processes by which partners do business or achieve financial accountability.

What Can Jesus Teach Partners?

Matthew 17:24–27 teaches lessons that can enable global partners to weather what at times seem to be unreasonable and illogical financial requirements. In this passage, people begin questioning Peter as to whether Jesus will be paying the temple tax or not. Using the incident as a teaching moment for his disciple, Jesus inquires of Peter, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?" (17:25 NASB). Peter responds correctly, stating that this tax is for strangers. Jesus affirms that this is indeed the case. The requirement is illogical and should not apply to them. It is what Jesus says afterwards that is amazing: "However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me" (17:27 NASB).

Jesus could have responded in many other ways. He could have railed against the people who were requiring financial compliance. He could have argued that the law was not applicable to him because of his deity. He could have made a case that he had more important things to manage. After all, he was training a group of people who would be leading a global movement. He was healing the sick and raising the dead. He was also preparing to become the sacrificial lamb and die for the sins of all humankind. He had many legitimate reasons to not abide by the financial regulation. Yet Jesus did not let this government-regulated accountability requirement shake his confidence. He did not give the externally imposed financial requirement the power to cause him to feel demeaned or disrespected. Jesus stopped what he was doing to address the issue. He seemed to take extra care to "not give offense." Yet in earlier chapters, Jesus did not hesitate to offend others under different circumstances (Matt 15:12–14). He did not seem to waste a moment worrying about whether he was offending the Pharisees. When his disciples asked if he realized he had offended the Pharisees, his response was, "They are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit" (Matt 15:14 NASB). Jesus seemed indifferent as to whether or not he had offended the Pharisees. However, when it came to an unreasonable financial accountability requirement, he took care not to give offense.

Perhaps Jesus' example might provide global partners with greater capacity in dealing with frustrating financial requirements. Partners should consider whether financial requirements by governments, in and of themselves, have the ability to demean. What role does maintaining an identity rooted in Christ play in this overall debate? What implications do his actions have with regard to what is worth fighting about and what is not? In the end of this story, God provides what is needed through a special act of grace. As partners approach the thorny issue of financial compliance, God's grace and provision are also necessary. This passage provides hope that Christ understands the struggles partners face and can help guide them through these challenges.

Conclusion

Accountability and fiduciary requirements are not going to diminish anytime in the near future. With a global war on terrorism underway, funds crossing national boundaries are being scrutinized more than ever. Financial regulations will likely increase rather than decrease, and nonprofit organizations and ministries in places such as the United States and Canada will not be able to give large amounts of unaccounted-for funds across national borders. If that is the reality, should partners just stop sharing financial resources? If so, should partners settle for one part of Christ's body to be rich with financial blessings and for other parts to lack the means to meet their most basic needs? Passages such as Psalm 67 (which says that God blesses people so the ends of the earth may know him) and 1 Corinthians 12 (reminding partners to be the "body of Christ") must be read afresh in consideration of such national and global requirements. Even the earliest of believers seemed to understand that resources should be shared to meet needs within the body (Rom 15:26). On the other hand, does a good relationship mean no accountability? If so, what does it mean for believers who are taught they have a close relationship with Christ, yet one where he holds each of them accountable? Can trust grow with no accountability, or does trust grow as partners are mutually accountable and faithful?

A way forward is to begin to redeem accountability processes so that they no longer mirror worldly values but instead reflect the reality of the global church's own relationship with God. Everything in each culture must be brought to the foot of the Cross. If wealthy partners thrust secular methods of financial accountability onto cross-cultural partnerships without crafting a more holistic approach to accountability, partners receiving funding will likely feel demeaned. Secular patterns of accountability alone will likely never mirror the values found in Scripture. Through the use of dialogue and carefully contextualized processes, partners have the power to fashion processes that model the truth of Scripture found in both the Romans 12 and Romans 13 passages. Accountability can serve as a tutor helping everyone to grow in godliness and maturity in Christ. Once partners devote the time and attention needed to craft contextualized processes that reflect the high value God places on accountability and relationship, a new era can finally emerge in global mission where neocolonialism will be only a distant memory. **IJFM**

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Books and Missiology

The Gospel of John as Missiological Theology

by Michael T. Cooper

In the recent book, Ephesiology: A Study of the Ephesian Movement, *Michael Cooper argues for the vital role of missiological theology in movements to Jesus. By synthesizing Luke's material in Acts with portions from Paul's epistles and the Johannine corpus, Cooper is able to identify crucial functions in an Ephesian movement. He claims a healthy movement will begin with a keen "missiological exegesis," but it must mature towards a missiological theology. Cooper portrays Paul as a missiological theologian who "begins to connect the activity of God in the culture with the One true Creator God we can only know from his own revelation." Cooper then turns and addresses the role of John the Apostle in the theological maturation of this movement. He digs into biblical scholarship and asserts that John's gospel is the work of a missiological theologian in dialogue with his context, whose sensitivity to the religious systems of that Ephesian milieu help ground the theology of this movement. Cooper asserts that the astute missiological theologian will help correlate culture and the revelation of God in Jesus Christ in a way that sustains a movement.*

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Editor's note: This article is an excerpt from Ephesiology: A Study of the Ephesian Movement, *by Michael T. Cooper (William Carey Publishing, 2020), taken from chapter 5, pages 82–89. Reprinted by permission.*

The Gospel of John, the Fourth Gospel, provides a wonderful model of a text that offers a deliberate focus on addressing specific cultural issues and connecting them to Jesus' story. John's unique contribution to the Ephesian corpus testifies to the importance of connecting stories. Matthew's Gospel did that with the Hebrews. Mark's did the same with the Romans, and Luke's with Theophilus. Now, less than forty years after the arrival of the light of the world, John is connecting Jesus' story with the Ephesians.

There are at least two things that first-year Greek students observe in the Gospel of John. First, and perhaps foremost, is how relatively easy it is to translate the Gospel from Greek to English. The simplicity of words and grammatical structure helps build the confidence of budding new Greek scholars. Second is how difficult it is to interpret John's Gospel. Even with the simplicity of the language, the thoughts and ideas conveying John's unique expression of Jesus' story are some of the most profound in all of Scripture.

The profound nature of John's Gospel is due in part to the diversity of opinion related to the reason why he wrote such a different perspective than the Synoptics—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. D. A. Carson summarizes the mood of Johannine studies:

> There is much more of the same, all of it worthy of lengthy discussion. But the dominant impression of the field of Johannine studies today is of considerable disagreement as to what the text says or implies, and disarray as to the best methods for studying the book. (1990, 40)

Even so, Carson writes,

> Whether the Fourth Gospel was interpreted so as to ground some form of Christian mysticism, or so as to make clear the truth of justification by faith, there was at least no doubt that it was the product of the apostle John, that in some ways it is the most focused of the four canonical Gospels, and that fundamental reconciliation between John and the Synoptics can be achieved. (ibid., 29)

Perhaps even more interesting, most scholars have agreed that the provenance or origin of John has little impact on our understanding of the Fourth Gospel. In fact, Craig Keener argues,

> Although the evidence for a Syro-Palestinian provenance is not absolutely compelling, it is not weak and would be the most likely proposal if the evidence for Roman Asia is judged as better. At the same time, it should also be noted that establishing a provenance in Ephesus is not essential for interpreting the Gospel. Ephesus was mostly representative of other Greco-Roman cities of the eastern Mediterranean, so the same general milieu would inform the Gospel there as in many other places. (2010, 146)

To dismiss the *Sitz im Leben*—the setting in life—of the Fourth Gospel will result in a complete misunderstanding of John's message. The background of Ephesus is absolutely necessary.

Keener's insistence that the culture of Ephesus is not necessary for interpreting the Gospel is remarkable and flies in the face of every first-year Bible student who learns that context is king. The *Sitz im Leben* (roughly "setting in life"), a German term that biblical scholars use to communicate the context of a text, is critical to understanding and interpreting the purpose of a text. Along with the Sitz im Leben, authorial intent—the reason why the author wrote—also influences our understanding of the text. To dismiss the Sitz im Leben of the Fourth Gospel will result in a complete misunderstanding of John's message. As we consider the unique contribution of John's Gospel to Jesus' story, the background of Ephesus is absolutely necessary.

So we begin there; and the story of how this Gospel came to be is worth repeating. We do not know exactly when John arrived in Ephesus, but we have no doubt that he lived there, most likely sometime between Paul's death in AD 67 and the conclusion of the persecution of Emperor Domitian in AD 96. Eusebius, the fourth-century bishop and renowned "Father of Church History," adds clarity to John's presence in Ephesus (although not necessarily to the writing of the Gospel) after the death of Domitian, when John returned from exile in Patmos:

> Listen to a tale, which is not a mere tale, but a narrative concerning John the apostle, which has been handed down and treasured up in memory. For when, after the tyrant's [Domitian's] death, he returned from the isle of Patmos to Ephesus, he went away upon their invitation to the neighboring territories of the Gentiles, to appoint bishops in some places, in other places to set in order whole churches, elsewhere to choose to the ministry some one of those that were pointed out by the Spirit. *(HE* 3.23.6)

Irenaeus (AD 130–202) relates a story he heard from Polycarp (AD 69–155) that places John in Ephesus at the time of Cerinthus:

> John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." *(Against Heresies* 3.4.4)

Cerinthus (died ca. AD 100), a Jewish Christian from Egypt, contended that Jesus received the Christ at his baptism. Some believe this to have been an early form of Gnosticism, but to connect Cerinthus to the late second-century heresy is anachronistic. He was most likely a Judaizer, as he continued to hold a strict Jewish position on the Sabbath and circumcision. His teaching presumably flourished during the late first century in Asia and was perhaps influenced by Egyptian mystery religions, as he denied the divinity of Jesus.

Some have suggested that Cerinthus impacted Paul's ministry, even to the point of being the focus of his epistle to the Galatians as well as the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) in AD 50, but there is no good reason to make such an assertion. Jerome certainly indicates the possibility when he writes,

> I refer to Cerinthus, Ebion, and the rest who say that Christ has not come in the flesh, whom [John] in his own epistle calls Antichrists, and whom the Apostle Paul frequently assails. *(Commentary on Matthew,* Preface, 2)

However, such a vague reference cannot be assumed to have been the occasion for Paul, who had no aversion to calling out false teachers by name (2 Tim 1:15; 2:17), to write Galatians.

Recounting Polycarp's ministry as bishop of Smyrna, a city north of Ephesus on the Aegean coast, Irenaeus remembers hearing him teach what he had learned from the apostles, especially sitting at the feet of John, as he came to faith in Christ as a young man *(Against Heresies* 3.3.4). John later appoints him as bishop of the church in Smyrna (Tertullian, *Prescriptions* 32.2). Polycarp died a martyr's death in AD 155 for being an "atheist," since he did not believe in the Roman gods. Repeatedly asked to repent from his unbelief and to renounce Christ, Polycarp testified, "Eighty-six years have I served him and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?" *(Martyrdom of Polycarp,* 9). The date of Polycarp's death, and his age helps place John in Ephesus around AD 69, if not before.

Relating what he knew from Clement, Eusebius indicated that John only wrote his Gospel out of necessity *(HE* 3.24.5), something that seems apparent in Jerome's preface to his commentary on Matthew's Gospel:

> When [John] was in Asia, at the time when the seeds of heresy were springing up…he was urged by almost all the bishops of Asia then living, and by deputations from many Churches, to write more profoundly concerning the divinity of the Saviour, and to break through all obstacles so as to attain to the very Word of God (if I may so speak) with a boldness as successful as it appears audacious. Ecclesiastical history relates that, when he was urged by the brethren to write, he replied that he would do so if a general fast were proclaimed and all would offer up prayer to God; and when the fast was over, the narrative goes on to say, being filled with revelation, he burst into the heaven-sent Preface: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: this was in the beginning with God." *(Commentary on Matthew,* Preface, 2)

Charles Hill suggests that Eusebius' reference is actually a fragment from Papias' book (written ca. 110), *Expositions of the Sayings of the Lord* (1998, 582–629). Papias, a hearer of John and friend of Polycarp, became the second bishop of Hierapolis (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.33.4). If Hill is correct, then John's Gospel was well known throughout Asia in the late first century. Additionally, Polycarp and Papias could have been among the bishops who requested that John write about the Savior, although it seems more probable that they became involved in the ministry in Asia later, as both seem to know the entire Johannine corpus. This could suggest a date for the Fourth Gospel in the range of AD 68 to 90.

Granted, many scholars have given attention to the nascent Gnosticism and Docetism that might have emerged in John's day. However, this seems unreasonable if we date the Gospel early. Few scholars give attention to the city of Ephesus and the worship of Artemis and Dionysus as a contributing influence on the content of this unique Gospel. Even more, the striking prologue emphasis on λόγος *(logos)* and the connection to the philosophy of Heraclitus of Ephesus (535–475 BC) is largely ignored. Granted, there are nearly six hundred years between Heraclitus and John. Nevertheless, Heraclitus' logos philosophy was renowned in Ephesus and Asia, much more so than the teaching of Cerinthus, which only survives in the writings of his antagonists.

Diogenes Laërtius writes in the fifth century BC that Heraclitus' book, *On Nature,* was housed in the temple of Artemis and, "…acquired such fame that it produced partisans of his philosophy who were called Heracliteans" *(Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* IX, 6). As Kahn points out, Heraclitus' philosophy attracted the attention of many during John's day and later into the third century,

> Down to the time of Plutarch [AD 46–120] and Clement [of Alexandria, ca. AD 150–215], if not later, the little book of Heraclitus was available in its original form to any reader who chose to seek it out. (1981, 5)

Paul and Luke must have also known about Heraclitus. For two years, Paul reasoned (Greek διαλέγομαι; *dialegomai)* the word (Greek λόγος; *logos)* of the Lord to Jews and especially Greeks in the philosophical school of Tyrannus, where Heraclitus would have no doubt been taught (Acts 19:9–10). While we do not know much about this school, the language Luke uses to describe it indicates its connection to Greek philosophy. The Greek, σχολαί *(scholai),* is a term used to describe the location where philosophers taught (Lidell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon),* and διαλέγομαι, as we saw in chapter 3, is the manner in which philosophers engaged students. As we have seen, Paul was a student of culture, so it is only natural that he would have studied the major philosophy that emerged out of Ephesus just like he did with that which emerged out of Athens.

The Fourth Gospel addresses the religious and philosophical systems of Asia.

Heraclitus, writing during the period when the Jews were returning from the Babylonian exile and constructing the Second Temple, was regarded as highly as Plato and the later Stoics. Even Christian philosophers held him in high regard. Justin Martyr (AD 100–165), who heard the gospel while in Ephesus, thought of Heraclitus, along with Socrates, as a pre-Christ Christian. He writes,

> We have been taught that Christ is the first-born of God, and we have declared above that He is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists; as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and men like them; and among the barbarians, Abraham, and Ananias, and Azarias, and Misael, and Elias, and many others whose actions and names we now decline to recount, because we know it would be tedious. *(First Apology,* 46)

So was John dealing with a proto-Gnosticism or Docetism in his prologue, or with an existing *logos* belief in Ephesus? Gnosticism and Docetism do eventually become formidable competitors of Christianity, but not until later in the second century. Could John have foreknown these systems of belief? Absolutely, but why would we need to force a tenuous prophetic declaration by the apostle when he clearly wanted to connect Jesus' story to those in Asia?

The Fourth Gospel is an evangelistic presentation focused on addressing the religious and philosophical systems in Asia, and specifically those associated with the goddess Artemis and the god Dionysus, as well as with the philosopher Heraclitus. John was not concerned with embellishing the Synoptics with his personal eyewitness of Jesus, nor was he concerned with the chronology of Jesus' ministry. It also seems unreasonable to suggest that the destruction of the Jewish temple or the Jewish War would have influenced his writing. If the Gospel is dated to the beginning of the Jewish War, when John arrived in Ephesus, the temple's destruction has no bearing on the Gospel. In fact, the significance of John's references to the temple (John 2:14–21; 7:14–28; 8:2–59) must be juxtaposed to the importance of the temple of Artemis to the Ephesians. If, in fact, John's audience comprised non-Christian Ephesians, they would have had no regard for the Jewish temple, if they had even known about it at all. It makes more sense that John's references to the temple in his Gospel positioned Jesus as the most high God who was greater than any god or goddess worshipped in temples made by human hands. Jesus superseded the worship and rituals occurring in a temple, no matter where the temple was located—Jerusalem or Ephesus.

John's Gospel was a message that would have connected with a people who were proud to live in the city of a wonder of the ancient world, where "all Asia and the world worship" Artemis (Acts 19:27). His primary concern was connecting Jesus' story with the story of those in Asia in such a way that they would clearly see that the one true God, εγώ εἰμι, is the creator and sustainer of the κόσμος (John 6:35–51; 8:12; 9:5; 10:9, 11–14; 11:25; 14:6). It is he alone who gives the right to become children of God, rather than Artemis, who acted as the protector of childbearing (John 1:12). Jesus performed genuine signs, like the wedding feast miracle, that would clearly demonstrate his primacy above Artemis, the goddess of matrimony (John 2:1–12). It is Jesus who can respond to religious leaders and call them to be born again, in distinction from Dionysius who was twice born of Zeus (John 3:1–15). Jesus had special knowledge of people, like the woman at the well (John 4:1–45)—who, like some women in Asia, consorted with men in the antics of the symposium. Jesus' reference to being the living bread signifies his preeminence above other gods and goddesses, whose theophaginic rituals connected the practitioner with the deity. Only Jesus can take away the hunger of humanity (John 6:22–59).

John's superb missiological theology made Jesus real to those who had never heard of him. The fact that he was an eyewitness further testified to the authenticity of Jesus as "the true light, which gives light to everyone" (John 1:9), who came into the world to give abundant life (John 10:10). Jesus was rejected and despised by his own people (John 1:11), but those other nations—and John was writing in a context where there were as many as fifty distinct ethnic groups—would find solace in a personal God who sacrificed himself and was resurrected to new life so that they might also receive eternal life (John 4:39–42, 46–53; 10:16; 12:20–26; 16:8–9; 17:20–21). This was a message for the entire world, a word that John repeats in order to make clear that Jesus is the one true God and Lord, supreme over all others.

In spite of Keener's conclusion—"An Ephesian provenance does not affect interpretation as much as we might hope" (2010, 146)—it seems clear that the uniqueness of the Fourth Gospel provides compelling evidence for John as a missiological theologian. The heart of the gospel is to tell the story of Jesus, and John brilliantly portrays Jesus in a way that made sense to those in Ephesus and Asia. John is connecting with the Ephesians on philosophical, religious, cultural, and ethnic levels to communicate Jesus' story in a way that it did become their story. It was no longer just the Jewish story of a Messiah. It was the story of the one true God who would restore the world, including the world of those in Asia.

John clearly understood the culture and history of Asia. He must have read Heraclitus to make the connection with the *logos*. He understood the significance of the temple of Artemis for the lives of the Ephesians and juxtaposed Jesus, who has supremacy over any temple. John knew about the religious rituals of theophagy (eating the gods) and matrimony. He demonstrates a profound awareness of the importance of women in Ephesian culture as he relates the story of Jesus' relationships with women (Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene, Syrophoenician woman). His deep understanding of his context and his thoughtful engagement when relating Jesus to his audience demonstrates a missiological theology that connected Jesus' story with the people's story.

This manner of connecting stories ensured that Christianity would be an indigenous system of beliefs and contributed to the ongoing expansion of the movement that was as much a Jewish movement as it was a Greek movement. In fact, it was God's movement, as he continued to go before the early disciples to make himself known. The task they enjoyed was showing those they engaged how God was at work among them. To do that meant they had to be where the gospel was needed and they had to allow the Holy Spirit to show them what God was doing to grab the attention of those he was pursuing.

The effectiveness of these early efforts demonstrated a thoughtful understanding of the context, as they dialogued with people, observed their culture, and studied their history. They knew the story of those they were engaging and they connected that story with God's story so that it became a unified story of God's relentless pursuit of more people worshipping him. This model of developing a missiological theology is one contemporary missions must emulate if the gospel has any hope of connecting to culture. **IJFM**

Endnotes

1 Cerinthus and the Ebionites have both been mistakenly identified as proto-Gnostic. Their beliefs certainly found a home in later Christian Gnosticism, but Cerinthus and the Ebionites were clearly situated in the milieu of their day. Both Cerinthus and the Ebionites emerged out of the Judaizing Christians and their doctrines developed in concert with Christianity and Plato.

2 Papias' own testimony on being a disciple of John is conflicted. Whatever the case, he certainly learned the Johannine traditions.

3 The main source for Cerinthus' teaching includes Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (1.26.1; 3.2.1, 2; 3.3.4; 3.11; 16); and Ephiphanius, Panarion. Eusebius writes about Cerinthus in *HE* 3.28.

4 Diogenes writes, "As to the work which passes as his, it is a continuous treatise *On Nature,* but is divided into three discourses, one on the universe, another on politics, and a third on theology. This book he deposited in the temple of Artemis and, according to some, he deliberately made it the more obscure in order that none but adepts should approach it, and lest familiarity should breed contempt." Only fragments of *On Nature* exist today.

5 See Andreas Kostenberger, "The Destruction of the Second Temple and the Composition of the Fourth Gospel," *Trinity Journal* 26 (2005), 205–42, for a discussion of the impact of the temple's destruction. I obviously disagree with Kostenberger's assessment.

6 Luke typically uses οἰκουμένη (inhabited earth) rather than κόσμος (world).

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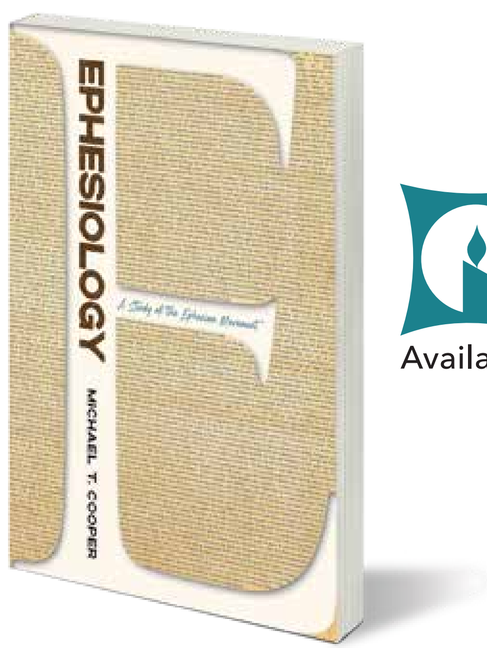

Becoming *Nikkei:* A Comparative Study of Diasporic Japanese *Dekasegi* Christian Communities

by Gary Fujino

Editor's note: This article is an excerpt from A Hybrid World: Diaspora, Hybridity, and Missio Dei, *edited by Sadiri Joy Tira and Juliet Lee Uytanlet (William Carey Publishing, 2020), taken from chapter 10: "Becoming Nikkei: A Cross-Cultural Comparative Study of Diasporic Japanese "Dekasegi" Christian Community in Japan, Brazil and Peru." Reprinted by permission.*

The *dekasegi* or "migrant worker" phenomenon of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries had a profound impact upon the economies and cultural perceptions of their respective immigrant populations in Japan, Brazil, and Peru. It also affected and contributed to the Christian presence in these countries. Defined as South American residents of Japanese[1] or *Nikkei*[2] identity "who returned temporarily to live and work in Japan, where they often had a separate identity from that of the larger Japanese population,"[3] these dekasegi lived, worked, raised children, and worshipped in Japan, as well as in their native Peru or Brazil during the decade of the 90s and much of the early 2000s.

As a Japan-based church planter with a North American mission agency, I was tasked with researching, visiting, and helping to establish networks for evangelism and mission in these disparate locales among sections of the dekasegi diaspora of Japan, Brazil, and Peru. Over the course of a four-year period (2009–2012), I visited Brazil and Peru several times as well as various dekasegi communities inside Japan, where I was living. Based on participant observation, on-site research, and informal interviews conducted during these visits, I was able to observe and study local historical factors, religious affections, different views of personal identity, and the socio-cultural impact of trying to adapt to a specific society in particular but also fluid and globalizing contexts like car manufacturing plants in Nagoya, Japan, or the cities of Sao Paolo, Brazil, or Lima, Peru. I also saw the effects of Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, and even English language use in these various contexts. During the time frame of this research, I personally experienced and witnessed some of the effects of hybridity and globalization upon select *Nikkei dekasegi* diasporic communities in these areas.[4]

What follows are partial findings and missiological implications from this long-term ethnographic research.[5] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to present a comprehensive and exhaustive analysis. Only reflections are contained here, and they may not be generalized beyond the populations studied.

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The thesis developed from my research is that Nikkei identity in the dekasegi diaspora mentioned above is formed by an individual but with the influence of a community (which may or may not be Nikkei—or both) as well as variegated other influences. As such, this type of hybrid identity necessitates a unique missiological, evangelistic, and pastoral approach, which I shall suggest in the implications section. Among implications detailed are the understandings that: 1) the pathway of Nikkei and dekasegi[6] identity formation is multi-faceted; 2) Nikkei and dekasegi are the same but different in each of the three nations studied; 3) "triadic" convergence[7] is what helps to form identity and also creates a hybrid identity; 4) the effects of the dekasegi movement, even in the present day, should not be ignored; 5) finally, there are various ways for reaching dekasegi populations including language outreach. But what works in one place may not apply in the same way for another place.

Basic Demographics and Short Histories

To begin, in order to better understand the implications, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the three countries featured in this paper—specific to their Japanese[8] and Nikkei populations. These are not meant to be comprehensive or even complete summaries. What has been included here only relates to the phenomenon of the dekasegi diaspora.

Japan: A short history on its Brazilian and Peruvian immigrants

The history for Japan on this topic of Latin American dekasegi is fairly recent, dating back to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act of 1990 and its revision in 1998, and then again in 2015 and 2018. What this law did, in part, was to open the doors for Brazilians and Peruvians of Japanese descent to leave their home countries and enter into Japan to live and work. The response was overwhelming, peaking at nearly 300,000 Brazilian Nikkei and roughly 100,000 Peruvian Nikkei in Japan through the late 1990s.[9] But there was a marked decrease from the end of 2008 because of downturns in the global economy. Many dekasegi from both Brazil and Peru lost their jobs and domiciles in Japan, some even a way back to their homelands. Language barriers, xenophobia, low or non-employable skill sets, etc., contributed to making it difficult for people to make ends meet.

Figure 1, at the top of the right column, is a sign, in the Portuguese and Japanese languages (ca. 2010), showing rules that Brazilian workers living near the Toyota plant in Homi-city, Aichi prefecture, must follow in order to live in their own community. These Brazilians are surrounded by disgruntled Japanese residents, and the sign represents how rules have been established to keep these communities strictly separated.

Figure 1. Symbol representing the Latin American dekasegi *diaspora in Japan: The polarization of cultures*

Brazil: A short history of its Japanese immigrants

Brazil opened its doors to immigrants from Japan in 1908. The one hundredth anniversary of Japanese immigration to Brazil was celebrated in 2008. Japanese laborers originally went to Brazil to replace slave laborers brought in from Africa; the former group had dreams of making it rich and then returning to Japan. Most stayed and made names for themselves as a people by farming the most difficult hinterlands, including the Amazon, against great odds and hardships. After World War II, some pro-Emperor protests and an internal terrorist-like activity from both Nikkei and Brazilians alike erupted and polarized society for a couple of decades after the war. Gradually, the Nikkei population gained status and acceptance in society and moved from the farm to the city. The majority of Nikkei are now part of the Brazilian middle class. But assimilation has come with a cost and many Nikkei still do not feel completely Brazilian nor do all Brazilians completely accept them. The Nikkei in Brazil remain a largely unreached people group of between 1.3–1.8 million according to various estimates.

Figure 2, top of page 21, shows a highway exit leading into Mogi das Cruzes marked by a *torii,* the traditional gate used in Japan to demarcate the entrance to a Shinto shrine. Forty-five kilometers outside of Sao Paolo city, Mogi das Cruzes has a sizeable Nikkei population. This symbol of Japan over a major road in Brazil illustrates how Nikkei Brazilians who erected this torii seek to co-exist there in an unusual mix or "fusion" of cultures.

Figure 2. Symbol representing the Brazilian dekasegi *diaspora: A Japanese* torii*—The fusion of cultures*

Peru: A short history of its Japanese immigrants

Peru welcomed Japanese immigrants a decade earlier than Brazil and hosts one of the oldest "new worlds," behind Hawaii and Guam. In 2019, Peruvian Nikkei celebrated its 120 years of immigration. World War II was a watershed event for the Japanese in Peru because of negative circumstances flowing out of Peru's military alliance with the United States, i.e., incarceration and deportation for those with Japanese "blood," caused Peruvian Nikkei to become less strict about cultural preservation. This is reflected in present day trends where over 60 percent of Nikkei are said to marry outside

Figure 3. Symbol representing the Peruvian dekasegi *diaspora:* Nikkei *artist's rendition of Japanese cartoon—The embedding of cultures*

their community. The modern day rise of Alberto Fujimori to power as erstwhile president of Peru, the effects of his three consecutive administrations, and his subsequent decline from power, imprisonment, and loss of favor in Peruvian society profoundly affected the resident Nikkei communities in both Peru and Japan, even in the United States. Despite the dekasegi phenomenon of massive Nikkei emigration that was instigated under Fujimori, the effects of enculturation and globalization have weakened or even caused some Nikkei in Peru to lose their traditional ties to Japan.

Figure 3, bottom left, is a painting for an art class by a Nikkei woman at the Peru-Japan Cultural Center in Lima.

The cartoon characters from Japanese children's stories in the original (top right) were originally depicted with wide, round eyes. But, for her own art class project (bottom left), this lady of Japanese descent chose to draw these same characters with narrow, slanted ones—even though wide, round eyes were initially drawn by Japanese animators in Japan.

Missiological Implications Based on Data Interpretation

Missiological implication #1: The pathway of Nikkei dekasegi identity formation is multi-faceted

The model depicted below illustrates my conception of Nikkei identities of the various people I met and interviewed while in Japan, Brazil and Peru on research trips between 2009–2012. Additionally, several extended in-country visits were made to various Peruvian and Brazilian communities throughout Japan during that same time period. This schema is a generalization, an amalgamation, of my interview data and responses separated into categories and designations which shall be explained further below in this section.

Figure 4. Nikkei Identity: The Influence of the Big Picture

The following is my explanation for the contents of the graphic on the previous page, page 21:

The Individual: I view one's core identity as an amalgamation of inward and outward influences. Here, and specific to our topic, "self-derived consciousness" means what one thinks about oneself as it relates to Japan, i.e., an intrinsic, psychological state of mind or influence. That is, the thinking, "I am a 'Japanese', a Nikkei, a dekasegi, or a combination of all. It speaks to the question, where do I come from? Or, who am I?"

For example, in the course of my research of these various communities, I found that many Nikkei from both Brazil and Peru seemed to suffer from identity crises when they went to live and work in Japan because of confusion between the meanings of Nikkei and "Japanese." These are not synonymous terms. On the other side of this, some Nikkei did not suffer from identity crises when they went to live and work in Japan simply because they were able to discern and decide for themselves the differences of meanings behind their identities as Nikkei or "Japanese" and how those terms might apply to them. At the same time, some non-Nikkei respondents might even generalize the differences based on ethnicity, i.e., saying, "we are all Brazilian" instead of admitting that one could be "a Nikkei from Brazil." Contrary to the first two examples, these respondents chose to focus more on the similarities, saying, "we all have the same heart" or, "yes, there are differences of language and culture but the human heart is the same."

Many Nikkei from both Brazil and Peru who went to live and work in Japan seemed to suffer from identity crises because of confusion between the meanings of Nikkei and "Japanese." Others did not suffer because they were able to discern the difference of these meanings and how they apply to them.

Adachi describes these different types of self-identification as something "beyond-the-state" and specifically hints that

> some South American *Nikkei* and other Latin American transnational migrant workers are creating a new sense of ethnic identity by claiming to be simply Latin American, aligning themselves along non-Japanese Latin Americans.[10]

She goes on to underline that because of mobility and transmigration patterns,

> boundaries of ethnic groups become more fluid in a global world... People can create various homes and origins... The more people move around—connecting with people from various "homes"—the more complex the concept of ethnicity becomes.[11]

This fluidity of "ethnicity" and identities ties directly to the concept of hybridity. What Werbner and Modood call the "transgressive power," "ambivalence and the sheer efflorescence of cultural products, ethnicities and identities."[12]

DeVos and Romanucci-Ross call ethnicity a "self-perceived group,"[13] more than being based upon "common lineage." Thus, ethnicity is always being made and remade, especially because of political and social boundaries as "a subjective sense of continuity and belonging."[14] This agrees with Hirabayashi et al's definition of Nikkei above. I also concur with anthropologist Michael Rynkiewich who notes that, in reality, *all* cultures are contingent, constructed and contested.[15] Ethnic and cultural (Nikkei) identity naturally proceed out of all of the aforementioned manmade constructs.

In plain terms, what this means regarding the ethnic identity of Nikkei is that, in part, one "becomes Nikkei" because one chooses to be with a "self-perceived group" who call themselves Nikkei or even that the person himself prefers to think as such. This selection of self-identification is not primarily nor even necessarily contingent on ethnicity, language or cultural surroundings. Rather, it is based on how one thinks and feels about oneself, internally and individually, as well as from how one might be described or thought of by outsiders of a given group, which create for the insider "a subjective sense of continuity and belonging."

Self-perception can also be influenced by what others say about oneself, the extrinsic influences of culture, society, even racial prejudice or unconscious profiling, etc. In other words, this is the externally imposed concept of "the other" which says "you're so (not) Japanese" or "you don't look Japanese" or even "all Japanese are like you . . ." etc. In sum, the combination of what people may think of you, along with what you think of yourself regarding your own ethnic identity is what makes or doesn't make a person identify himself as a Nikkei, a "Japanese" or a dekasegi.

The Community: The category, "the community" in the graphic above encompasses topics too broad and expansive to be properly covered in a paper this size. However, they are worth mentioning in passing, and include generational heritage and societal pressures from both the larger Nikkei, Japanese or Latin societies surrounding these communities. That is why I include four generations of Japanese immigrants in the graphic above, as well as perceptions of one's local societal setting (the area where one grows up), plus larger outgroup pressures (nationally, from within Japan, Brazil or Peru).

A helpful visual illustration of this is an unpublished generational chart (below) of immigration and social perceptions of Nikkei in Brazil. It was created by Dr. Jurandir Yanagihara, a third generation Brazilian Christian of Japanese descent.

The Big Picture: This final categorization which includes the influences of history, globalization, marriage and family ties, as well as political concerns are, again, beyond the scope of this paper to cover in detail. It is not possible to comprehensively cover each country and its immigrant populations in this way.

So, once more, we will only touch on one specific example from recent history: the 1990 immigration law enacted by Japan to open its borders to Nikkei abroad which forever changed the relationship between not simply Brazil and Peru but with the families who went from those countries as well. It illustrates the impact of the "big picture" quite well. A *Wall Street Journal* op-ed column December 6, 2018, noted that these South American dekasegi,

> ethnic Japanese who live abroad…were welcomed to Japan throughout the 1990s. But during the financial crisis (of 2008 and beyond) the government offered them cash grants to leave lest they displace native workers.[16]

What this historical and societal example underlines is how governments can easily both instigate and then obviate the very same immigration patterns they commence. The 1990 Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act was specifically directed toward migrant workers of "Japanese" identity. So, the impact on both the individual and the community of dekasegi Nikkei, not only in Japan but in Peru and Brazil as well, is germane concerning the implementation of that law and its various changes in 1998, 2015 and 2018. The implementation of its most current revision in November 2018 by the current Japanese government raises many questions as to Japan's capability to receive and "welcome" non-Japanese immigrants. In one news article, the dekasegi movement of the 1990s is cited as a specific example of such challenges to Japanese law and immigration policies.[17] Beyond historical and political machinations, we would be remiss to not also mention the persistence of both in-group (endogamous) marriages—to "preserve" identity—and out-group (exogamous) marriages—in conforming with social mores—to the degree that some of my respondents in Peru, for example, feared the total loss of their Nikkei identity because of high intermarriage rates.[18] These and other of the "big picture" items mentioned above in the graphic affect individuals and communities at the "grassroots level" which also influences and causes a hybridization of Nikkei identity, whether these persons are in Japan, Brazil, Peru or elsewhere.

Identity is a fundamental aspect of personality formation even though it is a cultural and social construct. And as we have seen, in the case of Nikkei and dekasegi identity, how it is formed in a globalized and migratory context could also deeply influence the practice of ministry in terms of evangelism, discipleship and the structure of worship and church attendance. Thus, in seeking to minister to the disparate populations and generations of each nation mentioned in this paper, the pathway of identity formation along which a Nikkei must pass is something that must be taken into account as the gospel is shared with them.

Table 1. The historical process of migrant integration for the Nikkei into Brazilian society (Source: Jurandir Yanagihara)

Time Period	*Situation*	*Objective*	*Location*	*Identity*	*Form of Identity*	*Feelings Toward Larger Culture*
1908–1941	Accommodation /adjustment	Become wealthy enough to be able to return to Japan	In colonies, on the farms	Japanese	Similar to what they had in Japan	As a stranger
1942–1962	Adaptation	New motherland	On the farms and in the city	Japanese-Brazilian	Constructed	Dualistic: being both Japanese and Brazilian at the same time
1963–1980	Integration	Individualized recognition	In the city and on the farms	*Nikkei*-Brazilian	Fragmented	Double "non-citizenship"
1981–2000	Identification	Roots	The city	Brazilian-*Nikkei*	Self-acceptance	A "non-native" Brazilian
2001–	Acculturation	Enjoyment and influence	Upper middle class	Brazilian with *Nikkei* roots	Acknowledged	A type of a Brazilian with an ethnic consciousness

Missiological implication #2: Nikkei is one and the same, yet different in three countries

Closely related to missiological implication #1 that Nikkei dekasegi identity formation is multi-faceted and complex, there is also the notion that Nikkei is the same yet different in each of the three nations and even within their own communities, as Jurandir Yanagihara's taxonomy demonstrates, in table 1, page 23.

On the one hand, many similarities exist. Nikkei everywhere share a common heritage with Japan and/or the Japanese community in their localities, as well as a common original language (Japanese)—except sometimes with immigrants from Okinawa (Okinawa dialect). Immigration a century ago took place only a decade apart for the original ships departing to Brazil and Peru, and recent "re-emigration" to Japan from Brazil and Peru started once more for Nikkei in both countries at the same time, beginning in 1990 because of the enactment of the Japanese law mentioned above. The inherited cultural heritage from the *Meiji* era brought by the original pioneer settlers a hundred years ago is shared and has been transformed as successive waves of immigrants who, in turn, "brought" the accoutrements and behaviors of their successive eras to these adoptive homelands. For example, many traditional Japanese values such as restraint, hard work, pensiveness, a focus on education, and being true to oneself were still emphasized among the Nikkei I met in Japan, Brazil and Peru.[19]

"One-size-fits-all" evangelism will not suit the triadic convergence of *Nikkei* identity.

On the other hand and at the same time, differences are also considerable. The biggest difference I saw was how Nikkei were treated in the various local communities of each country. For example, in Aichi, Japan, the Nikkei Brazilian community and in Kani, Japan, the Nikkei Peruvian community, was "in but not of" the surrounding Japanese community. One could feel the polarization of cultures that was almost palpable between the resident Japanese community and the immigrant worker Nikkei population, i.e., with the not so subtle sense that "we are not the same and you are not welcome here." Inside Brazil, on the other hand, there was a definite sense of fusion between cultures where one could clearly be both Brazilian and "Japanese" at the same time, without too much sense of dissonance or contradiction. I myself felt this even as a visiting Nikkei when people spoke Portuguese to me and didn't even give me the second look that I often get in other contexts. Inside Peru, I felt an embedding of identities where people almost seem determined to be either "Japanese" or Peruvian or both. In other words, people came across as consciously choosing to be who they were; they were also able to clearly state reasons as to why this was true for them. Even with these examples, it can be seen that ministry outreach would not be the same for each population.

Thus, in application, for such variegated homogeneity, it would not be appropriate to generalize or use a "one-size-fits-all" approach, i.e., to think that one type of evangelism or discipleship methodology will "suit" any kind of Nikkei or that "if it works in Japan, it will work with 'Japanese' everywhere." As already noted above in missiological implication #1, Nikkei identity formation is complex and beyond simple generalizations. For individuals on a personal level and sometimes even communities, it appears that Nikkei identity is less defined by skin color or Japanese language proficiency, and more by the composition of one's home, upbringing and environment, educational connections and the desire one has to be/become a Japanese. So, if such factors are not carefully considered, many could "fall through the cracks" and be missed by a so-called "cookie cutter" approach in reaching these disparate populations.

Missiological implication #3: Triadic convergence

Taking into consideration the similarities and differences between both the dominant culture and the Nikkei sub-cultures mentioned above in missological implication #2, my research data findings agreed with Hirabayashi, Kikumura-Yano, and Hirabayashi on the value of relational ties that comprise a "triadic convergence." The idea of "triadic," or a group of three, comes from the writings of Nikkei identity scholars looking at Nikkei populations in a global context. I also sensed this positive tension as I did my fieldwork. This same term of "triadic convergence" applies to the dekasegi since dekasegi are not an ethnicity per se but Nikkei from different places who have become migrant workers, usually in Japan.

"Triadic" speaks of "interactive relationships between the home nation, Japan and Nikkei community formation."[20] Like the legs on a tripod, these three facets together are necessary for explaining and dealing with a globalized, hybrid identity like the dekasegi, or even the Nikkei in Brazil or Peru.

1. Home nation: in our case, this is Brazil or Peru or even Japan in some instances.
2. Japan: important to this is how one's concept and perceived relationship to the nation and people of Japan impacts one's life. "Japan" as a part of the convergence refers to the "big picture" part of the diagram in missiological implication #1, where

one's conception and relationship to Japan is a key element in forging identity, practice and behavior in general for both individuals and communities.

3. Nikkei community formation: this is about how the Nikkei in that context perceive themselves as regards to their Japanese "connection" within their home nation. We have already discussed this at length above.

I encountered a specific example of this kind of triadic convergence in Brazil simply because one time I happened to be visiting near that occasion on the local calendar. Traditionally, the *Bon Odori* or "Festival of the Dead" as it is often called is celebrated by Japanese in Japan during the summer months, usually August. The festival is often held for three or more days and includes civic holidays, cemetery visits and memorial celebrations as well as festivities and customs, such as *Toro Nagashi,* a traditional sending off of lit paper lanterns down rivers in Japan during *Obon,* as this festival is also called. However, in both North America and Brazil, the dates will often shift depending on the local calendar. In Brazil, for example, I discovered that the Obon festival is normally held during the first week of November. When I asked if this was intentionally done to coincide with the Day of the Dead in South American Catholic tradition, I was told yes.[21] Called *Finados* in Portuguese but synced with Obon, this time period is when Nikkei in Brazil follow the custom of their home nation yet incorporate the tradition of Japan as local Japanese Brazilians work to build Nikkei community formation, a practice that both sets them apart yet also allows them to participate in the local context of their home nation. This is triadic convergence.

In 2012 it was estimated that there were between 200-300 Portuguese-speaking churches in Japan, comprised both of Nikkei and Brazilians of all ethnicities. This is phenomenal, since the total Christian church demographic in Japan hovers somewhere between 7,800 -8,000 congregations for the entire country.

Missiological approach: To reach various populations of Nikkei in a globalized world, using a triadic approach is a needed framework. We must consider the home nation, its relationship to Japan, and how the resident Nikkei community forms its identity as we minister to these groups. The older geographically-based, static, local context approach is inadequate to explain or deal with these and other Nikkei and dekasegi experiences.

Missiological implication #4: The effects of *dekasegi* movement should not be ignored

In Peru, anecdotally, it is estimated that half of the entire Nikkei Peruvian population had been dekasegi in Japan for varying lengths of time. In Japan, Brazilian immigrants, most of whom are Nikkei, are a sizeable and influential population. The global recession that started in 2008 caused many dekasegi to return to their home nation from Japan, or left them stranded in Japan without a job or a future. However, even though the enormity and pace of this dekasegi movement from more than a decade ago has waned, missiologically speaking, opportunities for sharing the gospel with, through, and in these migrant populations in any of the three countries remain ripe. What does this mean in application for mission?

First, a vision for training these dekasegi is strongly evidenced among professional Christian workers on both sides of the ocean. In Brazil, for example, intentional, organized efforts are taking place to specifically reach returnees from abroad because it has been found that Nikkei may sometimes come to Christ more easily abroad (though usually in a Portuguese language context). This can be attributed to the fact that those who leave their homeland are often more open-minded than those who remain, simply by nature of the fact that they have left their homes for regions beyond. Thus, receiving the gospel is only one of many "new" experiences that migrant workers encounter. Because of this reality, some churches in Brazil send missionaries to Japan, both to minister to unreached Japanese but also to establish Portuguese-speaking congregations there. In 2012, it was estimated by a coalition of evangelical Brazilian pastors in Japan that there were between 200–300 Portuguese-speaking churches in Japan comprised both of Nikkei and Brazilians of all ethnicities. This is phenomenal since the total Christian church demographic in Japan hovers somewhere between 7,800–8,000 congregations for the entire country!

Also, some dekasegi who have been abroad are sometimes more open to the gospel once they return to Brazil than before they left. My respondents explained that this was because "becoming Christian"—which often meant becoming Roman Catholic—was perceived by many Nikkei as a betrayal of their Japanese identities and heritage so, in general, Christianity in every form was resisted by most Nikkei (as it is in Japan). But spiritual needs manifested overseas were met by the gospel from Christians living there. Being out of their home country actually made turning to Christ easier for many, according to my respondents.

Inside Japan itself, both Brazilian and Peruvian pastors expressed a desire to see both an expansion of their language ministry works among their own people as well as a desire to see the surrounding Japanese population reached for Christ. Two pastors I spoke with in Japan also mentioned a vision to train lay persons to lead churches so that the church could eventually function without professional clergy. This also addresses a felt need that was raised by one missionary who told me that Nikkei tend to feel better when a Nikkei church leader is over them, one who "looks like them."

and only in Japanese and sometimes even in English as a support language or as a venue for evangelism, when necessary. Learning English as a second language was quite popular in Lima when I was there. On the other hand, Nikkei in Sao Paolo and other Brazilian locales seemed very interested in improving their Japanese facilities. Thus, language classes specific to such interests and contexts could become another form of outreach.

The heart language of the majority of Nikkei I met was not the Japanese language, and any evangelism or training should be primarily conducted in their heart language of Portuguese or Spanish. But the ability to speak Japanese remains a staunch vested interest.

On the other hand, many Nikkei in Peru have either lived or worked in Japan (and therefore now have connections there) or have relatives or friends who did. Similarly, because of the large, still extant Brazilian communities in Japan, with relatives and friends living there, the desire and ability to visit Japan—even if one is not a dekasegi—is appealing and strong to many Brazilian Nikkei. The question for visitors from both countries to Japan is not whether they will come but, spiritually speaking, what will be done with them when they do come? And what will be done for them or through them when they return to their own country?

Finally, whether in Japan or in their homeland, whether returning from Japan or going there for the first time, there is a viable opportunity for both a harvest of new souls and for training Nikkei to win Nikkei to Christ. As already mentioned, the prominence of the dekasegi in Japan has lessened radically in 2018 from a decade ago yet their influence remains—since many have stayed as families and are still working in Japan as they continually seek to integrate into the larger Japanese context. In a different but similar way, dekasegi who return from Japan suffer from some of the same adjustment and adaptation issues experienced by military, diplomatic or missionary personnel in America who return from abroad. Thus, on both sides of the Pacific, the people and the influence of the dekasegi movement remain an issue to be engaged with missiologically. There are still many unanswered questions and untapped potential.

Missiological implication #5: Language, culture, and other means can be tools to win Nikkei to Christ (but not necessarily the Japanese language!)

The heart language of the majority of Nikkei I met in both Brazil and Peru was *not* the Japanese language. Therefore, evangelism and training should be primarily conducted in the heart language of Nikkei (whether in Portuguese or Spanish),

Having said this, it must also be noted that the ability to speak Japanese at varying levels still remains a staunch vested interest for Nikkei communities in Brazil and Peru. Inside Japan, speaking Japanese is almost a requirement for survival for dekasegi communities there; it is not uncommon for dekasegi children in Japan, raised in the Japanese school system and fluent in the language, to become de facto interpreters and interlocutors for their parents to the larger surrounding Japanese-speaking community. Japanese language acquisition is difficult for many Latin Japanese so teaching the Japanese language to native Portuguese or Spanish speakers could itself be an outreach tool among Nikkei in Japan.

On the other hand, Nikkei in South America seems to cling sometimes to the Japanese language as a tool to form or protect their identity as being "special" Brazilians or Peruvians. Thus, teaching Japanese classes or, better, using Japanese biblical language to teach grammatical patterns and vocabulary for everyday use (much as TESOL classes are used for evangelism in the US and abroad) would be appealing to many Latin Nikkei who "like" the Japanese language or want to keep up with it for manga (comic book) reading or to learn new conversational vocabulary.

Missiological approach: The heart language of the majority of the Nikkei I met was either Portuguese or Spanish; many spoke better English as a second language than speaking Japanese. But Japanese as a language remains a tool, a venue, for reaching Nikkei everywhere for Christ.

Some Final Thoughts

My research raised many questions that weren't answered. Much more research and active outreach among dekasegi communities in Japan as well as toward returnee Nikkei in their home contexts of Brazil and Peru needs to be conducted.

As previously noted, there are consonant "touchpoints" between Brazilian and Peruvian Nikkei regarding their identities. Such topics would include shared and similar experiences under World War II, generational changes in language and culture, and racially-charged impressions from the local culture. Because of the influence and experience of migration, the effects of globalization are deeply ingrained into the Nikkei psyche, whether in Brazil or Peru, and should not be ignored. Identity regarding Nikkei is fluid and changing, defying conventional wisdom because there is no singular categorization for Nikkei "ethnicity." Hybrid identification may be the answer here but further research will need to be conducted since Brazilian and Peruvian Nikkei seem to view themselves as both the same and different from their local setting at the same time. For individuals personally, their Nikkei identity is less defined by skin color or Japanese language proficiency, and more by home upbringing/environment, educational connections and the desire to be a "Japanese." Nikkei in both countries remain a largely unreached people group. Utilizing existing Japan-Brazil or Japan-Peru relationships must be considered, because of immigration and identity issues, especially the reciprocal (on both sides of the ocean) training of lay Christians for evangelism, church planting and training in leadership and multiplication. Strategies for reaching Nikkei should be considered from the basis of a variegated perspective rather than from a "cookie-cutter" approach. Finally, since we live in a globalized, migratory world—especially as this relates to Nikkei traveling to and from Japan—we must seek to strategize with this in mind, not merely looking at a local context or even countrywide. As a focus of evangelism, training and church planting, Nikkei are globalized sojourners. Those of us who seek to reach them must expand the horizons of our own mindsets, methodologies and practices, as we pray and plan to reach Nikkei everywhere for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. **IJFM**

Endnotes

1 "Japanese": used here as a descriptor, Nihonteki: 日本的 lit., 'Japanese-y' or 'Japanese-like.' I sometimes use this term as an adjective, although with the same spelling in English; it has broad application and can be used to describe things Japanese, whether they come from or are related to Japan itself or whether they are associated with Nikkei expatriates abroad, e.g., in Brazil or in Peru.

2 Nikkei: 日系 lit., "of the Japanese system, lineage or group." A person or persons of Japanese descent, and their descendants, who emigrated from Japan and who created unique communities and lifestyles within the societies in which they now live . . . Nikkei also potentially encompasses people of part-Japanese descent, to the extent that they retain an identity as a person of Japanese ancestry. Being Nikkei, in other words, has primarily, but not exclusively, to do with ethnic identity." Lane Hirabayashi, Akemi Kikumura-Yano and James Hirabayashi, *New Worlds, New Lives: Globalization and People of Japanese Descent in the Americas and from Latin America in Japan* (Stanford, CA : Stanford University, 2002), 19–20, 25.

3 Hirabayashi, Kikumura-Yano, and Hirabayashi,19.

4 I have been asked why I did not also cover other Japanese populations for this research. The answer is twofold: 1) the specific assignment I had with my agency was only with these countries so my focus of study was only on these nations initially. Also, 2) the Nikkei dekasegi populations in both Brazil and Peru created measurable and visible communities and sub-cultures that affected local areas in Japan in a significant manner. Other possible Nikkei dekasegi populations were not so visible or prevalent within Japan during this same time period. Further research should be done in other areas of the global Japanese diaspora but that was beyond the scope of this particular project.

5 I presented my research details and methodology at the June 2018 consultation in Manila, the Philippines. This paper has been edited to only show the final conclusions and missiological implications because of space considerations.

6 In this paper, I do not use dekasegi as a category of ethnicity. Rather, it is a descriptor of a type of Nikkei identity that is manifested in these various contexts by nature of migration.

7 See Hirabayashi, Kikumura-Yano, and Hirabayashi, 2002.

8 Here, I use "Japanese" as a noun: for a people, Nihonjin: 日本人 lit., 'a Japanese person or the Japanese people.' In this paper, I sometimes use "Japanese" as a noun to describe only a Japanese citizen who lives in Japan or is temporarily living outside that country but intends to return, who speaks the Japanese language as their only or first tongue, who "looks" Japanese physically, and who is regarded by other Japanese individuals or the larger society as a Japanese person. The term may also be applied in a plural form toward a group of individuals.

9 A *New York Times* article (April 25 2009) estimated a combined population of 366,000 Brazilian and Peruvian immigrants in Japan.

10 Adachi, 19.

11 Ibid.

12 Werbner and Modood, 2015.

13 DeVos and Romanucci-Ross, 18.

14 DeVos and Romanucci-Ross, 25.

15 Michael A. Rynkiewich, "The World in My Parish: Rethinking the Standard Missiological Model," *Missiology* 30, no. 3 (2002): 315–16.

16 I would add that one condition of those grants was a signed contractual promise never to return to Japan.

[17] "Making Sense of Japan's New Immigration Policy: A Controversial New Regulation Will Allow More Foreign Workers into Japan. But Can Japan Take Care of Them Once They Arrive?" https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/making-sense-of-japans-new-immigration-policy/.

[18] See the following links for miscegenation statistics in Brazil among Nikkei: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mixed-race_Brazilian#Japanese/non-Japanese https://www.labeurb.unicamp.br/elb/asiaticas/japones.htm (this link is in Portuguese).

[19] Nobuko, Adachi, *Japanese and Nikkei At Home and Abroad: Negotiating Identities in a Global World* (Amherst, NY: Cambria), 2010.

[20] Hirabayashi, Kikumura-Yano, and Hirabayashi, 338.

[21] Please see the article in the Nichi Bei online periodical, "The Transformation of Obon in Brazil": https://www.nichibei.org/2010/06/the-transformation-of-obon-in-brazil/.

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Books and Missiology

Clarifying Insider "Ekklēsia": An Historical Review of Key Issues

by S. T. Antonio

Editor's note: This article is an excerpt from S. T. Antonio's Insider Church: Ekklēsia and the Insider Paradigm *(William Carey Publishing, 2020), taken from chapter 4. Reprinted by permission.*

In the middle of the COVID-19 lockdown, Ahmad was devouring the Word. By government orders, we were confined to our homes, so we started studying the Bible together on WhatsApp calls. Despite the poor internet quality, Ahmad persevered, discovered new truths about God, and committed himself to applying and sharing the story. As we were finishing, Ahmad interjected, "Hey, next time I need your advice on some things. How do Christians pray? And how do I fast? And should I stop going to the mosque? And how do I talk about my faith to people?"

Ahmad was wrestling with how his newfound faith should take shape for him in his Muslim milieu. The way that cross-cultural workers answer such questions—the advice given, the options presented—is shaped by our assumptions about what is (and what is not) helpful for disciples and emerging churches as they grow to maturity and fruitfulness. It is also shaped by our underlying theology of the nature of the church and how the church takes shape in various cultures.

The insider paradigm includes a particular set of assumptions and implications regarding the nature of the church. Some of these positively and creatively express the biblical nature of the church, while others undermine and fall short of it. A responsible approach to multiplying biblical churches among Muslims ought to learn from both the strengths and weaknesses of the insider paradigm.

To do so, however, requires an accurate understanding of the particular ecclesiological assumptions and implications of the insider paradigm in the first place. Too often the debate over insider movements has been driven by mischaracterization and straw-men arguments, increasing misunderstanding and suspicion and entrenching people more firmly into their sides. A better way forward is to recognize that as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ and fellow laborers in the Lord's field, we ought to take the time and effort to listen and understand one another charitably and accurately. Then we will better understand whether we actually disagree, and if so, where precisely the points of disagreement are,

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enabling us to discern potential pathways toward mutual understanding and consensus. This is the intended spirit and purpose of this chapter (and the next) in describing and evaluating the vision of the church in the insider paradigm.

The insider paradigm broadly supports and affirms "insider" identity and movements, which typically refer to Jesus' followers retaining or remaining in the "socio-religious" identity of their birth—i.e., identifying as "Muslim followers of Jesus." In addition, the insider paradigm has often supported ongoing participation in key Muslim rituals, modifying and reinterpreting such participation in a way that is viewed as compatible with a vital faith in Christ (e.g., ritual prayer, mosque worship, Qur'an reverence, confessing prophethood of Muhammad).

In this chapter, I attempt to outline, as straightforwardly and fairly as possible, the ecclesiological outlook of the insider paradigm as described by its chief architects and leading thinkers in their prolific writings.[1] Insider advocates come from a variety of ecclesial backgrounds and perspectives, and they do not all agree on every aspect of ecclesiology.[2] However, decades of collaboration have given rise to a recognizable ministry paradigm, and this paradigm includes a particular set of commitments and perspectives on the nature of the church—a vision of ekklēsia for insiders—that challenges traditional perspectives in significant ways.[3] The present chapter describes this vision, while the next evaluates it in light of the biblical vision of the church.

The particular vision of ekklēsia in the insider paradigm will be outlined from the perspective of the following key issues, which have been addressed previously, and the next chapter will revisit each one to highlight its strengths and shortcomings.

Each of the following categories represents an important dimension of the nature of the church, and each provides a window into the unique contours of insider ekklēsia:

- biblical story and themes
- core essence of the church
- local and universal church
- visible and invisible church
- attributes and marks of the church
- relationship between the church and salvation
- relationship between the church and the world

Biblical Narratives and Themes for Insider Church

The insider paradigm highlights various themes and parts of the biblical narrative to undergird its vision of ekklēsia for insiders. The particular themes and passages emphasized, and the way they are applied to insider movements, are foundational to the insider perspective on the nature of the church.

Old Testament: Inside and Outside the People of God

There are a few Old Testament themes that insider advocates appeal to in developing an ekklēsia for insiders. Charles Kraft argued that the Old Testament people of God, in the form of people "born involuntarily into extended kinship groups," is a more suitable form for Muslims than the "voluntary association" form of the Greco-Roman church (1979, 115). Woodberry, on the other hand, suggested that the theme of "the faithful remnant," first in Israel and then among the nations, holds potential for illuminating insider ekklēsia (2007, 26).

One commonly referenced theme relates to Old Testament figures who seem to worship the true God without joining the covenant community of Israel (Talman 2015c, Loc. 4583). The most cited individual is Naaman the Syrian, who converts to belief in *Yahweh* as the one true God, and yet returns to his homeland having received pardon (or permission) from Elisha for bowing before a pagan god when accompanying his master to the temple (2 Kings 5; Baeq 2010; Talman 2015c, Loc. 4596–4636).

Other examples cited are Melchizedek (Gen 14:18–20; Heb 7:1–10), Abimelech (Gen 20), Jethro (Exod 18), and the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1–13; Talman 2015c, Loc. 4583), considered Old Testament precedents of believers who worship God but remain inside their "socio-religious" community.[4] As such, they are seen as precursors to the "non-proselyte conversion" in the New Testament, as well as a paradigm to a church of insiders following Jesus within Muslim identity and community.

These Old Testament themes, however, are not as significant in the insider paradigm as the several New Testament themes used to undergird insider ekklēsia.

Insider Church and the Kingdom

No theme is more pervasive in the insider paradigm than the theme of the kingdom of God. In many ways, a theology of the kingdom, and the kingdom parables, provide the overarching biblical and theological framework for the insider paradigm as a whole and for its vision of ekklēsia in particular.

Insider advocates see the theology of the kingdom as putting "church" in proper perspective. Jesus did not come to found the institutional "Christian church" or start a new religion; he came to inaugurate the kingdom, an expansive reality which transcends the established church and can spread in the midst of non-Christian religious communities.

The theology and parables of the kingdom are seen as reframing a traditional view of the church, offering a new "kingdom paradigm" of church planting. Whereas the traditional paradigm is framed by "conflict of religions" and denominationally "separatist" ecclesiology, a "kingdom paradigm" understands the kingdom to transcend denominations and religious communities: "The Kingdom of God includes the Church, but is bigger than the Church. The Kingdom refers to the whole range of God's exercise of His reign and rule in the universe. This includes religions" (Higgins 2009, 87; cf. Taylor 2015, Loc. 4371).

temple prayers at a time when temple leadership was officially opposed to faith in Jesus (Higgins 2015b, Loc. 5623). For insider advocates, this provides a clear biblical precedent for contemporary insiders who gather together with other believers and yet continue to pray in the mosque and identify as Muslims (Travis 2000, 53).

The parables of the kingdom shift the focus from church planting to kingdom sowing. It represents a more dynamic, organic view of the church—"not so much a congregation as it is a movement, a life, an organism, a seed." (Higgins)

The parables of the kingdom—especially the yeast in the dough—shift the focus from "church planting" to "kingdom sowing" in the insider paradigm (Travis and Woodberry 2010). The former represents a more Western, organizational, and institutional concept of the church and the latter expresses a more dynamic, organic view of the church:

> The church, when understood from a Kingdom perspective, is not so much a congregation, as it is *a movement, a life, an organism, a seed.* According to Jesus' metaphors, the church lives and grows amidst all sorts of other things: weeds, rocks, and dough. (Higgins 2015, Loc. 5404, emphasis added)

This organic view of the church, shaped by the imagery of the parables, is extended to imply that Jesus himself expected, and taught us to expect, an ekklēsia which could take shape "within the religio-cultural world of the Muslim community" and would "include Islamic places and patterns of worship" (ibid., Loc. 5421).

This understanding and application of the "kingdom" theme will be evaluated in the next chapter, but there is no mistaking that it is a hugely influential component of the biblical framework for an insider church, reframing the nature of ekklēsia as a community that can take shape within, and spread among, non-Christian "socio-religious" communities. Another critical building block for insider ecclesiology is the Jesus-movement as it unfolds among the Jews and Gentiles in the book of Acts.

The Jerusalem Church as First Insider Church

For insider advocates, the first church was an "insider church." The first Jewish believers in Jesus did not intend to form a separate religious community, but rather formed a sect within Judaism called "the Way" (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9). While they gathered with other Christ-followers, they still identified as Jews, followed Jewish laws, and continued in

This understanding leads to a reframing of the nature of ekklēsia as "a movement within the social and religious life of the Jewish people" that "took structural or formal expression as it met in separate homes or public gatherings *and* as its members continued in the Temple and the synagogue" (Higgins 2006, 118; emphasis in original; cf. 2009, 78). Thus, "They did not cease to be the church in the Temple worship, and they did not cease to be Jewish in the home meeting" (ibid.). The dual identity in the first church is taken as a basis for affirming the legitimacy of insider ekklēsia which combines ecclesial and "Muslim" identity, believing fellowships and mosque worship, as potentially reconcilable.

In addition to finding support for insider ekklēsia in the early Jesus-movement among Jews in Jerusalem, the insider paradigm finds support in the Gentile church, particularly in light of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

Insiders, the Gentiles, and the Jerusalem Council

Acts 15 plays a critical role in the biblical framework for insider ekklēsia, and many parallels are drawn between the Jerusalem Council and the contemporary insider controversy. The inclusion of the Gentiles in God's people was a new, surprising work of God initially resisted by the church, but eventually accepted through Spirit-led consensus and consultation. Similarly, insider advocates contend, it is important to recognize that God is doing something new and surprising in our day to include Muslims in the church "as Muslims." Just as the apostles did not require the Gentile believers to be circumcised and keep the law and therefore become Jews, so today the church should not require Muslim followers of Jesus to become "Christians" or adopt a "Christian identity." If Gentiles are able to be saved and follow Jesus by faith *as Gentiles,* without becoming Jews, then Muslims can be saved and follow Jesus by faith *as Muslims,* without "becoming Christians."[5]

The result of the Jerusalem Council is a "bilateral ecclesiology" for Jews and Gentiles (Talman 2015, Loc. 6093)—or "multilateral ecclesiology" for all nations (Talman 2015, Loc. 6109)—with a Jewish church following the Jewish law and a Gentile church free from it. However, the fact that the council required Gentiles to follow a limited number of Jewish laws for the sake of unity with the Jewish church implies that insider fellowships may eventually need to adjust their practice of church in order to express unity with the wider body of Christ (Woodberry 2015a, Loc. 5978–5996).

Thus both the Jewish Jerusalem movement and the Gentile movement in Acts are taken as paradigmatic for insider ekklēsia, albeit in different ways. The early Jewish church is viewed as a paradigm for the *positive* idea of ekklēsia remaining in its natural "socio-religious" culture and community, while the Gentile church (and the Jerusalem Council decision) is taken to be a paradigm for the *negative* idea that biblical ekklēsia does *not* require adopting a foreign "socio-religious" identity and culture.

The paradigms in Acts of the early Jewish and Gentile movements are an important part of the biblical framework for insider ekklēsia, and the following chapter offers a critical assessment of their legitimacy. Now I turn to another important New Testament theme that undergirds insider ekklēsia, which is the theme of the household/oikos.

An "oikos model" of church draws on a theme in the book of Acts, one in which the family network itself becomes the church, enabling new believers to remain within their community.

Insiders in Household/Oikos Churches

The concept of "house/household" in the New Testament (oikos in Greek) has particular relevance in shaping insider ekklēsia. Drawing upon the theme of household conversions in the book of Acts, the insider paradigm promotes an "oikos model" of church in which the family network itself becomes the church. This is set in contrast to the "Western aggregate model" of church, in which ekklēsia takes the form of a conglomeration of individual believers gathered into a new society separate from (and potentially a threat to) existing family networks. With minimal disruption to the natural family, the household/oikos model enables new believers to remain within their community network, thus facilitating a potential insider movement, as well as fulfilling the Abrahamic promise of blessing for all families of the earth (Lewis 2007, 75–76; 2010, 34).

As later discussion shows, the oikos theme and family networks play a significant role in insider ekklēsia in ways that both contributes to and falls short of the full biblical nature of the church. In addition, the insider paradigm also draws upon the body of Christ theme in its vision for insider ekklēsia.

Insiders and the Body of Christ

The "body of Christ" theme plays an important role expressing insider ekklēsia that is outside the existing Christian community and inside Muslim community and identity. Insider advocates highlight the way the "body of Christ" focuses on the spiritual connectedness of believers to Christ and to one another rather than membership in a particular ecclesial body (Travis et al. 2006, 124; Higgins 2006, 118–19; Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 117). Membership in the body of Christ does not require "joining a church," identifying as "Christian," or rejecting one's membership in the Muslim *umma.* Rather, it is a spiritual identity effected by God when one believes in Jesus, and it can be expressed in fellowship with other believers as well as in other social and religious spheres of daily life (Higgins 2006, 118–19). These local insider expressions of the body of Christ can develop visible forms and structures for their community life, and their identity as members of Christ's body does not exclude membership and participation in another religious community (Higgins 2006, 118–19). The body of Christ, like the kingdom of God, transcends religious communities (Travis and Woodberry 2015).

Other New Testament Themes

A number of other biblical themes are occasionally referenced in the insider paradigm. One is the church as a *holy community of the Spirit,* which highlights "restored and restructured relationships" in the church that attract the outside world, without dividing the church from the world (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 120). Another theme is the *new creation,* which, along with the kingdom, is taken as central to God's purposes for the world, while the church is secondary and instrumental in participating in God's new creation project (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 150). The themes of garden, city, and temple can all be traced to a culmination in the new creation, when the church will be transformed into a new, unknown form, which makes all present ecclesial forms and structures provisional and temporary (ibid., 177–85).

The foundation of insider ekklēsia is a particular group of biblical themes and narratives given particular emphasis, interpretation, and application that creates the space for, and even encourages, insider expressions of church. This insider biblical theology, thoroughly evaluated in the next chapter, is foundational in shaping all remaining dimensions of insider ekklēsia discussed below, including the essential identity of insider ekklēsia.

Insiders and the Identity of the Church

The question of the essential identity of the church is at the heart of the insider controversy. If insiders retain the "socio-religious" identity of their Muslim community, then what is the identity of the church, and what sets it apart from the Muslim community? Insider-ministry advocates articulate their answers both negatively and positively—what the church *is* and what it is *not*.

First, insider advocates emphasize that the core essence of the church is not to be found in Western church institutions, traditions, or cultural expressions (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 71–72). Some insider advocates avoid using the word "church" in favor of other terms such as "Christ-centered communities" or "biblical ekklēsia" (Travis 1998b, 412; 2012, 241, n. 36). Higgins, who uses the word "church," explains concerns about this English word:

> I am convinced that hidden in the word "church" for many of us are concepts that are not entirely biblical, but are rather identified with our experience of church as independent, isolated, and self-contained congregations. We therefore run the risk of equating that experience with the essence of "church." (2015a, Loc. 5381)

Higgins argues that many people import their own (Western) congregational experience of church, which must be separated from the essence of the biblical church.

A Christian socio-religious identity is not part of the core essence of the church.

Second, the insider paradigm affirms that a Christian "socio-religious" identity is not a part of the core essence of the church. An ekklēsia does not need to identify as "Christian" to distinguish itself from its community, but can indeed retain Muslim "socio-religious" identity (Travis 1998b; Travis 2015a, Loc. 837). The "retaining of social and religious identity" is understood as "not leaving" one's family or religious community in which one was born and raised, but remaining in one's family *and* "socio-religious" community (ibid., Loc. 817–37). "Christian socio-religious identity" then, is clearly excluded from the essential identity of the church.

While insider-ministry advocates affirm that insider movements retain their "socio-religious" identity as Muslims, they also possess an "ecclesial identity," which requires at least three things. First, an ecclesial identity requires a community or fellowship of people who believe and follow Christ—a "Christ-centered community," the key constant for C1-C5 communities in the C-spectrum (1998a, 407; cf. also Parshall 1998, 405; Travis 1998b, 412). Duerkson unpacks this further in his article "Must Insiders Be Churchless?"

> A church, according to the New Testament, is first and foremost a locally identified group of believers who are committed to following Jesus and his commandments, and to doing this together. . . . A church is, quite fundamentally, a *community* that follows the commands and example of Jesus, including expressions of baptism and communion. . . . In the New Testament this idea of community is often expressed through kinship language and practices. The church is a family whose members care for each other in familial ways. (2012, 162; emphasis in original)

Duerkson develops further the notion of the church as a community centered on Christ, in terms of a commitment to follow Jesus and his teachings together as a family. This is understood as the essence of the "ecclesial identity" of the church, which is to be distinguished from its "social identity," which they continue to share with their Muslim family and community.

The ecclesial identity of the church for insiders is shaped by the kingdom of God. Rebecca Lewis highlights the essential identity of the church in her comparison between insider movements and church planting movements:

> So the main differences between "insider movements" and "church planting movements" lie in the nature of the "house churches" (pre-existing social networks turning to Christ rather than artificial aggregate groupings) and the social identity of those involved (retained versus changed). In both movements the churches are not institutionalized, and the people in both movements share *a new spiritual identity as members of the Kingdom of God* and disciples of Jesus Christ. In the case of "insider movements," however, this new spiritual identity is not confused or eclipsed by a new social identity. (2007b, 76, n. 1; cf. Lewis 2015b, Loc. 12528–47; emphasis added)

Insider churches and "CPM" churches differ in form and social identity, while they share an essential identity as members in God's kingdom, which, significantly, does *not* require a new "social identity."

The ecclesial identity of the church is also defined in terms of the body of Christ. Kevin Higgins, in response to Tim Tennent's critique that insider movements fall short of a fully biblical ecclesiology, proposed the following definition of the essence of the church:

> *The Church is the Body of Christ, and the assembly of believers who have been saved by grace through faith.* The Church is therefore a creation of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. It is not a human organization or institution, although clearly forms and structures do factor in as tangible ways in which this

> community expresses itself visibly. No human being can "make" a church or join the Church and as such, is called to live out their membership in the Body of Christ, the Church, as a full time lifestyle in every venue of life. . . . *One's identity as a born again member of the Body can and does overlap with one's identity in other spheres of life, including one's religious life.* (Higgins 2006, 118–19; emphasis in original; cf. 2015c, Loc. 12730)

Higgins' definition continues the insider theme mentioned previously of distinguishing the essence of the church from organizations and institutions, emphasizing the church as the body of Christ, and therefore a creation of God, not man. Rather than people "making/planting" or "joining" the church, it is God who creates the church and incorporates people into it; and human beings are to live out their membership in the world "as a full time lifestyle in every venue of life," an identity which can "overlap" with other identities, such as one's religious identity. Higgins further elaborates a theology of church which creates space for insider expressions of faith:

> I am suggesting here that the biblical definition of "church" does not necessarily refer to a "bounded" or "closed" set social grouping which prevents a member of His Body, the church, from also being a "member" of another social or even religious structure or expression. However, a clarification is needed lest I be misunderstood. On one side, I do see church as a closed set, for only those who are born from above and incorporated by the Spirit into His Body are members of the church! But as such, they are not thereby excluded from living in and among other social and religious structures as yeast in the dough. (Higgins 2006, 118; cf. Higgins 2015c, Loc. 12729)

Higgins argues that the theological boundaries of the body of Christ do not require believers to give up their membership in other social and religious structures; one can have dual membership. The essence of the church is found not in changing social and religious identity, but rather in the spiritual regeneration and incorporation of believers into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

One way the essence of the church has been defined is in terms of the special presence and work of God relating to a particular community in its cultural context. While all social entities emerge through the interaction of individuals to one another, ekklēsia comes into existence when people within a particular cultural context relate to one another and to God in a special way (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 71–72). The biblical metaphors that express the nature or "theological ontology" of the church are taken to "express the special way God is present and working in and through these communities, despite their very diverse cultural expressions" (ibid., 108). Therefore, when insiders relate to one another and to God in a particular context in specified ways, ekklēsia "emerges" in that context.

It is clear that the insider paradigm presents particular ways of defining the core essence of the church that include insider communities as expressing the biblical church. These unique perspectives include clearly distinguishing the church from cultural forms and institutions, as well as separating the essence of the church from affiliating with a particular religious identity (Christian, Muslim, etc.). What is highlighted is the presence and work of God in creating the church by regenerating believers and uniting them to Christ's body, a reality which can take place among people who retain their "socio-religious" community identity as Muslims. These perspectives challenge our understanding of the church in positive ways, even as they raise some important concerns, both of which I will take up in the next chapter.

Besides the essence of the church, the insider paradigm has a unique perspective on defining the local church, as seen below.

Insiders in Local Ekklēsia

From the beginning, insider advocates have affirmed the importance of local fellowships or "Christ-centered communities." Some defining features of local ekklēsia and "church life" can be discerned.

The Basic Features of Local Ekklēsia in the Insider Model

The vision for the local church in the insider paradigm can be summarized as follows: *a group of Muslims in a family/social network who commit to following Jesus together while remaining part of the Muslim community as "socio-religious" Muslims.* There are four key components of this definition: (1) belief in and discipleship to Jesus, (2) Muslim family/social networks, (3) ongoing participation in the Muslim community, and (4) commitment to one another.

Fundamental to the local insider church is *commitment to follow Jesus.* Insider fellowships consist of people who believe in and follow *"Isa al-Masih"* (the Muslim name for Jesus)[6] as their Savior and Lord (Higgins 2009, 77; cf. Higgins 2015 Loc. 12730). Various insider advocates and missiologists give firsthand testimony to encountering and experiencing the sincere faith of insiders from such fellowships (e.g., Travis and Travis 2005).

While only those who believe and are saved are part of the body of Christ (Higgins 2015, Loc. 12730), insider advocates do not advocate separating out believers from not-yet-believers, so as not to disrupt the family network by creating a competing "believers-only" community, which leads to the second component: *Muslim social/familial networks* (Lewis 2007, 75–76). Rather than "planting" churches as new social units, insider advocates seek to "implant" churches in Muslim social networks, preserving these networks to allow the gospel to spread in the community along the lines of extended family and close friends (Talman 2004b, 8).

This insider "oikos" model of church is contrasted with the prevailing Western model of church as a "voluntary society," in which "people must be given freedom to join the community of Christ's followers by their own mature decision and should decide for themselves as adults to receive baptism" (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 50–53). This model, also known as the "believers church," is argued to have originated in the Anabaptist and free-church movements, having spread throughout the globalized world, and yet has been resisted in more communal-oriented societies, as those in Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist nations.

The insider paradigm offers an alternative, advocating an "oikos" model that seeks to avoid "aggregate churches" of strangers, extracted from their families in a separate church structure (Lewis 2007, 75; cf. Lewis 2015b, Loc. 12587). In insider churches,

> Families and their pre-existing relational networks *become* the church as the gospel spreads in their midst. The God-given family and clan structures are thereby supported and transformed from unbelieving communities into largely believing communities. Decisions to follow Christ are more communal rather than individual.… The destruction of families and the creation of semi-functional, extracted, new communities of believers-only is thereby avoided, and the gospel continues to flow along preserved relational pathways. (Lewis 2015b, Loc. 12587)

The goal is to preserve, rather than disrupt, existing family networks. This means a different vision of ekklēsia, not as a competing community *outside* the family, but as a transforming community *within* the family:

> In "insider movements," therefore, there is no attempt to form neo-communities of "believers-only" that compete with the family network (no matter how contextualized); instead, "insider movements" consist of believers remaining in and transforming their own pre-existing family networks, minimally disrupting their families and communities. These believing families and their relational networks *are* valid local expressions of the Body of Christ, fulfilling all the "one another" care seen in the book of Acts. (Lewis 2007, 75–76)

Preserving and staying within Muslim social and familial networks is a key emphasis in this particular insider model of local ekklēsia.

In addition to seeing the church take shape in existing Muslim familial/social networks, the local ekklēsia for insiders includes a third component: *ongoing membership or participation in Muslim community identity and/or practices.* When Rebecca Lewis distinguishes local "insider" churches from those in "church planting movements," she highlights two key factors: (1) remaining in family networks, and (2) remaining "Muslim" in terms of "social identity" (Lewis 2007, 76, n. 1). When local believing families come to faith and become a local expression of the church, they do not renounce their Muslim identity or call themselves Christian. Rather, these local fellowships continue to see themselves as Muslims and identify as Muslims, remaining an ongoing part of the Muslim community, while also seeing themselves as part of the kingdom of God and the body of Christ (ibid.).

But maintaining a Muslim identity often requires ongoing participation in Muslim ritual practices (Travis 1998a, 411–15). Insider advocates have variously supported and defended one or more of the following practices: (1) ongoing participation in Islamic ritual prayer *(salāt)* at the mosque or at home, substituting biblical content for Qur'anic words (e.g., Uddin 1989, 267–72; Travis 1998b, 414); (2) affirming the full Islamic confession of faith *(shahada)* that there is no god but God and Muhammad is the apostle *(rasul)* of God, reinterpreting Muhammad's apostleship or prophethood in a more limited fashion (cf. Higgins 2004, 120–21; Brown 2006, 131; Talman 2014; Talman 2015b); and (3) retaining some ongoing ritual use of the Qur'an in private or corporate worship, reciting texts that support but do not contradict the Bible (cf. Uddin 1989, 267–72; Travis 1998b, 414; Brown 2006, 131; Travis and Woodberry 2015). Insider advocates do not argue that these are necessary to the insider paradigm, nor are they universal practices by all insiders. However, the insider paradigm has been used to defend these practices as biblically permissible ways for people to follow Jesus while maintaining Muslim identity.

In addition to the church taking shape in existing Muslim familial/social networks, the local ekklēsia also includes ongoing membership in Muslim community identity and/or practices.

In addition to the above elements, many insider advocates also include *commitment to one another* as a part of the core of the insider model of the local church. This can be seen in a number of the definitions of the local church by insider advocates, such as that of Duerkson:

> A church, according to the New Testament, is first and foremost a locally identified group of believers who are committed to following Jesus and his commandments, and to doing this together.… A church is, quite fundamentally, a *community* that follows the commands and example of Jesus, including expressions of baptism and communion. (2012, 162; emphasis in original)

Part of the definition of the local church is togetherness and a common commitment to follow Jesus as a community. This same idea is expressed differently by Talman, who adopts a definition of church from the Ryrie Study Bible:

> A local church can be defined as "a group of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who have organized themselves for the purpose of doing God's will." … This shows us the need for contextualizing ecclesiology. Following Ryrie, I would maintain that the biblical absolute here is that of "organization to do God's will," but I would suggest that the form of that organization is not mandated… Hence not only would a "Jesus mosque" be acceptable, but so might a movement within the Muslim community that is not determined by its place of public worship. (2004b, 9, 12, n. 18)

Seeking to distinguish "local church" from a specific worship location, Talman zeroes in on "organization to do God's will" as the essential component of the local church, which implies a common commitment or togetherness of a community of believers. Dyrness likewise says that "an incipient ecclesial form" is present wherever the purposes of Ephesians 4:11–16—members being built up to maturity in Christ—are being fulfilled, even imperfectly (2016, Loc. 2731).

The core of the insider model of the local church is therefore one in which discipleship to Jesus spreads throughout a Muslim family such that the family network itself becomes an expression of the local church, committed to following Jesus together while remaining within the Muslim community as "Muslims." In addition to this core description of the insider model of the local church, it is also important to look at the nature of the gatherings and community life of the local church in the insider paradigm.

> The church is depicted as "church-in-process," a real and emerging church which contains aspects of the nature of the church, yet not fully expressing all the elements of the biblical church.

Local Church Life in the Insider Model

Local gatherings of insider fellowships have been affirmed in the insider paradigm from the beginning (Travis 1998a, 408; William 2011, 70), and insider advocates provide various profiles and descriptions of these gatherings which illumine the nature of local ekklēsia in the insider paradigm. Local gatherings are often described as focusing on Bible study, prayer, and fellowship (Travis and Travis 2005; Dyrness 2016, Loc. 2731). However, such gatherings are not alternatives to prayers at the mosque, and the level of openness of such gatherings depends upon local circumstances, social skills of the believers, and response of the particular neighborhood (Travis and Woodberry 2015, Loc. 1481)

The majority of insider advocates affirm the importance of gathering together in local ekklēsia, but there are differences as to how structured and organized such gatherings should be. Some insider advocates, such as Rebecca Lewis, have suggested that the gathering of believers need not be planned and structured; it can be spontaneous and organic, as what happens in the course of natural family life. In the "oikos/household" model, believing families "do not need to adopt the meeting and program structures common in Western aggregate churches" (Lewis 2007, 75–76). Since the church simply *is* the family network, then the church can express itself in the context of the natural activities and relationships of family life.

The insider model of local church is depicted as a model of "church-in-process," an "emerging" church which contains aspects of the nature of the church if not yet fully expressing it (Travis 2000, 53, 59; Higgins 2006, 119). This emerging, in-process ecclesiology can be seen in the following definition of local ekklēsia from an insider perspective:

> *Every local "church" body is an expression of the Church body.* And every time believers meet together, they are an expression of the Body. Of course, not every gathering of believers contains all of the elements of all that the scriptures teach regarding "church." The primary marks of a mature expression of the Church include these functions from Acts 2:42–47: The church exists where there is apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking bread (both as real meals, and the Lord's Supper), prayer/worship, the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, radical generosity in community life, intentional gathering together (publicly in the "Temple," and as believers house to house), and the ongoing addition of new believers. (2006, 119; cf. Higgins 2015c, Loc. 12748; emphasis in original)

Higgins affirms that insider gatherings are, on the one hand, a real expression of the church, the body of Christ; and at the same time they do not yet reflect all the elements of the biblical church, which he equates with "a mature expression of the Church" (taken from the profile of the early church in Acts).

One way the emerging character of insider communities is described is by analogy to the Catholic perspective on Protestant churches, which affirms that the true church exists fully only in the Roman Catholic Church, while also affirming the presence of ecclesial communities and (Protestant) churches with elements of "sanctification and truth" that are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church (ibid., Loc. 2678–94).

This developmental, in-process model of the church can be seen in at least two practical areas: sacraments/ordinances and elders. Many insider advocates affirm baptism and/or the Lord's Supper in their explanation of the local church: some have emphasized baptism (Talman 2004b, 9), some communion (Higgins 2006, 119), and some both (Travis 1998b, 414; Duerkson 2012, 162). Those who are aware of insider movements indicate a varied practice among various movements:

> In some movements it seems to be a common practice to remember the sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins during a meal shared together. Most Jesus-following Muslims practice some form of water baptism as well, not to indicate a change of religious affiliation, but as a sign of identifying with Jesus, who has opened the way for the cleansing of sin and for new life in Him. Some Muslim disciples of Jesus who do not yet practice outward water baptism consider themselves to have been baptized spiritually because of their relationship with Christ, who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. (Travis and Woodberry 2015, Loc. 1516)

The practice of these two rites is thus not yet universal among insider movements, and if affirmed as essential to the local church, express an emerging, "in process" character of insider ekklēsia.[7]

Advocates generally affirm the appointment of elders as a biblical feature of mature churches.

The appointing of elders is another area where this developmental, in-process nature of the insider model can be observed. As with the ordinances, it appears that the appointment of elders has taken place in some, but not all, insider fellowships (Travis et al. 2006, 124; 2006, 119; cf. Higgins 2015, Loc. 12767). Some insider advocates emphasize appointing elders as essential to the nature or functions of a "mature church," with some churches not yet having arrived (2006, 119; 2009, 77; cf. Higgins 2015, Loc. 12767). Another perspective sees the "offices" of the church as reflecting functions of the church as a whole, which can develop into particular roles when the particular need arises; e.g., the ministry of *diakonia* (service), a function of the whole church, eventually required the development of particular roles in Acts 6:1–7 (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 126).[8]

Thus, we see that insider advocates generally affirm the appointment of elders as a biblical feature of mature churches, while also allowing time and space for emerging, immature churches to grow into mature, elder-led churches, allowing flexibility in terms of the timeframe and the particular style of leadership.

One key reason that the insider model provides considerable developmental space for local fellowships is because of the principled distance between insider movements and Christian churches. Insiders, by default, are often isolated from national Christians or churches (if there are any); and cross-cultural workers, or "alongsiders," are generally very careful about how involved they are with the community, ideally limiting their involvement to mentoring relationships with key insiders in the movement (Travis and Travis 2015, Loc. 10561). This means that growth and development from an "emerging, infant" church to a community that fully expresses the elements of the New Testament church may be a gradual process.

The contours of the insider model of the local church have now become clear. At its core, the church is envisioned as a group of Muslims in a family network who are committed to following Jesus together—expressing local church as a family/community, while continuing to participate in the Muslim community "as Muslims." The community life of local insider churches is one which seeks to gather together in ways appropriate to the context for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship, as they seek to gradually grow and develop under the guidance of the Spirit into a full expression of a mature, biblical church, led by elders and practicing the sacraments.

The question to which we now turn is the issue of the relationship of these local insider fellowships to the larger body of Christ, the universal church.

Insiders and the Universal Church

By definition, Muslim insiders do not identify as Christians, and thus identify with the Muslim umma[9] over the "Christian *umma*," at least nominally (Talman 2004b, 8; Travis 2015a, Loc. 817). This raises the critical question of the role of the universal church in the insider paradigm. Insider advocates affirm the universal church as a *theological, spiritual reality*, while also acknowledging that insider churches face unique challenges in seeking to express this ideal in their context.

Insider advocates across the board affirm that insiders, and insider fellowships, are part of the universal church. All groups on the C1-C6 spectrum are affirmed as part of the larger body of Christ (Travis and Travis 2005, 402; Travis et al. 2006, 124). By virtue of faith in Christ, insiders are spiritually united by God to the body of Christ, making them members of the universal church (Higgins 2006, 118–19; cf. Higgins 2015, Loc. 12730). As Paul and Barnabas advocated for the Gentiles to be accepted by the Jerusalem church as full members of the church, so insider proponents advocate for insider believers to be accepted as part of the global family of God (Massey 2004; Bartlotti 2015, *UIM,* Loc. 2125).

It appears that many insiders, while not identifying as Christians, see themselves as a part of a larger community in Christ that transcends religious communities:

> Based on comments from Muslim followers of Jesus as well as colleagues who know these believers well, we can affirm that the great majority of Jesus-following Muslims view all people who are truly submitted to God through Christ, whether Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, as fellow members of the Kingdom of God. The presence of the Spirit of God in both born-again Christians and born-again Muslims points to realities—the Body of Christ and the Kingdom of God—that go beyond socio-religious labels and categories. (Travis and Woodberry 2015, Loc. 1477)

Though Muslim followers of Jesus may distance themselves from Christians in name, they generally see themselves as spiritually connected with those Christians who are truly born again; and when Christians see the presence of the Spirit in the lives of insiders, they should similarly recognize them as part of the body of Christ. In insider ecclesiology, it is not religious affiliation that indicates whether or not one is part of the universal church; it is the presence of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer.

While affirming this spiritual reality, insider advocates acknowledge the practical limitations of insiders expressing the universal church visibly (Duerkson 2012, 165; Dutch 2000, 22), as connectedness and solidarity to one's Muslim birth community takes priority over visible identification with the non-Muslim believing community. Insider advocates acknowledge this shortcoming, while warning evangelical critics not to hold insiders to higher standards than what evangelicals themselves have been able to achieve, with their many denominational divisions and independent churches (Duerkson 2012, 165; Higgins, Jameson, and Talman 2015, *UIM,* Loc. 1716). For some, this deficiency is another part of the insider church's "emergent," in-process character (2016, Loc. 2746).

Some, however, argue that the visible expression of the universal church is not essential, arguing that the New Testament allows for a "one body, two communities" model of church with "two distinct categories for the body of Christ," Jewish and Gentile (Jameson and Scalevich 2000, 35). Although one body in Christ, Jews and Gentiles opted to be one "in Spirit" rather than in practice, remaining separate "in almost all aspects of everyday life" (ibid., citing 1 Cor 9:19–20). As the Jews continued to follow the law, so many contemporary Muslims are finding it necessary to maintain their distance from the traditional Christian community in order to stay within their Muslim context. Christian dietary practices, dress, and worship styles make it difficult for Muslim believers to freely fellowship with them. To do so would destroy their credibility in their own community, as it would have for first-century Jewish believers (ibid.).

Like Jewish believers, who were free to continue following the law and keep unclean Gentiles at arm's length, so Muslim followers of Jesus are free to continue following their traditions and remain separate from Christians, whom some Muslims consider "unclean"—for the sake of maintaining their witness to the Muslim community. While the universal body of Christ is affirmed as a spiritual reality, its visible expression through tangible fellowship is set aside for the higher priority of maintaining solidarity and connectedness to one's birth community for the purpose of witness.[10]

Several insider advocates, however, push back against this "one body, two communities" theology of the universal church, viewing separation as a temporary, pragmatic reality at best that should eventually move towards tangibly expressed unity with the wider body of Christ, which is the biblical norm (Dutch 2000, 22; Higgins 2009, 80). Insider communities, while adopting Islamic forms, ought to eventually adjust their community life so as to express their solidarity and connection with the universal body of Christ (Woodberry 2015b, Loc. 5978–96).

Despite not being in visible communion with the Christian church, these Hindu insiders are united with them spiritually in the invisible church, sharing a common faith and life in the Spirit.

Insider advocates report some examples of insiders expressing fellowship with the universal church in low-key and security-sensitive ways, including through friendships, interactions at mission staff conferences, regular consultation in sharing ideas and strategies in Bible correspondence schools, insiders sent to represent the insider church to the national church in other countries, and an "annual gathering that includes insiders from various countries and outsiders from multiple denominational backgrounds, meeting together for a week of Bible study and discussion" (Dutch 2000, 22; Higgins 2009, 80).

Another example is an insider movement with "low key but formal links with an international Christian denomination" with a "mutual recognition of each others' ministry and ethos, . . . the denominational leadership recognizes the ministry and 'ordinations' of the insiders" (ibid.). Such links are seen as "a fruitful way forward, and a viable expression of a more faithful ecclesiology of the 'glocal' church, a church that is at once and in essence both local and global, both particular and catholic" (ibid., 80–81). Although expressing the universal church is a challenge, some insider proponents advocate for insider communities moving toward appropriate, low-profile ways to forge connections with the wider body of Christ.

The universal church is an important issue in the insider model of church. The insider paradigm affirms the universal church as a spiritual reality that transcends religious affiliation, encompassing all who have been incorporated into Christ's body through faith, whether Muslim, Christian, or other. While most insiders see themselves as part of a larger community of faith, the nature of insider movements is such that visibly expressing their connection to the global church is superseded by the priority of maintaining connection to the Muslim family and community. While some insider advocates see this as a biblically legitimate option, others see it as a temporary necessity, with the ideal of insiders moving toward limited, low-profile ways of connecting with the wider body of Christ.

The challenge of visibly expressing the universal church relates directly to the next key topic, which is how the insider vision of the church relates to the visible and invisible church.

Insider Church: Visible or Invisible?

One way to frame the insider debate is with the question: "Can someone say 'yes' to Jesus and 'no' to the visible church?" (Tennent 2006, 101). This raises the question of how the visible and invisible church shapes insider ecclesiology. Insider advocates reflect diverse perspectives on the concepts of the visible and invisible church that reflect different denominational backgrounds. However, the paradigm as a whole reveals a particular expression of visibility and invisibility in insider ekklēsia.

Herbert Hoefer, from a Lutheran perspective, utilizes the visible/invisible church concepts in expressing an ecclesiology for Hindu insiders who refuse baptism and membership in the church in India. Initially referring to them as an example of "churchless Christianity," Hoefer later reported that these believers had rejected the "churchless" moniker and affirmed that they *are* part of the church, even if they understand and practice it differently (Hoefer 2007; 2015, Loc. 6687–6705).

Hoefer believes that the visible/invisible church concept creates space for such believers who are not baptized or church members: "not everyone who is on the church rolls (the visible Church) is actually in the body of Christ through faith (the invisible church, known only to God). Likewise, there are people unknown to us in the visible Church, but known to God as His own" (ibid., Loc. 6705).

The visible church, for Hoefer, is especially connected with church membership, and this is the primary problem for these insiders (ibid., Loc. 6758–77). The reason they reject church membership is because it carries the cultural meaning of their abandoning family and community, with significant legal and social implications. In order to remain inside their family and culture as a witness, church membership is avoided. This does not mean that these insider groups (called *Jesu bhaktas)* have a problem with fellowship with other believers, which they seek in a variety of forms, as there are

> new forms of faith communities evolving. The *Jesu bhaktas* do not despise fellowship with fellow believers; indeed, they desire it and are developing various ways to achieve it. They are doing this separate from the established church bodies: through pilgrimages, Christian *sanyasis,* mass rallies, Christian friends, standing outside the church on Sundays, joining in Christian worship, Holy Communion, Bible correspondence courses, Christian ashrams and internet discussions. These are forms of spiritual fellowship and accountability that are familiar and comfortable to them from their Hindu cultural background. (ibid., Loc. 6758)

These insiders pursue fellowship with other believers, but they do so outside the bounds of membership in a Christian church and in forms shaped by their cultural background.

For Hoefer, fellowship with believers is essential, but membership in the established Christian church is not. Luther's *adiaphora* principle states that "any church practice or policy that does not compromise the gospel of salvation by grace through faith is a matter of adiaphora, a matter of indifference and freedom" (ibid., Loc. 6706). Since church membership is not essential to salvation, it should be considered *adiaphora,* says Hoefer (ibid., Loc. 6759). On the other hand, "Some form of fellowship is highly helpful for sanctification; however, the form that this faith community takes may differ from culture to culture" (ibid.).

However, despite not being in visible communion with the Christian church, these Hindu insiders are united with them spiritually in the invisible church, sharing a common faith and life in the Spirit (ibid., Loc. 6863). This may not express itself in organizational membership, but it should express itself in relational openness to the other and mutual edification and growth into Christian maturity.

However, other insider advocates are less comfortable with using "invisible ecclesiology" in the context of insider movements. Duerkson, from an Anabaptist believers church perspective, pushes back on Hoefer's use of the visible/invisible church, affirming that the New Testament understanding of the church includes visible community as essential. While affirming the reality of "a wider and unseen Church," Duerkson emphasizes that the New Testament "seems to primarily understand church as *gathered groups of disciples* that are visible to the wider community" (2012, 162; emphasis in original). Therefore, "While it is possible to be a follower of Christ and not a member of a local church, Christ's ideal is for people to be committed to a local group of believers who together represent Christ to their context" (ibid.). The reality of the invisible church, says Duerkson, should not eclipse the necessity of visible community in a New Testament church.

Duerkson is not the only one who wants to preserve visibility in insider ekklēsia. Kevin Higgins affirms, in response to critics:

> I believe in the visible church, that is, in a church made up of believers who meet and can be seen, touched, and heard. My definition refers to these as communities. The whole focus of the work I do and the training I have developed over the years is to see the extension and establishment of such communities of disciples, such churches. My view of insider movements is not inconsistent with the development of forms of church community and forms of church leadership that are biblical, and also fit the context of the culture.... Thus, the visible church and its visible forms are biblical concepts. Insider proponents believe in the visible church. (2009b, 70–71)

Higgins fully ascribes to the visible church, understanding it to refer to tangible, observable gathered communities of disciples, affirming it to be completely consistent with insider ekklēsia.

In the end, the emphases of Hoefer and of Higgins and Duerkson can be generally reconciled in the insider paradigm. While insider ekklēsia generally affirms the importance and necessity of visible community, understood as committed participation in local ekklēsia (the emphasis of Duerkson and Higgins), it also generally avoids official membership in the *existing, established* visible church (the emphasis of Hoefer). Furthermore, the existing "visible" church is encouraged to welcome insiders as members of the body of Christ even if they are not officially identifying with the existing visible church.

Thus, insider ekklēsia seems to be shaped by both the visible and invisible nature of the church in different ways. As regards the visible nature of the church, the insider paradigm envisions insiders not as secret believers (C6), but believers who openly live out their faith as Muslim followers of Jesus. We have already seen the concept of local ekklēsia includes visible, tangible communities of faith in Muslim social networks. Some are "underground" churches that meet discreetly with a lower profile, while others can be more open and public, depending on the context and social skills of the insiders (e.g., the case of "Jesus mosques"; Travis and Woodberry 2015; cf. Massey 1996, 151). At the very least, the ideal seems to be for gatherings that are at least visible enough to family members and friends to facilitate the spread of the gospel within the social network, leading to a potential movement.

Along with an affirmation and pursuit of the visible church, insider ekklēsia is also shaped by aspects of the invisible church. In response to what is perceived as an overly institutional ecclesiology, the insider paradigm affirms the unseen, spiritual nature of the church, such that the church is a spiritual creation of God, and all who are saved are united to the body of Christ by the Spirit. Therefore, insiders *are* part of the church, the body of Christ, prior to and regardless of any participation in any church structure or institution.

Another aspect of invisibility in insider ekklēsia is in the expression of the universal church. While visibility is strongly affirmed by some insider advocates, this is focused primarily at the local church level, whereas the universal church is allowed to be, by and large, a spiritual, invisible reality, as discussed previously. Insiders' spiritual bond with the wider visible Christian community typically is not visibly expressed, instead remaining mostly a hidden spiritual reality of the heart and mind. While some insiders have found ways to engage in fellowship with the wider body of Christ, such ties are not overly visible—not only for security reasons, but also to maintain an insider identity. If the goal is for the insider movement to retain its Muslim identity, then any ties to the visible Christian community must remain under the radar at best, if not functionally invisible.

In summary, insider ekklēsia is both visible and invisible. With respect to local gatherings of insiders in Muslim communities, insider ekklēsia is visible, if low profile. With respect to the universal Christian church, insider ekklēsia is functionally invisible. The next chapter examines the ways that a robust understanding of the visible and invisible church affirms and challenges this understanding.[11] Before doing so, however, it is also important to understand how the attributes and marks of the church are expressed in insider ekklēsia.

Attributes, Marks, and Insider Church

The question of the attributes and marks of the true church provides another vantage point to illumine the unique ecclesiological vision of the insider paradigm. Overall, the insider ekklēsia engages more with the Protestant marks than the classical attributes, but ultimately emphasizes its own particular marks to guide the evaluation of churches and movements.

Some insider advocates argue that the classical attributes, as well as the Protestant marks, are historically and contextually shaped, responding to particular temporal concerns that are far removed from contemporary insider movements (Dyrness 2016, Loc. 2678; Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 34, 36).

Thus, it is not surprising that insider ekklēsia, by and large, is not significantly influenced by the classical attributes of the church (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic). Some exceptions exist, such as a lone mention of "catholicity" in the context of encouraging fellowship with the universal church (Higgins 2018, 27), and a reinterpretation of "unity" as a key marker of the biblical church (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 165).

More significant in the insider paradigm are the Protestant marks of the Word, baptism, and communion. Although not considered universal criteria for recognizing the true church, they are broadly considered important ecclesial practices, as previous discussion has made clear related to local ekklēsia.

Each of these practices, however, may be expressed and understood differently in insider contexts. In some insider fellowships, the study of the Word does not exclude a role for the Qur'an and the hadith as respected texts. The Qur'an and the prophethood of Muhammad may be "revalued" without being rejected; teachings in line with Scripture are affirmed, while Jesus and the Scriptures gradually supersede and relativize the Qur'an and the prophet (ibid. 2019, 141). Such a process has been compared to the way God revealed his truth in Scripture "against the backdrop of religious traditions and practices of local cultures" that "helped to illuminate" aspects of God's truth (ibid., 141–42). All of this provides an insider "twist" to the ministry of the Word.

While insider ekklēsia generally affirms the necessity of visible community—understood as committed participation in local ekklēsia—it also generally avoids official membership in the existing, established visible church.

It has already been noted that many insider movements among Muslims are reported as practicing a form of water baptism. A priority, however, is to express baptism in a way that is not "a ritual of social disruption" or of changing religious communities but rather as an identification with Christ and one's new life in him (Travis and Woodberry 2015, Loc. 1516; Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 135). The practice of communion appears to be less frequent, though it has been described as "remember[ing] the sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins during a meal shared together" (Travis and Woodberry 2015, Loc. 1516).

Some insider advocates have argued that it is the theological meaning only and not the form of baptism and communion that is normative. Baptism and communion were adapted from existing Jewish cultural rituals (a purification ritual and the Passover, respectively), and insiders (and others) are free to utilize existing cultural or religious rituals in their context that can be adapted to communicate the meaning of baptism and communion (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 137–38). In some contexts, such corresponding rituals can be found, but in other contexts, it is more difficult, which leads some insiders to de-emphasize these practices.[12]

In summary, the insider paradigm affirms, in various ways, the importance of the practices associated with the Protestant marks, and yet allows some flexibility as to the particular cultural form that these practices take so as to avoid "Christian" meaning which would signal a change in religious community. However, of these practices, only the ministry of the Word appears to be treated as a universal "mark of the true church," while baptism and communion are simply important "ecclesial practices" through which God's presence is manifested in a particular community.

Rather than focusing on the classic attributes or Protestant marks, insider advocates offer their own set of criteria that mark out true churches, marks which they affirm can be and are increasingly present in emerging "insider" communities. One example is the six "devoteds" of the early church in Acts, taken as indicators of a healthy movement: (1) prayer, (2) the apostles' teaching and fellowship, (3) breaking of bread and prayer, (4) meeting in the temple and house-to-house, (5) leaders devoted to the Word and prayer, and (6) relational discipleship (Higgins 2015b, Loc. 5507–634).[13] These marks of healthy movements are presented as fully compatible with fellowships that maintain a "socio-religious" insider identity, in line with the pattern of the early Jewish church.

Another set of marks that have been proposed to identify the "emergent reality of the church" among insiders includes: (1) hearing and obeying the story of Christ, (2) the formation of a community around the story, (3) response of the community to this story in prayer and praise, (4) living at peace with one another and with the wider community, and (5) witness of the community to Christ and the transformation of the Spirit. The first mark is an intentional revision of the Protestant mark of proclamation of the Word, while the fourth is an expansion of the classical mark of unity that affirms the church is not distinct from its community, but rather "yeast in the dough" seeking to bless its community in shalom (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 155–71).

In the following chapter, we will look at the strengths and weaknesses of how the insider paradigm "marks out" the true church. Here we note that the insider paradigm offers a distinctive approach to the marks of the church. Largely bypassing the classical attributes, insider advocates affirm a modified "insider-friendly" version of the practices of the Word and sacraments, not as universal marks of the true church, but as ecclesial practices of varying importance. Furthermore, insider advocates have proposed their own set of marks of emerging churches that are understood to be fully compatible with insider churches.

Besides the marks of the church, the insider paradigm also offers a distinct approach to the question of the relationship between salvation and the church.

Salvation and the Insider Church

One critique of the insider paradigm is that it reflects a contemporary evangelical tendency to bifurcate the doctrine of salvation and the doctrine of the church (Tennent 2007, 215). This raises the question, however, of how the insider paradigm actually does characterize the relationship between salvation and the church. A closer look at the writings of insider advocates reveals that they affirm salvation to be both *outside* and *inside* the church in different respects.

Insider advocates clearly affirm that salvation can be found *outside* the existing institutional Christian church, a point which by now is eminently clear. Significantly, this fact reflects a distinctively Protestant theological conviction, as insider advocates affirm unequivocally that salvation is by faith alone, not through membership in any church or religious community. Hoefer includes the Reformational principle of *sola fide* (faith alone) as one of his principles for developing an ecclesiology for Hindu insiders, asserting that church membership in the visible "Christian" church is not a requirement for salvation, and therefore *adiaphora,* or a matter of "indifference" and Christian freedom (2007).

However, insider advocates take a step further in their application of the *sola fide* principle. Not only can salvation be found *outside* the institutional Christian church; salvation can flourish *inside* a *non-Christian* "socio-religious" community. The Travises argue that sola fide is a basis for the possibility of being "saved" and yet remaining part of one's "original non-Christian religious community of birth" (Travis and Travis 2005, 403). Joining the "right" religious community is not necessary for salvation, and those who insist upon it are in danger of adding an additional requirement or "work" for salvation (Hoefer 2007). For this reason, insider advocates sometimes claim that the gospel itself is at stake in the "right" of insiders to remain in their religious birth community (Lewis 2015a, Loc. 6479–533).

While the insider paradigm clearly affirms salvation outside the church in terms of the institutional Christian community, it affirms salvation to be *inside* the church in certain ways. The insider paradigm does not promote an individualistic view of salvation in which people come to faith individually without ever entering or expressing the body of Christ. In fact, the household/oikos model of insider churches envisions salvation and church formation as happening simultaneously; when a family comes to faith together, they experience salvation and immediately become an expression of church (Lewis 2007, 76; cf. Lewis 2015b, Loc. 12528–47).

Kevin Higgins likewise depicts salvation as closely linked to the insider church. Higgins affirms that salvation by grace through faith results in immediate spiritual incorporation into God's church. As insiders come to faith, they are "added" by the Holy Spirit to the church, in a spiritual sense (2006, 119). In this sense, no one can "join" the church or apply for membership—it is an act of God that takes place at conversion (ibid., 118–19). Once this happens, "membership" in the body of Christ becomes a part of insiders' identity which should be lived out "as a full time lifestyle in every venue of life," both in community life with other Jesus followers and in ongoing participation in Muslim religious life (ibid.; cf. Higgins 2015c, Loc. 12730). While salvation does not require connection with the institutional Christian church, salvation inevitably results in being incorporated into the church spiritually, which ideally will take shape in ecclesial insider communities or churches.

Salvation includes not only forgiveness and justification, but also spiritual formation/sanctification. Insider advocates acknowledge a role for the church in sanctification, though with varying levels of emphasis. Hoefer acknowledges that "some form of fellowship" is "highly helpful" for spiritual development of believers, which he understands broadly to include Bible correspondence courses, mass rallies, Christian friends, and internet discussions (2015, Loc. 6758).

Insider advocate Bernard Dutch uses stronger language, urgently arguing the necessity of biblical churches for the spiritual endurance and maturity of believers. After posing the question, "Can believers flourish and grow without a distinct identity and community?" Dutch's answer is worth quoting at length:

> When a community of believers is small and weak, it is difficult to meet together regularly and meaningfully. Individual believers then have difficulty retaining their passion for Christ. I have seen many believers fall out of fellowship and then lose all signs of spiritual life. . . . Where I live the spiritual battle is not so much for Muslims coming to faith in Jesus; it is for Muslim background believers forming themselves into local fellowships. I have heard similar comments from colleagues working with Muslims elsewhere in the world. Believers in the church have a collective strength for spiritual victory that individuals do not (Matt 16:18). I believe Satan knows this and opposes the formation of the church at every opportunity. This spiritual opposition confirms to me that forming local fellowships of Muslim background

> believers is the right strategy.... We must persist in prayer for breakthroughs in establishing the church among believers of Muslim backgrounds. We must continually encourage and teach them about the crucial role of the local church in God's plan for His Kingdom.... To reach significant numbers of Muslims, we need growing numbers of vibrant, Biblically based churches that remain in and relevant to Muslim society. The Muslim world will only be reached through indigenous church planting movements that explode far beyond what outsiders can direct or fund. (2000, 22–23)

Dutch's impassioned plea for biblical churches highlights the necessity of the church in the spiritual formation and perseverance of Muslim-background believers. Without the spiritual strength of a local church, new believers are in danger of succumbing to Satanic influence and backsliding into unbelief. In general, then, the insider paradigm affirms the importance of the church in the sanctification of believers, with various insider advocates falling somewhere on the spectrum between the church being "highly helpful" and "necessary" for sanctification.

The insider paradigm has a unique approach to the question of the relationship between salvation and the church. Salvation can indeed be found outside the institutional church and inside other (non-Christian) religious communities. On the other hand, salvation is closely related to the church, in that it results in immediate incorporation by God into the body of Christ and often immediate formation of a church if a whole family is saved together; furthermore, the development of church forms plays an important role in the spiritual formation of insider believers.

Before evaluating this perspective, along with those discussed in the other topics, I will look at one final topic which has great relevance to the question of insider movements: the relationship between the church and the world.

Insider Church in the World

The insider paradigm expresses the church-world relationship in distinctive ways which are critical for understanding the shape of its vision. One aspect of the church-world relationship is the relationship between the church and culture, which brings us back to the issue of contextualization.

Insider advocates have reflected a variety of understandings and postures towards contextualization and its relationship to insider movements. Some of the earliest, most prominent insider advocates have defended insider movements and C5 fellowships as a natural outgrowth and logical outcome of biblical contextualization, based on the way that religion and culture are intertwined in Muslim societies. Hence, Travis has described insider movements and C5 as an example of high-spectrum contextualization (1998a), and Higgins has defined insider movements partly as movements that are "expressed within as much of the culture as possible, including religious culture" (2004, 156). Furthermore, Travis acknowledges the danger of syncretism, giving several recommendations to avoid it in C5 movements (1998b, 414). Abdul Asad likewise distinguishes between "syncretistic C5" and "appropriate C5" (2009, 155–56).

Some insider advocates, however, have sought to separate contextualization from insider movements. Rebecca Lewis distinguishes contextualization (along with the "C-spectrum") from "insider movements," since insider movements focus upon the relationship between believers and their preexisting family/social network, not the language and cultural forms of the believers' worship (2007, 76). Duerkson and Dyrness argue that contextualization is not the best model for capturing the way the church is emerging in insider situations, proposing a new model of "reverse hermeneutic" and "emergence theory" (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 27–28; cf. Duerkson 2016, Loc.108).

> "Where I live the spiritual battle is not so much for Muslims coming to faith in Jesus; it is for Muslim background believers forming themselves into local fellowships." (Dutch)

Those insider advocates who emphasize the contextualization paradigm include an evaluative element that is aware of the possibility of syncretism, arguing that insider movements avoid it. Duerkson and Dyrness' model, on the other hand, is more descriptive, emphasizing pragmatic evaluative criteria, related to practical positive and negative relational results. Rebecca Lewis avoids the issue of contextualizing altogether, at least explicitly, though even she herself is involved in contextualizing a form of church which is more relevant to communal societies—the household church model. Despite these different frameworks, the insider paradigm generally sees religion and culture as a unified whole that cannot be separated, affirming that a significant amount of religious culture and identity can be legitimately retained and expressed in the biblical church.

A closer look at the insider paradigm shows that, despite the varying postures towards contextualization, the insider paradigm offers a particular way of characterizing the identity of the church in relationship to the world—and especially the world's cultures, social structures, and religious communities.

As I show below, the insider vision emphasizes the positive value of cultures and religious structures as spheres in which God and his kingdom are at work, and which therefore should be retained and preserved rather than rejected or overturned by the church. The church-world relationship is envisioned in terms of the church as a change agent embedded within the world's social, cultural, and religious structures, best expressed in the biblical metaphor of "yeast in the dough."

Cultures and religious structures are spheres in which God and his kingdom are at work.

The insider paradigm affirms a largely positive view of the social structures and institutions of the world as having God-given value. Family, government, courts, and other societal institutions and norms are divinely ordained to counter evil and sustain human society, and therefore should be preserved: "Especially in view of the power of sin in our fallen world, these structures must be guarded and secured or sin will run rampant and the world will self-destruct" (Hoefer 2007; 2015, Loc. 6744). The family structure in particular is viewed as having a special role in God's salvific plan, based on God's promise to Abraham to bless all "families" of the earth (Lewis 2010, 34; 2015, Loc. 6340). This framework undergirds the insider paradigm's vision of a church which aims to avoid disrupting families, communities, and social institutions in its relationship to the world.

In addition to a positive view of social structures, the insider paradigm emphasizes the positive value of cultural and religious structures of the world as venues in which God is at work in bringing his kingdom. Human "religions" in particular are often included under the umbrella of God's kingdom:

> The Kingdom of God includes the Church, but is bigger than the Church. The Kingdom refers to the whole range of God's exercise of His reign and rule in the universe. This includes religions. The Kingdom paradigm acknowledges there is another kingdom as well, and takes seriously the battle for the allegiance and hearts and minds of people. (Higgins 2009a, 87)

In comments reflective of the insider paradigm as a whole, Higgins emphasizes the universal scope of the kingdom of God, rejecting the idea that the kingdom is limited to the church.[14] Higgins does not expound upon how exactly God's kingdom reign relates to human religions, but he is intent on including them in the scope of the kingdom, which creates the space for God's presence and work in them.

The presence of God within the cultural and religious values and narratives of the world becomes a strong basis for preserving and affirming cultural and religious identities, rather than rejecting them. While acknowledging that God is present in the church in a special way, "God is present throughout creation, and even in other religions" (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 71), which motivates us to find God in non-Christian cultural and religious traditions:

> We have argued throughout this book that the particular shape a community of Jesus-followers takes always reflects a reverse hermeneutic, a situated reading of Scripture and the story of Jesus in terms this group can understand and embody. This process prompts us to be attentive to *the way in which God is in the midst of cultural and religious values, practices, and identities, seeking to affirm and not replace these.* (ibid., 172, emphasis mine)

Not only does the church read Scripture from its cultural and religious context, but God himself is understood to be present and at work within these structures in a way which preserves these structures and identities. While an element of transformation is acknowledged, the overall preservation of cultural and religious structures is emphasized:

> This creates an emergent process whereby God enhances and transforms, but does not overturn, the community's social customs and identities. Ecclesial practices like these are uniquely able to locate the community's own cultural narrative within that of the gospel and in turn to identify *the presence of the gospel within the community's historical and ongoing cultural narrative.* This dual movement—people locating themselves in the ongoing biblical story and recognizing *God's presence and work within their own community's narrative*—allows the emergence of new church communities that will be both in continuity with and distinct from their social context. (ibid., 146; emphasis added)

Duerkson and Dyrness's model clearly assumes that both God and his gospel are already present in cultural narratives, a reality which can be recognized when churches develop worship practices shaped by their own cultural and religious milieu. The church's relationship to the world, while acknowledging ways in which the church challenges cultures and religions, is shaped by an overall positive view of cultures and religions as spheres in which God is present and at work.

With such an emphasis on the positive value of cultural, social, and religious structures, the insider paradigm characterizes the church-world relationship primarily in terms of embedment: i.e., the church is a change agent *embedded* in the world, spreading through its cultural and religious structures. At times this is connected with an understanding that churches, like all human communities, are necessarily and inescapably embedded in culture (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 28).

However, this is most clearly highlighted by the insider paradigm's favored image for depicting insider movements—the yeast in the dough. As mentioned previously, insider advocates widely utilize this kingdom parable as a lens through which to understand insider movements and churches, the yeast being the insider church/movement, and the dough being the Muslim social, cultural, and religious structures in which the insider church is embedded and through which it spreads (Travis and Travis 2005, 404; Travis and Woodberry 2015, Loc. 1353). Higgins explicitly applies this to the nature of the church and its role in the world, combining the yeast-in-dough image with that of seed-in-soil in another kingdom parable, depicting the world as the environment within which the seed or yeast of the kingdom—the church—exists, grows, and spreads (2015a, Loc. 5397). This results in a vision of church as embedded in the social and religious structures of the world with all its messiness of "weeds, rocks, and dough," facilitating the growth and spread of the kingdom throughout these structures.

> This paradigm characterizes the church-world relationship primarily in terms of embedment, i.e., the church is a change agent embedded in the world, spreading through its cultural and religious structures—as yeast in the dough.

The embedment of the church within the cultural and religious structures of the world does not leave the "world" unchanged, however. The insider paradigm affirms the church as a change agent within these structures, which can be described in terms of kingdom "transformation" and "new creation." While God intends to preserve and enhance local cultures and identities, he does not stop there:

> We must be clear that God's purposes in the kingdom are not satisfied by simply making believers into better Americans and Kenyans or Japanese. Rather, God is always making things new (Rev 21:5). These emergent markers then represent ways that the gospel, the story of Jesus, by the work of the Spirit will create something new in and through the cultural values of any people group.… all these offer ways for us to push back against our cultural situation—both affirming and transcending that culture. (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 172)

While their book mostly emphasizes the positive value of existing cultural and religious structures and identities, Duerkson and Dyrness here acknowledge that the kingdom also involves God's "new creation" taking place "in and through" the culture.

In the end, the insider paradigm affirms the church as "in, but not of" the world, even if in modified fashion. When insider churches remain embedded in their Muslim religious communities, they are fulfilling their calling to remain in the world (Anna Travis 2015, Loc. 11904). However, insiders are born again spiritually through faith in Christ, they live according to the Bible as the Word of God, and God's kingdom reign is manifested in their lives (Higgins 2006, 118). Insiders will, over time, reject some Muslim beliefs and practices that are contrary to Scripture, while retaining and modifying others (Travis 2015a, Loc. 832–47), creating some degree of difference with the wider Muslim community (for example, in regard to the authority and purity of the Bible, the death and resurrection of Jesus, and salvation by grace rather than works (Travis and Travis 2005, 406–7; Travis and Woodberry 2015, Loc. 1426).

Higgins describes this process as highlighting the way the church is "in" but not "of" the world:

> Kingdom sowing is incarnational, adopting the religious and cultural forms of our Muslim friends. A community of believers will remain in their world, though not of it. Many behaviors, customs, and values will be retained by a believing community, and will need to be adopted by the cross-cultural missionary. But unbiblical values will also be challenged and changed from within, by believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:13). (2015a, Loc. 5438)

Insiders do not simply absorb their cultural and religious context wholesale; Scripture will also challenge and change aspects of the context as well.

Another way the insider church is "in, but not of" the world is through its engagement with the kingdom of Satan which attempts to subjugate God's purposes in the world (Higgins 2009a, 87; Anna Travis 2015, Loc. 11918–32). The church's relationship to the world is characterized by spiritual warfare, not giving any place to the devil, and releasing people in the world from spiritual bondage and oppression, a special emphasis in places dominated by folk Islam (Anna Travis 2015, Loc. 11932).

However, the "otherworldliness" of the church is not seen as hindering the church from remaining embedded "in the world," including its social and religious structures. Although the insider church indeed will reject and modify certain unbiblical beliefs and practices, it will also need to retain enough of the Muslim worldview and way of life to maintain membership in the Muslim community. Practically, this may mean that while certain beliefs will not be rejected outright, they will be reinterpreted or minimized (cf. Travis and

Woodberry 2015, Loc. 1426). Similarly, the church's spiritual origin is not taken to contradict with its status of being embedded within the religious communities of the world:

> On one side, I do see church as a closed set, for only those who are born from above and incorporated by the Spirit into His Body are members of the church! But as such, they are not thereby excluded from living in and among other social and religious structures as yeast in the dough. (Higgins 2006, 118; 2015a, Loc. 12738)

Anna Travis applies a similar line of reasoning with respect to the dominion of Satan and the call of the church to remain in the world:

> Praying for his followers, Jesus said, "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one" (John 17:15). In the parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus describes the people of the evil one and the people of the kingdom as mixed together in the world; God's plan in this age is not to separate the two, since it could harm the people of the kingdom to do so (Matt 13:24–30, 37–43). Paul expects that Jesus' followers will continue to relate with people in the world (1 Cor 5:9, 10). John tells us that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one, but that Jesus protects those who are born of God (1 John 5:18, 19). (2015, Loc. 11932)

Citing a variety of texts, Anna Travis argues that the otherworldly identity of the church is not cause to disengage from the spiritual battle in the world.

But she takes this one step further, arguing that insiders do not necessarily need to immediately and publicly "renounce what we consider idolatrous practices associated with the religious community of their people" (Anna Travis 2015, Loc. 11948–64), since idolatry is "a matter of the heart" and "what is inside a person." What is most important, Travis says, is to claim in the mind and heart that "the evil one has no place—no claim or power over us" and "renounce and get rid of whatever the evil one has in us in order to live in victory over him in this world—in this evil age where he is still the ruler" (ibid., Loc. 11948–64). Being "not of" the world does not mean insiders cannot remain embedded within the religious structures of the world, even in spiritual warfare. In a variety of ways, insider advocates affirm that the church is "not of" the world, bringing about transformation and new creation within the world, and yet this fact does not preclude the church from remaining embedded in the social and religious structures of the world as yeast in dough.

The relationship between the church and the world is a critical facet of the insider model of the church. While acknowledging the presence of the kingdom of darkness in the world and the need for God's transforming work, the insider paradigm emphasizes the positive value of social and cultural structures and religious structures as either established by God or as spheres within which God is present and at work. The insider church is envisioned as a community embedded within the social, cultural, and religious structures as yeast in the dough, a change agent which spreads the transformation of the kingdom and God's new creation within these structures without rejecting them or separating from them.

Conclusion

The insider paradigm presents a particular vision of the church for insiders, a vision shaped by a variety of assumptions, themes, and perspectives on the nature of the church. Insider advocates appeal to an array of ***biblical themes and paradigms*** in Old and New Testaments, and especially in the Gospels and Acts, to argue that Scripture fully supports, and at times encourages, a church for religious insiders.

Standing on this framework, the insider paradigm affirms that insider churches express the ***core essence of the church***, which is not to be found in affiliation with an institution, a particular cultural form, or a given religious identity, but rather in the presence and work of God in regenerating believers and uniting them to the body of Christ, something which can and does happen among insiders.

The structures of the world are affirmed as worthy of preservation: cultural and social structures are God-given, and religious identities are spheres within which God and his kingdom are present and working.

The insider paradigm envisions the ***local church*** taking shape as believing families and social groups come to faith together, becoming expressions of the local church while retaining their family ties and their Muslim identity. While insiders may continue to gather with Muslims at the mosque, they also gather together with other insiders for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship, hopefully growing into more mature expressions of the biblical church under the guidance of the Spirit.

The insider paradigm affirms the ***universal church*** as a spiritual reality that transcends religious communities, including both born-again Christians and born-again Muslim followers of Jesus in one body. Due to the commitment of insiders to protect solidarity with their Muslim community, the universal church is largely a spiritual reality for insiders that seldom finds visible expression, with some exceptions.

Despite diverse uses of terminology, the ***visible and invisible church*** shapes the insider vision in various ways. The insider paradigm affirms the necessity of visible community at the local church level, but rejects the necessity of officially joining the existing institutional church. The insider paradigm, furthermore, emphasizes the invisible, spiritual nature of the church as having theological priority over any human structures or institutions.

In terms of the ***marks of the church,*** the insider paradigm offers its own criteria for discerning the work of the Spirit in forming emerging, healthy insider churches. In addition, the insider paradigm affirms a modified version of the teaching of the Word, baptism, and communion, not as marks of the true church, but as important ecclesial practices which are fully compatible with insider movements.

The insider paradigm affirms that ***salvation*** can certainly be found outside the existing institutional church by those who remain in their non-Christian "socio-religious" community. Salvation leads to an immediate incorporation into the body of Christ spiritually, and this can also lead to an immediate visible expression of the church when whole families and social groups come to faith together, which facilitates spiritual formation.

The insider paradigm envisions the church as embedded within the ***world.*** The structures of the world are affirmed as worthy of preservation: cultural and social structures are God-given, and religious structures and identities are spheres within which God and his kingdom are present and working. The church is envisioned as neither separate from nor undermining these structures, but embedded within them as yeast in dough, spreading the transforming work of the kingdom from within.

The contours of insider ekklēsia are now clear. But how should we assess this vision? To what extent does it reflect a viable model for multiplying robust, biblical churches in Muslim communities? In what areas does it push us in helpful directions, and in what areas does it leave us desiring better solutions? To these questions, we now turn. **IJFM**

Endnotes

[1] It is important to state that not every missionary who claims the insider banner practices the "insider" paradigm in ways which are consistent with the way the paradigm is articulated by its leading missiologists.

[2] I'm grateful to both Don Little and Kevin Higgins for alerting me to this in personal communication. As just one example, Duerkson and Dyrness, authors of *Seeking Church,* hail from the Mennonite Brethren and PCUSA churches, respectively (2019, 2).

[3] *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus within Diverse Religious Communities* is a case in point, a testimony to this collaboration and a standard resource for understanding the insider paradigm. Talman himself freely speaks of the "insider paradigm" in chapter 2 of *UIM,* entitled "The Historical Development of the Insider Paradigm."

[4] See Harley Talman's "The Old Testament and Insider Movements" in *Understanding Insider Movements,* which focuses on the issue of an Old Testament theology of religions and non-proselyte conversion (2015c).

[5] Talman sees this as the New Testament counterpart to the "non-proselyte conversion" in the Old Testament discussed previously (Talman 2015c, "Old Testament and Insider Movements," Loc. 4780).

[6] *'Isa al-Masih* is "Jesus the Christ" in Islamic Arabic. Arab Christians, however, refer to Jesus as *Yasua' al-Masih;* and most of the Bible translations, liturgy, and Arabic worship songs use *Yasua',* not *'Isa.* However, some contextualized Bible translations, as well as some contextualized movements in the Arab world, use 'Isa.

[7] In his case study of an insider movement in East Africa, Ben Naja found that 80 percent of the believers had been baptized (Naja 2015, Loc. 3445). He did not ask about the practice of communion.

[8] "What are normative, then, are not the contingent forms these offices took in their first century setting (or in their later setting in church history); rather, the offices or functions developed as needed for the health and growth of the body, whatever culturally appropriate (and contingent) form they might take" (Duerkson and Dyrness 2019, 126).

[9] The original meaning of Arabic *umma* is "nation" or "people," and it is primarily used to refer to the worldwide Muslim community—the "Muslim nation."

[10] Such a view appears to be found in a particular group studied and reported by Woodberry. A series of questions was to understand their attitudes toward traditional Christians, and a diversity of responses were found. Woodberry lists the following five responses:

"They are brothers of the same faith."
"If we follow their traditions, we can't work with our own people."
"They eat forbidden (haram) food."
"We don't like them because of their behavior, dress, and food."
"We must love them 100 percent, but in our culture we must stay separate." (2005, 21–22)

At best, unity with traditional Christians is expressed in terms of being members of the "same faith" and giving/receiving love; however, cultural and physical separation is maintained. Another example is the case study cited by Duerkson and Dyrness from the southern Philippines, in which an indigeneous church movement has sought to intentionally reject and distance itself from practices associated with the Christian church, due to the historic oppression of Muslims by the Christian Filipino majority (2019, 102–3).

[11] The insider paradigm has at times highlighted the nature of the church as a *"mixed community,"* which recalls the basis of Augustine's original distinction between the visible (mixed) and invisible (pure) church. However, this concept is applied differently in the insider paradigm; rather than an argument for retaining fellowship with the institutional church, despite the presence of unbelievers (the point of Augustine and the Reformers), the concept is applied to support a church that emerges within Muslim community networks and exists as an open community that does not draw hard, visible lines between believers and not-yet-believers (Parsons 2006; Higgins 2015, Loc. 5421).

[12] Duerkson and Dyrness note two contrasting examples in the southern Philippines. In the case of the Manobo people in Davao del Norte, there is an ancient ritual in which "the spirit priest drinks the blood of sacrifices on behalf of good spirits that offer protection against *busow,"* who are malevolent spirits that "search for blood to satisfy their cravings." This caused great confusion in understanding communion, causing people to wonder if God was a *busow,* and whether they would be possessed by an evil spirit if they drank Christ's blood. Therefore, the churches in that area rarely practiced communion. On the other hand, in Bangsamoro, an ancient Moro ritual called *sandugo* involved people winding themselves and drinking one another's blood, "creating a new community of blood," and some believers in Christ have appropriated it in their communities as a ritual of Christ's love (2019, 138).

[13] Another version of this list broadens beyond the "devoteds" to other aspects of the early church community, indicating a "primary marks of a mature expression of the church": apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking bread (both as real meals, and the Lord's Supper), prayer/worship, the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, radical generosity in community life, intentional gathering together (publicly in the "Temple," and as believers house to house), and the ongoing addition of new believers (Higgins 2006, 119; cf. 2015c, Loc. 12748).

[14] Another example is that of Herbert Hoefer, who supports his ecclesiology for insiders with a similarly expansive view of the kingdom: "The rule of God extends to more than the Church. God's love, concern and will are extended to all people, whether they acknowledge and serve him or not. John 3:16 says, 'God so loved the world.' God's prophets spoke not only to his people, but to the nations. . . . His kingdom comes wherever and whenever his will is done" (2007; 2015, Loc. 6744–58).

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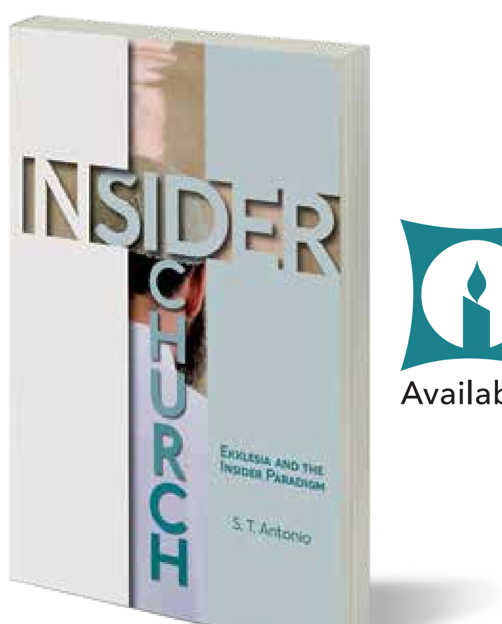


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Books and Missiology

Institutionalizing a Culture of Innovation

by Derek T. Seipp

Editor's note: This article is an excerpt from Innovation in World Mission, *by Derek T. Seipp (William Carey Publishing, 2016), taken from chapter 7. Reprinted by permission.*

Derek T. Seipp has been helping leaders become more strategic for over twenty years, living overseas for twelve of those years. He contributed to the book Extending God's Kingdom: Church Planting Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow *by EMIS and has written about mission strategy for the* Lausanne Global Analysis *and* Evangelical Mission Quarterly. *He holds a masters in organizational leadership and futures studies from Regent University, VA. He currently serves as East Asia and Mekong Region Operations Manager for Beyond.*

"The whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." Ephesians 4:6 (NASB)

The art of innovation lies in using what you've learned through the scenario building process for identifying higher impact opportunities. Peter Drucker wrote, "There are, of course, innovations that spring from a flash of genius. Most innovations, however, especially the successful ones, result from a conscious, purposeful search for innovation opportunities" (Drucker 1985, 3). The tools discussed in previous chapters are some of the most widely used tools to which today's businesses are turning for finding these innovative ideas.

These innovative ideas certainly come from a variety of sources. Drucker talked of this as a "flash of genius." Flashes of genius, however, are hard to come by and are notoriously unpredictable. It's also generally not recommended to rely on one single innovative thinker to find new ideas and opportunities. Such a person will find themselves frustratingly at odds with the larger team.

Instead, businesses institutionalize the innovation process. They create innovation centers based upon these principles. They empower their employees, then reward them for coming up with new ideas.

Bill O'Brien, former Vice President at the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board), has been helping Christian organizations institutionalize the innovative process ever since he read an article on the subject written by a NASA physicist (World Futures Society 1994; Seipp 2015). The 1994 article described how NASA's Dr. John Andersen used a group process to challenge his team's assumptions about interplanetary space travel. The result? His team found a new method of space-propulsion that reduced the time for new probes to get to Jupiter, cutting down several years to a just a couple of months.

According to O'Brien, the key is to help a group conceptualize a scenario they've developed, far off into the future; then the group is pressed to find higher and higher level capabilities within that scenario. After identifying an idea or opportunity, the group works backwards to today, discussing all the steps necessary to arrive at this new future. O'Brien says this type of scenario planning results in revolutionary ideas for everyone involved: "This is not a way of creating strategic plans, but it is a way of creating new ways of thinking" (Seipp 2015).

Drucker stated, "Purposeful, systematic innovation begins with the analysis of the sources of new opportunities" (Drucker 1985, 7). The goal of innovation is not just to come up with one new idea, but rather to cause the organization to become purposefully systematic in identifying new opportunities. It is a continuous process of attacking strategic drift, by moving beyond it. It's about aiming for where the ball is going to be, rather than where it is now, or was last year. It's becoming like the tribe of Issachar, knowing the times and knowing what to do in response.

It's a process of orienting the team to the issues of the future.

The Mission Society was facing its twenty-fifth anniversary. They were proud of their history, but felt an uneasiness (Seipp 2015). Leaders noticed a gap developing between their vision and the deployment of missionaries on the ground. O'Brien was called in to help. A cross-section of leaders and missionaries was assembled in Prague in 2008.

Looking at the trends and challenges developing in their world, Vice President Jim Ramsay realized, "If we don't change, we won't be addressing the key global issues in 10–15 years . . ." But it wasn't just about ministry opportunities. Ramsay said, "We have to rethink how we do everything." They assembled a group: a cross-section of individuals from across the organization. They examined scenarios twenty-five years into the future, and it fundamentally changed everyone who participated. Eight years later, Ramsay says, "Broad organizational shift is [still] happening as a result of that meeting—its fingerprints are all over many aspects of our organization today."

The process of orienting the team to the issues of the future, rather than the issues of today, forever changed the members of the team. Ramsay says that new innovative ideas still continue to emerge. As O'Brien said, it's a new way of thinking. It changes people.

The goal is to embed these new ways of thinking into the organization's culture. This is not a one-time activity, but a living process. Each change we encounter is an opportunity for us to use the creativity God gave us to impact our world for Him and His glory. The innovation process must be kept alive. To create such a culture, we begin by focusing on spiritual leadership.

Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leadership "reframe[s] our relationships with others, appreciating them with dignity and love" (Oster 2011, Kindle location 78). The Bible describes this type of love as *agapao* love (Winston 2002). It seeks the best for others as described in the beatitudes. Jesus is the ultimate example of this love. He worked for people's best interests; not just their spoken needs, or their surface problems.

According to Oswald Sanders, this kind of spirituality comes from authentically living out the values of discipline, vision, wisdom, decision, courage, humility, integrity, sincerity, and humor (Sanders, J. O. 2007). When corporations lack these values, they become crippled, difficult places in which to work (Mitroff and Denton 1999). Teams working in an atmosphere starved of these values stagnate (Winston 2002; Sanders, T. I. 1998). Moreover, innovation won't thrive in such an environment either (Oster 2011).

Agapao love focuses on truly loving God and others. This kind of love builds maturity, both in the giver and the receiver. All it takes is for one individual consistently living out this kind of love to radically transform toxic relationships into healthy ones (Clinton and Sibcy 2006). It transforms ordinary teams into high performance teams (MacMillan 2001).

It should be noted that just because an organization performs *spiritual ministry* does not necessarily mean the organization dynamics are also *spiritual* (Sanders, T. I. 1998). Ministry organizations can easily be devoid of wisdom, courage, love, trust, vision, or other values. An environment of micro-management and distrust will stymie innovation and individual commitment. We have all heard stories of churches led by overbearing pastors, leaving no space for individual soul expression. Though these organizations may be made up of spiritual people, the dynamics are anything but spiritual. It also doesn't matter if the senior leadership team thinks these are present in the organization. Leaders may need to invite a few of their individuals out for coffee, and ask them how they perceive the core values of the organization. It may be that some teams model these values well, while others have become toxic.

There is not one "correct" set of values that will transform your organization into a spiritual organization (Mitroff & Denton 1999). Yet, it only takes a few of these values to completely transform the dynamics. The most important factor is that these values are modeled at the top, by the senior leadership (Daft and Lane 2008).

Incorporating spiritual values into organizational dynamics will enrich the soil that innovation needs in order to take root and begin growing (Mitroff & Denton 1999). These values also help organizations from calcifying. When organizations become rigid, they quit adapting to external changes. Energy is required to keep our organizations from succumbing to entropy. Just as we do, our organizations need times of renewal. It keeps them fresh and alert to what God desires to do in our changing world.

When organizations are supportive of innovation they adapt faster to their changing environment. Innovation enhances the resilience, or adaptive capacity, of organizations (Holling 2001). It keeps our organizations from becoming a boiling frog. True resilience includes the ability to know when to change and adjust. There is only one thing to which we may hold unswervingly, and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. God left much of the specific methodology up to us as an expression of the creativity he gave to us.

When the gospel came to Antioch, it was presented with a host of new and different conditions. Peter and the disciples in Jerusalem approached the situation with rigidity. Paul, however, approached the situation with innovation. It created a tense situation resulting in the leadership in Jerusalem having to wrestle through some very difficult and fundamental questions regarding change. Imagine what the church might be like today if Peter and the other apostles had remained rigid on a purely Jewish expression of the Gospel?

Leadership science has changed significantly over time. A hundred years ago, when the environment was changing at a much slower pace, organizations functioned much like factories. The focus was on developing assembly lines with high efficiency. Centralized, hierarchical, and bureaucratic leadership structures supported the standardization of actions which rarely changed. Levels of bureaucracy helped ensure that change happened in a precise manner, where each minute change was understood for its impact on each other area of the manufacturing process. This kept efficiency at its peak.

Today's environment is very different, and it requires a different type of leadership. Having levels of bureaucracy is too rigid to respond to the rapid, daily changes we face. By the time a decision travels up and down each level of command, it's already too late. Strategic drift has widened into a gulf.

To keep up with the changes, organizations have shed layers of management in favor of adaptive structures that can learn and react quickly with a greater degree of autonomy (Daft and Lane 2003). As a result, organizations look much flatter. Teams are empowered to make quick decisions, but they must also be able to defend their choices.

The removal of management layers left a hole in the organization (Daft and Lane 2008). To fill the void created by removing layers of management, employees need clearly defined tasks, the empowerment to fulfill those tasks, and accountability to outcomes. Management relationships have to be replaced with team cohesiveness. Tight structure provided by hierarchy was significantly relaxed, and it was found that an atmosphere of professionalism kept the organization from sliding into chaos. On-going training improved the skillset of the workers and contributed to the professionalism, holding the structure together. All these became known as the necessary substitutes for layers of bureaucratic management. When used together, we've found organizations perform much more efficiently than under tight bureaucracy. This leads us to the issue of organizational cultures which promote innovation.

Innovation doesn't just happen. As leaders create space for organizational members to be creative and take reasonable risks, they must foster a culture of innovation. Supporting innovative thinking while stifling the implementation of new ideas will shut down creative ideas and create frustration. Creating an innovative culture happens as leaders reproduce spiritual values in and through other leaders and teams. This takes significant time and effort.

Today's environment requires a different type of leadership. Having levels of bureaucracy is too rigid to respond to the rapid, daily changes we face. Organizations have shed layers of management in favor of adaptive structures.

Teams need faith-based stretch goals, to help them reach far beyond their natural abilities, so that innovation is necessary to break through their assumptions about what is possible. All unnecessary obstacles to implementing new solutions need to be removed, while they are encouraged to try multiple small experiments. New ideas should be tried quickly with a value placed upon new insights to be gained. Each failure is a learning opportunity, but failures should come quickly. Keeping innovation experiments small keeps failures from taking down the entire organization, or entire teams in the process.

Organizational Learning

Each team and team leader should promote an intense curiosity among teams where members are encouraged to learn everything they can from other industries and disciplines. This turns teams into "learning factories." This cannot happen in an environment where information is protected and controlled. Organizations have found that as they open up the complete sharing of all organizational data; individuals begin to understand the complex issues being faced. Oster says this about the link between innovation and organizational learning:

> Innovative people and organizations are "learning factories." They consistently capitalize on their God-given talent to explore, learn, and retain new concepts…Corporate leadership supports multiple forms of institutional learning and builds systems into place where new information is embraced instead of feared…Innovation leaders continually remove physical and organizational barriers that hinder information sharing, and are on the lookout for "sacred cows" and "silos" that hinder the flow of information. (Oster 2011, Kindle Locations 712–23)

Too little diversity leads to constrained thinking. Too much diversity leads to dysfunction. Developing a productive amount of diversity is a challenging endeavor. Individuals have a psychological need to fit in on a team (Kristof-Brown et al 2005). Hence, if you have too much diversity, people will shut down, feeling they will never be able to work together. Productive diversity takes time to develop. Every team should understand they'll need to work through Tuckman's developmental stages of forming, storming, norming and performing (Tuckman 1965). After the group forms, they eventually begin storming as they bump into each other's diversity of thought and skill. Here they have the opportunity to learn how to work with each other's differences. Hopefully, people realize that God created us differently in order to fill in each other's gaps of skills and abilities (Werbel & Demarie 2001). If they successfully work through the storming phase, they'll move below the surface, appreciating what each member adds to the team, and eventually launch to high levels of effective performance. But if they cannot get through the storming phase, team members will simply work with each other at a relatively unproductive surface level.

Religious organizations tend to attract people with similar worldviews. Embracing diversity will mean increasing friction; however, many Christians believe team friction is unspiritual. Productive, positive friction shows you're learning and wrestling with new and creative ideas.

Diversity is an important part of organizational learning. Diversity brings people with different perspectives together creating a complexity of thought which has been shown to increase organizational performance, creativity, and innovation (Daft and Lane 2008, 332). When people are of the same income level, race, marital status, background, age, etc., they tend to think alike. Religious organizations tend to attract people with similar worldviews and theological views. While conformity may make some working environments easier, it tends to narrow the boundaries of our creative thinking. Even though mission organizations work in a wide diversity of cultures, it is highly possible that the organization itself has very little diversity. Think about the actual diversity that exists among your own leadership structure and on specific teams within your organization. Putting aside the places your people work, how diverse are you, really?

Increasing diversity broadens the breadth of experience and learning from which we may draw. Actively look for people with different backgrounds and experience. Embracing diversity, however, will mean increasing friction within your teams (Daft Lane 2008; Oster 2011). Many Christians seem to have a view that interpersonal, or team friction is somehow unspiritual. If there's no friction, people are all thinking the same way. Productive, positive friction shows you're learning and wrestling with new and creative ideas. Rather than eliminating friction, teams need the skills to work with differing viewpoints in a productive and unthreatening manner (Senge 2006). They need the skills to deal with friction in a healthy way.

Ephesians 3 and 4 show us how God created his church for diversity. God purposefully placed Gentiles together with the Jews, living stone by living stone, laid next to each other into the temple of God. Paul says he did this in order to display God's manifold (which means diverse!) wisdom. Later, we're told we become mature as we appreciate and make space for the variety of each other's gifts (Eph 4:7–13). We're told that when we walk this way, we walk in love with one another (Eph 4:15).

Paul continues by comparing this diversity to a human body, in which unique parts all work together the way God intended (Eph 4:16). The Gentiles, however, by choosing to live in discord rather than accept diversity, shows that their hearts are darkened and their minds are ignorant (Eph 4:17–18). Paul urges his readers to throw away the old self and walk in this new way, appreciating our diversity which we learn through Christ (Eph 4:20).

Dialogue

Some people believe that in order to become a smarter organization, all one needs is smarter people. But just because an organization employs a large number of geniuses doesn't mean the organization is smart (Senge 2006). In fact, in many cases, the higher the collective IQ of an organization, the more dysfunctional the organization becomes. Place the world's brightest economist, psychologist, ecologist, and the world's brightest business mind together in the same room and ask them to solve the world's hunger problem. Odds are they couldn't agree on anything. Goleman (2002) states that when it comes to working together, emotional intelligence is much more important than IQ. The one doesn't necessarily correlate to the other, either. This is why Senge believes that the organizational IQ is generally much lower than the average IQ of the individuals making up that organization. It all depends on whether you are able to get these people to work together effectively. If you can make that happen, it is possible for the organization to operate at a much higher IQ than its member's average. A lot of this relates to the art of dialogue (Senge 2006).

Organizations with high IQs are called learning organizations. They get their power from their ability to learn more about their environment and collectively process that learning into targeted, innovative action. Learning happens through a skill called dialogue, in which individuals learn to explore new and different ideas from many angles in a non-threatening way. Individuals hold their own judgments loosely, placing a greater value on meaningful group interaction.

Best-selling author and speaker, Senge, states that most business schools place too high of a value on developing student's debate skills, where the emphasis is on presenting and defending ideas (2006).

> The usual Western approach to problem-solving or improvement is to attack and criticize, then look for an alternative. This analytical approach does not always lead to creative or fruitful solutions. (Hines and Bishop 2006, 50)

The problem is that debate skills start working against people as they advance through organizational ranks. Eventually, the issues they face become more complex than for what their own personal experience has prepared them (Senge 2006). In essence, they start debating and defending strategies which are beyond their own knowledge and experience. When individuals get to these higher levels, the skills they need are not debating and defending, but the ability to spur creative dialogue and work with the group processes to let new creative solutions emerge.

It's like the findings of Lausanne, 1974: missionaries placed too much focus on proclamation, and not enough time asking questions and helping people wrestle through difficult issues as a part of the discipleship process. Theological schools may be placing too much focus on teaching people how to "teach" theological truth, rather than helping seminary students learn how to help individuals wrestle through the application of spiritual values into their own lives.

Dialogue is one of the top skills needed to navigate the complex future environment. As problems become increasingly complex, we have to learn to release the collective knowledge and experience residing in our teams (Senge 2006). Answers won't come from the top. Debating and arguing about ideas doesn't work. Debates assume the opponent must be won over to a correct point of view. It assumes one person is right and the other is wrong. Dialogue, however, assumes that the answer resides in the collective wisdom of the team. It assumes teammates can, and need to, learn from one another. Differing viewpoints are not opportunities to win someone over; they are opportunities to learn something new. Dialogue has a goal of creating a "shared reality" (Hackman and Johnson 2009, 6). Researchers Reverend & Tannenbaum state,

> there is this magical thing in an organization, or in a team, or a group, where you get unrestricted interaction, unrestricted dialogue, and this synergy happening that results in more productivity, and satisfaction, and seemingly magical levels of output from a team…The challenge, of course, is in learning to appreciate differences in interpretation without feeling pressured to either demonize the other or strive for complete agreement. (1992, 48)

When issues become more complex, they start debating and defending strategies which are beyond their own knowledge and experience. They need the ability to spur creative dialogue and work with group processes.

The result of this kind of dialogue is transformational. Yet for this to happen, organizational goals and group effectiveness have to become more important than any one individual's personal aspirations (Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner 1994). The real learning happens as we recognize our assumptions and willingly open them up to others to be probed and explored. Initially, this may feel threatening, but when teammates and organizational members begin placing organizational outcomes above their own ego, true synergy becomes possible.

MIT credits its tremendous successes in creating a long history of technological innovations to this type of dialogue, which they say "mines" the collective intelligence of their people. Imagine the world's smartest PhDs working together, not fighting over who has the better idea, or who gets credit for a breakthrough, but approaching every conversation as an opportunity to learn and build upon each other's ideas. Imagine the depth of maturity this requires.

MIT may think it stumbled upon something revolutionary, but the idea is entirely Biblical. Paul wrote something similar.

> Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. He humbled himself… (Phil 2:3–8, NET)

Dialogue requires an atmosphere of humility, especially if individuals are to present their ideas to be challenged and questioned by others. It also requires authenticity where people learn to clearly speak the truth without fear (Eph 4:15). It requires love, as people examine and challenge the ideas of others in a way that honors our love towards God and our coworkers (Luke 6:31).

Creating an environment in which communication supports creative and innovative ideas is difficult work. It's not about you having a good idea. Focusing too much on your own perspective creates a closed, unfriendly atmosphere (Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim 1994). Alternatively, it's not about complete blindly yielding to others either. Placing all the emphasis on others' ideas ignores the inherent value of your own ideas. And, interestingly, it's not about compromise. Too often compromises result in neither party feeling completely satisfied with the outcome. Rarely will any of these methods of working together lead to an innovative solution.

The secret of this type of rich communication lies in the ability to maintain a high concern for others, while concurrently maintaining a high degree of concern for your own perspective as well. This takes much more time and energy than developing a compromise. To do this, each individual must seek to understand each other's individual world—as it is understood by them (Eisenberg, Goodall, and Trethewey 2010). This requires much deeper communication than surface talk. Its power lies in acknowledging the intrinsic value arising from the diversity of our experiences.

This is the goal of Ephesians 4 diversity: that our conversations become creative processes through deep collaborative interaction. When we get to this place, no individual is carrying an agenda other than to achieve team goals in the best way possible. Deep collaborative interaction doesn't result in compromise, it results in synergistic breakthrough thinking.

In this chapter we talked about some of the essentials necessary to institutionalize a culture of innovation. It begins with developing spiritual organizations led by spiritual leadership. Leaders should model agapao love, seeking the best for each individual. We discussed the values necessary to create cultures that support innovation. Next, we discussed orienting our organizations toward continual learning to create organizations with high IQ's. Lastly, we discussed the core skill of dialogue that unleashes the collective experience in teams. **IJFM**

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Books and Missiology

Hindu *Dharma* and Experiencing God

by Timothy Shultz

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Gospel witness to Hindus is a profoundly experiential thing. It is something that *happens* to us—both to the disciples of Jesus who are bearing witness and to the Hindus who are receiving that witness. It happens to us because Jesus is doing it, within us and through us. Experience is a critical part of gospel witness, because it is at the center of a Hindu worldview about truth and religion and God. They want and even *need* to experience Jesus. Furthermore, they will seek to experience him on their own terms, in ways that feel most natural and trustworthy to them. Indeed, *all* human beings approach God in their own way; we cannot help doing so because we are who we are. The fact that God welcomes us however we come to him is a wonder.

In his book *The Hindu View of Life,* the legendary Hindu scholar and first Vice President of Independent India, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, explains the relationship between reasoning and intuition, and the role of experience in grasping truth about God: "Religion . . . is a kind of life or experience. It is insight into the nature of reality or experience of reality. This experience is not an emotional thrill, or a subjective fancy, but is the response of the whole personality" (1927, 13). He further emphasizes the central role of intuitive experience about religion: "Religious experience is of a self-certifying nature. It carries its own credentials" (1927, 13).

Radhakrishnan links this self-certifying, intuitive experience to reason; but he uses reason to clarify the experience rather than using experience to complement or illuminate reason. The experience stands until reason catches up:

> In order to be able to say that religious experience reveals reality, in order to be able to translate religious certitude into logical certainty, we are obliged to give an intellectual account of the experience. The chief sacred scriptures of the Hindus, the Vedas, register the intuitions of the perfected souls. They are not so much dogmatic dicta as transcripts from life.... The truths in the Vedas can be re-experienced in compliance with ascertained conditions. (1927, 14-15)

In this book the author describes how Hindu people experience and respond to Jesus Christ. He addresses their core values, the rhythms of their cultural world, and the patterns of community and family that make up their covenantal relationships. It is more than a manual for contextualization, for the author compels the reader to discover the beauty of Hindus as Jesus sees them—and the beauty of Jesus through Hindu eyes. In chapter four, "Experiencing Jesus Christ," he examines the apologetics of Jesus and applies them to the Hindu context.

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Hindu people may look for truth in the sense of a reality that someone has intuitively experienced, and which they can explain and demonstrate how to reproduce. Truth is found within the reasonable narration of the experience, and the proof of the legitimacy of the narrative is that the experience can be reproduced in the real world.

What is the context in which Hindus seek to experience reality? It is *dharma.* Hindus seek to experience reality that makes a positive difference in the totality of their lives according to Hindu dharma. We must reiterate Bharati's point about the nature of Hinduism:

> The most basic point to grasp is that Hinduism is not a religion like other religions, but a dharma. So for an average person, dharma is a comprehensive word which includes spiritual, moral, social, and even secular values. (2005, 21)

Bharati quotes Benjamin Khan, who further points out that intuitive experience of truth that makes a difference in someone's life will take place in harmony with life in their larger society:

> For to create mental and spiritual fellowship among men is the aim of dharma. So the term dharma is a very extensive term and includes all that activity that a man, if he has to live fittingly, is required to contribute under the fixed order of things; it is activity conforming to the norm of the universe which is good and should not be altered. (Khan 1983, 34)

All of this helps us establish a foundational philosophy for experiential gospel witness to Hindus. We are free to apply the insights of Radhakrishnan, Bharati, and Khan because of what Jesus said about an experiential apologetic based on deeds in the Gospel of John.

We can learn at least two things from the material quoted above. First, it is imperative that we learn to conceive of Christianity as the experience of the presence of Jesus within the lives of Hindu people. Wherever and however people experience the presence of Jesus is where his kingdom has come. The Gospel narratives reveal that to experience the presence of Jesus is to be loved by him in a way that is often referred to as blessing: he demonstrates his love by his deeds. In other words, Jesus will reveal himself to Hindu people by blessing them in a manner that they can receive, according to their dharma.

Because their dharma teaches them to live within a highly networked culture of relationships, the presence of Jesus will be experienced by Hindus in such a way that the individual, their family, their community, and potentially even the entire society is blessed. Helping people experience Jesus with a view to their family or larger society is entirely appropriate, because the examples that Jesus left of dealing with people were of blessing, provision, and deliverance, rather than of chaos and conflict.

The second thing we learn is that Hindus want to experience Jesus in a way that is intuitive, reasonably explainable, and reproducible. The intuitive experience of Jesus is something that Hindus perceive as righteous and peaceful. They sense the presence of Jesus in the loving deeds that they are experiencing from his disciples. This means that a highly programmatic ministry will not be effective (or even welcome) unless the programs serve to position people together so that they intuitively sense the presence of Jesus among them.

Reasonably explainable experience means that the deeds can be clearly traced as originating with God, who has come to them in Jesus' name, and is not a product of the efforts of people. For example, the Hindu people can point to a prayer ceremony when a certain need was presented to God in Jesus' name—a prayer for healing or deliverance, for example, or a portion of Scripture that shed light on an intractable problem and was the beginning of good news. Verbalizing the gospel message becomes the explanation of how and why we are experiencing Jesus in such a positive way. Stories, examples, and nuggets of truth that sticks are preferable to Christian theology at this point.

Reproducible experience is not formal ritual but something that fits into the Hindu way of life. It is accessible, and Hindus can share it with their family and friends. In fact, this is exactly what Jesus said when he pointed to his deeds as the evidence of the truth of his words, and when he promised his disciples that they would be able to offer the same experience to others through their loving deeds.

The Sanskrit word for this experience is *anubhav.* Anubhav takes place within the soul. It is not the dubious faith of feelings or something that is grasped in a limited way by the senses. Nor can it be reduced to cold rationality, nor taken apart and proven by evidentiary trial, nor weighed by the logical rules of rhetoric. Anubhav is the way God communicates or reveals himself deeply within people. It is the difference between studying the menu and eating the meal, between planning a trip to the beach and actually walking on the beach. It is a sure experience of hope that the kingdom of heaven can come to earth.

For Hindus, this anubhav is an introductory experience of the benevolent power of Jesus Christ, who surprises them by revealing Himself to them. He enters their world, demonstrating His love and grace. Anubhav may be dramatically powerful, such as the physical miracles performed by Jesus, but it is not strictly a power encounter. It may also be the superb social and relational character that Hindus see in a disciple of Christ who is supporting them in trying or complex circumstances. It may be a startling question that a child asks an adult about the absurdity of biological inequality between groups of people, which unmasks the dark heart of human prejudice. It may be a heartfelt gesture of sincere respect for elders, which pierces the heart of a Hindu family who did not expect to be treated so graciously.

Anubhav can also be a flash of intuitive realization close on the heels of an event that is orchestrated by God, a visible and dramatic answer to a prayer offered to God in Jesus' name, a dream or vision, or an experience of worshipping Jesus in a Hindu manner. It may even simply be peace *(shanti)* in the heart of the Hindu family that "surpasses understanding." Ultimately, the power of anubhav is that it speaks to the Hindu people in a way that awakens their hearts to the reality of Jesus. When experienced consistently and authentically, anubhav gives them assurance about the truth of the gospel.

Anubhav often starts for Hindus when they become convinced that the presence of Jesus is manifested in the lives of his followers. This happens when the disciples have learned not only how to experience Jesus but also how to translate that experience to Hindu people.

Ask yourself this question: How do I experience Jesus? Answering it may require that you adjust your thinking about your relationship with God away from right believing and right doing within an extracted Christian community, and instead direct it toward *experiencing Jesus in everyday life.* Once you have done this, ask yourself a second question: How do I translate this experience into words and practice that Hindu people can intuitively understand, access, and share with others?

While she waved
the small burning wick
in the stainless steel plate and prayed,
a shining figure dressed in white
appeared before her,
right there among the idols
and garlands and incense.

Disciples who know how to translate their experience of Jesus into stories that Hindus can access will find it easier to develop a deeper level of trust in their relationship. Their Hindu friends may share a concern or a need, or even an aspiration that they have in their lives, with the believers. They may even share that they want to experience Jesus as well. When this happens, the disciple should listen quietly and respectfully, aware that they are being entrusted with a great treasure.

After the disciple is sure that they understand everything clearly, they can assure the family that they will pray to God in Jesus' name about this issue. It may be best to pray for the need privately, or perhaps even arrange a time when they meet with the Hindu family and have a formal prayer ceremony, performed in a Hindu-friendly way. This may include bathing before people gather for the ceremony, sitting on the floor around a small table with burning incense and little candles, and ringing a bell before beginning.

It is best not to push for this, however. Just remain patient and humble and allow the Holy Spirit to show you how to proceed. As you pray, your Hindu friends are in the perfect position to experience the benevolent power of Jesus. Jesus can provide jobs and places to live. He can guide people who are confused about their lives, restore broken families, and heal minds and bodies. When believers and Hindus who are living in authentic relationship share these types of experiences with Jesus, many barriers between them and Jesus can be broken down.

Stories of Anubhav

Shalini (not her real name) was about sixty when she began attending our ESL classes. She was a charming and friendly person, though it eventually became clear that her quick smile was hiding deep inner pain. One day, after a session in which we had shared our issues and sought prayer in Jesus' name, Shalini told us how frightened and worried she was about her grandchildren. They had grown up in an eastern city in the US and were not always on the same page as her, culturally or morally. Although we had not had this same experience, we could pray for Shalini with insight, because we had lost count of the number of times we had heard this prayer request from other immigrants. Next week she came back and told us the following story.

That week Shalini had been doing *aarti* in her home, just as she had done hundreds of times before. *(Aarti* is a special time of worshiping Hindu deities.) While she waved the small burning wick in the stainless steel plate and prayed, a shining figure dressed in white appeared before her, right there among the idols and pictures and garlands and incense. The person identified himself to her as Jesus. He said that he had heard the prayers she had offered to God in his name for her family. He assured her that all would be well, and then vanished. Shalini wept with joy and awe as she told us this story, and we rejoiced with her.

After this landmark event, we celebrated in Shalini's home with *satsangs. (Satsang* is a pan-Indian term meaning "gathering of truth.") We would sing devotional songs called Jesus *bhajans* and have an opportunity to share the gospel with her family and friends. This is an example of anubhav.

Another story is that of Prakash and Jaya (not their real names). The couple had recently moved and misplaced Jaya's gold wedding bangles. They searched their apartment high and low but couldn't find the lost treasure. This was terribly upsetting, and a sense of foreboding about bad luck settled on them. A disciple of Christ who happened to be their friend assured them that he would pray about this situation. The very next day they found the bangles and gave glory to Jesus—right in front of their family! This is also anubhav.

One of the more powerful examples of anubhav is how disciples of Jesus handle adversity and loss. Peace in the midst of trouble is an incredibly powerful anubhav experience for Hindus. A young couple I know had decided to convert to Christianity. They had made the decision to leave self-identification in their birth community and declare Christian identity through church baptism. This was especially complex because the wife was Muslim and the husband was Hindu. They thought conversion would clarify many things in their troubled world, but it had the opposite effect: their families became even more frustrated with them, and then the man lost his job. Since he was in the jewelry business, we talked with them about how trials are more valuable than gold. They decided to persevere and prayed about every issue in their lives. We prayerfully walked with them through this time, and God faithfully guided and provided for them. In the end, their family became completely accepting of their new way of life in Christ. This is anubhav.

They must allow the Hindus to respond to Jesus *as Hindus,* so that their faith will be sincere and real.

A man I'll call Sanjay was also attending our ESL classes. He never missed a session, and I really enjoyed chatting with him and his wife. They were cultured people with attractive personalities, an excellent living example of the wise, temperate, spiritual ideal that Hindus value. One day Sanjay told me that he had begun to notice how every new word or phrase he learned in our class was used in his workplace, just as we said it would be. He saw this as anubhav, an experience of Jesus Christ blessing him because of our love for him, and he died a disciple of Jesus.

Another man came to believe that Jesus' presence was in our lives, and since we were outside the Hindu community he felt safe with us. One summer his son fell very ill and was hospitalized. Our friend blamed himself for this. He had heard from us and from Christians in India that Jesus was the God who would forgive sin. Anubhav was working in his mind. One day he arranged to meet me and confessed horrific sins he had committed in India, hoping I would bring him to Jesus so he could escape what he saw as God's wrath. Many Hindus believe that their bad karma is worked out in the lives of their children. I listened carefully to his confession and prayed with him. I urged him to join me in the process of seeking Jesus for forgiveness and a new life. This brother truly sought the Lord, but his wife hated us and destroyed any further attempt at witness.

A transformed life is a powerful anubhav for Hindus. We know of a young man from the global Hindu diaspora who had fallen into a life of substance abuse. However, his conversion to Christianity, which involved water baptism in a church and referring to himself as a Christian, completely changed his life from hatred to blessing. This led his family to become Christ *bhaktas*, followers of Jesus who retain a Hindu identity.

Experiencing Jesus through answered prayer is another powerful form of anubhav. A man we know came from an upper caste family that was filled with chaos and self-destructive tendencies. He had experienced provision in Jesus' name, which, through a series of events, helped him rescue his sisters from disastrous arranged marriages. This man grew rapidly in his faith, and was once even invited to share the gospel in a leading Hindu temple in India! His father eventually accepted his Christ bhakti—devotion to Christ—and one of his sisters became a Christ bhakta herself.

Devotion or Conversion

After a Hindu family has had an introductory anubhav, they may become very open to welcoming Jesus further into their lives. This is a crucial moment or period of time for Hindus on their journey to Christ, so the believers must allow them to respond to Jesus from the heart. In other words, they must allow the Hindus to respond to Jesus *as Hindus,* so that their faith will be sincere and real.

Hindus usually don't respond positively to Jesus or "get saved" like nominal, unregenerate Christians. They respond positively to Jesus like *Hindus,* through devotion that motivates them to seek to worship him. This worship will deepen the anubhav that the Hindus have already had and make Jesus even more attractive, convincing them that they can approach Jesus and relate to him from an undivided heart.

Often, however, our fears about syncretism, doctrine, and "the way we were raised" prevent us from understanding this process. We assume that all people receive Christ in much the same way, so we ask Hindus if they are willing to accept Christ as their Savior. "I already accept Jesus," they think, and say yes. At this point we disciples, anxious to be faithful to the gospel, press the Hindus to understand and accept that Jesus must be their only God.

Hindus may not understand what accepting Christ really means to the disciple. But if they get the sense that the anubhav comes at the cost of being pressured to become Christians, we are likely to lose any ability to help them further understand who Jesus really is and what he would like to fully accomplish in their lives. We may deeply offend them and never even know it—they might gradually distance themselves from us because they think we are insisting that they convert to Christianity.

A ministry philosophy that emphasizes conversion as the basis of devotion will almost always have this effect. This is not what is meant by the offense of the gospel. It is just inappropriate ministry practice.

Believers may want to push for conversion, but it is much better to empower *devotion*. Hindus refer to this as bhakti. Bhakti means devotion, and that devotion can certainly be focused on Jesus, regardless of whether the bhakta has said the Sinner's Prayer. Devotion through worship is the heartbeat of how Hindus respond to God after a positive initiatory experience of Jesus. The revolution for believers is not only to accept this but to actually empower Hindus to worship Jesus, even if they have not yet confessed the lordship of Christ. Experience that is followed by worship is the very best way to reproduce the experience of truth, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan—and more importantly, according to Jesus in John 14.

Jesus-focused bhakti motivates the Hindu family to truly consider the feasibility of life as disciples who are devoted to Jesus. As they wrestle with the implications of this life-changing and unexpected revelation, they will naturally need to consider how other Hindu people will respond to their new devotion. Will their family and friends continue to accept them, or will society reject them? This is often the point where everything breaks down, but it does not have to be the end. There is an alternative.

This other possibility is for the Hindu family to consider that their devotion to Jesus as Hindus, not as converts to Christianity, could be acceptable—even attractive and inviting—to their family and friends. They might come to believe that the people they love could also experience Jesus, that they too could pray to him, worship him, learn about him, and witness to others about him. **IJFM**

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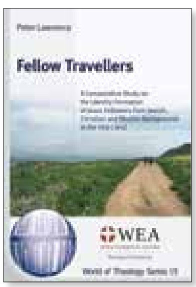
Books and Missiology

Fellow Travellers: A Comparative Study on the Identity Formation of Jesus Followers from Jewish, Christian and Muslim Backgrounds in The Holy Land, by Peter Lawrence, World Evangelical Alliance World of Theology series no.15, Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, edited by Thomas Schirmacher (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 113 pp.

—Reviewed by Tim Green



Originally a master's degree thesis, *Fellow Travellers* explores the following question:

> How can the identity formation of Messianic Jews, Arab Evangelicals, and Muslim-background believers in Israel be described and in what way are their personal and collective experiences similar and/or dissimilar in this domain? (9)

Its *focus* is identity, the *comparison* is between first-generation believers from three different religious backgrounds, and the *context* is wisely restricted to one small region to reduce the number of variables.

Despite its shorter length and more limited scope than a doctoral study, this book is fully worthy of publication. It deserves attention firstly, because the topic of identity is missiologically significant, and secondly, because the book extends existing theory in new ways and in an unusual context.

Identity, a Missiologically Important Topic

"Identity" has become a key concept in our rapidly changing world. Personal and corporate identities flex under the impact of globalization. Travel and the internet expose people to new worldviews. Migration and intermarriage create new hybrid identities. Pluralizing societies challenge formerly fused notions of faith, ethnicity, and nationality. The resulting insecurity causes many societies to push back against globalization as they yearn for their former stability. This appears to be a factor in the rise of assertively nationalist regimes today, a full generation after they had experimented with 1990s liberalism and open borders. Nevertheless, people are digitally connected across borders as never before, enabling the emergence of youth cultures and identities in which people have more in common with each other than with their own parents.

Every year, millions of people migrate to a different country or a different faith from what they were born into. They inevitably face challenges of identity which continue to morph for their children. Thus, identity transition is key in both migration studies and conversion studies, and these two fields shed light on each other. Recently they have even been joined by gender studies, where the previously unthinkable notion of gender fluidity is now being vigorously promoted. Evangelicals in post-Christendom societies find their own identity under threat.

What can missiologists learn from comparing these different kinds of identity transitions while focussing especially on faith formation? How may the descriptive tools of sociological research be combined with more prescriptive theological approaches? Can they indeed be combined at all, or are they different-but-complementary? At the very least, might missiologists benefit from analytical frameworks offered by psychology, anthropology, and sociology, in exploring the multi-dimensional nuances of identity? I agree with the author of *Fellow Travellers* that "[m]issiological concerns—such as: evangelism, conversion, discipleship, and church planting—seem to be, in one way or another, all related to the topic of identity formation" (49).

In recent years, some researchers have started to explore these frontiers of missiology in relation to the ever-growing number of Muslims turning to Christ. Much research has focussed on the *processes* of conversion—how and why Muslims turn to Christ. But now attention has shifted to conversion's *consequences* in the ensuing years and decades.[1] How do these believers grow in a new personal identity in Christ, alongside a new group identity in Christ's community, while still staying connected with their Muslim communities? What new identity labels do they acquire? What factors help them to pass on the faith to their children? Lawrence rightly states that "the topic of identity formation has emerged as a research gap within the field of missiology" (14).

These identity questions for believers of Muslim background can be echoed for believers of Hindu, Buddhist, or Jewish backgrounds. But research runs separately in these different religious contexts, without comparing between them. It is rare for a study to straddle two movements to Christ, as in Jonas Jørgensen's fine work comparing identity issues for Jesus

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followers of Muslim and Hindu backgrounds.[2] To compare three different movements at once is rarer still. This is where Peter Lawrence has broken new ground and why his book *Fellow Travellers* is important.

Strengths of Lawrence's Research Study

1. A comparison of three communities in the same context

One risk in comparative studies is to try to compare different things in different contexts. This introduces too many variables at once. It is wiser either to compare the same thing in different contexts, or else different things in the same context. Lawrence chose the latter approach, by taking the highly unusual context of Israel where three different movements of Jesus followers can be compared side by side.

His historical overview of these three communities is illuminating. Messianic Jews, at first a majority of Jesus-followers in the early church, were later reduced to a minority as the Gentile church swelled. That church, wielding state power from the fourth century, enforced a full identity separation between "Christian" and "Jewish" so that Jesus-believing Jews "even had to denounce their own people and heritage in order to demonstrate their commitment to Christendom" (22). The equivalent denunciation was required by rabbinic Judaism, and the two communities drew apart for many centuries.

Later evangelical efforts to reach the Jews resulted in many thousands being absorbed into denominational Christianity by the end of the nineteenth century, but at the cost of their Jewishness. The twentieth century saw the emergence of Messianic Jewish congregations as a new collective identity where "they could express their newly-found faith in accordance with their Jewish heritage" (23). Exponential growth in the twenty-first century has resulted in around three hundred Messianic congregations and thirty thousand Messianic Jews in Israel alone (23). This is a sizeable and expanding community.

By contrast, Arab Evangelicals in Israel are a smaller and shrinking group. Their origins are in the Arab Christian communities which existed in the region from the third century and were still numerous a hundred years ago when Christians played a leading role in the Arab nationalist movements. From these Orthodox and Catholic communities, Protestant missionaries established new churches, and the resultant denominational tensions are still felt today. With their numbers drastically reduced by emigration, Arab Evangelicals in Israel comprise a minority (just three percent) of the Christian community who form a minority (ten percent) of the Arabs, who in turn are a minority (twenty percent) of Israel's population.

However, even while "Arab Christianity in the Middle East is threatened by extinction, a new community of evangelical faith is emerging in the region" (27). These are Muslim-background believers, currently numbering around five hundred individuals in Israel but with substantial growth in the last twenty years. This growth is mirrored in the region and Lawrence considers that "they might turn out to be a lifeline for the Church in the Middle East" (27).

Thus, the demography of Christianity in the Holy Land is changing at an accelerating rate, with Arab Christians in numerical decline but now augmented by Jewish-background and Muslim-background followers of Christ. Lawrence opens a window for us on this fascinating, fluid situation which naturally gives rise to questions of identity.

Lawrence summarises points of commonality between Messianic Jews, Arab Evangelicals, and Muslim-background believers. They have all been shaped personally by the political and theological force-fields that created the State of Israel—a joyous fulfilment for some, a painful eviction for others. They often speak each other's languages, since many of them are bilingual or trilingual between Hebrew, Arabic, and English. All three communities derive directly or indirectly from Protestant missionary endeavours in the past and are the subjects of contemporary missiological interest. All three face some hostility and pressure from their parent communities, whether Jewish, Arab Christian, or Muslim, with the last of these facing the biggest rejection. Also, all three groups are viewed by outsiders as evangelical Christians but themselves view the label with some ambivalence. Thus, all three groups "are, to some extent, disconnected from their communities of birth and, at the same time, do not feel fully part of the global evangelical community." Nevertheless, members of all three groups have experienced "one essential element to the evangelical faith . . . namely the life-changing encounter with the person of Jesus" (34).

Members of all three groups are, to some extent, disconnected from their communities of birth and, at the same time, do not feel fully part of the global evangelical community.

2. Useful coverage of relevant literature

To survey relevant literature in any one of these fields is a major undertaking; to do it for all three is daunting indeed, especially for a master's level thesis. Lawrence was necessarily selective, prioritizing research work done specifically on the target groups in Israel itself, while including some wider material.

He cites several studies on Messianic Jews caught between "two communities at odds with each other" (40, citing Stern), namely the church and the people of Israel, yet seeking their own identity. They are

> trying to find "a third way"…constantly crossing the well-established borders between Judaism and Christianity and…marking new boundaries between Messianic Judaism and these two religions. (39, citing Fehler)

Historically this third way was tightly sealed, because Jewish religious law had defined followers of Jesus as outside the boundary of Judaism. However, "Jewish people today are much freer than ever to shift, choose and interpret the components of their Jewish identity" (40, citing Warshawsky). This creates space for Messianic Jews to join other Jews in the quest to define modern "Jewishness." By prioritizing their ethnic and cultural identity as Jews, and downplaying the religious element, they

> challenge the common notion that Rabbinic Judaism is the norm for "Jewishness" and, simultaneously, they refuse to accept that their faith in Jesus is a boundary marker between them and their fellow Jews. (40–41)

How do Arab Evangelicals form and view their identity? In contrast to Messianic Jews, whose identity options have opened up over the last century, for Arab Christians they have become tighter. A hundred years ago "Muslims and Christians started to identify themselves mainly by their shared ethnicity and nationality as Arabs . . . their 'Arabness' was considered a unifying factor for their people group" (44). But in recent decades, the Judaization of Israeli society and the Islamization of Palestinian society squeezed Arab Christians into a tight spot. Excluded by both Israeli and Palestinian mainstream communities, they are drawn to emigrate to the West where they will not be stuck in ethnic or religious boxes. Findings by Salim Munayer are confirmed by Ajaj and Miller, that today Arab Evangelicals

> prefer to identify themselves, first and foremost, by their religion (Christian) before their ethnicity (Arab/Palestinian) or nationality (Israeli)…there has been a noticeable change from forty years ago when their Arab identity was more prominent than their religious beliefs and affiliation. (48, citing Ajaj and Miller)

Thirdly, Lawrence observes that for Muslim-background believers the topic of identity formation has generated much missiological interest. Tim Green's work on this is discussed further below. Kathryn Kraft[3] found that Muslim-background believers in Lebanon and Egypt faced a similar dilemma, and those most comfortable in their new identity were the ones who had "successfully adhered a Christian religious identity onto a pre-existing Muslim ethnic identity" (51, citing Kraft). Jens Barnett developed a nuanced model of identity which "provides a helpful insight into the complexity of multiple belonging and hybrid identification among Muslim-background believers in the Levant" (52). Studies specifically in the Holy Land include the 2003 research by Ant Greenham,[4] which raises the question of whether women believers form identity in a different way from men.[5]

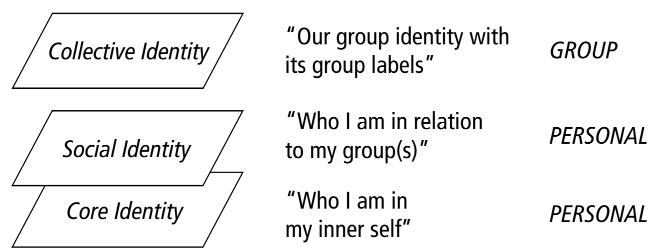
3. Application and extension of theory

As a reviewer evaluating Lawrence's work, I now find myself in the curious position of being evaluated by him in turn, since he bases his theoretical model for identity on the one I developed for believers of Muslim background in Pakistan.[6]

Lawrence thus summarises my identity model:

> Tim Green's research on the conversion experiences of Muslim-background believers in Pakistan is one of the most frequently quoted studies on the issue of identity formation among Jesus followers in the House of Islam…he presents a dynamic model with three layers of identity (figure 1 below) in which *core* refers to the construction of a personal identity, *social* to the formation of an individual identity within a community, and *corporate* [actually *collective*] to the positioning of a group within society. (50)

Figure 1. Three layers of identity (Green)

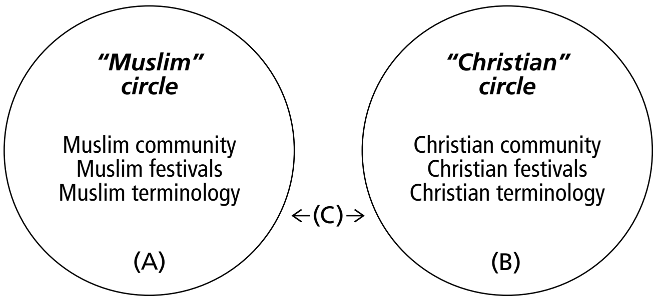


Like migrants from one country to another, "spiritual migrants" from Islam to Christ undergo deep loss and change, struggling to integrate their old and new identities and wondering how long it will take to truly feel at home. For instance, on the social identity level,

> these "spiritual migrants" find themselves on the borderzone of Islam and Christianity and are confronted with a sense of dual belonging to both religious communities.… Green observes various coping strategies among these Jesus followers, such as: 1) switching between both religious communities until they are forced to choose between one of them; 2) supressing one side of their social identity by associating completely with the other religious community; 3) finding a synthesis—through the creation of a "third culture"—which is tolerated by their family members and friends. (50–51)

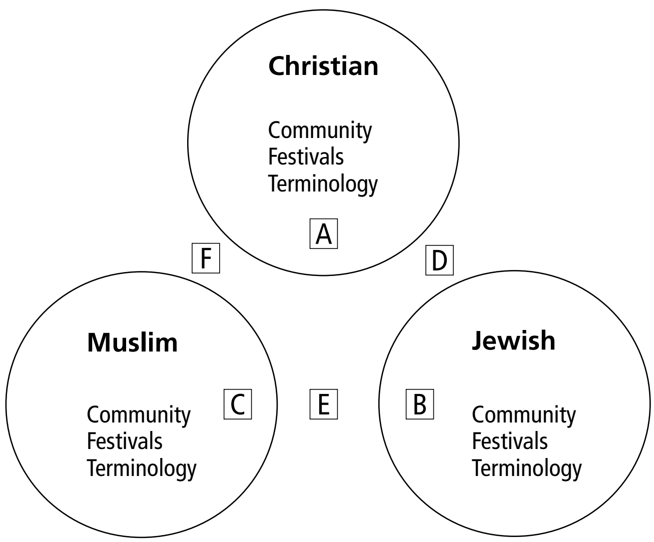
In my own research, I had represented this dilemma of dual belonging as two circles, functioning on the social identity layer and had asked my interviewees whether they felt they belonged in positions A, B, or C (figure 2, at the top of p. 59).

Figure 2. Social identity options with two communities (Green)



In quite an innovative way, Lawrence extended this diagram to three communities, thus opening up identity options A to F:

Figure 3. Social identity options with three communities (Lawrence)



He further considered the possibility that believers, instead of having to choose between or oscillate between mutually exclusive communities, could find themselves in the overlap where their simultaneous belonging is tolerated by the different communities. (See figure 4 to the right.)

In contrast to traditional collectivist societies, where a person is required to belong to one tribe or another, dual and multiple belonging is a feature of modern pluralistic societies. So our identity frameworks need to include this possibility and I commend Lawrence for extending the diagram to include it. In practice this final diagram proved a little difficult for some of Lawrence's interviewees to grasp, because the areas of overlap could be interpreted either as simultaneous belonging to different social communities or else a higher-level unity in Christ between believers of different backgrounds. This is an important distinction and the diagram could perhaps be adapted to show it.

4. Careful, appropriate methodology

I commend Lawrence's careful, transparent interview technique and his reflections on what it means to be an insider-outsider in ethnographic research. I agree with him that the insider/outsider distinction can be over-emphasised, since "[u]ltimately, the level of reflexivity—regardless whether the researcher is a so called 'insider' or 'outsider'—is key to the quality of data collected and analysed in a field study" (68, citing Kraft).

His interview guide drew from my field work and that of Warshawsky (for Messianic Jews in Israel). Lawrence wisely combined some open-ended listening to interviewees telling their own story in their own way, along with some perceptively chosen questions designed to explore his research topic. The nine interviewees comprised three individuals from each target group. They ranged in age from 25 to 55 years, with a mix of marital status, and two-thirds were female. Lawrence recorded the data in a careful way and analyzed it with standard techniques.

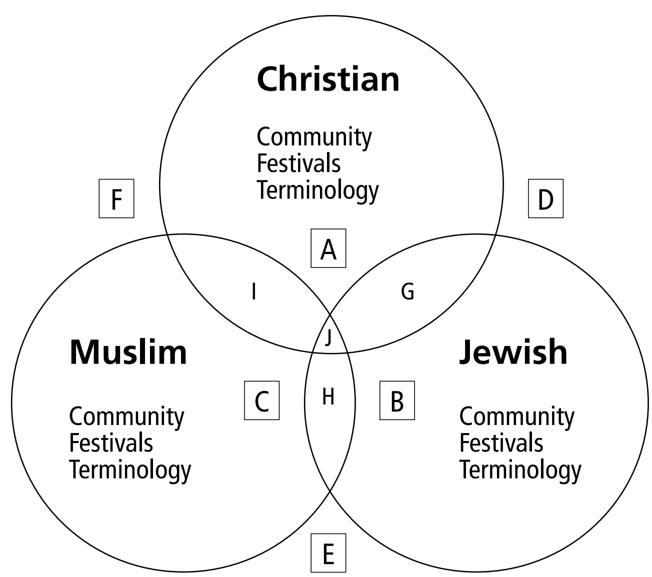
5. New findings

The small sample size of just nine interviewees is acceptable for a master's level study but can lead to only tentative conclusions, especially since each target group is represented by just three individuals. However, Lawrence also compared his limited findings with the wider literature for the three communities of Jesus-followers and his conclusions draw on both sources.

a. Identity formation for Messianic Jews

Messianic Jews in Israel mostly continue to identify as ethnically and culturally Jewish, often feeling more Jewish since coming to faith in their Messiah, and thus with a renewed

Figure 4. Social identity options including overlapping possibilities (Lawrence)



identity as fulfilled Jews. "I feel more Jewish than ever, I feel so complete" was the comment of one interviewee. The second one similarly embraced his Jewish identity more fully than before since "that is what God gave me." The third likewise affirmed "I am completely Jewish, believing in Jesus didn't make me lose my Jewishness." They feel loyal to the State of Israel and part of the Jewish community, though distancing themselves from rabbinic Judaism. "I don't feel like I need to go to a synagogue. I don't feel like God is there," commented one (75–76).

They felt more strongly connected to their birth community than to the Christian community:

> I never call myself a Christian. I am Messianic who believes in Yeshua Messiah. He is the Son of God, he came to this world. He died for my sins. Theology, we are the same, I don't disagree with the Christian theology, but I would use the Jewish terminology to describe myself.

However, they strongly connect with believers of evangelical faith from other backgrounds, and consider faith to be more important than ethnicity for choosing a marriage partner (85–86).

b. Identity formation for Arab Evangelicals

Arab Evangelical interviewees still connected somewhat with friends and relatives in the traditional Christian community, with some low-level opposition from that community. But they "have drawn a clear boundary between their own faith and their religion of birth" with the label "evangelical" as an identity marker to mark this distinction. They did not feel they really belonged inside either the Christian or the Jewish community, let alone the Muslim community. One interviewee commented "I am Israeli citizen, but not Jewish. I am a Christian. I don't forget that I am Palestinian, I am Arab. I am Israeli, I am not a Palestinian citizen" (80).

c. Identity formation for Muslim-background believers

Lawrence found that in relation to their Muslim birth community these Jesus followers experience "high levels of discontinuity in their social identity from the moment they make their newly found faith public." Of his three MBB interviewees, one had not yet told her parents of her faith in Jesus. When a second one told her parents, it brought "a wall in our relationship, especially between me and my father. My mother was struggling a lot, but more accepting. The children made my parents closer to us . . . it is better now, praise God." The parents of the third interviewee said, "Don't bring us shame, whatever you want to believe, keep it away from the family" (84).

These interviewees had ceased to celebrate Muslim religious festivals and no longer use Islamic terminology or give their children Muslim names (87). All three of them used the Christian or Hebrew terms for Jesus, not the Muslim name. The interviewees had joined an Arab Evangelical church and/or a Messianic congregation (the reasons for this surprising choice are not given by Lawrence but would be interesting to know). One of them was happy to call herself a Christian, but also "a Muslim who believes in Jesus." Another said, "I am from a Muslim family, but I follow Jesus" (83). Both of these were hesitant to place themselves fully in the "Christian" community.

d. Continuity and discontinuity

Lawrence found that the continuity with the birth culture and religion seems strongest for Messianic Jews, who redefine Jewishness into a space they can occupy: "they feel more Jewish because their ethnicity is no longer defined by Rabbinic Judaism" (91). Arab Evangelicals, by contrast, define themselves in distinction to the traditional Christian community, though still with points of social connection. For Muslim-background believers there seems to be the greatest discontinuity from their birth community: "these Jesus followers from the House of Islam definitely do not see themselves as part of the Muslim circle" (91).

These differences strike me as important, and they beg a deeper explanation. I return to this question below. Lawrence's finding is also significant that Messianic Jews become more politically engaged after they have come to faith while Arab Evangelicals and MBBs tend to disengage.

In terms of their self-descriptions, Lawrence found that

> the interviewees do not call themselves anymore by their ethnicity or religion of birth only—i.e. Jew, Arab Christian, Muslim—but add a word to indicate that they are Jesus followers, such as: "Messianic Jew," "Arab Evangelical," "believer from a Muslim family," and so forth. (92)

Similarly with religious terminology, such as the names they use for Jesus, interviewees from all three groups tend no longer to use the terminology of their religion of birth but use modified terms.

e. A new community in Christ

Lawrence found that:

> Regardless of their ethnic, social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, the majority of them find themselves in the circles that bind them together with other Jesus followers . . . [E]ach one of them indicated that they experience—in their daily lives—a closer connection and stronger sense of belonging to other believers of evangelical faith than to members of their own community and religion of birth. (93)

This echoes what first took place in the very same region two thousand years earlier, as "followers of the Way" came together from the mutually exclusive communities of Jew and Gentile, to create one new identity in Christ.

6. Valuable conclusions

Lawrence has broken new ground in comparing the identity formation of first-generation Jesus followers from three different religious backgrounds, living at the same point of time, in the same geographical context. I agree with him that this provides "a missiological framework for a comparative study between members of these target groups" and "a model for further research among these communities of evangelical faith in Israel and beyond" (100–101). I also appreciate the way he has extended my binary social identity diagram to create more possibilities. It would be most interesting to see other researchers try out his diagrams in different settings, with some modification to remove one area of ambiguity noted above.

Physical migrants, who leave one country to settle in another, face similar identity issues to spiritual migrants who leave one faith to settle in another. The comparisons should be explored.

Limitations or Weaknesses of the Study

Given the tiny sample groups comprising only three individuals each, Lawrence could be accused of overreach in describing his data as "rich," and in extrapolating its significance to verify or modify the findings of the literature which is based on larger field studies.

Although Lawrence sprinkles his text with a good number of short quotations from the interviewees, at times his own interpretation takes precedence over theirs. Thus, he argues that Muslim-background believers in Israel "might find themselves unable to pursue a new and/or renewed identity because of the pressure they encounter" (89–90). However, studies in other contexts show that MBBs may well have a more nuanced awareness of identity than Lawrence allows.

This tendency for the researcher's voice to override that of the subjects can be exacerbated when only short excerpts are cited from the transcripts. This usually results in fragmented sound bites, selected and arranged at the whim of the researcher. I see the same tendency in Lawrence's book, and I would have liked to hear more of the interviewees' accounts in their own words. However, having conducted similar research myself, I well know the problem of trying to achieve this within the constraints of word count.

In fact, the author could have liberated word count by reducing the amount of repetition in the book. Phrases like "as already discussed" show the need for tighter editing, or even some restructuring to collate and condense those points which recur repeatedly in different parts of the book. Tighter editing would also have corrected the occasional missing or misspelt words. Although Lawrence is generally clear in his arguments, this clarity is sometimes lost when, for example, he tries to distinguish between *new* and *renewed* identity and to connect those with *discontinuity* and *continuity* respectively.

However, these are minor points. To Lawrence's credit, he is aware of several limitations in the scope and scale of his study. I do not consider these to be weaknesses as such, but springboards into further research, and to these we now turn.

Springboards for Further Research

I affirm Lawrence's six recommendations for further research (p. 96 onwards). I comment here on three of them, then add five more of my own, with reference to Muslim-background believers in particular.

Three of the author's suggestions

First, he would like to investigate whether the metaphor of "being on a journey," used by himself in the book, is also prominent in the theology or liturgy of Jesus followers in Israel (96). This metaphor resonates with my interest in migration. Physical migrants, who leave one country to settle in another, face similar identity issues to spiritual migrants who leave one faith to settle in another. These comparisons could be researched in a more rigorous way, or a more ambitious project could be attempted to explore the identity journey of those who are simultaneously geographic and spiritual migrants. These days thousands of Muslim migrants to the West are also migrating to Christ, so how do they juggle both transitions at the same time? In joining an American church, for example, how can they discern what is cultural and what is Christian? Do they form their closest bonds with those who are fellow-migrants from the same country or fellow-migrants from the same faith, or both? A cluster of questions awaits research. Studies in this will not only be of academic interest, but also of great practical and pastoral benefit.[7]

Second, Lawrence would like to "find out what the differences are in identity formation between first- and second-generation believers between the target groups" (97). This is an urgent question in countries like Algeria, Bangladesh, Iran, and Kazakhstan where the first-generation movement is now transitioning to the second generation.[8] What will happen to the children of Muslim-background believers as they grow up? At the *core identity* level will they make their parents' faith their own, in a living way? In terms of *social identity,* will they be able confidently to maintain relationships both with the community of believers and the Muslim community, and into which community will they marry? What *collective identity labels* will distinguish the MBB community as it matures in the second generation?

Third, Lawrence proposes that comparative missiological research be carried out on areas of contextualization including Insider Movements. I agree with him that this should be done within a single context to reduce the variables, for in the Insider

Movement debate, much unnecessary missiological heat has arisen from failing to understand how the factors play out differently in different local contexts. How much more, then, is a single context needed when making missiological comparison between different religions. Lawrence has done this for Israel, pointing the way for similar research in other regions.

Five additional proposals

First, I hope that researchers can explore in a more rigorous way than Lawrence does, his fascinating hints about continuity and discontinuity working out differently for believers of different backgrounds. He rightly points out that missiologists make unsupported comparisons between Jesus followers in Insider Movements and Jesus-believing Jews in the early church (95). However, in his sociological conclusions about why Messianic Jews experience much more continuity with their Jewishness than do MBBs with their Muslimness, Lawrence seems to miss the theological elephant in the room. St. Paul as a Jew-in-Christ wrestled with this question of continuity and discontinuity after his conversion. How could he reconcile God's promises to his people Israel—"theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises"[9]—with those promises being fulfilled in Christ and in Christ's followers? Paul carved out a theological path for Messianic Jews to reconcile their old and new identities which is not available in quite the same way for believers of Muslim background, I would argue. Perhaps that is controversial, but it needs to be explored theologically to avoid over-simplistic comparisons. This begs for further empirical studies to compare the theology (and associated psychology) of Messianic Jews and Muslim-background believers, in Israel and beyond.

Second, Lawrence hints at the psychology of language in the religious terminology which first-generation believers choose. As he observed for Jesus followers in Israel, so I found in different Muslim countries, some believers of Muslim background prefer to use familiar names for God and Jesus while filling them with new meaning (expressing continuity) while others prefer completely new words (expressing discontinuity, new wineskins for new wine). What psychologically are the reasons for these choices, how may the psychology shift over a period of time as the new believers get established in their core identity, and how do believers switch between different terminology according to their audience? This is pastorally relevant, in the choice of vocabulary used in discipleship courses,[10] for instance.

Third, it would be useful to test in other contexts the identity model I proposed for Pakistan and which Lawrence extended in Israel. He mentions other researchers on MBB identity[11] who have also used this framework, and a recent doctoral study in Bangladesh has done the same.[12] However, Jens Barnett's model[13] is also important to consider and in some respects is better than mine. We need models that are simple enough to give us a handle on the slippery issues of identity but not so simplistic that they distort the research or the findings.

Fourth, the sociological concept of liminality has been explored in relation to believers of Muslim background, but it would be very interesting to compare it for all three communities in Lawrence's study. Liminal people are those at the edges and the gaps, an uncomfortable place to be but also a creative place where ultimately new hybrid identities are formed. Lawrence hints at this phenomenon but it should be examined further through the lens of identity theory.

Fifth, Lawrence's study (like most such qualitative research) is a snapshot at a moment of time. To some extent it allows for backwards reflection, as interviewees comment on their past experiences, but it does not point forward to what their perceptions will be ten years into the future. Identity is not fixed in time, especially for liminal people in transition. So how will the identity of new believers continue to evolve as they marry (typically locking them into one community or the other), give names to their children (also an identity marker), reconnect with their estranged relatives, and pass through stages of faith? Even at the end of life's journey the identity questions remain: in which religion's graveyard will they lay their head, and what will be inscribed on the tombstone? As for individuals, so for communities, the questions of identity shift as first generation believers give way to the second. With the movements to Christ that are now 30–40 years old, what can be gleaned from their wisdom to avoid repeating their mistakes?

Some believers prefer to use familiar names for God and Jesus, while others prefer completely new words. What are the psychological reasons for these choices?

And Finally . . .

These topics are relevant not only to new believers in non-Christian cultures, but also to western believers in the identity confusion of their post-Christendom cultures. Lawrence comments that Christian young people in Europe are "asking the same kind of questions as Muslim-background believers around the world." I agree with him that first-generation Jesus followers can be

> leading the way for other believers of evangelical faith around the world. These Jesus followers have learned through trial and error how to form their identity in accordance with the gospel and, as such, they seem to be forerunners in this endeavour. (103)

We have much to learn from them!

Endnotes

[1] This shift is seen in the two volumes edited by David Greenlee. The 2006 publication *From the Straight Path to the Narrow Way* (Milton Keynes, UK) collated research on conversion of Muslims to Christ, but by 2013 attention was shifting to MBB identity in *Longing for Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between?* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library).

[2] Jørgensen, Jonas, *Jesus Imandars and Christ Bhaktas: Two Case Studies of Interreligious Hermeneutics and Identity in Global Christianity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

[3] Kathryn Ann Kraft, "Community and Identity among Arabs of a Muslim Background Who Choose to Follow a Christian Faith" (PhD dissertation, Bristol, University of Bristol, 2007).

[4] Anthony Greenham, "Muslim Conversions to Christ: An Investigation of Palestinian Converts Living in the Holy Land" (dissertation, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004).

[5] Women's perspectives have unwittingly been overlooked by male missiologists. The network When Women Speak (https://whenwomenspeak.net/) is working to redress this imbalance and part of its focus is on hearing the voice of female believers of Muslim background.

[6] My full research is in Tim Green, "Issues of Identity for Christians of a Muslim Background in Pakistan" (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of London, 2014). The framework is presented in two chapters "Conversion in the Light of Identity Theories" and "Identity Choices at the Border Zone" in *Longing for Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between?,* edited by David Greenlee (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013).

[7] See for example Tim Green and Roxy, *Joining The Family* (UK: Interserve, 2016) and the accompanying video discussion course, which explore some of these issues for Christ's followers of Muslim background in Britain. This draws on Roxy's first hand experience and that of more than twenty other interviewees.

[8] For an interesting comparison between two contexts, see Rania Mostafi and Pat Brittenden, "Movements in Iran and Algeria: The Second Generation Challenge" in *Motus Dei : The Movement of God and the Discipleship of Nations,* eds David Cole and Wes Watkins (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, forthcoming).

[9] Romans 9:4, NIVUK.

[10] This especially arises when there is an established "Christian" minority in a Muslim country, and where the choice of language is a clear badge of loyalty to one community or another. Should discipleship courses align new believers with the old or new communities, or a mix of both? For example, this question arose for the Urdu, Arabic, and Russian translations of the discipleship course *Come Follow Me* (Tim Green, USA: Lulu Press, 2013).

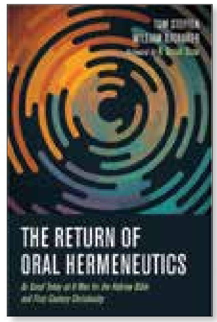
[11] Azar Ajaj, Duane Alexander Miller, and Philip Sumpter, *Arab Evangelicals in Israel* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016).

[12] Peter Kwang-Hee Yun, *An Exploration of the Social Identity of Muslim-Background Believers in a Muslim Majority Community in Bangladesh* (UK: Langham Publishing, forthcoming 2021).

[13] Jens Barnett, "Refusing to Choose: Multiple Belonging among Arab Followers of Christ" in *Longing for Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between?,* edited by David Greenlee, 19–28 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013).

The Return of Oral Hermeneutics: As Good Today as It Was for the Hebrew Bible and First-Century Christianity, by Tom Steffen and William Bjoraker (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 393 pp.

—Reviewed by David Beine



In the fall of 1986, I found myself near Dallas, Texas, registered for a grammatical analysis class at the University of Texas. The summer before, I was immersed in the intensive Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) courses at the University of Washington. There, a fellow classmate and I discussed the continuation of our program in Texas. My classmate told me that he had heard from his roommate that one of the upcoming grammar course offerings was much more difficult than the other and that we should avoid that class when we arrived in Texas. That fall, as I stood looking at the course registration sheet, I struggled to recall which was the difficult course. Was it Discourse Analysis with Robert Longacre (which employed a more functionalist approach to grammar), or Communication Analysis taught by Ilah Fleming (that used a stratificational grammar approach)? Based on the written course description, I decided the harder course was the former, and I selected the latter, the one we all called Strat. Shortly thereafter, I ran into my former summer classmate and was reassured when he told me he had also signed up for the same class.

We were both wrong! Strat was by far the more difficult course. But it was revolutionary to my understanding. It opened my eyes to the fact that there is meaning beyond just the words on the page (the text). Every dialogue recorded on a page takes place within a unique "communication situation" (CS) that also includes several different aspects of communication, irreducible to written text, and therefore missing in the text alone. We were asked to consider possible aspects of the CS in our analysis of meaning *along with* the more traditional structural and functional grammatical analysis of the text itself. As the idea of the CS was drilled into my head, it opened my mind to the reality that words on a page are only symbolic representations of actual events that were much richer in meaning, more than simple letters combined into words on a page could contain or constrain. It taught me to look deeper, to understand the contexts beyond the words, and to include these insights in the ultimate interpretation of meaning, even for sacred text.

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I began this review in a rather unorthodox way, by telling a story. Similarly, authors Tom Steffen (professor emeritus, Biola University) and William Bjoraker (Associate Professor, William Carey International University), present their book, *The Return of Oral Hermeneutics* (based heavily in oral storying methodology), in an unorthodox manner: They move from the concrete to the abstract (as oral hermeneutics does), instead of abstract to concrete, as most Western analysis is structured. The authors begin and end their book with demonstrations of oral hermeneutics, sandwiching supporting theory from the fields of cultural studies, linguistics, neuroscience and theology in between, as they lay out their case for the "return" of oral hermeneutics (OH). I found the book fascinating as I spent many weeks really chewing on and digesting the tome's premises and implications.

Utilizing recent findings of modern neuroscience and linguistics, the authors assert that orality is the more natural state of meaning-making for humanity.

The Layout of the Book

After briefly setting the stage for the book (including assuring the reader of their orthodox theological stances on the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture and the canon—which should alert us that the authors understand that some classical theologians might challenge their ideas), the authors open with a powerful demonstration. Part 1, titled "Demonstrations," uses the scriptural story of Elisha and the widow's oil (chapter 1) along with reflections on the story (chapter 2) to illustrate the power of the OH methodology. In part 2, "Propositions" (chapters 3–8) lays out the authors' proposals about how the canon of Scripture, as we know it today, first evolved from voice (spoken and collectively shared) to mainly text-based analysis today (as a product of the Enlightenment and rationalism). They argue that today's textual hermeneutics (TH) methodologies and resultant systematic theologies (taught at most Western seminaries and exported to overseas seminaries and Bible schools) are incomplete by themselves and should be supplemented with OH methods to provide the richness and breadth of meanings that were originally part of the Old Testament Hebrew and first-century Christian church hermeneutical processes (thus the "return"). In part 3, "Echoes," they represent the ideas of the preceding chapters through the story of Elisha and Naaman (in the same format as chapter 1). Both stories about Elisha are taken from the pages of 2 Kings in the Bible. The authors' overall contention is that people at their created core are oral storytellers. Therefore, Scripture is best understood and conveyed through the oral storying methodology.

I am going to again break with book review convention. Assuming that many readers of this journal have access to the internet, and might not have the $42 to buy the book, I want to recommend some sources that do a good job of highlighting the main points of the book. The best I have found comes from an interview with one of the authors (Steffen) about the content of the book. Jackson Wu presents the rationale for, and overview of, the book in the form of two blog entries that can be found at: https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2020/08/26/the-need-for-oral-hermeneutics/ and https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jacksonwu/2020/09/02/the-return-of-oral-hermeneutics-an-overview/respectively. The first addresses the need to develop a model of oral hermeneutics while the latter provides a wonderful overview of the book itself. I would commend these sources to the budget-conscious reader.

Application to Frontier Mission

A key application for the majority of readers of this journal (many labor among oral learners) is that it lends support for the continued emphasis upon the use of oral methods. The authors' primary contention that oral hermeneutics was the main model (pre-enlightenment) practiced by Old Testament Hebrews and early Christians (both oral-preferred cultures) would suggest by inference, that it is still an appropriate model for use in world missions today where most unreached, frontier peoples are also non-western oral learners. Further, utilizing recent findings of modern neuroscience and linguistics, the authors assert that orality is actually the more natural state of meaning-making for humanity. Far more than just "sugar-coating the gospel in order to make it more palatable to oral cultures" (as I have heard some assert about oral storying), the orality method is a better model for meaning-making of Scripture than textual hermeneutics alone.

Such a proposal is likely to ruffle the feathers of a few theologians, particularly those who have been promoting TH as a universal model and exporting it to a variety of biblical education spaces across the mission world. This book challenges whether it is appropriate to do so. Perhaps more threatening, it challenges the assumption that TH, the model practiced at most western seminaries and Bible colleges, is the universal model of meaning-making ("methodological imperialism").

Those currently engulfed in the OH movement would do well to consider the authors' constructive critique of the question sets currently employed in the most popular models of the modern-day orality movement, *"Questioning our Questions."* While the orality movement is amiable to OH methods, the authors contend that the question sets currently used originate primarily from TH, thus making them culturally unrecognizable. They advocate studying the receivers' cultures and adjusting our questions to their cultural preferences accordingly, to increase effectiveness. They also provide alternative questions that might better fit value-moral systems that exist outside of the west (e.g., honor/shame, fear/power and purity/pollution).

Applications beyond Frontier Mission

Beyond the frontier mission context of this journal, there might be deeper implications for us all. Some of these, as noted above, may be considered provocative. They may ruffle the feathers of traditional Western theologians who rely alone on textual hermeneutics, considering TH sufficient for discerning biblical meaning and, therefore, a universal model. Although taking care not to say so too strongly, the authors certainly challenge the idea of a universal model throughout the book.

Ultimately, the authors are calling their readers to consider a complete paradigm shift (although carefully couched in the language of "addition to" rather than "replacement by"). Oral hermeneutics (OH) is good not just for the mission fields' oral learners, but it also works better (i.e., "best practice") for all current and upcoming generations of "postmodern, post textual, and post factual" people, such as millennials and Generation Z. This is a bold and audacious claim. I invite readers of this review to pick up the book and ponder the evidence provided and give serious consideration to the authors' contentions.

I decided to try OH with my eighty-three-year-old, GED-educated mother and my fifty-two-year-old, highly educated (medical doctor) wife. I used the demonstration stories (which read like movie scripts) to walk them through the two stories of Elisha included in the book. Both have read the stories and heard expository sermons (based on TH methodology) on these passages. After concluding the stories, I asked them about their experience, and both told me that it was personally more meaningful than anything they had done before. The experience seemed to confirm the authors' contention that "while TH educates the head, OH educates the heart" (306) and to affirm their use of the tag line, borrowed from the orality movement (47), "the word made fresh." It proved to me, rather conclusively, the effectiveness of the method even in highly textually-based societies such as ours. It made me wonder if there is a secondary reason that we call it SCRIPT-ure.

Personally, I learned many new things and big ideas by reading this book. I never realized that I, like many, read out loud inside my head using an "inner reading voice" when I really want to understand, and I do not do this when I am skimming. I learned so much from the book including: the prominence of narrative genre in Scripture (and what that means); the preeminence of orality in the human species (and what that means); "creative fidelity" and "ruled spontaneity;" the very *words* of Jesus and the very voice of Jesus; the possibility of multiple boundaried truths emerging from a single passage; "scribality," and orality's influence on text; the development of writing upon textual development and teaching; character analysis, character thinking, and character theologizing; why the grand metanarrative of Scripture is so important; the richness and purpose of story, symbol, and ritual; and so much more. In short, I learned about the need for oral hermeneutics. If there were ever a Christian *Theory of Everything* this would be it. My copy of the book is now heavily highlighted and richly annotated (with my personal scribblings in the margins), and the pages are severely dog-eared. Reading this book has changed how I see many things and how I will choose to communicate the gospel in the future. I highly recommend this book.

> Oral hermeneutics works better for all current and upcoming generations of "post-modern, post textual, and post factual" people.

Necessary Critique

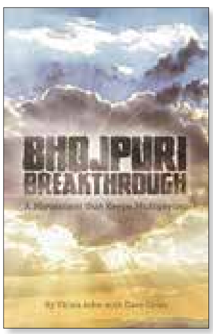
Any good book review needs to address both "the good" and the problematic. Regarding the book's structural strengths, there is much to comment on. The book is richly footnoted, which allows readers to go deep into the academic literature (if desired) while keeping the rich story line from getting lost in "the weeds." The authors frequently identify which author is speaking, provide periodic comical semantic word play, almost reaching the level of haiku (e.g., "the red bird proposition is nested . . . ," "Wright is right," etc.) which made reading the book fun, and the questions the authors want readers to personalize *are always italicized.* Regarding the book's weakness, there is only one critique I can offer. The authors contend that OH needs to sequentially precede TH, but in both of their demonstrations they open the storying sessions by first providing background on the Scriptures that certainly have their origin in TH approaches. If OH followed by TH is a "necessary sequence" (306), there is a seeming contradiction. Perhaps the next edition of the book will clear up this incongruity and remove the suggestion of a required order if one is not, in fact, fundamental.

Finally, in my nearly thirty years of experience on the mission field I have seen almost every conceivable model of mission practiced (even at the same time in the same place), covering the favored practices of almost every era of mission past and present. And I have seen the gospel, the true gospel, spread and thrive despite the limitations of the missiological model being employed. This gives me great hope. While the principles gained in this book are insightful (and we would be wise to implement them), I take great confidence that God will continue to grow and build his church around the world despite our weaker or stronger hermeneutical methods. I believe that OH is a valuable tool in reaching our world, but it is not *the* "silver bullet." It is another good, and perhaps even superior, "bullet" (a silver bullet), but it is one of many "bullets" that God can and does use in calling his own from around the world. I believe anyone who adopts this new model in practice should keep this in mind as a humility check.

Hopefully, readers of this tome will seriously ponder these important perspectives and not just let them go in one eye and out the other. It could positively impact ministry both abroad and locally.

Bhojpuri Breakthrough: A Movement that Keeps Multiplying, by Victor John with Dave Coles (Monument: CO: WIGTake Resources, 2019), xviii + 209 pp.

—Reviewed by H. L. Richard



This book is about a church planting movement in North India, straddling the borders of the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. But, in fact, *Bhojpuri Breakthrough* is more focused on a parachurch group that claims to be the originator and main support of the Church Planting Movement (CPM). Each chapter until the last two is about breakthrough, including the opening "Before the Breakthrough" up through "Breakthrough in Caste" and "Breakthrough among Muslims" to chapter 11, "Breakthrough in Leadership Development." The closing two chapters deal with principles of the movement and frequently asked questions.

This is a multi-authored book (nine contributors, all local parachurch employees, mentioned on page xv, along with the co-authors). A careful read of the book raises more questions than it answers, as this review will demonstrate. Very little data is presented that would enable a reader to draw his own conclusions, and very little missiological analysis is present in the volume. The tone of the book is decidedly promotional, including a fundraising hook at the end.

There are both errors and highly dubious statements in the book, but this review will highlight two issues of central importance, caste and the role of money. Some errors were introduced as the result of generalizations that are far too broad: for example, the statement on page 4 that the British opposed missionaries because missionaries associating with the local people "caused embarrassment to the British Raj."[1] A worse error on page 6 is surely an editorial problem as no one could possibly think (about missionaries) that "instead of using the local Hindi word for God they used the English word for God;" the context of the statement suggests that this was a problem up through the 1990s.[2] Anti-Hindu errors also appear; on page 21 there is a claim that in past centuries the first-born son of Dalit (untouchable) families had to be drowned in the Ganges River,[3] and that textual references to pouring molten lead into ears "would kill the person, but that's what was done; it's written in their scripture."[4] South Indian Christians are also brutally caricatured as we are told on page 23 that "They have a very distinct division between the churches, with high-caste churches and low-caste churches that never interact with each other."[5] A last example from page 122, "India has 92 different cultures."[6]

Perhaps the most astonishing claim in the book is this: "If the high caste in our area are only 2 percent or 10 percent of the population, that same percentage is also reflected in the churches. . . . God is at work in all the castes" (24). If this could be documented and demonstrated it would be revolutionary to all church growth and church planting movement thinking, which since J. W. Pickett's 1933 study of *Christian Mass Movements in India* have always recognized the central place of sociological groups (castes) in movements to Christ. Has any church anywhere in the world ever achieved what is claimed here, a perfect cross section of every strata of society?

This seems a clear case of saying what people (particularly gullible Christians in the West with their lack of understanding of India) would want to hear. Other examples of statements that would fall into this category are: "in this movement each person is being discipled and mentored" (23); "practically everyone who has partnered with us has been happy, healthy and successful" (159); "most of the leaders in the movement spend three to five hours a day in prayer" (193); "shallowness comes from either ignorance of God's Word or a person knowing more truth than they obey. Discovery Bible Studies prevent both of these" (199–200); the principles outlined here "will work anywhere" (200). Finally for this list, on page 12 it is suggested that the movement really began when the Bhojpuri New Testament was released. But, in fact, Bhojpuri is traditionally a *spoken* rather than a *written* language. Even now, Bhojpuri churches use Hindi Bibles for preaching rather than the Bhojpuri version. Serious research is needed into the effectiveness and impact of the Bhojpuri Bible.

Returning briefly to the caste question, on page 28 there is a claim that "I consider it important to teach believers from all castes to meet and worship together, even while being sensitive to local customs." "Local customs" will be vastly varying among the various castes, including significant differences in language/dialect; to mix all varieties of castes and simultaneously be sensitive to local customs is simply not possible. This seems confirmed on page 123 where we are told that "the movement has

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spread in a variety of ways to different language groups, different geographical areas, *multiple caste groups* (within those language and geographic areas), and different religions" (emphasis added; page 151 suggests that "the homogeneous unit principle . . . can sometimes be useful" but "we've used the language and culture to reach people and let them form their own groups").

The current fads regarding movements require serious missological analysis.

There are multiple passing references to money throughout the book. Page 32 mentions a church meeting of three to four hundred people in a community learning center; whether that building is owned or rented and who is paying the bills is not mentioned. Page 43 refers to a slum ministry where funds were given to provide soccer uniforms and shoes and balls. Page 48 refers to a need for funds for a Christmas program, but the group was told there are no funds. Page 100 says fifty children are sent to school in every city where there is children's work. Page 104 tells of hiring a full-time worker, but page 159 says

> a movement cannot depend on salaries and money. A movement has to depend on God and bi-vocational leaders. If we started paying leaders, it would kill the movement (and we don't have the money anyway). (cf. 173)

The situation is that staff are hired for social service work and training movement leaders (56) but local leaders are not paid. There are also training centers with "a systematic set curriculum" (162). Page 177 brings some of these tensions together:

> Most leaders in movements work bi-vocationally. We don't pay pastors or hire leaders.... Rather than thinking in terms of full-time versus part-time workers, we see everyone as a worker in God's Kingdom.... In fact, some of us who live as itinerant mission workers rightly get support for doing ministry.

One doesn't have to read very far between the lines to know that such financial policies and practices produce tension, resentment and division. Such topics are not helpful in promotional literature, but a peek is given on page 198: a strategy of Satan is to provoke comparison, like "He's succeeding; I'm not. He got a motorcycle, but I didn't. He's building his house; I'm not." (There is a negative reference to other Christian organizations "enticing leaders to join their staff through financial offers," this in the context of ministry to Muslims, 155.)

Reticence related to finance is maintained until the final statement of the book, where the last of the frequently asked questions is about supporting the work, and a web link is provided. That web link takes one initially to just a sign-up page, but from there into the world of high-powered fund-raising ("train a leader for only $96 per year") and phenomenal claims of millions of converts ("our vision is that thirty million people will come to know Christ by the year 2018;" this obviously needs an update). This type of hype easily gets into the wrong hands and brings a backlash against local Christian workers who are sincerely and humbly seeking to serve Christ. Promotion in America often harms the cause of the gospel.

One may question whether a missiology journal should even review a book like this. But serious missiological analysis is necessary related to the current fads over movements. Better data is needed than this type of book provides, but until that data is available, it was thought worthwhile to examine some of the claims laid out in this study.

Endnotes

[1] This is far too broad a generalization about the British approach to missions. From 1813 missionaries were allowed in India and received much imperial favor, particularly for their educational enterprises. The British Empire was vast, even within India, and many local authorities at various times and places were zealous believers who supported missions within their role in the political setup.

[2] What local terms to use for God was a constant point of discussion, not resolved even to the present time. I have written on this at https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/33_1_PDFs/IJFM_33_1-Richard.pdf.

[3] This is far too broad a generalization. For an account of William Carey's responses to infanticide, with some estimates of the prevalence of the practice, see https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/ministry-in-killing-fields/.

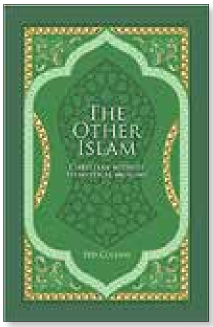
[4] There are a number of references to pouring molten tin or lead or hot oil into the ears of recalcitrant (by some authority's definition) low caste people, such as the Dharmasutra of Baudhayana 12.4 *(Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha,* ed. and tr. Patrick Olivelle, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 98, or the Laws of Manu 8.272 *(Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra,* ed. and tr. Patrick Olivelle, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 182. The *practice* of this, however, is another matter. Ludo Rocher, in his paper on "Inheritance: *Dāyabhāga"* in *The Oxford History of Hinduism, Hindu Law: A New History of Dharmaśāstra,* elucidates a "principle of textual interpretation" whereby "distinguishing 'injunctions' *(vidhi),* which have to be taken literally, and broad statements that hyperbolically underscore general principles *(anūvāda)"* plays a crucial role (eds. Patrick Olivelle and Donald R. David, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 170. This pouring of lead into ears is clearly the latter hyperbolical affirmation of a principle, not a practice that was, or was intended to be, literally carried out.

[5] There are notorious caste problems in all the South Indian churches (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal) but this broad generalization is truly a caricature of a complex scenario.

[6] The claim of ninety-two cultures sounds clear and scientific, but there is no agreed definition that clearly distinguishes one culture from another. The 1961 Indian census claimed there were 1,652 mother tongues (http://www.languageinindia.com/aug2002/indianmothertongues1961aug2002.html), but the Anthropological Survey of India in 1992 concluded that there were only 325 languages, showing again the difficulty of defining what a language or culture is. But one would expect at least 325 cultures when there are 325 languages (in fact there are surely many more cultures than this in India), so the figure of ninety-two is perplexing.

The Other Islam: Christian Witness to Mystical Muslims, by Ted Collins (Manchester, UK: The Higher Path, 2021), 156 pp.

—Reviewed by Keith Fraiser Smith



One of my early memories of Cairo as a mission partner is enduring many hours of the repeated name of Allah broadcast from a shop-front mosque beneath our apartment's windows. I had heard and read about Sufi brotherhoods but was unprepared for them in a conservative Sunni country like Egypt. Having now read Ted's book, I wish I could enter a time machine and return to 1976 and drop into that neighbourhood mosque.

Many years later, I began attending Friday prayers at neighbourhood mosques in the Potteries. I would enquire about the men in green turbans but received vague answers which made me none the wiser. Reading informed me of the Barelvi and Deobandi strands of Asian Islam. These experiences enlightened me to how "being Muslim" could be expressed in multiple ways, beliefs and practices, while tightly bounded by Asian Islamic culture.

However, until reading Ted's book I had no idea how important Sufi movements are to the spiritual life of Muslims, their mission *(Da'wah),* and their accommodation of Western culture.

The book consists of seventeen pithy chapters, an epilogue, a glossary, and a page of further resources.

Ted relates many personal experiences of attending Sufi gatherings, talking to Sufi adherents, and drawing on his MA research, which focused on "conversion" to Sufism in the UK. We are introduced to a Sufi world within an orthodox Islamic world, underscoring this when he writes, "The outlook of Sufis is significantly different from that described in typical Christian books about Islam" (16).

In chapter 3, Ted defines anad describes the structure of mystical Sufism as being primarily relational and experiential. At the centre is a *shaykh* (or *pir)* (feminine—*shaykha* or *pirra)* who attracts *mureeds* (feminine—*mureedas).* They are akin to disciples. Beyond them are "followers" and then "people who believe in Sufism." Ted goes to great length to indicate the pervasive influence of Sufism, particularly in the Barelvi tradition. The shaykhs' influence is established through their accredited spiritual experiences and effectiveness to provide mediation between themselves, their disciples, and God. They are spiritual power brokers. What shaykhs do is expanded further in chapter 6.

The activities and history of Sufism are covered in chapters 4 and 5. Ted, here and elsewhere in his book, underlines the point that the roots of Sufism in Islam are ancient,[1] Quranic, and modelled by Muhammad. This legacy vindicates several unorthodox beliefs related to Muhammad.

Chapter 8 introduces us to the current "Sufi Celebrities" and movements which the reader may encounter in conversations with Muslims: Nazim Haqqani (Naqshbandi-Haqqaniya), Hamza Yusuf, Ibrahim Osi-Efa (Ba'Alawi), and Muhammad Abu-Huda al-Yaqoubi.

Chapter 9 looks at shaykhas who draw their inspiration from Rabi'a Adawiya. She lived in the city of Basra and died in the year 801.

After the riveting revelations of the first nine chapters, chapter 10, entitled "Darkness," concentrates on the negative aspects of Sufi mysticism. Ted begins by offering us a new and helpful way of answering the question, "Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?" He writes, "Same God, different story about him" (80). He writes that there is a darkness in Sufism which is more than a darkness of ignorance but something "that works against what is true and right" (81). He highlights the testimonies of Sufi mureeds who commune with their dead shaykhs as examples of the strong occult element in their spirituality.

Chapters 11 and 12 unveil the Sufi *Noor Muhammadi* (Light of Muhammad) teaching which may seem "weird and alien" (97) to the reader. According to Sufi scholars, the Qur'an justifies the belief that God created Muhammad in the form of light. Then there is the widespread practice of celebrating the birthday of Muhammad that is related to the tendency of Muslims to elevate him to a position of a mediator, one to be venerated, in addition to that of messenger. In Egypt, it was a popular festival, especially among the uneducated.

In chapter 13 ("Sufism, Politics, and Holy War"), Ted's conclusion is that "Sufism does generally prioritise peace, love and harmony" but "it is not the simple antidote to extremism that politicians dream of." (103)

The final four chapters provide insights into how Christians may present the Christ of the Gospels to Sufi Muslims by looking at how Sufism is growing.

Muslims of the Arab World have been Keith's focus for more than 40 years. He ministered with the Anglican Church in Egypt and Jordan under the auspices of the Church Mission Society. He then served in a variety of leadership roles with Arab World Ministries in Media, the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, and the UK.

Chapter 14 is a fascinating chapter entitled "Born again Muslims?" It reminds me of an Egyptian Muslim woman whom I met in Cairo. We were alumni of the same residential 6th form college in the UK. The circumstances gave us an opportunity to share our religious experiences. It transpired that while at the college, we had both been "born again" within our Christian and Islamic heritages. I wonder which conversion motifs would have applied? Using these motifs,[2] Ted analyses three Sufi friends who have been "born again." The one common motif is the mystical, usually dreaming about the shaykh.

"Sufi mission" adapts to secular Western culture and it appeals to nominal Muslims because it endorses their Asian Islamic inherited culture, while revitalizing their spiritual, personal, and family lives.

Chapter 15 is a fascinating chapter on "Sufi Mission" and how it is being adapted to the secular Western context. Sufism appeals to nominal Muslims because it endorses their Asian Islamic inherited culture, including faith, while revitalising their spiritual, personal, and family lives. Ted writes of Sufi "taster" meetings to which Muslim and non-Muslims are being invited.

So how should the gospel be presented to mystical Muslims, mureeds, followers, or seekers? Ted suggests the following:

1. As shaykhs are "saviours," mediating figures between humanity and God, so we can present Jesus in his intermediary role. Jesus is God's provision to them to establish a living relationship.
2. Sufis respond to a "quietness"[3] that speaks louder than assertive and aggressive polemics.
3. Subtle, loving language which stimulates further discussion. Ted calls this, "Fishing with bait, not nets" (128).
4. In common with other Muslims, issues of assurance are important.
5. The use of parables.
6. Stretching their vision beyond their expectations of what their chosen shaykh can deliver.
7. Encouraging them to experience Christ-centred community activities (taste and see).

Sufis come with a discipleship mentality looking for guidance. Our willingness to be Christ's representatives to them, Jesus-shaped people, is important. Ted puts it this way. "It's who we are, how we behave, and evidence of the Lord being with us that are really important parts of making our message credible" (136). We are to be engaged in authentic, concerted, persevering prayer for those God introduces to us.

The good news for Sufis is that Jesus supplies all that they are looking for in a shaykh and much more besides. He has inaugurated the characteristics of the kingdom of God. Ted reminds us that faith in Christ gives us the confidence to step back and wrestle with the challenge of seeing him through different cultural and religious lenses: preparing us to tell of the great mysteries of the faith, "The incarnation of Christ, death as sacrifice, his glorious resurrection, his ascension to the right hand of power, and the giving of the Holy Spirit" (139).

Ted alerts us to the growth of Sufism, its strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Reading his book, may we equip ourselves for gracious encounters with Sufi shaykhs and their disciples. **IJFM**

Endnotes

[1] Chapter 7 provides short histories of Al-Jilani (1077–1166), Ibn Arabi (1162–1240), and Rumi (1207–1273).

[2] The author uses the following motifs designed by Lofland and Skonovd: intellectual, experimental, mystical, affectional, revivalist, and coercive.

[3] Such as the "Kerygmatic Approach" as advocated by Martin Accad, Steve Bell, and others.

In Others' Words

Editor's Note: In this department, we highlight resources outside of the IJFM: other journals, print resources, DVDs, websites, 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.

Two Surveys of Religion with Surprising Results

Don't miss two articles that interpret sociological and religious data obtained in recent surveys of religion. The first, "Face and the Loss of Reputation in the Korean Protestant Church," was published in 2020 in the open access missiological journal *Missio Dei.* Authors Shin-Ho Choi and Michael Rynkiewich look at religious identity in South Korea, but instead of simply focusing on individual identity, they draw on "a more corporate concept known in the business world as 'Reputation Theory.'" This theory informs their discussion of their own survey of the growth or stagnation of religious life in South Korea. And if you're interested in honor and shame, the entire issue 11 of *Missio Dei* is worth a read.

The second article, entitled "Pew: What India's Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and More Think About Religion," was published in *Christianity Today* (June 29, 2021) and is the most extensive PEW survey of Indian religions in decades. Some have faulted the Pew survey for representing urban values more than rural values, or for not portraying accurately the extreme religious and political polarization that has taken place in the past few years.

> John Dayal, a Delhi-based Christian political analyst and co-founder and past secretary general of the All India Christian Council, credited the report for its "good coverage of cultural issues"… But he also said the report failed to fully capture the "extreme polarization" caused by the recent election campaigns of Hindu nationalists and the resulting Islamophobia which "now permeates all aspects of national intuitional and public life." Tensions over increasing Hindu nationalism in India have caused the nation to climb the Open Doors' persecution index in recent years. Open Doors now ranks India at No. 10 on its 2021 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it's hardest to be a Christian. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom recommends India be added to the State Department's list of Countries of Particular Concern. Pew itself calculates that India has the highest level of social hostilities regarding religion among the world's 25 most-populous countries, as well as one of the higher levels of government restrictions. Yet Pew found that most Indians value religious pluralism and tolerance and feel very free to practice their faith…"

For the complete findings of the PEW survey, see "Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation."

A Different Look at Islam from Inside

An inquiry into a possible Muslim Enlightenment comes from a new book called *Reopening Muslim Minds* by Turkish author Mustafa Akyol. In an excellent *Christianity Today* interview (June 21, 2021) with Todd Johnson of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, Akyol speaks candidly about Qur'anic interpretations that have become more fundamentalist and narrow in the centuries since the emergence of Islam. The interview, entitled "Reopening Muslim Minds to Freedom and Tolerance" (June 21, 2021), had some surprising admissions: a mention of the Armenian genocide, and a condemnation of the persecution of Christian populations in the Middle East. Not to be missed!

One Year Anniversary of Beirut Blast

One year ago on August 4, a horrific explosion rocked Beirut, killing 200 people and wounding thousands of others. According to Reuters,

> The chemicals arrived on a Russian-leased cargo ship that made an unscheduled stop in Beirut in 2013. An FBI report seen by Reuters last week estimated around 552 tonnes of ammonium nitrate exploded, far less than the 2,754 tonnes that arrived.

No one seems to know "who brought in the explosives . . . , who allowed for their unloading and storage, who removed quantities of it and where it was sent" ("Lebanese Demand Justice on Port Blast Anniversary"). See also the poignant lament written by Brent Hamoud of the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in the IMES blog entitled "Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit: Sifting Through the Rubble of the Beirut Blast One Year On."

Ethiopian Evangelicals Divided as Civil War and Famine Worsen

With the major supply road into the rebel Ethiopian province of Tigray now even more tightly blocked by the Ethiopian government, severe famine looks inevitable. The U.N. says it needs 100 trucks traveling twice a day to prevent almost certain catastrophic famine for the Tigrayan people. In July 2021, only one truck convoy of 50 trucks made it through once. (See the July 31 article in the *New York Times* entitled, "This Ethiopian Road is a Lifeline for Millions. Now it's Blocked." See also the July 1, Issue Brief, Refugees International, entitled "The Cruelest of Fates: Famine in the Time of War in Tigray.") Ethiopian evangelicals number over 20 million (19% of the population) but find themselves increasingly divided—and ambivalent. The current prime minister, who took power in 2018, is himself a Pentecostal believer. In 2019, he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work towards ending the war with Eritrea. Ironically, according to some, he initiated and is promulgating this current civil war. (See "Ethiopian Christians Take Sides Over Tigray Crisis," *Christianity Today,* July 6, 2021.) For a good explanation of the roots of this conflict, see a November 5 article in the *New York Times* entitled "Why is Ethiopia at War with Itself?"

Forced Mass Sterilization of (Muslim) Uyghur Women

The Economist published the results of a trip to Xinjiang by their correspondent "Chaguan" on June 26, 2021 in an article entitled "Ferocious Birth-control Policies in Xinjiang are Racially Targeted." The official government position is that the startling and sharp reduction in Uyghur births from 2014 to the present is the result of "spontaneous agreement to sterilization" on the part of tens of thousands of Uyghur women. Western journalists suggesting otherwise are "engaging in slander." However, *The Economist* notes the following:

> By 2017 the [Bachu] county's birth rate had fallen from 19 to 13 per thousand, a highly unusual drop in just three years. Astonishingly, in 2019 Bachu reported a birth rate of 4.15 per thousand people. That is one of the lowest birth rates anywhere in the world, and a decline rarely seen even in wartime.

The Fall of Afghanistan

Taliban Strategy

After twenty years of US and NATO war on terror in Afghanistan, the entire country has fallen to the Taliban in a rapid series of military strikes, the result of a brilliant strategy of negotiated surrenders, targeted assassinations, and threats of wholesale massacres. The *New York Times* noted that:

> The Taliban committees take advantage of a defining characteristic of Afghan wars: Fighters and commanders regularly switch sides, cut deals, negotiate surrenders and cultivate village elders for influence with local residents. The current conflict is really dozens of local wars. These are intimate struggles, where brothers and cousins battle one another and commanders on each side cajole, threaten and negotiate by cellphone. ("A Wave of Afghan Surrenders to the Taliban Picks Up Speed," *New York Times,* May 27, 2021)

Saad Mohseni, the co-owner of the Afghan TOLO News, told the *New York Times:*

> Their outreach was fantastic. Their planning was very good. They managed the element of surprise. They capitalized on intratribal, ethnic, religious and ideological differences to win over people. And they made the most of peoples' frustrations with the government.

See "Collapse and Conquest: The Taliban Strategy that Seized Afghanistan," *New York Times,* August 18, 2021.

Despite offering amnesty to all, Afghans who worked for the government and US military as interpreters or in other capacities, are being hunted down using captured extensive payroll lists and biometric data bases. See "Before the Taliban Took Afghanistan, They Took the Internet," *Atlantic Council,* August 26, 2021. Targeted assassinations of prominent Afghans escalated sharply—more than 700 in 2020 alone—and more than half occurred in the last three months of 2020 after the Peace Talks began. Acts of terror designed to cause mass surrender of Afghan troops were greatly facilitated by the freeing of more than 5000 radical jihadists (many of whom were foreigners) from prison. The Taliban has reaped the benefit of billions of dollars of military equipment left behind in haste—conservative estimates place it between eighteen to twenty-four billion dollars' worth. Will this treasure trove make the formation of a terrorist nation state almost inevitable? See the article in *The New Yorker* "Afghanistan, Again, Becomes the Cradle for Jihadism—and Al-Qaeda" (August 26, 2021). For an historical account of the rise of the Taliban, see "Who Are the Taliban?" *BBC News,* August 18, 2021. Don't miss the excellent article in *The New Yorker* by a journalist who was himself kidnapped in 2002 by Sirajuddin Haqqani, the newly appointed Minister of the Interior for the Taliban "government" and head of the Haqqani Network. See "Biden's Chaotic Withdrawal from Afghanistan is Complete" *(The New Yorker,* August 30, 2021).

Evacuations: Too Little, Too Late

US and western allies were able to evacuate more than 124,000 by August 31 in a two-week heroic air lift. Hundreds of US citizens, other foreigners, and more than 150,000 Afghan allies were left behind. But veterans, private citizens, government officials, journalists, and relief agencies from multiple countries rallied to pull off herculean rescues. Most had personal ties to their translators and interpreters. Check out the remarkable story, "'Just One More': Inside the Massive Military Community Effort to Save Afghans" *(Military Times,* August 27, 2021).

The Sudden Collapse of the Afghan Army

For insight into why the Afghan military crumbled so quickly in the face of the Taliban advance, see a very perceptive article in the Intelligencer of *New York Magazine,* August 17, 2021 entitled "Why Afghanistan's Security Forces Suddenly Collapsed." And for an insightful analysis of the impact of corruption on Afghanistan's government, see the August 28 article in *The Economist,* "The Afghan Government was Undone by its own Corruption."

> In Afghanistan, "from your birth certificate to your death certificate and whatever comes in between, somehow you have to bribe," says Ahmad Shah Katawazai, a former Afghan diplomat.… Officials often buy their posts and must extort kickbacks to recoup their investment. Mr. Katawazai says it can cost $100,000 to become a district police chief. Officials' main goal becomes extorting revenue to distribute to their families and patronage networks… By the end the country

> was so corrupt that governors cut deals with jihadists … Why then, when it invaded Afghanistan decades later, did America fail to take corruption seriously? One answer is that political thinkers are only now doing so. Scholars such as Francis Fukuyama, a political scientist, see corruption as a throwback to pre-modern governments where power is based on personal ties rather than institutions. In this way South Vietnam and Afghanistan resemble mafias or the feudal states of medieval Europe. States like these lack the cohesion needed to beat a disciplined insurgency such as the Vietnamese communists or the Taliban.

Urban vs. Rural Viewpoints

Two articles that are very well worth reading give two very different viewpoints. The first one is the tragic story of an urban (Kabul) Hazara extended family of many brothers, all of whom worked for different US military or NGO organizations. (See "After Airport Bombing, an Afghan Family Buries a Father, and Hope," *New York Times,* August 27, 2021). The second is an even more disturbing article entitled "The Other Afghan Women," *The New Yorker,* September 6, 2021. Knowing that 70% of Afghans live far outside the cities, the author, Anand Gopal, spent the summer of 2021 in Helmand Province, by then already occupied by the Taliban. His intention was to interview rural women. Gopal himself was one of a few journalists who had embedded with the Taliban at the start of the war. What emerges is a tragic tale of war lord Amir Dado, the brutal Ninety-Third Division, and how these vicious Afghan militias became allies of the Americans. Gopal is also the author of a 2015 Pulitzer-Prize finalist book entitled *No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban, and the War Through Afghan Eyes.*

Who is Most at Risk under the New Taliban?

Implications for human rights, humanitarian concerns, religious and ethnic persecutions are vast. The UN estimates 14 million people are on the edge of starvation right now because of a prolonged drought, a surge in the coronavirus, and a likely economic collapse. See "A Million Afghan Children Could Die in 'Most Perilous Hour', UN Warns," *The New York Times,* September 13, 2021.

Afghan Hazara, who make up nine percent of the population (over 4 million) are Shi'a Muslims. Systematically persecuted for being "heretics" for generations, a Hazara girls' school was bombed by ISIS in May 2021, killing over 90 girls ages 12–18 and a maternity hospital in a Hazara community in Kabul the year before. A powerful warning of the risk of genocide for the Hazara comes from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum:

> "Even before recent events, Afghanistan ranked second highest in the world for risk of a new onset of mass killing of civilians, according to the Museum and Dartmouth College's Early Warning Project. The recent developments have heightened that risk exponentially," said Naomi Kikoler, the director of the Museum's Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide.

Christianity Today published a moving testimony of an Afghan pastor in the US who is in touch daily with many other Afghan Christians in Afghanistan. The son of an imam, and a Hazara himself, his story highlights the fact that many Afghan Christians are Hazara. See "'My Heart is Broken': An Afghan Pastor Grapples with the US Withdrawal," *Christianity Today,* August 20, 2021.

Women face a particularly threatening future. Girls and women have had twenty years of education. Women-owned businesses number 57,000 and have created 130,000 jobs. Close to 30% of the Afghan parliament was female, but the new government has appointed no women. (See "Hardliners Get Key Posts in New Taliban Government," *BBC,* September 7, 2021.) One Afghan woman educator wrote a moving appeal:

> Educated girls are the ones who will pry the fingers of extremism from Afghanistan's throat. … Don't look away from Afghan girls. … Educated girls grow to become educated women, and educated women will not allow their children to become terrorists. The secret to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan is no secret at all: It is educated girls. ("I Founded a Boarding School for Girls in Afghanistan. Don't Look Away from Us," in the *Washington Post,* September 1, 2021)

Comparisons with Britain's First Afghan War

For an excellent historical perspective going back 170 years, don't miss William Dalyrimple's essay comparing Britain's First Afghan War 1839–1842 with this current debacle ("Afghanistan Always Defeats the West," by William Dalyrimple for *Unherd,* August 28, 2021.)

> If the First Afghan War helped consolidate the Afghan State, the question now is whether our current failed Western intervention will contribute to its demise. Afghanistan has changed beyond all recognition in the last twenty years. The cities have grown, people travel much more widely, thousands of women have been educated. Television, the internet and an ebullient media have opened many minds. It is impossible in such circumstances to predict the fate of the divided state of Afghanistan under renewed Taliban rule … For the truth is that in the last millennia there had been only very brief moments of strong central control when the different Afghan tribes have acknowledged the authority of a single ruler, and still briefer moments of anything approaching a unified political system. Afghanistan has always been less a state than a kaleidoscope of competing tribal principalities governed through maliks or vakils, in each of which allegiance was entirely personal, to be negotiated and won over rather than taken for granted. **IJFM**

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Disclaimer: The table below shows where the content of a given article might fit; it does not imply endorsement of a particular article by the editors of the Perspectives *materials*. For sake of space, the table only includes lessons related to the articles in a given **IJFM** issue. To learn more about the Perspectives course, visit www.perspectives.org.

Related Perspectives Lesson and Section

Articles in IJFM 38:1–2	*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)*	*Lesson 15: World Christian Discipleship (S)*
Cultural Dimensions of Financial Accounting Systems Mary Lederleitner (pp. 5–11)			X		X
The Gospel of John as Missiological Theology Michael T. Cooper (pp. 13–17)	X	X	X	X	
Becoming *Nikkei:* A Comparative Study of Diasporic Japanese *Dikasegi* Christian Communities Gary Fujino (pp. 19–28)		X	X		
Clarifying Insider "Ekklēsia": An Historical Review of Key Issues S. T. Antonio (pp. 29–50)	X		X	X	
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