THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSIDER MOVEMENT PARADIGM

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Over the past fifteen years missiologists have produced a massive amount of literature related to the contextualization debate surrounding the proposals of Insider Movement proponents. Working through the back-and-forth arguments related to Insider Movement theory is a time-consuming undertaking made more challenging by the nuances and differences articulated by Insider practitioners. Coleman has noted that a spectrum exists in the practices of Insider proponents and has helpfully coined the term "Insider Movement paradigm" (IMP) to recognize that uniformity does not exist among proponents.[1] Few field practitioners have the margin to work through all of the literature directly or indirectly related to the Insider debate. Fewer still have the time or resources available to trace the IMP presuppositions back to its main root. This article is an attempt to locate the rise of the IMP in its historical context and to provide a summary of the literature central to the formation of the IMP as a strategy in high religious contexts.[2]

The Problem of Resistance in High-Religious Contexts

Insider methodology rests heavily on the concept of People Movements and Donald McGavran's Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP). If a movement is the goal, the barrier to reaching a movement is resistance. Over the years, missionaries have identified

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[1] See Doug Coleman, "A Theological Analysis of the Insider Movement Paradigm from Four Perspectives: Theology of Religions, Revelation, Soteriology and Ecclesiology" (PhD Diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011).

[2] The material in this article was originally published as a part of a chapter in: "Insider Movements: An Assessment of the Viability of Retaining Socio-Religious Insider Identity in High-Religious Contexts" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), available from http://digital.library.sbts.edu/handle/10392/2851; Internet.

three reasons for high-religious resistance to the gospel proclaimed by western missionaries: theological resistance, cultural resistance, and persecution.

As missionaries encountered theological resistance, they formulated arguments to confront the theological error of the opposing high-religion. Missionaries were convinced that if they were able to show the intellectual superiority of Christianity to Islam people would flock to join the church. Llull, Aquinas, Phander, Martin, and Zwemer are all examples of this mindset. However, over the course of time it became apparent that theological barriers were not the sole, or sometimes even the greatest, source of resistance.

Less visible to early missionaries was a high degree of cultural resistance. The term "double conversion" has been used by missionaries in high-religious contexts to describe the type of evangelism that required converts to forsake their culture and join the "Christian" community. Double conversion required converts to turn away from their culture and most of its forms in addition to turning away from sin. The result of double conversion is extraction. In high-religious cultures, community events are religious events and even political realities are validated by, and tied into, religious structures. Therefore, in these cultures, missionaries believed that double conversion was the only possible option for converts.[3]

The HUP states that individuals resist being pulled out of relationship to the people with whom they are the most intimate and, consequently, that extraction is a slow type of evangelistic method. As the literature related to People Movements and Church Planting Movements demonstrates, the gospel travels best (and fastest) along existing relational networks. Conversions that result in extraction retard the growth of the Kingdom because the leaven of the gospel does not have a chance to saturate the dough before it is cut away.

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[3]George Houssny, "Distinctive Religious Barriers to Outside Penetration: Demonstration of the Problem," in *Media In Islamic Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Evangelical Literature Overseas, 1974), 81-82.

But, double conversion is not the only cause for extraction. Community members converting to Christianity—even a contextually appropriate form of Christianity—is a source of great persecution. Families of new converts often feel a great deal of community shame if a family member—especially sons or daughters—undergo Christian baptism. Even if the convert had no intention of leaving their family or of breaking caste, the family is often so overcome by shame of the perceived abandonment that drastic actions are taken to save face within the community.[4]

While Insider methodology addresses all three areas of resistance to some degree, the central thesis of the IMP is that cultural resistance and extraction are the *primary* sources of resistance among these religious blocs.[5] That is, high-religious people are not rejecting the gospel itself but are stumbling on the cultural elements missionaries have placed around the gospel. Whereas the answer to theological resistance is some form of apologetics, the problem of cultural resistance is addressed with contextualization. Insider methodology is primarily focused on removing the cultural barrier so that people can hear a contextually appropriate gospel message.

The fundamental belief of Insider methodology is that contextualization provides the primary key to allow converts to maintain their cultural identity *and* respond to the gospel at the same time. Preventing extraction ensures the gospel travels along relational networks, and that the persecution that does arise occurs because of the gospel and not because of cultural resistance. Sam Schlorff has traced the problem of extractionism among Muslims and its answer of contextualization back to 1938. The wider debate informed by the social sciences, however, has become common in missiological circles

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[4]A classic illustration of family shame and persecution is vividly portrayed by Brother Andrew and Al Janssen. See Brother Andrew and Al Janssen, *Secret Believers: What Happens When Muslims Believe in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2008).

[5]Don McCurry asserts that "double-conversion...may well be the single most important reason for the greater lack of results in work among Muslims." See Don McCurry, "A Time For New Beginnings," *The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium* (Monrovia: MARC, 1979), 14. His sentiment is found throughout much of the material from the 1978 conference and is echoed and affirmed in almost all of the popular Muslim contextualization literature from the 1980s to the present.

only since the 1970s.[6] Since the IMP flows directly from a particular model of

contextualization, identifying that model and then tracing its development by the

positions represented on the C-Continuum is a helpful way to follow the formation of

Insider methodology.

The Groundwork for the C-Continuum

The double conversion model of evangelism and church planting led to the

formation of traditional Western churches in Islamic contexts. Travis has described this

method of evangelism and church planting as C1 and C2.[7] In the early history of Muslim

evangelism, the missionary view of Islamic culture allowed no other possibilities.

However, with the increasing influence of the social sciences came an increased

degree of respect for the culture receiving the gospel. Schlorff identifies the influence of

the social sciences as the main impetus behind the new methods proposed to reach

Muslims:

> Undoubtedly, the most important influence behind these changes has been
> the social sciences, and especially the increasing number of missionary
> scholars trained in these disciplines. I include here cultural anthropology,
> sociology, linguistics, translation theory, and communication science.
> These have changed evangelical attitudes toward culture and non-
> Christian religions and have revolutionized the evangelical missionary
> enterprise through the infusion of new ideas. The explosion of
> missiological studies by evangelicals in recent years has been nothing
> short of phenomenal. [8]

The infusion of the social sciences into the missionary endeavor resulted in the

introduction of several models of contextualization.[9] In particular, the translation model

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[6]Sam Schlorff, "The Translational Model for Mission in Resistant Muslim Society: A Critique and an Alternative," *Missiology* 28 (2000): 307.

[7] See John Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," *EMQ* 34 (1998): 407-08; idem, "Must all Muslims leave "Islam" to follow Jesus?" *EMQ* 34 (1998): 411-15. For brevity purposes, Travis's spectrum will only be referenced and not presented here.

[8]Schlorff, "The Translation Model for Mission," 306.

[9] See Stephen Bevans, "Models of Contextual Theology," *Missiology* 13 (1985): 185-202; idem, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992); and idem, *Models of Contextual Theology* rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

of contextualization has been instrumental in shaping the IMP.[10] Briefly, this model of contextualization takes the principles of translation and applies them to theologizing. A dynamic-equivalence translation does not attempt to translate the *words* but the ideas and meanings behind the words.[11] It assumes that a supra-cultural meaning can be stripped of its forms and given an entirely new shape within a new context. It also assumes that the context is generally a neutral vehicle for the gospel seed.[12] This model is articulated best by Charles Kraft's *Christianity in Culture*, which was first formulated as a textbook for a Fuller seminary class in 1973. It was officially published in 1979, slightly revised for the 25th anniversary edition in 2005, and has never gone out of print.

The transformed view of culture provided by the social sciences created an exciting new dynamic for reaching Muslims. Spurred on by the example of evangelical ecumenical bodies like the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, a wide number of international meetings were held throughout the world to discuss evangelistic approaches to Islam. The enormous impact of the cross-fertilization provided by these meetings cannot be overemphasized. Two early and influential conferences were the Marseille Conference on Media in Islamic Culture in 1974 and the North American Conference on Muslims Evangelism in Colorado in 1978. Phil Parshall, who attended the 1978 conference, comments:

> A landmark conference took place in Colorado Springs that Fall of 1978. Don McCurry gave leadership to a broadly representative group of people involved in Muslim outreach. The papers presented, along with the stimulating interaction, were exciting. I gave a case-study on our Bangladesh ministry. Out of this gathering was birthed the Samuel Zwemer Institute.[13]

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[10] In actuality, the IMP utilizes a synthesis of an Anthropological model and a Translation model of contextualization. For brevity and simplicity here, I have chosen to focus on Kraft's translation model of dynamic-equivalence as it is the predominant voice in the conversation. See pages 170-237 of Wolfe, "Insider Movements" for a more nuanced treatment.

[11] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (2002), 39.

[12] Ibid., 46.

[13] Phil Parshall, *Divine Threads within a Human Tapestry* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 128.

What is important about this quote is the timeline. Parshall had completed a missiology degree at Trinity in 1973 where he was exposed to the ideas published by professors at Fuller (Kraft, McGavran, Wagner, Winter, etc.). He remarks, "This exposure to the principles of cross-cultural evangelism done in a contextual mode formed the foundation for what our team would be doing in Bangladesh in the next few years."[14] His case-study of the experiment done between the years 1973 and 1977—which was eventually published as the book *New Paths of Muslim Evangelism*—served to validate the cultural approach advocated by the 1974 conference and earlier by the Fuller faculty. The following will trace chronologically key articles that have shaped the conversation toward an Insider approach. The conversation can be divided into two parts: theoretical suggestions and the reporting of experimentation.

Theoretical Suggestions Addressing the Cultural Problem

One of the most influential and widely quoted articles was a lecture Charles Kraft gave at the 1974 Marseille conference entitled "Psychological Stress Factors among Muslims."[15] In his lecture, Kraft addresses the need to remove the cultural barriers of conversion—what he calls Cultural Conversion—in Muslim ministry.[16] He offers several suggestions as to what Christ-centered movements would look like in Islamic culture:

> A truly Arabic expression of a faith relationship to God though Christ will, first of all not look foreign; secondly will not require that Arabs learn or convert to another culture; thirdly, will allow the message to flow freely; and fourthly, will carry to both the in-group and the out-group an impact equivalent to that of the early churches that turned their Greek world upside down. Brother, that's an impact.[17]

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[14]Ibid., 110.

[15]Charles Kraft, "Psychological Stress Factors among Muslims," in *Media in Islamic Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Evangelical Literature Overseas, 1974), 137-44.

[16]Ibid., 139. See also Charles H. Kraft, "Christian Conversion or Cultural Conversion?" in *Culture, Communication, and Christianity: A Selection of Writings by Charles H. Kraft* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 392-402.

[17]Kraft, "Psychological Stress Factors," 141. "Impact" is the main result the dynamic-equivalence model of contextualization is aiming for.

Further, Kraft suggests that Arab Christians would be organized "on a kinship basis...focused more on group security rather than individual freedom."[18] The doctrinal patterns Kraft suggests will reflect an Islamic background by being monotheistic, and conceiving of God as more distant. In this way, it would likely reflect the fatalism of extreme Calvinism. He proposes that Arabs will likely be looking for a kingdom rather than a church, they will likely meet on Friday, pray five times a day, and chant the Scriptures.[19]

Kraft's most startling suggestion was that missionaries "bend every effort toward stimulating a faith renewal movement *within* Islam."[20] He admits to being provocative and not definitive in this address, but he goes on to say, "I think that this approach of developing a faith renewal movement within Islam is Biblical, since this is exactly what Jesus and His disciples did within Judaism. The catch here is whether you agree with my paralleling Judaism with Islam." He continues, "I am seriously suggesting that we encourage some Christians to become Christian Muslims in order to win Muslims to Muslim Christianity."[21]

The point here is not whether Kraft found broad approval for his suggestions. Rather, it is that Kraft's ideas—which were representative of a growing group of missiologists deeply trained in the social sciences and committed to experimentation— were heard by a wide group of missionaries and caught the imagination of some of them. Moreover, it reflects the material that he was teaching in his classes at Fuller. Since

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[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., 142-43. Kraft is well aware of the implications of his model of dynamic equivalence and has prophetically identified all the areas on which Insider proponents have since expanded extensively. See Rick Love, *Muslims, Magic and the Kingdom of God: Church Planting among Folk Muslims* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2000), 39-48; J. Dudley Woodberry, "Contextualization among Muslims: Reusing Common Pillars," *IJFM* 13 (1996): 171-86; Martin Parsons, "Unveiling God: Presenting Jesus to Muslims through a Confessional Recitation," *Mission Frontiers* 28, no. 6 (2006): 17-21; and idem, *Unveiling God: Contextualizing Christology for Islamic Culture* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005).

[20]Kraft, "Psychological Stress Factors," 143, emphasis mine.

[21]Ibid., 143-44. With the publication of *Christianity in Culture* in 1979, Kraft moved from the provocative to the definitive. See Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005).

Fuller at that time was the rising star in mission theory, the school attracted many students and carried wide influence.

The audience grew even wider in the 1976 *Missiology* article by John D. C. Anderson, "The Missionary Approach to Islam: Christian or 'Cultic.'"[22] Anderson begins by introducing the historic barriers to Muslim conversion and concludes that the greatest missionary mistake has been extractionism. He particularly addresses the opinion that persecution of new believers is the major barrier to the conversion of Muslims. He questions whether persecution is actually for the cross of Christ, or for cultural conversion:

> The explanation for this would not be far to seek if we only took the trouble to ask the persecutors one simple question: "What is this man's sin, that you treat him so?" They might well answer like this: "His sin is, first, that he is a blasphemer of our Holy God; second, that he is a traitor to our country and culture; thirdly, that by his apostasy he has brought great dishonor and disrepute on his parents, who not only brought him into this world, and taught him the true Islamic faith from his childhood, but who have given him love and care all his life." And they would be sincere, and perhaps also right, according to their understanding. For the Christian has somehow produced the image of being not a true worshipper of Allah, but a blasphemer; not a good citizen of his country, but a quisling; not a man who honours his father and mother, but a reprobate son.[23]

Anderson's solution to the problem of extractionism is to move away from the view of "cultic Christianity," that is, Christianity expressed through membership in a social organization, which is contrasted to a view of Christianity as membership in the Kingdom of God. Instead of taking Muslim background believers out of the culture, Anderson argues for "the Muslim and his culture being changed from within."[24] For Anderson, missionaries have the obligation and mandate to "'accept' [Muslims] and 'accept' Islam as the culture into which, by God's will, they were born. Jesus 'accepted' humanity and identified with it in his incarnation."[25] Ultimately, Anderson argues that

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[22]John D. C. Anderson, "The Missionary Approach to Islam: Christian or Cultic?" *Missiology* 4 (1976): 285-300.

[23]Ibid., 289-90.

[24]Ibid., 292.

[25]Ibid., 294. Note that Anderson presents Islam more as a culture than a religion, and that he makes no

missionaries must work toward the transformation of Islamic society by keeping converts within that society; he grounds his assertion in the model of the incarnation. He offers several practical suggestions for how his proposal may be accomplished.

Anderson suggests that missionaries should refrain from encouraging "disciples to repudiate Islam *per se*," using 1 Corinthians 7:20 as biblical support.[26] He also suggests that one should refrain from being "rigid" about the specifics of Islamic belief and practice. In other words, Anderson suggests that the forms of Islam—prayer, fasting, almsgiving, etc.—can be redefined.

A year later, John Wilder published the article "Some Reflections on Possibilities for People Movements among Muslims."[27] From the title, it is obvious that Wilder has advanced the conversation from personal evangelism and individual conversion to the discussion of and hope for the development of People Movements. Wilder echoes the shift from theology as the primary source of resistance among Muslims to extractionism: "Perhaps our greatest sin has been that of trying to persuade Christian disciples to come out of Islam when we should have told them to witness for Jesus within the culture in which God had placed them."[28]

Wilder then investigates the Messianic movement among Jews in search of missiological principles.[29] He identifies the similarities between the Jews and Muslims as

distinction between the religious tenets of Islam and the cultural components surrounding them.

[26]Ibid., 295.

[27]John W. Wilder, "Some Reflections on Possibilities for People Movements among Muslims," *Missiology* 5 (1977): 301-20. Woodberry asserts that Wilder's article grew out of a year-long focus on Islamic contextualization at Fuller Seminary. See J. Dudley Woodberry, "Contextualization among Muslims: Reusing Common Pillars," *IJFM* 13 (1996): 171.

[28]Wilder, "People Movements among Muslims," 303.

[29]Messianic Judaism first appeared in the latter part of the nineteenth century in England. However, it began to grow exponentially in America during the 1960s. By the time of Wilder's article, it was establishing itself as a vibrant religious movement. Since Wilder's use of Messianic Judaism as a model for contextualization, that parallel has been repeatedly referred to in Insider literature.

However, there is a significant phenomenological inaccuracy of this parallel comparison. The Messianic Jews of America and Israel are considered neither culturally nor officially Jewish by their Jewish communities and families. American Jews who confess Yeshua as Messiah are usually ostracized by their families and generally unwelcome in Jewish community events, even if they are involved in Messianic congregations. Israelis who confess Yeshua as Messiah face greater persecution from their families than their American counterparts, along with hostility from the community and discrimination from the government. Their children face difficulty when enrolling in the National Health Insurance because of their questionable Jewish heritage. Messianic Jews have been denied Israeli citizenship, derided as cult

"their unitary tradition of ethical monotheism..., their concept of social solidarity and national identity, and their common abhorrence of the apostate. Above all..., both have been resistant to the Christian message."[30] The one significant difference is that Islam does not have a unique place within biblical theology: "Thus, both because of its deep theological variance from Christianity, and because it lacks any historic Christian authentication such as the Jewish nation has, an Islamic parallel to Messianic Judaism would be lacking very important legitimizing factors."[31]

Nevertheless, despite the lack of important legitimizing factors, Wilder asserts that Muslim Insider believers do exist. He then presents a case study of a group who has existed in Turkey for forty-five years at the time of his writing. He describes the group in the following way:

> The group was established by a young man who had studied the Bible under the guidance of a missionary in Istanbul, spent years in medical training in the United States, and come to faith and open profession of Christ, but not baptism. Upon his return to Turkey he continued to meet with a like-minded circle of friends, and out of these meetings a group emerged which came to call itself "Jesus-ists". The group is considered by other Muslims to be one of many Sufi or "dervish"-like mystical orders. They maintain separation from the local Christians. They welcome the fellowship of visiting missionary friends known to their group, but are under their own leadership. In the two or three cities where the group exists, their members meet together weekly on Sundays for family worship and Bible study. In their Bible study they use the Gospels only, and their theological beliefs are in some important respects at considerable variance from orthodoxy; yet devotion to Jesus Christ is at the center of their existence.[32]

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members, and often subjected to bureaucratic intimidation. The parallel attempted here does not exist. Moreover, the Messianic Jewish movement is not an oikos fellowship. 48% of the members of the Messianic congregations in Israel did not come from a Jewish background, and 98% of the members of Messianic congregations in America were converted by Gentile Christians not affiliated with the Messianic Jewish movement. The only similarity between the Messianic Jewish movement and the Insider methodology IMP proponents attempt to describe is how the leaders of both movements hope the gospel will spread through pre-existing networks. Despite efforts to the contrary, Jewish families have continued to be torn apart when a member turns to Yeshua in faith. See Jeffery Steven Wasserman, Messianic Jewish Congregations: A Comparison and Critique of Contemporary North American and Israeli Expressions," (Ph.D. Diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997), 186-209.

[30]Wilder, "People Movements among Muslims," 304.

[31]Ibid., 305.

[32]Ibid., 306-07. Wilder's comfort level with the variance of this group's theological beliefs is striking, though not surprising. Though he does not quote Kraft in the bibliography of this article, Wilder echoes

Wilder then goes on to suggest why this group may be reluctant to overtly join the ranks of the Christian Church. First, he suggests that the church is making unrealistic and unnecessary demands, "requiring submission to special legalisms, cultural idiosyncrasies, and minute points of theology."[33] Secondly, he cites the Muslim conception of community and deep antipathy concerning apostasy, the psychological barriers toward the Christian community, and the social trauma of switching communities.

Having laid the groundwork for the cultural resistance of Muslims toward the gospel, Wilder then describes the formation and characteristics of a hypothetical movement to Christ within Islam based upon the model of messianic Judaism.

> But if it grew or exerted influence, opposition would start. Yet—and this is important—it would be likely to be the opposition which a strange new sect attracts, not the utter rejection awarded the apostate. For the movement would be *within* Islam. Its defenders would say something like "We're the *real* Muslims. We have rediscovered Jesus. Our own Quran honors him as Prophet, and we have found in our earlier Scriptures that he is also divine Savior. He says so himself. Can a prophet lie?"
> The crucial questions asked by other Muslims would be to ascertain the positions the new sect took toward Muhammad and the Quran. The sect might deny Muhammad's prophethood, but it seems far more likely that it would only redefine it—or even accept it.[34]

For Wilder, the important component to his hypothetical people movement is that the group would grow into a sect of Islam that achieved stability and permanence: "After

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almost verbatim the same concerns and comfort Kraft expressed in 1974. Kraft is comfortable as long as the group in question has a good translation of the Bible, because he is confident that the leading of the Spirit will bring them into greater orthodoxy. Kraft's confidence in growing orthodoxy as an inevitable outcome is questionable given the history of emerging orthodoxy in quasi-Christian sects like Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses.

[33]Ibid., 307. Wilder references a Jewish convert's frustrations with the legalistic injunctions of evangelical Christianity, including the prohibition of movies, cards, dice, and alcohol in n. 14. One major difficultly in assessing this statement is that he does not include specifics of demands that are cultural and therefore biblically unnecessary, and demands that are simply a part of becoming a disciple of Jesus.

[34]Ibid., 310-11.

all," Wilder writes, "the important thing to a sect is not what others say about it but what its members hold to be true."[35]

Theologically, Wilder proposes that a Christian sect within Islam would hold some theological deviances like retreating from the concept of the Trinity, a de-emphasis on the "Son-ship" of Jesus, a denial of Christ's death, and a select use of the biblical canon. The crucial point for Wilder is not whether the group is doctrinally sound; rather, it is that the group maintains contact with the universal church so that it would not become isolated. Hopefully, over time and with patience on the part of the universal Church, the Christian sect will be drawn out of heresy and into a fuller understanding of the biblical revelation. Wilder suggests,

> Thoughtful Christians, would probably remember that theological consistency and impeccability have never been a hallmark of the Christian church. They would distinguish the essential theological centralities from the non-essential cultural accretions, and be not too greatly disturbed by the new movement's changed modes of worship [and despite heretical positions of Muhammad's prophet-hood or the person of Christ] maintain a charitable, open and accepting spirit.[36]

Finally, Wilder suggests that failing to show the type of cultural sympathy to emerging movements in the way he described would be to commit the sin of the Judaizers in Acts 15. Accordingly, Wilder's reference to the Jerusalem Council has been repeatedly echoed in Insider literature to demonstrate the biblical grounds for allowing converts to maintain religious identity.

Taken altogether, though Wilder is only attempting to propose how Christians should react to movements that develop as a result of mass evangelism, his sentiments and proposals foreshadow an increasing amount of prescriptions for contextualized missionary strategy. The Insider proponent does not want to wait for a movement within Islam to emerge; they want to work toward developing one themselves using contextualized strategy.

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[35]Ibid., 311.
[36]Ibid., 312.

The papers presented at the Lausanne-sponsored 1978 North American Conference for Muslim Evangelization makes clear that missionaries had widely embraced several foundational elements that led to an Insider approach. Consequently, it can be identified as dramatic turning point in the contextualization conversation. First, the problem of resistance had clearly shifted from mainly theological barriers to cultural barriers. Twenty-nine of the thirty-two papers presented at the conference dealt with culture; only three grappled with theological issues. Donald Rickards articulates this shift as he suggests new tools to aid in the development of Muslim evangelism and comments on the similarity of resistance between Jews and Muslims:

> We are all aware that many of the problems are common in the ministry to both Jew and Muslim. For many years, Gentile believers insisted that the Jew leave his cultural heritage and identify cross-culturally with the Gentile Christian. Deep resistance was the result throughout those centuries.
> Yet, it was, or should have been, obvious that *not theology but culture was the barrier preventing Jews from coming to their Messiah*....In the past 10 years, thousands of Jews have become messianic Jews, meaning they have accepted Christ as their Savior. Since they feel the name Christian was an epithet thrown at believers and not necessarily a name God would use of them, they have chosen to be known as messianic, or completed Jews....Such a development is not only wonderfully exciting, it is also instructive to us who are concerned with the Muslim world.[37]

That shift is certainly reflected in the C-Continuum in that the only criteria used to judge a position on the scale are classified according to the use of culture.[38]

Second, missionaries had widely embraced the role of cultural anthropology in the contextualization process. While the nuances of the various models of contextualization had yet to emerge, the elements of the translation model were becoming widely accepted as a necessary process in order to address the cultural resistance of high-religious

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[37]Donald R. Rickards, "The Development of New Tools to Aid in Muslim Evangelism," in *The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium*, ed. Don M. McCurry (Monrovia: MARC, 1979), 433, emphasis mine. It is no coincidence that the first name for Insider Muslims was "Messianic Muslims." The Jews for Jesus model has been an important example for Insider practitioners.

[38]I do not mean to imply that Insider advocates are not concerned with theological issues in church planting, only that the cultural issues articulated through anthropological and social sciences far outstrip the theological ones to the extent that theology appears to be an afterthought in Insider literature. Hopefully, this perception is simply a result of the Insider's focus on cultural forms and the issue of deception.

societies. Stripping the gospel seed from its cultural husk in order to find new and

dynamic cultural forms became a significant focus of missionary effort. In essence, each

position above C2 on the C-Continuum offers a different answer to those socio-religious

forms that can be re-used and those that must be discarded. The reports of these

experiments were met with various degrees of both concern and excitement.

The Lombaro Case Study

Parshall published *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism* in 1980, which presents a

case study of an experiment in contextualization he led his team to undertake in

Bangladesh in the mid-1970s. *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism* was the report and

defense of that experiment written as his PhD project at Fuller, and Lombaro was the

code name he gave his context of ministry. Parshall divides his book into several

important sections. He first defines contextualization and syncretism and then discusses

the difference between form and meaning. His discussion of the subject flows directly

out of Kraft's position in *Christianity in Culture*; his experiment is an outworking of the

following philosophy:

> The principle here seems to be that Christianness lies primarily in the
> functions served and the meanings conveyed by the cultural forms
> employed, rather than in the forms themselves....God seeks to use and to
> cooperate with human beings in the continued use of relative cultural
> forms to express absolute Supracultural meanings. The forms of culture
> are important not for their own sake but for the sake of that which they
> convey.[39]

The second section is devoted to developing and explaining his application of

contextualization in the Lombaro case study. For the most part, Parshall supplies

practical answers to age-old questions related to the observance and use of time, finances,

housing, food, dress, and family. But he goes further by suggesting that Muslim culture

should inform issues like the day of worship, designation of believers, and the roles of

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[39] Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), 66.

clergy and laity.[40] Moreover, he strongly suggests the creation of homogenous churches

for Muslim background believers.

However, it is Parshall's re-use of Muslim religious and social rituals that truly

separates his experiment from missionary methods of the past. The theoretical

discussions and suggestions outlined in the previous section take shape in Parshall's

experiment. In particular, Parshall advocates the re-use of the Islamic forms of prayer,

fasting, music, and chanting of poetic translations of Scripture, as well as borrowing

elements from Muslim festivals, wedding ceremonies, celebrations surrounding the birth

of a child, and funerals.[41]

Though the theoretical framework had been developed slowly over the previous

decade, the picture of contextualization Parshall advocated was, at that time, considered

radical by many in the evangelical world. Criticism at some points was quite severe.

Generally, however, the direction suggested by Parshall was broadly accepted, especially

as he further delineated in subsequent publications lines he personally refused to cross.

Today, it represents the limits of what many organizations are comfortable

recommending in Muslim contextualization.

In particular, for significant theological reasons, Parshall concludes that

missionaries need to encourage new converts to transition out of the mosque. While

some missionaries eagerly advocate re-using almost the entirety of Islamic forms,

Parshall strongly disagrees:

> I cannot agree with my friend when he states that 98 or 99 percent of
> Muslim worship can be utilized by us. There is a large area of
> commonality...; most of the content of the ritual is acceptable to the
> Christian....Yet, there are a few items of such weighty theological
> significance that I conclude any true believer who permanently continues
> to participate in the prayer ritual is indeed compromising his faith in
> Christ. I hasten to add that I recognize the value of and need for a proper
> transitional time for movement out of the mosque. This may take weeks

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[40]Ibid., 157-80.
[41]Ibid., 199-219.

and even months.... To demand an immediate cessation of all that has been practiced for years leads only to extractionism.[42]

Within the mosque is continual confirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad and, while some missionaries formulated arguments to redefine prophethood to make the Muslim confession, the *Shahadah,* usable for new converts, Parshall concludes that the arguments were invalid: "A Christian's participation in the ritual is a confirmation of the message of Islam—regardless of what he is privately thinking or praying."[43]

By strongly advocating transition out of the mosque, Parshall demarcates the difference between C4 and C5, namely, the moral inability of Christian converts to remain within the Islamic religious system.

> Although I advocate that Muslims remain an integral part of their community, I am forced to stop short of encouraging continued involvement in prayers at the mosque. The ritual is too closely connected to Islamic belief, theology, and religious practice. I conclude that participation involves either compromise or deceit. Neither is acceptable for a Christian. Therefore, we must move "beyond the mosque" and explore other areas wherein our objectives can be fulfilled.[44]

When Parshall follows Kraft's advice to attempt to start movements within Islam, he attempts to keep converts as members of their social community while taking them out of the religious expressions of their community. Though Parshall expressed deep reservations related to the theological content of the Islamic forms of the confession and the message communicated by staying within the mosque, evidently other missionaries were pushing for a more inclusive approach to incorporating Islamic forms—virtually unchanged—into the religious practice of Muslim converts.

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[42]Phil Parshall, *Beyond the Mosque: Christians within Muslim Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 182-83.

[43]Ibid., 183. Specifically, the confessor of the Islamic creed is communicating to the community his belief in the Islamic articulation of the prophethood of Muhammad, his rejection of the incarnation of Jesus, and other things that directly support Islam and attack historic Christian doctrine. As Parshall has said elsewhere, the "mosque is pregnant with Islamic theology." Phil Parshall, "Danger! New Directions in Contextualization," *EMQ* 34 (1998): 409.

[44]Parshall, *Beyond the Mosque*, 184.

Teeter and the Friendship Center

David Teeter's experiment in Muslim contextualization stems most directly from Kraft's model of Dynamic-Equivalence and Harvey Conn's 1978 Colorado conference paper, "The Muslim Convert and His Culture."[45] Teeter's article, "Dynamic Equivalent Conversion for Tentative Muslim Believers," was written to explain the view of conversion supporting the "Muslim followers of Jesus" model of contextualization he was field testing in Bethlehem.[46]

While Teeter's article does not overtly deal with contextualization of Islamic forms, his proposed model of conversion is a foundational element of Insider strategy. Teeter's main point was to challenge the predominant evangelical view of conversion as a one-step process and to suggest that a slow process of "becoming" is more culturally appropriate in an Islamic society.[47] Teeter proposes a term he calls "tentative believers" to describe Muslims who have heard the gospel, but who have not made the overt step of declaring Jesus to be their Lord. The "tentative believer," according to Teeter, "is being deeply and profoundly changed, but he is not fully aware of this change. He has not made any deliberate "decision for Christ," but is aware, on some level, that Christ has entered into his life."[48] Teeter hopes that these men will emerge as committed believers, especially as they become heads of households and can influence their families to likewise move toward Christ and become a dynamic equivalent, *oikos* expression of church. He uses an inference from Mark 16 to ground his strategy's goal to produce tentative believers:

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[45]Harvie M. Conn, "The Muslim Convert and His Culture," in *The Gospel and Islam,* ed. Don McCurry (Monrovia: MARC, 1979), 78-92.

[46]David Teeter, "Dynamic Equivalent Conversion for Tentative Muslim Believers," *Missiology* 5 (1990): 307. At the time of publication, his model had been in operation for six years.

[47]Ibid., 307. In challenging the predominant evangelical paradigm of conversion, he is merely providing a case study of Kraft's "starting point plus" process view of conversion presented in *Christianity in Culture.*

[48]Teeter, "Dynamic Equivalent Conversion," 308.

Jesus said, "whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:16. We can infer three categories of people from this:

Response	Status
Believes and is baptized	Salvation assured
Does not believe	Condemnation assured
Believes, but is not baptized	Outcome unresolved[49]

Overall, Teeter is comfortable with the ambiguity of the third category, and believes that tentative believers have actually—though unknowingly—been born of the Spirit, and are slowly moving toward greater obedience as they continue to walk with Christ. He admits that "we cannot know the final outcome….Perhaps the person will change his mind and be baptized. Or perhaps Jesus will deal with the person as he did with the thief on the cross. Or maybe he or she will be lost….Who but God knows at this point?"[50] While Teeter recognizes that the assurance of salvation is impossible without the overt steps of verbal allegiance to Christ, he is hopeful that these tentative believers, "who are walking with Christ without actually converting to Christianity," will find favor with God at the Judgment Day.[51]

Again, Teeter does not overtly address the contextualization issue in this article. But, his proposal for dynamic equivalence applied to conversion in his experiment in Bethlehem supplied a case study for those committed to dynamic equivalence. The overarching theme was the ability of new believers to stay within Islam. He demonstrated that receptivity to Jesus—not necessarily the gospel—can be increased by de-emphasizing certain Christian emphases like baptism.

Woodberry's Re-Use of Common Pillars

In 1989, J. Dudley Woodberry published a watershed article in *The Word among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today*, which was reprinted in *IJFM* in 1996.

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[49]Ibid., 309.
[50]Ibid., 310.
[51]Ibid., 312.

Woodberry argues that the common roots between Jewish, Christian, and Islamic rituals enables those rituals to be incorporated more easily into contextualized Christ-centered worship. He builds his argument in the following way.

First, Woodberry underscores the urgent need for contextualization. He skims the literature dealing with contextualization from 1977-1987 and then supplies anecdotes from Muslims who find Christian literature incomprehensible.[52] Second, he describes how both national Christians and Islamic groups have both severely criticized efforts to contextualize.[53] Third, he extensively demonstrates, through literature review, the Jewish and Christian roots of the Islamic forms of confession, prayer forms, prayer postures, types of prayer, ablution, almsgiving, fasting, the pilgrimage, and the function of the Mosque.[54] He concludes, "If all these elements were used by God in His schoolhouse for His people Israel, can they not serve again for lessons as He gathers a new people for Himself?"[55]

Finally, Woodberry presents a short case-study that has incorporated his suggested re-use of the Islamic pillars. It is important to separate and analyze the individual components of the case-study to understand exactly what Woodberry is suggesting with his model of contextualization. It is quite evident that the theoretical suggestions of the 1970s have matured in the following case study.

Around 1984, a natural catastrophe struck a Muslim country that had a long-term missionary presence but that had seen very little fruit among Muslims. A group of about twenty Christian families moved into the area to serve the community, but only one came from a Muslim background. Though God was shown to answer prayers in Jesus' name

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[52]Woodberry, "Contextualization among Muslims," 171-73. See also J. Dudley Woodberry, "Contextualization among Muslims: Reusing Common Pillars," in *The Word among Us: Contextualizing Theology for Mission Today*, ed. Dean S. Gilliland (Dallas: Word, 1989), 282-312. Citations are from the *IJFM* article since it has been expanded and revised.

[53]Interestingly, he quotes a source in Malaysia that reports on a bill suggested by the Selangor state government that attempted to forbid non-Muslims from using a large list of Arabic religious language. Even as early as 1988, missiologists had taken significant and widespread strides to contextualize in Islamic contexts. See Woodberry, "Contextualization among Muslims," 173.

[54]Ibid., 173-82. This section of Woodberry's article is exceptionally well documented.

[55]Ibid., 182.

and though the message the missionaries preached was believed to be true, no Muslims converted until the Christians were seen performing ritual prayer and incorporating cultural practices to remove ritual impurity.[56]

In 1986, missiology taught at Fuller was introduced to the mission group, and as a result, it adopted a more intentional contextual approach. "Only Muslim converts," according to Woodberry, "were employed in the villages and many thousands have since responded."[57] Presumably, the rationale behind the shift away from Christian presence was an attempt to remove all culturally foreign elements in an effort to follow the HUP. The missionaries used a translation of the New Testament that incorporated Muslim vocabulary rather than the Christian words for God, prophets, Jesus, etc.

Significantly, Woodberry attributes the missionaries' deep knowledge of the Quran as an important factor in the spread of the gospel in the region. The Christians approached the Quran in two ways. First, and most importantly, it was used by the Christians as a theological starting point and a source of truth. Starting with the Quran, Christians confronted the local belief that Muhammad would be an intercessor at the Day of Judgment in the following logical progression:

1. The Quran does not mention Muhammad as an intercessor.
2. The Quran tells that only the one whom God approves can intercede.
3. The Quran approves of the *Injil* as a source of truth.
4. The *Injil* says that God approves of Jesus and that he is the only mediator between God and man.
5. Therefore, Jesus is the intercessor at the Day of Judgment.[58]

Second, the missionaries attempted to diminish the importance of the Quran by relegating a Quranic verse to a position of authority only for the region of Mecca during the time of Muhammad. In a similar way, Muhammad was re-interpreted to be a prophet to the Arabs only.

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[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Woodberry, "Contextualization among Muslims," 182.

Third, in a public debate, one of the Muslim background missionaries presented himself as a Muslim. By claiming to be a completed Muslim—having completed his submission to God through Jesus—he was able to transition the debate into a conversation between "brothers."[59] By claiming to be "Muslims," the missionaries were trying to separate themselves from the distain associated with the Christian community in that country and around the world. The group of followers has come to be called "believers" by the surrounding community, which has served to maintain their community ties by avoiding association with the minority Christian community.

Fourth, the missionaries overtly pursued a group decision for Christ. "Conversions are following along family, friendship, and occupational lines. When whole villages come, the mosque remains the center of worship."[60] In order to keep the family unit intact, missionaries refused to baptize believers unless the head of the household was baptized first.

Last, and Woodberry's main object of interest in the article, the missionaries incorporated scripturally modified Islamic forms in their strategy. Woodberry only discusses the transformation of the prayer rituals and does not mention mosque attendance or other pillars of Islam like confession, almsgiving, fasting or pilgrimage to Mecca. The form of the ritual prayers remained basically unchanged; only the content was modified and saturated with a number of Scriptures (Ps 23; Matt 6:9-13; John 1:12; John 3:16; Ps 117:1-2).[61]

Woodberry mentions four factors that could weaken the blossoming movement. First, leadership training is exceptionally important when the meaning inherent in the Muslim forms are being radically stripped away and replaced with new meaning. Vestiges of the old meaning will haunt the forms unless significant teaching is continually given to new believers. Training leadership to recognize the dangers of

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[59]Ibid., 182.
[60]Ibid., 183.
[61]Ibid.

syncretism, especially when using the old forms, is quite difficult in a fast-growing people movement.

Second, Woodberry recognizes the importance of reaching out to the existing Christian community so that isolation does not lead to the movement being swallowed back into Islam.[62] Yet, the problem with forming connections within the existing Christian community is that the growing contextualized community will slowly move to an overtly Christian identity. Since the great attraction of the contextualized community is their ability to remain within the greater Islamic society, any move out of that society will have a corresponding affect on its ability to be attractive to the Muslim community. The believing community sits on a razor's edge between two societies, and the leadership is uncertain how to make positive forward progress.

Third, Woodberry recognizes the dangers of retaining Islamic meanings by using Islamic forms. At the same time, he discusses the dangers of "an ossified contextualization that inhibits maturity."[63] Here, Woodberry is alluding to an article presented by Denis Green at the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization conference in 1987, which centered on Islamic-Christian themes. The majority of those presentations were published in *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*. Green uses the phrase "stagnated contextualization," which he defines as "contextualization which has been employed as a means of facilitating the transition of Muslims from Islam to Christianity, but which then comes to operate as a barrier to their proceeding to a complete experience of Christ and his salvation."[64] Yet, Woodberry concludes, despite

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[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Denis Green, "Guidelines from Hebrews for Contextualization," in *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry (Monrovia: MARC, 1989), 245. Green goes on to say that "the evangelists [to the Hebrews] apparently felt comfortable with allowing their converts to retain certain beliefs and practices which were not wholly compatible with Christianity, expecting these things to fall away as spiritual maturity was reached. Yet the expected growth had not occurred (Heb 5:12-14); on the contrary, the Christian experience of the converts had stagnated (Heb 5:11)" (247).

the challenges and dangers, God is "blessing the refurbishing of these pillars in our day as they bear the weight of new allegiance to God in Christ."[65]

One major difficulty in assessing Woodberry's case study is that the descriptive nature of the article does not present a detailed account of the entire strategy. Woodberry only describes several aspects of the strategy through relating situations in the case study. As of yet, more than twenty-five years after the publication of this article, there remains no case study that systematically builds a theological framework for this method of contextualization. While Woodberry has continued to study the development of this movement, he has refrained from widely advertising the results.

Despite these weaknesses, Woodberry's case study presents a contextualized approach that attempts to keep converts within Islamic society. The article is not entirely clear whether the missionaries attempted to follow Parshall's method and transition believers out of the mosque and Islamic *religious* society or whether the converts are encouraged to stay in the mosque. However, Travis, who has a great deal of inside knowledge of this movement, quotes Woodberry's article as "an excellent case study of a C5 movement in one predominately Muslim nation."[66] Whatever the missionaries' ultimate approach, Woodberry laid the theoretical groundwork for the re-use of Islamic forms and supplied a case study where that type of re-use in select circumstances has seemed to produce much initial fruit.

Herbert Hoefer's *Churchless Christianity*

Hoefer's study is different than previous studies, not only because it comes from the Hindu world, but also because it has developed independently from the theoretical suggestions surrounding Muslim missions. Additionally, Hoefer's book was organized so that the research data could be interpreted independently of his own conclusions, with

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[65]Woodberry, "Contextualization among Muslims," 183.

[66]John Travis, "Appropriate Approaches in Muslim Contexts," in *Appropriate Christianity,* ed. Charles H. Kraft (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 398.

the result that his suggestions are a relatively small portion of the entire book. His work has been referenced countless times to demonstrate the problem of extraction and double conversion, and to argue for the Insider approach as the solution to those problems.

In the early 1980s, Herbert Hoefer heard about a phenomenon in the rural areas of the southern Indian state of Tamilnadu where people were believing solely in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior but had no plans to undergo baptism or join a local church. He then conducted a study to measure both the numbers of the phenomenon and the theological state of what he calls "other sheep."[67] The 1991 publication of *Churchless Christianity* contains a write up of that study, along with an additional study conducted in the city of Madras. It concludes with a short chapter that includes theological reflection on the ramifications of the study. The 2001 publication includes, among other things, more theological reflection, a paper interacting with the sociological affects of "conversion," an explanation of caste, and a rave review of the original *Churchless Christianity* by H. L. Richard.

Chapter 1 consists mainly of an introduction to the situation and faith of a number of Non-Baptized Believers in Christ (NBBC). Since these people do not habitually go to church, there is great deal of diversity in worship practice. Some have private devotions, some go to church occasionally, some still participate in the Hindu festivals, some do not, some have a picture of Jesus in their back room, and some place Jesus' picture along with a picture of the other gods. In almost all cases, the driving factors that keep these followers of Christ from publicly joining the visible Christian community is the extraction that would inevitably follow. Each interview mentioned the cost associated with breaking caste to join the caste of the local believing community. In some cases, the pastors themselves advised the NBBC to refrain from breaking caste by joining the church. Despite the variety of worship styles and beliefs of the NBBC, they are

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[67]Hoefer continually refers to these people as "other sheep" to indicate his firm belief that they are Spirit-filled Christians. Herbert Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity,* rev.ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 5.

commonly recognized as authentic followers of Christ by the general community, the pastors of the Christian community, and by their extended family.[68]

Chapter 2 describes the factors that keep the NBBC from breaking caste and joining the local church. The study lists ten common characteristics of the NBBC interviewed, including a desire to maintain harmony in the marriage relationship, a respectful attitude toward relatives, the attempt to change religion without changing cultures, the sentiment that remaining unbaptized affirms the family mission and tradition, and the difficulty of finding good marriages for the children. Surprisingly, when these NBBC break caste to join the local church, they are not necessarily warmly welcomed in. The Christian community has often refused to provide marriage partners for NBBC who break caste to join the church through baptism, leaving the children of these rural NBBC without honorable prospects for marriage.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe the random study questionnaire that was conducted in Madras and draws conclusions from the data provided from that study. After explaining the study and research method at some length, Hoefer outlines the results of the study:

> Our statistics have shown that there is a solid twenty five percent of the Hindu and Muslim population in Madras City which has integrated Jesus deeply into their spiritual life. Half of the population have attempted spiritual relationships with Jesus and had satisfying and learning experiences through it.[69]

Hoefer describes the devotional and spiritual life of these NBBC as intensely personal and non-communal: "Most of the time, these believers in Christ relate to Him only in their private prayer and meditations. Occasionally they go to church anonymously, but for the most part they are on their own to nurture their faith. Thus, they easily fall away from a disciplined worship life and into a syncretistic way of thinking."[70] Not surprisingly, since many of the NBBC discover Jesus on their own

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[68]Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity,* 5-44.
[69]Ibid., 106.
[70]Ibid.

through TV or radio broadcasts, Hoefer says that the NBBC "provide an amalgamation of Hindu and Christian experiences in Christ."[71]

The difficulty with Hoefer's study is not the fact that the phenomenon exists; rather, the problem is with the theological implications that Hoefer attempts to draw from the situation. The most glaring difficulty is that Hoefer suggests that baptism be omitted as a central Christian teaching and practice: "Is the administration of baptism as essential function of the Gospel?"[72] In other words, if the requirement of baptism can be waived as an entry rite into the believing community, then these NBBC would not be required to break caste in order to receive teaching and fellowship from the Christian community. Additionally, Hoefer suggests that the only hope for Christ to reach India is the fulfillment of Hinduism by Christ:

> Christianly grew out of Judaism because Christ was incarnated there. However, when He is grafted into" a totally new tree, we must only expect a new hybrid, a Church of Gentile customs and a theology of Gnostic and mystical ideas. Only then will Christ "of whom and to whom and through whom are all things," be "all in all" among the varying cultures of the world (Rom 11:20-24, 36)....We do not want to change the culture or the religious genius of India. We simply want to bring Christ and his Gospel into the centre of it.[73]

In addition to *Churchless Christianity* being taken as an illustration of the problem of extraction and double conversion, the descriptive study in *Churchless Christianity* is used by Insider advocates as a basis to prescribe Insider Movements. Essentially, they argue that these Insider believers need to be protected from the national church. With missionary assistance, NBBCs should develop completely outside of the national church's traditions and structures:

> Nonetheless, one must question whether Hoefer in the end is either too traditionally attached to the church or just not careful enough to define

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[71]Ibid., 117.
[72]Ibid., 155.
[73]Ibid., 200. Notice how Hoefer confuses the subject of Paul's metaphor. Christ was not grafted into a Gentile tree in Rom 11; rather, the Gentiles were grafted into the Jewish tree of God's covenant with Israel. The theological starting point is terribly misplaced in fulfillment theology.

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what he means in saying that this churchless Christianity needs the church.
Did Gentile Christianity need the Jerusalem church? Arguably, it needed
to be protected from that church....India's NBBCs need to be guarded
against a great deal of trouble that Christians will cause them...but they
certainly need help.[74]

Overall, while *Churchless Christianity* is not a document that proposes an Insider

strategy—indeed, Hoefer strains to ensure that the developing NBBC community

maintain ties with the traditional Christian community—it has been used by Insider

advocates to prove the validity and necessity of an Insider strategy. Furthermore, as

Hoefer has become aware of the contextualization debate in recent years, he has

continually defended and advocated the Insider approach.[75]

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[74]H. L. Richard, "Review of *Churchless Christianity,*" in *Churchless Christianity,* rev. ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 263.

[75]See, for instance, Herbert Hoefer, "Proclaiming a 'Theologyless' Christ," *IJFM* 22 (2005): 98; idem, "Response to Gary Corwin from the Hindu Context," *IJFM* 24 (2007): 21; idem, "Rooted or Uprooted: The Necessity of Contextualization in Missions," *IJFM* 24 (2007): 131-38; idem, "What's in a Name? The Baggage of Terminology in Contemporary Mission," *IJFM* 25 (2008): 25-29; and John Travis et al., "Four Responses to Tennent's 'Followers of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques," *IJFM* 23 (2006): 124-26.

C5: Logical Conclusions of Dynamic-Equivalence

At this point, it should be clear that the taxonomy Travis prepared in the C-Continuum is simply a description of dynamic-equivalence being applied to increasing areas of the targeted people group's religious culture. C3 avoids their religious culture. C4 incorporates their religious forms that do not overtly deny the biblical testimony concerning Christ and eventually transitions out of the Islamic religious community. C5 significantly redefines crucial Islamic terms in order to stay as a sect within the Islamic religious community. C5's re-use of Islamic ritual to keep believers inside the Islamic community is essentially the logical conclusion of dynamic-equivalence.

Travis traces his development along the logical progression of dynamic equivalence in his own ministry. He studied contextualized theory before he and his wife became missionaries and planned to make every attempt to strip the gospel seed out of its cultural shell:

> Moving beyond these first three types (C1-C3), we, along with a number of national and expatriate coworkers, felt compelled to apply contextualization theory further. ...Within a few years there were several hundred believers. The communities of faith they formed are at the "C4" point on the continuum and closely resemble the types of congregations described and commended by Parshall (1980).

> This C4 lifestyle greatly helped the new follower of Christ remain a part of his family and neighborhood. Yet in time (usually about three months to one year), the community would realize the C4 believers were in fact no longer Muslims. Although they would still keep the fast, wear Islamic clothing, use Islamic terminology, keep Muslim dietary practices, and not change their names, they would generally not pray in the mosque and no longer referred to themselves as Muslims. Rejection would eventually come. Gradually the distance between C4 believers and their Muslim communities widened.[76]

Presumably, the reason behind Travis's dissatisfaction with C4 ministry was the widening cultural distance between communities that resulted in a slowing of the gospel message along relational networks. Fewer people were being reached with the gospel.

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[76]Travis and Travis, "Appropriate Approaches," 400-01.

The goals of facilitating a people movement cannot be realized when homogeneity

disintegrates due to a widening cultural distance. With dynamic equivalence, the way to

solve the widening cultural gap between new Muslim background believers and their

birth community is to minimize the cultural drift away from Islam. C5 is the best way to

accomplish that task. Travis describes his journey toward his belief that believers could

maintain a C5 Islamic identity:

> During the time we were beginning C4 experiments (the late 1980s) we
> also began hearing about some cases of Muslims, many of them leaders,
> who had come to faith in Isa (both in our area and in other countries) and
> who chose to remain in the Muslim community, much like Jews of today's
> Messianic Jewish movement remain culturally and officially
> Jewish....These Muslim believers are able to set aside certain Islamic
> beliefs, interpretations and practices, yet remain a part of the Islamic
> community as they follow Isa. They do not change their name or legal
> religious affiliation. They continue to identify with the religion of their
> birth and participate in things Islamic insofar as their conscience and
> growing sensitivity to Scripture allows. This point on the continuum—a
> community of Muslims who follow Christ yet remain culturally and
> officially Muslim—is referred to as C5. Others refer to emerging
> networks of C5 congregations as "insider movements", since the
> evangelism, discipling, congregating and organizing of C5 believers
> happens within the Muslim community, by Muslims with Muslims. [77]

At this point in his ministry, Travis was attempting to use "religious forms

commonly used by local Muslims which were either expressly biblical, or at least neutral,

so that Muslims coming to Christ would need to change outward forms as little as

possible."[78] The biblical basis of Islamic forms presented by Woodberry led Travis and

others to reject very little about Islamic worship. The resulting contextualized Christian

worship looks very similar to Islamic worship. However, despite the similarities in

rituals and the continued involvement and presence within Muslim society (i.e.,

Parshall's C4), Travis was not satisfied with the ability of these believers to continue to

reach their Muslim neighbors: "As we have continued to see the limits of C4 in our

context, as our burden for lost Muslims only grows heavier, we have become convinced

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[77]Ibid., 401.
[78]Ibid., 400.

that a C5 expression of faith could actually be viable for our precious Muslim neighbors and probably large blocks [*sic*] of the Muslim world."[79]

If the main problem in Muslim evangelism is the foreignness of the message preached by Christians, and if extraction and the subsequent breakdown of the community network must be avoided at all costs, then C5 is by far the best solution to those problems. Travis expresses this sentiment as follows:

> We have little hope in our lifetime to believe for a major enough cultural, political and religious change to occur in our context such that Muslims would become open to entering Christianity on a wide scale. But we do have great hope, as great as the promises of God, to believe that an "insider movement" could get off the ground—that vast numbers could discover that salvation in Isa the Messiah is waiting for every Muslim who will believe.[80]

A question rarely asked in the current debate is whether extraction is truly the *main* cause of resistance in Muslim evangelism. Nevertheless, the glaring issue with Insider Methodology is whether the proposal is biblically permissible. Understanding the contextualization theory that stands behind the IMP is helpful in formulating a biblical response.

Conclusion

The genesis of the IMP traces back almost forty years to the application of Kraft's model of dynamic equivalence to the issues in Muslim evangelism, which became popular because of the introduction of the social sciences as an essential part of missiology. Since 1974, and mostly as a result of the influence of the faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary, theory and experimentation have continued to seek solutions to the cultural problem in high-religious contexts. While some solutions, like Parshall's, have sought to differentiate between belonging to a faith community and membership within a social community, the Insider solution is to maintain the totality of religious

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[79]Ibid., 401-02.
[80]Ibid., 402.

identity. The model of contextualization behind the Insider methodology is dynamic equivalence. Generally, maintaining a religious identity is theologically validated by claiming—like messianic Judaism—to have been completed by faith in Jesus. The result of the completed faith is the formation of a Muslim sect or the transformation of Islam from within. By becoming a Muslim sect within Islamic society, believers retain the ability of the gospel to travel along the lines of a community network. Despite the significant theological errors in the proposed Muslim sects—recognized in a theoretical sense by Kraft and Wilder, and objectively presented by Parshall alongside Travis's article in 1998—Insider proponents are convinced that the benefits of Insider Movements far outweigh the potential for disaster.