

Tribute to J. Robertson McQuilkin

J. Robertson McQuilkin: A Life Remembered

Robert J. Priest

MANY EMS MEMBERS HAVE directly, or indirectly, benefited from the life and thought of Robertson McQuilkin, who recently (June 2, 2016) went into the presence of the Lord. As a missionary, missionary mobilizer, missionary educator, missiologist, author, exemplary husband, conference speaker, he incarnated the motto of Columbia International

to frontier missions, to evangelizing the least reached of the world, and thus had close ties with the US Center for World Mission and with Ralph Winter. And so I asked Brad Gill to contribute his perspective on McQuilkin. And since Steve Ybarrola had once told me that it was while at the US Center and under the influence of McQuilkin that he caught the vision of missiology, and of anthropology as a necessary part

Robertson McQuilkin was born into a family with missions at the heart. All five siblings would serve as missionaries, contributing cumulatively over 110 years of overseas missionary service.

University (CIU): "To Know Him and to Make Him Known." Since it was in his role as President of CIU that McQuilkin exercised influence, I invited CIU Chancellor and former mission executive George Murray, who long worked closely with McQuilkin, to help us remember and appreciate the life and missionary vision of McQuilkin.

In 2010 MissioNexus honored McQuilkin with a Lifetime of Service Award. Since Robertson served as a missionary in Japan, I invited two of his former students (Ron Barber and Don Schaeffer) who subsequently served as missionaries in Japan, to reflect on his life and influence. Since Ron Barber has systematically studied McQuilkin's writings, I suggested he tell us a little about those. Robertson served as an early president of the Evangelical Missiological Society. Thus, I asked David Hesselgrave and Michael Pocock, who served with him at that time, to add their thoughts. Since Scott Moreau also has long served in EMS leadership, I asked if he would also contribute. McQuilkin had deep commitments

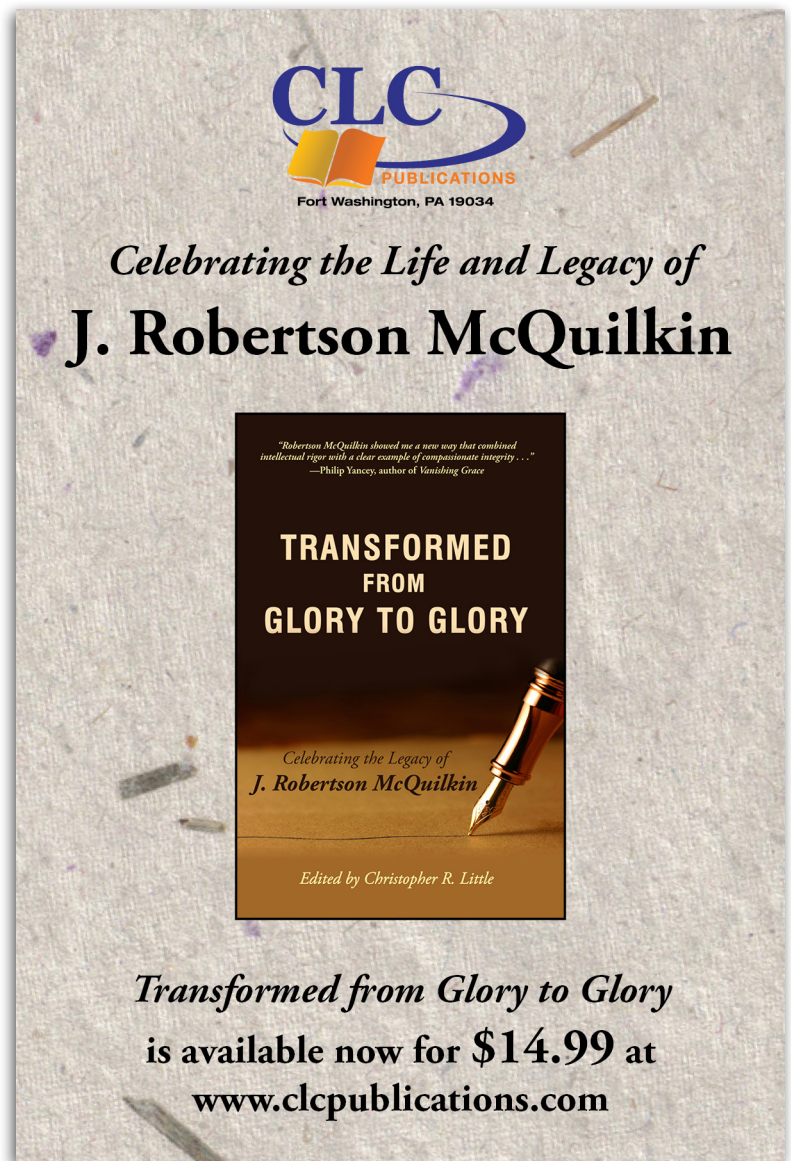
of that, I invited Steve to tell his story of McQuilkin's role in his becoming a missiological anthropologist. McQuilkin was also a missionary recruiter, and thus, I invited Lisa LaGeorge, missionary recruiter, and missiologist, to provide her reflections.

Robertson McQuilkin taught courses at CIU on ethics, sanctification, and Christian living, and hermeneutics—but not on missiology. And yet his very engagement with all of these topics was missiological in nature. He wrote some articles that were explicitly missiological. While many of his articles did not seem to be standard missiology, even his articles on hermeneutics and culture, on "the behavioral sciences under the authority of Scripture," and on "preaching" were inevitably missiological. My own missiological thinking is deeply indebted to the influence of McQuilkin. In my view, missiologists and missiology students would be well-served to read his writings. A good place to begin this would be with the 2015 festschrift in his honor, *Transformed from Glory*

From the Editor

In this issue, we celebrate **the life of Robertson McQuilkin**, past President of CIU and active contributor to the founding of EMS. We appreciate Robert Priest, President of EMS, for gathering pieces for this special occasion to pay tributes to Dr. McQuilkin.

The **three papers on "contextualization"** were previously presented at EMS regional conferences and now selected for our readership. We are glad to offer this issue of Occasional Bulletin to EMS members as one of the benefits of EMS membership.



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Celebrating the Life and Legacy of
J. Robertson McQuilkin

"Robertson McQuilkin showed me a new way that combined intellectual rigor with a clear example of compassionate integrity..."
—Philip Yancey, author of *Vanishing Grace*

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J. Robertson McQuilkin*

Edited by Christopher R. Little

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to Glory: Celebrating the Legacy of J. Robertson McQuilkin, edited by Christopher Little.

Robertson McQuilkin was born into a family with missions at the heart. All five siblings would serve as missionaries, contributing cumulatively over 110 years of overseas missionary service. The lives of his four sisters are also worth celebrating. And many of their own children and grandchildren later served and serve as missionaries. With the death of Robertson McQuilkin, my own mother, Anne McQuilkin Priest, has now lost her last surviving sibling. So yes, he has always been "Uncle Robertson" to me. Perhaps someday I will write my own lengthier reflections on his life, and all that he has contributed to my own life and missiological thinking. But not today. However, I will end

by mentioning one gift I received. Uncle Robertson and Aunt Muriel introduced me to a young lady they thought would make an excellent missionary. And so today I invite my wife Kersten Bayt Priest to wrap this up with her own reflections on the life and personal impact of "Uncle Robertson."

Each of the above contributors responded with alacrity, and should be thanked for the gift they offer of helping us as missiologists reflect on and remember the well-lived life of our missiological elder and colleague.

Robert J. Priest is President of the Evangelical Missiological Society and G. W. Aldeen Professor of International Studies and Professor of Mission and Anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

J. Robertson McQuilkin

George W. Murray

THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM from those who really know what kind of person should lead a parachurch missionary agency goes something like this: find the field missionary who is doing a great job, and who does not want to leave the field, and make THAT person your next leader. Well, that's what Columbia International University did when it was looking for its third President. Being a Great Commission school from its founding, CIU wanted a Great Commission President with a missionary heart, and they found what they were looking for in Robertson McQuilkin. And he and his wife really didn't

less-than-perfect faculty and staff members were among the lessons he taught me. I watched him wisely insist on being the ultimate "gate-keeper" when it came to hiring people for key faculty and staff positions, and I was amazed at the number of highly-qualified (and needed) faculty applicants he refused to hire because they did not embody CIU's core values of personal victorious Christian living and world evangelization. I know for a fact that at one point in Robertson's leadership of CIU 75% of the core faculty had previous vocational (not just short-term) mission field experience. Their mission field experience and burden for unreached people's

Sabbath-keeping, loyalty, and accountability to a local church, the importance of individual and corporate prayer, learning through failure, and infinite patience with less-than-perfect faculty and staff members were among the lessons he taught me.

want to leave Japan where they had been effectively serving for 12 years. Therefore, they "brought the field home with them", and their passionate love for the unreached peoples of the world permeated CIU's leadership for the next 22 years.

When Robertson arrived at CIU in 1968 to become the university's third President, he hired me, single and fresh out of college, to be his administrative assistant. Always the teacher, not only did he give me lots of work to do, but he deliberately spent time with me as a person, mentoring me both personally and professionally. Because the school had been without a full-time President for two years before Robertson came, there was lots of "catch up" work to do. We both worked 10-12 hour work days, and I learned a ton in the process. Sabbath-keeping, loyalty and accountability to a local church, the importance of individual and corporate prayer, learning through failure, and infinite patience with

came through loud and clear in the classroom, regardless of the specific courses they were teaching. That didn't happen by accident.

When Robertson became CIU's President in 1968, the school was experiencing significant financial stress. Though he and I had many in-depth conversations about the challenges he was facing, never once did he complain about the financial stress under which he was operating, nor did he ever blame his predecessor, even privately. Instead, I watched him joyfully change the oil in his own car, heat their home with a single wood-burning stove, and ride a bicycle to his office every day to avoid fuel costs and save the school money.

At the end of that first year, Robertson asked me to continue to work with him, but backed off of that request immediately when I told him of my own sense of calling to missionary service and the need to keep moving in that

direction. Three times over the next 30 years during which my wife and I were engaged in vocational missionary service, Robertson went deliberately out of his way to offer me a job at CIU, and each time he joyfully honored our refusal due to our commitment to missionary service. Even though he needed help, his refusal to put any pressure on me revealed that his heart remained burdened for the world's lesser-reached peoples.

Robertson was one of our greatest cheerleaders and prayer partners all the years that my wife Annette and I were missionary church planters in post-Christian Italy. During those years, we started a 24/7 evangelistic radio station that blanketed all of northeast Italy and western Yugoslavia with the message of the Gospel. To advertise that radio station, we produced large, bright yellow bumper stickers for people to display on their cars throughout northeast Italy. On a short trip back to the States, I stayed with the McQuilkins in their home for a couple of nights. When I wanted to wash my hands before a meal, and their hall guest bathroom was already occupied, Robertson urged me to go through their bedroom and use their private bathroom. There, plastered

thing Robertson and Muriel talked about, it was something they lived. I was amazed by the degree of personal interest they demonstrated in what I was doing (writing my thesis), knowing that they had the burden of an entire university on their shoulders. More than once, Robertson himself made me a full hot breakfast and served it to me in my bedroom so that I could keep writing while I ate. When I successfully defended my thesis, they threw a surprise celebration dinner party for me in their home. At least eight (maybe ten?) of my student colleagues were at the McQuilkin dinner table that night, most of whom Robertson had never met prior to that occasion. At the end of that meal, Robertson read and commented on a Bible passage, then went around the table, inviting each of those students to say his or her name and give one prayer request. Without taking any notes, he then led us in prayer, remembering each student by name along with the actual specific prayer request of each. It was a wonderful example to me of warm, generous Christian hospitality and the ability to show genuine undivided attention and concern for people in the midst of caring for the manifold details involved in leading a university.

Without taking any notes, he then led us in prayer, remembering each student by name along with the actual prayer request of each.

permanently right in the center of their private bathroom mirror was one of our large yellow radio station bumper stickers! When I asked Robertson about that, he simply said, "I pray for you and Italy's unreached people every day while I am shaving."

Robertson always urged me to be a life-long learner, and, when I decided to pursue a Master's degree at CIU while serving in Italy, he encouraged me to come back to the USA and live with them in their home for the final weeks of writing my thesis. The first morning I was there, being a very early riser, I found an easy chair in their family room where I made myself comfortable while drinking a cup of coffee. Robertson appeared, and I immediately sensed I was sitting in "his chair." Though he said nothing, I quickly realized my mistake and didn't repeat it on subsequent mornings. Instead, I witnessed him, morning after morning in that chair. What was he doing there? He was beginning his day with the Lord, with three things in hand: a well-worn Bible, a journal, and a huge three-ringed binder. When I asked him about the binder, he told me that he regularly received hundreds of missionary prayer letters from CIU graduates serving around the world. He would have his secretary punch holes in all those letters and place them in large three-ringed binders. Then, on a daily basis, he would work through those notebooks early each morning, praying deliberately for all those missionaries.

During those eight weeks when I lived in the McQuilkin home, I saw both Robertson and Muriel "close up", and their private life matched their public persona. Joyful (there was lots of laughter) victorious Christian living wasn't just some-

In 1985, Robertson McQuilkin invited me to join the CIU Board of Trustees, and I served with that godly group of men and women for the next 15 years. Those were stretching years for me, because Robertson deliberately appointed me to serve on (and even chair) every Board committee (academic, finance, student affairs, governance, buildings, and grounds, etc.) at some time or another during that period. Looking back, I realized that he was deliberately training me, and that training was invaluable for when I became CIU's fifth President. And, once I became the President of CIU, Robertson never once told me how I should be doing my job, but he was always available for counsel and prayed for me every day.

I have hundreds of books in my personal library, and most of them I have read or skimmed at least once. But there are a few of those books that I have read over and over, books that continue to have a huge impact on my life and service. One of those books is *The Great Omission* by Robertson McQuilkin. It is one of the most simple and clear explanations of the unchanging missionary heart of God that I have ever read, and it has greatly influenced the personal and vocational direction of my life. It is as relevant today as when it was written, and I will doubtless read it again, more than once, in the future.

I thank God for the life and legacy of Robertson McQuilkin, a true friend and mentor who has had a profound impact on my life.

George W. Murray (DMiss TEDS) served as a church planter in Italy with the Bible Christian Union (BCU) for 13 years, then as Executive Director of BCU and later of The Evangelical Alliance Mission. He served as President of CIU for seven years and now serves as Chancellor.

A Reflection On the Influence of My Favorite Missiologist

Ron Barber Jr.

FIRST MET “MR. MCQUILKIN” as a child shortly after he returned from Japan to become president at what has become Columbia International University (CIU). He had been introduced to my parents who were just beginning to follow through on their commitment to Christ and was a great help to them. I had no idea at the time that I would marry his daughter, Amy, and follow his example of church planting in Japan and, later, equipping cross-cultural workers for ministries around the world. Getting to know him as speaker, teacher, father-in-law, and friend was an incredible privilege.

Practitioner

As a church planter in Japan with The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) for twelve years, McQuilkin was involved in several church plants and I have had the opportunity to visit two of them: Tsuchiura Megumi Church in Ibaragi-ken and Izumi Fukuin Church in western Tokyo. Both have continued to grow under Japanese leadership with the former becoming one of the largest churches in Japan. As a missionary, McQuilkin questioned the use of a Western apologetic method to present the gospel in the Japanese culture. He used the tools of cultural anthropology to understand his audience and to identify Japanese values

At one point he offered his large collection of books on Japan to any family members who wanted them. At that time, we were thinking of going to Africa, so we turned down the offer. Later, as God directed us to Japan, we regretted the loss of such a wonderful resource!

Like many, I have used his book, *Great Omission*, as a tool to help young people think about the cause of world evangelization and their role in it. It is a classic example of McQuilkin’s style of preaching and writing: practical, with powerful illustrations and a call for a decision. He was never satisfied with simply giving information but worked hard to appeal to the emotions and will of the listener/reader. This has challenged me as a teacher to be a steward of the message that seeks transformation in the lives of my students.

Missiologist

McQuilkin’s concern for world evangelism led him to address the vital missiological issues raised during the decades of his life. I had the privilege of compiling a complete bibliography for the festschrift in his honor recently, and he gave me total access to his files. Although the task at hand was building the bibliography, I was also able to read some of the correspondence between McQuilkin and other authors

Correspondence with others about the cause of world evangelization and how to define the task and recruit laborers demonstrated the passion with which he wrote formal articles and was present in everyday communication as well.

so that he could communicate the gospel more effectively. When we worked in Japan, I benefited directly from his insights into Japanese culture. And now that I am teaching contextualization and cultural anthropology I can appreciate the approach that he modeled when analyzing culture. His emphasis on understanding the context has strongly guided my practice and teaching.

Mobilizer

McQuilkin considered missionary work in Japan as his calling, and he did not want to leave the work there. However, when CIU asked him to return to America to become president of the school, both TEAM leadership, and the Japanese church encouraged him to take the strategic role and challenged him to send back to Japan fifty missionaries to take his place. He met that goal in the first five years of his presidency.

Although my wife and I spent twenty-three years as church planters in Japan, we were not among his recruits!

concerning these key issues. The tone of these letters was professional and irenic. For example, one author misquoted McQuilkin’s position on the normativeness of scripture in a theology text by stating the exact opposite of his position and, to add insult to injury, misspelled his name in the citation. Rather than lashing out on this very important point, McQuilkin’s response was to assume the mistake was unintended and point to some other resources that further addressed the issue. Correspondence with others about the cause of world evangelization and how to define the task and recruit laborers demonstrated the passion with which he wrote formal articles and was present in everyday communication as well. That passion was present even at the end of his life. Just a few weeks before he died, his mind was confused, and he could not carry on a conversation. But as I was sitting with him he suddenly said, “What are we going to do about the problem of world evangelization?”

This passion for world evangelization led him to address major issues concerning the mission of the Church head

on. He vigorously promoted the necessity of evangelism through writings on the “dark half of the world” where people do not even have a chance to hear the gospel. And he emphasized biblical teaching on the lostness of the lost, the reality of hell, and the narrow way. McQuilkin stood steadfastly for the priority of evangelism in defining the missionary task. He warned of the dangers of “just sending money” to support nationals and addressed some of the pitfalls of short-term missions. In all of these polarizing topics, he sought to be true to the full range of Scriptural teaching, while interacting with the opposing views. He expressed certainty where he felt Scripture was clear but acknowledged areas where certainty was less appropriate

and where there could legitimately be disagreement. This approach to the functional authority of Scripture is explained in his hermeneutics textbook, but I learned it by reading his early book on evaluating the church growth movement. He has challenged me to stand in the center of biblical tension.

In conclusion, I say “Thank you, dad, for your constant encouragement to us to pursue God’s calling to know Him and to make Him known.”

Ron Barber Jr. is Professor of Intercultural Studies at the International Graduate School of Leadership, Quezon City, Philippines

A Tribute to Robertson McQuilkin

Don Schaeffer

I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF being a student at Columbia Bible College (1974-1978) while Robertson McQuilkin was president. I am so thankful for the lasting impact that he had on my life.

First, McQuilkin was a powerful preacher. His messages in chapel were always a highlight. Each year he set the spiritual tone with his messages on the year verse. His series on Living by Faith were not just messages; he lived out what he preached and wanted to instill these truths in all the students. His desire to know Christ and to make Him known was the foundation of his ministry. His commitment to the enduring authority of Scripture and his vision to reach a lost world made a deep impact on me.

Second, I had the privilege of doing directed study on Japan under his tutelage. His love for Japan and the people there never waned. He had a large collection of books on Japan, and it was a blessing to get his insights on the country and its culture.

Third, his books have continued to influence my life and ministry. His *Life in the Spirit* was one of the recommended books in the course on Spiritual Formation that I taught this past year while serving as a missionary-in-residence at Toccoa Falls College during our home assignment. *The Five Smooth Stones: Essential Principles for Biblical Ministry* is a book that I

have given to my children and others in ministry. His Introduction to Biblical Ethics is still one of the first books I turn to when working on difficult ethical issues. Understanding and Applying the Bible, The Great Omission, A Promise Kept, Measuring the Church Growth Movement—all of his books are still worth reading. See the helpful resource library here: <http://mcquilkinlibrary.com/>

Most of all, I am grateful for McQuilkin’s example, especially his love and devotion to Jesus. He never tired of reminding us of the importance of living in the center of biblical tension. “It is easier to go to a consistent extreme than to stay at the center of biblical tension.” He took the time to have meals with students, and we always appreciated the opportunity to ask him our hard questions. We were never disappointed with his incisive answers.

McQuilkin touched many lives, and I am grateful for his impact on me.

“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Hebrews 13:7-8

Don Schaeffer, Missionary to Japan with The Christian & Missionary Alliance since 1984.

Tribute to Robertson McQuilkin

David Hesselgrave

B E FOLLOWERS OF ME AS I AM OF CHRIST—the apostle Paul could write that, not just once, but three times and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I don’t know whether my friend and colleague Robertson McQuilkin ever quoted Paul at this point, but I do know that he could have quoted him and with transparent integrity.

I had the privilege of meeting Robertson when we were missionaries in post-War Japan. I met him, but I did not meet with him often. His mission allowed him to concentrate his time and attention to that ministry to which he felt especially called—the planting and nurture of a local church. And it was not long before we began to hear—not from him but from others—how people were coming to Christ and

that church was growing. Robertson was a model Christian missionary on the field.

Years later it was my privilege to sit down in their home one summer evening with Robertson and his wife Muriel in Columbia, S.C. to discuss some missiological concerns. By that time Muriel was confined to a wheelchair and only distantly aware of what was being discussed. At times, she would become agitated. Each time, Robertson would pat her on the shoulder or arm and quietly reassure her that she had not been forgotten—in a short time she would have his full attention. After the passing of what by then had been hundreds—and perhaps thousands—of such nights, Robertson still remembered the vows he had taken in the light of their wedding day many years before. Robertson will always be remembered for that. True to his marriage vows, Robertson was a faithful, loving husband “in sickness and in health.”

I also had the privilege of teaching at Columbia Bible College back in an earlier day. It was not the easiest of times for our evangelical schools, and so I inquired of a Columbia faculty friend how things were going. His answer was as I had hoped but with an interesting twist. He answered to the effect that, as president, Robertson had adopted a “Japanese

approach” to problem-solving:

When faculty members disagree on an issue, Dr. McQuilkin postpones the vote and asks us to think and pray until such time as we can reach a consensus. But he reminds us that, if we cannot reach a consensus by the time a decision simply must be made, he will make the decision himself. “That,” he sometimes adds, “is why I am president.”

I do not know by experience. Just hearsay. But I am persuaded that Robertson was an exemplary Christian college president.

All of this and much more that could be written is to help us recall something of the memory and challenge bequeathed by our brother and friend, Robertson McQuilkin. Robertson himself has already heard something akin to this—though of infinitely greater import—from his Lord and Savior, and ours!

So . . . Oyasuminasai, Robertson. Mata ashita!

David Hesselgrave is Emeritus Professor of missions (retired) at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and co-founder with Donald McGavran of the Evangelical Missiological Society.

Tribute to Robertson McQuilkin

Michael Pocock

THREE CHARACTERISTICS COME TO MIND as I reflect on the life of Robertson McQuilkin, who I have known since the 1970s. Faithful, Fearless, and Fruitful. Robertson and Muriel went to Japan with TEAM, The Evangelical Alliance Mission, of which my wife and I became a part later on. They were faithful in that ministry. A number became believers and churches were started that have continued to grow. All the veteran post-WW II missionaries in Japan at the time would attest to Robertson’s faithful and effective work there. He was a very relational person, excellent in his use of Japanese, loved by the people.

Robertson became more widely known when he became President of what has become Columbia International University. Robertson made sure that CIU stayed faithful to the Word of God and the Great Commission. All of his writings attest to these two great concerns.

When Robertson’s wife Muriel contracted Alzheimer’s, Robertson was absolutely faithful to her for more than 14 years of her illness. I would always visit their house and Muriel when in Columbia, or when calling on the phone. Whenever I asked about Muriel his answer was simple: “She’s just as sweet as she always was.” Such was his faithfulness to Muriel that when he stepped down from the presidency of Columbia to give her his full attention, his reasons resonated throughout the evangelical community: “I am a man of my word, and I said I would love honor and cherish my wife, and I intend to do just that.” The great men’s movement, Promise Keepers, often used Robertson either in person or

by video to show thousands of men what marital fidelity as a believer is all about.

Robertson was faithful, and not only to his wife but to the Lord Jesus, the Word of God and the Great Commission. If any tendency raised its head to be less than Christ-centered, Word directed and Great Commission oriented, Robertson was a fearless advocate to draw the evangelical missions movement back to its roots. His book *The Great Omission*

Robertson was faithful, not only to his wife but to the Lord Jesus, the Word of God and the Great Commission.

showed this. His willingness to graciously critique even his own mentors like the great Donald McGavran, who himself was the one to advocate with David Hesselgrave for the formation of a specifically Great Commission oriented professional missiological society which became the EMS in 1990, showed Robertson’s straight-forward way of being. Even Ralph Winter did not escape Robertson’s gracious critique by showing that lostness is the big criteria for mission efforts, not only a western generated concept of unreached.

David Hesselgrave, after founding the EMS in 1990, could see that Robertson should be the one to continue the emphasis on a salvation-oriented, Christ-centered, Word-based

missiology. I had the privilege to work with Robertson closely during his tenure as President of EMS. We became good friends, and I respected him greatly. Columbia prospered during and after Robertson's tenure, and their graduates are ministering fruitfully all over the globe. When Robertson and Muriel came together to a Missions and Evangelism Lectureship at Dallas Seminary, students were moved by his ministry and the example of his life. His was a fruitful life as a straightforward advocate and example of missions. A man

unimpressed by position, popularity or pomposity, but passionate about the Great Commission. It's a blessing to know that Deborah Jones who married Robertson a few years after Muriel's passing, could become the wife and companion of this delightful man of God.

Michael Pocock is Senior Professor and Chairman Emeritus, World Missions and Intercultural Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary.

McQuilkin's Impact

Scott Moreau

I HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY Robertson McQuilkin longer than I can even remember. I believe I first heard of him as a missiologist while studying in Seminary, and remember the high regard for him by many in the field. Though not as productive in the written missiological world as some were, his ideas were certainly held in highest regard, as was his decision to put the care of his ailing wife above his career. I was thrilled when he agreed to write six articles for the *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (2000; Baker)—I

knew they would contribute significantly and that having him as one of the authors was a treasure for the project and for evangelical missiologists. While I only met him, and never really got to know him well, his impact on me and missiologists around the world remains profound.

Scott Moreau is editor of the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* and is Associate Academic Dean of Wheaton College Graduate School & Professor of Intercultural Studies.

McQuilkin and Christian Mission

Brad Gill

MISSIOLOGY, LIKE ANY FIELD or discipline, has its schools of thought and its different institutions that promote various theoretical models. But some persons seem to transcend these classifications, and in the field of missiology, I believe Robertson McQuilkin was one of them. I was raised in the "West Coast" combustion of Fuller's School of World Mission, but very early felt the influence of McQuilkin at Columbia out in the East. He mentored many a younger mission candidate from a distance, and we're indebted to this wonderful man for all he represented to mission.

During his lifetime, the evangelical mind had been forged across an American landscape, a time that certainly tested the soul of evangelical mission. As a post-modern undertow pulled on Christian mission, McQuilkin represented a heart and mind anchored in biblical authority. He was boldly conservative theologically in the face of cultural winds that tested the very foundations of Christian mission.

Even as a young mission candidate, I was aware of the fresh tide of anthropological insights which were emerging from his post-World War II generation. Evangelical missionaries had entered the halls of the academy, and the social sciences were steadily improving evangelical understandings of mission in ever so fruitful ways. But even as young candidates in seminary we understood we were dancing with

an academy that flaunted the authority of scripture, and we needed to assess those insights with a biblical lens as did Robertson McQuilkin.

But Dr. McQuilkin always seemed to handle the heat of situations with a most inviting grin. At least that's what sticks with me about him—I guess because you learn so much about a man by the way he responds to life. I heard over the years of the grief he faced in the loss of family, and I felt a certain pride for my mentor and friend. There wasn't a distance in his manner, no desire to impress with abstract theological truths, but a warm engagement that so impressed our younger generation in mission. I had the privilege along with other student mission leaders to invite him to address our international gathering in Edinburgh in 1980, and I well remember how he spun those daunting statistics of the remaining unreached peoples. He had walked the streets of Japan, and the lost-ness of that people had tempered his soul. Those younger leaders caught something in that hour with McQuilkin that I feel to this day. His memorial is in the hearts of the generation that follows.

Brad Gill is a senior member of Frontier Ventures (the U. S. Center for World Mission) and Editor of the *Int'l Journal of Frontier Missiology*.

J. Robertson McQuilkin's Impact on One Missions Mobilizer

Lisa LaGeorge

WHILE I WAS STUDYING at Columbia International University (CIU) in 1996 and 1997, President Emeritus Dr. J. Robertson McQuilkin was much beloved by students, even those like myself who never met him. I admired him from afar through his sermons, chapel messages, and books, as well as his influence on his family. My own family has been touched by Alzheimer's, and I admired his faithfulness and joy in caring for his beloved wife. The last 25 years of my life have been spent as a missionary, TCK advisor, missions professor, and mobilizer in the shade of the grand shadow cast by this missionary giant.

Dr. McQuilkin was known for his commitment to Matthew 9:37-38: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his field." Perhaps we could say that this verse summarized the focus of his life, and he provided a steady example of the consistent, winsome, clarion call to obey the Great Commission. As I speak daily to college students who

the dangers involved in extensive and unfocused theological education, he understood that prospective missionaries did need appropriate training theologically and vocationally. Following Dr. McQuilkin's death, tributes flooded in from former students who had been impacted under his tutelage in correspondence classes, Perspectives classes, and seminary courses in systematic theology, ethics, and biblical interpretation.

4. Holiness matters. Dr. McQuilkin was known as a man who was determined to discipline his body so as to honor his Lord. One CIU cafeteria employee commented that his restraint carried over even to the amount of food he was willing to take in the dining center. Dr. McQuilkin understood that holiness in the Christian life has direct implications on the task of the Great Commission. Addressing this generation so often ruled by their feelings, Dr. McQuilkin urged his students and readers that acting contrary to feelings and making hard decisions was a "Gethsemane experience" that would be honored and used by God.

Dr. McQuilkin was rarely seen without a smile on his face.

He was a man of wit, contentment, and delight in his God even in difficult days.

come from a culture of a pandering, selfish focus on personal gratification, every conversation I have is influenced by the legacy of J. Robertson McQuilkin. Following here are a few ways that Dr. McQuilkin's life influences today's missionary mobilizer.

1. The Gospel matters. Dr. McQuilkin's book *The Great Omission* (2002) speaks simply of the pursuant God, who provided one way for all peoples to obtain salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. The obedience or disobedience of God's people to the Great Commission is evidence of their understanding of God's exclusivity and love.

2. The Family matters. Outside of mission circles, Dr. McQuilkin was best known for his faithful care for his wife, Muriel, through the long goodbye of Alzheimer's. He demonstrated for all of us that faithfulness to vows spoken to God in marriage is more important than the specific responsibilities or context of a job. With his own missionary family grown, Dr. McQuilkin encouraged missionary parents to recognize that God would significantly use their children's unique global upbringing. His attention to MKs both at Ben Lippen School and CIU encouraged many of them to pursue the mission field as had their parents. Dr. McQuilkin also articulated that the lack of a family through the gift of singleness might be used by God to best reach the hardest places on the earth.

3. Education matters. While Dr. McQuilkin recognized

5. Joy matters. Dr. McQuilkin was rarely seen without a smile on his face. He was a man of wit, contentment, and delight in his God even in difficult days. The thankfulness he expressed for the gifts God had given him far outweighed the discontent that could have been his lot. He set an example for missionaries whose own road would rarely be smooth.

6. Legacy matters. Pastors, missionaries, professors, lawyers, churchman, friends, and family have all given testimony in the last days to the impact of Robertson McQuilkin on their lives and ministry. His extensive personal testimonies, speaking ministry, books, and even poetry have all left a firm legacy of faithfulness pointed in one direction: to see faithful laborers sent to the great harvest.

Written tributes have flowed in from around the world that Robertson McQuilkin loved so much.¹ Men and women have named Dr. McQuilkin as their professor, president, supervisor, mentor, statesman, friend, and hero. He was all of those things, but I suspect that what he most longed for was to hear Jesus call him, "good and faithful servant." Well done, John Robertson McQuilkin, well done.

<http://mcquilkinlibrary.com/mcquilkinmemorial>

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A Changed Life: Reflections on Encountering J. Robertson McQuilkin

Steven Ybarrola

IN THE SPRING OF 1981, I attended William Carey International University in Pasadena, California. I had recently returned from a little over three and a half years with the mission organization Operation Mobilization (OM) and went to the university to get a certificate in TESOL, which I planned to use in a “tent-making” missions ministry. I was required to take two other courses while there which I did begrudgingly...at least at first. These were courses in The Bible and History, and Culture and Missions Strategy. Little did I know that my experiences in those courses would send my life in a totally different trajectory.

At that time, the courses were taught by a series of visiting professors which, during that semester, included Don Richardson, David Hesselgrave, James Buswell III, George Patterson, and J. Robertson McQuilkin. Contextualization was still a relatively new concept among evangelicals, and it was absolutely new to me. Though I had spent several years living in different cultures, I really didn’t know the importance of, or the process in, exegeting context; I had a solid biblical grounding but not an anthropological one. Perhaps, for this reason, contextualization caught my attention, and Dr. McQuilkin was instrumental in helping ignite that cognitive fire and fan it into a full blaze in my imagination.

I no longer have my notes from the class sessions taught by Dr. McQuilkin, but I am living the effect of those sessions. As Priest and Barber note, McQuilkin’s years as a missionary in Japan had a profound impact on his recognition that to really understand and connect with the people he was there to serve he needed not only good theology but also good anthropology. As a result, McQuilkin “was at the forefront of a new breed of missionaries that stressed the importance of understanding culture.” This is what McQuilkin passed on to me—that we need to have the tools to exegete both text

(i.e., Scripture) and context (i.e., culture)—and this is what sparked my imagination and changed my life. I received my certificate in TESOL. But TESOL now seemed inadequate to the real challenge of contextualization that I had learned from Dr. McQuilkin.

After leaving William Carey International University, I finished my undergraduate studies in anthropology at Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota. By this time, I was married, and my wife and I had planned to return to the mission field after I graduated. But I took heed of Dr. McQuilkin’s challenge and realized that, while missionaries were generally getting good theological training before going to the field, they were still generally lacking in the tools (i.e., methods, concepts, theories) of anthropology. I felt I could better serve missions by getting graduate training in the discipline and went on to earn an M.A. and Ph.D. in anthropology from Brown University. After teaching at a liberal arts college in Iowa for 15 years, I began experiencing what a missionary friend called a “divine restlessness”—a feeling that perhaps God had something else for my family and me to do. As my wife and I discussed what this might be, I said that if I were to leave where I was teaching it would be to use my anthropological training more intentionally in the service of missions and the church. And this is how God led us; for ten years now I have been teaching anthropology in the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary.

Like hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of other students, I thank God for bringing Dr. McQuilkin into my life!

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J. Robertson McQuilkin: a fellow missiologist

Enoch Wan

THOUGH DR. MCQUILKIN IS KNOWN for being “the president of CIU” to many; but to me he was a fellow missiologist. I first met him at ETS gatherings because for a period of time EMS and ETS held meetings together in the same venue. On one occasion he was a strong supporter for my paper (“Ethnohermeneutics: it’s necessity and difficulty for all christians of all times” when serving as the founding director of the Ph.D. program at Reformed Theological Seminary) because of his passion

for the “plain meaning of the Scripture” and his sensitivity to both text (i.e., Scripture) and context (i.e., culture). I still remember vividly his facial expression and his passionate voice as he articulated his thought and held his stance on inerrancy of the Scripture.

There were opportunities and occasions we shared our thoughts and convictions on issues of missiological nature when I served as the regional VP of EMS in the southeast region where CIU is located. He was supportive of EMS events

when I served as the Executive VP of EMS. I enjoyed his publication, *The Great Omission* (2002), in which his passion for Christian mission and the lost came through loud and clear. I admire him and David Hesselgrave who both had impactful missionary service in the “land of challenge to Christian mission” — Japan. On both occasions when I spoke at the annual retreat of JEMA (Japan Evangelical Missionary Association) and Tokyo 2010, the faithful and fruitful missionary service of these two American families were still remembered by some.

My last meeting with him was in 2010 when MissioNexus

honored Dr. McQuilkin with a “Lifetime of Service Award.” On that occasion, I realized that I am not alone in my appreciations of him as a fellow missiologist.

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J. R. McQuilkin: Contextually relevant Christian wisdom and love

Kersten Bayt Priest

ROBERTSON MCQUILKIN WAS the college president and my professor during undergraduate days at Columbia International University. Serendipitously, he also became my sweet uncle—and a truly great uncle to my four children (my husband Robert Priest is the son of Anne McQuilkin Priest). Since Uncle Robertson’s homegoing I’ve reflected on how our life paths crossed, and the influence he had on my future as a sociologist of religion.

I grew up in the culture of northern California’s 1970s social movements: flower-power, civil rights, and anti-war protests. During the week, I attended large public schools which were conscientiously secular with an admixture of New Age religion. On Sundays, my church sang beautiful

to believe and build my life on. So, as a first generation college student, I flew across the country. I hadn’t bothered to read the small “rule book” that accompanied my acceptance letter so was shocked to discover that bell-bottom jeans could only be worn on the weekends. A wrap around skirt and two maxi dresses sufficed as classroom attire until winter break. Another shock was that a morning bell woke us up—at an ungodly hour—to read our Bibles and pray (6:15—was way too early for a night owl). However, the amazing thing about the school was that people really loved Jesus and thought the truths of Scripture ought to be consequential for not only one’s own life but for humanity. President McQuilkin regularly spoke in chapel and demonstrated through his own

He opened our minds in classes on hermeneutics, apologetics, and principles of the Christian life showing how nuanced faith is possible through the understandings of language and culture.

liturgy, but the symbols seemed somewhat hollow to most participants. My nascent faith took on more substance at a summer camp in the redwoods where I encountered preaching that pointed to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

My youth pastor’s wife warned me upon my return not to become a “Jesus Freak.” I didn’t even know what that was. My increasingly diverse “community” of faith included ardent charismatics—both Catholic and Protestant. Others wore lace head coverings and were loving but also very legalistic about gender roles. Some ardently prayed for me to be healed of my chronic illness. In almost an accidental way I learned about a fully accredited college in South Carolina where a person could study the Bible for a degree. I felt it would be helpful to systematically study the Christian faith through its core sacred text in order to sensibly sort out what

interaction with the text what a loving relationship with God and others looked like. Rules were not the point. He opened up our minds in classes on hermeneutics, apologetics, and principles of the Christian life showing how nuanced faith is possible through the understandings of language and culture.

My own cognitive dissonance was increasingly resolved as the spiritual, natural, and social world fit together in faith integration. Context mattered both for interpretation of the text and interpretation of all parts of the world. This crucial lesson became pivotal for me as I later went on to earn an MA in anthropology and PhD in sociology. The Bible tells us much about humans and society. But the direct study of humans and of society in the broader academy can also enlighten us, since Scripture is not comprehensive on every

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Theme: Contextualization

Internationalization of Western Mission Agencies and Contextualization

Martin Shaw, Jr.

The responsibility for global missions has always been the responsibility of every church. Throughout history some churches have contributed larger numbers of their members than others, but the work of missions has always been for the full Church. Additionally, down through history missional efforts have taken on a variety of approaches and forms, which at their roots have been a reflection of the culture of the times and the sending church. Examples of this can be found from the first century, to the Nestorian missionary movement to the “modern” missionary movement of the last two hundred years out of the Western church. With the re-emergence of globalization, particularly as the Cold War ended, roughly around 1989, there has been both a growth of the majority world churches in cross-cultural missions and the need for Western mission agencies to respond in a healthy manner to this new reality.

Missionary sending activity in modern times from countries outside of the Western world is not new. However, there are churches sending out missionaries today from countries where only a very small church existed two hundred years ago. In other cases churches that didn't exist even seventy years ago are sending out a growing missionary force. As an example, the church in Asia has well over a hundred years of missionary sending experience (Cho, 2008). Most mission leaders would be surprised to learn that in Asia alone there was a local mission board in Bangladesh in 1918, the Korean Presbyterian Church established a sending board in 1912 and that the church in Japan was sending their own people to Mongolia in the 1920s. (Cho, 37).

At least eight delegates from Asia were in attendance at the 1910 World Missionary conference in Edinburgh (Cho, 2008).

In the more recent past large numbers of missionaries have been sent cross-culturally from the churches in Korea, the Philippines, India, Brazil

and Nigeria.

While the world was being shaken by two World Wars and the Cold War, missions continued its impact through establishing churches and Christian communities throughout the world. As these churches continued to grow

and mature some were either encouraged to or caught their own vision for global missions. This development went largely unnoticed by the churches in the West until the 1980s when two researchers shared their findings on this topic. Larry Keyes and Larry Pate published their research that demonstrated the growth of majority world missions (Keyes & Pate, p. 187-206). Their impact at that time in Western missions' thinking is well documented. Along with their data they also forecast

continued growth in missions from these churches in the coming years. It would be a few short years after the first publication of their data when the Iron Curtain would fall and the world would open up in ways that were totally unexpected. While some Western missions had internationalized prior to 1989, the interest in doing so grew after 1989.

The response of mission agencies in the West to the added availability and presence of majority world missionaries has varied. Some have responded in new and creative ways and others have not dealt with this new reality.

This paper seeks to look specifically at one response, the internationalization of the Western mission agency through the lens of contextualization. In other words, given what is known about the importance of contextualization in mission work how should this

Overwhelmingly, the Western mission agencies that have internationalized have been interdenominational missions.

influence the way Western mission agencies think about and implement the internationalization of their agencies as a response to the reality of the global church's involvement in missions? Overwhelmingly, the Western mission agencies that have internationalized have been interdenominational missions. Some of the interdenominational missions that have internationalized are those with unique niches in missions work. Example would be groups involved in translation work or

working with youth or university ministries. Denominational missions, at least in North America, have not internationalized, but have followed other models. Given their close ties with and oversight by local denominational offices this is not surprising. Outside of their missions department denominational offices have a limited and tight focus on working with churches and activities inside their national borders. Since their staff is often considered part of the larger denominational offices it is difficult to bring in those from outside of their country to serve in leadership capacities within the denomination. Thus it is necessary to state at the outset that while internationalization has received a great deal of discussion within evangelical missions circles in the last twenty-five years, not all Western missions have moved in that direction.

Definitions

In the early 1990s not only were terms evolving, but Western agencies and voices from the majority world were wrestling with the proper response to fuller participation of the global church in missions. This was a new conversation for Western evolving churches and agencies that had dominated and monopolized global missions activity for the past several generations. As an example of the dearth of thinking regarding missions from churches outside of the West one research found that,

Among a vast quantity of missiological literature only bits and pieces were found that dealt with a vision for the Two-Thirds World missionary movement. There were fewer than a dozen statements or paragraphs that were found on this theme as we gleaned missiological literature from the 1970's. 'Globalization, World Evangelization, and Global Missiology' (Moon & Lee 2003, p. 259)

Terms reflect levels of understanding, so from the appearance of Keyes and Pate's report through the 1990s was a time period of discovery, growing understanding and responses for Western mission agencies, especially those in North America. The seemingly sudden discovery and resulting realization of the potential ramifications from the fact

that churches outside of the West were actually involved in global missions activity helps to explain why new terms also began to emerge and the evolve.

Internationalization and Globalization

Early references in literature utilized the term *internationalization* to describe most all concepts and activities that involved both Western and Two-Thirds World churches in missions. Thus, up until the publication of David Lundy's book, *We Are The World*, the word *internationalization* was more commonly utilized. (Lundy) In the early 1990s *internationalization* began to be more narrowly defined as the "internationalization of the missionary force." At the same time, globalization, at least in reference to the world of missions, came to be understood as the process of churches around the world participating in missions. (Shaw, 2007) Even at

recognition of the need to partner with the newly discovered majority world churches for expanded missions work.

While the understanding and application of *partnership* too has changed, a recent definition captures it as "The unique opportunities in working with the Triune God and the Body of Christ to accomplish the *missio Dei* under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit. (Wan & Penman, 2010)" The phrase *unique opportunities* can refer to either the opportunities that present themselves to the Church or how the Church responds to those opportunities.

Partnership is a helpful concept that can support the efforts of the global Church by bringing the strengths of each church to bear on the task that it has been given. However, partnership does not mean simply taking on the existing models and structures and then inviting others to join what you have developed. In true partnership all

Partnerships work well when a variety of strengths are present and all are working towards the same goal with those strengths.

this early stage globalization begins to refer to "the interconnectedness of the global church in carrying out missional activity" while *internationalization* is more narrowly defined and understood to refer to what was happening in some mission agencies, as in the *internationalization of the staff*. (Shaw, 2007)

Partnership

Along with the recognition of the existence of missions from the majority world and the addition of terms like globalization and internationalization to missions' vocabulary, an understanding of the need for partnership also developed. Phil Butler, the founder of Interdev, developed and popularized the idea of partnership in missions. The understanding of the need for partnership in a world that was far more open than it had been for many decades moved this concept forward on many fronts. One of those areas was

parties will be influenced by the other groups in the partnership. Neither does partnership mean that all the parties will become identical. Partnerships work well when a variety of strengths are present and all are working towards the same goal with those strengths. If one group seeks influence or insists that approach, forms, structures or work be done their way, partnerships do not work, nor gain their full potential.

Samuel Escobar was one of those voices who not only was from the majority world, but also had significant experience living and teaching in the West. In a seminal article concerning internationalization and partnership Escobar stated the following:

In other words, internationalization does not mean that North American churches (or parachurch agencies) are saying to churches in other parts of the world, 'Come join us in our task; come and learn the way we have devised it.' I'd rather hear North American

churches saying, 'Let us find out what God is doing in other parts of the world, especially in the frontiers of missions, and how He is doing it, and let us join Him with our brothers and sisters in order to finish the unfinished task.' Every church, old and new, rich and poor, has something to contribute to mission in the global village of tomorrow. This is true internationalization. (Escobar, 1992)

Contextualization

The term *contextualization* is a relatively recent addition to the evangelical missions' vocabulary (Moreau 2012, 20).

Initially starting from discussions related to theology, but moving on from there to eventually touch other realities in the church and missions, contextualization is now being applied to all aspects of church life. There has been a great deal written about the concept of contextualization and it is

faith in the local setting—understandable." (Moreau, 36). The praxis of this is that when the Gospel is taken from one culture to another it should be presented in such a manner so that it is uniquely understood and it informs and shapes the development of the church and lives of the Christians in the new culture. If the first two are true, then the expression of the church outwardly whether locally or beyond, while still defined by Scripture, should be shaped by who that church has uniquely become.

As the above statement relates to not only how Christians take the Gospel from one culture to another and how that will impact the resulting church, it can also be applied to and create expectations as to what missions from the resulting churches should be like.

low the indigenous church to have different manifestations of Christianity rather than export their denominational or personal patterns that are rooted in the missionary's history and culture. (Bell 2011)

If, in the process of taking the Gospel to another culture the church planting missionary needs to allow for "local manifestations" instead of implementing forms and structures from their home culture, then it follows that the same should be applied to the development of forms and structures for missions from those same churches. The danger for Western missions and churches is that as a result of their domination of global missions activity for the past two hundred years it could be assumed that their model is "the" model for missions.

In a practical application of contextualization principles, this would be no more correct than to state that their model for church is "the" model for church. If the churches in the West are going to be consistent in their application of contextualization they need to apply it to not only the transmission of the Gospel across cultures and the types of churches that develop as a result, but also to the forms and structures that those churches utilize to participate in global missions.

The danger for Western missions

and churches is that as a result of their domination of global missions activity for the past two hundred years it could be assumed that their model is "the" model for missions.

not the goal of this paper to give an overview to that discussion. Rather, the goal is to briefly define the concept and then apply it to the internationalization of Western mission agencies over the last two and a half decades.

Scott Moreau's statement is a good place to begin as he writes that "contextualization captures the tension of Christians having biblical revelation that is universally true and applicable while living in a world of societies that are widely diverse in the religious identities. 'Simply stated, contextualization means that the message (or the resulting church) is defined by Scripture but shaped by culture.'" (Moreau, 35). He goes on to describe contextualization as "the process whereby Christians adapt the forms, content, and praxis of the Christian faith so as to communicate it to the minds and hearts of people with other cultural backgrounds. The goal is to make the Christian faith *as a whole*—not only the message but also the means of living out of our

It does not make sense to talk about the importance of our message, be it in evangelism or discipleship and the subsequent local church needing to be defined by Scripture but shaped by culture and not also apply that to the missional activities, including the structures, that are birthed out of those local churches. Missions over the past two thousand years have taken many forms, each one that grew out of the specific cultural context of the sending church or group of believers.

A practical outworking of the above in missions is shown in the following observation:

William A. Smalley defines an indigenous church as "a group of believers who live out their life, including their socialized Christian activity, in the patterns of the local society, and for whom any transformation of the society comes out of their felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures (Smalley, 1978, 498)." This definition communicates that the church planting missionary must be willing to al-

Partnership and Internationalization

The process of missions should not be that the missionaries remain in charge of the results of their activities. Yet, that can remain a significant challenge for Westerners out of a conscience or unconscious concern that what they have started will not only remain and will remain true to the values that they have. As Jonathan Ingleby aptly stated, "Much anxiety has been expressed that the church of the South should remain 'true to the gospel' by which we in the West mean that they should agree with us." (Ingleby, 168) The same temptation can exist for Western missions as the majority world churches play an ever growing role in global missions. If carrying out the task of missions means that every church does it in the same way with the same structures and by agreeing that there is one approach we

risk satisfying one part of the global church while potentially hamstringing another part. Ingleby illustrates this by following up the above statement with "It would be a happier situation, I suggest, if they were less like us." (Ingleby 168) I would suggest that not only would this be a happier situation, but a healthier one.

In being less like us not only can the world see the great diversity of the Church and God's creativity, but it also brings the strengths, gifting and uniquenesses of the majority world church to play in global missions.

With the last two hundred years of Western dominance in global missions it is understandable to see how the models and structures for missions that developed in that context might be assumed to be the correct or most appropriate ones not only for those who developed and have been utilizing them, but also for anyone who would seek to join in similar efforts. However, there is a full two thousand years of missions history that represents more than just the recent past. The variety of missions in those two millenniums of history is not only rich in activities, but also diverse in approaches. Approaches that were birthed out of unique cultural and ecclesiastical contexts. Unfortunately, "much of our thinking about missions history and therefore about mission is still too triumphalistic, too Eurocentric, too androcentric—in a word, too colonial." (Ingleby, 168)

When Western mission agencies internationalize on the global level, and thus seek to be the conduit in which missions is carried out, there is a strong risk that their cultural thinking and practice will be brought with them and in doing so could negate what the majority world churches have to offer the Kingdom. The basis for continuing this approach is that any culture can view and treat their own culture or nearly similar cultures as normative, while all other cultures are then seen as *exotic*. (Ingleby, 171) It is not far from this position to begin protecting what we see as normative so as to avoid the pain of change or the embarrassment of recognizing that ours is not the only correct practice and in fact may only

work well in our context.

Lundy makes the statement that "A mission cannot call itself globalized until its Two-Thirds World missionaries feel at home in their own organization (Lundy, 45)."

To this statement Peter Nicoll adds "...and that the one-third missionaries still feel at home in it." (Nicoll, 4) While well intentioned and sounding good, given the complexities of cultures, it is hard to conceive of any organization being all things to all cultures in a comprehensive manner. The question left unasked is would local leaders and churches in the receiving cultures find such an organization what they are looking for? Bosch points out that "Our point of departure should not be the contemporary enterprise we seek to justify, but the biblical sense of what being sent into the world signifies". (Bosch, 1933, p.177) While referencing missions in general, such a statement could refer to structures and strategies. It would benefit all

their own country? If so, how do they feel about such entities? What exactly is the attraction, other than Western agencies having far-flung and established ministries? Whether in business, government or religious activities there will always be majority world people who are attracted to Western companies and organizations. The mere existence of such people is not a primary or even secondary reason for establishing sending entities in those countries.

Given the lack of data, more study needs to be given to this theme, but another critical question to ask is whether or not ten years after joining an internationalized mission the majority world missionary still feels the same attraction? If they do, how well do they still fit in and maintain the ability to motivate their own culture for missions from the inside out?

A dissertation entitled "Discovering A Contextualized Model for Training Japanese For Cross-Cultural Ministry" (Dupree, 2004) does present some data

Whether in business, government

or religious activities there will always be majority world people who are attracted to Western companies and organizations.

missional efforts in a globalized world if in responding to this reality each church would focus on the later as opposed to the former.

In presenting another rationale for internationalizing missions the following has been stated:

"The fact of the matter is that while nationals are creating their own indigenous mission agencies, many nationals are finding the thought of working with a far-flung, established ministry attractive." (Lundy, 147).

The critical question to ask is why are they feeling this way? Some might even find Western style church services and music attractive, but is that sufficient reason to plant only Western style churches in other countries? Such a statement leaves open too many questions. Are there existing missions in

that is helpful in understanding the impact internationalized missions vs. local sending agencies can have on missionaries who are sent out from the Church in Japan (Dupree, 2004). Dupree notes an "interesting trend" when he inquired about the effectiveness of missionaries who were sent out from Japan (Dupree, 182). Those missionaries who had gone with an international/non-Japanese sending agency responded with "results or a product, such as having established a church (p. 182)." Whereas those who had been sent out with a Japanese sending agency spoke more about relationships (*ibid*). Dupree attributes this difference in responses to "the kind of expectations the missionaries had been given by their respective sending agencies."

This lends credence to the case that missionaries from non-Western

countries who are sent out by internationalized missions will change, even if in small ways, from their home cultures, or that it is very challenging for Western agencies to fully embrace and maximize the strengths that the non-Western missionaries in their organization bring with them. While more hard data is needed to fully support these conclusions, it is anticipated that the results may vary slightly but would be consistent among majority world missionaries.

Focusing just on missions activity in Thailand, Zehner writes an interesting article highlighting church missions' partnerships (Edwin Zehner, 2010).

His main theme is the observation both among Thai churches, but also seen in other areas of the world that missions tends to "flow from groups of higher prestige and socio-economic power to groups of lower prestige (Zehner)." With that observation he then argues that more attention needs to be

its cocoon, in a sincere desire to help, only to find that not only was the help not needed, it was also detrimental for the butterfly, so too there is a process to developing healthy missions from any cultural context. One has to ask if the recent internationalization of Western missions does not fall into the same pattern. While the desire to encourage more missions from Majority world churches, it may not be all that helpful. These churches have been discovering God's call to them for His Kingdom work. While there is a need for more workers, Bill Taylor rightly points out that "The question for this missiology is not how much missionary action is required today, but what kind of missionary action is necessary." (William Taylor, 2000, p 112) Recognizing the positive addition and diversity of the entire Church's involvement in global missions should also free any one segment of the Church from feeling the need to bring their models and

that is even possible in a Western mission's organization. Can any Western mission restructure to the extent that they become broad enough so that they can fully reflect all of the above from multiple cultures in one organization? Conversely, can Majority world churches have the ability to fully express their own culture, and thus the strengths and weaknesses and the unique gifting and potential contribution God would have them bring to His mission in the structures of even the best internationalized mission agency?

The above practice of contextualization has not always been achieved. Küster has observed that "When Westerners visit churches in Africa, Asia, or Latin America, their first impression, even today, is that they are encountering distortions of their own tradition." (Küster, 2014).

If that is the case for the churches, it is partially a result of failing to encourage a contextualized approach to the church planting and leadership training activities. This begs the question that if missionaries and the churches they have planted in various parts of the world struggle with a healthy contextualization can the churches be expected to seek anything other than Western models for the other programs that they develop? In other words, has the internationalization of Western agencies for the purpose of encouraging global missions had the unintended result of discouraging the healthy development of global missions, especially from the majority world?

In a long list of concerns related to the globalization of missions, Ingleby's final point is "Finally, we have transferred *colonial* Christianity to the Global South by means of an insufficiently contextualized gospel—a *Western* Christianity at a fairly deep level, leading to a syncretistic response." (Ingleby, 172).

Very little study resulting in objective data has been done concerning the internationalization of Western mission agencies. There are antidotal observations that can be found in various articles and some books authored by Westerners, of which only a sampling are presented in this paper. Lacking objective data the following

Has the internationalization of Western agencies for the purpose of encouraging global missions had the unintended results of discouraging healthy development of global missions, especially from the majority world?

given to church-mission partnerships, openness to "spiritual leadership from groups of lower status," and a greater awareness of what is taking place in missions' activity outside of what the Western church is doing (Ibid.). The assumption he makes is that these are critical areas to understand and the failure to do so can lead to a failure to understand Western church and missions roots. The point is that there are similar observable patterns in the development and evolution of missions in both the Western and Majority worlds. Thus what occurred in the birthing and growth of Western missions is also taking place today in the same process for Majority world missions.

Zehner sees this as healthy and a process that needs to be allowed to continue. Much like the oft given illustration of the butterfly being helped from

structures to the aid of the other parts of the Church who are entering and contributing in their own way to the same efforts.

Areas of Concern

In a further fleshing out of the concept of contextualization Frost and Hirsh describe it as follows, "To contextualize is to understand the language, longings, lifestyle patterns, and worldview of the host community and to adjust our practices accordingly without compromising the gospel." (Frost and Hirsch, 85).

If the proper application and goal of contextualization is to see the above carried out in practice then this should impact how the churches in each culture go about conceiving of and implementing missions from their cultural context. One then has to ask if

will be a limited sampling of some of the comments that fall into one of two categories. The first would be comments from Westerners who in their writings are presenting positive rationale for the internationalization of either their own agency or Western agencies in general. The second category will be comments that raise concerns about internationalization.

An attempt to critique Western mission agencies' approach in missions was made at the World Evangelical Association's Mission Commission's Iguassu Missiological Consultation in 1999. Samuel Escobar's paper along with others raised the issue of managerial missiology expressing his and others' concern that such an approach "is to reduce Christian mission to a manageable enterprise." (Escobar, 109) What followed was a dialogue from various corners of the evangelical world, but the strongest reaction came from North American missions organizations.

The interaction was of interest for several reasons, but primarily for this discussion, how many from the Western missions context reacted strongly to critique on their approach to missions from the majority world.

It raises concern over the ability of the evangelical missions community to allow for constructive critique of each other and to allow others to develop their own approaches to missions at the cost of not adopting the current accepted approaches practiced by Western churches.

To put it another way, "Could it be that, hidden behind missions' present methodology, still lurks an incipient paternalism that is not yet aware of the riches of 'Macedonia's gifts'?" (Henry M. Conn as quoted in Reese, 94). Reese then states that "Conn was hinting at the possibility of partnerships between East and West, but the obstacle was that the West could not yet perceive anything of value that the East had to offer." (Ibid.).

Is it possible that while verbally giving acceptance to the value that the majority world brings to the global missions efforts that unconsciously Western agencies seek to internationalize because they feel that the models,

structures and approaches are better than what the majority church has to offer?

Without mentioning names Ingleby also references the managerial style of missions in his book by recounting the experience of one of his friends with a North American mission. The missiologist reportedly stated that "...the responsibility of the West is now to 'manage mission.'" (Ingleby, 169). Ingleby goes on to interpret that comment to mean that the West and presumably Western churches and missions are to offer "expertise, finance and direction, but doing it at a distance." (Ingleby, 169).

In a description of one North American mission's process of internationalizing the account is given how a mission agency with no previous work in or call from Korean churches moved to establish a sending office in that country (Brant, 48).

There is clearly a great deal of sensitivity on the behalf of the mission agency as they sought out a local leader to help them and then listened well to his advice and direction.

standard should not be applied equally to both situations.

Following the above accounting Brant references Don Richardson's *Peace Child* book and develops that theme further. "I suggest that just as God has uniquely prepared every people to RECEIVE the Gospel—God has also prepared every people to TAKE the Gospel. All the dynamics, the structures, the systems, etc. are already in every culture, so that when these are redeemed, they enable each culture to make their own unique contribution to global missions." (Ibid., 49).

This is an excellent point. As Escobar and others have mentioned each culture and thus the resulting church in those cultures are uniquely situated and gifted by God for the work He desires to accomplish in His Kingdom. Our recognition of that factor is critical to the way local churches approach incorporating missions into the fabric of their churches as well as how they determine what way, if any, a Western mission might have in walking with them in this area. A seminal question to ask coming out of the above statement would be, can a Western agency

Just as newer Christian communities

benefit from and look for identity with the global Church family, it can be attractive to be said to be working with a larger and historical missions agency.

In the process of establishing a presence in that country a meeting was held with the opportunity for questions to be asked by the Koreans who were present. One pastor asked, "In missions, we believe that every culture should have a contextualized church. Why should the same standard not apply to emerging missions?" (Ibid., 48). The response is an affirmation of indigenous missions, and "that the emerging missions movement must have flexible structures which take into account the cultural diversity of a global missions movement. (Ibid.)

The Korean pastor asked the right question and his response exhibits a good understanding of contextualization. There is no reason why the same

maximize the uniqueness that God has placed in that culture for His own purposes?

There is a difference between local partnering for missions activity and Western agencies internationalizing their staff. Each church should not only seek self-reflection to determine the strengths and weaknesses that they bring to the table, as well as being open to input from outsiders into those same areas.

"The fact of the matter is that while nationals are creating their own indigenous mission agencies, many nationals are finding the thought of working with a far-flung, established ministry attractive. (Lundy, 147)." Just as newer Christian communities benefit from and look for identity with the global

Church family, it can be attractive to be said to be working with a larger and historical missions agency. However, the question needs to be asked why individuals would want to work with a Western agency. There are several possible responses ranging from those who in an age of globalization are attracted to things Western. The same could be said for some people in why they would want to work for a Western corporation, but because there are people who would like to work for a Western corporation it would not be seen as sufficient rationale for the internationalizing of any company, so one is left to wonder why it would be a consideration for any missions organization.

There is a potential hidden danger that legitimizes Western dominance in global missions thinking and operations in the process of internationalization. Vinoth Ramachandra, a Sri Lankan writing about Orientalism, describes it as "an approach that 'essentialises' the culture of others in such a way that justifies their intellectual and political

many years. His paper and comments discuss the advantages and challenges of internationalizing. It is evident that even in a mission with a long history of internationalization, how the Western approaches either consciously or unconsciously still had a very strong influence on the culture of this mission. He writes:

In a Western-oriented mission such as OMF, Asia missionaries are often expected to be like Westerners in thinking and doing things. Westernization of the minority Asians is encouraged and welcomed, because it makes the mission society easier to operate and be in control. There is not a question about the necessity of Asians learning Western cultures. But when it comes to important discussions or decision making regarding missions in Asia, a real understanding and agreement can never be reached by Asians becoming like Westerners. (Ogawa, 177).

No agency is perfect and even in missions from the same general cultural background there will be differences in how to approach decision making. However, what is described above is

forms and structures need also reflect the local context in order to maximize their unique role in global missions.

In practical terms it is easier and more effective to internationalize in local missions activities through networks and partnerships than it is in the host country. The church in the sending country, whether directly or through a local sending agency can best prepare, support and develop strategies that will be culturally appropriate and the most helpful to the workers that they send out. This should in no way limit the ability of those churches and workers to interact with other churches that will be doing the same. When each group can recognize their own and others' strengths and weaknesses and come to the global table with that knowledge it will put the focus of networking and partnership for work locally or in missions terms, the field. As Warren Webster said as early as the 1970s, "In the Biblical interdependence of both younger and older churches lies the future of the church's mission to the world." (Wagner, 1972, 99).

A look at where most of the Western agencies that have internationalized will find that they have done so in other Western countries or countries that have some of the commonalities that have shaped Western missions. Those commonalities would be sufficient number of churches that have reached a level of financial wealth that allows them to carry out the model of missions that most Western agencies utilize. Thus outside of the West, countries like Singapore, Korea and Hong Kong would be prime examples. Yet, all of these countries also have their own indigenous agencies. These agencies may look like Western agencies, but more often than not they operate out of the unique cultural context that birthed them and the traits that would follow. With the exception of Korean agencies they tend not to be large in the number of missionaries that they send out or the amount of finances that they handle. What they do have is an exceptional understanding of and relationship with the culture of the churches they work with and the missionaries that they are sending out.

As good as any Western models and structures might be, they still grew out of a specific culture and context that is not the same context as found in the Majority World.

domination." (Ramachandra, 2009, 14). Western agencies may not be attempting to "essentialise" themselves in global missions, but it can give that appearance. If that becomes the case Western models and structures that could justify, even if unintentionally, the continued domination of those same models and structures are unhealthy at best.

As good as any Western models and structures might be, they still grew out of a specific culture and context that is not the same context as found in the Majority world.

Joshua Ogawa, a former missionary from Japan to South East Asia presented a paper at the Iggausu gathering in 1999. Ogawa's missionary service was with an historic Western mission that had been internationalized for

more than that. Operating any organization across cultures can be very challenging. What Ogawa is referencing is something deeper.

A quick survey would suggest that it is Western agencies who have internationalized, not those from the Majority world, even the ones with significant history. There are multiple reasons for this, but it does look like internationalization is primarily a one-way street. There are many examples of partnership on the local level by entities from around the world. This seems to be a better model for responding to the reality of what God is doing in His global work.

If contextualization is critical to theological development and understanding including ecclesiology and missiology, then it follows that the

A Model for Understanding

The following model from scenario planning developed by Denis Lane helps to build a realistic understanding of the dynamics impacting the work of groups together (Lane, 2001, 1). A starting point for many forward looking plans starts in the present, when in reality there is a rich history that impacts how and when various groups arrived at the present. The assumption is then made that "inherent in most scenario planning has been that 'we' have a shared present, which arises from 'our' shared past. From this present, the futures outlined in the various scenarios branch out" (Lane, 2).

This is illustrated by the following illustration. As we look at the world and the various cultures rarely do any two groups from different parts of the world have a shared past. There may

the Majority world church's traditions, worldview and approach to ministry. This in turn will impact how they will approach and own their own involvement in missions.

A better understanding of the context would be that in coming together for global missions, each group or country represented will have multiple pasts. These pasts will vary in length of time, types of experiences, theological understanding and general practices within that culture.

As each of these churches approach global missions at a specific point in time they will have a "converging presence." The point of convergence is the point in time where they are all aware and recognize the need for obedience to God through involvement in missions. This does not mean that there will be similar motivations for or identical

Conclusion

The internationalization of Western mission agencies, while being attractive to both the Western churches and agencies and even some in the majority world, there are potential areas of concern. The primary drawback is the challenge for any Western agency to fully contextualize themselves to the extent that they can understand and address fully all the cultures that they would seek to incorporate. While the need for partnerships is well recognized, the question becomes what should such a partnership look like and at what level it should take place.

This paper does not seek to suggest that Western agencies who have internationalized are wrong or that they should seek to reverse their course. Still there is the opportunity to look at the application of contextualization for their situation and ask critical questions going forward.

In a globalized world churches need to find ways to partner and closely work together with a variety of models and structures that even though they are different if they are brought together in a mutually beneficial manner can benefit the work of all groups and more importantly bring glory to the name of Christ.

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The globalization of missions will mean that there will be diversity in multiple areas. Such diversity is healthy and reflects the diversity of the God of the Bible.

be similarities, but the combination of language, customs, geography, climate, neighbors and wars, to name but a few areas all impact each group to give them very different histories. There may be overlap in some areas, but overall the history is rarely "shared." If the histories are not shared, then, even with globalization, can it be assumed that there is shared present from which all groups can work from?

Even in the case of a group of churches in the majority world who were started by missionaries from a Western church, their overall histories, while overlapping, are not really shared. There are points of commonality, but that is different. Further, how the Western church arrived at and carries out missions is deeply colored by their own unique history. This history will be very different from the history of the church in the majority world. Experiences, theological development and assuming healthy contextualization that has occurred will have all shaped

approaches to how they do missions. However, the anticipation is that from the point of convergence there will be a variety of futures that will develop. These futures will most likely be aligned in a closer manner than the groups were in their histories, but given the differences in multiple areas those futures will not be completely the same. We should neither anticipate that the futures will be similar nor that they should be fully aligned, only that they will be potentially closer than they were in their history.

This means that as the global Church participates in missions, they will need to develop their own unique approaches, models and be fully respected for where they have come from and where they go in missions. The globalization of missions will mean that there will be diversity in multiple areas. Such diversity is healthy and reflects the diversity of the God of the Bible. It will often mean that healthy partnerships may be the best way to reflect and enable such diversity.

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Evaluating the Viability of Insider Movements in Muslim Contexts

By Rev. Dr. Fred Farrokh

This paper addresses the extent to which adherents of non-Christian faiths may experience religious continuity upon coming to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In missiological terms, this considers the viability of insider movements. In particular, I consider this question in Muslim ministry contexts.

I begin by reviewing the definition of insider movements provided by their proponents. Specifically, that definition includes two indispensable elements: i.) permanent retention of Muslim identity, and ii.) remaining *inside* the Islamic socio-religious community, which is centered on the mosque. I then review recent field research which confirms that these two elements are present in contemporary Muslim insider movements. I then provide background data which is necessary for evaluating the viability of insider movements in Muslim contexts.

I conclude that the Insider Movement paradigm is not viable in Muslim contexts. The indispensable ingredient for retaining Muslim identity is affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad. Yet Muhammad's Christological input was of such an anti-biblical trajectory that those who seek to who seek to permanently retain Muslim identity will neither be able to find their individual identity in the Lord Jesus Christ nor their collective identity in the Body of Christ. Furthermore, when believers in the Lord Jesus Christ continue attending the Islamic mosque on a permanent basis, this practice confuses other Muslims and hampers the spiritual growth of these new believers in Christ.

Defining Insider Movements

In April 2007, the International Journal of Frontier Missions sponsored a meeting of missionaries. One of their tasks was to define "insider movements." Rebecca Lewis, based on this meeting, provides their working definition that insider movement believers "remain inside their socioreligious

communities, retaining the identity of that community while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible" (2007, 75).

As mentioned above, there are two main indispensable characteristics of insider movements (IM) in the Muslim context: First, IM believers remain inside the Islamic mosque, which is the locus of the Muslim socioreligious community. Second, Lewis states that

Field research in Muslim contexts confirms that the two indispensable elements of Muslim insider movements are indeed permanent retention of Muslim identity and ongoing mosque attendance.

IM promotes the permanent retention of Muslim identity. (I will use "remaining and retaining" below as a short-hand for these two elements.) While a Muslim seeker after Christ will typically go through a transitional state in which he or she continues to attend the mosque and identify as a Muslim, the IM paradigm recommends permanent, not temporary, states of identity and worship.

Differentiating Between Insider, Indigenous and Underground Movements

I differentiate between the terms *insider*, *indigenous* and *underground* which are used to describe movements to Christ in Muslim contexts. Insider movements are not necessarily synonymous with indigenous movements, the latter being thought of as *of the people*. There are indigenous movements to Christ in Muslim contexts, such as in

Iran and Algeria, where the new believers neither remain inside the Islamic mosque nor retain Muslim identity. These movements can be considered indigenous in that little outside influence has precipitated their spawning. Likewise, insider movements are not necessarily limited to localized, non-transnational movements that take place inside the borders of a Muslim country.

Additionally, insider movements are not synonymous with underground movements. Underground movements typically occur in high-persecution contexts, including atheistic, communist and Islamic contexts. Underground movements usually meet in homes or

other non-traditional church settings, in unadvertised locations. Information about the group and its meetings are shared on a need-to-know basis. Underground churches and fellowships in China are not Communist insider movements, since the believers do not identify as communists. Using the example of Iran again, believers there typically meet in underground fellowships. Yet they cannot be considered insider movements since the participants do not retain Muslim identity but identify themselves with alternate, non-Islamic identifiers. Neither do these believers continue to attend the Islamic mosque. Having presented these terminological clarifications, I now review research on actual Muslim insider movements.

Field Research on Muslim Insider Movements

Field research in Muslim contexts confirms that the two indispensable

elements of Muslim insider movements are indeed permanent retention of Muslim identity and ongoing mosque attendance—remaining and retaining. The first published research on the beliefs and practices of Muslim insider movement practitioners was presented by Phil Parshall in 1998 regarding in a location designated only as “Islampur” (see Parshall 1998). This study of 72 Insider Muslim leaders indicated that “96 percent say that there are four heavenly books, ie, Torah, Zabur, Injil and Qur’an (this is standard Muslim belief)” and “66 percent say that the Qur’an is the greatest of the four books” (Parshall 1998, 406). Since the Qur’an is the revelation Muslims believe God gave to Muhammad, affirmation of the Qur’an as a holy book tracks closely with affirming the divine origin of Muhammad’s prophetic mission.

Regarding mosque attendance in

study was conducted in seven different countries within four separate regions of the Muslim world—South Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa.

These insider movement participants exemplify the “remaining and retaining” characteristics outlined above. Prenger describes them as Muslims in the present tense. From the data given, these insider Muslims tend toward affirmation of Muhammad. Regarding their perceptions of prophets, Prenger states, “‘Andy’ was the only one that explicitly said in response to the question about prophets in general that he believes that Mohammed was not a prophet” (2014, 85). Prenger provides helpful verbatim quotes on what these leaders feel about prophets, Muhammad, and the compatibility of the Qur’an and the Bible. For example, a Southeast Asian leader “Drew” (pseudonym) conveys his beliefs through an analogy:

Insider movement proponents have accurately understood some facets of the wider Muslim ministry context, especially as they relate to catalyzing rapidly-multiplying movements in the Muslim world.

Islampur, “50 per cent go to the traditional mosque on Friday,” and “31 per cent go to the mosque more than once a day. They do standard Arabic prayers which affirm Muhammad as a prophet of God” (Parshall 1998, 406). Parshall notes the role of missionaries in promoting the IM paradigm: “Mosque attendance has been encouraged by the ‘outside’ Bible teachers” (Parshall 1998, 406). Though it would be helpful to know the percentage of Muslims in the general population of Islampur who attend mosque, the figures quoted by Parshall indicate that a significant number of Muslim insiders do so.

Second, J.H. Prenger recently published a doctoral dissertation (Prenger 2014) featuring a multi-national research design in which he interviewed 26 “Muslim Insider Christ Followers.” His research is the most expansive to date regarding the direct beliefs and practices of Insider Muslims. Prenger’s

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

Therefore, the Insider leaders interviewed by Prenger not only claim Muslim identity through the descriptor “Muslim Insider Christ Followers,” but many continue to embrace Muslim identity through affirmation of the prophetic office of Muhammad.

The data presented indicate the Muslim Insider Christ Followers see themselves as Muslims. In fact, at least two of the South Asian groups identify themselves as “Completed Muslims” and urge their Muslims friends to likewise find the fulfillment of their Islamic faith in Christ. In South Asia Region D,

Prenger reports that “the chosen identity of insiders are Pro-Christ Muslims or completed Muslims” (2014, 210).

Regarding attending the Islamic mosque, Prenger does not give the exact number of the 26 interviewees who continue to attend the Islamic mosque. Yet Prenger provides direct quotes from many of the Muslim insiders which indicate that they do. They have their own reasons and rationales for doing so, which are highly instructive.

Several of the Insider leaders adapt something akin to Paul’s marriage instructions in 1 Corinthians 7 to continued mosque attendance. Prenger notes: African IM Leader “Brad explained their strategy in regard to the mosque system as continuing what you did before. If insiders attended the mosque before they came to faith in *Isa*, they encourage them to continue going” (2014, 213). Prenger affirms that one of the South Asian Insider leaders adheres to the same principle: “Regarding mosque attendance, Mitch supports the idea that someone should not change their attendance habits after coming to faith in *Isa*. ‘He can worship in the mosque in the name of Jesus’” (2014, 209).

In summary, the contemporary “Muslim insider Christ followers” interviewed by Prenger adhere to the “remaining and retaining” principles as they remain inside the Islamic mosque and permanently retain Muslim identity.

Contextual Factors in Ministry to Muslims

The previous section establishes that Muslim insiders exist and that they generally follow the “remaining and retaining” principles inherent of insider movements. To this point, I have focused on the “what” question—what are insider movements? Now I turn my attention to the all-important “why” question—why are missionaries promoting insider movements in the Muslim context?

Insider movement proponents have accurately understood some facets of the wider Muslim ministry context, especially as they relate to catalyzing rapidly-multiplying movements in the Muslim world. Islam is the most expulsive of the world’s major religions

when it comes to faith deviation on the part of its adherents. The two theological constructs which govern expulsion from the Muslim community are *kufr* (unbelief) and *shirk* (associating partners with Allah). Muslim scholars from the time of Muhammad onward have viewed Christians as guilty of *kufr*—for not believing in Muhammad—and *shirk*—for attributing divinity to the man Jesus. Likewise, Muslims who have come to believe the biblical narrative that God incarnated Himself in the form of Jesus to undertake a redemptive mission on earth have traditionally been considered apostate by the Muslim community. According to Islamic Law, apostasy is punishable by death. Muhammad stated, “If somebody [a Muslim] discards his religion, kill him” (Sahih Bukhari, vol. 4, book 52, 260).

This dynamic explains the historical challenge of missions to Muslims. A Muslim who comes to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is typically expelled from the *umma* (Muslim community). Even if the punishment does not rise to the level of death, other severe consequences await the apostate. A Turkish writer, himself a Muslim-background Christian, Ziya Meral, states:

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

Meral’s assessment reveals why it has been difficult to catalyze growing movements to Christ in Muslim contexts. The *umma* either expels the converts to Christ, or the converts flee their native communities, making a growing movement difficult to obtain.

The ostensible brilliance of the insider movement paradigm is that it aspires to bring Muslims to saving faith in the Lord Jesus without their communities conferring apostate status

upon them. Insider proponents rightly understood that the key element of retaining Muslim identity is the continued affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad. As seen in the research above, insider Muslims continue to make this affirmation.

The Christological Barrier to Insider Movements in the Muslim Context

The insider paradigm would seem to provide the answer to the historical challenge of ministry to Muslims if it were not for one key factor: Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, denied the biblical narrative regarding Jesus Christ, rejecting Christ’s Divinity, Incarnation, Lordship, Sonship, Crucifixion and Resurrection.

The cornerstone of Islamic theology is Divine Unity, known in Arabic as *Tawhid*. One of the most famous chapters (suras) of the Qur’an is Sura Ikhlas (112) and Muslims feel its recitation is worth one-third of the entire Qur’an.

The two main roles of the Islamic Jesus are to assure people that he did not request anyone to worship him, and to prophesy the coming of Muhammad (sura 61:6).

This sura instructs Muslim worshippers: “Say: God is One...He does not beget, He is not begotten” (112:2-3). This verse indicates that Muhammad rejected the idea that God incarnated Himself or that He would be birthed into the world as Jesus was.

The Qur’an dictated by Muhammad repeatedly denies the Divinity and Lordship of Christ: Sura 5:116 illustrates this theme. Here Allah questions a contrite Jesus about Jesus allegedly receiving worship: “And behold! God will say: ‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God?’ He will say: ‘Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart; I know not what is in Thine.’” Overlooking for the moment Muhammad’s inclusion of Mary in the

Trinity, the Christological component of this verse diminishes Jesus greatly. First, Jesus is interrogated by Allah. Second, Jesus states that he has no right to be worshipped, which is clear denial of divinity. Third, Jesus emphasizes he is not omniscient. Although this final point is similar to some NT statements from Jesus, such as not knowing the time of his return, in this context the theological purpose is to further distance Jesus from divinity.

The Qur’an also states that Jesus is not the Son of God. “The Jews call Ezra a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God’s curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the truth” (9:30). Furthermore, the Qur’an denies the Crucifixion as follows:

“They [the Jews] said (in boast), “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God”; - but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made

to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not: Nay, God raised him up unto Himself” (4:157-58).

The two main roles of the Islamic Jesus are to assure people that he did not request anyone to worship him, and to prophesy the coming of Muhammad (sura 61:6). The Muslim scholar Tarif Khalidi explains:

“Clearly there is something about Jesus which makes his Qur’anic image so utterly different from the Jesus of the Gospels... He is the only prophet in the Qur’an who is deliberately made to distance himself from the doctrines that his community is said to hold about him” (2003 11-12).

Another Muslim scholar Smail Baliç rightly assesses the existential difference between the Islamic prophet Jesus and the biblical Jesus as God incarnate: “The chasm seems to be unbridgeable”

(1979, 1).

In Islam, Jesus is a side actor in the Islamic meta-narrative to Muhammad's lead role. Muhammad enlists Jesus to rebuke Christians upon His return to earth because they wrongly promoted Him to a status above that of a mortal man (Sahih Bukhari 2013, vol. 4, book 55, 657). The same *hadith* narrates Jesus breaking the cross in His Islamic second coming.

Smail Balic explains why Christian missionaries often mitigate the Christological chasm:

"It is primarily Christian missionaries, or certain Orientalists who are either themselves theologians, or who are well disposed to Christian theology, who overestimate the role of Jesus in the Koran. They are misled by the way of understanding Jesus which they retain from their Christian Tradition. It is no surprise that, under such circumstances, they arrive at false conclusions and evaluations" (1979, 3).

In my own doctoral field research, I described a hypothetical situation to 40 Muslim-born persons currently living in

believes God came to earth as a person. Muslims don't believe in the biblical Jesus" (Farrokh 2014, 160).

Since Muhammad's picture of Jesus contradicts the biblical description of Christ, then the prophet of Islam cannot be considered a bona fide prophet. Therefore, those who embrace the biblical redeemer Jesus have de facto rejected the primary ingredient for retaining Muslim identity.

Attempts by Insider Proponents to Overcome the Christological Chasm

Insider movement proponents have understood that the Christological chasm must be bridged if their disciples can claim the affirmation of Muhammad needed for retention of Muslim identity. It is no surprise, therefore, that these insider movement proponents began to seek to reconcile the Bible and the Qur'an. Geoffrey Parrinder, a Methodist missionary to West Africa, opened the door to a reconciled Chris-

God with Arabic cultural structures" (1979, 118). Fouad Accad, a Lebanese Christian, popularized a "Building Bridges" method in the 1970s (Accad 1976; 1997). Accad states that the Qur'an is "pro-Christ, pro-Christian, and pro-Bible" (1997, 10). He continues by stating "60 percent of Muslims who are approached with the method explained in this book put their trust in Christ—and all who do, do so without becoming detestable to their communities" (1997, 10). Both missiologists seek to elevate Muhammad to a position whereby Muslim insiders could continue to affirm the prophethood of Muhammad and thus remain in the good graces of their Muslim communities. In the figure on top of page 25, the efforts of these missionaries is signified by the "Up Line"

Other missionaries sought to bridge the Christological chasm by moving the biblical Christology in the direction of the Qur'anic Christology. Rick Brown of Wycliffe Bible Translators catalyzed Muslim Idiom Bible Translations by removing the term "Son of God" which Islam rejects. Others, such as John Travis, sought merely to emphasize to Muslims the Christology of Jesus as an exalted prophet, which Muslims already believe (see Dixon 2012, 121). Their efforts represent the "Down line" here.

Insider Movement Outcomes

In this section I evaluate the outcome of insider movements in the Muslim context. This is not merely theoretical, but includes evaluations of the field research above and that I conducted as a part of my 2014 PhD dissertation on Muslim identity. Specifically, I consider situations in which the two indispensable elements of "retaining and remaining" are present.

1. Authentic Converts Mislabeled as Muslim Insiders. Before I look at situations in which Muslim insiders permanently retain Muslim identity, I must address one category of "on-the-ground" happenings that confuses missiologists because of the usage of incorrect terminology. Insider advocate Kevin Higgins makes the following challenge to those who are skeptical of

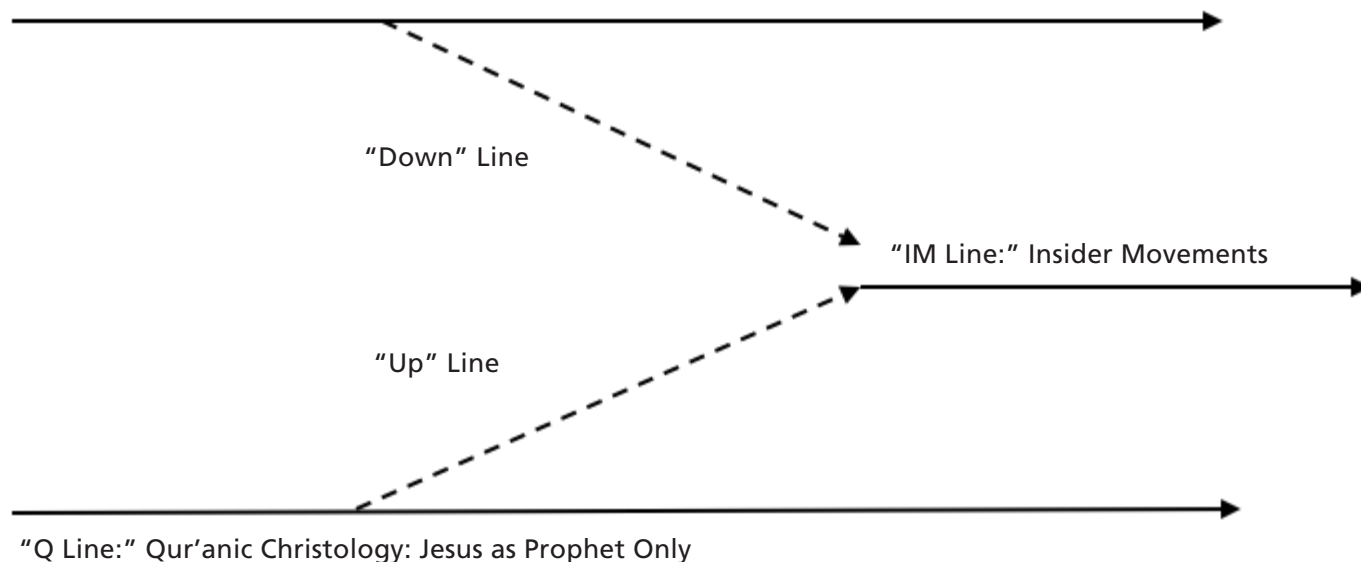
Since Muhammad's picture of Jesus contradicts the biblical description of Christ, then the prophet of Islam cannot be considered a bona fide prophet.

Metro New York. They originated from 18 different countries; 20 have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this hypothetical vignette, a Muslim comes to believe that "God visited the earth in the form of Jesus who died on the Cross and rose from the dead." I then asked each interviewee if the subject of the vignette now believes in the same Jesus he (or she) had been taught about as a Muslim. Thirty-eight of the 40 interviewees stated that this was a different Jesus. All cited theological reasons. Some mentioned the incarnation of God as differentiating this Jesus from the Islamic Jesus; others stated that the Calvary event disqualified this Jesus from being the same as the Islamic Jesus. An Uzbek Muslim scholar stated, "No. They are different. Islam looks at Jesus as any other prophet. Ahmed [the lead character in the vignette] now

tology by stating that Muhammad was primarily and appropriately rebuking Christian heresy; rather than attacking the biblical faith: "It has often been thought that the Qur'an denies the Christian teaching of the Trinity, and commentators have taken its words to be a rejection of orthodox Christian doctrine. However, it seems more likely that heretical doctrines that are denied in the Qur'an, and orthodox Christians should agree with most of its statements" (1965, 133). As such, Parrinder proposed a reconciled Christology which would become much in vogue among insider advocates.

Charles Kraft was an early pioneer of this paradigm who interpreted Muhammad as serving the God of the Bible: "I believe that this is what Muhammad himself was trying to do: to combine an allegiance to the Judaeo-Christian

"B Line:" Biblical Christology: Jesus as Divine Savior



insider movements in Muslim contexts: "I know of no critic of insider movements who questions whether Muslims are being saved—or can be saved—as 'insiders'" (2007, 34). Perhaps I would be that first person! Let me explain.

If a Muslim comes to believe the biblical narrative regarding the Lord Jesus Christ, he or she no longer believe in the prophethood of Muhammad, based on the laws of mutual exclusivity. My own PhD research among indigenous persons leads to the unequivocal conclusion that Muslims will not accept as "Muslims" those who believe that God visited the earth in the form of Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of humanity. Therefore, a Muslim who "gets saved" (in evangelical parlance) is no longer a Muslim. He or she thus no longer retains Muslim identity, which insider advocates themselves state is mandatory for insiders. So, Muslims may be getting saved wherever the Gospel is preached. This may include movements that are being described as insider movements. However, these new believers are not Muslims, technically, in the eyes of Muslims, since they have rejected Muhammad. Since the affirmation of Muhammad is the key ingredient for retaining Muslim identity, and insider proponents state that insiders retain Muslim identity, these

new believers therefore are not insiders.

Kevin Higgins' mistake is evident in his suggested identity statements for insider Muslims. Higgins describes this category of these "I-2" Insider Muslims: "I can say I am a Muslim...I believe that as time went by, however, Muhammad developed ideas and teachings with which I do not agree. Some of these are found in the Quran itself" (2006, 121). These believers may in fact have found salvation if the teachings of Muhammad they reject are those anti-biblical teachings regarding Jesus Christ and the salvation that is found in Him alone. However, as my own field research indicates, these believers would not be considered Muslims in the eyes of the Muslim community, since they believe Muhammad brought forth error.

This particular insider terminological fallacy is more easily demonstrated by analogy. Consider the case of an atheist who comes to believe in the Gospel and the biblical Jesus, but insists on calling himself an "Atheist Follower of Jesus" or an "Atheist Insider Christ Follower." He may insist to Christians that he is better positioned to reach other atheists by using this self-identifier. In reality, however, he can only honestly describe himself as an atheist in the past tense, since he has now come to believe in God. If other atheists come to know

that he refers to himself as an atheist in the present tense, but believes in God, they will rightly castigate him as a deceiver. Even if he tries to justify his self-identification through semantics—for example, the early Christians were also called atheists since they refused to worship Caesar as a god—the result of his mental and linguistic gymnastics will be only to confuse true atheists and true Christians.

Similarly, if a Muslim who comes to believe in the biblical Jesus insists on identifying himself as a Muslim on a permanent basis, other Muslims will inevitably consider him as an imposter or a hypocrite once his true beliefs about Jesus become known. He may think he is a "Muslim who is submitted to God through Jesus" but his insistence on this identity will ultimately fail because it violates the definition of Muslim that Muslims have held for 1,400 years.

Kevin Higgins believes that insider movements (which he also calls Jesus movements) can transform the meaning of the term Muslim: "Views concerning Muhammad, the place of the Qur'an, the value of the salat, the meaning of the word 'Muslim,' the nature of Jesus, the character of Allah, and many other elements of Islamic faith and life will change within and through such movements to Jesus"

(2007, 38). Kevin Greeson makes this mistake in his *Camel Tract* by encouraging Muslims to become “Completed Muslims” through Jesus (Greeson, n.d., 3, 9, 16). Again, by analogy, how would Christians feel if their own identification terminology was co-opted by outsiders?

Iranian Reverend Sam Yeghnazar of Elam Ministries points out, “The word ‘Muslim’ cannot be disassociated from Islam. We cannot play semantics with the word ‘Muslim.’ We cannot divorce the word ‘Muslim’—‘Submitted to God’—from all the religious connotations that come with it. The meaning of the word is now fully and inextricably linked to the Islamic religion” (2011, 2). Yeghnazar’s position echoes the sentiments of a prominent Palestinian imam in my interview pool, who stated: “words like...Muslim are not translatable” (2014, 165).

Moreover, when Muslims emigrate to other countries, they continue to iden-

tion is indicated by the IM line in the figure 1. Bill Nikides conducted several hundred personal interviews with Muslim insiders in the IM hotbed of Bangladesh. Those interviews, portrayed in the documentary *Half Devil, Half Child* reflect a tragic situation in which Muslims had come to believe to some extent in the biblical Jesus, yet they still claim Muhammad as a prophet and identify themselves as Muslims in the present tense (see Nikides 2012).

In my doctoral field research, I asked to the interviewees to respond to a Muslim insider. The questioning was as follows: “Though he has come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, God and Savior, Ahmed continues to state that he is a Muslim—telling people he is submitted to God through Jesus Christ. He continues to attend prayers in the mosque on Fridays and Islamic holidays there.” Then the question follows: “Do you think Ahmed is right to continue identifying himself as a

a Qur’anic word still used by Muslims 1,400 years later.

I interviewed an elderly Bangladeshi Muslim man who reiterated the *munafiq*/hypocrite theme on the question of whether Ahmed retains Muslim identity, “No. He is not pure. He is holding out one thing, and believing another thing. That is never the sign of a good man” (2014, 164). His Bangladeshi compatriot sat up in her chair, pointed her finger, and sternly announced, “I will catch her! She is not honest. She is trying to manufacture the Bible and our Muslim stuff into one thing” (2014, 164). These responses indicate that some Muslims will not be comfortable with a person who holds biblical beliefs claiming that he or she is a Muslim.

3. Perils of Muslim Insiders Remaining Permanently Inside the Islamic Mosque. My research vignette, after establishing the lead character as coming to believe God visited the earth in the form of Jesus, who died on the Cross and rose from the dead, continued with the following question: “Is it right for person who believes what Ahmed/Fatimeh believes to continue attending the mosque? Why or why not?” I note several perils with Christ-worshippers continuing to attend the Islamic mosque.

First, when Muslims are called to prayer five times per day, the mu’adhan (caller to prayer) cries out twice: “I bear witness that Muhammad is God’s prophet!” This is a confessional form of *shahada*. The same sentence is repeated corporately at the beginning of prayers inside the mosque during the *iqama*. Therefore, anyone who enters the mosque for prayers necessarily affirms the prophethood of the Islamic prophet who forbade the worship of Christ.

Spiritual dynamics and consequences flow from the decision to remain inside the mosque. If the Muslim insider denies Christ before men, Jesus said he will deny him before the Father. Thus, his union with Christ will be weakened by continuing to attend the mosque on a permanent basis.

Second, by attending the mosque, the Muslim insider will continue to

When Muslims are called to prayer five times per day, the *mu’adhan* cries out twice: “I bear witness that Muhammad is God’s prophet!” This is a confessional form of *shahada*.

tify themselves as Muslims, rather than using a translated term such as “People Submitted to God.” Muslim Student Associations abound, whereas one will not find “Associations of Students Submitted to God.”

My field research indicates that Muslims will not accept as a bona fide Muslim the person who has accepted the biblical narrative regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. A young woman from West Africa shares this testimony: “I was doing this for 3-4 years—telling people I’m a Muslim who believes in Jesus, not Muhammad. They said I was crazy. They said if you are a Muslim you have to believe in Muhammad. If you do not believe in Muhammad, you are not a Muslim” (2014, 192).

2. Insiders Striving to Believe Simultaneously in two Mutually Exclusive Faith Systems. This posi-

Muslim? Why or why not?”

An Uzbek Muslim scholar stated, “He is a confused guy! He can call himself whatever he wants, but people won’t take him seriously” (2014, 165). An Indian imam explained, “We consider him not a Muslim in the technical sense of the word, even though he may consider himself a Muslim in the general sense of the word. However, he would not have the same privileges as a Muslim. He would get no inheritance from Muslim relatives, while a Muslim would. He will not have a Muslim funeral” (2014, 164).

A Moroccan Muslim man introduced a powerful and evocative Islamic concept in his response to this question as he labeled the Ahmed character a *munafiq* (2014, 164). He did not know what the word was in English. *Munafiq*, most commonly translated hypocrite, is

hear preaching, prayer, liturgy, and conversation that promotes Islam and denigrates Christ. Many of the Muslim interviewees in my research felt that the mosque would lead the straying individual back into the fold of Islam. A young Saudi woman of Indian ethnicity stated, "Yes. She can go there to pray that Allah will guide her to the correct knowledge" (2014, 167). A Moroccan Berber man replied, "If he goes to mosque, he may learn that there is only one God and that Jesus is not God" (2014, 168). A Palestinian *hafiz* stated, "He should continue attending the mosque to get the right information. But if he prays to Jesus, his salat will not be accepted by God" (2014, 168).

Third, the presence of a Christ-worshipper in the Islamic mosque will deceive the other Muslims present. A Jordanian Muslim man whom I interviewed stated: "Maybe he is confused, but it would also be confusing to people in the *masjid*. You're talking about a very confused person" (2014, 168). Another Palestinian man rebuffed the idea: "No. He doesn't believe God. Why should he pray? He is a hypocrite. My Qur'an says Jesus is not God" (2014, 168).

Fourth, the Muslim-background Christian interviewees cautioned the lead character from continuing to attend the Islamic mosque. None of them condoned the practice. The interviewees commonly stated that continued mosque attendance constituted spiritual compromise. A Lebanese woman stated, "No. She is going on a new way. The old ways have to change. Even the Muslims will tell her: 'Get out of here; it's not your place'" (2014, 195). An Iranian woman stated, "No. She has to choose to honor the Lord and not deny Him by going to the mosque. You cannot serve the devil and serve God" (2014, 195). A Pakistani man gives his theological rationale: "No. He should no longer be worshipping a god he no longer believes in" (2014, 196).

Finally, a Turkish man stated, "No. This person (Ahmed) will never grow in the faith! In the mosque, the imam reads a small portion of Qur'an,

then *Sura Fatiha*. Then he declares the *shahada*, and the people all say "Ameen" [amen]. Ahmed cannot say *ameen* to Muhammad and *ameen* to Jesus" (2014, 196).

Several of the respondents articulated the travail facing a Muslim who comes to believe in the biblical Jesus. A Bangladeshi-American woman stated, "She might spare her life in doing that, especially if she has no other options, like another place to go, if she breaks with Islam. However, at some point there are going to be some contradictions she is just going to have to face in staying in the mosque" (2014, 195).

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

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

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

While the motivation to witness for Christ is laudable, I believe this is inappropriate if done through deception. Christians should ask themselves how they would feel if Christians who had converted to Islam remained inside churches, calling themselves Christians in order to covertly win more Christians to Islam. This is an exact analogy to the insider Muslim paradigm.

Conclusion

This paper suggests that the insider movement paradigm fails in Muslim contexts. This determination has been driven by contextual factors as well as indigenous input. The key element is identity. Muslims who come to believe in the biblical narrative regarding Jesus

are no longer Muslims in the eyes of the *umma*. If they insist on retaining Muslim identity permanently, they will be forced to continue recognizing the prophethood of Muhammad. Muhammad's teachings regarding Jesus so contradict the biblical portrait of Christ that those who continue to affirm Muhammad will not be able to fully find their individual identity in Christ or their collective identity in the body of Christ.

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Continued on page 36

The Use and Abuse of the Qur'an in Christian Missions

Mark Robert Anderson

This paper surveys the use of the Qur'an in Christian missions as: 1) a weapon for polemical attack, 2) a bond of "ecumenical" peace, 3) a repository of the "hidden" Gospel, 4) a bridge to biblical truth and 5) a source to explore and question in dialogue. It argues that only the fourth and fifth uses truly honor Christ and our Muslim friends, while the others dishonor them and abuse the Qur'an in some respect. In support of this position, the paper examines three factors that determine our use of the Qur'an, namely: our choice of its narrative, our grasp of its worldview and our beliefs concerning our primary calling in missions.

Since our hermeneutic is based on a scripture's perceived narrative, the first factor relates directly to the debate over Islamic origins. Because the Qur'an is both enigmatic and allusive, our need to interpret it against the backdrop of its worldview is even greater, as is our tendency to merely proof text. Finally, what we believe our primary calling in Christian missions is to—whether apologetics, peacemaking, evangelism or extending friendship—also determines our use of the Qur'an.

There is much controversy over Christian ministry to Muslims and our radically different approaches to the Qur'an are integral to most of it. In order to heal the growing missiological rift here, we must diligently strive to understand this issue better. Five of our most common uses of the Qur'an are as: 1) a weapon of polemical attack, 2) a bond to "ecumenical" peace, 3) a repository of the "hidden" Gospel, 4) a bridge to biblical truth and 5) a source to explore and question in dialogue. As I define these uses of the Qur'an, the first three abuse the Qur'an and dishonor Christ and our Muslim friends, while only the fourth and fifth truly honor them. Although I expect the approaches described below have been taken with the best of intentions, not since the fall darkened the human mind has sincerity been a reliable guide to either goodness or truth. But how can we tell proper use of the Qur'an

from its abuse?

With regard to what leads Christians to use the Qur'an so differently from each other, three determinative factors emerge—namely, our choice of the Qur'an's narrative, our grasp of its worldview and our understanding of our primary calling in missions. Since our perception of the narrative accompanying the Qur'an is a primary to our hermeneutic, the first factor relates directly to the debate over Islamic origins. If this scripture had originated in twentieth-century Waco, Texas, we would interpret it very differently from a book from seventh-century Arabia.

Our use of the Qur'an is also determined by what we consider our primary calling in Christian mission—whether polemics, peacemaking, evangelism, extending friendship or whatever else.

Because we agree on how to interpret the Qur'an only to the extent that we agree on the story behind it, the issue of narrative choice is pertinent to everyone's use of the Qur'an. Second, because the Qur'an is both enigmatic and allusive, its susceptibility to our mining it for preferred proof texts is greater, as is our need to interpret it within the context of its worldview. Last, our use of the Qur'an is also determined by what we consider our primary

calling in Christian missions—whether polemics, peacemaking, evangelism, extending friendship or whatever else. In order to determine which uses of the Qur'an honor Christ and which do not, we will begin by examining these three factors in turn.

If we are honest, however, another is dynamic at play here as well: our approach to all study of world religions. Such inquiry always comes with two great temptations: either crediting the other religion or its scripture with more truth than is really there or, conversely, refusing to acknowledge truths it actually evidences. Since both tendencies distort reality, both are mistaken. Anyone tempted to equate the Qur'an with the Bible needs to recognize that syncretism poses an ever-present danger and that, biblically, any marginalization of Jesus, the world's only Savior, is not of God (Jn. 14:16, Acts 4:12). On the other hand, simply to affirm that the Qur'an contains some light is not to say that its light is strong enough to guide us to salvation. We must not allow fear—whether of syncretism or of being

unfairly labeled syncretistic—to keep us from speaking the truth about the Qur'an (2 Tim. 1:7).

One other word of caution is in order here. Due to this topic's complexity, it has generated much contention and confusion in the Church. Hence, I urge my readers to recognize what this demands if we truly love Christ's Body: we must do our best listening, our best thinking and our best disagreeing here, measuring our words not for their

rhetorical impact, but rather their clarity, precision and gentleness. We must think the best of others unless we have no other option (1 Cor. 13:7). We must ensure that our tone reflects the grace we are called to (Col. 4:6). Properly understood, grace and truth are never in conflict, a point we will return to.

The Problem of Narrative

With regard to the qur'anic narrative, Angelika Neuwirth argues, the Qur'an is "the transcript of an orally performed, open-ended" prophetic monolog rather than "a written, premeditated corpus of prophetic sayings" (Neuwirth, 2009). Its every word is centered in Muhammad's struggle for "God's cause" in his native Arabia. On hermeneutical grounds, Neuwirth says we must read it as a series of texts growing out of "lively scenes from the emergence of a community" under Muhammad (Neuwirth 2003: 6). Examples of her point abound. For example, Q 8:67-69 addresses the problem of the early Muslims' love of booty and Q 8:70-71 speaks of the prophet's having enslaved captives taken in battle. Hence, we see that Muhammad and the Muslim community, or *umma*, engaged in military conquest and considered booty and slavery to be regulated by divine command. In this sense then, the Qur'an represents an immense cache of historical data.

Despite the centrality of Muhammad's story in its recitations, however, they include only faint glimmers of its context. The Qur'an gives considerable attention to narratives from the past, but is quite averse to supplying contemporary narrative. Muhammad's recitations came in the midst of some very stormy events, but instead of recounting those events, the Qur'an "merely refers to them; and in doing so, it has a tendency not to name names" (Cook 1983: 69). The qur'anic author often speaks as "I" or "we" or alternates between the two (e.g. Q 90:1-4). Often he addresses "you" in singular or plural (e.g. Q 94:1-4). Rarely is anyone identified, leaving us to piece the story together from the mention of an unnamed town and

other fragmentary details. We read of Christians (*nasara*) and of the "sacred precinct" (e.g. Q 5:1). But what kind of Christians and which "sacred precinct," when and where? These and a host of other questions find their answer only in the Qur'an's narrative context. But being known to those who first heard the recitations, all such background information was left unstated, making the Qur'an singularly unhelpful to us as a historical source if taken on its own. It affords us considerable data to plug into an external historical grid, but offers virtually no help at all in establishing the grid itself. Hence, the reader must bring to the qur'anic text some knowledge of Muhammad's prophetic career and historical context. If we must work hard to understand the Bible, relying on the best that historical, linguistic and interpretive scholarship can offer us, we must work harder still to comprehend the narrative behind a scripture with as few contextual markers as the Qur'an.

But this is where things get really

a just verdict? Or do you painstakingly sift through his testimony to see what of it is corroborated by other evidence and thus locate the 40% that is reliable? Granted, trashing the Muslim tradition is the far easier route to take. But as we will see, it leads to nowhere. The Hadith are highly problematic, but how we handle them decides our approach to the traditional Islamic origins they give rise to, which in turn shapes our hermeneutic (Madigan 1995: 351) and our consequent use of the Qur'an.

Poor Solutions to the Problem

Historically Western scholars and missionaries alike have interpreted the Qur'an with the traditional Islamic origins narrative in mind. They were not altogether uncritical in assessing the traditions: they rejected the miraculous and blatantly polemical interwoven through many of them. But beyond that, they were largely uncritical, thus making the Islamic origins narrative appear solidly founded.

The biography of Muhammad relies primarily on the Hadith, or reports about Muhammad and his companions. But while some of the Hadith seem accurate, many are contradictory, meaning that some are either inaccurate or totally contrived.

complex because our earliest full-scale narrative of Islamic origins is relatively late—i.e. nearly two centuries after the fact—and greatly embellished and distorted by piety and polemics, among other things. The biography of Muhammad relies primarily on the Hadith, or reports about Muhammad and his companions. But while some of the Hadith seem accurate, many are contradictory, meaning that some are either inaccurate or totally contrived. This is like having your star witness in court seriously exaggerate 30% of the time and straight-out lie another 30%, his testimony an intriguing blend of exaggeration, lies and truth. Do you angrily order him off the stand, even though you know some of what he says may prove vital to the court's reaching

For more than a millennium that worked well enough, but in the late nineteenth century Western scholars began taking a more skeptical approach as qur'anic studies started catching up to biblical criticism. The revisionism this produced eventually took three very different directions. One was highly critical of the Hadith for polemical reasons. Other scholars, influenced by liberal Christian theology, viewed the Bible and Qur'an as complementary, in that the latter allegedly criticized only heretical, tritheistic versions of Christianity, which they claimed were present in seventh-century Arabia (e.g. Basetti-Sani, 1977). This enabled them to transform Muhammad into a champion of Christian orthodoxy and find an underlying unity between Christian-

ity and Islam. Other scholars took a more radically revisionist approach, contending that the traditional sources were so polluted that the origins narrative they gave rise to tell us nothing of the origins of Islam, but only what later generations wanted to believe about them. They hypothesized that the Qur'an itself was the product of a lengthy evolutionary process that likely took place in the Fertile Crescent, not remote Arabia. By the 1980s a sharp division had developed between the radical revisionists and those unprepared to jettison the traditional origins narrative, with each side vehemently accusing the other of ignoring the obvi-

the authenticity of early Arabic poetry, thus dismissing what traditional Islamic scholarship deemed an invaluable guide to the Qur'an's overall context. So widely varied are the scholarly answers given to the question of Qur'anic milieu that Patricia Crone likens the situation to one where we encounter Jesus' quotations from the Hebrew Bible in the Gospels but are unsure if he was Jewish or whether his quotations were imported from outside his tradition. In addition, suppose the Gospels' geographical markers were so few and so vague that scholars disputed whether Jesus lived in Mesopotamia, Galilee or Greece. Such a degree of uncertainty

A Sound Solution

Though entirely consistent with his view of revelation, the Qur'anic author's utter lack of concern about framing his content with intelligible context is highly problematic for Qur'anic interpreters, as is the matter of Hadith authenticity. The encouraging news, however, is that while fine scholars still position themselves on both sides of the Islamic origins divide, a consensus now seems gradually to be forming, as historians sift through all the Late Antique evidence with Islamic origins in mind. There is sufficient early non-Muslim evidence for us to accept the traditional narrative that a local trader named Muhammad presented himself in early seventh-century Arabia as a prophet calling his people to abandon their polytheism and embrace his version of monotheism. Upon moving to Yathrib, he assumed theocratic rule and led his followers to conquer in God's name. There is no sound reason for us to question this much of the traditional origins narrative. Most scholars also accept the evidence from a large cache of ancient Qur'an manuscripts discovered in Sanaa in the early 1970s as establishing the fact that the written Qur'an text was undergoing editing during the late seventh and early eighth centuries, which also accords with Muslim tradition (Small 2013). Furthermore, there is a growing body of evidence for the general authenticity of early Arabic poetry.

We might term this approach "critical realism" because we are as open to as we are critical of the traditional sources. This stems from a realistic appreciation of the challenges inherent in reconstructing history—especially ancient history—where certainty refers simply to the integrity of our evidence and reasoning since demanding absolute proof here is fruitless. We refuse rationalistic dogmatism's damning of all the Hadith simply due to either their oral and relatively late origins or their Muslim bias—as if other sources are not biased. Instead, we scrutinize all the available data to determine which elements in the traditional narrative are confirmed or contradicted by early independent sources. We also refuse to

While tradition says the Qur'an originated in a polytheistic milieu that included Jews and Christians, the revisionists generally consider it to have Christian or quasi-Christian origins.

ous. Everyone agreed on the Hadith's historical unreliability, the immediate cause of the division. At issue was only the extent of their unreliability and how to respond.

While tradition says the Qur'an originated in a polytheistic milieu that included Jews and Christians, the revisionists generally consider it to have Christian or quasi-Christian origins. For example, one radical revisionist hypothesizes that it began as a non-trinitarian Christian hymnal which Muhammad and subsequently his community Islamicized by stages (Lüling 2003), while another claims it originated as a Syro-Aramiac Christian lectionary (Luxenberg 2009). A third scholar defends the notion that Islam emerged in a monotheistic environment by postulating that the Qur'an uses the word "idolatry" only figuratively to attack not polytheism, but rather retrograde monotheism (Hawting 1999). Some revisionists have even questioned Muhammad's existence, although no credible scholars currently do.

The problem is that, by rejecting the Hadith in their entirety, the radical revisionists made the Qur'an's milieu an open question. They also denied

would render the Gospels' meaning exceedingly elusive, which is precisely the situation we face in Qur'anic studies (Crone 2009).

Another problem with revisionism is that, despite its criticism of tradition, it is remarkably uncritical of its own underlying rationalistic hostility to tradition. Inherent in the Historical Method is the premise that tradition does not mediate history, making the historian duty-bound "if possible, to see through tradition to the history that might (or indeed might not) exist behind it" (Provan, Long & Longman 2003: 24). Most evangelical revisionists stress how much wider the time gap is between Jesus and the New Testament documents, on the one hand, and Muhammad and the traditional sources on him, on the other hand. But while their point is valid, what they fail to mention is that a much larger gap exists between the earliest Old Testament documents and the events they recount. So if we reject the Muslim tradition's authenticity on that ground, we must reject the Old Testament too. Rather than taking so uncritical an approach, we need to remain open to testimony of all kinds—including that of tradition.

pronounce on what did not exist based on missing evidence. We thus base our historical verdict on the preponderance of the evidence, believing that we have much to lose by embracing revisionism, despite the apparent freedom it offers.

But while the early non-Muslim sources afford us ample support for the traditional biography of Muhammad in broad outline, we remain skeptical about many of its details—such things as its account of Jewish treachery and its idealized view of Muhammad, Mecca and the early *umma*. Recent studies have also shown that an astonishingly high 52% of the qur’anic text consists of repeated, oral-formulaic material, suggesting “that Muhammad (or Allah or the archangel Gabriel) was seemingly well-versed in the techniques of folklorist oral transmission” (Bannerister 2014: 274, 57). Synthesizing all of the available evidence, we thus conclude that Muhammad was an early seventh-century trader turned prophet, operating in a polytheistic Hijazi milieu and that “Islam began as an avowed reformation of previous monotheism and pagan polytheism” (Graham 1983: 66).

Understanding the Qur’anic Worldview

Besides the question of milieu, there is another aspect of context we must reckon with to grasp the Qur’an’s meaning accurately. A scripture’s theology is not a catalog of disparate ideas. Rather, each of its teachings interacts with and gives shape to the others within its conceptual framework. Hence, we must understand what the components of the qur’anic worldview are and how they interrelate. For example: How does the qur’anic author view God, humankind and the relationship between them? What is sin, how does it affect that relationship and how do we obtain salvation? What role do the prophets and revelation play in that and what is the nature of scripture? What place does the community of faith hold, what is its mission in the world and what part does coercion play in it? How does the qur’anic author view spirituality in its dimensions—devotional, social and political—what is the meaning of

suffering and what is humanity’s final destiny? And how do all these things relate to their biblical counterparts?

Using such a comparative approach to the qur’anic worldview is like pointing out similarities and differences of color, line and shading between two great paintings. It enables us to appreciate the Qur’an’s relation to the biblical thought world better: both its distinctiveness from and its continuity with biblical theology. This is vital because the Qur’an often suggests more agreement with the Bible than actually exists and, when doctrines seem more similar

by means of qur’anic recitation and calligraphy. In all three respects, the Qur’an presents a direct challenge to us as Christians. First, it displaces as the people of God the church Christ loved and died for with the Muslim *umma*. And since an element of coercion has been central to the Muslim community’s mission from almost its birth, this represents an implicit denial of Jesus’ approach to loving our enemies and freedom of belief. Second, the Muslim scripture constitutes itself, its prophet and implicitly the tradition that comes from them as the final authority on

Since the Qur’an challenges biblical faith and teaching on so many levels, it is natural that our response should be commensurate with the challenge.

than they actually are, such similarity actually obstructs understanding. Such comparative study reveals that, despite obvious similarities, the two worldviews embody “quite different outlines, characters and structures” (Adams 1984: 306, 287). Numerous findings from such a study of the qur’anic worldview point to the Qur’an’s having originated in a polytheistic milieu and Muhammad’s desire to establish a new religio-political entity like the various Christian, Jewish and Mazdean (or Zoroastrian) states and empires in the surrounding lands. Only thus can we gain a true appreciation of the qur’anic approach to Jesus, which simultaneously honors and marginalizes him.

On the basis of this combined historical and worldview—external and internal—evidence, we can conclude that the Qur’an was given to provide the *umma* with two things, which the *umma* has very understandably added a third to. The first two are the community’s *raison d’être* and its ultimate authority. In addition, most Muslims came to view the Qur’an as their only means of direct access to God. For Muslims believe they encounter God existentially not through qur’anic teachings per se, but rather through the Qur’an’s linguistic being—its presence in their lives as the eternal word of God—primarily

what to believe and how to live. And third, because Muslims view the Qur’an as God’s only physical manifestation, it stands functionally in the place of Jesus as the bridge or way to God. Since the Qur’an challenges biblical faith and teaching on so many levels, it is natural that our response should be commensurate with its challenge.

Our Primary Calling in Missions

The third determining factor in our use of the Qur’an lies in what we believe is our primary calling in Christian missions, whether we relate to Muslims first and foremost as apologists, peacemakers, evangelists or friends. Our different answers here derive from how we view the challenge facing us in the world, the nature and scope of God’s solution and our place in that solution. To avoid confusion, I should say that I view both polemics and seeking “ecumenical” unity with Muslims as decidedly unbiblical, although we should not discount their biblical counterparts—apologetics/elenctics and peacemaking/service—which, together with evangelism/church planting, comprise our missional task.

The key thing is that we follow Jesus’ example in all three. Scripture clearly shows him combatting error with truth

and unmasking evil (Jn. 15:22, Mt. 5-7). But if we take that as our supreme calling in relation to Muslims, we tend to make things black-and-white and overlook the many ways truth can appear in other religions. For clarity's sake, we make categorical pronouncements without sufficiently seasoning our words with grace (Col. 4:6). Jesus, by contrast, was quite content to leave people uncertain about some things in order to ensure that God's heart for sinners was unmistakably clear to them (Lk. 4:22). Many Christians fear that following Jesus here would be reckless, but how can we truly call him Lord and "improve on" his way? Scripture also extolls peacemaking and doing good to others (Psa. 133, Rom. 12:18, Gal. 6:10). But if we view that as our primary calling, we tend to restrict ourselves to those points we agree with Muslims on and downplay our deeper differences. Yet anyone reading the Gospels can see that Jesus did not make peace with everyone. In fact, he sometimes seemed intent on

determined to weed out as many as possible. Some may wonder how we can be expected to follow him there if we aim to plant churches. But it is ultimately his job to build an indomitable Church and we gain nothing by building carelessly, which he clearly did not do (Mt. 16:18, 1 Cor. 3:10-12).

What grounds and centers our apologetic, peacemaking and evangelistic tasks is viewing them as aspects of a higher calling to extend true friendship to Muslims. This is our supreme missional calling. For in absolutely everything Jesus did, he was our friend. That included walking with us down dusty roads, bearing our burdens and loving us at all times (Prov. 17:17, 18:24, Lk. 10:25-37). It involved telling us the truth with scalpel-like precision when we were convinced we did not need it (Prov. 27:5-6). It included loving us to the end and even dying for us when we condemned and crucified him (Jn. 13:1, 15:13). Fulfilling our commission involves being the kind of friends to others that Jesus was to us (Jn. 20:21,

or evangelistic concerns very easily decide everything else. Thus, we turn the Qur'an into a weapon of attack, a bond of peace or a repository of hidden truth, when it is actually none of the above. Viewing our three missional tasks as aspects of our higher calling to extend true friendship to Muslims helps keep us from such excess.

1. Using the Qur'an as a Weapon of Polemical Attack

Having examined the three factors that determine our use of the Qur'an, we are now ready to consider briefly five common uses of the Qur'an in Christian missions. Some evangelicals react to the news of ISIS atrocities by turning the Qur'an into an attack weapon which they use against "Islam." This is nothing new: Christians have been doing this for well over a millennium. The aim may ostensibly be to address Muslim truth claims, which is vital, but only if we do it in a Christlike manner. More often than not, however, the real aim is to ridicule and lampoon the Muslim faith, making it appear ignorant, barbaric or depraved. This may be combined with personal attacks on Muhammad and a disproportionate emphasis on the dissimilarity of the Bible and Qur'an.

Those who do this may equate the coercive violence of the latter's Medinan suras, or chapters, with "true Islam" or employ a radical revisionist critique of the traditional Islamic origins narrative in an attempt to "destroy" the Islamic faith with one knockout punch, as it were. That is, they announce that Muslims are fooling themselves to think the traditional origins narrative has any historical basis. This sometimes involves taking a blank page approach to Islamic origins, which seeks to remove all confidence in our ever discovering them, thus rendering the entire Islamic edifice a sandcastle in the air. The bravado such lashing out often gives play to confers a false sense of accomplishment, of having "taken ground" in the war of words, and masks an underlying fear. But truth is just as easily used to harm as heal. The most senseless forms of lashing out involve verbal or physical abuse, even

Without a firm grounding in the moral character of God, our apologetic, peacemaking or evangelistic concerns very easily decide everything else. Thus, we turn the Qur'an into a weapon of attack, a bond of peace or a repository of hidden truth, when it is actually none of the above.

making enemies. Not that he really was so disposed, but he absolutely did not mince words when his handlers—if he had had such—would surely have told him to tone it down. Jesus' approach may seem ludicrous today, a quick way to earn a bad reputation. But he clearly did not care about that, prompting us to ask whether we value our good name over true peace. Scripture likewise commands us to make disciples everywhere (Mt. 28:18-20). But if we consider that our primary calling, we tend to care less about what means we use so long as we make disciples. We are tempted to reduce the standard of discipleship in our desire to make it easier for Muslims to become disciples. But Jesus was very careful about the means he used to attract followers and sometimes seemed

1 Pet. 2:21). Doing so will shine light into the darkness of some Muslims, enable us to be reconciled and do good to some and lead some to follow God's Son and join his Church. But as we cannot control anyone's response to our message, so also we are not responsible for their response. Offering true friendship is responsibility enough for us.

Biblically, apologetics/elenctics, peacemaking/service and evangelism/church planting are all important. But considering any of them our supreme calling opens us to the danger of that "results" orientation so prevalent in our culture, which emphasizes quantitative outcomes to the extent that the end justifies the means. Without a firm grounding in the moral character of God, our apologetic, peacemaking

violence, either to Muslims as Muslims or to their sacred symbols. For example, publically burning the Qur'an, as Terry Jones did, or degrading Islam's revered prophet. Whether or not the law of the land protects such behavior, it is sub-Christian and ineffective, not to say incendiary. To use the Muslim scripture to this end abuses it and sows contempt for Muslims, which dishonors Christ.

2. Using the Qur'an as a Bond to "Ecumenical" Peace

The polar opposite of that approach is the "ecumenical" one, its advocates using ecumenical to mean *interfaith*. They view the Qur'an as a bond to interfaith unity and aim primarily to promote reconciliation and peaceful relations with Muslims. This approach parallels a larger movement in our society toward interfaith coexistence, a predominant theme in our public discourse. Making unity and collaboration our primary concerns invariably makes those values shape the lens which we view the Muslim scripture through. Drawing on such works as Geoffrey Parrinder's *Jesus in the Qur'an* (1995) and Gabriel Said Reynolds's *The Qur'an and its Biblical Subtext* (2008), they interpret the Qur'an so as to maximize its continuity and minimize its discontinuity with the Bible.

C. Jonn Block's *The Qur'an in Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Historical and Modern Interpretations* (2014a) offers a recent evangelical example of this. Block believes the Qur'an, instead of attacking orthodox Christianity, champions it against its tritheistic perversion (2014a: 25-26, 39-44). Viewing both the Qur'an and Bible as incomplete revelations, he puts them on an equal footing in the hope that this recognition will impel Christians and Muslims alike to pursue "the humble orthodoxy that allows mutuality in spite of apparent contradiction" and accept their respective scriptures' ambiguity as a "divinely intended quality of revelation" (Block 2014b: 16, 19). Hence, Block hears the Qur'an as "an ecumenical voice" that allowed for the salvation of Christians, while striving to correct their theological excesses (2014b: 17). He writes that "Muhammad was very

possibly the seal of the prophets of Yahweh, just as Jesus is indeed a servant of Allah." It is on this basis that he speaks of our "mutually agreed upon transcendent and omnipotent One True God" and of the virtual indistinguishability of Islam from Christianity and vice-versa (2013: 19, 20). It is in this spirit that Miroslav Volf writes of a former Episcopal priest who considers herself 100% Christian and 100% Muslim and of a Muslim *hafiz*, or Qur'anic master, who follows Jesus as a Muslim (Volf 2011: 195-96).

A simpler version of this ecumenism comes in the common claim that the Qur'an's message is essentially that of the Bible, which usually boils down to something like: "Since we both believe in God and Jesus, our specific beliefs beyond that need not divide us. We all just need to love each other and live out the truth we have each been given. What matters supremely is that we get

that limits itself to either of his approaches to power is inadequate since neither "half" of the Qur'an can fairly represent the whole. Yet so effective have the purveyors of this approach been that many people have no idea the Qur'an's other "half" even exists and understandably many evangelicals have been swept along by this tide. Despite the desirability of so quick a fix, however, denying the real disagreements between the Qur'an and Bible often results in suppressed anger, leading to open hostility. Though the two scriptures share many beliefs about God, they disagree strongly on his character. And while peacemaking is undoubtedly commanded by scripture (Rom. 12:18), we are called not just to love Muslims, but to love as Jesus loved us with both grace and truth (Jn. 1:17, 20:21).

Block goes to some lengths to provide a historical rationale for his ecumenical reading of the Qur'an, but

While peacemaking is undoubtedly commanded by scripture, we are called not just to love Muslims, but to love as Jesus loved us with both grace and truth.

along together." Those embracing this view are right to stress the urgency of peaceful coexistence, but not to the extent that they sideline the Trinity, incarnation and atonement. To take this approach necessarily involves either ignoring or else creatively reinterpreting the Qur'an's violent content. They thus make the nonviolent approach of the Qur'an's Meccan suras representative of "true Islam" and join President Obama and other government leaders in relegating Islamists to Islam's fringes. Such Christians also ignore most of what the earliest sources tell us about Muhammad and the Muslim conquest in order to make him and his scripture fit the frame they have made for them.

For obvious reasons, this approach has broad appeal—indeed, who would not wish its pacifist take on Islam were true? But no credible historian takes its nonviolent Muhammad to be complete. And any presentation of the Qur'an

he builds it all on an assumption that a major disjunction occurred between proto-Islam and traditional Islam, an assumption he offers no sound basis for. By giving the Qur'an an ecumenical narrative, ecumenists render it an ecumenical scripture matching the purported Christian equivalent. Having done so, they then understandably have trouble distinguishing such "Christianity" from "Islam." But this is far from a standard interpretation of either the Bible or Qur'an. Like the Common Word document (2007), the ecumenists I refer to invariably Christianize the Qur'an and so effectively subvert it in the name of peace by refusing to take it seriously on its own terms.

3. A Repository of the "Hidden" Gospel

Some evangelicals marshal Qur'anic texts in such a way as to demonstrate

that, if only you know where to look for it, the Qur'an's "real meaning" is the message of the gospel, narrowly defined. These good folk are evangelists, but even so, their use of the Qur'an is similar to that of ecumenists since they too are looking to make the Qur'an agree with the Bible at points where standard interpretations put the two scriptures very much at odds. But since their goal is conversion of some kind, they focus not just on qur'anic teaching concerning God's unity, but rather on faith in Jesus as the only source of saving grace. They also lower the bar for potential converts by either omitting the Trinity altogether or simply talking it away since they deem it unnecessary to salvation and hence far more trouble than it is worth.

he can make relatively uncontroversial to Muslims.

This use of the Qur'an always implicitly grants it authority equal to that of the Bible, although some—Ibn Isma'il included—makes the point explicit by asserting that "*This is what Allah said* to the prophet Muhammad (pbuh)" (2006: 20, author's emphasis). Unless Ibn Isma'il professes belief in the Qur'an's divine revelation unscrupulously (i.e. meaning something by those words other than what Muslims would take from them), he cannot hold to the historic Christian creeds and call the Qur'an God's Word. It is one thing to observe partially shared beliefs and allow such common ground to lead to further dialogue, but it is quite another to assert that Muslims ought to be-

as talking points to guide his hearer to the Bible. Though some of what Greeson does with the qur'anic text goes beyond its original intent, he uses one of the Qur'an's most positive passages on Jesus, Q 3:42-55, to establish that he is holy, all-powerful and knows the way to heaven. Greeson connects Jesus' virgin birth to his sinlessness and highlights his ability to raise the dead, both points making him unique among God's prophets.

Drawing all this together with the passage's teaching that God took Jesus to be with him in heaven (Q 3:55), Greeson concludes that Jesus knows the way to heaven because "He Himself has traveled the straight path from Allah to earth and returned to Allah in heaven." He then asks, Who would be the best guide to heaven, someone who has gone there himself or not? Hearers who conclude that Jesus must be our best guide are then open to looking directly at what the Bible has to say, leaving the Qur'an behind (2014). Greeson states emphatically that he simply uses the Qur'an to facilitate the transition from it to the biblical text (2010).

Greeson claims his method enables the Muslim to see "from the text of his own Qur'an... that Isa is far more than a prophet," but he acknowledges that not every Muslim will see that. Although he goes too far when he says that the Qur'an teaches Jesus' "divine attributes" (2014), it is certainly understandable why qur'anic doublespeak on Jesus—its simultaneously honoring and marginalizing Jesus—might send readers in that direction. Taking Q 3:42-55 apart from the Qur'an's larger context, the passage does appear—especially to Christian readers—to point to Jesus' deity. It does not actually do that, although it should not surprise us that Muslim background believers would use the Qur'an in that way or find it effective in evangelizing their friends. Essentially, Greeson's method just uses qur'anic ambiguity to crack the qur'anic door, as it were, and let all who long for more truth to discover what awaits them in the light outside.

Greeson's use of Muslim language enables the listener to move from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Although

The Qur'an gives no indication that Jesus did anything for the "redemption of the world," a category entirely foreign to it. It also states repeatedly that, besides the mercy of God's sovereign choice, he forgives sins on the basis of repentance, faith and pious deeds.

One example of this is the pseudonymously written *The Faith of Isma'il*, which seeks to prove from the Qur'an that "*it is only by the Grace and Mercy of Allah in Isa al-Masih (pbuh) that we can be accepted by Allah*" (2006: 77, author's emphasis). But the Qur'an gives no indication that Jesus did anything for the "redemption of the world," a category entirely foreign to it. It also states repeatedly that, besides the mercy of God's sovereign choice, he forgives sins on the basis of repentance, faith and pious deeds (Q 2:277, 3:195, 5:94, 24:47-56, 29:7, 33:35, 46:31). Thus, the Qur'an uses words like "expiation" (*kaffara*) always with reference to the believer's acts of piety and charity (Q 5:45, 89, 95). As Q 11:114 says, "Good deeds remove evil deeds." Ultimately, only the believer whose good deeds outweigh her bad earns God's pardon (Q 7:8-9, 21:47, 23:102-103, 101:6-9, cf. 3:30, 18:49, 54:52-53). But Ibn Isma'il does not allow the Qur'an to speak for itself and limits beliefs "essential to salvation" to those biblical teachings

believe anything because the Qur'an tells them to. Though we can rejoice over every point the Qur'an agrees with the Bible on—just as we rejoice to see our own culture echo biblical truths—such agreement categorically does not make the Qur'an God's Word to "the prophet Muhammad." According to Ibn Isma'il, by following Muhammad and obeying the Qur'an, truly understood, we follow Jesus and vice-versa since Muhammad followed Jesus and was a true prophet of God. Ibn Isma'il can only draw such conclusions by rewriting the Islamic origins narrative such that the Qur'an says what he wants it to say.

4. A Bridge to Biblical Truth

It is possible, however, to "bridge" from the Qur'an to the Bible without compromising biblical truth. One such approach is that of Kevin Greeson, who describes the "Camel method" Muslim background believers taught him as a "bridge from error to truth" (2014). Essentially, it involves the evangelist's using the Qur'an's "flickers of truth"

Greeson begins with the Qur'an, he says he invests the Qur'an with no more authority than Paul's use of pagan poetry did (Acts 17:28). Rather, he uses the Qur'anic text simply to connect with the listener, prompt her to question her faith, gauge her hunger for God and guide her to truth. Greeson also couples his use of the Qur'an with leading questions, enabling the Muslim to "gently draw a contrast... between Isa and another prophet whom he knows all too well" without so much as mentioning the latter's name (2014). Thus, Greeson graciously draws simple contrasts such that they point hearers to the biblical way to God.

5. A Source to Explore and Question

A fifth use of the Qur'an takes it seriously, treats it with respect, interprets it in context and graciously contrasts it with the Bible. Two examples of this approach immediately come to mind. One is that of David W. Shenk's collaboration with Badru D. Kateregga in *A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue* (1999). Another is the Building Bridges Seminar sponsored by the Anglican Church. Since 2002 the seminar has produced a steady stream of publications with an emphasis on Qur'anic and biblical studies, pursued in a context of open enquiry, respect and friendship.

Two other examples are A.H. Matthias Zahniser's *The Mission and Death of Jesus in Islam and Christianity* (2008) and Gordon Nickel's *The Gentle Answer to the Muslim Accusation of Biblical Falsification* (2014). Zahniser carefully studies the totality of Qur'anic teaching on the end of Jesus' mission and death in order to build a case for a different interpretation of the so-called "crucifixion verse" (Q 4:157) from the one popularly believed by Muslims. By Zahniser's interpretation, Jesus did not escape crucifixion, but rather endured it, as most early Muslim commentators attest. Most Muslims also hold to the notion either that the biblical text has been corrupted or falsified beyond usefulness or else that we no longer have the Gospel God allegedly gave to Jesus. In whichever version, this theory seemingly resolves the huge discrepancy

between the Qur'anic presentation of the Christian scripture and a New Testament that bears almost no resemblance to it. It also enables Muslims "to rebuff any arguments based by Christians on the Bible" (Watt 1991: 30), which is why Muslims have made the falsification theory so central to their polemic (Goldziher 1896, cited in Nickel 2011: 2). The best way to counter this accusation is by gently and patiently examining the Qur'anic texts Muslims use to support it and demonstrating its fatal flaws, which is precisely what Nickel does.

As encouraging as all these studies are, however, much remains to be done in terms of exploring the Qur'an. A contrastive approach also allows us to explore the Qur'anic approach to coercion and discuss Shabbir Akhtar's belief that Jesus was "allergic to worldly power" (1991: 27). Among other things, we must effectively question the Qur'an's claim of monotheistic purity, its implicit claim to honor Christ and its claim to be the Bible's sequel.

However, addressing issues Muslims and Christians are deeply divided over calls for real wisdom. One tool to help facilitate dialogue is the ABC approach recommended in *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* (Patterson et al 2012: 170-172). The A, B and C stand for *agree*, *build* and *contrast*. Unfortunately, the higher the stakes, the keener we often are to disagree. Finding something genuinely to *agree* on right out of the gate minimizes argument, helping legitimize your partner's concerns and allay his fear that you care most about being right. Once you have established common ground and your partner feels heard, you can *build* by seeking a broader understanding of the topic. That then enables you to *contrast* the two positions and explore differences and concerns constructively. But instead of disagreeing, contrasting involves laying your respective views out side-by-side and discussing them from a position of mutual respect. Because it enables both partners to maintain their integrity, this approach can transform competition into collaboration and allow you to ask good questions—even hard ones.

Grace and Truth's Hour is Now, Always

Bearing witness to truth is central to our mission just as it was to Jesus' mission (Jn. 18:37, Acts 1:8). We must "all of us speak the truth to our neighbors," but how we do that is just as important as what we say: if we do not speak humbly, we are unfaithful to the truth (Eph. 4:25, Jas. 3:14-16). Despite the knee-jerk appeal of either fight or flight, neither is worthy of Christ. We must neither attack Muslims with their Qur'an nor abuse it by denying that it issues a challenge to Christianity, which is a form of flight. Positively, we simply tell the good news of Jesus. But negatively, since most Muslims believe they have an ironclad case, we must offer them clarity by demonstrating gently and patiently the profound uncertainty of their truth claims.

From childhood onwards Muslims are taught that friendship with God is utterly impossible. Yet that is the very thing we invite them to. We cannot angrily scream our invitation, muddle it together with some lesser appeal or mutter it under our breath. Friends alone speak convincingly of friendship. We must not let our "grace" get in the way of truth or our "truth telling" justify ungraciousness. But this union of seeming opposites does not come easily. Only led by the same Spirit that led Jesus can we find grace and truth's authentic oneness, yielding the same gracious witness and vulnerable boldness that he and his apostles modeled. By the Spirit, we are also strengthened to believe that Jesus unleashed a power in the world unlike anything before or since—Islamism included. It is ours just to align ourselves with his unstoppable power and leave the results with him for both the healing of his Church and the salvation of the world.

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aspect of creation. Combining diverse knowledge wisely for the love of Christ and His beloved creatures is the goal.

Robertson communicated these core principles so beautifully both in the classroom and over the course of his life. He communicated a winsome contextually congruent “witness” to God’s goodness. I saw how he did this for each of my children. One child was so proud of her athletic strength that she wished to give him a hug that could lift him off the floor. He enthusiastically let her do it, commending her “amazing” strength, because he knew it would give her great joy! My toddler was fascinated by how Uncle Robertson did wood repair. And so Uncle Robertson sat him up on the backyard picnic table, placed a nail on top of a wooden block, and guided his hand with the big hammer so he could experience real carpentry. One young son was shy of a driver’s permit, but Uncle Robertson secretly allowed him to drive the red convertible in the middle of the college soccer field for a trial run. Only an adult who understood “child culture” would allow children to experiment with a living room fireplace as a heat source for roasting marshmallows on Christmas Eve. This communication of love was heard and remembered. His attentiveness to context, using culturally relevant words and actions, are the heart of his exemplary missional approach. Not only have his teaching and writing on faith integration mattered for my current career, but the real life articulation of it was a profound gift for which I am forever thankful. Dear Uncle Robertson, you will be missed. Thank you. It will be a delight to see you again!

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