



# Asian Frontier Mission Initiative **AFMI/ASFM BULLETIN** Asia Society for Frontier Mission

Editorial Comments.....

John Kim

## **“Do we now see a new thing that springs up?”**

**"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:18-19)**

**T**his is what God declares, “See, I am doing a new thing!” He is indeed now doing a new thing. As He is doing His own work, the issue is not a matter of confirming whether it belongs to Him or not but perceiving it as His. As Paul and Barnabas perceived what God was doing among the gentiles in Antioch, there was no doubt about the intervention of God’s hand in the marvelous work among the gentiles. It had never taken place in human history then.

But we tend to keep dwelling on our own biased experiences when we see or hear something totally new to our eyes or ears. Jesus appealed us have eyes to see and ears to hear His work and words.

Since we have been living in rapidly changing world of modern society with enjoying many entertainments resulted by advanced technologies and sometimes being surprised by global disasters, we seem to overlook what God is really doing among the unreached. However God has been doing His own redemptive work in a way that He declared as “a new thing”. We may be able to realize how He develops His kingdom only when it already became a big tree. In a sense we need to be

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## The 3th Annual Conference of AFMI *Asia Society for Frontier Mission* in SEA: 4-8 Oct 2011

### ••••• *CALL FOR PAPERS*

Our primary focus this year will be *INSIDER PERSPECTIVES*. Participants are encouraged to submit papers providing relevant insights, models, and/or case studies toward the purpose of Kingdom advance—the Biblical Jesus movements in other socio-religious traditions like Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, Judaism, and postmodern atheist groups.

The due date for submitting papers is Aug 31 2011. Please feel free to contact John Kim at [yahya\\_kim@hanmail.net](mailto:yahya_kim@hanmail.net) if you have any questions. Decisions on which papers to include will be made by the steering committee.

ready to be surprised when we hear on-going Jesus movements among the unreached.

Do we think it is still possible that God is doing similar work as in the New Testament in this post modern society among the unreached? Numerous Jews and Gentiles came to the Lord in dramatic way from within their own socio-religious contexts as **John Ridgway** explained in detail through his article “*The Movement of the Gospel in New Testament Times with Specific Reference to Insider Movements*”. He described those movements in the New Testament as insider movements so persuasively. You will appreciate what he describes even better if you come and hear more about his own field experience among Shinto Buddhists and reflections at the coming event of AFMI-ASFM annual conference. (See the next page)

The meaningful communication for the Gospel spreading resulting in the movements often times must be made between messengers who become like the recipients in a God given context and those recipients who are encouraged to keep remaining in their socio-religious situation where they are called by God. **Harley Talman** who will also present at the coming conference of AFMI-ASFM reflects on this principle briefly in this bulletin as an emphasis. (See his article titled by Become Like So They Remain Like.)

Apostolic role must be essential part in the movements going beyond a specific socio-religious group. John Ridgway recognized it and emphasized its crucial role in his article. From this view, **Trevor Larson** gives you some understanding and practical field reflections on how God is working so that the Gospel can jump over from one socio-religious group to another. A couple of articles dealing with “jumping over one’s own culture” for the Gospel sake in this article seems to allude a special role of missionaries as outsiders. With insider perspectives, we may expect to see “ekklesia” forming and growing within and through the existing socio-religious networks. This cannot be a church-panting. But what needs to be planted is mission structure. There must be a great cooperation area between insiders and outsiders when they work together in mission. Mission planting sounds much plausible that church planting.

When we observe the insider movements, we are very much concerned about the issue of syncretism. However, again as John Ridgway mentioned in his article, it is unavoidable in any way. Thus the issue should become the matter of how to help the new believers in the movement so that they can take any problems they face to the Word of God for meaningful communication between the two. People may think this as self-theologizing. Usually, the Word of God is introduced in written form. However, **Rick Leatherwood** says in his article here, “Today 65% of the unreached peoples in the world do not read and write.” And thus he calls for “Oral Bible” by sharing a short reflection on the Bible translation job. The Word of God must be the central part always in the movements even among the illiterate.

**Daniel Shin Jong Paik** dug dipper ground in the area of the dynamics between religious “form and meaning” in context-

ualization by explaining the case of Naaman’s petition. His missiological interpretation on this case can be compared to others as there have been long debates on it. He insists that the interpretations of the passages in a narrative like Naaman’s story must be in agreement within the context and not in conflict with each other. He finds such conflict in previous interpretations from others who were engaged in the debate. He sees the Naaman narrative as a case showing the positive inner coherence between one’s conversion in other religious background and consequent petitions. His argument seems to be concluded with an appeal to abandon the quick judgment on the insider’s reaction after conversion taking place even though it looks like a compromise or a syncretistic behavior.

This year too **AFMI will be running a training course** consisting of four modules. Three pages on backside will give you the information in detail as before. It is strongly recommendable training as long as you eager to see more workers moving around the world with His Kingdom perspective and ministering among the unreached with insider perspectives.

**October 4-8** will be a great chance to you to know much more about “what God is doing for His own redemptive work” among the insiders living out with the Gospel within their own socio-religious contexts. See the invitation letter on next page and you are encouraged to come together with your colleagues who want to share the great burden for the remaining tasks among the unreached. **AFMI-ASFM** continues to seek for global cooperation in this urgent area as God is calling the 11<sup>th</sup> hour workers in the last mission era.

We appreciate many Western workers in frontier mission, who influence others in worldwide mission movements by contributing invaluable articles and sharing their field reflections. But at the same time we definitely need much more Asian workers who can also join this worldwide missional influence especially in frontier mission. We await many more Asian workers’ paper contribution. Please feel free to contact with the editor of this bulletin for the paper contribution or anyone on the steering committee of ASFM-AFMI. (See the next page)

A special issue (proceedings of SFM-AFMI annual conference) will be prepared for the next one. See the paper call on the cover page of this bulletin. I would encourage you to knock the door prayerfully. You will be welcomed to join the ASFM as long as you are willing to go ahead with the purpose we have on the last page.

I look forward to meeting you at the annual conference of AFMI-ASFM in SEA on Oct 4-8, 2011.

May His abundant blessings be with you as you seek for His Kingdom.



John Kim  
Editor



## Letter of Invitation to Annual Conference AFMI-ASFM 2011



Dear Respected Mission Leaders and Field Practitioners:

You are cordially invited to attend a 5-day annual conference of AFMI-ASFM:

# "Insider Perspectives" Oct 4-8, 2011

On October 2010 AFMI-ASFM held the annual conference consisting of three tracks: "Insider Perspectives", "Asian Initiatives", and "Global Cooperation" for the remaining frontier mission task. As we have been observing God's marvelous works that have never imagined before especially among the least reached, the steering committee concurred to give a sharp and comprehensive focus on what God has been doing within "other socio-religious people groups" for the upcoming event. This drove us to call for the gathering with the theme of "insider perspectives" in order to have consultation on the current missiological issues relating to it and confirm the biblical validity through the sharing of field practitioners reports and missiological reflections.

We will have a series of plenary presentations talking about Jesus-centered movements in Islam, Hinduism, Shinto, Buddhism, Judaism, and some Tribes. Among many other speakers are **Harley Talman, Kevin Higgins (Islam), Rick Hivner (Hinduism), John Ridgway (Shinto), David Lim (Buddhism), Gavriel Geffen (Judaism), and Paul O'toko (Indigenous People)**.

You are welcomed to come and join this event. You can take part in the conference by contributing a paper relating to the theme. Please be noted that your paper should be handed in by the end of August 2011 at latest. (See the "Call for Papers" announcement on the cover page.) Besides the presentations and round table activities, we will have special fellowship time altogether. Often times people sense we need more fellowship among the like-minded workers. You may bring any resources—books, papers, journals, files, and whatever you think valuable to share with other colleagues for the sake of His Kingdom development.

We look forward to a great fellowship with you and being encouraged from each other by witnessing what God has been doing among those unreached. Your prayer support will be much appreciated.

May His abundant blessings be with you as you seek for His Kingdom.

Sincerely yours in His grace,

*Steering Committee of AFMI-ASFM Annual Conference*

*Caleb Shin, Chong Kim, David Lim, Hwal Young Kim, John Kim, Kevin Higgins, Greg Parsons*

P.S. For more details like logistics, registration, travel and other information, please feel free to contact with **John Kim** at [john\\_yoon@psmail.net](mailto:john_yoon@psmail.net).



# The Movement of the Gospel in New Testament Times with Specific Reference to Insider Movements

*John Ridgway*

## INTRODUCTION

In this paper I would like to present a case for the **validity** and **usefulness** of the insider movement concept by **demonstrating its existence in the early church**. Therefore I would like to undertake a personal biblical reflection of the Scriptures with specific reference to the Book of Acts and Paul's Epistles.

Furthermore I would like to demonstrate that at the heart of the gospel from Genesis to Revelation is God's desire to reconcile every ethnic community through **insiders** in those communities and through **mobile** apostolic leaders and their teams who would go to every ethnic community. This would not occur through organized religious systems but through Jesus' introduction of the **kingdom of God**. Jesus himself was an **insider** who inspired **insider movements**. His preaching of the kingdom introduced a mindset into the early apostles and the other disciples that would enable them to not only be **insiders** in their own communities but also to take the gospel to all the ethnic communities of the world, as they lived out a **kingdom lifestyle** amongst the lost peoples of the nations.

Let me say that I am not a professional theologian but I am a serious student of Scripture in the context of 27 years of living in the Hindu and Muslim worlds. I am not attempting to rebut other viewpoints, but to give my own perspective that will hopefully add some clarity to the current discussion on this most important subject.

Kevin Higgins in his paper **The Key to Insider Movements: The "Devoted's" of Acts** published in the proceedings of the ISFM 2004 Meeting [1] attempted in some detail to come up with a working definition of the term **Insider Movement**. I quote his definition:

"A growing number of families, individuals, clans, and/or friendship-webs becoming faithful disciples of Jesus within the culture of their people group, including their religious culture. This faithful discipleship will express itself in culturally appropriate communities of believers who will also continue to live within as much of their culture, including the religious life of the culture, as is biblically faithful. The Holy Spirit, through the Word and through His people will also begin to transform His people and their culture, religious life and worldview"

Some may take exception to this definition as it includes the phrases "their religious culture" and "the religious life of the culture." In my own experience it is not possible to distinguish the difference between the cultural and religious life of a Hindu community as it all blends together to make up the **physical identity** of that community. This physical identity relates to everything that can be seen. It encompasses the culture, the religious system and festivals, the linguistic and ethnic realities, the social and economic system, etc. However, the entrance of the Good News will bring about a spiritual transformation that results in a **spiritual identity** that commences with the second birth and enables the person to become a citizen of the kingdom of God. In due course this spiritual transformation will affect whole families, their communities, their lifestyles, their relationships and the society as a whole. We have seen examples of this both in North and South India. With these clarifying comments I am generally comfortable to utilize Higgins definition.

As we seek to describe the events that occurred in the first century we recognize that it was a unique point in history when the birth of the Christian movement took place. In that sense such events will never be repeated. Yet there are certain **insights** that emerge, that appear to be common to hundreds of movements of the gospel over the last 2000 years of

Dr. John Ridgway completed a PhD in Solid State Physics from University of NSW in Sydney, Australia in 1970. He has served on the staff of The Navigators since 1971 and is currently a consultant with the Asian Navigators with special focus on the Frontier contexts. He and his wife, Ruth and their two children lived for 27 years in both Hindu and Muslim contexts in South Asia during which time John was a technical consultant for several US and Australian multinational companies. Presently John and his family reside in Denver, CO.

This article was originally presented at ISFM conference held at Atlanta, Georgia on 17-18 September 2006. Recent reflection on similar topic can be found at MF (May-June 2011).  
[www.missionfrontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org)

Christian history as documented by numerous people including Kenneth Scott Latourette.[2] Hopefully these insights will have application for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## ORIGINS OF THE FIRST CENTURY GOSPEL MOVEMENT

The idea of insider communities was already embedded in the gospel from the beginning.

Galatians 3:8 tells us, “The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: ‘All nations (ethnic groups) will be blessed through you’.” As we look at Genesis 12:1-3 we notice at least three key elements in the gospel announced to Abraham:

1. Abraham would experience personal blessing and that was through faith rather than the law (Romans 4:13)
2. Members of Abraham’s family/community/natural network who were responsive would also receive God’s blessing
3. “And all peoples/communities (families, KJV) on earth will be blessed through you”

The DNA of the gospel contained:

1. a faith response to the promise of God
2. a blessing to a responsive community
3. a blessing to all the peoples (ethnic communities) on the earth

The remainder of the Old Testament documents God’s purposes for the Jewish nation in particular and yet His concern for the nations of the world. This concern would find its full expression with the entry of Jesus into this world.

### A. *Jesus the Insider*

Jesus, the eternal Son of God became the Son of Man. When Jesus entered human history, he entered as an insider. John 1:14 tells us, “The Word became flesh and lived for awhile among us.”

From conception to death, he experienced every detail of human experience and “has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). The author again says, “He too shared in their humanity” and “he had to be made like his brothers in every way” (Hebrews 2:14, 17). Not only did Jesus become a **total insider to the human race** but also a **total insider to the Jewish race** as “a descendant of David” (Romans 1:3). Jesus adopted a customary trade, made pilgrimages to the Temple, had dinner with Matthew and his friends, went to Peter’s house and ministered there, and encountered hostility from his immediate family.

At the beginning of his public ministry he began to preach the **kingdom of heaven** (Matthew 4:17) and the **good news of the kingdom** (Matthew 4:23). Jesus was talking a new language. He was introducing new concepts, new expressions, new values, new outcomes that had actually always been in the mind of God. David was well acquainted with this kingdom when he expressed in 1 Chronicles 29:11, “Yours, O LORD is

the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all” and again in Psalm 145:13, “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.” This great theme of the kingdom runs through the whole Bible. Jim Petersen and Mike Shamy have amplified these thoughts in their book, **The Insider**.<sup>[3]</sup> Jesus’ command was to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33) and the theme of the kingdom dominated his *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5-7).

By Matthew 13, Jesus is giving seven different descriptions of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom is global. There are good seed and there are weeds. The Son of Man and the evil one are strategic influencers. It appears to be without religious structure. It is a mess. Jesus said let the wheat and the weeds grow together.

In Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus asks about how people understood his identity as the Son of Man: **His physical identity**. The response: a Jewish prophet. Then he asked the disciples. Peter saw him as “the Christ, the Son of the living God”: **His spiritual identity**. The physical identity was seen. The spiritual identity was perceived. With this clarity, Jesus declared his role: the church builder. Then Jesus declared our role: **using the keys of the kingdom**.

From Matthew 18:1 to 20:28 Jesus illustrates the **values** of the kingdom. In Matthew 21-22, Jesus tells three stories about the kingdom directed against the chief priests and the Pharisees. In Matthew 24, Jesus explains the connection between the gospel of the kingdom and the end of the age. Then Jesus tells three stories about the kingdom in Matthew 25 that are directed to his disciples and in Matthew 26 Jesus relates the last supper to his Father’s kingdom.

The whole **kingdom lifestyle** seemed independent of any religious structure. In fact it would enable a Jew to live differently in his Jewish society. It would actually enable any individual or family or community to live out the gospel in their own society no matter what its religious nature.

The genius of the good news of the kingdom was that it was **so simple**: change of heart and follow the ways of the kingdom. It could work within any cultural/religious framework since its allegiance was not to a religious structure but to God’s kingdom.

As a consequence, **Jesus the insider** was beginning to spawn **an insider movement** within the Jewish community and beyond.

Mark 1-4 records the beginnings of a **Galilean Jewish insider movement** commencing in Capernaum. There Jesus recruited the early disciples and cast out evil spirits. As a consequence “news about him spread quickly over the whole **region of Galilee**” (Mark 1:28). By Mark 6:30-44, we find Jesus feeding at least 5,000 such followers. The scripture indicate that these were men and so the actual number would no doubt have been more.

John’s gospel (chapters 2-3; 7-10; 11ff) records the details of the beginnings of a **Judean Jewish insider movement**. In John 2:23, John 7:31 and John 8:30 we are told that in each of these situations many people believed in Jesus. Even over to the east of the river Jordan in the district of Perea, we are told

in John 10:42 that “in that place many believed in Jesus.”

**Jesus encouraged others to be insiders.** When he sent out the apostles, he sent them into the area where they were from (where they were insiders). Jesus sent the Gerasene demoniac back to his own people. This was the beginning of a huge ministry of Jesus in the Decapolis, where the demoniac went and shared everywhere. Jesus then went north to Tyre and Sidon, met the Syroenician woman, and then came back on the eastern side of the Jordan, which was predominantly **Gentile**. Not long after this, Jesus is feeding 4,000 such followers (Mark 5-8). And so a **Gentile insider movement** had begun in this district. The Decapolis was a district containing ten cities on the far side of the Sea of Galilee (4). The cities were originally built by followers of Alexander the Great, and rebuilt by the Romans in B.C. 65 (5).

By the time of Jesus’ resurrection, there were at least 120 believers (Acts 1:15) with thousands of followers. An **insider movement** within the Jewish nation at large was underway, including Judean as well as Galilean believers. Also Samaritan and Gentile movements had begun.

### **B. Jesus the Apostle**

Jesus was not only an insider, but he was also our apostle (Hebrews 3:1). He trained 12 apostles. The **good news of the kingdom** would enable these men not only to experience the new birth and become citizens of the kingdom but also be carriers of the good news to the nations. This new kingdom mindset would in due course enable these men to think beyond their Jewish community and religious structures.

Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman in John 4 was quite a shock to the disciples. However it started an **insider movement in that place as many Samaritans believed** the woman’s (insider) testimony. Jesus stayed with this insider community for two days and “many more became believers”. Thus the disciples were witnessing an insider movement outside of their own community. The disciples at this stage were probably not aware of the implications of Jesus’ actions.

But this kingdom mindset would lead Jesus down a dangerous path with the Jewish establishment of that time. As Jesus entered his public ministry, within the first week, he was in conflict with the Jewish leadership. We are told that Jesus went down to Jerusalem from Capernaum to attend the Jewish Passover. For a religious Jew, at least three factors were essential:

1. Keeping the **laws** of Moses, especially circumcision and the Sabbath
2. **Temple** worship (Romans (9:4)
3. Attending the annual Jewish Passover in **Jerusalem**

For the Jew, these things were holy. The **law** was holy and they were to keep the Sabbath day holy (Jeremiah 17:22, 24).

The **temple** contained the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The city of Zion, the city of David, was the **holy city** and has become “The Holy City” for three great world religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

When Jesus entered the temple complex which was among the largest in the Roman world to celebrate the Jewish Passover in the first week of his public ministry (John 2:13-22), he found the temple courts were being used for the sale of sacrificial animals. Jesus stopped the sale of all these sacrificial animals and cleared out the whole temple area. Such behaviour was totally unacceptable as God’s house had been turned into a “den of robbers”. The kingdom mindset impacts every society and culture and brings into question every structure religious or otherwise in that society or culture. Naturally this action of Jesus greatly upset the Jews. The Jews demanded from Jesus, “What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days”. The Jews thought he was referring to Herod’s temple but John explains, “But the temple he had spoken of was his body” and this insight didn’t make sense until after Jesus’ resurrection.

From this point onwards, Jesus’ focus was not on the physical Jewish Temple, but on **the good news of the kingdom**. The offering of His body would enable **our bodies to become temples of the living God** in which He would dwell.

My own reflection on the gospels would suggest the possibility that **the good news of the kingdom was providing a spiritual message (good news) and a spiritual expression (kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God) that would take it beyond the confines of the Jewish religious traditions and culture**. Luke 16:16 tells us that “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until

John”. The Old Testament covenant/message was “obedience to the LORD through the Law” (old wine) in the context/framework of “the Law and the Prophets” (old wineskin). But Luke 16:16 continues, “Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it”.

The New Testament covenant/message was to be “obedient to the LORD through faith” (new wine) in the context/framework of the kingdom (new wineskin).

The Old Covenant focused on the physical, whereas the New Covenant focused on the spiritual within the person, but not on physical structures. **Spiritual wine must be poured into a spiritual wineskin: the kingdom of God and not into physical wineskins** (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or any man-made religious system). But in the course of time, this kingdom lifestyle will impact the physical structures where it is present. The kingdom is not controlled or confined by religions or nations or world leaders. But it does work through

***M**y own reflection on the gospels would suggest the possibility that the good news of the kingdom was providing a spiritual message (good news) and a spiritual expression (kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God) that would take it beyond the confines of the Jewish religious traditions and culture.*

them like yeast, imparting vigor and relevance and at times judging and running counter culture to these physical structures. For indeed our spiritual life becomes natural and our natural life becomes spiritual.

Jesus explained to the woman at the well, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in **spirit and truth**” rather than in Jerusalem at Herod’s temple or the temple that the Samaritans had constructed on Mt. Gerazim around 400 BC but was then burnt down by the Jews around 128 BC. Jesus declared in John 4:21, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem”. Paul explained in Romans 9:4 that “**temple worship**” was one of the privileges of being a Jew (Old Testament) but that Romans 12:1 tells us “to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is our **spiritual worship**” which is to be worked out in the real physical world and this is one of the privileges of being a citizen of the kingdom of God (New Testament).

The author of Hebrews explained it this way in Hebrews 10:1, “The law is only a **shadow** of the good things that are coming – not the **realities** themselves.” Again, he states, “They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings – **external regulations** applying until the time of the **new order**” (Hebrews 9:10).

### C. *What do we learn from Jesus?*

Jesus came preaching the good news of the kingdom. This **good news of the kingdom** would enable a movement of the gospel to take place within the Jewish nation. But even more significantly it would enable His work on the cross to impact the nations of the world. He was not only an **insider** but also functioned as an **apostle** to enable the good news of the kingdom to go beyond the Jewish world into the vast Gentile world that consisted of all the ethnic communities of the world

Paul described Jesus’ ministry in Romans 15:8-9 in these terms, “Christ has become a servant of the **Jews** ..... so that the **Gentiles** may glorify God”. And Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 32:43, “Rejoice, O **Gentiles**, with his people (**Jews**)” and Psalm 117:1, “Praise the Lord, all you **Gentiles** ... all you **peoples**” Romans 15:10,11.

Entering this kingdom was not based on one’s religion or **one’s own righteous performance** within that religious system but on a **vulnerable humble heart that trusted the King**. Jesus illustrated this stark difference in Luke 18:9-14 when he told the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector and how these two men prayed in the temple. The Pharisee prayed (to/about himself) regarding his religious righteousness, but the tax collector asked for God’s mercy and he was the one whom God justified. Since entry into the kingdom was through a second birth and not through the first birth, it is open to all mankind.

### D. *Post-Pentecost*

Finally, the entrance of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost now enabled all that Jesus had done and said to be translated into action in the lives of people. The focus was no longer a magnifi-

cent temple in Jerusalem although as insiders the Jewish believers still continued to worship there, or any other building such as the great mosques of Medina and Mecca or the lofty cathedrals of Europe or the huge mega-churches of America or the ancient temples and shrines of Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism, etc. The focus was now on the Holy Spirit living in us. We have become the temple of the living God (1 Corinthians 3:16) and as living stones we are becoming a holy temple built by God, all of us built into it, a temple in which God lives by His Spirit, Ephesians 2:21-22.

No longer was there an association with holy cities such as Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome, Medina, Mecca, Ayodhya, etc. No longer was there a bondage to the laws of Moses as the means of salvation or of any dogma of any religious system, including Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Communism and even Christianity. Neither the laws or dogmas or even traditions, customs, sacraments of any system were the issue but faith, enabled by the grace of God, in Jesus Christ.

Now **the message was very simple**: “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel” 2 Timothy 2:8.

Now **the expression was very simple**: the kingdom of God, a spiritual community not associated with any religion or nation or ideology, but in fact the reign of God not only in the lives of people on this earth but also over all beings in the heavenly realms.

Now the transformation was very simple: the Holy Spirit living in us transforming our lives and enabling us to live in harmony with one another and with all the ethnic groups of this world.

The focus had shifted from temples to people indwelt by the Holy Spirit. As Revelation 21:22 wonderfully states, “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” The focus had shifted from the laws of Moses to faith in Christ. The focus had shifted from holy cities and religions to a **kingdom community that embraced all the nations**, yet which knew itself as a physical, identifiable body of believers in the various cities and towns and villages where the gospel had come.

The birth of the movement of the gospel in the first century was now about to be unleashed. It was free of the boundaries of Judaism and of any religious or non-religious system. It could go beyond national borders and cross over into and penetrate any religious or cultural entity. The Old Testament had wonderfully played its role in preparing for the New Covenant. The shadow had pointed to and opened up the way for this New Testament reality.

## NATURAL EXPANSION OF THE GOSPEL AMONGST THE JEWS

Jesus was an insider in the Jewish world of Judea and Galilee and Acts 1–12 records **the insider movement** that took place in this context.

After his resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days with his disciples discussing the kingdom of God. This must have been an extraordinary occasion as Jesus spent extended time to explore the nature of the kingdom of God and how this would enable movements of the good news to occur in every nation of the world. Then he promised them that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit. This took place on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem when “God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) were present. Also converts to Judaism as well as Cretans and Arabs were there. These Jews came from Mesopotamia in the East; Galatia and Asia Minor in the North; Rome, Crete and Cyrene in the West and Egypt in the South.

From my own reading of the account in Acts there appears to have been at least three streams of Jews present on that day. Firstly there were emigrant **Mediterranean and Mesopotamian Jews** who were Jews (first, second, third or more generation) living in the Roman Empire and generally somewhat lax in their Jewish practices. Secondly there were the **Galilean and Judean Jews** (Acts 2:7, 9) who were living in their own country. Finally there were the **Grecian Jews** who were Greek speaking Jews that had lived in the Roman world but had now returned to Jerusalem especially to practice their Jewish faith and were on the whole quite strict in their Jewish practices. They are mentioned in Acts 6:1 and 9:29 as well as Acts 6:9.

Acts 2:9-10 tells us there were Jews from “Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia (modern Turkey), Egypt and the parts of Lybia near Cyrene” representing the eastern region of the **Mediterranean** world. Then there were Jews who were called “Parthians (modern Iran), Medes (east of Mesopotamia) and Elamites (north of the Persian Gulf); residents of Mesopotamia” (Modern Iraq). They represented the **Mesopotamian** Jews.

Significant response would have taken place on the Day of Pentecost from all three streams of Jews present on that day. Let us now follow the expansion of the gospel among the second stream, namely the Galilean and Judean Jews, as well as the Grecian Jews, i.e. the third stream. We will look at the first stream in more detail in Section 4.

After Peter spoke on the Day of Pentecost, about 3000 people responded. The new believers met every day in their homes and in the temple courts. Every day new people were responding, Acts 2:46-47. By Acts 4:4, the number of men that had responded was about 5000 which meant that possibly 15,000-20,000 people were involved. A remarkable movement of the gospel indeed, and accomplished exclusively by **insiders**. At this time, Barnabas, a Mediterranean Jew from Cyprus appeared in Jerusalem and donated money to the apostles. He was a Levite and probably quite a dedicated Jew.

By Acts 5:12, the believers were still meeting in Solomon’s Colonnade, a porch that ran along the inner side of the wall of

the Temple that enclosed the outer court. Men and women were continuing to respond. These new believers were meeting in the Temple area to pray. In doing this, they were **merely following their cultural and religious norms**. And their homes also became a natural place for spiritual fellowship and worship. Every day they continued to meet “in the temple courts and from house to house” (Acts 5:42). With many people responding, a dispute arose between “**the Grecian Jews and the Aramaic-speaking community**” (Acts 6:1) over the daily distribution of food. This appears to have been a dispute between the second and third stream of Jews. The seven men chosen to oversee this problem all had Greek names, including Stephen and Philip which meant they could relate to both communities. Also a convert to Judaism, Nicolas from Antioch was included. At this time there was rapid growth of new believers with even “a large number of priests” responding, Acts 6:7.

Then a further conflict arose between Stephen and “Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia” who were members of the synagogue of the Freedmen. Freedmen were Jews who had been freed from slavery in Cyrene (chief city in Libya) and Alexandria (capital of Egypt

and second only to Rome in the empire) and Cilicia (Tarsus was the capital of this province) and Asia (Ephesus was the capital). Since Paul (Saul at this time) was from Tarsus, it is very possible that he attended this synagogue and may have been one of those among these **conservative Grecian Jews** who were arguing with Stephen. Finally Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrin with charges of, “We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God” and “This fellow never **stops speaking against the holy place and against the law**”. Again they said, “For we have heard him say

that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us” (Acts 6:12-14).

Stephen, who clearly grasped the implications of **the good news of the kingdom**, was obviously free of the laws and customs of Moses and the magnificent temple of Herod in Jerusalem. He recognized that true worship was no longer tied to a building but was demonstrated by a changed life (Romans 12:1). However, by the time these false witnesses had been persuaded to twist his words, he now appeared to be speaking “words of blasphemy against Moses and against God”. When the high priest challenged Stephen regarding these charges (Acts 7:1), Stephen began to present an overview of their Jewish history, up to the time when Solomon built his magnificent temple. Then he made the explosive statement, “However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men”. It was clear that he had Herod’s magnificent temple in Jerusalem in mind when he made this statement. Stephen went on to state, “You always resist the Holy Spirit! ... you have betrayed and mur-

***T**hese new believers were meeting in the Temple area to pray. In doing this, they were merely following their cultural and religious norms. And their homes also became a natural place for spiritual fellowship and worship. Every day they continued to meet “in the temple courts and from house to house” (Acts 5:42).*

dered the Righteous One". The Sanhedrin went into pandemonium at these statements and Stephen was dragged out of the city and stoned with Saul standing there giving his approval of Stephen's death.

On that same day when godly men were burying Stephen "a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria". We are told in Acts 8:3 that "Saul began to destroy the church". **It is very likely that most of the believing Jews in Jerusalem including some emigrant Jews were sympathizers of Stephen.** As such, they recognized that the good news was not just for the Jews but for all nations and that the temple in Jerusalem and the Law of Moses were no longer part of God's purposes. But now their lives were in danger.

However, "those who had been scattered (by the persecution) preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there" (Acts 8:4-5). As a result, **many Samaritans responded** and Peter and John were sent down to check out this phenomenon. This most likely seemed contrary to their current understanding of the good news being only for the Jews. But the Holy Spirit enlarged Peter's understanding and after Peter saw Gentiles (Cornelius and his relatives and close friends) respond to the good news, he realized that God "accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:35).

Then, Acts 11:19-20 records, "Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message **only to Jews**. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene (Capital of Libya), went to Antioch and began to speak to **Greeks also** telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus."

These Greek speaking Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene, who were very likely strong sympathizers of Stephen, had already begun to realize that even Greeks could respond to this **good news of the kingdom** which was not defined by Jewish law or tradition or customs but could be accepted by anybody of any background.

Again, this phenomenon would have seemed strange to the apostles in Jerusalem and they sent a Mediterranean Greek speaking Jew to investigate the situation. When Barnabas "saw the evidence of the grace of God," in Antioch he was very excited and immediately thought of another Mediterranean Greek speaking Jew who was familiar with this area and had gone through an amazing encounter with Jesus himself. So Barnabas went to Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, to search for Saul who was a Roman citizen by birth and yet had been trained by Gamaliel in Jerusalem to be a leading Pharisee of his day. Acts 9 tells the events of the amazing encounter that Saul had with Jesus and the ensuing conflict Saul faced with **Grecian Jews** in Jerusalem who saw him as a traitor and were determined to kill him (Acts 9:29).

Saul and Barnabas had considerable influence in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26) and this multicultural, multi-religious city was to become the great sending base for the apostolic movement

(Acts 13:1-3) that would touch the rest of the Roman Empire and beyond.

As we reflect on this **Jewish insider movement**, we see it starting in Jerusalem and spreading throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria (Acts 9:31). It initially met in the temple courts and then seems to have moved more and more into homes. We notice in Acts 12:12, that many people were gathered in the home of Mary, the mother of John, also called Mark and they were praying for the apostle Peter. Persecution forced many believers to scatter and pass on the good news wherever they went. In this scattering process, Philip talked to Samaritans. Also Greek speaking Jews in Jerusalem talked to Greeks in Antioch.

It would appear that over this period from Jesus' ascension until the time when Barnabas and Saul ministered in Antioch (about 18-20 years later), possibly between 30,000 – 50,000 Jews had responded to the good news. Also other movements in Samaria and Antioch were spawned in the process. An "Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians" responded to the good news through Philip. He was very likely the beginning point of the gospel back in the country of Ethiopia, although we have no record of this happening.

Key leaders were essential for this movement to take place. Peter was pivotal to the response in Jerusalem. Stephen was the key to the movement going beyond Jerusalem. Philip was a link for the gospel touching the Samaritans and the Ethiopian world. Barnabas and also Saul were strategic for the movement in Antioch. Peter later influenced Jews in Lydia and Joppa (Acts 9). These men had steadily grasped the implications of **the good news of the kingdom and its expression** in their own nation and beyond.

## EMIGRANT EXPANSION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS

Pentecost represented an amazing number of emigrant Jews such that Acts 2:5 stated "Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven". These first, second, third or more generation Jews would have begun to influence their context wherever they lived in the Roman Empire. And of course their context would have also influenced them.

As Barnabas and Saul started their missionary journey, this **was the first stream of people they sought to impact**. Acts 13:5 tells us that after arriving in Salamis, "They proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues." These Mediterranean Jews were in practice generally quite nominal Jews and were more culturally akin to the Greek-speaking Roman world in which they lived. Being Jews, Barnabas and Saul had a natural bridge to them, and they in turn had a natural bridge to the Roman world.

In fact we get the impression in Acts 21:21 that Paul was actually teaching "all the Jews who lived among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their

children or live according to our customs". This would have enabled these Mediterranean Jews to relate even more closely with their Roman and Greek counterparts. **They were emigrant Jews who were becoming contextualized culturally and religiously for the sake of introducing the good news to their Greek and Roman friends.** It appears that on his first journey Paul focused on these lost emigrant Jews first as they were his own people and secondly they would have had natural access to the Gentile mainstreams of the Roman Empire. There was some response from this group but the primary response was from the Gentile world which became Paul's focus.

It is interesting to note why this discussion in Acts 21:17-25 was occurring. A **large insider movement** was taking place in Judea and beyond. The elders in Jerusalem said to Paul, "many thousands of Jews have believed and all of them are zealous for the law." Was this movement syncretistic? No. Was the leadership in Jerusalem unable to think beyond the Jewish religious system? Perhaps. Was this movement actually valid since these insiders were expressing their new faith within their own cultural/religious system? Yes! Absolutely! Were they right to impose their thinking on other Jews who lived amongst the Gentiles and would not have held to the same religious traditions? No! That was pressing syncretism upon other believers. However this whole issue exploded when Jews from the province of Asia shouted regarding Paul, "this is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place (holy temple)". The city of Jerusalem was thrown into uproar (Acts 21:31). This led to Paul's arrest and subsequent trials before Felix and Festus. Finally he was sent to Rome to appear before Caesar.

We also note that Paul had continued with the same strategy of **focusing on the lost emigrant Jews as well as the Gentiles on both his second and third journeys.** In the process he came across responsive Jews as well as God-fearing Greeks and worshippers of God such as Lydia who responded. For example in Corinth, "Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed," (Acts 18:8). And the Jews in Ephesus wanted to spend more time with him (Acts 18:20).

**An amazing emigrant Jewish couple** from Pontus (Northern Turkey) was Aquila and Priscilla. They had settled in Rome but had been forced to leave and settled in Corinth where Paul recruited them. Later he asked them to shift to Ephesus to help commence the ministry there. Later they again returned to Rome. In Romans 16:4, Paul says of them, "They risked their lives for me. Not only I but **all the churches of the Gentiles** are grateful to them." This emigrant Jewish couple had impacted Gentiles all over the Roman Empire, and had moved at least four times.

Today we have ever increasing **Asian American** and **Asian Australian** communities who also have the capacity to influence not only their own communities but also the communities to which they have emigrated. In Asia we have Filipinos working in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. We have Indonesians and Indians working in Malaysia and Singapore. All of these immigrant communities have an unusual opportunity to influence their host communities as well as their own communities.

The emigrant Jews were often motivated by trade, business and commerce in their desire to live in other countries. But in the process they influenced the communities where they lived. Others were maids, servants and slaves who worked in another country. K.S. Latourette states in Volume 1 of his series **A History of the Expansion of Christianity** [2] on page 116:

"The chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession or a major part of their occupation, but men and women who earned their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those whom they met in this natural fashion".

This would have been particularly true of the emigrant Jews in the first century, who had become **insiders** in the places where they had settled.

***A n insider movement does not normally flow into other ethnic main-streams without the presence of apostles, prophets and evangelists. These mobile leaders and their teams are the ones who cause the gospel to go beyond its natural borders into other ethnic groupings.***

## **APOSTOLIC EXPANSION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE NATIONS**

We have described the natural expansion of the gospel in the Jewish mainstream and how this insider movement impacted the life of the Jewish nation. In this context it required leadership to bring about initiatives and also to sustain the move-

ment.

Now we will look at the apostolic movement of the gospel recorded from Acts 13-28. An insider movement does not normally flow into other ethnic mainstreams without the presence of apostles, prophets and evangelists. These mobile leaders and their teams are the ones who cause the gospel to go beyond its natural borders into other ethnic groupings.

We have already noted the influence of Peter, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas and Saul within the Jewish insider movement and their role in pushing the movement into new ethnic streams.

Acts 13:1-3 is a pivotal turning point in the expansion of the gospel as the Holy Spirit specifically set apart Barnabas and Saul for a work that would take them deep into the Gentile world. **This apostolic expansion** was essential for the good news to be sown into new ethnic streams.

The first missionary journey consisted of Barnabas and Saul plus John Mark. On the second journey Paul selected Silas to

accompany him. On this journey Paul asked Timothy to join them. Luke (a doctor) also joined them in Troas. Paul recruited Priscilla and Aquila to leave Corinth and help start a ministry in Ephesus. They in turn influenced Apollos who went on to Achaia to the city of Corinth and influenced the believers in that place.

On Paul's third journey he had Timothy and Erastus with him, as well as Gaius and Aristarchus from Macedonia. Also Sopater from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe as well Tychius and Trophimus from Asia Minor, accompanied him. Luke was also with him for some of the trip making up to 12 men as part of this mobile team.

Another key associate was Paul's close friend, Titus, whom he probably recruited from Antioch and accompanied Paul and Barnabas to the Jerusalem council (Acts 15). Titus played a key role in the Corinthian scene as well as in Crete.

**These mobile teams functioning apostolically were essential for initiating new insider movements.** We see churches beginning in the Galatian cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Then on Paul's second journey, churches began in the Macedonian cities of Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea as well as the Greek cities of Athens and Corinth. Finally on Paul's third journey, a church began in the Asian city of Ephesus which in turn most likely led to churches in Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. After these trips, Paul was arrested and taken to Rome where he stimulated the church in that city.

We see **the church** as the umbrella for both the insiders actively engaged in reaching their own community as well as the mobile teams that were seeking to reach into new ethnic communities. In fact the church is more than a umbrella. It is the Body of Christ which in Acts 13, commissioned and sent out the apostles.

It is interesting to note that as the gospel moved further into the Gentile world, the **background of the various mobile leaders involved also changed.** Jesus was a Galilean Jew. Barnabas was a Greek speaking Jew from Cyprus. Paul was a Roman citizen who was also a Greek speaking Jew. Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Greek father. Paul had him circumcised. Titus was purely Greek. Paul refused to let him be circumcised. Timothy had considerable influence in Ephesus and Asia Minor and this fitted his background. Titus, who was a pure Greek fitted well into the Greek speaking world of Corinth and Crete.

After the 1500s a great expansion of the gospel took place beyond Europe to much of the rest of the world. At that time the Catholic and Protestant societies utilized full time missionaries (mobile apostolic teams) to advance the gospel as well as traders and other laymen.

## INSIDER MOVEMENTS OF THE GOSPEL WITHIN THE NATIONS

We have already examined the Insider Movement that took

place within the **Jewish nation** beginning at Jerusalem.

We have also noted the results of the scattering of the believers out of Jerusalem due to the persecution in connection with Stephen. As a result **Samaritans** began to respond. Also Philip influenced the Ethiopian eunuch who could have taken the good news back to his own country of **Ethiopia**.

The Jewish insider movement impacted the whole of **Judea, Galilee and Samaria**. The gospel spread to **Antioch**. It had also spread to Damascus, an important city in the Roman province of **Syria** about 150 miles (about five days travel) north of Jerusalem. Damascus was considered the oldest city in the East and was the hub of a vast commercial network with roads leading to Bagdad, Mecca and cities in the west. It had a huge temple to Jupiter but also had a large Jewish population.[5] There the believers were known as The Way living in Damascus and very possibly sympathizers of Stephen. This would account for why Saul wanted to eliminate these believers. The Way spread even to **Ephesus** (Acts 19:9, 23). Interesting that Paul would later identify with this **Jewish insider movement** that appears to have started in Jerusalem (Acts 22:4-5). It was also called a sect (Acts 24:14) and was well known to Felix, who had governed Judea and Samaria for six years by this time (Acts 24:22).

In Antioch we see the beginnings of an insider movement amongst the **Greeks** in that place. This was to spread both to the east and influence the Syriac-speaking world as well as to the West especially through the journeys of Paul.

Through the apostle Peter, we see Cornelius and his relatives and close friends responding and a movement began in Caesarea (about 30 miles north of Joppa), a city named in honor of Augustus Caesar. Caesarea was the headquarters for the Roman forces of occupation. Paul visited this city at least twice (Acts 18:22; 21:8,16) to encourage the small insider **Roman movement** developing through Cornelius' natural networks as well as responsive **Jews** that Philip had influenced (Acts 21:8).

On Paul's first missionary journey that touched Cyprus and the Galatian cities, the scriptures record an extraordinary response in Pisidian Antioch amongst **Jews**, devout **converts** to Judaism and **many Gentiles**, which spread **throughout the whole region** (Acts 13:49). **These three strands were the beginnings of insider movements in that area.** There were also responses in Iconium, Lystra and Derbe despite severe persecution from jealous Jews. After returning to Antioch, Barnabas and Paul recounted to the believers there how God had "opened the door of faith to the **Gentiles**". **Gentile insider movements were now being launched in the Galatian province.**

On Paul's second journey we see the beginnings of the church being planted in Macedonia and Greece. The Thessalonian believers seemed to have **influenced this whole area** (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8) **and a movement was taking place.**

On Paul's third journey, the church in Ephesus seems to have **influenced the whole region and a movement was underway in that place.** Acts 19:10 tells us daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus were held by Paul and the disci-

ples and these discussions went on for two years. During this time, “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.” At that time Epaphras became a believer and carried the good news to Colossae. From there the gospel spread to Laodicea and Hierapolis.

However, these new Gentile insider movements, which were expressions of the gospel in their natural ethnic networks, did not see themselves as converts to Judaism that required keeping the laws of Moses and especially circumcision. The Jewish insider movement and especially those believers who were Pharisees however felt that circumcision was essential for salvation. **The integrity of the Gentile insider movements was now at stake.**

This led to a very important summit in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15. The conclusion of this critical session, where the apostles and elders met, was that the Gentile believers did not have to follow all of the Jewish customs. The Gentiles were free to remain insiders in their own ethnic communities and as a consequence the gospel could freely travel along the natural ethnic lines. There were however four conditions added to this “freedom”.

As a consequence of this amazing session, a letter was sent to “the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia”. The Gentile insider movements were now authenticated and also encouraged by the leadership of the church at that time. This represented a major breakthrough for the mobility of the gospel and for the expansion of Gentile insider movements all over the Mediterranean world.

## SYNCRETISM AS THE CONSTANT DANGER

Usually one of the arguments brought against the concept of insider movements is that it promotes syncretism. Syncretism is an issue, but it is an issue for all believers.

As people live as insiders in their own communities, there will always be the ongoing danger of syncretism. When Jesus prayed in John 17:14-18 that his disciples would be “in the world” but “not of the world”, he knew this would be a dilemma all believers would face.

Jesus made it plain in Luke 16:13, “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”

The Oxford Dictionary defines syncretism as “the amalgamation of different religions”. The World Book Dictionary uses similar phrases such as “the attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices, especially in philosophy or religion”. The original Greek work, *synkretismos*, was a political term and literally meant the “union of rival Greek forces of Cretan (*kretos*) communities in opposition to a common enemy”. Another definition from the inter-

net is “the union of two or more opposite beliefs”. When applied specifically to the gospel, syncretism is then more narrowly defined as “syncretism of the Christian gospel occurs when critical or basic elements of the gospel are replaced by religious elements from the host culture”. [6] This latter definition is not very consistent with the previous definitions. It may be better to substitute the phrase “are amalgamated with” for the phrase “are replaced by”.

Two other examples of syncretism that plague most believers today are found in Galatians 5. The struggle between **law and grace** is explained in verses 1-12 and the struggle between **the flesh and the spirit** is highlighted in verses 13-24. Only **kingdom lifestyle** will resolve these struggles.

It is true that believers are heavily influenced by their surrounding community. But Paul had strongly encouraged the Corinthian believers to remain in their own community and remain as **insiders in that community**, 1 Corinthians 7:17-24.

Yet many Christian leaders and missionaries appear to teach that a new believer must leave their own community (Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, etc) and join a Christian (physical) community to escape the bad influence of their own community.

It is important to note that **contextualization is an issue for the missionary** and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 is a relevant passage. But **syncretism is an issue for the insider movement** or local believers as they wrestle with their own context. The rest of the book of 1 Corinthians is relevant to these believers.

For Paul, he **became like** the Corinthians for the sake of the gospel (chapter 9) so that they in turn could **remain like** their lost Corinthian friends (chapter 7), again for the sake

of the gospel.

Another interesting example of how much syncretism is part of every community is demonstrated in Acts 15. There the early church sought to give freedom to the Gentiles to remain in their own communities and live out Christ as insiders in their pagan cultures. But four conditions were added. The issue of sexual immorality made sense and was in fact something that would continue to be dealt with along with the coming of the good news regardless of community (1 Corinthians 7:1-7). Regarding the issue of drinking blood, this was indeed repulsive to the Jews as they had commands in Leviticus 3, 7, 17 and 19 against this practice. But it is interesting that the Jews wanted to impose this stipulation on the Gentiles which would seem to smack of syncretism. Indeed in Acts 15:21, the Old Testament is invoked as the authority for these conditions.

As far as the stipulation regarding eating food polluted by idols, Paul later releases this stipulation when he is advising the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 8:8 regarding this issue. And the issue of eating the meat of strangled animals was appar-

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ently a custom repulsive to the average Jew. But again it did not seem to be part of the gospel but more to enable the Jews to cope with the Gentiles. Yet it was in practice one community imposing their beliefs and practices on another.

Today the Christian world struggles in another area of syncretism. This is where we insist on the Bible plus various creeds, confessions and doctrinal church statements. Jim Petersen deals at length with this issue in his book **Church Without Walls**.<sup>[7]</sup> Churches in the west also struggle with areas of syncretism such as the incorporation of marketing methods, business structures, Boards of Directors, temple-like buildings, etc.

At this point, I would like to argue for the **validity and usefulness** of the insider movement and demonstrate its theological credibility through my own personal reflections from the book of 1 Corinthians, and how syncretism is handled in this context. In an earlier letter that Paul had written to the Corinthians, he had advised them about separating from other people. The word “Pharisee” literally means “to separate from”. But in 1 Corinthians 5:9-10, Paul corrects a misunderstanding that had occurred with the Corinthians. He says, “I have written to you in my letter not to **associate** with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.”

Paul goes on to explain that we separate from or dissociate from **believers** who are grossly syncretistic but not from the typically messed-up unbeliever, 1 Corinthians 5:11-13.

However, Paul is very clear that we cannot **participate** in two spiritual relationships as is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 where this word (participation, partake, participate, participants) is mentioned five times. In this case it had to do with the worship of the Lord and also the worship of demons. We cannot **participate** in two different belief systems.

A similar situation occurs in 2 Corinthians 6:14 where Paul again advises the Corinthian believers that they cannot maintain a relationship with Christ and Belial, who was associated with the cult of Aphrodite. In 2 Corinthians 6:16, Paul asks, “What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God”. Here Paul is not talking about physical temples but about the syncretism taking place in the hearts of the believers, where again the believer cannot **participate** in two different belief systems.

But it often becomes unclear about the difference between **association** and **participation**. Syncretism comes when we participate in two relationships representing two different belief systems. Association takes place for the sake of the gospel. We see Paul speaking to the syncretism of flesh and spirit in 1 Corinthians 6-7 in the areas of lawsuits, sexual immorality and breakup of marriages. Yet in the midst of this mess, he urges them to remain as insiders in their community in 1 Corinthians 7:17-24. Paul himself makes it plain that he sought to be an insider himself to every community he related to (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) in order that the gospel may touch others. And he was very aware of the dangers involved as he pointed out in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. He is aware of the temptations in such

a process and states “No, I beat my body (bring it under complete control, NEB) and make it my slave so that after I preach to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (verse 27)

But the confusion comes as we try to distinguish **physical** association from **spiritual** participation. This was a dilemma for the Corinthians and Paul elaborates on this in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 in the contexts of being in the temple, in the meat market and in the unbeliever’s home. These three contexts are the typical contexts for most believers in the Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist worlds today.

In the context of being in the temple (mosque, etc) Paul clarifies that “an idol is nothing at all in the world” and the food offered to the idols has no effect on us, 1 Corinthians 8:4 and 1 Corinthians 8:8. The physical presence of the temple, or the idols in the temple or the food offered to the idols was not the issue. This was the normal religious and social environment of their community and to influence their families and friends in their community they needed to be relaxed (free of it but not bound by it) in that setting. If we are free of the law or any religious law or system (Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism), then we are free to live under that law assuming our conscience is free of that law or system and not controlled by it.

But Paul was also concerned that their freedom from their religious and cultural traditions as well as their belief systems of their old religious world did not become a problem for other **weak believers** “who were still so accustomed to idols” and therefore would participate in the worship of idols due to their weak conscience, 1 Corinthians 8:9-10.

Therefore it was important for the Corinthians believers to be **careful in the exercise of their freedom** so that a young believer with a weak conscience was not led astray. Yet Paul wanted them to enjoy their freedom and to bring the good news of the kingdom to their own community. When Paul discusses the other two issues in 1 Corinthians 10 of the meat market and in an unbeliever’s home, he again urges the Corinthians to relax and not raise questions of conscience (v25) and “eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience” (v27). The issue is not our conscience, since we have freedom but to be sensitive in this case to the **unbeliever’s conscience** who is concerned for you.

Paul concludes in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 with this beautiful balance of being free in these matters and yet sensitive to the conscience of both unbelievers and weak believers. He concludes that whether you are eating food offered to idols in the temple or in an unbeliever’s home do it heartily and freely to God’s glory. At the same time, don’t be callous in your exercise of freedom, thoughtlessly hurting those who aren’t as free as you are.

Let me express this conclusion in another way. 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 is the balance between being sensitive to the conscience of **weak believers**, and even **unbelievers**, (versus **carnal believers** whose conscience is often more controlled by law) and yet enjoying the wonderful freedom (conscience of a **mature believer**) of living out the good news of the kingdom within the religious framework of your own community.

## PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE ON INSIDERS

In the midst of working through the various issues of syncretism that the Corinthians were facing, Paul was clarifying for the Corinthians, the essence of the gospel.

He was also concerned that they should remain in this messy context as they worked through all these issues. This would be kingdom living like “the yeast that has worked all through the dough” (Matthew 13:33). Their changing lifestyle would slowly impact their whole community.

The gospel was clarifying for the Corinthians believers and through them it was influencing their families, friends, neighbors, work colleagues and others.

In 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 Paul was very clear in his advice that a new believer should **remain** in his or her natural context which in this case included marriage/singleness, circumcision/uncircumcision and slavery/freedom. The new believer was not required to change their marital, religious, cultural or social context when they responded to the gospel. But Paul certainly encouraged believers to improve their social status if it was possible.

Verse 17 Paul stressed that a person should **retain their place in life**. This place in life was assigned to him or her by the Lord (through his or her first birth) and to which God has called him or her (through his or her second birth).

Verse 20 states “each one should remain in the situation which he was in **when God called him**”. God’s calling occurs when you are “called into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:9) and when you are “called out of darkness into His wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). When that calling takes place the believer should remain in that particular situation. Here Paul is not referring to a person’s vocation. Rather he is speaking about their religious or social situation.

Finally verse 24 tells us, “Each man, as responsible to God, should **remain in the situation God called him to**”. Paul even makes it clear that by remaining as “insiders” we are actually fulfilling our calling.

Three thoughts about calling emerge from this passage regarding insiders:

- “Each one should **retain the place in life .... to which God has called him**” (v17). They do not need to change their status, whether it is their economic, social or religious station in life (NIV Study Bible).
- “Each one should remain in the situation which he was in **when God called him**” (v20). God calls the insider. The insider is not called by churches or organizations or societies. And when that calling takes place, the insiders remain in their natural context. “Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should **remain in the situation God called him to**.” (v24). Again this is referring to one’s religious or social context, not to one’s vocation in life.
- They have a **calling to be insiders in their own com-**

**munity**. They are not required to leave Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, etc and join a Christian church or community. They will however be part of a kingdom community in their natural context that will be based strongly on the “one-another” relationships found throughout the epistles. For example, “**But encourage one another daily**, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness”, Hebrews 3:13. To go beyond their community usually requires a further calling, the calling to be an apostle.

In summary, the insider has a **calling to God, to his community and to his place in life**. Thus the insider movement with its local leadership appears to be the natural way for the gospel to impact that particular ethnic group. The local leadership is usually shepherding in nature.

We have seen the importance of “seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness” in grasping what is the good news and how this good news is expressed through insider movements in every ethnic community. Secondly we have seen that a new believer does not leave his or her cultural/religious context but rather lives differently in that context.

Thirdly, the new believers will be facing ongoing struggles with syncretism but with the help of mobile apostolic leaders, the gospel will continue to be clarified. As the lives of these new believers are slowly transformed, this will in turn impact their entire communities, resulting in **insider movements**.

The fourth factor that together with insider movements completes our understanding of church is the **apostolic movement led by small bands of mobile leaders**. These mobile bands take the good news into new ethnic groups and lay the foundations in these new ethnic groups. They also coach the local movements and recruit new apostolic leaders who in turn will go to new locations. All of this is church. It is in fact one seamless web, consisting of a dynamic ongoing interaction between the local and mobile movements.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF INSIDER MOVEMENTS

There appears to be at least ten characteristics of these insider movements.

1. **The gospel is very simple**. It is Jesus Christ and him crucified. Nothing more. It is not the crucified Jesus plus the Law. It is not the crucified Jesus plus leaving your community and joining an alien community. For a movement to have a pure gospel there is a constant need to clarify what is the gospel in order to counter such things as syncretism and false teaching. Often the apostolic mobile team is key to this process.
2. **The outworking of the gospel is through his kingdom**. Matthew 6:33. The kingdom functions through the natural networks of family, community and the society. As such the wheat and tares all grow together (Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43 as well as 47-51). We don’t sweat the mess.

3. Understanding our **spiritual identity** as being related to our second birth, when we become citizens of his kingdom. It has little to do with our cultural/religious identity. Jesus' spiritual identity was that he was/is the Son of God. We too are sons and daughters of the living God and that is usually spiritually perceived.

My own thought is that our second birth provides us with a set of keys (of the kingdom) that enable the **purity** of the gospel. This spiritual dimension results in the transformation of lives through the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and both local and mobile leaders. This in turn **guards the gospel** and keeps it from the influences of syncretism that are ever present in every context. Our second birth provides us with our spiritual identity as we now become citizens of God's kingdom. This in turn provides us with many spiritual keys that enable the purity of the gospel as we seek to touch the nations.

4. Understanding our **physical identity** as being related to our first birth, when we were assigned (1 Corinthians 7:17) a place and time in history (Acts 17:26) that determines our cultural, social and religious identity. Jesus' physical identity was that he was/is the Son of Man and as such was seen as a Jewish prophet. We too are sons and daughters of men and our identity is usually very obvious to all.

Again my own thought is that our first birth provides us with a set of keys (of the kingdom) that enable the **mobility** of the gospel through the natural bridges of our first birth and causes **the birth of insider movements**. Our first birth is our physical identity and provides us with our human identity. This includes our religious, cultural, national, linguistic, ethnic and social identities. As such we have many keys that enable us to identify as insiders and hence provide mobility for the gospel. These thoughts on the keys of the kingdom, though somewhat different from the usual interpretation, are offered as, hopefully, useful insights.

5. **The transformation of lives** comes about by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit causing us to become holy. Also spirit filled teachers giving instruction and even discipline to the believers. This transformation takes place in the context of everyday **relationships** such as family and work (Ephesians 5-6, Colossians 3 and 1 Peter 2-3). The "**one anothers**" dominate the epistles and these changing relationships reflect the growth of the **church**, Ephesians 4:15, 16.
6. The outworking of this transformation is **in the context of the lost mainstreams** where the person has responded to the good news. As 1 Peter 2:11 states, "Live such good lives among the pagans" (Greek is simply the *ethne* or nations). This outworking of the gospel is normally through the **natural networks** of relationships found in families and relatives, in the workplace, amongst close friends, with neighbours and occasionally with those in need (Luke 10:25-37). Rod-

ney Stark in his book, **The Rise of Christianity** [8] argues that as movements in history have grown, their "social surface" has expanded exponentially. He states, "Each new member opens up new networks of relationships between the movement and potential members. The forms of social networks will differ from culture to culture, but these **interpersonal relationships** will define the lines through which conversion will most readily proceed."

7. **The concept of church being household (oikos)** fits naturally into this insider flow of the gospel. Indeed this understanding of church is found throughout the Book of Acts and the Epistles. Paul especially utilizes it in 1 Timothy 3 when he thinks about the heads of **households** being the leadership of the insider movement. In 1 Timothy 3:15 he specifically refers to **God's household** as the church of the living God. When referring to the believers in Rome, Paul lists many **households** in Chapter 16. We note that oikos is just one of the expressions of the church. In fact in Romans 16 we have four different usages of the word ekklesia.
8. **The local leadership** that is needed for insider movements is also part of the natural fabric (1 Timothy 3) and it is the deacons who lead their own households (1 Timothy 3:12) as well as elders, overseers and bishops (1 Timothy 3:1-7) who desire to care for other households as well. Mostly these local leaders are laymen, who are already respected in their pagan communities. They provide an organic structure based on relationships in contrast to an institutional structure based on positions and programs. Often when resolving issues of justices such organic structures are necessary. An example is Acts 6:1-6 when certain widows were overlooked in the daily distribution of food.
9. Within these insider movements, there is the **cultivation of young apostles, prophets and evangelists and other mobile leaders** who will be released to go and plant the good news into new ethnic groups where the gospel is not known. The church is the umbrella that embraces these mobile teams as well as the local expressions.
10. A very helpful characteristic of an insider movement is the availability of an **indigenous, simple local Bible translation** which the common man can easily read and understand. In this way the priesthood of all believers is nourished as every believer can learn from the Scriptures directly and in turn can influence others with the good news. This characteristic is not deduced from scripture, but is evident by the way Paul wrote to these insider movements.

## CONCLUSIONS

We have seen that the **good news of the kingdom of God is the basis for insider movements** and that these insider movements occur in every ethnic community of the world through

“sent out” mobile gifted people who both understand and live out this kingdom lifestyle. In Genesis 12:1-3 we saw that ethnic communities are embedded in the gospel. Matthew 28:18-20 tells us that we are to make disciples of every ethnic community and nation.

And finally both Revelation 5:9 and Revelation 7:9 suggest that **our first birth** as well as our **second birth** will be part of our unique eternal identity. Revelation 7:9 states, “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.” The nature of this unique eternal identity is hard to grasp. Yet if we major only on the second birth and extract people out of their natural “insider” ethnic networks and in a sense cause people to deny their first birth, this would seem inconsistent with scripture.

We have seen how the good news of the kingdom was proclaimed by Jesus and as a result insider movements began to take place in both the Jewish and Gentile worlds. We are aware of the ultimate scene in Revelation 7:9. But how the Holy Spirit leads the people of God throughout history and today and in the future will have **great variation depending on the context** (e.g. fundamentalist Hindus, mainstream Hindus, nominal Hindus, secular Hindus, etc) **the location** (proximity to Mecca) and many other factors. Even today there are many different kinds of insider movements in the non-Christian religious mainstems of the world as well as in the secular West.

But we are strongly aware of Jesus’ words, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). And Jesus was truly an insider, yet his focus was the world (Matthew 13:38 and Matthew 28:18-20). We too need to be **concentrating locally** as insiders and yet **committed globally** as citizens of the kingdom of God.

In summary, we have seen the importance of:

- a simple gospel
- a clear understanding of the kingdom of God and how it is expressed in the nations
- transformation of lives lived in community through vital interpersonal relationships
- lives lived out in the context of the lost nations with an understanding of their physical and spiritual identities in this context
- the church being both the local expressions (insider movements) as well as mobile
- teams (apostolic movements) in dynamic interaction
- the church being transformed relationships in the body of Christ, especially in the household (oikos) and the workplace in the context of the lost world
- godly leadership ranging over all the gifts in both the local and mobile expressions of the gospel of the kingdom. **(AFMI/ASFM)**

## ENDNOTES

- [1] **The Key to Insider Movements: The “Devoted’s” of Acts** by Kevin Higgins, *IJFM* 21:4 Winter 2004.155
- [2] **A History of the Expansion of Christianity** by Kenneth Scott Latourette, 7 volumes, Harper and Row, NY, 1937-1945.
- [3] **The Insider** by Jim Petersen and Mike Shamy, NavPress, CSC, 2003.
- [4] **Holman Bible Atlas**, Holman Reference, Nashville, 1998, Page 220.
- [5] **Unger’s Bible Dictionary**, Moody Press, Chicago, 1982, Page 257.
- [6] **Syncretism**, Advanced Information, [www.mb-soft.com/believe/txc/syncreti.htm](http://www.mb-soft.com/believe/txc/syncreti.htm)
- [7] **Church Without Walls** by Jim Petersen NavPress, CSC, 1992.
- [8] **The Rise of Christianity** by Rodney Stark, Harper Collins, NY, 1997.

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# Become Like So They Remain Like

*Harley Talman*

**T**his brief article will examine what it means for the messenger/message to “become like” the target people enabling those who believe to “remain like” their people and a mass movement to emerge.

## BECOME LIKE

Before I had ever met a Muslim, I took a seminary course on Islam. I was shocked by the theological misunderstandings Muslims had about Christianity. But in further readings, I found mission scholars who held that cultural, social and communal barriers[1] were even greater than the theological ones. The logical response was for us to emulate the apostle Paul's practice as expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 and “become like” those we seek to reach.

19 For since I am free from all I can make myself a slave to all, in order to gain even more people.

20 To the Jews I became like a Jew to gain the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) to gain those under the law.

21 To those free from the law I became like one free from the law (though I am not free from God's law but under the law of Christ) to gain those free from the law.

22 To the weak I became weak in order to gain the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by all means I may save some.

Paul became like the people he sought to win: those whose religion had biblical origins (Jews), pagan gentiles who were “free from the [Mosaic] law”, and even the “weak” whose religious scruples kept them from enjoying the benefits of Christian freedom. So when I moved to a Muslim country, I “became like” the local Muslims. I wore a full beard like the religious, and immersed myself in the culture and religion. Consequently, I was often asked “Are you a Muslim?” This provided abundant and natural opportunities to share my faith. Moreover, I studied the Qur'an and memorized helpful verses. Over time, I was able to share key biblical truths and correct misunderstandings and objections to the gospel using Arab proverbs, Islamic concepts and Qur'anic verses. I saw that the more I “became like” my Muslim friends, the greater was their comprehension and acceptance of biblical truth.

## REMAIN LIKE

But what happens to Muslims after they come to faith in Christ? Muslims who embrace the gospel have been encouraged, expected or compelled to become like the national Christians and/or Western missionaries. They became “converts” - not only in Christian faith, but also in culture, lifestyle, religious identity and practice. Their becoming “Christians” and joining the Christian community (most of whom were only cultural Christians) has resulted in persecution and expulsion from the Muslim community--not necessarily for following Christ, but for bringing shame upon their family, rejecting their culture, and betraying their community. This phenomenon has not only been unfortunate, but often unnecessary and unscriptural, contradicting apostle Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 7:17-24:

17 Nevertheless, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each person, so must he live. I give this sort of direction in all the churches.

18 Was anyone called after he had been circumcised? He should not try to undo his circumcision. Was anyone called who is uncircumcised? He should not get circumcised.

19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Instead, keeping God's commandments is what counts.

20 Let each one remain in that situation in life in which he was called.

21 Were you called as a slave? Do not worry about it. But if indeed you are able to be free, make the most of the opportunity.

22 For the one who was called in the Lord as a slave is the Lord's freedman. In the same way, the one who was called as a free person is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought with a price. Do not become slaves of men. 24 In whatever situation someone was called, brothers and sisters, let him remain in it with God

The essence of the principle is for the believer “to remain in the condition in which he was called.” While the preceding context concerns remaining in one's marital situation, here the principle applies to religious, social and cultural identity. If someone came to faith while a Jew (circumcised), he should not seek to change that (through surgical procedure - v.18). Likewise, gentiles should not seek to be circumcised and adhere to the Mosaic law and Jewish way of life. In all cases, remaining in one's situation involves social, cultural, and religious affiliations.

What are the reasons that the apostle advocated “remaining like”? This passage surfaces at least three: first, “the Lord has assigned to each one” (v. 17) the situation in which he was

called - his station is God-given. (cf. Acts 17:26). Second, the believer can remain with an unbelieving spouse and yet not be defiled. In fact, the presence of the believer "sanctifies" the unbelieving mate (v. 14). Third, remaining in one's place may bring salvation to that partner (vv.12-16).

These are also hold true with regard to the larger social community of the one who remains. God assigned the Muslim follower of Christ to the Muslim community. His association with Muslims who do not believe and live like him does not defile him; rather his presence "sanctifies" the community for God's purposes. Most importantly, by remaining among them, the gospel of salvation can move through the believer's entire network of relationships, making possible a movement to Christ.

### BECOME LIKE ... REMAIN LIKE

These two truths are tied together. Messenger and message must "become like" the community to promote maximum acceptance. Likewise, those who believe must "remain like" their people if a movement is to emerge. I like the way a friend stated it: "We become like so they can remain like." Sounds good, but what might it look like?

My team is now engaged in an contextualized ministry to Muslims in Africa. We have adapted to their culture and religion, and sought to incarnate God's love through holistic hu-

manitarian work, despite insecurity and physical dangers. We have trained the area's sheiks (tribal chiefs and village elders) in community health development. This has opened doors for us to teach them about spiritual health and the message of our holy scriptures that the Qur'an testifies to. We made it clear that we are not asking them to change their identity and become "Christians," but rather to become citizens in the kingdom of God.

In keeping with traditional decision making processes, the sheiks interacted with our new teaching to reach group consensus, so that well over 100 Muslim sheiks trusted in Jesus as the Messiah who has authority to forgive their sins. They continue to perform *salat* (ritual prayers) and fasting, but according to Jesus' instructions (cf. Mt. 6). Most importantly, they are in a position to lead the thousands of people in their villages to become like them in their allegiance to Christ and the Bible, while remaining Muslim in identity and culture. It's that simple: *We become like so they remain like.* **(AFMI/ASFM)**

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## Mission Frontiers

<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/current>

The News and Issues Journal from the U.S. Center For World Mission

Can you have genuine members of the Body of Christ who do not consider themselves "Christian" but do consider themselves Bible-believing followers of Jesus? Is it possible to have people who faithfully study the Bible in order to follow and obey Jesus but who also consider themselves to be Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews...culturally?

Jesus Movements - May - June 2011

# God's 'Jump Over'

*Trevor Larsen*

**Summary:** *Fieldworkers from 14 teams multiplying believer groups to the third generation among cousin UPGs recently report jump-overs of small believer groups multiplying into other unreached people groups, in other provinces and countries. We observe 7 ways the Lord is fueling jump-overs. Most are driven by nationals at low cost. There are many challenges including how to mentor distant leaders, and how to manage the schedules of workers who have lots of fruit in lots of areas. A profile of forward assigned apostle-like figures emerges, and of a different kind of fieldworker than imagined by international organizational leaders.*

In Acts 11:17-18 and 15:14, followers of Isa observed and communicated what God did. This was part of their process of developing mission strategy and theology. Observing the surprising works of God, they concluded they must align themselves with what He is doing, including release old paradigms. Observing God and aligning with Him is man's part. One role of forward assigned apostle-like figures is 'to describe' what God is doing so that we can grasp the modifications in ministry approach He wants of us.

God is working to spread the gospel from 9 UPGs in which believer groups already multiplied to the third generation, causing this 'fire' to 'jump-over' to other UPGs, like a spreading forest fire starting to jump across boundaries. Or it could be described like the 'runners' of a healthy strawberry plan result in new plants in other parts of the field. These 'volunteer strawberry plants' emerged even though the 14 very fruitful teams of our Multipliers Network rarely sent workers to other UPGs intentionally. It even happened before these teams discussed plans to send evangelists. It happened when 'apostle like' individuals were guided by the Holy Spirit to the unreached edge.

What is it that God is doing to bring to life our vision in the other UPGs? What should we then do so that we work together with Him? In 2010 I randomly heard stories of jump-overs, while discussing other matters with field workers. Jump-overs are most often reported from UPGs to nearby provinces, but sometimes from UPGs to other islands, and even other countries.

All of these cases started from the 9 UPGs which began reporting 3 generation group clusters in just the last 3 years, which I view as early signs of movements. I have not yet interviewed all 14 teams in the Multipliers Network about jump-over cases. But through informal dialog with a few of the teams, we obtained the following reports - which stirs our imagination. If this phenomena were to continue, it would increase in its growth rate. I am convinced that in 5 years, we will see some amazing things. I believe that once we understand how God is causing jump-overs, we will

become more focused in mobilizing field workers and funds compared to our previous efforts. Our previous scramble to start work in unreached people groups was a costly struggle from launch date until the date when we could finally report the first 9 UPGs which multiplied to 3rd generation groups. From the point of engagement to the point of 3rd generation fruit, this process often has taken 10 years in these first 9 UPGs to report 3rd generation fruit. But if we alter our tactics of engagement, and instead of picking where but rather follow the work of God to start in the UPGs where He has already started small fires, I am convinced we can speed up the rate of multiplication. It seems as though our focus now should be on understanding this phenomena, and then determining how God would have us partner with Him, and with each other.

All of the following cases share these principles in common: 1) bridging agents who are part of a multi-generational cluster, 2) low cost of bridging, 3) movement through preexisting social groupings rather than individuals, 4) social mechanisms which select responsiveness and de-select un-responsiveness, 5) quick identification and empowerment of local leaders, and 6) the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the right people group in the right time, and via the right people. The likelihood that a responsive group will survive and thrive may depend on 7) the quick transition of initial spiritual responsiveness into Bible discussion group led by local people, 8) long distance mentoring of local leaders, and the 9) development of leadership communities.

In April 2011, I investigated this phenomena further, by questioning 7 church planters who were working in 3 people groups. They have developed 261 small believer groups in the 3 people groups where they live. What surprised them is that 5 of these church planters also developed 92 small believer groups in other Unreached People Groups (99% areas). These 92 'jumpover groups' were planted in 25 UPGs, and in 13 other people groups, even in 2 other countries - in places where we have no paid personell! 2/3 of these jumpover groups have begun within the last 2-3 years, and 11 have reached the 2nd generation. Considering the total of 353 groups planted by these 3 teams, 92 jumpover groups is 26% of the total, most of them unintentional!

I have discovered 7 means through which God is causing 'jumpovers'. The first level of partnering is partnering with God in what He is doing. We must dialog on how to partner with

each other to support faster deployment and health of these 'strawberry runners' in God's other fields.

## JUMPING FLEA

In tropics, it is a common to see a woman picking fleas from her friend's head before they jump over to someone else's head.

Isa followers mentored in a 3 generation group movement in one UPG jump over to another UPG by moving or traveling to trade goods there, then producing the fruit of small believer groups in their new UPG. There are 4 different kinds of 'jumping flea' cases which have produced groups in other UPGs. In the first 3 kinds of cases, a carrier moved for some period to the new field, while in the fourth the carrier was a traveling trader.

- Construction workers move from a 3 generation group movement in a UPG to start a construction job in another UPG; or in the reverse direction, individuals move from a different UPG to a UPG which already has a 3 generation group movement.
- House maids move from a 3 generation group movement in a UPG to another UPG
- College students studying in a city distant from their own UPG who become part of a 3 generation group movement in that UPG, return to their own UPGs after graduation and open believer groups.
- Traders who become part of a 3 generation group movement in their own UPG sometimes trade in other UPGs, and produce groups on their trade route.

## KINSHIP BRIDGE

Isa followers mentored in a 3 generation group movement in one UPG jump over to another UPG through kinship ties which bridge two ethnics. They pass along what they have already tasted, multiplying small believer groups. These 2 kinds of cases have birthed believer groups in a new UPG:

- Cross ethnic couples which have become part of a 3 generation group movement in one UPG may move permanently or temporarily from one UPG to live with a parent in a different UPG, and share the gospel there. One church planter who has birthed 6 cell groups in one UPG visited his in-laws in a different UPG, and won 2 individuals to faith while visiting.
- Isa followers mentored in a 3 generation group movement in one UPG visited a relative who had moved to another UPG, and birthed a small group during the visit. A church planter visited his brother in a different UPG, and won 2 other believers while visiting. He continues to do long distance mentoring by using text messaging. In the reverse direction, a believer who had moved to a different UPG where he became part of a 3 generation group movement visited his parents at the end of fasting month, and won some believers and started a mini-

group. In another case he moved back to his own UPG after his work finished, and sent messages about his evangelism.

## TRAINING SPRINGBOARD

Isa followers who are leading a 3 generation group movement in one UPG give training to evangelists who are working in another UPG where fruit has been minimal. They encourage trainees to send news of their evangelism during the next 2 months. If training delivered is of immediately useful kind, some fruit may be evident during the intensive training week, and we assess news of fruit during the first two months after training. There are 3 kinds of cases:

- Cross over workers active in a 3 generation group movement in one UPG are trainers in another UPG. They often have wider social networks and wider invitations. Cross over workers who train are more legitimized if they co-train with Isa followers who are the fruit of their work and who are recognized leaders. Insiders provide insight into contextually fitted tactics that color the general principles trained by the cross over workers. Cross over workers must deliver core principles strongly, but also learn from insiders, and allow their training to take on local expression even in ways unfamiliar to them, rather than expect contextual conditions to be the same.
- Workers who are both the fruit of, and workers in a 3 generation group movement in one UPG, are co-trainers with cross over workers as a training team in another UPG. Training is most fruitful if trainers from multiple generations work together. Training is focused on selected people ready to act immediately.
- Workers who are both the fruit of, and workers in a 3 generation group movement in one UPG, are called to a trainer's house in their own UPG to be trained intensively as a roving field worker. Their job may allow them to rove in a smaller or larger radius. This in house training intensive approach has reported fruit in near regions as well as far.

## FREE CATCH

God has been using the individuals who travel between UPGs to infect a new UPG with the experience of a 3 generation group movement in another UPG. Three kinds of cases report:

Individuals from one UPG live for a time in another UPG where they become part of a 3 generation group movement, then return and infect their own UPG.

An intentional missionary journey from a 3 generation group movement in one UPG to another UPG for 2-3 weeks tends to go with boldness and quickly find those who have already been prepared by the Spirit, provided those who travel are nationals who can cross over using their national language.

Cross cover college students working in a 3 generation group movement in the UPG near where they study intentionally move after graduation to another UPG in order to reach it.

## DISASTER RESPONSE

Some disaster response teams have birthed 3 generation group movements in the UPGs where they serve, while others only delivered practical love. There are many factors at play including responsiveness of local people to God who allowed the disaster, and how the principles of the team connect practical love to deeper mentoring.

## MIRACLE BRIDGE

This bridge has been used by God for centuries to open works within new UPGs, particularly if the people used by God to channel His miraculous help have been part of 3 generation movements in other UPGs. We have not yet gathered much information on just how far miracles are used in jumpovers between different UPGs, though it is a key element within all of the 9 UPGs where 3 generation fruit is reported. Persons from one UPG are helped with a dream or vision interpretation by someone from a 3 generation group movement in another UPG. The same is true when heart wounds are healed, when sicknesses are cured, when people are prayed for and pass through death's door in peace, and when people are freed from demons.

## ELITES

Elite Isa followers who have tasted 3 generation group fruit have access to other UPGs due to their status and influence. If these hierarchical contexts (in which they are high hierarchy) receive their testimony, doors are opened. Mentoring these types has high potential, but is often done poorly by Christian workers with little regard for the individual's security, shallow biblical understanding, and no grasp of the theological challenges he faces in his social context. Promising things have been reported in many 'settings', whereas in some others cases elites have been exposed unwisely and have been destroyed by foolish well meaning Christians.

Seminar/training in bridging dialog in elite groups legitimizes 2nd and 3rd generation fruit and establishes local vocabulary to support spiritual renewal.

Personal mentoring of elite individuals birth 2nd and 3rd generation fruit, particularly if the mentor can not enter the mentoree's 'setting'.

## SUMMARY

After first summarizing 7 general principles underlying all these cases, we looked at 7 exciting ways God is working to cause His 'fire' to 'jump-over' to other UPGs -- from the UPGs where that fire has reached the third generation in recent

years and momentum is branching out. Fruitfully engaging other UPGs will be speeded up to the degree to which His people align with what God is doing and synchronize their efforts in the direction He sets. This sample of cases is representative but not comprehensive. We have much to discover about God's amazing acts through shared learning between leaders. Then we need to line up strategy, training, and mobilization to synchronize with what God is doing.

## STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

1. Observe what God is doing, where His Spirit is blowing, and aligning with Him.
2. Recognize and align with lower budgets supporting 'natural' startups in other UPGs, driven by nationals who must add 'jumpover' work on top of very busy schedules. Use special limited strategically focused funding.
3. Recognize and support 'jumpover' agents. In many cases these are first or second generation fruit, as well as agents of next generation fruit. In other cases they are 'apostle-like nationals' with special gifting for startups in unplowed territory. One has started small cell groups in two distant UPGs, and supplied his own travel funds through fees earned via his transportable business. While 'apostle-like' nationals are socially, emotionally, and practically fairly self sufficient, they are empowered by attentive brotherly love and encouragement.
4. Recognize and focus on 'people of peace' who are particularly suited as cross cultural bridges. They are prepared by God before jumpover agents meet them.
5. Jumpover agents start 'renewal bridging dialog' more quickly and move the dialog forward more efficiently in 'jumpovers', because their time is limited. Friendship building is with the spiritually responsive only. Bridging agents have skill in quicker dialog, boldness and little fear of failure. They use mystical 'charisma', intuitively seizing the moment, especially when miracles or special circumstances occur.
6. Help jumpover agents learn to mentor long distance.
7. Recognize that new jumpover populations are not merely regions nor ethnics but also hybrid or special sub-populations -- move from UPGs to Unreached Segments. Each of many variants needs a somewhat different discipling approach.
8. Build new learnings into every quarterly evaluation, to make keeping sight of what God is doing part of team culture. Build a culture of Incremental Innovation.

Certain outsiders linked to jumpover agents play niche roles which are important. These roles should be defined through mutual discussion.

*Dr. Trevor Larsen has been ministering in an Asian country for 18 years. This article is an excerpt from his book in preparation for publication. You can find his another article titled by "Embryonic Ekklesia" in AFMI Bulletin No. 5, Oct -Dec 2010.*

# The Case and Call for Oral Bibles

*Rick Leatherwood*

**T**he nature of missions is changing as we get closer and closer to the end. Our understanding of what needs to be done becomes clearer in light of the time and season we now find ourselves. A lot has changed since 1980 when the U.S. Center for World Mission began to teach the church about the Abrahamic Covenant and unreached peoples, about bonding, overcoming ethnocentrism, redemptive analogies, what is the meaning of indigenous, etc. Many young people then took up the challenge of how to complete the Great Commission. Little did anyone realize how close we would be to reaching people from every tribe and tongue just 30 years later.

Today 65% of the unreached peoples in the world do not read and write. They are oral learners and we must reach them through oral strategies. The most important part of reaching unreached people is to bring them the word of God. Many missionaries on the cutting edge of completing the Great Commission are now creating and learning how to use oral Bibles.

One problem in missions which has often been overlooked is that after a written translation is completed, the people still don't know how to read it. Many translations, which a translator spent years working on are now collecting dust. Unfortunately literacy programs among unreached peoples have mostly been unsuccessful over the last 40-50 years, seeing on average an increase of only 4%. It is a difficult thing for an adult to learn to read and write. If one is going to expend the time and energy necessary to learn to read and write it would be nice if there were some literature in that language to read. For many of these languages there may never be another piece of literature other than the Bible written in that language. So literacy programs have faced the major problem of incentive. If a non literate person is going to go through all the effort to learn to read, it will most likely be in the trade language of the country in which he lives. There is little incentive to learn to read a language which has no literature other than the Bible in it, when one can learn to read the trade language of their country which has the Bible and also has volumes of other literature.

A moment is also needed to note the difference between an oral Bible and an audio Bible such as Faith Comes by Hearing is producing in many parts of the world. An audio Bible is the dramatized recording of

the New Testament onto a cassette tape or an MP3 audio player which they have created called a Proclaimer. The text for the audio Bibles such as FCBH produces comes from a written New Testament which has been translated and approved by Wycliffe or a Bible Society. A problem here is Wycliffe says it will take another 150 years to complete written translations in the languages of all the unreached peoples.

So what is an oral Bible and what are its advantages? An oral Bible is a recording of a core set of Biblical stories from genesis to Revelation that gives a panorama of the Scriptures. It is not a summary of the Bible's stories used for a gospel presentation as Global Recordings has done. Nor is it a paraphrase. An oral Bible is the word of God as it is written in the Bible. Great pains are taken in its creation to maintain the integrity of the Scriptures. Nothing is added or expositied. It is not embellished or expanded upon in any way. It is simply God's word as it is told in the stories of Scripture.

A major difference in an oral Bible and an audio Bible is that an oral Bible can be produced from the trade language which already has a written translation. Some good news is there are written translations in all of the world's trade languages. So the oral Bible is not dependant on 150 years of future new translations. It takes the already completed written translation of the trade language, and records a selection of the stories orally into the mother tongue of the unreached tribe just as would be done through someone translating a message of a visiting preacher. The advantage of the oral Bible is it is done by a team in a group setting rather than just depending on one person as is the case when a message is translated from a guest speaker.

Another difference in an oral Bible and an audio Bible is that the stories recorded in an oral Bible have been crafted for reproducibility rather than recording the whole text as is done in an audio Bible. Many stories in an oral Bible have been shortened so they can be reproduced by oral learners. For example in the story of Noah, three chapters are squeezed down to less than a page. It is then possible to learn to tell the story of Noah in great detail, but not all of the details which would make the story too difficult to master. So the stories have been condensed but the stories of an oral Bible are not a summary of God's word put into man's words. The oral Bible is not a tract. The stories are strictly the word of God.

Crafting is simply choosing how much of a story is to be included, where to begin a story and where to end it. Consider how Stephen in Acts 6-7, crafted his abbreviated story of Israel's history as he chose where to begin and end and what to include in each of the events he told.

Some stories in an oral Bible may be *compilations* of the accounts given in the four gospels. Such as Jesus' baptism, where only Luke gives the dialogue between John and the people coming to be baptized, though only Matthew sets the overall context of Jesus coming out of Galilee to be baptized by John at the Jordan, and finally only Jn. 1:29 says, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." So in creating an oral Bible we can take advantage of all four accounts being available to give listeners the most complete picture possible.

So to make an oral Bible, a team of 5-6 native speakers of a particular language, who also know how to read their nation's trade language, learn two or more Bible stories a day, taken from the written text of the Bible in the trade language. Depending on the reading skills of the storytellers, an oral Bible of 60 Bible stories told chronologically can be recorded in a week, beginning with creation and going right through to the book of Revelation. First the group sits together in the morning and discusses the key terminology of the stories they will be telling in their mother tongue that day. Their goal is to find the best way to say this word or that word in their language so the oral translation into their mother tongue will be accurate. They collaborate as a group discussing the word's meaning in the context of the passage, until they all come to agreement. Then each one studies their story using the group's consensus of the correct terminology or the best phraseology, and then with one of their team listening to check for accuracy, they tell their assigned story in their mother tongue as it is being recorded. The oral Bible then goes through a final check as it is edited.

With a native speaker listening to the recordings while following the written text, the editor makes any changes necessary, making sure the oral story agrees with the written text of the trade language. Together the editor and native speaker then arrange the stories in chronological order.

The stories are recorded onto a computer using a program called Audacity which is a free download from the internet. After the stories are edited they can be downloaded onto a CD, an MP3 player, or onto a variety of solar powered players on the market, or even put onto a mobile phone. The Oral Bible is now ready for distribution.

Our commission is to "go and make disciples," but it is pretty difficult to make disciples without the word of God. It is surely time for the whole translation component of missions to take a major step forwards toward reaching every tribe and tongue with the word of God by creating oral Bibles. It is good to see Wycliffe moving more and more into the creation of oral Bibles. As a result they have revised their projection from 150 years to finish the task of reaching every language with God's word to just 25 years by producing oral Bibles. This is good news indeed. Without doubt oral Bibles are the best way, as well as the fastest way to make the word of God available to oral learners who represent 65% of the unreached peoples of the world. (AFMI/ASFM)

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## Biblical Interpretation

# Contextualizing Religious Form and Meaning: A Missiological Interpretation of Naaman's Petitions (2 Kings 5:15-19)

*Daniel Shinjong Park*

In his vivid portrayal of mission over twenty centuries, Lamin Sanneh illustrates in account after account the necessary postulate that Christianity must be translated whenever it crosses cultural boundaries (Sanneh 1989). Missiologists have also insisted that to make the gospel message comprehensible, messengers need to put greater efforts into translating the linguistic and cultural “appropriateness” of the gospel message for the recipients (Kraft 2005).<sup>1</sup> This article suggests that this same appropriateness in communication is witnessed in the cross-cultural, inter-religious encounter of Naaman and Elisha in 2 Kings 5:15-19, and can provide one more biblical filter for sorting and sifting our contextualization efforts. By using linguistic analysis and cultural hermeneutics, I hope to penetrate the complexity of this Old Testament encounter and categorize the possible combinations of biblical meaning when attached to heathen forms. When God called Abram, a “worshiper of pagan gods” (Josh 24:2), to become Abraham, the founding ancestor of people of faith, he was not called from a vacuum, void of religious or cultural context. God chose to make a covenant with Abram, knowing fully that he was limited by his current religious culture in the understanding of God and the covenant that He wanted to make with him. God used the practices of the Ancient Near Eastern treaty and the epitome of idol worship that Abraham was accustomed to in calling him (Gallagher 2006, 146-147; Petersen 2007, 118-119). Beginning with Abraham I believe God reveals a model of contextualization for His kingdom ministry among people groups of other religious traditions.

In recent decades, missiologists have put greater emphasis on contextualization in presenting the gospel. While many creative and bold efforts have been made, many others feel unsure about making decisions about what degree of contextualization is appropriate. There is fear among the largely Westernized Christian community that contextualization, if unchecked, can lead to syncretism. Recent efforts in contextualization among the Muslims is one such attempt that has received scrutiny.

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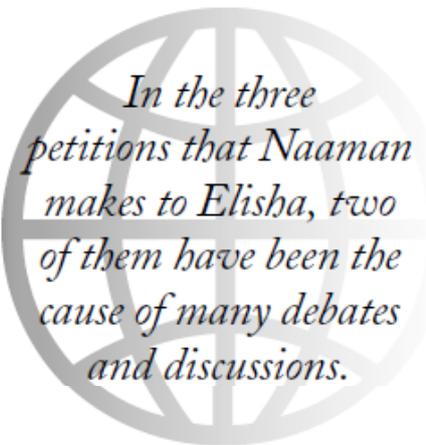
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### A Review of Discussions on Mosque Attendance

In "Contextualization Among Muslims" (1989), Dudley Woodberry shed a new light on missionary practices in the Muslim context as well as on the missiological understanding of contextualization. He argued that the "five pillars" in Islam, in fact, are "all adaptations of previous Jewish and Christian forms" (Woodberry 1989, 283). By pointing out that Paul and James continued to attend Jewish synagogues even after the community of new faith was formed, he among others provided biblical evidence that permitted the "followers of Isa" to attend Mosques (Woodberry 1989, 289). His argument resulted in strong support for the "followers of Isa" movement and led to many successful case stories in Muslim contexts, to the development of the C5 "Insider" Movement,<sup>2</sup> and to reaching out to the forgotten peoples behind the formidable walls of religious traditions (Travis 1998; Caldwell 2000; Culver 2000; Masev: Masev: DeNeui 2006). Those not so enthusiastic about the C5 and Insider Movement cautiously disagreed, believing that any legitimization of attending Mosques will make the "followers of Isa" vulnerable to religious syncretism (Parshall 1998, 409-410). This paper will especially address one particular argument from Tennent's list of the possible dangers in the C5 movement (Tennent 2006). In his brief exegesis of 2 Kings 5:18-19, Tennent states that practitioners of C5 movement inappropriately legitimize the Mosque attendance of Muslim background believers (MBBs hereafter) by misinterpreting Elisha's response to Naaman as a positive agreement between Elisha

and Naaman (Tennent 2006, 108). It is this use of the Naaman account in contextualization discussions that has led to this paper's further examination of 2 Kings 5: 15-19 discourse.

I believe this Old Testament account offers us another biblical case in our missiological discussions surrounding the contextualization of the gospel. I will present different interpretations of Naaman's petitions and Elisha's response, using biblical exegesis and theology of mission as it relates to contextualization. In addition, the relationship between form and mean-



ing as described by Paul G. Hiebert (1989) will be utilized. The strength of the link between form and meaning, evolved from Hiebert's discussion on the "connectedness" between form and meaning,<sup>3</sup> will also be explained in order to develop a model of contextualization. Using this model, the Naaman narrative will be re-examined to find the strength of relationship between forms and meanings embedded within the narrative and deepen our understanding of issues related to contextualization. Further, lessons from the narrative will be used to reevaluate some issues in the

interpretation of the Naaman narrative raised by Tennent (2006).

This story is especially interesting to the study of contextualization, since it is a conversion story of a Gentile that returns to his home culture. This story is similar to situations and dilemmas that many missionaries and newly converted Christians experience in countries where Christianity is scrutinized. In the three petitions that Naaman makes to Elisha, two of them have been the cause of many debates and discussions because they involve Naaman's actions after his conversion and seem to overlap with his previous religious practices.

### Synopsis of the Naaman Narrative

The pinnacle of the Naaman narrative is his confession of faith in YHWH after the miraculous healing of leprosy. In the Ancient Near Eastern culture, the disease and its cure signified judgment and divine salvation for the patient. In Smith's words, biblical healing "is not limited to the relief of physical suffering; healing generally refers to much larger theological issues as well" (1994, 205). Therefore, the narrative<sup>4</sup> of Naaman's healing is not only an account of who the true God is and who finds favor with God, but also provides the foundational plot of the narrative.

The broader plot of the narrative is the clash of two religious worldviews: YHWH, the true God, against the false god of Syria, Rimmon. By considering parallel characters<sup>5</sup> from the domain of YHWH in contrast to those of Rimmon as shown in Figure 1, readers are prone to assume that those siding with YHWH have a covenantal relationship with God and are the beneficiaries of an unfathomable grace, while those in the domain of Rimmon are heathens. This premise, however, is challenged as the narrative progresses.

Subplots appear as different characters are introduced. There are three contrasting pairs of characters. The first pair of contrasting characters are the King of Aram, Ben-Hadad II, and Johoram of Israel (Kaiser 2000, 42; Schultz 2000, 180). Both are kings of their respective

Figure 1. Contrasted Characters in the Naaman Narrative.

RIMMON			↔	YHWH		
King of Syria			↔	King of Israel		
Naaman			↔	Elisha		
Young Girl	Naaman's Wife	Servants	↔	Gehazi		

countries and both would be vitally dependent on their god for the wellbeing of their kingdom. The King of Aram was a man who did not know or have a relationship with YHWH. He served and worshiped his god, Rimmon, according to their religious traditions and cultural rituals. But when the healers of Rimmon could not cure “the honorable and highly regarded general,” he released the general to the hands of the prophet of YHWH with a considerable amount of treasure (Kaiser 2000, 44).<sup>6</sup>

The King of Israel shows all the signs of despair when he is approached with Ben-Hadad II's request. Sweeney concludes that the King of Israel “demonstrates his own lack of confidence in YHWH and the prophet of God in his own capital city” (2007, 299). Although Johoram was outwardly connected to YHWH, he neither knew the breadth of God's power nor sustained any expectation that God would help him.

The second set of contrasting figures are the servants of Naaman and Elisha. The young female servant of Naaman's wife is presented as a special person of faith. Despite her sufferings and hardships as a casualty of war, she did not give up her faith in the God of Israel. It is possible to conclude that her faith in the true God enabled her to be confident enough to suggest that Naaman visit Israel, knowing fully that if the mission turned sour it would bring calamity on her. Unlike the king of Israel, however, she did not lose her connection to God. The unshakable faith that a young girl showed throughout sufferings and hardships in her life is often used as an important hermeneutical device in the Asian context to encourage believers in the face of persecution and oppression and to give reasons for endurance.<sup>7</sup>

Naaman's wife, as well as the servants who accompany her, persuade their lord to follow through on the good news. Naaman's wife, upon hearing the news of her husband's hope for cure, persuades Naaman to seek help. The servants

**T***he evaluation of his questionable petitions should be based on the quality of his “spiritual transformation.”*

also contributed positively to the overall configuration of the plot because without their input Naaman would never have washed himself in the Jordan River.

On the contrary, the servant of Elisha, Gehazi, despite his position as YHWH's servant, was not controlled by his faith in YHWH but instead by his material greed. As a consequence of his choice, the curse of leprosy from which the general was released became a shackle to this servant of Israel's prophet (2 Kings 5:27).

Lastly, two most prominent contrasting human characters are Naaman and Elisha. The prophet, Elisha, was a man who had a strong relationship with YHWH. Naaman did not know YHWH nor had any relationship with him, but he came to the prophet of YHWH in desperation to be rid of leprosy that was “beyond everyone's control” in his homeland (Brueggemann 2007, 265). Naaman is clearly disappointed at the reception that he received and the method proposed for healing (v. 11,12). Being fully immersed in his religious culture, he expects rituals similar to those he had previously experienced in his homeland.

After the miraculous healing of Naaman, which may not have happened without the plea and persuasion of his faithful servant, Naaman returns to Elisha to make his confession of faith, which is the climax of the narrative to which all devices of the narrative plot lead.

I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel...your servant will no longer offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the Lord (v.15b, 17b, NASB henceforth).

Although YHWH caused the victory of the Aramean general (v. 1), the general was still devoid of the knowledge of the Lord. However, by the sovereign

activity of YHWH, Naaman is brought into an invisible divine congregation of true believers. Of those who were on the Israelite side, the only true believer proved to be Elisha. The King of Israel and Gehazi were not true servants of the Lord. From the religious world of Rimmon, however, Naaman, a foreign general, found favor with God. The critical roles played by the servant girl, Naaman's wife and the servants testify that they were under the will of God, unconsciously obeying God so that they fulfilled their part in this story.

Therefore this narrative suggests that the conventional manner of separating those who belong or don't belong to the true God simply by their religious association is not a valid assumption. We often assume that conversion is simply switching from one religious world, or religious association, to another. But in this narrative we can see that identity in YHWH is not that clear-cut. This narrative forces the missiological question of religious identity and what true conversion involves. It forces us to ask what indicators of change should be present when a person of another faith identifies with Christ.

### *Naaman's Conversion*

Despite the consensus among scholars on Naaman's great confession of faith,<sup>8</sup> their reactions to Naaman's petitions, which shortly follow his confession, display a wide theological spectrum. However, the evaluation of his questionable petitions should be based on the quality of his “spiritual transformation” (Long 1991, 73). Scholars have raised a series of questions on Naaman's conversion and his petitions: Was Naaman's conversion partial or perfect? (Nwaoru 2008, 35) Was his faith faultless or bound to his old belief system? (Buttrick 1962, 490) Was his confession monotheistic, henotheistic,

or monolatric? (Gray 1970, 507; Kaiser 2000, 46; Nwaoru 2008, 37) How then should we evaluate the conversion of Naaman?

According to the theologians of conversion, there are two aspects in the Greek word for conversion, *epistrophe*: directional *metanoia* (repentance) and confessional *pistis* (faith) (Berkhof 1996, 482; Peace 2004, 8). In the case of the Naaman narrative, there is a faith confession that Naaman makes to Elisha, “there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel” (v.15). On the contrary, it is not easy to find his repentance immediately from the narrative. Naaman could repent of many crimes he may have committed in his military career. There is, however, no evidence of his repentance of any of his previous crimes, and his conversion may seem to be incomplete.

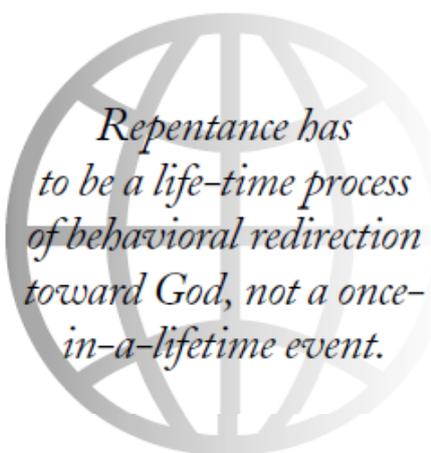
Here we have to carefully examine the biblical words for repentance. The Greek word for repentance, *metanoeo* or *metanoia*, focuses on the “emotional change of one’s mind” (Arndt, Danker, and Bauer 2000, 640). But the Hebrew word, *niham*, is closer to a “directional change” of behavior (Kromminga 1984, 936). In the Old Testament, when the prophets urged the Israelites to repent, it meant a behavioral turn from their idol-worship to become true worshippers of the YHWH. Repentance, therefore, has to be a life-time process of behavioral redirection toward God, not a once-in-a-lifetime event, since people are always under a constant inclination to fall away from God.

If repentance is a directional change of behavior, Naaman’s second statement of faith can be accepted as an evidence of repentance: “[Y]our servant will no longer offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD.” (v. 17) Directional change is apparent in Naaman’s confession. Therefore, I cautiously conclude that Naaman’s conversion, which shows his confession of faith and *repentance of directional change*, meets the theological requirement of conversion. However,

it is premature to accept Naaman’s subsequent petitions and behavior as indicative of genuine conversion without closer examination.

### *Debate on Naaman’s Petitions*

Naaman’s petition to take some dirt from Israel back to his country and the request to be pardoned of bowing down at the Rimmon temple have been the center of much controversy and debate among scholars of the Old Testament and of theology of mission. These petitions arose because Elisha refused to accept Naaman’s gifts.



### **First Petition: Please Take These Treasures!**

Scholars speculate on why Elisha refused Naaman’s gifts. Brueggemann claims that Naaman is acting according to the religious and traditional customs of his country, where heathen prophets often offered their services for money (2007, 269). Just as Naaman’s expectation of what Elisha would do to heal him was based on his experiences with heathen prophets in his own country, likewise his offering of gifts after the healing was a compensation for the healing received (Brueggemann 2007, 269).

Also, if the prophet accepted the gifts, Naaman would consider his debt to God or to Elisha fully repaid, or maybe that God can be coerced into doing miracles in return for riches and treasure. Elisha wanted this man to fully understand that it was God’s divine will and His power alone that had healed him. This idea is concurrent with the moral and functional perspective of

Sweeney, who says that “by declining to accept the gift, the narrative portrays both YHWH’s and Elisha’s magnanimity and highlights once again the relative power of Naaman and Elisha” (Sweeney 2007, 300). Elisha’s acceptance of the gifts would have sent the wrong message that somehow this miracle was Elisha’s doing and thus take the glory away from YHWH.

### **Second Petition: Soil for an Altar?**

Just after Elisha declines Naaman’s plea of accepting his gifts, Naaman says, “If not,” which indicates a conditional statement. The rejection of the former petition gave cause for the second petition, to obtain “two mules’ load of earth” (v.17). Some scholars criticize this petition as an act of “idolatrous superstition” because it reflects his polytheistic territorial concept of divinity and limits the almighty God to the soil of Israel (Keil and Delitzsch 2001, 3:226; Hobbs 1985, 13:66). Others criticized this petition as having a “monolaterous”<sup>9</sup> intention (Nwaoru 2008, 37). Scholars find it difficult to judge whether Naaman decided to *worship* God exclusively (monolatry) or to *believe* God exclusively (monotheism) from the given text. Gray’s quote from a German theologian widens our understanding of the context of the narrative.

(Naaman’s) reason consented to monotheism but convention bound him practically to monolatry. Eissfeldt has argued that there was already a tendency to monotheism in the cult of *Baal-shamaim* in Syria, so that Naaman was the more prepared to confess that the one God was Yahweh (Gray 1970, 507).

This observation suggests that it is unreasonable to conclude that Naaman’s petition was rooted in “idolatrous superstition” or “territorial concept of divinity.” Other scholars evaluate his request as a decision to maintain his faith in YHWH using the dirt as a “sacramental attachment” (von Rad 2001, 35) or for simply building his own altar for YHWH (Bullock 1861, 161; Provan 1995, 193; Nwaoru 2008, 35). Whether he intended to build an altar

or to use it as a sacramental attachment, the petition to get earth of Israel indicates the clear intention to worship YHWH alone.

### Third Petition: Worship in the Heathen Temple?

The third petition is even more controversial. Naaman says,

When my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon—when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter (v.18b, NASB).

Many scholars negatively interpret Naaman's petition as based on "polytheistic superstition" (Keil and Delitzsch 2001, 3:226), "religious compromise and superstition" (Hobbs 1985, 13:60,66), or a "pagan notion of territorial deity" (Maier III 1997, 187). Similarly, Kaiser asserts that Naaman "mixes his new Yahwehism with strands of an old paganism" (2000, 47). Smith is most severe and regards this petition as an excuse to get permission for "worshiping another god" (1994, 210). Nwaoru takes this further and surmises that Naaman experienced only a "partial conversion" (2008, 35). A few scholars such as Brueggemann, however, take a more generous position and regard Naaman's petition as "only a social

**M**issionaries must uncover the deeply rooted underlying connection between the cultural form and meaning.

requirement and not a serious theological act" (2007, 269).

To understand Naaman's true intentions, Elisha's response must also be taken into consideration. To Naaman's third petition of pardoning his bowing at the temple of Rimmon, Elisha succinctly replies, "Go in peace" (v. 19a). Scholars differ in their opinion of Elisha's answer as well. Some interpret Elisha's response as a simple farewell in Hebrew (Edwards, Rogers, and Dwight 1839, 2:741; Grieve 1920, 306). Other scholars suggest a neutral interpretation. They propose that Elisha did not give any decisive answers, neither approval nor disapproval (Keil and Delitzsch 2001, 3:227; Fritz 2003, 260; Maier III 1997, 190-191; Kaiser 2000, 48-49). They interpret Elisha's response to mean that now with a new faith in YHWH, Naaman should go back to his country, depending on the guidance of YHWH alone. A number of others are of the opinion that Elisha's answer is a positive affirmation,<sup>10</sup> which acknowledges the "social requirement" and "unavoidable occasions" in Naaman's situation (Provan 1995, 193; Brueggemann 2007, 269).

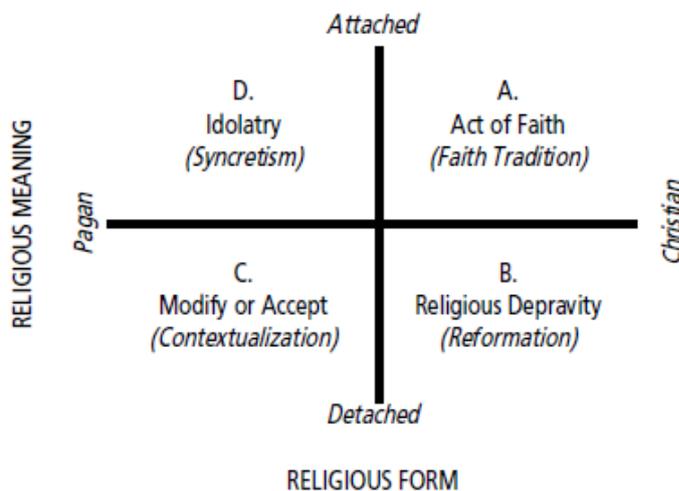
### A Principle of Contextualization

The core discussion of the Naaman narrative has to do with using religious patterns of heathen culture (form) to express Christian faith (meaning). Tillich (1964) defined the relationship between form and meaning by identifying differences between "religious sign" and "religious symbol."<sup>11</sup> Borrowing a theory of linguistics, he contended that if form and meaning have a strong and natural connection, it is a symbol. If the connection is weak (or detached), it is a sign. His account of the relationship between religious symbol and meaning provides a clearer understanding of religious symbolism, especially in the use of Christian symbols.<sup>12</sup>

[S]igns do not participate in any way in the reality and power of that to which they point. Symbols, although they are not the same as that which they symbolize, participate in its meaning and power.... The difference between symbol and sign is the participation in the symbolized reality which characterizes the symbols, and the non participation in the "pointed-to" reality which characterizes a sign (Tillich 1964, 54-55).

Paul G. Hiebert also observes that the development of scientific theory in the West has led to the merging of the cultural form and meaning as an inseparable entity (1989, 103). He advocates the necessity of a *divorce* between form and meaning. According to Hiebert, form and meaning can be connected differently, either arbitrarily, loosely, or tightly. Therefore missionaries must uncover the deeply rooted underlying connection between the cultural form and meaning if they intend to impart a different meaning through accustomed cultural forms (Hiebert 1989, 104). If a local form has an indivisible connection to the pagan religious meaning, it may need to be rejected (Hiebert 1989, 110-115).

Figure 2. Interpretative Graph of Religious Symbols.



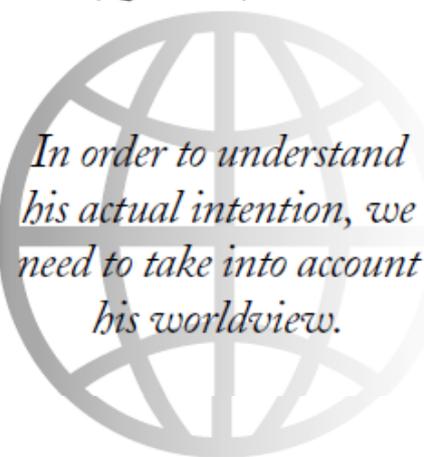
Interpreting the form-meaning relationship of religious symbols is complex, for the Christian context as well as in the context of other religions. Based upon theories of Tillich and Hiebert, a graph might help us see the different realities of religious symbolism (Figure 2 on p. 201). Within a “faith tradition,” a Christian form may be attached to a particular Christian meaning as an “act of faith” (Quadrant A). Missionaries can often make the mistake of thinking that this form will carry the same meaning as it crosses religious and cultural boundaries. Since the bond between the Christian form and meaning is very strong in the mind of the missionary, he or she feels compelled to impose it upon the new believers in the mission field. But missionaries should avoid the absolutization of Christian traditions and any grafting of those traditions on to a foreign context by simple transplanting or translation. These traditions should also be contextualized appropriately within any other intellectual, linguistic, and cultural setting.

The area of religious depravity (Quadrant B in Figure 2) is where the Christian meaning is detached from a Christian form, and can often indicate a place in need of reformation and revival. Extensive renewal is constantly required when a Christian symbol or form has lost its meaningfulness. When these forms are transferred to the context of other religions, appropriate contextualization has to be applied with great caution.

When a Christian form and its Christian meaning are detached or are only arbitrarily linked, the form has lost much of its religious connection in the missionary’s home country and may easily be dismissed as not having any religious value in the foreign context. While pushing the form onto the target culture is not advisable, the missionary needs to restore the lost meaning of that form and see whether it could be used in the target culture.

When pagan forms are detached from pagan meanings (Quadrant C), the forms become a characteristic of culture with another religious heritage, rather than a form that is crucial to that religion itself. Missionaries often assume that since the form has lost its religious meaning, it can be used to convey Christian meaning. Sometimes, however, minor modifications may be required to create a distance from certain previous meanings.<sup>13</sup>

The final quadrant represents a dangerous area where syncretism often occurs (Quadrant D). This is where



pagan forms and pagan meanings are tightly linked. Therefore, when a non-believer in the mission field comes across that form, it potentially conjures up all the idolatrous meanings associated to that form. Attempts to disassociate the pagan meaning from pagan form and give it a new Christian meaning are extremely difficult and have more often created syncretism rather than effective contextualization. Missionaries, however, should avoid directly attacking or passing judgment without the proper understanding of deep-level meaning and function of religious symbols in this area. If, as Paul Hiebert posited, the level of connection between religious symbols and their meaning can be arbitrary, loose, or tight, then this particular area where religious symbol and meaning are tightly linked requires extensive discussion. Further interaction and examination among local leaders and

believers as a “hermeneutical community” can determine whether (or how) the form and meaning can be detached or not (Hiebert, Tienou, and Shaw 1999, 385).

### *Re-evaluation of Two Petitions Using Form-Meaning Dynamics*

The various viewpoints of scholars on the second and third petition of Naaman were reviewed earlier. Now, in light of the previously discussed relationships of form and meaning, the two controversial petitions will be re-examined using form-meaning connection to shed greater clarity on the debate and its implications for contextualization in mission contexts.

#### **The Significance of Soil (v. 17)**

Altars of animal sacrifice are prominent structures in religious cultures of the Ancient Near East. Israel also had altars for burnt offerings. Even though Naaman used an ancient worldview with a pagan notion of God, we need to be cautious in judging his petition as paganism or syncretism. As was mentioned in the previous exegetical review, some scholars believe that Naaman’s petition reflects a “polytheistic territorial concept” of divinity, that the link in his worldview between the almighty YHWH and the soil of Israel is too strong (Keil and Delitzsch 2001, 3:226; Hobbs 1985, 13:66). Although this attachment of pagan theological form is true, a deeper level of speaker’s intention still needs to be interpreted.

Naaman’s second request of two mule-loads of soil can be analyzed with “deep-level semiotic narrative structure” (Pavel 1985, 91).<sup>14</sup> In order to understand his actual intention, we need to take into account his worldview. In linguistics, an utterance contains a surface meaning and a deep-level meaning; thus, let us examine these levels in Naaman’s petition.

Naaman’s actual utterance to Elisha is a request to take the soil of Israel, which is the surface meaning. Biblical scholars sense the syncretism in his request because they see an embed-

ded connection between his petition and the old religious worldview. Fritz points out that in the Ancient Near Eastern context, soil and deity are intermingled (2003, 260), and von Rad interprets Naaman's intention as reflecting the belief that there is a "sacramental attachment" between dirt and YHWH (2001, 35). These views, including Hobbs and Keil above, all agree that in Naaman's belief system, the form (soil) had an intricate connection to meaning (god of that land).

This is, however, only a partial interpretation of the deep-level semiotic structure. A fuller interpretation takes the connection one step further. When Naaman confessed his exclusive monotheistic faith (v. 17b) in his heart and mind, he had already replaced Rimmon with YHWH. Thus Naaman's final and deep-level intention can be interpreted as Naaman's intention to worship YHWH.

Let's add our work in Figure 2 to this deeper analysis of Naaman's request. In his theological frame, Naaman was unable to detach the meaning from the form. In his mind, dirt was a direct representation of the deity. When he realized that YHWH was the only true God, he immediately attaches YHWH to the dirt from Israel. In essence, he has taken a biblical meaning, YHWH, and attached it to a pagan framework of worshipping a deity. Naaman's request, however, is a dangerous attempt to contain biblical meaning, the worship of YHWH, in a pagan religious form. As we see in Quadrant D in Figure 2, if there is a tight form-meaning connection

Since Naaman confessed to not worship any of his former gods, it is more reasonable to interpret Naaman's petition in the context of his duties to the King.

in pagan religious symbols, the use of a pagan form endangers Christian meaning with syncretism, even though Naaman was personally able to detach the pagan meaning from its form.

It is improbable that Naaman worshiped YHWH exactly as the Israelites did. More likely, he would have offered up sacrifices in the most reverent and worshipful way he knows. Certainly the likelihood of his generating syncretism was there, but more likely, because the material that made up the altar was from Israel, he would never forget that he is, in fact, worshipping God. That altar would represent no being other than YHWH, the God who searches the hearts of men, the God who would accept his sacrifices.

#### Bowing at the Temple: Detachable Meaning (v. 18)

Naaman's third and final petition to excuse his bowing in the temple can yield deeper meaning with narrative analysis. *Structural semiotic analysis* (Wolde 1989, 24-28) of Naaman's discourse reveals an interesting symmetric meaning structure (Figure 3). The utterance can be divided into six phrases where the first three phrases are mirrored by the last three phrases. In the first and last phrase, Naaman begs pardon (A, A') from the Lord for his bowing (C') in the house of Rimmon (B'). When his master goes

there to *worship* (B), Naaman has to support the King next to him (C). You'll notice that B-B' and C-C' have formatic (syntactic) similarity; yet, even though the discourse is symmetric in form, the meaning behind is not the same. Nelson endorses this in stating, "because his loyalty is to his king and not to Rimmon, as his overfull speech tries to make clear, his request does not undercut his monotheism" (Nelson 1987, 179). In other words, Naaman's bowing is not because of his faith in Rimmon, but because of his duty to the King. Since Naaman confessed to not worship any of his former gods (v.15), it is more reasonable to interpret Naaman's petition in the context of his duties to the king.

As was discussed earlier, our interpretation can only be complete when it includes Elisha's response. Naaman had to return to his home in Aram. But what will happen next is a critical question both to Elisha and Naaman. Naaman knows that as the commander of the army and a notable and powerful official, he is unable to excuse himself from all the state functions, which usually entailed religious rituals. Thus, rather than trying to hide what he would be required to do, he is earnest and honest before Elisha, voluntarily informing Elisha of an unavoidable, inevitable activity in his home land. The fact that he even brought up this subject strongly indicates that Naaman had already considered the future and foreseen what serving YHWH would entail in his home country. In essence, Naaman is explaining to Elisha that even though he has to physically bow down before the idol, he is not worshipping the idol. He wants Elisha to know where his heart is, what his true intentions are.

In this context, the form is the act of bowing in the temple. The meaning associated with this form is the

Figure 3. Symmetric Structure of Naaman's Second Petition (2 Kings 5:18).

A In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant:  
 B when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to *worship* there,  
 C and he leans on my hand (to **bow** in the house of Rimmon)  
 C' and I *bow* myself in the house of Rimmon,  
 B' when I *bow* myself in the house of Rimmon,  
 A' the LORD pardon your servant in this matter  
 (2 Kings 5:18, NASB, parenthesis and emphasis is mine)

worshipping of Rimmon. Based on Naaman's confession of faith, one cannot assume that he will be worshipping Rimmon by bowing at the temple, since he explicitly confessed that there is no other God other than YHWH. Thus even though he bows out of necessity, he has detached any spiritual meaning from this transaction and is only performing an empty act.

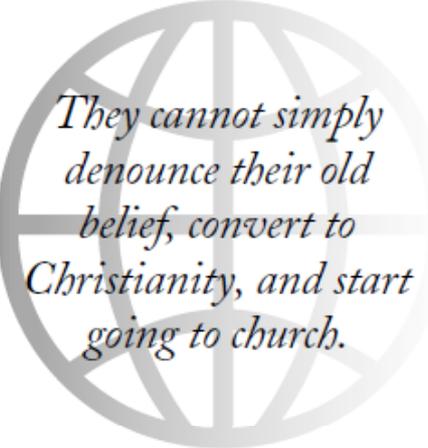
### *A Short Response to Tennent*

What is the potential contribution of this interpretation of Naaman's narrative to the theology and practice of contextualization? Can we develop a principle of contextualization based upon this story? As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Tennent is critical about the mosque attendance of an MBB. He presents two arguments. In his first argument, he states that if Naaman accompanied the king because the King was frail, it would legitimize mosque attendance only in cases where the new convert had to dutifully accompany "his ailing and feeble father" (Tennent 2006, 108).

However, as it was pointed out earlier, the reason for Naaman's temple attendance was because of the "social pressure" and expectation that came with his position as the chief general of the King (Brueggemann 2007, 269). Muslim "followers of Isa" can be said to be under similar social pressures. They cannot simply denounce their old belief, convert to Christianity, and start going to church. They will be disowned by their families, communities, and society at large and possibly face life-threatening situations. Tennent asserts that C5, if social pressure is the case, is comparable to Naaman's case: it is not a C5 movement anymore because the condition is more likely close to C6 (hiding identity and faith in Christ). In the passage, there is no explicit clue as to whether Naaman concealed or disclosed his new faith to the king and people around him. Yet, since the king and the people in the palace will hear about Naaman's miraculous healing, it is plausible that they

may also know about Naaman's new faith in YHWH. If this is the case, Naaman's case can be applied to the C5 movement as well.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, Tennent assumes that Naaman already had guilty feelings when he asked Elisha for "*forgiveness*" because "they both knew (it) was wrong" (Tennent 2006, 108). This interpretation, however, has shortcomings because the symmetrical structure of his petition explicitly showed that his bowing did not have the same meaning as his master's bowing, which was described as



*They cannot simply  
denounce their old  
belief, convert to  
Christianity, and start  
going to church.*

"worshipping" to Rimmon. If he does not attach a pagan spiritual meaning to his form of bowing, it should not be interpreted as an act of idolatry. Naaman in fact sought *understanding* from Elisha because even though he appears to be bowing at the temple of Rimmon, he is only going through the motions and has detached spiritual significance from the act of bowing to Rimmon.

### *Conclusion*

As all theologians acknowledge, biblical messages are not always found in the literal meanings of the scripture. It is important that in a narrative discourse like that of Naaman's story, the interpretations of passages be in agreement within the context and not in conflict with each other. The Naaman narrative shows a positive inner coherence between his conversion and consequent petitions. Naaman's petitions, though their

surface structures indicate an affinity to his old belief system (form), should be interpreted from a conversion that indicates his genuine commitment to YHWH (meaning). Further, since Jesus comments positively about Naaman's healing story in Luke 4:27, inter-textual agreement is reached when Elisha's response to Naaman is also accepted as positive.

Contrasting characters in the narrative raised a question of who the true people of God were. Those who have a "theo-centered directionality,"<sup>16</sup> whose inclinations lean toward God, consciously or unconsciously, are the people of God in reality. A conventional boundary of religious culture, one which was used to divide Jews and Gentiles, was found to be inaccurate. Therefore, the readers of the Naaman narrative should acknowledge that God is at work not only among the Israelites but also among the Gentiles, in and through situations prior to their conversion experience. Traditionally, mission in the context of other religions has often focused on extracting a new believer from their pagan religious context. Then the new convert becomes isolated from the community of his own people with lesser possibilities to bring others to Christ. There has been less appreciation for the *theo-centered directionality* of those like Naaman who find themselves within other religious associations.

Can we simply allow new believers to attend religious rituals at a Buddhist temple or worship at a Mosque? Or should we ban the pagan temples altogether? Stuart Caldwell, a practitioner and scholar of the insider movement, takes a negative view on the "place-location" interpretation of the pagan temple issue. In his research on "Jesus in Samaria," Caldwell concludes that Jesus' response to a Samaritan woman, "not on this mountain nor in Jerusalem temple" (John 4:21), actually implies his recognition of both places (Caldwell 2000, 26). His interpretation indicates that if a worshiper can revere God "in spirit and in truth," the actual place does

not matter.<sup>17</sup> However, although Caldwell's view respects the subjective position of the worshipers, it does not adequately deal with objective understanding and the relationship one has with other members of the faith community.

The lesson of the Naaman narrative advises us to allow a new believer to remain in the person's own familiar context while consistently discerning and developing better ways for the new believer to express his new faith in God. The task of the missionary is not only to coach new believers in preaching the gospel, but to assist them in cultural analysis, and to apply the form-meaning dynamics in religious symbolism as they seek together to contextualize the gospel. **IJFM**

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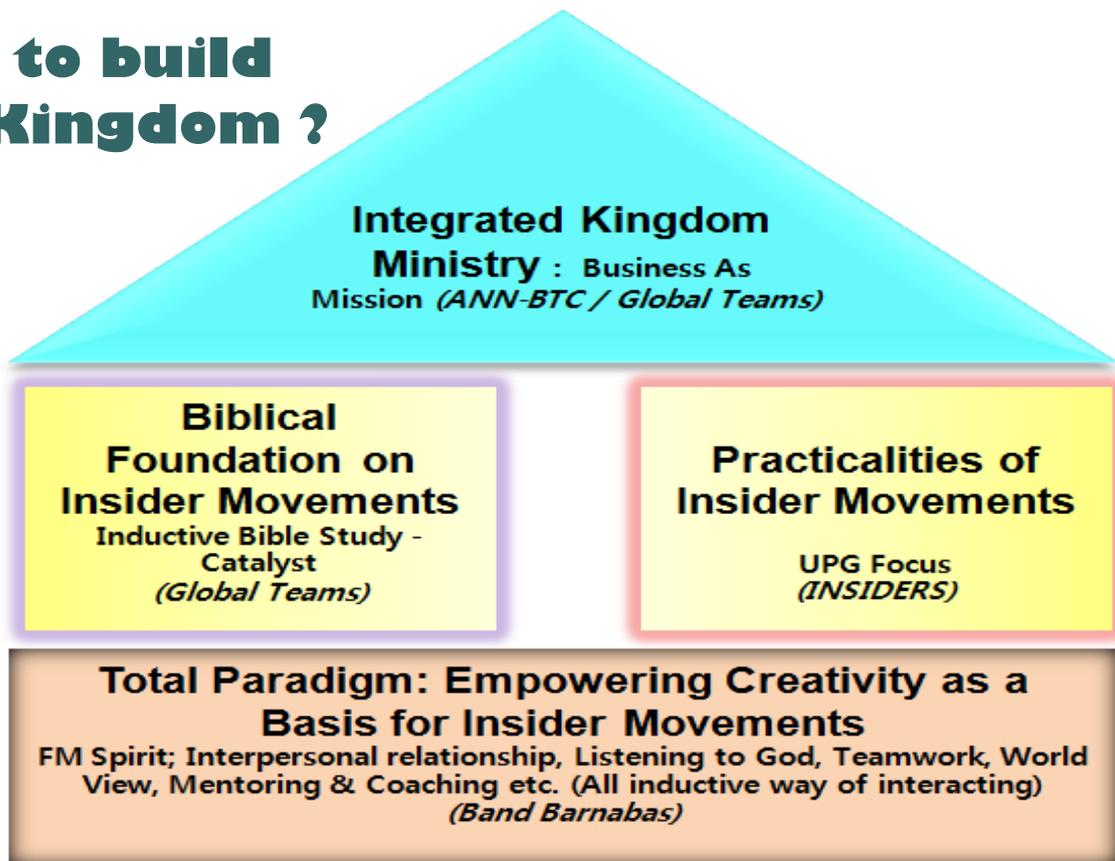
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**H**ere, I'd like to propose that we start taking more seriously *how we deliver* than teaching the right content. It is not *what* the nationals or young believers learn from us, but rather *how* they learn that's going to impact their culture and society in the long run. Modern day evangelical workers have focused too much on having the right content (mainly right theological content derived from the western form of Christianity) and assumed wrongly that we know how to deliver best. The main method of delivery was done through one way preaching and teaching. We assumed that the nationals don't know any better, thus we needed to teach them the right content, our way. This assumption begot the ill fruits of dependency all around the world. The ways that we deliver forced dependency from the very people we have been trying to empower. Speaking of the right content, we didn't even have the right content because the answers we brought with us derived from our cultural context.

Going with the questions and not with answers is how we at BB need to train ourselves. This is a set of skill that requires counter cultural intuition, actions and convictions. *I believe we can move from the pioneering stage to the partnering stage without going through the parental stage.* The problem of insisting on the right content (as good as they may be from our perspective) is that it produces unhealthy dependency issues where the nationals and/or young believers are unable to climb out of the parental stage.

We have to learn to teach in a way that empowers the people. The key to how we deliver must be related to how we come along side of the people and empower them to develop their own content that is right for their context. Coming along side of them requires an attitude of humble learning on the part of the workers from the outside. Without first learning from the people (more on this in ethos of lifelong learning), we cannot effectively empower and equip them to make right decisions. Even if they don't make the right decisions or develop the right content from our cultural and theological point of view (or even our personal preference), we allow them to learn from their mistakes by giving them the necessary room and space. We trust that the Holy Spirit will guide and correct them as they interact with the Scripture. (Related article: See "Empowering Creativity", *AFMI Bulletin No. 2, Jan-Mar 2010, Chong Kim, Band Barnabas*)

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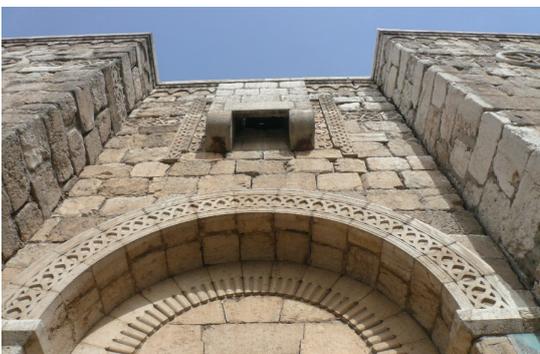
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Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. ... Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. (Acts 9: 22-25)

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If you have any feedback on this bulletin, you may contact John Kim at <yahya\_kim@hanmail.net>. We will try to be a channel through which you can have consultation with the authors of the articles and any other contributions in the bulletin.

