PERCEPTIONS OF MUSLIM IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY AMONG MUSLIM-BORN PERSONS IN METRO NEW YORK

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the Insider Movement paradigm in ministry to Muslims by assessing to what extent Muslims who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ may permanently retain Muslim identity. This research presents data from Islamic literature on Muslim identity, as well as New Testament data on the impact of the gospel on individual and collective identity as it entered various communities. The field research features interviews with forty Muslim-born persons in Metro New York who come from eighteen different countries. Half of the interviewees are themselves believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. The field data confirms the theological research that Muslims who come to believe the biblical narrative about the Lord Jesus Christ are no longer Muslims in the eyes of the Muslim community. Since affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad is the key requirement for retaining Muslim identity and since Muhammad's prophetic input regarding Jesus Christ was of such an anti-biblical trajectory, those who seek to retain Muslim identity permanently will not be able to find their individual identity in Christ or their collective identity in the Body of Christ.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

?	Do not Know/Unsure
ACS	American Community Survey
B	Belief in the Gospel
CE	Condoning Exploration
CMB	Christian of Muslim Background
CQ	Critical Questioning
EX	Expel/Excommunicate/Disown
F	Fellowship
FB	Female MBDLJ
I	Interest in the Gospel
IF	Indifferent
IJFM	*The International Journal of Frontier Missions*
IM	Insider Movements
IRF	Islamic Re-education: Formal
IRI	Islamic Re-education: Informal
K	Killing the apostate
LA	Limiting Access to the Forbidden
M	Mocking
MB	Male MBDLJ
MBC	Muslim-background Christian
MBDLJ	Muslim-background Disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ
MIT	Muslim Idiom Bible Translations
NACME	North American Conference on Muslim Evangelism
NN	Non-Negative
NYPD	New York Police Department
O	Ostracize
P	Positive
PA	Physical attacks
PE	Punitive/Expulsive
PM	Arrange Punitive Marriage
S	Shepherding
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
VWT	Verbal Warnings & Threats

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

The Muslim world remains the Church's greatest rival and its most difficult
mission field. Few attempts were made to bring the gospel to Muslim peoples from the
advent of Islam in the seventh century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Colonial
era missions during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century generated little
tangible fruit in Muslim lands (Johnstone, Johnstone, and Mandryk 2001, 14; Madany
2013).

Beginning in the 1970s, Western missionaries began experimenting with more
overt methods of contextualized gospel proclamation among Muslims (detailed in chapter
two). These methods included an ideology, which marked a departure from the historical
position, which saw Islam as an anti-Christian religion, in favor of the adoption of a more
sympathetic view of Muhammad and the Qur'an. Eventually, advocates of higher forms
of contextualization theorized that a Muslim could permanently "retain" Muslim
"socioreligious" identity and practice and simultaneously be "under the Lordship of Jesus
Christ and the authority of the Bible" (Lewis 2007, 75).

These "Retentionists," as they are identified throughout this research, argue for a
semantic understanding of the word Muslim, frequently translated into English as
submitted to God. Therefore, Retentionists describe a Muslim believer as one who is
submitted to God through His Word, *'Isa*, (the Qur'anic name for Jesus Christ) (Higgins

2006, 121). Retentionism requires a dramatic re-interpretation of Muslim identity, as

Kevin Higgins articulates:

> I do, however, believe that authentic Jesus movements within Islam will bring transformation (and indeed reform) in the light of God's Word and Spirit as applied from the inside. Views concerning Muhammad, the place of the Qur'an, the value of the *salat*, *the meaning of the word "Muslim,"* [emphasis mine] the nature of Jesus, the character of *Allah*, and many other elements of Islamic faith and life will change within and through such movements to Jesus. (2007, 38)

This re-definition of the word Muslim is the basis for the Retentionist missiology.

Missiologists have encouraged the Muslim believers, alternatively known as

insiders, Jesus Muslims, and *Isai* Muslims, to retain Muslim identity permanently. In

doing so, they may avoid the expulsion that typically awaits Muslims who come to

believe Jesus Christ is Lord, God, and Savior. This research tests, from the point of view

of Muslim-born persons, the Retentionist claim that Muslims who come to faith in the

Lord Jesus Christ can and should permanently retain Muslim identity.

The Retentionist position has spawned a great deal of controversy in the

missiological community. Little verifiable, objective, social science field research exists

on the Retentionist position. Anecdotal evidence—unverifiable when rendered by

informants with aliases, in unnamed countries, through missionaries using pseudonyms—

has provided the main evidence in support of higher forms of contextualization.

Likewise, little research exists among Muslim-background disciples of the Lord Jesus

Christ (MBDLJs) regarding this spiritual identity issue, particularly regarding conversion

and spiritual transformation. Bradford Gill, editor of the *International Journal of Frontier

Missions*, notes that in the Arabic Muslim context: "There's already an abundance of

anthropological studies on the Arab world, and specifically on negotiating identity, but

almost nothing on this subject of conversion" (2012, 103). In other words, the effect of

conversion to Christ on the spiritual identity of Muslims is still largely untested and unknown.

The Muslim world yields grudgingly to social science research. Obstacles arise in the form of lack of freedom of speech, harsh punishments for criticisms of political or religious leaders, and the collectivist orientation in which individuals consider their opinion part of a group consensus. Only in the late 1990s did television market research firms begin asking Middle Eastern Muslims which programs they were watching. In 2002, James Zogby undertook a watershed study of 3,800 Arabs in eight countries, resulting in *What Arabs Think: Values, Beliefs and Concerns.* Since apostasy from Islam constitutes a serious, or even capital, crime, research into the religious views of Muslims has been challenging. Retentionists routinely cite security concerns as a challenge to providing independent verification of their efforts.

This research seeks to remedy this deficiency of field data. I interviewed forty Diaspora Muslim-born persons in Metropolitan (Metro) New York, including five Islamic scholars and twenty Muslim-background disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, to cull their beliefs about whether it is possible for a Muslim to permanently retain Muslim identity and simultaneously be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Since I have ministered in Metro New York since 2006, I have familiarity with this context.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to develop components of a theory of Muslim identity by examining ways Muslim-born persons in Metro New York perceive that permanently retaining Muslim identity is compatible with being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Problem Statement

In what ways do Muslim-born persons in Metro New York believe permanently retaining Muslim identity is compatible with being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, I will consider the following research questions:

1. What impact did coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ have on the identity of Jews and Gentiles, respectively, in the New Testament?

2. What elements of Islamic theology, law, and history inform Muslim identity?

3. What do Muslims in Metro New York perceive regarding the compatibility of permanently retaining Islamic identity and simultaneously being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ?

4. What do Muslim background disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in Metro New York perceive regarding the formation of their identity as they became disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Background

I am a Muslim-background Christian who has been involved in ministry to Muslims either full or part time since my conversion to Christ in 1983. I was born in the United States, where my mother was born. My father is from Iran. My mother converted to Islam upon marriage. We were raised Muslim and attended mosque. Our family lived in Iran briefly when I was small, but we returned before I was old enough to recall the experience.

I came to Christ in 1983 when I read the Bible during my college years. I lived over two years on the island of Cyprus while working on the Arabic satellite TV channel, SAT-7. While working for SAT-7, I negotiated a contract with Middle East Research and Consultancy (MERAC, an Emirates-based firm) to have SAT-7 included in satellite television audience research samples. I also have taken short-term missions trips to Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In 1995, I participated in the Reconciliation Walk, which sought to diffuse the bitter legacy of the Crusades. From 2007 to 2010, I handled the email responses from Muslims around the world to the Muslim Journey to Hope (www.MuslimJourneytoHope.com) television program. While most of my actual living experience has been with and among Diaspora Muslims, I have an appreciation for the unity and diversity that is the global Muslim world, as well as for the challenges to ministry among Muslims in more hostile contexts.

I am an ordained missionary with Elim Fellowship (www.ElimFellowship.org). From 2006 to 2013, I served as the Executive Director of JFM Network, Inc., also known as Jesus For Muslims, a parachurch organization in Metro New York. This ministry promotes Muslim evangelism and spiritual strengthening of MBDLJs. As part of JFM, I oversaw the opening of a safe house for MBDLJs who were suffering persecution or homelessness, and had a direct role in their practical care and discipleship. I have also served on the team coordinating Muslim Background Believer Conventions in the United States (www.MBBConvention.org) from 2006 to 2013. I co-pastored a group of Iranian MBDLJs from 2007 to 2012, as well as a group of English-speaking MBDLJs from 2006 to 2013, which meets monthly. I participated in the first "Bridging the Divide"

Consultation in 2011, at Houghton College in New York. This consultation sought to bring missiologists and missions practitioners together in an attempt to address misunderstandings and bridge the divisiveness and acrimony that currently engulfs the missions community.

Significance of the Study

The proposed study is significant to me as an MBDLJ who is also in ministry to Muslims—my passion and my call. The proposed study is also significant to the missiological community. Though Retentionist strategies have existed for four decades, there is still much information not known that is germane to evaluating the appropriateness and sustainability of these strategies. First, the missions' community has not yet conducted adequate research on Muslims who are coming to faith in Christ. This includes their sense of spiritual allegiance before, during, and after the conversion process—a process which shapes identity.

The rise in global Pentecostalism has ensured increased focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in spiritual freedom and spiritual warfare. However, when it comes to the issue of spiritual influences on Muslims and MBDLJs, the topic scarcely exists in the context of the Retentionism debate. This significant oversight is now being corrected. Mark Durie, an Australian missionary to Aceh, Indonesia, offers groundbreaking material on the subject in *Liberty to the Captives*. He describes *shahada*, which is the confession of faith that forms the primary Muslim identity marker and point of entrance into Islam: "Reciting the *shahada* is a covenant declaration that Muhammad will be your guide for life" (Durie 2010, 1). Durie explains, "If the status of Muhammad as a Messenger is not explicitly renounced, then the curses and threats of the Qur'an, and Muhammad's

opposition to the death of Christ and the Lordship of Christ can be a cause of spiritual

instability, causing someone to be easily intimidated, and breed vulnerability and a lack

of confidence as a follower of Jesus" (2010, 76). Durie astutely notes that MBDLJs will

have a difficult time navigating and developing their spiritual identity in Christ if they are

simultaneously seeking to retain Muslim identity, which is primarily manifest through the

affirmation of Muhammad.

Don McCurry summarizes this often-overlooked spiritual dynamic in ministry to

Muslims in his *Healing the Broken Family of Abraham*:

> I need to state that I believe there is a deep spiritual aspect to our Christian
> encounter with Islam. Although only a small percentage of Muslims may be
> Orthodox, the anti-Christian ideas in Islam have become so pervasive that they
> predispose Muslims everywhere to resist the preaching of the Gospel.
> Furthermore, I believe that there is a spiritual intelligence and power behind this
> resistance. Satan's great desire is to thwart God in reaching and recovering lost
> human beings through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (2001, 151)

The spiritual essence and origins of Islam hold significant ramifications for Retentionism.

McCurry suggests Muslims are spiritually oppressed by Islam, regardless of their

affiliation, "I also believe that in non-Orthodox forms of Islam, spiritual 'powers' are at

work, whether they be in Sufism, Folk Islam, or any other sect. Behind each one of these

varieties of Islam is the spirit attempting to prevent Muslims from ever learning who

Christ really is or why they need Him" (2001, 152). McCurry and Durie stand as voices

in the wilderness on this subject. This dissertation seeks to amplify the voices of

MBDLJs regarding the spiritual powers at work in their lives, both positive and negative,

as they navigate the identity issue.

Second, only two published studies, through early 2013, even begin to address

what "Insider Muslims"—those who retain Muslim identity—actually believe and

practice (Parshall 1998; Naja 2013). Insider/Retention advocates often rely on one

anonymous local leader in an unnamed country (Brown 2007, 70; Brown 2007a; Cumming 2009, 2; Daniels 2013). While it is natural to cite security concerns as the reason for withholding specific information about these leaders, missiological research is starving for the reliability and verifiability this data would provide.

Third, Retention Advocates frequently call for indigenous input into the missiological discourse, but they show little progress in facilitating this input (Brown 2007, 73; Higgins 2007, 33; Woodberry 2007, 27). In fact, Rick Brown, Kevin Higgins, and Dudley Woodberry were present at the 2011 Bridging the Divide Consultation in Houghton, New York, yet there were only five Muslim-born persons among the approximately fifty participants. Even the *International Journal of Frontier Missions (IJFM)*, which has addressed contextualization in Muslim missions more prominently than any other missiological issue, has not published (as of early 2013) an article by an MBDLJ, while it has run twenty-two articles by Retentionism advocate Rick Brown. Even when *IJFM* has presented a contrary view on Retentionism, like those of Timothy Tennent (2006) and Dick Brogden (2010), they have run simultaneous rebuttals to their articles by Retentionists who were given prior access to those articles.

Fourth, the issue of Retentionism or Insider Movements (IM) among Muslims is critical because of its dire implications for Christology. David Garner states, "No longer in incubation, IM has hatched into a mature, practiced, sanctioned conviction. Its pervasive practice around the world by untold numbers of missionaries, mission agencies, and persuaded nationals has created a missiological, ecclesiological, and existential crisis" (2012).

Finally, Higgins seeks to "bring transformation" and "reform" to Islam from within (2007, 38). He bases this on an ambitious missiological assumption that Islam can be internally transformed. Historically, Islam has refused even modest attempts at reform. For example, the Ahmaddiya movement in Pakistan consider themselves Muslims, enthusiastically affirming the prophethood of Muhammad and the Qur'an. The Second Amendment of the Constitution of Pakistan, based on Islamic Law, however, inserts specific language to decree them non-Muslims since they believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a bona fide post-Muhammadan religious reformer:

> A person who does not believe in the absolute and unqualified finality of The Prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the last of the Prophets or claims to be a Prophet, in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever, after Muhammad (Peace be upon him), or recognizes such a claimant as a Prophet or *religious reformer* [emphasis mine], is not a Muslim for the purposes of the Constitution or law. (Pakistani.org 1974)

Historically, Islam rejects and repels the type of reform Higgins seek to bring. If the *umma* (Muslim community) will not accept the Ahmadiyya as Muslims, it is difficult to imagine how they could continue to accept as Muslims those who believe in the incarnation, divinity, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—doctrines contradicted by the Qur'an. As Higgins' attempt to reform Islam from within is met with disfavor by the Islamic community, people who consider themselves Insider Muslims will nevertheless be considered non-Muslims by the *umma*. It also leaves these Insider Muslims in a state of identity limbo and lacking the status to even attempt to reform Islam from within.

Limitations and Delimitations

Geographic: The study focuses exclusively on Muslim-born persons living in the Metropolitan New York area, which includes the five boroughs of New York City,

contiguous counties, and Northern New Jersey. Critics of this research may argue that the opinions and beliefs of Diaspora Muslims cannot be generalized to the wider Muslim world. If that is true, then similar research in alternate fields would certainly be warranted. Nevertheless, the strength of this research location is that the communities of Muslims living in Metro New York originate from nearly every Muslim country and are significant in number. A Saudi man in New York may behave differently than he would in Riyadh, especially since no religious police are present to identify and punish religious deviance and apathy. Nevertheless, many Diaspora Muslim leaders are encouraging them to strive for more religiously observant behavior than when they were back home, precisely because they are living among non-Muslims and are obligated to be good examples for Islam.

Units of analysis: This research studies spiritual identity among Muslim-born persons only. According to Islam, anyone born of a Muslim father is a Muslim. Though there are significant numbers of people in Metro New York who have converted into Islam, the processes of formation of spiritual identity are different for them than for those individuals who were born Muslim. Therefore, converts into Islam are not included as units of analysis in this study.

Identity lens: Every individual simultaneously holds multiple identities. Most people have identities related to their ethnicity or tribe, gender, place in the family, socio-economic status, hobbies, and religious affiliation. Since Islam purports to be a holistic religion that affects all parts of life, there are inherent challenges to dissecting the various identities that may be resident within Muslim-born individuals. This research seeks to

provide indigenous views of Muslim identity, the flexibility of that identity, and ascertain whether that identity could include faith in the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Diaspora facets: There are many research-worthy components of ministry to Diaspora Muslims. Demographics is the leading example, with numbers of Muslims in the United States quoted as low as 2.75 million (Pew Research Center 2011, 20). On the high side, President Barack Obama, in his 2009 Cairo speech, referenced "nearly seven million American Muslims in our country today" (Obama 2009). Also, the assimilation issue has taken center stage because of the geo-political confrontation between Islam and the West. While this has been studied somewhat in Europe, in part to determine whether Muslims are becoming a "fifth column" domestic threat, this issue has been given scant attention in the United States. Akin to this issue is the topic of the possible traumatization of a community increasingly viewed with scorn by segments within the majority population, particularly during tense geo-political events. During the Iran hostage crisis, I remember several Iranians in our community saying they were "from Persia," relying on the general populace's weak grasp of geography and history. The issues regarding Diaspora Muslims are addressed only to the extent that they affect the missiological question at hand: what these Diaspora Muslims ultimately think about Retentionism.

Permanence versus Transitional States: It is understandable and expected that Muslims who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ may go through a transitional period of internal struggle and confusion before and even after coming to saving faith in Christ. During this period, which could be days, weeks, months, or even a few years, it is likely the individual may be hesitant to confess Christ, seek water baptism, or associate publicly with believers of like-precious faith. During this time, the individual may retain Muslim

identity both internally and publically. While every believer is strengthened by confessing Christ as Lord (Matt. 10:32; 16:16; Rom. 10:9), the purpose of this study is not to examine transitional states, since Retentionism has been proposed by its advocates as a permanent state for the Muslim follower of Jesus. Discipling Muslims through this transitional state is an issue for those ministering to Muslims, yet it is not the key missiological issue at hand. This study, therefore, limits its consideration to the question of whether an individual can permanently retain Muslim identity while simultaneously being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Time orientation: This study focuses on Protestant missions to the Muslim world. Catholic and especially Eastern Orthodox churches have a long history of interaction with, and response to, Muslim theology and theologians. That output includes material in Coptic, Aramaic, Arabic, Armenian, Amharic, and Latin, and should be included in a wider study of the history of Christian mission to Muslims and Christian-Muslim interfaith discourse and apologetics. This study, however, focuses on modern missions only, since Retentionism is of the modern period.

The historical origin of Islam is not a focal point: Scholars such as John Wansbrough have called into question the Muslim narrative regarding the origins of the Qur'an (1977). Specifically, their research challenges the Islamic doctrine of Uthmanic Recension—that the Qur'an was recited by Muhammad and codified under the third caliph Uthman. This study focuses on the content of Islamic source documents, not how they came into existence.

Identity as a stand-alone concept is not a focal point: The concept embodied by the word identity is important in the West in both the social sciences and in practical

matters (for example, identity theft). While inclusion of the term Muslim identity in the title of this dissertation may create anticipation of a thorough study of the concept of identity, this research is actually an indigenous study of Muslim-ness, or the essence of being a Muslim. Those phrases are admittedly awkward in English, hence the use of Muslim identity. The word for identity, *hawiyya* in Arabic (*hawiyyat* in Persian), does not appear to figure prominently in classical or contemporary discussion among indigenous persons regarding what makes a person a Muslim or non-Muslim. Yet, in English, Muslim identity seems the best representation of the topic under examination.

Missionary motivation is not a focal point: Though the current missiological debate on Retentionism is heated, and though I critically evaluate the input of many missionaries, it is not my intention to judge the motives of these missionaries. As a Muslim-background Christian, with family roots to a small town in central Iran, I express appreciation to those who have set their feet on the path of presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ to Muslims. Muslims continue to represent a challenging mission field. Often it is thankless work. Some missionaries have laid down their lives trying to bring the gospel to Muslims. Perhaps something positive can be borrowed from the Islamic tradition of *niyya* (stating and honoring intentionality). In critiquing missiology, it is not my ambition to judge motives or intentions.

Definitions

This research project largely focuses on definitions and terminology. One challenge in ministry to Muslims is that many biblical terms and names have alternative meanings in an Islamic context. All terms, therefore, are defined carefully in this study (See Glossary for Arabic/Islamic words).

1. Muslim-Background Disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ (MBDLJ). A major challenge of this research is finding a suitable word or expression for what evangelicals typically call a Christian—the person who has been born again and has had his or her sins forgiven through faith in the finished work of Christ. No one word, term or name perfectly fulfills that connotative requirement in the Muslim context. A variety of terms have been used in the contextualization literature, and the term used will typically indicate an author's disposition toward Retentionism. Christian is typically a pejorative term in the Muslim world and is not used in this study, even though those who oppose Retentionism prefer Muslim Background Christian (MBC) or Christian of Muslim Background (CMB). The term convert suggests proselytism, which Retentionists disapprove of, yet Kathryn Kraft ably uses convert in her recent study of Arab Muslim converts (2012). The Retentionists use of an "individual … living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible" is cumbersome, especially when adding something about Muslim pedigree. Given these challenges, I adopt a previously unused term, Muslim-background disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, (MBDLJ), to represent what evangelicals would esteem a Christian from Muslim background. Since Muslims never refer to Jesus Christ as Lord, this acronym designates the Muslim-born person who has come to faith in the biblical Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Muslim. This expression is also fraught with controversy. For the purposes of this study, a Muslim is defined as an adherent to the religion of Islam. No level of observance is presumed. As previously noted, missiologists have attempted to

define Muslim as "one who submits to God" (Higgins 2006, 121). Logically, therefore, the evangelicals' Christian would be the best of Muslims. Since many people in various religions feel they submit to the Supreme Being, then using the term Muslim in this way causes it to lose all meaning. A primary component of this research includes asking Muslims what the term Muslim means to them. Specifically, this research will determine whether Muslim-born persons in Metro New York will accept a wider definition of Muslim that could include the evangelicals' concept of a Christian.

3. Muslim-born person. This connotes a person born into a Muslim family, not a convert into Islam. While this should not cause confusion for the general audience of this dissertation, there is a technical point in Islamic theology that may trigger confusion among Muslim readers. Islamic theology denies original sin. According to verse 30:30 in the Qur'an, all people, regardless of their family religion, are born into a state of *fitra* (original pattern of purity) and may be considered Muslims before the age of accountability in Islam, which is generally deemed adolescence. Therefore, some Muslims may consider all human beings Muslim-born persons.

       This technicality was borne out when I visited a mosque in Metro New York and did two interviews there. The interviewees brought me a young man and said, "Interview him. He was a Christian and became a Muslim!" I replied that my research limited me to interviewing Muslim-born persons. One of them replied that all people were born Muslims, so I could indeed interview him. (Nonetheless, as a convert, he was not included in the research pool.)

4.   Retentionism. Retentionism is used as a short-form of the missiological position

that Muslims who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ may permanently retain

Muslim identity. Retentionists are proponents of this position, which is a subset of

the wider Insider Movement paradigm that includes Muslim Idiom Bible

Translations (MITs) and various Insider evangelism strategies such as the Camel

Method and Kingdom Circles. Like MBDLJ, Retentionism is a new term that has

not been used in the literature.

5.   High Contextualization. Contextualization of the gospel to Muslim as described

by the higher numbers according to John Travis' C scale, namely C5 and C6

(1998). This scale will be discussed further in chapter two, with C5 being a

dynamic equivalent of Retentionism. Since there is often disagreement or

confusion about what is meant by C5, I do not use this designation in this

dissertation except where it appears in quotations from other writers.

6.   Identity. Identity describes how a person views himself or herself, individually

and collectively, as well as how others view him or her, and the group to which he

or she relates. Rebecca Lewis argues that socio-cultural identity and religious

identity are inseparable, God-given and therefore unchangeable (2009). This

research examines the perceptions of Muslim-born persons in Metro New York

regarding this central tenet of Retentionism.

Assumptions

I hold to the position that a person needs to believe Jesus is God to be saved. Rick

Brown has argued that since people naturally struggle to understand the nature of the

Godhead it is not necessary to believe in the divinity of Christ to be saved (2000).

Nevertheless, I assert that persons who have been raised to believe Jesus is specifically not God (such as Muslims) must have a change in that understanding for their belief to be considered salvific.

I assume that representations about the content of Islamic teachings in this research should be representations with which Muslims themselves could agree. I assume that evangelism and church planting efforts among Muslims should be sustainable. While security and confidentiality in ministry form the backdrop of ministry to Muslims, the assumption is that the use of deception or any transgression of biblical ethics results in an unsustainable ministry model.

Structure of the Dissertation

The purpose of this study is to develop components of a theory of Muslim identity by examining ways Muslim-born persons in Metro New York perceive that permanently retaining Muslim identity is compatible with being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter two commences with a study of the historical development of this concept of Retentionism. The primary function of chapter two, reviewing the key missiological literature on Retentionism, roughly in chronological order, is to provide a contextual and missiological backdrop to the rest of the dissertation.

Chapter three assesses Research question one (RQ1)—the impact of conversion to Christ upon the individual and corporate identities of Jews and Gentiles in the New Testament. Based on that study, a biblical hermeneutic is explored that can be applied to Retentionism. Two main biblical analogies Retentionists use to justify their positions are also addressed. Chapter four considers Research question two (RQ2)—how Islamic

theology, law, and history impact Muslim identity. This constitutes a significant body of knowledge that has been largely absent from the Retentionism debate.

Chapter five outlines the field research methodologies and describes the Diaspora community within which the research is taking place. Chapter six presents the field research among Muslims in Metro New York, which addresses Research question three (RQ3) on Retentionism from the point of view of Muslims. Chapter seven features the results of fieldwork among twenty Metro New York MBDLJs. This chapter will answer Research question four (RQ4) on Retentionism from the perspective of MBDLJs. I include input from these MBDLJs on the pneumatological influences they describe— regarding both the Holy Spirit and other spirits. Chapter eight presents the components of a theory of Muslim identity that answers the problem statement of whether permanently retaining Muslim identity is compatible with being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The dissertation ends with the missiological implications of the presented theory and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RETENTIONISM

The question of MBDLJs permanently retaining Muslim identity—

Retentionism—has emerged as a controversial issue in missions to Muslims. The

missiological friction regarding Retentionism has heated to a white-hot state. On one

hand, Timothy Tennent writes that conversion to Christ must cause a "rupture" in Muslim

identity (2006, 113). On the other hand, Rebecca Lewis argues that Muslim identity is

"God-given" and unchangeable (2009). The rules of mutual exclusivity suggest that both

of these statements cannot be correct simultaneously. Therefore, tracking the historical

development of Retentionism is indispensible in an overall assessment of its viability.

Retentionists have complained their positions are misunderstood or

misrepresented (Lewis 2012; Lewis 2009). Furthermore, the nature of Retentionist

theology is a challenge to pin down precisely, due to relativism and fluid definitions.

Therefore, this dissertation in general, and this chapter in particular, provides significant

numbers of direct quotations to present accurately the Retentionist position.

Introduction to the Theological Context of Retentionism

Retentionism is the promotion of permanent retention of Muslim identity among

MBDLJs. The ideological development of Retentionism emanates from a number of

missiological and theological streams, each with its own context. It is impossible to

assess Retentionism without some understanding of the streams that provide the backdrop

to this movement. While some of the historical dynamics are relatively fixed and easier to study, the modern streams are still evolving and ever dynamic. Retentionism is complicated. This literature review endeavors to inform the reader on the current missiological crisis regarding Retentionism, as it stands in early 2013.

The following significant missiological and theological streams spawned Retentionism:

1. The *dhimmi* theological paradigm presumes Islamic superiority and renders Christians as protected, but second-class, subjects.

2. Post-colonial guilt precipitated missiological re-evaluations.

3. The Fulfillment Theory states the gospel compliments and completes what other religions lack. In this view, championed by John Farquhar, other faiths are viewed as pre-Christian or quasi-Christian, rather than anti-Christian (Netland 2001, 33-39).

4. The Western protestant denominations that carried the Christian mission to Muslims in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century developed increasingly liberal theologies. One result of this liberalization was the early quest for a reconciled Islamic-biblical theology and a reconciled Qur'anic-biblical Christology.

5. Western missionaries concluded in the 1970s that missionary extractionism was the main cause of perceived missional failure in the Muslim context.

6. Western Church Growth Movement research and emphases suggest the gospel spreads most quickly through homogeneous groupings based on family, and culture or sub-culture.

7. Western Christians tend to emphasize presenting Christ as Savior, but de-emphasize presenting Christ as Lord.

8. Christians initiated inter-faith ecumenical efforts, particularly on the academic front.

9. Christians have sought to assess and respond to the renaissance of Islamic fundamentalism and jihadism, as manifest in the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the growth of Sunni Wahhabism. These responses range from a nativist and defensive mentality among some Western Christians to a political correctness that seeks to identify, promote, and amplify the voices of moderate Islam.

10. The missionary funding culture prioritizes return-on-investment and cost-benefit analysis. In this system, ministries that report significant fruit justify continued support, while those that do not report such fruit are likely to wither for lack of support.

Due to issues of scope and space, this dissertation evaluates the indispensable material that flows from these missiological and theological streams. The main quest of this research is to discover and present the missing information. Specifically, this research seeks to present the biblical and Islamic resources needed to evaluate Retentionism, as well as to capture the sentiments of Muslim-born persons on this topic.

Chronological Development of the Missiological Crisis Regarding Retentionism

The historical context of Retentionism hinges on the 1970s. Input into the development of Retenionism prior to that time can be considered the roots. The output that became Retentionism is the fruit.

Early Protestant attention to Islam was marked by antipathy. In the preface to the first English translation of the Qur'an, George Sale reflects these negative sentiments about Muhammad and Islam: "The remembrance of the calamities brought on so many nations by the conquests of the Arabians may possibly raise some indignation against him

who formed them to empire; but this being equally applicable to all conquerors, could not, of itself, occasion all the detestation with which the name of Mohammed is loaded" (Sale 1734).

A modern mission to Muslims follows on the heels of a colonial era in which Christian European powers colonized most of the Muslim world. Albert Memmi described the psychological effect of colonialism on both colonizer and colonized (1957). Colonialism challenged Islamic notions of superiority in unprecedented ways as Muslims observed infidels surpassing them militarily and economically (Bernard Lewis 2003).

Toward the end of the European colonial period, missionaries were already writing about the challenges related to ministry to Muslims in a manner that set the stage for the Retentionism debate. Henry Riggs, a missionary who served in Turkey and Lebanon, made a report to the Near East Christian Council in 1938 which encouraged "the development of groups of followers of Jesus who are active in making Him known to others while remaining loyally a part of the social and political groups to which they belong *in Islam* [emphasis mine]" (1938, II, 6). Riggs' statement constitutes a significant historical milestone regarding Retentionism. Samuel Zwemer and his associates opposed Riggs' initiative. A.R. Stevenson, in *The Moslem World* edited by Zwemer, specifically rebuts Riggs by arguing that Muslims needed to break with the religion of Islam to follow Christ in "open and public confession—regardless of the consequences" (1947, 101).

The Riggs-Zwemer tension reflects the arduous challenge of the Muslim mission field, as well as the varying attempts to overcome this challenge. Riggs' Retentionist position could be characterized as both embryonic and marginal in his day, while Zwemer and his colleagues articulated the mainstream position. Retentionism, however,

gained momentum in the 1970s to the extent that it became the mainstream Western

missiological position by the turn of the twenty-first century. The historical, conservative

position would recede to the missiological margins, particularly in the missiological

journals.

The post-colonial move toward contextualization and indigenization in missions

greatly influenced missions to Muslims. The past four decades of missiological input in

Muslim ministry have resulted in the Insider Movement theory, in which the Muslim

believer in Christ permanently remains inside his or her socio-religious community and

retains Muslim identity. Charles Kraft was an early pioneer in arguing that Muslims who

come to faith in Christ should retain Muslim identity. He introduced the concepts of

"Muslim Christians" and "Christian Muslims," and viewed the mosque as a "dynamic

equivalent church" (1979, 119).

Fouad Accad, a Lebanese Christian, popularized a "Building Bridges" method in

the 1970s (1976; 1997). Accad states that the Qur'an is "pro-Christ, pro-Christian, and

pro-Bible" (1997, 10). He continues by stating "60 percent of Muslims who are

approached with the method explained in this book put their trust in Christ—and all who

do, do so without becoming detestable to their communities" (Accad 1997, 10). As such,

Accad championed a Retentionist position in which Muslims could come to faith in the

Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible, yet permanently remain in favorable standing in the

Muslim community. Kraft sought to rehabilitate the image of Muhammad by stating, "I

believe that this is what Muhammad himself was trying to do: to combine an allegiance

to the Judaeo-Christian God with Arabic cultural structures" (1979, 118). This fresh

interpretation of Islam, the Qur'an, and Muhammad was indispensable to the Retentionist

argument. This re-interpretation surfaces again in the works of Geoffrey Parrinder, Kevin Higgins, and Joseph Cumming in chapter four of this dissertation.

The Triumph of the Extractionist Narrative in the 1970s and its Justification of Radical Contextualization Experiments

During this period of the 1970s, Western missionaries were moving away from what they viewed as missionary extractionism. Charles Kraft decries that missionaries "have so often demanded that converts turn against their own culture and convert to a foreign culture" (1974, 27). This practice is labeled "double conversion" (McCurry 1979, 14). Missionary Sam Schlorff reports the move to remedy extractionism was already championed at a Muslim evangelism conference at High Wycombe, United Kingdom, in 1976 (2000, 312). Arthur Glasser, at the North American Conference on Muslim Evangelism (NACME) in 1978, states with specific reference to Samuel Zwemer, "All felt that we had to make a decisive break with the past" (1979, 44).

Phil Parshall's *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism* was a watershed in promoting higher forms of contextualization of the gospel to Muslims (1980). Parshall recommends gathering MBDLJs into their own homogeneous groups rather than having them join existing churches, using the identifier "followers of *'Isa*" rather than 'Christians' and possible 'initiation' rites other than public baptism" (1980, 161, 164, 189-197). Though Parshall stops short of recommending MBDLJs permanently retain Muslim identity, and became troubled later by what his proposals may have morphed into, his ministry context of Bangladesh would become the leading site of contextual experimentation. Later, Retention advocates claimed amazing results in Bangladesh. Insider missionaries began reporting 522,000 Muslim converts in Bangladesh in under a decade (Rutz 2006).

As early as the late 1980s, the idea of gospel contextualization had caught the attention of Muslims. In July 1987, the *Islamic World Review* warns Muslims that Christian missionaries were using an "underhanded style" called the "Contextualized Approach," "It means they now speak in the context of the people and the culture of the country where they are operating, and are less honest in their dealings with simple, often illiterate, peasants. They no longer call themselves openly Christians in a Muslim area, but 'Followers of Isa'" (Woodberry 1996, 173).

By 1998, a leading insider advocate, John Travis, had developed the C scale to describe the types of churches formed in Muslim contexts. The C scale began to refer to Contextualization, with C1 on the low end and C6 on the high end (Travis 1998). Though imperfect, particularly with its vague demarcation of C5, this scale has dominated missiological discussion. The crux of the issue is the dividing line between C4 and C5. C5 Muslim believers may permanently retain Islamic identity and religious practice while purportedly living under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible. Regarding the identity issue, Travis writes, "C5 believers are viewed as Muslims by the Muslim community and refer to themselves as Muslims who follow 'Isa the Messiah'" (1998, 408). For this reason, C5 is synonymous with the permanent retention of Muslim identity.

While Travis' presents his C-scale as a descriptive tool of on-the-ground realities, he later states he was trying to "birth a C5 movement" (Travis and Travis 2005, 401-402). Later in this chapter of the dissertation, I examine the issue of whether the C5/Retentionist/Insider Movement is indeed a description or a prescription. The consequences of this description/prescription question are huge, since the former suggests an indigenous movement, while the latter suggests a foreign, imposed movement.

Missionaries who felt high contextualization and Retentionist initiatives were syncretistic began to issue warnings in the late 1990s. Parshall draws the line at C4 in his "Danger!" article in the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* in 1998. Sam Schlorff argues that the punitive nature of *shari'a* (Islamic law), not missionary extraction, is the problem in missions to Muslims (2000). Timothy Tennent critiques "C5 and Jesus Mosques," arguing that true faith in Christ should inevitably cause a "rupture" in the believer's Muslim identity (2006, 113). Tennent's statement regarding "rupture" is the strongest statement in recent literature in opposition to Retentionism—something akin to Zwemer's historical position. Even David Hesselgrave writes a general piece that syncretism was actually "missionary induced" (2006).

Recent, Enhanced Explanations of Retentionism from Its Advocates

Since Retentionist missiology tends toward the transitory, extensive quotes from Retentionists themselves highlight their position. Furthermore, since Retentionism is not widely known or understood by the global church, or even the wider missiological community, Insider Movement advocates may later claim they were never promoting Retentionism. Permanent retention of Muslim identity is, however, in fact the cornerstone of the Insider Movement missiology in the Muslim context. It is based on a colossal assumption that Islam will allow itself to be drastically reformed from within. Retentionists have unequivocally promoted this position for several decades.

Building on Charles Kraft's work, Rebecca Lewis, Kevin Higgins, John Travis, and Rick Brown have emerged as the main ideological architects of Retentionism. *The International Journal of Frontier Missions (IJFM)* convened a meeting of high

contextualization advocates in April 2007. The spokesperson for this assembly, Rebecca

Lewis, offers a working definition of an insider movement as,

> any movement to faith in Christ where a) the gospel flows through pre-existing communities and social networks, and where b) believing families, as valid expressions of the Body of Christ, remain inside their socio-religious communities, retaining their identity as members of that community while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible. (2007, 75)

Lewis' definition argues for permanent retention of Muslim identity inside of the

Muslim's socio-religious community.

Lewis expounds on her definition of Insider Movements with another article in

IJFM in 2009 entitled, "Insider Movements: Honoring God-given Identity and

Community." She argues that each person's socio-religious identity is God-given and,

therefore, should not be changed.

> Changing one's identity from 'Muslim' or 'Hindu' to 'Christian' is often illegal or is viewed as betrayal by one's family and friends. However, the gospel can still spread freely in such places when insider believers gain a *new spiritual identity*, living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible, but *retain their socio-religious identity*. (Lewis 2009, 17)

The latter clause specifically validates Muslims retaining Islamic religious identity,

which includes participation in Islamic corporate worship. Travis, in his C5 Retentionist

definition, allows for continued mosque participation. "Participation in corporate Islamic

worship varies from person to person and group to group" (Travis 1998, 408). Travis'

wording, though vague, neither discourages corporate Islamic worship nor forbids it. As

such, Insider Muslims are free to continue attending the Islamic mosque.

Kevin Higgins promotes the Retentionist ideal of Muslims who submit to God

through His Word, '*Isa*. Higgins provides nuance by delineating Retentionist MBDLJs

into three identity categories, I-i, I-ii, and I-iii. He recognizes that Retentionism

specifically requires an affirmation of the Prophethood of Muhammad, since this

affirmation is the key requirement of keeping a person in the good graces of the Muslim community. Higgins provides affirmation of Muhammad implicitly in I-i, conditionally in I-ii, and unequivocally in I-iii:

> I-i: I can say I am a Muslim because the word Islam means submission and a Muslim is one who submits. So, I can tell others in the Muslim community that I have submitted to God ultimately in His Word, Isa, and the Word of God in the Taurat, Zabur, and Injil which the Quran confirms.
>
> I-ii: I can say I am a Muslim because the word Islam means submission and a Muslim is one who submits. So, I have submitted to God ultimately in His Word, Isa, and the Word of God in the Taurat, Zabur, and Injil which the Quran confirms. In addition I can accept and affirm the earliest teaching of Muhammad, especially during the early Meccan period, and can say honestly that in that early period he had a prophetic role in calling Arab, Christian, and Jewish people of his time to repent. In this sense, I can call him a prophet. I believe that as time went by, however, Muhammad developed ideas and teachings with which I do not agree. Some of these are found in the Quran itself.
>
> I-iii: I can say I am a Muslim because the word Islam means submission and a Muslim is one who submits. So, I have submitted to God ultimately in His Word, Isa, and the Word of God in the Taurat, Zabur, and Injil which the Quran confirms. In addition I can accept and affirm all of the teaching of Muhammad as I find it in the Quran, and can say honestly that he had a prophetic role in calling Arab, Christian, and Jewish people of his time to repent. I can call him a prophet. I can say the shahadah with integrity because I believe Muhammad was called by God to a prophetic role. I read the Quran through the interpretive key of the Gospel and the previous books. When I read the Quran through that lens and filter I find that it agrees with the Bible and that perceived contradictions are due to misunderstandings of the Quran (and in some cases there has been misunderstanding of the Bible as well by Christians). (2006, 121)

Higgins renders his categories as recommended confessionals that serve as theoretical missiological pronouncements. He does not base these confessions on the actual statements of indigenous persons. His own perspective of Muhammad's prophetic contribution appears to fall in line with I-iii, based on his statement, "I do, however, think it is quite possible that there is an 'original Islam' in the Qur'an, an Islam that has been lost through the misinterpretation of what became the 'orthodox' versions, and that this may well be in closer (if not complete) harmony with biblical truth" (2007, 40). Similarly, Higgins states, "A new 'Jesus' reading of the Quran is of course just one piece

of what an Insider Movement would develop in its life and practice" (2004, 164).

Elsewhere, he calls for a "radical re-interpretation of the Qur'an, Muhammad, the *hajj*

and *shahadah*" through this "lens of a 'Jesus Key'" (Higgins 2007, 38). This "Jesus Key"

when used as a Qur'anic exegetical tool, however, provides a non-sequitur, since the

Qur'an comes six centuries after the Bible. In summary, Higgins is not speaking about

temporary or transitional states for Muslims coming into a faith relationship with Jesus,

but is obviously proposing permanent identity states.

Rick Brown of Wycliffe Bible Translators builds on Charles Kraft's idea of

dynamic equivalence and argues for the existence of "Biblical Muslims" in his study of

the faith journey of Muslims (2007). By announcing to the missions world the existence

of "Biblical Muslims," especially as he compares them to "Sub-Biblical Muslims,"

Brown argues for permanence in his view of Retentionism since something that meets

biblical standards obviously need not be changed (2007, 69). Chapter four of this

dissertation discusses Brown's equally important argument that Muslims do not need to

believe in the divinity of Christ for salvation.

These leading Retentionists argue for permanent retention of Muslim identity,

since they conclude that this identity is God-given and may be considered biblical.

Abundant written evidence suggests they are proposing permanent retention of Muslim

identity, not merely a description of a transitional state a Muslim may go through when

coming to faith in Christ. This dissertation specifically evaluates the permanent retention

of Muslim identity, which these Retentionists endorse and promote.

The Emerging Critique of Retentionism

In the past five years, the Retentionism debate has not gone away; it has intensified. Dick Brogden confronts the Retentionist point of view that identity and community are God-given and cannot be changed in a critique of insider movements, which he calls *Inside Out*. "We need to probe the assumption that pre-existing communities are value neutral and that God intends Muslims to remain in the socio-religious community into which they were born" (Brogden 2010, 33).

The increasing push back against insider movements prompted Joshua Lingel, Jeff Morton, and Bill Nikides to publish *Chrislam: How Missionaries are Promoting an Islamized Gospel* (2012). *Chrislam* includes some of the first essays on insider movements written by MBDLJs. Nikides, working with Bangladeshis who oppose Retentionism in their country, produced a film called "Half Devil, Half Child," borrowing Rudyard Kipling's (1899) term and suggesting insider advocates were not leading their disciples into saving faith in Christ (Nikide 2012).

Prior to *Chrislam: How Missionaries are Promoting an Islamized Gospel,* few MBDLJs or ministers indigenous to Muslim countries had spoken out publicly on the issue of Retentionism. Reverend Sam Yeghnazar, President of Elam Ministries, which serves Iranians, writes, "The word 'Muslim' cannot be disassociated from Islam. We [missionaries and missiologists] cannot play semantics with the word 'Muslim.' We cannot divorce the word 'Muslim'— 'Submitted to God'—from all the religious connotations that come with it. The meaning of the word is now fully and inextricably linked to the Islamic religion" (2011, 2). As such, Yeghnazar challenges Higgins' argument for a more flexible use of the word Muslim.

**The Question of Whether Retentionists are Promoting Insider
Movements or Merely Observing Them**

Given the review of the development of Retentionism, and the absence of a

parallel missiological track emanating from MBDLJs or Global South Christians, it

would seem non-controversial to assess insider movements among Muslims as an

experimental Western missiological initiative. John Travis confirms this when he testifies

he and his colleagues were trying to "birth a C5 movement" (2005, 401-402). This

Western initiative in birthing C5 movements is affirmed by Dixon regarding Indonesia,

and by Ayub regarding Bangladesh: "People in this country usually say that missionaries

are doing their theses in Western seminaries and are doing experiments on this country"

(Nikides 2012). Bassam Madany writes, "I risk being regarded as an extremely

judgmental person when I describe the Insider's missiology as a purely Western construct

that manifests a radical discontinuity with the missiology of the great missionaries of the

past" (2013). Basil Grafas quotes an unnamed MBDLJ's bold statement at a mission's

conference he attended: "I know that you missionaries like to consider our countries as

your laboratories, but it would be nice to consult the lab rats once in a while" (2011, 41).

Grafas states, "The response of Muslim background Christians everywhere to this sort of

missionary innovation is volcanic" (2011, 42).

Rick Brown expresses irritation toward those who oppose his efforts to catalyze

people movements to Christ in the Muslim world:

> If I had the choice (as only God does) between seeing a growing movement to
> Christ in which biblical Muslims were willing to say the *shahada* under duress
> with a biblical interpretation or seeing no movement at all, I would prefer to see
> the movement to Christ … It is hard for me to understand those who abhor the
> *shahada* so much that they would rather see no movement to Christ at all among
> Muslims than see biblical Muslims following Christ without refusing to say the
> *shahada.* (2007, 73)

Brown, to his credit, understands that the indispensable requirement for Muslims staying in good standing inside the Muslim community is affirmation of the *shahada* creed, which states that Muhammad is God's messenger. Yet it remains to be seen how a *shahada*-confessing movement can be considered a movement to the biblical Christ since Muhammad, who is the subject of the *shahada* confession, rejected the biblical portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. While Islamic and biblical Christologies are explored in chapter four of this dissertation, the point here is Brown's strongly-stated quest for people movements, as well as his depiction of those not in agreement with his methods as those "who would rather see no movement to Christ at all among Muslims" (2007, 73).

Despite the evidence that Retentionism is a Western missiological initiative, some Retentionists continue to insist that they are only describing events on the mission field, not prescribing them. Rebecca Lewis argues,

> The earliest insider movements out there did not start because someone had a great missiological idea and said, 'Let's try starting an insider movement.' As usual theory is following observation. As to the spread of the Gospel to the Gentiles in Acts, God is moving this way and we are trying to catch up by analyzing the phenomenon. (Corwin 2007, 8)

In response to Brogden's assessment that, "Insider Movements are the current creative missiological rage," Rebecca Lewis was given permission by *IJFM* to rebut in-line as follows: "This statement implies that missiologists invented 'insider movements' and are promoting them as a new technique. In fact, these types of movements started to happen and we are being forced to evaluate if they are biblically legitimate" (Lewis, in Brogden 2010, 33). Here Lewis follows Higgins in suggesting that insider movements are spontaneous, evolving, indigenous movements. Their statements are based on a significant assumption that Islam could be dramatically reformed from within in a way that might even jeopardize the foundations of Islam itself.

Even John Travis seems to have reversed his position that he and his team were seeking to birth a C5 movement through their own efforts. In his 2013 article in *Christianity Today*, he takes the Gamaliel position that those who critique insider movements may find themselves fighting against God. "We [missiologists] should be careful. We could find ourselves opposing what God is doing, when God moves in ways we do not expect. Those trying to pull up what they perceive as tares may in fact be destroying maturing wheat" (Travis 2013, 30). The argumentation used by Lewis and Travis seems to be an effort to squelch healthy missiological discourse and evaluation regarding insider movements. It also requires an ignorance of the strong proto-IM missiological recommendations of Charles Kraft in the 1970s.

Addressing Limited MBDLJ Input in the Retentionism Debate

At the time of this writing (early 2013), only five research projects have interviewed Muslim-born persons on this missiological topic area of Muslim identity. The first was featured in Parshall's 1998 "Danger!" article, in which seventy-two Insider Movement Muslim believers were interviewed in "Islampur." In 2008, Turkish MBDLJ Ziya Meral published an important contribution on Apostasy from Islam in which he interviews a number of MBDLJs and provides anecdotal evidence about a number of others. Meral's work underscores the crucible facing MBDLJs as they come to faith in Christ.

In late 2012, Kathryn Kraft published *Searching for Heaven in the Real World*, in which she interviews Arabic MBDLJs in Lebanon and Egypt. She makes some assessments on how these MBDLJs negotiated identity, suggesting that MBDLJs may experience "adhesive identities" (2012, 103). She considers how MBDLJs are navigating

identity transformation. This important topic goes beyond the scope of this research, which simply asks whether permanently retaining Muslim identity is a valid identity option for MBDLJs.

In 2012, Tim Green published an article on how "ex-Muslim Christians" negotiated identity in the critical component of marriage. He interviewed approximately thirty MBDLJs in a South Asian city. He will present his full results in a forthcoming dissertation. Finally, in 2013, Ben Naja presents the results of interviews with 322 rural East Africans in an unnamed country or countries. Since 93 percent of the interviewees continue to refer to themselves as Muslims, it is apparently an insider movement. Yet Naja fails to note whether these interviewees continue attending Islamic mosques, or affirm Muhammad as a prophet, thus blunting the value of his research to the Retentionism discussion (though he mentions a fuller presentation of his findings may be forthcoming) (2013, 28).

Imposed missional strategies that lack adequate indigenous input can create missional blind spots. Tim Green bears this out in his excellent article of MBDLJs' negotiation of marriage. Green exhibits how understanding Islamic law can explain behavior that would normally befuddle Western socio-cultural theories.

> Take the case of Mazhar. He converted from Islam way back in 1962 and married a Christian woman, Sadia. Mazhar's parents accepted her quite well and in time even came to appreciate her more than their Muslim daughters-in-law, for she served them with kindness. Mazhar and Sadia had five daughters who, growing up, enjoyed a good relationship with their paternal grandparents. But then came the time for the eldest daughter's marriage, to a Christian man. At this Mazhar's Muslim family were furious and completely cut off all contact for the next fourteen years. I wondered why their reaction was so strong when they had tolerated Mazhar's own marriage to a Christian. (Green 2012, 478)

Green then offers a case study of an MBDLJ woman who married a Christian man. Her family reacted violently. Again, Green struggled to explain this behavior. After a third similar incident, he put the pieces of the puzzle together:

> A chance comment from a third interview showed me what lay behind this. After Nabila's Muslim husband left her, his relatives came to put pressure on her and her children. Her adult son told me, "They tried to pressurise us. They said "No, the boy can go where he likes and get married, we won't let the girls go. Our family line will be spoiled."
>
> Then it all made sense. It was all about patrilineal concepts of the "family line," reinforced by *sharia*. (2012, 478)

For Tim Green, Islamic law—*shari'a*—held the key to explaining the behavior in this situation.

In unpacking the example about Mazhar, a basic understanding of Islamic law provides a ready explanation to Green's question about the grandparents' fury. Islamic law prohibits a Muslim woman from marrying a non-Muslim. Mazhar's parents likely continued to consider Mazhar a Muslim, at least in what Green would describe as his "collective identity" (2012, 440). Under Islamic law, a Muslim man is allowed to marry a Christian woman. Their children are by definition Muslims, following the father's family. The daughters of Mazhar and Sadia are viewed by their grandparents as Muslims under Islamic Law, regardless of the fact that they had been raised as devoted Christians. Under Islamic Law, if a Muslim woman marries a non-Muslim, the Muslim kinfolk this situation as a theft of property, an unspeakable shame that their woman would marry down, and an insult to the *umma* that an unclean infidel has defiled the purity of their daughter. As such, Mazhar's father is manifesting collective fury, which his family would expect and require him to exhibit, even more than he may be expressing his own personal displeasure with his son. If the family came to know he had restored relations with his

son, it would be seen as a reinforcement by Mazhar's father of all that had gone wrong. Thus, the fourteen silent years ensued.

Green struggled to explain this behavior in the Muslim community, even after living among Muslims for seventeen years, until he applied an understanding of Islamic Law to the given situation. In this case, Islamic Law (based on *Suras* 2:221 and 5:5), as amplified by Muslim scholars, makes marriage of Muslim women to non-Muslim men impermissible. Furthermore, Islamic Law and theology have greatly affected Muslim societies whether they are technically under *shari'a* or not. Even in Muslim cultures where the people are not practicing much of their Islam, they will not let their daughters marry an infidel. Green's astute but belated assessment is the kind that has been largely lacking as non-indigenous persons initiate missions in the Muslim world.

Value of this Research to the Retentionism Debate

Building on these first few research projects previously listed, which interviewed MBDLJs, this dissertation seeks to introduce the voices of additional Muslim-born persons into the Retentionism debate. Those voices are still conspicuously absent, though they are the main stakeholders in the issue at hand. Chapters six and seven present 180 direct quotations on Retentionism made in interviews with 40 different Muslim-born persons in 2013. They are from 18 different birth countries. I list the birth country and ethnicity of each respondent for easy tracking. Half of the interviewees are MBDLJs, yielding an unprecedented cohort comparison of MBDLJ and Muslim perceptions on Muslim identity and Retentionism.

As a closing caveat to this chapter, there will inevitably be a delay between the writing of this dissertation and its publication. The potential exists that additional

important voices will have entered the discussion in the interim. Additionally, some

Retentionists may have modified or even reversed their positions in this interim period.

CHAPTER 3

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CONVERSION TO CHRIST ON
IDENTITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, WITH
APPLICATIONS FOR RETENTIONISM

This chapter explains the failure of two biblical analogies offered by

Retentionists—the Messianic Jewish Analogy and the Gentile Analogy. It also evaluates

the impact of the gospel on individual and corporate identity as it entered Jewish, Gentile,

and mixed communities in the New Testament. This evaluation yields profound

applications for contemporary missions to Muslims and argues against Retentionism.

The applications that will ultimately come forth from this chapter suggest: (1) The

Lordship of Christ extends to the identity issue; religious identity is therefore not

unchangeable, as Retentionists contend. (2) The individual and corporate identity of

MBDLJs must be centered in Christ. (3) Retentionists, in their Gentile Analogy, simply

fail to address what, if anything, Muslims must leave behind to follow Christ as Lord. (4)

The New Testament record clearly indicates that persecution is to be expected as the rule

rather than the exception when the gospel enters a community, and the Muslim world is

no exception.

Missiologists who support Retentionism argue that Muslims who come to faith in

the Lord Jesus Christ should permanently retain Muslim identity (Brown 2007; Higgins

2006, and Lewis 2007, 2009). Retentionists have justified their position largely because

of reported, though disputed, anecdotal successes in the field. Retentionism as a

missiology draws heavily upon cultural anthropology; Retentionists appeal to the Bible

much later, almost as an afterthought. Even Charles Kraft, looking back on several decades of contextualization among Muslims, offers a concession, "I feel we have focused so much on appropriateness at the culture end that we have neglected the Scripture end of our discussion" (2005, 5). This honest appraisal by an architect of Retentionism appropriately summons missiologists back to a Scriptural basis.

As in any theological debate, opposing sides try to enlist scriptural backing for their positions. Garner assesses the importance of biblical hermeneutics in this debate in his article on "High Stakes Hermeneutics:"

> Piloting IM thinking is a set of determinative hermeneutical commitments, and it is these hermeneutical features that will serve as the focus of our analysis. Professing converts and missionary practitioners could surely be found to defend IM practice and proclaim evidence of its fruit. However, neither a battle of anecdotes nor listings of alleged successes and failures adequately reckon with IM practice. IM thinking needs addressing according to Scripture, and IM-ers themselves have discerned this need. (2012)

Retentionists offer two basic Scriptural analogies in support of Retentionism. First, their Messianic Muslim Analogy argues that since Jews did not cease being Jews when they came to faith in Jesus Christ, Muslims should not cease being Muslims. Joshua Massey contends, "C5 is much like C4, with the primary difference being self-identity. Whereas C4 believers identify themselves as 'followers of Isa,' C5 believers identify themselves as 'Muslim followers of Jesus'—much like Messianic Jews, who call themselves 'Jewish followers of Jesus'" (2000, 7). Travis even uses the term "Messianic Muslim Followers of Isa" as the title of a 2000 *IJFM* article (2000).

Second, Retentionists have advanced what is referred to in this dissertation as a Gentile Analogy, claiming that because Gentiles were not forced to take on Jewish identity, so to Muslims should not be forced to take on Christian identity (Lewis 2009). These Retentionist arguments face an immediate challenge since the terms "Jewish" and

"Gentile" are primarily ethnic identifiers compared with the religious identifier "Muslim." It is impossible for a Jewish person to discontinue being Jewish, and for a Gentile to cease being a Gentile. Nevertheless, these analogies are evaluated within the fuller treatments of the impact the gospel had on Jewish and Gentile analogies as it entered those New Testament communities.

Impact of Faith in Jesus the Messiah on Jewish Identity

As a preface to this section, this dissertation works under the premise that the Jewish people form a unique historical case of the gospel's entrance into a community. The Lord Jesus Christ was born into a Jewish family, within an ethnic group and culture that had received the Old Testament scriptures, divine covenants, and messianic promises. If ever the gospel could have made a painless or seamless entry into any culture, it should have been first century Middle Eastern Jewish culture. The historical-cultural circumstances of first century Judaism constitute a unique and unrepeatable context in the redemptive history of Israel. Thus, they do not provide a transferable model for introducing the gospel to other cultures. L.D. Waterman's statement "God chose the Jewish people to play a unique and unrepeatable role in salvation history" rings true (2007, 57). This unrepeatability facet immediately threatens the viability of the Retentionist analogy which claims that as Jews did not cease being Jews when they came to faith in Messiah Jesus, so Muslims should not cease being Muslims when they come to faith in Him. Yet, even if the first century Near Eastern Jewish context could easily be transposed onto other contexts, Retentionists still are not able to successfully apply their Messianic Muslim Analogy.

While lessons regarding the entrance of Messiah Jesus and messianic faith into first century Near Eastern Jewish culture are therefore in some points not applicable to other contexts, this study nevertheless contains key identity lessons. Further, if the entrance of the gospel into the Jewish community encounters significant opposition, it may be likely that similar opposition will occur as the gospel enters other cultures and communities. This could certainly include Muslim communities.

Jesus' Own Words and Actions Relating to Jewish Identity

Retentionists argue that the gospel flows best through family and kinship circuits within socio-religious communities (Lewis 2007, 75). The Lord Jesus Christ was indeed Jewish. Therefore, Jesus' statements and actions regarding family allegiance and Jewish socio-religious culture help develop a biblical understanding of identity.

Jesus' Statements on His Family Identity

Jesus upheld the Decalogue command of honoring one's father and mother. He urged the Pharisees not to neglect their parents by justifying the giving away of their support as *Qurban* (offerings to God, Matt. 15:5; Mark 7:11). However, when Jesus' mothers and siblings sought His audience, He apparently dismissed them by stating that His real family members are those who do the will of God. All of the Synoptic writers capture this somewhat puzzling incident (Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). Mary was certainly a woman who did the will of God, though perhaps His brothers were yet unbelievers (John 7:5). The solution to this puzzle seems once again to be a statement of priority, with the spiritual affiliation emphasized above the natural. Robert Gundry, in his commentary on Matthew 12:46-50, titles the section "The Persecuted as the Family of the Heavenly Father" (1994, 248). Luke 11:27-28 has Jesus responding to "blessed is the

womb that bore you …" with, "on the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."[1] A pattern emerges in the New Testament in which spiritual identity receives precedence over family and ethnic identity. This certainly should be borne in mind by Muslims who come to faith in Christ.

Jesus' Criticism of Those who Relied Solely on Jewish Identity

Jesus did not reject His Jewish identity. He tells the Samaritan woman "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). He identifies His mission as to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24) and instructs His disciples to follow this pattern on their initial missions trip (Matt.10:6).

While Jesus embraced His Jewishness, He taught that simply being Jewish was not sufficient to find favor with God. The Pharisees prided themselves on their connection to Father Abraham. Jesus nevertheless confronts their boasting about being physical descendants of Abraham by exposing their spiritual condition: "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). Jesus' statement cannot be taken as an affirmation of their socio-religious identity. To Nicodemus, Jesus presented the idea of "new birth." He did not mention fulfillment of Jewish identity, but of a regeneration which seemed mysterious to Nicodemus, who wondered if one needed to enter again into his mother's womb (John 3:4).

Jesus' Treatment of the Jewish Socio-Religious Sabbath Institution

Religion shapes culture and society, especially when there is a strong majority religion in a culture. As such, a parallel may be investigated by comparing the relationship of Judaism to first century Middle Eastern Jewish culture and the relationship

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[1] All Scripture citations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New American Standard Bible.

of Islam to cultures where Islam is the dominant faith system. If Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath challenged the first century Jewish Sabbath practices, it is difficult to imagine that He would not challenge Islamic practices that have become part of the socio-religious cultural milieu in many Islamic contexts.

The fourth of the Ten Commandments served as a weekly reminder of God's sovereignty, order, and wisdom. Keeping the Sabbath holy was a biblical injunction. In part because of the awe which with they viewed God, and in part to create a buffer that would protect against Sabbath-breaking, the Jews developed socio-religious cultural norms and expectations around the Sabbath. Yong-Eui Yang describes these as the "meticulous rabbinic development of the Sabbath regulations" (1997, 60-61).

The Insider model would project that Jesus would leave these socio-religious Sabbath customs intact, particularly since there was significant overlap between the true biblical Sabbath and that which the rabbis sought to protect and observe. Nevertheless, Jesus continually provoked confrontations regarding the Sabbath, challenging the erroneous rabbinical interpretations and practices associated with this socio-religious cultural institution. Jesus' corrective measures rose to the level of needling, such was His desire to bring transformation to an anti-Torah spirit in Sabbath practice and understanding.

For example, Jesus did not shy away from doing good on the Sabbath, such as healing the man with the withered hand. He then lectured the synagogue congregants on the true meaning of the Sabbath. Mark 3:5 notes that Jesus was "looking around at them with anger." In Luke 13:10-17, He healed the hunchback woman in the face of the rebuke by the synagogue official that healing should be done on the other six days of the week.

Jesus called this synagogue official a "hypocrite" (v. 15) and left him "humiliated" (v. 16).

In Matthew 12:1-8, Jesus' disciples break the Sabbath, in the court of public opinion, by picking heads of grain. Jesus defends them from the Pharisees' inevitable rebuke, again teaching a proper perspective of the Sabbath. Jesus' purpose is not to abolish the Sabbath, or create unnecessary arguments. Yang astutely notes that the issue is Lordship. "The real issue in the first controversy pericope (12.1-8) is not the question of the interpretation of the sabbath law as such; what is really asserted is rather that someone dramatically significant is present who is greater than David and the temple and that he is none other than the Son of man, who is the Lord of the Sabbath …" (Yang 1997, 302)

The Sabbath issue provides an illustration of Jesus' expectations regarding socio-religious cultural norms. Certainly the Pharisees had mixed the traditions of men with the law of God (Mark 7:10-13), but at least there was something of divine substance within the mixture. Jesus sought neither to redeem nor to overlook their religious observance. Rather, He challenged it because a Lordship issue was at stake. If Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath confronted the first century Jewish Sabbath practices, it is difficult to imagine that He would leave unchallenged many Islamic religious practices. It is harder still to imagine the Lord Jesus would condone continued mosque attendance by His disciples at an institution specifically set up to deny His Lordship.

How Messianic Jews Viewed Themselves

The question of how messianic Jews identified themselves and how others identified them is closely tied to how they viewed Jesus, as well as how the wider Jewish

community viewed Him. This section reviews Jewish perspectives on Jesus. It then

considers both individual and corporate identity of New Testament Messianic Jews,

before concluding with Pauline views on these subjects. This treatment provides valuable

lessons on how MBDLJs may expect to be identified and treated by their families, and by

religious leaders.

<div align="center">Jewish Perspectives on Messiah Jesus</div>

Jesus enjoyed tremendous support as a populist preacher and rabbi. His miracles

guaranteed that solitude would be hard for Him to find once He began His public

ministry. Many Palestinian Jews recognized Jesus as Messiah even prior to His

crucifixion and resurrection.

Despite this popular support, amicable relations between Jesus and the Jewish

religious leadership can be traced back to when the Messiah was twelve years of age and

participated in a cordial question and answer session at the Temple. During the three

years of Jesus' public ministry, the Jewish religious leadership viewed Jesus as a Galilean

outsider who did not rise through the prescribed rabbinic channels. Given this lack of

pedigree, it is unlikely the Jewish religious leadership would ever have accepted Jesus,

even if He had solicited twelve members of the Sanhedrin as His core disciples, rather

than an unseemly group of laymen including fishermen and a tax collector. Eventually,

the Pharisees ascribed His powers of deliverance to an alleged Satanic covenant with

Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24).

Persecution results when identity, power, or finances are threatened. Jesus did not

deliberately challenge or threaten the Jewishness of the Jewish religious leadership.

Indeed, Jesus said in Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the

Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." Rather, His meteoric rise outside of their rabbinic channels, coupled with His miracles and popular appeal, threatened their monopoly on religious power—their prerogative to sit in the seat of Moses, which was the locus of their socio-religious identity. For this reason, the Jewish religious leadership viewed Jesus with envy. Matthew 27:18 and Mark 15:10 record that even Pontius Pilate understood the Jewish religious leaders delivered Jesus to him because of their jealousy. Bruce Malina notes that envy was the worst of evils in Near Eastern biblical culture, since significant negative events were thought to be linked to it (2001, 108).

The Jewish religious leadership, who had been jealous of Jesus, then focused that jealousy upon His apostles. Like Jesus, the apostles did not rise up through the socio-religious rabbinic network, and were therefore deemed a threat to that network and worthy of persecution. Ajith Fernando notes that the beating of the apostles in Acts 5:17 occurred because the Jewish leaders were envious (1998, 210). Simon Kistemaker attributes this envy to the fact that the apostles were drawing large crowds in the temple area (1990, 197). If the Jewish religious leadership responded in this fashion to those who uphold the Lordship of Christ, it would be natural to expect a similar response from Islamic leaders who have been educated to reject the Lordship of Christ.

<div align="center">Individual Identity of New Testament Messianic Jews</div>

Jesus is presented in the New Testament as the fulfillment of Jewish messianic expectation, and the culmination of all sacrifices—"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29; Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10). Jesus becomes the focal point of the divine plan of redemption accomplished through the Jewish people. The gospel is a Jewish gospel, though its acceptance is open to all.

Given this background, it is not surprising that New Testament Jews who came to believe in Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah sensed tremendous continuity with their Jewish past. They considered themselves heirs of Old Testament messianic promises. Therefore, New Testament Messianic Jews developed an identity as Jewish followers of the Jewish Jesus—the living stones who would make up a monumental Jewish religious revival. This is the type of continuity Retentionists envision regarding Muslim identity in their Messianic Muslim Analogy.

<div align="center">Corporate Identity of New Testament Messianic Jews</div>

The call of Jesus to follow Him was a personal one that shaped the spiritual identity of New Testament Messianic Jews, and placed them into a corporate body whose identity centered in the Nazarene Himself. David Wenham amplifies this point, "Although Jesus saw himself as having a mission to Israel as a whole, this does not mean that he had no concept of inaugurating a movement with which people could and should identify. On the contrary, he called people to 'come after/follow him'" (1995, 169). Jesus indeed knew He was starting a movement. He did it through making disciples. He based the collective identity of this movement on an irreplaceable personal relationship with Himself. Hence, both the individual and the corporate identity of New Testament Messianic Jews could be realized only by abiding in Messiah Jesus. Individual salvation meant immediate placement into the corporate Body of Christ. This dynamic is timeless, and needs to be addressed by Retentionists, who do not appear to teach MBDLJs to find their corporate identity in the Body of Christ, the Church, but rather encourage them to retain their Muslim identity as a part of the Islamic community, or *umma*.

The emergence of a Messianic Jewish community in the New Testament is both a fulfillment of God's design and a continuation of Jewish worship of the one true God. Wenham comments on the Messianic Jews' continuity with the Old Testament people of God:

> How did Jesus envision his mission to Israel, and did he intend to found 'the church'? He clearly did not see it as a mission to replace Judaism with a new religion or, primarily at least, to set up an institution of any sort. He saw himself as announcing God's new day of salvation and as inviting the people of Israel to receive the salvation that they had been promised and were looking for. (1995, 169)

The Book of Acts supports Wenham's assessment. Peter, a Jewish fisherman from Capernaum in Galilee, stands up on the Day of Pentecost and interprets those miraculous happenings as the direct fulfillment of Jewish prophecies. The majority of his recorded address quotes from the Old Testament. The non-quotations in the Pentecost address merely interpret the fulfillment of those Old Testament prophecies.

While New Testament Messianic Jews viewed themselves as heirs and successors to their faithful Jewish forebears, they viewed their Jewish persecutors as those who were opposing God's will. Peter rebukes the Jewish religious leadership in Acts 4:10 regarding the death of Jesus, "… by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead." Peter, noted to have spoken by the Holy Spirit, sets the Jewish religious leadership as striving against God. Stephen outdoes Peter in his withering criticism of Jewish leadership, "Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become" (Acts 7:52). These early messianic leaders were mindful of Jesus' teaching about persecution, even as they identified with the persecution of Christ Himself.

Paul and Jewish Identity

Paul's insights on identity provide foundational material for the believing Jewish individual and community. Saul of Tarsus (Paul) identifies himself as a Pharisee and son of a Pharisee, in the present tense, when standing before the Sanhedrin long after his conversion (Acts 23:6). He is also the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:8) who, perhaps more than anyone else in his generation, opened the kingdom of God to non-Jews. For these reasons, Paul is a fascinating historical case study in identity. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer argue that Paul downplays his origins and background (Hengel and Schwemer 1997, 16). Paul's identity is also prone to definition by those who looked back upon the apostle's life and ministry through their own theological lenses. Perhaps this is a reason Paul's identity seems elusive, and is prone to changing winds, as described by Philip Cunningham:

> For centuries, Paul has been understood as someone who renounced his Jewish heritage, who had become a zealous Christian missionary, who had attacked the supposed Jewish belief that one earned salvation through works of the Law, and who insisted on justification by faith. Current Bible research, however, is revealing that such a view may be largely based on erroneous assumptions about Paul and about his Jewish heritage. It is beginning to become apparent that far from being an opponent of Judaism, Paul was a faithful Jew throughout his life. (1986, 1)

Despite the divergence of thought and the misunderstandings related to Paul's personal identity, a well-developed Pauline teaching on the identity of believers in Messiah Jesus emerges in the New Testament. Paul does not veil his views on Jewish and Gentile identity. This section of the dissertation and the subsequent section consider those views respectively.

The first post-Antiochan missionary sermon recorded by Luke occurs in Acts 13, as Paul and Barnabas enter the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. The identity they

presented, based on their worship, manner, and dress, must have been such that the synagogue ruler addressed them as "brethren" and thus invited them to share an exhortation with the congregation (Acts 13:15). Paul uses inclusive, first-person plural language affirming his Jewish identity, such as "The God of this people Israel chose *our* [emphasis mine] fathers." (13:17), and "to *us* [emphasis mine] this message of salvation has been sent" (13:26). Paul identifies the Messianic advent as the fulfillment of the promise to the Jewish people, again using inclusive language in verses 32 and 33, "We preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, that God has fulfilled this promise to *our* [emphasis mine] children in that He raised up Jesus ...." Paul's sermon should be explained not as merely an example of bridge-building communication, but as a Jewish rabbi explaining faith in the Jewish Messiah to his Jewish brethren. As such, Paul preached continuity of the messianic faith with the biblical faith of the Jewish fathers.

Paul, in his not-so-triumphal return to Jerusalem, twice affirms his Jewish identity in the present tense before his accusers (Acts 22:3; 23:6). Paul's intimate understanding of Jewish identity, and sense of propriety in Jewish ministry, undoubtedly factored into his insistence on Timothy's circumcision in Acts 16:3, since Timothy was of a Jewish mother. Even Postmodernists John Crossan and Jonathon Reed concede, "Both Paul's letters and Luke's Acts of the Apostles agree that Paul was a fervent Jew" (2004, 4).

Paul's identity nevertheless remains an enigma. F.F. Bruce downplays the impact Paul's Tarsian birth and Roman citizenship had on his identity, since his Jewish identification was so dominant (1977, 41). Howard Marshall states that Paul had the ability to function in Hellenistic Jewish Christian settings as well as Palestinian Jewish

Christian settings, "Like Barnabas, he seemed to be equally at home in two worlds" (1990, 37). Ben Witherington, in his *Paul Quest*, undertakes a search for the complicated identity of this Rabbi from Tarsus, concluding Paul had a tri-partite identity:

> The trinity of Paul's identity involves his Jewishness, his Roman citizenship and his Christianity ... It appears that of the three major identity factors, the least influential was his Roman citizenship ... Certainly more important is Paul's Jewish background, much of which he brought with him, though in transformed and transfigured shape, into his Christian life. Yet when Paul himself compares his illustrious Jewish past with his Christian present, he is prepared to place all of his former life in the loss column in comparison with the surpassing value of knowing Christ and being in him. Paul can speak of his 'former' life in Judaism (Gal 1) in comparison with his present life (1998, 87-88).

Witherington's highlighting of Paul's "former life" statement and his predestined call are associated with Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. The context of that writing was in response to an extreme Judaizing initiative, including a requirement of Gentile circumcision, which Paul rejected, rebuking Peter and Barnabas for their involvement in it. Therefore, perhaps Paul was merely opposing the taking on of Jewish identity by Gentiles, and even perhaps the taking on of Gentile identity by Jews. This dynamic is alluded to by Wenham, who summarizes, "For all Paul's affirmation of the Jewishness of Christianity, he came into sharp and regular conflict with Jews and Jewish Christians who saw him as betraying the ancestral faith, notably by his refusal to impose the Jewish law and circumcision on Gentile converts" (1995, 180).

In Romans, Paul addresses chapter two to Jewish readers to help them see their need for a savior. In verse 17, he focuses on Jewish identity, "If you bear the name Jew …." He adds a stinging rebuke that does not pamper Jewish identity, but defends God's reputation, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (2:24). Paul concludes, "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly" (2:28). This mirrors some of Jesus' statements on the primacy of spiritual and internal identity over and above

ethnicity. In Galatians, Paul goes so far as to equate unbelieving Jews as the spiritual heirs of Hagar and Ishmael (4:24-25).

Though this topic of Paul's views on Jewish identity is admittedly complex, Paul saw himself as permanently retaining Jewish identity, but insistent that there were some key things he would leave behind. In Philippians 3:4-8, Paul makes perhaps his most thorough statement regarding both his Jewish identity and the things he felt he needed to leave behind—deeming them "rubbish"—to know Christ his Lord fully.

Paul embraces his Jewish identity and roots throughout his life. At the close of his life, he writes, "I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did" (2 Tim. 1:3). Simultaneously, Paul sees his relationship to Jesus Christ as Lord as the primary shaper of his identity. He sees Jesus' call to serve and expand the body of Messiah as the primary goal of his life and he is willing to leave behind anything that does not coincide with that call. This includes the friendship and admiration of Paul's many colleagues and co-conspirators, who would eventually try to kill him after Paul left them to follow the Messiah.

How New Testament Messianic Jews Were Viewed by Others

The context in which the gospel entered first century Jewish culture was unique and therefore unrepeatable among all other peoples. Nevertheless, the introduction of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah and the emergence of a Messianic Jewish New Testament community still cannot be considered a smooth transition for the Jewish people. In the same way, Muslims who come into Christ's Kingdom should not assume a seamless entry. Though many first century Jews came to faith in Christ (Acts 21:20), including a large number of priests (Acts 6:7), a plain reading of the New Testament indicates that

the Jewish religious leadership largely rejected Jesus and His apostles. This new

movement found its identity in Christ, but most of these Jewish religious leaders were not

willing to identify Jesus as Messiah or find new birth and identity in Him.

How Messianic Jews Were Viewed by Other Jews in the Book of Hebrews

Hebrews is the one New Testament book specifically written to Messianic Jews.

Many questions surround Hebrews, including authorship, date, and location of audience

(Bruce 1964; Hagner 2005, 247). Since Clement quotes from Hebrews in AD 96, the

book must have been written and circulated before then (Kistemaker 1984, 14). Despite

these uncertainties, it is clear that the book is written to Messianic Jews who were

suffering persecution from the wider Jewish community, with many wavering in their

newfound faith in Messiah Jesus.

The latter half of Hebrews 10 segues from the doctrinal teaching of the book to

focus on the plight of those who came to faith in Jesus as Messiah. Hebrews 10:32-34

provides some detail into this persecution of the Messianic Jews. This persecution

includes, "a great conflict of sufferings," "being made a public spectacle through

reproaches and tribulations," imprisonment, and the seizure of property.

Kistemaker contends in his commentary on Hebrews that non-believing Jews saw

their messianic brethren as "traitors" (1984, 299). Philip Hughes states regarding

Hebrews 10:32-33:

> For a Jew to confess the faith of Christ Crucified brought on him the detestation
> and obloquy of his compatriots, the ruination of his business, and even expulsion
> from the family circle. This would particularly be the case in the Jewish
> homeland, and it goes a long way toward explaining the extreme poverty of the
> Christian community in Jerusalem, which caused Paul to give such prominence to
> the collection of relief funds among the Gentile churches (1977, 427).

The Book of Hebrews concludes with the exhortation to Messianic Jews to join their Messiah Jesus "outside the camp, bearing his reproach" (13:13). If these Messianic Jews ultimately became religious outsiders, it can be expected that MBDLJs may follow in their footsteps.

How Messianic Jews Were Viewed by Unbelieving Jews in Acts

The New Testament Messianic Jewish community, under the leadership of Peter and James, experienced significant persecution at the hands of their fellow Jews. Luke, in Acts 4:17, has the Jewish religious leadership concerned about the messianic movement spreading further among the people. Herod saw that his execution of James, the Son of Zebedee, "pleased the Jews" (Acts 12:3) and he set out to bring Peter to a similar end.

Acts 8:3 finds Paul *elumaineto* (ravaging) the church. William Barclay explains Luke's choice of this word. "It is used of a wild boar ravaging a vineyard and of a wild animal savaging a body" (1976, 64). John Calvin chimes in that God "vouchsafed to make Paul a pastor of such a cruel wolf" (1560, 328).

When Jesus says to Paul, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5), Paul is not only persecuting the church, but Christ himself. Darrell Bock states, "Jesus tells Saul that the persecution is really directed against himself" (1997, 358). Scott Cunningham concurs, noting this Christ-Church connection language is used nearly verbatim in all three cases where Saul's conversion is told in Acts, thus indicating a strong Lucan emphasis (1997, 219). This language serves to reinforce the bond between the Master and his servants. When contemporary MBDLJs are persecuted, it is primarily the risen Christ within them that is being persecuted by an Islamic spirit that abhors the idea of Christ as Lord.

While many Jews in Palestine and in the Diaspora came to believe in Messiah Jesus, Paul nevertheless met stiff persecution at the hands of his Jewish brethren. In Pisidian Antioch, a segment of the Jewish population became "filled with jealousy" (13:45) and began opposing Paul. On the next stop, Iconium, Jews and Gentiles collaborated on an attempt to stone Paul (14:5). After the healing of the lame man at Lystra, Jews won over the crowds, who stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city (14:19). The conclusion of Paul's first missionary journey ends with him exhorting the newly won disciples: "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

The theme of Paul's persecution at the hands of his unbelieving brethren continues in Thessalonica in Acts 17:4-6, in which unbelieving Jews who had become jealous start a riot. They then accuse Paul and his companions of turning the world upside down. When Paul makes a return to Jerusalem, the Jews of Asia Minor recognize him and bring a sensational accusation against him.

In Acts 28, Luke gives a description of one Jewish viewpoint on the Messianic Movement. On his arrival in Rome, Paul the prisoner immediately sought out the leadership of the Roman Jewish community. These leaders were unaware of Paul, but offer this telling summary statement, "We desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere" (28:22). This summary statement reveals four pertinent facts. First, the Roman Jewish leaders identify these Messianic Jews as a Jewish sect among many sects in the first century Jewish milieu. Second, though they have not heard of Paul, they have heard that this sect of the Nazarenes is "spoken against everywhere" (Acts 28:22). Third, as the imperial city,

this was the news that reached the heart of the empire concerning the Jewish followers of Jesus. Fourth, the chronological placement of this incident at the end of the Book of Acts appears to represent a concluding commentary device on the relationship between the messianic Nazarene movement and the wider Jewish community.

The persecution of Jesus, the Apostles, and the early Messianic Jews holds important lessons for contemporary MBDLJs. They are accused of being traitors as were the early Messianic Jews. Though these mischaracterizations of identity have triggered persecution, both New Testament Messianic Jews and MBDLJs have experienced a grace of God that enables them to overcome it.

How Messianic Jews Were Identified by Gentiles in the New Testament

The question of the messianic claim of Jesus was an internal Jewish debate. Nearly all of the significant New Testament actors up until the Gentile Pentecost at Cornelius' home were Jewish. Therefore, the New Testament provides less coverage of how Messianic Jews were viewed by non-Jews than how they were viewed by Jews. Indeed the politically calculating Pontius Pilate, a non-Jew, seems at once intrigued by Jesus, haunted by the input of his wife regarding Christ, and bothered by the disturbance the Galilean rabbi posed to his governance.

Luke gives several examples of the ignorance with which ruling Gentiles viewed the Messianic Jewish issue. First, the Jews of Achaia bring Paul before Gallio's judgment seat on the grounds of the apostle preaching contrary to the Torah. Gallio impatiently dismisses the case since the accusation regards, "questions about words and names and your own law" (Acts 18:15). A similar situation occurs as Luke describes the awkward interchange between Paul and Porcius Festus in Acts 25. Festus describes the Jewish

legal case against Paul, in which Paul's accusers "simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive" (25:19). Festus observes the question of Jesus' resurrection to be within the confines of the Jewish religion. He notes one religion, not two. Gallio and Festus are simply not familiar enough with the religious dispute at hand to make an informed decision about it.

Gallio's and Festus' lack of understanding regarding the context of the Jewish messianic debate is an example of what Robert Priest (2006) calls "experience-distant theologizing." A similar thing can occur when missions executives who are unfamiliar with Islam make consequential decisions about ministry to Muslims. They may consider that Muslim identity is "value neutral" (See, for example, Brogden 2010, 33), though MBDLJs and indigenous persons would have helpful insights on this issue, if consulted.

Messianic Jews experienced significant continuity of socio-religious identity in coming to faith in Christ. Their case study is unrepeatable because Jesus was incarnated as a Jewish man into first-century Near Eastern Jewish culture. No other community will ever experience this unique calling, though believers in every generation can be inspired by how Messianic Jews overcame persecution. Now the research spotlight turns to the case of Gentiles.

The Impact of Conversion on the Identity of Gentiles in the New Testament

The Retentionists' Gentile Analogy

Retentionists appeal to the New Testament with the Gentile Analogy; in the same way that Gentile followers of Christ in the New Testament were not required to take on Jewish identity, so too should contemporary Muslim followers of Christ not be required

to take on Christian identity. Rather, they should be allowed to permanently retain Muslim identity. The conclusion is to the contrary; the New Testament required Gentiles to leave behind their pagan religious identity if they wanted to have any meaningful relationship with Jesus. Likewise, MBDLJs must leave behind Muslim identity since that identity requires an affirmation of Muhammad, who stated unequivocally that Jesus was neither Savior nor Lord.

Rebecca Lewis pictorially depicts the Gentile analogy with her version of the Kingdom Circles (2009, 18). She advocates that Gentiles did not need to become Jews, or go through a Jewish door, to get to Jesus Christ. Therefore, anyone, including a Muslim, should be able to come to Christ directly, without leaving his or her socio-religious community. Muslims need not go through Christianity.

Also along these lines, Kevin Higgins reports that a group of Insider missiologists attempted to apply the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council experience to the Muslim context. "For the purposes of the ISFM [International Society for Frontier Missiology] meetings in Atlanta, our assignment was to answer the question, What might the gathering in Acts 15 have done had they been asked to consider an insider movement among Muslims, instead of a Gentile movement?" (2007, 32). Higgins exegetes what Gentiles were required to leave behind, which is the main thing most Bible readers will remember about the conclusion of the Jerusalem Council. Yet Higgins does not apply that conclusion to what Muslims must leave behind to follow Jesus Christ as Lord. He completely omits this essential topic. Rather, Higgins merely presents a very soft and minimalist portrayal of the essentials for salvation (see chapter eight of this dissertation). The ultimate conclusion of Higgins and his team was that a personal relationship with Jesus was all that really

mattered for Muslims; their position could be summed up by the title of an article by John Travis, "Jesus Saves, Religion Doesn't" (2013, 30).

MBDLJs globally are dealing with the issue of leaving behind Muhammad to follow Jesus. Their Muslim communities are pressing this issue upon them. In 2008, I participated in a trip organized by Voice of the Martyrs that provided training to a group of MBDLJ pastors in Bangladesh. In the first question and answer session, the initial question was from a pastor who asked, "How should we respond when the Muslims ask us about our views of Muhammad and the Qur'an?" In 2013, while visiting MBDLJs who recently emigrated from Uzbekistan to their ancestral homeland of Crimea, the same subject came up again. They said, "We are scheduling a four-hour seminar tomorrow and we want to discuss with you ways to handle questions about Muhammad!"

Since Christian is a pejorative in nearly all Muslim contexts, it may not be necessary for Muslims who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible to take on the actual identifier "Christian." Yet this avoidance does not justify the retention of a Muslim identity. Using Travis' terminology, the problems associated with the non-contextualized C1 and C2 positions do not validate a jump to C5. Other options are available to individually and collectively identify MBDLJs that do not include the Muslim identifier.

The Pagan Religious Milieu of the Roman Empire in the New Testament Era

An understanding of the pagan Gentile world in New Testament times is essential to assessing the Gentile Analogy. This world featured a religious milieu of gods and goddesses who mingled with men and women and shared their faults. It was not a high, religious climate like that of monotheistic Judaism. Ramsay MacMullen offers this

picture, "The standard Roman city, if such a thing could have been discovered within its boundaries, would need room for temples to the Capitoline Triad (Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva), plus Mercury, Isis and Sarapis, Apollo, Liber Pater, Hercules, Mars, Venus, Vulcan and Ceres" (1981, 1). The climate was far from one of complete religious tolerance; MacMullen describes "a widespread feeling that to slight the gods, plural, was wrong…to have one's own god counted for nothing if one denied everybody else's" (1979, 2).

Instead of adhering to one religion, Gentiles in this era would have been able to name the gods their family and community venerated. Idol worship had the public component of votive offerings that shaped spiritual identity. Jorg Rupke notes, "Though a private act, offering a votive fell within the remit of public cult, the temples. The location itself ensured an audience" (2007, 157). MacMullen adds, "Cult associations bound their members to detailed usages" (1979, 12), with often-lengthy engraved instructions on temple behavior and worship activities.

The pagan Roman world of the first century, into which the Jewish apostolic church launched its Gentile mission, features two several commonalities with the contemporary Muslim world. First is the aforementioned intolerance toward faith deviation—the pagan view that slighting the gods was wrong. Second is the Roman superiority complex of that time, which mirrors contemporary Islamic sentiments, as described by J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz: "From the second century, or even earlier, the Roman nobility had proclaimed that Roman greatness was a reward sent by the gods for Roman piety. The Romans might be excelled by foreigners in other skills but in religious observance they were surpassed by none" (1979, 1). The vows associated with pagan

temple worship are in some ways comparable to Islamic mosque worship, as reflected in the confessional call to prayer ("*Ash-hadu ana Muhammadan Rasool Allah*," "I bear witness Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah"). Verse 5 of *Sura Fatiha*, which is uttered by Muslims in all 17 daily *rakat* (rounds) of prayer, also offers a vow: "*Iyyaka na'abudu wa iyyaka nasta'een*" "Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help" (Pickthall translation). These similarities are presented not to equate Islam with paganism, but merely to show that Muslims coming to faith in Christ today may face challenges similar to those pagan Gentiles faced in the New Testament era. Idol worship touched many aspects of pagan Gentile life, much as Islam greatly influences many cultures.

While Jewish believers in Messiah Jesus experienced significant continuity of spiritual identity, Gentiles experienced radical discontinuity. Pagan Gentiles who came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ incurred community wrath for slighting the gods through their omission of public temple worship, while simultaneously insulting the alleged source of the greatness of the empire. MBDLJs likewise incur community wrath for their decision to follow Christ as Lord.

How Gentile Christians Viewed Themselves

The entrance of the gospel into the Gentile world forms a major theme in the New Testament. While Messianic Jews experienced a significant sense of continuity with their Old Testament forebears, Gentiles who came to faith in Messiah Jesus experienced dramatic break with their pagan past, and created a new spiritual identity (Gal. 4:6-9; Eph. 2:11-13). Judith Lieu describes the significance of this continuity in an excellent article on "The Forging of Christian Identity": "The creation, at least rhetorically, of a

self-conscious and distinctive identity is a remarkable characteristic of early Christianity" (2011, 435).

In considering a biblical evaluation of the Gentile Analogy, Luke and Paul again are particularly helpful. Luke, as perhaps the only Gentile writer of a complete book in the Bible, chronicles the introduction of the gospel into numerous Gentile or mixed Jewish-Gentile communities, including Antioch, Paphos, Lystra, Derbe, Pisidian Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus. Paul evangelized Gentiles, planted churches among them, and wrote letters to them, which have become part of the New Testament canon. Therefore, he had a significant role in shaping Gentile identity in Christ. In the cases of the Galatian churches, and the churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus, the New Testament presents the narrative of both the church plant and the instructional Pauline epistle (or epistles) addressed to them.

Developing a Gentile Christian Identity and Frame of Reference

The development of Gentile Christian identity did not exist prior to the Book of Acts. By the conclusion of Paul's life (approximately AD 68), churches that contained Gentile Christians were perhaps not yet exclusively Gentile. Marshall states, "We know that Paul's churches were composed of both Jews and Gentiles" (1990, 38). For this reason, the development of Gentile, Greek, or Hellenic Christian identity was still embryonic in Acts. This identity was nurtured with care by Jewish apostolic influence, as reflected in the Jerusalem Council and the Pauline epistles, as well as by these blossoming Gentile Christian communities themselves, the leaders of which are named in several of the Pauline and Johannine letters.

The challenge of bringing a Jewish-yet-universal message of salvation to uncircumcised Gentiles cannot be overstated. First, Jewish apostles had to overcome motivational obstacles to even to consider reaching out to them. Paul, then Rabbi Saul, received an unexpected call to the Gentiles upon his conversion on the Damascus Road. God resorted to visiting Peter with supernatural visions to move him to minister to the Gentile Cornelius.

The second major challenge in the entrance of the gospel into Gentile communities was the lack of a frame of reference on the part of the Gentiles in assessing and understanding the messianic message. The Acts 14 incident at Lystra underscores this point, as the Lycaonian-speaking Gentiles there mistake Paul and Barnabas for Hermes and Zeus. The apostles could have started a Hermes and Zeus Insider Movement at that time, but instead they tore their clothes in grief and told the locals, "you should turn from these vain things to a living God" (Acts 14:15).

Gentile Christians' Idol-Free Identity

Paul, as the Apostle to the Gentiles, is among those who shape their spiritual identity. Rather than bridge building on their idol worship, Paul communicates a strong anti-idol polemic. The sermon on Mars Hill is considered a masterpiece of Gentile contextualization, especially in Paul's interpretative statement regarding the Unknown God. Nevertheless, Paul requires these Athenians to leave their idols behind, "We ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (Acts 17:29-30). Paul notes

that God is willing to overlook these days of ignorance if men will repent of their

idolatry. In Ephesus, his anti-idolatry preaching (Acts 19:26) is the basis for a riot.

The notion of idols soiling the pure rather than being redeemable bridge-building

material is not merely a Pauline notion. David Gill notes of the Jerusalem Council's

decree, "Clearly as Gentiles joined the Christian community, the Jewish group had to

come to terms with pagan cult. Thus the council at Jerusalem advised Gentiles 'who turn

to God ... to abstain from the pollution of idols ...' (Acts 15:19-20)" (1994, 92). Thus,

things associated with false gods have a polluting or contaminating nature. There is no

talk about redeeming things associated with false gods, continuity with pagan worship, or

Idol Insiders.

The Case Study of Ephesus

The entrance of the gospel into Ephesus provides a helpful case study with

applications for the Retentionism debate. If the Gentile Analogy is true, one should

expect to read about Artemis Insiders in the New Testament. First, Ephesus, like the

Muslim world, was a diverse and challenging mission field. Apollos, Priscilla, and Aquila

all conducted pioneer work in Ephesus prior to Paul's arrival (Acts 18:24-28). The city

contained a Jewish community, as well as some disciples of John the Baptist.

Second, the greatest missional challenge in Ephesus was the strong connection

between the city, its people, and their worship of the Greek goddess Artemis, also known

in Roman mythology as Diana. Her temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

The town clerk of Ephesus asks, "What man is there after all who does not know that the

city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image

which fell down from heaven?" (Acts 19:35).

Third, the New Testament gives a rare and precious cohort study of Ephesus. The study begins with the inception of the Ephesian church (Acts 19 and 20, including Paul's instructions to the Ephesian elders). Paul contributes additional information to this study at the time of his Epistle to the Ephesians. The study concludes in John's Revelation—in which the Ephesian Church is directly addressed toward the end of the first century. While the exact dating of these examples is unknown, possibly up to thirty years passed between the inception of the Ephesian Church in Acts 19 and the message given to that church in Revelation 2.

Acts 19:1-41 chronicles the full entrance of the gospel into Ephesus, which resulted in the Ephesian Gentile church plant. Several points are worth noting. Demetrius the silversmith felt threatened, couching his economic interest in terms that would promote a groundswell of religious foment in favor of Artemis. He states that Paul is proclaiming everywhere, "gods made with hands are no gods at all" (v. 26). Paul's equivalent message at Mars Hill confirms Demetrius' testimony. Finally, Demetrius indicates that Paul's preaching will completely undermine their religion and the "temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence" (v. 27).

The threat to religious identity precipitated a mob response and riot. The two-hour chant of "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" resembles the ritualized chanting seen at Muslim festivals—especially the Shi'ite *Ta'ziya* pageant during the month of Muharram. This Ephesian chant provided a collective affirmation of their pagan idolatrous religious identity, which they felt was threatened by Paul's ministry.

Undeterred, Paul continued to call for repentance from the worship of idols, which he held to be false gods. Acts makes no mention of Artemesian followers of Jesus. Eventually, the worship of Artemis would end. Paul did not intend to preserve it. David Gill states: "Clearly the implications of Paul's teaching at Ephesus, and elsewhere in the province, was that people would stop coming to worship the goddess (and which would hit those who made the offerings to be dedicated within the sanctuary) and that the goddess herself would be 'deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship'" (1994, 89).

In conclusion, Paul saw it as his mission to destroy the socio-religious pagan identity of the Ephesians centered in the worship of Artemis. Since Artemis was the goddess of the hunt, Paul could have used gospel bridging by preaching that Jesus, like Artemis, was hunting for human hearts. This would have allowed the people of Ephesus to retain their socioreligious identity as Artemis Insiders, with tactful witness, rather than causing riots as Paul did. Paul, however, does not use this Artemis Insider strategy, even though Artemis worship did not feature the overt anti-biblical Christological content that Islam features. If Paul did not promote Artemis Insiders, he probably would not endorse Muslim Insiders.

By the time Paul wrote Ephesians, there is no mention of an Ephesian Church embedded inside Artemis worship. The book does not mention the name Artemis. When one reads Ephesians, they have left that identity completely behind. In Ephesians 4:21-24, Paul emphasizes the identity transformation that requires putting off the old self and putting on the new self. By the time of John's Revelation, the Ephesian Church is called back to Jesus Christ, its "first love" (2:4). Jesus does not mention Artemis in His message

to this church. The flame of Artemis worship appears extinguished, at least as a major threat to the gospel.

Had Paul followed the missiological pattern of current Retentionists, modern Christians may have expected to read about Artemis Insiders throughout this New Testament narration. It may even have been projected that Artemis worship and socio-religious identity would be retained up to the present day. Artemis, however, is nearly forgotten by the time of the end of the New Testament chronicle; she stands as a curious relic of history.

<div align="center">Pauline Identity Illustrations for Gentile Christians</div>

Though Gentiles needed to repent of and relinquish their pagan religious identity, Paul helps them build a positive new identity centered on Christ through two significant identity illustrations. Like John the Beloved Disciple, Paul saw Christ as the Vine and His disciples as the branches. In writing to Gentile believers in Rome, Paul informs them that the Jewish branches were natural branches, while Gentile branches were wild branches grafted in (Rom. 11:17). Paul's argument even appears to discourage independent Gentile Christian identity, "It is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you" (11:18). The lesson again is that Jesus is Lord over identity. As Lord, He has the prerogative to shape, transform, and define identity as He sees fit. Likewise, MBDLJs are grafted into Christ the Vine.

Paul's second illustration also inspires MBDLJs, who are thrilled and thankful to be part of the unified, global Body of Christ. This illustrative statement regarding Gentile Christian identity comes from Ephesians 2:15, in the picture of the "one new man." Ephesians 2 addresses Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ corporately forming one

body in the Lord, through the cross. While the grafting-in illustration seems to diminish Gentile Christian identity, the one new man lifts that identity in an inclusive ecclesiological picture. Gentile believers are not second-class citizens in the kingdom of God, but "fellow citizens with all the saints," as Paul describes in 2:19.

Commentators add several helpful insights into Paul's one new man illustration. Herman Ridderbos states in reference to Ephesians 2:15, "Indeed, this corporate unity with Christ dominates the idea of the new man so strongly that believers, as the Body of Christ, even in their totality can be called 'the one new man'" (1975, 64). D. D. Stoeckhardt adds, "The Christian Church is *de facto* the one new man formed from Jews and Gentiles" (1952, 148). In this sense, Paul has elevated the previously alienated Gentiles into a position in Messiah Jesus where they are placed into the Body of Christ and simultaneously become co-heirs of the promises of God.

The Gentile Pejorative

In this study of Gentile Christian identity, a challenge emerges in that the concept of "Gentileness" is a Jewish concept used by Jews to refer to non-Jews. Gentiles at the time of Christ would not have thought of themselves specifically as Gentiles. Instead, they would have identified themselves as inhabitants or citizens of other geographical locations, or members of various ethno-linguistic communities.

A simple concordance analysis reveals that all New Testament authors other than Paul use "Gentile" as a synonym for those who are not ethnically Jewish. Only Paul uses "Gentiles" as a pejorative. He does so in writing to Gentiles themselves. Therefore, instead of somehow affirming a "God-given" status, to use Lewis' term, regarding these

Gentile socio-religious communities, Paul's sanctification emphasis is so strong that he turns the linkage of "Gentiles" with sinfulness into a demeaning descriptor (2009, 16).

All of the following quotations are written to Gentiles who have come to faith in Christ, and who may be struggling to crystallize or maintain that faith. The exasperated apostle warns the carnal Corinthians of, "… fornication not so much as is named among the Gentiles" (1 Cor. 5:1). To the Galatians, teetering on the brink of legalistic proselytism into Judaism, Paul links the words "sinners" and "Gentiles." "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles" (Gal 2:15).

To the Thessalonians, he equates the word "Gentiles" with lustfulness and unbelief. He exhorts the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5, "that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God." To the Ephesians, Paul writes, "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind" (4:17). These verses indicate that Paul insisted on a transformed life and identity centered in Christ for Gentiles, and which left behind the sins that so commonly infected Gentile communities. Indeed, Paul set out to fulfill what the Lord Jesus called him to accomplish among the Gentiles, "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18).

How Gentile Christians Were Viewed by their Communities

The New Testament does not record any significant positive affirmation of Gentile faith in Christ by their wider Gentile communities. Though the Mars Hill sermon is thought to be the high-water mark for contextualized preaching to a Gentile audience, Paul's hearers nonetheless felt he was a "proclaimer of strange deities" (Acts 17:18)

because he was preaching Jesus raised from the dead. Because of this emphasis on the resurrection of the dead, which appealed more to Jewish supernaturalism than to Gentile wisdom, some of his hearers on Mars Hill began to "sneer" at him (17:32). Their disdain may have caused negative peer pressure which could explain why the spiritual harvest at Athens is relatively limited (17:34) and why there is no mention of a solid church plant there. Paul, in fortifying the Corinthian Church, encourages them in the face of their communities rejecting their beliefs as "foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18). The Ephesians rioted at the introduction of an exclusivist message from Paul.

A Biblical Hermeneutic that Yields a New Identity for Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ

The complexity of the identity issue stems from the multiple identities a person may have, such as ethnicity, religious affiliation, age, gender, and even socio-economic status. Paul presents an intriguing example of such a multi-identity person. Nevertheless, God did not intend that the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ remain confused about identity.

The biblical research, commentaries, and focused theological monographs provide the framework for the development of a biblical hermeneutic regarding identity that has profound implications for the Retentionism debate. The following summary statements will be expanded in this chapter:

1. The Lordship of Christ extends to the identity issue; religious identity is therefore changeable, contrary to the contention of Retentionists.

2. The individual and corporate identity of MBDLJs must be centered in Christ.

3. Retentionists, in their Gentile Analogy, simply fail to address what, if anything, Muslims must leave behind to follow Christ as Lord.

4.   The New Testament record clearly indicates that persecution is to be expected as the rule rather than the exception when the gospel enters a community, and the Muslim world is no exception.

<div style="text-align:center">The Lordship of Jesus Christ Extends to the Identity Issue</div>

Though Retentionists argue that socio-religious identity, including Muslim identity, is God-given and unchangeable, this research indicates the contrary. The Lordship of Jesus Christ extends to identity. Jesus Christ, as Lord, retains the unconditional right to define and transform the identity of His disciples. The only unchangeable aspects of identity are those affecting the individual's physical component, most notably his or her ethnicity. God indeed has given that physiological identity, which is in the genes and DNA. However, spiritual identity, and even socio-religious identity, become clay in the Potter's hands, which He can shape as He wills.

The early church's Christology featured the Lordship of Christ. Marshall notes, "The mark of a Christian in the early church was that he was prepared to confess his faith in the words 'Jesus (Christ) is Lord' (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3, Phil. 2:11)" (1990, 97). This emphasis on the open confession of Christ as Lord impacts the biblical hermeneutic on identity.

Even one's family can become an idol if placed ahead of Christ. The Gentile world of the Near East in the New Testament era, like the Jewish world, featured strong family ties. Craig Keener notes in his commentary on Matthew's account of "Whoever does the will of God … is my brother and sister and mother" (12:46-50), "Even in traditional Greek and Roman cultures, family ties were paramount. Being perceived as

antifamily was a much greater danger than it is today; yet Jesus followed the practice He demanded of others; the kingdom of God comes first" (1999, 370).

The Example of Jesus' Relationship to His Socio-Religious Community

The Insider Movement strategy strives to keep new Muslim believers in Christ within their socio-religious communities. As such, this strategy requires these new believers to remain in the accepted status with the religious leadership of their communities. In the case of Muslims, the mosque leadership ultimately arbitrates this status.

It is helpful in assessing the Retentionist strategy to examine Jesus' relationship to the Jewish religious leadership of His day. God ordained that Jewish religious leadership be vested in the Levites, who would form the Jewish priesthood. At the time of Christ, the leading Jewish religious figure was the high priest, an office passed down through kinship lines. The Sanhedrin formed the Jewish religious high court, dominated by Pharisees and Sadducees. Pharisees constituted a conservative Jewish reform movement; Scribes rounded out the professional religious class.

Jesus harshly rebuked this entire leadership milieu. This leadership had syncretized the true Law of God with the traditions of men, but had at least maintained something of a Scriptural foundation. Matthew notes that Jesus told His disciples to "beware" of the "teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (16:6, 12), which He likened to leaven. Moreover, Jesus called the Jewish religious leaders sons of the devil (John 8:44). In Matthew 23 alone, Jesus calls the Scribes and Pharisees "hypocrites" seven times, "blind" five times, "serpents," and a "brood of vipers." In verse 33, Jesus judges

them as hell bound. With this type of language, Jesus does not seem to model or encourage the birthing of insider movements.

Jesus' Instructions to His Disciples Regarding Their Relationship to Their Families and Communities

Jesus' develops the identity hermeneutic through His instructions to His disciples regarding priorities in family and community relationships. He says, "You will be hated by all because of my name" (Matt.10:22; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:17). This pessimistic prophecy once again does not seem to be the instruction of someone wanting to start an insider movement. Jesus also makes specific mention of family relationships in a way that is difficult to reconcile with the expectation inherent in the IM paradigm—that the gospel should flow most naturally through family and kinship structures. To the contrary, loyalty to Christ must supersede family loyalties (Luke 14:26).

The second half of Matthew 10 includes challenging words from Jesus to His disciples on the subject of identity priorities as He sends them out in mission. The general theme is to expect difficulties and persecution from both governments and family members. Regarding the family betrayal warning in Matthew10:21, John Nolland comments, "Among those who will seek to use the legal system to stop the missionary witness will be members of one's own family; and the legal redress will go all the way to capital punishment" (2005, 425). Keener, in his exegesis of Matthew10:21, argues, "Although Jesus values families (5:27-32; 15:4-6; 19:4-9), the division his mission brings appears particularly in families (cf. 10:21)" (1999, 329). Regarding the "hated by all" admonition of Matthew10:22, Keener directly challenges the notion of the gospel flowing most easily through family circuitry. He claims this hatred "will extend to those in closest

relation to the disciples; the gospel is offensive to those who reject its demands or whose culture or tradition it challenges" (1999, 324). As the passage crescendos with the Lordship call of Christ (10:32-39), Keener concludes, "Jesus calls for disciples to love him not only more than their families, but more than their own lives" (1999, 331).

Since Matthew 10 provides instructions to Jewish apostles undertaking a short-term mission to Jewish towns, one could argue for a limited application of this passage. A full reading of the passage and its context, however, does not indicate Jesus intended a limited application. The message of Matthew 10 is confirmed in other places in the New Testament. In the Upper Room discourse, for example, Jesus warns His disciples, "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God" (John 16:2). This verse is as applicable to MBDLJs as it was to the disciples who first heard it during the Upper Room discourse.

The Disciple's Primary Identity Is Centered in Christ, Not in Birth Community or Ethnicity

The New Testament studies covered by this research point toward a new identity, both individually and collectively, centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer in Messiah Jesus experiences new birth and becomes part of a new collective body, the Church. The origination of this body is set in a Jewish context, but the intention and trajectory are that the body will include members from all peoples. Gentile believers enter into this covenant in Jesus the Messiah, are grafted into a Jewish root, and become part of "one new man" with their Jewish brethren of like precious faith.

Jesus, as the individual and corporate identity maker, summoned His disciples with the personal call of "follow Me." That call was an invitation from the Lord Jesus Christ to be with Him and enter into a rabbi-disciple relationship. That relationship, and

the identity created by that relationship, must become the primary identity marker in the lives of all disciples of Christ. This identity in Christ, therefore, takes priority and precedence over birth identities, such as ethnicity and race. As such, this research contradicts Lewis' thesis that socio-religious identity is God-given and hence unchangeable.

Failure of the Gentile Analogy: Not What Is Added, but What Is Left Behind

The Retentionists' Gentile Analogy, based on the Kingdom Circles paradigm, fails to address the crucial question of what new believers must leave behind to follow Jesus. Jesus pressed the Lordship issue continually. In the case of the Rich Young Ruler, the Lordship issue hinged on what he was willing to leave behind. Paul told the Philippians that he was leaving behind a confident, self-righteousness based on his Jewish pedigree. Rather, he found his righteousness and ultimate spiritual identity through Messiah Jesus. Paul continually preached that Gentiles must leave behind their idols to follow Jesus, causing riots by this preaching as he went. The Apostle John, writing late in the New Testament era, concludes his First Epistle with the admonition: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). All of this material points to a biblical (and specifically New Testament) hermeneutic that recognizes Christ as Lord has the sole prerogative to not only assign and define the individual's new identity, but to call him or her to abandon aspects of his or her old one. This includes His right to demand that His followers leave behind all that undermines their new identity.

A hypothetical example illustrates how Kingdom Circles ultimately collapses when failing to consider this "left-behind" test. In a hypothetical "Satanist followers of Jesus" situation, the IM theory would for Satanist followers of Jesus to permanently

retain identity in their socio-religious Satanic community. As long as they worshipped Jesus in their hearts, they could keep a veneer of Satan worship on the outside, thus best positioning themselves to reach out to other Satanists. In no way does this research insinuate that Muslims, the focus of this dissertation, are Satanists. Rather, it simply points out that Kingdom Circles paradigm fails to answer what those coming to Christ must leave behind.

<div align="center">

Persecution Is the Rule Rather than the Exception when
the Gospel Enters a Community
</div>

The Retentionist paradigm fails to incorporate the persecution motif of the New Testament. The simple conclusion is that the spiritually fallen people of this world, whether Jewish or Gentile, are prone to be at enmity with God (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-16). While ministry to a population with an underlayment of Christian understanding may somewhat mute this enmity, missionaries should leave this wishful thinking behind as they enter Muslim communities. Furthermore, Christ equips His disciples to endure and overcome persecution.

To understand the New Testament persecution motif further, a few comments must be included regarding the cruelty of the Roman penal system. Brian Rapske's descriptive work on Roman custody helps contemporary Bible readers understand the types of persecution endured by Paul and other New Testament believers (1994). He notes that Roman prisons were places of coercion and punishment. The type of beating Paul and Silas received at Philippi would have been "severe enough to open wounds needing cleansing" (Rapske 1994, 125). The stocks used in this case were to not only secure and restrain the prisoners, they typically were used to cause pain and discomfort (Rapske 1994, 127). According to natural reasoning, this severity of Roman incarceration

would have caused anyone, including the apostles and other New Testament Christians, to avoid persecution, as often incarceration was a one-way ticket to death.

This persecution theme has recently been understated. Joseph Modica states, "A review of the major bibliographies and trends in Luke-Acts research over the last thirty years has shown little or no attention given to suffering in Luke-Acts" (1995, 7). Nevertheless, the persecution motif dominates the Book of Acts chronicle, and many commentators confirm this. Ajith Fernando states that only three chapters of Acts, from Chapter 3 onward, do not describe persecution of Christians (1998, 154). He articulates the applicability of Acts to the present age, "Chapter 4 marks the beginning of resistance to evangelism in the life of the church, a feature that has been true of her life during the twenty centuries that followed" (Fernando 1998, 151). Scott Cunningham argues, "The prominence of the theme of persecution in Luke-Acts is undeniable" (1997, 13). Paul House states that persecution provides the "theological and literary framework" of Acts (1990, 320). He assesses Luke's emphasis on the suffering caused by persecution as not merely a sub-theme, but foundational, "Acts has no purpose, no plot, no structure, and no history without suffering" (1990, 321). Schuyler Brown argues that a main objective of Luke in Acts is to show the Church persevering in faith, rather than falling into apostasy (1969). House adds that the "proper interpretation of Acts depends in part on the commentator's grasp of suffering's importance in Acts" (1990, 321). The latter half of Acts (chapters 13-28) focuses on Paul's missionary activity among Gentiles; yet that very call to the Gentiles included a call to suffer (Acts 9:16).

Several verses in Acts indicate that Luke may even overlook or understate the persecution that occurred in various places. For example, in Corinth he notes that

opponents of the gospel merely "resisted and blasphemed" (18:6). Luke does not mention physical threats. Nevertheless, God must fortify the usually fearless Paul in a night vision, "Do not be afraid any longer … no man will attack you in order to harm you …" (18:9-10). Also, Paul informs the Ephesian elders, "The Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in *every* [emphasis mine] city that bonds and affliction await me" (Acts 20:23). These references indicate that Luke, in the interests of time and space, and having provided an undeniable theme already, may simply have not recorded much of the persecution taking place in Acts as the gospel entered various communities. From Luke's written record, I chart persecution in Acts in chronological order as follows:

Table 3.1. Persecution in Acts

Site of Persecution	Sites Where No Significant Persecution is Mentioned
Jerusalem*	Samaria
Damascus*	Joppa region (including Lydda and Sharon)
Paphos	Caesarea
Pisidian Antioch	Berea
Iconium*	Athens
Lystra*	
Philippi	
Thessalonica	
Corinth	
Ephesus	
Greece*	
*Martyrdom or attempted martyrdom reported	

Table 3.1 indicates that persecution was the rule rather than the exception in Acts. Furthermore, places in which persecution was not reported by Luke tended to be sites of shorter-term missions efforts, especially the Petrine mission to the Joppa region and

Cornelius' home in Caesarea. The Pauline mission, with its emphasis on church planting, could scarcely avoid persecution.

The persecution theme is not limited to Acts, but extends to the wider New Testament narrative. Kistemaker, in his commentary on Hebrews, argues, "Wherever the church begins to develop and grow, opposition can be expected" (1984, 299). Dean Gilliland notes, "When the gospel threatens customs and rituals, a reaction occurs" (2004, 267). Josef Ton, a Romanian theologian, provides a biblical theology of suffering and martyrdom, borne in the crucible of Communism, which focuses on the eternal rewards for the persecuted (2000). Indeed, the cyclical persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire, which included martyrdom and which began in the New Testament era under Nero, continued right up until Constantine.

The expulsive nature of Islam (which will be investigated in detail in the next chapter of this dissertation) will likely result in even the most careful of MBDLJs merely delaying that expulsion. Retentionists like Accad attribute lack of fruit in ministry to Muslims to antiquated and insufficiently contextualized methods. Martin Parsons, in *Unveiling God: Contextualizing Christology for Islamic Culture*, thus criticizes Samuel Zwemer, the "Apostle to Islam," "He failed to recognise the need to contextualise the actual concepts that Christology is expressed in" (2005, 16). Since Islam is a post-Christian religion, and therefore a contextualized Christology in its own right, it is difficult to comprehend how a re-contextualized message could either promote biblical understanding among Muslims, or prevent the persecution of those coming to faith in Christ. Instead, Parsons risks the perils of Islamizing Christology.

The last exegetical observation offered in this section returns to the theme of jealousy. If the Jewish religious leadership rejected Jesus because of envy, and similarly rejected the apostles, entrenched religious leadership will likely feel threatened by any apostolic movement in any particular culture. This includes nascent movements to Christ in Muslim communities. Though this jealousy may spawn persecution, the good news is that the Holy Spirit can empower the Church to overcome this persecution, and even thrive under it.

Final Assessments

In summary, the identity of believers in Christ, including MBDLJs, must center in Jesus himself. Jewish and Gentile audiences are invited to follow Jesus on the path of salvation. Their idols and besetting sins, however, must remain behind. Though appropriate contextualization is needed, family and community reactions to the entrance of the gospel are frequently beyond the control of missionaries and new believers. True disciples must follow Christ, who as Lord shapes and transforms identity by the Holy Spirit.

The conclusions in this chapter contradict Retentionist assertions, which suffer from lack of biblical support. First, the notion that the existence of Messianic Jews warrants an equivalent of Messianic Muslims is a non-sequitur because Messianic Jews experienced spiritual continuity within a unique redemptive-historical context that MBDLJs do not share. The Gentile Analogy fails since it does not assess what Muslims must leave behind to follow Jesus.

This dissertation concurs with several dissertations by writers such as J. Henry Wolfe and Wonjoo Hwang who assess the wider subject of IM hermeneutics. Wolfe

states, "Altogether, the biblical and theological arguments offered by Insider proponents are incomplete or flawed in significant respects" (2011, 164). Hwang concludes in his recently-published dissertation on the same subject, "From a biblical perspective, this study argues that the Insider Movement does not pass the test of biblical validation because key assertions and biblical claims of Insider Movement advocates stand upon exegetically flawed interpretations of biblical passages" (2012). Without reviewing their respective, specific rationales in detail, both researchers have come to reasonable conclusions. Certainly, the exegetical conclusions of Retentionists on the identity issue have missed the biblical mark.

CHAPTER 4

ISLAMIC SOURCES ON MUSLIM IDENTITY

Fruitful and sustainable missiology requires a thorough understanding of the context in which God's mission takes place. This study addresses missions to Muslims—an admittedly broad mission field comprising one in five persons in the world. While there is a natural diversity among the vast numbers of ethno-linguistic groups that have come under the shadow of Islam, the Arab Muslim hegemony since the advent of Islam has attempted to enforce a measure of religious uniformity upon these groups. This chapter addresses the effect of Islamic theology, law, and history on Muslim identity. This body of knowledge seems conspicuous by its absence in the wider missiological discussion of ministry to Muslims. This chapter will specifically seek to answer three questions related to Muslim identity that impact the missiological discussion on Retentionism: (1) Is it possible to reconcile the identity of the biblical Jesus with the Jesus of the Qur'an and *hadith* literature (authoritative sayings of Muhammad)? (2) According to Islamic literature, what makes a person a Muslim or non-Muslim? And (3) How do Islamic apostasy laws affect Muslims' spiritual identity (and allegiance)?

Comparative Christologies

The Christological question forms a key component of identity development. If the biblical Jesus and the Islamic Jesus can be established to be the same person in what this document calls a "reconciled Christology," there follows a potential for Muslims

retaining Islamic identity when coming to saving faith in Christ. Joseph Cumming shows

that a reconciled Christology is indispensable to the concept of Retentionism as he

recounts the story of his friend "Ibrahim:"

> Ibrahim was a well-respected scholar of the Qur'an, a *hafiz*. When he decided to
> follow Jesus, he closely examined the Qur'anic verses commonly understood as
> denying the Trinity, denying Jesus' divine Sonship, denying Jesus' atoning death,
> and denying the textual integrity of the Bible. He concluded that each of these
> verses was open to alternate interpretations, and that he could therefore follow
> Jesus as a Muslim. (2009, 2)

Ibrahim's conclusion regarding a reconciled Christology opened the door to his

Retentionist, or Insider Muslim, identity.

On the other hand, if the biblical Jesus and Islamic Jesus are two mutually

exclusive identities, then a Muslim who comes to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

will likely undergo a significant change in identity. Therefore, a comparison of the

biblical and Islamic Christologies forms a critical component of the contextualization

puzzle in ministry to Muslims. This study commences with a brief treatment of the

orthodox, biblical Christology.

Biblical Christology

The identity of the Lord Jesus Christ is a question central to all humanity. Simeon

declared that the infant Jesus was "appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and

for a sign to be opposed" (Luke 2:34). Jesus later asked His disciples in Matthew 16:13:

"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Peter responded, "You are the Christ, the

Son of the Living God" (16:16). The first question upon which New Testament history

hinged was whether Jews would accept Jesus as Messiah (Greek, *Christos*) and the Son

of God. Peter answered in the affirmative.

Jesus' divinity is a central piece of biblical Christology. Richard Bauckham notes that the "christology of divine identity … is pervasive in the New Testament writings" (2005, 148). Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh and was accused of blasphemy for it. In John 10:33, the Jews stated, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." In Mark 2, Jesus provoked a situation regarding the recognition of His own divinity when healing the paralytic lowered in through the roof. He said the man's sins are forgiven, raising the ire of the Scribes present (2:7). These Scribes noted that only God can forgive sins. Instead of backing off His statement, which Jesus surely would have done if He were not God, He healed the man and confirmed His divine prerogative of forgiving sins.

John, writing after the Synoptic authors, focuses on material not included in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. He gives special emphasis to the divinity of Christ, beginning with the Logos Prologue (John 1:1). In 1 John 4:1-4, John provides a test to determine whether a spirit was of God or of the spirit of anti-Christ. That test centers on whether the message confirms that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. The Gnostics, who asserted that Jesus did not come in the flesh, failed this test.

Paul wrote from a position of authority that came from a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle presents a clear Christology in Philippians 2:5-11 as he describes the Divine, Eternal Son emptying himself of His divinity and becoming the likeness of a man. The issue of Jesus' divinity was sealed for Paul. Marshall explains, "There can be no doubt that in the usage of the New Testament writers, beginning from Paul, the title of 'Lord' is regarded as the title used of God as used in the Old Testament

and now applied to Jesus" (1990, 106). Hebrews 1:3 describes Jesus as the "exact representation of the nature" of God.

The Early Church Councils dealt primarily with Christological issues. Arianism was exposed as heresy for claiming that the Son was not eternal, and therefore, not co-equal with the Father. The Nicene Creed has more Christological content than combined content regarding the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. The Council of Chalcedon addressed the Monophysite controversy and confirmed that Christ had both a divine and a human nature.

Throughout Church history, Christology has been the greatest determiner of whether a movement was deemed orthodox or heterodox. The Mormons hold to an aberrant Christology, claiming Jesus is a created being, the biological offspring of the Father and Mary, and the brother of Lucifer (Christian Defense 2010). Jehovah Witnesses likewise believe neither in the divinity of Jesus nor the Trinity. They, therefore, have been excluded from Christian orthodoxy, which holds to one God in three Persons, with Jesus Christ having both a divine and human nature.

To set up the comparison with the Islamic Christology, therefore, the biblical Christology is marked by its foundational tenet of the divinity of Christ. He is Lord of all (Phil. 2:11) and the one who created all things (John 1:3). Equally important to this discussion is the role that Jesus plays in the biblical narrative as the focal point of prophecy and redemptive history.

Islamic Christology

Islam is a post-Christian religion. The Qur'an mentions many biblical prophets and characters, including Jesus Christ. Jesus is considered a great prophet in Islam, since

he is one of only four prophets, along with Moses, David, and Muhammad, who are believed to have given written revelation. Islamic theology therefore includes a Christological component. This section seeks to develop an accurate picture of Jesus in his Islamic context, such that a reliable comparison can be made with the biblical Jesus.

Similarities between Biblical and Islamic Christologies

Muslims believe that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary (Qur'an 19:20). He was an authentic prophet (2:136). He did many miracles, including healings and raising the dead by the will of Allah (3:49). He was called the "word" and a "Spirit from Him" (4:171). He is known as the "Messiah" (3:45, Arabic *al-Masih*). All of these references are similar in some sense to biblical descriptions of Jesus.

The Anti-biblical Trajectory of Islamic Christology

The theological backdrop to the comparative Christology discussion must include a reference that Islam rejects the idea of original sin. Islam, therefore, neither requires nor anticipates an atoning Savior. According to *Sura* 30:30, people have been created virtuously, in *fitra*, and are not born sinners as the Bible teaches.

Though many Qur'anic descriptions are similar to biblical descriptions of Christ, Islam nevertheless teaches that Jesus was merely a mortal prophet, who although born of a virgin was in no way divine. The Qur'an states that Jesus was not divine and has him preach a genre of *ex cathedra* statements that He is not divine. *Sura Ma'ida*, declares, "They do blaspheme who say: 'God is Christ the son of Mary.' But said Christ: 'O Children of Israel! Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.' Whoever joins other gods with God, - God will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help" (5:72, Yusuf Ali translation throughout, unless

otherwise noted). This teaching is issued directly from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself to add emphasis. This verse includes a hell-justifying condemnation of blasphemy and joining other gods with God (Arabic, *shirk)*. These two main theological demarcations points—*kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk*—which separate Unitarian Muslims from Trinitarian non-Muslims, guarantee that Islam would include no such concept of plurality in the Godhead.

Sura 5:116 follows this theme. Allah questions a contrite Jesus about Jesus allegedly receiving worship, "And behold! God will say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God?' He will say: 'Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart; I know not what is in Thine." Overlooking for the moment Muhammad's inclusion of Mary in the Trinity, the Christological component of this verse diminishes Jesus greatly. First, Allah interrogates Jesus. Second, Jesus states that He has no right to worship, which is a denial of divinity. Third, Jesus emphasizes He is not omniscient. Although this final point is compatible with some New Testament statements from Jesus, such as not knowing the time of His return, in this context the theological purpose is to further distance Jesus from divinity.

In *The Muslim Jesus,* Islamic scholar Tarif Khalidi succinctly describes the Christological difference between the Bible and the Qur'an, "Clearly there is *something* about Jesus which makes his Qur'anic image so utterly different from the Jesus of the Gospels … He is the only prophet in the Qur'an who is deliberately made to distance himself from the doctrines that his community is said to hold about him" (2003 11-12).

Similarly, Sahih al-Bukhari has the Islamic Jesus rebuking Christians upon His return to earth because they wrongly promoted Him to a status above that of a mortal man (2013, vol. 4, book 55, 657). The same *hadith* narrates Jesus breaking the cross in His Islamic second coming.

Muslims interpret *Sura* 4:157-158 to deny the crucifixion of Jesus. This study bypasses that discussion because it becomes a moot point if Jesus is indeed reduced to a mortal prophet. The biblical narrative, summarized in Philippians 2:5-11, collapses if the one crucified is a mere human.

Muhammad 'Ata ur-Rahim, a Pakistani Muslim, provides an example of the classical Islamic Christology (1977). Ur-Rahim presents the Islamic polemic that the Divine Jesus was a Pauline innovation, promoted politically by Constantine, and upheld by a politically powerful Catholic Church. He holds strongly to the Islamic view of Christ as prophet only, even hinting that contemporary Christians are "anti-Christ" and Christianity is a "mask on the face of Jesus" (1977, 1). He deems that original Christianity was Unitarian. Ur-Rahim begins with the Islamic view of Jesus' mission, and superimposes it back onto Christian history. He maintains that Arius was a true follower of Christ in preaching Divine Unity. This helped Eastern Churches recognize and accept Islam, claims ur-Rahim (1977, 13).

Many Christian missionaries among Muslims, such as Geoffrey Parrinder, have accentuated the similarities between the biblical Jesus and the Qur'anic Jesus. Yet, Khalidi notes the significant differences in the corpus of literature he calls the "Muslim Gospel" (that is, the Qur'anic and *hadith* passages pertaining to Jesus). "Jesus is always identified as a Muslim prophet—and this must be constantly borne in mind, for he is,

after all, a figure molded in an Islamic environment" (Khalidi 2003, 44). When Muslims say they believe in Jesus, they are affirming faith in this Muslim Jesus. This place of Jesus in Islam is akin to the role of John the Baptist in the Bible. In Islam, Jesus is the forerunner to Muhammad. *Sura* 61:6 is a prime example, where Jesus announces a prophet coming after Him whose name is "Ahmad," a cognate of the Arabic "Muhammad." In summary, Jesus' main function in the Qur'an is to assure Muslims He is not divine and never required people to worship Him. As such, Muhammad uses Jesus to destroy the biblical salvation narrative. In Islam, Jesus decreases in prominence, and helps Muhammad increase.

Quests for a Reconciled Christology

Christian and Muslim scholars have waged theological turf wars for fourteen centuries to present and buttress their respective Christologies. The quest for a reconciled Christology is a more recent development. Harold Netland describes the traditional Christian view regarding the historical view of the mutual exclusivity of Christologies between Islam and Christianity, "It has traditionally been maintained, for example, that the Muslim and the orthodox Christian cannot both be correct in their respective beliefs concerning the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. At least one must be incorrect" (1991, 33-34). Netland, therefore, argues that the respective Christologies are irreconcilable.

Christian Initiatives

In 1890, while the British controlled the Indian Subcontinent, E. J. S. White, an employee of the British government, visited the Ahmadiyya prophet Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and was greatly impressed by him. White then formed the New Nazarene Church, "seeking to mingle what he considered to be the purer elements of both Islam and

Christianity in a Unitarian doctrine" (Farquhar 1915). John Farquhar also describes

pamphlets circulated by the New Nazarene Church (Nazarene New Church, in some

references) in 1893:

> In these, we find it stated that members of the Nazarene New Church should
> adhere strictly to the Law of Moses 'as perfected by our Master Jesus.' They are
> to accept the Gospel of Matthew and some other parts of the New Testament, but
> not the writings of John or Paul. They are recommended to read the Koran as a
> perfect exposition of the Unitarian doctrine. (1915, 149)

The movement did not gain much traction and soon ended. Zwemer assesses the

movement as an "example of syncretism" (1916, 101). Farquhar or Zwemer do not give

enough information to make a full Christological study of this group, though it is

noteworthy that White's attempt to bridge the divide between biblical Trinitarianism and

Islamic Unitarianism ended in Unitarianism. Further, White dismissed essential parts of

the New Testament that focus on the divinity and full unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ.

William Goldsack, a missionary to Bengal, attempted at the beginning of the

twentieth century to reconcile Christologies, arguing that Muslims "evade the clear

inference that … Jesus is divine" (1905, 14). Goldsack's argument implies that Muslims

are either ignorant of their Qur'an or willfully ignoring information within it about Christ.

Geoffrey Parrinder, a Methodist missionary to West Africa, opened the door to a

reconciled Christology further by stating Muhammad was primarily and appropriately

rebuking Christian heresy, rather than attacking the biblical faith. "It has often been

thought that the Qur'an denies the Christian teaching of the Trinity, and commentators

have taken its words to be a rejection of orthodox Christian doctrine. However, it seems

more likely that heretical doctrines are denied in the Qur'an, and orthodox Christians

should agree with most of its statements" (1965, 133). As such, Parrinder proposes a

reconciled Christology, which has become in vogue among Retentionists.

Kevin Higgins, who argues for Retentionism by advancing the concept of "Muslims submitted to God through His word, Isa" (2006, 121), also pushes for a reconciliation of the Bible and the Qur'an. "I do, however, think it is quite possible that there is an 'original Islam' in the Qur'an, an Islam that has been lost through the misinterpretation of what became the 'orthodox' versions, and that this may well be in closer (if not complete) harmony with biblical truth" (Higgins 2007, 40). Higgins essentially repeats Goldsack's argument that a proto-Islamic message existed that was compatible with the Bible, but was later hijacked by the *Mufasiroon* (Qur'anic commentators). Finally, Fouad Accad suggests that the Qur'an is "pro-Christ" and "pro-Bible" (1997, 10).

To this point, only White is actually promoting Unitarianism. Goldsack, Parrinder, Accad, and Higgins argue for theological reconciliation based on naïve re-interpretation of the Qur'an and Islam that hitherto lacks hermeneutic gravitas. The "U" line can graphically represent their position as they try to bend the Islamic Christology upward:

Christian Missionary Efforts toward a Reconciled Christology

Biblical Christology: Jesus as Divine Savior

B

Bending the biblical Christology down (Brown via Muslim compliant Bibles, Travis via 'Isa as prophet portrayal)

D

U

Bending the Qur'anic Christology up (Goldsack, Parrinder, Greeson, Accad, and Higgins)

Q

Qur'anic Christology: Jesus as Prophet Only
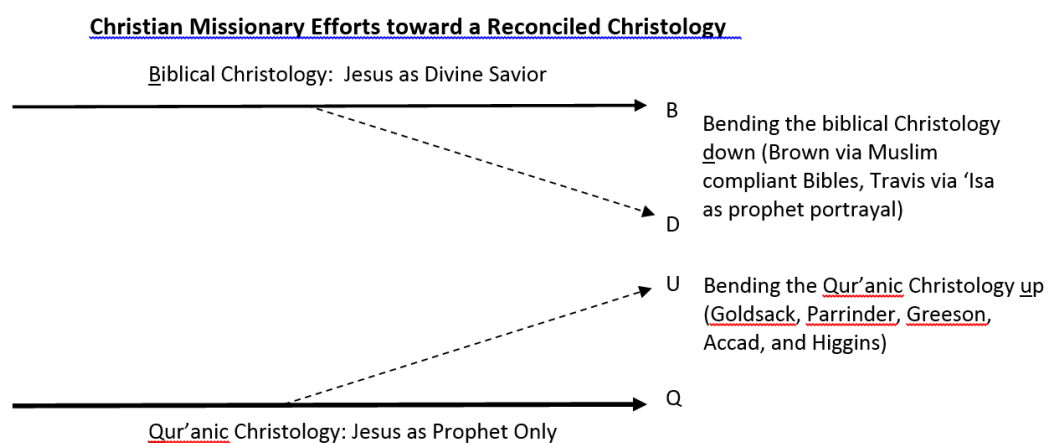
Figure 4.1. Christian missionary efforts toward a reconciled Christology

While using the "U" line strategy of re-interpreting the Qur'an is hermeneutically unsound, even more dangerous is the "D" line attempts to bend the biblical Christology downward. The Christian quest for the Christological reconciliation required by Retentionism indeed moves Western missiology away from biblical orthodoxy. Rick Brown plays a major role in this movement by downplaying the importance of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. He argues in "What Must One Believe about Jesus for Salvation?" that it is necessary to neither believe in nor understand the divinity of Christ for salvation:

> There is no verse that says one must understand the divinity of Jesus to be saved … These doctrines about the deity of Jesus and his substitutionary punishment are wonderful parts of the Good News, and it is worthwhile discussing them with seekers, as Paul demonstrated in Romans. But the overwhelming Biblical witness is that although these doctrines are important for the disciple to understand, an understanding of them is not required for salvation. If we tell people that they cannot be saved until they know and have been convinced of these additional doctrines, then we are creating obstacles for them. (Brown 2000, 14-15)

Though Brown's confounding of the words "believe, "know," and "understand" in the article title and quote might be confusing to some, a much more crucial issue is at stake. Stated simply, it is unclear how a Muslim, raised to believe that Jesus is specifically not God, can be saved without a significant change in that belief. Given his theological and missiological position, it is understandable that Brown would lead an international movement to remove the obstacles that he feels are posed by using direct translations of the divine title "Son of God" in Muslim Idiom Bible translations. Instead, he prefers replacing them with alternate terminology.

John Travis moves away from a biblical Christology by a strategic diminishing of Jesus Christ. Roger Dixon, a missionary to Indonesia, reports:

> In a meeting with three missionaries in March 2006, 'John Travis' admitted to my wife and me that they deliberately changed the wording in the Gospel of John so

that Muslims would want to read it. And all of the missionaries present agreed that change was contrary to the intent of John's gospel. This confirmed for us that there was a conspiracy of sorts to shift (for however long) the identity of Jesus from his role as the second person of the trinity to one of an outstanding prophet. (2012, 121)

Travis, like Brown, felt it was necessary to alter the Bible to pique Muslim interest. This practice lends credence to age-old Muslim allegations that sinister Christians have tampered with the Bible. Furthermore, they departed from the starting point of the biblical, Divine Jesus, and moved toward the Islamic Jesus, who is merely a prophet. This Islamic Jesus is not empowered to save souls. Even as Jesus Movements are now becoming a synonym for Insider Movements, the question begs whether these initiatives are promoting movement toward the biblical Jesus or the Qur'anic Jesus. If it is the latter, the message will not be able to save Muslims, since the Qur'anic Jesus is merely a prophet who neither died on the cross nor rose from the dead.

Muslim Initiatives

Conciliatory statements from Muslim scholars are harder to find. In fact, the Palestinian scholar and *imam* who is an interviewee in the field research component of this dissertation (with the identifier U5) responded to the question of whether there is any verse in the Qur'an that could be interpreted to support the divinity of Jesus. "There is absolutely no verse like this. You will never find a Muslim scholar who believes there is anything in the Qur'an that supports the divinity of Jesus" (U5 2013). If Muslim scholars exist that lean toward a divine Christology, Insider advocates would do well to highlight their writings. More likely, a Muslim scholar who came to believe in the divinity of Jesus would soon be considered an ex-Muslim scholar by the *umma*.

Muslim precedence for rejecting compromise on Christology stems from a meeting between the Arabian Christians of Najran and Muhammad himself in AD 632. *Surat al-Imran* (3) gives the skeleton of this meeting, with Muslim commentators Muqatil, Ibn Sa'd, and Ibn Ishaq providing further details (see Nickel 2006). The Najrani Christians invited Muhammad to accept Christ as Lord, highlighting the miracle working power of Jesus (3:49). They pledged, in return, their political allegiance to him if he would do so. Muhammad replied that Jesus is no more divine than Adam, who was created by the word of Allah without the agency of a human father (3:59). When they reached no theological compromise, Muhammad proceeded to "invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars" (3:61).

Kevin Greeson, in his evangelistic "Camel Tracks: Discover the Camel's Secret" gospel tract, ironically uses the same passage in *Sura* 3, especially verses 45-49, to attempt to bring Muslims the gospel message (Greeson n.d.). However, the contextual backdrop is Muhammad's unequivocal rejection of Christ as Lord and his ultimate cursing of the Najrani Christians. Greeson then invites Muslims to become "Pakka Muslims," with the word "Pakka" meaning "complete" (n.d., 3-4, 17-18). Greeson, thereby, encourages retention of Muslim identity.

This "Camel Tracks" evangelistic tool also strongly endorses the Qur'an as Greeson writes in the introduction, "I am grateful to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, Islamic Foundation, and others who are translating the Arabic Koran into all languages of the world. I feel blessed as I read the Koran in my mother tongue" (n.d., 1). Greeson continues, "The content of this tract comes from years of listening to Bangladeshi Muslim Church Planters." Finally, he encourages his Muslim readers: "Do not miss out

on Allah's blessings … Please find a Koran translated into your language and together let's find a treasure that will change your life" (n.d., 2).

Moving again to Islamic initiatives, Mahmoud Ayoub, a professor of Islamic Studies at Temple University in Philadelphia, merely offers a few Christological olive branches to Christians. He states, "As for the theological points, such as the question of revelation, the mystery of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the prophethood of Muhammad, these are points that need much patience and prayer" (2007, 15). Ayoub adds, "The Qur'an, far more than Muslims have ever done, accepts the pluralism of religions and affirms the unity of faith" (2007, 21). Again, he notes in a chapter specifically on "Christological Issues," "I do not advocate that we accept the theology of one tradition and reject that of the other" (2007, 114). Ayoub obviously writes in a Western context among those who are trying to present a tolerant view of Islam. Interestingly, in Rick Brown's 2007 piece, "Biblical Muslims," he only cites one Muslim author—Mahmoud Ayoub.

Nonetheless, Ayoub qualifies his statement, knowing his co-religionists will brand him a heretic if he does not, by stating, "Muslims could not, in the Qur'an or later, understand or accept the idea that God could reveal himself in a human person, that is to say, Jesus Christ" (2007, 12). Throughout, Ayoub demonstrates tactical ambivalence. He makes seemingly contradictory statements, much as the prophet of Islam did himself. This ambivalence creates gray areas from which Muslim apologists can lean on Christians' tendency to give the benefit of the doubt. Based upon this type of writing Christian missionaries have also extended their arms of Christological reconciliation toward Muslims. From the Muslim side, it may be considered a form of *taqiyya*

(deception or dissimulation), which indeed baits conciliatory-minded Christians into Christological heresy. Nevertheless, Ayoub holds strongly to the Islamic position of rejecting the divine incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The Mirage: Sufi Attempts to Offer a Mystical Islamic Jesus

There are two main sources of Muslim admiration for Jesus. First, Muslims must believe in all prophets, of which Jesus is one. Second, Sufi traditions created an intriguing and sublime portrait of Jesus Christ. Sufis attempted to inject spirituality into an often rigid, sterile Islamic monotheism. As such, they sought a personal relationship with God that doctrinal Islam forbids, since Allah is impersonal and unknowable. This idea of the desire to have a connection with God seems to offer promise for a contextualized gospel presentation, especially when the same Sufic faith tradition has an appreciable veneration of Jesus.

Khalidi summarizes, "By the time of Ghazali [died AD 1111] ... Jesus was enshrined in Sufi sensibility as the prophet of the heart par excellence" (2003, 42). He also describes Jesus as the "patron saint of Muslim asceticism" (Khalidi 2003, 34). Therefore, the Qur'anic Jesus serves not only the same forerunning function as the biblical John the Baptist, He even fulfills the picture of the ascetic John. While Muhammad carries the Davidic traits of passion, warfare, and governance, the Islamic Jesus fulfills the biblical picture of the monk-like John the Baptist, known in the Qur'an as *Yahya*.

While this Sufic portrait of Jesus may increase hopes of Christian missionaries to find a reconciled Christ, it remains necessary to emphasize that the Muslim Jesus, including the Sufi Muslim Jesus, is always and forever cast into a role of a prophet who

serves the Islamic theological agenda. The Bosnian Muslim theologian Smail Baliç notes that Qur'anic prophets outside of Muhammad "have no direct function in the active faith of Muslims" (1979, 3). This reality snuffs out the hope of Muslims entering into a personal relationship with the Islamic Jesus. Therefore, the Sufic Jesus is merely a mirage for those hoping to bend the "U" line up in the direction of the biblical Christology "B" line. Upon closer inspection, the Sufic Jesus is in reality the Islamic Jesus.

Obstacles to a Reconciled Christology

The quest by Retentionists to find Muslim scholars who embrace a biblical Christology is an earnest one that has amounted to searching for a needle in a haystack. Cumming offers the pseudonym *hafiz* (one who has memorized the Qur'an) "Ibrahim." Yet, an actual Muslim scholar who writes on paper and ink is much harder to find. In fact, Muslim scholarship is uniformly against a reconciled Christology. Baliç states, "Islam rules out any incursion of the human into the sphere of the divine … Islam would dispel from the believer's mind any thought of a human share in the divine uniqueness" (1979, 1). Baliç, like Ayoub, rules out the possibility of a reconciled Christology.

Tawhid as a Barrier to a Reconciled Christology

The Muslim doctrine of Divine Unity is known as *Tawhid.* Though *tawhid* is translated "unity," the meaning is stronger than can be expressed in one English word. In the preface to the English translation of Muhammad Abduh's classic work *Risalat at-Tauhid* (*Theology of Unity*) (1895), translators Ishaq Musa'ad and Kenneth Cragg are instructive "… it must be remembered that *Tauhid* is a causative and intensive noun and never means 'unity,' still less 'unitariness,' as an abstract state. It is aggressive, so to speak, antiseptic: it means 'unity' intolerant of all pluralism, in the ardent subjugation of

all that flouts or doubts it" (1966, 12). Musa'ad and Cragg assess that *tawhid* is an Islamic antiseptic to the Christian doctrine of Incarnation. Incarnation and *tawhid*, as suggested by Baliç, are irreconcilable and mutually exclusive theological constructs. Parsons likewise notes that the Islamic view that Allah is intangible, bounded, and extrinsic. Therefore, the God of Islam cannot enter space and time as Christ did (2005). Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (died AD 1350), disciple of the celebrated imam Ibn Taymiyyah, composed a verbal poetic joust, "O Christ Worshippers," which asks who was running the universe when God was visiting the earth (Jawziyyah, n.d.)

The unpardonable sin in Islam is *shirk*, associating partners with Allah. *Sura* 4:116 clearly expresses this doctrine, "God forgiveth not (The sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with God, Hath strayed far, far away (from the right)." This verse strongly condemns any deviation from *tawhid* as the singular unpardonable sin in Islam. As such, the Qur'an rebukes the Christian concepts of divine Incarnation and plurality within the godhead.

The Hermeneutical Problem with Superimposing Biblical
Connotations onto Qur'anic Terms

Christians have attempted to offer a reconciled Christology, which bridges gaps between the Bible and the Qur'an. It is necessary, however, for Christians to superimpose biblical connotations onto Qur'anic words in order to get close enough to bridge the divide between *tawhid* and Incarnation. *Sura* 4:171 appears to have potential for contextualizing the gospel to Muslims, since it calls Jesus "Christ" (Arabic, *Masih*), "his word" (*kalimatuhu*) and a "spirit from him" (*ruhun minhu*):

> O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of God aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of God, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in God and His apostles. Say not 'Trinity': desist: it will be better for you: for God is one God: Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son.

The obvious context of this verse is to promote Divine Unity, reject Trinitarianism, and strip Christ of His glory, Lordship and eternal Sonship. The quest to find a Divine Jesus in this verse must admittedly occur against the grain of its context. Nevertheless, this verse is quoted frequently in support of a reconciled Christology. Therefore, this study will examine the Islamic usage of Christ, Holy Spirit, and Word.

Regarding Jesus' formative Qur'anic title of Messiah, there is no Old Testament messianic foreshadowing in the Qur'an, especially with promises that the Messiah would be "mighty God" (Isa. 9:6). "Messiah," (Arabic, *Masih*) has virtually no meaning to the average Muslim. It is simply Jesus' last name, a title devoid of any connotation.

Jesus' Qur'anic descriptor in 4:171 as "a spirit from him," with God as the reference point, also seems to hold potential for supporting Jesus' divinity. However, Islam has an underdeveloped pneumatology, with the question of the identity of the Holy Spirit not emphasized in Islam. A common explanation is that the Holy Spirit is in fact Gabriel, the angel in Islam who brings down revelation.

This conclusion comes from a comparison of two Qur'anic verses. *Sura* 16:102 states, "Say, the Holy Spirit has brought the revelation from thy Lord in Truth, in order to strengthen those who believe, and as a Guide and Glad Tidings to Muslims." *Sura* 2:97 states, "Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel - for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by God's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe." The congruity of language yields that the Holy Spirit is Gabriel,

who, like Jesus, is a minister of Islam. Therefore, the wider Qur'anic context behind 4:171 could only equate Jesus with Gabriel, not with God. Moreover, Shi'ites use "Ruhollah" (literally, "Spirit of God") as a boy's name, as in Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. These Muslims are no more likely to find "Spirit of God" as a designation of divinity than are Spanish Catholics to view as divine their sons whom they name "Jesus." Jesus is an important figure in Islam, but not a central one. In no way does his Islamic role mirror His biblical position as the focal point of all prophecy, sacrifice, worship, and eventual crowning.

Regarding the "Word" exegesis of 4:171, some Christians have interpreted this as a Qur'anic reference to the Divine Logos. Muslims are aware of these Christian efforts to superimpose biblical meanings onto Qur'anic words. They are responding to them. The Islamic Foundation of the UK translates *kalima* as "command" with the following (obviously polemical) explanation:

> What is meant by sending the 'command' to Mary is that God ordered Mary's womb to become impregnated without coming into contact with sperm. In the beginning the Christians were told that this was the secret of the fatherless birth of Jesus. Later on, under the misleading influence of Greek philosophy, they equated this with the 'Logos,' which was subsequently interpreted as the Divine attribute of speech. The next step in this connection was the development of the notion that this Divine attribute entered into the womb of Mary and assumed the physical form of Jesus. Thus there developed among the Christians the false doctrine of the godhead of Jesus, and the false notion that out of His attributes God caused that of speech to appear in the form of Jesus. (Islamic Foundation of the UK 2013)

In another attempt to counter the "Jesus as Word" comparison in 4:171, the Ahmadiyya sectarian commentator Maulana Ali (2002) translates *kalima* as "prophecy."

Greeson also attempts to superimpose a biblical interpretation of "Word" onto *Sura* 3:45. He attempts to use this as a gospel bridge, to help his readers become "Pakka (Complete) Muslims. Greeson, thereby, argues for Retentionism. "The Koran makes it

clear, 'Isa is the Word (Kalim) and Spirit (Ruh) of Allah. No other person or prophet carries these titles" (Greeson n.d., 6). Greeson fails to mention the context of this passage from *Surat al-Imran* occurs when Muhammad specifically rejects the invitation of the Najrani Christians to receive Jesus Christ as the Divine Savior.

Despite Greeson's claims, a more accurate interpretation of the Qur'an must yield the conclusion that Jesus merely speaks the word of Allah by the will of Allah. Even the accommodating Mahmoud Ayoub cannot accept the idea of the divinely incarnated Word: "Islam would not go on to say, 'And the Word was God.' God transcends his revelation" (2007, 12). Zakir Naik of the Islamic Research Foundation tackles *Sura* 3:45. He argues that Jesus is a word from God, not the word of God. He notes that this title of the word is not exclusive to Jesus, but that John the Baptist is also connected to the same referential title of *kalima* in 3:39 (see Naik 2009). In Islam, the "word" represents the message of *tawhid* spoken by all prophets, none of whom are divine.

In proper biblical hermeneutics, the interpretation must be consistent with the specific reference, the particular book, and the whole Bible. To the extent this is possible, the Qur'an deserves similar treatment. Therefore, it is misleading scholarship to render a specific interpretation of "word" that is inconsistent with the fuller Qur'anic context. In any case, the rendering of "word" in the Qur'an as Divine Logos is not a solid interpretation within the particular passages of 3:45 and 4:171. The "Jesus as Word" issue is just one instance where re-assigning or superimposing biblical content onto Qur'anic terms will not only cause confusion to those Muslims potentially persuaded by this, but will also insult the intelligence of informed Muslims, and thereby cause unnecessary offense.

The Troubling Analogy: Islamizing Biblical Texts

Kevin Higgins steers insider movements toward a "radical re-interpretation of the Qur'an, Muhammad, the hajj and the shahadah, in the light of Christ and his Word" (2007, 38). The Qur'an and Muhammad come six centuries after Christ. Therefore, it seems non-sequitur to re-interpret these Islamic institutions as somehow fulfilled by the coming of Christ.

The inverse of Higgins' radical re-interpretation is illustrative when considering efforts by Muslim scholars to find "Muhammad in the Bible" by superimposing Qur'anic meanings onto biblical names and terms. Abdul Ahad Dawud claims that many Old Testament prophecies refer not to Christ but to Muhammad (1993). He stretches to link Muhammad to the Shiloh prophecy of Genesis 49 (1993, 49). He also claims that the Arabic *sufi* is somehow related to the Greek "Sophia" (wisdom) without any linguistic justification (1993, 47). Jamal Badawi, of the Islamic Information Institute in Canada, claims in his "Muhammad in the Bible" teaching that the *Baca* of Psalm 84:6 is an alternate rendering of "Mecca" and therefore predictive of Muhammad (Badawi 2013). Ahmed Deedat long claimed that Muhammad was the Comforter of John's Gospel by morphing the Greek word *Paraklete* (see Deedat 1991). These interpretations are, however, individually faulty, and go against the entire flow of the Old and New Testaments.

Meta-Narrative Issue

If Jesus is God and is the focal point of all Scripture and prophecy, then there is no room left for Muhammad. To feature Muhammad as its lead actor, Islam must reduce the role of Jesus to a prophet who is a supporting actor for Muhammad. The Sunni

Muslim author Charis Waddy explains the exalted position of Muhammad in *The Muslim Mind*, "The Prophet Muhammad fulfilled the true task of Man, the purpose of humanity, and so he is also called 'the perfect human' (*al-insanu-'l-kamil*)" (1976, 36). Abul Ala Mawdudi describes the birth of Muhammad under the section heading, "The Saviour is Born" (1932, 41). Though the perfection or sinlessness of Muhammad is debatable, even according to the Qur'an, the place the Prophet holds in Muslim hearts and minds and in the Islamic theological landscape is not. As Samuel Zwemer argues, "The sin and guilt of the Muslim world is that they give Christ's glory to another, and for all practical purposes Mohammed himself is the Muslim Christ" (2002, 20).

Given Jesus' Islamic role as a mortal prophet and herald of Muhammad, any movement toward a reconciled Christology on the part of Christians will require them to diminish the role, essence, and identity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Conversely, were Muslims to move in the direction of a biblical Christology it would require them to replace Muhammad with Jesus as the subject of their attention and affection. This replacement would essentially mean the end of Islam, since the Qur'an is God's revelation to the world through Muhammad and the *hadith* sayings are Muhammad's authoritative words to the world.

<p align="center">Conclusion: A Different Jesus</p>

A thorough examination of Christian and Islamic scriptures yields the conclusion that the Jesus described in these respective religions are different identities. There is no room in the Qur'an, *hadith*, or Islamic theology for God to enter space and time as a man, die on the cross for the sins of humanity, then rise from the dead. Abd al-Fadi gives the reasoning:

> By the end of Muhammad's period in Medina the verses had become harsh, being hostile to Christians and entirely rejecting the deity of Christ. No doubt the reason was purely doctrinal because Muhammad saw, in the dogma of the Trinity, that which conflicts with the unity of God which Islam proclaims and on which its message is based. (2003, 4)

The Incarnation is the Christian distinctive, while *tawhid*—the absolute unity and non-tangibility of Allah—is the Islamic distinctive. If Muslims were to accept the Incarnation, as required for a biblical Christology, *tawhid* would be undermined and the entire Islamic theological system would collapse.

While Christian scholars seem quick to build a bridge toward a reconciled Christology, Muslims do not appear to be building from their side. Islamic scholar Fazlur Rahman dismisses as "not at all convincing" the claims of Christians who say Muhammad may not have rejected "a more sophisticated or spiritualized" Christ (1979, 26). The sympathetic Ayoub even rejects the idea of divine incarnation.

In conclusion, Muhammad had ample opportunity to correct any alleged heretical Christology with which he may have been confronted by refreshing a biblical Christology. He failed to do so. Instead, he reduced Jesus Christ to his own personal forerunner in the role of John the Baptist. Moreover, the Islamic distinctive of *tawhid* makes the biblical and Islamic Christologies mutually exclusive. If Muslims were to move toward a biblical Christology, they would necessarily need to deny *tawhid*, which is the cornerstone of the Islamic faith. Baliç's final assessment on the potential for a reconciled Christology rings true, "the chasm seems to be unbridgeable" (1979, 1). The conclusion that the biblical and Qur'anic portrayals of Jesus Christ are mutually exclusive identities holds seismic implications for missiology. One's relationship with Christ is paramount in discipleship and the development of spiritual identity. MBDLJs encounter a different Jesus, who is Lord and Savior, than the Islamic prophet Jesus. The

field research for RQ4 (chapter seven) will examine how MBDLJs navigated the Christological question, and how that navigation shaped their identity and spiritual allegiance.

The refusal of Retentionists to promote a mutually exclusive Christology prompts a final assessment. When Higgins claims, "I know of no critic of insider movements who questions whether Muslims are being saved—or can be saved—as 'insiders,'" he attempts to gloss over the colossal problem Retentionists have created (2007, 34). For when Retentionists move in the direction of a reconciled Christology—given the reality that Muslims are not moving toward them—they actually introduce an Islamized Jesus who is shorn of His saving power. The damage occurs whether or not Retentionists fully realize it or intend it. As such, Retentionists quickly reach, and cross, the line marking historic, biblical, Christian orthodoxy, regardless of whether their ministerial credentials are with organizations that maintain orthodox, written statements of faith.

Finally, the movement of Retentionists toward a reconciled Christology provides Muslim apologists with the greatest gift they could have ever asked for—evangelical missionaries ultimately presenting an Islamized Jesus who can only promote Muhammad and Islam. Western liberal Christian scholars have long since disavowed the divinity of Christ, His virgin birth, and His miracles. Muslim scholars, such as 'Ata ur-Rahim, frequently cite these liberal theologians in their attacks on the Bible and Christian doctrine (1977, 14-15). Evangelicals on the other hand have carefully safeguarded these biblical truths about Christ, realizing that the entire biblical faith rests on them. The movement of some evangelicals toward a Christology the Muslim community can accept—whether through experiments in Bible translation or theological reconciliation of

the Qur'an and Bible—presents an ominous departure from their historical position. Perhaps it is merely a symptom of the liberalizing of Evangelicalism.

Islamic Identity Markers

A study of Muslim identity by necessity requires an examination of the definition of the term Muslim, according to Islam. Islamic input on this key question has also been sorely lacking in the preparation of missional strategy to Muslims. Islam has a view of what constitutes its adherents and non-adherents. With minimal controversy, this position remained articulated over many centuries, from its founding documents to its modern jurists. Contemporary Muslims also have their subjective views of the same subject. The field research in RQ3 and RQ4 will address the subjective views of Muslim-born persons about Islamic identity. RQ2 will review Islamic sources on the subject.

Shahada: Confession of Faith as Entry Point into Islam

A non-Muslim who wants to become a Muslim must declare the *shahada* sincerely, not under compulsion. The *shahada* literally means bearing witness and is comprised of a two-part formula which translates as, "there is no God but Allah; Muhammad is the apostle of God." This formula is frequently printed and recited. For example, the *shahada* is written in a flourished style on the flag of Saudi Arabia. In its confessional form, the clause "I bear witness that" (*ash-hadu an*) is added to each part of the *shahada*.

An analysis of *shahada* indicates that the point of entry into Islam is a theological point of entry. It is a statement of belief, *iman*. All subsequent points of Islamic practice, commanded or preferred, including dress, diet, and manners are indeed subsequent to

stating *shahada*. Christians familiar with decisional regeneration paradigms understand conversion into Islam.

Any person born to Muslim parents is considered a Muslim. It is customary for Muslim parents to whisper the Islamic confession of faith into the ear of the newborn infant. Islam teaches a pre-existence of all human souls, which are not marred by original sin but are created in *fitra* (*Sura* 30:30), which is an original state of purity. As such, the first words into the baby's ears re-awaken this consciousness of the state of virtuous purity. At that point, the teachings of Islam begin to be written on the slate of a person's life. This inculcation from birth creates a strong identity bond with the religion of one's ancestors.

The *shahada* is recited individually and in its confessional form in the first person singular. The creed welds the individual believer into the Muslim community in a cement-like bond. Mawdudi comments on "there is no God but Allah," "This beautiful phrase is the bedrock of Islam, its foundation and its essence … The believers in it become one single community and those who do not believe in it form the opposite community" (1932, 65). Mawdudi, thereby, argues that the Muslim community has the right to define itself, and it has done so (1932).

The role of *shahada* in individual and collective Muslim identity is evidenced five times a day as Muslims are called to prayer. The *mu'adhin* who calls Muslims to the mosque for corporate worship uses the individual, first person, confessional form of the *shahada* formula in this call to prayer, or *adhan.* The mosque itself is either called *masjid* (the place of prostration) or *jami'* (congregation). Friday, in Arabic countries, Iran, and other Muslim countries, is known as (*Yawm) Juma'*, or the (Day of) Congregation. As

such, worshippers are called to corporate worship through a *shahada* confession rendered in the first person singular, thus tying together individual and collective Muslim identity. Logic might dictate the use of a first person plural form of *shahada* by the *mu'adhin* (We bear witness that there is no god but Allah; we bear witness that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah). The *shahada*, however, is not recited in plural form. Moreover, once the Muslim worshippers arrive inside the mosque, a form of the *adhan*, called *iqama*, is recited corporately to commence prayers. *Iqama* is a derivation of *shahada* and also affirms Muhammad as prophet. Therefore, it is impossible to participate in corporate Islamic worship without publicly affirming the prophethood of Muhammad, who stated that Jesus Christ is neither Lord, God, nor Savior.

Muslim identity, therefore, is confessionally-appropriated, through a theological statement that affirms the God of Islam and its prophet. Muslim scholar Caesar Farah states, "By uttering the first part of the shahadah one becomes a *muslim*, submitter to God, but when one pronounces the second part of the same, he becomes a *Muslim*, an adherent to the religion of Islam" (1968, 103). Farah's explanation would render void Higgins' argument for a wider usage of the word Muslim. Higgins' idea of considering someone "a Muslim who is submitted to God through his word, Isa" represents a dramatic innovation that contrasts with the historical understanding of the term Muslim by Muslims as they identify their co-religionists.

Nevertheless, Farah's explanation underscores why Retentionists who have encouraged MBDLJs to remain inside the Muslim religious community must satisfy the requirement of the affirmation of the prophetic office of Muhammad. In particular, Kraft and Accad worked hard to rehabilitate the image of Muhammad. Goldsack and Parrinder

strove for a reconciled Christology such that Muhammad's Christological pronouncements are considered true rather than false.

The *shahada* also forges a criticism-proof shield around Muhammad and the Qur'an. Since the name of the prophet is included in the two-part confession, it is inconsistent with genuine Islamic faith to utter anything considered doubtful of the prophet. Since Islam has theological doors of entry and exit, Muslims are at much greater risk if they deviate from Islamic faith by aberrant confession than if they deviate from prescribed Islamic behavior. According to the Islamic system of salvation by works, an accumulation of good deeds can overcome wayward deeds.

Georges Houssney observes, "The *Shahada* has a powerful impact on Muslims throughout their lives" (2010, 53). Muslims who want to test the religious identity of a person ask them to declare *shahada*. Mark Durie encourages MBDLJs to renounce the power of the *shahada*—a breaking of the covenant of the authority of Muhammad and the Qur'an in one's life (2010). The dynamics at work in this section reflect the missiological challenge at hand: Muslims need freedom from a negative theological/spiritual covenant—yet it is this same theological confession that binds them to their community.

<div align="center">

Kufr (Unbelief)

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The contrast to *iman*, as indicated by *shahada*, occurs in *kufr*. *Kufr* is the great sin of non-Muslims who reject the message of Islam. According to the *Encyclopedia of Islam, kufr* is "that which covers the truth … Disbelieving in the Qur'an or in any of the tenets of the Muslim religion … Infidelity … Blasphemy" (Hughes 1994, 281). *Kufr* is associated with blasphemy, which is virtually a synonym for apostasy in Islam. The

disbeliever is a *kafir*, one of the despised *kafiroon* (infidels). The Arabic term *ghair-Muslim*, introduced as a literal equivalent of non-Muslim, is not of Qur'anic origin. Mawdudi amplifies the meaning of *kafir*. "The man who denies God is called *Kafir* because he conceals *by his disbelief* what is inherent in his nature and embalmed in his own soul—for, indeed, his nature is instinctively imbued with 'Islam'" (Mawdudi 1932, 4-5). The famous *Sura Kafiroon* from the Early Meccan Period indicts the *kafiroon* for their stubborn disbelief (109).

Islam, like Christianity, has faced innumerable theological challenges, heresies, and schisms. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali is perhaps the most significant Islamic theologian between the first Islamic century and the last, contributing approximately seventy works on theology, philosophy, and jurisprudence. Al-Ghazali brought Sufism into the Islamic mainstream. This scholar weighed in on the question germane to this dissertation: what makes a person a Muslim, or a non-Muslim? This was relevant in the sectarian medieval Islamic context in which heterodox Mu'tazilites contended that the Qur'an was created and therefore not eternal. Meanwhile, Sufis sought to bring mysticism and experientialism into Islam.

In this context, al-Ghazali penned the classic *Faysal al-Tafriqa Bayna al-Islam wa al-Zandaqa* (The Decisive Criterion for Distinguishing Islam from Masked Infidelity). The title indicates the tight theological boundaries around Islam, which separate Muslims from non-Muslims. Translator Sherman Jackson renders the one Arabic word *tafriqa* with two words "decisive" and "distinguishing," though it also could be rendered "discrimination" (2002, 83; see also www.dicts.info). The Arabic roots f-r-q

yields the word *fariq,* which survives as the modern Arabic standard root word for team. Essentially, al-Ghazali is describing who is on the Muslim team and who is not.

Though al-Ghazali was more tolerant than many Muslim scholars, he gives the essential ingredient of *kufr* as disbelieving in any revelation given by Muhammad. This imam highlights the expulsive nature of Islam by condemning to death those who reject Muhammad. Muhammad Khalil and Mucahit Bilici note in *Faysal al-Tafriqa*, al-Ghazali holds out the possibility of some divine mercy on Judgment Day extended to those who never heard of Muhammad, or only heard a polemic against him (2007, 112). Nevertheless, al-Ghazali, as an honest and orthodox Muslim, cannot help but specify the harsh nature of Islam. Specifically, regarding Christians and Jews, al-Ghazali writes:

> "Unbelief (*kufr*)" is to deem anything the Prophet brought to be a lie. And "faith (*iman*)" is to deem everything he brought to be true. Thus, the Jew and the Christian are Unbelievers because they deny the truthfulness of the Prophet. Deists are all the more Unbelievers because, in addition to our messenger, they reject all the messengers. Atheists (*dahriyun*) are even more so Unbelievers because, in addition to our messengers who were sent to us, they reject the very God who sends the prophets altogether.
> Now all of this is based on the fact that "Unbelief" is a legal designation (*hukm shar'i*), like slavery and freedom, its implication being the licitness of shedding the blood of one (so designated) and passing a judgement upon him to the effect that he will dwell in Hellfire forever. And since this is a legal designation, it can only be known on the basis of an explicit text from scripture (*nass*) or an analogy (*qiyas*) drawn from an explicit text. Now, there are explicit texts regarding the (status of) Jews and Christians. Deists, Dualists, Crypto-infidels (*al-zanadiqas zindiq*), and Atheists are assigned to the same status on *a fortiori* grounds. And all of these parties are associationists (*mushrikun*) inasmuch as all of them deem one or more of the prophets to be a liar. Hence, every Unbeliever deems one or more of the prophets to be a liar. And every one who deems one or more of the prophets to be a liar is an Unbeliever. (al-Ghazali 2002, 92)

The impact of this teaching on Islamic law and society, and Muslim identity in particular, cannot be overstated. Though Christians are above Atheists on the Islamic totem pole, they are still *kafiroon* since they have not believed in Muhammad. Christians

are *mushrikoon* (associationists, derived from the word *shirk*) because they have associated Christ with the Divine. As al-Ghazali states, people who hold that Jesus is God exhibit disbelief in Muhammad even as they associate a partner (*shirk*) with Allah. As such, they are *kafiroon* who are expulsed from the Muslim community, and worthy of death and hell.

Writing two centuries after al-Ghazali, Ibn Manzur penned the classic twenty-volume Arabic dictionary, *Lisan al-Arab* (*The Arab Tongue*), in AD 1290. Ibn Manzur follows al-Ghazali's line of thinking that Islam requires complete affirmation of the prophetic veracity of Muhammad, "Al-Islam means a demonstration of obedience to everything that the ambassador of Allah reveals so that his blood will not be shed" (Manzur 1990, 294).

There is nothing cultural or anthropological about this discussion of Muslim identity; it comes down solely to beliefs. Therefore, missionaries who sought strategies for rapid church growth in the Muslim world needed to uphold a positive view of Muhammad. Kraft, Higgins, Accad, and Cumming understand correctly that Retentionism depends on an enhanced view of Muhammad.

Kufr is conferred on groups and individuals by the *'ulama* (Islamic clergy) based on Islamic law and precedent. Whether the group in question considers itself Muslim is irrelevant. The Ahmadiyya (also known as Qadiani) number several million adherents in Pakistan. They consider themselves Muslim. They believe in the Qur'an and Muhammad. Yet, they also believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a bona fide prophet (or divinely authorized religious reformer), who lived from 1835-1908. The Qur'an teaches (33:40) that Muhammad is last of the prophets, *khatam al-nabi'yeen* (the seal of the prophets).

The Islamic community has long since established that acceptance of any prophet after Muhammad is *kufr*. The Second Amendment of the 1974 Constitution of Pakistan specifically states that the Ahmadiyya are not Muslims because they have accepted a prophet or "religious reformer" after Muhammad (www.Pakistani.org 1974).

The case of the Ahmadiyya illustrates that the Muslim community responds to faith deviation with expulsion. Muslim communities typically do not expel people for failing to perform their religious duties. They expel them for what they come to believe, or cease to believe. Though Insider Movement Muslims may consider themselves Muslim, and aspire to retain Muslim identity, there is no real potential for any movement to remain within the Muslim community that believes God has come in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

Though he is not likely to find ultimate acceptance by the *umma*, Higgins nevertheless seeks a "radical re-interpretation" of Islam, a re-discovery of a purer form of Islam closer to the Bible:

> I do, however, believe that authentic Jesus movements within Islam will bring transformation (and indeed reform) in the light of God's Word and Spirit as applied from the inside. Views concerning Muhammad, the place of the Qur'an, the value of the *salat,* the meaning of the word "Muslim," the nature of Jesus, the character of Allah, and many other elements of Islamic faith and life will change within and through such movements to Jesus. There will be a radical re-interpretation of the Qur'an, Muhammad, the hajj, and the *shahadah.* (2007, 38)

Higgins, therefore, becomes comparable to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who sought to create a renewal movement within Islam. If the Muslim community expelled the Ahmadiyya, who rigorously attest to their faith in Muhammad and the Qur'an, it is unlikely Muslims will accept within their community those who actually believe Jesus Christ is Lord and God, which is an anathema to Islamic theology. According to Islamic law and theology, Christ-worshippers are guilty of *kufr*. Shi'ites have labeled Christians *kafir zami* by

combining the words for disbeliever with second-class protected religious minorities (Farsi, *zami,* Arabic, *dhimmi*) (Human Rights Watch 1997).

Expansion of the *Takfiri* Doctrine

Imputing *kafir* status upon another is known as *takfir*. Muslims were prone to fighting with each other over religious differences ever since the Sunni-Shi'a split after the death of Muhammad. Al-Ghazali urged restraint in conferring *takfir*, "As for the Advice, it is that you restrain your tongue, to the best of your ability, from indicting the people who face Mecca (on charges of Unbelief) as long as they say, 'There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God,' without categorically denying this" (2002, 112).

For al-Ghazali, *kufr* was disbelief in the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad. He maintains such respect and tolerance for all who believed in Muhammad and the Qur'an that he went so far as to rule: "If a person knows that another person believes that everything the Prophet brought is true and despite this he brands the latter an Unbeliever, he himself becomes an Unbeliever" (2002, 132). Nevertheless, this great voice of Medieval Islam indicts Christians as both *mushrikoon* and *kafiroon*. He affirms the punishment for their *kufr*: "Unbelief is a legal designation (*hukm shar'i*) that refers to 1) a person's loss of property rights; 2) the licitness of shedding his blood; 3) and his dwelling in the Hellfire forever" (2002, 115). Al-Ghazali's teaching, moderate as it has been considered, kept in good graces any person or group who maintained faith in the prophethood of Muhammad.

This affirmation of Muhammad, as reflected in the *shahada*, is the key requirement of remaining in good standing with the Muslim community. Muslims must

silence any criticism or disbelief expressed toward Muhammad since the entire Islamic theological edifice rests solely on Muhammad, his Qur'an, and his traditional sayings, the *hadith*. Charles Kraft, and later Higgins, necessarily re-interpreted Muhammad's mission and message so Insider Muslims could affirm faith in the Prophet of Islam, and thus remain within the *Umma*. These missiologists gauged correctly the requirements of membership within the Muslim community.

This reinterpretation of Muhammad is not without serious drawbacks. First, this reinterpretation might not accurately portray Muhammad's message and mission—which would naturally draw the ire of Muslims. Second, it will certainly cause confusion among Muslims who are encouraged to believe in both the Bible and the Qur'an. Third, it may only delay, not prevent, persecution and expulsion of Insider Muslims if the Muslim community learns that these Insiders actually believe in the Deity of Christ. There is simply no historical precedence for the Muslim community ruling belief in the Incarnation as anything other than *kufr* and *shirk*. Thus, the extent to which Islam can be reformed or reinterpreted may be much more limited than Retentionists hope.

Furthermore, with the Islamic renaissance of this generation, hard-line Islamists have greatly broadened the use of the *takfir* condemnation to allow them unilaterally to withdraw the status of Muslim, with its myriad benefits, for perceived deviance from the faith. Hayder Mili notes, "Most contemporary *Takfir* doctrine was forged inside Egyptian jails following the great wave of arrests targeting the Muslim Brotherhood in the mid-1960s where many of its members were tortured and/or executed" (2006). The Muslim coming under the *takfir* sentence leaves the House of Islam and becomes an apostate who is worthy of death and must be killed by observant Muslims.

The expansion of the *takfiri* doctrine provides religious sanction to politically inspired murder. This thinking brought about the downfall of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, who called himself a devout Muslim and was frequently televised praying in mosques. However, he maintained a hard line against the Islamic political front in Egypt. As Rachel Scott notes, "When Khaled al-Islambouli, a young lieutenant in the Egyptian army, assassinated President Anwar Sadat on 6 October 1981, he said: 'I have killed Pharaoh'. By calling Sadat Pharaoh, the assassin claimed that Sadat was not a Muslim but an apostate, and therefore, deserved to be killed" (2003). In Revolutionary Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini frequently was depicted slaying Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlavi, with the caption, *"Li Kulu Musa, Faroon"* ("For every Pharoah, there is a Moses"). This is another example of attributing *kafir* status on a confessing Muslim.

This expansion of *takfiri* doctrine sprung from a quest for spiritual and theological purity, and an even further narrowing of tolerance for faith deviation among Muslims. It resulted in endless bloodshed and heartache in the Muslim world in the past few decades. If those like Sadat, who confessed they are a Muslim, may be deemed apostate and killed, there is little hope that those who have come to believe a narrative which Islam categorically rejects—that God entered space and time as a human being, died on the cross and rose from the dead—will be spared expulsion.

Impact of Islamic Apostasy Laws on Muslim Identity

Citizens of Western countries are accustomed to societies that enjoy freedom of religion. Since freedom of religion requires the right to change one's religion, an element exists that requires religious identity in these societies remain fluid and dynamic. In societies that deny freedom of religion, such as nearly all Muslim societies, religious

identity is not dynamic but static. This section analyzes the classical Islamic view on apostasy, contemporary reflections on it, and the effect of these views on spiritual identity for Muslims.

Over fifty countries are Muslim-majority nations, and Islam boasts well over one billion adherents. Diversity of opinion will exist among Muslims on how to treat those who deviate from the faith. For that reason, the orthodox, classical Islamic position on this subject provides indispensable illumination, especially since Islamic thought is generally moving back toward orthodoxy, rather than away from it.

<div align="center">Where Seventh Century Meets Twenty-First Century</div>

The contemporary Muslim world paints a stark picture of the tension between modernity and antiquity. This tension creates a tectonic fault line where the cherished principle of freedom of religion rubs against the Islamic handling of faith deviation and apostasy. An example of this tension occurred in 2006, when shocked Americans learned that a high court in Afghanistan sentenced an Afghan Muslim man to death for converting to Christianity (Labott 2006). To most Americans, Afghanistan was a nation the American military and its allies had supposedly liberated from the Islamic fundamentalist regime of the Taliban. *Der Spiegel*, a noted German magazine, opines, "The possibility that Rahman could be put to death for apostasy made Western nations realize that despite the massive amounts of reconstruction aid they have pumped into Afghanistan, human rights remain by no means guaranteed in the country" (2006). In another *Der Spiegel* article regarding this case, Juergen Dahlkamp and Susanna Koelbl summed up this tension, titling their story, "Worlds Colliding: Afghanistan's Human

Rights Disaster" (2006). Indeed, where Islamic law conflicts with international human rights expectations, great tension is likely to result.

<div align="center">Defining Apostasy in Islam</div>

Apostasy (*ridda* or *irtidad*) in Islam carries the connotation of turning back from God's appointed faith, Islam. As a former Muslim currently writing as a secularist, Ibn Warraq encapsulates the exacting nature of the Islamic religion toward those who stray from orthodoxy "Any verbal denial of any principle of Muslim belief is considered apostasy" (2003, 16). Missionary Samuel Zwemer, known as the "Apostle to Islam," comments on Baidawi's six-volume work on the *Traditions of the Prophet*, "In every standard collection of this sort we find a special section devoted to the subject of apostasy and the treatment apostates received at the hands of Mohammed or his companions" (1924, 37). While Christians view those who hold to an aberrant Christology or soteriology as apostates or heretics, Islam reserves the right to designate as apostates those who fail to believe in any aspect of Islam, or who adopt the teaching of any religion that contradicts Islamic teaching.

The Islamic theology regarding apostasy rests on two theological constructs. The first is *kufr,* and the second is *shirk* (associating partners with Allah). These Qur'anic constructs are pervasive throughout the Muslim world. Their verbal equivalents are in present use as cognates in most major Muslim languages even after fourteen centuries. Both represent dangerous areas into which a law-abiding Muslim will not want to tread.

Shirk is the unpardonable sin in Islam. Muhammad's early mission was to denounce the polytheism of his Meccan community. Later, he succeeded in ridding the Ka'aba of idols. In Islam, the idolater is a *mushrik* (plural *mushrikoon*). Since *shirk* is the

unpardonable sin in Islam, the Muslim who moves from the orthodox monotheism of Islam to polytheism is guilty of apostasy.

Though Christians confess to worshipping one God, from a strict Islamic monotheistic perspective Christians have associated the human prophet Jesus Christ as a partner with Allah. *Sura* 17:111 targets Christians by associating belief in a begotten Son of God as *shirk*, "Say: 'Praise be to God, who begets no son, and has no partner [Arabic, *shareek*] in (His) dominion; Nor (needs) He any to protect Him from humiliation.'" While Retentionists may argue the concept of biblical Sonship is misunderstood by Muslims, the Qur'an unequivocally links divine sonship with polytheism.

<center>Qur'anic References on the Penalty for Apostasy</center>

The Qur'an contains multiple verses that specifically address penalties for apostasy. These verses create a sense of foreboding and fear for Muslims who shudder to tread in the path of apostates. As such, apostasy laws greatly influence Muslim identity. The context of these verses generally occurs later in Muhammad's career, during the Medinan Period, when the Islamic community achieved political power. Early Muslims came into the *umma* by making a confession of faith in Allah and his prophet. These converts then immediately and automatically enjoyed the societal and political benefits of Islamic identity. Some would leave Islam for a number of reasons, including those who abandoned the Islamic cause during the frequent wars and skirmishes prosecuted by the Muslims. All of the "turn backs," regardless of their reasons for leaving Islam, were considered apostates.

Sura 3:90-91, a staple passage on apostasy, focuses on belief and unbelief:

But those who reject Faith after they accepted it, and then go on adding to their defiance of Faith, - never will their repentance be accepted; for they are those who

have (of set purpose) gone astray. As to those who reject Faith, and die rejecting, - never would be accepted from any such as much gold as the earth contains, though they should offer it for ransom. For such is (in store) a penalty grievous, and they will find no helpers.

This passage positions apostates for severe penalization.

Sura 4:89 seems to close the door on any claims by Muslims that Islam does not prescribe the death penalty for converts, "They but wish that ye should reject Faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing (as they): But take not friends from their ranks until they flee in the way of God (From what is forbidden). But if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them; and (in any case) take no friends or helpers from their ranks."

Finally, *Sura* 9:74, which is believed to be one of the final two s*uras* revealed, places the apostate between the jaws of execution and damnation:

They swear by God that they said nothing (evil), but indeed they uttered blasphemy, and they did it after accepting Islam; and they meditated a plot which they were unable to carry out: this revenge of theirs was (their) only return for the bounty with which God and His Apostle had enriched them! If they repent, it will be best for them; but if they turn back (to their evil ways), God will punish them with a grievous penalty in this life and in the Hereafter: They shall have none on earth to protect or help them.

These verses provide the scriptural basis for Islamic Apostasy Laws.

Hadith References on the Penalty for Apostasy

Muslims look to the traditional *hadith* sayings (plural, *ahadith*) of Muhammad for amplification and clarification of Qur'anic verses. These *ahadith* are arranged in compilations deemed authentic (Arabic, *Sahih*). Muhammad affirmed the death penalty for apostates. According to Sahih Bukhari, "Narrated Abdullah: 'Allah's Apostle said, "The blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that I am His Apostle, cannot be shed except in three cases: In *Qisas* [retaliation] for

murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse and the one who reverts

from Islam (apostate) and leaves the Muslims"'" (Bukhari 2013, vol. 9, book 83, 17).

Muhammad also gave executive orders to slay apostates. Again Sahih Bukhari

records, "Narrated Ikrima: 'Ali burnt some people (hypocrites) and this news reached Ibn

'Abbas, who said, "Had I been in his place I would not have burnt them, as the Prophet

said, 'Don't punish (anybody) with Allah's Punishment.' No doubt, I would have killed

them, for the Prophet said, 'If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him"'"

(Bukhari 2013, vol. 4, book 52, 60).

This has been the Islamic mantra for the past fourteen centuries, "If a Muslim

discards his religion, kill him." Therefore, Muslims live in a toxic environment of fear,

especially those who are discontent with Islam and are considering abandoning the faith.

<div align="center">

Contemporary Affirmation of the Death Sentence
for Apostates from Islam

</div>

Despite some attempts by Muslim Reformists to argue that Islam does not

command death to apostates, the orthodox position on death penalty for male apostates

remains virtually unassailable. Mawdudi explains:

> To everyone acquainted with Islamic law it is no secret that according to Islam the punishment for a Muslim who turns to *kufr* (infidelity, blasphemy) is execution. Doubt about this matter first arose among Muslims during the final portion of the nineteenth century as a result of speculation. Otherwise, for the full twelve centuries prior to that time the total Muslim community remained unanimous about it. The whole of our religious literature clearly testifies that ambiguity about the matter of the apostate's execution never existed among Muslims. The expositions of the Prophet, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*Khulafa'-i Rashidun*), the great Companions (*Sahaba*) of the Prophet, their Followers (*Tabi'un*), the leaders among the *mujtahids* and, following them, the doctors of the *Shari'ah* of every century are available on record. All these collectively will assure you that from the time of the Prophet to the present day one injunction only has been continuously and uninterruptedly operative and that no room whatever remains to suggest that perhaps the punishment of the apostate is not execution. (1953)

Mawdudi notes, "speculation" about whether Islam indeed prescribes the death penalty for apostasy "first arose among Muslims" a little over a century ago. Prior to that, there was no question that apostates should be killed (1953). The Prophet, his companions, the Caliphs and the *'ulama* (scholars, *mujtahids*) all upheld the death penalty for apostates. Mawdudi gives the rationale for the death penalty by arguing the damage to the Islamic community by one who "severs affiliation" through apostasy is immeasurably worse than any damage caused by a *kafir* who was never affiliated with the community by faith (1953). Therefore, the neck of the apostate, by his own apostasy, is "lifted into the noose" (1953).

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran, the most influential Shi'ite scholar in the twentieth century, concurs with Mawdudi. In his 1965 treatise, *Tahrir al-Vasileh*, Khomeini states that a Muslim man who apostatizes faces execution if he will not repent. It does not matter if he was born Muslim or converts into Islam. A woman apostate receives a lifetime jail sentence and beatings when praying. If she repents, she receives freedom. In Iran, which has founded its legal system on *Shari'a* law, women are jailed for even slight breaches of the dress code.

In traditional societies, the man is both the public figure of the family and its spokesperson, so the articulation of apostasy is more likely suspected and proven among males. Various Islamic schools may differ regarding rules of evidence for apostasy, or the formula for trying the apostate. Nevertheless, they all agree on the death penalty for post-pubescent male apostates.

The Intersection of Islamic Law, the Universal Declaration of
Human Rights, and Muslim Identity

The development and enforcement of internationally recognized human rights
bless humanity. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to chronicle that development,
it is sufficient to note that all Western versions of human rights include protections of
freedom of religion. In the United States Constitution, for instance, its writers placed
freedom of religion as the First Amendment. They understood that their entire Bill of
Rights rested upon freedoms of conscience, thought, and worship.

In 1948, the United Nations adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Article 18 states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or
in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in
teaching, practice, worship and observance" (United Nations 1948).

The Turkish MBDLJ, Ziya Meral, notes Saudi Arabia abstained from the United
Nations vote which adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (2008,
8). Other Muslim countries also protested the usage of "freedom to change his religion,"
but eventually they approved the Declaration. Muslim countries have similarly protested
subsequent covenants and declarations, including the 1966 International Covenant on
Political and Civil Rights, in which "freedom to change" was softened to "freedom to
have" a religion (Meral 2008, 9).

While many Muslims are individually tolerant human beings, Islam is the least
tolerant of all major religions. The Open Doors' 2013 "World Watch List," ranks
countries regarding persecution of Christians (Open Doors 2013). Nine of the top ten, and
forty of the top fifty, are Muslim countries. While not all Muslim countries enforce the

death penalty for apostasy, nearly all apostates from Islam are subjected to persecution.

Meral sums up the trials facing MBDLJs:

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

Due primarily to this persecution of apostates, very few Muslims were recorded

as leaving Islam for another religion prior to the latter part of the twentieth century. For

example, "The Rev. William Miller once asked a convert from Islam this question, 'Is the

law of apostasy a cause for the fewness of converts?' He replied, 'It is *the* cause!'"

(Zwemer 1924, 25). In terms of this dissertation, Muslims have historically retained

Muslim identity because they had no choice.

Muslim Responses to Apostasy in a World of Multiplying Apostates

Muslim Reformists in the West

Muslims struggle in the modern world to defend a faith requiring the death

penalty for apostasy. Some modern Islamic apologists seek to soften this image of Islam.

Nashid Abdul-Khaaliq argues, "The truth is that if you search the Qur'an from cover to

cover you will not find death prescribed as a punishment for apostasy" (2010). He

suggests the *hadith* prescribing death for apostates may be illegitimate. Similarly,

Ibrahim Syed, of the United States-based Islamic Research Foundation International,

states, "There is no bigger misconception … than the belief that Islam doesn't tolerate

apostasy" (2012). Syed argues that a Muslim who discards his religion for another

religion may be exempted from the apostasy punishment, while the Muslim who discards Islam for atheism is guilty of apostasy and therefore punishable.

There are two rationales for a reformist view of Islamic apostasy by Muslims. First, some Muslims have moved into their equivalent of theological liberalism. Second, and more importantly, many Muslims in the West strive to present Islam as a tolerant and reasonable faith. They understand Westerners will inherently cringe when hearing about a faith that executes those who leave it. Therefore, they obscure the apostasy teaching. This dissimulation or deception is *taqiyya*, and is permissible under *Shari'a* if it promotes the cause of Islam.

Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran aspires to enforce *Shari'a*. The Shi'ite position on apostasy is essentially the same as that of the Sunnis, and is articulated by Khomeini as well as by Sultanhassan Tabandeh. Tabandeh was a leading cleric who rejected the underpinnings of the UDHR by offering his 1966 work, *Muslim Commentary on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* Regarding apostasy, Tabandeh expresses the same hubris one may hear in many mosques worldwide when he states that no Muslim would ever want to leave Islam (Meral 2008, 13). Tabandeh, nevertheless, echoes the Shi'ite position of the death sentence for male apostates, and life imprisonment for females.

Human rights news reports continue to highlight MBDLJs in Iran who have been imprisoned, tortured, and killed. Iranian MBDLJ martyrs include Reverend Hossein Soodmand (killed in 1990), Reverend Mehdi Dibaj (1994) and Reverend Mohammed Bagher Yusefi (1996) (McDonnell 2011). All were converts from Islamic background

and high-profile leaders of the church in Iran. From June 2010 to January 2011, two hundred two Iranian Christians were arrested arbitrarily according to Elam Ministries' Persecution Report released on January 25, 2011. Of the twenty-one still jailed at the time of that report, nineteen bore Muslim names.

On January 27, 2013, Pastor Saeed Abedini, a United States citizen who is an MBDLJ of Iranian birth, was sentenced to Evin Prison for eight years for his religious activities. Friends of Saeed have started a petition online at www.savesaeed.com, for which they hope to gain 300,000 signatures before presenting this petition to the United Nations. Nevertheless, the current Supreme Leader of Shi'ites, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has previously stated, "When we want to find out what is right and what is wrong, we do not go to the United Nations; we go to the Holy Koran. For us the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is nothing but a collection of mumbo jumbo by disciples of Satan" (Mayer 1999, 27). Given this backdrop, it appears the Iranian Shi'ite leadership has only hardened its stance toward apostasy.

Contemporary Sunni Responses to Apostasy

The Sunni world is broader and more diverse than the Shi'ite world, but evidence suggests there is no general softening of its stance towards apostasy. Al-Jazeera provided an excellent example of this on February 21, 2006, by airing a debate between the Syrian secular psychologist Wafa Sultan and Islamic Scholar Sheikh Ibrahim al-Khouli of Egypt (al-Khouli, Youtube 2006). The topic was the "Clash of Civilizations" and Sultan was quick to point out the intolerance of Islam, beginning with Muhammad and continuing to the present day. Rather than debating Sultan on the merits of her argument, al-Khouli pressed her repeatedly, "Are you a heretic?" (Arabic *intee al-mulhida?*). If you are a

heretic, then there is no point in rebuking you, since you have blasphemed against Islam, the Prophet, and the Qur'an"(2006).

It is notable that after Sultan's impassioned address about the deficiencies of Islamic thought, and her perceptions about the primitive and barbaric nature of Islamic civilization, al-Khouli did not seek to engage with her substantively on the content of her argument. Rather, he tries to get her to confess to being a heretic. When she declines to answer, he pronounces her a heretic. This qualifies her for Islamic retribution. This exchange illustrates, from the Islamic point of view, the threat of excommunication or *takfir* is more onerous than anything logic or debate can offer. This exchange, coupled with the World Watch persecution list, and incidents like that surrounding the Afghan Abdul Rahman, show that Sunnis are not ready to dispense with the harsh apostasy provisions of *Shari'a*. In fact, a recently-published Pew Forum study of global Muslims indicates that a majority of Muslims in Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, Palestine and Pakistan feel an apostate from Islam should be killed (see Fisher 2013; Pew Research Center 2013).

In conclusion, Islam teaches that male apostates should be killed. Leading Muslim scholarship holds that a Muslim who comes to believe that God has entered space and time as the Lord Jesus Christ has moved into *kufr* (unbelief) and therefore is an apostate. This has held true since the genesis of Islam, through the classical period, and to the contemporary era. The integration of these factors casts a paralyzing fear over Muslims. If they are to embrace faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then stigmatization and identification as an apostate await, since faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is outside the

bounds of permissible Islamic belief. As such, Muslim identity is frozen in a block of theological ice.

Conclusions

The data considered in this chapter argues against Retentionism. Though Retentionists claim to have discovered a missiological innovation by which Muslims can find salvation and simultaneously and permanently enjoy acceptance from their communities, this discovery may amount to little more than fool's gold. Unfortunately, non-Muslim background missiologists who strategize cross-cultural ministry to Muslims overlook much of the material evaluated. Certainly, there are cultural differences and tremendous sectarian diversity among the more than one billion Muslims in the world. Nevertheless, the core teachings of Islam, especially from the Qur'an and *hadith*, play the largest single role in the shaping of Muslim identity.

First, Islam's central teaching regarding Divine Unity, *tawhid*, excludes the possibility of a Trinitarian God visiting the earth in tangible form. This teaching forms a watertight and mutually exclusive Christology between the Qur'an and the Bible. In Islam, Jesus is no more than a mortal prophet. Second, the doors of entrance and exit to the Muslim community are theological in nature, as defined by the *umma*. Belief in Christ as Divine Lord and Savior constitutes a serious departure from Islamic faith and disbelief (*kufr*) in the message of Muhammad. Third, Muslims who come to believe in Christ as Lord are unequivocally apostates according to Islamic Law. Male apostates may punished by death. Though this sentence is not enforced uniformly throughout the Muslim world, family and community pressure make life very difficult for MBDLJs.

Islam can only be described as an expulsive religion. This expulsive nature of Islam regarding faith deviation explains the historical challenge regarding Muslim evangelism. The outcry against missionary "extractionism," as voiced by proto-Retentionists in the 1970s was even then overstated. Furthermore, that post-colonial era context is quickly fading in the face of Islamic renaissance. Even today, the push of community expulsion is much stronger than any pull of missionary extraction.

All of these factors influence the identity of MBDLJs in the eyes of the Muslim community, as well as in their own eyes. The environment described creates an atmosphere of fear for Muslims, who even if they are not following Islam conscientiously shudder to fall into the despised category of apostates, whom the *Umma* views as traitors. MBDLJ Ziya Meral aptly frames the identity crisis facing the emerging generation of MBDLJs in the title of his 2008 work, "No Where to Call Home."

CHAPTER 5

FIELD RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The research thus far has focused on theological works from Christian and Muslim perspectives, which inform the Retentionism debate. The Problem and Purpose Statements proposed in this dissertation require original field research from Muslim-born persons in Metro New York regarding their beliefs about Muslim identity. The purpose of this study is to develop components of a theory of Muslim identity by examining ways Muslim-born persons in Metro New York perceive that permanently retaining Muslim identity is compatible with being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. This field research component asks actual Muslim-born persons in Metro New York whether they continue to deem someone who comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ a Muslim.

The theological findings in chapter three reveal that both Jews and Gentiles in the New Testament experienced persecution and identity transformation as they came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That chapter also concludes that the Lordship of Jesus Christ extends to and encompasses the identity issue. A believer's individual identity is centered in Christ and his or her corporate identity is centered in the Body of Christ.

In chapter four, the theological findings from the Islamic perspective indicate that the Islamic Jesus and the biblical Jesus are two mutually exclusive identities. The Islamic Jesus is a mortal prophet who fulfills a role of promoting Islam and its prophet Muhammad. He is a minor actor in the Islamic narrative, whereas He is the focal point of

the biblical narrative. Islam rejects the divinity of Christ and His saving work on the cross. The Islamic community has ruled for 1,400 years that those who hold incarnational beliefs are outside the fold of Islam. All of these factors inform the topic of Muslim identity and affect the status and transformation of identity for Muslims who come to faith in the Divine Savior, Jesus Christ.

This field research considers how the theoretical interfaces with the practical, and whether the biblical and Islamic conclusions that have so far undercut Retentionism are upheld by the actual perceptions of Muslim-born persons in Metro New York. This chapter introduces the field research component. First, it will review recent research on the American Muslim community, especially as it relates to Muslim identity. Second, it identifies research data regarding the Muslim community in Metro New York so the field-research interview pool may approximate this community. The diversity of this pool allows for some comparisons to the global Islamic community. Third, it introduces the survey instrument used to elicit responses from Muslim-born persons in Metro New York on the main research question at hand—whether they believe permanent retention of Muslim identity is compatible with belief in the Bible and being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fourth, it describes the content analysis methodology used to evaluate the survey results.

Muslim Demographics in the United States

American Muslims remain a research enigma for several reasons. First, there is no general agreement about the number of Muslims residing in the United States. United States Census Data does not capture religious affiliation, though inferences can be made through numbering certain ethnic groups, such as Turks, which correlate strongly with

Islamic affiliation. Some communities where Islam has made inroads, especially the African-American community, witness both a converting into and a falling away process that is hard to quantify. Finally, the reality that the United States' unquantifiable illegal immigrant population includes many Muslims makes the overall Muslim population an elusive figure. The Pew 2011 Survey counts 2.75 million Muslim Americans (2011, 20). Though this number is up 200,000 from their 2007 survey, it remains much lower than Muslim community estimates.

American Muslims also constitute a research enigma because of the dynamic changes within the community. Sharon Abu-Laban describes the successive waves of Muslim immigrants to North America, in chronological order, as "pioneers," "transitional," and, most recently, "differentiated" (1991, 13). The first two waves were interested in maintaining their Muslim identity yet tended toward assimilation, while the "differentiated cohort" exhibits an "offensive-activist" mentality. Mark Hausfeld notes the more recent "offensive-activist" cohort sense the spiritual vacuum in America and feel Islam is a viable answer to it (2009). His assessment seems accurate.

Indeed, these cohorts reflect portraits in the photo album of the fast-changing Muslim world, especially with the recent move toward orthodoxy and fundamentalism. While many Americans were unfamiliar with Islam during these pioneer and transitional periods, this has all changed. The 1979 Iranian Hostage Crisis brought Islam into the headlines. The bombing of the World Trade Center (9/11) brought Islam into the 24-hour news cycle. After these events, Americans have an increased awareness of Islam and Muslims, even though their mental pictures of al-Qaeda, Iraq, and Afghanistan, often

appear more like caricatures. Finally, the move toward political correctness has in some ways stifled open and honest public discussion about Islam and Muslims.

Despite the uncertainties in quantifying American Muslims, more information about the community is becoming available. The Pew Research Center recently conducted two significant surveys of American Muslims, published in 2007 and 2011. The title of the 2007 survey is *Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream*. The 2011 survey, *Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism,* mirrors information revealed in the 2007 survey. Since the 2011 survey is more recent, highlighting information from that survey presages preparation for the field research in Metro New York.

The Pew 2011 study finds "a 63% majority of Muslim Americans are first generation immigrants to the U.S., with 45% having arrived in the U.S. since 1990. More than a third of Muslim Americans (37%) were born in the U.S., including 15% who had at least one immigrant parent" (Pew Research Center 2011, 8). Notably, this research focuses on Muslim-born persons only, not those who have converted into Islam. This would therefore exclude about one-fifth of American Muslims who are converts. This figure is approximated by subtracting the 15 percent who had at least one immigrant parent—and were, therefore, likely to have been born Muslim—from the 37 percent American-born population. Similar statistics for the breakdown of the Muslim population in Metro New York are unavailable. The following chart is based on the Pew 2011 figures:
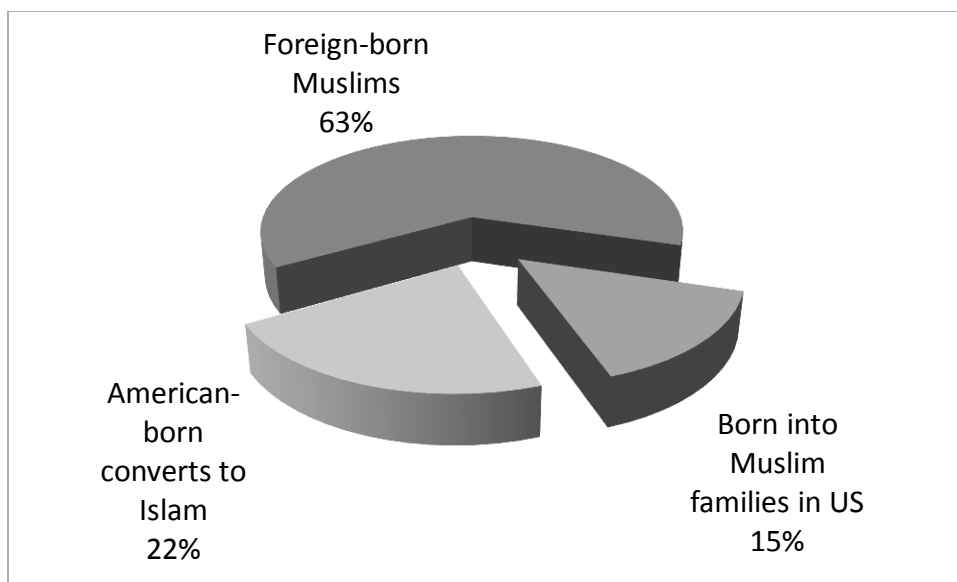
Figure 5.1. Breakdown of Muslim population of the United States

Regarding ethnic mix, the Pew Survey states:

> First-generation Muslim Americans come from a wide range of countries around the world. About four-in-ten (41%) are immigrants from the Middle East or North Africa, while about a quarter (26%) come from South Asian nations including Pakistan (14%), Bangladesh (5%) and India (3%). Others came to the U.S. from sub-Saharan Africa (11%), various countries in Europe (7%), Iran (5%), or other countries (9%). (Pew Research Center 2011, 8)

All of these communities are represented in the Metro New York Muslim community.

Since the focus of this research is Muslim identity, Pew Research Center's inclusion of a question on Muslim identity helps clarify the issue. "When asked to choose, nearly half of Muslims in the U.S. (49%) say they think of themselves first as a Muslim, while 26% see themselves first as an American; 18% volunteer that they are both" (Pew Research Center 2011, 7). The survey also gleans information regarding the religious observance of Muslim Americans: "69% say that religion is very important in their lives, and about half (47%) report at least weekly attendance at a mosque for prayer.

Similarly, about half (48%) say they make all five salah prayers daily, and another 18%

report making at least some salah daily" (Pew Research Center 2011, 10).

The most significant statement in the 2011 Pew Study, as it affects this

dissertation, is:

> Yet the survey finds that most reject a dogmatic approach to religion. Most Muslim Americans (57%) say there is more than one true way to interpret the teachings of Islam; far fewer (37%) say that there is only one true interpretation of Islam. Similarly, 56% of Muslim Americans say that many different religions can lead to eternal life; just 35% say that Islam is the one true faith that leads to eternal life. (Pew Research Center 2011, 11)

The Pew Research Center concludes, "In this respect, Muslim Americans differ from

many of their counterparts in the Muslim world and are similar to U.S. Christians" (2011,

11). A Pew Research Center survey of global Muslims in 2013 states: "In all but a

handful of the 39 countries surveyed, a majority of Muslims say that Islam is the one true

faith leading to eternal life in heaven" (Pew Research Center 2013, 13). Pew Research

Center's analogy is that just as American Christians tend less toward dogmatism than

their global brethren, so Muslim Americans are less dogmatic than the global *umma*.

Even prior to doing interviews, Pew's survey suggests that if Muslim Americans will not

accept the broader, more fluid definition of Muslim required by Retentionism, then it

unlikely the wider Muslim community will accept the definition. In other words, if

Muslim Americans will not accept within their perception of Muslim identity a person

who believes in the Bible and Jesus as Lord and God, then the global *umma* is not likely

to accept it either.

Muslim Demographics in Metro New York

Large numbers of Muslims presently live in Metro New York. Chris Clayman and

Meredith Lee recently undertook a monumental project locating, describing, and

numbering unreached people groups in Metro New York. That research, published in 2010 under the title *EthNyCity,* covers many Muslim people groups in Metro New York. It does not, however, include all of them.

This *EthNYcity* research includes American Community Survey (ACS) data from the United States Census Bureau (2008). ACS "total ancestry" number is based on self-identification. The ACS "foreign born" reflects first generation immigrants. Clayman and Lee also include community estimates based on discussions with community leaders. The community estimates are higher due to the tendency of leaders to include undocumented community members and possibly even round up. In the case of Iranians, Clayman and Lee present Persian Jews as a separate people group. With the exception of the Indonesian and Egyptian count, which include perhaps a majority of Christians in those respective counts, the data listed in table 5.1 approximates Muslim populations in Metro New York from Clayman and Lee's *EthNYcity*.

Table 5.1. Muslim populations in Metro New York

People Group	ACS Total Ancestry	ACS Foreign-Born	Community Estimate
Pakistanis	65,171	66,933	120,000
Egyptians	47,728	35,344	110,000
Bangladeshis	NA	69,968	100,000
Turks	48,977	32,110	70,000
Iranians	30,989	19,219	60,000-70,000
Afghans	11,888	8,204	20,000
Palestinians	10,805	NA	30,000
Senegalese	4,553	NA	30,000
Indonesians	NA	6,677	8,000-15,000

Metro New York Muslims may be less assimilated into American life than the wider American Muslim population. There are two main reasons for this. First, the ethnic communities of Muslims in Metro New York are larger than in other cities (except

perhaps for Arabs in Dearborn, Michigan, and Iranians in Southern California). This enables a non-assimilating, or ghettoing, dynamic. Second, Metro New York is still the largest port of entry into the United States. Therefore, Metro New York Muslims likely have lived in the United States for shorter durations than the Muslims in other communities. For these reasons, the perceptions of Muslims in Metro New York may track more closely with the perceptions of Muslims in their respective homelands.

Introducing the Field Research

Pilot Project

In summer 2012, in order to prepare for this dissertation field research, I conducted a pilot research project to field-test interview questions. This pilot included yes or no and short answer questions administered in face-to-face interviews with Muslims in Metro New York and in an identical on-line survey. The questions centered on Muslim identity—what makes a person a Muslim or a non-Muslim. The expectation was to propose a similar survey for the dissertation research, which would yield quantitative results for statistical evaluation.

A review of the responses from four face-to-face interviews and an identical six online questionnaires necessitated an adjustment to the original research design. First, respondents wanted to give answers in greater depth than a binary or scaled response form could accommodate. Second, several respondents gave the rationale "because the imam tells us to." This type of response suggested that interviewing imams and Islamic scholars in person could prove invaluable in gathering data on Muslim identity, since these scholars are more familiar with the theological underpinnings of Islamic beliefs. Third, several respondents in street interviews were offended and angry when asked

directly about Muslims straying from the faith. They struggled to follow a hypothetical

question. This led to the introduction of a third-person vignette to defuse the anger and

allow the respondents to articulate their opinions more fully. Fourth, the reporting of this

pilot research to seminary colleagues and faculty yielded the suggestion to include

MBDLJs in the study to see how they negotiated any transformation of Muslim identity

and spiritual allegiance as they came to faith in Christ. In preparation for the field

research work, faculty advisors showed me the value of administering an identical

interview to both Muslims and MBDLJs. This would make for perhaps an unprecedented

comparison of Muslim and MBDLJ perspectives on Muslim identity. In summary, the

proposed research design evolved into a qualitative design, which allows for more in-

depth responses and content analysis evaluations.

The Research Instrument

The research instrument is an interview using a third-person vignette. The use of

this third-person vignette somewhat diffuses the offense and awkwardness of a person

leaving Islam for the Muslim interviewees. For the sake of the value of comparing

Muslim and MBDLJ responses, identical third-person vignettes were administered to

both populations. The same vignette was used among MBDLJ interviewees in chapter

seven. It encouraged the MBDLJs to speak about their views on spiritual formation in a

third-person, inferential manner. The only difference in the interviews was that Muslims

received one additional question about how to become a Muslim. This helped assess the

practical outworking of some of the theological information in chapter four. MBDLJs

received one additional question regarding how permanently maintaining Muslim identity

and mosque attendance might affect the role the Holy Spirit is able to play in a person's life.

The vignette features a fictitious "Ahmed" for male interviewees, and a "Fatimeh" character for female interviewees. These are Islamic names easily recognized as such by the interviewees. Ahmed is a derivative of the name Muhammad, and Fatimeh is the name of Prophet Muhammad's daughter.

In the vignette, the character goes through a spiritual journey marked by: (1) interest in the gospel, (2) belief in the gospel, and, (3) fellowship with others who believe in the gospel. The Ahmed/Fatimeh character ultimately continues to identify himself/herself as a Muslim and attend prayers in the Islamic mosque. Interviewees were asked to speculate on the reactions of family and friends to this narrative, at each step of the process. The interviewees were also asked at what point, if any, the Ahmed/Fatimeh character ceased being a Muslim. The hypothetical narrative is set in a city in the home country (or ancestral home country) of the interviewee, thus tying the situation to global Islamic sentiments. The utilization of the urban context derives from the likelihood that most Muslims in Metro New York are from urban settings abroad, realizing significant differences exist between urban and rural life and culture in many countries. In some Muslim countries, it is difficult for a woman in her early twenties to visit places outside the home. In the end, two of the forty interviewees questioned the plausibility of the hypothetical vignette occurring exactly as it was stated in their respective home countries. One said a woman in her home country of Bangladesh may have a challenge gaining internet access, and a second one mentioned a problem in her country, Kazakhstan, of the blocking of biblical websites.

The use of a standard vignette yielded the positive aspect of direct comparability of responses among the forty interviewees. The vignette portrays the entrance of the gospel into the life of a Muslim. Naturally, in the real world, this could happen in many different ways—through missionaries, local Christians, a dream or vision, as well as with a number of types of media. I chose the media route, which meant the gospel came to the Ahmed/Fatimeh character without face-to-face interaction with a missionary. The advantage of this scenario is it sheds light on the extent to which MBDLJs are expulsed from their communities in cases when no missionary extractionism is possible. If the interviewees suggest that the MBDLJ is expulsed from the community, it cannot, in this vignette, be credited to or blamed on missionary extractionism, which was cited by Retentionists as a major rationale for Retentionism.

The full interview follows, with question identifiers in parentheses. Italics indicate narrative, and regular font indicates questions to the respondents. For female interviewees, the identical vignette was read with Fatimeh substituted for Ahmed, and the pronouns feminized:

> (Becoming Muslim?) *I am studying what makes a person a Muslim or a non-Muslim*. If a person wants to become a Muslim, what must they do? (For Muslims Only)
>
> *(Interest section): There is a young man, Ahmed, from a Muslim family in a city in your homeland. It is a respectable family and Ahmed has a good name. During his early 20's he begins to visit various websites on the internet. He even goes to web sites that have material about the Bible and the life of Jesus Christ.*

(Interest-Friends?) If Ahmed's Muslim friends find out about this, what do you think they will do?

(Interest-Family?) If his family finds out at this time, what do you think they will do?

(Belief section): Let's assume that no one finds out and Ahmed continues down this path. He comes fully to believe the Bible is true and that God has visited the earth in the form of Jesus Christ. He believes Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

(Same Jesus?) Do you feel Ahmed is now believing in the same Jesus he had been taught about as a Muslim? Why or why not?

(Belief-Friends?) If his Muslim friends find out at this time, how do you think they will respond?

(Belief-Family?) If his family finds out at this time, what do you think they will do? *Fellowship section): Let's suppose again that his family and friends have not found out. Ahmed starts secretly to meet with and worship with other people who hold the same beliefs as he has come to hold.*

(Fellowship-Friends?) Eventually, his friends finds out about Ahmed going to these meetings, and what he now believes. What do you think they will do?

(Fellowship-Family?) His family finds out as well. What do you think they will do?

(Still Muslim?) Do you feel Ahmed is still a Muslim? Why or why not?

(When Left?) If not, at what point did Ahmed stop being a Muslim?

(Retentionism) Though he has come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, God and Savior, Ahmed continues to state that he is a Muslim—telling people he is submitted to God through Jesus Christ. He continues to attend prayers in the mosque on Fridays and Islamic holidays there.

(Retentionism?) Do you think Ahmed is right to continue identifying himself as a Muslim? Why or why not?

(Mosque attendance?) Is it right for person who believes what Ahmed believes to continue attending the mosque? Why or why not?

(Holy Spirit?) How do you think Ahmed's decision regarding maintaining Muslim identity and mosque attendance affect the role that the Holy Spirit is able to play in his life? (For MBDLJs only)

The interview vignette asks two types of questions. The first type, totaling six questions, requires the interviewee to speculate about the actions of friends and family of the Ahmed/Fatimeh protagonist. These are truly third-person in nature. The second type, totaling four questions, asks the interviewee in a more direct fashion for their opinions on: whether the protagonist is now believing in the "same Jesus;" whether he or she is still a Muslim, and, if not, when he or she stopped being a Muslim; whether he or she is right in continuing to call himself or herself a Muslim; and whether continued mosque participation is appropriate. The Muslims had one additional question at the beginning on conversion into Islam, while the MBDLJs had one additional question at the end on how Retentionism may impact the role the Holy Spirit is able to play in the life of the protagonist.

The most important question, as it relates to this dissertation, is coded "Still Muslim?" This question gets to the root of whether the interviewee believes a person who comes to believe that the Bible is true, and that God has visited the earth in the form of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and rose from the dead is still a Muslim. After the question on comparative Christology, the next two questions are on Retentionism, and the final question deals with continued mosque attendance. These questions are prefaced by a restatement of the protagonist's belief, as well as his or her claim that he or she is a Muslim—submitted to God through Jesus Christ. In several cases, the narration needed repeating since the scenario seemed preposterous to the interviewees. In other cases, where MBDLJs clearly responded about transitional states, clarification was given that the Ahmed/Fatimeh character intended to claim Muslim identity permanently.

Because of factors covered earlier in this research, I never used the words Christian, Christianity, or Church in the interviews. I maintained this practice even when repeating a question or explaining something the interviewee found unclear. Where the interviewees used those words in their responses, they have done so based on their own interpretations and conclusions.

RQ3 Research

Research question three proposes the Retentionism question to Muslim-born persons in Metro New York as follows: What do Muslims in Metro New York perceive regarding the compatibility of permanently retaining Islamic identity and simultaneously being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ? The RQ3 research required interviewing twenty Muslims—five scholars and fifteen laypersons. The scholars include three imams and two other scholars of Islam. The three imams are presently serving Islamic communities

in Metro New York. One of the scholars has a postgraduate degree in Islamic theology from his home country of Uzbekistan. The second scholar is a Palestinian *hafiz ul-Qur'an* (has memorized the Qur'an), is an imam-in-training, and is enrolled in an Islamic studies program.

I also asked the imams whether "alternate interpretations" of Islamic teachings on the nature and work of Christ create the possibility of a "reconciled" Christology between the Bible and the Qur'an. This concept of a reconciled Christology is a key plank in the Retentionist model. A reconciled Christology would ostensibly allow for continuity of identity for Muslims who essentially come to a fuller belief in the same Jesus Christ as they knew as Muslims.

These twenty Muslims hail from thirteen birth nations and ten different ethnic groups (See the exact listing in chapter six). The diversity of these interviewees provides a unique global connectivity from this local pool of interviewees. While the geographic scope of the study is Metro New York, the setting of the vignette in the interviewees' home countries will create some trans-local implications.

RQ4 Research

Research question four presents the Retentionism question to MBDLJs in Metro New York. While most of these individuals were not familiar with the missiological debate on Retentionism, they had personally wrestled with the question of Muslim identity. Therefore, Research question four is presented as follows: What do Muslim background disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in Metro New York perceive regarding the formation of their identity as they became disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ?

I interviewed twenty MBDLJs for RQ4. Similar to the interviewees in RQ3, I sought a diverse respondent pool for RQ4. The interviews of MBDLJs included ten adult men and ten adult women. They represent ten different birth countries and fourteen different ethnic groups. The RQ4 interviews utilized the same third-person vignette from RQ3. MBDLJs were asked to determine at what point, if any, the subject of the vignette ceased being a Muslim, and whether the subject believes in the same Jesus he or she was taught about in their Muslim upbringing.

MBDLJs were asked one question not asked of the imams and Muslim laypersons: how retaining Muslim identity and mosque attendance affects the role the Holy Spirit may play in a person's life. Literature on contextualization of the gospel among Muslims, specifically that relates to Muslim identity, lack pneumatological analysis. This research will help continue bridging this missiological gap.

The interviews were carefully introduced and conducted in a way such as not to influence the responses of the interviewees. Most MBDLJs in Metro New York are unfamiliar with the current missiological debates regarding contextualizing the gospel among Muslims. I know of two MBDLJ ministry leaders who are very familiar with the controversy and have strong opinions against Retentionism. I interviewed one but did not interview the second.

This field research allows the MBDLJs to give indigenous input into the missiological discourse. Data obtained in RQ4 enable MBDLJs to engage in what Robert Priest appropriately describes in Ott and Netland's *Globalizing Theology* as "experience-near" theologizing (2006). David and Cynthia Strong describe the development of "hermeneutic communities," with the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council emerging as the

Church's first one (2006). MBDLJs have the potential to become a vital hermeneutic community, though at this time few MBDLJs are writing about missiology. Some are using the platforms of satellite television, radio, and internet for cutting-edge ministry and theologizing. Woodberry concurs, "The outsider might be helpful in suggesting biblical guidelines, but those from a Muslim background are in a better position to understand the meaning of labels and identity in their contexts" (2007, 27). Following his advice, this research captures MBDLJ input on the topic of Retentionism and makes it available to the wider missiological community.

Analysis of Field Data

The interviews generated qualitative data. Content analysis was the main tool for assessing the data. The content of these interviews was evaluated to determine whether the Muslims, the scholars, and the MBDLJs believe it is possible for a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ to retain Muslim identity permanently. The vignettes allowed for comparisons between the Muslims, imams, and MBDLJs. A number of social science research guidebooks, led by H. Russell Bernard's *Research Methods in Anthropology* (2002), and including Richard Mitchell's *Secrecy and Fieldwork* (1993) provided guidance. A deeper description of the data analysis is provided in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The research methodologies described in this chapter set up the fieldwork component of the dissertation. The field work examines, through the use of a third person vignette, the views of Muslim-born persons in Metro New York concerning Retentionism. Results from the Muslim interviews are presented in chapter six; the results from the MBDLJ interviews are presented in chapter seven.

CHAPTER 6

FIELD RESEARCH AMONG MUSLIMS

This section addresses research question three as proposed in chapter one of this

dissertation: "What do Muslims in Metro New York perceive regarding the compatibility

of permanently retaining Islamic identity and simultaneously being a disciple of the Lord

Jesus Christ?" Healthy contextualization relies on reliable information from people

within a ministry context. The Muslims interviewed in this study provide that input.

Obtaining the Interviews

I conducted the Muslim interviews personally, face to face, between August and

October 2013. None of the twenty Muslim interviewees had a relationship with the

interviewer prior to the interview. Four of the interviews, including two of the scholars,

were arranged by local Christian contacts who simply requested the potential interviewee

participate in a research study on Muslim identity. A Muslim friend arranged one

interview with his own imam, and I pre-arranged one interview with a local imam.

For each of the six arranged interviews, the contacts knew the interview involved

Muslim identity—what makes a person a Muslim or a non-Muslim. None of the

interviewees had any additional information about the content of the interview. The

fourteen non-arranged interviews utilized what Russell Bernard labels "street-intercept"

(2002, 243). I simply walked up to people on the streets in Muslim neighborhoods and

greeted the potential interviewee, *Salaamu alaikum* (Peace be upon you). Their responses

almost invariably indicated whether they were Muslims. If affirmative, I brandished my seminary ID card and said, "I am a Christian seminary student studying Muslim identity. Would you have time for me to ask you questions about this?"

In a number of cases, the person did not have time to talk. In other cases, the person did not speak enough English to participate. I did not conduct interviews in other languages, though this excluded a segment of potential interviewees. Several of my personal contacts sought to arrange interviews with other scholars, such as local imams hailing from Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Turkey, but were unsuccessful in obtaining those interviews in a reasonable amount of time. Nevertheless, the diversity of the Muslim interviewees, who were born in thirteen different countries, is a great asset to this dissertation.

Two of the interviews took place in the courtyard of a mosque after Friday prayers. I conducted several street-intercept interviews on a Friday afternoon at the time observant Muslim men would typically attend mosque. This enabled the capture of the responses of several less observant Muslims. In every case, the goal was conducting the interviews absent from the presence of others who might overhear and thus influence the interviewee's responses. In several cases, this was not possible and an onlooker or friend was present.

Though it is not culturally appropriate for a man to approach Muslim women on the streets, I was able to interview one Muslim woman in a public area at a local university, and another Muslim woman through an arranged and chaperoned interview. Otherwise, men were the primary participants in the Muslim segment of the interviews.

For the MBDLJs, presented in the next chapter, ten women and ten men participated in the interviews.

Even in a free country such as the United States, it can be a challenge to conduct street interviews with Muslims. While interviewing a Palestinian man (MM1) on a local sidewalk in a commercial area, an apparent friend of his rode by on bicycle and called to him, "Don't talk to him! He's with the FBI." In an unfortunate twist of timing, just as the interviews began, local news media reported that the New York Police Department (NYPD) had designated various mosques as terrorist organizations. Surveillance had been going on for some time, but the public reporting of it created an air of tension. One imam, U2, brought up this NYPD designation in the interview. Due to this reality, it is possible that a number of the Muslim interviewees may have responded in a way to make Islam look tolerant and favorable. A Bangladeshi man, MM2, responded to one question saying, "Muslims in Bangladesh don't have the way of thinking you see on CNN" (2013).

There was at least one interviewee whose English was just above the borderline to participate in a survey, which featured hypothetical and philosophical questions. I only repeated or rephrased questions when it appeared the interviewee was struggling to understand. In every case, I took dictation as the person spoke. All quotes or comments from the interviews are verbatim comments in the words they themselves used. Words in parentheses indicate additions where the interviewee's clear intent might elude readers of this research who were not present at the interviews. An inline translation of foreign words is provided in parentheses following that word. Each participant signed a consent form that stated the purpose of the interview. The consent form, used for both Muslims

and MBDLJs, confirmed the interviewee's identity would remain confidential. The consent form template is included in appendix A.

Muslim Interviewee Demographics

Nineteen of the twenty Muslim interviewees were born abroad. This 95 percent ratio was certainly higher than the Pew Study's 63 percent foreign born rate but not unreasonable for the gateway city of Metro New York. Interviewees were asked to name their birth countries and ethnicities, their present age, the age when they came to the United States, and if they have visited their home country. They represented their nations of birth and ethnicities as shown in Table 6.1. Where interviewees share the same birth country and ethnicity, multiple codes are listed. The codes that follow are the interviewee's unique identifier, where MM stands for Male Muslim, FM stands for Female Muslim, and U stands for *'ulama*, the Arabic term for Islamic scholars, which can include clergy.

Table 6.1. Birth country and ethnicity of Muslim respondents

Birth Country	Ethnicity	Code(s)
Bangladesh	Bangladeshi	FM2, MM2, MM10
Guyana	Indian	U2
India	Indian	FM1
Jordan	Jordanian	MM12
Morocco	Berber	MM6, MM11
Pakistan	Pakistani	MM5
Pakistan	Punjabi	MM3
Palestine	Palestinian	MM9, U1, U5
Saudi Arabia	Indian	MM4
Sierra Leone	Sierra Leonean	U3
Trinidad	Indian	MM7
Turkey	Turkish	MM8, MM13
United States	Palestinian	MM1
Uzbekistan	Uzbek	U4

The age range of the Muslim interviewees is 23 to 84 years. The average age is 40.6 years. The average time spent in the United States is 12.3 years.

The one American-born interviewee had visited his ancestral homeland. Five interviewees stated they visit their home country frequently. Only three stated they had not visited since moving to the United States. Of these three, none had immigrated to the United States before reaching the age of 28, and their length of time living in the United States was five, six and thirteen years, respectively. Therefore, even those who have not visited their home country since immigrating are well positioned to respond to a vignette that takes place in that country.

Sixteen of the nineteen foreign-born interviewees had lived in their home countries as adults. Of the three that had not, one came to this country when he was nine years old, another when he was twelve, and the third when he was fourteen. Two of these three had visited their home countries after immigrating to the United States. I met MM3, who emigrated from Pakistan when he was twelve, at the Pakistan Day Parade in Manhattan. Though I did not ask him whether he had visited Pakistan since he immigrated, his presence at this event suggests he remains connected to his community. This group of twenty Muslims seems positioned and informed to comment on the sentiments of Muslims in their respective home countries.

All of the Muslim interviewees said they came from families where both their parents were Muslims. Regarding sectarian identification, all but one said they were Sunni Muslims. The young Pakistani, MM3, proudly volunteered he was a Sufi. The Sunnis, however, were not asked if they had other leanings, such as Sufi, Salafist, or others.

Academic regulations require confidentiality of all interviewee names. Regarding the imams and scholars, constraints exist in what I can share of their backgrounds. All of these men are scholars of Islam with significant Islamic education. All received those studies abroad. Three of the five are currently functioning as imams at local mosques. One had represented his nation at an international Qur'an recitation competition in Saudi Arabia.

The Interview Results

The field interviews included a vignette featuring two types of questions. The first type measures the responses of the friends and family of the protagonist (Ahmed/Fatimeh) as he/she first shows interest (I) in the gospel, then believes (B) in the gospel, and then fellowships (F) with others who hold those beliefs. There were six total questions in this category—one for friends, and one for family within each of these three progressions. These responses (Coded Questions) give valuable information on what is likely to happen to a Muslim who becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ. The second type of question within the vignette is also open-ended but does not fall under the same uniform coding as the first set. The second set addresses the key questions on Retentionism.

Coded Questions: Muslim Tolerance of Faith Deviation

Explanation of Codes

To analyze the contents of this type of qualitative data, responses need to be evaluated and then categorized. I analyzed all of the responses and grouped them into types. I also applied the same types to the interviews of the Muslims and the MBDLJs. The data fall into fifteen types of responses, and are listed below in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Types of Responses

Type of Response	Description
Positive (P)	Friends/family promote or encourage the protagonist's actions
Condoning Exploration (CE)	Islam allows Muslims to explore other religions
Indifferent (IF)	Statements that the friends/family won't care, or they will respond indifferently, to what the protagonist is doing or believing
Don't Know/Unsure (?)	Self-explanatory
Critical Questioning (CQ)	Friends/family question the protagonist about his/her actions in a non-affirming manner
Islamic Re-education: Informal (IRI)	Friends or family members presenting Islamic doctrines/teachings in an attempt bring back the straying protagonist
Islamic Re-education: Formal (IRF)	Insistence by the friends/family on Islamic counseling by an Islamic teacher, or recognized *sheikh* (elder)
Verbal Warnings & Threats (VWT)	The use of ultimatums or severe argumentation to bring the protagonist back into the fold
Limiting Access to the Forbidden (LA)	Disallowing the protagonist to leave the home, go to meetings, access the computer, etc.
Mocking (M)	Friends/family ridiculing or laughing at the protagonist
Arrange Punitive Marriage (PM)	Marrying off an apostate woman to a staunch Muslim man
Ostracize (O)	Marginalizing and excluding the protagonist from the social circles of family and/or friends
Physical attacks (PA)	Beatings or other physical abuse
Expel/Excommunicate/Disown (EX)	Expulsion from the family or the *umma*. In the latter case, this is known as *takfir* (imputation of infidel status)
Killing the apostate (K)	Self-explanatory

For ease of comparison, these fifteen types of responses are grouped into three major categories: Non-Negative (NN); Shepherding (S); and Punitive/Expulsive (PE). The listing of possible responses is presented from more tolerant to less tolerant within each category. Non-negative (NN) responses include those responses that are either positive, condone religious exploration, or reflect indifference. The few cases where the interviewee could not give an answer are included in this section. While the term

shepherding (S) is more of a biblical motif than an Islamic one, it is used it here to represent those responses where the family and friends seek to bring the straying protagonist back to Islam without severing the relationship. The final category, punitive/expulsive (PE), suggests an imminent or actual rupture in the relationship. The category of mocking (M) was cited only six times by these Muslim interviewees, and was included in shepherding. The mocking incidents were intended to shame the Ahmed character into returning to the fold, rather than expulsing him, so it is in the shepherding category.

Table 6.3. Categorization of responses

Type of Response	Category of Response
Positive (P)	Non-Negative (NN)
Condoning Exploration (CE)	Non-Negative (NN)
Indifferent (IF)	Non-Negative (NN)
Don't Know/Unsure (?)	Non-Negative (NN)
Critical Questioning (CQ)	Shepherding (S)
Islamic Re-education: Informal (IRI)	Shepherding (S)
Islamic Re-education: Formal (IRF)	Shepherding (S)
Limiting Access to the Forbidden (LA)	Shepherding (S)
Verbal Warnings & Threats (VWT)	Shepherding (S)
Mocking (M)	Shepherding (S)
Arrange Punitive Marriage (PM)	Punitive/Expulsive (PE)
Ostracize (O)	Punitive/Expulsive (PE)
Physical attacks (PA)	Punitive/Expulsive (PE)
Expel/Excommunicate/Disown (EX)	Punitive/Expulsive (PE)
Killing the apostate (K)	Punitive/Expulsive (PE)

Interview Data

Each of the 120 responses are evaluated and coded and appear in Table 6.4. In forty-six cases, the interviewee gave a two-part answer. An example is Moroccan MM6's response to the Interest-Friends question (friends' response when Ahmed shows interest in the gospel): "If he only wants to discover, it's no problem; I would tell him, 'The Bible

has been changed'" (2013). His two-part answer indicates both condoning exploration (CE) and Islamic re-education of the informal (lay, non-professional) variety (IRI). Both responses were counted as one unit of response, rather than a half. In other cases, respondents gave two-part answers since Muslims from their home countries, might have legitimately varying responses to a question. A Palestinian man, MM9, responded to the Belief-Friends (friends' response when Ahmed believes the gospel) question by saying, "In Islam we have a law that whoever converts to Christianity or Judaism must die. I (personally) believe it's a private thing. But other people think otherwise. They try to implement this law (of killing converts)" (2013). Here MM9 indicates indifference (IF), but people in his homeland would try to implement capital punishment (K) for apostasy. Both responses were counted.

Similarly, a number of responses included an it-depends-what-type-of-Muslims response. U4 responded to the Interest-Friends question by saying, "It depends on what type of Muslims. If they are conservative, they will cut the relationship. In Uzbekistan, the friends probably will not care" (2013). In this case, the response indicated either ostracism (O) or indifference (IF). Both were counted. There were also several two-part, sequential answers, such as U4's response to the Interest-Family (family's response when Ahmed shows interest in the gospel) question: "First, if the father is educated, he will speak to Ahmed. Then they will call in the *mahallah aksekal*, which means, 'neighborhood white beard,' to talk to him, as the next solution" (2013). I coded this two-part, sequential response as CQ for critical questioning from Ahmed's father, and IRF (Islamic Re-education: Formal) since the sheikh or elder was called in.

Due to these multiple responses, the 120 questions yielded 170 responses. In two cases, the respondent gave a three-part answer. I present the responses in tabular form. "I" stands for interest in the gospel, "B" stands for belief in the gospel, and "F" stands for fellowship with others who believe in the gospel.

Table 6.4. Muslim interview responses

	I-Friends	I-Family	B-Friends	B-Family	F-Friends	F-Family	Totals
Positive (P)	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
Condoning Exploration (CE)	8	11	1	0	1	2	23
Indifferent (IF)	4	5	5	5	6	2	27
Don't Know/Unsure (?)	0	0	1	0	1	1	3
Non-Negative (NN) Totals	**12**	**16**	**8**	**6**	**9**	**5**	**56**
Critical Questioning (CQ)	7	5	3	3	5	3	26
Islamic Re-education: Informal (IRI)	8	5	11	7	5	5	41
Islamic Re-education: Formal (IRF)	0	1	0	2	0	2	5
Verbal Warnings & Threats (VWT)	0	1	1	2	2	2	8
Limiting Access to Forbidden (LA)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Mocking (M)	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Shepherding (S) Totals	**16**	**13**	**16**	**16**	**13**	**13**	**87**
Arrange Punitive Marriage (PM)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ostracize (O)	2	0	3	2	4	1	12
Physical Attacks (PA)	0	1	0	0	1	2	4
Expel/Disown/Excommunicat/(EX)	1	1	0	2	0	3	7
Killing the Apostate (K)	0	0	1	1	1	1	4
Punitive/Expulsion (PE) Totals	**3**	**2**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**27**

For the Muslim interviewees, the most common response was IRI (Islamic Re-education: Informal) with forty-one responses. These Muslims felt the most likely response was for the friends or family of the straying protagonist to counsel that

protagonist by reinforcing his or her Islamic beliefs and countering the biblical beliefs he or she has now come to embrace. This illustrates the confidence Muslims have in their religion. The Bangladeshi woman, FM2, stated in response to the Fellowship-Family question (family's response when they found out the protagonist fellowships with other gospel-believers) that Fatimeh's mother would take the lead in this matter. "They will exchange the knowledge, and read our religion to her more, from the mother to the daughter" (FM2 2013). Since IRI is in the shepherding category, it is not surprising that this category was home to more than half (87 of 170) of the total responses. In summary, the interviewees gave 56 non-negative responses, 87 shepherding responses, and 27 punitive/expulsive responses.

Regarding tolerance, the Muslim interviewees gave twenty-three responses that condoned exploration of other religions. Jordanian MM12 responded to the Interest-Family question, "It's ok. Islam is about exploring and finding out the truth. Prophet Muhammad said to educate yourself, even if it's to (go to) China" (2013). Though the authenticity of this China *hadith* has been debated, the key thing to note is that nineteen of the twenty-three condoning exploration responses came when the protagonist merely showed interest (I) in biblical web sites (Daiyu 2007). Once Ahmed/Fatimeh believed in Christ as Lord, God, and Savior, or began to fellowship with others who did so, the CE responses dropped off precipitously.

These Muslim respondents did not mention punitive/expulsive responses to the extent that Islamic law would predict. In fact, there were as many responses of indifference (IF), twenty-seven, as there were in the entire punitive/expulsive category. Within the PE category, ostracism was the most common response with twelve, followed

by EX (expel/disown/excommunicate) with seven. There were only four mentions of killing and these all threaded through the responses of the Palestinian interviewee MM9. This particular man invited me to sit in his SUV for the interview, perhaps to make sure others would not hear his answers, as he smoked a cigarette and thoughtfully responded to my questions. To the Fellowship-Friends question (friends' response when they found out Ahmed is fellowship with others who believe in the gospel), he responded, "It varies from people to people and from town to town. But they will beat him up real good; he might die. In Saudi, they will kill him right away. In Egypt, the (Muslim) Brotherhood would kill him" (MM9 2013). Obviously, this interviewee took the liberty to project the vignette beyond his Palestinian homeland. Nevertheless, the idea of capital punishment for apostates was scarcely mentioned by the other interviewees. By comparison, I took a church group to a mosque in New York City on an educational trip a few years ago. During the question and answer period, one of the religious instructors at the mosque clearly and forcefully said apostates from Islam should be killed. I was not surprised that the imams or others in this study did not mention it, due to the current political sensitivities associated with police surveillance of mosques.

The story described in this vignette stretched the imaginations of some of the interviewees. Several could not conceive of, or had never heard of, a Muslim leaving Islam. U5, the Palestinian imam prefaced the Interest-Family question, "It will be impossible for a person to look for another religion" (2013). A Turkish man, MM13, began his answer to the B-Family question by saying: "I have no idea. I have never thought about something like this happening" (2013).

Retentionism Questions

The Ahmed/Fatimeh vignette sets up the questions on Retentionism. Below are the responses to these questions.

The Same Jesus?

The Ahmed/Fatimeh character, after initial web searching, comes "fully to believe the Bible is true and that God has visited the earth in the form of Jesus Christ. He believes Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead." At this juncture, I asked the interviewees, "Do you feel Ahmed/Fatimeh is now believing in the same Jesus he/she had been taught about as a Muslim? Why or why not?"

The answer to this Christological question holds such implications for the Retentionism debate that I include all of the Muslim interviewees' responses.

Table 6.5. Muslim responses to the same Jesus question

FM1	No. When she mentions Jesus is God, that is wrong. That is the fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity.
FM2	No. The Holy Qur'an gives the details of *Hazrat Isa alaihi-assalaam* (prophet Jesus, peace be upon him). We believe God created him. That is the difference.
MM1	Yes. We call him *Isa*.
MM2	Probably not. His foundation is changing.
MM3	No. We don't believe Jesus is God.
MM4	No. We believe Jesus never died.
MM5	No. In Islam Jesus is not crucified.
MM6	I don't think so. Isa did not die. God took him up from earth to heaven.
MM7	No. If he believes Jesus is God; of course not.
MM8	No. Christians believe that Jesus is like God the Father. But we don't believe like this. We believe he came like Muhammad or *Musa* (Moses).
MM9	No. That's absolutely wrong. Our Qur'an is like a constitution. God does not lie. The Qur'an states what happened and that *Isa* was never crucified. Isa is only a prophet who went up to heaven.
MM10	It's up to Ahmed to decide. Jesus is our prophet also.
MM11	It's almost the same. We believe Jesus wasn't crucified. Those who thought they crucified Jesus, thought they did it, but it was someone else, and Jesus was taken up.

Table 6.5 continued	
MM12	No. If you are talking about God physically coming down to earth, then who was taking care of the universe? There is no one verse in the Bible where Jesus says he is God.
MM13	That's really difficult to say. We have a different understanding about Jesus. God doesn't come to earth and visit people.
U1	No. Our belief is that Jesus is a messenger and did not die on the cross. This is a contradiction of the Islamic view of Jesus. It is the same Jesus, but who he is has been corrupted.
U2	No. Our teaching is that Jesus had no quality of divinity in him. Jesus was an excellent person and a prophet. It is the same Jesus but Ahmed has added qualities to Jesus which Jesus did not have.
U3	No. He believes in the same Jesus the Christians believe in, but not the same Jesus the Qur'an describes. The Qur'an says Jesus was not crucified or killed. And God never came to earth in the form of any of his creation.
U4	No. They are different. Islam looks at Jesus as any other prophet. Ahmed now believes God came to earth as a person. Muslims don't believe in the biblical Jesus.
U5	No. If he believes that Jesus was crossed (crucified) and is a God coming from heaven to earth, it is not the same Jesus who is a human being and a messenger. We believe Christians have misconceptions about *Isa al-Masih*.

The United States-born Muslim interviewee (MM1) was the only one who gave an unequivocal affirmative answer, though with limited explanation. An elderly Bangladeshi man (MM10) responded that the question about Jesus was essentially Ahmed's to decide.

All of the other Muslim interviewees (90 percent) opposed the description of Jesus in whom the protagonist had come to believe. All of the laypersons, except for Bangladeshi MM2, provided theological reasoning for their opposition. Ten of the twenty respondents (50 percent) objected to the essence of biblical Jesus—God visiting the earth in the form of Christ. Eight of the twenty interviewees (40 percent) objected to the acts of Jesus—His dying on the cross and rising from the dead.

Interestingly, scholars U1 and U2, perhaps because of their experience in sharing the message of Islam with Christians, outlined specific differences between the biblical Jesus and the Islamic Jesus, yet then backtracked a bit on whether they were the same Jesus. I asked the imams and scholars for further details about whether the Qur'an allows

for the divinity of Jesus, since Retentionists have promoted that position. Their responses appear later in this chapter.

In summary, the Muslims interviewees reject the idea of a reconciled Christology. These respondents hold that the Islamic Jesus and the biblical Jesus are two different identities. Thus, they affirm the analysis of Bosnian Muslim scholar Smail Baliç, "In Islam Jesus, like all other prophets, is reduced to human dimensions. Therefore, in Muslim discussion, Jesus does not possess the importance which is his in Christianity. In the Koran Jesus is simply a subject of the history of the prophets" (1979, 2).

<p style="text-align:center">Still Muslim?</p>

This question is the most important one in the dissertation, for it asks whether a Muslim who has come to believe in the biblical meta-narrative is still a Muslim. At this point in the interview, the Ahmed/Fatimeh character is said to "fully to believe the Bible is true and that God has visited the earth in the form of Jesus Christ. He believes Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead." I asked, "Do you feel Ahmed/Fatimeh is still a Muslim? Why or why not? If not, at what point did he/she stop being a Muslim?"

Due to the vast implications of this question for the Retentionism debate, I include all twenty responses.

Table 6.6. Muslim responses to still Muslim question

	Still Muslim?	When Left?
FM1	No. If she believes Jesus is God, the monotheism is gone.	When she believed that Jesus is God.
FM2	No.	When she came to believe God came through Jesus, she is no longer a Muslim.
MM1	Yes.	NA
MM2	No.	If your belief changes, your religion changes.
MM3	I don't know. I can't judge anyone.	NA

Table 6.6 continued		
	Still Muslim?	When Left?
MM4	No. If you believe Jesus died, it means you don't believe in the Qur'an. Therefore you are not a Muslim.	When he believed that Jesus died.
MM5	No. He came to believe Jesus is God. Jesus is only a messenger.	When he came to believe that Jesus is God.
MM6	No.	The condition to be a Muslim is to believe in one God.
MM7	No. If he doesn't believe in the Oneness of God and that Jesus, the messenger, is distinct from God, he does not believe in the fundamental creed of Islam. He has associated a partner with God.	When he associated Jesus as a partner with God.
MM8	No.	He changed his religion.
MM9	No.	Because the Qur'an is God's words. When you say that what God says is wrong, you are saying the Qur'an is wrong, so you don't believe in Islam.
MM10	No.	Once he believes by heart and by mouth in another thing, he is no longer a Muslim.
MM11	No.	If he believes Jesus died on the cross, then he is not a Muslim.
MM12	No.	When he believed Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.
MM13	(Inferred no)	In the learning time, he is still a Muslim. In the long time, he's not really a Muslim.
U1	No. What he now believes is a contradiction to Islam.	When he came to believe that Jesus is other than a messenger.
U2	No. From the moment he began to believe that Jesus is Son of God or had any divine qualities.	When he believed that Jesus had divine attributes. To attribute qualities of divinity to any prophet contradicts the Islamic concept of monotheism.
U3	Not really.	Anyone whose beliefs contradict the Qur'an and *hadith* is not a Muslim.
U4	No. If he believes in Jesus as a God, of course he is not a Muslim. He's a *murtadd* (apostate). That's the first word of the *shahada*. However, many people in Uzbekistan are not familiar with theological details. All they see are the labels, "Muslim" and "Christian."	When he broke *shahada*. There is one meaning to *shahada* and it's clear cut. The main principle in Islam is *tawhid* (Divine Unity).

Table 6.6 continued		
	Still Muslim?	When Left?
U5	No.	When he believes Jesus is Son of God, it means he has belief that is unacceptable Islamically.

The Muslim interviewees strongly reject the premise that a Muslim who comes to believe in a divine Jesus remains a Muslim. Only one interviewee (the American-born Palestinian) feels the protagonist is still a Muslim. Eighteen of the twenty (90 percent) Muslim interviewees state that when the Ahmed/Fatimeh character came to believe the biblical meta-narrative, he or she ceased being a Muslim. The key rationales here, like in the previous question, deal with Christology. The interviewees overwhelmingly feel that the adoption of a biblical Christology is a violation of *tawhid* and *shahada*, and thus triggers revocation of Muslim identity. In other words, these interviewees are suggesting that the Muslim community has decided that a Muslim who comes to believe in the Divine Jesus who died on the cross is no longer a Muslim.

Continued Claim to Muslim Identity

The prior question presents a direct assessment of the Ahmed/Fatimeh character. The follow up question solicits the interviewees' responses to the protagonists' insistence on retaining Muslim identity. The narrative states: "Though he has come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, God and Savior, Ahmed continues to state that he is a Muslim— telling people he is submitted to God through Jesus Christ. He continues to attend prayers in the mosque on Fridays and Islamic holidays there." Then the question follows: "Do you think Ahmed is right to continue identifying himself as a Muslim? Why or why not?" Their responses are included in Table 6.7.

Table 6.7. Muslim responses to right to continue identifying as a Muslim

FM1	No. There are verses in the Qur'an that say Allah cannot have human form.
FM2	I will catch her! She is not honest. She is trying to manufacture the Bible and our Muslim stuff into one thing.
MM1	Yes. Because your Bible is in our Qur'an.
MM2	Probably not. Religion is based on what you believe. You cannot believe one thing and say another thing.
MM3	Probably not. He should just call himself a Christian.
MM4	Yes. If he is not committing sins like adultery, he can say he is a Muslim. Actions are what matters.
MM5	(Unsure. Was not able to understand the hypothetical nature of this question.)
MM6	We have *mu'min* (believers) and *non-mu'min* (non-believers) who are not strong in their hearts. But they are still Muslims. Ahmed is not a Muslim. He is a *munafiq* (hypocrite). I don't know what you call it in English. He mixes religions. He goes to mosque and to church. He has lost his way.
MM7	No. Is he submitting to Islam or submitting to Jesus? He is rejecting Islamic beliefs outright.
MM8	That's not true. If he believes what regular Christian people believe, he cannot be Muslim. He believes that Jesus is like God the Father. He should take a Christian name.
MM9	No. Muslim means you believe in Islam. You must believe in only one God. You cannot be Muslim if you believe Jesus is God. Then you believe in two gods.
MM10	No. He is not pure. He is holding out one thing, and believing another thing. That is never the sign of a good man.
MM11	This is hard. Some people stay in the middle, but it's either black or white. This guy is lost. He doesn't know if he is a Muslim or a Christian. There is no mix between the religions. Either you believe this or you believe that. Either God is one or God is three.
MM12	Of course not. He became an unbeliever if he says he is following Jesus Christ. He doesn't believe in Islam.
MM13	I don't know. It's not about religions. I respect everyone.
U1	No. He believes in contradictory beliefs to Islam and will be taken out of the fold of Islam.
U2	We consider him not a Muslim in the technical sense of the word, even though he may consider himself a Muslim in the general sense of the word. However, he would not have the same privileges as a Muslim. He would get no inheritance from Muslim relatives, while a Muslim would. He will not have a Muslim funeral. When the word Muslim is used in reference to humans, it means they have made a conscious decision to take the Islamic teachings as a whole, not picking and choosing. If you do not believe in Muhammad as the final prophet, you are not a Muslim.

Table 6.7 continued	
U3	Not really. Anyone whose ideas contradict the Qur'an and *hadith* is not a Muslim. What it means to be a Muslim is to believe what Allah commands to be believed, and believe in all books. However, if he has an ideology contradicting the Qur'an, he is not submitted to Allah. He must believe in the Qur'an as a whole, without picking some *ayat* (verses) and throwing out the others. When we use the words "Muslim" and "Islam," we look at how the words are used in the Qur'an. Abraham and other prophets were Muslims. However, from the time of the Qur'an (going forward), a person must believe in all books and all prophets. Should I say, "I will be loyal to Governor Pataki (a previous governor of New York State) even after his time (in office), and no one can be my governor after him?"
U4	He is a confused guy! He can call himself whatever he wants, but people won't take him seriously.
U5	He has the choice to do that--to consider himself a Muslim. Anybody can say he is a Muslim through Christianity or a Muslim through Judaism. If I am an English speaker, then anyone will have to say that they are submitted to God. However, words like Allah and Muslim are not translatable. The word Muslim is not translatable as a name; it is only translatable as a term, as a description. I think the problem is with translation. In English you say the word Muslim and then say it means submitted. In Arabic the word submitted is coming from the same word for Muslim.

These follow-up questions evoked bewilderment and confusion on the part of several of the interviewees. If some had never heard of a Muslim leaving Islam, few would have encountered this specific scenario. The Uzbek scholar, U4, blurted out, "He is a confused guy! He can call himself whatever he wants, but people won't take him seriously" (2013).

Moroccan MM6 introduced a powerful and evocative Islamic concept in his response to this question as he labeled the Ahmed character a *munafiq* (2013). He did not know what the word was in English. *Munafiq*, most commonly translated hypocrite, is a Qur'anic word still used by Muslims 1,400 years later. This Moroccan man said he is willing to accept Muslims with weak faith (non-*mu'min,* literally, non-believer) as Muslims, but he withholds Muslim identity from *munafiqoon* (hypocrites) (2013). The weak-faith Muslims nevertheless retain Muslim identity because they are still under the

collective affirmation of Islam and the prophet Muhammad. The Ahmed figure in this vignette has individually repudiated the essence of Islam, and therefore is deemed a non-Muslim, even though he may claim he is a Muslim.

The Bangladeshi man, MM10, reiterated the *munafiq*/hypocrite theme on the question of whether Ahmed retains Muslim identity, "No. He is not pure. He is holding out one thing, and believing another thing. That is never the sign of a good man" (2013). His Bangladeshi compatriot, FM2, sat up in her chair, pointed her finger, and sternly announced, "I will catch her! She is not honest. She is trying to manufacture the Bible and our Muslim stuff into one thing" (2013). These responses indicate that some Muslims will not be comfortable with a person who holds Ahmed/Fatimeh's beliefs claiming he or she is a Muslim.

Once again, MM1, the American-born Palestinian, was an outlier in accepting Retentionism. The Indian ethnic professor from Saudi Arabia, MM4, offered his support for Retentionism on this question, seemingly contradicting himself after considering Ahmed a non-Muslim on theological grounds in his previous response. He accepted Ahmed continuing to identify himself as a Muslim, "If he is not committing sins like adultery, he can say he is a Muslim. Actions are what matters" (MM4 2013). In the previous question, he stated that beliefs are what matters. This professor's apparent contradictory remarks simply underscore that human beings are far from predictable.

An elderly Pakistani man, MM5, could not follow the hypothetical nature of this question, as his English was a bit weak. He became part of the interview pool after an encounter at a South Asian store in the Metro New York area. Someone on the street had told me Muslims owned the store and I would find Muslims inside. When I went inside, I

asked the several men present if someone would like to step outside to do an interview on Muslim identity. These several men recommended MM5 since he knew a lot about Islam. On this question, however, he could not grasp Ahmed's insistence on retaining Muslim identity and simply said he was unsure how to respond (2013). A Turkish man, MM13, was the other interviewee unwilling to take a definitive position on this question.

In summary of this section and Table 6.7, sixteen of the twenty interviewees (80 percent) did not accept the protagonist's claims to retain Muslim identity, while two accepted it and two were unsure. Several considered the Ahmed/Fatimeh figure as a confused or hypocritical person with whom they pled to make a clear choice about religion. A young Indian ethnic from Trinidad, MM7, whom I met at a mosque courtyard, put it sarcastically, "Is he submitting to Islam or submitting to Jesus? He is rejecting Islamic beliefs outright" (2013).

<div align="center">Continued Mosque Attendance</div>

This question came after the previous narrative, "Is it right for person who believes what Ahmed/Fatimeh believes to continue attending the mosque? Why or why not?" The responses appear in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8. Muslim responses to continued mosque attendance

FM1	Yes. She can go there to pray that Allah will guide her to the correct knowledge.
FM2	I don't know if she should go, but I will tell her with my last breath to change her ideas and read our book.
MM1	Yes. It's OK to practice or explore another religion.
MM2	It's OK. If he wants to go to the mosque, he can do whatever he wants.
MM3	No. People will not let him in the mosque.
MM4	Yes.
MM5	Yes.

Table 6.8 continued	
MM6	He should choose one religion. If he goes to mosque, he may learn that there is only one God and that Jesus is not God.
MM7	Yes. Perhaps he would be guided back to Islam.
MM8	Is he between Muslim and Christian? It seems he can't make up his mind. He's not sure. He has to choose.
MM9	No. He doesn't believe God. Why should he pray? He is a hypocrite. My Qur'an says Jesus is not God.
MM10	If he goes for *Namaz* (prayers, *salat*), but believes in Christianity, I don't think it is right.
MM11	*Iman* (faith) is in the heart. If he wants to believe in this way, he won't be comfortable in the *masjid* (mosque) or in the church. He is lost.
MM12	No. Maybe he is confused, but it would also be confusing to people in the *masjid*, and also to his friends in the church. You're talking about a very confused person.
MM13	If he goes there, he should also give *zakat* and fast Ramadan.
U1	He should continue attending the mosque to get the right information. But if he prays to Jesus, his *salat* will not be accepted by God.
U2	Perhaps there is hope he will revert back to Islam, so he can seek guidance in the *masjid*.
U3	Yes. The mosque is open to all. We are not going to prevent people from coming. We will not expel Ahmed from the mosque. It is our prayer that he will come to the knowledge of the truth.
U4	Why is he going to the mosque? You either go to the mosque or the church.
U5	He is welcome. No one will prevent him. But if he believes Jesus is the Lord or the God, his faith needs to be purified. Everyone will convince him to purify his belief. The Qur'an says that Jesus is not the Son of God. There is contradiction. He needs to reach a point (of decision). If Jews and Christians come one step forward, they will find Islam. There is only a hair ('s breadth) of difference.

The interviewees had mixed feelings about continued mosque attendance. Six of twenty thought the mosque may provide corrective instruction and thus bring the protagonist back to Islamic orthodoxy. In the language of the coded questions, this is equated with a shepherding (S) function through IRF (Islamic Re-education: Formal). The protagonist continuing to attend the mosque offended eight of the twenty. The Palestinian man who felt the Ahmed figure would be killed as an apostate in several Middle Eastern countries (MM10), with detestation in his voice, condemned Ahmed for continuing to attend the mosque, "He doesn't believe God. Why should he pray? He is a

hypocrite. My Qur'an says Jesus is not God" (2013). The young Punjabi Sufi, MM3, felt

Ahmed's associates would not even let him in the mosque (2013). Respondents MM8,

MM11, MM12, and U4 beg the protagonist to make up his mind about his religious

identity and allegiance (2013). U1, a *hafiz* (Qur'an memorizer), stated that if Ahmed

prays to Jesus, God would not accept his prayers.

How to Become a Muslim

The interview with the Muslim respondents began with an opening question, "If a

person wants to become a Muslim, what must they do?" I considered ending this

question, "What must they believe?" I chose the verb do rather than believe so as not to

push them into a creedal statement.

Fourteen of the twenty specifically responded with either English or Arabic

wording that declaring the *shahada* is what a person needs to do to become a Muslim. I

interviewed a Turkish man (MM8) on a park bench on a Friday at a time when Muslim

men might otherwise attend congregational prayers. He stated: "He should go the

mosque. The imam will ask him five questions about belief in God, Holy Books,

Prophets, Angels and the Last Day. He has to believe in Muhammad one hundred

percent" (2013).

Only five of the interviewees (25 percent) mentioned neither *shahada* nor

Muhammad. The Sufi, MM3, responded: "Start with good intention. Clean their heart.

Lose their ego. Control themselves. Then start reading the Qur'an" (2013). The

American-born Palestinian, MM1, also mentioned going to the imam for guidance, "Go

to the imam. He'll show you the steps. Practice the *deen* (religion). Pray five times daily"

(2013).

In short, 70 percent of the Muslim interviewees stated that becoming a Muslim centers on the *shahada*, and its affirmation of *tawhid* (Divine Unity) and the prophethood of Muhammad. The interviewees reinforce the notion that the door of entry into Islam is a theological door. Similarly, they clearly stated that the door of exit out of Islam is likewise a theological door.

Views of *'Ulama* on Questions Related to Retentionism

The debate on contextualization in the Muslim context depends on accurate information about that context. While Muslim imams and scholars would certainly not support the purpose behind Christian missiology, or discern various spiritual dynamics, they are well equipped to explain what Muslims believe, what they practice, and why. These scholars have provided excellent insights into Muslim identity, specifically as it relates to defining the word Muslim, and in regard to Islamic Christology.

First, Retentionism depends on a broader, looser understanding of the term Muslim. Kevin Higgins argues for this in his insider Muslim identity statements, all of which begin with the confession, "I can say I am a Muslim because the word Islam means submission and a Muslim is one who submits. So, I have submitted to God ultimately in His Word, Isa" (2006, 121). The Islamic clergy interviewed in this dissertation reject this notion. The imam from South Asian background (U2) responds to the protagonist Ahmed's contention that he is still a Muslim:

> We consider him not a Muslim in the technical sense of the word, even though he may consider himself a Muslim in the general sense of the word. However, he would not have the same privileges as a Muslim. He would get no inheritance from Muslim relatives, while a Muslim would. He will not have a Muslim funeral. When the word Muslim is used in reference to humans, it means they have made a conscious decision to take the Islamic teachings as a whole, not picking and choosing. If you do not believe in Muhammad as the final prophet, you are not a Muslim. (2013)

The imam from West Africa (U3) also rejects the notion of selectively picking

verses from clarifies what it means to be a Muslim:

> Anyone whose ideas contradict the Qur'an and *hadith* is not a Muslim. What it means to be a Muslim is to believe what Allah commands to be believed, and believe in all books. However, if he has an ideology contradicting the Qur'an, he is not submitted to Allah. He must believe in the Qur'an as a whole, without picking some *ayat* and throwing out the others. When we use the words 'Muslim' and 'Islam,' we look at how the words are used in the Qur'an. Abraham and other prophets were Muslims. However, from the time of the Qur'an (going forward), a person must believe in all books and all prophets. (2013)

Another respondent, U5, is an Arabic speaking imam, raised, and educated in the

Middle East. Like his fellow clergy, he rejects the broader definition of Muslim required

by Retentionists. He gives valuable linguistic insights into Ahmed's situation:

> He has the choice to do that—to consider himself a Muslim. Anybody can say he is a Muslim through Christianity or a Muslim through Judaism. If I am an English speaker, then anyone will have to say that they are submitted to God. However, words like Allah and Muslim are not translatable. The word Muslim is not translatable as a name; it is only translatable as a term, as a description. I think the problem is with translation. In English you say the word Muslim and then say it means submitted. In Arabic the word submitted is coming from the same word for Muslim. (2013)

Respondent U5, therefore, identifies the semantic problem with using the word Muslim

outside the Arabic/Islamic context and filling it with alternate meaning. This

compliments U3, who reiterates that the word Muslim is used only in conjunction with

faith in the Qur'an and all messengers, including Muhammad.

The second point in which these *'ulama* provide insight is in the area of the

Islamic Christology. I asked the three scholars who are presently serving as imams if

there were any verses in the Qur'an whose interpretation could support the divinity of

Jesus. Again, their responses are instructive and worth noting. The Arabic scholar U5

states:

There is absolutely no verse like this. You will never find a Muslim scholar who believes there is anything in the Qur'an that supports the divinity of Jesus. The words *kalimatullah* (word of God) and *ruhallah* (Spirit of God) will be understood by Arabic speakers. They do not mean Jesus is divine. There are lots of expressions in the Qur'an and *hadith* like this. *Baytullah* is "the house of God," not "God is the house." The same is for *masajid ullah*, which means "the mosques of Allah." God is not living there. *Kitabullah* is used for the Qur'an. It means "the book of God," not "God is the book." *Khalqullah* means "the creation of God," not "God is creation." The problem is not in the Arabic, but in translation. I believe the problem with *kalimatullah* occurred when it was translated from Arabic into Aramaic. Even *eeyal-ullah* which is found in *hadith* and is related to the current Arabic word for family—*a'ila'*—might be translated "family of God," which is close to the Christian concept. However, the better translation is "dependents of God." (2013)

The South Asian imam U2 also weighed in on whether expressions such as *kalimatullah*, when used in reference to Jesus Christ, as in Sura 4:171, could be interpreted as statements of divinity. He responded, "Islam came to correct errors. Certain words have meaning in Islamic context. *Kalimat* (word) is used more generally than in reference to Jesus alone. Adam was created by the word of God. God said, 'Be!' And he was. The same is stated about Jesus. *Kalimatullah* is no way a divine attribute" (U2 2013). By referring back to the story of Adam (*Sura* 3:59), who was created without a human father, U2 argues for a non-divine Jesus.

The Arabic imam U5 also explained the importance of *tawhid* as a theological construct, "In Islam, you have to destroy all thoughts which are un-Islamic" (2013). He applied this to the *shahada* confession that "there is no God but Allah," "You must make a *nafy* (denial) that there are any other gods, and an *ithbat* (confirmation) that Allah is the only one God" (U5 2013).

These Islamic scholars undercut an essential pillar of Retentionism, as articulated through Joseph Cumming's friend Ibrahim, who "closely examined the Qur'anic verses commonly understood as denying the Trinity, denying Jesus' divine Sonship, denying

Jesus' atoning death, and denying the textual integrity of the Bible. He concluded that each of these verses was open to alternate interpretations, and that he could therefore follow Jesus as a Muslim" (2009, 2).

Cumming understands that affirmation of the Qur'an, and therefore of Muhammad, is required to retain insider status in the Muslim community. He points to "alternate interpretations" of the Qur'an that could reconcile the Bible and the Qur'an (Cumming 2009, 2). According to the Islamic scholars, these alternate interpretations, as they relate to the deity of Christ and by extension to the Trinity, do not exist. Furthermore, if Jesus is reduced merely to a human prophet, then His death would not be efficacious for atonement. As such, the question of whether the Qur'anic Jesus actually died on the cross is a moot point, since it would have been a mortal prophet who was crucified.

Rick Brown moves in a similar direction as Cumming in his "Biblical Muslims" article. He quotes a Muslim Insider "Brother Noah," who has a view of *shahada* altogether different from imam U5, "Saying that Muhammad is a prophet does not mean that Jesus is not the Messiah and the Lord … So someone can say the *shahada* and at the same time can believe in Jesus as his Savior and Lord" (Brown 2007, 73). Based on the Islamic studies section in chapter four of this dissertation and the input of Metro New York imams, it seems Cumming' friend Ibrahim and Brown's friend Noah are offering statements contradictory to the core teaching of Islam. Certainly the '*ulama* interviewed in this field research would not agree with the Insider Muslim friends of Cumming and Brown.

In summary, these imams provide the following arguments against Retentionism:

1. There are no legitimate interpretations of the Qur'an that allow for a divine Jesus.

2. Super-imposing biblical meanings onto Qur'anic verses defies sound Islamic hermeneutics.

3. The term Muslim has a specific meaning that excludes worshippers of Christ.

4. People who believe in the divinity of Christ are not legally Muslim and are excluded from the benefits thereof.

5. Islam is a cohesive and integrated belief system that forbids its adherents from accepting only the beliefs they want and rejecting the others.

Controlling for Geography

Bangladesh has been offered as an Insider Movement success story. Since Bangladesh is a non-Arab Muslim country far from Islam's heartland, a wider definition of the term Muslim might flourish outside the Islamic theological heartland—if such a geographical distinction could even exist in the twenty-first century. This hypothesis is testable by looking at the subset of Muslim interviewees who hail from outlying areas. For this purpose, the following interviewees are the non-heartland control group: American Palestinian (MM1), Indian (FM1), Bangladeshis (FM2, MM2, and MM10), Guyanese Indian (U2), Sierra Leonean (U3), Trinidad Indian (MM7), and Uzbek (U4).

Except for MM1, this subgroup of nine Muslims was at least as objectionable to Retentionism as were the other eleven Muslim interviewees. A review of the tables in the non-coded section vignette responses confirms this. Even if U2 and U3, who received theological training in the heartland, and FM1, who lived in Saudi Arabia, are dismissed from the control group, the remainder of the control group rejected Retentionism. The

three Bangladeshis interviewed in this survey rejected Retentionism outright and expressed some offense at the concept.

The only prospect of hope for the Retentionist motif came from the Uzbek scholar, U4, who stated about the hypothetical Ahmed, "If he believes in Jesus as a God, of course he is not a Muslim. He's a *murtadd* (apostate). That's the first word of the *shahada*. However, many people in Uzbekistan are not familiar with theological details. All they see are the labels, 'Muslim' and 'Christian'" (2013). This scholar also stated, "Jehovah's Witnesses are coming into my country, and trying to convert everyone to Christianity" (2013), implying misunderstanding of what the word Christian means in that former Soviet context. Nevertheless, misunderstanding of the term Christian does not warrant misuse of or unwarranted borrowing of the term Muslim.

The American-born Muslim (MM1) was the only interviewee who accepted Retention. This raises the question whether American-born individuals are more flexible in their use of the term Muslim and their acceptance of Retentionism. I review this dynamic again in chapter seven, since four of the twenty MBDLJs (20 percent) are United States-born and another immigrated to the United States when he was a year old.

I am grateful to the interviewees for contributing their considerable insights not only to this research but also to the wider pool of public information. Those contributions and insights have been sorely lacking in research on Muslims in general and ministry to Muslims in particular.

Conclusion

The field research covered in this chapter centered on field interviews conducted with twenty Muslims in Metro New York in late 2013. The interviewees included five

Islamic scholars. I personally knew none of the interviewees prior to their respective interviews. The primary purpose of the interviews was to obtain the perceptions of these Muslims on the central question of this dissertation—whether a Muslim who comes to believe the biblical narrative about the Divine, Eternal Savior Jesus Christ can retain Muslim identity.

The twenty Muslims interviewed in this section felt family and friends seek to bring a straying Muslim back to Islam. They envisioned this type of scenario more often than they envisioned one marked by punishment or expulsion. This may confirm the Pew Research poll that Muslims living in America are more tolerant and less dogmatic than their global brethren (Pew Research Center 2011, 11).

Despite this tolerance, these Muslim interviewees overwhelmingly reject Retentionism. They cannot accept within their understanding of the term "Muslim" a person who believes in a Divine Savior Jesus who came to die for the sins of the world and rose again. Once such a person accepts this biblical narrative, he or she is no longer a Muslim in the eyes of the Muslim community.

This research has affirmed that Muslims can retain Muslim identity even if they are not practicing Islam, because they have not violated the collective affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad, and his book, the Qur'an. Once a Muslim adopts the biblical salvation narrative, however, he or she has individually repudiated the theological essentials for continued Muslim identity. The theoretical implications of these conclusions are assessed in chapter eight of this dissertation. In chapter seven, the research turns to fieldwork among MBDLJs to garner their perceptions on Muslim identity and Retentionism.

CHAPTER 7

FIELD RESEARCH AMONG MUSLIM-BACKGROUND
DISCIPLES OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (MBDLJs)

Chapter six explores the perceptions of Metro New York Muslims on

Retentionism. This chapter examines the perceptions of Metro New York MBDLJs on

the same subject. While Muslim-born persons who have not yet had a personal

experience with the Lord Jesus Christ may have responded to the interview vignette in a

truly hypothetical manner, MBDLJs, to one extent or another, have personally negotiated

the issue of Muslim identity as their respective spiritual identities were impacted by this

relationship with Christ. To reflect this reality, Research question four reads: What do

Muslim background disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in Metro New York perceive

regarding the formation of their identity as they became disciples of the Lord Jesus

Christ?

The identity question is set within the overall discussion of Retentionism.

MBDLJs constitute a significant group of stakeholders in missions to Muslims for several

reasons. First, many of them are praying for their Muslim family members and friends to

come to saving faith in Christ. Second, MBDLJs have experienced many of the

challenges facing Muslim inquirers embarking on a spiritual journey toward Christ.

Third, many of them have extensive backgrounds in sharing the gospel with Muslims.

For all of these reasons, their input can provide unique perspectives on this key

missiological discussion of Retentionism.

Interviewee Sample

This section of the research contains the interviews of twenty adult individuals—men men and ten women MBDLJs ranging in age from twenty-five to seventy-three. The mean age of the interviewees is 48.4 years. Three of the interviewees are from Shi'ite background; the other seventeen are from Sunni background. The average length of time the people in this cohort have been believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is 19.3 years. The newest believer began trusting Christ two years ago, while the longest-serving MBDLJ has been in Christ for thirty-five years. All of the MBDLJs, except one, were raised in homes where both parents were Muslims.

Four of the twenty interviewees (20 percent) were United States-born. One foreign-born interviewee immigrated to the United States with his family when he was one year old. All of the twenty interviewees were born into Muslim families and were raised Muslims; none were converts from other religions. All of the United States-born interviewees have visited their respective ancestral homelands as adults. One had lived in that country as an adult. Fifteen of the sixteen foreign-born MBDLJs have lived in their birth countries as adults (past 18-plus years of age). Five of the sixteen foreign-born MBDLJs accepted faith in Christ in their respective countries, and add the perspective of having lived as MBDLJs in Muslim countries. The average length of time lived in the United States by this cohort is 24.9 years, just over half of the 48 year mean age. These factors make it reasonable that this cohort of interviewees could respond to a vignette set in their respective countries. As such, this Diaspora research is connected to the global picture.

The self-reported birth countries and ethnicities of the MBDLJ interviewees, and their respective identifiers, are noted in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1. Birth country and ethnicity of MBDLJ respondents

Birth Country	Ethnicity	Interviewee(s)*
Burkina Faso	Mosi	MB1, MB4
Burkina Faso	Malenke	FB6
Egypt	Egyptian	MB6
Egypt	Jordanian	MB3
Iran	Persian	MB5, FB10
Jordan	Jordanian	FB4
Kazakhstan	Kazakh	FB7
Kazakhstan	Uzbek	MB7
Lebanon	Lebanese	FB5
Pakistan	Pakistani	FB2, MB9
Trinidad	Indian	FB3
Turkey	Turkish	MB2, FB9
United States	Bangladeshi	FB8
United States	Karachi (Caucasus)	MB8
United States	Pakistani	MB10
United States	Yemeni	FB1
"FB" = "female MBDLJ; "MB" = male MBDLJ		

This sample represents ten different birth countries, and fourteen different ethnic groups. Only one foreign-born MBDLJ, an Indian ethnic from Trinidad, was raised in a non-Muslim majority country. Two sets of interviewees were husband and wife couples, but neither couple shared an identical birth country-ethnicity match.

Two of the MBDLJs were completely unknown to me at the time of their interviews. These two interviews were arranged by church contacts. Another MBDLJ I met only once prior to the interview. I was familiar with the other seventeen through the Jesus for Muslims Network of churches and ministries, including several I knew very well. I was aware of the position on Retentionism of one MBDLJ prior to the interview. I refrained from interviewing another MBDLJ whom I was aware had a strong position

against Retentionism. Most MBDLJs in Metro New York are not familiar with the missiological debate surrounding Retentionism. I strove to find a mix of MBDLJs that featured diversity in age, gender, and ethnicity. All interviewees were conducted by me and in English. None of the interviewees previewed the interview questions.

Most of the MBDLJ interviewees are actively reaching out to their Muslim friends and neighbors. Two of the men are pastors of ethnic fellowships made up largely or entirely of MBDLJs. The thought crossed my mind as I analyzed their responses, "Perhaps one reason God has had me serving in this community is so I could meet many of these precious brothers and sisters in Christ and amplify their voices for the wider world." Their insights are keen and speak for themselves in so many cases.

Though these MBDLJs are presently living in Diaspora, many of them are enduring excruciating social and family pressure because of their decisions to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Many were disowned after their conversions to Christ. One was poisoned nearly to death. Another was recently blamed for a tragic death that occurred in his family. One of the women, a newer believer, shared how the people from her community are gossiping about her on the streets of New York. One woman even remarked to her, "Can you believe the daughter of so-and-so became an apostate?"

Interview Results

Like the Muslims, the MBDLJs responded to the Ahmed/Fatimeh vignette. They were asked one additional question regarding the effect of Retentionism on the role the Holy Spirit may play in the life of an MBDLJ.

Coded Questions: Muslim Tolerance of Faith Deviation

Six of the questions required the MBDLJ to project the responses of Ahmed/Fatimeh's family and friends. I applied the same type of analysis to the MBDLJs family/friend question responses as I did to the Muslim interviewee responses. Since these responses were categorized using the same coding system, they are again referred to as Coded Questions. "I" headings are responses when the lead character demonstrates interest in the gospel; "B" headings count responses when he/she believes in the gospel; "F" represents fellowship with other gospel believers. These are the same codes as in the previous chapter, and generated the responses in Table 7.1. The responses are grouped in the wider categories of Non-Negative (NN), Shepherding (S), and Punitive/Expulsive (PE), as in the previous chapter.

In general, the MBDLJs were more familiar with the challenges facing the Ahmed/Fatimeh figure than the Muslim interviewees. Several stated they have gone through the same experience as the Ahmed/Fatimeh character. Others stated they knew someone who had. The MBDLJ interviewees rendered 172 total responses to the 120 questions, as seen in Table 7.2. (The twenty Muslim interviewees provided 170 total responses to the same set of questions.) As in the Muslim interviews, some MBDLJs gave two-part answers to various questions. In many cases, the interviewee said, "It depends on what kind of friends," or, "It depends on what kind of family …" followed by two answers. Both answers were recorded in those cases. In other cases, the interviewee said one thing was likely to happen, followed by something else that was likely to happen. All of these responses counted equally. They were not weighted as halving dual answers. In three separate cases, respondents gave a three-part answer. Like in the

Muslim interviews, no differentiation existed between something the interviewee said would probably happen or would definitely happen. Since these were hypothetical questions based on a third-person vignette, counted equally as this seemed the most accurate way to capture their qualitative sentiments.

Table 7.2 column headings are: "I" for "interest" (the friends' response when the protagonist shows interest in the gospel), "B" for "belief" in the gospel, and "F" for "fellowship" with others who believe in the gospel.

Table 7.2. MBDLJ interview responses

	I-Friends	I-Family	B-Friends	B-Family	F-Friends	F-Family	Totals
Positive (P)	0	0	3	2	4	1	10
Condoning Exploration (CE)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Indifferent (IF)	1	2	1	1	0	2	7
Don't Know/Unsure (?)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Negative Response Totals (NN)	**1**	**2**	**4**	**3**	**4**	**3**	**17**
Critical Questioning (CQ)	7	3	1	1	1	1	14
Islamic Re-education: Informal (IRI)	4	1	3	1	3	2	14
Islamic Re-education: Formal (IRF)	1	4	0	0	0	0	5
Verbal Warnings & Threats (VWT)	7	9	2	5	6	1	30
Limiting Access to Forbidden (LA)	3	3	0	2	2	8	18
Mocking (M)	3	0	6	1	0	0	10
Shepherding Response Totals (S)	**25**	**20**	**12**	**10**	**12**	**12**	**91**
Arrange Punitive Marriage (PM)	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Ostracize (O)	1	0	8	0	5	0	14
Physical attacks (PA)	0	2	1	6	0	3	12
Expel/Disown/Excommunic./(EX)	0	0	3	12	3	9	27
Killing the apostate (K)	0	0	1	2	3	3	9
Punitive/Expulsive Totals (PE)	**1**	**2**	**13**	**22**	**11**	**15**	**64**

Table 7.2 reveals several important statistics. As with the Muslim interviewees, the MBDLJs responded that shepherding (S) functions would be the most likely response (91 of 172) in the hope of bringing the straying protagonist back to Islam. Punitive/expulsive (PE) responses ranked second, and non-negative (NN) ranked third. While the Muslim interviewees felt Islamic Re-Education: Informal (IRI) was the most likely shepherding tactic, the MBDLJs felt this would be Verbal Warnings and Threats (VWT).

The most common trend line was for family members to issue verbal warnings and threats in response to Ahmed/Fatimeh's interest in the gospel, and then expel or disown him or her when his or her belief in the gospel was discovered. If discovery did not occur until the fellowship stage, expulsion was still the most commonly cited response. Indeed, a majority of the MBDLJs (twelve of twenty) perceived that the family (Belief-Family question) would disown or expel (EX) Ahmed/Fatimah when he or she came to faith in the Bible and Christ as Lord. Nine of the twenty expected that the family (Fellowship-Family question) would likewise expel the protagonist for fellowshipping with likeminded believers. A Pakistani woman, FB2, stated that when Fatimeh showed interest in the gospel, her family would "keep her in the house;" however, when she came to faith in the gospel, that same family would "throw her out of the house" (2013).

The response summary changes if the focus is limited to the belief and fellowship stages. In this scenario, punitive/expulsive (PE) responses overtake the shepherding (S) responses by a count of sixty-one to forty-six. The MBDLJ interviewees felt the family and friends would employ shepherding tactics when the protagonist showed interest in biblical web sites. When the protagonist got to the point of believing in the gospel, or

fellowshipping with others who do, the MBDLJs rendered punitive/expulsive responses more commonly than shepherding responses. Ostracism (O) was largely the friends' equivalent to the family's expulsion. Half (ten of the twenty MBDLJs) felt the friends of the Ahmed/Fatimeh would ostracize him or her when they came to learn of his or her new beliefs or fellowshipping behavior.

Regarding other forms of persecution, nine total responses mentioned the credible threat or likelihood of the Ahmed/Fatimeh character being killed. Interestingly, six of the nine capital punishment responses came at the fellowship stage. These nine responses came from seven different interviewees, who envisioned a killing could happen in Jordan (two interviewees), Pakistan (two interviewees), Burkina Faso, Kazakhstan, and Yemen. The Burkina respondent, MB1, was poisoned several times in his home country because of his faith in Christ, but he lived through those attempts on his life. The Yemeni interviewee FB1 answered the "Fellowship-Friends" question by saying her friends would "tell on her. Her life would be at risk. If she was living in a village, anyone in the village could shoot her" (2013).

A Turkish MBDLJ, MB2, echoes this theme of rural-urban differences. In response to the Interest-Friends question, he asked for clarification about whether the scenario was playing out in a rural or urban setting. He stated, "City people have more exposure to the gospel and churches. However, so many rural people are moving to the cities that they are creating pockets of rural-thinking people in the cities" (MB2 2013). A woman also from Turkey, FB8, stated in response to "Interest-Friends," "They won't mind too much. We're talking about city folk" (2013).

The MBDLJs mentioned the likelihood of physical attacks twelve times. An Indian, FB3, commenting on her home country of Trinidad, states that when the family of Fatimeh learned of her beliefs, they would, "Throw her out of the house. They will think she was demon possessed and beat her. They will tell her she disgraced the family" (2013).

Two female MBDLJs (FB5 and FB8) stated that Fatimeh, if unmarried, would face punitive marriage to a strict Muslim man (2013). This severe form of persecution seeks to quash a woman's faith and ensure that her children are legally Muslim. The vignette merely stated the protagonist was in his or her early 20s, but did not specify the protagonist's marital status.

The Iranian interviewees MB5 and FB10 gave interesting outliers. These two provided over half (six of ten) of the positive (P) responses. The Persian man, MB5, stated that when Ahmed's friends came to know about him attending meetings with like-minded believers they would probably also go the meetings and come to faith. The Iranian woman, FB10, stated that the family would show interest in hearing about their daughter's newfound faith, responding to Belief-Family, "I heard about a story like this. In these cases, they would be patient, and could even come to know the Lord through her" (2013). She re-iterated on the Fellowship-Family question, "Nowadays, some family members are coming to the Lord through their children" (FB10 2013). In fact, this was the case for MB5's father. Many Iranians have rejected Islam as a unifying belief system, thus creating greater openness to the gospel in that country.

Non-Coded Questions

The Ahmed/Fatimeh narrative, while yielding important data, seeks primarily to set up the following five questions in the same vignette that inform the Retentionism debate:

The Same Jesus?

This question field-tests the comparative Christology question examined theologically in chapter four. Because of its importance to developing identity in Christ, all twenty answers are included. Furthermore, this data from twenty unique Muslim-born individuals, of whom we know their birth countries and ethnicities, is an asset to other students of this context, since similar data on this topic is virtually non-existent. Unlike the Muslim interviewees in the previous chapter, these MBDLJs have come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The narration describes the protagonist coming "fully to believe the Bible is true and that God has visited the earth in the form of Jesus Christ. He/she believes Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead." The interviewee is then asked: "Do you feel Ahmed/Fatimeh is now believing in the same Jesus he/she had been taught about as a Muslim? Why or why not?"

Table 7.3. MBDLJ responses for the same Jesus question

FBI	No. In Islam Jesus is just a prophet.
FB2	No. She now believes Jesus is Lord, not only a prophet.
FB3	No. As a Muslim, I was taught that Jesus is nothing.
FB4	No. Her mindset about Jesus will be different. It may be a struggle for her at first.
FB5	I don't think so, since '*Isa* is only a prophet and Muhammad is more important.
FB6	I don't think so. In Islam, they teach that Jesus didn't die. So it's different.
FB7	No. Because Jesus is God and visited the earth. She believes in His divinity. It's not like Islamic belief.

Table 7.3 continued	
FB8	Not at all. Because Jesus in Islam is not a Savior; He's just a prophet. It's definitely not the same Jesus. The Jesus they know of is not someone who can save.
FB9	No. The Jesus of Christianity is entirely different than the Jesus Muslims believe in. The first one is God walking on the earth, and who died on the cross.
FB10	No. Because Muslims don't believe Jesus was God who came to earth. He is a prophet—one degree lower than Muhammad—and a human like us.
MB1	No. He was brought up to believe that Jesus was only a prophet. Now he believes that Jesus is God in the flesh who died on the cross.
MB2	No. Because the Islamic Jesus and Biblical Jesus are different Jesuses. In Islam, Jesus is the #2 greatest prophet, but still only a prophet.
MB3	No. The turning point is recognizing the divinity of Jesus. Jesus of the Bible is not recognized as Lord in the Qur'an.
MB4	No. Jesus of the Qur'an was a simple prophet like others, and said Muhammad would come after. I never heard talk about *Nabi* (Prophet) '*Isa*. They were only talking about Muhammad.
MB5	No. Because he accepts Jesus as his Lord and God. Muslims don't believe Jesus is God.
MB6	No. In the Muslim religion, Jesus is just a prophet, exactly like Muhammad, whereas now he believes Jesus is God and part of the three in one.
MB7	No, since he now believes Jesus died for his sins and rose from the dead.
MB8	No. Jesus in the Qur'an is not deity. He's only a prophet in the Qur'an.
MB9	No. Because Jesus in Islam did not die and therefore he never resurrected.
MB10	No. There is clearly a difference between the Jesus of Christianity and the Jesus of Islam. In Islam, Jesus is a very, very respected prophet, but nothing more. Ahmed has now come to believe in something Muslims would consider blasphemous.

All twenty MBDLJ respondents assert that the Jesus the Ahmed/Fatimeh character has come to believe in is a different Jesus than he or she would have learned about growing up as a Muslim. Their unanimity corresponds with the conclusion of chapter four, that the biblical Jesus and the Qur'anic Jesus are two different and distinct identities. While the Muslim respondents affirmed this conclusion, they were not unanimous and unequivocal. It is also likely that MBDLJs have pondered this question significantly more than their Muslim counterparts have because of their decision to accept Christ as Lord and Savior.

The Bangladeshi-American woman, FB8, points out that the Islamic Jesus is shorn of His saving power, "Jesus in Islam is not a Savior; He's just a prophet. It's definitely not the same Jesus. The Jesus they know of is not someone who can save" (2013). Nine of the twenty MBDLJs specifically mention the divine nature of the biblical Jesus as setting Him apart from His Qur'anic namesake. Four of the MBDLJs point out the difference of Jesus' actions, in dying on the cross. Nine of the MBDLJs cite that Jesus' role in Islam, as nothing more than a prophet, is inconsistent with His biblical identity. Four interviewees even mention Jesus that the Islamic Jesus is considered inferior or equal to Muhammad in nature, even though the name of the Islamic prophet is never mentioned in the vignette.

The Mosi respondent, MB1, sums up the feelings of most of the cohort regarding the question coded "Same Jesus?" "No. He [Ahmed] was brought up to believe that Jesus was only a prophet. Now he believes that Jesus is God in the flesh who died on the cross" (2013). The other Mosi respondent, MB4, makes a comparative Christological statement, and then comments on his perceived role of Jesus in Islam, "No. Jesus of the Qur'an was a simple prophet like others, and said Muhammad would come after. I never heard talk about *Nabi Isa* (the Prophet Jesus). They were only talking about Muhammad" (2013).

Still Muslim?

This question, the key field research question of the dissertation, is labeled "Still Muslim?" It occurs in the vignette narrative after the fellowshipping questions. This point in the interview shows the Ahmed/Fatimeh character has come "fully to believe the Bible is true and that God has visited the earth in the form of Jesus Christ. He believes Jesus

died on the cross and rose from the dead." This question then asks, "Do you feel

Ahmed/Fatimeh is still a Muslim?"

All twenty MBDLJs answered "no," and most did without equivocation and

within a second of the question being asked. I immediately asked the follow up question,

"At what point did Ahmed/Fatimeh stop being a Muslim?" Because of the importance of

this question to the dissertation, all 20 responses are provided.

Table 7.4. MBDLJ interview responses to Still Muslim question

	Still Muslim?	When Left?
FBI	No.	When she believed Jesus died on the cross.
FB2	No.	When she accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior.
FB3	No.	When she gave her heart to the Lord.
FB4	No.	When she started fellowship with other believers.
FB5	No.	When she came to know that God died on the cross.
FB6	No.	I don't think she's still a Muslim because she believes Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.
FB7	No.	When she believed Jesus is Lord, God and Savior.
FB8	No.	Because she's believing in Jesus as God and Savior and is not believing in Allah.
FB9	No.	I don't believe she's a Muslim anymore. Once you believe Christ is God, you are not a Muslim.
FB10	No.	She believes in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
MB1	No.	When he showed interest he was still a seeker. When he became a believer, he found the truth and left the bondage.
MB2	No.	What does it mean to be a Muslim? It means submitted to Muhammad and Islam.
MB3	No.	When he accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior.
MB4	No.	When he received Jesus Christ in his life.
MB5	No.	Because he believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior, which is not the same belief a Muslim has.
MB6	No.	If you define Muslim as the religion he believes in, that Muhammad is the seal of the prophets, and the Qur'an is the Word of God, then he is not a Muslim.
MB7	No.	When he believed Jesus is God. Muslims don't believe Jesus is God, but a prophet before the last prophet, Muhammad.
MB8	No.	Because he put his faith in Christ and believes in Him as deity.
MB9	No.	Because he no longer believes in the fundamentals of Islam—the *shahada*—that Muhammad is the last prophet and Allah is God.

Table 7.4 continued		
MB10	No.	Once he believed in things incompatible with Islam. The way the word Muslim is commonly used, he would not be. 'Muslim' means subscribing to a set of beliefs. Now his beliefs are incompatible. To some degree it comes down to semantics.

This question is the most direct query regarding Retentionism, and one upon which this dissertation hinges. While the Muslim respondents were strongly against Retentionism, the MBDLJs came out unanimously against it. All twenty MBDLJs reject the idea that the Ahmed/Fatimeh character is still a Muslim. Specifically the Ahmed/Fatimeh character is reported as believing the Bible is true, and that God visited the earth in the form of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and rose from the dead. These MBDLJs follow the Muslim interviewees in rejecting the idea that a person who holds such beliefs is actually a Muslim. Thirteen of the twenty mentioned belief in the Divinity and/or saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the point at which the protagonist became a non-Muslim.

As the answers indicate, the MBDLJs perceive this issue as being all about beliefs. No one offered the possibility of the protagonist remaining a Muslim culturally but a non-Muslim religiously. No one argued, "once a Muslim, always a Muslim." This indicates that the MBDLJs viewed the term Muslim as a religious identifier based on beliefs. When the protagonist's beliefs changed, he or she ceased to be a Muslim. Only FB4 reasoned that Fatimeh's fellowshipping with other believers marked the point at which she ceased to be a Muslim (2013). Again, the MBDLJs track closely with the Muslim interviewees on this question.

Several of the respondents made statements regarding their perceptions of the term Muslim. The Egyptian, MB6, states, "If you define Muslim as the religion he

believes in, that Muhammad is the seal of the prophets, and the Qur'an is the Word of

God, then he is not a Muslim" (2013). A Turkish man, MB2, asks a rhetorical question,

then answers it, "What does it mean to be a Muslim? It means submitted to Muhammad

and Islam" (2013). The American-born Muslim, MB10, parses out the definition of

Muslim, "The way the word Muslim is commonly used, he would not be. 'Muslim'

means subscribing to a set of beliefs. Now his beliefs are incompatible. To some degree it

comes down to semantics" (2013). Regarding the semantic aspect, these twenty MBDLJs

are unwilling to include in their conception of Muslim a person who has come to believe

in the biblical narrative about Jesus Christ.

Fifteen of the twenty MBDLJs interviewed in this research were born outside the

United States. Furthermore, all of the United States-born Muslims have visited their

ancestral homelands. While interviews with MBDLJs in Muslim countries are plagued by

internal threats to validity, based on interviewees' natural concerns that their responses

may become known, this interviewee pool seemed very free to speak openly and honestly

about a process that all of them had personally gone through.

Continued Claim of Muslim Identity

This question is a nuanced version of the previous one. The last question asked

whether the interviewee considered the Ahmed/Fatimeh character a Muslim. This

question asked whether it was right for the protagonist to continue identifying as a

Muslim on a permanent basis, "Though he has come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord,

God and Savior, Ahmed continues to state that he is a Muslim—telling people he is

submitted to God through Jesus Christ. He continues to attend prayers in the mosque on

Fridays and Islamic holidays there. Do you think Ahmed is right to continue identifying

himself as a Muslim? Why or why not?"

Table 7.5. MBDLJ responses to right to continue identifying as a Muslim

FBI	This is not right. A Muslim must believe Muhammad is the last prophet.
FB2	That is wrong. When you accept Jesus as Lord and Christ you should not say you're Muslim.
FB3	No. She should really be calling herself a Christian if she has the commitment to Christ.
FB4	No she should not. If she does, it means the roots of Islam are still bothering her.
FB5	What does it mean that she says she is a Muslim? Does she mean still a Muslim in the old way? If you are submitted to God in Jesus Christ, that means you are not a Muslim.
FB6	I was doing this for 3-4 years—telling people I'm a Muslim who believes in Jesus, not Muhammad. They said I was crazy. They said if you are a Muslim you have to believe in Muhammad. If you do not believe in Muhammad, you are not a Muslim. After the 3-4 years of this, I was 17 at the time, I told people I just believe in Christ. I am a Christian, I am not a Muslim. My dad was mad. He said I betrayed the family, but he did not want to cut off the relationship.
FB7	No. There is something wrong with her heart.
FB8	She really is no longer a Muslim. If she doesn't know that, she must need more discipling. If she gets closer to God, she will realize she is not a Muslim.
FB9	I'm totally against that. I took the Perspectives course and they teach that. But I don't agree with that. You can't have it both ways. Christ and Islam are exact opposites.
FB10	No. Because the God of Islam is totally different than our Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot serve two gods. The masterpiece of Satan was creating Islam. It is the deepest darkness.
MB1	No. As soon as you believe in Christ and join a worshipping body of believers you cannot continue to be a Muslim. You made a commitment. To remain a Muslim is to deny his faith.
MB2	No.
MB3	No.

Table 7.5 continued	
MB4	Yes. When an African is about 20, he can state his own identity. Before that, he cannot state his own identity. He only has his family's identity. In my case, I was 21 and I had been hiding to go to church. But the family would say everyone would go to the mosque today. I had to go but I just prayed to Jesus in my heart. This went on more than a year. Then, I told my family I will pray at home (not at the mosque). One day my oldest brother doubted me. They sent an Islamic teacher to my house and a small class was formed. However, I couldn't learn the Qur'an. I couldn't keep it (in my memory). Then I refused to go to the class. My father was out of town. My oldest brother found out and he beat me. Then I prayed, "Jesus if you are the Son of God who I believe in, make the teacher stop coming to my house." After that the teacher got in trouble. The story circulated that he was dating a madam. And the class stopped. I was still going to the church in hiding. I was afraid. I would sit on my prayer mat, but pray to Jesus. I had another Muslim friend in my situation, and we started praying together in his house. Only my mother and my sister-in-law knew about my true faith. After one year of praying with my friend, I won the green card lottery to go to the United States. After I left, everyone found out.
MB5	No. He is denying Christ by doing so. It's one or the other.
MB6	I don't think so. He's not right to identify himself as a Muslim. Either you're a Muslim or a Christian. You can't be both.
MB7	It's hard to say. You can't rip him out of his community. But I don't think he can say he is a Muslim. He has to identify himself as a follower of Christ. How will he testify about Christ if he does not?
MB8	No. Now he's compromising. He can't do this continually.
MB9	This is about semantics. He thinks he is a Muslim by his own interpretation. I would not agree with him doing this because he's disguising himself as a Muslim. He does not want to deal with the repercussions the Muslims are going to give him. He is trying to maintain allegiance to two different Gods. Fundamentally, the God of the Bible and the God of the Qur'an are not the same.
MB10	Practically speaking, I would have patience with him. Ultimately, maybe a few years down the road, it would be a bit deceptive to the Muslim community. I wouldn't feel comfortable with that. At some point there should be a public identification with Christ, and make it known through public baptism.

Again, the MBDLJs reject the concept of Retentionism. The only MBDLJ who

answered in the affirmative actually misunderstood the question as not whether Ahmed

was right to continue identifying himself as a Muslim, but whether he had the right to

continue identifying himself as a Muslim. I realized afterward that I should have clarified

the question, but I failed to do so during the interview. As such, the sole positive

respondent was merely stating that a person over the age of twenty, in his African

country, had the right to declare his religion. Prior to that age, the family conferred religious identity.

The MBDLJs take a strong position against permanent retention of Muslim identity by the Ahmed/Fatimeh character. Apparently, FB9, a Turkish MBDLJ, had heard in the Perspectives course an affirmation of Retentionism, but she rejects that teaching. Instead, she gives an apt summary statement regarding the predicament of Ahmed/Fatimeh, "You can't have it both ways" (FB9 2013).

The respondent from Burkina Faso, FB6, was a teenage girl growing up in Burkina Faso when she met Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In her spiritual journey, she underwent the identity ordeal so common to many new believers. In her case, she tried to present herself as a Muslim by "telling people I'm a Muslim who believes in Jesus, not Muhammad" (2013). Her Muslim friends and family responded to this by telling her she was "crazy." "They said if you are a Muslim you have to believe in Muhammad" (FB6 2013).

The Uzbek MB7 and the Pakistani-American MB10 encourage patience and grace, since coming to faith in Christ can indeed become a traumatic experience for a Muslim. Nevertheless, they insist on public identification with Christ at some point (2013). Permanent retention of Muslim identity is not an option for a disciple of Christ.

The Pakistani, MB9, indicates the Ahmed figure may seek to avoid persecution through Retentionism, "He thinks he is a Muslim by his own interpretation. I would not agree with him doing this because he's disguising himself as a Muslim. He does not want to deal with the repercussions the Muslims are going to give him" (2013). Here MB9 concurs with the *'ulama* who indicated in the previous chapter that the term Muslim is

not a term individuals can re-interpret according to their own thinking (2013). None of

these twenty MBDLJs felt Muslim identity was unchangeable. None stated anything

about remaining a cultural Muslim. The West African MB1 feels Ahmed's insistence on

continued Muslim identity is a denial of Christ, "To remain a Muslim is to deny his

faith." The Iranian MB5 echoes this reply: "He is denying Christ by doing so. It's one or

the other" (2013).

Continued Mosque Attendance

The question of continued mosque attendance moves the discussion from

theology to practice. The MBDLJs answered the question, "Is it right for person who

believes what Ahmed believes to continue attending the mosque? Why or why not?"

Table 7.6. MBDLJ responses to continued mosque attendance

FBI	It's not right to continue. She should leave when she's ready, but if she stops attending she puts herself in danger.
FB2	No. If you believe in Jesus as Lord and God, you should not stay in the mosque.
FB3	No. She can't.
FB4	No. It will not build her up.
FB5	No. She is going on a new way. The old ways have to change. Even the Muslims will tell her: "Get out of here; it's not your place."
FB6	I don't think it's right. But if you don't want to get in trouble, I think it's a good choice. You can go there and just pray to Jesus.
FB7	If she goes there to pray and listen to the Qur'an, that is wrong. If she goes there to preach the gospel and to testify that Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life, that is ok.
FB8	She might spare her life in doing that, especially if she has no other options, like another place to go, if she breaks with Islam. However, at some point there are going to be some contradictions she is just going to have to face in staying in the mosque. I can understand her being consciously silent. I wouldn't judge it. It might be her only way of surviving.
FB9	Ever since I came to the Lord, I can't go to the Muslim prayers. Even when my relatives died, I avoided going to the mosque. I can't even take the name of Allah in my mouth.
FB10	No. She has to choose to honor the Lord and not deny Him by going to the mosque. You cannot serve the devil and serve God.
MB1	No. He cannot compromise. He cannot go back.

Table 7.6 continued	
MB2	No. This person (Ahmed) will never grow in the faith! In the mosque, the imam reads a small portion of Qur'an, then *Sura Fatiha*. Then he declares the *shahada*, and the people all say "*Ameen*" (amen). Ahmed cannot say *ameen* to Muhammad and *ameen* to Jesus.
MB3	No, except for evangelism or befriending or loving Muslims.
MB4	It is a matter of age. If he is young, he has no choice.
MB5	No. Either you are a Christian or a Muslim. You cannot be both.
MB6	He should immerse himself with the Christian lifestyle, not the Muslim lifestyle. He should just go to the home group, Bible study, or church.
MB7	We don't know Islamic (Arabic) language and you can't pray in Uzbek language. It's not like praying in tongues. When you pray in tongues, you know you are praising God. But in Arabic you could be praying evil words you don't understand. So I'm not gonna pray Islamic prayers.
MB8	No. He could go there once to announce his faith in Christ, but he could not go there continually.
MB9	No. He should no longer be worshipping a god he no longer believes in.
MB10	I would encourage him to develop an exit strategy. He should transition out. If he has an intentional missional mindset, I could understand him staying in the mosque as a covert witness. But witnessing in the mosque brings up a lot of gray areas. When the people in the mosque ask him about Jesus, he would have to make sure he was not deceptive. I don't think there is something inherently wrong with doing prostrations, as long as he is praying to Jesus and praying for the people around him. But this is the exception to the rule. Normally he should transition out of the mosque.

A Turkish MBDLJ in ministry, MB2, makes an important contribution to the discussion in taking on the question of perpetual mosque attendance by MBDLJs, "This person will never grow" (MB2 2013). His rationale is that Ahmed, if he continues in the mosque, will have his loyalties divided between Muhammad and the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives specific liturgical rationale why this is so, "In the mosque, the imam reads a small portion of Qur'an, then *Sura Fatiha* (the first *sura* of the Qur'an). Then he declares the *shahada*, and the people all say '*Ameen*' (amen). Ahmed cannot say '*ameen*' to Muhammad and '*ameen*' to Jesus" (MB2 2013).

The response of MB2 raises the question of discipleship, which is considered a key issue by most people I know in Muslim ministry. Mosi MB1, from Burkina Faso,

feels continued mosque attendance is a "compromise" (2013). Iranian FB10 believes

Fatimeh is denying Christ by going to the mosque.

> The United States-born MBDLJ (MB10) gives a thoughtful yet nuanced response:

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

First, MB10 encourages the Ahmed figure not to deceive the other mosque attendees, yet

he sees no inherent problem in praying to Jesus, or praying for other Muslims in the

mosque. (Respondents FB7 and MB3 were the only other MBDLJ interviewees who felt

continued mosque attendance could have missional benefit.) Though MB10 recommends

a missional mindset that many Retentionism advocates use to justify continued mosque

attendance by MBDLJs, he nevertheless feels the protagonist should develop an exit

strategy and transition out of the mosque. The complexity of this answer reflects the

challenge facing many MBDLJs who have recently come to faith in Christ.

A Bangladeshi-American who has visited Bangladesh, FB8, articulates additional

complexities associated with continued mosque attendance, "She might spare her life in

doing that, especially if she has no other options, like another place to go, if she breaks

with Islam. However, at some point there are going to be some contradictions she is just

going to have to face in staying in the mosque. I can understand her being consciously

silent. I wouldn't judge it. It might be her only way of surviving" (FB8 2013).

This female respondent, FB8, only provided one punitive/expulsive answer in the

coded question section, and that was to suggest regarding Fatimeh, "If she's unmarried,

she'd be married off to a strict Muslim man" (2013). Nevertheless, FB8 feels that continued mosque attendance might be a life-saving mechanism to stave off severe persecution. Her empathy for Fatimeh is tempered by her understanding of the contradictions Fatimeh will face for continued mosque attendance. The Yemeni-American FB1 also concedes, "If she stops, she puts herself in danger" (2013).

An Iranian woman, FB10, feels the issue of continued mosque attendance is a Lordship issue for Fatimeh, "She has to choose to honor the Lord and not deny Him by going to the mosque. You cannot serve the devil and serve God" (2013). The Uzbek MB7 also cites spiritual implications that discourage continuing to pray in the mosque, "We don't know Islamic (Arabic) language and you can't pray in Uzbek language. It's not like praying in tongues. When you pray in tongues, you know you are praising God. But in Arabic you could be praying evil words you don't understand. So I'm not gonna pray Islamic prayers" (2013).

Impact of Retentionism on the Holy Spirit's Role in the Life of the MBDLJ

This final question flows from the previous two questions as the protagonist continues to claim Muslim identity and continues to worship in the mosque, "How do you think Ahmed's decision regarding maintaining Muslim identity and mosque attendance affect the role that the Holy Spirit is able to play in his/her life?" All 20 responses are included in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7. MBDLJ responses to role of Holy Spirit question

FBI	By continuing to attend the mosque, she leaves herself open to the lies and the negativity. And that can affect your faith walk. The mosque experience penetrates the heart. You develop a false sense of sisterhood with Muslim women.
FB2	That I can't say.

Table 7.7 continued	
FB3	The Holy Spirit called me to come out of the mosque. The Holy Spirit drew me to a church. The mosque isolated me and rejected me.
FB4	She will grieve the Holy Spirit if she does this. For me, it was a struggle until I received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.
FB5	Yes. The Holy Spirit is teaching her not to go there, because Jesus is not there. You need to have a new way with a new attitude. Why should she go to the mosque? To please them? This will only cause confusion.
FB6	Maybe God can use her in the mosque to change people there. But I believe she should leave at some point. I know a person who does this. I told him it's not fair. God said you have to confess your faith. If you stay in the mosque you are trying to hide your faith.
FB7	I had this situation come up with one person. I asked God, "Why is she doing that?" She is putting Muslim people in confusion. She is closing the door to the Holy Spirit working in her life. She's still relying on her own righteousness by doing *namaz* (prayers, *salat*). But the Holy Spirit is giving that righteousness for free. You don't have to work for it. There is something wrong in her heart. She has to give that to God.
FB8	Understanding that she can't be both can be a life-long process. I still believe you can't be both. Even if she has not matured to that point, the Holy Spirit can still work. I don't think God is limited. But even if she remains a secret believer, I don't think the Holy Spirit will stop speaking to her. He understands what we are going through.
FB9	I am no judge of the Holy Spirit. Only He can understand what she is doing. If she has a good reason, He will understand. One day she may burst out in the mosque, "Jesus Christ is Lord!"
FB10	(It will effect it her) One hundred percent. The fact is she is denying Christ before the others. She is not taking up her cross, which she should do even if it costs her life. The Holy Spirit only comes to glorify Jesus. She's not declaring what the Holy Spirit is doing—glorifying Jesus. I went to visit my country (Iran) once to visit my family. My family told me to tell the customs officials that I was a Muslim, if they should ask. I told them, "No. I will tell them clearly that I am a Christian." (When told that no names are being revealed in this research she replied, "Please use my real name...I will spell it out....")
MB1	Jesus will not send the Holy Spirit to those who deny Him before people, or who compromise or who are ashamed of Christ. Jesus will not pray to the Father to give them the Holy Spirit.
MB2	I don't want to go to the mosque and listen to the Qur'an. Muslim background believers need to state their new identity.
MB3	The Holy Spirit will deal with him according to his conscience and intentions. It may bother his conscience if he continues to say he is a Muslim. In my opinion, it's wrong to say he is a Muslim.
MB4	At a certain point, you have to declare yourself. But it is not about religion, it is about faith.
MB5	He is avoiding the Holy Spirit's work in his life. God does what God wants to do, but Ahmed is not allowing God to work in his life. He's not following Jesus 100 percent. I went through the same thing until God showed me this.

Table 7.7 continued	
MB6	If he has accepted Jesus Christ and is really sincere about his belief, then the Holy Spirit can work wherever he goes (to witness) -- if he goes to a mosque or a bar. It depends on the sincerity of his relationship with Jesus Christ.
MB7	It will grieve the Holy Spirit. If you become a follower of Christ, you must find a family, a church, to pray together—if you can find that.
MB8	Yes. When you do the Islamic prayers, you are professing that Muhammad is the final messenger and Islam is the truth. If he professes that, he denies the truth of Christianity. You cannot profess both.
MB9	Putting myself in the story, I believe it would limit the ability of the Holy Spirit to work in Ahmed. He is not fully devoted to one belief system. In one belief system, the Holy Spirit does not exist. In Islam, the Holy Spirit is considered to be Muhammad. In the other belief system, the Holy Spirit exists. Ahmed is turning the Holy Spirit on and off in his life.
MB10	It's hard to quantify. My instinct is that these things would negatively affect him. As a Charismatic, I believe in spiritual forces of darkness. In settings like a mosque there are spiritual strongholds present. If he submits his spirit and mind to them, it could affect him and keep the Holy Spirit from speaking to him.

Several of the MBDLJ interviewees feel the protagonist will come under negative spiritual influences by retaining Muslim identity and attending the mosque. The United States-born MB10 states, "I believe in spiritual forces of darkness. In settings like a mosque there are spiritual strongholds present" (2013). The Yemeni-background woman, FB1, comments, "By continuing to attend the mosque, she leaves herself open to the lies and the negativity. And that can affect your faith walk. The mosque experience penetrates the heart" (2013).

Four female interviewees described how Retentionism may limit the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the protagonist. Jordanian FB4 insists, "She will grieve the Holy Spirit if she does this" (2013). The Lebanese woman FB5 states, "The Holy Spirit is teaching her not to go there, because Jesus is not there" (2013). Kazakh FB7 recounts a similar story, "I had this situation come up with one person. I asked God, 'Why is she doing that?' She is putting Muslim people in confusion. She is closing the door to the

Holy Spirit working in her life" (2013). The Iranian FB10 declares that Retentionism will affect the role the Holy Spirit is able to play in Fatimeh's life, "One hundred percent. The fact is that she is denying Christ before the others. She is not taking up her cross, which she should do even if it costs her life. The Holy Spirit only comes to glorify Jesus. She's not declaring what the Holy Spirit is doing—glorifying Jesus" (2013).

The general trajectory of the male MBDLJ responses is similar. The MBDLJ from Burkina Faso, MB1, states, "Jesus will not send the Holy Spirit to those who deny Him before people, or who compromise or who are ashamed of Christ. Jesus will not pray to the Father to give them the Holy Spirit" (2013). Jordanian MB3 feels that Ahmed's continual claims to Muslim identity may negatively affect his conscience, and that the Holy Spirit will have to deal with him about this (2013). Iranian MB5 feels the protagonist "is avoiding the Holy Spirit's work in his life" (2013).

Uzbek MB7 also mentions that Retentionism may "grieve the Holy Spirit" (2013). Pakistani MB9 self-identifies with the Ahmed figure and pronounces, "Putting myself in the story, I believe it would limit the ability of the Holy Spirit to work in Ahmed. He is not fully devoted to one belief system. In one belief system, the Holy Spirit does not exist. In Islam, the Holy Spirit is considered to be Muhammad. In the other belief system, the Holy Spirit exists. Ahmed is turning the Holy Spirit on and off in his life" (2013). Although MB9's connection of the Holy Spirit to Muhammad is not necessarily a majority opinion in Islam, he nevertheless concludes that Retentionism can result in spiritual vacillation and impede the biblical Holy Spirit's work in Ahmed's life (2013).

Several MBDLJ interviewees, such as FB8, felt the protagonist's continued claim to Muslim identity and continued mosque attendance would not limit the role of the Holy

Spirit (2013). The Egyptian MB6, as well as FB6 from Burkina Faso, felt the Holy Spirit could empower the protagonist as a witness in the mosque, even though FB6 ultimately sided against continued mosque attendance (2013). There were several MBDLJs who were indifferent about this question, such as FB2, who is the newest believer of the cohort, and FB9, who says she "is no judge of the Holy Spirit" (2013).

Control Group Comparisons on Muslim Tolerance

The use of control groups helps explain variance in field phenomena. This research, however, has revealed a relative uniformity of MBDLJ answers on the Retentionism question. The data nevertheless yield several valuable comparisons on how the various sub-groupings of the interviews anticipate Muslims tolerate faith deviation. I present these comparisons below.

United States-Raised Interviewees versus Overseas-Raised Interviewees

This section compares and contrasts the responses of the United States-born or raised MBDLJs with those MBDLJs who were raised overseas. I include the interviewee who immigrated when he was one year old with the former group, since his life experience will have tracked more closely with that of the United States-born interviewees. For that reason, I call the comparative cohorts "MBDLJs Raised outside the United States" and "MBDLJs Raised in the United States." This study compares the views of Muslims raised in Diaspora with those who were not.

The five United States-raised MBDLJs form one-quarter (25 percent) of the MBDLJ cohort. This allows for a ready comparison with the fifteen (75 percent) foreign-born MBDLJs. To frame the context, the United States-born or raised interviewees have

ethnicities of Pakistani (two), Bangladeshi, Yemeni, and the Karachi Muslim region in the Russian Caucasus.

The five United States-raised MBDLJs have taken a similar position rejecting Retentionism, as have their foreign-born counterparts. All of these United States-raised MBDLJs have dealt at a deep level with the issue of coming to faith in Christ and identity transformation. I am aware that at least eleven of the MBDLJ respondents experienced significant family pressure for their faith decision. Several were disowned. One still wears a veil in public, but rejects the premise that a person who believes Jesus died on the cross remains a Muslim.

Since the data indicate no appreciable variance in the non-coded questions on Retentionism, I apply this analysis only to the coded questions in the vignette. The purpose of this comparison is to assess whether the United States-raised MBDLJs feel the straying Ahmed/Fatimeh figure will meet a similar reception as predicted by the overseas-raised cohort. Once again, all interviewees were asked to envision the hypothetical scenario taking place in their birth country or ancestral home country. As such, this is a study of the interviewees' perception of the tolerance of Muslims in their respective homelands.

The following table compares the responses of MBDLJs raised outside the United States to those raised in the United States. Since there are three times as many (fifteen versus five) interviewees in the former group, I have multiplied the statistics in the second column by a factor of three to allow for direct numerical comparison.

Table 7.8. Raised in United States versus raised outside United States

	MBDLJs Raised Outside United States	MBDLJs Raised in United States (weighted x3)
Positive (P)	9	3
Condoning Exploration (CE)	0	0
Indifferent (I)	7	0
Don't Know/Unsure (?)	0	0
Non-Negative Responses (NN)	**16**	**3**
Critical Questioning (CQ)	10	12
Islamic Re-education: Informal (IRI)	11	9
Islamic Re-education: Formal (IRF)	4	3
Verbal Warnings & Threats (VWT)	20	30
Limiting Access to the Forbidden (LA)	11	21
Mocking	10	0
Shepherding Responses (S)	**66**	**75**
Arrange Punitive Marriage (PM)	1	3
Ostracize (O)	14	0
Physical Attacks (PA)	7	15
Expel/Disown/Excommunicate (EX)	19	24
Killing the Apostate (K)	4	15
Punitive/Expulsive Responses (PE)	**45**	**57**

The general observation flowing from this comparison is that the United States-raised interviewees track closely with their foreign-born counterparts. Shepherding (S) remains the most cited category of responses for both groups, with verbal warnings and threats as the overall leading response. Punitive/expulsive (PE) runs second for both groups and non-negative (NN) finishes third.

The United States-raised cohort did not envision as many non-negative (NN) responses as the foreign-born respondents, but this finding must take into consideration

the foreign-born Iranian MBDLJs, who volunteered over half of the total positive (P) responses. The United States-raised cohort tracked closely with the immigrants regarding expulsion (EX). They were, however, more likely to envision a scenario in which the Ahmed/Fatimeh character might be killed.

Muslim Interviewees versus MBDLJ Interviewees

Another relevant comparison is that of responses of the Muslim interviewees with those of the MBDLJ interviewees. Since there was no appreciable difference regarding their views on Retentionism, I compare their views on tolerance from the coded questions. The responses are grouped by category. The breakout of the data is found in the previous chapter for the Muslims and in this chapter for the MBDLJs.

Table 7.9. Comparison of Muslim and MBDLJ responses

Comparison of Muslim and MBDLJ Responses by Category					
Category of Response	Muslim Responses			MBDLJ Responses	
Non-Negative (NN)	56	33%		17	10%
Shepherding (S)	87	51%		91	53%
Punitive/Expulsive (PE)	27	16%		64	37%

The data reflect some similarities and some differences. The number of shepherding responses is similar between the two cohorts, with shepherding the leading category for both. The MBDLJs were much more likely to envision punitive/expulsive responses, which came in second place for their cohort. For the Muslims, the non-negative category came in second.

Figure 7.1 presents the number of responses by category for both the Muslim and MBDLJ cohorts. The responses of each cohort are divided between those of the protagonist's "Friends" and "Family."

Figure 7.1. Friends and family comparison
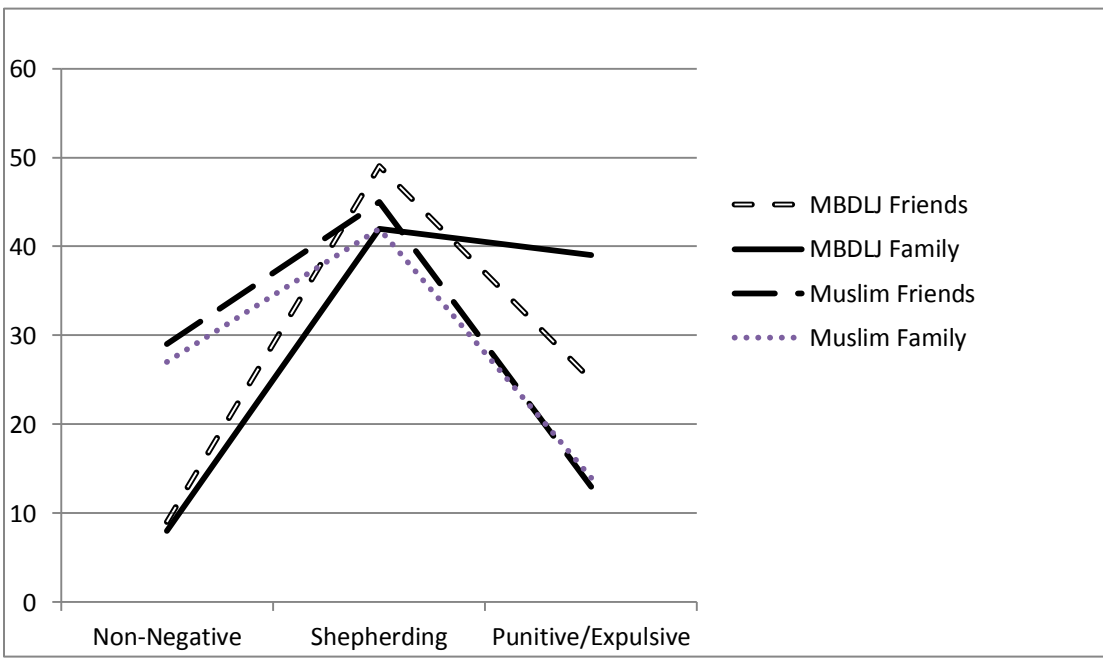
In summary, three statements can be made from this line graph. First, since the Friend and Family lines for the Muslim interviewees almost overlay each other, the Muslim interviewees do not anticipate a big difference between Friend and Family responses throughout the protagonist's process of faith deviation. Second, the MBDLJ interviewees, on the other hand, feel the protagonist's Family members will respond more harshly than would the Friends, as reflected in the punitive/expulsive category. Third, the Muslim interviewees are more likely to anticipate tolerant, non-negative responses than are the MBDLJ cohort.

According to the number of responses, the Muslim interviewees hoped that the straying protagonist might return to Islam through what is categorized as "Islamic re-education: informal" (IRI). This includes many forms of counseling from the friends and families themselves, using the Qur'an and *hadith* in an attempt to counter the new beliefs

Ahmed/Fatimeh came to hold. The Muslim interviewees were more than twice as likely (forty-one to sixteen) than the MBDLJs to anticipate this particular response.

The Muslim interviewees were nearly four times as likely (twenty-seven to seven) to expect an indifferent (IF) response to the protagonist's actions and beliefs. Likewise, the Muslim interviewees cited twenty-three times that Islam allows a Muslim to explore other religions, but none of the MBDLJs mentioned this. MBDLJs cited mocking (M) responses more frequently (ten to eight), as well as execution (nine to four). Both interviewee cohorts felt ostracism (O) was a likely response to the spiritual journey undertaken by Ahmed/Fatimeh. Ostracism ranked third among MBDLJ total responses with fourteen citations, and fifth among Muslim responses, with twelve. This has implications for Retentionism, since ostracism puts the believer on the outside of his or her socioreligious, kinship, and friendship group.

There are two reasons for these differences between MBDLJ and Muslim responses. First, Muslims in Metro New York are less inclined to represent Islam as a harsh and expulsive religion. This concurs with Islamic *da'wa* (missions) in the West to present the religion as tolerant. To an extent, they were representing Islam and wanted to portray it in a more positive light, while the MBDLJs were not prone to this same inclination. Second, many of the Muslims had not thought much about apostasy previously, while the MBDLJs would have naturally given the subject much thought.

Conclusion

The MBDLJs join the Muslim interviewees in rejecting Retentionism. All twenty of the MBDLJ interviewees state that a person is no longer a Muslim who comes to believe the Bible is true and that Jesus is God in the flesh. Furthermore, the

overwhelming theme of the rationales is that such a person is disqualified theologically from retaining the status of a Muslim. The main reason for their position is the dramatically different picture and role of Jesus Christ in the Bible compared with that of Jesus in Islamic revelatory literature.

These MBDLJs complimented their respective commentaries on the vignette with many personal testimonials. To summarize, they felt that coming to believe in the biblical narrative about Jesus Christ brought them salvation and an eventual cessation to their identity as Muslims. They also felt that the Holy Spirit led them away from this Muslim identity and mosque participation. They declared that to continue with Muslim identity was a form of spiritual compromise that offended, grieved, or at least delayed the full release of the Holy Spirit's work in spiritually transforming their lives.

The data culled in these two field-research chapters require analysis for their impact on theory development. Specifically, the interview results will help theoretical formulation about Retentionism. Combined with the theological research in chapters three and four, the field research provides the data needed to assess whether Muslim-born persons believe a Muslim can permanently retain Muslim identity if he or she comes to believe in the biblical Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 8

THEORY DEVELOPMENT

This dissertation focuses on a key missiological issue in ministry to Muslims: can Muslims permanently retain Muslim identity if they come to believe the biblical narrative that Jesus Christ, as God in the flesh, came to this world to die on the cross for the sins of humanity and then rise from the dead? The term "Retentionism" represents the concept of permanent retention of Muslim identity by Muslim background disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ (MBDLJs). Retentionism is the foundation upon which Muslim Insider Movement missiology rests, since proponents of Retentionism advocate permanent retention of Muslim identity by Muslims who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The concept of Insider Movements in the Muslim context is completely dependent on permanent retention of Muslim identity by MBDLJs. According to Rebecca Lewis' definition of insider movements, movements of this type do not exist without Retentionism (2007, 75).

The purpose statement for this dissertation develops components of a theory of Muslim identity by examining in what ways and to what extent Muslim-born persons in Metro New York perceive permanently retaining Muslim identity is compatible with being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. This chapter develops the components of a theory of Muslim identity on the basis of the following work: core assumptions and assertions of the Retentionist argument, Islamic sources on Muslim identity, and field

research that crystallizes two streams of input—the perceptions of Muslim-born persons living in Metro New York, and the perceptions of MBDLJs living in Metro New York. After the review and explication of the theoretical components, I consider the missiological corollaries that flow from these components. The chapter concludes with several future considerations and recommendations for further research.

The Case for Retentionism

Retentionism, also known popularly as Insider Movements, constitutes a bold missiological innovation by offering a new and expanded concept of Muslim identity. By arguing that Muslims can permanently retain Muslim identity and simultaneously be disciples of the Lord Jesus, Retentionism advocates have claimed ostensibly to have untied the 1,400 year old Gordian Knot in ministry to Muslims. Where historical Christian missions to Muslims met much resistance and bore little fruit, Retentionists claim significant movements to Christ among Muslims. Fouad Accad claims a 60 percent conversion ratio with his Insider evangelism method that keeps Muslims in the good graces of the Muslim community (1997, 10). Retentionists in Bangladesh have claimed over half a million decisions for Christ (Rutz 2006). I personally recall seeing reports of these large numbers of conversions in missionary newsletters, and rejoicing over this welcome news. These Retentionist claims, however, lack independent verification, and the overall Retentionist missiology has escaped significant scrutiny due to the cloak of secrecy Retentionists have thrown over their work (Dixon 2012). This research is the first dissertation on Insider Movements published by a Muslim-background person, and it intentionally seeks to bring to the missiological debate the views of Muslim-born persons

on whether this expanded definition of Muslim identity is valid in the eyes of Muslim-born persons.

Several assumptions underlie Retentionism, and are used to justify its implementation on the field. First, as described in chapter two, Western missionaries in the 1970s were able to successfully advance and propagate the diagnosis that missionary "extractionism" was the cause of anemic results in missions to Muslims. Charles Kraft was the leading advocate of this position. He argued that missional results could be improved by deeming that mosques may serve as "dynamic equivalent churches" and that Muslims could become "Muslim Christians," thus retaining their Muslim identity (Kraft 1979, 119).

Insider Missiology has been prescriptive in nature rather than a description of events on the field. The watershed North American Conference on Muslim Evangelism, held in Colorado in 1978, at which Kraft's revolutionary ideas were promulgated, is an example of this dynamic. The prescriptive missiological theory was advanced at the beginning of the conference, while the field reports came at the end. Reverend Richard Bailey, who presented the Central Asia field report at NACME, notes, "The field reports in *The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium* were not well connected to the missiological messages given at the conference. I had hoped for some discussion of those reports, but they were not mentioned during the conference" (email message from Richard Bailey to the author, August 23, 2012). Indeed, the sequencing of the conference was puzzling in that the field reports should have informed missiology. Instead, missiology trumped field realities. This anecdote highlights the prescriptive nature of

Retentionism, though Rebecca Lewis states that Retentionists are merely describing events on the field (Lewis, in 2010, 33).

Second, Retentionists place emphasis on making people movements in the Muslim context without a commensurate emphasis on making disciples. This explains why Rick Brown of Wycliffe Bible Translators could justify Insider Muslims continuing to declare the *shahada*, bearing witness that Muhammad is Allah's apostle, while overlooking that Muhammad denied that Jesus Christ is Lord, God, and Savior. "It is hard for me to understand those who abhor the *shahada* so much that they would rather see no movement to Christ at all among Muslims than see biblical Muslims following Christ without refusing to say the *shahada"* (Brown 2007, 73). Brown does not specify whether he is promoting movements to the Islamic Christ, who is merely a prophet, or to the biblical, Divine Christ, who is the focal point of revelation and worship.

This emphasis on creating people movements forms a dominant theme in Insider missiology. It appears the Insider missiology was patterned after Western Church Growth movements that enjoyed some success in cultures featuring a Christian undergirding. By 2007, Lewis, in consultation with other Insider advocates, was able to advance this definition of Insider Movements:

> Any movement to faith in Christ where a) the gospel flows through pre-existing communities and social networks, and where b) believing families, as valid expressions of the Body of Christ, remain inside their socioreligious communities, retaining their identity as members of that community while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible. (2007, 75)

The key element in Lewis' definition is that Muslim believers in Christ remain "inside" their "socioreligious communities." In the Muslim context, the socioreligious community centers in the mosque. Missiological controversy surrounds the proposition of believers in Christ "retaining their identity" within the Islamic "socioreligious" context. If

Lewis, and others such as Kevin Higgins, did not insist on the appropriateness of

Muslims who come to Christ remaining religiously inside, there would be no controversy.

Brown seals the argument for permanent retention of Muslim identity by

presenting his concept of "Biblical Muslims" to the world (2007). Brown suggests that

something which meets biblical standards need not to be changed. Kevin Higgins probes

deeply into the concept of Muslim identity and has correctly ascertained that affirmation

of the prophethood of Muhammad is indispensable to permanent retention of Muslim

identity (Higgins 2006). Several of Higgins' missiological articles in the past decade have

become seminal works on Retentionism—insider movements in the Muslim context.

Though these missiologists may or may not personally believe in the authenticity

of the prophetic mission of Muhammad, they understand Muslims can remain in good

standing inside their communities if they refrain from rejecting Muhammad's prophetic

authority, which is the covenantal basis for the religion of Islam (Parrinder 1965, 133;

Charles Kraft 1979, 118; and Higgins 2006, 121). More specifically, in order to

successfully implement their paradigm, these Retentionists needed to conduct a "radical

reinterpretation" of the Qur'an's teachings against the Incarnation, Deity, Crucifixion and

Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Higgins 2007, 38). Retentionism appears to be influenced

by Farquhar's Fulfillment theory in which the gospel is seen to compliment non-Christian

religions rather than replace them (Netland 2001, 33-39). While this theory may have

greater potential in other religions that do not contain overt Christological content, the

imposition of the Fulfillment theory upon Islam is problematic, since Islam has as its

distinctive a rejection of the biblical, incarnational narrative regarding the Lord Jesus

Christ. Furthermore, Muslims created their community specifically to exclude those who

hold to beliefs in the Incarnation of God or the divinity of Christ. By obliterating these indigenously constructed boundaries, Retentionism has raised the ire of Muslims and MBDLJs alike as a Western imposition (Woodberry 1996, 173).

In summary, Retentionism is being advanced by Western missiologists who understand that creating a rapidly multiplying movement among Muslims can be most easily attained through a paradigm that affirms the prophethood of Muhammad. The writings of these Retentionists reflect a certain brilliance and depth of thinking. Yet they lack the deeper understanding of the spiritual essence of Islam reflected in the writings of other missiologists, such as McCurry (2001) and Durie (2010).

The Failure of the Gentile Analogy

Retentionists have based their missiology on field pragmatism and cultural anthropology rather than on the Bible (Charles Kraft 2005, 5). They began to offer serious biblical arguments for Retentionism almost as an afterthought. The Gentile Analogy, their most significant argument, states that, as Gentiles did not need to take on Jewish identity to follow Christ, so Muslims should not need to take on Christian identity. Lewis presents this argument with her Kingdom Circles diagram (2009, 18). While the New Testament pattern, especially under Pauline preaching, required Gentiles to leave behind their pagan religious identity and affiliations, the Retentionists' Gentile Analogy simply does not address what, if anything, Muslims must leave behind to follow Christ. The Gentile Analogy contends that Muslims can enter the kingdom of God as Muslims, thereby retaining their Muslim identity, which ultimately requires the affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad. Since Muhammad denied the whole salvation narrative centered on the Lord Jesus, it is difficult, however, to explain how a Muslim could

simultaneously retain this Muslim identity and manifest genuine saving faith in the biblical Jesus.

Developing the Components of a Theory of Muslim Identity

The purpose statement of this study is to develop components of a theory of Muslim identity by examining in what ways and to what extent Muslim-born persons in Metro New York perceive that permanently retaining Muslim identity is compatible with being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. These components have been generated by the Islamic material regarding Muslim identity in chapter four, and the field research among Muslim-born persons in Metro New York in chapters six and seven. These are the components of that theory:

- The Muslim community has maintained since its inception that Muslim identity requires an affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad.

- The biblical Jesus and the Islamic Jesus must be considered mutually exclusive identities, since Muhammad viewed Jesus Christ as nothing more than a mortal prophet.

- If a Muslim comes to believe the biblical narrative that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh who died on the cross and rose from the dead, then that person is no longer a Muslim in the eyes of the Muslim community but is now an apostate.

- Islamic Law requires that the Muslim community withdraw Muslim identity from the apostate and expulse him or her from the *umma*.

- MBDLJs must deny the cornerstone of Muslim identity—affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad—if they are to find their individual identity in the Lord Jesus and their corporate identity in the Body of Christ.

Islamic Sources on Muslim Identity

The research in chapter four indicates that the Muslim community and its scholars for fourteen centuries have been unified in their basic perspective regarding Muslim identity. Individuals who believe in the biblical narrative regarding the Lord Jesus Christ are disqualified theologically from acquiring Muslim identity through the *shahada* confession. Indeed, the Muslim community itself has ruled that the adoption of the biblical narrative constitutes a repudiation of Muhammad's teachings. A Muslim who comes to believe in the Divine Redeemer Jesus Christ is a *kafir* (disbeliever) and a *mushrik* (one who has associated a partner with Allah) in the eyes of Islam. According to Islamic Law, the Muslim community then confers apostate (*murtadd*) status upon the MBDLJ through a process called *takfir* (imputation of disbeliever status). Even though Islam allows Christians and Jews to have recognized, second-class status as *dhimmi* communities, there is no affirmation from the Muslim side that Muslim identity could include those who believe in the divinity of Jesus. The Muslim community has ruled that adoption of that belief alone triggers revocation of Muslim identity.

Field Research on Muslim Identity

The field research examines the perceptions of Muslim-born persons in Metro New York on Retentionism. I interviewed forty Muslim-born persons in Metro New York from August to October 2013. I was able to capture their perceptions on Muslim identity using a third-person vignette. The interviews specifically garnered their beliefs about whether permanently retaining Muslim identity is compatible with being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter five described the field research methodologies; chapter

six presents the results of twenty interviews with Muslim-born persons (who were not themselves believers in the Lord Jesus Christ).

Though this interviewee pool came from thirteen different birth countries and ten different ethnic groups, eighteen of twenty (90 percent) reject the concept of Retentionism, with only one interviewee affirming it. In summary, they conclude that a person who came to believe in the biblical narrative regarding the Lord Jesus Christ is disqualified theologically from retaining Muslim identity. I also captured the interviewees' perceptions on how Muslim communities in their respective homelands would respond to a Muslim who has strayed from the faith. The interviewee cohort felt that the Muslim community would undertake efforts to bring the person back to Islam, including verbal warnings and threats, critical questioning, and Islamic re-education.

Chapter seven presents the findings of interviews with twenty MBDLJs (Muslim background disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ) in Metro New York. The interview vignette was the same as the one administered to the twenty Muslim interviewees. These MBDLJs, to one extent or another, had personally experienced the identity issue they were asked to evaluate in the hypothetical vignette. These adult individuals represent ten different birth nations and fourteen different ethnic groups.

Like the Muslim cohort, the MBDLJs reject the premise that a person who believes in the Bible and the Divine Redeemer Jesus can permanently retain Muslim identity. They were unanimous in their rejection of this main plank of insider movements in the Muslim context. None of the twenty MBDLJs feel that the Qur'an and the Bible is describing the same Jesus. This serves as their main rationale for rejecting Retentionism. These MBDLJs perceive an inherent contradiction between retaining Muslim identity and

becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. They feel this retention would create personal and communal confusion, represent compromise or an outright denial of Christ, and impede the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.

Many of the MBDLJs share how they went through excruciating situations similar to that of the protagonist in the vignette. However, rather than trying to maintain Muslim religious identity and practice as the protagonist did, these MBDLJs were helped by the Holy Spirit in developing a new individual and collective identity centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. As an Indian background woman from Trinidad shares, "The Holy Spirit called me to come out of the mosque. The Holy Spirit drew me to a church. The mosque isolated me and rejected me" (FB3 2013). A Jordanian woman, FB4, disagrees with the vignette protagonist Fatimeh remaining in the mosque as a Muslim insider, saying, "She will grieve the Holy Spirit if she does this" (2013). Jordanian FB4 shares this testimony, "For me, it was a struggle until I received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit" (2013).

In summary of the field research, I interviewed 40 Muslim-born persons from the United States, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Guyana, and Trinidad. They range in age from their twenties to their eighties. Twenty of the forty are Muslim background disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thirty-eight of the forty (95 percent) reject the concept of Retentionism—that permanently retaining Muslim identity is compatible with biblical faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes all of the MBDLJ interviewees.

Table 8.1 reflects how the Muslim-born interviewees evaluate the Ahmed/Fatimeh figure. This protagonist was reported to have come to believe that God has visited the earth in the form of Jesus, who died on the cross and rose from the dead.

Table 8.1. Interviewee Perspectives on Ahmed/Fatimeh Muslim Identity

	Muslim Interviewees	MBDLJ Interviewees
Still Muslim	1	0
No Longer Muslim	18	20
Not Sure	1	0

Though this interview cohort of forty Muslim-born persons in Metro New York is by definition a diaspora group of Muslims, their responses in light of biblical and Islamic literature contradict Retentionism and cast doubt on the viability and sustainability of insider movements as a missiological model in any Muslim context. Furthermore, the strong rejection of Retentionism by the interviewees, coupled with the data garnered in chapter four, raise questions about whether an insider movement could have ever sprung indigenously in the Muslim context, as Retentionism advocates contend.

Theory Presentation

A Muslim who comes to believe the biblical narrative that God visited the earth in the form of the Divine Savior Jesus Christ is no longer a Muslim in the eyes of the Muslim community and, therefore, no longer retains Muslim identity.

Missiological Corollaries

The field research segment of this dissertation took place among Diaspora Muslim-born persons. However, since a theological rationale undergirds the theory developed by this research, the corollaries flowing from this theory are not limited

geographically to the field research site of Metro New York. Most of these corollaries flow from a lack of familiarity with the Muslim context on the part of Christian missionaries who are promoting new forms of contextualization.

The primary missiological implication of the theory presented in this dissertation is summarized as follows: Insider movements (Retentionism) in the Muslim context can only ultimately fail because the Muslim community has long ago decided that the indispensible ingredient for remaining in good standing inside the Muslim community is the affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad. Yet Muhammad's prophetic input regarding Jesus Christ is of such an anti-biblical trajectory that those who continue to affirm this prophethood, or remain under the collective affirmation of such, will not fully find either their individual identity in the biblical Jesus Christ or their corporate identity in the Body of Christ.

This theory may serve as a boundary for missional strategy to Muslims, beyond which Retentionism has tragically strayed. It can also provide a basis from which future researchers can investigate the navigation of identity transformation by MBDLJs. This research yields the following missiological implications for Retentionism, or insider movements, in the Muslim context:

1. An *a fortiori* argument can be made regarding the relationship of this research to the wider Muslim context. The Pew 2011 Survey notes that American Muslims "reject a dogmatic approach to religion" (Pew Research Center 2011, 11). Like American Christians, they are more religiously tolerant than their worldwide brethren. If this is so, and if these Diaspora Muslims overwhelmingly reject the concept that a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ can still be a Muslim, then an *a fortiori* argument can be made: the

global Muslim community is even less likely to accept Retentionism than the Diaspora sub-group. Testing of this hypothesis could occur in other Muslim contexts by research that would fall within the recommendations for future research at the end of this chapter.

2. The Christological chasm forms a theological barrier to Christ-centered insider movements developing in the Muslim context. Retentionists properly understood that a reconciled Christology was central to their initiative. Nevertheless, Baliç's accurate assessment that the theological chasm between the biblical and Qur'anic faiths is "unbridgeable" greatly influences the discussion on Retentionism (1979, 1). In this dissertation, Muslims and MBDLJs alike have rejected the viability of Retentionism, primarily because of the mutually exclusive Christologies between the Bible and the Qur'an.

This context-specific theological roadblock essentially dooms insider movements in the Muslim world. If a Muslim comes to believe in the biblical narrative of the Lord Jesus Christ, then he or she must necessarily contradict the Qur'anic teaching about Jesus. As such, the new believer in Christ has individually repudiated a collectively affirmed tenet—namely, that the Qur'an is the infallible Word of God. This then triggers a denial of the central identity marker for Muslims—that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Finally, the Muslim community, based on a decision at its inception, and affirmed from that time to this, withdraws Muslim identity status from the one who has come to believe in the biblical Lord Jesus. The only question that remains is how strenuously the Muslim community will enforce prevailing apostasy laws.

3. The heterodox re-interpretation of Islam by non-Muslims violates the Muslim community's ability to define and identify itself, insults the intelligence of Muslims, and

thus cannot provide a solid missiological foundation. Higgins correctly states that

Retentionism is dependent on a "radical re-interpretation of the Qur'an" and a

"transformation" of Islam, and redefining the term "Muslim":

> I do, however, believe that authentic Jesus movements within Islam will bring transformation (and indeed reform) in the light of God's Word and Spirit as applied from the inside. Views concerning Muhammad, the place of the Qur'an, the value of the *salat,* the meaning of the word 'Muslim,' the nature of Jesus, the character of Allah, and many other elements of Islamic faith and life will change within and through such movements to Jesus. There will be a radical re-interpretation of the Qur'an, Muhammad, the hajj, and the *shahadah.* (2007, 38)

In light of this research, several concerns immediately attend Higgins' statement.

First, if offense to Muslims must come in the preaching of the gospel, it should not come

by claiming that Muslims do not understand their own scriptures and religion. The

Islamic clergy became agitated when I asked them about possible interpretations of

Qur'anic verses that could accommodate a divine Jesus (See Chapter 6). This is

represented by the "U" line that seeks to bend the Qur'anic Christology upward (see

Figure 4.1). These clergy considered this more reprehensible than a simple discussion of

biblical Christology—the "B" line. Furthermore, if Muslims have been so intellectually

addled as to not have recognized the divine Jesus in the Qur'an, then their defense against

gospel illumination should not have been so formidable.

Second, Retentionists have failed to adequately identify and present a gospel

bridge from Islam to the Bible. Missiologists sought to find redemptive analogies in the

cultures and contexts in which they have served. Essentially, this is the strategy of "U"

line proponents who seek to find a divine Jesus within the pages of the Qur'an. This

strategy fails because it violates basic hermeneutic rules that an interpretation should be

reasonable within its immediate context, as well as consistent within the wider context of

chapter and book. With some exceptions, biblical hermeneutic and Qur'anic *tafsir*

(commentary, explanation) processes share this dynamic. When Goldsack argues for a divine Jesus in the Qur'an, and when Parrinder, Higgins, and Greeson seek to radically re-interpret Islam, they tacitly insult the intelligence of the Muslims and their scholars, who for centuries have been reading, studying, memorizing, and expositing their sacred texts.

Don Richardson champions redemptive analogy missiology (see Richardson 1984). He also made a thorough study of Islam and the Qur'an with the hope of finding a redemptive key embedded within Islam. Richardson concludes the faiths are mutually exclusive and Islam contains no significant redemptive analogy to the gospel (Richardson 2003).

Third, Higgins' attempt to bring about a reformation of Islam from within does not hold the promise that Retentionists envision. Islam has always refused this type of reformation, since the reformer or reformers must *de facto* take a position of authority equal to that of Muhammad. This dynamic threatens to displace Muhammad as the final prophet. Moreover, the type of reformation inferred, through faith in the biblical narrative regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ, would completely collapse the Islamic *tawhid* narrative, the legitimacy of Muhammad, and, the notion of Muslim identity.

Finally, the data beg the question of the role and limits to the influence of missiologists in various contexts. Missionaries like Warren Larson overstate the power of missionaries serving in the Muslim context, "The debate over 'insider movements' revolves around a key question: Should converts from Islam be allowed or encouraged to remain in their Muslim religious and social networks after conversion?" (2011). The

Muslim community—not the missionary, nor the MBDLJ—determines whether that MBDLJ will be allowed to remain in the Muslim community.

The biblical illustration of this dynamic occurs in John 9:22, in relation to Jesus' healing of the man born blind. In this case, the Jewish religious leadership decided that anyone who confessed Jesus is the Christ was to be put out of the synagogue. The healed man could remain a synagogue insider only if he denied Christ, which is a spiritual trap into which the man's own parents fell. Even Jesus himself could not keep the healed man in good standing in his religious community, which ultimately decided to banish him for confessing Christ (John 9:34).

Baliç is again instructive in explaining how missionaries err when they seek to radically re-interpret the Qur'an and Islam:

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

Baliç critiques missionaries' use of the "U" line—attempting to bend the actual Islamic Christology upward.

4. Christian efforts to bend the biblical Christology down toward the Islamic Christology threaten to collapse the uniqueness of the biblical Lord Jesus Christ completely. Though this research has not focused on Muslim-idiom Bible translations (sometimes called MITs), there is a direct link between these translations and Retentionism. Brown seeks to bridge the Christological chasm—not as Goldsack, Parrinder, Accad, and Higgins do by bending the Islamic Christology upward—but by bending the biblical Christology down, as represented by the "D" line. Brown has

attempted to produce Bibles for Muslims that track in the direction of Islamic *tawhid*

doctrine and away from biblical Trinitarianism. To this end, he has practiced removing

direct "Father" and "Son" terminology from these Bibles (Brown 2005). These

translations are the natural outflow of Brown's positive view of Muhammad, which

provides the basis for Retentionism (see Brown 2007, 71-73).

Retentionist John Travis (a pseudonym) employs another "D" line tactic in

presenting Muslims with the picture of Jesus as exalted prophet, which is similar to the

Islamic Christological portrait. Missionary to Indonesia, Roger Dixon, recounts:

> In a meeting with three missionaries in March 2006, 'John Travis' admitted to my wife and me that they deliberately changed the wording in the Gospel of John so that Muslims would want to read it. And all of the missionaries present agreed that change was contrary to the intent of John's gospel. This confirmed for us that there was a conspiracy of sorts to shift (for however long) the identity of Jesus from his role as the second person of the trinity to one of an outstanding prophet. (2012, 121)

The problem with these "D" line strategies is important, since they diminish the

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from His rightful exalted position. Islam fails because it is a

Christ-diminishing religion. Missionaries should not aid this diminishment.

5. Christ's witnesses should refrain from co-opting terminology the Muslim

community has specifically reserved to define itself. Muslim identity belongs to the

Muslim community. Islam emerged as a post-Christian religion. Though Islamic theology

considers even Adam to have been a Muslim, Islamic teaching requires that usage of the

term Muslim after the advent of Muhammad (post seventh century) must include

affirmation of all prophets including Muhammad. This was borne out in chapter six by

imam U3 from Sierra Leone.

Further, the Islamic community uses the term Muslim in a way that precludes the

term's use to describe those who believe in the divinity and incarnation of the Lord Jesus

Christ. Iranian Reverend Sam Yeghnazar of Elam Ministries points out, "The word 'Muslim' cannot be disassociated from Islam. We cannot play semantics with the word 'Muslim.' We cannot divorce the word 'Muslim'–'Submitted to God'– from all the religious connotations that come with it. The meaning of the word is now fully and inextricably linked to the Islamic religion" (2011, 2). Yeghnazar's position echoes the sentiments of imam U5, who states that "words like…Muslim are not translatable" (2013). When Muslims emigrate to other countries, they continue to identify themselves as Muslims, rather than using a translated term such as "People Submitted to God." Muslim Student Associations abound, whereas one will not find "Associations of Students Submitted to God."

Thus, Higgins' conception of a Muslim submitting to God through 'Isa is invalid. Higgins' insistence can only invite the scorn of Muslims in the same way orthodox Christians would resent insistence by Mormons that they are true Christians. Preposterous to Muslim ears is the notion of a "Muslim" who believes in the divinity of Jesus. Similarly, Travis' presentation of "Messianic Muslim followers of Isa" is deemed a contradiction in terms (2000). The Muslim-born interviewees in this study linked the term Muslim with certain anti-biblical theological positions.

Likewise, the Muslim community owns the term mosque. External actors should avoid using terminology such as Messianic mosques, Jesus mosques, and *Isai Jamaat* which are not understood by Muslims themselves. When outsiders use terms owned by the Muslim community, this represents an unethical encroachment. Some Christian missionaries may feel they must dispense with traditional terms that have negative connotations in the Muslim context, such as Christian, Christianity, and church. The

terms Muslim, Islam, and mosque are not dynamic equivalents to these terms and are not an appropriate substitutions for them.

6. The identity of Muslims is changeable. This research argues against Lewis' contention that Muslim identity is God-given and unchangeable (Lewis 2009). If Muslims renounce the prophetic credibility of Muhammad, they are no longer Muslims, according to the Muslim community's own criterion for Muslim identity. Ethnicity is unchangeable but religious identity is changeable. Jesus, as Lord, has the right to change a person's religious identity. MBDLJs will retain their ethnic identity and have the potential to become spiritual salt and light within these groups if they remain faithful to Christ without compromise and if they avoid the pitfalls associated with insisting on permanently retaining Muslim identity.

Neither the Muslim interviewees nor the MBDLJs brought up the notion of cultural Muslims. They did not raise the possibility of a person remaining culturally Muslim while being spiritually non-Muslim. No one said a person who is once a Muslim is always a Muslim. To do so would deny the whole Islamic corpus of literature on apostasy. Therefore, this fieldwork clearly argues against the use of the word Muslim as primarily a cultural descriptor.

7. Retentionism, when used as a missionary model in ministry to Muslims, will produce believers who are confused about their own spiritual identity and who are seen by their own communities as confused, disingenuous, or hypocritical. Joshua Massey celebrates the creation of a class of Retentionist Muslims he calls a "strange kind of Muslim:" "Muslims view C5 believers as Muslim, though perhaps 'a strange kind of Muslim.' Most Muslims have never met Muslims who 'follow Jesus,' so the curiosity

that results from their identification often leads to open doors to share their faith in Christ" (2000, 8). Massey's statement is only partially true. Since Islam teaches that all mortal prophets, including Jesus and Muhammad, preached the same Unitarian message, many Muslims would consent that they are already, at least indirectly, followers of Jesus.

Though non-believers may struggle in any context to apprehend the spiritual transformation of disciples of Christ, the type of believers Massey seeks to generate is hardly a boon to evangelism among Muslims. First, Islam confers apostate status on Muslims who have come to believe in the biblical narrative featuring the divinity of Christ. Becoming an apostate is far more serious in the Muslim context than simply being considered "strange." Prudence on the part of these Insider Muslims and their missionary mentors can only delay this inevitable conclusion on the part of the Muslim community.

Second, Muslims react negatively when those who have come to believe in the Divine Savior Jesus Christ insist on retaining Muslim identity. At best, they will view such a person as the Uzbek scholar U4 did: "He is one confused guy! He can call himself whatever he wants, but people won't take him seriously" (2013).

The conclusion of the Uzbek scholar U4 is not mere speculation. Phil Parshall recounts a study of Insider Muslim believers in an unnamed country referred to only as "Islampur" (1998, 406). Ninety-six percent of those Insiders retain the standard Muslim belief in four heavenly books (*Taurat, Zabur*, *Injil*, and Qur'an), 66 percent say the Qur'an is the greatest of the four books, and 45 percent do not affirm God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Similarly, interviews with Bangladeshi Insider Muslims presented in the film "Half Devil, Half Child" reflect profound spiritual confusion on the part of those insider believers (Nikides 2012). This is not the confusion that may attend a new believer

in a transitional state, but a permanent state of confusion caused by trying to find faith in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ while simultaneously affirming loyalty to Muhammad and his Qur'an, which insists that Jesus was neither Lord nor Savior.

At worst, Muslims view Insider Muslims as *munafiqoon* (hypocrites), as did Muslim interviewees MM6 from Morocco and MM9 from Palestine. When the Ahmed figure claimed continued Muslim identity after coming to faith in the biblical narrative, the Moroccan Berber MM6 immediately labeled him a *munafiq*, even though he did not know the word in English. *Munafiq* is loaded with negative connotation in the Muslim lexicon. To explore the context of MM6's comments, it is helpful to note that *Al-Munafiqoon* (The Hypocrites) is also the name of a famous *sura* in the Qur'an (63). This *sura* rebukes those false brethren who tried to trick Muhammad, "When the Hypocrites come to you [Muhammad], they say, 'We bear witness that thou art indeed the Apostle of God.' Yea, God knows that thou art indeed His Apostle, and God bears witness that the Hypocrites are indeed liars" (63:1). In this context, the word *munafiqoon* is associated with lying and treachery against the prophet himself.

A missiological method that results in a munafiq association will not generate a positive witness from an Insider Muslim to the wider Muslim community. James White, in an interview with Thabiti Anyabwile, notes that the Insider strategy will have a long-term negative effect on gospel evangelism among Muslims:

> It seems self-evident to me that such a concept, that of creating a Christianity where one is a secret disciple while maintaining an outward profession of Islamic faith, replacing prayers in one's own mind to Allah with prayers to Jesus, etc., is not only utterly foreign to the biblical record (which addresses clearly the responsibility of being a disciple of Jesus in a hostile context) but even from an Islamic perspective is utterly without merit as well. A believing Muslim would find such a concept pure deception and a heart-borne example of unbelief and

even shirk, and such would have little attraction to a believing Muslim, to be sure. (2013)

McCurry echoes White's concerns that Muslims will reject insider movements as deceptive:

> I find two reasons why I cannot agree with model five ['staying inside Islam']. First, by retaining everything Islamic, the danger of old forms containing old Islamic meanings is so great that syncretism is inevitable. Second, there is too much room for deception in this model. The unconverted Muslims can perceive these new 'believers' as Muslims, while the new 'believers' perceive themselves as Christians without the label....The whole witness to the truth of the Gospel is blunted by this total submersion within forms of Islam. (2001, 330)

The field research in this dissertation reveals that several Muslim interviewees raised questions about the integrity of someone who adopted biblical beliefs, but claimed continued Muslim identity. They felt this was confusing, and possibly even disingenuous and misleading.

8. The Holy Spirit is able to help MBDLJs develop a new individual identity centered in Christ and a collective identity in the Body of Christ. The MBDLJs interviewed in this dissertation provided key insights regarding their own respective spiritual transformations. The theme was the Holy Spirit revealed the Lord Jesus Christ to them in such a way that they developed both a personal and corporate identity in Christ. The Iranian woman FB10 states, "The Holy Spirit only comes to glorify Jesus … I went to visit my country once to visit my family. My family told me to tell them at customs that I was a Muslim, if they should ask. I told them, 'No. I will tell them clearly that I am a Christian'" (2013). When I told her no names are revealed in this research she replied, "Please use my real name ... I will spell it out ..." (2013). This bold witness for Christ risked much to go back to her home country to testify of the transforming power of the

gospel. Similarly, the Pakistani respondent MB9 notes the role of the Holy Spirit is limited if a person is "not fully devoted to one belief system" (2013).

The MBDLJs also speak of a spiritual maturation process. Bangladeshi American FB8 counsels the hypothetical Fatimeh character: "Understanding she can't be both can be a life-long process. I still believe you can't be both. Even if she has not matured to that point, the Holy Spirit can still work" (2013). The Jordanian believer MB3 understands the struggle the Ahmed protagonist underwent, and connects it to the sensitivity of his conscience to the Holy Spirit, "The Holy Spirit will deal with him according to his conscience and intentions. It may bother his conscience if he continues to say he is a Muslim. In my opinion, it's wrong to say he is a Muslim" (2013).

Ultimately, a Muslim will have to determine whether he or she is willing to follow the same Lord Jesus Christ who continues to call people today as He did His original disciples. That response will largely affect the role the Holy Spirit plays in the individual's life. A West African MBDLJ (MB1) who pastors many MBDLJs, states, "Jesus will not send the Holy Spirit to those who deny Him before people, or who compromise or who are ashamed of Christ. Jesus will not pray to the Father to give them the Holy Spirit" (2013). This shepherd clearly infers a positive promise for those MBDLJs who do not deny Christ or stand ashamed of Him—the Father gives the Holy Spirit to believers in Christ.

Future Considerations

Potential Exists For People Movements to Christ in the Muslim World

The potential for people movements to Christ certainly exists in the Muslim world, but these movements will only be realized through collective rejection of

Muhammad and the Qur'anic narrative. In fact, these movements are already happening, but they cannot be considered insider movements according to the definition of IM being advanced by Retentionists. Since Muslim insider movements require an affirmation of Muhammad, this affirmation will conflict with any strong Christ-centered movement. Spiritual growth for Muslim-born persons is determined not only by what they add to their faith, but also by what they are willing to leave behind. A rejection of Muhammad is the key to spiritual revival in the Muslim world. Iran is one example where this is already happening on a nationwide basis. Many North African Berbers are also coming to faith in Christ in a similar fashion, yet they too are setting aside Muslim religious identity.

Unprecedented numbers of Muslims are coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This does not mean these new believers in Christ need to abandon their language or ethnic group. They need not initiate a departure or separation from their communities. They need not adopt cultural aspects of other ethnic groups who have a longer Christian history.

Currently, the movements toward Christ in the Muslim world are not insider movements. Retentionists have reported Insider success stories in Bangladesh and Indonesia, which are far from the Islamic heartland (Rutz 2006). As such, they may hope that insider movements may gain traction in Muslim lands considered less orthodox, more folkish, and less intolerant of faith deviation. This hope is unfounded for a number of reasons. First, the Muslim world is moving more toward orthodoxy—or at least a polarizing orthodoxy—than away from it. Second, the non-heartland Muslim control group had nearly identical views regarding Retentionism and faith deviation as the heartland group.

Third, all areas and regions in the Muslim world persecute followers of Christ, regardless of whether these regions are inclined to secularism, heterodoxy, or Folk Islam. Afghanistan, Somalia, Maldives, and Mali rank as four of the top seven persecuting countries in the world, though these are non-Arabic countries lying outside the Muslim heartland. None of these four countries are traditional bastions of Islamic puritanism (Open Doors USA 2013). Even if a Muslim community is largely non-practicing, it remains under a covenantal affirmation of Muhammad from the time that community accepted Islam. This is the *shahada* affirmation MBDLJs must disavow if they are to find new identity in Christ. Mark Durie in his *Liberty to the Captives* counsels MBDLJs how to break the spiritual power of the *shahada* confession through the cross of Christ (2010). McCurry provides a crucial explanation once again in addressing the false hope for insider movements thriving in heterodox Islamic contexts, "I also believe that in non-Orthodox forms of Islam, spiritual 'powers' are at work, whether Sufism, Folk Islam, or any other sect. For behind each one of these varieties of Islam is the spirit attempting to prevent Muslims from ever learning who Christ really is or why they need Him" (McCurry 2001, 152).

Last, if there ever was a so-called Muslim people group that had no collective affirmation of Muhammad, then they could not be considered Muslim according the *umma's* definition. As a result, any movement to Christ springing up within such a group could not be considered a Muslim insider movement because adherents could not permanently retain Muslim identity. This tension reflects the innate contradiction in applying the insider movement paradigm to the Muslim context.

How Some MBDLJs are Navigating Identity

Retentionists claim to have solved the great missional challenge posed to the global Church by Islam. Yet this research suggests that the permanent retention of Muslim identity among MBDLJs is not a viable answer. The long-term goal for individual MBDLJs and their collective groups is to abandon Muslim identity and replace it with an identity centered in the Lord Jesus Christ. I will venture a few observations, anecdotes, and research references that may assist future researchers who may study how MBDLJs are navigating identity transformation. This section does not seek to present a comprehensive set of identity options for MBDLJs but merely state that Retentionism is not among those options. The theory presented in this chapter may form a baseline for others who investigate how MBDLJs navigate identity transformation.

The Egyptian and Lebanese MBDLJs interviewed by Kathryn Kraft do not seem to be Insider Muslims, since they do not specifically refer to themselves as Muslims in the present tense. Kraft states, "When referring to individuals in the analysis, I try to respect their self-identification, whether as a convert, Christian, follower of Christ, Muslim-Background Believer (MBB), Believer of a Muslim Background (BMB), or something else" (2012, 5). Tim Green's timely work on MBDLJ identity focused on marriage issues. He notes, "It will have been noted that I use interchangeably the terms "believer from Muslim background", "former Muslim", "convert" and "ex-Muslim Christian." A mix is needed, for no one term is favoured [favored] by all" (2012, 436). Once again, Green is describing individuals and groups who do not appear to retain Muslim identity regarding self-reference.

The Diaspora MBDLJs interviewed in this research, and those with whom I have worked closely on a daily basis, have rejected the prophethood of Muhammad and Muslim identity. They do not identify themselves by using the term "Muslim" in the present tense. In nearly all cases, these MBDLJs took on Christian identity. The Persian fellowship in Metro New York identifies itself as a *Musharikat Masihiya* (Christian Fellowship, stemming from two Arabic root words), also called the Farsi Church.

This same pattern is true in Iran itself, where there is indeed the ever-present prospect of government persecution for those who spurn Islam. The situation in Iran may seem atypical of most Islamic settings, since the stigma of disavowing Muhammad has largely been broken for Iranians. MBDLJs in Iran refer to themselves as *Masihi* (Christian) despite any negative baggage associated with that word. For example, a popular Farsi testimony program is titled, *"Cheraw Masihi Shadam?"* ("Why Did I Become a Christian?") (Mohabat TV 2011).

Iran provides an example where the collective affirmation of Muhammad and his contemporary representatives is being called into question. Because of this dynamic, Iranian MBDLJs are more likely to enjoy intact relationships with their family and community, though discretion is at a premium due to the aforementioned government persecution. In the widely watched testimony of Khosrow Khodadadi, this young Iranian man finds Christ and remains in good standing in his family (Gateway Films 2007). Khosrow's father sees that Christ has improved his son's life and he therefore rejects the input of his other son who thinks Khosrow is crazy.

After Iran, Algeria may have the most MBDLJs of any Muslim country. In November 2013, I viewed videos shared by an Algerian MBDLJ of public baptisms, in

meeting halls adorned with the cross, held in Algeria in October 2013 (see JFM 2013). Significant persecution remains a possibility, as he mentioned the torching of twenty-seven home churches by Islamic hard-liners. Bassam Madany is monitoring Arabic press reports regarding new indigenous movements to Christ in the Maghreb countries of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. He notes the new movement is called "*Masihiyeen al-Judud*" which is translated "The New Christians" (2013). He continues, "They and those who report about them in the Arab press, use the term *"Masihiyyeen,"* as a testimony to their solidarity with other Arabic-speaking Christians, and as full members of the 'One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church,' in the words of the Nicene Creed" (Madany 2013).

Georges Houssney makes the following statements about Algerian MBDLJs following his May 2013 trip to Algeria, "The boldness of the believers is exceptional. They are proud to call themselves Christians publicly" (2013). He reports regarding a missions conference he attending in Algeria, "Every speaker stressed the need to get out of Algeria and go to the unreached areas of the Arab world. I couldn't believe my ears when I heard some of the speakers say with excitement: 'In a short time, Algeria will be Christian again'" (Houssney 2013).

As a concluding testimony, the Jordanian interviewee MB3, who is a respected MBDLJ leader, remarked to me, "Fred, I believe we MBBs have reached critical mass" (2013). The rationale is that Muslims can no longer pretend MBDLJs do not exist, or that those who do are just fringe lunatics. In terms of media and messaging, this means Muslim governments and Islamic institutions have had to enter the fray of ideological discourse. The sense of being part of a body that has reached critical mass is a reassuring notion for MBDLJs, who are now abiding within Christ and His global body.

Better Practices for Missiology in the Muslim Context

Retentionists can enhance missiology in the Muslim context by taking a number of concrete steps.

Taking a Clear Position on Muhammad and Islam

If Retentionists like Charles Kraft, Higgins, and Brown insist on commenting about Muhammad, they should take a definitive stance on whether Muhammad is helping people enter the kingdom of heaven or hindering them. Jesus takes a stand in a similar situation in Matthew 23:13 when He states: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." Jesus' statement cut against the popular opinion of his socio-religious community.

Higgins' I-i and I-iii Insider positions appear to argue that Muhammad is helping people enter the kingdom of heaven (or, as Muslims might word it, to perfect their religion before the *Yom ad-Deen*, or Day of Judgment). Higgins' positions can read as nothing less than affirming Muhammad and endorsing permanent Muslim religious identity.

> I-i: I can say I am a Muslim because the word Islam means submission and a Muslim is one who submits. So, I can tell others in the Muslim community that I have submitted to God ultimately in His Word, Isa, and the Word of God in the Taurat, Zabur, and Injil which the Quran confirms.
>
> I-iii: I can say I am a Muslim because the word Islam means submission and a Muslim is one who submits. So, I have submitted to God ultimately in His Word, Isa, and the Word of God in the Taurat, Zabur, and Injil which the Quran confirms. In addition I can accept and affirm all of the teaching of Muhammad as I find it in the Quran, and can say honestly that he had a prophetic role in calling Arab, Christian, and Jewish people of his time to repent. I can call him a prophet. I can say the shahadah with integrity because I believe Muhammad was called by God to a prophetic role. I read the Quran through the interpretive key of the Gospel and the previous books. When I read the Quran through that lens and filter I find that it agrees with the Bible and that perceived contradictions are due to

misunderstandings of the Quran (and in some cases there has been misunderstanding of the Bible as well by Christians). (Higgins 2006, 121)

Moreover, most Muslims would celebrate Higgins' Insider Retentionist positions as satisfactory affirmations of the prophethood of Muhammad. If Higgins himself went to nearly any *imam* and recited the I-i or I-iii positions he endorses for Muslim believers, he would be welcomed into the fold of Islam. He could then seal his *iman* (faith) and *deen* (religion) with a standard recitation of the *shahada*.

Due to the anti-biblical, anti-incarnational components of Muhammad's prophetic input in the Qur'an, a person who permanently retains Higgins' I-i or I-iii Muslim identity should not be considered to have saving faith in Christ. Higgins tries to dispel this by writing, "I know of no critic of insider movements who questions whether Muslims are being saved—or can be saved—as 'insiders'" (2007, 34). Yet simple logic based on the law of mutual exclusivity seems to pit itself against Higgins.

Even if someone could esteem the I-i or I-iii positions as compatible with saving faith in Christ, these Retentionist positions create massive discipleship challenges. The MBDLJ respondents were quick to point this out. The Turkish MBDLJ, MB2, fired back about the hypothetical Insider Muslim Ahmed, "This person will never grow in the faith!" (2013). The reasoning behind this statement is that an Insider Muslim will not establish full identity in Christ or His body. Furthermore, that Insider will struggle to jettison anti-biblical Qur'anic teachings such as: the original purity (non-sinfulness) of humans, the innate superiority of males over females, the impersonal nature of God, and obtaining God's merit by works. This same Insider Muslim will have to wrestle with whether to aspire to Islamic pride or biblical humility, or govern himself or herself by biblical honesty ethics or Islamic ethics in which ends frequently justify the means.

Exercising Biblical Discernment

Charles Kraft, Higgins, and Brown understand that maintaining good standing in the Muslim community requires acceptance of Muhammad as a prophet. Therefore, they affirm Muhammad and the Islamic theological foundation at a certain level. At some point, however, wishful thinking regarding Islam must be tempered by biblical discernment. If ever a group of people existed who might be prone to exhibit wishful thinking regarding a possible path to salvation within Islam, it would be the MBDLJs. This would give them hope that their deceased loved ones could be saved. Instead, the MBDLJs interviewed in this study have rejected Islamic teachings about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Growth or activity alone does not indicate a movement is born of God or the Holy Spirit (Travis 2013). Instead, Jesus' description of seed sown on rocky soil might seem a more accurate description (Matt. 13:20-21). This seed springs up quickly, but will eventually wither because of lack of depth of soil. Jesus notes that this kind of seed is particularly vulnerable to persecution. This is analogous to the discipleship problem created by building on the Qur'an, Muhammad, and a Muslim insider position. This evangelism strategy may result in quick decisions and apparent rapid growth, but it is not sustainable for many of the reasons cited in this research. Any missionary who bases his or her message on the Qur'an provides some level of affirmation of Muhammad. In addition, if this missionary uses Islamic descriptors and honorifics about Jesus, such as calling Jesus "Isa Masih alaihi as-salaam" (Jesus Christ, upon him be peace), he or she will inevitably get some level of confirmation of belief in this Islamic Jesus from Muslims. Yet these decisions are not what evangelicals often call decisions for Christ.

Understanding that Presenting Soft Essentials for Salvation Will Not Result in People Movements to Christ in the Muslim World

Rick Brown does not feel Muslims need to believe in the divinity of Jesus for salvation (2000). Likewise, Kevin Higgins advances a set of minimum essentials for salvation, based ostensibly on Jesus' preaching in Luke 24. Higgins writes, "A 'test' of faith would simply be, does the disciple believe Jesus died and rose again? Have they repented of sin? Have they received the Holy Spirit?" (2007, 36).

Regarding Brown's assertion, a Muslim's belief in Christ cannot be considered adequate for salvation if the subject of that belief is not transformed from that of a mere prophet to the biblical divine Savior. Higgins' soft essentials for salvation fall flat on all three criteria. First, as Bangladeshi-American FB8 points out, "Jesus in Islam is not a Savior; He's just a prophet. It's definitely not the same Jesus. The Jesus they know of is not someone who can save" (2013). While it is laudable that missionaries seek to move Muslims from the common Islamic substitution theories regarding Jesus' crucifixion, the mere belief that Jesus died and rose from the dead cannot save a soul if the one who died and rose again is a mortal prophet. In short, Higgins repeats Brown's mistake.

Many pious Muslims can easily interpret Higgins' second essential regarding repentance from sin as something they have already satisfied, regardless of faith in Christ. Islamic scholars provide a corpus of instructional and devotional literature on the topic of repentance. The title of *Surat at-Tawba*, the ninth *sura* of the Qur'an is "Repentance." This is perhaps the final *sura* revealed and the main theme is striving against *mushrikoon* (polytheists) in a severe, violent, and uncompromising way. The verse giving the *sura* its name, verse 9:11, speaks of *mushrikoon* repenting and becoming brothers to the Muslims, as evidenced by their Islamic *salat* (ritual prayers) and (*zakat*)

almsgiving. *Sura* 3:89-90, also describes repentance (*tawba*) as a movement from *kufr* (disbelief, apostasy) back to *iman* (faith). The concept of greater Jihad prescribes that Muslims strive against sins of the soul in something akin to the repentance concept. Higgins does not insist Muslims repent of their thinking regarding Jesus being merely a prophet.

Third, Higgins' minimum essential for a Muslim's salvation that he or she has received the Holy Spirit is equally vague and puzzling in this particular context. Higgins is not clear on the affirmation of this apparently subjective criterion. Muslims do not believe in the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Instead, they believe the Holy Spirit is most likely Gabriel, the messenger angel who brings down revelation, as he did to Muhammad. Therefore, a Muslim could easily interpret a person as receiving the Holy Spirit if he or she accepts Muhammad as the final prophet. Ascertaining the presence of the grace of God in a person's life and even the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is primarily a subjective observation.

Brown and Higgins request that evaluations of Muslim Insiders remain based primarily on the experiential transformation of these Insiders rather than on their doctrinal positions. The MBDLJs interviewed in this research argue that Brown's and Higgins' type of Insider Muslim was grieving or failing to submit to the Holy Spirit. Many of the MBDLJ interviewees also feel the Muslim Insider presented in the vignette was in a severely comprised relationship with Christ or denying Christ outright. Many state that their spiritual growth was contingent upon leaving behind their Muslim identity.

By presenting low-threshold essentials for salvation, Brown and Higgins water down the gospel, doing Muslims no favors. Many pious Muslims live virtuous and noble

lives. It is not necessary to dismiss or attempt to explain away this good character. Yet, it is equally unwarranted to mistake these qualities as evidence of biblical salvation.

Describing Accurately the Movements Being Presented in Support of Insider Movements

Insider advocates relish the concept of people movements. Therefore, it is incumbent on them to describe these purported movements accurately and with sufficient information for the missional community to assess whether a given movement is an appropriate missional example. For example, in the year 2007 the *International Journal of Frontier Missions* presented many theoretical articles in favor of Muslim insider movements. These included Lewis' definition of Insider Movements, Brown's "Biblical Muslims," Higgins' "Act 15" exposition, and Woodberry's "To the Muslim I Became a Muslim?" Additionally, Brown wrote a piece titled, "Brother Jacob and Master Isaac: How One Insider Movement Began" (Brown 2007a). This article was the main mission field testimony used to buttress the insider movement argument. Yet Brown's writes his verification statement in a way that defies corroboration: "The following account is based on the testimony of Brother Jacob and a foreign missionary. It was also investigated and verified by several Christian leaders in the country concerned" (2007a, 41).

In this purported insider movement, which resulted in the baptizing of 250 people, Brown mentions that Brother Jacob used Qur'anic bridging in his preaching, "Citing passages from the Qur'an and the Bible ..." and, "starting with the Qur'an and then moving to the Bible" (2007a, 41). Beyond that, Brown does not mention whether the new believers in Christ retained Muslim religious identity, whether they continued attending the Islamic mosque and celebrating Islamic holidays, or whether they continued to affirm

shahada. For these reasons, it is impossible to judge whether this cornerstone case study of how an insider movement began was actually an insider movement at all.

While Christian readers will undoubtedly love to celebrate movements to Christ in Islamic contexts, it is critical, from a missiological point of view, for Retentionist/Insider advocates to portray those movements accurately. Better yet, those associated with a leader like Brother Jacob could arrange for him to conduct a telephone interview with a missiologist not involved with that movement. This could occur without a significant threat to anyone's security, and could provide helpful lessons a leader like Brother Jacob might share.

Higgins' "I-ii" Insider Muslims comprise another misleading category. He describes these Insiders: "I can say I am a Muslim…I believe that as time went by, however, Muhammad developed ideas and teachings with which I do not agree. Some of these are found in the Quran itself" (2006, 121). These believers may in fact have found salvation if the teachings of Muhammad they reject are those anti-biblical teachings regarding Jesus Christ. As this research shows, these believers are not Muslims in the eyes of the Muslim community, since they believe Muhammad brought forth error.

Since insider movement experimentation is promoted and funded from outside the Muslim context, those promoters and funders may naturally be unfamiliar with high-persecution contexts. This lack of familiarity can cause a confounding of phantom-like insider movements with actual underground church movements. Not all indigenous movements and revivals are insider movements. This is especially true today, as God is clearly moving throughout the Muslim world and many former Muslims have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Similarities exist between insider and underground movements. Both types of movements tend to (or are reported to) occur in high-persecution contexts. Both may meet in unregistered facilities such as homes. Meeting places and times, while not advertised publicly, are shared on a need-to-know basis.

There are, nevertheless, critical differences between insider movements and underground movements. Whereas insiders purportedly retain the religious identity of their community, undergrounders are orthodox in their Christology. Undergrounders also identify themselves as part of the global Body of Christ, though they may be limited in their ability to meet with or contact other brethren in the wider body. Bona fide underground church movements in the Muslim context also have the characteristic of having jettisoned affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad and the authority of the Qur'an. Insider movements, based on the definitions provided by their creators, must retain these affirmations if they are to remain in good standing in the *umma*. Because of these existential differences, it is inaccurate and unethical to represent successful underground movements as insider movements.

Abandoning Insider Movement Terminology when Abandoning Retentionism

Retentionist missiology is currently the driving force behind much of Western missions to Muslims, even though the ideological underpinnings of Retentionism have largely remained undetected by supporting churches and individual donors. Their own missiology may embarrass some Retentionists once it is exposed. Yet their proposal for insider movements successfully developing in the Muslim world is completely dependent upon this concept of Retentionism.

Nevertheless, when Retentionists come to understand the theological impossibility of the insider paradigm working in the Muslim world, it will help if they cease using the self-contradictory term "insider movements" in the Muslim context. If Muslims retain an affirmation of Muhammad and *shahada*, they should not be described by missionaries as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Conversely, if Muslims have indeed come to faith in the biblical Jesus, then they have discarded faith in Muhammad and the Qur'an. They should not be described as Insider Muslims, Messianic Muslims, or any other term that uses the word Muslim in the present tense. According to the *umma's* definition of Muslim identity, these people are now non-Muslims. Therefore, they are not religious insiders according to Lewis' definition.

Recommendations for Further Research

The Muslim world has grudgingly yielded to social science research. Yet there are signs globally that a thaw is occurring. Capturing Muslims' views regarding their own religion is challenging, due to shame and honor factors, as well as the intolerant nature of Islam toward faith deviation. This research was able to uncover hitherto unknown perceptions of Muslim-born persons on the topic of Muslim identity by interviewing thirty-five Muslim-born immigrants in Metro New York and five United States-born Muslims in Metro New York.

Additional research on Muslim identity in other fields may help inform missiology in the Muslim context. In particular, research that measures the strength of the collective affirmation of Muhammad in respective Muslim communities could determine whether post-Islamic communities are emerging. Likewise, a measurement of communal

responses to faith deviation in various Muslim contexts would provide excellent insights for missiology.

Though the Insider/Retentionist paradigm cannot produce spiritually mature disciples of Christ, God is nonetheless moving in the Muslim world. Additional research on the spiritual transformation processes of these MBDLJs would help build the knowledge base. Green (2012) and Kraft (2012) have contributed insightful field work on the identity transformation of MBDLJs. The twenty MBDLJ interviewees in this research offered their insights on comparative Christologies and the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. This type of research is replicable in other contexts. Admittedly, this research focused solely on Muslim identity. More research is needed on MBDLJ discipleship and spiritual transformation.

Finally, healthy contextualization requires a good knowledge of ministry context. In Muslim contexts, this knowledge must include reliable information from Muslim sources on Muslim identity. I have attempted to provide that in chapter four through a review of Islamic literature, as well as in chapter six through interviews with Muslim scholars. Additional research could include interviews with objective Muslim scholars who are non-participants in the ministries of the researchers. I realize collecting this data in the Muslim world presents challenges to indigenous or non-indigenous researchers.

Concluding Words

The Muslim world is a complex domain, home to vast numbers of people groups. It contains over a billion and a half people, the majority of which are unreached with the gospel. Moreover, millions of these Muslims emigrated outside of their ancestral homelands. Every one of these billion-plus people is a unique human being. Any attempts

to generalize about the Muslim world are immediately subject to accusations of reductionism. Nevertheless, since Muslims by definition share the religion of Islam, certain understandings and discernments are necessary to employ successful missional contextualization among them. This research has sought to crystallize those understandings and discernments.

This dissertation, based on biblical and Islamic research and field interviews with forty Muslim-born persons in Metro New York, concludes that permanently retaining Muslim identity is incompatible with being a biblical disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. I provide a theoretical statement that the Muslim community views a Muslim who has come to believe the biblical narrative about Jesus Christ as no longer a Muslim. The key element for maintaining Muslim identity, according to the Muslim community, is affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad. Since Muhammad's prophetic input regarding the Lord Jesus Christ was of such an anti-biblical trajectory, those who insist on an affirmation of Muhammad will not fully find their individual identity in the Lord Jesus Christ and collective identity within His body. Ironically, a better understanding of the Islamic context would have spared high-contextualization Retentionists this missiological error, which seeks to impose an experimental identity on indigenous persons.

I do not seek to judge the motives of Retentionists. As a Muslim-background Christian, I honor the intention of all who have set out to reach Muslims with the gospel. Likewise, I do not condemn every missionary who has ever used a Muslim's reference to a verse in the Qur'an as a gospel bridging opportunity. I simply addressed a deliberate missiological innovation that relates to this dissertational research on Muslim identity.

Since Retentionism bears so strongly and negatively on presenting a biblical Christology to Muslim hearers, a corrective statement is necessary.

Though Retentionists have failed in their missiological quest, it is not as if they bungled an easy assignment. The Muslim world remains the Church's most challenging mission field and its chief rival for unreached souls. There is no magic shortcut to winning the Muslim world. This mission continues to require love for Muslims, intentionality, perseverance, Holy Spirit-borne faith in an exalted and powerful Lord Jesus, creativity, and biblically appropriate contextualization. Retentionism, however, constitutes an inappropriate and syncretistic experiment.

I pray Retentionists soon realize that the missiological path they forged amounts to an unfortunate detour. Hopefully, they will retrace their steps and carefully mark the entrance to that detour with cautionary information that will spare others the same error. Due to the missiological crisis they spawned, this action, taken immediately, is the greatest gift they could give the Muslim world, as well as to the Church, in its ministry to Muslims.

Informed Consent Form

Assemblies of God Theological Seminary

Project Title: PERCEPTIONS OF MUSLIM IDENTITY
Name of Investigator(s): Fred Farrokh

Introduction:
You have been asked to take part in a research study on MUSLIM IDENTITY. This looks into what makes a person a Muslim, or a non-Muslim.

Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the study and the procedures involved.

Procedures:
This study will ask several questions and then share a story about a Muslim man or woman. It is not a real story. It is pretend. However, your answers to questions about this story are important to the research.

The results of this study are <u>confidential.</u> None of the information provided will identify you by name. Only the researchers will have access to the information, which will be kept in a locked facility at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.

Risks and Benefits
You will not be paid to participate. The Assemblies of God Theological Seminary maintains no responsibility for any injuries resulting from or related to this research. In the event of injury, the cost of health care services is the responsibility of the participant.

Questions:
If you have any questions about this research project, please call Fred Farrokh at 973-572-8051.
If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, please direct them to Dr. Johan Mostert, the IRB Manager at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Counseling Office at (417) 268-1073.

Consent to Participate:

I am 18 years or older and have read and understand the information in this form. I have been encouraged to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my

satisfaction. By signing this form, I agree voluntarily to participate in this study. I understand that I am solely responsible for any injuries incurred during or following this study. I understand that all answers provided to Fred Farrokh will be kept private. I have been offered a copy of this form for my own records.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Printed Name of Participant   Phone

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

(Becoming Muslim?) *I am studying what makes a person a Muslim or a non-Muslim.* If a person wants to become a Muslim, what must they do? (For Muslims Only)

(Interest section): There is a young man, Ahmed, from a Muslim family in a city in your homeland. It is a respectable family and Ahmed has a good name. During his early 20's he begins to visit various websites on the internet. He even goes to web sites that have material about the Bible and the life of Jesus Christ.

(Interest-Friends?) If Ahmed's Muslim friends find out about this, what do you think they will do?

(Interest-Family?) If his family finds out at this time, what do you think they will do?

(Belief section): Let's assume that no one finds out and Ahmed continues down this path. He comes fully to believe the Bible is true and that God has visited the earth in the form of Jesus Christ. He believes Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

(Same Jesus?) Do you feel Ahmed is now believing in the same Jesus he had been taught about as a Muslim? Why or why not?

(Belief-Friends?) If his Muslim friends find out at this time, how do you think they will respond?

(Belief-Family?) If his family finds out at this time, what do you think they will do?

(Fellowship section): Let's suppose again that his family and friends have not found out. Ahmed starts secretly to meet with and worship with other people who hold the same beliefs as he has come to hold.

(Fellowship-Friends?) Eventually, his friends finds out about Ahmed going to these meetings, and what he now believes. What do you think they will do?

(Fellowship-Family?) His family finds out as well. What do you think they will do?

(Still Muslim?) Do you feel Ahmed is still a Muslim? Why or why not? (When Left?) If not, at what point did Ahmed stop being a Muslim?

(Retentionism) Though he has come to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, God and Savior, Ahmed continues to state that he is a Muslim—telling people he is submitted to God through Jesus Christ. He continues to attend prayers in the mosque on Fridays and Islamic holidays there.

(Retentionism?) Do you think Ahmed is right to continue identifying himself as a Muslim? Why or why not?

(Mosque attendance?) Is it right for person who believes what Ahmed believes to continue attending the mosque? Why or why not?

 (Holy Spirit?) How do you think Ahmed's decision regarding maintaining Muslim identity and mosque attendance affect the role that the Holy Spirit is able to play in his life? (For MBDLJs only)

GLOSSARY

Glossary of Arabic/Islamic terms

Notes:

1. Arabic does not have capital letters. I have capitalized the English transliterations according to norma rules of capitalization in English.

2. I have generally transliterated words ending with the Arabic letter "ta marbuta" simply with a concluding "a." These same words are also commonly found in literature with the alternate ending of "ah."

Word	Arabic	Description
adhan	أَذَان	The corporate call to prayer, usually from the minaret
aya	آية	Verse of the Qur'an (plural, *ayat*)
da'wa	دعوة	Invitation to accept Islam; Islamic evangelism
deen	دين	religion; can also be a synonym for Islam; *yawm iddeen* means Day of Judgment; alternate spelling is *din*
dhimmi	ذمي	Second-class citizen status of Jews and Christians living under Islam
fitra	فطرة	innate character; pattern of purity that describes the state of humans at birth
hadith	حديث	an authoritative saying of Muhammad (plural, *ahadith*)
hafiz	حافظ	one who has memorized the Qur'an
hawiyya	هوية	identity
hazrat	حضرة	holy person (coming from hadrat, based on the Arabic root for "presence")
ijtihad	اجتهاد	Islamic jurisprudence
imam	إمام	congregational leader of a mosque
iman	الإيمان	faith
Injil	إنجيل	Islamic description of the revelation brought by Jesus
irtidad	ارتداد	apostasy (from the root *ridda*)
iqama	إقامة	A call to commence praying, based on the Arabic word for "raising up"
'Isa	عيسى	Qur'anic name for Jesus; also the biblical name for Jesus in Persian
ithbat	اثبات	confirmation; proof
jami'	جامع	mosque (literally, congregation)
jihad	جهاد	holy war or spiritual struggle
judud	جدد	new (plural)
kafir	كافر	infidel
kalima	كلمة	word
khatam	خاتم	last; final; seal
kufr	كفر	disbelief
Masih	مسيح	Messiah' Christ (*Masihi* is the common Arabic word for Christian)

masjid	مسجد	mosque (literally, place of prostration)
mu'adhin	مؤذّن	the one who calls Muslims to prayer
mu'min	مؤمن	believer
mufasir	مُفسر	commentator
mujtahid	مجتهد	Islamic jurist
munafiq	منافق	hypocrite (plural, *munafiqoon*)
murtadd	مرتد	apostate
musharikat	مشاركت	Persian word for fellowship; partnership; community
naby	نبي	prophet
nafy	نفي	denial
niyya	نيّة	intentionality
rakat	ركعة	prescribed "rounds" of motions and prayers in *salat*
Sahih	صَحِيْح	compilations of authentic sayings of Muhammad
salat	صلاة	Islamic prescribed prayers
shahada	الشهادة	The Islamic confession of faith, "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."
shari'a	شريعة	Islamic law
sheikh	شيخ	elder; teacher; imam
shirk	شرك	associating partners with Allah; idolatry; polytheism
Sunna	سنة	the way of the prophet (*Sunnis*, a major branch of Islam)
sura	سورة	a chapter of the Qur'an
tafsir	تفسير	commentary, explanation
takfir	تكفير	imputation of infidel status; excommunication
Ta'iziya	تعزية	a Shi'ite passion play based on the martyrdoms of Hassan and Hussein
taqiyya	تقية	dissimulation or deception
Taurat	توراة	Islamic description of the revelation brought by Moses, cognate of Torah
tawba	توبة	repentance
tawhid	توحيد	The Islamic doctrine of the divine unity of Allah
'ulama	علماء	Islamic clergy; plural of *'alim*, learned
umma	أمة	Muslim community
Zabur	زبور	Islamic description of the revelation brought by David (ie., Psalms)
zakat	زكاة	almsgiving prescribed by Islam

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