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ABBREVIATIONS

CPM   Church Planting Movement

EC   Ethiopian Calendar (7 years less than the world calendar)

ESV   The Holy Bible: English Standard Version

IM   Insider Movement

LXX   Septuagint (Greek translation) of the Hebrew Scriptures

MBB   Muslim Background Believer (A Muslim who has become a
           believer in Jesus

RVVP   Rift Valley Vision Project

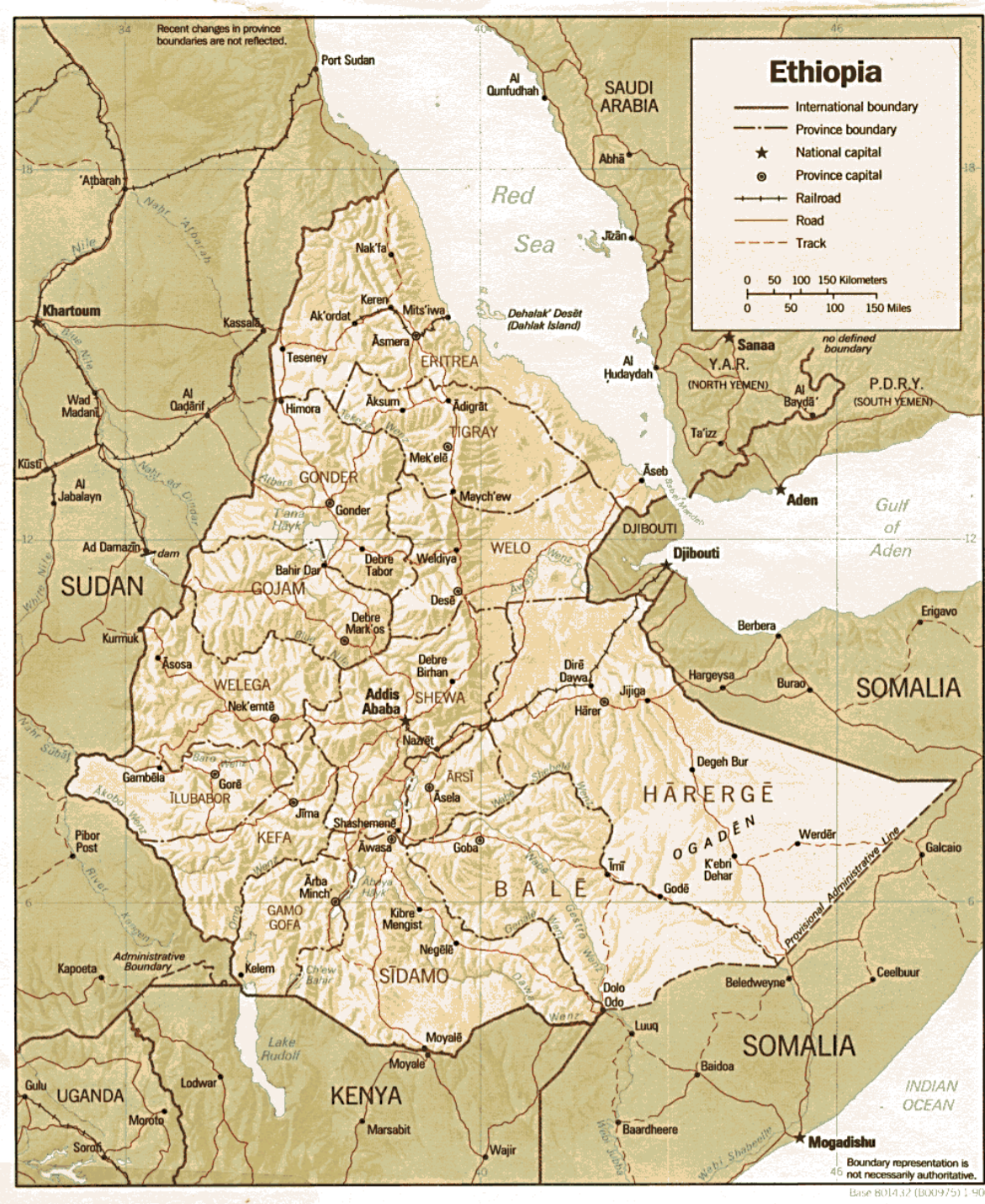NRSV   New Revised Standard Version

MAP OF AFRICA

SOURCE:

http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/africa/etafrica.gif

MAP OF ETHIOPIA

SOURCE:

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/ethiopia.gif

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of contextualization and the related issue of what are commonly called "Insider Movements," have filled the pages of missiological literature related to Muslim evangelism over the past 20 or more years. The term "Insider Movement" as applied to Muslim evangelism describes groups of Muslim Background Believers (MBB's) who are evangelizing within their own social grouping. Whereas other methods of Muslim outreach have been largely unsuccessful, Insider Movements have grown quite large, however, not without controversy. Such groups are often accused of syncretism by which is normally meant that these "converts" are not "biblical" converts within the understanding of the detractor.

Insider movements have drawn significant attention as a mission strategy due to their evident success among groups most resistant to the gospel. Initially the claimed success was not easily verified due to security issues and the nature of the movements themselves but more documentation has become available especially since 2005. Much of the debate between those favorable and unfavorable to the Insider Movement strategy has centered around the related concepts of conversion and identity change. While the issue of how to define what is meant by conversion has received more attention in the literature, the issue of identity and identity change is often mentioned but seldom directly discussed in the context of missiology.

For a Muslim living in a rural Ethiopian community to be identified as a Christian is to be separated and ostracized from family, friends and society. Thus Muslims who turn to Christ have often been "extracted" from their community for safety and for discipleship purposes. However, extractionism as a method of Muslim evangelism has been criticized on several grounds. First, it is unhealthy for the convert to be separated from their family and community. Second, much of successful evangelism in any society

is of a person-to-person nature; by extracting the converts this effective evangelistic method is not possible. Third, when the new believers are extracted the influence of such converts is removed from their society and thus the possibility of indigenous Christian witness through a vibrant Christian community among Muslims cannot develop.

Massey (2000:8) speaks to the issue of identity when he writes:

Whom do they see as 'Christians'? In parts of the world where significant numbers of C5 believers exist today, they are mostly looking at C1-C2 believes. When C5 believers compare themselves to C1-C2 Christians, they say, "I don't pray like a Christian, unwashed in a pew with my shoes on; I pray like a Muslim. I don't dress like a Christian with Western pants and collar shirts; I dress like a Muslim. I don't talk like a Christian, with all their strange terms to describe God and his prophets; I talk like a Muslim. I don't eat like a Christian consuming uh… you know and *haram* meats (i.e., meat not butchered in the "kosher" way); I prefer *halal* meats, like a Muslim. I don't have a Christian name, like John, Tom or Paul; I have a Muslim name." Thus, C5 believers are being entirely honest when they identify themselves as "Muslim" followers of Jesus.

As a point of reference, Massey provides the following chart of the C1-C6 spectrum originally created by John Travis (1998).

The C1–C6 Spectrum

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
Christ-Centered Community Description	A church foreign to the Muslim community in both culture and language	C1 in form but speaking the language used by Muslims, though their religious terminology is distinctively non-Muslim	C2 using non-Islamic cultural elements (e.g., dress, music, diet, arts)	C3 with some Biblically acceptable Islamic practices	C4 with a "Muslim follower of Jesus" self-identity	Secret Believers, may or may not be active members in the religious life of the Muslim community
Self-Identity	"Christian"	"Christian"	"Christian"	"Follower of Isa"	"Muslim follower of Jesus"	*Privately*: "Christian," or "Follower of Isa," or "Muslim follower of Jesus"
Muslim Perception	Christian	Christian	Christian	A *kind* of Christian	A *strange kind* of Muslim	Muslim

Figure 1 from Massey(2000:7)

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But what is meant by a "Muslim Follower of Christ?" Does such a person continue to pray the *Salat* five times each day? Do they attend Mosque? Do they confess Muhammad as the prophet of God? Do they believe such Christian doctrines as Jesus is the "Son of God?" What does it mean to be Muslim? Or Christian? Or to be a follower of Jesus? And more importantly, how are these ideas integrated into the self-identity of the believer and the corporate identity of the believing community? Finally, how does Muslim identity affect Christian evangelism in Muslim societies and in what ways?

Brown, in an article entitled, "Biblical Muslims," gives focus to C-5 groups as "Insider Movements." He brings forward several particularly helpful insights including his discussion of Muslim and Christian as being primarily socio-religious categories. He writes:

> Christianity and their subdivisions constitute social groups, each of which has many "boundary-marker" customs that are shared within the group but not outside. Muslims view Islam as a complete culture, within its own historical heritage, art forms, greetings, holidays, books, customs, ethics, politics, values and beliefs. They view Christianity the same way, not as a relationship to God through Christ but as a contrasting socio-religious grouping, with its own historical heritage, art forms, greetings, holidays, books, customs, ethics, politics, values and beliefs…So although the Qur'an guides people to the Bible, Muslims typically identify the Bible as belonging to the Christian socio-religious group rather than to themselves (2007c:68).

In the same article Brown uses Paul Hiebert's (1994:107-136) distinction between "bounded-set Christians" and "centered-set Christians" as a helpful tool in discussing the causes of disagreement among Christians as to the appropriateness and effectiveness of "Insider Movements." *Bounded-set* Christians define themselves in terms of criteria and if the criteria are not met then the group or person under consideration is not "Christian." A *centered-set* approach determines the person or group's relationship to the center (Christ) and their trajectory (are they moving toward the center). Using a bounded-set approach many Insider Movements would not be

considered Christian because they do not meet the necessary threshold for doctrinal or theological knowledge and thus they are deemed to be outside the boundary, whereas they may be accepted as Christians if a centered-set approach were used. Brown calls for further serious research on the topics related to Insider Movements in order to more fully understand the issues involved (2007c:71). In a later article, Brown (2009:86) discusses the effectiveness of the use of a people group's "heart language" in scripture translation and evangelism. He writes, "When presented with the biblical Gospel in their own style and vocabulary, open-minded Muslims often respond with exclamations of joy, saying "This is *our* Book!" Clearly this speaks more broadly to the issue of contextualization and what it takes to get a hearing of the gospel among Muslim people, but language is an essential component of the cultural and social aspects of identity. As discussion of contextualization has moved from a sender orientation to a receiver orientation the issue of identity and identity change on the part of the receiver has comes into increasingly sharp focus but little research has been done on this important topic.

In the ongoing discussion regarding C-5 contextualization and Insider Movements, the issue of identity is often referenced but not directly discussed in detail. Brown (2009) makes important points regarding Bible translation into a people's "heart language" in terms of their owning the Bible as "ours," but what does it mean to be "ours" as opposed to "theirs." What comprises a sense of "our-ness" and how does a transformation from the Bible and the biblical story being "theirs" to "ours" come about? How do Brown's "boundary-marker customs" really relate to the issue of Muslim identity, and how do the same customs create barriers to conversion? Is it possible to be part of a socio-religious grouping called "Muslim" and yet be a "Christian" in terms of theology? And if so, what does that mean?

The driving force behind what are called "Insider Movements" is the idea that Muslims need to hear the gospel from someone they consider to be one of "us" rather than one of "them." When a Muslim responds to the gospel and becomes a "follower of Isa," or some similar designation, what sort of identity change has taken place? If there is no identity change, is it then meaningful to consider such people Christian whether that terminology is used or not? If there is an identity change, what is its nature, how may it be understood, and are there any useful tools for understanding identity that can help mission practitioners to understand and possibly encourage this process if their goal is the conversion of Muslims to Christ?

As for myself, I am president of Shiloh Bible College Ethiopia and in our school we train leaders, pastor and missionaries to plant churches and evangelize the Muslim peoples of Ethiopia and the surrounding nations. As I have worked with our several programs in this area the issue of identity has come into focus as a crucial and central issue for our work. However, there is little written directly about this matter that has provided an adequate foundation for our teaching and thus the practice of the missionaries being trained. I have found the issue of identity as it relates to Muslim evangelism to be often mentioned but seldom discussed and never in adequate detail. For this reason the topic of identity and identity change as it relates to evangelism and church planting work among Muslims, along with the relationship between identity and conversion are important issues that have not yet been adequately researched.

There are some important limitations to this research that need to be clearly expressed. First, the issue of Muslim conversion within the context of missiological discussion involving "Insider Movements" is taking place largely within an Evangelical and Pentecostal theological paradigm. There are Christian denominations and theological viewpoints that do not seek to "convert" Muslims but rather accept Islam as

a valid means to approach God equal with Christianity. Within such a paradigm to seek to "convert" Muslims is an arrogant and unwarranted enterprise. Other denominations take a "silent witness" approach meaning they exist in proximity to Muslim communities and have open doors to receive Muslim converts if they should arrive but do not actively engage in evangelistic work among Muslims. This discussion is framed within the context of those who actively seek to convert Muslims to faith in Christ.

In Ethiopia the Ethiopian Orthodox church has traditionally taken the second approach although previous centuries saw forced conversion of Muslims, as will be discussed later, more recent decades have seen a generally peaceful relationship between Muslims and Orthodox Christians and active evangelistic efforts have been rare between these groups. The political relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox and Ethiopian Muslim communities is complex and many facetted with both laying claim to long traditions within Ethiopian society. This will be discussed only slightly as it is the topic for another dissertation.

Currently Ethiopia can be described as a pluralistic society by which is meant that on a national scale there are approximately 45% Orthodox, 34% Muslims and 18% Evangelical Christians with 3% holding to some form of traditional African belief system. However, at the local level a given community will be largely of one belief system and the others, if present, will be minority groups within that local community. Because the Ethiopian constitution gives significant authority over such matters to local governments, this leads to instances of persecution of minority groups on all sides in terms of land ownership, society and cultural acceptance, and sometimes even violence.

As will become clear in what follows, this study is done within the following parameters: 1) the meaning of conversion and identity change will be examined within an Evangelical/Pentecostal paradigm of active evangelism and church planting among

Muslims which seeks the conversion of Muslims to faith in Christ; 2) the research site of Ethiopia is a Muslim minority nation with local communities that are Muslim majority areas ultimately accountable to a pluralistic federal system of government; 3) the personal experience of the researcher has been in training evangelists and church planters from Evangelical Christian denominations who are working among Muslim communities across Ethiopia. Their stories and experiences are very much a part of my outlook on these issues.

CHAPTER 1: Background of Research

1.1   Context of Muslim outreach in Ethiopia

Muslim outreach in Ethiopia exists within a historical, cultural, religious and political context. Until the past 8-10 years Evangelical outreach to Muslims in Ethiopia has largely been conducted using what has been termed an "extractionist" approach. Charles Kraft writes:

> If the communicator demands that it be his or her frame of reference that provides the communicational categories rather than that of the hearer, the approach may be labeled "extractionist." ...If, instead of this extractionist approach, the communicator adopts the receptor's frame of reference as that in terms of which the communication takes place, we may label the approach "identificational" or "incarnational" (2005[1979]:119).

Kraft's comparison between extractionistic and identificational or incarnational approaches has been influential in the development of what have been termed C-5 strategies. If an approach is to be incarnational or identificational then it must take into consideration the cultural and historical context of communicating the gospel message. In Ethiopia, tribal or ethnic identification is of primary importance. History and politics are also key factors in how Muslim groups perceive Christianity and in many cases barriers exist between Muslims and Christians precisely because of these historical and political realities. Finally, there is a religious context to be considered. Christian outreach to Muslims did not begin recently but has a long history in Ethiopia as does Islam itself. In fact, Islam in Ethiopia dates back to the lifetime of Muhammad himself. Today many new Muslim groups from various Muslim majority nations are working to gain influence among Ethiopian Muslims. In order for a culturally appropriate witness to Christ to be presented in Ethiopia, a clear understanding of the historical, cultural, religious and political context is essential.

1.2   A brief review of Ethiopian history and society

There is a story about the donkey and the hyena called, 'The Donkey Who Sinned.' Once upon a time a lion, a leopard, a hyena and a donkey got together to solve a riddle, to discuss the bad conditions that plagued the land, to discover why the rains had stopped coming and why food was so scarce. 'Why do we have to suffer like this? How long do we have to go on without food?' they asked, over and over. 'Maybe one of us has sinned and God is punishing us, one of them suggested. 'Perhaps we should confess our sins out loud, and ask God for forgiveness,' another added. To this all of them agreed, and the lion began: 'I am sorry, for I committed a very terrible sin. I once found a young bull in a village broke his back and ate him.' The other animals looked at the lion, whom they all feared because of his strength, and shook their heads. 'No, No,' they protested, 'that is not a sin! That is exactly what God would have liked you to do.' The leopard followed: 'I am very, very sorry, for I committed an awful sin. I once found a goat in a valley that had wandered from the herd, I hid behind a bush, caught him and ate him.' The other animals looked at the leopard, whose skill at hunting they all admired, and protested: 'No, no, that is not a sin! If you hadn't eaten that goat, God would have been angry with you.' The hyena then spoke: 'Well, I think I am the sinner. I once snuck into a village, caught a chicken by surprise, and ate it all at once. 'No, No,' the animals protested, 'that isn't a sin. God would have liked it if you ate two of them.' Then the donkey spoke: 'Once, when my master was driving me along a trail, he met a friend and stopped to talk. While they were talking, I went to the edge of the trail and nibbled at a few blades of grass.' The other animals looked at the donkey, whom no one feared or admired. After a moment of silence, they shook their heads sadly and said: 'That is a *sin*! A very terrible sin! You are the cause of all our misery!' And so the lion, the leopard and the hyena jumped on the donkey, cut him up into pieces and devoured him. We children lived like the donkey, careful not to wander off the beaten trail and end up in the hyena's belly.

Nega Mezlekia (2000:6-7)

The history of Ethiopia spans at least two millennia and so will not be covered in any detail here. However, there are aspects of Ethiopia's history that are essential in understanding the relationship between Christians and Muslims as well as some aspects of the sense of personal and social identity held by Muslims in Ethiopia today. Thus a short review of selected topics concerning the history of Ethiopia will be briefly reviewed.

Some writers such as Henze (2000), Marcus (1994), and Pankhurst (1998) begin their consideration of Ethiopia's history by mentioning the oldest known hominid, Lucy, *Australopithecus africanus*, discovered in 1974 in the Awash valley of Ethiopia. Certainly Ethiopia can lay claim to humans living within its borders for a very long time but it is more recent aspects of its history that will aid this present study. The prehistoric period does, however, make an important contribution to the present study concerning the origins of the various people groups making up the population of Ethiopia.

All Ethiopian scholars agree that there was a strong relationship between South Arabia (present Yemen) and the northern territory of Ethiopia. Older works suggested that a group of Sabians crossed the Red Sea settling northern Ethiopia and eventually forming the Axumite kingdom. More recently the idea of migration from South Arabia has found less favor and the constant interaction between the people's on both sides of that narrow waterway with very similar languages as well as military domination back and forth account for the culturally Semitic influence found in the northern Ethiopian linguistic tradition. The ancient Ethiopian kingdom of Axum became prominent in the earliest centuries of the Common Era and its language, Ge'ez, which remains the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, is related to the Semitic languages of Palestine and the Arabian Peninsula. The languages of the ethnic groups further south such as the Oromo and Sidama, to name only two of many, are related to the Nilotic and Omotic language groups and reflect entirely different linguistic as well as cultural traditions. The northern Semitic tribes, Tigray and Amhara, have largely maintained political dominance throughout the past 1900 years. In that the Semitic tribes have been nearly 100% Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and the Southern tribes have been predominantly either Muslim (Oromo) or followers of their traditional

beliefs until the past 50 years, the religious differences between Christian and Muslim have deep and complex roots.

Toward the end of the 3rd century, according to Ethiopian church tradition, two young Syrian Christians came to the Axumite capital in what is now Northern Ethiopia by way of shipwreck. In terms of its official recognition, these two young men are credited with bringing Christianity to Ethiopia. Also, it was Frumentius, the most famous of the two, who became the first bishop of the Ethiopian church and influenced Ethiopia toward a monophysite form of Christianity (Marcus 1994:7-8).

The popularly known national history of Ethiopia (as told by the politically powerful) combines legend, tradition and fact in such a way that emphasizes the close relationship between church and state. The church provided what has often been termed Ethiopia's national epic, the *Kebra Negast* (Glory of Kings). This epic tale was written during the 14th century (Pankhurst 1998:54) but was originally presented and believed by many to be a historical document reaching back to biblical times and the encounter between King Solomon of Israel and the Queen of Sheba (see 1 Kings 10:1-13). The Ethiopian version tells of how the Queen of Sheba was tricked by Solomon into an intimate relationship and how their son Menelik was born on her journey back to Ethiopia. At the age of 22, Menelik journeyed to Jerusalem to meet his father who welcomed him as his first born and asked him to remain with him and to become the next king of Israel. Menelik refused telling his father he needed to return to his mother. Solomon sent a delegation of young men with him who, unknown to Menelik, secreted the Ark of the Covenant from the temple and carried it with them on their journey. The *Kebre Negast* presents the story replete with supernatural events and interventions as evidence of God having chosen Menelik as king and progenitor of a Solomonic dynasty and Ethiopia as His new chosen people. The final chapters of the Kebra Negast move the

story into the Christian era affirming Christ, rejecting the Jews who are presented as Christ crucifiers and affirming the practices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Budge 1932).

This epic tale was used to support the claim of the Amhara and Tigrinian peoples' right to rule Ethiopia and was adapted and used by various emperors to claim that Ethiopian territory should extend to include the territory of the modern nations of Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia if not portions of Sudan. Thus Ethiopian national government, Christianity, and Amhara rule have traditionally been lumped together into one package by the rulers of Ethiopia up to the revolution of 1974. From the point of view of the Oromo and other people groups of central and south Ethiopia, this "epic" was untrue and was actually being used to justify their oppression by Amhara conquerors.

Islam also has a long history in Ethiopia dating back to the time of Muhammad himself. In 615 AD during a time of persecution in Mecca, Muhammad sent a group of more than 80 families to Axum telling them that the king there would receive them in peace. They were indeed received and lived among the Axumites. Most remained Muslims but a few converted to Christianity. This story is well known in Muslim tradition and reflects an initial hospitableness in the relationship between Ethiopia and Islam but it was not too long before the differences between Muslims and Christians began to come to the forefront and conflict developed. This story continues to be told in several different forms and continues to play a role in the formation of Ethiopian Muslim identity.

An extreme example of conflict would be the history of Ahmad ibn Ibrihim al-Ghazi (1506-1543), an Oromo Muslim who gathered an army and very successfully fought the imperial government of Ethiopia. Between 1527 and 1537 he conquered a

vast territory, perhaps a third of the Imperial heartland, as well as neighboring lands that stretched all the way to the coast (Marcus 1994:31-33). Ahmad was eventually halted and defeated with the help of the Portuguese and their more advanced weaponry, but the memory of his *jihad* was not easily forgotten on either side. Erlich has termed the fear that Amhara rulers have exhibited toward Muslim political activity since that episode as, the Ahmed Gran syndrome (Erlich 1994).

The Oromo tribe is the largest single people group in Ethiopia and comprise more than a third of the nation's inhabitants. Until the mid 1800's there was no history of the Oromo people of Ethiopia written by an Oromo. Since that time there is a developing body of literature describing the history, society and culture of the Oromo as well as other tribal groups. Members of Ethiopian ethno-linguistic groups today write an increasing number of the books and articles published about their own people groups. When the story of Ethiopia's history is told by Oromo writers it is quite a different story than the way Amhara and Tigrinian historians have told the tale. In many cases such Oromo writing has been done by anti-government groups and individuals who view the history of Ethiopia as a legacy of usurpation of land, imposition of slavery and oppression, and illegitimate rule over the Oromo people. Many of these writers have published their materials from outside of Ethiopia where they have relocated either in exile or by choice. An example is Melbaa who writes from Khartoum:

> By the fourteenth century the Abyssinian ruling class had developed a very powerful ideological justification to legitimize its rule. The church was credited with the development of this sophisticated ideology. This ideology was fabricated in the book called "Kebra Negest", meaning 'the Glory of the Kings.' Its main objective was to portray the Abyssinians as special people chosen by God and destined to rule the others. Justifications presented for this are, the mythical birth of Menelek I from Solomon and Sheba and Abyssinians acceptance of Christ whom the Jews rejected (1999:43).

One of Melbaa's motivations seems to be to justify opposition to the Ethiopian government by such groups as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).[1] Thus both sides of the issue have their own cultural and political agendas.

From the 4th to the 13th centuries the Axumite empire was located primarily in the very northern areas of what is known as Ethiopia today, and was ruled primarily by ethnically Tiginian rulers. From the 13th century the national epic and the imperial system supported political leadership dominated by the Amhara. From that time until 1974 a national story was sustained in which Amhara rulership was affirmed, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity was made the state religion, and expansion of Abyssinian rule over tribes to their south was justified. The 19th century was a notable time of expansion for Imperial Ethiopia when the current shape of Ethiopia took form through the inclusion of the Oromo and Southern Nations by military conquest.

From 1974 -1991 the Derg revolutionary/socialist government brought various ethnic groups into a broader discussion especially in its early years. However, by the 1980's the issue of ethnicity was diminished in the national discourse in favor of an economically and class based discourse. Since 1991 the current government, in spite of criticism to the contrary, has been more inclusive of all ethnic groups and has allowed for a much greater opportunity for peripheral groups to expand their influence, including Muslims.

The Oromo and Southern Nations have entered into the national discourse in a greater way since the value of their ethnicity was affirmed by the national constitution ratified in 1994. However, this process has not been without conflict and challenges including some even choosing to attempt armed resistance. As an example, many of the

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[1] For further information see the OLF website: www.oromoliberationfront.org/

Oromo, as the largest single people group of Ethiopia, have disputed the legitimacy of the rule of the Ethiopian federal government. Some Oromo disagree that Ethiopia as a nation should exist in its present form and a few have attempted to gather armed support to achieve independent rule. For a significant number of the Oromo people, Islam has become a religion of opposition. The Amhara rulers were so closely associated with Orthodox Christianity that for many Oromo, a part of the expression of their political opposition is their identity as Muslims. Thus political and religious factors have been combined into the identity of at least a segment of the Oromo population. In the next section the issue of culture will be examined and combined with this short rendition of Ethiopian historical events.

1.3   Culture and cultural diversity in Ethiopia

> Yeneta's Bible was perhaps the oldest one in all of Ethiopia. The cover was made of finely polished *Qwara* wood, rubbed with bruised herbs and oils and wrapped in sheepskin. The pages themselves were made of sheepskin and beaten fine as bond paper, and were inscribed in an ancient liturgical language called *Ge'ez*. The Bible was so heavy that it had taken two men to lay it on the table in Yeneta's sanctuary, from which it would never be removed. "Yeneta," I asked, "what is the language of the angels?" The venerable priest stopped his rhythmic reading of the Bible. His eyes flashed angrily, like wildfire. He rose to his full height, six feet three inches tall, and stared into my eyes for a full measure of eternity before shaking his head in disappointment and sitting down. "Indeed," Yeneta said, "you make me wonder if you are Amhara or if you were found in the dump." I found out that day the Divine Author delivers in Amharic, and that the Devil speaks Oromo.
>
> Nega Mezlekia (2000:20-21)

Of the 85 or more tribes in Ethiopia, some are understood to be Christian such as the Amhara and the Tigray even though there are significant numbers of Muslims among these tribes. On the other hand, some tribes are considered to be predominantly Muslim such as the Oromo, Afar, Somali, Alaba, and Harari but there are many Christians among these groups as well. Islam, as existing in much of Ethiopia, is a mixture of scriptural Islam practiced in its more pure form in the cities mixed with

traditional religion forming a type of folk Islam usually termed Sufi by Ethiopian Muslims. This folk Islam is common in the countryside. Therefore, a consideration of culture and society among Ethiopians is essential to the study of identity in this diverse nation.

As recorded above, from the 4th century until the end of the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, rulers from Tigray and then Amhara largely dominated Ethiopia. These are considered northern or Semitic tribes as explained above. The culture of these groups was considered to be "Ethiopian" culture by the rulers who controlled education, business, land ownership and virtually all the economics of day-to-day life. In 1974 Megistu Haile Miriam and his government came into power and began 17 years of socialist/communist rule (the *Derg* meaning "committee") during which time religion was outlawed and ethnicity was downplayed as not serving the socialist agenda that emphasized socio-economic classifications over ethnic ones. The *Derg* forcefully put down the OLF, and other ethnically based opposition groups. In 1991 the *Derg* was defeated by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) which soon expanded its definition to become a national party called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) that continues to dominate Ethiopian politics until now. In 1991-1994 a new constitution was written and ratified that greatly enlarged opportunities for religious freedom and affirmed ethnic identity as the basis of the new government. The current constitution of Ethiopia forms what is termed an ethnically based federal system.

Politics will be discussed in more detail below but the importance of ethnicity in every aspect of current Ethiopian society presses for a discussion of culture as a significant aspect of the background of this study. In that there are more than 85 language groups and thus at least 85 identifiable ethnic groups and the Ethiopian

government has validated ethnicity as the primary characteristic of Ethiopian society, culture has become a key aspect of discourse in the public sphere. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has been divided into nine regions and two autonomous cities. The region with the largest number of different tribal groups (more than 40) is the Southern Region. Its name, Southern Nations Nationalities Races and Peoples (SNNPR) indicates both the importance as well as the variations in the way ethnicity is understood in Ethiopian society.

During the early years of the present government and the establishment of the current nine ethnically based regions of Ethiopia, the issue of the Amhara was a matter of heated discussion. Some wanted an Amhara region to be established and others did not. This was for several reasons: 1) the Amhara had been dispersed broadly throughout the nation during the Imperial government; 2) significant numbers of ethnic Amharas had intermarried with other tribes; 3) the Amharic language had been imposed upon the nation by the emperors thus diminishing the importance of other languages; and 4) anger toward the Amhara from groups like the Oromo and Southern Nations that saw them as conquering oppressors (Michael 2008:393-398). In the end the views of Meles Zenawi, later to become Prime Minister, won out and an Amhara region was formed. The issue's significance is very much connected both to the language issue and to those ethnic groups brought into what Levine has termed, "Greater Ethiopia" through military domination (Levine 2000[1974]).

Language and culture are so closely related and intertwined it is impossible to separate the two. Ethnic groups are often defined as language groups or sub-groups. A people's identity is very much connected to their common language. Thus, a part of the cultural subjugation imposed by Amhara on the Oromo as well as the Southern Nations had to do with the devaluation of their languages. During the years of Imperial rule all

government was conducted in Amharic and any real advancement into national leadership and administration was possible only for Amharic speakers. The question arises, if Amhara is only one of the nine ethnically based regions then why should its language be imposed upon all people groups of Ethiopia? Yet there is a historical reality that the most commonly spoken language in the nation is indeed Amharic. This continues to be a thorny problem.

An example of how this problem continues to be played out is the area of education. Regional governments have the authority to determine the language of instruction in their schools up to grade eight. If that language is not Amharic then Amharic must be a course taken by students as must be English. In Oromia, as an example, Afaan Oromo (Oromo language) is the language of instruction in schools up to grade eight for the purpose of affirming Oromo culture and the value of their language. Not all students in Ethiopia advance beyond the eighth grade especially in rural areas, although the standard would be grade ten. In Oromo society and within the regional government itself Afaan Oromo is the language used but in the towns and cities Amharic is both common and known. Amharic is also the language used by the federal government and all documents submitted to any federal agency must be in Amharic. Students graduate from eighth grade and must take a national exam. Again after the 10th grade a national exam is given that determines whether the student will continue to eleventh and twelfth grade (called preparatory school) and then another national exam is taken after the twelfth grade to determine which students will go on to University. None of these national exams is in Afaan Oromo, in fact after tenth and twelfth grades the exams are in English. It is not difficult to see that students who speak, interact and read primarily in their local language until the eighth grade are at a disadvantage in terms of their performance on the national exams and thus their opportunities for

university level training and careers requiring university level education are significantly reduced. This is an example of how cultural and language issues contribute to social conflict in modern Ethiopian society.

Hussein (2008) presents the case for revitalization of Afaan Oromo and the struggle to do so within the Ethiopia context. For Hussein, and many Oromo people, Amharic was imposed upon them as an act of cultural hegemony and thus using and promoting Oromo language, literature, and culture is essential to protecting the ethnic identity of the Oromo people. Hussein writes:

> This means we have to look at language as: (1) a locus of an ongoing struggle implicating the production of knowledge, values and identities; (2) a social phenomenon that is a vital component of the forces and conflicts of social history; and (3) a social phenomenon whose analysis and problematization should transcend the conventional discourse of domination and subordination. The relative position/power that a language has attained in a country may create power imbalances and material inequalities between the ethnic groups in the country (2008:51-52).

For the purpose of the present research, this discussion of language and culture highlights the depth of the cultural and linguistic divide among ethnic groups in Ethiopia. This has significance due to the fact that the Amhara are generally identified as Christian and the Oromo as predominantly Muslim. These religious identifications carry with them a great deal of social and political baggage.

But the issue is not only one of language. The old adage, 'the victor writes the history' is certainly true in Ethiopia. Hassan writes:

> Consequently, the ruling class systematically depicted the Oromo as a people without history, and belittled their way of life, and their religious and political institutions. It is not an exaggeration to say that no people had their history so distorted or ignored and their achievements and human qualities undervalued as the Oromo have in the Ethiopian historiography (Hassan 1994:2).

These two factors, language and history, define a people group and so are deeply important if not constitutive of culture. Because ethnicity/culture is the primary point

of reference in Ethiopian society today, Amharic language dominance remains an issue as does the inclusion of the history and accomplishments of all ethnic groups in the national story of Ethiopia. Although there are certainly Amhara Muslims and Oromo Christians, the identification of the Amhara with Orthodox Christianity and the Oromo with Islam when combined together with the dominance of ethnic distinctions in the national discourse creates a unique environment for interaction between the various faiths represented in the nation.

Cultural differences often stand behind religious differences. Blackhurst (1980) contrasts two Oromo groups that differed in their response to Amhara dominance. One group is the Tulama Oromo that took a conciliatory approach and have been largely assimilated into Amhara culture. The other, Arssi Oromo, have strongly resisted assimilation. Blackhurst writes about the Arssi Oromo:

> Their attitude to the Amhara state is, at best, ambivalent and they have adopted Islam, traditionally the religion of the enemies of their Christian Amhara conquerors. Arssi territory, comprising parts of the present-day Provinces of Shoa, Bale and Arussi, is then a *locus classicus* of the confrontation between north and south in Ethiopia (1980:55-56).

Thus history and culture have combined as an influence to move the Arssi Oromo people toward Islam as the religious choice of the enemies of the Amhara Christians. It is noteworthy that the Arssi Oromo did not accept Islam in large numbers until after the ending of the Italian occupation in 1941 (Balisky 2009:217). Prior to the Italian occupation nearly all Arssi Oromo practiced their traditional religion. Thus the history of Islam among the Arssi is not long nor its heritage old. Yet the Arssi Oromo are some of the most adamant members of Ethiopian society regarding their Islamic faith largely due to this connection between culture and religious affiliation.

Another factor of Amhara dominance among the Arssi Oromo that confirmed them as enemies of the Amhara, is economic. When the Amhara administration of the

Arssi was imposed by Amhara administrators, called *balabat*, they changed how land was "owned" and distributed. The Imperial Household took one third of the land, one third was given to the soldiers and officers of the army fighting to take that territory who became nobles to whom the Arssi paid rent, and one third was given to important Arssi families (Blackhurst 1980:56). Thus land ownership and control passed from the clan to individual people, which had never been the Oromo custom. Moreover, many of the new owners were not Arssi Oromo at all but Amhara to whom the Arssi must pay rent and tribute to farm what they considered to be their own land. The resulting wealth transfer from Oromo to Amhara is another significant point of conflict.

Among apologists for the Muslim community in Ethiopia today there is a desire for Muslim religious identity to supersede ethnic identity and thus allow for a united Muslim voice to promote their common religious agenda. Ostebo writes, "ethnicity has always been more important than religion" (1998:440). But in the same article he also writes, "A new characteristic at the present time is the tendency to be motivated more explicitly by religious factors" (1998:438). Ahmed (2006) is a Muslim writer and university professor in Ethiopia who has acknowledged that Muslim culture has in many ways been alien to the Ethiopian context and has written at some length concerning the need to reevaluate areas of conflict between Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia. Ostebo has taken Ahmed to task strongly suggesting that Ahmed should emphasize that "Islamic culture is as authentically Ethiopian as is the Christian" (1998:446).

Ostebo also discusses at some length the developing new sense of identity among Muslims in Ethiopia. While acknowledging, as quoted above, that ethnicity has always been more important than religion, he nonetheless wants to combine all Ethiopian Muslims together into a common "Muslim identity." He affirms a series of

articles published in *Bilal*, an Ethiopian journal, between 1992 and 1993 that retold the story of Muhammad sending refugees to the Axumite kingdom in 615. In the retold story the Axumite king becomes a Muslim but is later forced back to Christianity by the priests. The conclusion put forward by the *Bilal* articles is that since the king of Axum accepted Islam, Ethiopia became the first nation outside of Arabia to accept the new faith thus making Ethiopia special in world history and among Muslims (Ostebo 1998:444). The idea that the Axumite king became a Muslim and that only one of the Muslim refugees ever became a Christian are both longstanding parts of how the Ethiopian Muslim community has known this story and neither idea is new. However, the drawing out of the significance of Ethiopia becoming the first nation outside Arabia to accept Islam is used as an attempt at shaping a new identity for Ethiopian Muslims. Next the topic of the diversity of religious beliefs in Ethiopia will be examined.

1.4   Religious beliefs

There is a diversity of religions in Ethiopia as well as diversity within each religious tradition. Reports and figures as to the number of Muslims in Ethiopia have varied immensely from source to source. Muslim groups have claimed as many as 55% and even 60% of Ethiopians are Muslim in an attempt to gain political influence and make their case for *Shari'ah* law to be allowed in Muslim communities. The most recent Ethiopian census (2007) gives the data as 33.9% Muslim, 43.5% Orthodox Christians, 18.6% Protestants, and .7% Roman Catholics , for the nation as a whole. Ethiopian census data is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Population Size by Religion: 2007

Religion	Number: all	Percent	Urban	Urban%	Rural	Rural%
All Persons	73,918,505	100	11,956,170	100	61,962,335	100
Orthodox	32,138,126	43.5	7,070,932	59.1	25,067,194	40.5
Protestant	13,746,787	18.6	1,614,145	13.5	12,132,642	19.6
Catholic	536,827	0.7	66,468	0.6	470,359	0.8
Muslim/Islam	25,045,550	33.9	3,098,275	25.9	21,947,275	35.4
Traditional	1,957,944	2.6	39,252	0.3	1,918,692	3.1
Others	471,861	0.6	67,098	0.6	404,763	0.7

(Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2008:18)

Although Ethiopian Orthodox is perhaps the most unified group, there is an ongoing underground reform movement gaining momentum among them. Among the Protestants there are now more than 30 denominations and a growing number of independent churches. Muslims are divided among at least 30 different groups although the number of adherents of many of these groups is small. Thus there is significant variation in how religious and cultural issues may be factored into any discussion depending upon whether one's viewpoint is from a macro (national) or a micro (local) scale.

The religious alternatives are expanding in Ethiopia and so also are the variations in possible religious identities and the boundaries between these groups are quickly changing. Desplat writes, "Increasing links between communities, the resulting perception of new alternatives and the (re-)definition of these boundaries are the inherent result of globalization processes" (2005:482). Ethiopia has existed largely in isolation from the surrounding nations over the course of the past 2000 years. Even today Ethiopia maintains its own calendar and way of telling time. 2013 in the Western calendar is 2004/2005 in the Ethiopian calendar, which celebrates its new year on September 11th according to the calendars of the rest of the world. At what the rest of the world would call 9 am it is 3 in the daytime for Ethiopians. Whereas other African nations have adopted an international language as their national and educational

language, Ethiopia maintains its tie to Amharic and allows local languages to be used in the educational system at least to the 4th grade. Yet globalization will have its effect.

Desplat goes on:

> On the formation of the current government in 1991, this prejudiced policy [favoring Orthodox Christianity] was abandoned and religious freedom was guaranteed as a constitutional right. The accompanying process of democratization led to the liberalization of the political sphere and, consequently, the fragmentation of the religious sphere. As a result, previously suppressed or non-existent contemporary religious movements, such as Pentecostalism and various revivalist Islamic ideologies, entered the country and challenged well-established institutions and initiated a new arena for debate on the 'true' faith, religious boundaries and correlated identities. While Christian-Muslim disputes remain an important discursive element, internal rivalries between adherents of the same faith have increased. Internal religious differences have thus become a dominant discourse and relegated the previous debate to a secondary *topos* (2005:486).

Desplat may overstate the extent to which internal differences have relegated interreligious discourse to the background but it is certain that of greater interest to many Ethiopians is the discussion between various groups within their own faith. Desplat illustrates his point by describing the differences between the Harari people with their reverence of Muslim saints and holy men and their dispute with incoming Wahhabi's trained in Saudi Arabia who teach that such veneration is not pure scriptural Islam. The Harari cultural sensibility requires that such local saints be revered and so it is a clash of religion but also of culture. Similar sorts of processes are at work in the Protestant arena as well.

1.4.1 Traditional religion in Ethiopia today

As stated above, there are more than eighty different ethnic groups in Ethiopia, each with its own language. Thus it will not be possible to discuss the many variations in traditional religious beliefs as interesting as that would be. However, the primary research area of this study is focused upon the Oromo people who number more than
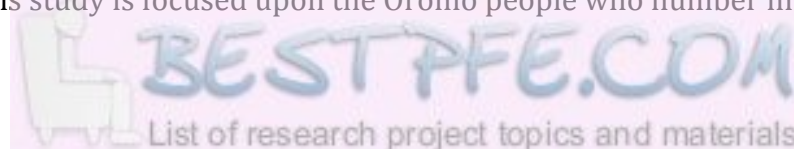
34 million in Ethiopia and so traditional religion among the Oromo will serve to illustrate how traditional religion affects the religious environment of Ethiopia.

Since 1991 and the beginning of the present government, all religions have experienced new opportunities for public expression and traditional religions are no exception. *Eressa* or *Irecha* is an Oromo public thanksgiving ritual normally performed near water or on a hill top that relates to seeking Waaka's blessing of fruitfulness and provision for the community. Each year Oromo people gather in Bishoftu at Lake Hora for a national *Irecha* festival and as many as 2 million have attended the last several years not only from different parts of Ethiopia but from around the world. Oromo traditional religion is very much connected to the Oromo culture but is also a strong part of Oromo identity and of Oromo political aspirations. Although many Oromo are Muslims or Christians (either Orthodox or Evangelical), the traditional belief structure remains part of Oromo culture and cannot be easily removed from having some effect on every religious practice.

Traditional Oromo belief is centered upon worship of *Waaka*, the high God who created the universe and lives in the sky. That worship practice is called *Waakafecha* and the religion itself, *Waaqeffannaa*. *Waaka* was once close to the Oromo people but is now far removed. The story of why *Waaka* has removed himself from close contact with humans is told in various ways, Belay Olam (2003) mentions his being kicked by a mule. *Waqqeffannaa* is claimed by Oromos to be one of the earliest monotheistic religions and it is often taught that Moses learned monotheistic beliefs from contact with *Waqqeffannaa* in Egypt. *Qaalluu* are the priests of *Waaka* who serve in places of worship called *gimbi* or *galma*. *Waaqeffannaa* is not a scripturally based religion but rather, traditions are passed orally (Fayyis 2013).

Although *Waaka* is the high God there are other spiritual beings acknowledged

by *Waqqefannaa* that are called *Ayyaana*. These spirits are of various kinds dwelling in

close proximity to humans and are the daily focus of much of the regular and common

practices of *Waaqeffataa* Oromos (those following traditional beliefs).

> It is the common understanding, therefore, in the Oromo traditional religion that
> *Waaqa* governs through the power of spirits. *Waaqa* directs the lives of his
> creations, both humans and non-humans through '*ayaana*' (the spirits). Then,
> these spirits descend upon both humans and non-humans, according to he
> teachings of the Oromo traditional religion. When it comes to humans, these
> spirits descend upon those individuals who are chosen and competent to take
> over the responsibility of religious leadership. The power of these spirits
> provides them with the knowledge and strength to give their judgments
> truthfully, by understanding the two truths, the truth of *Waaqa* and the truth of
> man. This can be seen as one of the indicators of the fact that there is a strong
> bondage, a unity of meaning between social organizations and religious thinking
> of the Oromo people (Gudetta 2008:63).

Although the majority of Oromo follow either Islam or Christianity, for *Waaqeffataa*

Oromos this is a corruption of the true Oromo belief structure. Thus Islam, as an

example, is also the Arab version of monotheism but it has been mixed with much Arab

culture and thus if an Oromo practices the Arab version of Islam they are accepting a

foreign culture as well as religious beliefs. An Oromized version of Islam is better in this

view but still not as good as following *Waakeffannaa*. Thus there is a tendency to

combine Oromo beliefs with Islam or Christianity to make a more acceptable hybrid

form of either. Protestant Christianity has been more resistant to this syncretistic

approach than Islam although certainly not immune from it. Presently a significant

number of Muslim groups from outside Ethiopia have begun efforts to produce a more

scriptural version of Islam in Ethiopia focusing on teaching the *Qur'an* especially in

smaller and more remote communities.

Waakeffannaa does not include a belief in Hell or punishment after death.

Rather, the consequence of sin is to have problems in this life. After death the follower

of *Waakeffannaa* will be with *Waaka* but will continue to have active involvement in the lives of their descendants, family and tribe through the spiritual realm. The *qaalluu* (priests) are those chosen by *Waaka* by the impartation of *ayana* (spirits) through which *Waaka* interacts with humans (Olam 2003:33). Thus *qaalluu* are intermediaries that perform rituals, offer sacrifices, and have a prophetic function in that they speak the words and express the mind of God to the people concerning various needs and questions they may have. In Muslim communities, *qaalluu* are often called *sheikhs* or *imams* but continue to function in much the same traditional ways (Olam 2003:37-38). Also in some Orthodox communities the *debtera* (priests), though using Bible verses, practice magic and sorcery as do the *qaalluu.*

Oromo traditional religious beliefs are widely known and practiced among Oromo clans.

> Today, both ordinary Oromos and Oromo scholars emphasize the importance of the revival of Oromo traditional religion in order both to negotiate and mend the mistrust that grew big, and to forge the unity among the Oromos who have been made subject to domination and colonial rule. They believe that the man-made divisions among the Oromos with regard to the two world religions, Islam and Christianity, can be dealt with if this revival could be successfully implemented (Gudetta 2008:65).

Waakeffannaa is strongly influential among the Oromo as an integral part of culture and day to day living. Even the many Oromo who are Muslim as well as those who are Orthodox Christians are affected by these traditional beliefs and in many cases traditional practices have been incorporated into localized forms of both Islam and Christianity. Evangelical Christian churches have strongly opposed traditional religious beliefs as being demonic in origin and have done their best not to allow any such practices into the churches. Thus evangelical Christianity has not made the progress among the Oromo that it may have if it used a more contextual approach. However, mainly due to a strong fear of syncretism, Protestant denominations have resisted

incorporating most Oromo cultural practices into Christian worship. Evangelical groups are normally headquartered in Addis Ababa and denominational leaders are for the most part Amharic speaking. Although the practice is now changing, until recently, all denominational churches were expected to conduct their services in Amharic and the use of *afan Oromo* (Oromo language) was viewed with suspicion and concern due to fear of the possible introduction of syncretistic practices. Today more and more evangelical churches are using *afan Oromo* in worship and preaching or at least offering teaching in Christian doctrine in the local dialect.

1.4.2 Christianity in Ethiopia

Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity remains the largest single religion in Ethiopia today with nearly 44% of the population. There has been a major change since 1974 when the *Derg* came to power. The *Derg* in many ways helped the Muslims to become a much stronger voice as the result of diminishing the voice and influence of the Orthodox Church (Ahmed 2006:10). Since the Orthodox were identified with the Imperial system, the *Derg* sought to remove them from their dominant position of influence both in terms of society and government. They certainly succeeded in regard to the governmental area and since that time the Orthodox Church has not had nearly the same influence with government but they remain quite influential in terms of the society at large.

Among the Oromo people group Orthodox Christianity has largely been understood as the "legitimizing ideology for the empire-state" (Gnamo 2002:104).

> Instead of preaching universal humanistic messages such as peace and justice, equality and solidarity, the priests usually followed imperial campaigns and justified the massacre and mutilation of the expanding army against those who refused to submit… (Gnamo 2002:105).

Certainly Orthodox Christians would not agree with this characterization but it reflects the beliefs and attitudes of many Oromo. According to the 2007 Census, in Oromia region Orthodox are 30.5% of the population and Protestants another 17.7%.[2] This would indicate that the facts, assuming the accuracy of the census, are somewhat different than the perception. Since 1991 there has been sporadic conflict between the Orthodox Church and various Muslim groups. Although there has been a perception, especially outside of Ethiopia, that there has been a predominantly peaceful relationship between the two largest religions in Ethiopia, beneath the surface there has been hostility that has broken into the open from time to time. Ahmed gives accounts of several conflicts from the 1990s especially around the building of mosques in Christian areas or the reaction of Christians to the expansion of Islam (Ahmed 2006:16-18). Numerous reports circulate about such conflicts but in many cases are not reported in the media for fear of fuelling intensification.

Some reports do find their way into print such as two incidents in Addis Ababa in July of 2012 (Gatsiounis 2012). In that report Muslims had demonstrated at the African Union concerning Ethiopian governmental control of certain aspects of their religious practices at which time 71 were arrested and then the following week another conflict occurred at Anwar Mosque. UNESCO identified Harar as a World Heritage Site in 2006 largely because of the long tradition of peaceful coexistence between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in this important city. This author visited Harar in 2010 and heard first hand reports of recent violence between Orthodox Christians and Muslims resulting in several injuries and at least one death. So while there is a strong tradition of

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[2] see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Ethiopia, which summarizes the 2007 Ethiopian Census data available at http://www.csa.gov.et/pdf/Cen2007_firstdraft.pdf.

mutual coexistence between Orthodox Christians and Muslims there are also incidents the reveal underlying tensions.

Orthodox Christianity has also seen Evangelical denominations as an enemy at least until recently. Because Orthodox Church leaders viewed Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity as having the only legitimate right to represent Christianity in the nation, they have often opposed Evangelical groups. In Northern and strongly Orthodox areas it is not uncommon for an Evangelical street preacher to be stoned by local Orthodox residents for preaching blasphemy. This author has heard several reports firsthand from those who have received such treatment within the past 10 years. Other Evangelical preachers have been harassed in Orthodox communities by arrest and unwarranted legal action. The cases known by this author have resulted in Federal intervention and the release of Protestant pastors from prison but have certainly had a dampening effect upon the willingness of Protestants to share their faith in such communities. For the most part such incidents are not reported in print media and so knowledge is transferred largely by word of mouth. More recently the official position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church leaders has been modified to some degree but it is unknown how this situation will develop in the future.

Within the Orthodox Church there has been developing an underground reform movement over the past ten years or more. These Orthodox believers, including a number of priests, have started an underground movement in which Evangelical theology is taught within the Orthodox Church. Because this group is not officially recognized, and of a secretive character, it is difficult to know numbers or the extent of its growth. However, it is becoming more widely known and spreading across much of the nation among Orthodox believers. This movement is not too different from a similar movement that took place in the 1980s and 90s that eventually separated from the

Orthodox Church to become its own evangelical denomination, the Ethiopian Ammanuel Church. The current movement seems to have the intention of remaining within the Orthodox Church as a reform movement. Reports heard among Evangelical Christians are that it is growing and becoming a strong influence within the Orthodox Church, which, if this trend continues, will have a significant impact upon the Christian movement in Ethiopia. Whether this reform group will be able to remain within the Ethiopian Orthodox fold will be seen over the next several years. It must also be said that the growth and extent of this movement is impossible to accurately judge since the majority of information comes through those involved in the movement itself.

Evangelical Beginnings

The earliest history of Evangelical Christianity begins in the 19th century with the coming of Swedish Evangelicals and then the Church Missionary Society both of which had the goal of revitalizing the Ethiopian Orthodox church rather than starting a new Christian movement of their own. Neither of these groups had significant success in their goal of reform. The history of the Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia today begins in the early part of the 20th century. Most of the accounts of the beginning and development of the various denominations have been written by missionaries or in a few cases by the denominations themselves, thus they tend to focus only on the activity of the denomination or missionary group involved. The most even-handed book in print is Tibebe (2009), which also gives a more complete account of the significance of Pentecostalism in Ethiopia. Although some protestant missionaries had sporadic contact with Ethiopia starting from the 17th century, these early missionaries did not start a church or movement separate from the Orthodox Church. The history of evangelicalism in Ethiopia as it affects evangelism of the nation today began in 1904 with the arrival of Dr. Karl Cederqvist, a Swedish Lutheran missionary who began work

in Wellega (Tibebe 2009:72). His medical work opened the door for him and built a positive reputation for the Swedish Lutheran missionaries.

Although Emperor Haile Selassie allowed a considerable number of missionary groups into Ethiopia during the period between 1916 and 1930, the one that has had the largest influence on Ethiopian Evangelical Christianity has been the work of Sudan Inland Mission (SIM) initially under the leadership of Dr. Lambie. Unlike the other missions groups that centered their work mainly in the South West of the nation, SIM worked in the Southern Region initially in Wolayta. In fairness, Dr. Lambie was on his way to Western Ethiopia and the town of Jimma when the Wolayta Governor offered him land to set up his clinic (Davis 1980:30-31). The SIM missionaries established a clinic and operated it until the Italian occupation in 1937 at which they were sent out of the country. There were 46 baptized Wolayta believers when the group of 26 including SIM missionaries and children departed (Davis 1980:106; Balisky 2009:116). When the new SIM director returned in 1943 there were more than 200 congregations and 25,000 believers through the work of the Wolayta Christians themselves (Cotterell 1973:102). Girma provides a corrective to much of the missionary literature when he writes:

> The predominantly Christ-above-culture theology of some of the early SIM missionaries (among others) created another culture, the culture of the "Jesus People", which was unnecessarily detached from the culture of the people, colouring [*sic*]the image of the alternative community as a sect. The relationship between SIM missionary returnees and the local church leaders begun to sour after the Italian interlude, as the returnees took charge of the direction of the mission. Social concern was considered marginal, a means to an end, rather than an integral part of mission. This absence made the theological conviction in favour [*sic*] of social transformation more conspicuous, as exemplified in the actions of SIM, such as the decision to limit the education that it provided to most Ethiopians to the elementary level (usually considered to end at grade four). The rationale was that this amount of education was all that was needed in order to be able to read the Bible, and therefore, spread the gospel (2009:192).

The indigenous evangelists had a much more contextualized approach to evangelism and church planting. Davis writes, "From the very first, Christianity became

a natural thing to the Wallamo Christians, and they did not consider it as something introduced from the outside" (1980:77). As an SIM missionary and historian, Davis would like to present a picture representing that this was the hope and goal of SIM missionaries as a whole but Girma referencing Fargher (1996) and others paints a more balanced picture. Nonetheless, the Wolayta evangelists became a powerful force for spreading the gospel among many tribal groups in Southern Ethiopia. Their commitment, dedication, and sacrifice has been an inspiration to Christians across the nation and has inspired the Ethiopian Evangelical churches to believe they are well able to trust God themselves to do the work of spreading His kingdom.

Pentecostalism in Ethiopia

In the early 1960's a group of students had formed a prayer meeting with regular gatherings at Haile Selassie University. Based upon reports of Christians present at those meetings personally interviewed by the author, students experienced a Pentecostal outpouring described in very similar terms to Acts 2:12-4. Those students later became key leaders of many denominations across Ethiopia and out of that group the Ethiopian Full Gospel Church was formed. Pentecostalism had come to Ethiopia gradually and through many different avenues, each of which lays claim to being the first or bringing the Pentecostal message to Ethiopia. According to Tibebe (2009:150) the first Pentecostal influence came by way of three young women missionaries sent to Ethiopia in 1937 by Elim Fellowship of Lima, New York. Tibebe does an excellent job in describing the various streams of Pentecostalism that drew together in the late 1960's including those mentioned above, the Finnish Pentecostal Mission, and a spontaneous work among high school students in Nazareth. But whereas the early influences were localized, the Pentecostal movement came into focus by way of a conference held in Hawassa in 1965 sponsored by Hewot Berhan Church and Swedish Pentecostal

missionaries along with Paul Johansson, Elim missionary to Kenya, who brought an influential Kenyan Pentecostal preacher named Omaha Chacha. A similar conference was held in Addis Ababa in 1966 that ignited interest in the Pentecostal message and thrust it into national prominence.[3]

The student movement is a vital and important part of the reception of the Pentecostal experience in Ethiopia as well as the course of its development. Students at Haile Selassie University (Now Addis Ababa University) were some of the key voices that brought the Marxist government to power in 1974 but later they suffered disillusionment. The Christian student movement, emboldened by a fresh Pentecostal experience, began to see revolution not in Marxist terms but as one of life transformation through faith in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. This brought them into conflict with those students who were taking the Marxist path and became one of the early sources of persecution experienced by the young Pentecostal movement. Tibebe writes:

> For the Pentecostals, salvation is synonymous with a new birth, a metaphor for radical renewal and reorientation of lifestyle, hence their frequent reference to *dagem lidet* ("rebirth" or "to be born again"), a concept that had not been spelled out clearly in the tradition of the national Church. This issue of *dagem lidet* has often times been the source of considerable tension between the Pentecostals and the Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia. The latter consider the term offensive, for from their point of view, it is a slap in the face of their old Christian identities (2009:165).

Again Tibebe continues:

> According to informants who were actively engaged in the early phase of the Pentecostal movement, their chief motivation for witnessing was the life transformation they had personally experienced by becoming Christians and the urgency they felt to share it with others to encounter the same. Many other young students were also attracted by the striking changes they had observed in

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[3] This description of the beginning of the Pentecostal movement draws heavily from Tibebe, 2009 especially for names and dates. To that has been added personal communication of the author with many of the actors involved.

> the behavior of converts whom they had known before as "bad guys" or sick men and the testimonies of miracles reported by converts (2009:166).

These students immediately began to have conferences, gather regularly for prayer, start churches that became very fast growing, and in numerous ways became an annoyance to the Orthodox Church establishment. Persecution began in 1967 when a group of several thousand stormed a conference of perhaps 300 Pentecostal Christians gathering in Debre Zeit causing injuries and property damage. This became known throughout the nation and through news coverage of the event the name *Pente* was permanently attached to this new kind of Christian.

The Pentecostal movement in its early season was largely an urban movement with many young adherents who were most often converts from among Orthodox believers. During the *Derg* years the young Christians were soon persecuted especially due to their evangelistic zeal. The *Derg* shut down the recently formed Full Gospel Believers Church first since it had little support from other Christian denominations and was the most aggravating to the Marxist government. Thus the young Pentecostals began to attend other denominational churches that were still open. Through some seventeen years of persecution the Pentecostal experience was spread across all denominations and became the common if not the normative experience of Evangelical Christians throughout the nation. Pentecostal Christian groups today are conducting the largest and most successful outreach work among Muslims in Ethiopia and thus this study will focus upon the issues raised by their evangelism and church planting strategies.

1.4.3   Islam in Ethiopia

Islam in Ethiopia dates back to 615 AD and the lifetime of Muhammad. But Ethiopia was dominated by the strength of the Orthodox Church and apart from short periods of

armed struggle Muslims were generally an oppressed minority. Beginning in the 20th century that began to change. "During the Italian occupation of the country (1936-1941), the Fascist regime pursued an overtly pro-Islamic policy in order to undermine the resistance of the state and the church" (Ahmed 2006:4-5). Although the *Derg* years (1974-1991) were not hospitable toward religion in general, the Muslim community in some ways found their situation improved since the Orthodox Church was officially removed from any governmental influence and no longer able to use governmental power to control Islamic initiatives. Since 1991 and the implementation of the ethnically based federal system Muslim groups have proliferated especially through funding and theological teaching coming into Ethiopia from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Somalia as well as other Islamic nations. Ostebo comments regarding the change to the new governmental system in 1991, "For Islam in Ethiopia, it entailed a movement from the margins of society to increased recognition in the public sphere" (2008:416).

Islam in Ethiopia although having some important centers such as Harar in the East and Jimma in the West, has been predominantly rural in nature. Most Muslims would call the form of Islam practiced in these farming areas Sufi but by missiologists it is usually known as folk Islam. It is a mixture of Islamic teaching with local, traditional beliefs and practices. In such areas Islamic teaching comes by way of the *imam*, or Muslim teacher, since the farmers do not read Arabic. The teaching of the *imam* is often a mixture of Islamic teaching supported by *Qur'an* or *Hadith* (Muslim traditions) and local spiritual practices. In many cases these *imams* function more like a shaman than a teacher of Islam. Local people come to them for deliverance from various demonic attacks and curses. They also come for magic amulets or potions for protection and prosperity. Such communities would certainly identify themselves as Muslim but often this identification is as much political in nature as it is religious.

Muslims in Ethiopia, in general, come from ethnic groups that have been marginalized, having been originally included in the Ethiopian Empire by way of warfare. Thus they perceive Islam as the religion most appropriate to those who are in opposition to a Christian dominated governmental system. Today, the Orthodox Church no longer dominates modern Ethiopian government, but that time frame is short compared to centuries under Imperial rule. A significant part of the current dynamic among Ethiopian Muslims is a move toward a more scripturally based form of Islam. This is promoted through teaching in various formats and encouraged by numerous groups hailing from various Islamic groups and nations. The goals of these groups are similar but methods differ. The initial goal is to create a Muslim identity that supersedes the many ethnic identities found among Muslims in Ethiopia. If this can be achieved there can be a unified voice among all of Ethiopian Muslims demanding greater rights for Muslims and eventually acceptance of *Shari'ah* law in Muslim communities. The ultimate prize for all these groups would be for Ethiopia to become a Muslim nation governed by Islamic law.

Abbink describes well the situation of Ethiopian Muslims in the following two quotations:

> The 'quest for identity' is an expression that can be applied to the efforts of Ethiopian Muslims to be recognized, to organize, and to raise their position in the country towards parity with the Christians, who have been politically and culturally dominant from the fourth century until the 1970's (1998:110).

> While Ethiopia was thus one of the first countries to receive Islam (later developing centres [*sic*] of Islamic learning in Harar, Masawa, Zeyla, later Jimma), it has also seen a notable tendency towards inward orientation, displaying the kind of seclusion and self-sufficiency that was equally characteristic of Ethiopian Christianity. In addition to the geographical reasons for this, linguistic and cultural factors probably also played a part. Arabic never was and never became an indigenous spoken language – even most Ethiopian Muslims only knew Quranic passages and prayers in Arabic – and for many purposes ethnic and regional identities tended to be as important as religious identity (1998 112).

A strong factor noted by Abbink is the cultural and linguistic isolation of Ethiopia. The result of this isolation has been that ethnic identities are a much stronger influence on individual and social action than religious identifications in most cases. While Abbink wrote the above quoted article in 1998 the situation is only gradually changing through the pressures of globalization.

Ostebo discusses what he terms an "increasingly diversified Muslim community" that is developing in Ethiopia (2008:417). He writes:

> The issues of religious reform and ethnicity are, …, clearly interlinked, where both religion and ethnicity have gained renewed strength as categories for the construction of identity, and as strong forces for popular mobilization (2008:418).

Ostebo (2008) describes three reform movements active among Muslims in Ethiopia, the *Salafi, Tabligh* and what he calls an intellectualist movement. The *Salafi* is what was previously known as *Wahabbi* from Saudi Arabia. The *Tabligh* movement is connected to its founder Sheikh Muhammed Iliyas who started this movement in India in 1929. The final group he terms the "intellectualist movement" is connected to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Each of these three reform movements is most active in urban areas, although the *Salafi's* have been connected to the Bale and Arssi areas as well.

The *Salafi* movement is closely connected to the Oromo tribal group who predominate in Bale and Arssi. They are also growing in strength in new areas of Oromia such as Jimma and its environs. Ostebo writes, "Among the Oromo, the question of ethnicity has become overtly politicized, framed within the ethno-nationalism of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)" (2008:437). Thus the *Salafi* support the OLF agenda but are somewhat limited in pursuing their religious agenda by the strongly ethnically oriented society in which they exist. The *Tabligh* are almost exclusively drawn from among the Gurage people group. The intellectualist movement is the most ethnically

diverse as it is drawn from among the educated Muslims of Addis Ababa. One question of interest would be why these groups are predominantly active in urban areas?

Ethiopian society, like much of Africa today, reflects a strong movement away from rural society with its traditional religious and cultural components, into urban areas. The largest such area in Ethiopia is Addis Ababa but the regional capitals are also growing at a record pace. These dislocated, predominantly young populations have economic opportunities that differ from those available in rural communities. Education is far more available as are contacts with new ideas of all kinds including religious ideas. Dislocation brings with it a sense of disorientation and so as populations move from rural to urban areas they tend to seek out those of their own ethnicity, language and religion. However, in an urban environment such as Addis Ababa the amount of interaction with those of other cultures and religions is significantly increased. Thus Muslim reform groups have opportunity to extend their influence into new ethnic groups as they operate in urban areas. It is also clear that virtually all Muslim reform movements have strong connections outside of Ethiopia and many of their main teachers are either from other nations or were trained outside of Ethiopia. Such foreigners and Ethiopians with international experience seldom have interest to live in rural areas.

The *Salafi* movement is an example of another trend among Muslim reform movements and that is the use of financial resources and other incentives to further their goals. Saudi Arabian money has poured into Ethiopia for building mosques, supporting the salaries of *imams*, providing travel and educational opportunities for Ethiopians, as well as starting businesses that offer employment to Muslims or those who are willing to convert. It is very common for Saudi resources to be used to provide talented Ethiopian university age students with opportunities to receive *Salafi*

educational programs in Saudi Arabia that lead to financial support when they return to Ethiopia.

However, one of the most interesting issues for missiology is the connection between ethnic identity and religious identity. Ostebo (2008) discusses this issue at some length and concludes that although ethnic identity predominates, religious identity (specifically Muslim identity) reflects a broadening of identification that is on the rise in Ethiopia. While it seems that this is certainly one of the goals of the Muslim reform movements, that is, to make Islam the foremost point of orientation in the establishment of identity, it is unclear that much progress is being made yet. Perhaps that is a trajectory that the nation is on as globalization exerts its influence. But as of this writing the ethnically based federal system continues to force ethnicity and culture as primary identity markers. The other challenge Islam faces in Ethiopia is the proliferation of such a wide variety of Muslim groups seeking to gain influence. Below is a chart listing only the main groups functioning in Ethiopia as of 2013.

Different Muslim Groups Operating in Ethiopia

Country	Founder	Name/English	Name/Amharic	Name/Arabic	No.
Lebanon	Abdellah al–Hareri	Ah`bash	አህባሽ	أَحْبَاشِ	1
Egypt	Hassen al-Benna	Eh`wan	ኢኽዋን	إِخْوَان	2
Yemen		Sufi	ሱፊይ	سُلْفِي	3
Iran and Iraq		Shia	ሺአ	شِيْسَة	4
Ethiopia	Abret Sheh	Abreti	አብራቲ	أَبِرِيِتِي	5
Saudi Arabia	Abul Hassen	Ash`ari	አሽአሪ	أَشْعَرِي	6
Yemen		Muatazila	ሙአተዚላ	مَعْتَزِلَا	7
Yemen		Qederia	ቀደሪያ	قَدَرِيَّة	8
Saudi Arabia	Mohammed Ibnu Abdul Wehab	Ah`lu Sunna	አህሉ ሱና	أَهْلُ السُّنَة	9
Pakistan	Mewlana Elyas	Teblich	ተብሊግ	تَبْلِيخ	10
Sudan		Tekfir	ተክፊር	تَكْفِير	11
Saudi Arabia '	Rbie al-Medhely	Med`heli	መድኸሊ	مَدْخَلِي	12
Saudi Arabia		Salafi	ሰለፊይ	سَلْفِي	13

Table 2
Main Muslim Groups Operating in Ethiopia 2013.
Read Table from right to left.

1.5   Politics

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia established by the 1994 constitution is a

unique experiment in an ethnically based federal system. It arose with no democratic

traditions present in the nation of Ethiopia and at the end of one of the most repressive

and violent Marxist regimes since Stalin's Russia. As described above, Ethiopia was

ruled by an emperor between the 4th century and the end of the imperial regime in 1974 when Haile Selassie was deposed by what became the *Derg* government headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam. In speaking of Mengistu, Teshale writes, "His murderous reign was unequalled in modern Ethiopian history" (1995:168).

The new era beginning in 1991 was without precedent in Ethiopia in regard to a significant move toward a democratic system of governance. Democracy in Ethiopia, as with all things Ethiopian, took on its own unique form. The 1994 constitution formed nine ethnically based regions and two federally administered autonomous urban areas.

> The main objectives of Ethiopia's regionalization policy are to enable the different ethnic groups to develop their culture and language, manage socio-economic development in their respective areas, exercise self-rule and bring about an equitable share of national resources among the regions. Lately, it has become increasingly evident that the shortage of trained personnel and inadequate institutional and administrative capacity that many regions are experiencing have hampered efforts to institutionalize decentralized governance and promote balanced development in the country (Meheret 2002:130).

Decentralization of power is not intended to stop at the regional level but to extend to the *Wareda* (county) and *Kebele* (local) areas. As Meheret explains this process requires a large number of qualified and trained administrative personnel, one of the challenges that continues to face Ethiopia today. Meheret identifies the prominent themes for governance in Ethiopia as language, culture and socio-economic development.

With more than eighty-five ethnic groups and only nine regions each tribe did not have its own region. The Southern Region (SNNPR) alone is estimated to have some forty-five ethnic groups within its borders. The addition of zones has provided another level of authority, also ethnically based, that allows for those ethnic groups not large enough to govern a region to nonetheless have an area under their control. The decision to base the nation's governmental system on ethnicity, while to some extent an expediency to maintain the unity of the nation under the new government at the time of

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its formation, was also a response to the strong feeling by many tribes that their interests had been neglected or intentionally trampled under previous governmental systems. The effort at unity was not entirely successful in that Eritrea having been a province of Ethiopia, became independent and formed its own government in 1991.

The *Derg* government had been defeated by a variety of opponents many of which arose either from the vestiges of the student movement that had initially supported the overthrow of the emperor such as the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF), and ethnically based groups such as the Oromo Liberation Front. In the end the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was able to bring many groups together under its new banner, the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and so became the leading force in the new government.

The student movement of the 1960's is significant to the background of this study for several reasons. The students were opponents of Emperor Haile Selassie and had a strong focus on land reform using the slogan, "Land to the tiller" (Bahru 2002a:220-224). The students were initially attracted to the socialist agenda and its opposition to the imperial system of land tenure (*gult* system) in which land was controlled by the nobility comprised of appointees of the emperor. The holder of the *gult* right did not "own" the land, as all land belonged to the emperor, but they had the right of taxation which normally called for a percentage of the crop grown on the land to be given to the *gult* holder. A *rist* holder had land use rights only. The *rist* right involved a definite right to farmland, but not always the same land, and could be passed down to a person's heirs. Under Haile Selassie the *gult* and *rist* (feudal) system was transformed into a bureaucratic system during the post WWII era (Hoben 2001:7-8). However, the system continued to function in much the same manner as it had for centuries. As the population grew and heirs multiplied (during this time period all children inherited

equally in most of Ethiopia) the land holdings grew smaller and smaller. Gradually, the small farmers became increasingly discontent with the emperor and the feudal system.[4]

Ironically, it was Haile Selassie himself who, due to his interest in improved education for Ethiopia, had founded Haile Selassie University (Addis Ababa University), and the students educated in that university who became his opponents. During the early years after the socialist revolution of 1974 students participated in a broad modernization project reaching to the village level (Donham 1999:27-35). Many university students who were assigned to teach the peasants the principles of the revolution supported this campaign called by the Amharic name of *zemecha*. However, as the farmers resisted, the response of the military regime became increasingly violent and the students became disillusioned. Many of these students became part of the opposition groups that eventually brought about the overthrow of the *Derg* in 1991. As an example it was students from Addis Ababa University who fled to the north in 1974 to form the TPLF out of which came the present dominant political entity (EPRDF).

University students continue to be influential and are often called upon to give thoughts and opinions regarding the present quality of democracy as well as their perception of the democratization process. Valfort (2009) reports the results of a survey conducted in 2004 among 331 Addis Ababa University students. The sample was flawed in that too many respondents were from the Tigray people who are closely associated with the ruling party (EPRDF) and some students made this complaint. But the perception that is expressed at the end of the report is that the government has primarily benefited those of Tigray and other ethnic groups are not well represented nor are they receiving the same benefits of the government. While a commonly held and

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[4] For a complete description of the land tenure situation see (McCann 1995) and Dessalegn (1999).

expressed idea among Ethiopians privately, such sentiments are not often publically aired. Pausewang, *et al* (2002) is an example of the rather common critical position of literature produced outside Ethiopia toward the quality of the present democratic experience of Ethiopia and its ethnically based federal system. The 2000 election was widely criticized by Western observers due to a lack of fairness relating to opposition parties. Those objections are stated in Pausewang, et al. (2002:230-231) where they write:

> It [the EPRDF] has built up a formal structure of democratic institutions to keep in line with the promise it made to the Ethiopian people and the demands and expectations of Western donors, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. But below the surface it has built a party structure that keeps tight control at all levels and makes sure that no one can use these democratic institutions efficiently to challenge its power.

Pausewang has himself been an outspoken and consistently critical observer of Ethiopian elections since 1994. While many of these comments have some truth behind them, they also examine Ethiopian democracy from a somewhat unrealistic point of view.

As stated above, Ethiopia has no history of democracy to draw upon and thus all methods, procedures and governmental process associated with democracy as well as a functional public sphere must be created *ex nihilo*. Such processes are inherently risky with many potentially destructive forces at work. Pausewang and others are attempting to hold Ethiopia to a standard of democracy that is unreasonable at this stage in its political development. These criticisms date back to the first election in 1994, which was not only the first election of the present government but the first election in the history of Ethiopia. Democracy in Ethiopia is young and the governmental and social sectors are still developing.

2012 saw the passing of Prime Minister Meses Zenawi who served Ethiopia as its leader for nearly twenty years. The governmental system has not collapsed, peace has been maintained, the regular course of government has continued with the constitutionally mandated successor being placed in office until the next scheduled election in 2015. The new Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Hailemariam Desalegn, is not from Tigray, as most observers and many Ethiopians would have expected, but he is from southern Ethiopia and is of the Wolayta people. This development seems to bode well for the future of democracy in Ethiopia even if it takes on a one party form at the present season.

As to the significance of Ethiopian politics for the present research, there are several important political factors that must be considered. First, the ethnically based federal system has affirmed ethnicity as the most significant social characteristic to be considered. This affects not only politics but every area of Ethiopian life. Regional governments, and below that, the zone and *Wareda* levels as well, have significant power and influence over an ever more clearly defined number of areas. Religion, while important, is not easily becoming the over arching rally point managing to cross ethnic lines to achieve a unified voice that either the Muslims or the Christians would have liked. This creates opportunities with regard for evangelization and church planting by Christian groups but also requires such groups to take into account ethnic differences rather than using a one-size-fits-all approach to evangelism. Second, the role of the young, and especially university students, remains of strategic importance for any social movement or program in Ethiopia. University students are more open to new ideas and change but they have their own agenda and are much influenced by forces and trends from outside Ethiopia. They are also very concerned about their personal, family and economic future and especially by perceived opportunities or the lack thereof in these

areas. Thus secularization and globalization are important forces becoming of greater influence in Ethiopia. Third, the potential for long-term stability and religious freedom bodes well that the relatively open dialogue between religious groups will continue. In the existing climate the opportunity for evangelism and church planting by Christians among Muslims will likely continue to exist.

1.6   Summary of missiological issues

Based upon the background information presented here, there are several missiological issues that must be considered regarding Muslim conversion to Christianity in Ethiopia. There are historical barriers arising from the viewpoint of many Muslim people groups that Christians have been their conquerors and oppressors. The emphasis on ethnic differences and ethnic identity can also be a barrier to the evangelization of Muslims. In such a culturally charged environment, it is very difficult for a person from outside a given people group to learn their social and communicative conventions so well that they are not unknowingly putting up barriers to conversion in both speech and lifestyle. The complexity of the religious environment is also a prominent factor that becomes clear in the above discussion. Finally, Ethiopia is known for its linguistic and cultural isolation. That isolation means that Ethiopia has not been as affected by globalization or Westernization to the same degree as other nations in Africa. Whether this issue is problematic depends largely upon the kind and degree of contextualization utilized in one's missiological strategy.

Missionary and evangelism work among any people group must be done within a historical, social, cultural, religious and political context. Each of these factors is significant as to how the Christian message is heard and understood by the intended receivers. The Ethiopian context for evangelism and church planting among Muslims is one that is charged with ethnic differences, historical enemies, political agendas, and

internal religious distinctions that all tend to be intensified by foreign influences. It would be a great temptation to simplify the situation by ignoring one or more of these factors but a successful missiological approach must accommodate the entire spectrum of issues if it is to be successful. The advantage of the critical hermeneutic approach based upon an understanding of the role of narrative in identity formation and change is that these tools are integrative in nature and allow the missiologists to accommodate the complexity required by other approaches without over simplification. It is the goal of this study to both explain and utilize such an approach.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

This section includes a brief summary of literature giving focus to the status of research related to the research questions stated above. The literature will be discussed under the following topics: identity as related to Muslim evangelization and conversion; and methods of Muslim outreach, evangelism and church planting.

2.1   Identity and its relationship to Muslim evangelism and conversion

Identity in relationship to Ethiopian Muslims has been examined most often from a political viewpoint due to the challenges related to Ethiopia's ethnically based federal system of governance (Alem, 2005). As such, ethnic, tribal and religious identity issues have largely been subsumed under a political rubric. Abbink (1998) provides a more helpful orientation in the manner in which he gives focus to the issue of identity among Ethiopian Muslims providing a brief historical perspective. He writes concerning the fact that whereas folk Islam has predominated in the countryside, new developments

> ...can only be understood in the changing configuration of a globalizing Islam
> that is expanding under new social and political conditions [and] will reshape
> the social fabric of Islamic societies in Ethiopia and the nature of Muslim identity
> and identification in the country. Villagers will be drawn into the wider debate,
> initiated by globally oriented scriptural Islamic community leaders or
> missionaries, on Islamic ideals and practice (Abbink, 1998:121).

Ethiopian Muslim identity has also been discussed in terms of the radicalization of Islam in the past 15-20 years. Ostebo (2008) reviews the history of three Islamic reform movements in Ethiopia and discusses groups such as the *Salafi (Wahabi)* movement with strong ties to Saudi Arabia, which provided teachers and finances for these groups. In the context of a history of Muslims being outsiders, largely excluded from the Ethiopian political power structure, the recent openness to religious and ethnic diversity has opened up new opportunities for expression of Muslim culture. However, it must be remembered that religious diversity is secondary to ethnic diversity in the

Ethiopian public sphere and thus Muslim identity is normally expressed in connection

with tribal/ethnic identification. Ostebo writes:

> The task of the researcher is then to listen to the voices of the concerned
> context's discursive traditions, to make an effort to determine and identify their
> precise content, to trace their impact over time and space and investigate how
> the interactions of a variety of contexts are influencing them. Only then can we
> obtain a more precise picture of contemporary Islam and the quest for reform in
> the area under investigation (2008:419).

Ostebo (1998) emphasizes the growing awareness of Ethiopian Muslims concerning

their long and significant history as they are in the process of forming a new

multicultural identity but always with a political focus. De Waal (2004) traces the

history of radical Islam in the horn of Africa starting from Sudan in the 1980's but again

dealing primarily with the political aspect of Muslim identity. Although these sources

are helpful in understanding the development and current influences upon the

Ethiopian Muslim identity, all emphasize the political dimension and thus give focus

primarily to points of conflict. Because much of the literature on this topic has been

written from a political perspective and gives attention to cultural or religious themes

only at points of intersection with that paradigm, it has only marginal application to the

present research.

The issue of Ethiopian Muslim identity is more thoroughly discussed in Desplat

(2005). Desplat approaches his subject using Harar as a case study. Harar is a city in

eastern Ethiopia with a long history of Islam and is known for its veneration of local

saints and holy persons. Desplat discusses a conflict that has arisen between the

traditional Harari form of Islam with a newly entering *Wahabi* form of Islam from Saudi

Arabia. In Desplat's concludes:

> I have attempted to demonstrate how religious identities and their boundaries
> are historically rooted and constructed in a specific context and certain
> conditions. The general focus was on actors as carriers of new ideas who played

important roles in collective processes of identity-building through debates with and in dissociation with the 'other', in this case the Wahhabis (2005:501).

Desplat bases his work on Lamont and Molner (2002) and their discussion of boundaries in their relationship to identity making an effective case for diversity in Muslim identities based upon contextualization of relevant scriptures and traditions. Desplat's discussion emphasizes the role of the specific context when discussing the development or change of religious identities.

Jalata has written extensively about Oromo identity and *oromummaa*, what he terms a national and international project of Oromo liberation (2007:1). As a firm supporter of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Jalata is hesitant to affirm Islam as having any rightful place within Oromo identity. Rather he connects Oromo traditional religion with Oromo social and political systems and aspirations as well as providing the proper foundation for Oromo identity. Jalata has primarily a political agenda of promoting Oromo identity for the purpose of unifying opposition to the Ethiopian government and securing the establishment of an Oromo state.

> Through the processes of Abyssinianization and Christianization, successive Ethiopian/Abyssinian state elites have racialized their own identity and those of indigenous Africans they have colonized. Using a racialized discourse, they have dominated the indigenous African population and prevented the construction of a multinational democratic state that could have promoted peace, stability, and development (Jalata 2008:4).

Jalata's use of race as a distinguishing factor in Ethiopia emphasizes the difference between the Semitic cultures of northerners compared to the people groups of central and South Ethiopia. It is clear that Jalata is focused on a political agenda and using the rhetoric of identity to achieve this end. Nonetheless, political rhetoric and strongly politicized agendas are part of the environment within which Muslim evangelization must be conducted in Ethiopia.

Scholars have normally emphasized one aspect of the concept of identity whether social, cultural and ethnic or religious but have not adequately integrated these factors. In most cases the emphasis is on conflict whether political conflict between Muslims and the Ethiopian government or among Muslim factions. None of these apply the concept of identity in a missiological dimension. The present research intends to provide a method of integration of the various aspects of identity through Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity and to apply this understanding to the missiological enterprise.

Bediako's (1999,1992) landmark study on *Theology and Identity* in the African context is outstanding with regard to traditional African religions and especially those of West Africa and its principles will be included in this research. Bediako's emphasis is upon conversion to Christianity from traditional religion and does not directly address the topic of Muslims in Ethiopia. However, many of the tribes of Ethiopia that are predominantly Muslim today come from a worldview not very different from that with which Bediako engages but with the admixture of Muslim thought, values, and social structures. Bediako's discussion is also applicable in respect to tribes such as the Oromo who were not colonized by Europeans, as is widely known of Ethiopia's history, but certainly consider themselves to have been colonized by the Amhara (Orthodox Christian) empire. This study will utilize many of Bediako's insights but will extend the area of study into new territory. Within the missiological objectives of this research, the topic of conversion is closely connected to the topic of identity.

Kaplan discusses conversion in Ethiopia in general terms including conversion to Islam or Christianity. He writes, "In discussing the acceptance of either Christianity or Islam, it is important to consider the social, political and geographic networks through which these religions spread (2004:378). The socially based identity found in Ethiopia,

and most non-western nations, provides a different context for the spread of the gospel than the concepts of conversion found in most Western oriented literature are intended to address. Kaplan writes:

> New Muslims were often accepted more on the basis of their willingness to accept the religion of Islam than their actual practice and familiarity with its teachings. Conversion was frequently understood as a gradual process, in which the declaration of faith was a crucial first step, rather than the culmination of a process (2004: 380).

This would indicate that the Muslim idea of conversion is closer to Hierbert's *centered-set* approach, which may then prove more appropriate in Muslim evangelism. In this study we must consider the social, political and geographical networks through which religion spreads and the significance of both socially created identity as well as the usefulness of a more process oriented understanding of conversion. If the conversion that Muslims have witnessed is that of Christians becoming Muslims and in that context conversion is understood as a process over time rather than an event, this is a key factor to be considered in developing strategies and interpreting results of Muslim evangelization.

Donham has conducted an ethnographic study of the Maale people of South Ethiopia. He writes:

> Conversion is fundamentally about the assumption of new identities – often in situations in which macrohistorical changes have undermined old systems of status and self-validation. These new identities are enacted primarily through the adoption of new narratives that reposition persons making new sense of local situations that promise new dignity and access to wider values (1999:120).

Donham is primarily interested to discuss the effect of Marxism and the *Derg* on tribal cultures in South Ethiopia. His discussion of the spread of Protestant Christianity among the southern tribes highlights its modernizing influence upon traditional tribal cultures. This influence toward modernization brought the Protestant church into disfavor with tribal elders who felt a loss of community influence.

In a more general way, Kraft (2005,1979) discusses conversion in terms of his dynamic equivalence model. In his view, conversion must be understood, symbolized, and communicated in terms not identical to the scriptures but in a relationship of dynamic equivalence. In this way Kraft comes to a relational view of conversion based upon turning and moving along a new trajectory toward God. That trajectory then becomes a process of conversion rather than an event (2005:261-265). This fits well with Hiebert (1994) and his discussion of the concept of the meaning of becoming a Christian in terms of set theory. The traditional Western approach used by most Evangelical Christians is a "bounded set" approach which defines "Christian" in terms of doctrines that form a boundary separating those inside from those outside whereas Hiebert is suggesting another approach is possible which he calls a "centered set" approach based on relationship to the center (Christ) and trajectory (moving toward Christ). Hiebert later writes:

> Conversion then is a point – turning around. This turning may involve a minimal amount of information regarding Christ, but it does involve a change in relationship to him – a commitment to follow him, however little we know of him, to learn more and to obey him as we understand his voice. But conversion is also a process – a series of decisions that grow out of this initial turning (2008:311).

The relationship between identity and conversion that will be presented in this study will be an application and perhaps in some ways an extension of Donham, Kraft and Hiebert.

Studies and dissertations related to Ethiopian Muslim identity in most cases deal with Oromos living outside Ethiopia in Europe or America: see Gudetta (2008), Swanson (2008), and Sanders (2002). An exception is Frejacques (2002) dissertation on the Karayu Oromo that is based upon research done in Ethiopia and deals with ethnicity and identity formation emphasizing the conflict between Oromos and Amharas. Thus
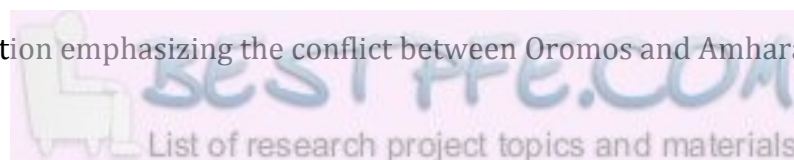
Frejacques (2002) follows a different trajectory than the present research which gives focus to identity concepts that include a broader scope than ethnicity alone and which gives equal emphasis to social and religious dimensions. Klemm (2002) discusses the development of a positive Oromo identity in recent years as expressed in women's clothing. Klemm's work is helpful but the focus again is on politics and the potential for Oromo secession from the Ethiopian state as expressed aesthetically in the change of clothing among Hararge women of Eastern Ethiopia. Jalata (2010) is one of the best discussions of Oromo identity but minimizes the religious dimension in favor of a political agenda. However, Jalata, an Oromo living outside Ethiopia, when discussing the central Oromo institution of *gadda* relies heavily upon quotations from others rather than giving a personal explanation of this important topic. While each of these approaches gives insight into Oromo Muslim identity, they address most forcefully the identity change associated with politicization rather than change in religious identification. These research agendas connect with the present work and provide useful contextual information but do not address the missiological questions.

2.2   Methods of Christian outreach to Muslims, evangelism and church planting

In this section of the literature review representative writings dealing with the issues of Muslim conversion will be brought forward to frame the research question in its contemporary setting. The study of the evangelism of Muslims and the need for some level of contextualization has been much discussed for many years although not using the terminology of contextualization until the 1970's. Samuel Zwemer, often called the father of modern Islamic missions, wrote many books and articles between 1900 and 1954. Although taking a generally oppositional view of the relationship between gospel and culture, Zwemer did much to help the Christian community begin to understand Muslim beliefs and practices. He, perhaps more than any writer since, was able to

synthesize an understanding of both popular or folk Islam and classical Islamic beliefs. His writing on Islamic teaching, practice and Muslim culture are widely read by missiologists and missionaries working among Muslims to this day.

During the 1970's a renewed emphasis on world evangelism was founded with the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization. As early as the Willowbank Report (1978) the issue of contextualization and the indigenization of the church emerged as a central issue. The Willowbank Report states, "Therefore, while rejoicing in our cultural inheritance and developing our own indigenous forms, we must always remember that our primary identity as Christians is not in our particular cultures but in the one Lord and his one body (Eph. 4:3-6)" (Winter 1981:531). Thus identity and the transformation of identity through conversion is an important theme but largely undeveloped in the relevant literature. Bosch mentioning some of the challenges of contextualization writes:

> The best models of contextual theology succeed in holding together in creative tension *theoria*, *praxis* and *poiesis* – or if one wishes, faith, hope, and love. This is another way of defining the missionary nature of the Christian faith, which seeks to combine the three dimensions (1991:431).

Bosch notes what he calls "ambiguities of contextualization" in which he points directly to many of the issues being wrestled with today in the field of Muslim Evangelism (Bosch, 1991, pp. 425-432). In recent years Muslim Evangelism has come to be dominated by the issue of contextualization.

In 1998 John Travis (a pseudonym) published his landmark description of a spectrum of approaches to contextualization of the gospel message among Muslims (Travis, 1998:407-408). This spectrum is described as placing "Christ-Centered" groups on a scale from C1-C6 representing the degree and nature of the contextualization employed in each approach. Travis describes the C1-C6 spectrum as follows:

C1- Traditional churches using non-indigenous language. Christian churches in Muslim countries entirely removed from the culture. Christians exist as an ethnic/religious minority.

C2- Traditional churches using indigenous languages the cultural forms remain Western or non-Muslim.

C3- A degree of contextualization is used in these Christ-centered communities using the local language of the Muslims and employing non-religious indigenous cultural forms. Style of worship, dress, and other externals, are loosely from the indigenous culture. Local rituals and traditions, if used, are purged of religious elements. C3 groups may meet in a church or a more religiously neutral location. The majority of the congregation is of Muslim background and call themselves Christians.

C4- These are contextualized Christ-centered communities using Muslim languages and biblically permissible cultural and Islamic forms. They are similar to C3 except believers worship looks in most respects like Muslim worship, they keep the fast of Ramadan, avoid pork and alcohol, use Islamic (Quranic) terms and Muslim dress. These communities are almost entirely of Muslim background. Though highly contextualized, believers are not seen as Muslims by the Muslim community. Believers call themselves, "followers of Isa Al-Masih," or some similar formula.

C5- These are Christ-centered communities of "Messianic Muslims" who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. Believes remain legally and socially within the Islamic community. Aspects of Islam incompatible with the Bible are rejected or if possible reinterpreted. Believers may remain active in the mosque. The primary differentiation between C4 and C5 believers is their self identification as Muslims who are followers of Isa.

C6- These are small Christ-centered communities of secret, underground believers. These can be individuals or small groups who remain isolated due to the hostility of the surrounding community. Such groups do not normally attempt open evangelization in their communities.

Many related articles may be found in the International Journal of Frontier Missiology, Evangelical Missions Quarterly, and St. Francis Magazine. Generally speaking the IJFM articles are favorable to the C-5, high contextualization approach while St. Francis Magazine (Orthodox) is quite cautious toward these same ideas. EMQ seems to attempt an even-handed approach emphasizing scripture but in the end falls generally in agreement with St. Francis Magazine. Below are some examples from this

literature that will illustrate the positions taken while attempting to avoid the repetitiveness.

Steinhaus (2000), a pseudonymous article written by someone working in a Muslim context, emphasizes the need of a strong role for the work of the Holy Spirit in Muslim evangelism. Argumentation and theological disputes have not proven effective in reaching Muslims so Steinhaus suggests an emphasis on the work and power of the Holy Spirit. There are fewer theological concerns felt by Muslims when dealing with issues related to the Holy Spirit than the trinity or the nature of Christ and so there can be greater openness to discussion. He writes:

> What we are all trying to do is to find a way to help Muslims think outside of religious categories so that they may consider the claims of Christ more objectively. That is, rather than trying to get Muslims to consider Christianity as opposed to Islam, or trying to get them to accept Jesus – as a prophet they consider to have been remade into a god – could we instead initially present the Holy Spirit as the key to what they want and then later let the Spirit lead them into an understanding of the work of Christ? (2000:28).

Thus Steinhaus addresses the challenges of Muslim evangelism from a Pentecostal position that is similar to the approach of some of the larger groups working in Ethiopia. For Steinhaus, conversion and the transformational processes are primarily the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the work of the Spirit should be emphasized rather than arguing theological issues such as the nature of Christ because theological argumentation has not proven to be a fruitful approach.

Nikides (2006) opposes the C-5 contextualization methodology as being syncretistic and unbiblical. Nikides rightly complains about the pseudonymous nature of the evidence presented in support of C-5 approaches and the lack of verifiable information. He becomes quite accusatory in his attack against C-5 groups attacking them for being fundamentally dishonest both in approach and in practice. He further debates the theological/biblical support offered in support of the C-5 approach. In the

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end he offers anecdotal reports and experiences to support his claims opposing the C-5 approach in a similar manner to the C-5 supporter reports he questions earlier in his article. This article is a testimony to the lack of actual research, the difficulty of disclosing sources, and the largely anecdotal nature of the evidence. Nikides virulently opposes Massey (2004) and emphasizes the importance of the church in establishing proper doctrine, defining true Christianity, and the importance of the historical church councils such as Nicaea and Chalcedon in their theological determinations of orthodoxy. Massey and others would argue that C-5 believers are Christians because they have received Christ into their lives through faith and are now in the process of being led by the Holy Spirit as they work out their own Christian theology within their own "Muslim" context. Whereas, Nikides argues that definitions of the nature of Christ and the trinity as handed down through church traditions define what it means to be a Christian and thus variation from these traditions and theological formulations means that such "believers" cannot truly be considered Christian at all. Thus for Nikides (2006), "Insider Movements" are really "Outsider Movements."

Tennent (2006) argues in a detailed discussion of biblical, theological and ethical issues relating to C-5 movements and their appropriateness in Muslim evangelization. His conclusion states: "I think the best approach is to see C-5 as a temporary, transitional bridge by which some Muslims are crossing over into explicit Christian faith" (2006:113). The issues he discusses are well argued and clearly stated, however, he retains the hegemonous position of the Western church judging all other Christianity by its theological and biblical interpretation. However, Tennent (2006) illustrates an important need for research in this area. He makes the statement that, "approximately half of these C-5 believers continue to attend the mosque, even if they also attend small gatherings of other C-5 believers" (2006:102). This naturally raises questions as to what

exactly is meant by "believer" if the person continues actively in their Muslim faith, "actively" being the key word. Are they attending mosque out of social obligation and because they do not want to be separated from family and community at this point? Are they actually confessing Muhammad as the prophet of God in the *shahada*?[5] Tennent points to the heart of this debate which is essentially about what does it mean for a Muslim to convert to Christianity? What sort of identity change is expected and in what ways should that identity change be expressed?

Tennent makes the statement, "published case studies about MBB's demonstrate..." (2006:114). He does not give a footnote but must be referencing Parshall (1997) that refers to an informal gathering of information in his ministry that should in no way be referred to as a "study." Parshall provides no methodology, no means of verification of data, and thus his work is difficult to identify as a "study." The fact that Tennent (2006) refers to "published case studies" but does not list any is telling. As of that moment in the C-5 debate research was essentially unavailable. Olam (2003), a dissertation done at Fuller Seminary, is based upon research done in Ethiopia and is discussed more fully below. Olam mentions an earlier study done in Asia in an undisclosed nation but in both his discussion as well as that of Tennent the methodology, which is claimed to be objective in nature, is flawed and poorly described. Fortunately, in the years since 2006 some research has been done and that will be discussed shortly.

Higgins (2006) responds to Tennent in a generally favorable manner but reaches somewhat different conclusions. Higgins places his focus on the definition of "church" and "Muslim" and the issue of identity. He agrees that "church" is a part of Christian life

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[5] Shahada is the Muslim Confession: "There is no god but God and Muhammad is his prophet." This statement forms the core of Muslim theology and is recited at every occasion of prayer.

but would define it somewhat more broadly than Tennent. He also would allow for a broader and more culturally oriented definition of "Muslim" that could allow "Muslim Christians" to use this self designation honestly. Higgins continues his discussion in his 2007 article, "Acts 15 and Insider Movements among Muslims." Here he is clear in his support of the concept of Insider Movements and their potential among Muslims. He examines Acts 15 especially in reference to Woodberry's article in the same issue of International Journal of Frontier Missions (IJFM). Higgins concludes by writing:

> 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," and 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).

Thus he arrives at the crucial point of affirming a process in which the Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers and groups of believers to clarify and transform both character and doctrine, affirming such a process to be foundational to Christian experience. A logical extension of this thought would be that the setting up of boundary fences to keep out those who do not subscribe to specific doctrinal formulations may not be a necessary or healthy component of missiological practice. Still the question remains, what is the relationship between a "movement toward Jesus," and conversion?

Ezeogu (1998 a and b) adds to this discussion an emphasis on the difference between a dialectical relationship between the Bible and culture and a dialogical one. The dialectical relationship between Bible and culture is essentially one of conflict and leads to issues of authority and power/dominance. In this point of view the Bible is absolute and thus must be understood the same in all places and by all peoples. The dialogical viewpoint provides for a conversation between the Bible and culture in which culture will be altered on the one hand but theology and biblical interpretation will also

be affected. Ezeogu travels well beyond the notion of contextualization as the adapting of the presentation of the message of the gospel in appropriate cultural forms when he suggests that different cultural settings may produce different interpretations of scripture. Many of those most opposed to the C-5 sort of contextualization take a dialectical approach to the relationship between Bible and culture, which causes them to be uncomfortable with the idea that culture may affect a valid understanding of scripture. The dialogical approach is precisely what critical hermeneutics is equipped to address and thus the present research may profitably explore the implications of the ideas presented by Ezeogu.

One of the challenges of evangelism and church planting among Muslims is the issue of who decides the meaning of scripture as it applies to the target group? If the Western or Westernized missionary group dictates what is acceptable as correct theology then problems will develop. In such cases the political issues immediately arise and so taking orders, so to speak, from a Western authority as to what is proper knowledge of God will inevitably create tension. Further, if an indigenous movement is to develop within a people group they must be responsible to function as what Hesselgrave (1995:141) calls a hermeneutical community. Whiteman (1997:2-4) moves missiology in a positive direction when he suggests three functions of contextualization: 1) to communicate the gospel in word and deed and to establish the church in ways that make sense to people within their local cultural context, presenting Christianity in such a way that it meets people's deepest needs and penetrates their worldview, thus allowing them to follow Christ and remain within their own culture; 2) to offend, but only for the right reasons and not the wrong ones; and 3) to develop contextualized expressions of the Gospel so that the Gospel itself will be understood in ways the universal church has neither experienced nor understood before, thus expanding our

understanding of the kingdom of God. These functions, Whiteman (1997:6) writes, leave us with three challenges: 1) Contextualization changes and transforms the context – this is the *prophetic* challenge; 2) contextualization expands our understanding of the Gospel because we now see the Gospel through a different cultural lens – this is the *hermeneutic* challenge; 3) contextualization changes the missionaries because they will not be the same once they have become part of the body of Christ in a context different from their own – this is the *personal* challenge.

The 1995 article by Hesselgrave mentioned above uses an example from his missionary experience in Japan. Hesselgrave states, "At later stages the Japanese church as a priesthood of believers became (or should have become) a "hermeneutical community" deciding how the Scripture is best understood and applied in the Japanese cultural context. While often overlooked, this is what is involved in the discipling of the *panta ta ethne* of the Great Commission" (1995:141). His comments, though made nearly two decades ago remain important for Islamic contextualization today. If *converted* Muslims are thought of as developing their own "hermeneutical community" and as capable of deciding how the scripture is best understood and applied in the Muslim context, then the discussion between the Western "hermeneutical community" and the Muslim Christian "hermeneutical community" can take on the character of a conversation between equal partners rather than an hegemonous dictation of true and proper biblical theology by the West. Notice that if in the above statement the word Oromo were used in place of Muslim there would be much less objection. To suggest an *ethnos* can itself become a hermeneutical community is one thing; to suggest Muslims, another religion, can function in that manner is where many would disagree. So are Oromo Muslims an ethnos (Oromo) with their own language and culture, or are they Muslim, another religious group which few Christians would allow the right to

determine Christian theology. In addition, many other scholars will need to be brought into this discussion in the full discussion of the meaning of "conversion" undertaken in chapter four, notably Sanneh, Kraft, Walls, Nyende and others.

Gefen moves forward the discussion of contextualization and the relationship of the gospel to culture when she writes:

> When new followers of Yeshua are taught to reject the cultural heritage of their people, something very precious is stolen from them. In rejecting those expressions of shared life, they marginalized themselves within their own communities and become less relevant to those around them. They lose some of the most basic tools of the communication through which their people express love, honor, and respect for one another. They make themselves unable to effectively communicate both their own love and God's love to their family and loved ones. Culture is such an integral part of a people that rejecting a culture is to a degree a rejection of that people (2007:101).

Gefen touches the heart of the relationship between contextualization and identity and the significance of this important issue to the task of missions and the ability of new converts to spread the gospel among their family, friends and community. In Ethiopian societies the expression of love, honor and respect are fundamentally important issues and connect directly to a person's sense of self. Communication of values such as love, honor and respect are entirely determined by cultural norms, thus the interaction between culture, identity and gospel communication is vital to the missiological enterprise.

Woodberry (2007) is a discussion of Paul's statement that he became a Jew to Jews and a Gentile to Gentiles and what it may mean in the context of Muslim evangelism. Woodberry uses the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 and its dealing with the issue of gentile converts to ground his discussion biblically. His primary area of concern is the C-5 Insider Movements of which he writes:

> For reasons of security and to honor commitments of confidentiality, very little research on "Insider Movements" has been made available to the general public,
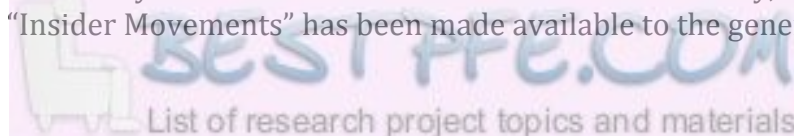
but there has been research on and recording of communities and movements in various parts of Asia and Africa (2007:24).

Unfortunately he does not give any further information concerning these case studies making few specific references to any data. In conclusion Woodberry defends the practices of using the term Muslim, attending the Mosque, and using the *Qur'an* for teaching, along with other practices commonly used with Insider Movements. Thus Woodberry brings forward the issue of syncretism. He uses Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council as a paradigmatic scripture in support of those practices among C-5 groups that have been criticized. Unfortunately, the actual practices of these groups are not clearly identified and shared since he is not able to report specific research on the topic. It seems that the debate continues without resolution because there is no hard evidence as to what practices are being followed. One side has anecdotal reports supporting their claims and the other side has different anecdotal reports supporting theirs. However, the discussion revealed in the literature on this topic can help to frame the issue and thus offer some foundation for this research to build upon.

The issue of contextualization and the dangers of syncretism have been addressed from various theological perspectives in Rommen (2003) – Orthodox; Frame (2001) – Reformed; and Donavan (1978) – Roman Catholic. Rommen presents a quite conservative viewpoint corresponding to the views of Gary Corwin, editor of Evangelical Missions Quarterly and chief missiologists for Sharing in Mission (SIM), who is generally opposed to the C-5 strategy. Frame writes from a very Westernized approach to scripture and doctrine although he does not seem to recognize it. Donavan having been a Roman Catholic missionary among the Masai of Tanzania as well as teaching in Ethiopia has a more balanced approach and would be comfortable with the concept of a dialogical approach to scripture.

The Volume 17(1) of the International Journal of Frontier Missions is devoted to the issue of Muslim Contextualization and particularly to a discussion of the C-5 category of Muslim Background Believers (MBB). Eight articles appear in this issue of which six have been widely quoted in scholarly work on this topic. Joshua Massey argues in "God's Amazing Diversity in Drawing Muslims to Christ," that God is diverse in His manner of dealing with all peoples and often does the unexpected. Thus Massey argues, "...even as Paul argued tirelessly with Judaizers that Gentiles did not have to convert to Judaism to follow Jesus, Muslims to not have to convert to 'Christianity' to follow Jesus." He continues, "C-5 workers want to convert Muslims to Jesus not to Christianity" (2000:8). This kind of reasoning while common among C-5 advocates has contributed greatly to the controversial nature of the issue at hand. Massey could easily have expressed the same idea in a manner much more acceptable to those on the other side of the issue. While Massey may believe that Evangelical scholars of today are like Judaizers of Paul's day, it is certainly not going to move the conversation forward by saying so. One of the goals of this research is to find a possible path upon which those on both sides of the high versus low contextualization issue can walk together.

Bernard Dutch asks, "Should Muslims become "Christians?" by which he means must they use the title and designation of "Christian." This is one of the many places in this literature in which the issue of identity is raised but not discussed or studied in any significant manner. His discussion indicates that his answer would be "no," because such a designation means the removal of such Muslim followers of Jesus from their society and the end of their witness to other Muslims. He writes:

> I believe that these Muslim masses will never be reached by evangelism that results in converts being extracted and expelled from their society. We will never see significant numbers come to Christ through outsiders making forays into Muslim society to abduct a few responsive people. To reach significant numbers

of Muslims, we need growing numbers of vibrant, Biblically based churches that remain in and relevant to Muslim society (2000:23).

Caldwell (2000:28-29) in his article "Jesus in Samaria: A Paradigm for Church Planting Among Muslims," provides four parts of an approach to Muslim ministry based upon the example of Jesus in Samaria.

1) Indigenous Worship in Community

2) Giving Scripture without Polemics

3) Adoption and Transformation of Religious Terminology

4) Adjusting to Islamic Ritual Purity.

And he makes 5 very relevant, though somewhat controversial points in his conclusion based upon the kingdom parables of Matthew chapter thirteen:

1) Kingdom sowing means we seek and expect a believing community to form and remain within the religio-cultural world of the Muslim community, at least for some time.

2) Forming a community of believers within the religio-cultural world of the Muslims will include Islamic places and patterns of worship.

3) Kingdom sowing in an Islamic context means that no confrontational effort to replace the Qur'an with the Bible is needed, at least not at the beginning.

4) Kingdom sowing means Truth will be communicated in the language of Muslims, including their religious vocabulary.

5) Kingdom sowing is incarnational, adopting the religious and cultural forms of our Muslim friends. ... But unbiblical values will also be challenged and changed from within, by believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Caldwell 2000:31).

Both Dutch and Caldwell express well what their opponents such as Rommen and Colbert are accusing them of. They seem to be saying that a Muslim Background Believer does not need to leave his/her Muslim religious belief system or the Qur'an or discontinue Muslim worship practices in order to be a "believer" in Jesus. This brings us exactly to the point at issue in this research. What does it mean for a Muslim to convert to Christ? Is it possible to continue to accept the Qur'an as scripture (above the Bible), Muhammad as a prophet, and to do *salat* with fellow Muslims in the Mosque declaring that Allah is one and Muhammad is His messenger and be considered to have "converted" to Christ in any meaningful way? Or is this syncretism and another way of saying that all paths lead to God and are the same, so to be a Muslim is the same as being a Christian. Because the C-5 movement insists on the fact that such MBB's are "converts" to Christ and followers of Jesus whereas those like Colbert and Rommen disagree, the conflict continues.

Jameson and Scalevich (2000) compares the conversion of Muslims today to that of Jews in the First Century. Jewish believers in the New Testament continued to attend the temple, to use Jewish forms of worship, even Paul made sacrifices as recorded in Acts 21. Jameson and Scalevich find support in the account of the Jewish Christians in Acts for Muslim Christians remaining within their cultural context and functioning as an Insider Movement to convert their communities to Christ. This is an example of the sort of inadequate exegesis that has been used to support C-5 methods.

In the same issue of IJFM Rick Brown has written a widely quoted (favorably and unfavorably) article entitled, "The "Son of God" Understanding the Messianic Titles of Jesus." Brown (2000a) discusses the issue of the use of Jesus as "Son of God" terminology among Muslims in light of the fact that the only Arabic concept of "son" is that of the biological fathering of a child and this concept is not used in a spiritual sense

similar to Christian and New Testament usage. His discussion provides advice for translating and using scripture related to this terminology in Muslim evangelism. This has become an issue of focus for Christians opposing C-5 style evangelism of Muslims because of the centrality of Christ as Son of God in Christian doctrine and identity. In the context of the proposed research the question could be expressed as, "Can a person be said to have taken on the identity of a follower of Jesus if they do not confess Christ as the Son of God?" The opposite side of the issue from Brown (2000a) is that there are many doctrinal issues in scripture that must be explained when moving from one language to another and that is the role of teaching and disciple making. Brown advocates removing references to Jesus as Son of God and replacing them with a substitute acceptable to Muslims. His opponents argue we do not have the right to change the scripture to make it more palatable to some. In Ethiopia among Protestants there is widespread agreement that the Bible is God's word and some form of inerrancy is expected.

John Travis (2000) which is entitled, "Messianic Muslim Followers of Isa: A closer Look at C-5 Believers and Congregations," is an attempt to answer some of the objections raised since he first published the C1-C6 scale in 1998 using several case studies to illustrate his points. He makes some significant clarifications concerning the C-5 category of Muslim believers in *Isa*. First, the C-5 approach is not intended to be a "missionary approach" where a non-Muslim missionary takes on a Muslim identity for the purpose of evangelizing Muslims but is rather intended to be an indigenous strategy for those coming to Christ from within the Muslim community. Second, with regard to the issue of continued Mosque attendance, Travis notes that C-5 believers vary in their practices in this area with some often attending mosque prayers and others seldom or never doing so. In many cases mosque attendance is for the purpose of relationship

building or maintenance and evangelism. The third issue of reciting the "*Shahada*" is the area where Travis is not as strong or clear in his response. He writes that some C-5 believers do recite the *Shahada*, some insert *Isa* at the appropriate points and some take an approach of honoring Muhammad as a great statesman and reformer and are careful not to say anything disrespectful about him. He responds to Phil Parshall's statement that C-5 believers should and will transform into C-4 believers as soon as is practical by saying that we do not have enough data over a long enough period of time to know whether this is what will take place or not. He concludes his article by writing, "While we must be careful to guard against syncretism, we must also be mindful that assent to perfect theological propositions is not the apex of the coming kingdom that Jesus proclaimed" (2000:59). This last statement points out well the core issue between Parshall (1998) and those like him who prefer a C-4 paradigm, and Travis along with those preferring the C-5 approach. This is not to say that Parshall believes that perfect theological propositions are the apex of the coming kingdom but rather to point out the key issue of how scripture and its interpretation fits into the missiological task of reaching Muslims for Christ. Parshall has worked among Muslims for many years and has written numerous books on the subject of reaching Muslims for Christ as an SIM missionary. While he seems to be willing to accept C-5 as a short-term strategy, the lack of any concrete expectation of life transformation away from Islamic belief and practice and toward generally accepted norms of Christianity that seems to be present in the C-5 strategy, bothers him. Travis (2000) clarifies his thoughts regarding another important issue regarding the fact that there are so many different C-5 groups and each seems to do things their own way. There is no clearly stated set of C-5 guidelines proposed by anyone but rather there is a wide range of practices described as C-5 that reflect a wide spectrum of theological underpinnings.

Rick Brown is a supporter of "Insider Movements" and C-5 strategies who has written extensively on this and related topics. He is a Bible scholar with personal experience in Muslim outreach. In addition to the article already discussed, Brown (2000b) addresses the issue of the minimum requirement for a Christian to believe and be called a Christian? He takes the position that while a great many doctrinal statements, creeds and confessions have been used over church history the gospels really only require one to put their faith personally in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, meaning one's Lord and Savior. After saying, "Yes," to Jesus one can then grow into further doctrinal understanding. In a series of three 2006 articles Brown (2006a,b,c) provides an excellent and extensive comparison between Christian and Muslim viewpoints on a series of theological issues. In a fourth 2006 article, Brown (2006d) discusses the issue of contextualization without syncretism." He distinguishes between contextualization, which is a parameter of enculturation whereas syncretism is a parameter of worldview. Here Brown raises important issues for discussion and consideration in terms of the need to be clear about what we mean by syncretism but based upon the usual use of the term in missiology it seems doubtful that his argument will settle very much.

Brown (2007a) is a testimony of the beginning of an Insider Movement among Muslims brought about through the visions of the risen Christ. It is an encouraging testimony but again unlikely to convince those who oppose the C-5 stategy. Supporters of C-5/Insider Movement approaches often garner such testimonies as proof of divine sanction of these methods based upon Peter's example in Acts 15 of relating the experience of his vision that led him to the house of Cornelius. Brown (2005, and 2007b) continue to deal with the topic discussed in Brown (2000a), the use of the term "Son of God" in Christian literature, scripture translation and evangelistic efforts among

Muslims. The 2005 article gives the most complete statement on this important issue with an excellent history of Arabic translations of this term and the reasons for changes and adjustments over the years. Brown's articles have been widely published and used in support of the C-5 approach primarily because he is a stronger scholar and theologian than many other supporters who are primarily practitioners and at times go astray with their exegesis of scripture. Whereas the use of "Son of God" terminology regarding Jesus in Christian literature such as tracts for use among Muslims is clearly unhelpful, scripture translation is another matter. The suggestion that scripture itself should be adjusted in order to accommodate the sensibilities of one or another group proved to be beyond the scope of acceptability to Ethiopian denominations when the use of this kind of translation was rejected by the Evangelical Churches of Ethiopia after extensive discussion.[6]

Corwin (2007) is a seminal article on the issue of C-5 and Insider Movements and along with Tennent (2006), discussed above, forms the clearest and most significant evangelical challenge to the usefulness of these concepts and the appropriateness of C-5 methods. As the Editor of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Corwin speaks with an authoritative voice for the Evangelical faith community at least in its American expression. Corwin raises 10 questions to which various well-known supporters of C-5 and Insider Movements respond both within the article itself and at the end. While his questions raise important and appropriate issues for discussion they come from a clearly Western paradigm and reveal a deeply felt evangelical discomfort

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[6] For a recent discussion of scripture translation issues for use among Muslim populations see, *Report to world Evangelical alliance for conveyance to Wycliffe global Alliance and SIL International* (2013) available at http://www.worldea.org/images/wimg/files/2013_0429-Final%20Report%20of%20the%20WEA%20Independent%20Bible%20Translation%20Review%20Panel.pdf

with the notion that newly evangelized people groups might develop their own theology as they are led by the Holy Spirit to interpret the scriptures within their own cultural context. The primary concern behind Corwin's article seems to be that such a theology may be significantly different than that prescribed by Western Evangelical Christianity.

Dudley Woodberry (1996) is a seminal and much quoted article related to the contextualization of the Christian message among Muslims entitled, "Contextualizing Among Muslims reusing Common Pillars." In this influential article Woodberry traces the foundational practices and terminology of Islam to earlier Jewish and Christian sources. His point is not to diminish the differences of meaning in the Muslim usage of these terms and practices and how they are used in Muslim practice today but to reduce the distance between many Christians and what they perceive to be quite foreign practices of Muslims. Although this article was written before the current debate concerning Insider Movements got underway, his points are important and relevant to that issue. The understanding of these pillars, their source and application today, can provide some common ground for communication and understanding between Christians and Muslims. Also, within the context of the present discussion in missiology can provide some understanding and perhaps room in Christian theology for the possibility of redefining again some of the forms and terminology currently used by Muslims that were once of Christian and/or Jewish origin. Woodberry's attempt to make Islam less strange and fearful to Christians by showing how many Muslim practices actually find their origin in some Christian or Jewish practice is important both to deepen the understanding of Christians on these issues but also to reduce the perceived distance between the two groups.

Jim Leffel has written an article entitled, "Contextualization: Building Bridges to the Muslim Community," Which is posted on the Xenos Christian Fellowship website.

Unfortunately there is no date provided in the article itself as to the writing of the article but the references are all before 2000 so one assumes if later articles were available they would have been used. This article is quite clear and complete in its description of C-5 contextualization and its difficulties. Leffel takes his position in agreement with Parshall's 1998 Article, "Danger, New Directions in Contextualization." Leffel's summary of Parshall does not add very much new information but does illustrate the important point that there is a singular lack of discussion or agreement as to what is meant by "Christian" and how should scripture be used in the discussion related to Insider Movements. Unless an adequate definition is provided as to what is meant by "Christian" and therefore "conversion," it is nearly impossible to compare the viewpoints of C-5 and Insider Movements supporters versus opponents. Further, how do scriptural arguments connect with this sort of topic? For the most part scripture is used in the form of proof texting with a little background information and a few Greek words thrown in to give more credibility. Texts are thrown back and forth at one another like darts hoping to score more points rather than to further a common understanding of the issues at hand.

Andrews (2009) builds upon the insights of Thomas Friedman in his 2005 book, *The World is Flat* when he proposes five points concerning contextualization in a "flat city."

1. Our contexts are no longer isolated and stationary.
2. Indigenization is slowly fading in the memory of the pre-twenty-first century Church.
3. The agents of contextualization need to shift.
4. We need to move away from theology toward theologies.

5. We need to move away from trying to find the holy grail of contextualization models and embrace a diversity of models.

His analysis raises several important issues for consideration. Such issues as, who should be involved in the contextualization process, Western missionaries and theologians or non-western theologians and Christians? What does it mean to be open to "theologies?" Does that mean we think the Bible is not clear or does not set an absolute standard? Or does it mean we understand the limitations of our own point of view and it is time to end the hegemonic hold the West has had on the definition of orthodoxy? Finally, are there a number of possible contextualization models appropriate in various situations and conditions? Andrews' article and analysis is stimulating and helpful as well as pointing toward the discussion that will come in later chapters.

Phil Parshall's 1998 article, "Danger! New Directions in Contextualization," is perhaps the most widely quoted or referenced article on the subject of C-5 contextualization. Parshall's article is important for several reasons. First, Parshall is a well-known SIM missionary to the Philippines who has worked among Muslims and has written extensively on the subject. Second, Parshall himself introduced what is now termed the C-4 approach and in this article goes on record as being opposed to the C-5 strategy. Third, he provides the first material that has been published that approximates a systematic study of a C-5 group. This case study was done in Islamapur in 1995 in which 72 "key people" were interviewed and their responses reported by Parshall. This study has been widely referred to on both sides of the C-5 issue primarily because of the scarcity of data published anywhere on this topic. Unfortunately, no methodology is provided for the study, although seeming to be of a quantitative nature, the selection of participants is not explained and no factor of variation or any other

statistical information is provided. However, percentages are given and quoted by others giving the data an air of accuracy and formality that is probably not appropriate. In the end, Parshall's actual concerns gather around examples of non-Muslims posing as Muslims for the purpose of evangelism or evangelists in some way using duplicity to spread the gospel. Those supporters of the C-5 approach today in the literature do not use nor encourage such deception nor do they use C-5 as a missionary strategy but as a contextualization strategy for Insider Movements.

Parshall returns to this issue in his 2004 article, "Lifting the Fatwa." Essentially Parshall offers a half of an olive branch to those with whom he disagrees. He restates his case again now quoting Woods (2003) for biblical support but in a gesture suggesting one who feels they have won the argument and can afford to offer his hand to a defeated foe, he concludes with some words of conciliation. Unfortunately his article does not serve to move the discussion forward. Parshall is a prolific writer who has written several books on the subject of Muslim Evangelism among which are, *Bridges to Islam* (2003,1986); *Muslim Evangelism: Contemporary Approaches to Contextualization* (2003); and *The Cross and the Crescent: Understanding the Muslim Heart and Mind* (2002) all of which draw from a wealth of experience as a missionary among Muslims.

Darrell Whiteman wrote two articles in 2004 on the topic of Anthropology and Mission. While Part 1 traces the history of the relationship between anthropology and Missions, Part 2 gives focus to the application of anthropology to the process of contextualization using the terminology of "incarnation." Whiteman gives 8 practices appropriate to an incarnational approach to cultural differences.

1. We start with people where they are, embedded in their culture and this frequently requires downward mobility on our part.
2. We take their culture seriously, for this is the context in which life has meaning for them.

3. We approach them as learners, as children, anxious to see the world from their perspective.
4. We are forced to be humble for in their world of culture we have not yet learned the acquired knowledge to interpret experience and generate social behavior.
5. We must lay aside our own cultural ethnocentricism, our positions of prestige and power.
6. We will be very vulnerable; our defenses will have to go, and we'll have to rely more on the Holy Spirit than our own knowledge and experience.
7. We make every effort to identify with people where they are, by living among them , loving them, and learning from them.
8. We discover, from the inside, how Christ is the Answer to the questions they ask, and to their needs that they feel. (2004:85)

Whiteman's discussion points to several areas of the utmost importance to the issue of contextualization but although many would agree with his 8 points they remain issues of debate in practice. Laying aside our "ethnocentricism," as an example, is a principle often agreed with but challenging to apply. Also, the issue of power in missions and the willingness of Westerners to lay aside their control of the purse strings and with it, control over the doctrinal content of "orthodox Christianity," is a bridge few missionary organizations have yet crossed. Point eight is perhaps the most interesting from the point of view of critical hermeneutics in that it suggests it is not actually possible for a human being to leave behind their culture of origin and thus "see from the inside" the viewpoint of those of other cultures. Critical hermeneutics would inform us that the best a missionary can do is to understand the points where she is "hardwired" differently than the culture where she ministers. Thus encouraging a newly formed Christian community to reflect upon the meaning of scripture under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as it may apply within their own cultural context is vital to the spread and development of the gospel.

Joshua Massey also contributed two 2004 articles entitled, "Living like Jesus, a Torah-Observant Jew: Delighting in God's law for Incarnational Witness to Muslims." In

Part One, Massey's starting point for his discussion is that many Western missionaries to Muslims live in a manner and lifestyle that seems appropriate to them but that is not "according to Muslim categories of righteousness, which we typically perceive as legalistic and works-oriented" (2004:13). Because of this, many missionaries do not achieve the spiritual respect needed to be effective witnesses to Christ in Muslim cultures. Massey uses the examples of both Jesus and Paul to illustrate living "under the law" as Torah observant Jews in order to be effective in communicating their message within their own cultural contexts. He follows in Part Two with a discussion of practical outward expressions of living a life among Muslims that will communicate righteousness in terms Muslims will understand for the sake of maintaining an effective witness. He describes a manner of praying the Lord's Prayer such that the outward appearance is something like the *salat* and therefore communicates the correct message to Muslims. He writes:

> …if we delight in God's Law to guide our incarnational witness to Muslims, there is no need to call ourselves anything but 'Christian.' Who else would pray the Lord's Prayer three times daily? Nonetheless, Muslim acquaintances will quickly see that we do not fit into their stereotypes of unclean, pork eating, clean-shaven, non-praying, scantily-clad, immoral 'Christians (2004b: 67).

Moving from the theoretical to the practical and visible is where incarnational witness seems to founder. Massey provides specific and clear examples of practices that while seeming unusual to Western Christian Missionaries are very compatible with effective witness among Muslims and not so different than our forefathers in first century Christianity. Massey's discussion raises the issue of missionary identity among Muslims, which is related but not central to the issue of this research.

Massey (2004c) is a reiteration of some issues raised a few years before. But in this article Massey makes an important contribution to the discussion of C-5 Muslim context ministries by calling attention to the differentiation of Christ centered versus

Church centered ministry. This distinction has not been entirely well received but it deserves consideration. C-5 groups have been more focused on establishing a permanent and sustainable Christian witness within Muslim communities that could permeate Islamic institutions that guide the faith of Muslim peoples. Massey's point is that Jesus did not call people to join a religion but to be joined to Himself. In such a context it is important to allow Muslim believers to wrestle with and solve the problem of how to live out their faith in Christ within their own context and missionaries and missiologists, as outsiders, cannot do that for them nor do they have the right to dictate what Christian faith should look like among Muslims. As one reads the articles mentioned in this literature review it is quite easy to classify the thinking of the various authors as either church centered or Christ centered and so this is a useful distinction. In fairness to what Massey calls the church centered group, they see an identity between Christ and the church to the point that they would not make such a distinction at all, to be church centered for them *is* to be Christ centered. In more current discussion, a broader definition of church that would include house churches and home groups that has been promoted by such groups as the Church Planting Movement (CPM) has alleviated this issue for some. This aspect of the discussion of Christian identity formation among Muslims needs further examination.

Jorgensen has done a research project within Muslim and Hindu contexts. The group he studied called them selves Jesus *Imandars.*

> The word *iman* (faith) is not just etymologically related to "*imandars*" but plays a fundamental role in the *imandars*' self-understanding as "faithful." According to the emic, that is, the *imandars'* perspective, faith is not abstract knowledge or belief but must be existential and relational, expressed first and foremost as faithfulness. According to the *imandars, iman* involves a personal totality, "heart, mind, and strength," and becoming a Jesus *imandar* means to fix one's *iman* on Jesus, that is, to enter a relation with Jesus, who as a spiritual master will mediate the divine and transform the believer through his very presence (2009:172).

Jorgensen's work connects and the present research in his discussion of identity not just from the point of view of "how others see me," like most of the articles mentioned so far, but searching to examine the self-understanding of the Jesus *imanders*. This group has developed its own personal and group identity from within a Muslim context and frame of reference. Jorgensen insists that they have transcended the Muslim concepts in that their Christology reaches beyond what is acceptably Muslim and thus Jesus *imanders* are an example of genuine contextualization. This is one of the few examples in the literature of an actual study being done but this examination is focused more upon the issue of how this group of Muslim converts has developed their own theology rather than the issue of identity itself.

Gray and Gray (2009a and b) as well as Gray et al. (2010) are also based upon field research and discuss two church planting models used among Muslims. The first model is called the "attractional model" where believers are gathered together to form a new social network (church) that is separate from existing social networks. The second is called the "transformational model" which is described as follows. "[T]he gospel is shared within the context of a natural social network, gradually transforming the network towards Christ, regardless of the state of faith of individual members of the network" (2010:89). The description of these two types of church planting models is helpful and defines clearly the two strategies whereas the information as to which one is best is not so clear. The transformational model is associated with the C-5/Insider Movement practitioners whereas the attractional model is the more traditional approach; both of these approaches are used in Ethiopia by various groups doing outreach to Muslims. Gray and Gray (2009a and b) clearly favor the transformational approach and associate it with sharing Jesus as opposed to promoting a church. Their

discussion reflects a questioning view toward churches as a model for Christian community. They indicate that both attractional and transformational models are alternatives for church planting but in their discussion the transformational approach has a much-reduced emphasis on "church" as the end product. Their definition of the transformational approach indicates that the social network is being transformed, but what of the individuals within that network. Indeed there is little actual explanation of what sort of Christian community would be established through what Gray and Gray (2009 a and b) describe as the transformational model. However, their point concerning working within existing social networks is well taken. Among Muslims in Ethiopia, community or *ummah*, is a highly important concept that will arise at several points in the discussion below.

The ongoing debate regarding C-5 strategies and whether they are biblical and whether they are producing "real" Christians continues to this day. Abdul Asad (2009) writes a more conciliatory kind of presentation than is normally found in St. Francis Magazine. In it he suggests that C-5 strategies that are understood to be a transitional rather than a permanent and ongoing approach to Muslim evangelism could be a way of making peace on this issue. Unfortunately, it is very doubtful that the C-5 practitioners are willing to see their strategy as temporary nor are their opponents likely to be willing to accept C-5 as even a temporary part of the evangelization process. Only a few months later St Francis Magazine published an article by Flint (2010) strongly disagreeing with Asad. Flint (2010) says that according to church history strategies like C-5 will inevitably lead to syncretism, which is never good whether permanent or temporary. Johnson (2011) is an appeal to make peace between C-5 and C-4 proponents and find a way to appreciate one another as brothers of good faith. Even up to the time of this writing the current issue of Evangelical Missions Quarterly has an article by

Rolland Muller indicating that from the viewpoint of his ministry at least they realize that their C-5 approach has created a "transitional community" that will inevitably be replaced by some more openly Christian model as time goes on. From the articles of the past few years it seems that there is some interest in finding common ground on the issue of C-5 between those who support and those who oppose but overall it seems that there is mainly agreement for each to go their own separate way.

The final article to be discussed on this topic is Travis and Woodberry (2010). In this article they move through eighteen frequently asked questions about Insider Movements, which they now are calling "Jesus movements within Muslim Communities" (2010:24). Both of these writers are well trained and experienced missiologists working in the area of Muslim outreach. They are both strong supporters of high contextualization strategies. The primary intersection between this article and the present research is in the area of identity. As is common in many of the articles on the topic of approaches to Muslim evangelism and church planting the topic of identity is mentioned and briefly discussed but never defined. Travis and Woodberry use the term socio-religious identity and by it seem to mean the aspect of identity that would be described as identity in terms of how a person is perceived by others, often called "social identity." While this is certainly one aspect of identity theory, it is only one part of the much larger understanding of identity that is needed to bring clarity concerning how identity and identity change (conversion/discipleship) can be understood in Muslim outreach and thus how these concepts may be helpful in the broader missiological context. Thus following the literature up to very recent articles it can be noted that the issues that are the focus of this research have often been noted as important but not systematically examined.

A notable book on the topic of Muslim evangelism was published in 2008 giving

focus to what are termed, "fruitful practices" (Woodberry 2008). This is a collection of

writings by a group of missiologists and missions practitioners involved in Muslim

outreach and who are favorable toward high contextualization strategies. While the

topic of the book is not C-5 or Insider Movements, those writing various portions as

representatives of a variety of missions groups all favor various kinds of high

contextualization strategies most often associated with C-5 methodologies. This is an

excellent resource of practices that are being successfully used in Muslim outreach

around the world helpful for anyone doing Muslim outreach. Two chapters are of

special significance for the present study, Becker and Simuyu (2008) discusses the issue

of discipleship among Muslim converts and thus gives attention to the issue of

conversion. Two of the "fruitful practices" identified in this article stand out as

significant in terms of conversion and the formation of a new identity. First is the need

to model in action what is being taught to new believers. Both modeling and the

expectation that the Christian life is intended to be lived out through actions consistent

with belief are important ideas that will be considered in this study. Second, they

suggest that discipleship can begin *before* conversion. This indicates the unresolved

nature of the discussion regarding conversion. Conversion as a process is often

mentioned but when brought into direct confrontation with the Evangelical teaching of

conversion as an event dependent solely upon belief in Christ that should be followed

by a discipleship process, the issue is left unclarified. This issue is both theological and

practical and requires a much more complete discussion which will be undertaken in

chapter 4.

John and Anna Travis (2008) discuss factors affecting identity choice by those

following Jesus in a Muslim context. Travis has been clear that the difference between C-

4 and C-5 strategies is one of religious identity. In fact he has been more clear and more consistent in acknowledging this than other practitioners of C-5 models who tend to use terms like socio-religious identity or even socio-cultural identity. After having acknowledged that the primary difference between C-4 and C-5 strategies is one of religious identity, Travis and Travis write, "The existence of such C-5 expressions of faith depends largely on the ability of the MBBs to show that they are truly a part of the local community and then find ways to express biblical truth in forms and categories Muslim friends and neighbors can accept" (2008:203). So Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are in the position of functioning within a local community where it is not acceptable to be a follower of *Isa*. The C-5 strategy suggests that for such believers to present themselves outwardly to their community as being a Muslim while inwardly having "converted" to Christ is an acceptable evangelistic strategy. Those who disagree would say it is dishonest and the ends cannot justify the means. As will be seen as the present research is reported, transformation of identity or the taking on of a new identity as a follower of Christ within a Muslim context is not an unusual process but rather an entirely normal process of discipleship.

When identity is brought forward for examination in this literature the issue is almost solely that of how a person is identified by others. This is quite a different issue from the process of personal identity formation and transformation. In the sociological literature on identity, which will be discussed below, the various ways a person may present themselves to others could be described as a persona of which a person may maintain several in different situations. One of the issues for evaluation in this research concerning identity and identity change among Muslim converts is to what extent Christian conversion supports the notion that there can or should be a difference between how a person sees themselves and the identity they project to others? If this
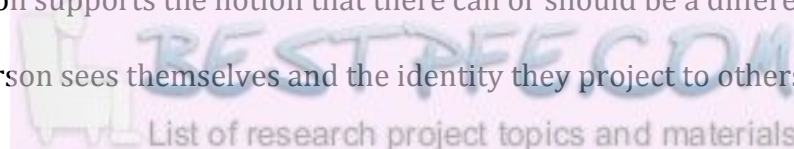
issue were examined purely within an American church context, as an example, for a Christian to maintain an old, non-Christian identity among friends and associates after having received Christ would be considered problematic and if accepted at all would be something that ought to change over time. In Muslim evangelistic contexts this same scenario is considered positive for the purpose of influencing those former friends and associates in a process of community evangelization. This strikes to the heart of the key differences between those accepting the C-5 methodology and those preferring C-4. For those like Phil Parshall, who has expressed reservation about C-5, there is a perception of dishonesty in the C-5 approach if a person is intentionally appearing to be something they are not. For such missiologists the idea that believers in Christ should use any dishonesty in their method of spreading the gospel makes them uncomfortable.

Proponents of C-5 strategies have answered this issue in essentially two ways. One is to deny there is dishonesty because the person is socially/culturally Muslim even if religiously a follower of *Isa*. The other answer given has been that even if the issue is one of presenting a different religious identity it is acceptable for a believer to do so if the purpose is to reach their community with the gospel. Scriptures such as Paul declaring he becomes all things to all people that he may win some in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 are used to support this view. The differences between these two viewpoints are at the heart of the missiological discussion pertaining to Muslim evangelism today. C-5 strategies (recognizing there is a wide variation among them) have enlivened hope for successful Muslim evangelism through their success, yet questions remain for some as to the appropriateness of these methods for the Christian cause. To date this issue has not been adequately addressed and thus there is space created for the present research project that hopes to add something to a fruitful understanding of the identity issue for the context of Muslim evangelization.

2.3   Theses and dissertations

If the published literature has not fully addressed the issues of concern in this research, what about theses and dissertations? A brief discussion of those theses and dissertations on relevant topics that the author was able to locate follows. The first to be discussed is Wemlinger (2008) which is a Masters Thesis discussing the development of Oromo identity up to the 19th Century. While Wemlinger does an excellent job of discussing the historical development of Oromo identity in terms of its collective nature, she does not examine the dynamic of identity in the context of religious conversion because her focus is primarily on the historical context. Nonetheless, Wemlinger has done a good job of expressing important background information and understanding of the development of Oromo identity.

Frejacques (2002) is a presentation of original research among a group of pastoral Oromo people examining the development and nature of their ethnic identity. While the present research is not directed at the specific clan under consideration by Frejacques, she gives a very helpful description of many aspects of Oromo culture as expressed among this group. Her focus is squarely on ethnicity and the development of ethnic awareness and thus does not directly address the issues of this research giving essentially no consideration to religious beliefs. However, ethnic identity, or what is in Ethiopia most often called cultural identity, is of great significance and its interplay with religious identities is an area of exploration for this research.

Girma Bekele (2009) examines the Evangelical mission to Ethiopia through the lens of a Missional Alternative Community described by David Bosch. This work provides an excellent background in terms of the history of Ethiopia and the Evangelical mission. The focus of this excellent dissertation is to emphasize the need for a broader and more holistic understanding of Christian mission where care of the poor is not a

tool of evangelism but rather an integral part of Christian mission itself. The title of this research, *Listening to the Cry of Hagar*, is not a reference to Hagar as a representative of Muslims but Hagar as representing the poor and marginalized. Thus the focus of Girma's research is his discussion of how the Evangelical churches should reconsider the nature of their self-definition of mission to include a more compassionate ministry to the poor.

Sanders (2002) discusses identity in Ethiopia based upon images, symbols, myths and stereotypes examined from a political science viewpoint. Her approach is not directed to understanding religious components of identity but she does review several theories of identity from psychology, anthropology, biology and sociology and then applies these theories to the Ethiopian context. In particular Sanders combines these various theories into a more unified systems based approach to understanding group interaction with consideration of the issue of identity. Her focus is upon power differentials, their origin and consequence.

Gilchrist (2003) is an MA History thesis prepared for North Carolina State University that traces the work of the Christian Missionary Fellowship (CMF) among the Oromo people and its "unintended consequences." He argues that the missionaries became "inadvertent agents of Oromo identity" through their education and medical work. Gilchrist shows well that the missionaries did not prioritize work related to social development but rather only did such work as a means to the end of evangelization of the Oromo. However, the result of translating the Bible and thus encouraging Oromo literacy in their own language and encouraging education among the Oromo people had the unintended effect of encouraging Oromo ethnic awareness and thus the Oromo sense of identity. The relationship between the CMF and the Oromo people was not entirely without its problematic side. The CMF was authorized by Emperor Haile

Selassie and thus although not as much seen in the role of oppressor as the Orthodox Church among the Oromo, they were nonetheless connected to the Amhara imperial government. The picture painted by Gilchrist is not so different than that of other African nations existing under colonial rule in which missionaries though initially closely allied to the colonial powers eventually provided strong encouragement to the independence movements largely through the creation of written forms and the teaching of indigenous languages initially for the purpose of Bible study. Unfortunately Gilchrist (2003) suffers from a lack of direct knowledge of Ethiopian society and reliance upon sources that are difficult for an MA student from America to properly evaluate.

Straehler (2005) an MA thesis, and Maurer (1999) a DTh dissertation, both from UNISA, explore conversion motives. Straehler studied six Christians who had converted from Islam to Christianity in Sudan and Maurer studied ten Christians converting to Islam and ten Muslims converting to Christianity in South Africa. Both resources are excellent discussions of conversion, conversion processes, and conversion motives with an emphasis on conversion motives. Maurer identifies a complex of conversion motives that interact in an individual case eventually resulting in conversion. He also emphasizes that conversion in fact moves in both directions, Christian to Muslim and Muslim to Christian and both deserve the attention of missiologists. Straehler reviews six models of spiritual decision processes and then compares those models to his research in Sudan. Both of these studies are well done and provide excellent information concerning conversion motivations and decision-making processes. While these two studies give primary focus to the conversion process among Muslims and Christians, the issue directly studied is motivation and decision-making factors in conversion. The research questions of the present study are not only geographically

distinct from these studies but also differs in that it looks primarily at the issue of identity change as it relates to the conversion of Muslims to Christianity.

Greenlee (1996) is a PhD Dissertation in which factors leading to conversion for urban, male Moroccans were studied and the tendency of converts to participate in a formed church was also examined. The date of this research puts it just prior to the C-5 debate but after the issue of reaching Muslims had come to be of serious consideration among missiologists. The research reported by Greenlee was among a small group of single men who had become Christians largely through individual witness. The methods of evangelism were not very contextualized, only about half of those studied shared their new faith with others, those having experienced persecution for their new faith being stronger in their witnessing. Greenlee also shows the need for church gatherings even if in small groups for mutual encouragement and what he terms "burden bearing." However, in the very difficult environment of Muslim majority Morocco a sense of community was slow developing among the converts. The reasons for conversions and thus the contents of conversion stories were diverse. Conversion was experienced as a process over several months or a year, supernatural events though occurring in some cases were not significant as a factor leading to conversion in most cases, and oldest siblings were unlikely to become Christian. The reason why the eldest child or eldest son did not become Christian is certainly culturally related and must be examined within a larger culturally relevant approach to evangelism in Morocco. The main factor Greenlee found for conversion was Bible study or interest in the scripture but it seems that his organization emphasized that approach and thus those responding would naturally be the ones who value the approach offered. Overall, Greenlee (1996) is only somewhat helpful to the present research but in 2005 Greenlee edited an excellent book, *From the Straight Path to the Narrow Way: Journeys of Faith.*

Greenlee and Love (2005), a chapter in Greenlee (2005) suggests that Muslim conversion to Christ is a complex of interrelated factors and can be viewed through seven lenses or ways to look at the conversion processes among Muslims. The seven lenses are presented in Table 3 below. Section Two of Greenlee (2005) examines the topic of understanding the experience of Muslims coming to faith in Christ. Among the chapters in that section, Gaudeul lists five common patterns among Muslims coming to faith: 1) encountering the person of Christ; 2) need for truth and certainty; 3) search for community; 4) desire to experience forgiveness and redemption; 5) hunger for a personal encounter with God (2005:82). Maurer lists five "operational conversion motives" from his research that emphasize psychological factors. These five factors discussed by Maurer are: 1) Religious (seeking truth); 2) mystical (sudden or dramatic experience like Paul on the road to Damascus); 3) affectional (close personal relationships); 4) sociopolitical (religious identifications connected to various social groups and historical events); 5) Material (financial or related motives) (2005:98-103). Eric (2005:137-156) shares stories of conversion of various individuals and draws out the specific reasons for conversion in each case that for the most part give illustration to Gaudeul and Maurer. Several other chapters in Greenlee (2005) will be referenced in the discussion of Christian conversion among Muslims below as this is one of the most important books available on this topic today.

Table 3: Greenlee and Love – Lenses to view Muslim Conversion*

Greenlee and Love: Lens to view Muslim Conversion	Description
Psychological Lens	Tools such as the Engel Scale are used to understand the step by step psychological (mental) processes involved in conversion.
Behavioral Lens	Focus on turning or reorientation of life
Sociological Lens	Recognizes the social dimension of conversion. For most of the world conversion is not only an individual decision.
Cultural Lens	Culture can encourage a person toward conversion or place barriers to conversion in their way. C-5 strategies come in here.
Spiritual Warfare Lens	Recognition that there is a spiritual dimension to conversion and a spiritual battle to be fought for the souls of men and women.
Human Communicator Lens	Who shares the gospel with the unsaved is very important and new believers are some of the most important evangelists. Thus the voice and involvement of new believers in reaching the lost is very important.
Divine Lens	God is involved in the conversion process, thus supernatural occurrences and answers to prayer are part of the process.

*Greenlee and Love (2005:35-50)

Greenham (2004) is based upon research done in Palestine among Muslims converting to Christ. The focus of Greenham is also the factors leading to conversion. His research indicates that out of eleven possible factors being researched, four were found to be of primary significance among women and five among men. While noting that each convert had a mixture of several conversion factors at work, Greenham identifies the most important factors among the Palestinians he interviewed. The top four conversion factors found by Greenham for both men and women were: 1) the person of Christ; 2) God's miraculous involvement; 3) the truth of Jesus' message; and 4) the role of believers (2004:214). For men, a fifth strongly significant factor was reading the Bible. Perhaps there is an educational opportunity difference that causes reading the Bible to not be a strong factor among women. Greenham gives a

significantly stronger view of the importance of supernatural intervention by God especially in the form of dreams than most of the other research reviewed thus far. The focus of research, both that which has been examined in this review and others mentioned by those researchers but inaccessible to this author, has been largely on conversion factors of Muslims who have come to Christ. Maurer (2005) is the only one to give attention to the fact that the conversion process moves in both directions and that to examine why Christians are becoming Muslims or returning to Islam is an important factor in the understanding of Muslim conversion. However, the present research is interested to examine the conversion process itself and specifically the issue of identity change which, although mentioned often in the literature has not been the direct focus of research to this point.

One DMiss dissertation done at Fuller Theological Seminary by Belay Olam applies the above issues concerning contextualization of the gospel message to Ethiopia and specifically the Oromo people group (Olam, 2003). He is himself Oromo and so writes from an emic/insider perspective and thus his views on culture and traditional religious beliefs among Oromo are particularly valuable and insightful. His study connects with this research primarily on the issue of culture and contextualization. However, contextualization as a general concept is not the central issue of this research except as it intersects with the identity issue and in terms of evaluating present evangelistic work being done in Ethiopia among Muslims. It should be noted that there are several weaknesses to Olam's work. One is that he really adds little if anything new to the discussion other than attempting to provide some data from a legitimate study to add support for the C-5/Insider Movement strategy. However, his results and methodology are questionable. Aside from possible methodological problems with the administration of his questionnaire, his results are that 100% of the 100 respondents

among a house church movement in Western Ethiopia all responded in exactly the same manner. First, it is extremely unlikely that 100% of any one hundred-person sample would completely agree on all the doctrinal issues upon which they were questioned. Secondly, the author has personal knowledge of the group he studied and whereas in 2003 they may have been C-4, today they are C-5 and there are many issues upon which his results would differ if he were to do the same study today. Thus Olam provides an emic perspective on contextualization among Ethiopian Oromo Muslims that is culturally informative and insightful but his actual research and therefore its conclusions must be subjected to serious questioning.

This quite lengthy literature review leads to the following conclusions:

1) Study on the relationship among identity, conversion, church planting and evangelism among Ethiopian Muslims has not been adequately done.

2) There is a clear and compelling need for this research as it affects not only Muslim Outreach in Ethiopia but the principles disclosed will apply in some way first to Muslim outreach in sub-Saharan Africa, and to a lesser but hopefully important degree to the efforts of those working among the 1.5 billion Muslims of the world.

3) The extensive debate and literature regarding the C-5 high contextualization strategies call for study into the definition and process of conversion among Muslims and especially the issue of identity and identity change among converts.

4) The application of critical theory and narrative identity may significantly contribute to understanding of the dynamics of culture/worldview/identity change among Muslims during the process of conversion.

5) Therefore the present research is needed and could make a significant contribution in the study of missiology.

CHAPTER 3: Research methodology used in this study

This chapter describes the research process used in this study. Topics that are discussed under this heading include the research site, entrée, participants, data collection, text creation, data analysis, the timeline, a brief description of critical hermeneutic theory, and the background of the researcher. Each of these topics is presented in accordance with the principles of conversation and narrative based research as described in Herda (1999:85-138). The ontological orientation of this research is well stated by Ricoeur when he writes:

> So understanding is not concerned with grasping a fact but with apprehending a possibility of being. We must not lose sight of the point when we draw the methodological consequences of this analysis: to understand a text, we shall say, is not to find a lifeless sense which is contained therein, but to unfold the possibility of being indicated by the text (1981:56).

The research process used in this study is informed by the principles contained in this passage.

The critical hermeneutic orientation to participatory inquiry involves the fixing of a discourse event through transcription and then analyzing that text as narrative. Thus the research process is one of conversations that are recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using critical hermeneutic theory. The procedures followed in this study are described below.

3.1   Research Site and participants

The primary research site is the Oromia and Southern Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia. Participants include, converted Muslims (MBB's), Oromo community leaders, mission leaders and workers involved in Muslim Outreach projects and church planting among Ethiopian Muslim people groups. Primary participants are Muslim Background Believers (MBB's). Some Muslim informants were contacted and some discussion was accomplished but these participants were unwilling to be recorded so that only notes

could be taken during those conversation and then immediately following. Leaders of evangelistic and church planting groups, national and international, working among the Ethiopian Muslims were also included in the research process but in two cases those participants were not willing to be recorded or their names used because of security concerns. In these cases written notes were taken during the conversation and summaries/transcripts made immediately after the discussion was completed.

Twenty-four conversation partners were recorded and transcribed, four conversations were conducted that could not be recorded and for which notes were taken and transcribed for a total of 28 subjects in this research. Five of the participants were women and the rest men ranging from early twenties to seventies in age. In some cases written transcriptions or personal knowledge of the life stories of the participants were available from earlier discussions or personal knowledge.

Below is a chart of those participants who were recorded and their conversations transcribed and analyzed.

Table 4
Research Participants Recorded and Transcribed

Name	Tribe/Ethnic	M/F	Age Approx.	MBB	Notes
Yousuf	Arssi, Oromo	M	25	Yes	10 years Christian
Tahir	Arssi, Oromo	M	35	Yes	15 years Christian
Gezahegn	Sidama	M	45	No	Missions leader
Abdu	Somali	M	45	Yes	10 years Christian
Gizaw	Harari	M	35	Yes	12 years Christian
Tamam	Siltie	M	40	Yes	10 years Christian
Musa	Oromo	M	40	Yes	12 years Christian
Alazar	Arssi, Oromo	M	40	Yes	23 years Christian
Abba Gadaa	Oromo	M	70	No	Oromo traditional leader
Zemzem	Oromo	F	30	Yes	16 years Christian
Muhammad Bedaso	Arssi, Oromo	M	30	Yes	10 years Christian
Sheik Gultamo	Oromo	M	65	Yes	10 years Christian
Muhammad	Oromo	M	25	Yes	5 Years Christian
Muhammad Ahmed	Alaba	M	50	Yes	1 year Christian
Melaku	Amhara	M	25	Yes	4 years Christian
Medina	Arssi, Oromo	F	24	Yes	3 years Christian
Kedir	Arssi, Oromo	M	25	Yes	5 years Christian
Haji Usman	Alaba	M	65	Yes	20 years Christian
Fatimua	Arssi, Oromo	F	26	Yes	5 years Christian
Aman	Bale, Oromo	M	28	Yes	5 years Christian
Aliazar	Oromo	M	25	Yes	5 years Christian
Asha	Boorana Oromo	F	28	Yes	7 years Christian
Abdu	Arssi Oromo	M	30	Yes	1-2 years Christian
Mintesinot	Arssi Oromo	M	40	Yes	23 years Christian

3.2   Entrée to research participants and languages used

All conversations were voluntary and were solicited through friends or acquaintances. They were told I was researching the topic of Muslims converting to Christianity and would like to talk to them for my research. When we began to talk I explained about the research being done, its purpose and methodology and asked their permission to record the conversation. The recorded conversations were from this group. Four persons were unwilling to be recorded and one did not want his name used but these were willing to talk. Their request has been honored. I took notes during our conversation and then reviewed and finalized those notes immediately after. Conversations were conducted mainly in Amharic with an interpreter. The recording included the Amharic and English, which was all transcribed and then checked for accuracy. In one case the conversation was conducted in English and in one *afan Oromo* (Oromo language) and interpreted. I had no transcriber who could speak Oromo and thus that conversation transcript only includes the English portion, however the accuracy of the translation was verified by another qualified *afan Oromo* speaker.

3.3   Data collection and text creation

Data collection for this study involved a review of relevant literature, a personal journal, recorded conversations, document analysis, and observation. Literature was reviewed and has provided an important source of data and context concerning Ethiopian Muslims, their society, history, culture, and missiological issues of contextualization. Much of the research process was recorded in a personal journal, which is one of the sources of data for this study. Procedures for the creation and analysis of texts are described below.

Conversations were undertaken on an informal basis. Each of these conversations was tape recorded (with the exception of the four mentioned above) and

transcribed with the permission of the research participant. Once each transcript was verified for accuracy of content and interpretation of language it was made a part of the research data for this study. Conversation transcripts are then considered as texts for analysis using the principles described below. In one case a recorded follow-up conversation was undertaken in order to more deeply explore issues raised during the first conversation. In a few cases the recorded conversation was a part of an ongoing series of interactions and so the other non-recorded and informal conversations provide a personal context and in a few cases clarification of some issues. Reflection on any unrecorded conversations and interactions were normally included in my personal journal.

3.4   Data analysis

Analysis of data in the participatory hermeneutical approach to research is a creative and imaginative act because the researcher is appropriating a proposed world disclosed through the text. As the researcher is exposed to the text they are changed in such a manner that they see the world differently because they themselves have become a different person through the research process. Gadamer (1989) refers to a "fusion of horizons" that is possible through conversation. What is meant by this phrase is that each conversation partner has a horizon, that limit of knowledge, experience, and understanding that is possessed at the moment. That horizon is understood ontologically in terms of the being-in-the-world of the person. Through conversation there is the possibility of understanding presented by which a person may be able to transcend their own horizon and thus be able to "see" the world differently and actually become a different person with a new horizon of being (Gadamer, 1989:302-307). Therefore, the problematic being explored is seen differently as new and creative

solutions present themselves. The following sequence will be followed for data analysis as presented in Herda (1999:98-99).

1) Conversation partners were selected and contacted by phone, email, or in person to set up a time for recording a conversation together. In formal conversations a letter was provided prior to the time set for meeting which described the research to be conducted and the type of conversation desired. During the meeting our conversation was recorded with the permission of the research participant.

2) The taped conversations were then transcribed. The transcription process was overseen by the researcher personally so that all nuances of gesture and tone of voice were brought to bear on the meaning of the conversation partners to the best of the researcher's ability. The transcriptions process was undertaken as soon as practical after the conversation was taped.

3) The transcripts were then examined, pulling out significant statements, developing themes and placing them within categories. Categories were refined as necessary throughout the research process.

4) Themes were substantiated with quotes from the transcripts as well as from the researcher's notes and log. In using participants' quotes, every effort has been made to remain as close as possible to the original language even if it is a second language to the participants or a translation. In this case, English is a second or perhaps third language to most of the Ethiopian participants and some are comfortable and proficient in its use as English which is the medium of all university level training in Ethiopia. Conversations conducted in Amharic or Oromifa were transcribed and translated by both the interpreter used during the recording and checked by others when transcribed. One exception is the

conversation recorded in Oromifa for which only the English translation was transcribed. Minimal editing was done on conversation transcripts and then only for the purpose of clarity of meaning as understood during the dynamics of the conversation itself or from other context known to the researcher. All conversations have challenges of understanding and those being conducted through an interpreter especially so, therefore it is important to acknowledge this limitation.

5) Themes were examined in light of the theoretical framework and constructs described and developed during this study. Additional data will be introduced from the literature sources discussed in the review thus allowing for the participation of the voices from the literature to be included in the overall conversation of the topic at hand.

6) Transcriptions were sent to the research participant when practical in order to facilitate both correction and accuracy but also to provide opportunity for on-going discussion regarding the issues at hand.

7) In developing the text, groupings of themes and sub-themes were considered within each category in light of the theoretical framework and constructs developed to guide this study. Often themes fit into more than one category, so the discussion indicates this and develops various dimensions of the theme or grouping of themes.

8) Discussion of the research problem is presented in a two-part analysis. The primary analysis, chapter five, gives focus to the themes and content of the conversation as recorded and transcribed. The secondary analysis, chapter six, addresses the data at a theoretical level thus allowing for the introduction of theoretical constructs as they apply to the research categories.

9) In the research process, implications for the written discussion were explored that provide new insights and new direction for examination of the issue under investigation.

10) Analysis and identification of those aspects of this research that merit further study have been made a part of the research process or noted as possibilities for future research projects.

11) Finally, the implications of the research for both the researcher and participants has been made a part of the research process by examining opportunities for learning learning and fusion of horizons that has taken place during the research process.

The research process described here has been followed as much as possible with some variation arising from language and translation issues, settings of conversations and time availability of the participants.

3.5 Time line

This field research was conducted over approximately a two year time frame during 2011-2012. About half of the conversations were conducted and recorded in 2011 after which they were transcribed and evaluated. The other half of the conversations were conducted in 2012. Ongoing conversations with some of the participants as well as others involved in the field have continued up until the final writing and editing was completed.

3.6 Critical hermeneutic theory: a brief description

The theoretical foundation for this study is drawn from critical hermeneutic theory. Significant authors are Heidegger, Ricoeur, Kearney and Habermas. Gadamer is discussed briefly to the extent that his work intersects with that of the other theorists. Critical hermeneutic theory is closely connected to the theory of text and interpretation

developed by Ricoeur. He writes, "to interpret is to explicate the type of being-in-the-world unfolded *in front of* the text (1991:86; 1981:93). In other words, the process of interpretation, for Ricoeur is not getting at motives and thought patterns behind the text, but rather appropriating the text in such a manner that the interpreter becomes a different person whose actions are shaped by a new way of understanding what it means to be in the world in light of the text. Production and analysis of text is the critical hermeneutic methodology of study; interpretation of texts is guided by an awareness of the world disclosed in front of the text. Ricoeur continues, "for what must be interpreted in a text is a proposed world that I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities. That is what I call the world of the text, the world proper to this unique text" (1991:86). Each theory or philosophy examined will provide a window through which the data can be viewed in such a manner as to disclose the world in front of the text and thus open the possibility of understanding and the opening of new worlds.

Martin Heidegger

In analyzing the data with respect to the research category of community, Heidegger's discussion of *being-with,* is most helpful. He writes, "The world of Da-sein is a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*]. Being-in is *being-with* Others" (1965:155). *Da-sein* is usually translated as "being-in-the-world." Therefore, in Heidegger's thought, *Da-sein* is understood in relationship to others who are also with us in the world. One cannot fulfill one's ownmost possibility of being except as he or she is in community with others because the essence of *Da-sein* is *being-with.* Critical hermeneutics is built upon the priority of the issue of ontology over epistemology. Therefore, being is the primary issue more so than knowing. *Da-sein* is always anticipating the future and the coming into being of one's ownmost possibilities. Heidegger (1962:373) writes:

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By the term 'futural', we do not here have in view a "now" which has *not yet* become 'actual' and which sometime *will be* for the first time. We have in view the coming [*Kunft*] in which *Dasein*, in its ownmost potentiality-for-being, comes towards itself. Anticipation makes *Dasein authentically* futural, and in such a way that the anticipation itself is possible only in so far as *Dasein*, *as being*, is always coming towards itself – that is to say, in so far as it is futural in its Being in general.

This anticipation of one's ownmost potentiality-of-being allows for a space into which imagination can step to create a new possible future into which one might project themselves. However, the notion of *being-with* informs one that such a future cannot be inhabited alone but must be inhabited along with others also. Heidegger (1962:154) explains:

By 'Others' we do not mean everyone else but me – those over against whom the "I" stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too. This Being-there-too [*Auch-da-sein*] with them does not have the ontological character of a Being-present-at-hand-along-'with' them within a world. This 'with' is something of the character of *Dasein*; the 'too' means a sameness of Being as circumspectively concernful Being-in-the-world.

Thus, being-with things is not the same as being-with people who are those who have the same sort of being as myself and toward whom I owe a duty of care. Thus in Heidegger's philosophy of *Being and Time* there is an ethical quality to being-in-the-world. Ricoeur builds upon many of Heidegger's ideas as he develops his theory of narrative identity.

Paul Ricoeur

Ricoeur (1992) develops his theory of identity based upon two Latin words for self, *idem* and *ipse*. *Idem* is that aspect of identity that stays the same over time. He refers to these qualities as character. He writes, "by 'character' I understand the set of distinctive marks which permit the reidentification of a human individual as being the same" (1992:119). *Ipse* is that aspect of identity that allows for change over time. A

person is the same when a baby, a child, an adult and an elderly person, yet has significantly changed over time. The combining of these two aspects of identity requires the pulling together of the concordant and the discordant, sameness and difference within the same life. This pulling together is accomplished most naturally through narrative. Ricoeur writes, "because of the concordant-discordant synthesis, the contingency of the event contributes to the necessity, retroactive so to speak, of the history of a life, to which is equated the identity of the character" (1992:147). Borrowing from Aristotle's *Poetics,* Ricoeur uses the term, "emplotment" to describe the bringing together of the discordant and the concordant (1984:66). Its primary significance for this study is that it allows for a "grasping together" of the events of a life. Self-understanding is most naturally expressed in terms of the story or narrative of a life. An individual life fits into the story of a community and the present fits into the larger narrative of the history of a people. Who a person is and how they understand themselves has everything to do with the possibilities for their future. Such a narrative that forms an identity amounts to "…the proposing of a world that I might inhabit and into which I might project my ownmost powers" (Ricoeur 1984:81). Thus identity must incorporate a past, present and an anticipated future. Herda comments on this aspect of Ricoeur's theory when she writes, "the self is also a dialectic that gives us a character that remains the same throughout transitions in our life and also allows us to create a newness that houses the future" (Herda 1997:37).

This conception (incorporating an anticipated future into identity) will be important to this study of conversion and identity change in Ethiopia. In subsequent chapters of this study the significance of an anticipated future as being an integral part of identity, identity change and Christian discipleship will be explored. The future orientation of human life and experience is not normally addressed in theories of
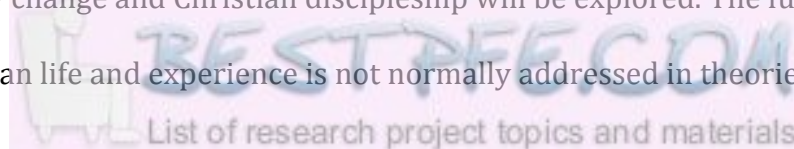
identity where the emphasis is on history, culture and common experience that "make us who we are." Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity allows for a productive inclusion of anticipation as an aspect of the self as well as connecting with the Christian concepts of faith and trust.

This notion of the proposing of a world that might be inhabited is one of the most important contributions made by Ricoeur. His theory brings forward the temporal dimension of human experience, Ricoeur (1999b:14) writes:

> No historical period ever exhausted its own dreams. What happened in the past is only a partial realization of what had been projected. . .The promise of an historical event is always more than was actually realized. And so we have to find the future of the past, the unfulfilled potential of the past.

Thus the narrative that expresses a person's or community's identity draws upon the past but also proposes a future. Therefore, narrative theory when applied to identity allows for the creation of a new future, not limited by the characteristics of the present or the past. When Ricoeur writes, "there is more in the past than what happened. . .we have to find the *future of the past,* the unfulfilled potential of the past," he creates a possibility for traditions, culture and social institutions to find new expression through imaginative adaptation. Thus Ricoeur combines the past, present and future into a whole in his theory of narrative identity.

Narrative identity also forms the lynch pin between Ricoeur's theory of action and his ethical theory. In *Oneself as Another* narrative identity is the transition point as he moves toward a theory of ethical responsibility. Ricoeur (1992:114) writes:

> Narrative theory finds one of its major justifications in the role it plays as a middle ground between the descriptive viewpoint on action, to which we have confined ourselves until now, and the prescriptive viewpoint which will prevail in the studies that follow.

Because narrative theory allows one to consider their life as a whole and both *idem* and *ipse* aspects are included through the mediation of the plot of the narrative, there is the possibility of ethical content. As such, a person becomes responsible for their actions and for the future that is created through them. Ricoeur (1999a:8) explains:

> I would like to add a third component in explication of this difficulty of preserving one's identity through time, and of preserving one's selfhood in the face of the other, and that is the violence which is a permanent component of human relationship and interactions. Let us recall that most events to do with the founding of any community are acts of violence. So we could say that collective identity is rooted in founding events which are violent events. In a sense, collective memory is a kind of storage of such violent blows, wounds and scars.

The above quotation is taken from his discussion of memory and forgetting in which he proposes that there is an ethical responsibility at times to remember so as not to allow the memory of those who have suffered to be forgotten, and at other times a duty to forget in order that a new future can be forged which is not a replay of the tragedies of the past. These components come together in Ricoeur's identity theory wherein we are challenged to appropriate, and therefore become responsible for, the story that is our identity.

Richard Kearney

Kearney, a student of Ricoeur, has extended Ricoeur's work on story, narrative, and imagination. Kearney (2002:132) writes:

> This power of mimetic re-creation sustains a connection between fiction and life while also acknowledging their difference. Life can be properly understood only by being retold mimetically through stories. But the act of mimesis which enables us to pass from life to life-story introduces a 'gap' (however minimal) between living and recounting. Life is lived, as Ricoeur reminds us, while stories are told.

The telling of one's story introduces a "gap" or a space between the events told and the self, into this gap mimetic activity is introduced. Within this space one finds space for reflection, and as Ricoeur reminds us, it is always possible to "tell it otherwise"

(1999a:9). Every history includes some facts and not others, prioritizes one viewpoint over another, and thus tells its story in only one manner among many alternatives. When the history of Ethiopia is examined as the combination of the stories of its many different people groups, that story becomes both more full and quite different. Ethnic groups such as the Oromo who have embraced Islam and in some cases rejected Christianity in favor of traditional religious beliefs, have done so in reaction to their experience of a violent and oppressive past. As Christians and missiologists it is our responsibility to explore ways to open up new possibilities for a future where the wounds of the past can be healed and a new future can be embraced that is no longer defined by past violence nor does it produce future violence. By reframing the story of the past, the Ethiopian people can open up new possibilities for the future. This "telling otherwise" allows for the same events of history to become the foundation for new and hope filled futures.

Kearney (1998:149) explores the role of imagination in the creation of new possible worlds when he writes:

> To account for this phenomenon of ontological novelty, Ricoeur's hermeneutics of imagination looks beyond the first-order reference of empirical reality – which ordinary language discourse normally entails – to a second-order reference of possible worlds.

The role of imagination in the creation of new possible worlds to be inhabited, introduces the possibility of a new identity through the narrative thus created. Furthermore it allows for ethical examination of actions, both of the past and those yet in the future. Kearney (1998:255) summarizes this ethical dimension when he writes:

> The ethical potential of narrative imagination may be summarized under three main headings: (1) the *testimonial* capacity to bear witness to a forgotten past; (2) the *empathic* capacity to identify with those different to us (victims and exemplars alike); and (3) the *critical-utopian* capacity to challenge official stories with unofficial or dissenting ones which open up alternative ways of being.

These three aspects of the ethical dimension of narrative imagination create space in which the stories of those on the periphery, who have been excluded from the national, dominant narrative, can be reintroduced and thus allow for the possibility of healing, reconciliation and thus communication. When space is introduced within which a person or community is allowed to tell their yet unheard story, an opportunity for healing is created. Through such processes those who have been excluded can begin the journey toward inclusion. If no space is provided in which such stories can be told and the healing process is thus not begun, Ethiopia will become more and more ethnically fragmented and the potential for violence will grow.

As the story of those who have been excluded becomes a part of the public sphere a new narrative can begin to be formed into which these new stories and their implications could be introduced. Kearney (1999:26) writes:

> Moreover, it is precisely because stories proceed from stories in this manner that historical communities are ultimately responsible for the formation and reformation of their own identities. One cannot remain constant over the passage of historical time – and therefore remain faithful to one's promises and covenants – unless one has some minimal remembrance of where one comes from, of how one came to be what one is.

Thus Kearney extends Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity while developing the theme of imagination.

As Christians, the term imagination is seldom part of the standard theological vocabulary. Words such as faith and hope are much preferred to "imagination" because it sounds so unreal and tentative. However, imagination can be viewed as the connection between a metaphor and its meaning, or a parable and its interpretation, or between a story in the Jewish scriptures and a New Testament truth. Richard Hays writes:

In 1 Corinthians we find Paul calling his readers and hearers to a *conversion of the imagination*. He was calling Gentiles to understand their identity anew in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ – a gospel message comprehensible only in relation to the larger narrative of God's dealing with Israel (2005:5).

Imagination can also be understood as the connecting point between an old self and a new self which is exactly the meaning of conversion as will be explored in chapter four.

Jürgen Habermas

Complementing the theories of Ricoeur and Kearney are those of Habermas, which deal with communicative competence, the public sphere, and legitimation. Habermas (1984) distinguishes between three types of action: instrumental, strategic and communicative. Instrumental action is non-social action oriented toward success, in other words, it is action undertaken on a technical level. Strategic action is social in nature but also oriented toward success. Strategic action involves actions intended to influence the decisions or actions of others. Finally, communicative action is social in nature and is oriented to reaching understanding. Thus, communicative action is not primarily intended to reach personal goals so much as it is to "harmonize … plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions" (1984:285-286). The distinguishing characteristic between the two types of social action, strategic and communicative, is whether the orientation is toward success or toward reaching understanding.

Habermas writes, "reaching understanding is the inherent *telos* of human speech" (1984:287). Thus, communicative action contains within its nature a prospective orientation. Ricoeur describes Habermas at this point as invoking "the *regulative ideal* of an unrestricted and unconstrained communication which does not precede us but guides us from a future point" (1981:78).

All communicative action for Habermas (1984) involves the putting forward of validity claims. Building upon a presumption of comprehension, he delineates three validity claims. First, that the statement made is true. Second, that the speech act is right, within its normative context. And third, that the speaker is sincere and therefore means what is expressed. Each of these validity claims can be criticized and defended (redeemed) through reason and argumentation. They are thus subject to verification through further communication within the context of an orientation toward reaching understanding and under conditions of symmetry, or what Habermas terms "pure intersubjectivity," which essentially means both sides of the discussion are equally free to share and receive ideas (1970a:371-3). For Habermas, the force of the better argument will determine the position that wins acceptance. Habermas does not adequately address the role of feelings in the communicative process, preferring rationality, but this will be addressed in chapter six.

Habermas uses Austin's (1975) classification of speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. Through a locutionary speech act a person says something that expresses a state of affairs. For example, "It is raining." An illocutionary speech act performs an action through saying something. An example would be when an employer says, "You're fired." A perlocutionary speech act produces an effect upon the hearer such as fear and thus willingness to comply. "If you don't give me your money, I'll shoot." The intention of the illocutionary act is found in its meaning and thus it must be interpreted. However, a perlocutionary act can be identified only by the result that is intended to be created in the hearer. Habermas puts it this way, "I would like to suggest that we conceive perlocutions as a special class of strategic interactions in which illocutions are employed as means in teleological contexts of action" (1984:293). Thus for Habermas, communicative action can only involve illocutionary speech acts and only

illocutionary aims. He writes, "illocutionary results are achieved at the level of interpersonal relations in which participants in communication come to an understanding with one another about something in the world" (1984:293).

While Habermas agrees that, "every process of reaching understanding takes place against the background of a culturally ingrained preunderstanding" (1984:100), he uses the idea of preunderstanding quite differently than Gadamer uses his related notion of prejudice. For Gadamer, prejudice, or preunderstanding, is a product of human openness to the world (1976:9). In other words, humans experience the fact that hot things burn and it hurts, so this preunderstanding or prejudice influences their future response of avoiding hot things. For Habermas, cultural influences or preunderstanding is a context within which communication takes place, which can be adjusted through discourse. But the distinction between Habermas and Gadamer is that Habermas' theory of communicative action is oriented to the regulative ideal of an ideal speech situation that draws us from a future point. Gadamer (1989), on the other hand, uses his idea of prejudice or preunderstanding to develop his notion of "effective history." By effective history Gadamer means all of the personal and social history that is actualized in a person's life at a given moment. Gadamer (1989:301) explains:

> On the whole the power of effective history does not depend on its being recognized. This, precisely, is the power of history over finite human consciousness, namely that it prevails even where faith in method leads one to deny one's own historicity.

In other words, a person's effective history influences the manner in which they experience the world and interpret its meaning whether they recognize it or not. This idea of effective history plays into Gadamer's (1989:302) definition of a person's horizon as:

> The range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point...A person who has no horizon does not see far

> enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. On the other hand, 'to have a horizon' means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it.

For Gadamer then, recognition of having a horizon gives rise to the possibility of a *fusion of horizons* whereby a person's horizon can be enlarged and moreover the possibility exists for them to become a different person because a change in horizon necessarily has ontological consequences. Thus Gadamer's theory builds upon pre-understanding and so is backward looking in its orientation whereas Habermas orients his theory to a regulative ideal situated at a future point.

Both the ideas developed by Habermas and Gadamer are helpful in different ways although they themselves were in serious disagreement over these very matters. One of the strengths of Ricoeur is his ability to find a mediating idea by which to resolve such divergent viewpoints in a productive manner. Whereas for Habermas, ideology (and therefore religion) is connected irrevocably to systematically distorted communication, Ricoeur understands both ideology and the authority of tradition in a somewhat less sinister manner. Kearney writes concerning Ricoeur's views, "Ideology as a symbolic confirmation of the past, and utopia as a symbolic opening towards the future, are complementary. If cut off from each other, they can lead to political pathology" (2004:88). This research will use the ideas of Habermas and Gadamer together (as mediated by Ricoeur). By doing so, it will be possible to gain insight into the dynamics of the dissonance between the missionary/evangelist/church planter and Muslims in Ethiopia and thus move toward understanding as to why various approaches to evangelism of Muslims are more successful and others less so. By understanding this dynamic it may be possible to maximize the positive effects being sought while minimizing the problems and difficulties inherent in any such enterprise.

However, first there is a need to develop the ideas of Habermas somewhat further.

Habermas (1996:4) restates his idealized speech situation in the following terms:

> In seeking to reach an understanding, natural-language users must assume, among other things, that the participants pursue their illocutionary goals without reservation, that they tie their agreement to the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims, and that they are ready to take on the obligations resulting from consensus and relevant for further interaction.

Habermas builds upon this theory of communicative action toward a broader theory of civil society in *Between Facts and Norms*. There he discusses "social space" which is generated through communicative action. As Habermas (1996:360) develops this idea he explains the related concept of the *public sphere*:

> The public sphere can best be described as a network for communicating information and points of view (i.e., opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes); the streams of communication are in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions. Like lifeworld as a whole, so, too, the public sphere is reproduced through communicative action, for which mastery of a natural language suffices; it is tailored to the general comprehensibility of everyday communicative practice.

The public sphere is the combination of diverse voices, especially of those who are potentially affected by a given social problem. Habermas (1996:365) continues:

> But in the diverse voices of this public, one hears the echo of private experiences that are caused throughout society by the externalities (and internal disturbances) of various functional systems – and even by the very state apparatus on whose regulatory activities the complex and poorly coordinated subsystems depend.

Thus, through communicative action, issues and problems are brought into the public sphere where diverse voices are to be given opportunity to express ideas and concerns and where public discourse on an informal basis can take place. The opportunity for the voices heard to be truly diverse is crucial to the operation of the public sphere in that as compared to the political center, the peripheral voices have a relatively "greater sensitivity in detecting and identifying new problem situations" (Habermas 1996:381).

Summary

By giving consideration to the ideas and concepts of critical hermeneutics a window of understanding may be opened such that the missionary enterprise among Muslims can be understood again in a more productive way. For the most part missionary communication is what Habermas terms "strategic action" as defined above. In other words, the goal has not normally been to understand others so much as to convince "them" and thus produce the result of conversion. The result has too often been missionaries "talking at" people rather than a "talking with" people. One of the issues noted in chapter one was that missionary use of social programs such as medical or educational programs has, in some cases, not so much been to help the non-Christian as to convert them. Such ulterior motives can bring offense and give opportunities for the enemies of the gospel to accuse. Yet, many have been converted to Christ through the expression of compassion in various forms and so certainly it is an important part of Christian outreach. This kind of dynamic can benefit from critical hermeneutic analysis. Finally, critical hermeneutical theory has the potential of restoring to Christian and missionary theology and methodology a future orientation that has largely been lost in favor of preserving traditions and protecting a specific understanding of biblical truth much more connected to Western cultural values than is often realized. Discussion will return to these issues in chapter six.

3.7   Background of researcher

Coming to this season in my personal journey has led me through a varied set of experiences. Those experiences have shaped my values and priorities and caused me to see the world in the manner in which I do. I grew up in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States and graduated from a high school that had exactly two non-white students, one of which left during my Junior year. It was an excellent school district
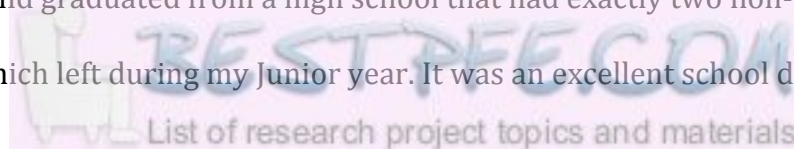
originally formed by professors from the University of Washington School of Education and very cutting edge at the time. My late high school and college years coincided with the Viet Nam War in which I did not participate because I was not called into the military and chose not to volunteer.

My religious beliefs began to take shape as I completed college, and Christianity came to have a direct influence on significant decisions in my life. I left Hastings Law School of San Francisco after the first year to attend Bible College and train for the ministry. This was not a light decision on my part, but the culmination of a deep desire to make a difference in people's lives and determining that the legal system was not the means by which I could be most effective in this pursuit. During the next fifteen years I worked in construction of houses, had my own contracting business, studied and taught theology and worked as a volunteer in my church.

It was during this period I met and married my wife Felecia, who is African American, and we began to raise our family of four children. Considering the lack of any relationships with non-white people while growing up it is hard to explain how I came to marry Felecia. In the end I think that the values received from my parents, that there is truly no difference, in terms of humanity, between people of any race, were influential in spite of the fact that I had little opportunity to live out those values.

In 1993 I was ordained to ministry and became the international missions pastor of my church in Oakland, California. In this position I worked directly and on an ongoing basis with people and projects in China, the Philippines, Japan, India, Russia, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya and Mexico. My greatest love is Ethiopia and I travelled back and forth for fifteen years before moving to Awassa in August of 2008 to take the position of President of Shiloh Bible College Ethiopia.

My education includes an MA in Theology with an emphasis on Biblical Studies from Fuller Seminary as well as an EdD from the University of San Francisco. My first doctorate was done in Education in the area of Organization and Leadership and my dissertation examined issues of leadership as related to working with environmental issues in Ethiopia. While working in Awassa we have developed leadership training programs for preparing evangelists and church planters to work in Muslim Outreach programs in Ethiopia. In this work I have had opportunity to work directly with many of the key leaders and participants involved in Muslim Outreach in Ethiopia. I see this research and writing process as a wonderful opportunity to continue on my personal journey of understanding in contextualization and the enculturation processes.

Thus I am a committed Pentecostal Christian leader who has worked as a missions practitioner for twenty years in various nations but the last seven years living in Ethiopia. I am personally involved in preparing leaders who are ministering among Muslims in Ethiopia and the nearby nations. Critical hermeneutics as a research paradigm acknowledges that every researcher brings their own culture and background to the research process and that no research is truly objective in that it must be done by humans who cannot escape their own humanity. Therefore, part of the evaluation process of the value of the research involves an acknowledgement of the background and personal history of the researcher.

CHAPTER 4: Theoretical Foundations and Constructs

Having now provided an historical review, a literature review, and a description of methodology to frame the issue of this writing, it is now necessary that the foundational ideas and concepts be carefully clarified. There are two theoretical foundations that must be set in place to support the discussion that will follow. The first is "conversion." Since this research is being conducted within a missiological paradigm, conversion will be discussed primarily from a missiological viewpoint using other fields of study such as social science and theology to broaden and clarify this concept. Evangelization and church planting among Muslims, as it is being done in Ethiopia today, is primarily being conducted by evangelical churches and denominations who seek to bring about the conversion of Muslims to faith in Christ. The need is to clarify what is meant by "faith in Christ," how that faith should be expressed and lived out by converts, and how it can be identified and evaluated by others. These are the relevant issues related to the concept of conversion that will be discussed. A guiding question will be: Is there a biblical understanding of conversion that is most appropriate for the mission to Muslims?

The second foundational concept that must be examined and clearly defined is that of identity. As the discussion of conversion progresses it will become clear that for evangelical Christianity, conversion involves transformation of character and a reorientation of life that necessarily involves a new understanding of self and a new identity. Identity as a separate issue has only recently been discussed in any sustained way with regard to its role in missiology and specifically Muslim evangelism. But this issue has been identified repeatedly as an important one in the literature related to high contextualization approaches to work among Muslims often called "Insider Movements." Thus a wide range of concepts and studies related to identity theory from psychology, sociology, anthropology, cognitive science, and philosophy will be

examined and gathered together to suggest a workable concept to be used in missiological studies such as this one. Once these two foundational concepts have been discussed and a working understanding developed, the research materials gathered in this study will be presented (chapter five) and then analyzed (chapter six) using the definitions of conversion and identity presented in this chapter.

Christian concepts of conversion vary immensely from denomination to denomination and from church to church. The present study is being conducted primarily among Evangelical and Pentecostal groups. While "Evangelical" in Ethiopia includes both groups, the mission to Muslims in Ethiopia receives significant financial support from outside the nation. Thus the concepts and approaches of those providing such support are also important and are somewhat more varied than indigenous paradigms. Most Ethiopian denominations favor approaches to Muslim evangelism and church planting that would fall under the C-4 or perhaps C-3 paradigms whereas independent churches and outreaches supported by groups connected with the Center for World Missions of Pasadena or other similar missions supporting groups tend toward higher contextualization approaches. This author is not familiar with specific efforts by the Ethiopian Orthodox church in terms of a mission to Muslims other than the existence of Orthodox churches in areas that are predominantly Muslim. Therefore the Ethiopian Orthodox concepts of conversion are not directly addressed and will only be mentioned briefly in what follows.

Among those Christian churches and ministries conducting evangelism and church planting programs among Ethiopian Muslims there remains considerable variation regarding the meaning of conversion and what would be expected if a Muslim converted to Christianity. Much of the literature review has highlighted several interrelated issues regarding this point. First, what kind of change is expected if

someone is to be considered a "convert?" Is that change fundamental or superficial?

Does conversion take place over time as a process or is it an event with another process

such as discipleship to follow? One context in which this issue may arise is the reported

results of various missions work among Muslims. Reports that several thousands of

Muslims having "converted" to Christ have been publicized, often in literature intended

for fund raising purposes, but normally without explanation as to what is meant by

conversion. Since there is a wide range of meaning in use for this important term not

only among Christian groups but also among the various social sciences, it is important

to explore. Because this study is done from a Christian missiological perspective

drawing some conclusions regarding the most appropriate understanding of conversion

for the missiological enterprise must be attempted.

A second and related issue is identity change. In the literature reviewed above,

one of the primary areas of debate between C-4 and C-5 approaches to Muslim outreach

has to do with what sort of identity change would be expected among Muslims who

have come to faith in Christ? The designation of Muslim Background Believer (MBB) is

used by outsiders but the self designation of high contextualization groups has often

been *Muslim Followers of Isa* or some similar designation. Such groups seek to remain

inside of their Muslim community while following Christ. These groups have been

criticized for not being truly Christian if they continue to repeat the Muslim confession

of faith (*Shahada*), continue Mosque attendance and performance of Muslim prayers

(*salat*). The issue at stake here is whether believers of Muslim background can consider

themselves socially, culturally, or even religiously Muslim and yet be considered to have

"converted to Christ." An interrelated issue is the connection between the identity

projected to others, and the internal understanding of self. A clear understanding of

identity and how it relates to the topic of conversion is essential to the mission to Muslims.

This chapter will proceed first with a discussion of the topic of conversion under the headings: conversion as understood by social science; conversion as understood by Muslims; Christian conversion; and finally, missiology and conversion. The discussion of identity will be organized as follows: theories of identity from social science; Muslim concepts of identity; the dialogical self; the study of lives; the narrative identity theory of Paul Ricoeur; and then these ideas will be summarized in the final section on identity in missiological contexts.

4.1 Theories of religious conversion

The theoretical basis for the definition and understanding of conversion as used in this study must be made clear. Within that discussion Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians often mention the issue of identity change as part of what is meant by conversion. Thus, identity as it relates to conversion is also an important part of this issue but will be examined as a separate theoretical construct in the second part of this chapter.

Theories of religious conversion have been developed by various social sciences such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology and this area will be examined first. Next it is important to understand the concept of conversion from a Muslim perspective. Christian conversion as understood from both theological and biblical viewpoints will then be examined in detail to provide adequate foundation for a missiological understanding of conversion.

4.1.1 Conversion from a social science paradigm

This section will explore theories of religious conversion taken from social science in an effort to understand in a general sense the meaning and issues involved in the conversion process. From a social science paradigm, conversion is primarily a

subjective experience and as studied through the lens of sociology is a matter of perceived experience interpreted within a religious matrix of thought. Beckford describes this when he writes, "One of the assumptions on which the present analysis is founded is that speech is not simply an objective report upon reality. It is the speakers' way of using available resources to construct an appropriate view of reality" (1978:251). To the convert, these experiences may be interpreted as connecting with an unseen reality, but the truth-value of these beliefs lie outside of the parameters of possible examination for the social scientist. For her, religious conversion occurs in contexts primarily understood within a social science framework whether psychological, sociological, political or anthropological. Christian studies of conversion sometimes minimize the social aspects of conversion but such factors play an important, if not a dominant role, in the conversion process as Muslims turn to faith in Christ.

James (1902) is often cited as the first to offer direct discussion of conversion from a psychological paradigm, his definition of conversion allows for both sudden and gradual conversion and has a greater degree of affinity with Christian concepts than psychologists would generally allow today. James writes:

> To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities. This at least is what conversion signifies in general terms, whether or not we believe that a direct divine operation is needed to bring such a moral change about (1902:80).

The contribution from James lies primarily in two ideas. First, conversion can be either sudden or gradual and in its gradual form may involve a period of "unconscious incubation" in which religious ideas are entering conscious awareness. Secondly, James sees conversion as primarily a unifying process where a divided consciousness becomes

unified which leads to greater happiness. In other words, there is normally an experience of some sort of crisis whether more or less acute that brings a person to consider religious remedies to their condition. That resolution takes the form of bringing together disparate aspects of personality into a unity. Another point with regard to James' and similar psychological approaches that have followed his line of thinking, is that intensification of one's religious beliefs within the same religious system is considered a case of conversion and thus it is not necessary for a person to change religions to experience conversion. Most social scientists today would distinguish between a change from one Christian denomination to another as opposed to a change from Islam to Christianity or vice versa.

In 1965 Lofland and Stark published a sociological analysis of conversion to a cult. Their analysis has been influential on subsequent studies done from a sociological paradigm. The starting point for conversion to a cult was described in this study as following upon a set of "predisposing conditions." First the potential convert will experience a period of life tension. This may take many forms but is similar to James (1902) emphasis on a crisis situation as the starting point for conversion. For Lofland and Stark, tension is their choice of terminology because they envision a long-term process as opposed to an acute condition. This longer-term process of tension building in a life is more suitable to the descriptions received from converts from Islam to Christianity in Ethiopia. Often there is a long-term building of tensions resulting from questions not satisfactorily answered from within the Muslim paradigm that eventually lead the Ethiopian Muslim to a consideration of other religious options.

The second factor identified by Lofland and Stark (1965) is that developing tension takes place within a problem solving perspective that is religiously oriented. The resolution of developing tension within a religious paradigm is necessary if the

person is going to seek a religious conversion as the resolution for their increasing tension. Increased tension within a religiously oriented problem solving orientation may then lead to the individual becoming a seeker. In that Lofland and Stark studied an American cult experience their specific understanding of seekership is not so helpful in the Ethiopian context but certainly testimonies of converted Muslims gathered in this research confirm that at some point they began seeking answers outside of their Muslim community. In the cases known through this research, those who eventually chose to convert, were not satisfied with the answers received from *imams* or other community leaders and so began to look to sources from outside of their Muslim milieu. It is certainly more difficult to find and interview Muslims who were satisfied with the answers they received within their own community and thus chose not to seek further. Presumably these aborted their seeking and settled back into their own religious context.

The next step in Lofland and Stark (1965) is a turning point. Normally this is precipitated by someone from another religious background that draws the seeker into specific interest in the new religion. For Lofland and Stark this was an encounter with a cult member. In the case of Ethiopian Muslims it may be an encounter with a Christian or perhaps literature or some other form of communication such as television or radio broadcasts. In the conversations included in this research there are examples of those who came into contact with a Christian, or in some cases another Muslim with challenging questions, or perhaps a Bible or other literature. The timing of this encounter is important and a number of the research participants of this study passed by some opportunities for various reasons before their turning point experience. How much effect those earlier encounters ultimately had in their decision to convert is difficult to quantify but certainly the process of gradual separation from Islam and

ultimate conversion is a common theme of the conversion testimonies gathered in this research.

At this point Lofland and Stark (1965) found that friendship and relational bonds developed between the seeker and one or more cult members. In the Ethiopian Muslim evangelism context often a small group of those studying about *Isa* in the Quran and leading to a study of the Bible is an important part of the conversion process. It may be only one other individual or it could be a group that forms relational bonds that gives support and encouragement to the seeking Muslim but these relationships are extremely important in the conversion process. This is primarily because of the strong attachment the Muslim has for the *ummah*, or community of Muslims. The relational basis of Islam is very strong and so one of the hindrances to Muslims converting to faith in Christ is a strong sense of loss that accompanies separation from their former community and its relationships. The building of new relationships that can gradually replace the lost sense of connection to *ummah* is a critical part of the conversion process often overlooked by Christian ministries.

In the Lofland and Stark model the final step in the conversion process before actual conversion is a period of intensive interaction with the cult and its members. In the Muslim evangelistic context in Ethiopia this means that the prospective, or perhaps new convert, must have their questions answered. The Muslim has not only learned Islamic doctrine and teaching but also has lived the lifestyle of a Muslim, which is significantly different than that of a Christian. As the convert engages in intensive interaction with their new community and new faith orientation, there are many new points of stress that develop. If they are entering a group of highly contextualized MBBs, tension may be minimized because their new community follows customs more compatible with the Muslim's former life. But the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* have shaped the

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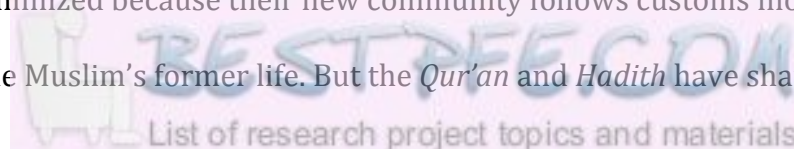
thinking patterns of the Muslim to such an extent that those patterns of thought must be examined and reconsidered. A skilled teacher/disciple-maker can make an important difference in the success of this process. Many Christian groups choose not to confront these issues and thus allow the new convert to remain within a Muslim paradigm but with a greater respect for *Isa* than other Muslims. This is where much of the debate regarding the efficacy of the Insider Movement strategy arises centered around the issue of what it means to "convert" to faith in Christ. Muslim outreach ministries often privately complain of the high rate of "converts" who return to Islam over time. This issue of relationship building and reexamination of ideas shaped by *Qur'an* and *Hadith* may be a key in understanding and solving this challenge.

Thus Lofland and Stark (1965) can make a helpful contribution to understanding the dynamics of Muslim conversion to faith in Christ in the Ethiopian context. The points of correction and debate from other sociologically oriented studies regarding religious conversion will be noted below but the Lofland/Stark approach is convincing regarding the importance of considering factors often left outside of the Christian religiously oriented models of conversion that often minimize social, cultural, relational and psychological factors.

Snow and Phillips (1980) is a study that questions the Lofland/Stark model as to the necessity of the "predisposing conditions" as listed and evaluated there. The value of this study for the present research is primarily to appreciate that there is no one model of conversion and that human beings do not all follow the same route to a religious destination. It is certainly true that while the Lofland/Stark process is helpful it cannot become a straight jacket for a more nuanced understanding of specific conversion processes.

Long and Haddon (1983) use a socialization approach to religious conversion

comparing the "brainwashing model" to the "drift model." Although these ideas have been much referenced in the sociological literature they are not so helpful in terms of Muslim conversion to faith in Christ in Ethiopia. The other popular approach of the 1980's, rational choice theory, while at first glance seeming questionable from a Christian viewpoint has some contribution to make to the study being undertaken here. Gartrell and Shannon (1985) examines the conversion process as one undertaken by a rational actor who compares the benefits of various religious affiliations and ultimately makes a rational choice. While this study does not culturally relate to the Ethiopian context in terms of the rational options of the decision maker, and emphasizes a Western individualistic paradigm, nonetheless, there are some helpful insights provided by this study. It is common to hear allegations of converts in Ethiopia whether moving from Christianity to Islam or from Islam to Christianity being influenced by monetary, business, political or social concerns. From the point of view of either faith this is seen as a negative accusation and is often made by one group toward the other accusing that they are "buying converts." The Muslim tradition is that when a person converts to Islam, and especially from a Christian background, they will be given *zakat* (charity) from the community they are entering. When a *sheikh* or *imam* converts from Islam to Christianity they often become celebrities and expect (and often receive) financial benefit from their conversion. Business opportunities have often been used in the spread of Islam in Africa to attract converts to Islam. Another consideration would be the perceived or actual cost of conversion. A Muslim converting to faith in Christ will often lose their inheritance, be rejected by their family and friends, need to leave their home community, and could be beaten or even killed. These are certainly issues that can properly be considered using a rational choice model. Indeed economists such as Ensminger (1997) believe that an economic interpretation using a rational choice

model is sufficient to explain conversion in Africa and theories such as Horton (1971) that emphasizes the effects of globalization, as an example, are unnecessary. Both Christianity and Islam would view their own religious belief system to be above such mundane considerations and offer greater value than money or social sacrifices but such issues are often deciding factors for individuals who determine that the cost is too high to change religious affiliation or perhaps that the benefits are great enough to warrant such a change.

Snow and Machalek (1984) is a study that defines conversion as involving radical change specifically in a person's "universe of discourse."

> Viewed in this light, conversion concerns not only a change in values, beliefs, and identities, but more fundamentally and significantly, it entails the displacement of one universe of discourse by another or the ascendance of a formerly peripheral universe of discourse to the status of a primary authority. Such a conception does not restrict conversion only to changes from one religion to another or to the adoption of a religious worldview where one was previously absent. In addition, a nominal affiliate of a religious community may come to hold old but not particularly salient ideas with a new intensity and clarity of vision. Nominal belief thus becomes "true" belief, and what was previously peripheral to consciousness becomes central (Snow and Machalek 1984:170).

This approach emphasizes the use of conversion narratives with an emphasis on whether that narrative reflects a new universe of discourse. However, Snow and Machalek were taken to task by Staples and Mauss (1987:137), among other issues, for identifying too closely the universe of discourse with consciousness and thus providing an overly "weak conceptualization of the person who experiences conversion." For Staples and Mauss conversion is "fundamentally a process of change" but they prefer their notion of "self transformation" (1987:137). For Staples and Mauss, language is the way in which a person engages in self-transformation and by that they mean transformation of the "real self" as opposed to self in the sense of a role. Staples and Mauss write, "We view conversion as an inherently subjective phenomenon, we believe

that the subject, and only the subject, is qualified to tell us who he or she *really* is"

(1987: 138). The conception of self transformation through language used by Staples

and Mauss has led to further reflection and development of this idea in Stromberg

(1993) and then in Popp-Baier (2001) both of whom rely upon Ricoeur's notion of

narrative identity which will be discussed at length below. The theoretical grounding

provided by these studies supports the methodology of this study in examining the

conversion narratives of converted Muslims as a primary source of information.

However, the point made by Snow and Machalek that conversion narratives by their

very nature are "socially constructed" is well taken and so the possible effect of the

social influences on the construction of conversion narratives must be duly considered

(1984:175).

In 1977 Max Heirich did a study that seems quite prescient in its conclusions and

continues to be applicable in its findings even after nearly forty years. Writing from a

sociological paradigm, Heirich finds that because sociologists essentially discount any

possibility that there could be any reality behind religious experience they necessarily

discount the value of giving serious study to religious conversion. Heirich suggests that

conversion is a common human experience across many cultures and ought to be taken

seriously as a topic of study. He further suggests that the sociological bias against

religion ought to be suspended during that study in order to gain a clear understanding

of what is actually going on during the process of conversion. One of his complaints is

that studies done to that time had not included a control group to know if there is any

necessary correlation between factors suggested and the result of conversion. This

seems to continue to be a problem in the study of conversion from within a social

science paradigm. He also suggested that based upon his study of Pentecostal Roman

Catholics he did not find that social factors alone could explain the phenomenon of

conversion, at least not those that had been put forward at that time. He did confirm

that "the process of conversion occurs through use of available social networks"

(Heirich 1977:673). But he also found that social networks alone were not enough to

ensure conversion if the person had not already become a religious seeker. This is an

important factor in Muslim evangelism and especially in consideration of the C-5

paradigm. Social networks are very important in the process of conversion and such

networks are essential in understanding and encouraging the conversion process.

Therefore the emphasis on working within available networks as emphasized by Gray

and Gray (2009a and b) is a significant contribution of the Insider Movement strategy.

   Heirich defines conversion in terms of "the process of changing a sense of root

reality" (1977:674). This points to a deep and fundamental sort of change expected in a

"conversion" process. A change in root reality or grounding, as Heirich discusses it,

leads to a path of considering two important issues. First, what sort of circumstances

destroy clarity of root reality and thus cause a person to become un-grounded?

Although Heirich does not go into reports of supernatural occurances such as dreams

and visions reported by Muslims that have moved them to reconsider Christ, he does

say that the current sociological explanations at this point are not sufficient to explain

such phenomena. Secondly, Heirich asks, "How is an alternative sense of grounding

asserted in ways that lead observers to take it seriously?" (1977:675). By this he seems

to be drawing on an earlier observation that the same sorts of things seem to happen to

others who do not convert. This is a fascinating question from a missiological

perspective. The missionary does his/her work and the gospel is communicated,

relationships are formed, questions are asked, study groups begun, but some respond

and others do not. What are the circumstances surrounding the contextualization and

communication of the gospel message that cause the recipients of the message to take it

seriously and to consider a fundamentally life changing reorientation? Heirich (1977)

raises some important issues that may not be answerable from a purely sociological

paradigm. Heirich suggests the benefit of a cooperative, working relationship between

sociologists and religionists to more adequately study conversion. While it may not be

possible to "look inside the heads" of potential converts to find the answers to Heirich's

questions, perhaps there is a way around them. Complicated issues that involve

sociological, economic, anthropological, political and psychological aspects may benefit

from a narratively based approach that allows for a synthesizing, non-threatening

mechanism to resolve such complex issues.

From a sociological paradigm, conversion is understood largely in terms of a

socialization process. Kilbourne and Richardson write:

> The best way to conceptualize conversion, therefore, is as a form of socialization:
> The process by which individuals learn the appropriate roles, norms, and status
> assignments of a group; they inculcate the values, beliefs, and world view of a
> group; and they acquire a new social identity(s) based upon their group
> membership or group affiliation (present or absent). What distinguishes
> conversion, however, from other forms of socialization is the focal emphasis on
> self-change (e.g., a change in world view in a religious or quasi-religious setting
> and the kind of social audience reaction to that self change (1989:15).

Kilbourne and Richardson (1989) considers the older paradigm of religious conversion

to be that expressed by Nock when he writes, "Judaism and Christianity demanded

renunciation and a new start. They demanded not merely acceptance of a rite, but the

adhesion of the will to a theology, in a word faith, a new life in a new people (1933:14).

Nock takes Christian conversion as normative describing it in terms of being radical and

complete where as conversion as understood or experienced in other religious systems

does not approach this standard and is thus considered to be only "adhesion" rather

than conversion. Nock's point of view seems to Kilbourne and Richardson as being

essentially passive on the part of the convert recognizing little initiative in seeking a

new religious belief system. A new paradigm in sociological analysis would be that of the convert as a seeker of new religious experiences. Much of the new sociological paradigm comes from the religious environment of the Unites States from the 1960's onward where many new religious movements from Asia along with various New Age movements became popular. However, that paradigm has only limited application in Ethiopia. "Self Change" is not a high motivation for Ethiopians who are much less individualistic than Americans. However, the useful aspect of this paradigm for the present study is the appreciation of the dynamic of the acquiring of a new social identity through changes in group affiliation. Moving from Muslim to Christian or from Christian to Muslim has very significant social consequences for anyone making such a life change. Such changes may be made for various reasons including marriage, financial benefit, social advantage such as political opportunities, and many other similar reasons. These sociological bases for change in religious affiliation are an important factor to consider with regard to Christian conversion from Islam in Ethiopia.

Rambo (1993) offers a synthesizing approach where models such as Lofland/Stark are considered but given a more culturally nuanced examination. His definition of conversion has been widely quoted:

> Conversion is a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientations. In this book we will see that (a) conversion is a process over time, not a single event; (b) conversion is contextual and thereby influences and is influenced by a matrix of relationships, expectations and situations; and (c) factors in the conversion process are multiple, interactive, and cumulative. There is no one cause of conversion, no one process, and no one simple consequence of that process (1993:5).

Rambo's sequential stage model is helpful in considering the process of conversion. It follows the pattern: Stage 1 – Context; Stage 2 – Crisis; Stage 3 – Quest; Stage 4 – Encounter; Stage 5 – Interaction; Stage 6 – Commitment; and Stage 7 – Consequences

(1993:16-18; 168-169; Rambo and Farhadian 1999:32). In contrast to many Christian models of conversion the originating stage of context and the final stage of consequences are given important consideration. Both of these stages are particularly important with regard to Muslim conversion. In developing an evangelistic and/or church planting strategy for use in Muslim communities by Christians the context within which conversion is expected to occur as well as the consequences of conversion are of critical significance and especially in relation to the issue of whether the convert will continue in their new religious orientation. On that topic, Rambo gives greater consideration of disaffiliation although he does not carefully analyze it as to possible motivations. In Ethiopia this is a significant issue where it is common for converts to return to their original religious affiliations. However, Rambo with his rather generalized approach does little other than point to the importance of giving due consideration to these issues.

Gooren (2007) concludes his review of the approaches to religious conversion mentioned here as well as many others with the statement, "almost all of the conversion approaches mentioned here conform to the typical social science bias of tending to reduce religion to social-economic or psychological factors" (348). He also concludes that the sociological study of religious conversion would benefit greatly by the inclusion of input from theology and mission studies (2007:348). Certainly this is a valid expression of concern as to the value of sociological studies to the issue of religious conversion in that sociologists tend to discredit the possibility of any actual reality behind religious belief systems. However, as noted above sociological approaches add an important dimension that should not be ignored in a missiological study such as this one. Several important articles regarding conversion in Africa and Ethiopia have been

written and the following section will consider their contribution to the present research.

4.1.1.1 Conversion in Africa and Ethiopia from a social science paradigm

Horton (1971) is based primarily upon a consideration of research done in Nigeria among the *Aladura* churches. Horton's main position is that conversion to world religions such as Islam or Christianity from traditional African belief systems is primarily being caused by global socio-economic forces. Horton's argument is that African traditional religious beliefs address issues of the microcosm involving local spirits and day to day needs of people in the "local community and its environment" whereas world religions deal with the macrocosm which involves a "supreme being concerned with the world as a whole" (1971:101). His main point regarding conversion is that the pressures of what would now be termed modernization or globalization are moving people from primary awareness of the microcosm toward increased awareness of the macrocosm. Thus, as people are forced out of their comfort zone of the local they are forced to interact with forces and powers well beyond the scope and limitations of their traditional religious belief system. Thus they are being moved toward the realm where the world religions dwell and they (Islam and Christianity) are benefitting from these social pressures. However Horton sees Islam and Christianity only as catalysts to this transition and not causes. In fact Horton finds the results of Christianity and Islam both to be "meager" and describes the result of Christian proselytism as a "highly conditional and selective acceptance" of the faith (1971:104).

Fisher (1973) takes Horton to task especially with regard to how his thesis holds for Muslim expansion in Africa. Fisher questions the inevitability argued by Horton on several grounds. He questions why there should be a single pathway of movement from traditional religious beliefs toward monotheistic religion and questions if this is the

only possible pathway for indigenous African societies? Further there are examples of Muslim societies that are 1000 years old in Africa and the globalization phenomenon being discussed by Horton has occurred only in the past century at most. Fisher notes an underlying pattern of Islamic expansion in Africa as one of quarantine, mixing, and reform. The process of entrance of Islam into many African nations has initially been one where the Muslims were kept separate from the remainder of society and thus their practice of Islam remained quite pure within a small and isolated community. Then comes a period of mixing wherein the number of Muslims grows but there is significant mixing between scriptural Islam and local religious practices and beliefs into a form often called folk Islam. Then finally a time of reform develops during which a reform movement is initiated either from segments of the Muslim population within the nation or by outside influences. This is certainly the pattern found in Ethiopia with the current stage being that of reform. While there are clearly segments of the indigenous Ethiopian Muslim populations working to bring about a reform toward scriptural Islam, in today's environment much of the money, teaching and impetus for reform comes from outside of Ethiopia. But the trend is certainly toward a reform of folk Islam or Sufi as it is called in Ethiopia, toward a more scriptural form. Although there are few places in Africa where the history of Christianity as existing today extends beyond 250 years, Ethiopia is one place where Christianity has existed since before the birth of Muhammad. The pattern identified by Fisher as applying to Islam in Africa seems also to be applicable to Ethiopian Christianity. Today there is a strong movement among Ethiopian Orthodox Christians toward reform especially citing issues of mixture and the need to return to an original and more purely scriptural form of Christian practice and belief.

Horton (1975) responds to Fisher and goes on to develop the arguments at issue more fully than in his 1971 article. While Horton is unwilling to give credit to Fisher for
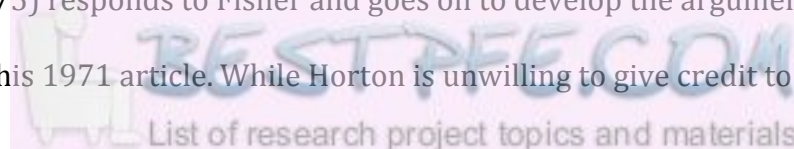
raising important issues, he actually proves one of Fisher's objections, which is that

Horton needs to consider African societies more specifically and individually. Horton

does this in his 1975 response to Fisher but continues to insist that the evidence

warrants his rather broad and sweeping conclusions. In terms of a missiological

examination as the one here undertaken, the lesson of not overgeneralizing is an

important one. Ethiopia is a pluralistic African society with its own culture and

combination of cultures. There are at least 85 different languages spoken in Ethiopia

and even a discussion of Islam as lived and expressed within the same people group will

have wide variations from place to place. Further, the historical context of Islam and

Orthodox Christianity and their interaction over centuries is also an important and

unique factor in the Ethiopian situation. Thus generalizing the findings of this research

to other Muslims societies must be done with care.

Horton and Peel (1976) primarily responds to Ifeka-Moller (1974) in which she

takes Horton to task over a number of issues gathering around a central concern of why

should African religious beliefs inevitably transform into those of white foreigners? Her

objections are more nuanced but it seems this is the central issue. Horton responds with

a very anti Christian, intellectualist approach, which is consistent in all of his writings.

Horton takes a very rationalistic view of religion in general and of conversion in

particular. For him, Christians are most often uneducated and thus unsophisticated in

their thinking (1976:490). For Horton, the greater good is rationalism and

intellectualism, two ideas often used in his writing. He believes that traditional societies

will inevitably move toward monotheism whether they encounter Christianity and/or

Islam or not. Thus social factors are the dominant forces behind the growth of both

Christianity and Islam in Africa.

Gallagher (1990) supports Horton's "intellectual approach" as offering an explanation for conversion without making judgment as to the correctness of the religious beliefs under study whether Christian or Muslim. Gallagher writes:

> In Horton's view the intellectualist search for the causes of conversion to Christianity and Islam in Africa has no necessary consequences for the truth or falsity of Christian and Muslim beliefs. It is simply the most adequate way of arriving at a comprehensive explanation (1990:105).

In this Gallagher seems to fall prey to Proudfoot's argument which he also quotes with approval that religious beliefs do not come out of religious experience but rather beliefs already held form the parameters of possible religious experience and so provide their explanation prior to the experiences themselves (Proudfoot [1985] quoted in Gallagher 1990:22). Horton, with his intellectualist/sociological approach sets aside the issue of the truth or falsity of the belief systems themselves reflecting his own belief system that such beliefs are not worthy of serious attention and thus can safely be ignored. Nonetheless, it is helpful to consider the effect of modernization upon changing belief systems in the African context. While the social, political, cultural and economic factors affecting a Christian mission to Muslims are not identical with those affecting the movement from rural and traditional African societies toward modernism and globalization, the fact that such pressures and influences do indeed affect conversion decisions is correct and must be considered in a full examination of the topic.

In research specific to Ethiopia Horton has been challenged in terms of his position that rural and farming communities are unwilling to accept change. Kaplan writes:

> Although Horton's model is generally understood to suggest that farmers are among the most conservative elements in many African societies and hence among the last to accept new religions, the Ethiopian evidence can be interpreted somewhat differently (2004:383).

Freeman (2002), an anthropological examination of a remote ethnic group in the South of Ethiopia, finds that there are mechanisms in place to allow for change and the acceptance of new ideas, including religious ideas, even among the most isolated people groups. These processes are discursive in nature and can occur over an extended period of time. However, new ideas and unfamiliar ways are regularly incorporated into the lives and practices of such communities. In Ethiopia, new religious beliefs have also been spread through conquest and in such cases the conservative tendencies of traditional societies are of little ` on the conversion process. Hefner, who also disagrees with Horton's viewpoint on several important points, offers a more nuanced view regarding the acceptance of change in traditional societies when he writes:

> As a society is brought into contact with a larger politico-economic order, institutions once vital for the sustenance of indigenous identities may be abolished or subverted, bringing new circuits of status, investment and self-validation into existence. In such a context a religion that promises a new measure of dignity and access to the values and rewards of the larger society may find a ready following among peoples previously committed to local ways (1993b:27).

The kind of transitions discussed by Freeman (2002) and Hefner (1993b) are ongoing processes in Ethiopian society. These processes have significant missiological implications.

Peel examines conversion within the context of Ijebu and Buganda societies of Nigeria and Uganda respectively. He adds an important reason for utilizing sociological/anthropological analysis when considering religious conversion in Africa. Peel writes:

> If we assume the loss of the exclusive hold of the old cosmology and therefore a popular predisposition to change, the success of particular new belief-systems is largely a function, first, of their availability and, secondly, of the willingness of the powerful, for reasons of their own, to sanction them – or at least their inability to stop them (1977:134).

Peel also mentions that it was the young men who converted to Christianity in his study. In Ethiopia it is well known that the spread of Christianity among the peoples of the South was first among younger sons. This was due to their relative disadvantage in the family system where it was necessary for them to wait for their father to bless their field before they could plow and plant their crops. In that the elder brothers received priority in this cultural practice by the time the younger sons were able to plant it was late in the season and their crops were lessened or ruined due to the poor timing. By converting to Christianity they escaped this traditional practice and thus were much more open to conversion than eldest brothers who made up only a small percentage of converts in those early years. However, this removal of younger sons from the traditional system also brought criticism of Christianity as being socially disruptive. Along this line, the role of community elders is also very notable in any conversion process in Ethiopia. The opposition or support from these important community leaders is vital to the success of any evangelistic endeavor. Getting permission from village elders to live and work in a community goes a long way toward opening doors of opportunity for evangelism. These factors identified largely by social science are important factors to consider in developing outreach strategies for Muslim communities.

Freeman (2002:121) and Kaplan (2004:279) both affirm that Protestant Christianity spread in the Southern regions of Ethiopia among people who were challenging the authority of their fathers. It is common enough that the younger generation is more open to new ideas and religious beliefs and certainly not a new idea. However, the reason for and outplay of this phenomenon in Ethiopia is significant for the present study. As noted above, it was largely young men who adopted Protestant Christianity among the people groups of Southern Ethiopia due to their relative

disadvantage for success as compared to their elder brothers. This often caused friction in communities where Christians were seen as disrespectful and unwilling to follow local cultural norms. Hamer (2002) echoes the same assessment with regard to the spread of Protestant Christianity among the Sidama people when he writes, "The resulting divisions, subverting what had preciously been accepted by all, threatened the social fabric of the community" (2002:611). In all of the cases mentioned by Freeman, Kaplan and Hamer, Protestant Christianity did indeed spread widely among the people groups studied. However, the process has left enduring scars and often proceeded without the support of community elders. In Muslim communities such seeming disregard for local custom and social norms creates a strong encouragement for resistance and labeling of Christianity as a foreign religion.

Aguilar (1995) is a study of the Boorana of Northern Kenya. This is a clan of the Oromo people discussed at some length above. The Waso Boorana have been somewhat separated from other Oromo and even from other of the Boorana clan due to the politics of the colonial era and decisions made at the time of Kenyan and Somali independence. Aguilar traces the conversion of the Wasso Boorana first from their traditional Oromo religious practices to Islam and then in more recent years a reversion from Islam back toward *Waakafana* (traditional Oromo religion). One of the most striking aspects of this study, although not drawn out sufficiently by Aguilar, is the role of culture and cultural affinity in religious conversion. Aguilar emphasizes that the initial move to Islam had more to do with Somalization as opposed to Islamization of the Waso Boorana. Their neighboring people group, the Somali's, had a very similar culture, also depending upon cattle and the corresponding pastoralist lifestyle. Interaction between the two groups were of a very natural sort as they both visited many of the same areas from year to year for grazing of herds and thus had ongoing contact with one another. The Somalis

were Muslims and during the colonial period it was advantageous for the Boorana to be

on good terms with them. Thus they had a cultural affinity and an economic (rational)

motivation for closer relations with the Somali peoples. This led to many Boorana

becoming Muslim. Whereas the Christians were locked into a model of Christianity

appropriate for settled communities:

> Islam has provided places of encounter with the traditional religious world of the pastoralists through trade centres [*sic*] and the caravans that moved from the East African coast into the interior before and at the beginning of the colonial period (Aguilar 1995:525).

Aguilar continues:

> Those traders have been agents of the spread of Islam among the pastoralists, owing to their daily interaction with them. The face of Islam has been closer to some African social institutions (e.g. polygyny); the face of Christianity has been identified with European missionaries, with their school system and with a European way of life (1995:526).

Aguilar concludes that, "From a sociological point of view the two communities

interacted to the point where there was a symbiosis at the local level" (2004:529).

However, in more recent times, since the 1970's, there has been a reaffirmation

of the traditional practices of the Boorana. This has occurred due to a number of factors.

First there was no longer a rational motivation of advantage politically or economically

to remain tied to the Somalis. Second, traditional religious beliefs for the Boorana are a

key factor in producing a peaceful life. Aguilar write:

> It follows that in keeping the peace the Waso Boorana achieve a firm foundation for a proper relation with God and the supernatural world. ..., I would argue that their pattern of thought when it comes to herd management provides the foundation for their management of ritual activities and ritual choices (1995:535).

Another way to say this is that the cultural distinctives of the Boorana have grown up

around their core value of the *nagaa Boorana* or "peace of the Boorana." A key source of

conflict for the pastoralist Boorana is grazing and water distribution and thus their

customs regulating this area are vital to their peace and way of life. Thus religion is a significant factor in maintaining the cultural norms related to feed and water for the Boorana cattle and thus must be considered in any outreach to this people group. If a Christian approach to evangelization of the Boorana does not account for the pastoralist lifestyle on the one hand and provide for the peace of the community through a culturally appropriate way of overseeing cultural norms related to distribution of feed and water for Boorana cattle, it will certainly fail. Thus if Christian outreach is concerned first and foremost with religious issues and ignores the sociological factors it will not be successful in converting the Boorana. Currently there is a back and forth or what Aguilar terms a diversification of religious belief and practice among the Boorana with some remaining Muslim, others favoring traditional Oromo religious beliefs and still others becoming Christians and various mixtures of all the above.

A number of studies have been done in Ethiopia concerning the subject of religious conversion. The lessons learned from this research are extremely valuable in the understanding of conversion in the Ethiopian context. One such lesson is to consider the patterns of conversion and their differences when examining Islam and Christianity. Kaplan writes, "As a rule Orthodox Christianity spread from the core to the periphery, while Islam usually expanded from the periphery towards the center" (2004:379). The difference here seems to be that Christianity in its Orthodox form existed as the state religion while Islam, generally speaking, did not. But the difference is more significant than that. Christianity spread as a religion based primarily upon texts in a society where only the elite could read those texts. Thus the priests became an educated elite who functioned as religious experts spreading the message of Orthodox Christianity. Although Islam is also a textual religious tradition, the use of texts was quite different in terms of the spread of Islam in Ethiopia. Rather than a primary focus on literary

learning, for Islam in Ethiopia, the emphasis was on the practices of Islam. The Muslim convert was first taught the confession and then how to pray the five required times each day, to give alms, and finally to read the *Qur'an* and that only if a teacher was available. While there are certainly examples of qualified Islamic teachers and clerics operating in Ethiopia from the earliest times, especially in Islamic centers such as Harar and Jimma, the spread of Islam came about primarily by non-professionals whereas Orthodox Christianity was largely defined by its educated clergy. Because the attitude of Muslims toward Christianity does not as clearly distinguish between Orthodox and Protestant Christians as would be expected within the Christian community itself, this conception of Christianity as not being a grassroots sort of movement has hindered the spread of all forms of Christianity to this day among Muslim communities. The fact that Protestant Christianity originated from foreign missionaries has only strengthened this perception.

Another issue regarding the practice and development of Islam and Christianity in the Ethiopian context is that of syncretism. Kaplan writes:

> (I)t is noteworthy that throughout Ethiopian history membership in its monotheistic religious communities was open to a broad range of believers and practitioners, who were not necessarily required to completely abandon earlier religious traditions and practices (2004:375).

Examples of syncretistic tendencies in the Ethiopian forms of both Islam and Christianity have been chronicled in Braukamper (1992) and mentioned as early as Trimingham (1952). Hassen writes, "What all this amounts to is that there was a series of gradations in the conversion of the Oromo to Islam, which acted as an insulator absorbing Islamic radiation without violently uprooting their traditional values" (1994:152). Thus among the Oromo, as an example, whereas the Christian conversion process seemed to expect a violent uprooting of traditional values, Islam was spread

gradually allowing for the continuation of those same values. Islam has only in recent years begun to visit those communities that have practiced syncretistic forms of Islam with the purpose of moving them toward a more scriptural center. By allowing the mixture of Oromo traditional beliefs with Islam many Oromo became Muslims. The same may be true of Christians seeking to spread Christianity among the Oromo today. If syncretistic practices area allowable, mixing Muslim beliefs with Christian ones, there could very well be a much faster spread of a "Christian " movement among the Oromo.

Christianity in both its Orthodox and Protestant forms has not escaped the same phenomenon. Ethiopian society has been dominated by very strong cultural identities and these have survived the impact of new religious belief systems. This should engage the consideration of the Christian missiological enterprise on several levels. One is the significance of culture in the conversion process in Ethiopia. Those forms of religious conversion that allow for a gradual shift in societal norms through an internal process of change will have a much superior opportunity for success over those insisting upon immediate and complete transformation of the individual. In this regard Islam has been more compatible with many of the ethnic groups in the area of study. Evangelical Christianity with its revivalistic tendencies tends toward a model of immediate change at least in terms of outward signs on socially significant issues. Unfortunately long term and pervasive character change has often not been achieved through this method. Pentecostal forms of Christianity that have been prominent in Southern Ethiopia have been even more insistent upon immediate response to the Christian message which has caused many forms of syncretistic practices to be continued privately and in secret while disavowed publically. This has again defeated the Christian goal of deep penetration into the culture. Kaplan warns, "In either case, we should be warned against

the tendency to posit the existence of a 'pure', unchanging eternal form of a particular

faith, and to measure its Ethiopian variants against this ideal type" (2001:376).

Kaplan raises another, perhaps equally important issue, when he writes:

> Yet another problem that has influenced conversion studies is the failure to distinguish adequately between changes in belief and changes in affiliation. Thus, the reasons why a person or group of people might choose to associate with or join a particular community have been conflated with the factors that led to a change in worldview. It may well be accurate to claim that potential converts were attracted to a religious community by the educational opportunities or economic advantages it offered. It is, however, a leap to claim that those factors resulted not only in a new 'affiliation', but also in the 'conversion' to a new faith (2004:381).

Drawing largely from Nock (1933), Kaplan distinguishes between affiliation and

conversion emphasizing that these are not equivalent. In the current missional

environment this issue forces itself into our awareness in more than one way. One is the

issue of the depth of penetration of the Christian message into the hearts of individuals

and into the fabric of a culture. These issues are difficult to judge and especially so in

the short term. Quick results are the expectation of those who finance much of today's

missionary enterprise. Affiliation is much easier to identify and quantify than is

conversion. Counting decision cards can be accomplished immediately following an

evangelistic meeting and often this is used as an indicator of the success of a given

campaign. This sort of measuring must necessarily produce the conflation of affiliation

and conversion into one concept. Second, current missionary sending organizations

with their emphasis on immediate and measurable results will tend to place priority

upon numbers and thus prefer quantity over quality in results evaluation. Those

missionary endeavors that produce quick, verifiable and quantifiable results are very

often prioritized over longer term and less quantifiable strategies in terms of funding.

As will be discussed below, this emphasis on large numbers is one factor propelling the

popularity of the Insider Movement strategy. Although results are not as verifiable as

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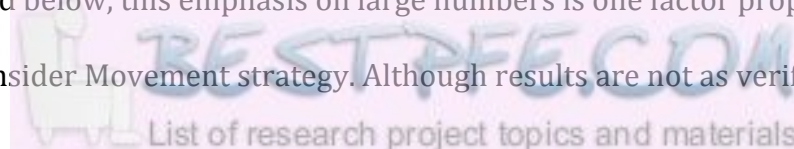
desired, past results in Muslim evangelism have been so meager that a methodology that seems to produce large numbers of "converts" is more likely to receive funding than other methodologies. However, if Kaplan's warning is heeded on this topic, it would be good to consider if the goal of missions is affiliation or conversion and to clarify what is meant by each term.

The context for conversion to Christianity for Muslims is their own understanding of what it means to become a Muslim and this will be examined in the next section.

4.1.2 Conversion as understood among Muslims

The primary reference point for any Muslim Background Believer in her/his understanding of conversion must be the concept of conversion to Islam from other religions. Therefore, the task undertaken in this section is to understand conversion from Christianity to Islam and how this process is experienced from the Muslim side of the equation. Parshall instructs that salvation as understood by the Muslim is normally understood as the recitation of the *shahada* and then doing works consistent with Muslim teachings, primarily the five pillars of Islam. This is commonly understood but there is also a significant role for faith in Islam and the Muslim is expected to believe the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* and at some points Muslim teaching emphasizes faith above works (1994:30-33).

In Ethiopia, most Muslims are born into their religion. Their family and community are Muslim and so they grow up as Muslims themselves. Thus being a Muslim is very much connected to being part of a Muslim community or the *Ummah*. This sense of community is very essential to Muslim society and the sense of identity of Muslims. The idea of *ummah* is one of interdependency and is very compatible with rural Ethiopian society. So much so that being part of the Muslim community and

growing up in that context it is quite difficult for most to consider separating themselves from it. Thus there are high hurdles to overcome to encourage Muslims do convert to faith in Christ. There are also ongoing efforts to bring Christians into Islam and so conversion from Christianity to Islam in Ethiopia is common and undertaken for a variety of motivations.

One way a person may become Muslims is by an intentional expansion process called *da'wah* . One of the subjects interviewed for this research was formerly a *da'wah* worker and editor of a Muslim Journal in Ethiopia. His work was, in Christian terms, largely apologetic. That is, he spent a good portion of his time defending Islam against Christians who, in the view of those Muslims with whom he worked, are infidels and therefore ignorant of the true teaching of God (Allah). *Da'wah* may literally be translated, "calling," and thus refers to calling non-Muslims to the true God. Methods used in Ethiopia for *da'wah* include discussion (argumentation), DVD and CD production and distribution, online methods, printing and distribution of tracts and magazines, and the building of mosques in non-Muslim areas. Defense of Islam often takes the form of arguing that the Bible is corrupt and thus unreliable in comparison to the *Qur'an*. A second area often used is showing the superiority of Islam as compared to other religions such as Christianity centers around the issue of Muslims worshipping one God (*tawhid*) as opposed to the error of the Christians in worshipping three. Thus *da'wah* in Ethiopia is primarily an effort to show by argument the superiority of Islam over Christianity in its various forms. Christian evangelistic efforts are often pushed toward this model of argumentation because Muslim teachers and clerics feel comfortable on this familiar ground. Today another activity, Christians would term this polemical, is also called *da'wah*. This is the effort to convince Muslims who are practicing a form of folk Islam to adopt a scripturally based Islamic belief system.

Kaplan writes:

> For Muslims, the recitation of the *shahada* (declaration of the faith) was the
> essential condition for conversion. New Muslims were often accepted more on
> the basis of their willingness to accept the religion of Islam than their actual
> practice and familiarity with its teachings. Conversion was frequently
> understood as a gradual process, in which the declaration of faith was a crucial
> first step, rather than the culmination of a process (2004:380).

The fact that Islam is first and foremost a lifestyle rather than a belief system makes it

significantly different than Christianity as it is usually found in Ethiopia. Lifestyles must

be learned and practiced over time whereas common Evangelical Christian thinking is

that salvation can be accomplished through confession of certain central truths and may

or may not be followed by significant life transformation. Thus Muslim concepts of

conversion and religious life are significantly different from those of Christians.

The actual mechanics of conversion to Islam as practiced in Ethiopia, and

explained to this researcher by a former Muslim cleric, are very simple and essentially

the same for all Muslims. To begin the process all that is required is the recitation of the

shahada or testimony of Muslim faith. These seven Arabic words, "*La ilaha illa Allah,*

Muhammad rasulu Allah," may be translated into English as, "There is no God but God.

Muhammad is the messenger of God" (Brasswell 1996:59; Rafea 2005:86). This

confession is understood by Muslims to have two parts. First that there is but one God

and second that Muhammad is His final messenger. Dutton writes:

> It can thus be seen that in one sense it is very easy to become a Muslim, the only
> formal requirement being that this dual declaration of faith, known as the
> *shehada*, is said publicly, that is in front of witnesses. Nevertheless, there is the
> assumption that in declaring this statement, the person doing so is prepared to
> live by its implications...(1999:154).

An example of the conversion process could be the case of a Christian who wants

to marry a Muslim woman. In fact, in Ethiopia, it is not uncommon for Muslim families

to offer their daughter to a Christian man with the purpose of enticing him to become

Muslim in order to marry. In Ethiopia, such a person must wash and put on clean clothes and then will be brought to a *khadi* or Shari'ah judge to make the confession. First the person will be asked formally if they want to become a Muslim to which they must answer, "Yes." Then they will be asked to make the confession of the *shahada*. If a *khadi* is not possible then an *imam* or some known and respected elder in the community may perform this function. After this the person may be asked to confess that Paradise and Hell are both true. He may also be asked to say that *Isa* is also a messenger of Allah and a spirit from God. This last confession although common has been the subject of some controversy in recent years in Ethiopia.

Once this beginning point has been accomplished the person will be assigned a teacher and is now called a *muallefat* which can be translated as "one who has become stable." The teacher of the *muallefat* will instruct them in the five prayers or *salat*, regulations regarding alms or *zakat*, the Ramadan fast and the importance of *Hajj* or visiting Mecca as a pilgrim. Then the convert will be taught to read the *Qur'an* in Arabic which they must recite out loud and memorize passages to use in *salat* as well as on other occasions. As the convert continues to live in the Muslim community they will learn the importance of following the example of the life of Muhammad and thus become familiar with *Hadith* and conform their behavior to the examples found there (Rafea 2005). Thus by actions the Muslim internalizes the teachings of Islam. This is opposite to the process for most Christians who are taught doctrine and scripture first and may or may not be taught they must conform their actions to those principles. Rather, knowledge of truth is valued above actions based upon that truth for Christians whereas for Muslims actions are primary and truth will become known through engaging in the prescribed actions. Kaplan notes regarding Islam in Ethiopia, "With regard to Islam, it appears more related to an expiation than conversion, at least in the

sense of a profession of faith, representing the beginning of a process of transformation, rather than its conclusion" (2004:376). Thus conversion for Muslims is a somewhat different process than that normally understood by Christians.

When a Christian converts to Islam in Ethiopia they will be fully accepted in the Muslim community and Muslim teaching is quite strong on this issue. Thus the new convert will receive special attention especially if they are converting from Christianity. *Zakat* will be given them even if they are already wealthy as a part of welcoming them into the new community and this must be received by the *muallefat*. These factors are very important in that they create expectations on the part of a Muslim who converts to Christianity. Their frame of reference as described above is quite different than the experience a Muslim may encounter when entering many Christian communities. During this research many converted Muslims have described their disappointment regarding the level of acceptance into their new Christian community and its willingness to help them financially. Often a Muslim will leave everything behind when converting. This means their livelihood, their inheritance, land, and possessions all become forfeit. Thus they often enter the Christian community with nothing but their clothes. As such they have an expectation that their new Christian community will help them by providing money so they can begin their new life. Many times their experience is that they are not well received by Christians and are often distrusted or ignored. They are not given money since the Christians interpret this expectation of the Muslim as being a desire to be paid to convert to Christianity. This can easily become the reason that a Muslim returns to Islam. They will often cite a lack of the sense of community they had in the *ummah* that for them was far greater than what they experienced among Christians.

In Ethiopia, there is a difference between the practices of Muslims in the larger towns and cities where the *mosques* are overseen by teachers who have been trained in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* as opposed to practices in rural settings. This sort of Islam is called scriptural Islam in Ethiopia as opposed to *Sufi* Islam that is practiced in the countryside. In Ethiopia, *Sufi* does not actually mean any connection to the *Sufi* movements but is a way of saying folk Islam or Islam that is based more on custom and practice than on formal training in the *Qur'an*. In Ethiopia, although it is a pluralistic nation, rural communities tend to be all of one religion or another. They may be all Muslim, all Orthodox Christian or all Protestant Christian or in more remote areas all followers of traditional tribal beliefs. So conversion from one religion to another within rural communities is somewhat rare but more common in towns and cities. At this point it is important to carefully consider what is meant by Christian conversion, which will be the topic of the next section.

4.1.3 Christian conversion

The meaning of Christian conversion is a vast subject with a great variety of positions and emphases. One reason this topic is not made more clear in many articles published regarding outreach to Muslims is the difficulty of dealing with the vast array of options possible within the range of Christian theologies. This section will examine this issue primarily from the evangelical and Pentecostal points of view since these perspectives are the most relevant to the current study in the Ethiopian context. A brief mention of Roman Catholic and Ethiopian Orthodox views on conversion will also be presented for the sake of completeness regarding the Ethiopian context but these theological positions will not be dealt with in detail primarily due to the reasonable limitation of space. This section will proceed under the following headings: 1) Christian theology and conversion; 2) biblical words and concepts related to conversion; and 3) missiology and

conversion. Finally a working definition of Christian conversion for use in this study will

be offered.

4.1.3.1 Christian theology and conversion

The topic of conversion among Christians is both wide and long. It is wide in terms of

the many different approaches to conversion taken by the various Christian expressions

and it is long in its history. For the purpose of missiological research such as this,

conversion is a challenging idea to review and evaluate. Indeed, it would be much easier

to focus upon a narrower topic than the one undertaken in this research. But there is

also value in a wider consideration of the issues of conversion and identity change. In

this section the topic of Christian conversion will be discussed primarily through the

lens of Muslim evangelism and the missiological issues involved in outreach to Muslims

for Christ. In the Ethiopian context, primarily Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians

have chosen to undertake outreach to Muslims. Therefore, these theological viewpoints

will provide one source of guidance in narrowing the possible range of this discussion.

Also, although various approaches to conversion will be discussed, the focal point will

be to develop an understanding of this important topic most appropriate to the

enterprise under consideration. The questions that will guide this portion of the present

inquiry will be the following. What understanding of Christian conversion is most

helpful and productive for the work of evangelism and church planting among Muslims?

Are there understandings of conversion in use by Christians today that have a negative

effect on this missiological task and why? And finally, how does a theology of conversion

interrelate with Muslim outreach strategies such as the Insider Movement approach?

McKnight (2002) is a particularly good place to start this discussion in that he

develops his discussion as a "Sociology of Conversion" using Rambo's outline of the

conversion process as his guide. To this McKnight adds his own analysis of conversion

as revealed in the gospels. McKnight (2002) suggests three broad categories that represent the range of ways conversion is understood in various Christian traditions. He uses the categories of conversion as socialization, conversion from a sacramental viewpoint, and conversion as a personal decision as a helpful way of organizing Christian theologies of conversion. Conversion as socialization relates to established Christian communities and often to the experience of those growing up in a Christian family/community. McKnight emphasizes that this process often connects to ethnic identity. An example would be that for many Ethiopians their ethnic identity means they are Orthodox. They grow up in an Orthodox family and within an Orthodox community, fasting together, attending services and celebrating festivals together, and so they are Christians more through a socialization process than by way of a "salvation experience" as expected by other theologies of conversion. There are many Christian groups in Ethiopia beside the Orthodox that may have a strong socialization experience as the basis of their Christian faith. In South Ethiopia, where Protestant Christianity is most prevalent, many denominations such as *Kale Hewot, Makane Yesus, Hewot Berhan*, and others include Christians who have been part of their churches for several generations and so succeeding generations experience their Christianity as what McKnight terms, "a series of gentle nods of the soul" (2002:5). Even though the theology of conversion held by these denominations would be of the personal decision type, the experience of many members is much more of the socialization type.

The second category mentioned by McKnight regarding theologies of conversion conceives a liturgical process. McKnight describes the liturgical process as follows:

> If the "liturgical convert" and the "socialized convert" share a similar growth process, they diverge when it comes to the value laid on the rites performed by the priests. Thus baptism assures a purification from original sin and entrance by proxy into the church; catechism is official enlightenment into the special teaching of the church; confirmation is an authorized and divinely anointed

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blessing from God securing that convert's passage into God's Kingdom; the Eucharist profoundly enables the grace of God to be received with all its glories and blessings; and continued participation in the church secures, maintains, and promises eternal blessing (2002:7).

Variations of this theology are present in Ethiopia among Orthodox believers, Roman Catholics, Mekane Yesus, and other Lutheran groups. The emphasis here is on the effectiveness of the sacraments when administered by an authorized priest in the prescribed manner. Conversion means having properly received baptism but is not so much associated with an event as ongoing life in the specified tradition. In the case of Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia there is an ongoing expectation of good works that are part of the Christian life. Salvation is not so much described in language in the past tense as is often the case among those who follow a personal decision theology but rather reflects a future hope to be realized at the time of judgment. Those denominations in Ethiopia founded upon a Lutheran heritage and embracing a liturgical or sacramental approach following the infant baptism and confirmation pattern would see themselves differently than either Roman Catholics or Orthodox in that their emphasis remains salvation by faith but with a much stronger view of the sacraments and the role of the priesthood than other evangelical churches.

McKnight (2002) calls the third category of theology concerning Christian conversion the "personal decision" paradigm. This is identified with Evangelical theology and emphasizes individual responsibility before God to make a personal decision for Christ. Conversion in this approach is understood as a specific moment of decision normally reflected in a prayer of salvation sometimes described as giving one's heart to Christ. Whereas the other two approaches see conversion as taking place over time and do not identify a specific moment of salvation, the personal decision approach uses terminology such as, "I was saved at..." or "I was saved on a certain date." Salvation

and conversion are normally conflated into a single event that is spoken of in the past tense for a Christian.

McKnight finds value in each of these approaches. As stated above, the personal decision paradigm emphasizes personal responsibility before God; the liturgical process approach emphasizes the sacraments, most notably baptism; the socialization approach emphasizes the role of the Christian community in conversion and both the liturgical process and socialization models recognize conversion as a process, which McKnight finds valuable. Thus McKnight seeks to combine valuable insights from each of these three categories of understanding Christian conversion into his approach for which he prefers the term "commitment to Christ "rather than conversion. Based upon McKnight's study of conversion in the synoptic gospels, he identifies four parts of this commitment.

The first part is decision. For McKnight this need not be a once for all type of decision but could be a series of smaller decisions but ultimately a person decides to follow Christ and make a commitment to a new direction for their life. This decision may include a process of deliberation or counting the cost (2002:166). The second aspect of the commitment is "ritual confirmation and consolidation" (2002:166). By this McKnight brings in the sacramental aspect of conversion and especially baptism. A third aspect of commitment is "surrender" and this aspect may well involve a process of ever deepening surrender. In this aspect of conversion McKnight is pointing both to the process and to transfer of control of one's life. Taking up one's cross and following Christ fits into this aspect of conversion. The fourth and final aspect identified by McKnight is "public identification" by which he means one's testimony or witness of their commitment to Christ. These components of conversion gathered by McKnight from the gospel accounts and also combining Rambo's sociological approach, point to a
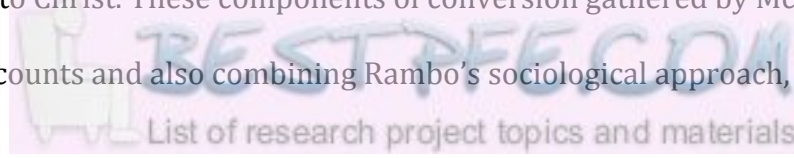
process of conversion rather than an event. This process involves the four parts

mentioned above but McKnight recognizes that because people and their lives are

different their experience of these four aspects of conversion/commitment will vary

widely and need not take the same order nor be a continuous process. These are not

steps in a conversion process but aspects of a conversion experience and are meant to

be descriptive rather than prescriptive. Many lists of the components of conversion

would include the four aspects of commitment to Christ identified by McKnight, but his

insight that these are not steps in a process but aspects of a process that may be mixed

together in a wide variety of ways is an important contribution.

The next author to be included in this discussion is Gordon T. Smith who has

written two monographs on the topic of Christian conversion. Smith brings together a

number of important ideas and presents an approach particularly suitable for the

Christian mission to Muslims. Smith (2001:94-95) makes note of the inadequacy of

three assumptions made in American revivalist practices. First, there has been an

assumption that the typical pattern of conversion involves a personal decision based

upon a crisis experience. Often preaching precipitates the "crisis experience" leading to

a "decision for Christ". The issue here is the view that salvation or conversion should

normatively involve an immediate personal decision to respond to a presentation of the

gospel message. Under this assumption there is little appreciation of a long-term

process that may lead to conversion nor the length of time over which a commitment

may develop.

Smith then writes:

We should not miss another American evangelical assumption inherited from
revivalism: the belief that conversion is easy, painless and certainly not costly.
Revivalist preachers stress that "salvation" is a free gift that anyone can have if
they merely make the decision, pray the "sinner's prayer" and "accept the Lord
Jesus into your heart" (2001:96).

This is perhaps the primary point of discontinuity between the revivalist paradigm and the experience of Muslims coming to Christ. For them, salvation is often very costly on many levels. The third assumption noted by Smith is that this revivalist approach to salvation is also based upon the assumption that salvation comes as an individualized experience where Christ becomes one's "personal savior" (2001:96). While each of these assumptions about salvation/conversion has biblical support, the question is whether they should be normative experiences applying to every person, in every culture, in every generation. In other words, are these assumptions to be considered as "eternal truth" or examples of one way that a person may experience salvation/conversion.

Another aspect of the evangelical theology of conversion that Smith critiques is the separation of salvation and sanctification as differentiated experiences (2001:99). Smith traces this back to Charles Finney, the nineteenth century American evangelist, who was accused of making salvation easy but said he made up for that with a strong emphasis on sanctification as a subsequent experience. This issue raised its head with respect to the discussion concerning C-5, high contextualization approaches. These approaches have been critiqued by Evangelicals who feel that there is a lack of necessary understanding and acceptance of key Christian doctrines by members of these groups. Yet the common Evangelical conception of conversion is one of a two stage process, salvation and then sanctification with the second step unclear and not required. This appears to be a point of inconsistency that needs to be evaluated as a biblical theology of Christian conversion is developed.

The issues raised by Smith are all problematic with regard to Muslim Evangelism. For Muslims, crusade-meeting preaching is not normally how they

encounter the Christian message since it is often not possible in Muslim dominated areas. Ethiopia is certainly not an individualistic society and so the idea of a strongly individualistic approach to salvation/conversion is not a good fit. For Muslims, conversion is not easy or painless and is very often quite costly. These factors lead to a need for a very different understanding and approach to salvation/conversion to properly support a mission to Muslims.

Whereas American society, as the epicenter for this Evangelical approach to conversion, is an environment in which people are converting from a secular and largely non-religious mindset, Muslims are converting from an entirely religious mindset that is in opposition to Christianity. There seems to be a general lack of understanding on the part of Evangelicalism that its practices have been as much determined by their own cultural milieu as the practices they often criticize as being non-biblical or syncretistic in other cultures. This theme is evident in the previously referenced writing on the subject of the Insider Movement approach to Muslim evangelism.

Similarly to McKnight, Smith identifies three classical approaches to conversion and then attempts to synthesize them into a biblical model. Smith draws from Haughton(1967) to identify his three models of conversion. The three are the Roman Catholic model, which he describes as primarily a matter of joining a community of faith and is often spoken of in terms of spiritual formation. The second model he calls "reformed." In this model conversion is understood as "putting faith in Christ" and is understood as being in opposition to works righteousness. The third approach Smith calls the Holiness/Pentecostal approach where a second work of grace is emphasized for holiness that is termed a baptism or filling of the Holy Spirit (2001:80-83). While these are certainly differing models of conversion they seem less helpful than those of

McKnight and certainly less comprehensive in their scope as far as understanding the

variations present within the various parts of the Christian community. However, Smith

continues his discussion with seven "elements" or "strands" of a "good conversion" that

are quite useful for the purposes of this study.

The seven elements of a good conversion as presented by Smith (2001:135-141)

are:

1) Belief: The intellectual component
2) Repentance: the penitential component
3) Trust and the assurance of forgiveness: the emotional or affective component
4) Commitment, allegiance and devotion: the volitional component
5) Water Baptism: the sacramental component
6) Reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit: the charismatic component
7) Incorporation into Christian community: the corporate component

Thus Smith presents a theologically comprehensive view of conversion that

incorporates the wide range of factors presented in the New Testament. McKnight, on

the other hand, incorporates a stronger sociological orientation when he describes what

he terms Christian commitment. The core aspect of conversion for both McKnight and

Smith is a reorientation of life and the formation of a new identity. McKnight writes, "It

is not about repeating a formula, or belonging to a church, or praying a prayer; it is

about following Jesus as the shaping core of one's identity" (2002:181). Or as Smith

writes:

> The central place of faith and repentance is the basis for the biblical
> understanding that conversion is a *turning*, a change, a *metanoia.* This turning
> reflects a change in mind, but much more than that, it is a radical change of
> orientation. One's face is turned from one fundamental orientation to a radically
> new direction. The "turning" of faith and repentance means a change of loyalty
> and allegiance (2001:143).

In both McKnight and Smith there is a clear emphasis on significant change expressed in

terms of "Jesus as the shaping core of one's identity," (McKnight) or "a radical change of

orientation," (Smith). It is now time to begin to gather together the thoughts expressed

so far from social science and theology with the goal of reaching a clear expression of the meaning of biblically informed Christian conversion as seems most appropriate to the enterprise of Muslim evangelization and church planting.

Toward this goal, Gaventa may be of help. She gathers together three categories of personal change that help to combine the ideas so far presented from social science and theology. Specifically drawing from the ideas of James, Nock and Traventa, Gaventa writes:

> There are, then, *three categories of personal change* of which we need to be aware in this study: alternation, conversion, and transformation. Alternation is a relatively limited form of change that develops from one's previous behavior; conversion is a radical change in which past affiliations are rejected for some new commitment and identity; transformation is also radical change, but one in which an altered perception reinterprets both present and past. These distinctions are, of course, not hard and fast. Nevertheless, these categories may be useful as we begin our examination of the New Testament (1986:12).

For the purpose of this research, while all three categories of personal change described by Gaventa are present in various New Testament texts and are therefore valid possibilities within which to understand human experience related to personal religious change, this research will focus in on the third category of transformation as being the most helpful for Muslim evangelism. For this study the definitional distinction between conversion and transformation based upon a specific rejection of the past (conversion) as opposed to a reinterpretation of the past (transformation) is not incorporated. Rather, conversion is understood to include a rejection of some aspects of the past that are incompatible with a new life in Christ and reinterpretation of others within a Christian paradigm. Therefore, transformation will be considered as a part of the meaning of conversion. However, Gaventa's contribution that transformation involves reinterpretation of past events as a vital part of re-visioning one's life around

the new center of Christ is an important aspect of the understanding of conversion that is being developed here.

Smith (2010) emphasizes transformation as the heart of what can be understood as biblical conversion. Transformation for Smith involves a change in identity that takes place within a Christian community (2010:21-38). Coming from a human development perspective, Fowler uses similar images in his definition of conversion:

> Conversion is *a significant recentering of one's previous conscious or unconscious images of value and power, and the conscious adoption of a new set of master stories in the commitment to reshape one's life in a new community of interpretation and action* (1981:282; italics in original).

The ideas of entering a new community, re-centering of one's life, and the role of a master story in this process are very appropriate to the understanding of conversion being developed in this research project. Thus Christian conversion as understood in this research *includes* real and significant transformation of identity that takes place within a community of faith in which one's past, present and future life are reinterpreted in light of a new life-center, Christ.

Smith (2010:21) begins to build his understanding of Christian conversion on a two-part foundation. For Smith, salvation is the work of God alone whereas conversion is the human response to that work. Using this understanding it is possible to give place both to the sovereignty of God while allowing for human responsibility and cooperation. One of the challenges in defining and understanding conversion is locating a balance point between these factors. If conversion is understood only as the work of God it can lead to passivity on the part of humans rather than active participation in the process. Or if human action is overly emphasized it can lead to legalism on the one hand or to overreliance upon human effort to achieve transformation leading to failure and disappointment.

The connecting point between God's sovereignty and human responsibility is faith. Smith says it clearly, "Conversion is an act of faith" (2010:26). This is a point where there is a distinction between Western forms of Christianity and forms common in Africa. Whereas Western Christianity prioritizes knowledge and right belief, African Christianity prioritizes faith and experience. Anderson states:

> Christianity, particularly in its Pentecostal emphasis on the transforming power of the Spirit, purports to offer more than the traditional religions did. In Africa, Pentecostal AICs have changed the face of Christianity because they have proclaimed a holistic gospel of salvation that includes deliverance, from all types of evil oppression like sickness, barrenness, sorcery, evil spirits, unemployment and poverty (2001:210).

Whereas Western Christianity has favored an emphasis on faith for salvation, African Christianity has favored an ongoing role of faith in the life of the believer. The Western tradition has divided salvation and sanctification into two different and separate experiences. African Christianity tends toward a more holistic understanding of the Christian faith. Sanneh writes:

> Conversion is the turning of ourselves to God, and that means all of ourselves without leaving anything behind or outside. But that also means not replacing what is there with something else. Conversion is a refocusing of the mental life and its cultural/social underpinning and our feelings, affections, and instincts, in light of what God has done in Jesus (2003:43-4).

Here Sanneh defines conversion as a refocusing of every part of life. Conversion as understood and presented by Smith (2001,2010) is also a comprehensive approach in which conversion is a process that includes all seven of Smith's elements listed above and is therefore a more compatible theology of conversion for the African context. Again quoting from Smith, "The old identity is gone; we have entered into a new identity that is grounded on faith, ("The just shall live by faith," Rom. 1:17 KJV) and that supports the transformation that will follow" (2010:27).

Very often the topic of salvation/conversion has been viewed primarily from a human point of view without due consideration of the divine perspective. From the human point of view, the question may be asked, "How can I go to heaven?" Or a person may ask, "What is the least change necessary for me to be assured of salvation?" The latter question does not seem to be answered anywhere in the New Testament, very likely because it is not in God's interest to answer such a question. Smith writes:

> We need to locate our theological reflection on conversion (our response to God's initiative) within the broader context of a biblical theology of salvation (Christian soteriology) so that our theology of conversion is consistent with what God is doing in the world (2010:22).

For Smith, what God is doing in the world is transforming human lives. Smith writes, "To be a Christian is to be in Christ, and our holiness, or righteousness, is one that we can only speak of or experience by virtue of our identification with the cross of Christ and our participation in the risen life of Christ" (2010:94). Through faith the Christian receives the transforming power of God's grace, which becomes her source of holiness. Life transformation thus becomes the purpose and indeed the prominent characteristic of Christian conversion. In this approach conversion involves an initial experience of believing the gospel but also includes the process of change that follows. This approach to a theology of Christian conversion provides a sound basis for evangelism among Muslims. Muslims are coming from a religious experience that wholly touches every part of their lives. Christianity must be equally comprehensive in its approach if it is to effectively transform the Muslim psyche. However, the Christian transformative process is one based upon the power of God's grace rather than human effort. As will be shown below, the expectation of life transformation through the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is a scripturally sound conception of conversion.

Conversion in this research is understood as taking place within the context of a community of faith. Smith writes:

> God's salvation is always portrayed in corporate terms, never to the exclusion of the individual, but always with the assumption that the individual is an integral member of the community of faith. Thus we cannot in the end conceive of or portray a biblical doctrine of conversion except with a distinctly ecclesial character (2010:37).

One of the lessons learned from the sociological analysis of religious conversion above is that the social dimension of conversion should not be ignored or undervalued. Even an MBB who heard the gospel on radio and had no contact with Christians in person is nonetheless receiving the gospel through another Christian and is making contact with a community of faith. Ministries using such approaches to evangelism such as media and the internet must consider that bringing new converts into a community of faith is a necessary part of what it means for them to come to faith in Christ. Those converting to Christ come from one social setting and are transferring into a new one. In the case of Christian conversion from a Muslim background, the social dimension is of high importance. New Testament images of body (of Christ), temple, building, priesthood, and house are examples of ways in which the corporate nature of Christianity is described. Considering the point raised by Smith above, the purposes of God must be considered and prioritized as opposed to only giving consideration to the purposes of humans. Thus it is significant that scripture emphasizes not only an individualized understanding of conversion but a corporate one as well. Ephesians in particular stresses the corporate nature of the transformative process (4:11-16). This is particularly important in a Muslim context.

Smith contends, "a person is not a Christian unless they have a distinct sense of their identity as a participant in the people of God" (2010:37). This statement could cause a good deal of debate from those who see conversion in more individualistic

terms. In the context of the mission to Muslims, Christians gathering together is always

problematic and therefore it may be asked, "To what extent do new Muslim background

believers need to identify with a Christ following community?" This issue will need to be

discussed in greater detail below, but at this point, it is necessary to raise the issue as

being of significance regarding the understanding of conversion most helpful in the

outreach to Muslims. Green writes:

> However, as per John Travis' original definitions, the key issue distinguishing C-4 and C-5 is not *the degree of contextualization* but *identity*. C-4 groups are "Isa-centered communities" while C-5 are "communities of Muslims who follow Isa yet remain culturally and officially Muslim" (2013:62; italics in original).

For Green, "identity" as used by Travis would be a person's "social identity" as opposed

to their "core identity" or "collective identity" and his complaint is that all three "layers"

of identity must be included in this sort of analysis. Baig addresses this issue of the

connection between community and identity when he writes:

> Understanding the strength and unity of the *ummah* and its role in an individual's identity is essential in understanding the struggles that a Muslim seeker will undergo. His life within the *ummah* has been a place of security, acceptance, protection, and identity. For a seeker, it is an enormous sacrifice to lose his place in the *ummah*. As a Muslim seeker moves into fellowship with the Christian community, it is important that his sacrifice should be acknowledged and understood. The community of Christian believers should become a new place of belonging and inclusion (2013:71).

Thus Baig cautions, "Our emphasis on 'reaping the harvest' often ignores the individuals

within the harvest" (2013:78). Baig's counsel is pertinent to the definition of conversion

appropriate to Muslim evangelism. If "reaping the harvest" means someone "making a

decision for Christ," and what comes after is something else and not considered part of

the conversion process, it will be much easier for missions agencies to give less than

adequate attention to this important issue. Baig writes, "the ideal of the church as a new

ummah and place of security and identity has not become a reality for many Muslim
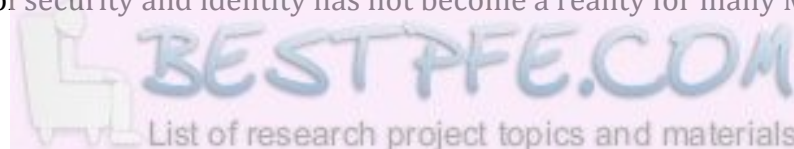
converts" (2013:74). Clearly the form a Christian community takes is an important variable to be considered.

If Christian community must take the form of a building with a cross on the top it will certainly be problematic in a Muslim context. The critical issue is stated well by Green when he writes, "it would be helpful to find out how believers are integrating their core identity as Christ's followers with their social identity as Muslims" (2013:65). The understanding of conversion being developed here involves significant identity transformation. Although this cannot be fully articulated prior to a more complete discussion of identity as a separate issue, which will be done below, it is clear that the relationship between community and conversion is an important one that bears careful consideration regarding its influence on the missiological task.

Building easily identifiable church structures in Muslim communities is very likely to result in their being burned or otherwise destroyed. This is not only because of the unwanted presence of Christians but because it is far too confrontational to be tolerated. Thus strategies like C-5 often take the form of home groups or house churches in Ethiopia. As stated above Ethiopia is a pluralistic society with Muslims making up only about a third of the population in general. However, there are fairly large areas that are Muslim dominated with a very high percentage of Muslims present in the community and controlling local governments. In such communities, small scale, Christ centered communities of various sorts are often the most appropriate strategy.

However, such home groups or house churches are seldom, if ever, "secret" as to their purpose and character. In such communities it would be impossible for such a group to exist for long without their purpose and nature being known. However, in that they are non-confrontational they are often tolerated. In Ethiopia the existence of such a "house church" is only a strong concern to the most radical of Muslims so long as it is

quiet and largely unnoticed. The problem arises when such a group is successful in

affecting a larger portion of the population. There seems to be a tipping point that must

be reached before intolerant Muslim leaders determine to persecute the new

movement. Whereas families will often react to only one family member becoming

Christian if they are aware, communities may not respond very much if the number is

small. It is the in-between level that is most problematic. Once an adequate size is

reached it will become difficult to stop such a group from operating unless help is

brought in from outside the community. But as long as the group is relatively small and

operates in a non-confrontational manner it may be left alone for some time while its

members grow in both size and strength.

In order to explore the answer to Green's query above it is necessary to

understand whether in fact the members of the small group have a core identity of

being a follower of *Isa*? In Ethiopia a mission to Muslims can take many forms. Some

never open the Bible but only use the *Qur'an*. Others have a strategy of encouraging the

study of Christian scriptures to learn more about *Isa al Messih*. Some have a clear goal of

reaching a point in the theological understanding of their members where the issues of

the trinity and incarnation are clearly discussed and scriptural support is provided.

Others avoid these issues and encourage their members to view *Isa* in a higher and

higher way until finally he eclipses Muhammad as the focal point of veneration and

honor. Others still allow Isa and Muhammad to remain side by side in terms of honor.

The understanding of conversion being developed here allows for a process of coming

to grips with these issues over time. The goal is certainly that a person's core identity

must become that of a follower of *Isa*. But must their social identity follow? As this

discussion continues it will be argued that Christian conversion involves identification

with Christ in a socially visible manner. An MBB may experience persecution and loss

and he or she may suffer greatly for their faith and for some mission leaders it is difficult to accept such suffering. But suffering and sacrifice for the sake of Christ and His kingdom has been a part of Christianity from earliest times, beginning with Jesus himself. Thus clarity as far as what is meant by conversion and careful consideration of the role of suffering in the life of a Christian is of central significance for any mission to Muslims.

Again, Christian conversion as understood in this research *includes* real and significant transformation of identity that takes place within a community of faith in which one's past, present and future life are reinterpreted in light of a new life-center, Christ. As this section comes to completion it is time to turn to the final aspect of conversion as used in this research, reinterpretation of one's life around a new center, Jesus. Every human is a combination of many experiences, some of those life experiences fit together easily others seem not to fit at all. The terminology of concordant and discordant experiences can be used for this dialectic of human life. Because disparate experiences must be combined into a human life there is need for a process that provides a means for bringing these experiences together into a unity, for humans this unity is a life story. The human activity of making stories allows for the inclusion of both concordant and discordant experiences in one timeline from which human beings draw meaning. The meaning aspect of a life story draws upon the larger stories with which the person identifies. Those stories are of their people group, nation, religious group, or other master stories within which a person's own story is located. An example might be a Jewish young person who determines to leave their home in another nation and move to Israel. That life decision is made in the context of the personal story of that young person but also within the context of their national, ethnic and religious identity. Their personal experience may include suffering and sacrifice for

the sake of their own values, as well as the values of their family and nation. But their own story is given meaning within the context of the story of the Jewish people as a whole. Thus stories of Israel as a people, such as that of Passover, are remembered and symbolically reenacted. The stories of the Jewish people being dispersed among the nations and suffering persecution are remembered from family to family and huge events such as the holocaust are memorialized in monuments and museums. Thus the personal discordant experiences of suffering and sacrifice are interpreted within the context of the story of a people allowing for those otherwise discordant events to be woven into a unity called a life story and given meaning by their relationship to master stories.

A major shift such as the conversion of a Muslim to faith in Christ, requires a reinterpretation of life events. In Ethiopia, a Muslim is almost always a part of a people group that has been identified as Muslim for one to perhaps ten or more centuries. They have an ethnic history that has been intertwined with the Muslim faith of their people in addition to the religious history of Islam and the life of Muhammad that serve as master stories for all Muslims. In most cases what a Westerner may think of as personal history is much more a family history in that the role of the individual is subordinated to the role of family and community member. Conversion affects not only the individual but also the family and community and thus is a daunting proposition for Ethiopian Muslims. Conversion, a strongly discordant life event, must somehow be understood and given meaning within that convert's life experience as a whole and thus their past and present must be reinterpreted and a new future envisioned. Prior to conversion the person understood their own life story within their Muslim context including both the story of Islam, Muhammad, and of their own people group. Thus the story of Christ and

His church must replace that of Muhammad and the *Ummah* as their master story or reference point, and their own place in tribal or ethnic history must be reinterpreted.

Because identity is connected to life story for humans and life story is given meaning in relationship to the master story with which a person identifies, if there is no reinterpretation of life and a re-visioning of one's life story the process of conversion is not yet complete. The life of Muslims is very much tied to following the life example of Muhammad. The *Hadith* (Muslim traditions) are very influential for this reason. Whereas the *Qur'an* has little information about Muhammad's life, the *Hadith* are a vast source of information detailing every aspect of the prophet's life. Emulating the prophet in as much detail as possible is the life goal of Muslims. The best religious life possible is one that follows Muhammad most closely. Not all Muslim communities accept the same *Hadith* and so not all envision Muhammad's life in exactly the same way, but within their own traditions, following the pattern of life of the prophet is the goal of a Muslim's life. Doctrinal statements will not replace this sort of life orientation. The power of story to shape lives, touch emotion, affect the will, and provide a pattern for life is unequalled in human experience. Doctrine while influential at the intellectual level cannot deeply move the emotions or change values whereas story can touch both intellect and emotion and even has the power to change values and is thus a much more powerful life changing influence.

But in Ethiopia the issue of a person's ethnic or tribal history is also of central importance. That is a much more complicated matter with a wide variation between ethnic groups as to how closely they align themselves with Islam. An example would be the Oromo people discussed above. There are certainly many Muslim Oromo and many of them would say that to be Oromo is to be Muslim. For other Oromo who are part of the resurgence of *Waakafanna* (traditional Muslim religious beliefs) to be Oromo is

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certainly not to be Muslim, not to mention the many Christian Oromo. But within the Oromo people groups of perhaps 40,000,000 there are clans that remain almost totally Muslim and so for their members, to be a part of their primary ethnic identification is to be Muslim. With respect to a mission to such people groups it will be necessary to retell the story of that people group in a new way. That Christ died for all nations and peoples and somehow the gospel has come to that people as well must somehow be incorporated into a re-visioning of their group history in order to create a space for conversion to faith in Christ. Thus to say a person can be religiously a follower of *Isa* but remain culturally and ethnically a Muslim indicates a lack of appreciation of the dynamic of identity formation and transformation that is part of the conversion process. This reinterpretation of the history of a people cannot be done from outside of that community but must be done, and can only be done, by insiders. This line can only be followed a short way in the context of this research since issue of local theologies and interpretive communities falls largely outside of the present discussion. In the next section the issue of biblical support for the understanding of Christian conversion presented so far will be addressed.

4.1.3.2 Biblical words and theological concepts related to conversion

In this section the biblical words and theological concepts related to conversion will be examined and compared to the understanding that has been presented this far. Words used in scripture have been examined and discussed in much of the literature concerning conversion and will be briefly discussed here. However, a wider consideration of conversion as presented in scripture will also be sought. Examples of conversion will be examined including the conversion of Saul (Paul), conversion stories in the gospel accounts, as well as references to conversion in a wider sense than only the use of the relevant vocabulary.

The natural starting point for a consideration of conversion in the New Testament is with the word *epistrepho,* which is the Greek word used to translate the Hebrew word *shubh* (return) in the LXX. In the Hebrew scripture the word *shubh* is very common and can refer to many kinds of turning or returning. One of these is turning back to God and in that sense it is used 120 times (Laubach 1975:354). In a theological sense, the Hebrew work *shubh* is used in reference to Israel as a people returning to God and is commonly used in the books of the prophets in this way. Scholars such as Barth point out that it cannot have a meaning like the New Testament concept of conversion because of the Old Testament context within which it is used (1967:310). This is no doubt true but it is clear that behind the New Testament idea of conversion resides the Hebrew concept of *shubh* or returning and in a religious sense, returning to the Lord. France writes:

> Thus while I have indicated that *shubh* is probably the nearest Hebrew equivalent to our term 'conversion', it operates in a different context of thought form that of Christian evangelism. It focuses not on a decisive 'change of religion', nor even on a personal transformation of religious experience through a one-only crisis, but rather on the maintenance of an existing covenant relationship through continual 'turning' from evil to God, a process in which both God and the individual (or more typically the community as a while" have a part (1993:294).

The New Testament term, which most directly translates *shubh* is *epistrepho* and for which *shubh* is a theological precursor. An example of the use of *epistrepho* would be Acts 26:17-18:

> I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you [18] to open their eyes so that they may **turn** from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me (NRSV).

These are words of Christ spoken to Saul at his conversion and recorded by Luke in Acts. In that this is not an exegetical study as such, the many issues connected to the scholarly exegesis of such scriptures cannot be fully discussed here. While an important

issue, it is not possible to address such concerns as: who is really being heard here, Luke, Saul or Jesus? Other questions outside the scope of this study would be the textual and accuracy issues raised by scholars concerning Acts and so these will be bypassed in favor of considering the New Testament witness as it stands. Peace argues that *epistrepho* emphasizes what one turns toward as opposed to what one turn away from for which the New Testament uses the word *metanoia* (1999:348). For the purpose of this study the fact that turning involves both a turning away and a turning toward is enough. This brings the discussion to the next New Testament word connected to conversion, m*etanoia*.

Metanoia is not used in the LXX to translate *shubh* in favor of *epistrepho* but it seems to have taken over much of the meaning of *shubh* in terms of the way it is used in the New Testament. Goetzmann writes:

> GK. (*sic*) Society never thought of a radical change in a man's life as a whole, of conversion or turning round, even though we may find some of the factors which belong to conversion. This shows that the concept of conversion is not derived from Gk.(*sic*) Thought, and its origin must be sought elsewhere (1975:357).

In his discussion of the fact that *metanoia*, as to its lexical definition, would be a "changing of one's mind," Goetzmann continues:

> … the change of words has not merely intellectualized the concept of *sub*. In fact the predominantly intellectual understanding of *metanoia* as change of mind plays very little part in the NT. Rather the decision by the whole man to turn round is stressed. It is clear that we are concerned neither with a purely outward turning nor with a merely intellectual change of ideas (1975:358).

Thus the New Testament use of the vocabulary relevant to conversion indicates a reorientation of one's life toward God and away from that which is not God or not of God.

The New Testament link to the prophets of the Old Testament would be John the Baptist who preached that his hearers should repent and should bear fruit appropriate

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to repentance (Matt. 3:2,8). Jesus picked up this message in his first preaching as recorded in the synoptic Gospels when he announces, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Thus the earliest message put into the mouth of Christ Himself by the New Testament record is one of repentance, which seems to be synonymous with turning away from that which is not pleasing to God toward the kingdom of heaven. Mark 1:15 adds, "and believe" to the command to repent and so *pistis* (faith/believe) is connected to conversion as well. Indeed "faith in Christ" can be used as a short hand way to refer to conversion (Col. 2:5). In his article on *epistrepho,* Laubach writes:

> When men are called in the NT to conversion, it means a fundamentally new turning of the human will to God, a return home from blindness and error to the Saviour [*sic*] of all (Acts 26:18; 1 Pet. 2:25). The use of *epistrepho* suggests that we are not concerned primarily with turning from the old life, but that the stress is on the turning to Christ, and through him to God (cf. Jn. 14:1,6) and so to a new life. Conversion involves a change of lords. The one who until then has been under the lordship of Satan (cf. Eph. 2:1 f.) comes under the lordship of God, and comes out of darkness into light (Acts 26:18; cf. Eph. 5:8). Conversion and surrender of the life to God is done in faith, and includes faith in Jesus Christ [Acts 11:21] (1975:355).

Thus conversion involves turning away from those things that are displeasing to God and toward God in Christ, it involves a change of lords and surrendering of one's life to God in faith. These ideas are found in the Greek words, *metanoia*, *epistrepho* and *pistis*.

Since the time of the Protestant Reformation the heart of Protestant doctrine has been salvation by grace through faith. From the time of the reformers until now a central issue has been that Protestants have an assurance of salvation that Roman Catholics do not. This assurance is possible because salvation derives in Protestant teaching from faith in Christ rather than human effort and thus forgiveness of sins is received and therefore entrance into heaven. Over time salvation vocabulary replaced conversion vocabulary and the time required came to be shortened until for

Evangelicals a simple response to an altar call is enough. Thus "salvation" in Evangelical vocabulary has come to be a punctiliar event easily identified and testified to as a definite moment in the life of a Christian. Since the 1980's conversion has been revived as a topic for discussion among Protestants and especially Evangelicals with authors and theologians such as Peace, Smith, McKnight, Newbigin, Gaventa, and many more weighing in regarding the relevant issues and many acknowledging that conversion is often not a punctiliar event but a process that takes place over time. This issue has also been raised with regard to Muslim evangelism as noted in the literature review concerning C-5 contextualization above. But how does the idea that conversion as a process rather than an event affect the original notion of salvation by grace through faith and the issue of assurance of salvation? As noted above, Smith (2001:135-141) provides a list of 7 elements of a "good conversion" in which assurance of salvation is number three. Yet, all of the seven elements taken together are certainly going to take significant time, including transformation into the fullness of the stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13). Thus, while listing these seven elements of a good conversion, Smith also speaks of conversion as not being an end but rather a beginning.

> Conversion is never an end: it is a beginning and a means to an end. Thus it must be followed by a program of spiritual formation that should mirror the very nature and contours of a Christian conversion (Smith 2001:153).

So conversion is a process but it is also the beginning of a process. This kind of language is common in the current literature because a process of conversion is difficult to match up with an adequate assurance of salvation, which is one of the foundation stones of Protestantism. In fairness to Smith he discusses assurance of salvation as being found in the interplay of all the seven elements (2001:151). But his next point is that there is no single element that can be linked to justification and no specific moment that can be connected directly to "salvation." Thus Smith is not ready to give up assurance as one of
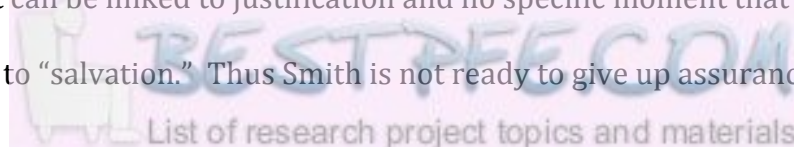
his seven elements but is also not able to explain clearly where it would come from in his scheme of conversion. In order to preserve "assurance of salvation" it is necessary for many theologians to divide conversion into two parts, salvation (making a decision for Christ) and discipleship or transformation that comes after. Is this truly a biblical concept?

The question could be asked this way, "Is assurance, as understood in Evangelical theology today, promised or anticipated in scripture?" Unfortunately, word studies will not provide a full answer to this question. A corresponding and perhaps more vital question would be: If conversion is truly a transformation of life as described by McKnight and Smith and a change of lordship as Laubach is quoted above, is there a biblical theology of conversion that supports that level of commitment and transformation on the one hand and can adequately address the desire for assurance of salvation on the other? At the outset of the exploration of these important questions it is appropriate to be clear that some of the current concepts of conversion, such as "making a decision for Christ" or understanding conversion as primarily a socialization process, are not adequate foundations upon which to build the sort of Christian commitment necessary for a Muslim context, even a context as diverse as Ethiopia. Finally, is there a theology of conversion available that provides answers for MBB's suffering persecution, loss and at times even death for their faith in Christ? For the purpose of a mission to Muslims these are the questions that must be answered with regard to conversion from Islam to faith in Christ. What follows will be a discussion aimed at providing biblical answers to these questions and thus building an adequate foundation upon which to form a biblically informed Christian theology of conversion appropriate for a mission to Muslims.

Another approach to the study of biblical conversion beside the examination of biblical vocabulary would be the examination of conversion experiences recorded in scripture. The most common study along these lines would be the conversion narratives of Saul as recorded in Acts 9:1-18; 22:6-16 and 26:12-19. Peace finds paradigmatic elements in Paul's conversion, which he describes as having three essential elements. The first is *insight* or coming face to face with God in some way, second is *turning* by which is meant turning away from an old life toward God in a new and meaningful way, and third, *transformation* (1999:99-101). These three elements of conversion, insight, turning and transformation, are found in what Peace terms an "event" paradigm of conversion and Peace believes they are essential for all conversions although they may be experienced in different ways. For Peace, Paul is one paradigm but he also presents a second, "process" type paradigm. But again, like Smith, Peace speaks of conversion as including transformation and then again as a beginning that must be followed up by discipleship during which time the actual transformation takes place. This issue will need to be resolved in order to have a coherent theology of conversion but for now it is essential to examine these two paradigms of conversion suggested by Peace more carefully.

Dramatic conversion stories have ever been of interest to Christians. From ancient times, Cyprian and Augustine were favorites not to mention Constantine. Luther is another example of a dramatic encounter with God that brought phenomenal results and the list goes on and on to the present day. The terminology of "power encounter" in Muslim evangelism has been popularized at least since Glasser's 1979 article, "Power Encounter in Conversion from Islam." The role of miracles, dreams and visions has found a place in many recent publications on Muslim conversion. However, based upon the findings of this research, although there have been some examples of individuals or

groups immediately coming to Christ as the result of a miracle, dream or vision, that would be the exception and not the rule. Of the more than thirty interviews this author has done with converted Muslims who report dreams, visions or miracles in their story, only one could be considered to follow a pattern of immediately giving their life over to Christ as savior and Lord. That case, Sheikh Gutamo, actually took place over a few days similar to Paul's conversion, which also seemed to take place over that length of time and was completed only with the visit of Annanias. In all other cases, the miracle, dream or vision was a beginning point or perhaps a focal point for a quest that took place over time in which the Muslim experiencing these dramatic events came to grips with their meaning and significance. In some cases this was a matter of weeks and in in others months and in a few cases even years.

So perhaps it is possible to turn to other more process oriented models of conversion available in the scripture. Peace provides a second option from the Gospel of Mark. McKnight (2002) also agrees that conversion as presented in Mark and the synoptic Gospels is process oriented and should be given due consideration regarding developing a biblical view of conversion. Peace finds this second, process oriented paradigm, to be of different from the first, event oriented paradigm, but still cut from the same cloth as that of Paul's experience. For the disciples, as described in Mark's gospel, their experiences was one of gradually coming to recognize Jesus for who He truly is and then coming to terms with the consequences of that fact for their own lives. While it may certainly be an issue for discussion as to whether (as Peace argues) Mark's gospel is built primarily around the story of the conversion of the twelve, as opposed to other possible thematic center points, it is clear that there is another paradigm of conversion, differentiated from that of Paul, that can be noted as experienced by the twelve (McKnight 2002:23).

The initial encounter with Christ of several of the disciples as recorded in the gospels includes the invitation of Christ to "follow me" (Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27; John 1:43). This invitation was not limited to the twelve but extended to others such as the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21) and to other individuals (Luke 9:59-60) and also to the crowd in general as Mark records, "And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). Certainly for Peace the invitation and its acceptance did not yet mean those responding were now converts, rather they had begun a process of reorienting their lives toward Christ. Over the next approximately three years they came to know who this Jesus is. The process of progressively understanding Jesus as teacher, miracle worker, prophet, Messiah, Savior, Son of God, took place over that period of time in and through the various experiences and crises recorded in the gospels. While there is no recorded moment where the twelve "repented" in the gospel account, the issue of repentance was certainly clear to them. John the Baptist preached repentance and baptized with a baptism of repentance (Acts 19:4). Jesus Himself preached repentance and He or His disciples also baptized (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; John 3:26). Arguments from the silence of scripture are always risky but it seems that the disciples of Christ were at least well aware of the need for repentance.

From the beginning of their time with Christ, the disciples continued with Jesus although others came and went (John 6:66-70). John records Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God" (KJV) somewhat earlier in his gospel whereas the synoptics set this statement later in Caesarea Philippi, but all have this confession of faith in Christ as God's Son around the mid point of the disciples time with Jesus (Mark 8:29, Matt. 16:16). At this point one can assume repentance and at least Peter, who

seems to be the spokesman for all, has confessed belief in Jesus as the Son of God. Yet there are challenges to come and Peter is recorded as denying Christ at the time of His trial and all the disciples seem to return to Galilee and their previous occupations after the crucifixion and evidently understood their "new life" to be finished and to have no clear vision for what might happen next (Matt. 26:69-75; John 21). But Christ appeared to them, gave them instructions to wait in Jerusalem and then in Acts 2 sent the Holy Spirit to empower them. After Acts 2 there is not further indication of wavering or lack of direction although there were yet a few doctrinal issues to be worked out concerning the Gentiles.

The question must then be asked, when were they converted? And the more so in light of the conversation recorded in Luke chapter twenty-two:

> Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, [32] but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me (Lu. 22:31-34).

The word used for "turn again" in the ESV is ἐπιστρέψας that has been discussed above and is most often used in the sense, «when you are converted.» This statement has endless pages written about it in theological literature, but taking it at face value, it seems that in spite of Peter's apparent repentance and definite confession of Christ as the Son of God, he still has not fully turned to God and indeed will shortly deny Christ. It seems very difficult to pinpoint a moment of salvation for the twelve and yet clearly they are converted (except for one). While it would be possible to join Gaventa and others in examining the conversion stories of Lydia, Cornelius, the Philippian jailor, and others, for the purpose of this missiological study this seems enough to establish that

there is a paradigm of conversion as a process described in the New Testament conversion stories.

But what of Jesus' expectations of those who follow Him? Jesus is recorded by Matthew as saying:

> Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done (Matt. 16:24-27).

The parallel passage to this one from Mark 8:34-37 is put into a central position in Sklba (1981) in his theology of conversion. After some lengthy comments on the Mark 8 passage, Sklba writes:

> The words of Galatians 2:20, 'I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me', are not a description of a higher state of Christian life but a simple description of what conversion means –to ignore the Self and to count on Christ alone. To be a Christian , therefore, means to practice daily and hourly that which we have seen and understand in our conversion (1981:280).

It is notable that not only at the beginning of Peter's experience with Christ is he told to "follow me." But also at the time of the conversation recorded in Luke chapter twenty-two and then again after the resurrection in John chapter twenty-four Jesus is still telling Peter to, "Follow me." The passage from Matthew 16 is a general invitation to follow Christ, open to all who heard and those who are still hearing today, "Follow me." But in this passage there is a price to pay by those willing to do so. The invitation is to, "deny self and take up our cross." Clearly sacrifice is involved here and the issue is eternal destiny. What will a man (or woman) give for their soul? The final judgment is clearly in view here and the issue of what a person has done is also mentioned. It is not only a question here of a person having right belief, but also of engaging in right action. Certainly all scripture must be understood in light of the entire New Testament

revelation, but there is a component of sacrifice and also one of responsibility for one's actions indicated here that must be factored into a biblical understanding of conversion. From the time of Luther the cry of the Protestant church has been *sola fide*, and any suggestion that there may be a component of conversion in which God requires right action on the part of the believer has been labeled "works righteousness." Yet, here it is, a person will be judged according to what they have done.

By completely taking the route of Greek thought over and against Hebrew forms of thought, the Protestant and particularly the Evangelical church, has moved entirely to one end of the spectrum, that of right belief determining salvation with no place for the issue of right action. As mentioned above it is possible to join Smith in understanding salvation as the work of God whereas conversion represents the human response to God's work. The question then becomes, what sort of response does God expect? And, unless everyone is saved with our without any response in terms of repentance or faith, the human response of turning to God would still be required. But what turning is required? For much of Evangelical Christianity, God expects repentance and faith and no more; after that the rest is optional. An extensive theology of justification as a forensic doctrine that positions the believer correctly with God regardless of their later actions has been developed over the past two centuries. But in the past thirty years or so the issue of transformation has been raised again as a part of what is meant by conversion and thus necessarily a part of the expectation of God for believers.

McKnight writes, "At its core, conversion is a process of identity formation in which a person comes to see himself or herself in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ (2002:4). And again, "Conversion is transformation of identity, involving both affirmations and behaviors" (2002:10). Smith adds:

> It is common to make a distinction between converts and disciples…It is a false distinction; for in the Gospels a convert is a disciple or there is no conversion. In other words, if we are not good at making disciples, we are not good at making converts!...I cannot but conclude that this is a subtle but powerful way in which the church has minimized the character and especially the costliness of conversion (2001:113).

Both Smith and McKnight make powerful statements, and in the view of this author, correct ones, concerning the nature of conversion but do not seem to develop an adequate theology of conversion and Christian life to support these views. In fact, both authors engage in a considerable amount of equivocation as to whether conversion encompasses the entire process of transformation as indicated in these quotes, or is in fact only the first step to be followed by a process of discipleship.

In order to develop a more adequate theology of conversion that has the capacity to truly include the idea of transformation it is necessary to consider Paul's understanding of conversion in a broader dimension. Chester adds helpful insight to the issue by his consideration of "calling" and the Greek καλέω as one of the significant ways Paul makes reference to conversion (2003:57-58). Chester supports his emphasis on καλέω as a primary way Paul refers to conversion by stating that in Paul's undisputed letters:

> Out of 27 appearances, the verb καλέω (call) is used in the aorist tense 14 times, and in the perfect tense a further 3 times, when it denotes the present sate of being called but does so on the basis of God's past action. These 17 references back to the beginning of the Christian life make καλέω the only verb used by Paul which refers directly to conversion in a majority of cases (2003:59-60).

The calling in view is God calling a person to a relationship with Himself and thus to a new identity as one of the called and as part of the community of the called. For Chester this is a creative work, thus God calling is also God creating. The Bible doctrine of creation connects God speaking with the creative act and in a similar manner, Paul

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connects God's calling of a person with his creative action. In speaking of Abraham in Romans chapter four Paul uses this creative aspect of calling:

> For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist (Romans 4:16-17 NRSV).

God's words, His promise to Abraham who was physically unable to have children, become for Paul an example of God calling into existence those things that do not exist. Chester writes, "If the children of Abraham are not reckoned by physical descent, then the very existence of children for Abraham will continually depend upon God's creative act of calling" (2001:80). A passage with similar affect would be Romans 1:1-7.

> Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (NRSV).

In the Greek text verse 1 reads, Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ἀφωρισμένος εἰς εὐαγγέλιον θεοῦ. Because there is no indefinite article as in English adding "an" before apostle is a choice of the translator but the words "to be" have also been added into the text to smooth out the English rendering. Literally the verse reads, "called apostle." These decisions by the translators are reasonable and necessary from the point of view of making the English text readable and putting their translation into good English. However, these additions to some extent cloud the meaning of the text. Paul is an apostle because God calls him one and that calling has a creative force that produces what God declares. In other words when God calls Paul an apostle, he

becomes what God has said. The same force is present in verses six and seven. A more literal rendering of these verses would be, "those called of Jesus Christ" (v. 6) and then "those called holy ones" (v. 7). Thus the church, those called of Jesus Christ, were not a people but have now become the people of God (Romans 9:26), which is the creative work of God who calls things that do not exist into existence. By the same reasoning, the church is called "holy ones" by God and thus His creative power again has been released to do what He says. This is connected directly to Paul's own calling wherein he has received "grace and apostleship to bring about obedience of faith among the Gentiles" (v. 5). It is perhaps more likely Paul means the "obedience of faithfulness" meaning faithfulness to the calling or covenant of God, two concepts also connected for Paul. But in regard to the present discussion the most important word here is "obedience." Those called to Jesus are called to be "holy ones" which means they are called to the obedience of faith(fullness) and thus to a newly created life involving both right actions as well as right belief. The power to accomplish this is the creative power of God released by the act of calling.

Paul connects the idea of being newly created with the meaning of being a Christian. Paul does not use the word Christian as such, for him the most common terminology is to be "in Christ" used 50 times in the undisputed letters of Paul, another four in Colossians and ten in Ephesians. 2 Corinthians 5:17 brings creation and being "in Christ" together, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." This distinction between the old and the new is carried through Romans 6 as well:

> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self
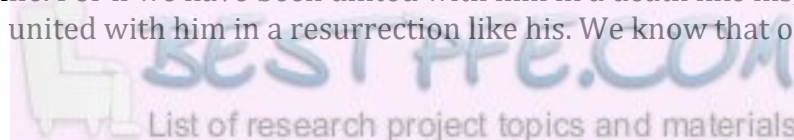
was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:4-6).

In the old life a person was a slave to sin but God has called him out of sin and into a new life. The old self is dead but the new self lives in the power of the resurrection. Clearly Paul does not expect the Christian to continue in sin but rather to receive the power of God to overcome sin. The power of resurrection can come only to those who die since clearly living people cannot be resurrected. Thus the "old self" must die in order that a new self can be created in Christ. The statement above that Paul does not "expect" the Christian to continue in sin forces the question of what is "expected" by God. If God expects anything from the Christian does that mean conversion requires the Christian to "do" something? And if so, then the issue becomes, is this introducing a kind of "works righteousness." The other side of the coin, however, is that if there is no *expectation* of change then what does "transformation" terminology mean?

This brings the discussion to the issue of the forensic language of justification and how it is to be understood. An exemplary if not paradigmatic passage from Romans would be:

> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:21-26).

In a forensic sense, justification means that God (the judge) declares a sinner "not guilty" as a free gift and not due to their works but rather in response to faith. But questions must follow such as: 1) is justification the end of the process of conversion or the first step; 2) does a person once declared not guilty need to stop sinning or is this

declaration/position permanent; 3) if a person being justified means they are in the position of being "in Christ" does that require something in terms of their actions or may they continue to sin and also be considered "in Christ"; and 4) and if the last answer is yes, does this create a license to sin for Christians? Before the concept of justification can be applied to the mission to Muslims it must first be determined what it means as a Christian doctrine.

Evangelical theologians have generally treated justification as an event after which comes everything else that is part of the Christian life such as sanctification. A person who is justified, is saved or in most cases "converted," although that language is not always used. After that, any other part of the Christian life becomes optional and thus sanctification is optional. To make it a required part of Christian life would be to add something to the "free gift" of God and thus it would not be a free gift anymore but rather depend upon works. This has opened such teaching to the accusation of giving a license to sin. Common arguments to avoid this accusation would be along the line that sanctification is not required for salvation but should be the Christian response to God's love expressed in justification. However, in a lexical sense it is difficult to say justification is only about a "not guilty" declaration without including righteousness as a part of the meaning. Thus the concept of "imputed" righteousness has entered Christian theology meaning that when the Christian is justified by faith they are also made righteous and thus righteousness also becomes a gift. If righteousness is a gift then it also cannot require work or again it would not be a gift. Thus a person becomes righteous as a declaration of God regardless of their actions. In this way evangelical theology has separated righteousness and even holiness from action thus creating a theology in which people who continue in sin are righteous.

But then what is to be done with such statements as, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? (Romans 6:1-2). And again, "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! (Romans 6:15). So it is evident that Paul does not envision that the person who is justified by faith should continue in sin, but then, how does he envision this issue?

Perhaps an overlooked key to Paul's thinking is Romans 3:25 quoted above. In this verse Jesus is called the propitiation for sin. In the Greek text this word is ἱλαστήριον (hilasterion), which according Kittel (1965:320-323) connects directly to the Hebrew word and idea of atonement. Paul's concept of atonement must have been shaped by the Old Testament teaching and the year by year celebration, the highest and most holy day of the Jewish calendar, the Day of Atonement which is described in detail in Leviticus 16. Although Kittel connects Romans 3:25 to Hebrew atonement in terms of both the blood of atonement and the place of atonement, he does not explore the possible intertextual connections between Romans 3:25 and Leviticus 16. Nonetheless, Kittel does provide an important link by highlighting the Jewish/Hebrew context of Paul's thought. By so doing, he points us toward the key to understanding Paul's reference to atonement at this point in his argument in Romans. Paul has argued from Romans 1:18- 3:20 that both Jew and Gentile are guilty and accountable to God. This is the first step in his argument in support of his thesis found in Romans 1:16-17,

> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. [17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

The quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 is used in a somewhat different sense than that of its original context but that is not unusual for Paul. It should be noted that Romans 1:17

does not say, "The righteous shall go to heaven by faith" as it seems it has often been read starting from Luther, but rather that "the righteous shall <u>live</u> by faith." Thus, following Paul's argument, Romans 3:25 connects the section before in which the guilt and accountability of all is shown with what comes after.

If the thought world of Paul is considered, then atonement is very much connected to Leviticus 16 and the description of the activities to be performed on that day. Hays (2005:29) counsels us that we must recognize the "embeddedness" of Paul's thought in scriptural language and "explore the rhetorical and theological effects created by the intertextual relationships between his letters and their scriptural precursors." To this end we will consider the relationship between the description of atonement from Leviticus with Paul's ideas in Romans. While it would be tempting to discuss many aspects of Leviticus 16 there is only space here to consider one section of this important chapter.

> And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel (Lev. 16:5-10).

Thus the high priest was commanded to make a sin offering for himself and then take two goats and cast lots over them to select one for God and one for "Azazel." The ESV properly does not translate Azazel since it is a proper name unlike other English versions that use words like, "for release" or "for escape." Those translations have nothing to do with the meaning of the word itself but only relate to the rest of what Aaron is commanded to do with that goat. Thus there are two goats involved in the Day of Atonement. The first is for Azazel who seems to be a spirit of the wilderness or

something like that although it is not clear at this time. Aaron was to lay his hands upon that goat as an act of identification with the animal and then confess all the sins of Israel over its head. Thus the sins were transferred to the goat and then it was taken into the wilderness and released. The other goat was killed and the blood taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the top of the Ark of the Covenant or place of atonement for the forgiveness of the sins of Israel for the previous year. The point that is important here is that there were two goats and as seen in the passage quoted above, both were part of the atonement. One goat atoned by its blood sprinkled before the Lord, the other took the sins of Israel away. Thus there are two aspects of atonement present here, one is the blood offered for forgiveness and the other is the removal of sins.

As Paul moves from one idea to the next in his letters, he often summarizes his previous argument in a verse or two and then introduces the next section in the same manner. As noted above, this puts Romans 3:25 as the introduction to what is about to follow. Thinking in those terms, Paul follows from this verse with his teaching regarding forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus (Romans 4-5) and then the removal of sins (Romans 6-8). In Paul's thought these two ideas are both part of the atonement he is describing and thus should not be separated in the sense that one part is required and the other optional. Both are inseparably part of the meaning of atonement that Christ has accomplished for the believer. Christ has brought about both the forgiveness for sins and the removal of sin from the life of the believer and both aspects of atonement are received (appropriated) through faith.

The next question that must be asked and discussed is, "What is the mechanism of transformation?" If removal of sin is part of the expectation of conversion, what does that mean and how can it happen? Paul's answer is found in Romans 6-8. Romans chapter six brings together baptism and sanctification. Paul writes in verse three, "Do

you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" Thus sanctification is connected to baptism, but not in the sense of sacrament or symbol but rather in the sense of an experience received through faith just like justification. Baptism as a sacrament is certainly part of the teaching of many, if not all Christian churches. For the purpose of this research the sacramental aspect of baptism is not in any way discounted but it is not in view here. Romans 6:11-13 reads:

> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

In this passage the intent is clear, the Christian should not continue in sin. But how can this be done? If it is by human effort then failure is nearly certain and the question can legitimately be asked again, "If this transformation is part of conversion and human effort is required, is this not then a doctrine of works righteousness?' But the problem is solved once Romans 1:17 is unlocked from the single application of justification by faith and is applied to the whole teaching of Romans as a truly thematic statement. The just shall live by faith. Thus sanctification, dying to self and living to God, is also a matter of faith in the same manner as justification. The Christian is forgiven by faith and is also sanctified by faith. The process is the same for both. Both are part of the atonement which is the topic of Romans 4-8 as introduced by Romans 3:25. Justification and sanctification can thus be joined in a biblical theology of conversion that includes both.

But what then is Romans chapter seven about? Many Christians use Romans seven and Paul's anguished expression regarding wanting to do right but finding himself doing wrong as justification to continue in sin. After all, if even the great apostle seems to have struggled with sin, how can a normal believer do otherwise? The issue of whether Paul is talking of himself or using himself as a literary device is outside the

scope of this writing and unimportant for this discussion. What is important is that Paul

is expressing a gap between experience and theology. The theology of chapter six is

correct but human experience is too often like chapter seven. So the question becomes,

how does the Christian close the gap between experience and theology? The possible

answers are essentially two allowing for some variations within each. One answer could

be that because the Christian is in the position of righteousness and has received

righteousness from Christ as an imputation, it does not matter. The Christian continues

to struggle with sin and never solves this problem because guilt has been removed and

that is the end of the story. In this view, atonement and justification are interpreted as

removing guilt but not removing sin. Dallas Willard has called this a gospel of "sin

management" (1997:35-59). He comments on the common Christian slogan, "Christians

aren't perfect, just forgiven" when he writes:

> Well, it certainly needs to be said that Christians are forgiven. And it needs to be
> said that forgiveness does not depend on being perfect. But is that really what
> the slogan communicates? Unfortunately, it is not. What the slogan really
> conveys is that forgiveness alone is what Christianity is all about, what is
> genuinely essential to it. It says that you can have a faith in Christ that brings
> forgiveness, while in every other respect your life is not different from that of
> others who have no faith in Christ at all. This view so pleasingly presented on
> bumpers and trinkets has deep historical roots. It is by now worked out in many
> sober tomes of theology, lived out by multitudes of those who sincerely self-
> identify as Christians (1997:36).

Is that really what the gospel does, remove guilt and leave us sinning? Or is the gospel

actually about not only forgiveness but also removal of sin?

The second possible answer to how the Christian closes the gap between the

theology of Romans six and the experiences acknowledged in Romans seven is to found

in Romans eight. But in order to reconcile the bold statements of Romans six with the

anguish of Romans seven it is necessary to understand chapter eight correctly. The

answer Paul gives is that it is the work of the Holy Spirit, released by faith in Christ that

resolves this dilemma. Romans 8:2-11 reads:

> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. **3** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. **5** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. **6** For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. **7** For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. **8** Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. **9** You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. **10** But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. **11** If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

So the answer given in Romans eight is that God knows humans cannot overcome sin in

their own strength (the flesh) but <u>can</u> do so by the power of the Spirit. The process is

not one of reforming the flesh or correcting the flesh, no, the flesh must die. When the

flesh is dead through faith in the work of Christ and identification with the work of the

cross, the Christian can then also be assured that they will receive the resurrection

power of Christ to overcome sin. Even the "body of death" Paul anguishes about in

Romans 7:24 can be recreated by the power of God through faith in Christ and brought

into submission to the will of God. The creative power of God brought forward in

Romans 4:16-17 is now brought to fruition here in chapter eight.

Paul writes to the Corinthians along the same line, "Therefore, if anyone is in

Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor.

5:17). Thus the thematic statement in Romans 1:16-17 is faithfully followed throughout

Paul's theological presentation of the Christian life, "the just shall live by faith." The

moment this statement is unlocked from the interpretation that the just shall go to

heaven by faith, a world of understanding is opened in which a biblical theology of

conversion can include both justification and transformation. But immediately the

question must be asked, what kind of transformation and to what end?

While acknowledging that territory has now been entered in which an adequate

answer to such questions in exegetical terms is well beyond the scope of this work, a

short answer will nonetheless be attempted. Ephesians 4:11-16 reads:

> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and
> teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of
> Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son
> of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of
> Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and
> carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in
> deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every
> way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and
> held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working
> properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Christian transformation is intended to take place within the context of the body

of Christ with every part of that body contributing to the process. The teaching on

spiritual gifts in both 1 Cor. twelve and Romans chapter twelve agree at this point when

they emphasizes the interdependence of the body of Christ and that each Christian has

something to contribute. Here in Ephesians four the body grows up into the fullness of

the stature of the head, Christ. Thus briefly, the goal of transformation is the fullness of

the stature of Christ and the place of transformation is the community of faith. Both the

goal and the place of transformation must be included in a biblical understanding of

conversion as transformation. Thus, the answer to these vital questions involves a new

identity in Christ formed within a Christian community. As stated above, Christian

conversion as understood in this research *includes* real and significant transformation

of identity that takes place within a community of faith in which one's past, present and

future life is reinterpreted in light of a new life-center, Christ. As Meeks writes

concerning the transformational process taking place within the new community:

> The ritual [of baptism] symbolizes "putting on Christ," who is the "new human" and the "the Son of God." The ecstatic response of the baptized person, "Abba! Father!" is at the same time a sign of the gift of the Spirit and the "sonship" (*hyiothesia*) that the Spirit conveys by incorporating the person into the one Son of God. The facts that this cry is retained in Aramaic in the Greek-speaking Pauline congregations and that it is also familiar to the non-Pauline Roman groups shows that this is a quite early tradition. Whatever else is involved, the image of the initiate being adopted as God's child and thus receiving a new family of human brothers and sisters is a vivid way of portraying what a modern sociologist might call the resocialization of conversion. The natural kinship structures into which the person has been born and which previously defined his place and connections with the society is here supplanted by a new set of relationships (1983:88).

But what is to be done about the problem of the assurance of salvation? If conversion is a process that includes something as unclear as to start and finish as transformation, at what point in that process is one considered a Christian? And does that mean they have assurance they will go to heaven? This moves the discussion into the area appropriate to a consideration of missiology and conversion.

4.1.3.3 Missiology and conversion

As an entry point into the missiology of conversion, the issue of the assurance of salvation will be addressed from a missiological perspective that connects to the previous discussion of a biblical theology of conversion. Assurance of salvation is very much connected to how conversion is conceived. Missiologist Paul Hiebert (1983,1994) may provide some guidance on this issue. In his often quoted article from 1983 and later developed more fully in his 1994 monograph, Hiebert raises the issue of how the category of Christian is identified. What are the boundaries of those who may be considered part of the Christian community? Hiebert uses set theory to illuminate this area and compares three kinds of sets, bounded sets, centered sets and fuzzy sets. Bounded sets are clearly defined sets and thus when applied to "Christian" there is a "clear distinction between "Christian" and "non-Christian" (1983:422). In order to
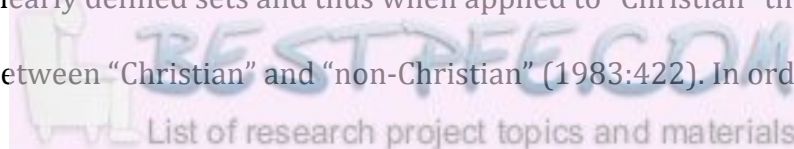
understand "Christian" as a bounded set, a clear group of characteristics must be identified that will identify those who are inside and those who are outside of the set, Christian. These characteristics must be intrinsic to the person who is to be determined to be in or out of the set which means a person is all a Christian or not at all a Christian by virtue of characteristics within each member or non-member of the set.

Hiebert's next kind of set is a "centered set." For a centered set the defining characteristic is its center and the relationship of the parts or members to that center. Although a centered set has a clear boundary, the focus in not on the boundary as it would be for a bounded set, rather the focus is on the center and relationship to that center. In a Christian application of this theory, it is understood that there can be movement toward the center or away. The center point for a Christian set would be Christ and faith in Christ and thus worship of Christ would be the defining characteristic. However, some will be closer to the center and some will be farther away. Some will be moving toward the center and some may be moving the other direction or may even change direction. For Hiebert in his 1983 article, conversion is a turning toward God and maturation comes after (1983:424). However, for the purpose of this research the main interest and contribution from Hiebert is regarding his application of set theory to the task of defining, "Christian."

Hiebert's final classification of sets is that of "fuzzy sets." Fuzzy sets do not have clear boundaries and thus when applied to Christianity have important problems. With fuzzy sets it is possible for a person to be partially in and partially out. Thus a person can be partially Christian and partially Muslim. For most Christian theologians this is not a satisfactory outcome. In missiological terms this approach may be helpful in terms of understanding the dynamic of a person coming to Christ from another religion and the fact that for some time they may be in a liminal state in between two faiths but at

some point there should be a resolution resulting in identification with one or the other.

As an anthropologist and missiologist, Hiebert prefers the centered set approach which he sees as corresponding to a "Hebraic view of reality" but expresses that Western thinking Christians may be more comfortable with a bounded set approach as it is more compatible with Western, rationalistic thought patterns (1983:426). In the current effort to finalize a biblical theology of conversion appropriate to the mission to Muslims a centered set approach is clearly more compatible with conversion as it is being understood here. As used in this research, the center of Christianity is the person of Christ. Doctrine, even scripture, is an important part of Christian growth and understanding, but not the center. The center of Christianity is a person (Jesus) and relationship to that center is the defining characteristic of the category, "Christian." A person is a Christian because they have defined themselves in terms of their relationship to Christ. Is Christ their Lord? Notice the issue is not whether Christ is savior but whether Christ is Lord. Lordship is the larger and more inclusive category within which Savior exists. Thus to be a Christian a person must be in relationship to the center, Jesus, as Lord. In the Judeo-Christian heritage God has an exclusive claim on worship and thus worship of other gods is not acceptable. A fuzzy set approach other than as a transitional condition is not acceptable to the Christian understanding of God in the view of this research.

Now it is time to return to the issue of the assurance of salvation. Understanding conversion as a process means that there is a starting point of reorientation of the life toward Christ as center (Lord).[7] This reorientation represents the first steps in the conversion process of repentance or turning way from the old life and turning toward God in faith (Hebrews 6:1-3). Paul often uses the term, "walk" to

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[7] Notice here Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:9

describe the Christian life. An example would be 1 Thess. 2:12, "we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory." Thus the Christian life is movement with and toward Christ as the center. Assurance of right relationship comes by having begun with a reorientation away from one's old life toward Christ and an ongoing walk with and toward Him. Beyond this, there does not seem to be more definite assurance provided by the New Testament. Yet in the theology of conversion provided here there actually is assurance. The believer very well knows if they have repented and turned toward God in faith and if they are walking toward or away from God. Is the person who has started a walk with God but then turned away lost? That would be a question outside the purview of this discussion. Thus a biblical theology of conversion as used in this research means that a Christian is one who has turned away from their former self-centered life to a new Christ-centered life and is walking with and toward Jesus in a process of transformation into Christ likeness.

But missiology has more to offer a theology of Christian conversion. Conn proposes, "a missiological agenda for theology," rather than a "theological agenda for missions" (1983:13). By this Conn intends that theology ought to be focused upon a missiological agenda and indeed if this is lost then theology has turned away from its proper directionality. Bosch picks up this theme when he writes, "Just as the church ceases to be the church if it is not missionary, theology ceases to be theology if it loses its missionary character" (1991:494). With regard to conversion Bosch writes:

> Conversion is, however, not the joining of a community in order to procure "eternal salvation"; it is, rather a change in allegiance in which Christ is accepted as Lord and center of one's life. A Christian is not simply somebody who stands a better chance of being "saved", but a person who accepts the responsibility to serve God in this life and promote God's reign in all its forms. Conversion involves personal cleansing, forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal in order to become a participant in the mighty works of God (1991:488).

Bosch well describes conversion from a missiological viewpoint with an understanding that it is comprehensive, practical and participatory. Van Engen lists five characteristics of mission theology:

1. Integrational: Understanding the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. Local: Approaching a New Context Anew.
3. Incarnational: Preparing for New Action.
4. Praxeological: Living out the Gospel in Appropriate Action.
5. Dialogical: Re-shaping our Understanding of the Gospel (2005a:203).

These five characteristics should apply to a theology of conversion and especially one to be used in a missiological application such as the present research. Notice that there is a two way movement indicated by Van Engen in characteristic number five. While mission theology starts with the gospel of Jesus Christ, it will also be dialogical by which he indicates that the missional enterprise not only received a pre-packaged gospel, but "reshapes" understanding of the gospel. On this point refer to Van Engen (2005b) for a more complete descriptions of Van Engen's version of the hermeneutical spiral. While these characteristics are being considered in the development of the theology of conversion presented here, what is lacking is theological reflection on the part of Muslims who have converted to Christ in Ethiopia. While input has been received, this author does not know of reports concerning sustained theological reflection, presented in a systematic manner by this community of faith itself. As this community of faith matures its contribution and correctives will need to be incorporated into the present reflections.

In that a mission to Muslims anticipates both an initial entrance into a new culture but ultimately its wide acceptance, Tippett offers the following advice: "For any religious conversion to be permanent its new structure should both meet the needs of the converts and operate in meaningful forms" (1977:211). Two significant points are

made in this short statement. First, a new structure, by which Tippett seems to mean both belief structures as well as organizational structures, must meet the needs of the new faith community. This is not the same as saying the "felt needs" of people although perhaps that is included here. But rather could be understood as making the point that new structures should answer the life questions arising from the context of the new community. Put another way, mission work has often suffered from the problem of answering questions the target group is not asking. The second point to be taken from Tippett is that the forms taken by the new religious belief system must be meaningful to the new community of faith. Transferring forms of religious expression that do not make sense in a recipient culture is not likely to connect to the new cultural setting sufficiently to make the new understanding of conversion permanent. In Ethiopia this has been seen in European and American groups bringing Western music, instruments, and hymnology that eventually had to be transformed into local worship languages and musical styles. An example regarding Muslim Background Believers would be that such a group may be more comfortable sitting on the floor on mats or rugs rather than on chairs or benches in a community gathering for Bible teaching. A proviso from this researcher would be that if there is an essential element to Christian practice such as baptism or communion these things must be taught clearly and the meaning transferred to the new community although the exact methodology may change.

Greenlee (2006) provides extended missiological reflection concerning conversion in a Muslim context. He emphasizes that conversion must be understood and fostered on three levels. First is the cognitive level of understanding. In this area the gospel must be communicated and received on the level of mental understanding and acceptance of knowledge of the truth. Second is the affective or emotional level. Acceptance of the gospel must be heart felt and thus touch the feelings of the new

believer. This area involves an attraction to Jesus, His person and personality. Finally, there is the evaluative level or the area of the will. This is the deepest level of commitment that Greenlee connects especially to the work of the Holy Spirit. Commenting upon the fact that perhaps 80% of all converted Muslims eventually turn back to Islam and building upon Hiebert's (2005) theory of the levels of assumptions that make up worldview, Greenlee describes these three areas as follows:

> As I have considered the process of conversion, including the ongoing steps into discipleship, I have realized that believers need more than simply to increase in *cognitive* assent – that is, what we believe to be true about God. We also need more than a growing attraction to the gospel and to Jesus, something that takes place at our *affective* level. By the power of the Holy Spirit we all need to grow into and make a profound commitment to the Lord Jesus – something that happens in the heart at our core or *evaluative* level. We need to affirm by the Sprit: *No turning back* (2006:26 italics in original).

Regarding Greenlee's third level of the evaluative, change on this level is not easy to achieve. At this level, suffering and persecution is a part of the transformational process. Greenlee writes, "Further, although persecution is not a panacea guaranteeing perseverance, God uses testing as a tool to forge change at the evaluative level" (2006:27). Thus regarding a mission to Muslims, Greenlee emphasizes that a healthy theology of persecution and suffering is a necessary part.

The final idea to be presented in this section is from Andrew Walls (2004). He emphasizes that the early church chose not to follow a pattern of proselytism by which he means transference of customs and cultural patterns of religion but not necessarily internalization of beliefs. Instead, as indicated in Acts 15 and clearly in the writings of Paul, Christianity chose a pattern of conversion. He writes:

> Conversion requires something much more radical. It is less about content than about *direction*. It involves turning the whole personality with its social, cultural, and religious inheritance toward Christ, opening it up to him. It is about turning *what is already there* (Walls 2004:6 italics in original).

Proselytism, as described by Walls, means an adding of something new to a person, a different religious culture, whereas conversion is about turning what is already present in the person fully toward Christ. Walls writes, "Greek-speaking Jews were negotiating someone else's culture while retaining their identity; Greek Christians were negotiating their own culture while expressing a Christian identity (2004:6). Thus conversion involves the transformation of human beings within their culture as each aspect of life is brought fully under the examination of Christ.

In the following section the insights concerning conversion gathered from social science, a Muslim understanding of conversion, Christian theology and biblical studies, and missiology will be gathered and summarized.

4.1.4 A working understanding of Christian conversion for a mission to Muslims

This section is entitled a "working understanding" because to say "definition" is perhaps too much to claim. In this part of the discussion concerning conversion the lessons gathered from social science and theology will be gathered together in the form of guiding principles of understanding on the topic of conversion as may be useful in support of a mission to Muslims. Up to this point various difficulties have been noted regarding an understanding of conversion and how it is implemented regarding a mission to Muslims. One difficulty is that many of those active in outreach to Muslims come from the point of view that there is one and only one correct biblical understanding of conversion, which is universally true for all people groups and all generations. While the universal truth of scripture is accepted in this research, its application is not universal but must take place within a cultural context. Secondly, to reduce conversion to the lowest common denominator, which is necessary for an approach that intends to apply that definition universally, is not helpful or productive in terms of a mission to Muslims. To limit the definition of conversion to a turning and

faith toward God is not a useful approach to understanding conversion for work among Muslims as has been shown above. Methods are never universally true and should not be considered in that light. However, another challenge in Muslim evangelism is the tendency to universalize methods as being universally true. Methods are not universal nor can they be considered "truth" but they certainly must be both biblically based and appropriate. The understanding presented here is guided by the need to be both biblically based and appropriate to a mission to Muslims in Ethiopia. Those working in other geographical areas will need to evaluate the appropriateness of these ideas for their own contexts. Finally, the Western preference for rationality over spirituality has been noted as a challenge in developing a theology of conversion appropriate to a mission to Muslims and the following ideas about conversion will attempt to avoid that pitfall as well.

4.1.4.1 Lessons learned from social science

Lessons learned from social science include:

1. The social nature of conversion: This includes both the context of conversion and the subsequent living out of a new life in Christ. Conversion tends to take place within available social networks.

2. Conversion involves a change in a person's "universe of discourse" and is thus connected to language. Language is socially constructed, shapes one's view of reality and the lived in world of the language community, and provides the building blocks of understanding out of which the world of a community is built.

3. Historical relationships between people groups shape attitudes and thus receptivity to the gospel message if it is being communicated between or identified with those outside of a community.

4. Conversion is most often a process that takes place over time with many factors influencing that process. Some of those factors are in the control of the mission practitioner and many are not.

5. The context of conversion can be understood better if the tools of social science are utilized.

6. Ultimately the experience of conversion is personal and therefore has a subjective nature that cannot be eliminated.

7. Economic considerations influence the conversion process.

8. Macro processes also affect conversion including influences of globalization that may create opportunities, close doors, and affect methodology.

9. When people become Christian they do not leave behind them their ethnic culture, worldview, or personal history. These aspects of human life must be brought into examination in light of the work of Christ in each person's life and this will take place over time. There will be give and take in this process and each community will ultimately define what it means to be a Christian in their setting.

10. The role of literacy is important regarding the spread of a literature based religious system.

11. While social science provides helpful insights for missiologists, it has limitations for the missiological enterprise in that it cannot process the truth claims of religious belief nor is it comfortable with the supernatural aspects of faith.

4.1.4.2 Lessons learned from the Muslim understanding of conversion

In examining the Muslim understanding of conversion the following insights were noted:

1. Islam is a lifestyle and is based upon actions prescribed for the Muslim out of which understanding of doctrine should come.

2. Islam is not initially communicated through doctrine but after commitment to follow Islam correct practices are taught.

3. Being religiously Muslim is often a part of a person's ethnic identity.

4. The *ummah*, or Muslim community, with its many interrelated social relationships is a critical part of the Muslim's experience of religion.

5. Muslim values such as experiencing religion together in Ramadan, mosque, or Hajj, as well as what constitutes holiness and submission to God, are central to Muslim identity and thus change will come through change of identity and not through a doctrinal approach.

6. New members entering the Muslim community are celebrated and should be accepted equally with other Muslims.

4.1.4.3 Lessons learned from a Christian and biblical understanding of conversion.

The seven elements of a "good conversion" as presented by Smith (2001:135-141) are:

1) Belief: the intellectual component

2) Repentance: the penitential component

3) Trust and the assurance of forgiveness: the emotional or affective component

4) Commitment, allegiance and devotion: the volitional component

5) Water baptism: the sacramental component

6) Reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit: the charismatic component

7) Incorporation into Christian community: the corporate component

Each of these elements can be biblically supported although various Christian orientations emphasize some and do not include all in their practices regarding conversion. Lessons learned from a brief examination of conversion in scripture include:

1. Turning from an old life to a new life in Christ is an essential element of conversion. Here, turning away includes a change of Lords and turning to means turning to Christ as Lord.

2. Faith is an essential element of conversion and along with point 1 represents an irreducible minimum for any Christian understanding of conversion.

3. Conversion is a process that affects the whole life and includes past, present and future.

4. Conversion takes place over time.

5. The goal of conversion is transformation into Christ-likeness.

6. The process of conversion is the death of the old and coming into a new life in Christ.

7. The power of conversion is the Holy Spirit.

8. The center of conversion is the work of Christ.

9. Conversion is to the person of Christ and not to a set of doctrines.

10. Seeking for a point in the process of conversion where a person knows they are going to heaven is somewhat misguided. Assurance of salvation is being in the way with Christ, if a single point in the process is considered to be the point of "salvation," then the rest of the process is necessarily reduced to unimportance, which is not scriptural.

11. Conversion is a part of the creative work of God.

12. Conversion takes place within a community of faith.

13. Baptism as an act of faith understanding that by faith the old is buried and the new is resurrected is an integral part of the process of salvation.

14. Conversion may not be simple, easy or painless and indeed may involve significant suffering and sacrifice, which should be considered as a normal part of the Christian life.

15. Because conversion takes place within an ethnic and linguistic context it may not always look the same from outside but the work of Christ within is the defining characteristic of conversion more so than outward forms.

4.1.4.4 Lessons learned from missiology

From a missiological paradigm the following lessons concerning a theology of conversion were noted:

1. A theology of conversion must be comprehensive, practical and participatory.

2. Conversion means a change in life direction and not simply acceptance of new teaching.

3. A theology of conversion will both influence a new culture and be influenced by the new culture as Christians live out their new faith within their own context.

4. A theology of conversion must be connected to action.

5. The forms conversion takes in the new culture must be meaningful within that culture.

6. Conversion must affect the cognitive, affective and evaluative levels of human life.

7. The goal of conversion is to make converts and not proselytes.

4.1.4.5 Summary of lessons learned about conversion

All the lessons learned regarding conversion are important to keep in mind but for the purpose of summarizing what has been gathered together on this topic the following eight aspects of conversion can be noted:

1. Conversion takes place within a social context.

2. Conversion is a process.

3. Conversion means turning away from an old life with its corresponding loyalties towards a new life in which Christ is both center and Lord.

4. Conversion means transformation of the whole life in its cognitive, affective and evaluative dimensions accomplished through the work of the Holy Spirit.

5. Conversion is to the person of Christ in response to the work of Christ with its direction toward the goal of Christ likeness.

6. Conversion means commitment to a new life direction and may require sacrifice and even suffering.

7. Conversion includes both new mental processes and new actions.

8. Conversion means embracing a new self-concept and a new social identity.

9. The summarizing statement has been used, Christian conversion as understood in this research *includes* real and significant transformation of identity that takes place within a community of faith in which one's past, present and future life is reinterpreted in light of a new life-center, Christ.

4.1.5 Conversion and identity change

When conversion is understood as transformation it must be made clear, transformation of what into what? It has already been argued that the goal of conversion is "the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). The stature of Christ points toward character, values, and priorities. It also points to capacities and characteristics such as understanding (revelation), faith, and relationship. These necessarily relate to a person's concept of self, which is in turn connected to how others see them and is therefore at least a part of their identity. In Romans 12 Paul writes:

> I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12;1-2).

The word translated here as transformed is μεταμορφοῦσθε from which the English word metamorphosize is derived. The kind of transformation indicated here is significant and results in something entirely new. This idea of transformation then leads to a consideration of what is meant by self and identity and further, how can the process of change of self or identity be understood most productively for a mission to Muslims?

Donham in writing anthropologically concerning the Maal tribe of South Ethiopia conveys:

> As Robert Hefner has usefully emphasized, Christian conversion is fundamentally about the assumption of new identities – often in situations in which macrohistorical changes have undermined old systems of status and self-validation. These new identities are enacted primarily through the adoption of new narratives that reposition persons by making new sense of local situations, that promise new dignity and access to wider values (Donham (1999:120).

In the following section of this chapter the issue of identity will be taken up under the headings of identity theories from social science, dialogical self, the study of lives and then the narrative identity theory of philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Finally an understanding of identity and identity change for use in the missiological context of a mission to Muslims will be synthesized.

4.2   Identity

The issue of identity has been highlighted in the discussion surrounding C-5, high contextualization strategies. Lewis writes, "Believers retain their identity as members of their socio-religious community while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible" (2009:16). And Asad adds, "In the past decade missiologists have taken Parshall's revolutionary adaptations to another level with the introduction of the

possibility of the MBB's retaining a *Muslim* self-identity rather than that of a 'follower of

Isa'" (2009:133). The issue has been stated well by Dutch:

> Western Christians tend to place great emphasis on the self-identity of Muslim
> back-ground believers. Self-identity is a major criteria differentiating several
> points on the "C1–C6 Spectrum". Some think that a Muslim background believer
> who continues to identify himself as "Muslim" crosses a line from
> contextualization to syncretism. In my experience with Muslim background
> believers, their self-identity is a multi-faceted issue that defies simple
> explanation and often frustrates external expectations. As cultural outsiders, we
> often see the issue in false clarity, imposing simplistic understandings of terms
> and relationships. We have great expectations for young believers to "take their
> stand" in a society hostile to the spread of Christianity within its ranks, where
> the struggle for survival is more intense than we outsiders will ever understand.
> But for many Muslim background believers, identity is fluid, taking the most
> appropriate form for the situation. For instance, where Christianity has strong
> negative connotations, Muslim background believers may avoid a "Christian"
> label and identify themselves in different ways according to various perspectives
> and situations (2000:15).

Those who oppose C-5 strategies tend to view this issue as one of compromise and

syncretism, interpreting the issue as Muslim converts being unwilling to identify with

their new "identity" in Christ. Those favorable to C-5 strategies, on the other hand, tend

to support the idea that in their context an MBB may need to have a more fluid sense of

identity (Dutch 2000), or their "socio-religious" identity is no more important than a

category assigned on government issued identification cards (Lewis 2009).

The fact that this issue is a slippery one and exceptionally difficult to pin down is

revealed in that although there has been much discussion, there is little clarity of the

meaning of identity in a missiological context. In both academic literature on identity as

well as popular use of the relevant terminology there are wide differences in usage and

meaning assigned to this important concept. Identity is a foundational, if not central,

concept used in psychology, social-psychology, sociology, anthropology and ethnology,

philosophy, political science, literature and literature theory, economics, neuroscience,

theology and missiology. No doubt this list does not include all disciplines that wrestle

in some way with the issue of self/identity. Each of these disciplines asks different questions and seeks answers using different methodologies and thus comes to differing conclusions. Each academic discipline uses its own self/identity/person terminology but even within a specific discipline this use is not consistent. This is also reflected in popular usage of these terms both in daily life and in popular literature such as "self-help books," novels, plays, popular psychology, and visual arts, as well as Christian and theological discussions. Thus the breadth of context as well as the manner in which these ideas are referenced is staggering and indicates a concept that everyone uses yet when a definition is sought with any specificity, it quickly slips from one's grasp.

In the following discussion the guiding trajectory will remain the use of self and identity terminology with regard to its missiological application and these terms will be explored specifically with reference to the Christian mission to Muslims giving special emphasis to the research field of Ethiopia. In spite of narrowing things in this dramatic manner, it will soon be seen that the issue remains broad and unwieldy which explains why it is seldom directly addressed. The last quarter of the 20th century alone saw 31,000 published papers on the subject of the self (Cote and Levine 2003:72). Clearly it will not be possible to do a serious survey of the many ideas concerning the self that have been published even in the past few years. However, this section attempts to bring some clarification and to arrive at an understanding of this important subject that is helpful for a mission to Muslims. Identity will be considered under the five headings of: 1) Theories of identity from social science; 2) The dialogical self; 3) The study of lives; 4) Narrative identity theory of Paul Ricoeur; and 5) Understanding identity change in a missiological context.

4.2.1 Theories of identity from social science

The modern discussion of identity was first developed in the area of psychology but soon brought into a sociological discourse. James (1890) is often cited as an early reference point for the social scientific discussion of self/identity. James (1890) differentiates between "I" as subject and "me" as object of reflection. As this discussion develops it will be seen that this foundational distinction continues to be used and developed by many theorists into a variety of concepts regarding the self. Mead (1934) in his seminal work, *Mind, Self and Society*, developed the distinction between "I" and "me" in his sociologically oriented theory of the self, as primarily a product of social interaction. These two early publications provide a basis for the psychological exploration of self/identity (James) and its sociological study as well (Mead). Although terminology is certainly not used consistently in the literature, "I" as the subject of action and "me" as object of reflection and of observation by others, is a common and important distinction. "Identity" has often been used in the sense of the "me" which can change over time, be multiple, may be understood in various ways by different observers in different contexts, and is sometimes understood in the sense of differing roles and social identifications. In most cases the "I" as subject provides a sense of sameness over time and exists in some way behind the various "me's" whether they are representations of self or arising from the observations of others. However, the concept of the "dialogical self" introduces a different approach that will be discussed below.

In terms of psychology, after William James the next and most influential theorist in the area of identity has been Erik Erikson. Erikson (1968) makes mention of cultural and social influences upon identity while giving primary attention to the formation of identity in adolescence. One of Erikson's major contributions to the study of identity formation is his theory of "ego identity," which he describes as "a defined ego within a social reality" (1980[1959]:22). Erikson continues:

> Ego identity, then, in its subjective aspect, is the awareness of the fact that there is a selfsameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods and that these methods are effective in safeguarding the sameness and continuity of ones meaning for others (1980[1959]:22).

Erikson's insistence upon a consistent self as a part of his theoretical system is an important point of differentiation among later theories. Erikson as a psychologist, primarily follows a developmental approach in which the important work that must take place in the transition from childhood to adult is the formation of a functional ego-identity. Erikson writes:

> While the end of adolescence thus is the stage of an overt identity crisis, identity formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence: it is a lifelong development largely unconscious to the individual and to his society. Its roots go back all the way to the first self-recognition: in the baby's earliest exchange of smiles there is something of a self-realization coupled with a mutual recognition (1980[1959]:122).

Thus, for Erikson, identity formation has a focal point in adolescence but is an ongoing process that continues over a lifetime and has both personal and social dimensions. Cote and Levine write:

> In the context of psychosocial functioning, we can extract three interrelated dimensions from Erikson's work on identity formation: the subjective/psychological dimension, or ego-identity *qua* a sense of temporal-spatial continuity and its concomitants; the personal dimension, or a behavioral and character repertoire that differentiates individuals; and the social dimension, or recognized roles within a community…Accordingly, resolution of the identity stage is facilitated when the three dimensions dovetail: when a relatively firm sense of ego identity is developed, behavior and character become stabilized, and community-sanctioned roles are acquired (2002:15).

For Erikson, there are three continuities that contribute to a healthy and functional identity formation: 1) within the self (sameness); 2) between the self and others (relational); 3) between others (community). With regard to the third category, Cote and Levine write:

> When these community relations are stable and continuous, people's personal and social identities within the community are safeguarded. However, when

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these relations are unstable, people's personal and social identities come under pressure and may undergo revision (2002:16).

To summarize Erikson, even though the formation of identity is in a sense complete at adolescence, it is not finished in that it continues over a lifetime and various pressures can bring about revision.

Sociological study of identity has focused primarily upon the formation of the "me" through interpersonal interactions. Building primarily upon the work of Mead, the symbolic interactionism school developed the concept that the "me" is formed by how humans use symbols (words) to communicate in such a way that a sense of self is developed. However, this self is constantly adjusting to changing contexts and thus there is a constant process of maintenance of the self that is part of the theory of symbolic interactionism. Another area of sociological study of identity is the theory of collective identity, which references early theorists such as Durkheim, Marx and Weber. Collective identity is understood as the identity of members of a group that have gathered around certain essential characteristics. This early essentialist viewpoint has been largely replaced with more social constructionist perspectives such as those represented by Berger and Luckmann (1966). To this, Michael Foucault has added the importance of power and power differentials in the formation of self.[8] Callero writes regarding Foucault and those following his line of thought:

> The primary contribution of the new scholarship is that it has connected the study of the self to the historical deployment of power. It has demonstrated that the self is constituted within relations of control and is deeply embedded within systems of knowledge and discourse. (2003:118)

Although the exact nature of the process varies the sociological approach comes back to the construction of the self through social interaction.

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[8] See Gordon (1980)

Cahill writes concerning the sociology of the person drawing upon Goffman, "Thus, the public person is not made in the image of a unique self; rather, an interpretive picture of a unique self is made in the image of the public person (1998:137). Thus from a sociological point of view, the self is not generated primarily from within but rather derives from the public person by which is meant the "me" that is formed through interaction with others. In fact as Riley notes:

> There is, then, an increasing weight of evidence drawn from disciplines across the board that identity is socially constructed, that our sense of self can only emerge as the result of communicative interaction with others (2007:83).

Riley (2007), written from the perspective of ethnolinguistics, further develops the theme of the emergence of self through communicative interaction when he writes:

> The main point I wish to make here, though, is that communicative practices – any communicative practices – do not just communicate messages, they also communicate identity. Speaking and communicating in cultural and group-specific ways proclaims membership of that culture or group (2007:93).

Membership in a culture or group is affirmed by what Riley terms "domain-specific discourses" that "operate as boundary markers for epistemic communities" (2007:115). Thus, cultures and groups maintain boundaries through domain-specific discourse that identifies and affirms individuals as insiders or outsiders. Religious discourse is an example of this phenomenon. Riley's discussion on this topic clarifies why it is so difficult to use the Insider Movement strategy as a missionary strategy in the sense of an outsider attempting to join a community and become an insider. The intricacies of domain-specific discourse are such that it is not normally possible for an outsider to become so familiar and competent that her/his communication would not be recognized as that of an outsider. It also points to the importance of the use of Muslim vocabulary, terminology and manner of communication in a mission to Muslims.

Riley develops his thoughts further in his discussion of the reconfiguration of identities (2007:213-241). Using Aristotle's concept of *ethos*, Riley describes how reliability and trustworthiness are developed in discourse. Riley writes, "Public perceptions of the Me (sic) and of a person's social identity form *ethos*" (2007:214). Public perception is often manipulated today in various media or forms of communication. Currently this is often the job of publicists and branding experts and thus Aristotle's idea has been made into something of an art form. That fact aside, one could say that *ethos* is the perception that someone desires to create for the purpose of producing a sense of reliability and trustworthiness in order to be more convincing and thus produce a positive response to themselves and their ideas. However, Riley notes that the *ethos* is tempered by the actual perceptions of others. Riley (2007) very helpfully distinguishes *self, ethos* and *person* as three distinct concepts. Self is described as the diachronic, private, subjective, "I" that is the agent of action. Person is the synchronic, public, inter-subjective, "You" that is often known as social identity. *Ethos* is a rhetorical identity produced as a projection of self as perceived by others and is therefore the interpreted self-expression of the "Me." I and me are concepts that are often discussed in the identity literature but the concept of ethos is a significant contribution in that it adds the clear idea of a projection of self that is intended to create a particular public perception. Thus from James to Mead and Symbolic Interaction, and then to Erikson and now here with Riley an interactive concept of self is consistently portrayed. Whether expressed as I (subject) and me (object), or in terms of self, ethos and person, there is an *interactive* quality to self/identity where personal concepts of self are projecting identity for public reception but there is also an internal self/identity that remains constant and generates those public perceptions.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) takes up the issue of cultural difference combining insights from both psychology and anthropology. The issue addressed is that of non-Western cultures for which self is construed in an interdependent relationship with context rather than the independent self of Western cultures. Markus and Kitayama write:

> We suggest that for many cultures of the world, the Western notion of the self as an entity containing significant dispositional attributes, and as detached from context, is simply not an adequate description of selfhood. Rather, in many construals, the self is viewed as *inter*dependent with the surrounding context, and it is the "other" or the "self-in-relation-to-other" that is focal in individual experience (1991:225).

The difference in self-construal between independence and interdependence affects cognition, emotion and motivation. Markus and Kitayama describe the interdependent self as:

> Seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship recognizing that one's behavior is determined, contingent on, and to a large extent organized by what the actor perceived to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship... Others thus participate actively and continuously in the definition of the interdependent self... An interdependent self cannot be properly characterized as a bounded whole, for it changes structure with the nature of the particular social context. Within each particular social situation, the self can be differently instantiated. The uniqueness of such a self derives from the specific configuration of relationships that each person has developed (1991:227).

Although cognition and emotion are important factors, for the current research, motivation is also key. Motivation to action for the independent self and the interdependent self will be quite different. Whereas the independent self will be motivated by the expression of "self-defining inner attributes" the interdependent self will be motivated to actions "that enhance or foster one's relatedness or connection to others" (1991:231). One finding of Markus and Kitayama is that those with an interdependent self-construal will be less motivated toward cognitive consistency. They write, "... the state of cognitive dissonance arising from counterattitudinal behavior is

not likely to be experienced by those with interdependent selves" (1991:240). In this regard, interdependent selves are not likely to insist on consistency between belief and action and can even view others who do emphasize consistency as lacking flexibility, being insensitive to context, being rigid, or immature (1991:247).

The interdependent self from an Eriksonian point of view is located within his discussion of ego and superego. The *telos* of identity development for Erikson is a properly functioning ego-identity. This is based upon his essentially Western and Modern paradigm. Thus the ego as the choice maker in a healthy ego-identity provides the necessary synthesizing and executive functions and is thus the center of Erikson's identity theory. However, Erikson understood that while the development of a strong ego as the center of identity is common in modern societies, pre-modern cultures would not be the same. Cote and Levine write regarding this area of Erikson's theory:

> Hence, ego development, vis-à-vis individual choice making, would be less extensive in premodern societies, whereas superego development binding the person to a community in terms of unquestioning duty, obligation, and self sacrifice would have been more extensive (2002:103).

Erikson's explanation of what Markus and Kitayama term the interdependent self would be the role of the super-ego. The main difference between the two theories is Erikson's "unquestioning" nature of super-ego control and his limitation of this influence to "primitive" societies.

Whereas Markus and Kitayama (1991) are primarily making a comparison between Western and Asian cultures, the view of self that is common in African cultures is quite similar to the interdependent construal of self they describe. Beattie (1980) makes specific reference to African representations of self when he identifies four main themes:

> The first is the marked stress on *context* in defining oneself, whether the identifying context is a group, or a category, or both. Second is the emphasis on

the *composite* nature of the person who (or which) is seen as comprising a number of sometimes separable parts. Thirdly and connectedly, there is the notion of the self as *open,* a kind of arena, rather than something closed and private. And finally, there is the idea of *degree*, the notion that the self's essential qualities may be characterized not merely by their presence or absence, but as varying in intensity and quantity, both in different individuals and in the same individual at different times (1980:314; italics in original).

Thus self as construed in Africa is most often of the interdependent variety and is therefore quite different than that of Western missionaries and their supporting organizations.

This is of great significance for the present study. Western based missions efforts tend to emphasize the need for consistency within belief structures as well as consistency between belief and actions. It will be shown below that this has some biblical foundation in that scripture presents an expectation of consistency between faith and living. However, that is an issue that needs to be addressed over time through discipleship. Tolerance for a relatively high level of dissonance between belief and action will most often be interpreted as syncretism by Western missions agencies. Secondly, an interdependent self, described by Beattie as "open", is substantially different than what is found in Western cultural settings. Thus, the idea that conversion will take place as a once for all "decision for Christ" at the close of a single message presenting the gospel does not fit well in the context of Ethiopian Muslims. Third, the idea that the feelings and thoughts of others will be a strong influence upon a potential convert does not adequately explain the dynamic found here. Those feelings, thoughts, and attitudes are not only considered as a factor but are actually internalized as part of the self-structure and thus function much more deeply and influentially than is normally considered in mission work conducted from a Western paradigm of an independent self.

Much of the social science literature on self/identity published over the past forty years has discussed "modern" or "postmodern" concepts of self or self as existing within these paradigms. It is also true that much of the literature is written to, about, and within Western culture and is thus less helpful than it would be if it were written with a broader context in mind. While globalization is certainly a factor that is affecting Africa in a great many ways, to apply notions from either "modernity" let alone "post-modernity" to rural African contexts is conceptually inappropriate. While the world may be "flat" in some respects, there is significant cultural pushback from a world that does not see this issue in the same light (Friedman 2006). What to the Western mind appears as advancement, communication, and new opportunities, to much of the rest of the world feels like Western cultural hegemony, and is not valued in the same way or for the same reasons. Economic advancement is a lure that draws many moths toward its flame, but cultural colonization is often understood as the other side of that coin. Receiving such a coin necessarily means receiving both sides. The more conservative Islamic cultures are reacting to this new kind of perceived Western imperialism and thus are among those who are pushing back and resisting "modernization" and "globalization." At the same time, cities in Africa are largely embracing economic development as highly valuable which produces significant dissonance between urban and rural perspectives. Africa centers of power are urban. Thus there is a mix of viewpoints present in the African milieu including at least pre-modern and modern if not also post modern as well.

Globalization has thus contributed to a sense of loss among many people groups who feel they are losing something precious to themselves and their families when their own culture is being over run by powerful outside influences over which they feel little or no control. Those things highly valued in traditional cultural settings receive

appellations of "primitive" or "backward," from those speaking from what they feel are more "advanced" societies. Many international points of stress can be traced back to issues of culture clash. Thus, culture is of great importance in the world today and nowhere more so than Ethiopia. Ethiopia has ordered its political system on the basis of culture and its constitution forms an "ethnically based federal system." For this reason ethnicity has taken a central place in every arena of discourse in Ethiopia and the issue of how culture relates to identity is of utmost importance. Thus it is time for this discussion to move in the direction of anthropology.

> Geertz, speaking from the viewpoint of interpretive anthropology, states:

> What do we claim when we claim that we understand the semiotic means by which, in this case, persons are defined to one another? That we know words or that we know minds? In answering this question it is necessary, I think, first to notice the characteristic intellectual movement, the inward conceptual rhythm, in each of these analyses, and indeed in all similar analyses, including those of Malinowski – namely, a continuous dialectical tracking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring them simultaneous view (1983:69).

Semiotic systems produce meaning and as Geertz has written, "culture is public because meaning is"(1973:12). Put another way, culture is both the context and producer of meaning, which exists in the spaces between persons rather than in the minds of individuals. Geertz has often been quoted as defining culture in the following sense:

> ...man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (1973:5).

Again Geertz writes concerning culture:

> Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action; social structure is the form that action takes, the actual existing network of social relations (1973:145).

Thus culture provides a "fabric of meaning" which emphasizes the interrelated character of the culturally based concept of meaning creation. And it is not only

backward looking (providing means of interpreting experience) but also forward

looking (a guide to action). Put another way, culture both provides a means to interpret

present and past experience and a basis for future action.

Geertz has provided one of the most quoted descriptions of the Western

conception of the person:

> ...as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures (1983:59).

It should be noted that Geertz here uses the term "person" as opposed to self or identity.

Sokefeld (1999) suggests that anthropologists most often begin from the framework of

person as described by Geertz and thus find other non-individualistic cultures to be in

some way not-selves. Indeed, Sokefeld notes that anthropological discourse has largely

avoided the terminology of "self" in favor of identity and when self is discussed at all, it

is often a reflection of what anthropologists understand as identity which is entirely

sociocentric (1999:419). Sokefeld argues persuasively that there can be no identities

without selves. By this he means that the sociological and anthropological traditions

have emphasized the "Me" of Mead and thus the objectified person as opposed to the

subjective person most often found in psychology. Since it is evident that there are

many different roles a person undertakes in life, if each role is understood as an identity

there are clearly many identities or perhaps better, identifications. Drawing from

Derrida, Sokefeld takes up the French term *differance* in explaining the semiotic nature

of identity. In this regard identity relates to two different meanings both stemming from

the Latin, *differre*. One meaning is represented by the English word "defer" and

indicates that a sign is a representation of something that is not present thus its

presence is deferred. The second meaning is to "differ" indicating that the meaning of a sign is not the same over time but rather differs in the sense that it is always changing. Thus identity being semiotic indicates that it is on the one hand a deferred presence of self and on the other, it changes over time.

Thus for Sokefeld, identity is not foundational but contingent beneath which there is an underlying stratum that contributes sameness, and this he understands as the self. Sokefeld writes, "Whereas … identities can be experienced as a plurality, the self is experienced as one because it is the frame that guarantees the continuity on which the multiplicity of identities is inscribed (1999:424). Thus, there is something behind a person's various culturally based identities through which she/he interacts with the world around, the self. The issue of incorporating both the aspect of sameness and also change over time into the concept of self/identity leads toward the integrative function of narrative or life story that will be taken up shortly. When Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity is examined below it will also be seen that Sokefeld anticipates the issue that is central to Ricoeur's view of narrative identity, action. Sokefeld states it this way, "agency is characteristic of the self and self is a precondition for action" (1999:430).

4.2.2 Muslim concepts of identity

Gabriele Marranci is an anthropologist who has done extensive study and writing concerning Muslim identity. He has taken Sokefeld as his entry point to the issue where Sokefeld writes, "In anthropological discourse, the question of identity is almost completely detached from the problem of self" (Sokefeld 1999:419). Sokefeld ultimately argues that "there can be no identities without selves" (1999:419). However, Maranci finds Sokefeld's arguments to be inadequate due to a lack of clarity regarding the actual nature of the self and identity. Marranci critique's Sokefeld's article when he argues that

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"[In] Sokefeld's article, which mentions both self and identity; they tend to blur into each other's domain" (2008:90). Marranci wants to distinguish clearly between self and identity and turns to neuroscience to accomplish his goal.

The two concepts key to Marranci's theory of Musliim self and identity are taken predominantly from Damasio's study of consciousness and self. Thus Marranci takes a quite different approach than Geertz and interpretive anthropology specifically regarding the relationship between culture and nature. Geertz discusses culture as being distinct from and even opposed to nature whereas Marranci would place culture within nature. Marranci further criticizes Geertz for his concept that culture is a "control mechanism" that governs behavior and thus self is overruled by culture (2008:92). Although Marranci seems to conflate the British structuralist approach with the interpretive approach of Geertz, he rightly concludes that anthropology has been guilty of "collective stereotyping of what Muslims should be or how they should behave" (2008:93). Marranci explains his concern by referencing his research among Muslim prisoners in Scotland:

> Any differences among the Muslim prisoners, who came from several ethnic and national backgrounds as well as different Islamic schools, was not acknowledged. Their individual identity as human beings, and the personal Muslim identity they felt to have, was denied by the assumption that their 'Islamic culture' shaped them in the same way and to the same degree (2008:93).

Although it seems that Marranci overemphasizes some aspects of Geertz's theory, he nonetheless has a stronger understanding of self and makes a clear distinction between self and identity which understanding leads to a significantly different concept of the Muslim self that deserves careful consideration.

Marranci argues that much of the previous discussion of identity in the social science paradigm has been mistaken primarily on two counts. First, it "has over-focused on the instrumental use of each other's identities, i.e. identity as a social instrument"

(1999:95). This has led sociological as well as anthropological analysis of identity to assume that what is socially thought of the other is the *real* other (1999:95). Second, is the issue of boundaries that has led to an understanding of identity as differentiation. Marranci states, "Because differentiation marks identity in the social world, why should we assume, as many social scientists do, that individuals experience their identity as social differentiation?" (1999:96).

To overcome what Marranci considers the mistakes of social science up to this point, he turns to neuroscience and its understanding of the self and identity as expressed by Antonio Damasio. Damasio (2000) is the primary source used by Marranci in which he describes core consciousness that produces a core self and extended consciousness that produces an autobiographical self. Damasio writes:

> The first basis for the conscious *you* is a feeling which arises in the re-presentation of the *unconscious proto-self in the process of being modified* within an account which establishes the cause of the modification. The first trick behind consciousness is the creation of this account, and its first result is the feeling of knowing (1999:172 italics in original).

There are some key factors that Damasio presents that are picked up by Marranci. First, self arises from a proto-self and this proto-self experiences feelings based upon stimuli in the environment. The persistent experience of these stimuli with their corresponding feelings leads to the creation of the *core self*. The core self is transient and momentary responding to immediate stimulations of various kinds and is present in those experiences but then ceases to exist when that experience ends. However, memory comes into play at this point. Damasio terms this kind of memory *autobiographical* in that it is memories of previous experiences. Damasio explains:

> When certain personal records are made explicit in reconstructed images, as needed, in smaller or greater quantities, they become the *autobiographical self.* The real marvel, as I see it, is that the autobiographical memory is architecturally connected, neurally and cognitively speaking, to the nonconscious proto-self and to the emergent and conscious core self of each lived instant. This connection

forms a bridge between the gonging process of core consciousness, condemned to sisyphal transiency, and a progressively larger array of established, rock-solid memories pertaining to unique historical facts and consistent characteristics of an individual…The display of autobiographical self is thus more open to refashioning than the core self, which is reproduced time and again in essentially the same form across a lifetime (1999:173).

Thus for Damasio, the individual has both core consciousness which produces a core self and an extended consciousness that produces an autobiographical self. Whereas the core self is transient and exists only within an experience, the autobiographical self persists over time. "Extended consciousness goes beyond the here and now of core consciousness, both backward and forward" (Damasio 1999:195). Thus the autobiographical self includes both a remembered past and an anticipated future.

The second piece of Marranci's theory comes from Milton who views emotions as being essentially ecological in nature. Milton argues that emotions arise from interaction of the human organism with its environment. They are essentially physiological reactions to external stimuli from one's surroundings such as the well-known fight or flight response mechanism. Feelings are the learned understanding of what those emotions mean, which are in turn connected to appropriate response mechanisms. Following this line of thought, learning (knowledge acquisition) is very much connected in its origin to emotions and their corresponding feelings (Milton 2005:35). In this way emotion is separated from feelings. *Emotions are thus ecological in origin and feelings are their corresponding learned responses*. Feelings are connected to culture whereas emotions are not.

For the next piece of Marranci's thinking it is necessary to return to Damasio and his discussion of identity. Damasio writes:

The idea each of us constructs of our self, the image we gradually build of who we are physically and mentally, of where we fit socially, is based on autobiographical memory over years of experience and is constantly subject to remodeling (1999:224).

We see then that identity for Damasio is drawn from the autobiographical self by an act of imagination producing a self-image that is understood as identity. When Damasio includes "where we fit socially" in his description of this phenomenon he incorporates a social dimension but minimizes any discussion of that aspect. Damasio's conception of self and identity are built upon a biological foundation and are therefore subject to the exigencies of natural selection. Damasio explains:

> [T]he shadows of the deeply biological core self and of the autobiographical self that grows under its influence constantly propitiate the selection of "drafts" that accord with a singly unified self. Moreover, the delicately shaped selectional machinery of our imagination stakes the probabilities of selection toward the same, historically continuous self (1999:225).

In other words, Damasio posits a proto-self that becomes a core-self through repetitive experiences that are remembered and this way create an autobiographical self which in turn produces an identity which is the imagined self-image that both persists over time and can change, thus allowing for a continuous self that has a greater probability of biological selection due to its ability to learn from the past and anticipate the future. This "person" is constantly experiencing remodeling or change as they learn and their personal history develops. Thus, as presented by Marranci and derived from Damasio, self and identity arise from biological rather than social processes and are not the same. Self (autobiographical self) is a real entity produced through neurobiology whereas identity is a product of imagination by which Damasio means, not real.

To these building blocks Marranci adds his own insight that a human being must "make sense" of their autobiographical self and desires to engage in various forms of self-expression (2006:47). Marranci develops this thought more fully when he writes:

> I have explained that identity is a process with two functions. On the one hand, it allows human beings to make sense of their autobiographical self, while on the other it allows them to express the autobiographical self through symbols. These symbols communicate personal feelings that, otherwise, could not be externally

communicated. Hence, I have concluded that it is *what we feel to be* that determines our personal identity. So, the statement of "I am Muslim' of a hypothetical Mr [*sic*] Hussein is nothing else than the *symbolic communication* of his emotional commitment through which he experiences his autobiographical self (2008:97 italics in original).

To this Marranci adds an important concept, which is that there is a balance between internal perception of identity and external environments (primarily social), which the person must keep in equilibrium. This issue will be returned to in more detail below.

One of Marranci's primary purposes in his writing is to explain why Muslims engage in acts of *jihad* or terror (a word he never uses). In his discussion he engages this issue by using the lens of identity. His explanation for why some Muslims engage in *jihad* is that a person must maintain "coherence between autobiographical self, identity and environment" (2008:100). Marranci explains *jihad* as an act of identity that arises from this need for coherence. The process is as follows: 1) the Muslim feels threatened by modernism, globalization, and Westernization that attack the foundations of his/her identity as a Muslim; 2) this creates panic which is an emotion and not a feeling and arises from environmental rather than social factors; 3) this panic knocks the person out of equilibrium and destroys their coherence between self, identity, and environment; 4) to restore coherence and equilibrium some Muslims engage in an act of identity termed *jihad*. While the purpose of the present study is not to explain *jihad*, the analysis given by Marranci raises important issues concerning identity.

Marranci seems to want to provide *jihad* with a biological grounding and thus minimize the role of social influences on the one hand and in doing so to minimize personal responsibility of Muslims for acts of terror on the other. Unfortunately he does not explain why *jihad*? In the possible range of responses that could be understood as acts of identity, why do some Muslims choose acts of violence and terror? He wants to separate the acts of violence by Muslims being propagated worldwide from their social

and religious context and transform them into acts necessitated by biology. Marranci determines that the "cause" of these acts of violence is the creation of "panic" in Muslims by the forces of globalization and thus the insensitivity of the West. Perhaps this is a needed balance to theories of blame and accusation against Muslims but it is not satisfactory by itself either because it does not provide an answer as to why *jihad* in the form of violent acts should be the chosen "act of identity" rather than one of many other options. Thus, while it is needful to appreciate the contribution of neuroscience to understanding the self and identity, Marranci's particular agenda of explaining *jihad* in biological terms must be balanced by appropriate consideration of social and religious factors. Certainly acts of terror are not the only possible way to restore equilibrium and coherence, yet this means is chosen by some Muslims and supported emotionally and financially by others. *Jihad* is defended by its perpetrators based upon passages from both *Qur'an* and *Hadith,* and while many Muslims would not interpret *jihad* in terms of physical violence, this interpretation has long and prominent historical roots. Thus there is certainly a social and theological component that must be considered as to why *jihad*, in the sense of acts of destruction and loss of human life, has become so prominent on the world scene today.

But what can be drawn from Marranci, Damasio, and Milton for the purposes of the present study? First, the role of feelings in the shaping of self and identity are brought to the forefront and demand consideration. Marranci claims," I am who I feel to be." A Muslim is a Muslim because he/she feels to be a Muslim. Such feelings are the learned, culturally based response to emotion. Thus if the question is asked, why does a person who has put faith in Christ want to be called a Muslim Follower of Isa? The answer provided by Marranci would be that they still *feel to be* a Muslim. From this,

further questions arise. How does this feeling develop and what are the consequences of "feeling to be a Muslim" in relationship to conversion to Christ?

First, the question regarding the process of identity formation as described by Damasio must be considered. This process is one of interaction with the environment and learning to negotiate encountered environmental factors successfully. While there is a primal sense in which "environment" is the physical environment, but humans grow to maturity primarily within a social environment, which should be understood as the more influential factor. Social/cultural influences include experiences of success and failure in terms of attempting various approaches to meeting personal needs and desires, but also include corporate memory that is maintained in the form of stories, proverbs, symbols, dramas, dances, and the many forms of cultural expression that convey the memory of one's community concerning successful and unsuccessful strategies for coping with the common challenges of life. While this process may have a biological primary root, the experience of humans today is that such processes take place within families, communities, and cultures. Thus, while the point that culture does not entirely determine self is well taken, its influence cannot be ignored. Cultural influences create a comfort level in the individual. For a person to say, "I feel Muslim" means that there has been an incorporation of meanings and values into the self that cause her/him to be comfortable in an environment where those meanings and values are shared.

Damasio suggests that feelings are a learned response to emotion and thus have a similar neurobiological structure to knowledge. Thus feelings and knowledge should not be as separated as is usually done in Western conceptions. What one knows of their environment and what one feels about that environment develop together in an interrelated manner. Above Damasio is quoted as writing, "The first basis for the

conscious *you* is a feeling… and that feeling is a feeling of knowing something"
(1999:172). Western cultures and academics favor knowing (considered objective) over
feeling (considered subjective). Therefore, even in missiology, there is a tendency
toward the prioritization of beliefs, doctrines and teachings above what people may feel
about them. Knowing the five pillars of Islam and feeling to be a Muslim are entirely
different phenomena. While Damasio affirms the human capacity for changes within the
autobiographical self, his mechanism for change is limited to environmental
interactions that produce new learning that bring about success for the organism. To
this must be added the capacity for reflection that allows for learning that does not lead
to greater success but perhaps a greater sense of happiness and satisfaction. And there
is the spiritual dimension of life and the work of the Holy Spirit to affect humanity
which capacity cannot be properly appreciated within the paradigms of either biological
or social sciences.

Damasio suggests that the capacity for change in the autobiographical self is
connected to a balance between two influences: lived past and anticipated future
(1999:224-225). This gap between current experience as understood within an
historical context and an anticipated future, is the gap in which the missiological
enterprise is conducted. Different anticipated futures produce different actions.
Anticipation is an act of the imagination. As explained above, Damasio conceives of
identity as an act of imagination and thus change of identity must also involve
imaginative processes. Envisioning a possible future is an act of imagination that can
implicate the individual in a process of transformation. The role of imagination and
narrative in self-transformation will be discussed in the section on Ricoeur's theory of
narrative identity below.

While acknowledging the many issues surrounding the use of the word Christian, if a person is to "feel Christian" rather than "feeling Muslim" the activation of the imagination is necessary to that process. The power of narrative is that it not only communicates knowledge but also engages corresponding feelings about that knowledge. Narrative puts knowledge into context and the same knowledge in different contexts creates different feelings about that knowledge. An example that is commonly used in the field of education would be the use of a photograph that is shown to a group of students. The photograph is partially covered by another paper so only half is visible to the class. In the visible half there is a black man who is running and behind him are a group of policemen, also running. The class is asked to think to themselves, what is the story that goes with this picture? In most cases (at least in America) the black man is thought to be running *from* the police. But then the rest of the picture is uncovered and in front of the black man is a white man who is running in front and he has a woman's purse in his hand that he has evidently stolen. The black man is in fact chasing the same person as the police but is simply running faster. The lesson of this exercise is that context created by creation of a narrative produces human reaction and different story lines produce different feelings about the same information. It can also be seen from this example that both knowledge and the feelings connected to that knowledge are closely intertwined. In this manner the "objectivity" of knowledge and the "subjectivity" of feelings are both brought into question. Human knowing is always contextual and is thus always intertwined with related feelings.

Conversion to Christ, as seen through the lens of Damasio and Marranci, looks somewhat differently than it appears under a purely theological paradigm. Neither Damasio nor Marranci are writing about conversion, but if their ideas are used as a lens through which conversion is considered, new insights may appear. The core self of

Damasio is largely ignored by Marranci since it does not represent the human experience of self. Self is experienced as autobiographical self and interpreted as identity. Feelings are central to the process of self-creation and self-change in a much more significant way than is often appreciated among missiologists and theologians. If conversion is understood using this conception, it requires a person to *feel* differently and not only to *think* differently. Thus arguments of an apologetic nature are unlikely to produce conversion. Teaching Christian doctrine and refuting Islamic teaching, is not, by itself, likely to produce change in how a person feels about herself. It should be added that the feeling of Muslim identity has been produced within the context of community and while involving teaching and instruction, is much more oriented to a process of doing things together. Repeated actions undertaken in community have produced ways of thinking and feeling that are deeply embedded in the Muslim individual. A mission to Muslims must be considered in the light of the need for a change of feeling: the change from feeling to be a Muslim to the feeling of being a disciple of Christ.

Another concept that can be reflected upon from Marranci is the human need to maintain equilibrium between the autobiographical self with its corresponding identity and the environment within which it exists. Marranci uses this concept to connect the creation of panic in the Muslim community with the outcome of *jihad* as an act of identity. Christian outreach into Muslim communities is certainly viewed as a threat, often connected to forces of globalization, and thus could produce panic in a similar way. First, it is a threat to the unity of the Muslim community and thus a violation of the all- encompassing value of *tawhid*. Kraft explains:

> Islam is a religion defined by unity. Unity in the oneness, or *tawhid*, of God. Unity in life between lifestyle and faith. Unity in society between politics and religion. Unity in the community defined by conformity. This is based primarily on the

doctrinal importance of the unity of God, in a religion whose creed begins with the affirmation that "there is no God but the one God" (2012:36).

Even though as an outsider looking at the Muslim community one may see many divisions and differences. Within the worldwide community of Islam, there is a strong value placed upon unity and thus a popular perception among Muslims of their overriding unity. Conversion to Christ as seen from within the Muslim community is a serious threat because it puts at risk a fundamental value held by Muslims. This threat is seen not only in relation to the community but as an attack upon the identity of the individuals within the community. In this manner equilibrium is destroyed and therefore must be restored.

In Ethiopia, the response to this kind of perceived threat can come at the individual and/or the community level. When a family member is known to have turned to Christ, the family perceives this as a threat to the *tawhid* of the family and thus the *tawhid* of the community. In such a case, the convert may be beaten, expelled, dis-inherited, and in a few cases, even killed. In the life stories and testimonies recorded during this research, all of these are recounted. In Marranci's terminology these would be acts of identity that restore equilibrium.

At the community level, an example would be an event in the town of Jimma in Western Ethiopia in 2011 in which nearly 100 Christian houses were burned and more than 50 churches destroyed. After the conflict was concluded, the investigation determined that the entire incident was orchestrated by a small but radical group of Muslims who created a flashpoint intended to produce this strong reaction by the community as a whole. So while it is true that the actual number of radical Muslims who instigated this action was relatively small, it is also true that they were able to manipulate the community as a whole to commit acts of violence. This is a phenomenon

found throughout the Muslim world. The extremists are few in number but they have a capacity to manipulate the emotions/feelings of the community as a whole through perceived threats. Within Ethiopian Muslim communities, perceived threats are not uncommonly met by violent reactions. Such reactions as viewed through the lens provided by Marranci can be understood as actions of identity that restore equilibrium in response to the emotion of panic created by the perceived threat.

This concept may also offer insight into what sort of Christ based activities within a Muslim community may be tolerated and which will not. The Insider Movement strategy is designed to allow converts to remain in the Muslim community. In order to do so, a Christian group (whatever they may call themselves) seeks to function in a manner that is somehow within the bounds of allowable variations within the Muslim community. Thus the designation "Muslim Follower of *Isa*" allows a person to present themselves as remaining within the allowable range of variations for Muslims while having put faith in Christ. In other words, the perception being created, or one could say, the *ethos* being projected, is that they remain Muslims with a somewhat higher regard for *Isa* than other Muslims. Those who object to this methodology suggest that either this is a true identity in which case they should not be considered Christians, or it is untrue in which case the strategy is one of dishonesty and deception. Neither of these alternatives is acceptable to many Christians. In the next chapter the results of research in Ethiopia will be presented which will confirm Marranci's viewpoint in many respects. If the new "Christian" movement is not viewed as a threat, it will not provoke a strong reaction. Missiologically, the question becomes, how is it possible for converts to function in such a way that it is not viewed as a threat? Corollary to this is the question, "Is the Insider Movement strategy the only or the best way to accomplish this goal?"

Kathryn Kraft has taken a sociological approach to the study of the conversion of

Muslims to Christ within which she has given careful consideration to the issue of

Muslim identity. Regarding Muslim converts and identity, Kraft writes:

> "[Although members of their society may see their faith change as an abandonment of the community, that is not usually their wish. To them, their change is one in beliefs, not a change in culture or society (2012:101).

Depending on a person's viewpoint they may evaluate such a statement positively or

negatively. Is conversion only a matter of beliefs? Can beliefs be separated from culture

and society for a convert? That is essentially the position taken by proponents of the

Insider Movement strategy. The answer depends much upon how one defines

conversion as noted in the previous section of this chapter. Kraft acknowledges this

concern when she writes:

> Many Arab converts have told me they are troubled by the suggestion that highly "contextualized" converts (participants in what has more recently been dubbed the "Insider Movement") do not consider themselves "Christian", since, as far as these Arab converts are concerned, all believers in Christ from a Muslim background have in fact adopted "Christianity", or else are theologically confused. They worry that these individuals have not experienced a full turning of the heart, which seems to necessarily entail a rejection of Islam: …there is little evidence that one can fully embrace a new faith without rejecting that which s/he is leaving. Their greater concern, however, is that such individuals want to adopt Christianity fully, but without the cost of the stigma that comes with a religiously deviant choice in the eyes of their society (2012:101).

But in the final analysis, Kraft argues that Islam becomes a convert's ethnicity and

Christianity their religion. Thus for her it is possible for a person to be a Christian by

belief and a Muslim by culture. This is accomplished by the concept of "adhesive

identities" which Kraft borrows from Yang (1999). Adhesive identity is a concept where

a person joins a new identity to the old one without replacing it. Kraft describes this as,

"adhesive integration [which] is when people add multiple identities without

necessarily losing one, allowing for positive interaction with people in a variety of

different social settings" (2012:105). She suggests that the identity of "convert" is the

adhesive that allows a Christian religious identity to be adhered to a Muslim ethnic identity.

While Kraft shows a great deal of personal knowledge regarding the thoughts and feelings of Arab converts, she writes from within the same paradigm that Marranci tries to overcome. The fundamental viewpoint of social science, when it comes to identity, is centered on a "Me" that is created by others. Since others may identify "Me" in various ways, there can be many "Me's." By conceptualizing identity in this manner, it is not a great leap to posit that some of these identities could be adhered together to form an amalgam identity. Thus the concept of the continuity of self is lost. Indeed both sociology and anthropology have largely subsumed self within the concept of a socially created identity. Marranci, drawing from Cohen (1994), rightly objects to this majority viewpoint on the basis that behind these "identities" there is a self that persists and is revealed in self-consciousness. Having made this objection to Kraft's theory of adhesive identity, it must be noted that she provides significant insights into Muslim conversion to Christ many of which will be brought forward below at the appropriate point in this discussion.

As the social sciences continue to wrestle with the concepts of self, identity, and person, the focus has come to be upon the interactive nature of self. Self is not in a world alone, indeed it could not be, and thus must be understood within its social and cultural context. But how does that context express itself in the formation of the self? Sociology and anthropology have turned largely to a consideration of the various "Me" identifications. But psychological study of the self has progressed along another pathway. The new psychological approaches emphasize the need for understanding of the "I" or subject of experience. The theory of the dialogical self has been developed

within the field of psychology and seeks a way to accommodate changeableness within the structure of the subjective self.

4.2.3   The dialogical self

The primary theorist of the dialogical self is Hubert Hermans who, along with Harry Kempen, wrote the primary monograph on this topic. Hermans' academic background is psychology and so there is a therapeutic orientation to his work although his major writing on dialogical self is largely theoretical. The uniqueness of the dialogical self is that Hermans moves from the idea that there are many possible identifications that can be experienced as objectified "Me's", toward a theory where there are many "I" positions that are in conversation or dialogue with each other. For Hermans although there is a dominant "I" position at any given moment there is never a complete resolution or unification of self (Hermans and Kempen 1993:93-95). Hermans found as a psychologist that humans have a capacity to seemingly change from one self-position to another, Hermans, Kemper and van Loon (1992) says it this way:

> The *I* has the possibility to move, as in a space, from one position to the other in accordance with changes in situation and time. The *I* fluctuates among different and even opposed positions. The *I* has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established. The voices function like interacting characters in a story (1992:28).

Thus theory of the dialogical self suggests that it is not only about how others may see a person (social identity) but *I* as a subject can change positions and this is not a pathological but rather a normal way for humans to experience themselves. The problematic of this theory is clearly seen in the above quotation. The "I has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice…" but what *I* is that? If there are numerous *I* positions and the self is never fully resolved and thus constantly in flux, it is unclear of what *I* he is speaking.

In his search for a theory to explain his clinical observations, Hermans came to

Bakhtin's literary theory of the polyphonic novel as developed in his book, *Problems of*

Dostoevsky's Poetics (1929). Hermans writes,

> Bakhtin, … was no psychologist and not primarily interested in psychology of the self. For him as a literary scholar, polyphony represented a multiplicity of divergent or opposite views of the world, and, as such, he emphasized the principle of discontinuity more than the principle of continuity (2001:247).

So Hermans found an essential discontinuity of the self as the common human

experience and reached into literary theory to draw a metaphorical relationship

between the concept of dialogue among characters in a novel and dialogue internal to

the self. Hermans thus combined the psychological theory of James in which James

allows for both the unity and multiplicity of the self and joins it with Bakhtin's dialogical

expression of the multiplicity of characters in the polyphonic novel to form his theory of

the dialogical self. By bringing Bakhtin's concept from literary theory into his

psychology of the self, Hermans was able to posit a dialogical relationship among "I"

positions.

> Although James' thinking on the self certainly admitted the possibility of a multiplicity of characters, Bakhtin's polyphonic novel, if applied to the self, can be seen as a challenge not only to the notion of individuality (the self as discreet from other selves), but also to the unity and continuity of the self. If the self is considered in terms of a polyphonic novel, the implication is a far-reaching decentralization of the self in terms of a decentralized plurality of characters (Hermans 2001:247-248).

Barresi describes more completely how James is used as the psychological basis for the

theory of a dialogical self. He explains it this way, although James (1890) primarily

discusses self utilizing a distinction between I (self as subject) and me (self as object),

he also discusses different selves such as material, social and spiritual selves that may

be in disagreement with one another. James also indicates that each passing thought

may come from a different aspect of self and for that moment is the self and there is no

reason or basis to project that there is a permanent self behind these passing experiences of thought (Barresi 2002:242). The self for James, as described by Barresi, is a group of I-me combinations that exist when a person identifies one of them as "Me" for a moment. Thus there is an ongoing dialogue between self and other but the other has been internalized in this theory so the dialogue continues both inside and outside of the person. In this dialogical relationship as described by Hermans and Kempen, "the tension between self and other is never resolved in any final way" (1993:93). Hermans thus develops a theory of a constantly changing, decentralized self that is open to the world and engaging in dialogical relationships both externally and internally. The dialogical self is a post-modern theory that essentially deconstructs the self. In the end, the dialogical self does seem to function well as a metaphor of the self more so than as a theory of the person.

The concept of a dialogical self solves some problems but simultaneously creates others. It solves problems resulting from the strong theoretical separation between a self-contained concept of person and a reified culture. The dialogical self provides a mechanism for interaction between an internal self and others as well as providing a role for culture both in forming selves and in turn being formed by selves. The metaphor of dialogue allows for two way communication, it can be undertaken and then abandoned for a season, at times it may have more influence and at times less, and also allows for individual differences. It is implicit that not all dialogue is equally convincing to different people with varying interests. Thus dialogue is a helpful metaphor regarding the interaction between self and culture. Whether it is a useful theory of personality is better left as an issue for psychologists.

There are also some difficulties with the theory of the dialogical self. The fundamental problem, as it appears to this writer, is that as far as the internal reality it

seeks to explain, it just does not ring true to experience. A person may have different

aspirations such as to be a policeman, a businessperson, a preacher, or a millionaire, but

each of these is not a self that is capable of being in conversation with the others. To

desire to engage in various activities clearly does not require the creation of a new self

for each one. Even if a person desires to be different kinds of people, a doctor, lawyer,

shop owner, or journalist, does not mean these are identities in dialogue with each

other inside of that person. That a person has different roles such as father/mother,

provider, friend, businessperson, church member, and so on, does not mean that there

is not a unified self behind these roles, and a unified sense of self shaping how a person

functions in each of them. The evidence Hermans provides to support his theory in his

voluminous writings is transcribed from recorded conversations in which people talk

from different roles or positions which Hermans interprets as being actually different

selves that are independently existing in such a way as to have an ongoing dialogue

within the person. He describes various selves taking the lead or dominant role at a

given time and then relinquishing that dominance to other "I" positions as the dialogue

continues. It is not possible to truly see inside of the mind of another but this

description just does not ring true to experience and since interpretation of experience

is the main evidence Hermans offers, the evidence appears weak.

It seems to be a major leap from different objectifications of self (me positions)

to different multiple subjective selves (dialogical self theory). Barresi critiques Hermans

when he writes:

> The weakness that I see in Hermans' current formulation of this theoretical
> framework is the assumption that he makes that an individual can adopt a
> narrative or authorial stance, somehow above the characters that make up the
> polyphonic and dialogical self, and can freely move the narrative 'I-position' from
> one character to another to give each his or her own voice (2002:247).

Barresi hits the nail on the head as far as the problem with the dialogical self in terms of its theoretical structure. Thus, as a psychological theory of self there is serious deficiency, but as a metaphor of self-change over time it is quite useful.

One of the useful concepts developed by Hermans has to do with the relationship of self to culture, which has been previously identified as a challenging issue. For Hermans, culture speaks with a collective voice within the self and is therefore a part of one's internal dialogue. In this manner, culture functions as a collective identity that speaks within the self similarly to the way a voice of conscience is commonly described. Hermans, using Bakhtin's terminology, calls this "ventriloquation" (2001:262). The collective voice of culture speaks in this sense inside the self and is able to contribute to the self-dialogue that is continuous and ongoing within the person. In this manner culture is internalized and becomes influential in the formation of self. Chaudhary and Sriram describe this aspect of Hermans' theory as "striving to arrive at a study of the self that is culture-inclusive, and a culture that is self-inclusive" (2001:390). This connects with Bakhtin's distinction between authoritative and internally persuasive discourse. Authoritative discourse comes from a dominant position of power, which for Hermans could be external or internal, and may control action but by way of a power differential as opposed to persuasion. On the other hand, internally persuasive discourse may also arise from outside of the self but is "tightly interwoven with one's own words" (Bakhtin 1981:345). Bakhtin suggests that internally persuasive words are "half-ours and half-someone else's" (1981:345). Tappan describes the process in the following manner:

> When another's words are 'retold in one's own words' … they become internally persuasive. Internally persuasive discourse is much more open, flexible and dynamic than authoritative discourse. It becomes genuinely dialogical (2005:55).

The context of this discussion for both Bakhtin and Tappan is the issue of ideology as opposed to culture in general. From that viewpoint, religious belief systems are another form of ideology and function in the same manner. When words concerning religious truth are internalized and become one's own words, they become internally persuasive which is clearly the goal of evangelistic speech in a missiological context.

Thus an important issue is brought forward here. How does authoritative speech become internally persuasive. Anyone who has worked in a mission to Muslims knows that confronting *Qur'anic* truth with biblical truth in a sort of authoritative show-down is not effective and thus apologetical approaches to Muslim evangelism tend only to harden each position and do not lead to dialogue or mutual understanding. Rather, raising questions for discussion and exploration is a much more effective method. The goal of such conversation should not be to get a "decision for Christ" but to enter into conversation such that the curiosity and interest of one's conversation partner is elevated and they begin to seek answers for themselves. Many times such dialogue has greater effect afterward than it appears at the time. When the questions asked become the honest questions of the Muslim interlocutor, that is, when answers can be explored together in a healthy and productive way, that is when a true and effective witness of the gospel is coming to the level of productive communication. Every person uses words that initially belong to others but as those words are internalized and made one's own that person gradually becomes the author of their own life. This is such an important process in terms of its implications for a mission to Muslims and will be discussed in detail below.

From the dialogical self the next section will discuss the study of lives, which is closely connected to the work of Dan McAdams. He also recognizes multiplicity within the self for which he uses the term "imagoes," but presents the power of life story as an

integrative mechanism to bring unity because "for each person there is a singular and definitive story to tell" (Raggatt 2000:67). The difference between McAdams and Hermans is partly one of emphasis (McAdams emphasizing life story and Hermans emphasizing dialogue) but more fundamentally whereas Hermans does not posit a unified self, only an ongoing dialogue among *I* positions, McAdams suggests that narrative has an integrative function and thus the power of bringing the multiplicity within the self into the unity of a life. Because the study of lives uses life story as its unit of study, it is an excellent transition into the narrative identity theory of Paul Ricoeur that will follow.

4.2.4 The study of lives

Alongside the dialogical self of Hermans must be placed the study of lives and its major theorist, Dan McAdams. One of the primary differences between Hermans and McAdams is the issue of the unity of a life. Whereas for Hermans, his post-modern approach leaves the self in discordance with simultaneously existing selves in conversation with one another, McAdams, while using the term "imagoes" to indicate the discordances within the self, theorizes the unity of the self through the synthesizing power of story.

> Whereas, for McAdams it appears that there is a kind of magisterial (or Bakhtinian monological) I who generates a narrative self, and constantly updates it, for Hermans there is merely different me's depicted in each of these characters who must be given the opportunity to speak for themselves, by being provided an I or I-position to speak for them (Barresi 2002:240).

McAdams, like Hermans, writes from the perspective of psychology, which means there is also a therapeutic orientation to his theory. However, his theories are useful and applicable to this study of the Ethiopian mission to Muslims. McAdams describes his own position as:

In late adolescence and young adulthood, people living in modern societies begin to reconstruct the personal past, perceive the present, and anticipate the future in terms of an internalized and evolving self-story, an integrative narrative of self that provides modern life with some modicum of psychosocial unity and purpose. Life stories are based on biographical facts, but they go considerably beyond the facts as people selectively appropriate aspects of their experience and imaginatively construe both past and future to construct stories that make sense to them and to their audiences, that vivify and integrate life and make it more or less meaningful. Life stories are psychosocial constructions, coauthored by the person himself or herself and cultural context within which that person's life is embedded and given meaning (2001:101).

In the above quotation there are several key ideas that will be discussed below referencing McAdams and other theorists who follow a similar approach.

1) The life story develops over time and is constantly changing.

2) The life story combines past, present and anticipated future into a single narrative.

3) A life story is an integrative narrative.

4) Life stories go beyond biographical facts to imaginatively construe experience.

5) Life stories involve a construction of meaning.

6) Life stories are embedded in culture.

4.2.4.1 The life story develops over time and is constantly changing

McAdams builds his theory within the paradigm of psychology using primarily James and Erikson as his foundation. One of the reasons narrative theory has become so widely used in social science is its ability to allow for change over time. Prior to narrative, trait approaches to identity were common in which the self was understood in a reified manner. Both James and Erikson developed their theories understanding the changeableness of human identity over time. This capacity of human identity to change has been more fully described and given a working mechanism by narrative theory.

Barresi and Juckes write, "What is important about James notion of person is that the 'me,' or self-in-context, is continually being revised in response to the changing
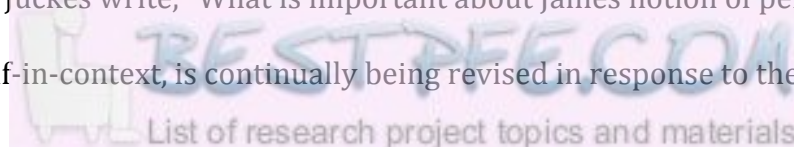
interests and needs of the organism" (1997:697). They continue, "This concept of the 'me' as an object of self-awareness can be seen as a ground for narrative self-construction" (1997:698). Thus one of the essential reasons for the need for a narrative understanding of the person is the issue of change over time. The self-narrative changes because present circumstances change. As the present situation changes and thus the meaning attached to the present "me", a new interpretation of past events that have led to the present condition is necessary and requires revision of the self-narrative. This is because, "Self is expressed in stories and these stories are 'sources of self-definition'" (Singer and Bluck 2001:92).

The life story can change in a variety of ways. Most people, although perhaps having a personal sense of their own life history, seldom actually tell or write that narrative in full. Rather bits and pieces are told and retold for various purposes and in differing circumstances. As McAdams writes:

> People carry with them and bring into conversation a wide range of self-stories, and these stories are nested in larger and overlapping stories, creating ultimately a kind of anthology of the self…. Thus identity may not be captured in a single grand narrative for each person, but identity nonetheless is accomplished through narrative. People create unity and purpose in their lives, and they make sense of the psychosocial niches they inhabit in adulthood through stories, even if they must rely on more than one story to do so (2001:117).

These overlapping life stories form a fabric or mosaic that makes up a person's sense of self. Conversion is a very definite kind of change that can happen in a person's life. The possibility of the incorporation of significant change, such as conversion, into a life story is one important reason that understanding identity change in terms of narrative is particularly helpful in the context of the missiological task. Bauer and McAdams (2004) is a study of life transitions such as conversion in adulthood. The report of their study suggests that such significant change experiences are positively perceived when

understood as growth. They identify four themes from life stories that involve growth: integrative, intrinsic, agentic and communal. These themes are examined in pairs, integrative/intrinsic and agentic/communal. In each case one theme is focused on internal processes (intrinsic and agentic) and the other is focused upon external processes (integrative and communal). Religious conversion narratives are often expressed in stories involving integrative and communal themes although agentic themes are often present to some degree as well. This is significant in that narrative has the capacity both to express integrative themes of change but also to provide a mechanism for the integrative process.

The description of the process of change in adulthood as discussed by Freeman and Robinson (1990:64-66) draws much from Ricoeur, which will be made clear in more detail below. They suggest a four-step process of development or life change in adulthood. The first step is *recognition* by which is meant recognition of the need for change whether due to life events such as marriage/divorce, birth of children, career change or other kinds of external pressures. Second is *distanciation*, a term used by Ricoeur, which means separating the self from itself. One mechanism for this is to tell the story. Once the story has been told it takes on a life of its own and thus provides distanciation between life as lived and life as told. The third step is *articulation*, which is a more permanent or formal inscription of life events. This could be writing or recording a narrative, or in some cultures dancing or using drama to express the narrative of a life. The last step in the process is *appropriation*, which means that the change is incorporated into the self and thus a new self is formed that includes the life change. In Ricoeur's terminology (borrowed from Heidegger) this would mean coming to a new way of being-in-the-world.

4.2.4.2 The life story combines past, present and anticipated future

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One of the integrative functions of narrative concerns time. What is lacking in Hermans' dialogical self is an adequate means to account for sameness over time. Narrative provides for continuity of self over the life history and anticipates possible futures. Sarbin writes:

> The temporal context of experience and action is what makes the narrative a congenial organizing principle. Action, and the silent preparation for action, because extended in time, is storied. We live in a story-shaped world. Action takes on the narrative quality, the familiar beginning, middle, and ending (1990:62).

Configuration of narrative is an imaginative act. When a story is told there are always gaps to be filled or smoothed over and the story must be told in a manner that fits the present situational need. It is also possible to look forward to anticipated futures which is again an act of imagination. McAdams notes:

> To create a personal myth is to fashion a history of the self. A history is an account of the past that seeks to explain how and why events transpired as they actually did. History is much more than a chronological listing of names, dates and places. It is a story about how the past came to be and how, ultimately, it gave birth to the present. It is a truism that the historian's understanding of the present colors the story he or she will tell of the past. When the present changes, the good historian may rewrite the past – not to distort or conceal the truth, but to find one that better reflects the past in light of what is known in the present and what can be reasonably anticipated about the future (1993:102).

Configuration, reconfiguration, anticipation of a future, are all acts of imagination and open up new possible worlds in which a person may choose to live. Thus narrative is not only a way of writing personal history in the sense of a series of biographical facts but a configuration of life that in Ricoeur's theory, could be told another way (1999a:9). Telling and retelling open up opportunities to reinterpret the past which in turn may lead a person to a new understanding of the present and thus can open up new possibilities for the future. Therefore, narrative provides an opening up to new possibilities. Barresi and Juckes write:

> Indeed, it is because the person continually tries to construct an identity with unified purpose and meaning that much of the effort in identity formation involves making sense of how a single person could be the variety of characters that occur in the history of self and that must be integrated into the life story (1997:713).

From a human point of view, life is not a jumble of disconnected selves in discussion with one another, it is a unified whole. There is, at times, confusion, but narrative has the ability to bring together the discordant parts into a unified whole. McAdams sums up this point well when he writes:

> Identity, then is an integrative configuration of self-in-the-adult-world. This configuration integrates in two ways. First, in a synchronic sense, identity integrates the wide range of different and probably conflicting, roles and relationships that characterize a given life in the here and now… Second, identity must integrate diachronically, that is, in time: "I used to love to play baseball, but now I want to be a social psychologist… (2001:102).

4.2.4.3 A life story is an integrative narrative

The life story not only performs an integrative function with respect to time but also with respect to events. Every life has expected and unexpected events. Some facts seem to fit into a life story and some seem out of place. Part of the narrative function is to provide a means whereby the parts that do not fit can be incorporated into the life story. McAdams puts it this way:

> As differentiation increases, we may seek reconciliation between and among conflicting forces in the story. Harmony and resolution must prevail amid the multiplicity of self. A good story raises tough issues and dynamic contradictions. And a good story provides narrative solutions that affirm the harmony and integrity of the self (1993:112).

Gregg (1995) prefers a musical metaphor for self rather than story, although he uses both. His purpose is similar, to bring an otherwise fragmented self together. He suggests that "identity consists of a system of self versus anti-self, or Me versus not-Me contrasts, so the meaning of a quality attributed to Me cannot be known without discovering the contrary not-Me representation(s) which define it" (Gregg 1995:637). Identity in

Gregg's descriptive scheme is a combination of both a positive sense of how and what

one understands themselves to be and also a negative image of what that person is not.

Using analogies of story or music allows for the combining of *imagoes* (McAdams) or *I*

positions (Hermans) and also the incorporation of both positive and negative aspects of

self (Gregg).

McAdams covers similar ground by postulating the concept of "imagoes." To

express the differentiation of characters present in a person's life over time, McAdams

uses the terminology of imagoes with a stronger meaning than that of a role. The

difference between a role and an imago for McAdams is that the imago must function in

a variety of life activities and is thus more durable, whereas a role would function in

only one setting. McAdams writes:

> Imagoes express our most cherished desires and goals. What we most want in
> life is often expressed in our identities as an idealized personification of the self.
> We are able to give voice to our basic desires by constructing characters in our
> stories who clearly personify what we want (1993:127).

Thus, for McAdams there are potentially many imagoes that must be brought together

into a unity of self which is made possible by the life story.

4.2.4.4 Life stories imaginatively construe experience.

McAdams writes, "A personal myth delineates an identity, illuminating the values of an

individual life. The personal myth is not a legend or fairy tale, but a sacred story that

embodies personal truth. (1993:34). For many, and especially many Christians, truth is

a big word. When McAdams uses "personal truth," it smacks of "relative truth" which for

many Christians is not an acceptable way of understanding truth at all. This is a wide

and significant issue for missiology as it wrestles with questions of whether scripture

when looked at from different life and cultural viewpoints may have more than one

meaning. But that is well outside of the scope of the present inquiry. For McAdams,

meaning, and therefore truth, is located at the intersection between the individual and culture. Bruner expresses a similar thought when he writes:

> Insofar as we account for our own actions and for the human events that occur around us principally in terms of narrative, story, drama, it is conceivable that our sensitivity to narrative provides the major link between our own sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us. The common coin may be provided by the forms of narrative that the culture offers us. Again, life could be said to imitate art (1986:69).

The intersection between the individual and culture for Bruner is explained as culture providing the narrative structures within which the individual tells her/his own story. In this manner, even an integrative identity, as is common in Ethiopia, will be able to express personal truth, or truth as seen through the individual life, although it will be "performed" through structures provided by culture.

Bruner's discussion of what he terms, "Two modes of Thought" may be helpful at this point. Bruner explains:

> A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be used as means for convincing another. Yet what they convince *of* is fundamentally different: arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness. The one verifies by eventual appeal to procedures for establishing formal and empirical proof. The other establishes not truth but verisimilitude (1986:11).

Put another way, a good story makes sense to the reader/listener and is considered true when it seems life-like or true to experience. Bruner continues:

> Discourse,… must depend upon forms of discourse that recruit the reader's imagination – that enlist him [*sic*] in the "performance of meaning under the guidance of the text." Discourse must make it possible for the reader to "write" his [*sic*] own virtual text. And there are three features of discourse that seem to be crucial to this enlistment process (1986:25).

The three features Bruner (1986) describes are presupposition, subjectification, and multiple perspectives. Presupposition is the creation of implicit rather than explicit meanings. Subjectification means the depiction of reality through the eyes of the protagonist of the story rather than as timeless truth. And multiple perspective means

representing the world through more than one viewpoint. Thus "personal truth" is not

so much meaning "truth in my opinion" as "truth as seen from where I stand." This

allows for others to see the same facts differently. The expression of self as found in a

life story, illuminates values (to use McAdams words quoted above), and by that it is

evident that someone with other values may interpret that life story differently. But

putting the life story into narrative form enlists the imagination of the reader/hearer to

join with the writer/teller in sharing the values represented. In terms of the

missiological enterprise, a lesson to be learned from Bruner would be that a message

need not always be explicit in communicating truth, it could be implicit and in this way

enlist the hearer's imagination, interest, and involvement in the communicative process.

Subjectification and multiple perspectives provide other useful missiological tools in

order to keep communication from becoming too oppositional in nature. The enlistment

of the imagination is itself a stretch for many missions practitioners who think only of

imagination in the sense of "untrue" or "unreal." In this case imagination is engaging a

conversation partner in a story through which truth may be discovered. The connection

between words and their meaning or between a story and its interpretation is an act of

imagination. McAdams expresses the relationship between ideology and truth in this

way:

> Ideology concerns questions of goodness and truth. In order to know who I am, I
> must first decide what I believe to be true and good, false and evil about the
> world in which I live. To understand myself fully, I must come to believe that the
> universe works in a certain way, and that certain things about the world, about
> society, about God, about the ultimate reality of life, are true. Identity is built
> upon ideology (1993: 81).

He follows this thought when he writes, "With the consolidation of an ideological

setting, therefore, we are able to ground our identities on a base of perceived truth"

(1993:86). Religious beliefs would be part of that "perceived truth" upon which a life may be grounded.

At this point there is discord between a Western understanding of truth and that of more relational cultures such as in Africa. In Western, rationalistic thinking, truth should be always true in every culture and in every generation. If it is not, then it is not "truth." On the other hand, relational cultures do not see truth in such absolutist terms. Truth in such cultures is not the highest good, rather, preserving harmonious relationships is of higher value. Thus what is true may vary depending upon what is necessary to preserve good relationships. For such a person "perceived truth" is not really a big challenge since it is obvious that truth looks differently when viewed from different angles. From the absolutist perspective, "perceived truth" is subjective and thus simply opinion and not truth at all. Thus relational cultures are much more comfortable with narrative styles of communication of truth whereas Western cultures are more comfortable with propositional expressions of truth.

Narrative helps life to make sense and making sense is not judged by the standard of immutable truth. McAdams writes:

> None of us is in a position to choose his or her own parents, or the circumstances of infancy and childhood. But maturity demands the acceptance and meaningful organization of past events. As adults, we impose a mythic plan on our lives where no plan existed before. We create myth so that our lives, and the lives of others, will make sense. Through myth we determine who we are, who we were, and who we may become in the future (1993:92).

As Ricoeur reminds us, there is no doubt less truth in history and more truth in fiction than most of us would like to admit. Sometimes, imagination, in its capacity to configure, is a key that unlocks truth. Perhaps this is why Jesus told parables.

4.2.4.5 Life stories involve construction of meaning

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By gathering together some statements from Sarbin it is possible to connect the present topic to the previous discussion.

> Historical accounts are endowed with meaning only when they are located within a narrative context... Narrative structure provides the framework for making sense of our raw encounters with people and things... In the study of lives, the hermeneutic function of narrative is central... Past events cannot be separated from the embeddedness of such events in lives, the living which follows narrative plots. On the continuity theory, the task for the historian is to produce a faithful rendering of the lived story (1990:49-61).

As noted above, Geertz locates meaning within a social and cultural context. Narrative places human experience in its social and cultural context, and in this manner creates meaning.

Bruner puts it this way, "Interpretive meanings of the kind we are considering are metaphoric, allusive, and very sensitive to context. Yet they are the coin of culture and of its narrativized folk psychology" (1990:61). Meaning as it exists between humans and in human contexts, is always interpretive and thus is always context sensitive. Meaning, or what Hatano and Wertsch (2001:80) call "sense making" is dependent upon context. They write, "What is a plausible story is culture-specific, because the process of sense making must rely on people's prior knowledge, much of which is provided by culture" (2001:80). Life stories construct meaning within social and cultural settings.

4.2.4.6 Life stories are embedded in culture

The relationship between life story and culture is two-way and mutually constitutive. Culture provides what has often been termed, a "tool kit" for narratives (Bruner, Wertsch, Gregg). This seems an unfortunate metaphor in that it gives the impression of a mechanic choosing the right wrench to adjust one's carburetor. People do not use culture in any such intentional manner and in fact culture mostly operates far beneath a person's conscious awareness. But there are certainly components that fit together from culture to form a life story. It is also true that life stories put together into larger

and larger wholes make up culture and so there is a dynamic relationship between life

stories and culture. Gregg uses the terminology of a "configuration of culture" by which

he means that an individual life story is configured out of materials such as characters,

plots, and symbols that have meaning within a cultural context (1998:125). Singer

describes the embeddedness of self in culture this way:

> Human beings begin with the raw capacity to assign affective value, categorize
> information, and order that information sequentially. This "I-Self" has the skills
> to narrate, but it awaits the socializing forces of family and culture to begin its
> story construction and telling. As consciousness of the self in the world develops,
> knowledge of Me in a variety of roles and contexts evolves. This knowledge is
> based in narratives transmitted by the representatives of the culture in which we
> are embedded (1995:452).

In any given culture, stories are told according to established patterns and this helps the

reader/hearer to understand easily the interrelationships among the characters, the

twists and turn in the plot, and ultimately the meaning of the story. A life story will also

follow patterns provided by culture. There are always acceptable and not so acceptable

ways to express one's life story.

McAdams explains how not only the form but acceptable content of life stories is

determined by cultural norms:

> Life stories mirror the culture wherein the story is made and told. Stories live in
> culture. They are born, they grow, they proliferate, and they eventually die
> according to the norms, rules, and traditions that prevail in a given society,
> according to a society's implicit understandings of what counts as a tellable
> story, a tellable life (2001:114).

Thus the culture within which a life story is embedded will influence its form and its

content, and will in turn help to create the context for future stories. Bruner explains

this process:

> The heart of my argument is this: eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and
> linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power
> to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and
> purpose-build the very "events" of life. In the end, we become the
> autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives. And given the

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cultural shaping to which I referred, we also *become* variants of the culture's canonical forms (1004:694).

Life stories must mesh, so to speak, within a community of life stories; tellers and listeners must share some "deep structure" about the nature of a "life," for if the rules of life-telling are altogether arbitrary, tellers and listeners will surely be alienated by a failure to grasp what the other is saying or what he thinks the other is hearing (2004:699).

Thus there is a two-way relationship between culture and life stories. The embeddedness of life stories in culture requires the use of narrative as a means of their communication. Life stories are influenced by cultural norms as to both structure and content but then become part of the cultural norms that will shape other, future life stories.

In the following section the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur and his theory of narrative identity will be presented as a helpful way to understand narrative identity. It will be noted that many of the ideas expressed above coalesce into a workable theory of self that will be used to analyze the data presented in the following chapter and to give insights into the missiological processes of the mission to Muslims.

4.2.5   Narrative identity theory of Paul Ricoeur

While Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity has much in common with McAdams' study of lives as well as other studies described above in terms of the issues of concern, he brings a philosophical approach that adds significantly to the discussion of self and identity. Ricoeur writes within a philosophical tradition of critical hermeneutics that borrows on the one side from the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer while also incorporating ideas from critical theory. Thus to situate Ricoeur in the field of philosophy one can note the influences of phenomenology (Husserl) and philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer) as being foundational to which can be added the critical theory of Habermas and his concern with emancipation. Ricoeur's extensive discussion

of narrative is directed toward the goal of supporting his concept of narrative identity, which in turn mediates between his theories of action and ethics.

The most appropriate starting point for this discussion is Rocoeur's concept of identity. Ricoeur noticed the same issue as James and Mead, which is the distinction between self as subject and self as object as reflected in the pronouns "I" and "me". However, Ricoeur frames the issue somewhat differently than the psychologists because he wants to prioritize the issue of time. For Riceour, the problematic of identity is connected to the issue of time and the fact that there is both sameness and change over time within the nature of the self. Thus he turns to the Latin terminology of *idem* and *ipse. Idem* identity has to do with sameness for which he uses the term "character" referring back to its Greek roots as being something underneath. Thus character is that which is beneath and unchanging as compared to the surface or appearance which may change. A person is spoken of as having "character traits" by which is meant specific, identifiable characteristics that endure over time that are associated with that person. The *idem* identity is that unchanging substance or character beneath what is externally (or internally) observed. But there is also another self that does change over time that must also be considered. The baby is the same person as the adolescent, who is the same person as the elderly man or woman. While there remains a self-sameness, a person changes in terms of physical characteristics, mental and emotional make-up, and even their own self-awareness. Thus "I" am the same throughout life but "I" also change over time. The "me" that changes over time is the *ipse* self. Thus for Ricoeur the issue is not as much a concern about the subject/object differentiation of "I" and "me" as it is how to combine sameness and difference over time.

Another way to describe *idem* and *ipse* is by considering the questions to which they respond. *Idem* answers the question of "What?" What a person is orients the

discussion toward those things that do not change. However, *ipse* responds to the question, "Who?" Who is the author of an action, the writer of a story, the one who is ethically responsible for an act or omission. *Ipse* is the self in its self-awareness. Thus identity involves both a self and its other that recognizes itself. These two senses of self are not two "I" positions as with the dialogical self, but two aspects of the same self, aware of itself. The *other* is a vital part of Ricoeur's theory of identity and takes three forms. There is the relation of self to one's body as mediator between self and the world, the relation of self to the foreign, that which is other than self, and the relation between self and itself in conscience (Herda 1997:37). Thus the I/Me distinction for Ricoeur is conceptualized as an internalized otherness.

Ricoeur's direction of thought is toward ethical responsibility. In this regard, Ricoeur develops his thought first with a theory of action, which he connects to his theory of the text. From there he moves to narrative and develops his theory of narrative identity. Based upon his theory of narrative identity he then develops his ethics. First he develops primarily a personal ethics in *Oneself as Another* and then moves to a focus upon social or community ethics in *Memory, History, Forgetting*. The foundation for ethics is the narrative understanding of self in which a person or a society understands themselves in terms of their story or stories. Within the person the dimensions of self as sameness (*idem*) and self as self-sameness over time (*ipse*) reveals the internalized other that must necessarily have the same freedoms, rights, and privileges as the self. Thus, Ricoeur develops his ethical theory by externalizing the other and arguing that again this other must have the same freedoms, rights, and privileges as the self. As within the person, the other must receive the same freedoms as the self, the external other in society must also access those same freedoms if the self is to experience them. One cannot have freedoms they are unwilling to give others. Thus

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for Ricoeur, the *idem/ipse* distinction provides both for the ontological basis of identity and the ethical content of action.

The reflexive nature of identity (*ipse*) is described above as self-awareness. Ricoeur explains what he means by the *ipse* self with the example of making a promise. When a promise is made it is to be kept at a future point in time. But who is it that will keep that promise? The person who promised is truly not present at the future point in time since some characteristics of that person have changed. They may be older, perhaps different physically, emotionally, or psychologically, but there is a continuity of identity with respect to that person who made the promise that allows for the expectation of its fulfillment at the time appointed. This identity that remains the same over time is the reflexive aspect of identity. Self-awareness causes the person to know they are the same one who made the promise. Thus the notion of i*pse* allows for a continuity of identity over time. Kearney writes:

> The story told by a self about itself tells about the action of the 'who' in question: and the identity of this 'who' is a narrative one. This is what Ricoeur calls an *ipse*-self of process and promise, in contrast to a fixed *idem*-self, which responds only to the question of 'what?' (2002:152).

This is the point at which Hermans and the dialogical self breaks down, at least in terms of its connection to human experience. The dialogical self cannot provide for the experience of sameness over time. For Hermans, there is no one to fulfill the promise. Thus the dialogical self is a useful metaphor that highlights some important aspects of self, but it cannot provide a workable theory of identity.

Temporality is an inescapable aspect of human experience. The world is experienced in terms of past, present and future. With respect to identity this means that a person understands they have a history, they are in the present, and anticipate a future. Ricoeur writes, "...time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated

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through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence" (1984:52). That is to say that the temporal dimension that is central to human experience is an essential aspect of human self-understanding and is best expressed through narrative. It is at this point that Ricoeur provides the theoretical underpinning for McAdams' study of lives. The temporal dimension of living is best expressed in narrative with its beginning, middle and end and in this manner the discordant events of human life can be synthesized into a unity or life story.

The *ipse* identity expresses itself in the fact that someone can tell his/her own story. The answer to the question, "Who are you?" is a story that combines a past set of experiences, a present condition, and the future hopes of the one responding. Every experience of a person's life is understood in terms of this temporal dimension. It is either something that has already occurred, is occurring now, or is a possibility projected into the future. Ricoeur writes, "...the common feature of human experience, that which is marked, organized and clarified by the fact of storytelling in all its forms, is its temporal character" (1996:139). Thus narrative is the properly human response to the question of identity and allows for the expression of the temporal quality of life.

As a person tells their story they gather together the concordant and discordant events of their lives into a narrative. The synthesizing of the concordant and discordant is the formation of a plot or using Ricoeur's terminology, *emplotment,* which he borrows from Aristotle's *Poetics*. The telling of a story requires that the events be put together into an understandable order. Thus emplotment, the making of plots, is a mimetic activity in that it creatively re-presents events in the form of a story, "a plot is an imitation of action" (Ricoeur 1984:54).

For Ricoeur emplotment involves a three-fold mimesis as related to the narrative function. Mimesis$_1$ is the pre-understanding of the world within which actions take

place with its meaningful structures, symbolic resources, and temporal character (1984:54). Thus mimesis$_1$ includes a person's preexisting linguistic and symbolic resources. An example of this pre-understanding would be words used to represent things, actions, ideas, and attitudes. The connecting of words to their meaning is a mimetic activity that exists prior to the use of those words in narrative and is thus part of the pre-understanding of language, symbol and temporality that are included in what Ricoeur means by mimesis$_1$. The second mimetic activity, mimesis$_2$, is what Ricoeur terms the "kingdom of as-if" (1984:64). At this level the story takes its form through emplotment. Events, actions, settings, are all incorporated into a storyline or plot. This has a configurational aspect in that a plot is not simply a succession of events but must be organized into an intelligible whole (1984:65).

The configurational aspect of mimesis or emplotment is the point at which it is necessary to consider the relationship between history and fiction. History lays claim to being a faithful rendition of events that have happened in the past whereas fiction makes no such claim to correspondence. However, Ricoeur argues that history is subject to the same configurational activity as fiction. The writer of history must choose among various facts, characters and actions to report, and must place each of these components into an intelligible whole. In other words, the historian is also a writer of plots. History not only reports but also interprets the events of which it tells. Fiction, however, though free to tell its story without correspondence to historical reality, also makes a truth-claim. Humans are historical beings, or as Ricoeur writes, "We belong to history before telling stories or writing history" (1981a:294). Indeed, the word history means both the events themselves and the record of those events. There is thus an ambiguity of history arising from the fact that humans are historical beings that both live and tell history. Both history and fiction are mimetic projects that seek to arrive at

the meaning of the events told and thus both make a truth-claim. It is Ricoeur's claim that "the world of fiction leads us to the heart of the real world of action" (1981a:296). For Ricoeur there is an interweaving of history and fiction in narrative identity due to the configurational quality of emplotment (1988:245).

The significance of this for the issue of narrative identity is that the story representing identity must necessarily contain both history and fiction. It is historical in that it claims to tell the story as it truly happened but it is also fictional in that the "facts" are configured and thus contextualized in a manner to bring forward the interpretation desired. In other words, the self-understanding of an individual or community is emplotted in a manner that expresses the preferred interpretation of that individual or community. The plot serves a mediating function between the events and the story as a whole. This is the point at which heterogeneous elements of a life are brought into a synthesis and an interpretation of those elements is urged. Plot then allows for the "grasping together" of the elements of a story (Ricoeur 1984:68).

Before moving to mimesis₃ it is important that the issue of character be taken up. The character is the "who" of action. In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur takes up the issue of character more fully than he does in *Time and Narrative*. He writes:

> The decisive step in the direction of a narrative conception of personal identity is taken when one passes from the action to the character. A character is the one who performs the action in the narrative. The category of character is therefore a narrative category as well, and its role in the narrative involves the same narrative understanding as the plot itself. The question is then to determine what the narrative category of character contributes to the discussion of personal identity. The thesis supported here will be that the identity of the character is comprehensible through the transfer to the character of the operation of emplotment, first applied to the action recounted; characters, we will say, are themselves plots (1992:143).

The actor in the self-narrative is the character of the story and thus the narrative self. As such, the character becomes known through her/his actions. The configuration of

actions creates the plot and also reveals the character. Thus the character of the self-narrative becomes known through description of action, motivation, context and other aspects of the narrative content and is thus similar to plot in regard to this configurational aspect. Narrative identity then involves the interweaving of history and fiction so as to disclose the character(s) of the narrative.

Emplotment at the level of mimesis$_2$ is the work of the poetic imagination wherein events are re-figured or transfigured by imagination into a creative imitation of life. This is a work of *poiesis*, in that it is a creative production of something new. The end of the life story has not yet been told and thus there are various possible futures and so there is a human "capacity for letting new worlds shape our understanding of ourselves" (1981b:181). This brings the discussion to mimesis$_3$ and brings Ricoeur's analysis back to the world of action. This third mimetic function occurs at the intersection of the world of the text and that of the reader/hearer. The story told must now be appropriated by the reader/hearer and applied in the world of action. This re-conceptualizing of the poetic imagination involves metaphors, myths, and symbols placed in new and imaginative relationships that provide variations of the world and offer freedom to see the world in new ways. Kearney, a student of Ricoeur, put it this way, "Imagination can be recognized accordingly as the act of responding to a demand for new meaning, the demand of emerging realities to be by being said in new ways" 1989:5). Thus the poetic imagination points toward the ability of language to open up new worlds. Ricoeur moves language beyond the level of description to the arena of the production of possible futures that might be inhabited. In this manner, mimesis$_2$ involves the remaking of action through narrating or retelling which in turn leads to mimesis$_3$ and "the proposing of a new world that I might inhabit and into which I might

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project my ownmost powers" (1984:81). The new world thus created has the potential

to be made real through action.

As Ricoeur grapples with the implications of the temporality of human

experience pertaining to the issue of narrative identity, he refers to its circular nature in

relationship to the above described threefold mimesis. Humans shape stories but in

turn are also shaped by them. Kearney writes:

> Storytelling is, of course, something we participate in (as actors) as well as
> something we do (as agents). We are subject to narrative as well as being
> subjects of narrative. We are made by stories before we ever get around to
> making our own. Which is what makes each human existence a fabric stitched
> from stories heard and told (2002:154).

This interplay between the reception of the stories of others and the formation and

telling of our own, points to the ontological significance of narrative. Humans have the

capacity not only to learn new things, but to become new people. Ricoeur refers to the

circular process between the character "and the narratives that both express and shape

this character" as the hermeneutical circle. Narrative identity is the "poetic resolution of

the hermeneutical circle" (1988:248).

Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons enters at this point (1989:302-307).

As the stories of others are heard or read there is a possibility opened to reach beyond a

present horizon and to enter into other worlds. At any given moment a person has a

horizon, which is essentially all that they can see at the present time. Through stories

and conversation with others, a person comes into contact with ideas and worlds

outside of their own present horizon. The possibility exists that the new horizon of the

narrative or conversation partner can be appropriated such that there can be a "fusion

of horizons." Through this process a person having a new horizon has become a new

person with new possibilities in life. Thus when such a person returns to their own

story they see it differently because they have become a different person. In this way,

the story telling process is one of figuring and re-figuring of identity. "This refiguration makes this life itself a cloth woven of stories told" (Ricoeur 1988:246). Ricoeur explains this idea in another way when he writes:

> Because of the concordant-discordant synthesis, the contingency of the event contributes to the necessary, retroactive so to speak, of the history of a life to which is equated the identity of the character...The narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told. It is the identity of the story that makes the identity of the character (1992:147-148).

If the telling of life stories is only a recounting of facts it will not produce transformation but when life stories are told, they are told again and again and not always the same. This experimentation with different expressions of a life through the contribution of fiction to the life-story process provides for an *evaluative dimension* and thus allows "the narrative [to] perform its functions of discovery and transformation with respect to the reader's feelings and actions, in the phase of the refiguration of action by the narrative" (1992:164). One of the great powers of understanding identity as narrative is the capacity for transformation opened up because it is always "possible to tell in another way" and thus engage in what Ricoeur terms the process of "telling otherwise" (1999a:9).

When Kearney mentions that humans are made by stories before they make their own stories he is referring to the power of what Ricoeur calls grand narratives. Grand narratives are the larger stories within which individual stories are situated. Stories of the formation of a people are such stories and within those larger stories, the individual's life story is told. The personal life history of each person is connected to the stories of their people or as Ricoeur writes, "in our experience the life history of each of us is caught up in the histories of others" (1992:161). Some stories are of a universal character. The Bible is such a story that encompasses creation to the end of the age.

Within that story is the story of Christ and redemption. One way to visualize salvation is the fusing of the individual life story with the grand narrative of Jesus. Those larger, all encompassing stories, are heard throughout childhood and form the cultural matrix within which the individual forms their own story starting in adolescence and early adulthood.

The telling or inscription of a life story creates some distance between the teller and that which is told. Ricoeur calls this *distanciation*, or the gap between living life and telling a life story. Between the living and the telling, events are configured into a narrative and components of both history and fiction are intertwined. It is in this gap that reflection occurs which allows for the ontological significance of the configurational act. Whether thought of in terms of Gadamer's fusion of horizons or Ricoeur's appropriation, the transformation of life becomes possible through narrative.

For Ricoeur, the meaning of a text, and meaningful action is a text for Ricoeur, is found in front of the text and not behind (1981c:113). Behind the text lies the intention of the author and her/his world of reference, but in front of the text is the world it creates in which a person may choose to live. The world in front of the text places a demand upon the reader to consider their life in light of the meaning of the story told. The true meaning of the text therefore lies in front of it. In this way, narrative identity is a concept, a process, and a mechanism of ongoing transformation for individuals and societies.

Thus by way of the life story, or narrative identity, a person incorporates traditions (culture) into their identity by way of stories but also finds opportunity for innovation through stories. The goal for Ricoeur is to become responsible for one's own life and to engage in ethical action. Thus Ricoeur passes from *Time and Narrative* to *Oneself as Another.* The power of narrative and imagination can be used for good or evil,

to creatively inspire toward healthy, emancipated lives and societies or ones dominated by ideologies of enslavement and destruction. That is the responsibility that humans face. It is not enough to become the narrator of one's story unless one becomes also the author of one's own life (1991b:437).

4.2.6   Understanding identity in missiological contexts

Having discussed the issue of identity and self from social science and philosophy it is now time to gather these ideas together into a useful approach to identity in the missiological context. This task will be undertaken through first reviewing the lessons gathered in the above discussion and then examining Paul Ricoeur's philosophy of narrative identity in light of the contribution of social science to synthesize a concept of identity as a missiological construct to be used in the analysis of the research data gathered in this project.

The questions that are guiding this missiological exploration of identity are the following. First, how does identity theory contribute to understanding such that it may offer guidance to the missiological task? Does the fact that such a person retains his/her Muslim socio-cultural identity or their religious identity make sense in light of identity research? In terms of conversion and the subsequent Christian life, how does transformation of life occur? With reference to the above discussion of conversion, how does "transformation" occur? A full discussion of these topics must await the presentation of data in chapter five and its analysis in chapter six but the issues will be raised in an introductory manner in this section

4.2.6.1 Lessons learned regarding identity- psychology and sociology

Throughout the study of identity within a social science paradigm, the fundamental distinction between "I" and "me" has been observed and has been a cornerstone of analysis. The fact that the self combines aspects of subject (I) and object (me) is

common to all social scientific explorations on this topic but is handled somewhat differently by psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Psychology, in all cases except the dialogical self of Hermans, emphasizes the continuity of self as actor, moderator, and storyteller. Sociology emphasizes the social creation and apprehension of identity as the "me" which is generally understood in terms of its multiplicity. Anthropology prioritizes the role of culture in self-creation. There are significant differences among the various theorists as to how the self is understood especially comparing individualistic and interdependent selves. Those theorists and theories bringing forward concepts of interdependent selves such as Riley, Markus and Kitayama, as well as Beattie are more useful in the context of an Ethiopian mission to Muslims.

Riley points to the concept of *ethos* and its significance in self formation. Ethos has two important dimensions for missiology: 1) ethos is the preferred understanding of self being projected by an individual; 2) ethos is critical for creating confidence and believability of one's communication. The first aspect of ethos is important in terms of the missiological tasks of evangelism and church planting among Muslims. When an individual is interested to learn of *Isa* they are immediately affected in terms of the *ethos* that may be projected by activities connected to such an endeavor. Muslim communities in Ethiopia are not positive about their members seeking answers outside of community norms. Positive aspects to be projected in ethos include involvement in community activities centered upon the mosque. These activities include many aspects of community life and thus as a person takes more and more seriously their commitment to Christ these activities will be affected. First the person's attitude and enthusiasm will be lessened toward these activities and perhaps their participation may be reduced as well. Immediately their community standing and reputation will be affected and questions will follow that put the person's reputation into question.

Ethos also affects the believability of the person bringing the Christian understanding of Christ to a Muslim community. The perception of the messenger is vital to the potential for acceptance of their message. As missionaries work in a Christian mission to Muslims they must be aware of the ethos they are communicating. If they are outsiders to a community, they will face many obstacles to the believability of their message. And if they are identified as Christians they must carry the extensive social baggage associated with "Christian" in a Muslim context thus their communication will be sifted through that matrix. On the other hand, a church planter/evangelist who is an insider of the target community has potentially fewer barriers to overcome. By following community norms for prayer, handling of scripture, methods of teaching, and holiness of life, they may be accepted under the ethos of someone who could bring religious truth to the community. This is a key factor contributing to the greater effectiveness of Insider Movement strategies, but it is also the source of many of the concerns of their detractors. Can a person project a door-opening ethos to Muslims without compromising their witness for Christ? And how do ethos and authentic witness interact with one another? These are issues that will be discussed in greater depth below.

Markus and Kitayama bring forward concepts of the interdependent self that are appropriate to the African context. They write, "Others thus participate actively and continuously in the definition of the interdependent self" (1991:227). This highlights the interactive nature of the interdependent self that not only considers the thoughts and ideas of those around her, but internalizes those thoughts and opinions in such a way that they actually become part of the self concept. This applies to any community or culture with an interdependent self-concept and Muslims communities in Ethiopia are such communities. However, non-Muslim communities in Ethiopia also follow the

pattern of an interdependent self. In Ethiopia this is not so much a characteristic of Muslim communities but of the various cultures making up Ethiopian society. Thus there are differences in this area with more remote groups being more interdependent and thus community members being more influenced by community norms regarding action and decision-making. However, in Addis Ababa, the most Westernized city in Ethiopia, there is more independence of thought and action perhaps due to the increased level of anonymity because of sheer numbers more so than the effect of Westernization.

Thus, Ethiopians, having an interdependent construal of self, will have strong concern for the thoughts and opinions of their community but more so, those thoughts and opinions are internalized and thus function as an internal voice. That is why in Muslims communities there will be members who may have interest to learn more about *Isa* but are strongly resistant to violating community norms. Markus and Kitayama explain that for the interdependent self "counter attitudinal behavior [is] unlikely" (1991:227). This manifests itself in the form of a strong desire for community solidarity around their identity. Being Muslim is a part of community identity for those people groups who identify as such. Thus community solidarity is damaged if some individuals or a minority group are seen to leave the community sanctioned religious identity. The issue here is not so much that the individual or minority group takes up different beliefs but rather community solidarity has deep roots in terms of safety and prosperity and so deviation is seen as a threat to the community and even a threat to the self-concepts of others.

Also from Markus and Kitayama, self-consistency is not held to be of such high value in the case of an interdependent construal of self as opposed to an independent self. For independent selves, belief and action should be consistent and often arguments

for the acceptance of a given position will use the issue of consistency between belief and action, or its lack, as a strong argument for or against a given position. Such arguments are not nearly so persuasive in cultures characterized by interdependence. Thus differences of practice or belief will often be acceptable among folk Muslims in Ethiopia so long as family or community solidarity is not damaged. If, however, variations of belief or actions are viewed as violating community norms of unity and solidarity, aberrant individuals or groups will be strongly sanctioned.

This issue of a lessened concern for consistency between belief and action manifests in another area as well. If a person of an interdependent self construal considers themselves a Muslim but does not attend mosque regularly or keep Ramadan faithfully, as examples, it is not such a major issue for them. They remain Muslims nonetheless. This would be the same for C-5 Christ centered communities functioning in Muslim contexts. They also will not be inclined to see inconsistency between stated beliefs and actions as a serious problem. Christians with an independent construal of self for whom consistency between belief and action is of strong significance will tend to view such groups as syncretistic. As Christian missiologists and mission practitioners it is a challenging undertaking to separate cultural preferences from biblical priorities such that a biblical understanding of this issue can be determined. This is an issue that will be considered more fully below after presentation of the research data.

4.2.6.2 Lessons learned regarding identity – anthropology

Beattie contributes some important ideas when he discusses the "African" self. There are so many differences among African people groups that a typology of "African" is not usually helpful. But it is also true that there are some commonalities across Africa that can be instructive so long as differences are accounted for as well. Much of what Beattie describes is an interdependent construal of self but he adds the idea of an "open" self,

which is somewhat different than Markus and Kitayama who are primarily using Japanese culture as their paradigm. This author can offer only an etic perspective, not having grown up in an African culture, but recognizing that limitation, the following comments could be suggested. Beattie's concept is something like an inclusiveness of self, meaning that the line between self and not-self is somewhat fuzzy compared to independent selves. However, this does not mean that African openness means there is somehow less of a self or a lack of clarity as to self identity. It is just that there is a greater level of interaction with the surrounding world not only socially but also spiritually and physically. This has a number of implications for missiology in the African context. Some of those implications are: 1) the possibility of syncretism is high; 2) once new ideas have been accepted, the door is not closed to future influences; and 3) this openness is selective in its orientation with significant differences depending upon whether the outside influence is considered "foreign" or "familiar."

Marranci also writes from an anthropological paradigm, even if a unique one. His insights drawn from neurobiology but applied anthropologically bring social science back toward a concept of a unified and persistent self. His concept of the autobiographical self that combines a remembered past with an anticipated future has many points of contact with Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity although Marranci may be reticent to appreciate them. Marranci's discussion of acts of identity, their inception in emotion, and their ability to restore equilibrium is also a useful theory that provides numerous fruitful avenues of thought for missiology. Marranci's theories provide for the possibility of self-change but do not develop an adequate mechanism to accomplish it. Narrative theory, while arising from an entirely different paradigm, can be combined with the ideas of Marranci to provide a more nuanced understanding of identity and the needed mechanism for transformation.

4.2.6.3 Lessons learned regarding identity - dialogical self

The dialogical self provides an interesting metaphor for self and in a missiological context such insights are useful whether or not it is effective as a psychological theory of self. The concept found in the theory of the dialogical self that is most useful in the mission to Muslims is that of "internally persuasive speech." In Ethiopia while there are varying traditions in this area, it is common for individuals to resist authoritative speech if possible. Thus if authoritative speech comes from a source toward which an obligation of obedience is felt, such as elders, parents, government officials, or other similar sources, there will be compliance but not necessarily persuasion. In that the goal of the Christian mission to Muslims is heartfelt, life changing agreement with the gospel message, compliance alone is not sufficient. Internally persuasive speech is "genuinely dialogical" in Hermans' words and to this may be added Habermas' theory of communicative action and Gadamer's theory of conversation as give and take toward a possible fusion of horizons. Whereas authoritative speech necessarily implies a power differential, conversational speech implies a level playing field, give and take openness, and an orientation toward mutual understanding. In this manner words spoken in conversation may be internalized by the conversation partner and thus become "internally persuasive" in the sense used by Hermans.

4.2.6.4 Lessons learned regarding identity - study of lives

McAdams, with his psychological study of lives through narrative, also makes important contributions to a missiologically productive understanding of identity. The configurative nature of story is a vital piece in understanding identity. Humans use story to put concordant and discordant aspects of life into a unified whole. This is much more helpful than Hermans' dialogical self that is never resolved into a theory of a unified self. McAdams emphasizes that although there are various "imagoes" or possible

personifications of self, behind these representations there is a unified person that is defined by narratives of self. This understanding aids the missiological processes in at least two ways.

First, evangelism and church planting work cannot be done except with a reasonable understanding of the nature of those who are the object of such missiological endeavors. When the value of self-narrative is understood, any person may adequately accomplish the goal of understanding others using normal human means of communication that do not require special skills beyond the willingness to listen. Understanding others is derived primarily from listening to their stories both personal and cultural. Personal stories of self exist within a culturally created matrix of thought and within culturally created structures of narrative. Thus listening to stories both of a personal and of a cultural variety, giving special attention to the founding stories of a culture, is the most effective way to come to know others in a missiological context. Knowledge of the common or root metaphors of a culture is also helpful and can be accomplished through the same method of study (Pepper 1942). This work cannot be done from the home office of a mission nor in a two-week trip to visit the mission field. It requires time with a people and in a cultural and linguistic setting in order to understand them and to develop a culturally appropriate missiological approach.

Conversion, if understood as connecting one's story to a new grand narrative, is also enabled through the story telling process. Thus a biblical story telling approach may be the most effective means of introducing new ideas to Muslims. Story telling is much less confrontational than argumentation and thus does not create resistance in the same way arguments do. Presentation of propositional truth will nearly always lead to a confrontational style of interaction and thus will produce the very opposition that it

seeks to overcome. Also, as Bruner emphasizes, narrative and conversational approaches "recruit the ... imagination" (1986:25), and imagination is a vital part of self transformation as this process is explained by Ricoeur.

4.2.6.5 Lessons learned regarding identity - philosophy of Paul Ricoeur

Ricoeur approaches narrative and narrative identity from a philosophical rather than psychological perspective and as such adds much to this discussion. His description of the narrative process as well as the formation of self is more appropriate and helpful to the missiological project than the psychologically based approach of McAdams although much of the content overlaps. The two primary contributions Ricoeur brings to this study are: 1) the incorporation of the self as changing over time into the self-concept through his theory of narrative identity; and 2) the process and nature of self transformation through re-imagining possible futures. As discussed above regarding conversion, the goal of the Christian life is transformation into Christ likeness but how can that change be understood and fostered? Ricoeur points toward a very human and usable approach.

Ricoeur's concept of the narrative self includes the possibility of change from its inception. Sameness (*idem* identity) and change over time (*ipse* identity) are combined into a single theory of narrative identity. Thus rather than the social science focus upon the I/Me, subject/object distinction, Ricoeur transforms the issue primarily into one of change over time and ultimately into ethical accountability for action through his theory of narrative identity. Self is thus understood in a fully narrative manner. This allows for the full inclusion of the concepts of McAdams noted above but also provides a theory of self-change and thus transformation.

Ricoeur's addition of a theory of self-change allows for transformation through the engagement of imagination and the telling of self-narratives. Transformation of the
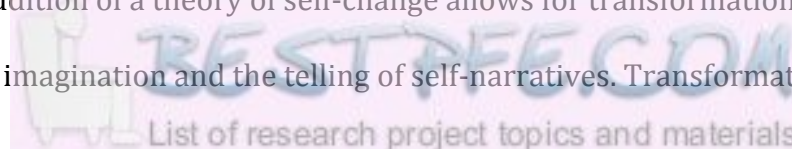
Christian life is not a matter of accepting new propositions of truth but rather one of incorporating a new understanding of self into one's self-story or narrative identity, and in this way becoming a different person. Further, the process of expression or inscription is essential in order to allow for distanciation between self and self-story producing a gap for reflection. It is in the process of reflection that new possible ways of being-in-the-world are created that can be experienced through action. Thus telling and hearing of self-narratives must be incorporated into the missiological strategy used with regard to a mission to Muslims.

In this chapter, two key concepts have been discussed at length: conversion and identity. The study of conversion has led to a conclusion that it is inseparable from the idea of transformation. The discussion of identity has led to the value of narrative and an understanding of self-change through the narrative dimension of life. These concepts will be used in the analysis presented in chapter six but first the data gathered for this study in Ethiopia must be presented and given its preliminary analysis in terms of its organization and the identification of themes. That will be the subject of Chapter Five.

Chapter 5: Presentation of Research

This chapter will present the results of field research conducted in Ethiopia during the period from 2010 to 2013.[9] As described above, the method of research and evaluation is done within a critical hermeneutical paradigm as described in Herda (1999). At the beginning of this chapter it is important to rehearse some important principles being followed and the limitations that must be recognized. First, the paradigm of critical hermeneutics is interpretive which means that it recognizes the role of symbols and language on the one hand but also the variability of meaning on the other. Thus moving from one language and one culture to another is not only a lexical matter but an interpretive one. Secondly, the orientation of this research is toward reaching understanding through human interaction and is primarily conversation based. Thus there is a reciprocal nature to this research in which there must be as level a playing field between researcher and participant as possible. Finally, the researcher is implicated in the research. In other words, there is no external, objective position from which to conduct research and thus the position of the researcher must be disclosed and incorporated into the evaluation of the value of the research presented.

The interpretive nature of this research emphasizes the role of language and thus symbolic communication. Words themselves are symbols and their use requires an engagement of the imagination. To connect the word "ball" to a physical object is an act of imagination. If twenty people are asked to visualize a "ball" independently, they will describe many different kinds of balls, although here in Ethiopia many would choose some sort of soccer ball. Each person visualizes (an engagement of their imagination) an object out of their experience, memory, loves/hates, interests, and so forth. There are

[9] Quotations from research participants are included as recorded without changing to gender inclusive language for the sake of accuracy. Please accept the apology of the researcher for this.

many visualizations of the word ball and thus many interpretations. Each interpretation is connected to a person and a context. Thus both personal history and context affect the meaning of any communication.

Conversation occurs between at least two individuals and so both contribute to the meanings developed and understood together. Regarding this research, the researcher is engaged in training Ethiopian and foreign missionaries to do evangelism and church planting work among Muslims. Their work is done primarily in Ethiopia but with some engagement of the surrounding nations. The participants are nearly all MBB's. Most of the participants are engaged in some way in the work of church planting among Muslims themselves. There was no attempt made to randomize the participants because that is not a principle of this sort of qualitative research. There was also no attempt to seek out participants with a particular point of view. In fact most participants were chosen because they are Christians of a Muslim background and the researcher had opportunity to talk with them. In this method of research the conversation between researcher and participant is generally unstructured in the sense that there is no prepared set of questions eliciting response as there would be if the method were one of interviews. Thus, it is not an interview but a conversation that is recorded and transcribed to create a text that will be interpreted. To these transcribed conversations will be added information from other conversations that for various reasons could not be recorded but during which notes were taken and immediately following were typed up.

The orientation of this research is toward reaching understanding. In this case, understanding of the relationship among Christian conversion, identity, and strategies for Christian outreach to Muslims. These three concepts have been developed, brought into relationship, and the problematic defined over the previous four chapters. The

nature of this research is mutual and collaborative which means that the relationship between researcher and participant is significant. A primary issue to be considered in this sort of research is the perceived differential of power. The researcher is a foreigner, relatively wealthy by Ethiopian standards and assumptions, well educated, and in a position of respect among Christians in Ethiopia. For all these reasons, the participant will attempt to please the researcher and to give him what the participant thinks he wants. Thus the researcher has attempted to overcome this problem by putting the participant at ease and honestly conveying interest in the participant's ideas and understanding as a knowledgeable person engaged in the area of study. This was done before recording the actual conversation. However, this challenge must be disclosed and the possibility of its effect upon the quality of the conversions acknowledged. Conversation means a back and forth, give and take sort of interaction which is skewed when there is a significant power differential between conversation partners. This is understood and while conscious attempts to minimize its effects have been made, it remains a possible influence upon the results achieved.

Another effect of an orientation to reaching understanding is that the goal of this research is not as much to gather facts as it is to understand the relationships between factors. Thus it is practical and process oriented more so than goal or product oriented. The missiological task of evangelism and church planting among Muslims in Ethiopia is ongoing. Understanding this process and suggesting practical application of the lessons learned is ultimately the purpose of missiological research. However, it is understood that ultimate answers or final solutions are not a likely outcome. This is because history and context are constantly subject to change and so answers today, while having application in the future, will necessarily need to be interpreted again in new contexts. While this is true, understanding is always valuable and provides a foundation upon

which to build in the ever-changing missiological environment of Africa and the Muslim world.

Personal limitations and challenges are also an important part of the disclosure required by this sort of research paradigm. In this case, language has been a challenge because while this researcher has lived in Ethiopia for some years and has some understanding of its languages, that understanding is not sufficient to allow for conversations to be conducted without interpretation. Thus both in the recording process and the transcription process, language interpretation has been involved and introduces the possibility of misunderstanding at a higher level than if all research was conducted within a common language. This challenge is intensified because the participants themselves do not speak Amharic as their first language (the interview language except for two cases). The researcher has travelled to Ethiopia over more than twenty years and has lived in Ethiopia and worked closely with Ethiopian people in the study area the past eight years. It is honestly impossible to say how much insight is gained or lost in this linguistic quagmire but it is essential to disclose this challenge for a proper evaluation of the value of this research.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that understanding is an ongoing and therefore incomplete process. The area of this research is wide in that even in Ethiopia there are a great many churches, outreach ministries, denominations, and individuals working in the area of the Christian mission to Muslims. While the researcher has interacted with many of these, it is not possible to have comprehensive knowledge of every method, procedure and philosophy being used. This research has been conducted in a non-Muslim majority nation in sub-Saharan Africa. The most direct application of this study will therefore be in similar African nations although other non-Muslim majority nations and perhaps even those working in Muslim majority nations will

benefit from the discussion provided. It is therefore the hope of this research to make a significant contribution to missiological understanding of the mission to Muslims.

Transcripts of conversations have been examined and themes identified. Research will be presented under the headings of various themes chosen by the researcher as being representative of the subject matter and arising from the conversations. Themes will be reported within the general categories of conversion, identity, and methods of outreach. Under the topic of conversion the following themes were identified: 1) the nature of conversion to Christ; 2) influences favorable to conversion; 3) influences hindering conversion to Christ; 4) consequences of conversion; and 5) converts who later return to Islam. Under the topic of identity the themes identified were: 1) the relationship of culture and religion in identity formation; 2) family and social influences; and 3) identity change. The themes identified under the heading of methodology are: 1) the home to home approach; 2) Insider Movements; 3) church planting movement strategies; and 4) the role of social and development projects.

5.1   Conversion

Conversion is a wide topic as is clearly seen from the discussion presented in chapter four. The following presentation of research findings combines ideas directly presented by research participants with information drawn from their stories and testimonies that is pertinent to the issues at hand. Quotations are taken from stories told by the research participants. It is difficult to remove a quotation from the story of which it is a part in that some of the context is lost. Thus participant responses are provided with enough surrounding material to bring needed context or the context is explained to provide the setting of the quotation. In order to avoid excessive repetition, when the same quotation is referenced in another section, it will not be repeated. Each quotation presented is

from the research done in Ethiopia during the time frame of this research, thus only the

participants name is given here. For more information please refer to the chart

provided on page 96.

5.1.1 The nature of conversion to Christ

"Yes, my old person was old, and the new person is new. I see it in that way"

(Muhammad Bedaso). This was the quite straight forward answer of one participant as

to the meaning of his new life in Christ. Conversion as change is an important theme

found in the responses of many of the research participants.

> The difference between the old life and the present life is like the difference
> between heaven and earth. Before I was beating my wife and I had no joy and
> peace but now I have joy and peace with good relationship with all people….
> Muslims are surprised when they see the change in my life (Sheikh Gultamo).

Many of the participants mentioned that whereas their previous life as a Muslim did not

have peace, their new life is very much characterized by peace. Their primary emphasis

was on internal peace and to some degree relational peace. The participants who had

converted from Islam had all experienced some persecution that induced other

hardships such as broken relationships and/or financial difficulties. But internally they

had a peace even during persecution and their current experience is one of peace.

> I was thinking that in reading and learning Qur'an I would have peace. But I got
> no peace. On the contrary, when I got converted to Christ and received my
> salvation free of charge, I tasted the glorious peace in me even in the middle of
> persecution…. My inward person was filled with ungodly character before my
> conversion, but now I have left all of that character. As I read the Bible and serve
> the Lord, the change in me is increasing. Above all, I hear the testimony of other
> people concerning me. Even my mother wishes that I might continue in this life
> until the end (Melaku Girma).

> I have peace now… Before my conversion I had no peace. But now I have peace.
> Above all, the spiritual experiences which I entered into are indicators of the
> change in my life. I had no such experiences before. (Medina)

> One of the reasons that peace is mentioned so often by those who have

converted to Christ from Islam is perhaps the value of a peaceful life in South Ethiopian

cultures. To be at peace with those around you is very important and to have inward peace is highly valued. This will be subsequently noted as a hindrance to conversion in that to damage relationships is viewed as very problematic. But to be at peace is a high cultural value that is included in most all conversion testimonies. The comparison between an old life that was not peaceful and a new life that is characterized by peace is the most commonly reported experience of MBB's in Ethiopia.

The change brought about by conversion not only invites comparison with a past that was quite different, it also creates new expectations for the future.

> Before my conversion I had no Father and daughter relationship with God. I used to fear God and tried to respect the law. But now a Father-Daughter relationship is established. The second thing is, I didn't have any peace in my former life, but now I have peace in me. In my former attitude, God was someone who was distant from me and living in the seventh heaven, according to Muslim teaching, but now God is near to me and he is in me and my future is connected to Christ alone (Aisha Muhammad).

Aisha has suffered a lot due to her conversion to Christ. Her husband found that she had put faith in Christ and so he divorced her in Muslim court and married another, taking their daughter with him and allowing Aisha to see her daughter only twice in a month. Because of that separation she had little finance and thus nowhere to live and little food to eat. Nonetheless, she has peace in her heart and has found a close relationship to God that she did not have before. She also anticipates a quite different future than before. Aisha is working with a Christian ministry where she does outreach to Muslims and especially women. She anticipates marriage and a family in an entirely new way now that she is a Christian. Her new expectation includes intimacy and communication with her husband that she would not expect in a Muslim marriage. She understands that God is using her and expects to grow in her relationship to Christ and in her spiritual life. To put this briefly, she expects to live a happy life. Medina also reveals new expectations for the future when she says:

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The true meaning of life for me is the change I have seen. This is the salvation I received through the Lord Jesus Christ. The second thing is about the future. God told me that I may reach many Muslim people in various places and I hope he will give me more grace [to accomplish this]. That is my expectation.

An important and common theme in the discussion of conversion is character change. In Ethiopia, character change is expected to be visible in the form of behavioral change. A person's actions are understood as defining their character. A relatively low value is placed upon people's words in this regard with a much greater emphasis on action.

> To me, conversion means to separate oneself from idol worshiping and bad habits and decide to follow Christ and be obedient to the word of God. ... A man of integrity is a man whose word and living are the same, that is a disciple….. If a person converted to Christ is changed, even if he has no testimony from his mouth, people begin to question about his change in lifestyle. This helps for preaching or testimony about Christ Jesus. ... In their belief , when the person who had bad behavior changes and becomes a good person, they call it "*wolhi*" (a man of God). The "spirit" has come near to him, they say….[For] Ethiopian Muslims, this is the key because they are not very sensitive to revelations or terms like that. Most of the Ethiopian Christian converts from Islam are converted because of someone's lifestyle change (Abdu).

There are several interesting points made here. Idol worship and bad habits relate to common practices among Ethiopian folk Muslims. It is common for Muslims in the Ethiopian countryside to continue in idol worship from their traditional religious belief systems. Chewing chat (a mild narcotic drug) and dishonest behavior such as stealing are also common character issues among rural Muslims in Ethiopia. A person of integrity is one whose words and lifestyle are consistent and a "person of God" is understood culturally as one who has changed to satisfy societal standards of goodness. The person who has experienced this kind of change is thought to have had a visitation of a good spirit, if not the Spirit of God. Beyond that, this change of lifestyle is nearly always mentioned as a prime factor attracting Muslims to Christ. In 2010 and 2011 this researcher visited a number of missionary sites where outreach was being conducted in

Muslim areas of rural Ethiopia. The Ethiopian missionaries were having quite good success in terms of the number of new believers they had after only about a year of service. So they were asked, what is the reason you have been successful? Out of six sites visited at that time all mentioned as the primary factor the transformed life of the Christians. Supernatural experiences such as dreams or physical healing were also mentioned as were development programs such as educational projects, but the first factor mentioned in each case was the difference in lifestyle between the Christian missionaries and their families as compared to the surrounding people. In every case the world "peace" was used to describe this difference. Interestingly, what happens inside of one's own heart in terms of peace is very highly valued but there is a corresponding expectation that such peace will be seen by others by how one conducts themselves in their family and community. Given the level of persecution experienced by all of the missionaries interviewed, it was, and remains, astonishing that peace has such a prominent place in the description of their Christian experience.

Many Ethiopian Christians connect traditional tribal religion with satanic activity. There is quite a big distinction drawn between self and others in this regard. The traditional practices of one's own tribe are often not identified as satanic or demonic but those of other tribes are easily spoken of in this manner. Western missionaries are often accused of bringing their own culture along with the gospel. Ethiopians who are of cultural groups who have a longer Christian heritage and thus have more established Christian traditions of worship also tend to expect other cultural groups to become Christian by following their own cultural expressions of worship. The primary geographical area of this study is in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia. Therefore, several of the participants mentioned issues related to language and culture as important regarding the theme of conversion.
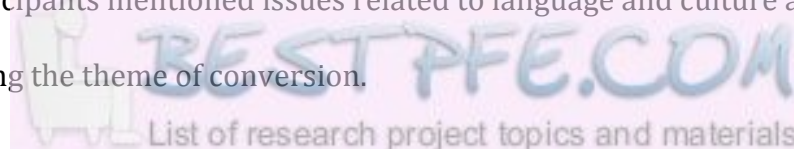
> Since Oromifa is their language, they can understand what is preached and taught easily. Then the transformation comes after that. The disadvantage is that they may bring their culture along with their language into the church. That culture may affect the strength and growth of the church. … The language and the culture are interdependent. Before they come to Christ they used to worship Satan with cultural coverage using this language. If they bring such a culture along with religion it may bring damage to the life of the believers (Mintisinot Abebe).

This quotation reflects a common attitude among Ethiopian Christians of several denominations. The fact that language and culture work together is a valid insight but to continue along that line to believe that somehow using one's own language is demonic is not likely to aid in the missiological endeavor. Indeed, the conflict between Amharic speaking and Oromifa speaking Ethiopians is a deep historical and cultural divide that has been described above. But since many Oromo are Muslims and many of those doing mission work among them are from other tribes, these conflicts are of major significance in terms of what is considered conversion by denominational and mission leaders. In some cases there is deep mistrust resulting in reticence to allow Oromifa speakers to conduct worship in their own language. The use of various languages has become much more accepted in recent years but the underlying mistrust remains. For some Ethiopian Christians there is little recognition of the culturally embedded nature of their own forms of Christianity and therefore little appreciation of the value of allowing other cultural groups to worship according to their own styles. Such issues perpetuate the pre-existing mistrust between people groups.

> Specifically in the southern part of Oromia, namely Arssi and Bale, when a Muslim is converted to Jesus Christ, they think that they also lose their identity of Oromo. They define Oromo as Muslim and Amhara as Christian. So when he receives Jesus Christ, automatically he loses his identity within his community (Gezehagne Asmamaw).

This issue will be revisited below under the topic of identity and culture.

Another issue with regard to understanding conversion among MBB's in Ethiopia is reflected in this quote from a former Muslim teacher.

> I want to do two things among those who have come from a Muslim background. When I teach them I want to root out the teachings of Islam that are deeply rooted in them. I studied the Qur'an long years and also I have many books for this purpose. I will do this underground because that will help them to get released from the bondage of fear and remove doubt from their minds so they don't think about their former religion. I am intending to remove Muhammad from their heart and I will use the name of "Allah" to teach the Allah of the Bible. Concerning the problem of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* and their books, I will teach them underground. … there is always a price to be paid if a person is to be rooted in faith, once a person is committed and saved by Jesus and if properly educated, he would be willing to pay any kind of price for the sake of his faith (Musa Muhammad).

Musa makes a number of important points in this quotation. First, in his view, to convert to Christ is to have Islam rooted out of one's heart. A common thread among many of the research participants connects what should happen during the process of a Muslim turning to faith in Christ, on the one hand, and understanding why a significant number return to Islam, on the other. The issue of turning back to Islam will be discussed below but this is one significant point to consider regarding conversion. If Muslims are not truly converted, turning back is nearly inevitable. For Musa, conversion includes a removal of the old thinking and feeling. Thus he wants to attack specific doctrinal issues such as Jesus being the Son of God and the trinity rather than avoiding them and he wants to "remove Muhammad from their heart." That second point is perhaps the more challenging and the more important. To be a good Muslim means to pattern one's life after Muhammad in ever detail. The *Hadith* provides detailed information about Muhammad regarding every spiritual and natural issue of life. The best Muslim is the one who follows that pattern most closely. Many of the practices followed by Muslims are not taught in the *Qur'an* but only in the *Hadith* and therefore are much more about following the pattern of Muhammad than knowing doctrinal

teaching. Many Muslims speak of deep personal love and devotion to Muhammad. Some

groups of MBB's speak of continued love and devotion to Muhammad as Christians but

if Muhammad is respected as a prophet of God, the *Qur'an* must also be accepted as

scripture since these two go together. If the *Qur'an* is scripture then Jesus did not die

and was not resurrected and is certainly not the Son of God.[10] For most Christians these

are truths that define Christianity. A final quote from one of the participants in this

study will summarize this point.

> The Muslims can come to Christ Jesus only when the new knowledge destroys the former knowledge from their mind. A Muslim who attains the age of three must learn some doctrine about the Muslim religion. They have already inculcated in their minds the knowledge contrary to biblical truth. This must be uprooted by knowledge of Jesus Christ (Aisha Muhammad).

Musa's methodology is to address these issues in an "underground" setting by

which he means not publically in front of the Muslim community. These issues are not

suited for an apologetic approach of argumentation and debate. That sort of approach

tends only to harden respective positions. Rather, discussion in a non-threatening

environment is key to making progress on difficult issues such as the trinity, Sonship of

Christ, prophethood of Muhammad, and so on. A skilled teacher who is very familiar

with both the Bible and the *Qur'an* must guide the seeking Muslim to a new

understanding regarding these important issues.

All the MBB participants in this study described a process of their coming to

Christ. An example is:

> Then I separated myself from my friend who witnessed to me about Christ. Even though I remained closed to the idea, the word preached to me was touching my heart gradually…. One day I went to a conference and I received Christ Jesus as my savior (Mintisinot Abebe).

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[10] References in the *Qur'an* include: Surrahs 43:57-59; 5:17; and 4:157-158 among others.

In most of the participants, their story of conversion is quite lengthy and so does not often provide a short and convenient quotation on this topic but it is possible to review the experience of some of them. Aman Muhammad had a question in his heart over many years in *Qur'an* school regarding how one can know they will go to paradise. The Muslim teaching is that one cannot know before death but will know only at the last day judgment. Aman was not satisfied with this answer and this thought bothered him over many years. Eventually he received a New Testament and in it he learned that Jesus died for him and through faith in Christ one can be saved. Still he did not truly pray for forgiveness until some time after that. In many cases dreams or visions were involved in their conversion but they did not make an immediate commitment to Christ because of many concerns and hindrances such as persecution and being separated from family and community. Even the most dramatic miracles and dreams, in most cases, did not produce immediate responses but rather began a process of separation from their old life into a new life with Christ. This seems to make the most sense when the cost of conversion is considered. To leave Islam and become identified as a Christian is not a decision to be made lightly, the cost is high, and so reflecting this, the process of separation was reported as being gradual in all but one of the cases in this study.

5.1.2 Influences favorable to conversion

This section examines influences that moved Muslims toward receiving Christ. Others have studied conversion motives and this is a similar examination but not focused as much upon motivation as influences that favor conversion. The first influence to be noted is the existence of questions in the mind of a Muslim that develop over time into an influence that leads them to faith in Christ. Questions have a two-fold effect: 1) they work to separate a person from their old belief system; and 2) when their answer is found in the Bible it moves them toward Christ. Questions may arise from various

sources but seeking answers is a primary factor that influences many Muslims toward

faith in Christ as will be seen in the following conversion narratives.

> When I was learning the Qur'an, the issue of entering into heaven (paradise in their definition) came up and the issue of burial, so my soul was filled with worry. This question in me led me to seek the way to salvation (Melaku Girma).

> One day we went to the mosque and in the mosque we were praying. After the prayer, the *imam* was teaching about heaven (paradise in their definition) and hell. He said that to enter to that paradise there is a rope like substance to walk on. If you fall on this side or that you will go to Hell. After this teaching, fear came to my heart and I thought in my heart that it is difficult to enter into paradise. So I began to cry, because I am not able to enter to paradise. On that very night, God showed me in my dream that this is not the way. He is the way. Then He showed me a sign of the cross. This is the cross you have to believe in. So it is through the cross that you are able to enter into heaven. At that time I was a high school student and I began to ask students who are Christians in the class about this cross. They told me from the Bible about the cross and Jesus, and who the way is. I decided immediately after hearing this message and then they took me to the church that I may repent and I received Christ Jesus as my savior….Within the teaching of Islam, the issue of entering to paradise is kept as a mystery. Therefore, this question grew [in my heart] over time. So that question was coming into my mind before the *imam* taught how to enter to paradise by walking on the rope. That ignited me to think more….Beside the question of entering paradise, I had a question about who is the true God. This is because my family worships different gods like Jimam, Shekna Husen, and others. So the issue of the higher God and lesser gods was a question to me…Even though they love their religion, many of the people within the Muslims community are in confusion concerning this. They have many questions (Kedir Waakayo).

> When I was studying the *Qur'an* I was not able to know clearly the way to eternal life. You pray and you don't know where you will go after death. That was a big question in my mind (Aman Muhammad).

> My question is, for example, about how to enter into paradise. The teacher taught us that a person should accomplish five things to enter into paradise. The one who commanded to do all these things will come and judge (*Al Mesisa* who is Jesus). Then I asked my teacher saying, "Who is *Al Mesisa*? Is there a difference between Allah and *Al Mesisa*?" The teacher was not able to answer me well. When he saw I was not satisfied with his answers, he beat me (Aisha Muhammad).

Another influence reported by most of the participants was some sort of miracle

such as dreams and visions, healing, deliverance or other supernatural intervention.

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After a long testimony concerning his life in Islam and gradual turning to Christ, Musa tells of hearing the voice of Jesus as he approached the end of his journey.

> Unexpectedly I heard a voice through my physical ear and my house was filled with light. The voice says, "Why are you weeping? Why are you weeping?" With surprise I asked the one who was speaking, "Who are you?" That voice answered me saying, "I am Jesus…" (Musa Muhammad).

> The cause of my coming to Christ was this. My sister was seriously sick, my family took her to the hospital and traditional medicine men as well. But she was not healed at all. Then some men around our village told us that "if you take this girl to those *Pentes* (Christians) she could be healed." And my family allowed her to go, and she got healed when they prayed for her. After some days, Christians came and told my family that though she is already healed, it is necessary to continue to pray. So, they said, "We need a room for prayer." And my family gave my room to pray for her, and we agreed they could use that room for prayer. … They used to come to my house and pray continuously (Tahir Shibiru).
> (The remainder of the story will be narrated for brevity) One day while Tahir was performing *Salat* one of the Christians asked him if he was worshipping and Tahir said "Yes." So the Christian asked him where is Allah? Tahir said. "He is everywhere." So the Christian asked, "Then why do you always pray only in one direction?" Tahir had no answer and so he went to the *imam* and asked but got no adequate answer. This put doubt and questions in his mind and so eventually it led him to go to a church where as he entered they were singing a song in his own language and he received Christ there.

Here are two conversion narratives retold by the researcher for the sake of clarity.

The first narrative is about how Medina's aunt became a Christian. Her Aunt had a son who was paralyzed but the aunt was fundamentalist Muslim and did not want Medina to take the child to the church for prayer. But the Aunt had lost twelve children to death for various reasons and due to that she developed some mental problems. They took the child to doctors and traditional healers but to no effect. Finally Medina took him to the church for prayer. When they prayed for that child, immediately he was released from the paralysis and he came running to Medina. After the healing of the child, they went back home singing a hymn. As they approached the gate, his mother heard them and began to fall on the ground as if touched by the Holy Spirit. Then she told them that she had a dream the night before and in that dream she saw a man in white clothes. Then

she began to confess that Jesus is truth and life. Medina helped her repent of her sins

and she received Jesus Christ.

The Conversion Narrative of Arishia Zekarias

Arishia is from a Muslim family and lives in the area of Alaba, Ethiopia. Before she was born her parents went to the town of *Dato* to the *Awlia* (priest of witchcraft) and made an offering and asked for help to have children since Arishia's mother was not able to conceive at that time. Thus Arishia was dedicated to the services of evil spirits before her birth. Her family was Muslim but engaged in the worship of spirits and witchcraft. On Sunday they worshipped the spirit, Dado and on Tuesday they worshipped *Nurhussen*, on Wednesday it was a spirit named *Jilal* and on Thursday another spirit named *Muhammed* (not identified with the prophet). Arishia was a *Kidim* (servant) of this worship from her childhood and so participated in the worship by preparing coffee, chat and offering prayers. From time to time she would accompany her father when he went to the *Awlia* to make an offering and seek some special favor.

Before coming to Christ she hated and avoided the Bible and all Christians as much as possible. Then in 1994 EC when she was in the 7th grade she went to visit her aunt who is a Christian. She was sleeping in the house when she had a dream. A light filled the house except the corners of the house, which remained dark. There was a Bible and also some printed songs in the light but she wanted to avoid them and the light so she tried to hide in the dark corners. While she was trying to move into the darkness a voice came out of the light saying, "Come back!" She was afraid and trembling when she woke up.

The next day she went to a girl she knew who was a Christian and told her she wanted to go to church with her. Her friend was surprised but Arishia told her that if she was asked why Arishia was coming she should say that Arishia wants to receive Christ. After receiving the Lord, Arishia went home but there she could not attend church or worship, so for many days all she could do was to pray by herself. Finally she told her family she would visit her aunt again and so she was able to go to church with her friend in the town of her aunt and there she received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. She was so happy as she returned home again but when she arrived there her family was waiting for her with sticks to beat her. She did not know how they found out about her conversion but they were waiting ready to beat her because of her faith in Christ. But when they raised their hands to strike they could not bring them down again because something invisible held them back and so she was able to escape.

She hid behind the house in a field that night while a guest came to visit the family home who knew her and asked concerning her. The family said they had driven her off since she had become a Christian but that guest helped make peace with the family and she was allowed to return home but she could not go to church and could only pray in tongues secretly. After four months she went again to see her friend and to go to church. The Holy Spirit gave her a song at that time and she began to sing and to worship using that song. She felt then the Lord wanted her to sing and to write songs and so she asked her friend if she could join the choir but her friend warned her there would be trouble. She had

been known as a person in the town who danced and received money when she was not saved and so the choir would not accept her for that reason. So she returned home again. On the way some children who knew her met her and told her that all her things had been thrown out of her house and if she returned there they planned to kill her. But since she had nowhere else to go she went on to her house anyway and hid herself in a place near the house and spent the night there. She had no food, no mattress, no help or support of any kind. One day while she was hiding they killed a sheep she had been raising and told her that this was just a warning and the next time it would be her they killed. Her father called the family and relatives together and they told her that she must leave Christianity or they would kill her and in that area a family decision like that can be carried out without penalty. She refused, so the family began to leave with the intention of killing her when the Holy Spirit told her to call them back and tell them she would not go to church but that God would judge them for stopping her. At these words they agreed to allow her to go to church but only on Sunday and they would not give her food or support to live.

When they saw that she persisted, they arranged for a man to come to beat her. When the children saw the man beating her they cried out and the family stopped the beating but even today she has pain in her hand and arm. She went out from the house into a deserted area and spent the night in a tree so the hyena should not find and kill her. The next day she went to her aunt who cried when she saw her bruises and bleeding. After this Arishia was discouraged and depressed and wanted to die. So much so that she went into the highway and stood in the middle trying to be killed by a car but the driver stopped and told her to go away and that she should not do such things. Then she decided to throw herself in the river and drown and so she went to the river and was about to carry out her plan when the Holy Spirit came upon her and she lost consciousness and fell to the ground. She was unconscious for some time and when she awoke she found near her some money laying on the ground and two clusters of coffee beans. She picked them up and the Lord spoke to her that He did not want her to die but that he would care for her and that she would have a ministry giving coffee to people and as they drank coffee in her presence she would preach the gospel to them so she felt called to the ministry and she began to prepare.

At this point she began to travel back to her family but on the way she met the man who had beat her who was loading his donkey. But the donkey became angry and bit him on his thigh, which seriously injured him. When the people of the town saw what happened they said it was the God of Arishia who judged that man and so he was afraid and so was her family and so they allowed her to come home. After a time her father contacted one of his brothers from Sheshamene (another town not too far away) to come to discuss with him concerning his daughter who had become a Christian. They spent the night talking and chewing chat and plotting against her. The next day her uncle went back home and when he arrived there he found that his business had been closed by the government and so he told her father that this happened because they plotted against Arishia and so they were afraid and the uncle even asked Arishia to pray for him.

Still the father wanted her to turn away from Christ and become a Muslim again. This time he called his other brother from England who was a known

fundamentalist Muslim to come and help persuade her. When the brother arrived they called the whole family together to discuss about her and another girl from the family who had converted to Christ. The uncle offered to give them money, clothing, education and all sorts of things if they would turn away from Christ. The other girl told Arishia just to take the money and then when they were gone she could go back to serving the Lord but she would have their money. This is what the other girl planned to do. But Arishia refused to take this money and clothing and so they sent her away but received the other girl who was willing to renounce Christ. But as she was going away the Holy Spirit told her to go back and to proclaim that Jesus is Lord to them. So she went back and told them that she had something to say and so they assumed she wanted to change her mind and gave her opportunity to speak. But when she spoke she boldly proclaimed Jesus is Lord and so a disturbance broke out in the home and she left.

They stopped the family meeting at that point but the girl who had taken the money to renounce Christ began to go to the town and tell everyone what Arishia had done. She went to her school, to the market, around the city and told how Arishia had refused to receive money to renounce Christ even though this other girl had accepted it and so everyone in the area heard this story. At that time Arishia went back to school but she had nothing, no school supplies nor even a place to live so she was very discouraged. She went out into the street and just slept along the road but that day a man came looking for her to the school. They told him she was along the street and so he came to find her and told her that he had heard how she was serving the Lord and had not turned away even for money and told her he would pay for a place for her to live, her school fees, her food and all her needs would be met. He did all these things for her as he promised until she finished high school.

She became known throughout the area because of her testimony and was accepted as an evangelist by her church and began to go out to preach the gospel in that area. She has been preaching and planting churches all around Alaba these past few years. Now she is very well known and respected as a Christian and even her family has accepted her decision. Most of them have not become Christians themselves yet but they have made it known in the community that they accept her and they have threatened to kill any Muslims who may harm her.

Arishia's story exhibits a number of important principles of Muslim conversion

to Christ in Ethiopia. She came to Christ over a period of time involving the witness of

her aunt, a dream, supernatural interventions at several points, had moments of

personal crisis and doubt, suffered at the hands of her family, was offered money and

other benefits if she would renounce Christ and return to Islam, and eventually won the

respect of her family and community and has become a strong witness for Christ.

Arishia passed through many extreme challenges and suffered greatly and now her faith and character have become known to many across Ethiopia.

The faith and testimony of Christians was also described as an important factor influencing some participants toward Christ. Melaku Girma told of a Christian girl who was unafraid to visit him when he was very sick with a communicable disease and even his family would not come into his presence. This strongly influenced him toward Christ that she was not afraid and believed God would protect her. The Christian girl said: "No, we are not afraid…and we can come and we are willing to pray for you." Later he comments about this:

> My [Christian] friend was saying that even people who are with such communicable diseases can be healed if we pray for them. I was revived because of these situations because of the confidence that I saw in the students, first in the girl and then in my friend and I understood them to be true creatures of God. Then I said, "This is the only religion which has truth." … Her influence on me was very great. It was like loving an enemy. Her character produced the sense of how to love others unconditionally (Melaku)

Muhammad Bedaso is another example of how the lives of Christians can be a positive influence toward Christ. He went to live with family members who were Christians after his father had died. He says, "While living with them I saw how they lived, how they worshipped God and how they cast out the devil…" But still he did not come to Christ immediately. He says, "Seeing all this I still had no faith in God because of two reasons. First I was taught that Jesus is a man not the Lord and second, if I followed Jesus the whole community of Muslims living in my area would kill me." This final factor of fear of family and community is a hindrance to conversion that will be discussed in the next section, but the positive influence toward Christ mentioned by Muhammad is the lives of Christian family members.

Another factor reported by some research participants was their receiving of a tract or Bible.

The story of Aman Muhammad:

When a child in Bale, where virtually everyone is Muslim, he first went to *Qur'an* school but later he was sent to secular school. He had a question in his mind from his learning in *Qur'an* school regarding how he can know eternal life but he received no answer. One day a classmate, who is a Christian, gave him a New Testament, which he began to read secretly. By himself he prayed to know Jesus after reading about Jesus dying on the cross. He understood that the *Qur'an* tells Muslims that the *Injil* (gospels) are true and so he believed this story and prayed to Jesus. Later, after he had moved to a larger town, he went to a church and at that time he went forward to receive Christ. He was the only one dressed as a Muslim there and so everyone looked at him. Some thought he must be there to destroy the church. But he received Christ anyway. No one spoke to him from among the Christians of that church. Only the guard of the church spoke to him over the next five weeks and they became friends. Later, one of his friends from childhood came looking for him since the friend had recently returned from Saudi Arabia where he had been training with *Al Queda*. They talked all night because the friend had heard that he became a Christian and wanted to know why. In the end his friend also wanted eternal life and so together they went to a church. At that church there was a minister who knew their language and was from a Muslim background. He prayed for the friend of Aman and he received Christ. During that prayer, Aman's friend fell to the ground and when he got up he was blind. Aman had to lead him around by the hand, which he did for the next six weeks. The last week of that period they were praying and fasting and one day the Holy Spirit came and they began speaking in tongues (no one had taught them about this) and when they shouted loudly in tongues the young man's eyes were opened and he could see again. They then walked from place to place sharing the gospel to Muslims. They had good success but the Muslims in that area became aggressive against them and attacked them but they were not seriously hurt. One day Aman was riding on a bus and the Muslims stopped the bus and told the people they only wanted Aman (they planned to kill him) but the other passengers said "No" and called the police who came and delivered Aman. Aman had many other experiences such as this. Aman's questions caused him to search for truth but it was his contact with a New Testament that provided the answers he desired.

In finishing this section it is important to note that many of the conversion narratives shared with this researcher included indications of how God had been working in their lives long before they actually turned to Christ. As they reflected on their own life experiences they recognized how events were orchestrated by God in the form of questions coming into their heart or some supernatural experience they themselves had or that they knew about among their family or community. These experiences were not recognized in this manner at the time but at the time when they

tell their story of coming to Christ, their personal history is seen through a new lens and re-interpreted within their Christian paradigm. This re-interpretation of the past and anticipation of a new and positive future is a vital part of the formation of their new identity in Christ.

5.1.3 Influences hindering conversion to Christ

The primary hindrances to conversion noted in this research were three. First, and perhaps the most important, is fear of family and community. This has been noted already in several of the testimonies above so only one additional quotation will be provided here.

> Yes, I was afraid for two reasons. Because, the majority of the community is Muslim, that is why I was afraid. The second thing is that I don't know what Christianity holds. I don't know about Christians. So, that is why I was very much afraid (Mintisinot Abebe).

It is difficult to put a number on those who never turn to Christ because of this fear since it is not possible to identify them and to get their story. The participants in this research from a Muslim background were all ultimately converted to Christ and so in some way overcame this fear. But there are undoubtedly many who do not. Missiologically this must be considered an important factor to address. Notice that Mintisinot had two objects of fear, not only the known threat from family and community who would oppose him becoming a Christian, but also fear of the unknown (Christians). In Ethiopia, even though it is a Muslim minority nation, in rural areas and some cities the population is nearly all Muslims and thus they have had little direct contact with Christians.

Fear of family rejection, community rejection, loss of inheritance or family benefits, loss of husband, wife, children, or physical attacks and even killing is threatened against those who turn to faith in Christ. The testimony of Abdu Muhammad

shows the seriousness of these fears and also illustrates that it is not only the potential

Muslim convert that is affected by that fear but also Christians evangelizing Muslims.[11]

Narrative of Abdu Muhammad

Abdu was a *da'wah* worker evangelizing for Islam and a journalist for one of the oldest Muslim newspapers in Ethiopia named *Hikma* (wisdom). One day while he was out preaching Islam around Addis Ababa, some men who were on the street sharing Christ gave him a tract. He had been reading the Bible trying to find out why humans were created. So he was interested to know more but he found as he read the Bible and compared that to the life of the Christians and the churches he saw that there was a contradiction. The people did not seem to live the Christian life he saw described in the New Testament. But he wanted peace, he had money because his wife was working in the UK and sending money home, but he had no peace. He asked the evangelists how to get peace and they said by faith in Christ. They were handing out tracts and so he took one. They told him to go to the church because they were afraid to pray with him on the street since he was clearly dressed like a Muslim, so he thought they were not really sincere Christians. But since he was leaving they changed their mind and said they would pray there on the street and they gathered in a circle around him and they began to pray for him and at that time he received Christ. They asked him if he had a Bible and if he read it. He told them he would read it and they told him to pray before reading for a Spirit of revelation. They told him to read the first book of the Old Testament and then the first of the New Testament and to go back and forth like that. So he began to read both the Bible and *Qur'an* side by side. But as he began to read, "In the beginning..." he could not pass that point without crying. For three days it was like that and on the third day he went to church. Since then he has continued in the way of Jesus.

Abdu's wife was in England because she was using her job there to send money to support the *Dah'wa* movement in Ethiopia. He wrote to his wife in England to tell her about his conversion and also informed his boss at the Islamic Newspaper. They wanted to hear why he had changed from being such a strong Muslim who was preaching and evangelizing people to Islam and now had become a Christian. His wife wanted to know if he wanted a new wife or more money? But he said, "No, it is only that I am now at peace. I have not known peace in my life until now." So she wanted to have their children transferred to her family but Abdu was not willing to do this.

He spent the next two years just being faithful in the church. The church gave him a place to live so he would not be burdened with rent since he was now learning to preach Jesus. He was baptized during this time and started to preach to whomever would listen of those he knew among the Muslims in Addis Ababa. Because of his preaching there were Muslims who came to damage the church and cause many problems so the church leaders told him he must not preach any

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[11] Please note that the statements concerning Muslim groups operating in Ethiopia, their activities and intentions, are the testimony of Abdu and cannot be otherwise confirmed by this researcher.

more or else must move to another place since the damage was too much. But he could not stop preaching because he felt it was like fire shut up in his bones. So he left that place and began to travel and preach wherever he could. He was doing any work he could find to support himself and preaching to Muslims whenever he had the opportunity. He met a friend from Afar (a strong, even fanatical Muslim area) who was also a Christian and they went together to Afar to preach the gospel. So they were travelling between Addis Ababa and Afar and preaching to any Muslims who would listen. In Addis at that time there were places called Muslim Knowledge and *Dah'wa* Associations that had been started by Saudi's around the city to spread Islam. These Muslim efforts were aimed mainly at college students. Since they were teaching Islam and since Abdu had been previously a fellow preacher, they knew him and they wanted to know why he would convert to become a Christian. This Saudi group was planning to encourage a Muslim revolution in the Horn of Africa and especially Ethiopia. Even though Islam had come to Ethiopia before other African nations, Islam has not expanded into all the country and remains less than half the population (the 2007census reported about 34%). So Ethiopia was influenced by Islam from long before the rest of Northern Africa but they are Muslim nations and Ethiopia is not. Thus Ethiopia is something of a disappointment if not an embarrassment. Islam came to Somalia from Ethiopia (Harar), but Ethiopia is not a Muslim nation and Somalia is.

Abdu and his friend Muhammad were travelling to Afar preaching Christ. But his wife's brother gave Muhammad poison and because of this he died and Abdu was left alone in the work. Abdu continued the ministry in Afar even though they beat him very badly whenever he would preach there. The first time he received this beating was after four years as a Christian. After that he stayed in Addis for 1 year recovering but then he went again to Afar. By then he had grown in his faith in Christ through his suffering. So every two months he would go to Afar for 10-15 days preaching in many areas. He continued this for one and a half years and during that time three Afar guys became Christians which is very miraculous (Afar people at that time were not known to ever convert to Christ). So he was hopeful and he taught these three faithfully. They were living far apart in various areas of Afar and he would travel from one to the other to teach them in their new faith. At that time a Muslim *Dah'wa* group came from Wollo and found Abdu and one of his converts and so the Muslims tried to convert them back to Islam. They talked back and forth for five days about the Bible and the *Qur'an* and when they had finished they wanted to kill Abdu because they had not prevailed. One of them received Christ but the others just wanted to discuss on and on but in the end they could not defeat Abdu's teaching. They had been holding their discussion in the mosque and on the last day after the afternoon *salat* (prayer) they came again to finish their talk and one of them came behind him and put something around his neck to choke him and kill him. They pulled him away from the Mosque and beat him badly trying to kill him. They wanted to stop him from having any heirs so he was beaten very badly to make him unable to have children and they threw him out in the street. The police found him and took him to a clinic that night but Abdu could not speak because they had damaged his neck by choking him. So they sent him to another hospital in a larger city but they could not help him either, so they sent him on to Addis Ababa for 17 days in the hospital and after that he could finally speak. The doctor told

him the condition was very serious and he needed continued treatment but he had no money. He went home but he could not work or preach because of his injuries.

There was a Muslim guy in Saudi Arabia who he had known before when he was a Muslim so he wrote to him to get help and that guy sent him some money and also some Christian friends in Addis helped him. So still he could do nothing as far as work and had no money for ongoing treatment. He went to a hot spring area since some said it may bring him some relief and stayed in Adama so he could go to Sodere (hot spring). He took only aspirin for medication and used the hot spring and with this treatment his legs were not in pain any more but he could not control his urine due to the injury. He was doing some evangelism in Adama and one Christian brother heard about him and wanted to do something to help. So he was able to go to a hospital and get some treatment and that brought some improvement. So he returned to his ministry in Afar and Somali region around the city of Dire Dawa. The Lord spoke to him clearly to go and to work in these areas even though he had suffered so much. A pastor from Addis Ababa called him and helped him again to get some medical treatment at the Korean Hospital which allowed him to get a much needed operation so he is now much improved but not fully well. To this day he is much better in every way but he cannot have children and has some other ongoing health problems from his injuries. Around this time Abdu's wife was killed in a train accident in UK caused by terrorists. Her family did not tell him immediately because she had married another Muslim man in UK after Abdu became a Christian and the money paid to the victims went to that family and not to Abdu or his children.

Abdu is someone who has sacrificed much for his faith in Christ. Some may suggest he should have been more secret concerning his beliefs and so avoided so much suffering. But for him, his faith has led him to openly declare his conversion and he has been fruitful in his evangelism and discipleship work over more than ten years. But those who have been willing to suffer for Christ are some who are the least supportive of Muslim outreach strategies that are secretive in nature and they often feel that such strategies are in the end dishonest or at least dishonoring to Christ. Such comments will be noted below in the appropriate section.

The second major hindrance for Muslims turning to faith in Christ as confirmed in this research is previously received teaching of Islam. Those growing up in a Muslim family and a Muslim community are taught from an early age concerning their religion. But the process of teaching is very informative. There is a combination of repetition in

terms of doctrinal instruction but a large portion of teaching is received through repetitive actions. The interweaving of Muslim practices into life is a most powerful teaching tool. Here are some quotations from research participants:

> Islam as a religion has a process of indoctrination. Infants are trained doing the customs of the religion like fasting and praying. These customs are stronger than the doctrine of the religion…. What we hear has its own influence in your life. But what you repetitively do has a big place in your life. Sometimes it becomes part and parcel of your life. Above all, what you hear at your infant stage has a great influence when you become grown up (Zemzem Kedir).

> The biggest challenge on their side [Muslims] is the doctrine that they have. Because they have been taught many times so that is the challenge for them that keeps them from coming to Christ. The second thing is on the side of the church, we must show love. Love and unity is expected by Muslims. Love and unity can attract them to come to Christ (Mintisinot Abebe).

> The first thing is the teaching given us against Christ in the mosque. The second is that from my childhood we are informed about Christ all the bad things. Above all, we were told not to greet *Pentes* [Pentecostal Christians] but to flee from them (Muhammad Bedaso).

The third hindrance noted by some participants had to do with the historical connection between Christianity and political oppression experienced during previous governmental regimes.

> One of the peculiarities of the Muslims around Arssi is that they are so zealous for the Muslim religion. At the same time they consider Christianity as oppression by Christians. They despise Christianity as the religion of Southern Ethiopia. So they claim that they are somehow superior to the rest of the people [of Ethiopia]. They hate it because they relate Christianity to king Tewodros of Ethiopia. They describe it as a religion of politics (Kedir Waakayo).

> The people around Arssi area were forced to accept Christianity by previous regimes. Even some of the women's breasts were cut and fingers cut off. So when we preach the gospel to them about Christianity the new generation becomes angry (Aliazar Hassan).

This complaint arises from the 19th century and the period when Ethiopian emperors extended their territory toward the South. At that time the emperors of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were very closely linked. Due to this history, Many Oromo people of the various clans such as Arssi have deep resentment toward Christianity and

do not clearly differentiate between Orthodox and Protestant Christians. In such areas Islam has become a religion of opposition and very much connected to politics. This idea is encouraged by the many outside Muslim groups operating in Ethiopia who use the period of mistreatment of more than a century ago to convince Oromo people to become or remain Muslims.

5.1.4 Consequences of conversion

As mentioned in the previous section, there is significant fear on the part of potential converts to Christianity from Islam. This fear is not without foundation and every MBB that was contacted during this research period has told stories of persecution, rejection, and suffering. The narratives of Areshia and Abdu given above are examples but there are many similar statements that were gathered in this research.

> There are three mosques in three *kebeles* (communities). I was the leader of the youth conference in these mosques. I was planning to drive the Christians from these areas, and to leave that place in an unjust way… This we did because the *Qur'an* says that "until people come to Muslim religion slaughter and kill them (Abdu Ababu).

Later, Abdu himself converted and suffered attacks against himself:

> After that Muslims persecuted me; they beat me and they threw stones on me. Above all, one day they came against me saying "this is your last day" but they were not able to seriously harm me because of the protection of God (Abdu Ababu).

> There is a Muslim law called Muhammad's *Hadith* within Buhari's book. When somebody goes to another religion or converts to another religious form, Islam, says, "Kill him." That is the law….If I am in that situation, [teaching new MBB's] this is what I would do. I will tell them that when they received Jesus it is not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer or be persecuted for his sake (Musa Muhammad).

> After three months my friends and my father heard of my conversion. Then they sent me a message saying, "you are converted to the religion of the Wolaytas and Kambatas and Hadiyas because they are influenced by foreigners"…My father and mother agreed that if I continue to be a Christian they would kill me because in Muslim culture this is acceptable. But I kept myself in the church not going out because I needed protection….Now my sorrow is for my family. I received Jesus

Christ at the age of 18 but my father is a teacher of the *Qur'an*. Whenever I think about my family I think that they are near to death (Muhammad).

Those who were persecuting me during conversion time are now converted to Christ and my father's age is 75 and my mother 70. They have received Christ Jesus and now are worshipping Him together (Kedir Waakayo).

Fatimua's Testimony – When she became a Christian her father found out and said he would not support her (she was in school in another town) and that she could not come home. After she graduated she and her sister went to their home but their father would not receive them so they went to another house. The elders came to them and said they could either renounce Christ and live with the family or continue with Christ and leave. Fatimua said she would never renounce Christ but her sister wanted to live at home. So Fatimua was sent away to live with a cousin but in the end her father was convinced because someone said, "What if something happens to her?" And after that he let her come home.

Aisha Muhammad's Testimony – She saw a vision of Jesus one night and it so affected her she started to ask different ones about its meaning. She learned from Christians it was Jesus and this put her on a path of coming to faith in Christ. She kept this secret from her husband and family members for some time but eventually her husband confronted her about her activities with other Christians and she confessed she was a Christian. He told her she must change back to Islam but she refused saying it was not a man who called her but the Lord himself. In the end he took her to *Shari'ah* court and divorced her. The court awarded her husband their daughter and he has remarried so Aisha now sees her only from time to time.

Yusuf Walio's Testimony – He had questions about Christianity but could not get answers from either Muslims or Christians. He prayed to God that He would make it clear to him. "After that the character of my family was changed against me. They began to hate me. Those who did love me before showed hatred against me. This was all before my actual conversion to Christ."

Every research participant also reported rejection by family members.

When my mother saw the change in my character and my determination, she told me to come back home (Melaku Girma).

Except my father who does not like total separation from me, most of my family members have deserted me and I also have separated myself from them because I cannot do what they do culturally as part of the Gurage tribe (Zemzem Kedir).

When I began to serve as a full time minister in the church, my family who were opposing me stopped opposing and even neighbors who opposed me began to accept me (Medina).

The initiative for threatening me was from my relatives. They accused me as one who brought a different religion into the family and caused the community to

blaspheme their name. Of course, there were pressures from people around and there was intense influence from my other relatives by raising questions about me so they would cause me to deny Christ…. Yes, when I was converted to Christianity from my Muslim background, the fist crisis that met me was the isolation from the Muslim side. On the other hand, the Christian community was doubtful of my words and they were hesitant to accept my conversion as real (Yusuf Walio).

When one Muslim becomes a Christian, he loses everything including family love and social connections with the community. By comparison, when he becomes a Christian he cannot find equivalent love as he was getting in his former life (Gizaw Guta).

Many research participants shared stories of property loss and beatings. An example is Haji Usman Muhammad who had been a well known Muslim leader. He had a dream in which Christ came to him and called him by name and told him to "come." In that dream Christ also told him, "When you receive me you will be persecuted and you will suffer. So you have to understand this. After suffering you will share glory." He was a very well known person in Alaba and so he continues:

The rumors of my conversion went over all the places of Alaba. Then persecution came and all our maize and wheat was looted by people, they took my three oxen and six cows. They took twelve goats and other things. I had a big house and they burned it. They accused me falsely and they brought me to the court; they beat my children and began to insult me…But many people came to Christ Jesus and now there are 294 (Haji Usman).

He also started a school with the help of a foreign aid agency and 562 children from the community are studying there…."Recently, fifteen days ago, some of the men from Alaba came to beat my wife and me and along with my children while we were worshipping God in the church. My wife is still on medication" (The leader of those who attacked him is in prison for 6 months and his companions have come to ask forgiveness).

In Ethiopia, if a Muslim converts to Christ it is nearly impossible to keep it a secret unless there is no interaction with others Christians at all. For this reason some groups maintain a Muslim lifestyle even in terms of religious practices but that will be discussed at a later point. One very commonly reported phenomenon is the returning of

converts back to Islam. This is interesting since churches and missions groups very seldom openly discuss this issue. One reason is that nearly all such reporting of ministry activity is connected to fund raising in some way. In the next section the issue of re-conversion to Islam is noted.

5.1.5 Converts that later return to Islam

It is certain that the fear of persecution and suffering at the hands of family and community influences some potential converts from Islam away from Christianity. The number of those affected is not easily discerned. Neither is it easy to confirm how many may be return from Christianity to Islam because of the various challenges they face. All of the participants in this study remained Christians and thus it is difficult to use their statements to fully understand this subject. But many who are involved in Christian service speak of the need for new converts to become strong before they face persecution due to the concern that they may turn back. Thus several participants recommended a discipleship program to be done as secretly as possible for as long as possible in order for new Christians to fully understand and enter into their new faith. Several of the participants (Arishia and Aiesha recounted above as examples) mentioned other family members or relatives who turned back to Islam.

One very common report was that of being offered money, restoration to family and international travel if new converts would return to their former practice of Islam. Two relevant reports are:

> There were relatives and friends of my father who live in Saudi Arabia. They tried to make me go back to Islam by sending money. But God has promised to provide for me according to his will (Muhammad).

> My family members came to me… they said to me they do not prefer my death and only require me to betray Christ Jesus and to agree with them. They told me that they are willing to provide everything for me if I deny Christ. They told me if I have the desire not to live in Ethiopia, they can provide all necessary provisions to live in an Arab Country and continue my

life according to the teachings of the Muslims as before. So they asked my decision...then I responded to their question negatively. I said to them that I have no response to their question. I have already believed God...they came with the power of money to draw me back from Christ Jesus. When I said, "No," to money they charged me using lies and brought me to the court. I answered their accusations in the court and paid all that was demanded of me. When my family and kin understood that I was not willing to change my mind, they agreed among themselves to leave the issue (Yosuf Walio).

Perhaps a more troubling part of many of the narratives was the problems they encountered in the Christian church. Mintisinot Abebe shared the thought that "Muslims have strong fellowship and concern for each other and this must be seen in the church." Unfortunately, concern and love from Christians is not always the experience of the Muslim convert.

Converts from Islam to Christ have one common problem. They do not have someone who can support them to continue in their new life. Because of this they backslide from faith in Christ. In the same way, no one was helping me and after three years in the house of the Lord, when I could not withstand the challenge, I went back to my family ..." (Musa Muhammad).

Then I began learning in the church but no one was giving me food to eat or something to drink. I was very hungry. In the Muslim culture, there is support and provision for the needy. But Christians did not show concern for their brother in Christ so I wept bitterly (Muhammad).

It is not good for new Christians to go to church but to remain being taught at home or in small groups until they are strong in their new faith. The main reason is that if they go to church they will find many contradictions. One is that sometimes the preachers in the churches preach negatively against Muhammad and they belittle him, which is difficult for the new Christian to deal with. Sometimes new converts from Islam have been greatly shocked by this and even had fights because of this issue. Also, in the church there may be foreigners who come and they want to take pictures of the new convert and so [conversion] becomes associated with giving money for various projects so the new convert begins to think of Christianity as a source of money and connect it with foreign things and foreign people (Aliazar Hassan).

Another issue mentioned is that if the new convert does not receive effective discipleship they may return to Islam.

The problem is that those people who see Jesus in a vision or in a dream often backslide from following Jesus. The reason is that they are not taught the foundational teaching of the Christian faith and so they easily go back to their

former religion. It is very important to teach them the foundational doctrines in love and in patience and with care. In that situation, they will continue to be rooted in their faith (Musa Muhammad).

Zemzem shared a similar idea:

They have an experience concerning miracles but the question is, how do they come to the knowledge of the truth? Of course, the miracles they saw cannot give answers to the questions in their souls. It [a miracle] does not bring rest to their soul....The miracle I stress here [that is needed] is not about healings, or opening blind eyes, but the miracle which brings rest to their soul. ...If they taste this kind of miracle, they will come to Jesus Christ.

Thus there are many challenges and hindrances working to keep Muslims from coming to faith in Christ but there are also influences they must deal with after becoming Christians. Arishia in her narrative reports that she was in such despair over persecution and financial problems that she tried to kill herself. Musa reports that he turned back to Islam for a season, although he eventually returned to faith in Christ. It is likely that these are not isolated reports and in fact these experiences are common among Ethiopian MBB's. Many converts must endure trials and hardships among Christians such as mistrust, rejection, lack of communication or financial help, and many others. Because of this, more and more Ethiopian MBB's support the idea of a separate gathering for those coming from Islam although this idea has not been supported by most denominations. Genet Church is one of the few or perhaps the only Ethiopian denominations to accept a group using an Insider Movement strategy under their covering without demanding significant changes in the manner of their operation.

5.2   Identity

Participants in this study did not speak of identity directly, for the most part. They told their stories of conversion and experiences as converts to faith in Christ. In the process they revealed three important themes in relationship to this topic of study. First there were comments that connected to the role of culture and religion in identity formation.

Second they spoke of family and social influences that clearly also affected their sense of identity. Finally they gave some insight into the process of identity change especially in relationship to their conversion and new life in Christ.

5.2.1 Culture and religion in identity formation

There is a difference of opinion in Ethiopia as to the connection between culture in terms of ethnic group and culture in terms of religion. Religious beliefs affect many aspects of life in Ethiopia and not only church attendance. There are Christian butchers and there are Muslim butchers across Ethiopia (and in some areas perhaps kosher butchers also). Those who are Christian would never go to the Muslim butcher to buy meat and the Muslims would never buy from a Christian butcher. As explained above, the Ethiopian governmental system is based primarily upon ethnic divisions and is therefore called an ethnically based federal system. There is no similar consideration regarding religion but as Yusuf is quoted above, each ethnic identity is assigned a religion. So Oromo are assumed to be Muslim and Amhara are assumed to be Orthodox. Actually the list is long: 1) Tigrinians are Orthodox; 2) Guraginya are Muslims; 3) Wolayta, Kambata and Hadiya are Protestant; 4) Afar and Somali are Muslims; and in this manner most tribes, and clans can be assigned a religious identification. The nature of tribal differences is that they tend to be treated as stereotypes and so each tribe or clan has an assigned identity that includes character qualities, personal habits and religious beliefs. Such stereotypes are learned and internalized at a young age. Those tribes that are closer in language and culture tend to have more positive stereotypes whereas those that have a history of conflict are seen in a negative light.

Correspondingly each tribe or subgroup has a dominant self-identity of ideal characteristics they connect with themselves. Religion is one of the characteristics that is part of group identity. Thus Oromo Muslims include Muslim as a part of Oromo

identity and, believing themselves to be the largest part of the Oromo people, they have even influenced other non-Muslim Oromo of the truth of their statements. The leader of the Oromo tribe is called *Abba Gadaa*. The person holding this position changes every eight years by tradition as a new age group comes into leadership. This is part of their traditional system of governance called *Gadaa*. One of the participants in this study was a former *Abba Gadaa.* He is a follower of *Waakafana*, which is the traditional belief system of the Oromo. He said:

> Muslim religion coming to the Oromo people has only happened in the past 300 years (for him a short time). The Oromo tradition is *Waakafana* and this is being revived among the Oromo people. The Oromo religion and their political system of *Gadaa* are very much connected and part and parcel to Oromo culture. *Waakafana* worships one God who is creator and is thus monotheistic. For Oromo religion, God is invisible and can be seen only in his actions such as miracles he may do or in sending rain, blessing with healthy crops and animals, and peace in the community that follows his ways.

Oromo Muslims claim a much longer history for Islam among the Oromo than 300 years, but for the former Abba Gadaa, it is nonetheless a short time compared to the history of his tribe. The interest in *Waakafana* at this time is undeniable with some two million gathering at Bishoftu the past few years to celebrate *Irecha*. But how many Oromo actually practice this belief system as their only or even primary belief system is unclear. However, the comments of the former Abba Gadaa highlight an important issue. There is certainly an Oromo identity for a significant number of Muslims that does not equal Muslim.

The former Abba Gadaa claims *Waakafana* is a monotheistic religion perhaps because both Islam and Christianity claim the same and both would accuse *Waakafana* of encouraging the worship of many gods. As understood by this researcher, Waaka is the high God above all, the creator of all things. But beneath *Waaka* are many lesser spiritual entities that must be dealt with on a day to day basis. Although *Waaka* may be

invisible, the lesser deities worshipped as idols by many Oromo are represented in some physical form. Oromo traditional religion has been described in section 1.4.1 above and so will not be further discussed here. There may well be various versions of *Waakafana* with various levels of purity practiced from place to place among the Oromo. However many committed followers of *Waakafana* there may be (the number is probably not clear at this point), many Oromo people have embraced a political narrative and corresponding rhetoric that includes Oromo traditions as being vital to their tribal and therefore personal identity. Islam has also been implicated as having political aspirations that are supported by Muslims from outside of Ethiopia. This makes for a very complicated picture when it comes to how components of ethnicity, politics, and religion mix in Oromo identity and sense of self. Musa said:

> You can't differentiate Islam from the culture, they are mixed...In Islam, business has its own law, clothing, and the way you eat, and the way you sleep, how you go out from your home, how you walk, marriage and divorce... everything is according to the *Quran* and *Hadith*. Upon this the culture is founded (Musa Muhammad).

This is no doubt true for those Oromo Muslims who are followers of scriptural Islam and have had clear teaching by knowledgeable teachers. The experience of those following folk Islam may well be somewhat different. Kedir who grew up in a rural area, comments on his experience of the issue of ethnicity in the church:

> I feel in my heart that I am an Arssi Oromo Christian, but the church that sent me here [to study] has no recognition of that. They even forced me to change my name... When we came to the church they did not teach us to receive Christ alone but we were introduced to the culture and living style of their nationalities along with the gospel ... Most of the Christians and leaders of the church in our area are not the native people. So when we came to the church they mixed us into their culture rather than keeping our context (Kedir Waakayo).

But Kedir himself used the *Oromifa* language in his ministry and has had good results with more than 40 coming to Christ in his church planting work among Muslims. But he

says that when he began to use the Oromo language his home church labeled him as being part of a secret political movement and an Oromo terrorist. But now they have accepted the use of *Oromifa* and have even developed some teaching in that language. Kedir continues:

> When God came to touch me, He came in my context and He came speaking my own language. Still as part of the church I have questions. Even those who are preaching and teaching the word do not keep the context of the people. …God came to me in my own context within my own being, within my own culture, and my own language and even the church should proceed in this way.

Kedir's father's name, Waakayo, indicates that God is near and not far away. So he uses this in preaching to Oromo that *Waaka*, who is creator, has come near in Christ and feels this is the best way to preach to Oromo people. Alazan also comments on this issue from his experience when he says:

> The church has never trained us to worship God according to our cultural context. For instance, I am Oromo, but I was compelled to sing hymns in *Kamabatinya* language that I do not know….Therefore it is good to follow Christ without losing one's culture. There is also an effort to translate the name of God in the Bible by "Allah" and Jesus as *Isa*. This will be a shock to the fundamentalists and will help us to establish churches in these areas.

Kambata is a tribe that is predominantly Christian and has evangelized nearby ethnic groups such as in the area of Alazan. It seems clear that in the current environment, outreach to Oromo Muslims should be undertaken in the Oromo language.

This is a topic under discussion among Ethiopians and often affected by current events. There is no agreement on this topic and it is clear that Oromo people themselves see the issue quite differently than others and in some cases differ among themselves. Mintisinot says, "The attitude is that any person born Oromo must be Muslim." The significance of that statement is not the same for all. This is true in the eyes of many even though the 2007 census numbers shown below on page 313 reveal that there are actually fewer Muslims than Christians among the Oromo. The use of the Oromo

language in Oromo churches and outreach efforts clearly speaks in a positive way to Oromo identity.

5.2.2 Family and social influences in identity formation

Identity in Ethiopia certainly draws heavily from family and social relationships. As a person internalizes cultural norms and expectations, these shape identity in the form of available roles and their related social responsibilities. As an example, Oromo Muslims, as discussed above, repeatedly claim Oromo identity is Muslim, even though there are a significant number of Oromo who adhere in some degree to the traditional Oromo religious belief system and many who are Christians. Based upon the number from the 2007 census given below, it is clear that the number who report *Waakafana* as their primary religious identity is in fact small. But its influence is greater than these numbers would indicate. One reason for this is that the *Gadaa* system of traditional governance among the Oromo is very much tied to the traditional religious practices of *Waakafana*. Also, the folk Muslim population has previously combined their form of Islam with many lesser deities as can be seen from the narratives provided above. But today, there is a growing influence from the many Muslim groups from abroad that are working tirelessly in Ethiopia to produce a more scriptural form of Islam. The progress these Muslim reformers are making is uneven but their greatest influence is clearly in the larger cities and towns with some influence in the countryside. That influence is certainly in conflict with traditional religious beliefs and is intentionally attempting to end the current level of mixture. In speaking of the activities of these groups, one of the participants, Muhammad Ahmed, said it this way, "Converting into Muslim means making people who are Islam by name to be Muslim by behavior."

It is unclear at this time what level of success will be achieved through this process of reform. Oromo sense of identity in terms of a political identity, which is

generally in opposition to the government, is simmering especially among the younger generation. Only a few weeks ago, June/July, 2014 several universities experienced violence by Oromo students against other tribal groups (and some violence in response as well). This was not reported very much in the news even locally and went unnoticed in terms of international news. But every family that has a student on one of those campuses received reports or a sudden trip home by their student. Those reports indicated quite serious violence on several campuses. The flashpoint of that violence did not in any way seem to warrant such a strong response, which shows the simmering nature of the potential for violence. However, in the end, the situation was calmed down by the government working with Oromo elders. The question will be whether a long-term solution can be found for the underlying issues.

Thus, there is a strong sense of Oromo political identity but perhaps less organized resistance groups than there have been in previous decades. It is difficult to state clearly percentages of religious adherents among Oromo. There are a number of sources that publish such numbers but unfortunately they are all flawed to some degree from the same problem, all those reporting have reason to report less than accurate numbers. The government census statistics have the strongest claim to legitimacy but it is understood that a census can look harder in one area than another. And every person was not contacted for the census as there is not adequate funding for that. Therefore, family members would report how many children, how many relatives, how many people live in a home or a village, and so forth. On one hand it is entirely reasonable, but it does not lead to 100% accuracy. Having given this proviso, here are the most accepted statistics from the 2007 census regarding religious identification by region with change noted between the 1994 and 2007 census numbers:

Figure 2: 2007 Ethiopian Census
Religious Affiliation by Region[12]

|	1994	2007	1994	2007	1994	2007	1994	2007	1994	2007	1994	2007	1994	2007
Region	Christians		Ethiopian Orthodox		Protestants		Catholics		Muslims		Traditional faiths		Other	
Addis Ababa	86.65%	83.0%	82.0%	74.7%	3.87%	7.77%	0.78%	0.48%	12.7%	16.2%				0.8%
Afar	4.4%	4.7%	3.9%	3.9%	0.4%	0.7%	0.1%	0.1%	95.6%	95.3%				
Amhara	81.6%	82.7%	81.5%	82.5%	0.1%	0.2%			18.1%	17.2%				0.1%
Benishangul-Gumuz	40.6%	46.5%	34.8%	33.0%	5.8%	13.5%			44.1%	45.4%	13.1%	7.1%		
Dire Dawa	36.7%	28.8%	34.5%	25.71%	1.5%	2.81%	0.7%	0.4%	63.2%	70.9%			0.1%	0.3%
Gambela	71.35%	90.2%	24.13%	16.8%	44.01%	70.0%	3.21%	3.4%	5.15%	4.9%	10.28%	3.8%		1.1%
Harari	39.49%	30.8%	38.09%	27.1%	0.94%	3.4%	0.46%	0.3%	60.28%	69.0%				0.2%
Oromia	49.9%	48.2%	41.3%	30.5%	8.6%	17.7%			44.3%	47.5%	4.2%	3.3%		1.1%
Somali	0.9%	0.6%	0.9%	0.6%					98.7%	98.4%			0.3%	1.0%
SNNPR	65.4%	77.8%	27.6%	19.9%	34.8%	55.5%	3.0%	2.4%	16.7%	14.1%	15.4%	6.6%		1.5%
Tigray	95.9%	96.1%	95.5%	95.6%		0.1%	0.4%	0.4%	4.1%	4.0%				

This breakdown of religion in Ethiopia by region from Wikipedia shows that Oromia has 47.5% Muslims according to the 2007 census and 48.2% Christians. Nonetheless, Muslim Oromo's claim that to be Oromo is to be Muslim. As noted, Mintisinot expresses what this researcher has heard from many other sources, "The attitude (of Oromo Muslims) is that any person born Oromo must be Muslim." This connects closely to the Islamicist master narrative. According to the Muslim groups operating in Ethiopia from other nations, Islam is increasing and will increase worldwide until the entire world follows Islam. According to this narrative: it is inevitable; it is the will of Allah; and it cannot be stopped. At that time, all the world will be governed by *Shari'ah* law, thus , according to this line of thought, any area that becomes a majority Muslim area should be governed under *Shari'ah* now. The way this has developed in Ethiopia is that Muslims tend to overstate their numbers so that the case for *Shari'ah* can be made stronger. Oromia is something of a battleground because

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[12] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Ethiopia, accessed 30 August 2014 for full census reference see http://www.csa.gov.et/pdf/Cen2007_firstdraft.pdf.

overall the percentages are close but local Muslim areas within Oromia may be nearly 100% Muslims. Thus Ethiopian Muslims claim inaccuracies in the census for various reasons and try to push that number up whereas, especially Orthodox Christians, want to avoid any claim for *Shari'ah* and thus would like that number to be lower and their own numbers higher.

Muslim's converting to faith in Christ commonly echo the statement expressed above by Mintisinot. This means that their self-perception as a Muslim Oromo is that the great majority of Oromo are Muslims. In conversation with these MBB's numbers of 70% of Oromo are Muslim or even 80% are sometimes heard. Therefore, whatever the statistically correct numbers are, Oromo Muslims believe that to be Oromo is to be Muslim. Further, they believe that since they are in a clear majority among Oromo, which is the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, they are on their way to controlling Ethiopia as a nation. This is not only important to Ethiopian Muslims but also to Muslims outside Ethiopia for whom Ethiopia is the key that will unlock Africa for them. Thus for Oromo Muslims, as Musa said, "You cannot differentiate Islam from culture…" Therefore to be Oromo is to be Muslim at least for the Muslim segment of the Oromo population. This is missiologically significant on several levels, but one is that across Africa the large numbers coming to faith in Christ have come from traditional religious backgrounds. If it were possible to separate a Muslim identity from Oromo identity, it would make the possibility of converting Oromo Muslims to Christ much more likely.

It is also important to notice that the majority of participants in this study come from an Oromo Muslim background. One of the lessons learned is that even though the level of scriptural knowledge and teaching among Ethiopian Muslims is relatively low, this Muslim narrative of advance and indeed the right and destiny of Muslims to rule the world, has been internalized as part of their corporate as well as their personal identity.
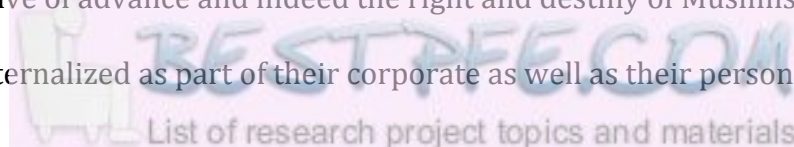
Ethiopian Muslim identity is very much connected to a narrative that has several key facets: 1) Muhammad was the best Muslim and therefore the best pattern for all Muslims to emulate; 2) Islam is destined to be the world dominating religion; 3) now is the time when this great destiny is being fulfilled worldwide; 4) therefore Muslims should follow carefully the lifestyle required by the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* so that this grand vision may be fulfilled. There are other factors in the Muslim narrative but these are key for the following reasons. The first factor means that on a practical level, followers of Islam are really followers of Muhammad more so than followers of the *Qur'an*. They follow Muhammad by learning stories about him taken from the *Hadith*. How a Muslim evaluate themselves as a Muslim is closely related to how well they feel they are following the pattern of the stories about Muhammad they have learned, more so than how closely their beliefs correspond to the *Qur'an*. Second, points two and three speak to a future expectation which engages the power of imagination to visualize that future. This visualization of a future world dominated by Muslims on behalf of Allah, is a powerful motivation for those who accept this vision. Point four provides the implication for today that the reform movement that has been brought to Ethiopia is part of a worldwide intensification of Islam in preparation for an eschatological vision. These are important points that will be examined in the final chapter of analysis.

5.2.3 Identity change

When examining the testimonies of converted Muslims gathered in this research, there is one overarching fact reported in some measure by all. They have suffered in order to become a Christ follower and the reason they accept suffering is because Christ suffered first for them. Thus it is only right that they should suffer for Him. For the MBB participants in this study, suffering has become a major part of their Christian identity. Clearly those who were not willing to suffer and therefore turned back to Islam are not

included among the participants, but the ones who have continued on and remain

Christians have accepted suffering as part of their life and service to Christ. In other

words, their Christian identity is strongly formed within a crucible of suffering:

physical, emotional, and mental. Thus sacrifice is a part of their Christian narrative and

Christian identity. Abdu makes the following comment:

> When they become Christians, we name them, "*Isa* Muslims." We don't call them Christian and that is, to me, a mistake…Because they are Christians, they are not "*Isa* Muslims."… This makes for much confusion. Here in Ethiopia there are so many people who call themselves "*Isa* Muslims," but they don't believe in the death and resurrection of Christ. But, they call themselves "Followers of *Isa*." They say that *Isa* has not died but he ascended and he will come back, so we are waiting for him and follow him…. In this situation, their previous teaching [as Muslims] against Christianity remains in their minds.

It is good to remember at this point the difference between quantitative and qualitative

research. If evaluated within a quantitative paradigm the above statement is the

subjective viewpoint of one individual that may or may not reflect the thoughts of a

significant number of others. Within a critical hermeneutic paradigm, this statement is

significant because it reflects the attempt of one mission practitioner to understand and

struggle with a difficult issue. The struggle reflected in that conversation may lead to

deeper understanding and insight into the problem at hand. For Abdu, who has himself

suffered greatly and does not hide his Christian identity, his suffering has become part

of his identity in Christ. He has suffered for Jesus and not turned away because of it. He

thus sees himself as a true follower of Christ, whereas, for him, the "*Isa* Muslim" has

avoided suffering but in the process remains a Muslim at heart.

For the MBB's who participated in this research, not all would be as straight

forward in their statements as Abdu, but the sentiment reflects one set of attitudes on

this topic. Abdu continues his thought when he says:

> I think if we take children at an early age when they are young, and if we cause them to grow up in a Christian life, maybe they can call themselves Christians

and identify with their identity in Christ. And the second part would be the way we teach. If we teach them to be filled with Christ they can be totally convinced and they can call themselves Christian....To produce impact, we must be different than what we were practicing before. We must reveal ourselves as Christians by living godly lives and loving and we must live in accordance with biblical teaching...being what they call *Abdurare*, a person who is recognized as a good and compassionate person.

The key to the kind of identity change that those like Abdu have experienced is the role of suffering in identity formation. A person who has endured through suffering for Christ, is fully convinced, which leads to willingness to fully accept her/his new identity in Christ. To the extent that a culture of maintaining a Muslim identity is encouraged such transformation and deep identity change does not seem to occur as completely, at least as far as the findings of this research in Ethiopia. This is a complex issue with many cultural, social and political factors in addition to the religious ones. It is no doubt possible to develop an Insider Movement culture in which MBB's have truly experienced a deep work of Christ and have taken on a new identity in Christ, which is expressed in an underground context. However, it can be noted that Kraft (2012) also reports MBB's who question those who have "converted" to Christ but continue in a Muslim identity especially in regard to the honesty of this approach. In the end, Kraft presents her theory of adhesive identities (Kraft 2012:103), as her answer to this dilemma. Abdu would not find such a theory convincing. Musa made the comment, "When they are fully persuaded and committed in their heart, that is the time they are ready for revealing themselves [as Christians]." The implication of Musa's comment would then be that if they have not "revealed themselves" they are not yet fully persuaded and fully committed in their heart. Musa has also suffered and struggled in his own walk of faith with Christ. His statements are not judgmental or critical, but they reflect his emic perspective as a fellow MBB.

Many of the participants in this study mentioned that they had struggled with the issue of whether they would go to heaven. One of the most mentioned aspects of their new faith in Christ is that they have come to know God who is willing to sacrifice himself for them. This is profoundly significant for many Christians but for those who come from a Muslim background especially so since the Muslim concept of Allah is one of a stern task-master and their image of final judgment is terrifying. In Christ they have found God who gave His life for them and therefore they can have confidence they will go to heaven. For several this understanding has unlocked their heart toward the God of the Bible. The story of the suffering and death Christ endured for humans has changed their heart. Thus the *emotional connection* to Christ is a central aspect of their conversion and subsequent identity change. It is not so much a doctrinal teaching of the atonement that has affected them but rather the emotion elicited by the narrative of his passion, death, and resurrection.

Muslims often report that they deeply love Muhammad. Even after conversion to Christ, one of the ongoing issues that many Muslims face is that their affection for Muhammad does not end when they choose to trust in Christ. Thus when negative, critical, or derogatory statements are made about Muhammad by Christian preachers, it elicits a reaction of strong anger even after their conversion. Those who have had a more profound conversion to Christ have transferred their affection to Christ. Whether that means they have no affection for Muhammad any more would be impossible to determine but in comparison, Christ has taken first place. This is not understood on the level of first place in doctrine, but first place in affection. It is a matter of the heart before it becomes a matter of rational thought. The narrative of the gospels provides a heart connection to Jesus that then allows their rationality to follow after.

This description has significant consequences for Western Christian missions organizations that exist in an environment that does not require the kind of suffering experienced by many MBB's around the world. Much of Western Christianity is "sacrifice free" in its doctrine. Christ has suffered so the believer does not need to suffer and should simply reap the benefit of what Christ has done. This kind of theology makes it very difficult to speak meaningfully into the hearts and lives of Muslim converts for whom persecution, suffering, and sacrifice is unavoidable if they are going to give testimony to Christ in their context. The analysis section below will return to this issue.

5.3 Missionary methodology

Another category of investigation of this research is missionary methodology and so themes have been identified relating to this category as well. Most of the participants are themselves engaged in outreach and church planting among Muslims and so they have both experience and knowledgeable opinions as to what is effective and what is not so effective for the task in which they are engaged. The experience of research participants in this study is not one of having tried all possible approaches and methods. Rather, they have engaged in their work using one or perhaps two approaches and in the process have discovered some principles they find important.

5.3.1 A home to home approach

In this section evangelistic methods are under consideration that although they are not public in nature, they are not secret either. In Ethiopia, because it is not a majority Muslim nation, there is freedom to evangelize and share the gospel. But in those communities or regions that are nearly 100% Muslim, while the government will certainly step in if there is a large-scale outbreak of violence, individuals are at risk of violence from family or community members. Thus public settings such as conferences or open meetings, if allowed at all, are of questionable value.

In some cases missionaries to Muslim communities have had open debate with Muslim leaders of an apologetic nature. Such debates do not seem to bear much fruit, although if there are seeds sown into the hearts of those who hear such exchanges that come to fruit at a later time it is difficult to know. None of the participants in this research mentioned either themselves or others who came to Christ in this manner. Such debates seem to create anger, hardened positions, and in a few cases violence rather than productive discussion. Another approach is for a Christian to take on Muslim appearance and teaching style and to teach rather than debate. If these persons were themselves former Muslim teachers it would be much more authentic than if a missionary who has no Muslim background attempted this method. Aliazar comments on this approach in the following manner.

> When we organize conferences the preachers used to put on the Muslim clothes and thus external contextualization with the purpose of attracting an audience. But when Muslims hear the voice through the loud speaker they take it as an insult because they are in Muslim clothes and they are quoting the *Qur'an* but they preach Christ. So it is better to preach to them at a family level rather than use the conference approach.

This sort of sentiment arose several times during the research. Muhammad Bedaso said, "We go two by two. We preach at the individual level, not when they are in a group. When they are more than two, they want to harm us and find something to attack us." This comment points to the effect of the strong sense of community among Muslims. In a group setting there is pressure to defend Islam against any attack or encroachment.

Another reason for the use of a home to home approach is the need for teaching and discipleship. For many of the Muslims in Ethiopia, conversion to Christ requires a lengthy process of examining present teachings (Islam) and comparison with new teachings in their new orientation toward *Isa*. Whether the teacher/discipler understands this as discipleship after conversion or as part of the conversion process is

not important here; a period of what is normally understood under the heading of discipleship is needed and very common in Ethiopia. This kind of teaching requires time, it takes place over repeated meetings (not a one time event), and needs an atmosphere of safety and openness to discussion. This is much better achieved in a home or private setting. Gizaw reported, "Right now we are practicing a new method of following newly converted Muslim Christians with the home to home approach, and give them biblical teaching for their growth to maturity." Musa also discussed the need to remove deeply held beliefs if a converted Muslim is to fully convert to Christ. He describes his method as being done through the process of exposing inconsistencies in Muslim teaching and giving a new teaching from the Bible. In Musa's case, having been a former Muslim teacher himself, he is able to do this in a style and manner that is very effective. It seems doubtful that this approach could be learned and used effectively by someone without this kind of background. Depending upon the overall methodology used, this could be seen as an insider approach, which is the method under discussion in the following section.

5.3.2 Insider movements

Because the Insider Movement approach has been popularized and taught widely in Ethiopia, it is a topic for discussion among all who engage in Muslim evangelism. There are many different groups working in Muslim evangelism and church planting in Ethiopia. While there may be a few who have received teaching on Insider Movements and have specifically adopted that approach from the beginning, more commonly, ideas connected to Insider Movements have been incorporated into existing programs. One of the largest of such movements in Ethiopia is supported by a U.S. missions organization that teaches the Insider Movement methodology. However, the basic principles were already characteristic of this group before they heard of Insider Movements. The

leaders of this group developed a very similar methodology on their own and only later have been informed that what they are doing is an "Insider Movement." The point made here is that this group is being supported because they have a compatible philosophy and not because they were intentionally taught to use an Insider Movement strategy as something new.

A former Muslim teacher who came to Christ through personal curiosity and study started that group, only afterward did he come to church to be "led to the Lord." Their early methods involved dropping small papers in the mosque during *salat* that had Arabic writing on them. The writing was usually a verse from the *Qur'an* saying something positive about *Isa* or some other *Qur'anic* verse intended to create curiosity in the mind of the recipient. This was effective for at least two reasons. One, virtually none of the people in that area can read Arabic themselves, but they will not throw the paper away because they have high respect (if not superstition) regarding the Arabic language. Thus they would keep the paper until at some future point they may have a chance to ask someone who can read it to tell them its meaning. Second, because the people do not read the *Qur'an* for themselves, they are dependent upon the *imam* or *sheikh* to teach them everything about Islam. Much of what is taught to them is not from the *Qur'an* but rather from the *Hadith*. For this reason, they often are unfamiliar with actual verses in the *Qur'an* that may bring those teachings into question. Thus when they find a *Qur'anic* verse in Arabic and find out the meaning is something different than the teaching they have heard, it creates questions in their mind. Through individual conversation those who respond to such questions are located and invited to study together. In that study, the *Qur'an* is the starting point and they move quickly to show that the *Qur'an* affirms the value of the Bible as something Muslims should know and

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respect.[13] They are then asked if they have ever read the Bible to which their reply is nearly always a resounding, "No, of course not." But then the issue is pressed, why does the *Qur'an* affirm the gospels as the word of God? The issue of the corruption of the Bible must be addressed but a skilled teacher can be successful in this line of discussion. Through this method the group is moved to begin study of the Bible. Over a process of perhaps three months up to a year, depending upon the skill of the teacher, and the openness of the Muslims in the group, they come to a new knowledge of Christ. This group was functioning in that manner before they heard the terminology of, "Insider Movement" but at this time they have come into contact with this terminology and have received some teaching along those lines. This particular group has a clear objective of what it means to come to faith in Christ including Christian baptism by immersion and understanding of the Bible as scripture over and above the authority of the *Qur'an.* The movement from Muslim to full faith in Christ is understood to be a process that will take at least months if not years to complete.

The other quite large group of MBB's that use an Insider Movement strategy functions on the other side of Ethiopia from the first group. During this research, a conversation was conducted with the leaders of both groups but for different reasons neither conversation was recorded. Thus notes were taken and a typed transcript prepared immediately after. With regard to the second major Insider Movement group, this researcher does not know at exactly what point this person began to use Insider Movement terminology or how long he had been engaged in Muslim evangelism when he heard of this methodology. But seemingly early in his work, he began to consciously engage in what he understands as the Insider Movement methodology. Since that time he has become very much involved with an international missions group that supports

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[13] See Qur'an 5:46; 3:3, 48, 84.

this methodology and has travelled abroad to their conferences and has brought visitors to Ethiopia to see his work. Actually, they do not see his work because for security reasons he brings representatives to Addis Ababa to meet them in their hotel. During this research both the leader and some members and former members of his movement were included, as well as other mission leaders in Ethiopia who know him and are familiar with that movement. This movement claims to be quite large in terms of numbers which is all the more impressive since the target area is one of the most strongly Muslim areas in Ethiopia and is known for its resistance to the gospel.

This leader did not speak in detail about their methodology preferring to emphasize results more so in terms of quantity although claiming many of those in his movement are "baptized" Christians. From others, such as some of his followers, as well as other mission leaders who have spoken to members of this group, the following picture has emerged. This group has a history of not teaching from the Bible and only using the *Qur'an*. If it were possible to directly discuss this issue with the leader it is likely he would point to the problem of the current translations of the available Amharic Bibles as not being Muslim friendly. By this is meant that they do not use *Allah* as the name of God, they do not make suggested adjustments to refer to Jesus as Lord rather than Son of God, and other similar issues. This kind of Bible for Muslims was proposed in Ethiopia but in the end not approved by the Evangelical Churches Fellowship because of doctrinal concerns. In speaking to the sister of one of the followers of this movement who had been under its teaching for more than three years at that time, the Christian Bible was never used or mentioned. They were taken to a location away from others for "baptism" which was called, "*wudu*" and is a normal Muslim washing intended to remove minor sins. In this "baptism" neither the name of Jesus, nor the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, nor any part of the Bible was mentioned. All teaching on *wudu* was taken

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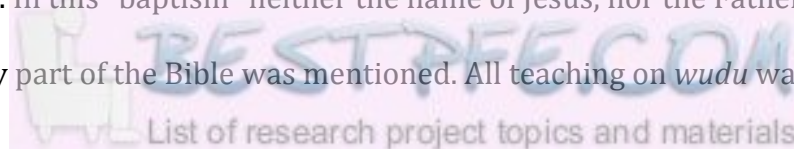
from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. Thus these individuals who are claimed as "baptized" believers in Christ have evidently not experienced any teaching from the Bible nor were they baptized into what would be understood by others as a Christian baptism. Due to secrecy concerns such practices appear to be unknown to the international missions organization that supports this work.

The one report mentioned above regarding baptism is consistent with the statements of other mission leaders in Ethiopia who confirm that they have also heard similar reports. Nonetheless, it cannot be confirmed by this researcher exactly what is being taught by this group. The quantity and quality of reports concerning the issues mentioned above seem convincing but it is not really possible to go into this area and make an actual third-party evaluation. Also, methods can change and perhaps things are being done differently now than they were two years ago when these reports were gathered. But that is one of the challenges with the Insider Movement strategy. It is often used in contexts that cannot be examined by outsiders. And the reports and "research" offered to confirm the results of these movements is based upon the reports only of the "insiders" themselves. If in fact a group never uses the Bible and only teaches from the *Qur'an*, uses only Muslim terminology acknowledging about Christ only those things accepted by other Muslims, it is difficult to understand what it would mean to consider them as Christ followers. In this case, "Christ followers," seems to mean they are Muslims who have a higher opinion of Jesus than other Muslims. While the numbers represented by such groups may be impressive, what is the meaning of those numbers?

There are other groups using various versions of what they may term an Insider Movement strategy, these two examples are described primarily to show the wide variations among these groups. Insider Movement as a strategy does not provide a theology, only a methodological concept. Insider Movement terminology has become so

widely used as to have become quite inexact as to its meaning and of little descriptive value. Groups may follow the philosophical concept of Insider Movement while following very different theologies. Just like the theology of groups using a traditional approach to church planting may be very different from one another; the theologies of groups claiming an Insider Movement approach are equally varied. It would be helpful if these two issues were separated.

In this research, some specific comments were made that relate to the Insider Movement paradigm. Musa comments regarding those using the Insider Movement strategy in Ethiopia:

> I don't agree with some of these groups. My difference with them is that they … first affirm their faith in the *Qur'an* and other Muslim teachings. Without that they cannot continue doing this kind of [insider] evangelism. First they have to affirm that they believe the Muslim religion and through that they can stay in it [the community] in order to work in that way. … The other thing that I don't agree with is about the source of their faith and teaching for those who are converted from Islam to Christianity. Their source of teaching should be only the Bible, not a mixture of the *Qur'an*.

Noting some of the challenges in trying to live "under the radar" as a Christian in a Muslim area of Ethiopia, Alazar says:

> People around my village know me very well; they have seen the change in my life and know who I am now. I cannot hide myself using different titles…In my village all the people know me as a Christian…If I changed or hid my identity they would say, "He came to spy on us" or they will call me a liar.

But Alazar also said:

> To bring the converts in to the believer's context takes a process. And, if our change of religion is known once, the Muslims will probably come to kill us. So, until the converts become mature, we teach the believers about *Isa* in their Muslim context. When people ask us who we are, we respond to them that we are "Muslims Followers of *Isa*." This is because if we separate ourselves completely we may face problems.

Thus functioning in a way that does not bring direct confrontation and thus being able to remain within the Muslim community is a common strategy. There are many

differences among Muslims both religiously and ethnically and thus different strategies will work in different cases. Muhammad said:

> The majority of the people in the Alaba area are Muslim. Those who have exposed themselves [are openly Christian] go to the churches but we use the house to house approach to convert the Alaba people to Christianity because this approach is more advantageous than the formal one. I am doing the house to house approach and there are other people who go to the *Al Mesisa* Mosque, and there is a formal church composed of people who have exposed themselves within the community. And there is also an *Al Mesisa* Followers Church in the area around.

Gezehagne, a mission leader who heads an organization who engages in ongoing Muslim evangelism and church planting in Muslim areas, said:

> Based upon our research or assessment, it has been found to be difficult to identify born again Muslims in the Insider Movement…. You see, unless we see character change, how can we say this one or that one is born again? You see, born again is becoming a new creature. So, when he becomes a new creature, he is a new creature. You know, he is a light, he cannot sit among the devil's possessions or other spirits because he can't do that. So at this time, we are teaching mainly on discipleship and the power of God…. So when he becomes a new creature he cannot hide himself…When he is filled with the Holy Spirit he practices to deliver those who are bound by demons…[and] laying hands on sick people. When they see miracles they choose to become Christians. In the Ethiopian context, nothing is hidden. Everybody knows. There are no secrets at all.

Regarding the idea that is the foundation of the Insider Movement strategy, that of converts remaining in the Muslim community to lead others to Christ, Gezehagne said:

> The question here is about staying in the community by living in a way that is acceptable to other Muslims. So what kind of witness exactly are you for Jesus? You know, if living acceptably in the Muslim community means basically practicing the Muslim religion, then how do you practice the Muslim religion and also be a Christian? …we can't avoid persecutions.

Abdu offered his thoughts on this topic when he said:

> Here in Ethiopia, there is a fear among those (converts) who come from a Muslim background. They are afraid of persecution and even killings from the neighbors and family when they accept Jesus as their personal savior. Because of this, they hide themselves by following their customs, culture, and way of dressing and greeting of other people. But they are Christians who do not want to expose themselves due to their fear of persecution and potential difficulties.

In many ways Abdu comes to the heart of the matter. Some in Ethiopia, such as Abdu who has suffered already, feel that Insider Movement strategies are primarily a way of avoiding persecution. Others emphasize this strategy as a way to more effectively share Christ in Muslim communities. Perhaps there are elements of both.

5.3.3   Church Planting Movements (CPM)

CPM has been widely taught and practiced in Ethiopia.[14] There are both similarities and differences between CPM and the Insider Movement strategy as far as the way these methods are practiced in Ethiopia. Both seek to work inside Muslim Communities. The difference would be that whereas the goal of the Insider Movement strategy is not clearly stated as being to plant churches but rather to continue with a small group structure in order to reach Muslims with the gospel, CPM is specifically committed to church planting as a strategy based upon the idea that the biblical manner for Christians to grow in their faith is within the context of a church. Having said that, the CPM concept of church is more like a house church and not a formal sort of traditional structure, for that reason several groups mix the strategy of CPM with the philosophy of Insider Movements.

Many groups including the Horn of Africa mission and Rift Valley Vision Project (RVVP) have used the CPM method and engage in specific CPM training. Gezehagne, head of RVVP, is quoted above as calling their version of CPM a "Peer Group" approach. CPM is a more clearly taught methodology than Insider Movement, which is more of a strategy with many possible methodological variations. Teachers of CPM also have a more clearly stated theology to which their methods are connected. Whereas, Insider Movements seem to give more focus to how to stay in the community and develop

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[14] See http://www.missionfrontiers.org/pdfs/33-2.pdf for a description of CPM and appropriate references.

networks of relationships for the purpose of sharing Christ, CPM is clear in its goal of church planting as a rapid indigenous movement. In order for this strategy to proceed rapidly, the house church is the model for church planting rather than buildings and formal structures. This strategy is appropriate to Muslim contexts and overall is compatible with an Insider Movement approach.

CPM is focused upon disciples producing disciples, leaders developing leaders and churches planting churches. The definition of a church used in CPM is minimal allowing largely for self-definition. Rift Valley Vision Project (RVVP) is therefore a church planting movement more so than an Insider Movement strategy. In discussion with RVVP leaders it is clear that the reason is the greater clarity of definition provided by CPM. Whereas Insider Movements are very broadly defined and exist with great variation, CPM while not centrally organized, is more clearly defined in terms of what it means to become a follower of Christ. The CPM methodology seems to be growing in influence in Ethiopia although at least as applied among Ethiopian Muslims, CPM and Insider Movement strategies are generally compatible ways of understanding and executing Muslim outreach programs.

5.3.4 Social and development projects

The final theme that will be identified from this research is that of social development projects as a means of conducting mission work to Muslims. On one level concern for others is an expression of Christian compassion and does not need to be engaged as a mission strategy. As Haji Usman said:

> The first thing is that they see the change in my life. And the second is that we support those who need our help. When we see a man who suffers from shortage of food, or is sick, or feels lonely, we assist and provide for them.

By showing compassion toward those in need, Christian character is demonstrated in a manner Muslims can recognize. Several other quotations from the research transcripts have been quoted above on this topic and so this section will summarize those ideas.

On a positive note, the demonstration of love for others has opened many hearts toward the gospel. This has been important in Ethiopia especially in areas where there is no existing Christian witness. Doors are opened to build relationships in new communities by addressing the needs of those who live in a given area. Medical projects, educational projects, and water projects are examples of programs that have been successfully undertaken in Muslim areas of Ethiopia and through which positive relationships have been established.

During this research one community was visited outside of Shashamene among the Arssi Oromo people group. Upon arrival in that place to see a new church that had recently been built by some missionaries sent out by RVVP, the community leader came out to greet the strangers to his community. When he understood who we were, he began to tell us about the beginning of the church in their community. This leader and almost all of the inhabitants of the village were Muslims only a few years before. A missionary had come to their community and had arranged with another Christian ministry to build a school project there. This Christian group specializes in school building projects and prioritizes Muslim areas with the purpose of door opening and relationship building. In this case a school was built to provide schooling up to grade four, which is a dividing point in the Ethiopian educational system. The community leader said that one day some Muslim leaders from the large mosque in Shashamene came to their town. They had heard that some of the local Muslims were becoming Christians and came to tell him and his community to drive the Christians out. But the community leader told them, "We have been Muslims here as long as anyone can

remember and we have never had a school in this town. These Christians came only a short time ago and now we have our first school. We will not drive them out." In fact the Christians were given land on which to build a church and at the time of that visit had nearly one hundred believers gathering there each Sunday.

However, there are potential problems with development work done for the purpose of Christian outreach. One of the accusations made by Muslim leaders against allowing such projects in Muslim communities is that the Christians only want to spread their religion and do not really care about the people. This has caused some groups to do development projects with no connection to Christian evangelism or church planting. Their hope is that their good witness of compassion for the Muslims will have a positive effect without overt preaching of the gospel. Such groups often mention the words attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the gospel constantly, and if necessary, use words." Since such projects seek long-term results that often come only after some time and often after the project has been completed, it is difficult to measure the fruit of this strategy in terms of converts. But it is not so difficult to measure their fruit in terms of the human benefit to those in need.

A number of groups working in Muslim communities use variations of the social development strategy in conjunction with their Christian outreach work. An example is starting kindergarten (KG) programs. These are pre-school programs that teach basic things like the Amharic alphabet to children who are not yet attending regular school. Even when the teacher is known to be a Christian, Muslim communities will send their children to be taught. One missionary working near Alaba reported that parents even told him that they did not mind him teaching their children about Christianity as long as he also taught them reading and basic math skills. Parents are normally concerned for the future of their children. Islam is a tradition oriented religion emphasizing a lifestyle

appropriate to seventh century Arabia and some Ethiopian Muslims question whether that is going to offer a positive opportunity for success for their children. Thus social development projects as to their role in a mission to Muslims have certainly had a positive influence on Muslim/Christian relations and in some cases have opened effective doors for the spread of the gospel. In all cases, human needs were met and the love of Christ was demonstrated.

5.3.5 Summary

This chapter has reported the results of field research conducted in Ethiopia. Themes were examined that were identified through conversation transcripts. To those transcripts were added reports and testimonies collected through personal conversations and recorded in research documents. The themes discussed were gathered under the headings of conversion, identity, and methodology. In the following chapter, secondary analysis will be offered and then some possible conclusions suggested in the final chapter of this work.

Chapter 6: Analysis

This chapter will offer analysis of the research presented based upon the paradigm of critical hermeneutics. This analysis will explore the insights that may be revealed by an examination of the missiological work of Christian outreach and church planting among Muslims in Ethiopia when viewed through the lens of critical hermeneutics. Analysis will proceed in reverse order to the presentation of Chapter Five, the reason for which will become clear as it proceeds. Analysis will begin with examination of the issue of methodology, then move to identity and finally to conversion.

6.1   Missionary methodology

From the Introduction until this point, the issue of missionary methodology has been central to this study. The popularity of Insider Movements in missiological literature over more than fifteen years presses for the thematization of its methods and approaches. However, the issues at stake are broader than Insider Movements as a methodology. The questions raised from the beginning of this study have pointed to a consideration of effectiveness and sustainability. Insider Movements have given promise of being both effective and sustainable and thus have earned the attention of any serious investigation of a Christian mission to Muslims. Therefore, this study has developed a sustained review of the meaning of conversion and identity in relationship to a Christian mission to Muslims. In the process, the issue of the Insider Movement methodology has been highlighted in its relationship to these two important issues. In this chapter the question of what sort of insight may be provided by a critical hermeneutic examination of this topic will be explored, beginning with the area of missionary methodology.

The great majority of Christian missionary work has been done within the paradigm of what Habermas has called strategic action. Strategic action is action that is

undertaken for the purpose of achieving an objective, in this case, the objective of evangelizing the world and bringing men and women to faith in Christ through the spread of the gospel. Thus, communicative means are being used to achieve a strategic objective. Cross-cultural communication for missionary purposes has traditionally been taught as a matter of a sender encoding a message that will be un-coded by a receiver (Hesselgrave 1978). Contextualization, in this scheme, has been understood as better and more effective encoding. But in terms of Habarmas' communication theory, contextualized strategic communication is still strategic and not essentially communicative in nature. In contrast, communicative action has as its goal and orientation, coming to mutual understanding. Missionary work has normally not had this orientation, but rather seeks primarily to secure conversions or perhaps "decisions for Christ" depending upon one's theological orientation. From the point of view of Habermas, all ideology is viewed in a negative light including religious ideology. But that does not mean there is nothing to be learned from his understanding regarding communicative competence. Habermas' critique of ideology is based upon his interest in human emancipation. In his view, emancipation is hampered when those motivated by ideology engage in what he terms, "systematically distorted communication" (1970b:205-218). For Christians, emancipation is understood as being truly possible only through faith in Christ, and therefore there is not so much difference on this issue as it may appear. After all, "For freedom Christ has set us free…"(Galatians 5:1).

Habermas expresses what would have to be considered today by both Christians and post-modernists, an excessive confidence in the ability of scientific rationality to produce human liberation. Nonetheless, his discussion of communicative competence is instructive regarding missionary communication. All communicative action for Habermas (1984) involves the putting forward of validity claims. Building upon a
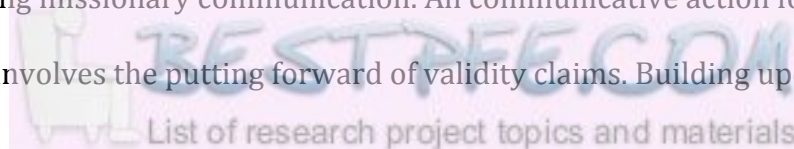
presumption of comprehension, he delineates three validity claims: 1) truth; 2) normative correctness; and 3) sincerity. Each of these validity claims can be criticized and defended (redeemed) through reason and argumentation. They are thus subject to verification through further communication within the context of an orientation toward reaching understanding and under conditions of symmetry. Symmetry, or what Habermas terms "pure intersubjectivity," essentially means both sides of the discussion are equally free to share and receive ideas (1970a:371-3). For Habermas, the force of the better argument will determine the position that wins acceptance. As has been often stated, this is an idealized projection of a communicative situation and thus a goal seldom, if ever, achieved in the real world. However, it can be instructive for the missionary enterprise to consider its communication from this point of view. Each of the validity claims suggested by Habermas will be considered in order.

Prior to a discussion of his three validity claims, the assumption of comprehension must be considered. In missionary communication the issue of comprehension cannot be presumed. In the mission to Muslims in Ethiopia, this issue raises its head at several points. Kedir, Ahman and others are quoted in regard to this issue as suggesting the need for conducting Christian work among Oromo Muslims in Oromifa (Oromo language). This is for several reasons, *including* comprehension. Communicating in a person's own language is helpful in terms of understanding, but in the case of the Oromo, it is not only an issue of understanding but also a matter of the openness of the heart. Amharic, as the language of oppression in their view, is not a productive means of reaching the hearts of Oromo Muslims. This reaches beyond the notion that a person's mother tongue is their heart language, as true as that is, because in this case, there is cultural and political baggage that comes with the use of Amharic. Even when Oromifa is used for Christian work among the Oromo people, which has not

actually been encouraged by all Christian ministries in Oromia at this time, there remain

deeper issues to be addressed.

Alazan raised one of the most challenging issues, which concerns the translation

of scripture.[15] For use among Muslims, translation of the scripture using *Allah* as the

name for God is preferred by most missions practitioners. But there are also other

translation issues raised in Brown (2005) such as the use of "Son of God." These are

thorny problems that are not easily resolved. One problem is that translations of

scripture are expensive to produce and to print, thus translation decisions come as a

package. Missions agencies and practitioners do not normally have an opportunity to

specify how they want each translational issue to be handled. If a missions organization

is favorable toward the use of Allah as the name for God, they may not be willing to

accept changing "Son of God" to "Lord" or some other designation acceptable to Muslim

readers. In order to get a hearing (or reading) by Muslims in Ethiopia such changes may

be helpful, but is the resulting translation the Bible, or something else? One approach

could be to make minimal changes in the text itself and then to use footnotes and

teaching tools to explain the meaning of the text.[16] But if the reader is put off by the

terminology and format used, that may not get a reading either. Another possibility

would be to call such altered texts a paraphrase rather than a translation, or it could be

possible to put the "scripture" into story form. Honesty is another important issue with

regard to the validity claims that must be redeemed in communication, so it is

important that whatever decision is made regarding this issue it should be reasonable

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[15] See page 310.
[16] For a recent discussion of these issues with recommendations see: Report to World
Evangelical Alliance for Conveyance to Wycliffe Global Alliance and SIL International
(2013) by the WEA Global Review Panel available at
http://www.worldea.org/images/wimg/files/2013_0429-
Final%20Report%20of%20the%20WEA%20Independent%20Bible%20Translation%2
0Review%20Panel.pdf

and explainable. In the case of putting the biblical message into paraphrase or story form using acceptable Muslim terminology and forms of communication, it could be used as a teaching tool with an aim of moving to an actual translation of the scripture over time. However, any such publication in a local language will be circulated widely and soon take on the character of scripture among that people group and so it would be difficult to move to another translation at a later time. Muslim apologists will surely raise the issue of dishonesty regarding a paraphrase or story edition of scripture that appears to be deceptive in nature of which this approach could easily be accused.

However, the accuracy of translation is not the only consideration here, the question is how to present the gospel to a Muslim audience in a way that will gain a hearing and not easily be discarded or ignored. From that point, those who respond can be taught more accurately. It is clearly not possible to teach someone with whom you are not in communication. The first validity claim mentioned by Habermas is that of truth. The Christian validity claim of truth cannot be redeemed through rational argumentation in the same way as a scientific or mathematical statement might be. The most important statements made about life cannot actually be redeemed in this manner. If someone says, "I love you" it cannot be reasonably verified in terms of its scientific truth. Nonetheless, humans regularly make major life-decisions based upon this kind of statement. But as Christians engaged in mission work, the claim being made regarding truth does not have to do with factual accuracy alone, it also involves the message as a whole and incorporates a claim of eternal truth from an eternal God. In consideration of the fact that the claim of the Christian message is one of eternal truth, how can a validity claim such as this be redeemed?

If the scripture itself is considered as to how it presents truth, there is a clear emphasis upon the use of narrative rather than proposition communication of truth. Bruner's point is duly noted:

> A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be used as means for convincing another. Yet what they convince *of* is fundamentally different: arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness. The one verifies by eventual appeal to procedures for establishing formal and empirical proof. The other establishes not truth but verisimilitude (1986:11).

Western culture, which has dominated the world academic culture, is much more comfortable with propositional truth since it is more easily subjected to logical analysis and evaluation. But at least since Frei (1974), the issue of narrative truth and its demise at the hands of the critical historical method of biblical hermeneutics has been brought forward for consideration. The result has been a renewed interest in narrative as a means of conveying truth. Nonetheless, many modern scholars continue to press narrative into the straight jacket of propositional truth by converting narrative into propositional arguments. It is certainly true that when the Bible is read, it is for the most part, a series of stories, by Bruner's conception, the testimony of the missionary can only be, "I have found this to be true in my life experience." For most human beings around the planet, and certainly for Ethiopians, this method of argumentation is familiar and acceptable.

In Ethiopia, news is often received in the form of human communication even more so than by media, from the internet, or print sources. Even if news is heard by radio, print, or television it is questioned because such sources are not always trust worthy. The most trusted source of information in Ethiopia is another person. That person should be known and be in relationship in such a way that it is believed there is no reason for them to give false or misleading information. Thus the truthfulness of

information received is established much more by the character of the information's source than by an evaluation of the information itself. This is also true in terms of the New Testament. Jesus is a trusted source of information about God because he sacrificed himself on behalf of humans. Human witness is confirmed in a similar manner. When the missionary is willing to sacrifice for the sake of the truth she brings, it is a convincing confirmation of her truthfulness.

Christian truth claims are often defended through apologetical communication. This would be much more acceptable to Habermas than narrative since he envisions the redemption of this validity claim largely in the form of propositional forms of discourse. In apologetics, the truth claims of the Bible are supported by scientifically verifiable facts and logical argumentation. This quickly becomes what Bakhtin calls authoritative speech, but perhaps not internally persuasive speech. The issue of authority and its related aspect of power differential will be returned to shortly. But at this point, Bakhtin's distinction may be considered as to how it may be applicable to the present discussion. Is the truth of the Bible true because of its "authoritative" source? For a Christian this is no doubt true and in that view, the truth of the Bible should be accepted by all because it is God's word. But the Muslim has their own scripture that they consider to be God's word. So why should Muslims accept the truth claim of the Bible over the truth claim of the *Qur'an*? One answer could be the testimony of miracles. Jesus, after all said, "But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me (John 5:36). Yet, the reports from this research showed that while visions, dreams and miracles brought questions that led many to faith in Christ, in nearly all cases, they did not believe the miracle to be a direct confirmation of a biblical message. *Isa,* who may appear in a dream, is in the *Qur'an* as

well as the Bible and so the Muslim does not need to leave his/her worldview to have a dream of *Isa.* Indeed, miraculous signs have been claimed in support of the *Qur'an.* In fact, the most convincing proof of the Christian message that was reported in this research was the transformed life of the messenger.

For many Christians, a truth claim concerning Jesus and a truth claim concerning the Bible are the same. For them the only way a person can know Jesus is through scripture. Under this view, the Bible is absolutely true and this is the way, or perhaps the only way, a human can know Jesus. Thus the truth claim of the Christian is that "the Bible is true," which is somewhat different than saying, "Jesus is true." Pentecostal believers, such as the great number of believers in Ethiopia, while affirming the truth and authority of scripture, add the work of the Holy Spirit. John 16:13 reads, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth…" If the first position is taken, (that Christian truth and the Christian Bible are synonymous), the witness of the Christian is reduced to a defense of the Bible and Muslims need only produce an argument, convincing to other Muslims, that the Bible has been corrupted. To accomplish this they bring forward many examples of contradiction and mistakes they find in the Bible. In deference to those Christian apologists who believe they can effectively refute every one of these claims, the Muslim argument does not need to convince a Christian apologist but only other Muslims that are already skeptical about the Bible. On the other hand, if the witness of the Christian missionary is that Jesus is true (John 14:6), that He is made visible in the transformed life of the believer, and that He can be known through personal experience, then arguments concerning possible contradictions of scripture become largely irrelevant.

Thus the validity claim of truth must be redeemed. In Ethiopia, life change, miraculous works of the Holy Spirit, and life experience expressed in story and

testimony are valid ways to accomplish this. The second validity claim is that the speech act is right, within its normative context. This means that a given argument makes a claim to validity based upon cultural norms of what constitutes a good argument. At this point Habermas actually creates something of a problem for himself in that he is basing his entire agenda on rationality being expressed in argumentation and for him the force of the better argument is indeed evaluated by the reasonable evidence provided. He does not favor arguments based upon authority or arguments based upon tradition but in a given society these may be acceptable means of redeeming the validity claim of normative rightness. In the case at hand, the question becomes, what sort of argumentation is normatively correct as far as Ethiopian Muslims are concerned?

Among scripturally based Muslim groups, an argument should be rooted in the *Qur'an* and its interpretation in Muslim tradition. Thus, in conversing with Muslims, if the approach taken is to begin with the Bible as an authority, it is not likely to be successful. Not only is the issue of the alleged corruption of the Bible an issue, but authoritative scripture for the Muslim is not the Bible but rather *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. Thus the normatively correct manner to present truth claims to a Muslim must begin with the *Qur'an*. However, if the discussion remains within ideas and concepts of the *Qur'an* alone, even though points of contact with biblical truth can be found, problems will be forthcoming because of the passages from *Qur'an* and *Hadith* that contradict the Bible. Thus, as described by Muhammad above, the strategy of beginning with *Qur'anic* passages that testify of the truth and value of the Bible as a basis to move into a study of the Christian texts is a valid strategy.

To return to Bakhtin's idea of internally persuasive speech as opposed to authoritative speech, in the case of Ethiopian Muslims, authoritative speech has become internally persuasive speech largely by way of repetitive actions. Having heard Muslim

teaching from a very early age, three years as mentioned by Aisha, from family and religious teachers alike, the voice of *Qur'an* and *Hadith* has become an internal voice for Muslims. Repetitive actions such as *salat*, undertaken over a long period of time, are another important means for the internalization of Islamic ideas. However, the Bible is not an authoritative voice nor an internally persuasive voice for Muslims, at least not yet. This reveals one reason that conversion for Muslims normally takes place over time as a process. It is also evidence for the need to start from the *Qur'an* in a Christian witness to Muslims. It is also the reason Musa reports that he wants to "remove Muhammad from their heart." If the strategy used by an Insider Movement is that the *Qur'an* is exclusively or continuously used to teach Muslims, that internal voice will not be challenged or changed. Thus, for such "converts," Christ will not supplant Muhammad in their hearts. When the role of feelings in Muslims identity formation as described by Maranci is incorporated into this picture, it is clear there will be limited transformation in such a case and thus the process of conversion will be seriously hampered.

It should also be noted that in Ethiopia, there is a strong orientation among Muslims toward an emphasis on visitation of angels, dreams, visions, and other supernatural experiences as a valid manner of being directed in one's life. Thus such supernatural experiences are given significant weight by Muslims. Unlike a secular, Western population, Ethiopian Muslims find arguments from accepted authority and evidence of supernatural validation to be normatively acceptable forms of argumentation that are commonly used in their experience and thus acceptable methods of redeeming this second validity claim.

The third validity claim that must be redeemed is that of sincerity. This validity claim means that the conversation partner is not being deceptive and is honestly

putting forward their arguments. Another way to say this is that there is no hidden

agenda. Not engaging in deception is certainly an issue of Christian character, but it is

also a validity claim that must be redeemed in human contexts. By this is meant that a

person's sincerity must be understood and accepted by their interlocutor and not

simply claimed by themselves. This is a particularly important point for Christians

working among Muslims. Very often an assumption exists that their sincerity is

understood and respected by the Muslim community among whom they work.

Unfortunately, it is common that missionaries from outside (not from a Muslim

background) unintentionally convey a lack of sincerity by their actions. Even more

challenging is the fact that for cultural and historical reasons their sincerity may be

challenged before they ever arrive on scene. Examples of how non-Muslim background

believers may unintentionally destroy the perception of their sincerity would be: the

way Christians pray (privately and secretly); the way Christians handle the Bible (not

with the respect Muslims handle the *Qur'an*); and the way Christians may dress, foods

they eat, or actions they do that do not follow community norms.

The discussion of the first validity claim strayed somewhat into the domain

represented here with regard to the role of willingness to sacrifice and the role of

suffering. If a person is willing to sacrifice or endure suffering in order to communicate

truth, this is considered strong evidence in support of sincerity. The comments of some

research participants such as Abdu that *Isa* Muslims who want to hide their true

identity are not sincere comes under this category. If willingness to suffer gives support

to the sincerity of one's words and arguments, an unwillingness to suffer for what one

believes will tend to work against the perception of sincerity. This is a particularly

difficult issue for Western missionary supporting organizations. To knowingly allow

missionaries connected to their organization to suffer physical and emotional abuse or

deprivation of personal resources is not only difficult for missions practitioners themselves, but unacceptable to their supporters. The experience of this researcher is that Insider Movement strategies that allow Christ followers to remain within their Muslim religious context and thus avoid persecution, are often influenced by this motivation. As noted in the presentation of research in Chapter Five, all of the research participants that came from a Muslim background suffered for their decision to put faith in Christ, but nearly all were eventually accepted in their communities and remain there as a witness. The price they paid was high in several reported cases, but they were willing to pay that price for the value of knowing Christ and serving Him in Christian witness. Their willingness to suffer has given them an acceptance they would not have had otherwise. They have redeemed the validity claim of sincerity through their sacrifice.

To complete this interaction with Habermas' concerning communicative competence, the orientation of communicative action must be toward mutual understanding under conditions of symmetry. Indeed, the difference for Habermas between communicative action and other forms of action, whether instrumental or strategic, would be specifically found in regard to the issue of an orientation toward understanding. The idea introduced earlier, but not fully developed, is that Christian mission, in some ways, will perhaps never meet this requirement of communicative action as defined by Habermas. This is because no matter how contextualized the communication or how loving the motivation, in the end, the goal is conversion to Christ. Where an orientation toward understanding can enter this picture is on a human level. As a communicator of Christ, the missionary can certainly be oriented toward understanding another human being in their life setting and in that process respect their freedom of choice.

Every person has a God-given choice to make in terms of receiving or rejecting the invitation to put faith in Christ. Thus the Christian missionary must offer the same respect and honor to others as they would claim for themselves. Ricoeur's point in *One's Self as Another* is exactly that each self must give to others the same freedom they desire. It appears that at this point Ricoeur, himself a Roman Catholic, crosses a line with regard to many of his fellow philosophers. He is essentially restating the Golden Rule in philosophical terms and not all are willing to follow him down that path. But the point is clear both biblically and philosophically that God honors humans by allowing them to choose Him freely or to reject Him. As representatives of God's kingdom, missionaries functioning in a multi-religious world can do no less. That means that deception is clearly not acceptable as a strategy and so it is well noted that Travis (2000), as one practitioner within the Insider Movement paradigm, has emphasized that Insider Movements are not a strategy to be undertaken by missionaries who are outsiders to a given culture and who would therefore need to present themselves as something they are not. Deceptive practices and authentic Christian witness are not compatible. But it certainly is possible to be honestly and authentically concerned for others and to desire to understand their life and beliefs. The idea of an orientation toward reaching understanding directs mission practitioners and leaders to reflect upon the attitudes they bring to the work in which they are engaged.

As a part of that reflection, in the opinion of this researcher, the reference to unsaved persons as "souls" is unfortunate. The Christian does not seek to "save souls" but rather to save human beings. The word "souls" feels too dehumanizing. A related matter is Habermas' point that communicative action takes place under conditions of symmetry. Habermas (1970a) uses the terminology of inter-subjectivity. This means that those engaging in discourse are equal in the sense that they treat one another as

subjects and not as objects in the communicative process. A conversation is between two persons as opposed to two individuals talking at each other. The concepts of communicative action and inter-subjectivity are closely linked for Habermas. In its essence, communicative action is contrasted with strategic action precisely at this point. When the Other is used as a means to an end, they are no longer a subject of equal worth, they have now become an object of lesser value than one's self. It may be that communicative competence and the paradigm of communicative action is an idealized concept, but perhaps Christians ought to be the very ones who may be able to achieve this goal. Jesus treats all humans as subjects and not as objects. Here is a fundamental difference between Christianity and those radicalized forms of Islam in which the killing of others is an acceptable form of *Jihad*. If Christ is willing to give humans such respect, how can those who claim to represent Him do less? Thus both in words and actions, the Christian missionary to Muslims must function in a way that is based upon a foundational understanding that human beings are equally valuable to God, and Christ has suffered for all.

The final idea to be explored from Habermas is that of the force of the better argument. What gives an argument force? For Habermas it is no doubt the more reasonable and best supported argument in a rational sense. But in Christian mission, the better argument must be evaluated within the context and cultural setting of communication. In many cases, the best reasoned and logically supported argument will not be considered the "better" one. In Muslim communities in Ethiopia, the better argument may include factors such as confirmation by supernatural acts, consistency with community values, or support from narrative as opposed to propositional argumentation. In the Book of Acts, Jesus is presented as saying, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in

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Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). From this scripture it is evident that Jesus is expecting that His disciples will need the power of the Holy Spirit to be convincing in the manner he desires. There is a need to go beyond human argumentation in order to have the "better argument" in pursuit of a mission to Muslims.

In the presentation of research in Chapter Five the methodology section included the house to house approach, Insider Movements, CPM, and social development projects. Participants in this research have used all of these methods successfully. Among the first three of these methodologies, one commonality is an emphasis on individual or small group settings as opposed to large public gatherings. This smaller setting allows for the validity claims of communicative competence to be redeemed more easily due to the less confrontational setting. In a larger, more public setting, those present may want to project an ethos of defending Islam against its enemies and under those conditions, effective communication becomes nearly impossible. Another commonality of these three approaches is that they reduce the perceived threat to the Muslim community. A possible difference among these three methodologies would be how far one may be willing to go in the effort to appear non-threatening. Some are willing to remove the Bible from use and to adjust foundational Christian beliefs to an acceptable Muslim standard. Others are not willing to go so far.

The fourth category of the inclusion of social projects in an outreach strategy for Muslims can convey an important message. However, *if* the purpose of such projects is deceptive in that it is not being undertaken out of human concern for others but rather as a means to gain access and preach the gospel, it will tend to backfire. But if such projects are used out of an authentic concern for others and with honest respect for Muslims as fellow humans with similar life desires, they can go a long way toward

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redeeming the validity claim of sincerity and establishing a conversation on the basis of inter-subjectivity. It is now time to move to an analysis of identity applying the theory of narrative identity of Paul Ricoeur to this research.

6.2 Identity

Although Ethiopia has a reputation for peaceful relationships between Christians and Muslims, the reality on the ground is somewhat uneven on this issue. Part of that story has to do with various incidents of conflict in recent years. More deeply the issue is connected to the heartfelt attitude of Oromo Muslims who feel that they were enslaved and brutalized by Amhara Christians in the 19th century and they have not forgotten. Thus, one of the great challenges in the Ethiopian mission to Muslims is the historically based anger between Muslims and Christians normally held just below the surface but with the potential to erupt when the proper stimulation is applied. Ricoeur provides some helpful insight when he writes:

> I would like to add a third component in explication of this difficulty of preserving one's identity through time, and of preserving one's selfhood in the face of the other, and that is the violence which is a permanent component of human relationship and interactions. Let us recall that most events to do with the founding of any community are acts of violence. So we could say that collective identity is rooted in founding events which are violent events. In a sense, collective memory is a kind of storage of such violent blows, wounds and scars (1999a:8).

Thus Ricoeur suggests that the collective memory of a people significantly contributes to their collective identity. In the case of the Oromo Muslims, that collective identity is one of grief, pain and anger over the attempt of others to steal their cultural heritage, disallow their language, and subvert their traditional forms of governance. A significant part of that story is that the accomplishments and significance of the Oromo in the history of East Africa are neglected or placed in a negative light in terms of the official version of Ethiopian history.

In many ways this issue is well beyond the scope of a Christian mission to Muslims. But Christians have a choice in this matter whether to identify with the legitimate complaint of the Oromo people, or to please their own tribal constituency and to curry favor with the government. The decision whether to identify with the Oromo or not, carries a significant risk to be sure. In Ethiopia, the historical roots of democratic forms of government are short and the development of the public sphere is in its infancy. At this time dissent is not well tolerated and certainly not actual opposition. But this is because those who came to power in 1991 themselves started as an oppositional group that developed into armed resistance and resulted in a change of government. Dissent without the risk of armed rebellion is essentially unknown in Ethiopia and the nature of the ethnically based federal system makes compromise and peaceful discussion of differences more challenging still. Positive movement may be slow but it is coming and can be encouraged through the development of a public sphere where non-official voices can express their concerns in a non-threatening manner. Habermas writes:

> The opportunity for the voices heard to be truly diverse is crucial to the operation of the public sphere in that as compared to the political center, the peripheral voices have a relatively "greater sensitivity in detecting and identifying new problem situations" (1996:381).

Voices suggesting the inclusion of a positive view on Oromo history being incorporated into the officially recognized account of Ethiopian history are certainly peripheral at this point. The result is that the most even handed writing on this topic comes from non-Oromo academic voices but Oromo scholars themselves have largely chosen a more radicalized path. There is a clear need for Oromo scholars to tell their own story but without the inflammatory political rhetoric that has characterized such writings to date. Christians could encourage that process but overall have not chosen to do so. As Kedir

mentioned above, when he tried to use *Oromifa* in his outreach program he was accused

of being an Oromo terrorist by his own denomination only a few years ago. It is a huge

challenge to leave such deeply felt cultural and political feelings outside the church, but

it is vital that the church learns to do so. By encouraging national healing and

reconciliation, the Christian community of Ethiopia can open the door to a much more

productive and healthy interaction between Christians and Muslims in which the

Christian message could possibly be heard in a new way.

On the individual level, narrative identity theory provides a productive

understanding of identity formation and change. Kearney writes:

> Storytelling is, of course, something we participate in (as actors) as well as
> something we do (as agents). We are subject to narrative as well as being
> subjects of narrative. We are made by stories before we ever get around to
> making our own. Which is what makes each human existence a fabric stitched
> from stories heard and told (2002:154).

Once it is understood that a person's identity can best be narratively conceptualized, it

becomes possible to incorporate testimonies and personal narratives into the

discipleship process. Identity formation is a process of hearing the stories of the people

with whom one identifies over a period of time until those stories are incorporated into

oneself and one's own place is located in relationship to that grand narrative. Thus,

identity change must be accomplished in a similar manner. Oromo Muslims, in their

small group settings, need to hear their story "told otherwise" (Ricoeur 1999a:9). That

narrative must be told and retold in a way that incorporates opportunity to see the

events of the past in a new way such that the possibility of a new future may be opened

as well. The new narrative could be outlined as follows:

> The Oromo people have a long and distinguished history with strong traditions
> of self-governance and faith in *Waaka* as the one true God of the Oromo people.
> Oromo have been a powerful and respected people shaping much of the history
> of Ethiopia as well as areas of Northern Kenya and Somalia. The emperors of
> Ethiopia defeated the Oromo in battle more than 100 years ago and so many

> Oromo took up Islam as a form of opposition to the Christian emperors who had made them suffer under oppression. But that was part of God's plan to bring them back to a true relationship with God the creator and high God through faith in His Son Jesus.

This story is given only as a short example of how the story of the Oromo people could be reshaped by Oromo Christians themselves in a way that reinterprets the past in a manner that creates space for an Oromo Christian identity that is not at odds with Oromo self understanding. By forming, telling and retelling this new story in literature, song, drama, and appropriate artistic forms, it can provide the foundation for a new identity for Oromo MBB's as well as a way for them to share their change of identity in a positive and productive manner that could bring about widespread transformation of the Oromo people and potentially Ethiopian society as a whole. There is a pre-existing tradition of story telling, proverbs, parables and songs both large and small in the Oromo culture. This cultural heritage can be incorporated into a new story line that opens up a new understanding of the past and therefore new possibilities for the future.

The possibility of re-visioning the future in light of a reinterpreted past is described by Ricoeur in this manner:

> No historical period ever exhausted its own dreams. What happened in the past is only a partial realization of what had been projected. . .The promise of an historical event is always more than was actually realized. And so we have to find the future of the past, the unfulfilled potential of the past (1999b:14).

The power of this approach is that the ability of narrative to incorporate both concordant and discordant elements allows for the past to be honestly dealt with and not denied. Healing cannot come through the denial of past events however painful and difficult they may have been. Denial of the truth cannot heal the wounds that were created by it. Indeed, when a person or a society's history is denied, it feels as though their identity is being stolen. Thus many societies such as Ethiopia that have long

histories and painful stories in their past become stuck at a certain point and cannot move beyond it. The point of impasse is that those in power find it threatening to allow other narratives to compete with their own because of fear that if other narratives are given sanction they may become powerful enough to encourage armed opposition. The process described here has risks, but it also has the potential for the greatest possible rewards. By utilizing these principles, the Christian community could become not only another idea in the wide spectrum of ideas, or another competing narrative among many narratives, but an agent of healing for their nation. The healing of a nation and the healing of its people cannot be separated.

But narrative has another capacity that is essential in the healing process. This capacity is the ability to affect both the levels of rationality and of feeling. Damasio (2000) has shown that identity includes both rational and affective dimensions that are combined in memory. Thus in order to reinterpret the past and to re-vision the future, the capacity to affect both the dimension of rationality and of feeling is essential. A methodology that touches only rational processes but does not influence the level of feeling will not be able to reshape identity. How the Oromo feel about their past is perhaps even more important than what they think about it. Past events are not nearly as important as the feelings they evoke. By telling it another way, narrative can reshape the past both with respect to its interpretation and how one feels about it. When feelings are changed, new possibilities for healing are unlocked.

The telling and retelling of personal narratives within a small group network can become a means of re-formation of identity on the individual level. When a personal narrative is told or written, Ricoeur's concept of "distanciation" enters the equation. Distanciation means that there is a space or a gap between lived events and the story told. That gap allows for reflection and consideration of those events in new ways.

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Without the creation of such a gap, humans can remain trapped in an unproductive cycle of self-understanding based upon a reified past full of anger and offense. The creation of a gap into which reflection can be introduced allows the past to be understood again in a new way and the story retold. The personal story retold, can provide a new interpretation of the past that allows for a new and healthy future to be imagined.

Christianity, in its New Testament form, is oriented toward the future. It is not in essence about protecting and preserving a past. Over the two thousand year history of the church, many Christian denominations and churches have become oriented primarily toward the past and thus see their mission as that of preserving and protecting traditions rather than projecting and moving toward a positive vision of the future. This, at least partially, arises from the manner in which they tell the story of Christ and His church. Often the emphasis is on Christ's statement, "It is finished" (John 19:30). By this the "finished work of Christ" becomes the defining characteristic of the church. Certainly Christ finished His work, but he also assigned work for His church to continue. That assignment is the foundation of Christian mission. The last words of Christ recorded in Matthew's gospel are:

> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).

Not only is the assignment given, but the work is to be done, "to the end of the age." This future orientation is not only the foundation for Christian mission but it provides the power for life transformation. What a person believes concerning their past determines the possible futures into which they may enter. A healthy orientation toward the

eschatological fulfillment of the promise of the New Testament can help to reduce the power of the past to limit future possibilities. This brings us to the topic of conversion.

6.3 Conversion

Among the research participants, conversion was not understood primarily as knowledge of certain doctrines nor was it understood as a matter of "receiving Christ into one's heart" although that is certainly part of the process. Rather conversion was understood primarily as being reflected in change of behavior or change in the way one lives their life. Thus change in a visible dimension was the expectation often expressed. Gezahagne expressed his thought that if someone does not change, how can it be known if they are Christian? This would be the common understanding of conversion among Evangelicals and Pentecostals in Ethiopia.

The concept from Ricoeur that is most useful at this point is that of the world in front of the text (1991:86; 1981:93). For Ricoeur, the meaning of a text is best understood not so much by seeking the intention of the author, behind the text, but by considering the world created in front of the text. The world behind the text includes not only the authorial intention but also the understanding of the contemporaneous hearers/receivers of that text with both the author's and immediate receivers being affected by their cultural, historical and linguistic context. Ricoeur's point is that all of these matters are essentially inaccessible to the contemporary reader of a biblical text. Every text of the Bible is implicated in some level of discussion regarding the author and their circumstances at the time of its writing. These academic discussions bring into question any certainty regarding authorial intention. The culture and historical context of the creation of the text are also a subject of debate with many ongoing disagreements. Beyond these, there is the uncertainty of modern scholars as to an accurate knowledge of ancient history. And beyond that, it remains unknown how the

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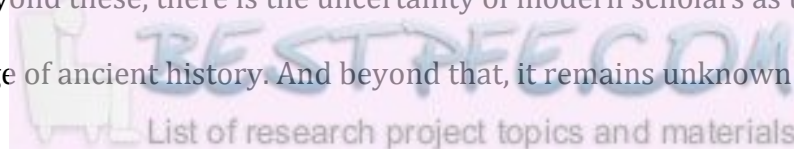
people of that time understood their own historical circumstance as opposed to how those circumstances are understood today. Considering the fact that there is little or little academic consensus regarding these issues, it seems to Ricoeur that to place the correct meaning of a text behind it, makes it essentially unavailable. What is available to the modern reader is the text itself, although there remain some debates even there. In front of that text lie the implications of the text for the reader. These things are available and accessible. Thus both Ricoeur's biblical and general hermeneutics emphasizes the world in front rather than behind the text.

Thus the question becomes, what is the world created by the text? Another way to ask this question would be, "What are the implications for living created by the text?" Although these are not identical questions, they are complementary and help to point things in a productive direction. An example might be, what sort of world is created by the text of Romans as presented in Chapter Four above? Under that reading of scripture, the world created is one in which there is a demand placed upon the believer to live a holy, God-centered life in which the Holy Spirit is available sufficient to empower her to do so. Put another way, the world created by the New Testament is one where the believer can grow into Christ likeness and in so doing undergo a great and wonderful transformation (Ephesians 4:13; Romans 6:11 and 12:2). This transformation is possible, and the power to accomplish this is accessed through faith in Christ (Romans 1:17). Thus, a world is created by the text in which a person may choose to live and to project their ownmost possibilities. For Christians, the projection of one's ownmost possibilities is done by "believing God" and entering into this world through faith.

Indeed this is one way to understand Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." When the word of Christ is "heard," faith comes into the heart to believe that word. In this conception, when the text enters

into the heart, a new possible world is created into which a person may choose to enter and live by faith. It is important to take notice that the topic of the passage, Romans 10:14-17, is the hearing of the gospel and the activity under discussion is missionary activity. This transformational process into Christ-likeness could be described as becoming an incarnational witness to Christ. As reported in Chapter Five, the transformed life of the Christian is the most influential motivation for Muslims to turn to Christ. A life transformed by the power of God through the work of the Holy Spirit will surely be an authentic and believable witness. In this way, critical hermeneutics provides a way of conceptualizing the relationship among the key concepts of this study: conversion, identity, and methodology.

The process of discipleship of MBB's must therefore incorporate narrative. The narrative dimension and its inscription, allows the gap of distanciation into which both reflection and faith may enter. The past can be understood again, now from God's point of view, as the person views their past from a new position and thus tells their story in a new way. The retelling of the past places its events into a new context and removes the old limitations associated with the old narrative and opens new possibilities of a new world in which the person may choose to live. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away; behold the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Notice, the person "in Christ" does not enter into a new creation as something outside of themselves, but rather they themselves become the new creation. The contribution of Ricoeur, drawing from Heidegger, is that the future comes to have an ontological status. Heidegger writes:

> By the term 'futural', we do not here have in view a "now" which has *not yet* become 'actual' and which sometime *will be* for the first time. We have in view the coming [*Kunft*] in which *Dasein*, in its ownmost potentiality-for-being, comes towards itself. Anticipation makes *Dasein authentically* futural, and in such a way that the anticipation itself is possible only in so

far as *Dasein*, *as being*, is always coming towards itself – that is to say, in so far as it is futural in its Being in general.

In other words, the anticipated future is currently a part of the being of the person who is presently in the world and thus the future self draws the person toward herself/himself. In biblical terms, it could be stated, a person can become the new person they see, through faith. Thus the experimentation with different expressions of a life through the contribution of imagination to the life-story process provides for an *evaluative dimension* and allows "the narrative [to] perform its functions of discovery and transformation with respect to the reader's feelings and actions, in the phase of the refiguration of action by the narrative" (Ricoeur 1992:164). It is the new world created by the text in which a person may choose to live and project their ownmost possibilities that draws that person forward, reshaping their actions and thus causing them to become a new person.

Creation and therefore, re-creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), is the work of God through the Spirit. Though narrative is the tool of choice to produce the transformed life of the believer, it is not simply imagination but the reality and power of the spiritual dimension that produces the new creation. When Paul chooses to use the terminology of "new creation" it forces the reader to consider the former creation. In Genesis 1:1-3 the creative power of God is connected to the Spirit of God, the voice of God and the word of God. God created, the Spirit brooded over the surface of the waters bringing forth the new creation, and God spoke. In this manner God brought into being those things that were not. In John's gospel, the commissioning of the church after the resurrection of Christ is told in a different way than it is recounted in Matthew. In John 20:21-22 it reads, "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said

to them, 'receive the Holy Spirit.'" The inter-textual connection between this passage and that of Genesis 2:7, "then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature," should not be missed. Thus, conversion produces a new creation, a new person, with a new identity, who has the capacity to be an incarnational witness to Christ.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

The starting point for this study was the current missiological discussion surrounding Insider Movements specifically with regard to the need to clarify the meaning and application of conversion and identity for use in a mission to Muslims. The research field has been Ethiopia with particular focus upon the Arssi and Bale Zones of Oromia Region. The study has been conducted using tools and concepts drawn from the philosophical orientation of critical hermeneutics in order to conduct and analyze the field research portion and to seek insights made possible through working within that paradigm. This chapter will suggest some conclusions that could be drawn from this research project and follow with suggestions for future research.

7.1   Conclusions

Conclusions suggested by this research are expressed under the headings of methodology, identity and conversion. These conclusions should be viewed in the sense of lessons learned through the interaction between the researcher and the research participants with the added dimension of conversation with the literature on these topics. Because the research was done primarily from a practical, application-based emphasis, the lessons learned are generally directed toward increasing the effectiveness of those engaged in the mission to Muslims.

7.1.1 Methodology

As this study is concluded it is difficult to be sure what descriptive word to use with respect to Insider Movements. Should they be called a paradigm, a methodology, a strategy? It seems that each of these descriptions has some place. Perhaps methodology is too much to say but a group of related methodologies seems reasonably accurate. Strategy is applicable only in the most general sense of the word but paradigm seems more appropriate although it gives the promise of a carefully thought through set of

ideas which again is probably saying too much. Thus, having struggled in the research of this issue for some years now, in some regards there is less to say than at the beginning. But then unlearning may be the best part of learning after all.

Based upon the knowledge developed during this study concerning the four main groups operating in Ethiopia that are using what could be considered an Insider Movement approach (yes, approach seems the right word), there is a good deal of variation to be found among them. The theological orientation behind these groups has significant variation and their actual methodology varies considerably. Each is struggling with ways to bring Muslims to Christ without removing them from their Muslim context and thus allowing them to provide ongoing witness from within their own communities. Each has found its own comfort level regarding the many relevant issues and challenges. Part of that picture is that even within Ethiopia there are variations among Muslim communities that must be considered. If a wider view is taken regarding Muslim communities worldwide such as from the Middle East, South Asia, to Asia, the variation is nearly unmanageable. For this reason one conclusion that must be reached is that each Muslim context must be considered as to its own cultural, historical, political, and religious context. There is no single way to engage in a Christian mission to Muslims.

It has been said that the only way to keep a secret in Ethiopia is if only two people know it and one of them dies. Thus the idea that groups of MBB's are going to meet and discuss/fellowship/disciple without the rest of their community being aware of it will not happen at least over any length of time. It may be possible to function in a way that does not confront community norms so directly that it brings a strong reaction. That would vary from community to community and from person to person. But to do that ongoing would in actuality mean remaining Muslim in practice as well as

dress, greeting style, diet, and so forth. Because Ethiopia is a pluralistic society there is more opportunity for groups to operate more or less under the radar, especially in towns, but it is not likely to be sustainable.

As several of the research participants suggested, suffering will not be avoided. Thus a theology that supports suffering as being a normal part of the Christian experience is essential in a mission to Muslims. As an example, theology that emphasizes that the church will be raptured before significant suffering is experienced does not seem appropriate to a Muslim context. Rather, a theology that provides a foundation for the Christian experience of suffering, placing suffering in a context of Christian life and growth and within the grand narrative of God's dealing with humanity is needed for the mission to Muslims.[17]

Truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity are essential components of Christian outreach to Muslims. Therefore strategies that bring these values into question must be carefully avoided. If the way an Insider Movement approach is implemented seems in some way dishonest or creates the perception of insincerity, it will certainly backfire. The issue of money fits in at this point. An expectation of support, emotionally, spiritually, and monetarily, for those converting to faith in Christ was reported by MBB's. To ignore these needs is understood as being insensitive and unloving. However, money coming from foreigners often creates an unhealthy spiritual environment. It seems best for funds to be routed through Ethiopian Christians whether ministry leaders, churches or similar means. Caution must be taken with regard to photographs and videos. While international missions agencies must report to their supporters and

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[17] For an excellent discussion of this topic see the *Bad Urach Statement: Towards an evangelical theology of suffering, persecution and martyrdom for the global church in mission* published by the International Institute for Religious Freedom and available at http://www.iirf.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFs/Bad_Urach_Statement.pdf.

raise further funds to continue ministry, because of the economic differences involved, the appearance easily becomes one of foreigners getting rich on the back of poor Ethiopians by using their photographs to raise funds. Therefore, caution must be taken and explanations provided. A bi-directional culture of honesty must be developed and maintained.

In Ethiopia there is a growing sensitivity among Muslims to the various strategies being used by Christians and especially those under the banner of Insider Movements, perhaps because these strategies work in closer proximity to local communities of Muslims. Christian motivations are being questioned on every level. Muslim apologists often direct their attacks toward issues of alleged dishonest practices on the part of Christians. They ask, "Are development projects actually being undertaken to gain access and so convert Muslims? Do Christians try to pass themselves off as Muslims when in fact they are really Christians? Therefore, when a Christian tries to speak to Muslims using the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, it must be authentic. Normally that means they should have been a trained teacher of Islam before coming to faith in Christ. A Christian who does not come from a Muslim background and attempts to use *Qur'an* and *Hadith* will in most cases create offense and not openness. In this regard, private conversations are more effective than public meetings. Conversing with two or three at a time provides a much different dynamic than talking to eight or ten in a group. This affects the role of foreign missionaries in the mission to Muslims. Certainly there is great variation in individual knowledge and experience among missionaries, but as a general principle, those from a given people group will be most effective reaching their own culture. Therefore, making strong disciples and strong leaders seems to be the most productive role for foreign missionaries.

Those who engage in Insider Movement approaches must clarify their goals. If they seek to make converts, they must be clear as to what conversion means for them. This study has presented an understanding of conversion that is appropriate for Muslim outreach contexts, but each church, denomination and missionary will determine for themselves the content of their theology of conversion. This study has shown that the need of new converts in a Muslim context is for extended teaching that addresses the many questions they have as they confront the differences between what they learned as Muslims and new, biblically based teaching. Classroom type teaching can be useful, but discipleship is really the more effective approach. In many cases, because of secrecy and security issues, the methods of discipleship being used may not be as effective as needed. This may be due to the fact that the ones who would do the discipling have not themselves experienced discipleship training. Therefore, it could be useful to take a convert into a neutral and safe environment for a season in order to strengthen their spiritual development before sending them back to their own community to disciple others and multiply themselves.

MBB's must enter into a new community of faith. It is not healthy for them to remain isolated from other believers and although there are a few who are reported to have come to Christ through radio or television and live without knowing other Christians, these numbers are very small and it seems only reasonable that the larger proportion of such isolated MBB's return to Islam. The nature of the new Christian community into which an MBB enters is vitally important. One of the most troubling reports from the MBB's who participated in this study was the lack of reception they experienced in churches. They were often mistrusted as plants or spies who were gathering information so Muslims could attack the Christians. At the least, they were often not welcomed warmly into fellowship.

Considering that many groups of MBB's exist in areas where churches are not possible, small group approaches seem the best strategy. Insiders themselves have developed strategies in Ethiopia that are appropriate and workable. These strategies involved small groups of MBB's meeting in non-confrontational ways and growing in strength until they are of sufficient numbers to begin a public meeting. The public gathering is envisioned as some sort of "*Isa* Mosque." As described to this researcher, an *Isa* Mosque follows norms of appearance and style common among Muslims such as removing shoes upon entering, sitting on rugs or mats rather than chairs with men and women separated, the speaker sitting and using more of a teaching style of presentation, following local dress and grooming customs, and using local languages. In this manner, the outward impression is not so different than any other mosque. That much is common among such groups in Ethiopia. The content of teaching as to how to handle the *Qur'an, Hadith*, Muhammad, and *Isa*, are varied based upon the kind of teaching the leader of such groups has received. All but one of the leaders of the groups operating in Ethiopia that are either functioning or moving in this direction are very clear in their teaching that Muhammad, though a respected leader, is not considered a prophet and thus the Bible replaces the *Qur'an* as scripture and Jesus is worshipped as the Son of God. However, in the individual lives of those coming to Christ, these issues are handled as a matter of teaching over time and not confronted as an issue required for entrance into the community.

In towns or cities where MBB's may come into existing churches, they need to be part of a group of other MBB's who understand their issues and concerns and can provide some buffering between the new MBB and his/her new Christian environment. Even in towns or cities, those coming to Christ from a Muslim background have often sacrificed much to enter their new faith. Family relationships are damaged or broken,

financial connections and inheritances are lost, possessions may have been taken or destroyed, and physical harm may have been experienced. And very significantly, their relationships and sense of community have been broken. These issues must be acknowledged and practical help provided as may be possible. The issues needing to be addressed for new MBB's in teaching and discipleship are significantly different than those for other new believers. Thus to combine them together with those from other backgrounds in a "New Believer's Class" is not the most productive approach and a significant proportion of new MBB's will be lost using this method. New believers coming from a Muslim background very much need to become part of a new, Christian *ummah* where they can grow in their new identity in Christ. This last point leads to a consideration of the issue of identity in the context of a mission to Muslims.

7.1.2 Identity

Is there such a thing as a "Muslim Follower of Isa?" This question has become central to the topic of Insider Movements and a guiding issue behind this study. Based upon the understanding of identity developed here, the question itself seems to arise from a sociological approach to identity. This means that the focus is upon an objective "Me" as seen and understood by others rather than the subjective "I" of self. So there are questions such as, what about an MBB who is identified on public documents and identifications as a Muslim? When this matter is raised it is normally in the context of a society in which it is not possible to change this identification even if a person wants to do so. Thus, this is really a non-issue since it is out of the control of the person anyway. In Ethiopia a person is free to change their religion so far as governmental regulation is concerned.

The second way this issue is raised is in connection to how people in an MBB's community identify them. In this regard the difference between public perception and

ethos is important. Public perception can be created in many ways and could easily arise from the assumptions of others over which again the MBB has no real control. An example would be the assumption that all Oromo are Muslims. But *ethos* involves an intentional projection of identity to others for the purpose of creating a favorable impression. To address the first situation the MBB would need to intentionally declare herself/himself to have left Islam in order to change a presumptive identity. It is questionable whether such an announcement should be expected or required. In the second circumstance, the MBB is intentionally creating a false impression of their true identity. This second instance is certainly problematic with respect to Christian character. It is at this point that the Insider Movement approach can be questioned if the projection of an untrue *ethos* is employed.

Behind this discussion is the more basic question of how does the MBB understand themselves. Having reviewed a large quantity of literature concerning Insider Movements, in all but perhaps a few cases, the positions taken on this topic have been based upon assumptions and projections about perceptions of self on the part of MBB's. This is an area that could benefit from additional research. There is a limitation at this point as to how much one person can know concerning another's heart. However, as to the research participants in this study, nearly all understand themselves as having converted to Christ. By that they meant that they have left their former religious belief system behind and embraced something new. However, exactly what they left behind, and what must be new is not consistent. What if a person continues to pray five times a day? What if that prayer includes recitation of the *shahada*? To pray five times a day is certainly not problematic for a Christian. To say the *shahada* five times a day would be, at least for Christians in Ethiopia. Can Muhammad remain a prophet for the convert? No, he cannot remain a prophet for the convert because if he is

a prophet then the *Qur'an* is the word of God and it contradicts the Bible. Can he be understood as a respected leader of his people who continues to be loved and honored by millions of people around the world? No doubt Muhammad is that and so to acknowledge it seems only reasonable. Can the *Qur'an* continue to be considered scripture for the convert? No, because it contradicts essential Christian teaching such as Jesus being the Son of God, and denies the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. To accept the *Qur'an* as scripture equal to the Bible is to redefine Christianity. Does the MBB need to dress in different clothes, change their name to a Christian name, shave their beard, or change their language? Certainly they must do none of these things to follow Christ.

So conversion and identity change mean leaving some things behind that contradict essential Christian beliefs. But must that be done immediately or will it take place over time? Based upon this research, the conclusion must be that it must take place over time just as similar changes takes place for virtually every convert to Christ from any background. Thus understanding conversion as a process leads to understanding identity change as taking place over time as well.

All symbols, including words, have meaning in the public sphere and are not privately defined. If each person had their own private dictionary of the meaning of words, communication would not be possible. A person who calls the color blue, red and the color red, green is considered color blind, not creative. The word Muslim, as used in Muslim communities, includes both cultural and religious aspects with the religious aspect being most prominent. That cannot be privately redefined by an MBB who wants to call themselves a "Muslim Follower of Isa" but only means the cultural and not the religious aspects of Muslim. Indeed the purpose of using such a phrase is to remain accepted among Muslims who understand such a designation in both its cultural

and religious aspects. If the community did not understand this designation in a religious sense the MBB could not succeed in their purpose by using it. Among the research participants who use designations like "Muslim Follower of Isa," they reported that they do so to avoid strong persecution against new believers who are not ready to face that kind of pressure and would most certainly return to Islam. They know it is inevitable that if they grow in Christ their new faith will become known through their changed life, but their goal is that the convert will be strong enough in their faith to endure that challenge when it comes. They do not feel the need to hasten the challenge before its time. Thus "Muslim Follower of *Isa*" is questioned in Ethiopia as a permanent designation and is accepted rather as a transitional stage in the growth of a new MBB's identity in Christ with the understanding that as transformation comes into the young believer's life it will eventually fall away.

Understanding conversion as a process allows for new MBB's to grow in their faith and commitment to Christ until they are willing to be known as a Christ follower even at the expense of suffering loss of possessions, family ties and even physical harm. Tahir, one of the research participants, described his vision for ministry in the following terms. He plans to develop small group networks of MBB's underground until their numbers reach a level in their community where they can form their own *Isa* Mosque at which time they will openly worship Jesus together but because of their numbers the community will not be able to strongly attack them. Musa emphasized that Muhammad must be "rooted out of their hearts," for MBB's to truly be converted to Christ. This is a process, and a challenging process at that. If conversion is understood as having the objective of transformation to Christ-likeness, this issue will disappear over time as the MBB grows in their spiritual life and change comes. Eventually they will be so

transformed they will not need to tell anyone that they are a follower of Christ because it will be obvious to all.

Lastly, Ricoeur's description of narrative identity is an appropriate conceptualization of identity for a mission to Muslims. It incorporates both the aspect of sameness (*idem*) and change over time (*ipse*). It provides an appropriate understanding to support conversion as transformation including a method of transformation that fits both biblically and culturally with a mission to Muslims. It encourages a future orientation over a tradition based Christianity, and it brings the Christian task back to its rightful center of being a follower of Christ rather than knowing biblical truth. Narrative can allow past to be reinterpreted, future to be re-visioned, and provide the inspiration to become the new creation in Christ that God intends His people to be.

7.1.3 Conversion

Understanding conversion as a process of transformation is clearly the most appropriate for a mission to Muslims. However, it is recognized that assurance of salvation is a matter of vital interest to many Muslims coming to faith in Christ and thus must be provided for in a theology of conversion. A biblical approach presented in this research is that assurance of salvation comes immediately upon turning away from the old life toward Christ through repentance and faith, but the normal Christian life is one of experiencing the Lordship of Christ as one is progressively transformed toward Christ-likeness. Thus the objective of the Christian life is Christ-likeness and the end of that journey will certainly be heaven.

This is particularly critical in terms of contextualizing a theology of suffering. Suffering is such a central aspect of Christian life for MBB's that it cannot be ignored. Transformation to Christ-likeness as the purpose of Christian life provides the necessary context within which to place suffering as a part of that journey. Further,

visible change in the life of the Christian is the most commonly reported influence toward Christ reported among Muslim converts. Therefore, a theology of conversion appropriate to the mission to Muslims must support both an appropriate understanding of suffering in the life of the believer and the transformational process.

Christian theology for a mission to Muslims in Ethiopia is most appropriate when approached from a narrative direction rather than being based upon an emphasis on propositional truth and teaching. Narrative teaches doctrine while simultaneously teaching values, and character. Further, narrative has the power to affect humans on the level of both knowledge and feeling. Finally, narrative places understanding in context. Muslims have modeled their living based upon stories about Muhammad found in Muslim traditions which they have learned from their earliest childhood. Thus narrative is a familiar manner for Muslims to learn spiritual lessons.

Finally, theology must be practical and lead to action. While many Christians are so sensitive to the salvation by faith and not by works issue that Christian life lacks a connection to appropriate actions. Muslims who turn to Christ expect proper action to be the outcome of faith. While Protestant teaching hesitates to incorporate any teaching that sounds like the Muslim concept of working to achieve right relationship with God, an appropriate expectation that faith in Christ will lead to right action is both scriptural and necessary for a mission to Muslims.

7.2   Suggestions for Future Research

Two possible research agendas come to mind as the end of this project is reached. First, it is possible for local research assistants to be trained who can follow cultural norms and speak local languages and thus travel and gather reports from Muslim areas where Insider Movements are operating that would not be possible for Western researchers. Such researchers could gather accurate information regarding the many issues raised in

this study such as how MBB's understand their own identity. Such a research agenda would raise significantly the level of knowledge regarding the actual activities, successes, and challenges of these movements.

Second, the question of how groups of MBB's may develop their own interpretive communities and thereby develop their own appropriate theologies of conversion and ecclesiology needs to be explored. Along this line, a study could be done that works with a number of Oromo MBB's to write or tell their own conversion narratives and then reflect upon and rewrite those narratives as part of a discipleship process. Or, a group of Oromo MBB's could work together to re-interpret and create a narrative of the history of their own people from their new Christian perspective and thus develop a narrative that could be used among Oromo MBB's to embed their new experience of faith in Christ in the history of their people group. The new narratives and methods developed in these research projects could be used both for discipleship and in an intentional process of new identity formation.

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*Note: Ethiopian Names are written first name, father's name and grandfather's name.

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