



INSIDE OUT

BY ROB LUTTON

During the recent World Cup, Brazilian star midfielder Ronaldinho was asked if he had any advice for his infamous teammate, Ronaldo. Through his beaming, buck-toothed grin, Ronaldinho just said he needed to play with more happiness – in a joyful, Brazilian way. When Ronaldo scored two goals against Japan, the coach was thrilled, not because his players won but because they did it in the Brazilian way, with very natural (not clinical) goals.¹ The South Americans showed the world what it is to play football in a way that resonates with their culture.

So what about expression of our faith in Jesus? How can it be expressed naturally in very indigenous ways? And, more specifically, how might it look for unreached people from a Muslim background?

About seven years ago I was leading a mission team to the Indian sub-continent and remember an occasion where we sat and shared stories with three Muslim followers of Isa (Jesus).

To be honest, at that time I don't think we realised what we had walked into. They spoke of themselves as Muslims and it was assumed that this was – and should be – their community and identity. They continued to participate in various ceremonies at the Mosque and their patterns of prayer, diet and so forth still had their place.

But then one of them shared his personal experience of grace through Jesus. He spoke of a night when he was sitting with a group of others grappling with the Jesus of the Gospels, the Pentateuch and the teaching of the Koran. An Imam (Muslim leader) and members of the local mosque crashed the meeting and began accusing these men of insulting aspects of the Muslim religion. But the men were able to refute the accusations and others testified to their good character and to their desire to explore the teachings of the Prophet Isa.

My friends and I gained a unique glimpse into what some refer to as an insider movement. That is, where the gospel is working within a culture from the inside out.



DESCRIPTION

BELIEVER'S SELF DEFINITION

MUSLIM PERCEPTION

It's about having a Kingdom vision of cultural transformation, not cultural decimation.

Experience shows that very few Muslim people will shift to a Christian identity the way we understand it, namely because of history (Crusades), and the perceived alignment with all things Western. And the Bible clearly shows Paul committed to seeing a person who comes to faith in Christ remaining within their original society [and culture]. (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)

So how do we even begin to grapple with working among Muslim people, so they are able to do faith their way?

A lot of work has been done by "John Travis" (a pseudonym), who has been involved in planting congregations among Muslims in Asia for the past two decades. Some years ago, John devised the C1-C6 Spectrum – a practical tool for defining the six types of "Christ-centred Communities" ('C') found in the Muslim context.²

The C1-C6 Spectrum shows the different approaches needed to successfully share the gospel among the world's 1 billion followers of Islam. Each type is still found in some part of the Muslim world, with differences in terms of language, culture, worship and religious identity.

This is at once helpful and confronting – and it becomes clear that to see cultures transformed from within, we need to be working somewhere between C4 and C5.

But this does not come without a degree of controversy and personal cost.

Sadly, my experience shows that both the cross-cultural worker and the potential new believer can be labeled as 'selling out' Christianity, being at risk of syncretism (a fusion of differing beliefs) or lacking a willingness to suffer for the faith.

For the cross-cultural worker it means moving to a marginalised place, separate from 'mainstream' Christianity so that others might encounter Jesus in a way that makes sense to them.

The C5 believer is also in a marginalised place, attracting persecution for their conviction that Jesus died on the cross and that salvation is by grace, not by works. Today there are many believers who still participate in Muslim cultural and religious practices (except for those contrary to Scripture) who have genuinely encountered Jesus and follow Him. However, because of their upbringing and life experience, they see themselves as Muslims who have found salvation in Jesus. It's a lot like the first believers who operated within Judaism.

In taking a step back from the Muslim world, we could also reflect on how we in a nation like Australia could also be accused of syncretism. Could it be that our materialism and largely secular approach to life shames us like few other times in history?

So as we continue in our own movements of faith – in whatever culture we are called to – may we go with a spirit for risk-taking so that others might have an opportunity to encounter Jesus.

¹ Waleed Aly, The Age, June 24, 2006

² Evangelical Missions Quarterly (Parshall 1998, Gilliland 1998 and Travis 1998)

For more info, check out:

- http://www.emqonline.com/emq_article_read.php?ArticleID=2139
- [http://www.missionfrontiers.org/2006/01/PDFs/16-23 Insider Movements.pdf](http://www.missionfrontiers.org/2006/01/PDFs/16-23%20Insider%20Movements.pdf)
- <http://guide.gospelcom.net/resources/x-spectrum.php>



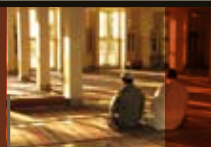
C1



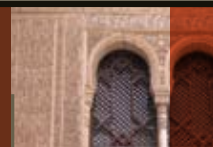
C2



C3



C4



C5



C6

Foreign church transplant, foreign in culture and language

C1 using local, non-Islamic language

C2 using non-Islamic cultural elements (e.g. dress, music, diet, artwork)

C3 with some biblically acceptable Islamic practices

C4 with a "Muslim for Jesus" self-identity

Secret believer, may or may not be an active member in the religious life of the Muslim community

Christians

Christians

Christians

Followers of Isa (Jesus)

Lover of Isa; Muslims for Jesus

Followers of Isa; Muslims for Jesus

Christians

Christians

Christians

A kind of Christian

A strange kind of Muslim

Muslim

the C1-C6 SPECTRUM