

THE INSIDER MOVEMENT AS A STRATEGY FOR EVANGELIZING MUSLIMS

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1. INTRODUCTION

In January 2009 I attended a workshop on the use of the *Insider Strategy* in evangelizing Muslims. While some useful strategies were taught, there were some serious hermeneutical and theological errors expressed. The hermeneutic used and the theology expressed are foundational to the theory and practice of the Insider Movement. Some of what was taught was explicit expressions of syncretism.

2 THE ERRONEOUS TEACHINGS

- 2.1 The use of narrative passages of Scripture to justify leaving new disciples of Jesus within the religion of Islam (e.g. passages which refer to Jesus birth and life as a Jew and the fact that Jesus remained a Jew, are reasons that Muslim background disciples of Jesus should remain Muslims);
- 2.2 Use of the word ‘insider’ in a manipulative way to refer to Jesus as a base for Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) remaining within the religion of Islam;
- 2.3 Following from 2.1 and 2.2 there is a lack of expression of the truth that in the New Testament Jesus has a unique relation to Israel as

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- the one in whom Israel is renewed and who is the fulfillment of the covenant promises of the Old Testament. Therefore Jesus as an ‘insider’ can not serve as a model for anyone else, and Islam is not comparable to Israel;
- 2.4 Separation of the Church from the Kingdom of God – there is no recognition that the Church is the Community of the Kingdom, the People of the Kingdom both in its universal and local manifestations;
 - 2.5 Using the aphorism, ‘Jesus never came to start a new religion’, to bear more weight than that truth can bear. While Jesus did not start a new religion He completed and fulfilled the religion of Israel: His church is Israel in the New Testament and continues the religion of Israel in a completed and purified form;
 - 2.6 While rightly asserting that MBBs should keep their culture it is asserted that they should also keep their religion. Thus there is no recognition that the culture needs to be given another religious foundation, and that it needs to be both affirmed in its good aspects and transformed in its harmful aspects;
 - 2.7 Misuse of James’s advice, ‘We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God’ (Acts 15:19). The issue James was addressing was circumcision as a rite of entrance into Judaism and the Church. Circumcision had been replaced by baptism and was no longer necessary to enter God’s renewed Israel;
 - 2.8 Failure to recognize that the Kingdom of God is a deeply religious reality, and that one cannot live the reality of the Kingdom and at the same time live a different reality;
 - 2.9 The truth that Jesus never told anyone to leave their religion fails to take account of His call to be born from above, to leave darkness and come into the light;
 - 2.10 The expression of an inadequate view of baptism. It was stated that baptism is a testimony to the faith of the believer and that giving testimony to Christ by word is functionally equivalent to baptism, so baptism is not necessary. Thus there is no recognition of baptism as a means of Grace and ordinarily essential for the disciple of Jesus. Baptism in the Scriptures is not what we do (testify to our faith) but what God does (include us in Christ and His Church);

- 2.11 The denigration of liturgy and tradition and the opposing of them to heart religion. While there is not a fixed liturgy in the New Testament, and one would not wish to impose a fixed liturgy on an MBB church, Corinthians does mention the corporate worship of the church in Corinth and such things as singing hymns and praying. Paul also talks about the tradition which was handed down for the Church;
- 2.12 The view that Muhammad is a New Testament prophet who got a few things wrong. I think that we must hold him to be a false prophet;
- 2.13 The view that the Qur'ān is inspired;
- 2.14 The notion that MBBs may legitimately say all of the *Shahādah* (the Muslim Confession of faith);
- 2.15 The person who gave her testimony said that she had become a disciple of Jesus, but had re-converted to Islām as a result of being influenced by the Insider Movement.

3 JUSTIFICATION FOR CONVERTS REMAINING INSIDERS

3.1 The nature of confessing

The idea that Muslims who become disciples of Jesus should be encouraged to permanently remain in the religion of Islam may seem a good idea to enable the MBB to use his family network to bring others to Christ, but it has no biblical foundation. To continue the Muslim prayers, whether in the Mosque or in the family, is to fail to take into account the nature of confession. It is fundamentally dishonest to join in the confession (Shahādah) and substitute other words for part of it. One is still joining in a false confession of a false religion, even if one does make a substitution. To confess Christ as Lord and Savior is to abandon all confession that does not recognize Him as Lord and Savior.

3.2 The argument of prayer to the same God

The argument that Muslims worship the same God as we is not a justification for joining them in prayer, because their prayers are not offered in

the name of the Messiah. Also, they involve a confession that may in some aspects be fine and true, but is also in some aspects false. I wonder if it is legitimate or deceitful for a MBB to say that he is a Muslim who submits to God in the name of Jesus?

3.3 Other possible insider movements as examples against the insider strategy

One participant in the workshop wonders if it's possible to have an insider movement in the Mormon Church. I wonder if it's possible to have an insider movement in the Unitarian Church or in the Jehovah's Witness organization. Would we suggest to someone who is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church and becomes a disciple of Jesus that he remain in that church to be a witness to Christ? Would we suggest to a Jehovah's Witness who becomes a disciple of Jesus that she stay in that organization to witness for Christ?

4. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW BELIEVER IN CHRIST

I do not think that it wise to tell a new believer in Jesus to stop joining in the Muslim prayers. At the same time I do not think that we should tell someone who has stopped participating in these prayers to re-embrace Islam. I believe that as a believer in Christ grows she will, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, stop joining in the prayers. The role of the missionary is to tune in to what the Holy Spirit is doing and to gently shepherd the new believer in Christ to leave Islam and become part of the Church. I believe that telling new believers to continue in, or return to, Muslim prayers is an approach to mission among Muslims that is contra Scripture, contra the Kingdom of God, and contra Reformed doctrine.

5. SCRIPTURE AGAINST THE INSIDER MOVEMENT

This insider strategy is clearly contrary to Scripture. Our Lord said in Mark 8:34-38:

Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.

And in Matthew 10: 28-33:

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Paul says in 11 Corinthians 6:14-18

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.' Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.'

Some may argue that Paul is calling believers to come out from religious and immoral association with pagan unbelievers. But are not Muslims unbelievers from the perspective of faith in Christ? If not, why engage in ministry to bring them to faith in Christ?

The encouragement of converts to remain long-term in Islam is contrary to Reformed doctrinal standards. The *Belgic Confession* in Article 28, on The Obligations of Church Members, says:

We believe that, since this holy assembly and congregation is the gathering of those who are saved and there is no salvation apart from it, believers ought not to withdraw from it, content to be by themselves, regardless of their status or condition.

But all people are obliged to join and unite with it, keeping the unity of the church by submitting to its instruction and discipline, by bending their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ, and by serving to build up one another, according to the gifts God has given them as members of each other in the same body.

And to preserve this unity more effectively, it is the duty of all believers, according to God's Word, to distinguish themselves from those who do not belong to the church, in order to join this assembly wherever God has established it, even if civil authorities and royal decrees forbid and death and physical punishment result.

And so, all who withdraw from the church or do not join it act contrary to God's ordinance.

6. CONCLUSION

I hope that I have given a reasonably short but thorough and Biblical critique of the Insider Movement in evangelizing Muslims. I am alarmed that Reformed missionaries are adopting this approach. I trust that my critique will cause them to think again and use a more Biblical approach.