

The C-Spectrum *John J. Travis*

A Practical Tool for Defining Six Types of "Christ-Centered Communities" Found in Muslim Contexts

John J. Travis (a pseudonym) and his family have been involved in planting contextualized congregations among Muslims in Asia for the past 22 years. Along with his wife, he has authored articles for a number of books and journals and frequently teaches and trains in many countries on the topics of contextualization, healing and sharing the love of Jesus with Muslims.

The C1-C6 Spectrum compares and contrasts types of "Christ-centered communities" (groups of believers in Christ) found in the Muslim world. The six types in the spectrum are differentiated by language, culture, worship forms, degree of freedom to worship with others, and religious identity. All follow Jesus as Lord and the core elements of the gospel are

the same from group to group. The spectrum attempts to address the enormous diversity that exists throughout the Muslim world in terms of ethnicity, history, traditions, language, culture, and in some cases, theology.

This diversity means that myriad approaches are needed to successfully share the gospel and to plant Christ-centered

communities among the world's 1.3 billion Muslims. The purpose of the spectrum is to assist church planters and Muslim background believers to ascertain which type of Christ-centered communities may draw the most people from the intended group to Christ and best fit in a given context. All six types are presently found in some part of the Muslim world.

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
Features of Christ-centered Communities	Traditional church Using culture, both language and other forms, which are foreign to local Muslim culture.	Traditional church Using culture foreign to local Muslim culture, but using daily language.	Contextualized community Using local cultural forms. Rejecting Islamic religious forms.	Contextualized community Using local cultural forms and biblically acceptable Islamic forms.	Community remaining within Muslim community Using local cultural forms and biblically acceptable and reinterpreted Islamic forms.	No visible community. Secret believers may or may not be active in religious life of Muslim community.
Socio-Religious Self-Identity of Believers	Christian	Christian	Christian	Follower of Jesus	Muslim Follower of Jesus	Private follower of Jesus
Muslim Perception	Christian	Christian	Christian	A kind of Christian	A strange kind of Muslim	Muslim

Chart adapted by the editors from Massey (2000), "God's Amazing Diversity in Drawing Muslims to Christ," *International Journal of Frontier Mission* 17:1. Used by permission.

C1—Traditional Church Using a Language Different from the Daily Language of the Surrounding Muslim Community. May be Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant. Some predate Islam. Thousands of C1 churches are found in Muslim lands today. Many reflect Western culture. A huge cultural chasm often exists between the church and the surrounding Muslim community. Some Muslim background believers may be found in C1 churches. C1 believers call themselves "Christians."

C2—Traditional Church Using the Daily Language of the Surrounding Muslim Community. Essentially the same as C1 except for language. Though the daily language is used, religious vocabulary is probably non-Islamic (distinctively "Christian"). The cultural gap between Muslims and C2 is still large. Often more Muslim background believers are found in C2 than C1. The majority of churches located in the Muslim world today are C1 or C2. C2 believers call themselves "Christians."

C3—Contextualized Community Using the Daily Language of the Surrounding Muslim Community and Some Non-Muslim Local Cultural Forms. Religiously neutral forms may include folk music, ethnic dress, artwork, etc. Islamic elements (where present) are "filtered out" so as to use purely "cultural" forms. The aim is to reduce foreignness of the gospel and the church by contextualizing to biblically acceptable cultural forms. May meet in a church building or more religiously neutral location. C3 congregations are comprised of a majority of Muslim background believers. C3 believers call themselves "Christians."

C4—Contextualized Community Using the Daily Language and Biblically Acceptable Socio-religious Islamic Forms. Similar to C3, however, biblically acceptable Islamic religious forms and practices are also utilized (e.g., praying with raised hands, keeping the fast, avoiding pork, alcohol, having dogs as pets, using Islamic terms, dress, etc.). Foreign forms are avoided. Meetings not held in church buildings. C4 communities comprised almost entirely of Muslim background

believers. C4 believers are seen as a kind of Christian by the Muslim community. C4 believers identify themselves as "followers of Isa the Messiah" (or something similar).

C5—Community of Muslims Who Follow Jesus Yet Remain Culturally and Officially Muslim.

C5 believers remain legally and socially within the community of Islam. Somewhat similar to the Messianic Jewish movement, aspects of Islamic theology which are incompatible with the Bible are rejected or reinterpreted if possible. Participation in corporate Islamic worship varies from person to person and group to group. C5 believers meet regularly with other C5 believers and share their faith with unsaved Muslims. Unsaved Muslims may see C5 believers as theologically deviant and may eventually expel them from the community of Islam. C5 believers are viewed as Muslims by the Muslim community and think of themselves as Muslims who follow Isa the Messiah.

C6—Secret or Underground Muslim Followers of Jesus with Little or No Visible Community.

Similar to persecuted believers suffering under totalitarian regimes. Due to fear, isolation or threat of extreme governmental/community legal action or retaliation (including capital punishment), C6 believers worship Christ secretly (individually or perhaps infrequently in small clusters). Many come to Christ through dreams, visions, miracles, radio broadcasts, tracts, Christian witness while abroad, or reading the Bible on their own initiative. C6 (as opposed to C5) believers are usually silent about their faith. C6 is not ideal; God desires his people to witness and have regular fellowship (Heb 10:25). Nonetheless C6 believers are part of our family in Christ. Though God may call some to a life of suffering, imprisonment or martyrdom, He may be pleased to have some worship Him in secret, at least for a time. C6 believers are perceived as Muslims by the Muslim community and identify themselves as Muslims.