

Contextualization: Bridges to Islam

Helping Muslims move from the Qur'an to become followers of Isa al Masih.

In recent times, we are hearing many stories about the dilemma of Muslims studying the Qur'an, who begin to have dreams of Isa al Masih.

What should he or she do?

INTRODUCTION



Scripture Predicts the Turning of Muslim Peoples

Psalms 72: Details future followers of the Coming King

- “Desert tribes” to the east of Israel in Jordan, Iraq, and Arabian peninsula
- “Sheba” in modern Islamic Yemen
- “Seba” is now a Muslim African land near Egypt and Northern Sudan (see Is 43:3; 45:14)

Isaiah 19:23-25: Assyria and Egypt to be believing nations alongside of Israel.

Isaiah 60:1-14

- Midian (in Saudi Arabia and Jordan)
- Ephah (son of Midian)
- Sheba (Southern Arabia = Yemen)
- Kedar (Second son of Ishmael, lived in the desert between Syria and Mesopotamia)
- Nebaioth (related to Kedar; probably Arabia Petraea now in Jordan)

My goal as a follower of Jesus is ... to build bridges

1. To understand a Muslim in his or her own cultural context while using as many Muslim forms and functions that are compatible with Scripture.
2. To share the love of Allah, which He has given to humanity through His everlasting Word [Kalimat Allah], by the power of the Holy Spirit [al-Ruh al-Quddus].
3. To build bridges, which implies some ground upon which to build and a direction in which to travel.

Outline

- I. Theory of Bridge Building
- II. Action Steps (Praxis):
Contextualization vs. Syncretism
- III. Bridge over Jihad and Crusade to
establish multiplying cells of
followers of Isa al Masih

I. Theory of Bridge Building

A. Definitions of terms

1. **Form:** Outward visible manifestation of practices and doctrinal teachings
2. **Function:** The purpose of the form in action-terms in the whole social system.
3. **Meaning** is the whole message.

B. Purpose and function of Islamic forms:

1. **To solidify** the whole community around one teaching and practice.
2. **To show** others that one is a good person.
3. **To catch** the just and merciful eye of Allah and his favor for Judgment Day.

Goal

To understand the meaning of Islamic forms and functions: Message the Muslim intends to convey both as to its emotions (connotations) and definitions (denotations). THEN

To communicate the biblical message in as many Islamic forms and many of its functions

Five essential forms of Islamic piety

Outward visible manifestation of practices and doctrinal teachings –

C. ISLAMIC FORMS, FUNCTIONS AND MEANINGS:

First Pillar: Prayer (salat)

Five times a day in Arabic with a set wording while kneeling and bowing and facing in the direction of Mecca, the Muslim holy city in Mecca







Fasting, Giving, Confessing

2. Fasting (sawm): Once month a year (termed Ramadan) only from sunup to sundown, then one may drink and eat.
3. Giving of charity (zakah): Everything belongs to Allah so we should use some of his wealth to help the poor
4. Confessing the creed (aqidah): “There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger.” [la ilaha illa Allah wa-Muhammad rasul Allah].

Fifth Pillar: Hadj to Mecca

Once in a Muslim's life time.





Some add a SIXTH pillar: Jihad (struggle)

- ✓ Against sin (for the 85% moderates)
- ✓ Against those who rebel against Allah with the sword (15% radicals)



Islam

KEY DOCTRINAL FORMS

Only one God exists

1. He is named Allah
2. He is personal creator, provider, and upholder of all things:

“This is the true account: There is no god except Allah. . . . He is indeed the Exalted in Power, the Wise. (Surah 3:62, see Surah 112).

“And behold! Allah will say: ‘O Jesus the son of Mary! Did you say to men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah’? He will say: ‘Glory to You! never could I say what I had no right [to say].’ (Surah 5:116)

(see <http://corpus.quran.com/>, spelling updated)

“[Do] Christians and Muslims worship the same God?”

“In terms of historical origin, the answer is **clearly yes**. In terms of theological description, there are many general points of similarity, but when it comes down to specific details, the answer has to be **no**. After all, what is the Christian God is not the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit? And what is the Muslim God if not the revealer of the Qur’an? But these two descriptions are mutually exclusive” (Corduan 1998, 88).

Allah possesses no partners nor does he beget children

1. Surah 112: “Say: He is Allah, the One and Only. Allah, the Eternal, Absolute. He does not beget not nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him [or like unto Him has never been one equal].”
2. Surah 3:64: “Say: ‘O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah. that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah.’ If then they turn back, say ye: “Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah’s Will).”
3. Surah 16:57. And they assign daughters for Allah. - Glory be to Him! - and for themselves (sons,- the issue) they desire!

Allah reveals himself in holy books through prophets

1. Tawrat Musa (five books of Moses),
2. Zabur Dawud (Psalms and Writings of David and others).
3. Injeel [Gospel] of 'Īsā al-Masīḥ was the second to last prophet.

LAST and final revealed book was the Arabic Qur'an

Mohammad was the capstone prophet of
Allah

Dictated word for word a universal message
through him

Dictated in Arabic language and Arabic
cultural form.

But who is ‘Īsā al-Masīḥ?

1. **Virgin born** (Surah 19:16-35) and holy (Surah 19:19)
2. **A creator of life, raised the dead, and a miracle worker** (Surah’s 3:49; 5:113; 22:73)
3. Called “**the Word of Allah**” (Surah’s 19:34; 4:171):
4. Called “**the Spirit from Allah**” (Surah 4:171)
5. Allah’s Servant (Surah 4:172)
6. **Prophet** given the Gospel (Injeel) and a Messenger (rasul like Mohammad) (4:171)
7. A **mercy** from God (Surah 19:21)
8. A **sign** to all peoples: “And (remember) her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples.” (Surah 21:91)
9. **Born, died, raised up alive**: “So peace is upon me the day of my birth, the day of my death, and the day of my being raised up alive”! (Surah 19:33) (see 3:55)
10. **Raised** to heaven (Surah 4:159)
11. **Will return to judge** the world (Surah 43:61)

Vast majority of Muslim commentators believe that Jesus never died on the cross.

That they [the Jews] said (in boast), “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah”; – but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:- Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself. (Surah 4:157-158)

Allah created

- 1) The universe perfect with a purpose: ““God created the heavens and the earth for a true purpose: to reward each soul according to its deeds. They will not be wronged” (Surah 45:22).
- 2) A first couple named Adam and Hawwa who then sinned,
- 3) Various forms of spirit beings, some of them are evil, called the Jinn, who are led by a powerful spirit creature named Shayṭān.

Allah commands all humanity to submit to and worship him

Allah is Absolute Lord and Ruler of the Universe

All must become a Muslim through following Mohammad's holy book, the Qur'an, and confessing Allah alone as God.

1. "Muslim" means "a person submitted to Allah and his Apostles, especially Mohammad.
2. "Islam" means the religion of those submitted to Allah.
3. Islam seeks to give guidance to all of life:

Allah commands all humans to be good by following his rites, forms, doctrines, and practices so that he or she will have favor before Allah's eyes

A final Judgment Day

- a. will come with the Second Coming of Isa al Masih (Surah 43.61)
- b. good and evil deeds will be measured in a balance.
- c. Allah will make the final choice

Hell and Paradise Waits

A fiery hell awaits the wicked whereas Paradise awaits those good people that Allah chooses.

In the Quran, God promises, “**Every soul will taste death.** Then to Us will you be returned” (29:57).

On the Day of Judgment, **every individual will be resurrected to account for their lives.** God describes this event in the Quran, “On that Day, people will come forward in separate groups to be shown their deeds: whoever has done an atom’s weight of good will see it, but whoever has done an atom’s weight of evil will see that” (99:6-8).

God will weigh everyone’s good and bad actions according to His Mercy and His Justice, forgiving many sins and multiplying the reward for many noble deeds. One who excels in goodness will be rewarded generously, but one whose evils and wrongs outweigh his virtues will be punished.

Those who fulfilled their purpose in life and lived righteously will enter an eternal paradise of pure bliss. The people of heaven will reside in beautiful mansions, no longer suffering from fatigue, disease and old age. God will remove animosity and pain from people’s hearts, providing supreme healing in a world of abundance and luxury, of lush gardens and flowing rivers.

In contrast, **those who die in a state of transgression against God or oppress others will be led to Hellfire.**

Sound familiar to what many Christians and Jews believe?

It is meant to be so!

A key element is missing – **grace** through faith in Isa al Masih's

- obedient and completely trusting life,
- His death on the cross as a substitute for our sins,
- His present reign after a victorious
- resurrection that conquers death.

**Contextualization of the Good News
(Injeel) of Isa-Jesus using a bridge
from the Qur'an vs.**

Syncretism that mixes the both

II. ACTION STEPS (PRAXIS)

Contextualization

1. Contextualization attempts to present the Gospel
 - a. in a culturally relevant manner.
 - b. Defined solely by Scripture
 - c. yet shaped by culture
2. “Presenting the unchanging truths of the gospel within the unique and changing contexts of cultures and worldviews” (May 2005, 350)
3. “Contextualization is shaping the message and presentation based on the receiver’s culture” (Dr. Neal Creecy)

Ed Stetzer, “What is Contextualization? Presenting the Gospel in Culturally Relevant Ways,”

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/october/what-is-contextualization.html?paging=off> (accessed 3/20/2015)

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Stan. May, 2005. Ugly Americans or Ambassadors of Christ? *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 41/3 (July):346-52,

Contextualization

1. Contextualization:

- a. Sculpting the core emphases of the same Gospel message and the form of its presentation based on the receiver's culture.
- b. Shaping the message (examples):
 - 1) Africa – receive the Holy Spirit for power and blessings now because Africans walk backward to view the past and live in the future.
 - 2) North America – receive eternal life because we have been more future oriented.
 - 3) Asia – covering of shame and acceptance into God, the Father's family, with Jesus as Older Brother and Kinsman Redeemer (Rom 8:29).

2. Contextualization: Dynamic and never static application of the Gospel across generations and cultures/sub-cultures.

Contextualization in Scripture

1 Corinthians 9:18-23

KEY: Paul targets his strategy to reach specific groups.

Antithesis vs. Syncretism

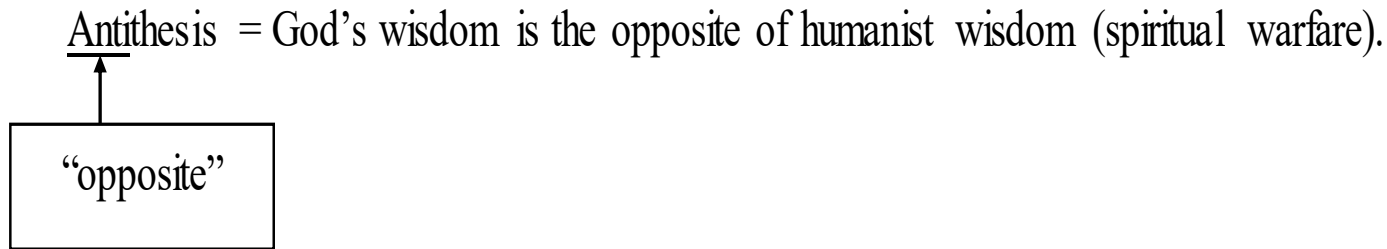


Figure 2. Meaning of antithesis

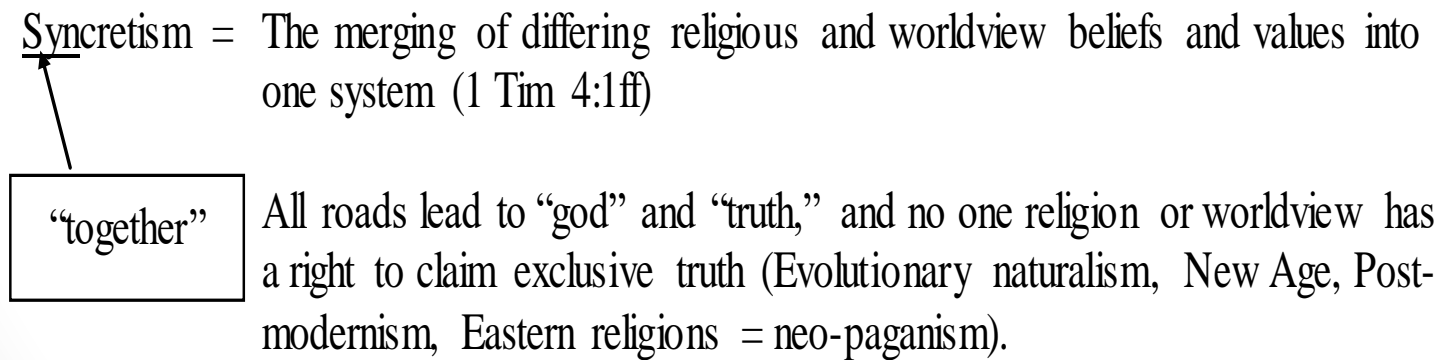


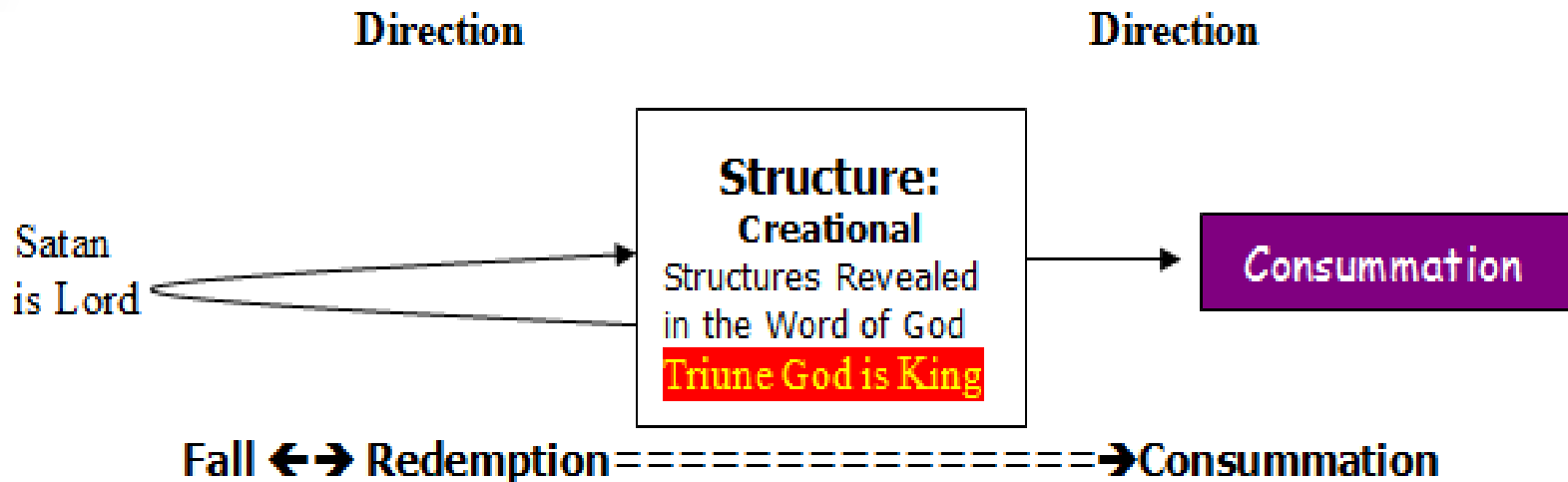
Figure 3. Meaning of syncretism.

Syncretism

“Syncretism is a message that has lost the **heart** of the Gospel. In another sense, it is moving in the **wrong direction**, away from the fuller knowledge of God” (Hiebert 2006, 44)

1. The heart and core of the Gospel must include a biblical account
 - a. creation, fall, flood, Babel, Abraham and covenants, redemption, growth of the Gospel, consummation.
 - b. Trinity and Person and completed work of Christ.
2. Pre-modernity, modernity, and post-modernity all directionally move away from the core truths and are syncretized with dualism.
3. Protestant, Trinitarian, and creationist theology is antithetical to ideologies of number two.

Structure and Direction



God desires to redeem the cursed and broken creation. Behind the seeming flux and abnormality or normality of the natural realm, Christians “believe that creational structure underlies all of reality, they seek and find evidence of lawful constancy in the flux of experience, and of invariant principles amidst a variety of historical events and institutions.” (Wolters 1985, 73)

Contextualization vs. Syncretism

Syncretism: Core **mixed**
between

Christ and Islam =
Chrislam

OR

Christ and Western
culture = Christian
imperialism

But peripheral forms are
mixed Islamic and
Western or purely
Western

Contextualization: Core is
solidly biblical Christian.

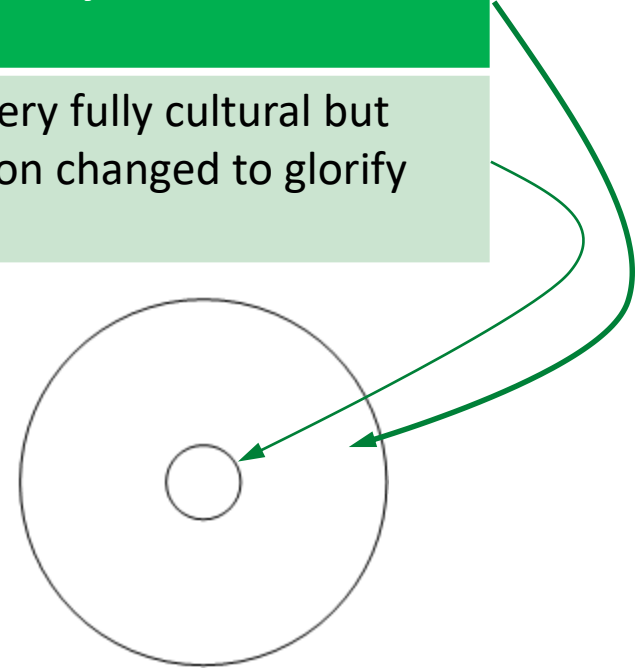
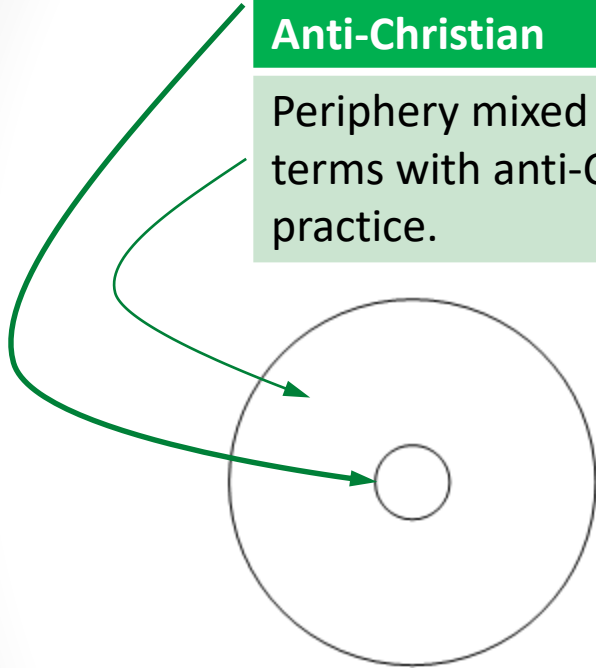
Creation, Fall, Redemption
through Isa al Masih,
Consummation.

Christ as fully God and man

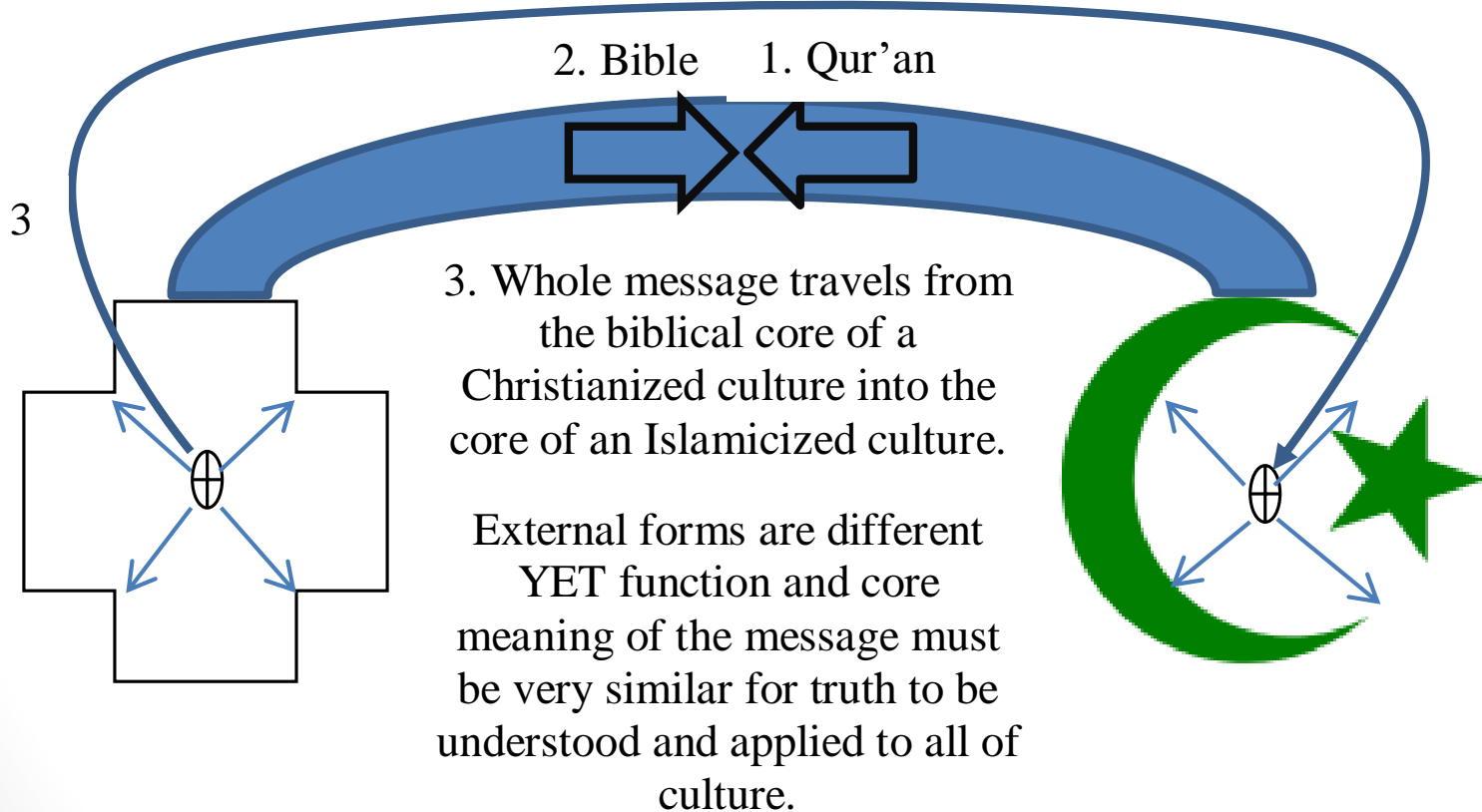
But peripheral forms are
as thoroughly Semitic-
Islamic as Scripture
permits.

Syncretism vs. Contextualization

Core mixed Christian and Anti-Christian	Core solidly biblical
Periphery mixed Christian terms with anti-Christian practice.	Periphery fully cultural but direction changed to glorify God.



Biblical Contextualization:
From the Qur'an to the Bible
as a **bridge** to know Allah.



Six C's of Contextualization

- **C1: Traditional Church Using Outsider Language.**
- **C2: Traditional Church Using Insider Language.**
- **C3: Contextualized Christ-centered Communities Using Insider Language and Religiously Neutral Insider Cultural Forms.**
- **C4: Contextualized Christ-centered Communities Using Biblically Permissible Cultural, Linguistic and Islamic Forms.**
- **C5: Christ-centered Communities of Muslims Who Follow Isa as Lord and Savior.**
- **C6: Small Christ-centered Communities of Secret/Underground Believers (Travis 1998, 407)**

Danger: Chrislam syncretism

“Syncretism is a message that has lost the heart of the Gospel. In another sense, it is moving in the wrong direction, away from the fuller knowledge of God” (Hiebert 2006, 44)

Syncretism mixes the Gospel story with an anti-Christian story in the core and in the external form

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