

A case study in church growth among some Muslims who migrated to the UK

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Introduction

I want to introduce you to an area of global church growth only recently noticeable, a secret yet to be maintained in real statistical form since it could lead to danger for those involved. However, in essence I can illustrate it from a case study here in Britain based on the work in which I am involved; for anonymity's sake we will have to refer to them as –the international Christian Fellowship (the ICF) in a northern UK city. It is a migrant congregation but we cannot yet categorize it as a missional church, nor multi-cultural church.

Normally empirical theology observes, measures, correlates factors and variables to produce a critique of what is apparently happening in the world. As human scholars, especially British ones, using empirical theology we bring about a critique, a judgement, a negative criticism exposing the holes and flaws in church life. THIS time I wish to use empirical observation to show a positive observation, and attribute it to Christian belief system involving God in the equation! Academics are nervous about doing that. It shows a subjectivity of evaluation and that lends itself to the critique that it is not academically credible. If we are to contribute to Edinburgh 2010 we wish to contribute to knowledge of what is happening in the world – pentecostally and charismatically – through Christian mission and to assess the reasons for it. Once we take God out of the equation we glorify humanity instead. We will have to consider both human and divine factors.

At a huge gathering for the 100th anniversary of Azusa Street's revival¹ Luis Lugo said Pentecostalism may have already surpassed the LA movie business in American exported influence. So my question for this paper is **'Since 'the ICF' church growth [in its original national state] is the fastest it has ever been for 1300 years², is it in anyway because of 'pentecostal' causes?'** What alternative is there? A globalising westernisation of immigrants? Or a globalised natural supernatural worldview that is open to spiritual matters once give the opportunity?

¹ See <http://pewforum.org/events/?EventID=109> [accessed 6 July 09]

² Taken from a website of a ministry focussed on this people group [accessed 6 July 09]

So let us have a look at what God is apparently doing across the world among these people and in their diaspora.

Context: World rates of Church growth and unreached people groups

The church is growing in many parts of the world but the church is not apparently growing in others. What makes the difference? Previously stereotyped as impossible for rapid church growth I suggest the specific context for the 'ICF' growth is what makes the difference. The people in my case study have a particular background culture in Shi'ite Islam. Ever since the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979, Shi'ite Muslims are often regarded in the West as radical and revolutionary, birthing terrorism. A minority maybe are like that. One estimate is that 70% of these people in their national base are nominal Muslims only. Since 2001 (not for 9/11 reasons) many have fled their nation. In the early 21st Century they are far more responsive to the Good News of Jesus Christ than they were a century or even a decade ago. The growth is both inside their nation and outside among their diaspora peoples across the world, at least among the Western nations to which they have migrated. The specific context of the host culture is what I think makes the difference.

Statistics of Muslims and Missionaries

Since the ICF have a Muslim background, we will consider them against the statistics on Muslim nations. According to Woodberry, Muslims are now 21 percent of the world population (1.5 billion), increasing from 12 percent in the past 100 years. The growth rate of Islam is higher than that of Christianity in terms of birth rates (1.81% per year, compared to 1.23%) but not conversion rates. However, Christians at one-third of the world population still outnumber Muslims. In some parts of the world, significant pockets of Muslims are turning to Christ, including North Africa, South Asia, and Indonesia.³ According to Mission Frontiers⁴, 26% of the Protestant

³ info from J. Dudley Woodbury, Russell G. Shubin, and G. Marks at ChristianityToday.com
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/winter/9.13.html> 26 May 09 Also Frontiers's magazine July 2009.

missionaries are reaching the unreached peoples of the world and 2.73% of the world's total missionaries work among Muslim people groups of which there are 4100 or 1.1billion people.

History of the 'x' people church: an overview

The national church in for our ICF people began in various places with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and other nations' denominational missions (early to mid- 19thC). These established medical and educational institutes. Even high members of their society were influenced by one convert at the turn of the 20th Century. The Pentecostal flavour arrived by 1914 with a returnee émigré.⁵ The Assemblies of God began in 1924 with American missionaries and again after WW2 but they left by 1960s. Now numerous denominations have representation in 'x' all within 0.33% of the total population. There was no real church growth from the majority population until after persecutions in the mid 1990s!

The ICF people: church growth in and outside their nation

During the 1960-70s there were only 200-300 Muslim converts to Christianity who were known to live in this nation, which then had around 45 million people. In 1975, Christians numbered about 1.5% of the total population because of the traditional Christian communities. Yet in 2000, only about 0.3% of this nation's population were Christians: does this mean the traditional Christian groups had migrated?⁶

⁴ The 12 blocs that comprise the majority of the least evangelized peoples are: African Sahel, Cushitic, Arab World, Iranian, Turkic, South Asian, Tibetan, East Asian, South East Asian, Malay, and Eurasian. See J. Dudley Woodberry, 'Comparative Witness: Christian Mission and Islamic Da'wah' *Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring 2009)* Sunday, 1 March 2009 <http://rfiaonline.org/archives/issues/7-1> (Accessed 26 May 09) Woodberry states 'In their article comparing Christian mission and *da'wah*, Todd M. Johnson and David R. Scoggins calculated that about 57,300 Christian missionaries worked in Muslim contexts and 141,630 Muslim missionaries (*da'is*) worked outside their home country. They have reduced the latter figure to 113,380 in a subsequent expanded but unpublished paper

⁵ See *Confidence*, 1909-1920s – there are numerous references to his journeys in the Middle East and through Russia and back to the USA.

⁶ I cannot provide the sources here or it would dispose of the anonymity of the people group. I do have them of you wish to communicate with me. Trying to make sense of the various sources is difficult. Compare M. Visser, *Conversion Growth of Protestant churches in Thailand*, (Goudstaat, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2008); he discovered multiple sets of sources of statistics for Thailand's Christian population all varying as this more elusive one. Missiometrics is a controversial area.

While statistics do not specifically include Pentecostal/ charismatics, it can be shown that Pentecostal/Charismatics made up 0.01% of the population! The Joshua project states that 0.3% of the total population are Christians of any label and Protestants are 3% of the total Christian population! (54.5% of that 3% are Orthodox, 36.4, Other and RC, Protestant and independent are 3% each of that). We have no other statistics since 2000. The statistics show that the internal national church had increased by 1970s but by the 1990s it had lost nine Pentecostal congregations and 87 congregations across denominations, probably due to the persecutions and flight of many followers of Isa Masih. The statistics change about 1990-94 and show a decline in all branches of the 'x' people church but it seems that there is growth among the Protestant and Independent churches; here may lie the Pentecostals. Johnstone, while stating smaller figures for converts also has a large figure for the total Christian membership- to include the traditional churches.

Within the nation there were several martyrs. Others fled to UK or USA and other western nations. Some of these were Pentecostals- like one now pastor of the London 'x' people Christian fellowship. They have led many diaspora churches. Their nation ranked ninth in the persecution tables in 2000 but according to Open Doors it is now much higher. Persecution began to purify the church and sort the various church groups and leaders, bringing a better unity. Disillusionment with Islam set in after certain political events in the later decades of the 20thC. Reaction to the oppression has grown slowly among many ordinary people, and with it has grown their openness to the story of Jesus Christ and the persecution of known Christians.

However, the membership of the remaining few Pentecostal churches had increased by 2000 but not in numbers of congregations. Since then the increase has been surprising if not known exactly, across congregations due to many going 'underground'. Whatever, there were very few congregations for a nation with 70 million population!

One external ministries focus group estimates much church growth: they train for growth as they plant underground groups both in and out of their nation. There is a refusal to state any statistics since the government would become aware and crack down. Indeed over 50 known arrests of Christian believers, ex-Muslims or MBBs (Muslim Background Believers) were made between spring 2008 and spring 2009. They estimate that there are well over 100,000 MBBs within the nation and many

more thousands across the world. In England alone we can count over 20 ICFs from London to Cardiff to Nottingham, Doncaster, Manchester to Glasgow. Most of these are made up of those who have arrived in UK since 2000- not the ones who arrived after the revolution of 1979.

The Case of this people group in Britain – wider perspectives

Many thousands of these people left their nation after political events decades ago. These remain Muslim at least nominally and are not so open to Christian matters. The next large influx came in 2000-2004 showed the oppression of the system; the change of government led to more emigrating and more may leave as a result of the 2009 elections. Disillusionment with Islam is a high factor in leaving when their political views are aired and police are alerted. 'Casual disdain' for the home regime is how one writer put it about the middle and educated classes still in their nation. Religious persecution has been a factor in flight but it is not so immediate amongst those interviewed. Only four, a single man from a catholic conversion in his nation, a man now in the ministry training school and a couple converted in the west who returned and found difficulties, claimed this as a reason for seeking asylum here in UK.

Political reasons for flight might be there for many but it is mixed with economic reasons too since minorities cannot find work or access to higher education so easily. However, while they are willing to work here they can only get jobs less than their educational and career history would suggest should be possible even after they gain citizenship.

Moral reasons also figure in motivation for flight. Alternative sexualities have also raised the arrest and execution levels. Adultery has a death sentence for the woman caught, by being buried alive. Accusations without proof lead to flight.

Health is a small but valid factor as some interviewed have suffered for various reasons, economic, political or moral.

A Case study of this people group in the northern UK city

The question for this paper came out of queries over Pentecostal mission and its contribution to the growth of the church. It has to be said that it is not a denominational Pentecostalism that has any influence in this. I have found that there

are over 25 independent people congregations in Britain and many more of this nationality are in small groups within English speaking churches of various denominations.

History

In 2002 one couple were designated as asylum seekers to this northern UK city. One requested to meet a Christian. A contact was made and the minister from a Methodist along with a retired medical consultant took up the challenge to care for these people establishing many teaching sessions.⁷ Caring for them involved not only teaching them the biblical concepts of the Christian faith but also going to court on behalf of their asylum cases. Many more were invited to the church; from one it multiplied to around 120 baptisms in six years. Many have moved on to other cities once residence permits were granted. They attended Bible study groups which sprang up while they had little else to do; it became a network of friendships and support groups but with much biblical content in their gatherings. The English 'father figure' taught but culturally he became the patron. When he died there was a sense of great bereavement. Then the next minister arrived in 2004. From then until 2006, the English church decided to seek funding for a pastoral assistant for these people.⁸ By 2007 a national helper was employed to help for a year and then in 2009 another took the job on instead.

Independence versus integration?

The ICF here is a hybrid; it is neither totally independent nor integrated with the English congregation! The growing size of the ICF attendees meant it was not practical to meet together in the same hall; issues developed over language and the length of time translated services took (no instantaneous translation was available). So the English continued to meet as ever morning and evening and the national language group-speaking congregation meets in the afternoon, as it was appropriate to the fast-food industry working hours! This is sad in that ethnocentricity and culture on the part of both congregations have played a part in separating the two congregations. The national language group congregation size reached 60-70 in 2006 but due to various factors it is regularly around 40 now. There is much work to

⁷ While he has a biography I will keep it anonymous.

⁸ Sources for this lie in personal knowledge and conversations over three years with the members and leaders of this particular Methodist Church.

be done in integrating the next generation of English speaking 'x' people young people into the English services; many cannot read their national language so cannot feel at home in either congregation. Other churches who adopt this nationality and allow a large group to develop seem few but there are some where full integration is possible due to the proportionately small numbers per congregation members attending English language services; they have mid-week national language or translated Bible studies.⁹

Other churches have decided to become independent of any British congregation or denomination: the Birmingham and London congregations are cases in point. On the other hand there is an Anglican chaplain for this community in UK and the chaplain manages to visit across denominations too. Large conferences gather these people and their interested friends; camps encourage them to share and deepen their faith. Baptisms take place after much teaching to ensure valid baptisms and understanding that this is in the eyes of Muslim relatives a 'cut-off' point in relationships. In actuality not all family members cut them off; many are as secular as the converts used to be. One really Muslim family has welcomed their relative's decision to follow Jesus Christ¹⁰ and another has cut off their relative from all communication!¹¹

Survey results on why they became Christians – followers of Jesus the Messiah

Methodology

I interviewed 38 converts to Christianity using the same questions with each often via an interpreter. The average mean age was 37 with standard deviation around 10 either side. 58% were men and 42% women. I asked 12 questions while getting their stories. Most of these are subjective questions depending on their own perspective and some on my perception of them. They are not isolated since I have known most of them for nearly three years. Around a third have been Christians for more than

⁹ A Baptist church has a few in W Yorks and another Baptist in Cardiff has some too. The large Anglican church of St Thomas Crookes Philadelphia in Sheffield manages a 'cluster group' of various language groups but attempts to provide integration through normal services with the English and other language clusters by instantaneous translation into headphones.

¹⁰ Interview with one man 19 July 09

¹¹ Interview with another man 30 June 09

four years (nearly 7) and have been in this city for that time, while the two thirds who have been Christians for less than four years have been more mobile.

If we can determine why they became Christians, we will discover causes for church growth, even if they are ones humans cannot enable.

Perspective on Islam

First of all the variety of background comprehension of Islam may have a bearing on the conversions. In answering this aspect of enquiry there was a range from low to high and yet it showed a lack of real interest by most in Islam. Most of the interviewees however, feared the powers that Islam can wield within a dictatorship led regime with Religious police on the streets. Disillusion with Islam therefore, also plays a strong part. It is informally estimated that up to 70% of the population in the nation are disillusioned with Islam and are not really interested in it; parents may have made them learn the rules, the Koran and do the prayers –even paid them to do it or punished them. Once grown up and able to leave home they became more secular than religious.

If they showed interest in Christianity while in their nation of course, they felt in danger and some who did become Christians there, had to flee family persecution.¹² However, the street distribution of New Testaments during 2008-9 by trained keen national evangelists shows much interest by the ordinary citizen. So, many are finding a possible alternative to Islam already in their nation. For those who came to UK since 2000 for other reasons, economic or political, there is a great openness to the gospel of Jesus Christ *if* wrong assumptions about Christianity are shattered on arrival. Some dive into a licentious lifestyle just because they are free to go to nightclubs for instance. Either their concept of Christianity is justified in that the west as a whole –represented by Hollywood – is Christian and therefore Christianity is adulterous, alcoholic and corrupt, or they find real Christians and gain the reality of Biblical Christianity from them.

Conversion stories

Most of the respondents to my interviews did not have dramatic conversions so much as logical ones. Friendship scores the highest for the means of coming to faith

¹² Only four out of 38 interviewed stated their conversion began in their home nation.

(86% registered in the top two scores for that reason). Once they were disillusioned with Islam they were open to other ideas. Friendship is THE biggest factor across this particular people's church growth. Early on at this Methodist church with the first group who came, there were Bible study groups every night of the week so eager were they for friendship and teaching. Many factors are involved in their stories but whereas one national author citing an independent ICF congregation states 50% of converts in a different northern city and indeed on his TV broadcast responses had dreams or visions of Jesus, my figures are less than that at a mere 15%. Some considerations in conversions are due to doctrinal commitment and spiritual experience but most are due to friendship.

Friendship factors

Of all the interviewees, 86% said friendship with someone already a Christian was very significant. It is THE KEY factor. They are in a strange land without family and if some come as nuclear families they lose their large kinship networks. So once an enthusiastic convert meets people and introduces them to the church it becomes a new family for many. Some only treat it as a national language group club and social events are attractive on a secular level. Even so this brings them in contact with those who have a genuine faith in Jesus; it is contagious if not necessarily fast working. The lifestyle of genuine Christians particularly among their own language group attracts the new converts.¹³ Community is THE factor in drawing people away and yet can be the eventual deterrent as the paradisaical expectations of a Christian loving family is not always reality. Many appreciate the type of services, attracted by the singing. That is actually cultural among Shi'ites far more than Sunni Muslims. Songs can teach as well as portray spiritual life and God's presence. Liturgy however informal brings a unity and community is enhanced.

Supernatural factors

Some do have dramatic aspects to their conversions; one lady sensed a presence of unusual perfume in the bedroom where it was not possible; the presence became visible as a white robed man and then the lady's son also saw the same vision. Later on, due to meeting another lady who happened to be a 'beginner Christian' (catechumen!), she told her about the 'presence'. She was introduced to a Methodist

¹³ Compare with Woodberry's results- see later section.

Minister and he had our national church worker for the District to teach a group; the lady's whole family were baptised as also the friend and her family just in March 09.

Pre-conversion dreams are relevant to a few following it up and becoming Christians. These seem to happen during a crisis. One lady had had a dream or vision of Mary in their nation and when arriving in UK had a vision of the baby Jesus. Whatever the influences it led her to agree to coming to our church when she met the evangelistic first member. One man at the end of his strength travelling by foot across Europe had a dream of Jesus and it re-energised him to travel on and opened his heart to the eventual invitation to the northern UK city church and baptism.

Miracles of healing are also effective. A father and daughter story revealed that friendship brought the daughter to faith in Christ and gradually she broached the subject to her sick father; to cut a long story short, he was healed of kidney disease and even after becoming a Christian has had many visions and dreams to do with Jesus.

Spiritual well being

While hard to assess another person's spiritual well being and perceptions of Christianity, I attempted to assess whether or not the interviewees considered their conversions to have changed them in more than an external way. Most immediately said they had been transformed. When it came to defining that in terms of values systems and personality and spiritual perception it was hard to give values 1-5. However, it seems that many were 'nice' people beforehand and so personality and values have not changed dramatically; the average score was literally 3 out of 1-5. Values had changed for some in the way they related to other people; this is growing with their sense of growth spiritually; not all grow at the same rate nor have the desire to do so. Some, if few, are definitely spiritually hungry for everything we can offer. This motivational factor is hard to work at in external forms for any congregation. One clue is seen in their motivation to serve in the Passion play produced each year by the local congregation on Good Friday in different towns each year; this is a very cultural way of portraying their 'hero'. Some consider participation helpful for their court cases to stay in the UK; we try to reduce such hopes. Others see it as something they can do without good English to portray their new faith to the world. Whenever there is good participation and faith is expressed,

there will be growth in 'spiritual muscles' and more will be attracted to Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

A comparison of results compared to approaches for MBBS in the wider Islamic world

Woodberry has published results of a large survey of Muslim converts to Christianity (MBBs). We will use this to compare the localised result of my case study.

First we need to establish if it is comparing apples with apples and it may not be possible to validate this. There are many Christian agencies working among Muslim people groups, some without outright intent to plant and grow churches from Morocco to Indonesia and among the diaspora groups in the West. Controversies about how to do this have abounded especially after the emphasis Phil Parshall gave in his 1980 book *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*.¹⁴ John Travis, and Rick Love have gone further. They developed the C1-C5 and C6 understanding of types of Churches among Muslims. They deny a continuum but there is one from becoming just like a Western church (C1) to adapting with dress and language and song style (C3) to totally hidden and hyper-contextualised groups who stay in the mosque (C5-C6). This is not the place for discussion on that but my observation is that all levels have some success depending on their context. Our focus people in the west have a C2-3 perspective – their own language but dress being similar to the west anyway for men in particular is not an issue and even service style is not an issue. The community is seen as Christian by any Muslim community nearby yet it retains some cultural forms used by 'our' people such as songs and drama. Any very religious Muslim cultural form however, is rejected or modified. They do not have to become like their old Muslim friends. However, language is essentially how they express themselves so a translated service is not as good as a totally national language service for regular worship.

National language group worship songs are very much a part of the service; again this is not the case in any mosque worldwide. Joy and love are expressed; again unlike a formal *salat* [prayer] service in the mosque. The freedom to pray aloud leading the congregation in prayer, individually as women as well as men is obviously different to any Muslim society. Extempore prayer is unusual among

¹⁴ P. Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House 1980).

Muslims too but common among 'our' international Christian Fellowships. Men usually lead major meetings but then that is the same among western Christian fellowships. So contextualisation is not towards the Muslim culture so much as the host nation despite the comment by the Thailand consultation "Interviews with participants revealed that a significant factor in these results was that contextualisation allowed the followers of Isa to retain more of their culture and social identity."¹⁵ Within their nation this may be a different story. Church Growth is evident there and abroad. So it is not for the sake of contextualisation that the church has grown in either context. Rather there is every attempt *not* to use any Islamic form; Islam is rejected.

Woodberry gives five reasons Muslims convert to Christianity.¹⁶ They each match the reasons I found among our focus group of converts.

[1] The lifestyle of Christians. Genuine care for each other as Christians and towards others scored highly. So as in the above survey, genuine friendship and community experience is a key factor.

[2] The power of God in answered prayers and healing. Experiences of God's at work beyond normal understanding- supernatural work in dreams and visions of Jesus- is especially important to folk Muslims. This continued why beyond their initial conversion; this is a mark of the natural charismatic. Again we see this in the converts in our focus congregation but only less than a fifth cite the supernatural as a trigger to conversion.

[3] Dissatisfaction with the type of Islam they had experienced. As we noted above disillusionment with Islam is a high factor. God is a punishing far away God, and the regime is fearful, not as the Christians teach and experience as one of love. Others cited Islamic militancy and the failure of Islamic law to transform society. Of those interviewed in my survey, this was alluded to in that the weight of opinion was towards lack of interest in Islam (72% average (3) and below (1-2 scores) interest) and fear of its consequences (86% were in the middle bracket of 3-4/5 scores).

¹⁵ Brown, R., Bob Fish, John Travis, Eric Adams, Don Allen, 'Movements and contextualisation: is there really a correlation?' Fruitful practices Consultation Thailand *IJFM* 26:1 Jan –Mar 2009 p29-31, March 2007 p 30.

¹⁶ J. D. Woodberry 'Contextualization Among Muslims Reusing Common Pillars' *IJFM*, VOL 13:4 OCT.-DEC. 1996 p171.

[4] The spiritual truth in the Bible and [5] Biblical teachings about the love of God. Everything in the previously accepted books of the Torah, Psalms, and the Gospels are taught to be from God but now superseded by the Koran as Christians corrupted them! These Christian converts said as did a few¹⁷ in 'our' city, that the truth of God found in Scripture became compelling for them and key to their understanding of God's character. Of those few converts who were 'involved' to 'avid' Muslims (score 4-5, 24%), they did search the scriptures in order to find truth in the person of Jesus Christ.

Conclusions

Cultural and Sociological barriers

Harvie M. Conn¹⁸ argues that the ***sociological barriers*** to conversion by Muslims are greater than the theological barriers. He sees these barriers as misunderstanding what conversion is; indeed is it seen as a 'one-step decision' rather than as a journey of faith to Christ? Is it seen as an individual decision rather than a multi-person decision since in many cultures group decision is more important than the individual? Conversion is not a purely religious or "spiritual" decision since it involves a holistic decision affecting all aspects of their life. The focus people of this study are between west and east; they want to decide individually what their destiny should be (see the recent interviews over their election crisis) but community dictates how that can be.

Once in a different context those seeking the reality of God, were able to overcome many of these sociological barriers and then the theological ones melted too. So church growth among MBBs is tied to their context but is this true of those in this focus nation? Is the growth within the country deliberately to counteract the national government?¹⁹ Or rather that the secularisation in the nation, with an Islamic facade, is creating a hunger for spiritual reality. The people who emigrated 30 years ago still seek solace in their cultural milieu with gatherings²⁰ that replace mosque gatherings

¹⁷ Interview with A & A 23 July 09, Doncaster.

¹⁸ Harvie M. Conn, 'The Muslim Convert and His Culture' *IJFM* 13.4 (2003).

¹⁹ Clive Erricker, 'In fifty years, who will be here? Reflections on globalisation, migration and spiritual identity' *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* Vol. 13, No. 1, February 2008, 15–26. This shows how original culture is eroded when mixed in with the new host culture on migration.

²⁰ Spellman, *Religion and Nation*, pp59-101.

for a far more intimate teaching and spiritual atmosphere; Muslim though they appear to be, they are really a cultural expression of togetherness. This is equivalent to the new émigrés finding solace in Christian congregations.

Pentecostalism and 'x' people Christians?

Does Pentecostalism have anything to do with this church growth? What makes one a pentecostal? Baptism in the spirit? The use of spiritual gifts? Or the awareness of the Holy Spirit in supernatural operations like visions and dreams? What makes for a pentecostal church that grows?

Anthea Butler²¹ highlighted for the early Pentecostals there were apocalyptic expectations, apostolic expectations – with spiritual gifts restored to the church - and egalitarian expectations in race, gender and denominational branding. Are these seen in the 'x' people church? No. Are the diaspora congregations therefore pentecostal or another brand of Christianity?

Wonsuk Ma has said in discussion Asian Pentecostalism

One may argue that the church will always be charismatic when an ideal lab situation is created as in China. However, I doubt if this would be the case in the West. Non-western worldview is remarkably similar to the Pentecostal worldview, with the full awareness of the spiritual world (Ma 2002:317) and this explains why Asian minds, unless “educated” in western theology, are readily open to Pentecostal beliefs and practices.²²

Church growth is coming among this particular people group across the world. One of their émigré evangelists considers a new revolution is coming to this focus nation because of this spiritual turning. We have found a few instances of dramatic supernatural interventions in a conversion process. They are open to dreams and miracles. They pray for healing. They have not been taught this. It is normal. It is *not* due to Pentecostals or Pentecostalism so much as a reality of natural experience oriented to pentecostal-like spirituality which happens to have a variety of tags denominationally - or none. Glossolalia and prophecy for two typically pentecostal gifts are missing until taught amongst our group but once shown as available, the new converts are fairly open to it; if previously taught by non-Charismatic teachers they are wary!

²¹ A. Butler, <http://pewforum.org/events/?EventID=109> (accessed 6 July 09).

²² Wonsuk Ma, 'Asian Pentecostalism: a religion whose only limit is the sky' 2005?

Primal Spirituality?

As Harvey Cox²³ stated this is a primal spirituality not pentecostal denominationalism per se. André Droogers has also said on the effects of Pentecostalism in the context of globalisation, 'The watershed [of Pentecostalism] is a primal or proleptic spiritual experience that fundamentally changes the parameters of his or her life.'²⁴ Does this account for growth? Is it not rather, a case of cultural rejection of Islam, a vacuum of other spiritual sources, friendship with welcoming hosts, and an encounter with God in and through these friendships.²⁵ Then comes the theological input and the transformation of attitudes, lifestyles and values. After that and indeed alongside comes mission. What is God doing in the migration patterns of today? Is he not attempting not only to bring the non-churched people groups to church doorsteps but also to wake up the western churches and indeed non-churched secular West by new enthusiastic missionaries from afar to us?

As for the growth of the church *within* this focus nation, is there not a hunger for God and a willingness to buck the religious conformity to the national version of Islam. Whenever there is opposition –the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church: it grows.

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²³ H. Cox, *Fire from heaven*, (London: Cassel, 1996)

²⁴ André Droogers, 'Globalization and the Pentecostal Success' in André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani (eds.) *Pentecostalism and Transnationalism*, (London: Hurst, 1999) n4.

²⁵ A culturalist as opposed to constructivist understanding.

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