

Shared Presuppositions? The CAMEL Method and the Insider Movement

JOHN SPAN

Abstract

This article explores whether the CAMEL method and the Insider Movement (IM) paradigm share similar philosophies, approaches, and underlying presuppositions. After a brief overview of the CAMEL method and its contexts (twentieth-century missions, the International Mission Board, and the Bangladeshi context), I will discuss four themes common to CAMEL and IM. We will see that CAMEL and IM share similar assumptions yet with different outworkings. Both seem to share the sentiment of the Catholic Louis Massignon, chief architect of Vatican II's approach to non-Christian religions: "Rather than destroy Islam, might it then not be better to expand it? ... If a Moslem followed his soul's promptings to the end, he would come to Christ."¹

Keywords

Camel Method, Insider Movement, mission, Islam, Bangladesh

¹ Jean Daniélou, *The Salvation of the Nations*, trans. Angeline Bouchard (Notre Dame: University Press of Notre Dame, 1962), 30–31.

Introduction

In 2011, Kevin Greeson, the leading proponent of the CAMEL method, asked, “Who would have thought that their own book would have been one of our chief tools for engaging Muslims with the Bible?”² This led some missiologists to conclude that the CAMEL method might be leaning toward the Insider Movement (IM) paradigm.³ When Joe Bell III interviewed Dudley Woodberry on the Christology of the CAMEL method, Woodberry, no stranger to Bangladesh and IM, stated that the CAMEL method encapsulated

a very clever and easy-to-remember way to combine a number of approaches that others have used. The contextualization aspects have been adopted from the insider movement that has been going on for some years in Bangladesh.⁴

In October 2011, Steve Addison interviewed Greeson, who affirmed that the method observed “C3 or C4 levels of sharing” by Christian believers from a Muslim background. Greeson stressed that CAMEL was not following a C5 or IM paradigm.⁵ David Garrison, a fellow International Mission Board (IMB) worker with Greeson and editor of several CAMEL texts, disagreed with Woodberry’s analysis regarding CAMEL and IM, stating,

Kevin [Greeson] learned the approach that he condensed into the Camel Method from MBB friends in Bangladesh; many of these friends had originally been associated with [an American IM proponent] and [a Bangladeshi IM proponent]’s Insider Approach, but had become disenchanted with it. The Camel Method, from its inception, did not adhere to Insider methods or aspirations.⁶

² “Movements with Steve Addison: 027-Building a bridge for Muslims—Kevin Greeson,” by Steve Addison, *player.fm*, October 19, 2011, podcast, time 13:04, <https://player.fm/series/movements-with-steve-addison/027-building-a-bridge-for-muslims-kevin-greeson-podcast>.

³ Rebecca Lewis defines an “insider movement” as “any movement to faith in Christ where a) the gospel flows through pre-existing communities and social networks, and where b) believing families, as valid expressions of the Body of Christ, remain inside their socioreligious communities, retaining their identity as members of that community while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible.” Rebecca Lewis, “Promoting Movements to Christ within Natural Communities,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 24.2 (Summer 2007): 75.

⁴ J. Dudley Woodberry, “Camel Training Method,” email to Joe M. Allen III, July 21, 2006, cited by Joe M. Allen III, “An Evaluation of the Christology of the Camel Training Manual” (Master’s thesis: Dallas Theological Seminary, 2007), 13, n. 22.

⁵ Addison, “Movements,” time 5:36.

⁶ David Garrison’s personal e-mail to the author, March 13, 2015.

There is a difference of opinion between Greeson and Garrison's assertions and those made by Woodberry. This article will investigate the extent to which CAMEL shares common ground with IM.

1. *Introduction to CAMEL*

The CAMEL method is an outreach method to Muslims drawn from of Sūrat Āl 'Imrān 3:42–55. It derives its acronym from the idea that Mary was chosen (C), that angels announced the birth of Isa (A), that this Muslim Jesus performed miracles (M), and that he knows the way to eternal life (EL). Its literature states that the “Camel Method is a simple method using one particular passage in the Qur'an as a means to confront Muslims with important truths about Who Jesus is” and that it is a way of “using Muslim's own scripture to introduce them to Jesus the Messiah.”⁷ It also describes itself as the “Koran as a Bridge” method.⁸

Developed in Bangladesh in the latter part of the 1990s and early 2000s, the method adopts ideas from earlier outreach efforts that utilize Christian interpretations of the Qur'an. Some notable contributors to this dynamic include Paul of Antioch (ca. 1200), Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464), and in the twentieth century, Kenneth Cragg, Giulio Bassetti-Sani, Fouad Accad, and Abdul Haqq.⁹ Common to all of them is the assertion that there is Christian truth latent in the Qur'an, and if read correctly, it can be a bridge or a stepping-stone to biblical truth.

Greeson and Garrison, as we have seen, assert that CAMEL arose from observing Bangladeshi church planters of Muslim background.¹⁰ Greeson then turned them into an easily replicable training package.¹¹ Greeson utilized the camel motif as he was persuaded that Muslims commonly believe that only this animal knows the mystery of the hundredth name of Allah—who, Greeson suggests, is the Christian God.¹²

⁷ Kevin Greeson and Randy Owen, “The Camel Method: Muslim Evangelism Training for Christians” (n.p.: P.E.A.C.E, 2005), 2. Hereafter *CAMEL PEACE*, <http://standupforthetruth.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/PEACE-Camel-Training-Final.pdf>. The second part of the quotation comes from the teaching DVD accompanying the *CAMEL Rider's Journal* (Arkadelphia, AR: WIGTake Resources, 2009), time 1:42–1:47.

⁸ David Garrison, ed., “The Camel Method: Introducing Muslims to Jesus” (unpublished document, 2003), 3, www.paul-timothy.net/docs/camel_method.doc.

⁹ Akbar Abdiyah Abdul Haqq, “Christ in the New Testament and Quran” (self-published, 1975); Fouad Elias Accad, *Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997).

¹⁰ Kevin Greeson, “Camel Tracks ... Discover the Camel's Secret” (unpublished document, 2009), <https://ruhallah.webs.com/Camel%20Tracks%20PDFs/CamelTracks11.15.07.pdf>.

¹¹ “Movements with Steve Addison: 027.”

¹² *Ibid.*, time 15:00.

Greeson acknowledges strong dependence on *The Way to Heaven: Through the Light of the Qur'an* by the Bangladeshi Samiron Baroi.¹³ He stated that Baroi was the person from whom he “learned the most” as a “mentor” and referred to him as an evangelist who is “the most effective I have ever encountered.”¹⁴ Parallel to Baroi’s work, the CAMEL method states that from Qur’an 3:42–55 one can find that “Isa is holy, powerful, and knows the way to heaven”—describing these as “divine attributes.”¹⁵ This threefold theme is found in all CAMEL materials and is referred to as the method’s “three humps.”¹⁶ CAMEL suggests that these concepts mean the same thing to the Muslim mind as to Christian thinking, and it infers equivalence between the Muslim Jesus and the biblical Jesus. In the words of CAMEL, “What is useful as a bridge is the way Christ’s divinity still shines through, as Isa is called a Spirit from Allah, a testimony to His divinity that is not shared by any other prophet in the Qur’an.”¹⁷

Current online CAMEL resources include “CAMEL tracks,” “Ruhallah,” and the revised CAMEL II documents in multiple languages.¹⁸ The 2009 *CAMEL Rider’s Journal* with teaching DVD and the CAMEL (2010) edition are readily available.¹⁹ In 2015, Greeson developed a mobile application of CAMEL with the IMB entitled “Islam: Getting2Gospel.”²⁰ Whereas earlier CAMEL presentations stressed Qur’an 3:42–55, this one singularly refers to Qur’an 3:45 to state that the referent, ‘Īsā al-Masīh, means “The promised salvation.” This patent Christianization of the Qur’an is a common CAMEL theme.

Garrison’s *Wind in the House of Islam* features the CAMEL method at work. He relates the story of ‘Amid, an evangelist about to baptize 63 people who “were convinced, from the Qur’an, that Isa was God’s only way of

¹³ Samiron Baroi, *The Way to Heaven: Through the Light of the Qur'an* (Dhaka, Bangladesh: A. M. Chowdhury Publication, 2004).

¹⁴ Kevin Greeson, e-mail to author, December 1, 2014. Kevin Greeson, “CAMEL” (audio lecture in Austin, Texas, April 4, 2014, 2:30 p.m. session), time 26:06. Everett Miller, who formerly worked with the IMB in Bangladesh, suggests that Greeson “admits that perhaps 80% or more of the Camel were [sic] learned from Samir.” In an e-mail to the author, March 18, 2015.

¹⁵ Kevin Greeson, *The Camel: How Muslims Are Coming to Faith in Christ!* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2010), 105.

¹⁶ Greeson and Owen, *CAMEL PEACE*, 13.

¹⁷ Kevin Greeson, *The Camel: How Muslims Are Coming to Faith in Christ* (Arkadelphia, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2007), 131.

¹⁸ <http://www.ruhallah.webs.com>.

¹⁹ David V. Garrison and Al Hodges, *The Camel Workshop* (Arkadelphia, AR: WIGTake Resources, 2009), and Greeson, *Camel* (2010).

²⁰ Kevin Greeson, “Islam: Getting2Gospel” (n.p.: IMB Connecting, 2015), <https://s3.amazonaws.com/SouthAsianPeoples/Islam+G2G+guide.pdf>.

salvation.”²¹ Earlier ‘Amid has recounted his methods to Garrison:

First we show them from the Qur’an that only Isa al-Masih is the Savior, and then we baptize them. Then we give them the Bible and we disciple them.²²

This quote suggests that according to Garrison, ‘Amid and friends found the way of salvation in the Qur’an, and like Baroi, they believe that the Muslim Isa is the same Savior as the biblical Jesus. Secondly, ‘Amid appears to base the act of baptism on adherence to doctrines derived from the Qur’an. Only after baptism are those baptized introduced to the Bible and a life of discipleship. This scenario raises multiple theological concerns, including its ecclesiology and doctrines of inspiration and special revelation.

II. CAMEL in the Context of Protestant Mission, IMB, and Bangladeshi History

The twentieth century ushered in an era of questioning the effectiveness of previous outreach efforts to Muslims. In 1941, Henry Riggs penned “Shall We Try Unbeaten Paths in Working for Moslems?”²³ Multiple responses, many of which stood philosophically on the idea of convergence or a rapprochement of Islam and Christianity, emerged. In 1969, the Vatican’s Secretariat for Non-Christians produced *Guidelines for Dialogue*. It advocated that

we must try to discover with our Muslim friends the lines of convergence, which will lead us to become more united in heart and mind, with a deep respect for each other’s main fundamental trends of thought and belief We cannot yet see how our separate ways will ever meet [yet we work] in anticipation when all believers will be One.²⁴

In the 1970s, Protestants took up this theme of convergence or bridge-building at several key symposia. Don McCurry, leader of the 1978 Glen Eyrie consultation, related that the “doors were thrown wide open” to try all kinds of experiments with contextualization but without “any

²¹ David V. Garrison, *A Wind in the House of Islam: How God Is Drawing Muslims around the World to Faith in Jesus Christ* (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2014), 119–20.

²² Ibid.

²³ Henry Riggs, “Shall We Try Unbeaten Paths in Working for Moslems?,” *Muslim World* 31.2 (April 1941): 116–26. See a similar title in Phil Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism: Evangelical Approaches to Contextualization* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980).

²⁴ Secretariat for Non-Christians, *Guidelines for a Dialogue Between Muslims and Christians* (Rome: Edizioni Ancora, 1969), 141.

guardrails.”²⁵ In 1976, Fouad Accad, who spoke at many of these conferences, published “The Qur’an: A Bridge to Christian Faith.”²⁶ In 1978, he published his “Seven Muslim-Christian Principles,” which featured a four-book idea that used the Qur’an, the *Tawrāt*, the *Zabūr*, and the *Injīl* with equal authority to make a gospel presentation. CAMEL and IM publications widely reference Accad’s 1997 text, *Building Bridges*.²⁷ The influence of Accad’s phraseology on CAMEL can be seen in the two following statements, which purport to demonstrate that “no Muslim can deny” the following truths regarding the divinity of Christ/Isa from the Qur’an. CAMEL: “From the text of his own Qur’an, he will see that Isa is far more than a prophet. Surah al-Imran 3:42–55 attests to divine attributes of Isa that no Muslim can deny.”²⁸ Accad: “No sincere, clear-thinking Muslim can deny what the Qur’an affirms about Christ’s divine characteristics.”²⁹ Both assert that the Qur’an contains indisputable Christian proofs and truths.

The IMB of the Southern Baptist Convention established itself in Bangladesh in 1957, and in 1976 this country too became part of the “bold mission thrust” of the IMB to reach all peoples by the year 2000. In 1998, the IMB officially introduced strategies of church planting movements (CPMs): “We will facilitate the lost coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ by beginning and nurturing Church Planting Movements among all peoples.”³⁰ Garrison defined a CPM as a “rapid multiplication of indigenous churches planting churches that sweeps through a people group or population segment.”³¹ This “need for speed” entered CAMEL as well, as the 2010 edition plainly states:

This method of evangelism is a major factor in the *speed* by which the Gospel is spreading. Muslim-background believers feel comfortable using the Qur’an as a bridge.³² ...Using passages from the Qur’an as a bridge to share the Gospel has kept martyrdom relatively low while *speeding* the Gospel’s spread throughout Muslim communities.³³

²⁵ Interview with Don McCurry with the author, Cairo, January 2014.

²⁶ Fouad Accad, “The Qur’an: A Bridge to Christian Faith,” *Missiology* 4.3 (1976): 331–42.

²⁷ Fouad Accad, *Building Bridges: Christianity and Islam* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1997) in Greeson, *CAMEL* (2010), 203.

²⁸ Greeson, *CAMEL* (2010), 105.

²⁹ Accad, *Building Bridges*, 113.

³⁰ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1999), 7.

³¹ David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake, 2004), 21.

³² Greeson, *CAMEL* (2010), 39 (emphasis added).

³³ *Ibid.*, 170 (emphasis added).

This speed bias also appears in IM literature. John Travis surveyed several movements in Asia, including Bangladesh and West Java, Indonesia. Among their common elements, they include the formation of “biblical ekklesiae, rapid multiplication, and the gospel moving through family networks.”³⁴

In 1995, Thom Wolf of Golden Gate Seminary taught about finding a “man of peace” (from Luke 10:6), and his material was included in CPM literature in 1998 and in CAMEL materials.³⁵ Finding this movement-starting person, said to be hospitable to the gospel, became a primary goal of the CAMEL evangelists: “The purpose of the Camel Method is to help you find a person of peace, a person in whom God’s Spirit is already at work, and to share with that person the Good News of Jesus Christ.”³⁶ Critics have suggested that whereas CAMEL promises an almost fail-proof prescription for success, scrutiny reveals strained exegesis of the Luke 10 passage.³⁷ CAMEL material from 2012 until the present now embarks on a search to find “4th soil persons.” This prescription is based on the parable of the Sower. In 2016, Greeson stated, “Jesus trained his people how to look for 4th soil persons.”³⁸ Both CAMEL and IM share the trait of strained exegesis, with CAMEL committing it with both qur’anic texts and biblical ones, while IM has its dossier of biblical prooftexts that include John 4 and Acts 15 and 17. The only prooftext held in common between them is Acts 17, which both cite as a justification for using qur’anic texts—akin to using pagan poets—to prove the gospel.³⁹

III. *Statistics*

In 2004, Greeson stated, “The Camel Method is an attempt to package the method being used to lead more than 7,000 Muslims to faith in Christ each

³⁴ John Travis, “Reflection on Jesus Movements among Muslims with Special Reference to Movements within Asian Muslim Communities,” in *Toward Respectful Understanding and Witness Among Muslims: Essays in Honor of J. Dudley Woodberry*, ed. John Dudley Woodberry and Evelyne A. Reisacher (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011), 234.

³⁵ Mark Snowden, ed., *Toward Church Planting Movements* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1998), 12–18.

³⁶ David Garrison, ed., *CAMEL Rider’s Journal* (Arkadelphia, AR: WIGTake Resources, 2009), 87. See also, Greeson and Owen, *CAMEL PEACE*, 12; Kevin Greeson, *Camel Training Manual: The Secret of the Camel Is Out ... Muslims Are Coming to Faith in ‘Isa* (Bangalore: WIGTake Resources, 2004), 51.

³⁷ Salaam Corniche [pseud.], “Man of Peace Show Thyself: Another Look at a Contemporary Silver Bullet,” *St. Francis Magazine* 10.3 (Aug 2014): 8–24.

³⁸ Kevin Greeson, Lecture at Denver Seminary Chapel, February 8–9, 2016, time 16:40, <http://www.denversereminary.edu/student-life/chapel/chapel-archive-spring-2016/>.

³⁹ Kevin Higgins, “The Devoted of Acts: The Key to Insider Movements,” in *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus Within Diverse Religious Communities*, ed. Harley Talman and John Jay Travis (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2015), 234.

month.” At the 2010 Lausanne Conference, S. Kent Parks and John Scott reported on a statement taken verbatim from the 2003 CAMEL book: “From 1998 to 2003, the Isa Jamaat Movement produced more than 250,000 Muslim background believers worshipping in an estimated 8,000 contextualized churches.”⁴⁰ Phil Parshall described the fruits of the CAMEL CPMs as “one of the most extraordinary acts of the Holy Spirit among Muslims ever chronicled.”⁴¹

Kevin Higgins was the coordinator of a study of IM groups in Bangladesh in 1995. He stated that it was reported in this “highly contextualized effort” that “tens of thousands of Muslims had become followers of Jesus while remaining Muslim.”⁴² Belay Olam Guta reported in 1997, “I have been a missionary in a South-Asian country, Islampur [= Bangladesh], and worked for two and a half years within a Muslim movement toward faith in Christ. In the last fifteen years, over 1,000,000 Muslims may have come to Christ in Islampur—often whole villages are converted.”⁴³ The term “thousands” frequently appears in a 2015 IM anthology by Harley Halman and Travis, with a dedication to “the many thousands of disciples of Jesus who bear witness to him as insiders.”⁴⁴

It appears that both CAMEL and IM have a bent toward using statistics to validate their approaches even though research among Bangladeshis by the likes of Bill Nikides for his documentary *Half-Devil: Half-Child* casts considerable doubt on these numbers. Higgins’s phrase “while remaining Muslim” is a key to understanding the heart of IM and to a degree, as the next sections will show, CAMEL.

IV. Four Main Themes of CAMEL with Comparisons to IM

A survey of CAMEL material from 2003 until the present reveals four recurrent themes:

⁴⁰ Cited by S. Kent Parks and John Scott, “Missing Peoples: The Unserved ‘One-Fourth’ World: Especially Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims,” Advance Paper for the 2010 Lausanne Cape Town Conference. This same statistic is found in *CAMEL* (2003), 12, and *CAMEL* (2004), 2, citing “Abdul’s central committee” as the source.

⁴¹ Phil Parshall, “Book Review of the *Camel Training Manual*,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 41.3 (2005): 384–85.

⁴² Kevin Higgins, “Encountering Muslim Resistance,” in *Reaching the Resistant: Barriers and Bridges for Mission*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1998), 109.

⁴³ Belay Guta Olam, “Contextualizing the Church among the Muslim Oromo” (DMiss diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 2003): 166–67.

⁴⁴ Harley Talman and John Jay Travis, eds., *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus Within Diverse Religious Communities* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2015), iii.

1. Christianity fulfills Islam,
2. The Qur'an is a valid starting point for building a bridge to the gospel,
3. The Qur'an complements the Bible,
4. Proper interpretation of select Qur'anic passages will convince Muslims of its Christian doctrine.

IM literature, as we will observe, also subscribes to these four assumptions.

1. *Christianity Fulfills Islam*

By references to “Pakka” or “completed Muslims,” CAMEL suggests that the Qur'an can serve as a tutor to lead people to Christ in a fashion similar to the use of the law in Galatians 3:24. It also suggests that Christianity is the crown of Islam—to rephrase John Nicol Farquhar's 1913 work, *The Crown of Hinduism*.⁴⁵ That way, Christianity can, as Isaac Taylor quipped in 1887, be said to “fulfil what is lacking in the Koran of Mahomet.”⁴⁶

Baroi, in his *Way to Heaven*, says this about Jesus: “There should be no dispute of the fact that *Isa* died as a pure Muslim (perfectly surrendered to Allah's will).”⁴⁷ The “CAMEL Tracks” and “Ruhallah” booklets tell Muslim readers that they can become “Pakka” or completed Muslims.⁴⁸ The following quote illustrates the authority given by CAMEL to the Qur'an as a repository of “Truth” and liberation:

Do you want to know the Truth and be set free? Please take the time to open your Qur'an and read for yourself, *ayyah* by *ayyah* this amazing passage *surah al-Imran* 3:42–55. I have provided you with my explanation of each *ayyah*. I pray that your eyes will be opened and you will understand this Truth and join the Pakka Muslim movement.⁴⁹

The 2004 *Camel Training Manual* suggests that some members of its CPM identify themselves as “Isai Muslims,” and it justifies this term by citing Qur'an 3:53 and stating “the followers of Jesus identified themselves as Muslims.”⁵⁰

⁴⁵ John Nicol Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 300.

⁴⁶ Isaac Taylor, “Mahommedanism,” in *Church Congress. General Peace: Congress Report of the Proceedings of the Church Congress Held at Wolverhampton, October 1887*, ed. C. Dunkley (London: Bemrose, 1887), 325–31.

⁴⁷ Baroi, *Way to Heaven*, 30.

⁴⁸ Peter Black defines a Pakka Muslim as a “proper or excellent Muslim.” Peter Robert Black, “Dynamic Equivalent Conversion and Baptism for Converts from Islam” (PhD diss., University of Wales, Lampeter, 1997), 20–21, n. 10.

⁴⁹ Greeson, “CAMEL Tracks,” 3. See also, Greeson, “Ruhallah,” 6–7.

⁵⁰ Greeson, *CAMEL* (2004), 11 citing Qur'an 3:53.

It is noteworthy that the CAMEL method employs a term that suggests a *bona fide* Muslim. By definition, such a person would be part of the Islamic *umma* (religious community) and would give their highest allegiance to Muhammad, said to be the perfect man (Arabic, *al-insān al-kāmil*), the model example of life (Qur'an 33:21; 68:4) and the final prophet who makes obedience to himself and Allah co-equal.⁵¹ The CAMEL material reports that some Pakka Muslims had a dream where Muhammad came to attest to the veracity of Qur'an 3:42–55.⁵² It states,

A recent survey was conducted of 600 “Pakka Muslims.” Out of 600, 150 said that they became “Pakka Muslims” through a dream where a messenger of Allah appeared to them and confirmed the Truth found in surah al-Imran 3:42–55. Some “Pakka Muslims” have even had dreams where they saw and heard the Prophet Mohammad, confirm the Truth that is presented in this booklet.

CAMEL thus suggests that a person who is decidedly against Christ—i.e., Muhammad—can appear in a dream to attest to the veracity of the biblical Christ in the Qur'an and by extension to its truths.

Proponents of IM utilize similar phraseology to describe Jesus's followers. D. O. in his pseudonymous “Jesus Movements in Islam,” asked, “Could not this be the testimony of the Muslim who begins to follow Jesus, that he is now becoming a filled or true Muslim?”⁵³ Woodberry related that the subjects of his 1995 study in Bangladesh called themselves “Muslims,” “real Muslims,” “completed Muslims,” and “Muslim followers of Isa.”⁵⁴ IM advocates Higgins and Travis utilize the term “Messianic Muslims.” Other IM advocates and adherents utilize the terms “In-Christ Muslims,” “new creation Muslims,” and “Biblical Muslims and pro-Christ Muslims.”⁵⁵ Collectively, they imply a parallel relationship between an Old Testament Jew who comes to know the Messiah and a “Qur'an-based” Muslim who

⁵¹ Qur'an 3:32,132; 4:80.

⁵² Greeson, “Ruhallah,” 6.

⁵³ D. O. (David Owen?), “A Jesus Movement Within Islam,” *Interconnect* 5 (1991): 15.

⁵⁴ J. Dudley Woodberry, “A Global Perspective on Muslims Coming to Faith in Christ,” in *From the Straight Path to the Narrow Way Journeys of Faith*, ed. David H. Greenlee (Waynesborough, GA: Authentic Media, 2006), 20.

⁵⁵ Kevin Higgins, “The Messianic Muslims” (unpublished manuscript, 1997); John Travis, “Messianic Muslim Followers of Isa: A Closer Look at C5 Believers and Congregations,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 17.1 (Spring 2000): 53–59. “Pro-Christ Muslim” is a self-descriptor by an IM adherent named “Angus” [pseudonym] in an interview with Jan Prenger; see Jan Henk Prenger, “Muslim Insider Christ Followers: A Grounded Theory” (DMiss diss., Biola University, 2014), 366. “Angus” also refers to people in his IM group as “completed Muslims” (368).

comes to know Jesus.⁵⁶ Traces of fulfillment theology with its stress on the idea that Christ came not to destroy but to fulfill (Matt 5:17) appear to be present in the idea of Pakka or Messianic or pure and completed Muslims.

Higgins expresses IM fulfillment thinking by suggesting that the Areopagus address justifies its assertions since “it is biblical to speak of the gospel as a fulfillment of the ‘seeking, reaching out, and finding’ process in every culture and religion.” He concludes that, based on this precedent, “insider movements can be said to relate to their religious context from this perspective of fulfillment.”⁵⁷ One cannot help but wonder if Higgins would support Louis Massignon’s stance observed earlier: “If a Moslem followed his soul’s prompts to the end, he would come to Christ.”⁵⁸

Adam Sparks and Paul Hedges have studied the rise of fulfillment theology and its view of non-Christian religions.⁵⁹ Sparks sees that this theology makes an equation of the “fulfilment of the Old Covenant by Christ, to the fulfilment of other religions by Christ.”⁶⁰ He terms this the “Israel analogy” and suggests that this is an erroneous equation.

Greeson defends the CAMEL approach by appealing to Don Richardson’s redemptive analogies in his *Eternity in Their Hearts* and *Peace Child*. He asserts that God has “filled the world with redemptive bridges ... that point both to our need for salvation and to the hope of salvation. ... We have learned that the Quran contains many bridges that we, too, can use to introduce Muslims to Jesus Christ.”⁶¹ Greeson appeals to what he sees as a precedent in Acts 17.⁶² Specifically, he affirms the usefulness of the story of Isa breathing life into clay birds in Qur’an 3:49 in a similar fashion to how Paul used the unknown altar to the Athenians by using “words and symbols familiar to their faith and [pointing] them to Jesus the Messiah.”⁶³

⁵⁶ See Richard Jameson and Nick Scalevich, “First-Century Jews and Twentieth-Century Muslims,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 17.1 (2000): 33–38.

⁵⁷ Higgins, “The Key,” 235.

⁵⁸ Daniélou, *Salvation of the Nations*, 30–31.

⁵⁹ Adam Sparks, *One of a Kind: The Relationship between Old and New Covenants as the Hermeneutical Key for Christian Theology of Religions* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014); Paul Hedges, *Preparation and Fulfilment: A History and Study of Fulfilment Theology in Modern British Thought in the Indian Context* (Oxford: Lang, 2001).

⁶⁰ Adam Sparks, “The Fulfillment Theology of Jean Daniélou, Karl Rahner and Jacques Dupuis,” *New Blackfriars* 89.1024 (2008): 633.

⁶¹ Greeson, *CAMEL* (2010), 17. Kevin Greeson, Lecture at Austin, Texas, (2014), 9 a.m. session, time 27:56.

⁶² See also Don Richardson, “How Missionaries Enrich Cultures,” *Moody Monthly* 9 (June 1976): 55–58.

⁶³ David Garrison, “Welcome to Camel Training,” in *CAMEL Rider’s Journal*, accompanying DVD media (Arkadelphia, AR: WIGTake Resources, 2009), session 1, time 1:28.

Two strong IM advocates also speak of redemptive analogies in Islam. In 1987, David Owen stated, “As we have surveyed the field of Islamic history, we have found redemptive and messianic analogies everywhere.”⁶⁴ In 2006, Jeff Hayes of the Navigators, in a presentation on sharing the gospel with Muslims, advocated the use of “redemptive analogies in the Koran.”⁶⁵

Are Greeson, Owen, and Hayes correct? Throughout the book of Acts, the apostle Paul forged communication bridges with his audiences, and at the Areopagus, he employed object lessons to his advantage; however, they fail to recognize that Paul used these bridges and object lessons subversively, not affirmingly.⁶⁶ Rather than seeing Athenian religiosity as a bridge to, or preparation for, the gospel, he saw it as an expression of idolatry, which called for repentance.⁶⁷ As for Richardson’s work, Christian Reese examines it and says it would be more accurate to call his descriptions “non-redemptive analogies” that bring humans to the end of their “own misguided attempts to find God.”⁶⁸ Thus, once “careful observations” (cf. Acts 17:23) are made of Qur’an 3:42–55 in its broader Islamic worldview, one cannot help but see it as a fundamentally distorted view of Christ. Rather than affirming the message of salvation, it supplants it.⁶⁹

2. The Qur’an Is a Valid Starting Point for Building a Bridge to the Gospel

In response to the question, “Have you or do you use the Quran in evangelism to Muslims and to what degree?,” Greeson replied, “Yes I use the Q. as pre-evangelism or as a bridge to the Gospel. I use this method almost every time I try to evangelize a Muslim” and “those [of a Muslim background] who I have seen come to Christ personally—95% came to Christ through the use of the Q. as a bridge.”⁷⁰

In 2003, Garrison, author of CPM texts and strategy coordinator for the IMB in the “South Asia” region, formalized Greeson’s observations and

⁶⁴ David Owen, “Project Sunrise Publication Report” (Larnaca, Cyprus: n.p., 1987), 3.

⁶⁵ Jeff Hayes, “Sharing the Gospel with Muslims” (unpublished document, Navigators, 2006), PPT slide 6.

⁶⁶ See Christopher Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 40.

⁶⁷ See Flavien Olivier Cedric Pardigon, “Paul Against the Idols: The Areopagus Speech and Religious Inclusivism” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2008).

⁶⁸ Christian Reese, *The Revelation of God Among the Unevangelized* (Secunderabad, India: OM Books, 2003; repr., Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2000), 162–163, n. 8.

⁶⁹ See Christopher Robert Flint, “How Does Christianity ‘Subversively Fulfil’ Islam?,” *St. Francis Magazine* 8.6 (2012): 776–822.

⁷⁰ Scott A. Elliott, “Survey on Quran, Allah and CPM,” paper presented to Dr. David Sills of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for course 80623 (December 9, 2006): 29–30.

edited “The Camel Method: Introducing Muslims to Jesus.”⁷¹ This document advises the trainee to read Qur’an 3:42–55 in the presence of a Muslim friend and say, “I have been reading the Koran and I discovered an amazing truth that has given me hope of eternal life in heaven.”⁷² Concerning Qur’an 3:49, the trainee is to observe, “Isa created life and did miracles,” and that “Allah demonstrated His power through Isa. The Koran says that the lepers were healed, the blind received their sight, and even the dead were raised to life again.”⁷³ The evangelist is instructed to close the conversation thus:

Once again, the Koran has flooded my soul with hope. Isa had the power to raise the dead—POWER OVER DEATH! This is amazing. Before, I had thought that death was the strongest enemy in the world. But the Koran says that Isa has been given power over death.⁷⁴

The recurrent phrase, “the Koran says,” followed by a biblical truth of who Jesus is, demonstrates that CAMEL sees the Qur’an as a useful theological starting point (*locus theologicus*) in defending the gospel.⁷⁵ It also ascribes a level of revelational authority or biblical inspiration to the Qur’an with a phrase reminiscent of the biblical phrase “thus God says”—which, CAMEL asserts, has the power to flood the readers’ soul with eschatological hope.

IM advocate Richard Jameson describes the affinity that so-called “In-Christ Muslims” see between the Bible and the Qur’an: they “find considerable common ground” between them which serves as “the bridge for outreach to their communities.”⁷⁶ Michael Roberts and Jameson also suggest that like converts from Judaism, these believers are merely engaging in a “reinterpretation” of a sacred text and using it as a “bridge to proclaim Christ.”⁷⁷ Corrie Block uses this same bridge motif, and the title of his work is “Expanding the Qur’anic Bridge.”⁷⁸ In his work, he advocates “constructing bridges of thought between Islam and Christianity” and concludes that “both Muslims and Christians are perhaps beginning to

⁷¹ David Garrison, ed., “The Camel Method: Introducing Muslims to Jesus” (unpublished document, 2003), www.paul-timothy.net/docs/camel_method.doc.

⁷² Ibid., 18–19.

⁷³ Ibid., 14, 19.

⁷⁴ Greeson, *Camel Training Manual* (2004), 68. See “CamelTracks,” 11.

⁷⁵ See Garrison, *CAMEL Rider’s Journal*, 55.

⁷⁶ Richard Jameson, “God’s Creativity in Drawing Muslims to Jesus,” in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 615.

⁷⁷ Michael Roberts and Richard Jameson, “Conversion in the New Testament,” in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 211.

⁷⁸ Corrie J. Block, *Expanding the Qur’anic Bridge: Historical and Modern Interpretations of the Qur’an in Christian-Muslim Dialogue with Special Attention Paid to Ecumenical Trends* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

acknowledge that their respective scriptures may be the incomplete revelations they possibly present themselves to be.” He cites John 21:25 and Qur’an 31:27 as prooftexts.⁷⁹

CAMEL and IM presuppose, contrary to the advice of Reformed missiologists Hendrik Kraemer, J. H. Bavinck, Samuel Schlorff, and Cornelius Van Til that one can build an edifice of the gospel on the basement foundation of the Qur’an. Rather than challenging the non-Christian presuppositions of the Muslim, CAMEL and IM appear to be affirming them. Block’s quote suggests—quite erroneously in light of the *sui generis* nature of the Bible—that it and the Qur’an are essentially incomplete without each other, which leads to the theme of the next section.

3. The Qur’an Complements the Bible

Perhaps the most crucial word-picture for understanding the continuity of the post-2013 CAMEL II materials with previous versions are images employed by Greeson. One features a vehicle with four wheels labeled “Taurat,” “Zabur,” “Injil,” and “Qur’an” (see Figure 1).

Earlier, at a talk given at the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and in the “Camel Tracks” booklet, Greeson employed an image of a cow.⁸⁰ “Camel Tracks” advises that “a cow with only one leg cannot stand, but when he stands on all four legs, he is strong.” The tract suggests that a “Pakka” or completed Muslim “reads all the Kitabs [holy books].”⁸¹ This statement appears to suggest that alongside the Bible, this person should also read the Qur’an.

These images suggest that each leg or tire carries equal weight or is of equal importance.⁸² Thus, the Qur’an is assigned equality to the three other parts, notably the *Tawrāt* [= Torah], *Zabūr* [= Psalms], and *Injīl* [= Gospel(s)].⁸³ CAMEL authors might defend the picture as a simple illustration for Muslims, namely that the Qur’an instructs them to read all four books. Without clearly stating this point and defending the uniqueness of biblical truth, however, CAMEL, as Keith Eitel has pointed out, could

⁷⁹ Corrie J. Block, *The Qur’ān in Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Historical and Modern Interpretations* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 305–6.

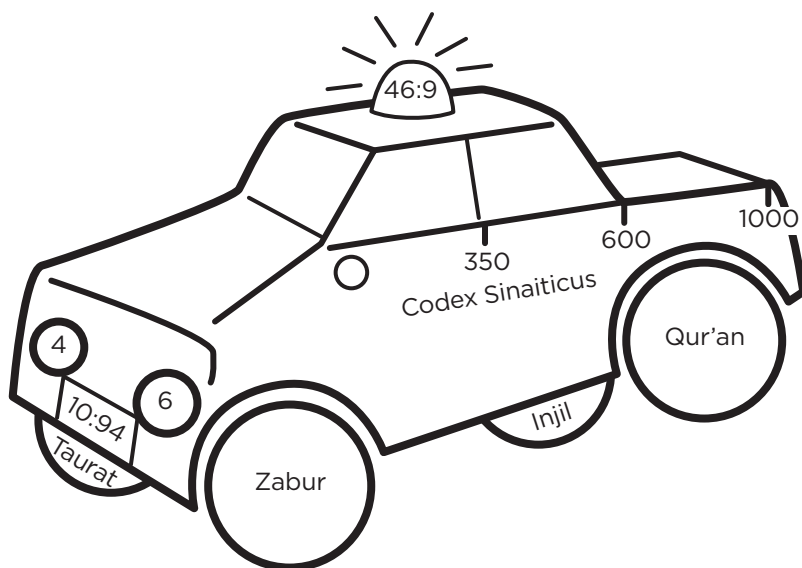
⁸⁰ Keith Eitel, “Ends Justifying Means, at a Price: Critique of a Camel” (unpublished document, 2005), in response to Greeson’s oral presentation on CAMEL at the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (March 14, 2005).

⁸¹ Greeson, “Camel Tracks,” 9–10.

⁸² Greeson, “CAMEL II materials,” <http://tinyurl.com/cameldocs>.

⁸³ These equivalences are assumed by CAMEL. See my PhD thesis for further explanation. John William Span, “A Critique of the Camel Method’s Use of the Miracles of the Muslim Jesus” (PhD diss., Faculté Jean Calvin, Aix-en-Provence, 2016).

Figure 1. Greeson uses a word-picture of a car to illustrate CAMEL II.



suggest that Qur'anic truth needs to be supported by biblical truth, and that biblical truth needs support from Qur'anic truth.⁸⁴

Baroi also affirms the complementarity of the four revelations to Moses, David, Jesus, and Muhammad and suggests that “the basic guidelines of all these separate paths are fundamentally the same.”⁸⁵ Are they?

Henk Prenger illustrates this four-book idea. He interviewed Higgins about his view of the Qur'an, and Higgins replied,

I see the Qur'an as a communication that continues to participate in that narrative. I would put it and Mohammed in a very similar category in a sense that I think that there are clearly places where he seems to have spoken out of a deep experience of the character of God, and he is participating in the biblical narrative.⁸⁶

Higgins's own words seem to suggest that he believes that the Qur'an is part of biblical salvation history.

The assertion of the equal status of these four books by IM and CAMEL calls into question the unique revelatory status of the Bible and its views of inspiration and revelation. Already in 1980, Schlorff foresaw the danger of

⁸⁴ Eitel, “Ends Justifying Means.”

⁸⁵ Baroi, *Way to Heaven*, 11.

⁸⁶ Prenger, “Muslim Insider Christ Followers,” 349–50.

a confusion of authorities when the Bible and the Qur'an are given equal revelatory status.⁸⁷ When Scott Elliott interviewed missionaries and Christians of a Muslim background, he documented evidence of this confusion of authority, even though Greeson, in the same interviews, did not see it.⁸⁸ Greeson responded that among "MBBs who came to faith through the Quran as a bridge and those who came to faith through another method or avenue besides the Quran, I have not found any differences in regard to their belief in biblical authority."⁸⁹ A theologically trained Bangladeshi Christian of Muslim background, however, suggested to Scott Elliott that the four-book idea validates the prophethood of Muhammad and should be categorically avoided.⁹⁰

4. Proper Interpretation of Qur'anic Passages to Convince Muslims

Baroi opens his work with the wish to "develop an understanding of the meaning of the Qur'an in an effort to present its light to the people of the world."⁹¹ After examining the miracles of the qur'anic Jesus, Baroi affirms that "we have [then] no other choice but to conclude that *Isa* is in fact Allah."⁹² The CAMEL method consistently suggests the same, even though Greeson asserts, "Your goal here is not to prove Christ's divinity through the Qur'an. The Qur'an is incapable of doing that."⁹³

The 2004 *CAMEL Training Manual* examines Qur'an 3:49 and affirms the power to create life in the breath of *Isa* and directs the trainee to show the Muslim to "see the likeness and unity of *Isa* and Allah." It concludes by stating—in a similar fashion to Baroi—that *Isa* is "the Ruhullah [Spirit] of Allah" and, by extension, equal to him.⁹⁴ The 2007 edition of CAMEL uses this same motif of spirit and suggests, "What is useful as a bridge is the way Christ's divinity still shines through, as *Isa* is called a Spirit from Allah."⁹⁵ CAMEL also attempts to extract the Logos doctrine from Qur'an 3:45.

The *CAMEL Rider's Journal* asks, "What does it mean that *Isa* is a Word from Allah?" and then schools the CAMEL trainee on the Arabic meaning of *kalimah* (word) and then suggests, "*Isa* is literally called the 'Word of

⁸⁷ Samuel P. Schlorff, "The Hermeneutical Crisis in Muslim Evangelization," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 16.3 (July 1980): 151.

⁸⁸ Elliott, "Survey on Quran, Allah and CPM."

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹¹ Baroi, *Way to Heaven*, 3.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 18–19.

⁹³ Greeson, *CAMEL* (2010), 134.

⁹⁴ Greeson, ed., *Camel Training* (2004), 67. *CAMEL* (2007) repeats the same verbatim.

⁹⁵ Greeson, *CAMEL* (2007), 131.

Allah.”⁹⁶ In its quest to find Christian doctrine in the Qur’an, CAMEL has overlooked the critical distinction between the meaning of “Word *from* Allah” and “Word *of* Allah,” with the former simply an expression of divine fiat—as per the Qur’an—and the second the Logos doctrine—as per the Bible. Paradoxically, the Muslim Muḥammad ‘Alī Merad states, “It is impossible to define the words *Kalima* and *ruh* as applied to Christ,” adding the caveat “unless the Qur’anic thinking is modified according to Christian thinking.”⁹⁷

Higgins advocates a similar hermeneutical key to unlock the contents of the Qur’an. He first asks a rhetorical question: “Whose criteria, indeed, whose hermeneutic will determine the validity of the interpretation of the Qur’an or Hadith offered by a Muslim insider movement?”⁹⁸ Then he answers:

I am suggesting that in an insider movement in Islam, it is possible to re-read the Quran with the hermeneutical key of the Old and New Testaments and develop an entirely new interpretative result.⁹⁹

Higgins has clearly Christianized the Qur’an. From a Christian standpoint, this is an illegitimate imposition of the doctrine of one sacred text, namely the Bible, on to the Qur’an, and from an Islamic standpoint, it fails to appreciate the entire Islamic worldview and the nonexistent place of a Savior and salvation within it.

V. Synthesis of CAMEL and IM Commonalities and Differences

As much as Greeson and Garrison categorically state that they are following the IMB contextualization guidelines, “C-4 and no more,” the data that has been presented from CAMEL raises some concerns as to its shared assumptions with IM.

CAMEL considers the concepts of holiness, power, and knowledge of the way to heaven, as well as Spirit and Word of Allah, as meaning the same in the Muslim mind as they do to the Christian. IM assumes that the history of redemption means the same in the Bible as it does in the Qur’an. Both suggest that a Muslim will consider a Christian interpretive grid imposed on the Qur’an valid. They both assert that this grid will have the same

⁹⁶ Garrison, *CAMEL Rider’s Journal*, 55.

⁹⁷ Muḥammad ‘Alī Merad, “Christ according to the Qur’ān,” *Vidyajyoti* 45 (1981): 312–15.

⁹⁸ Higgins, “The Devoted of Acts,” 237.

⁹⁹ Kevin Higgins, “Identity, Integrity and Insider Movements,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 23.3 (Fall 2006): 123, n. 17.

operative power as the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit to open spiritually blind eyes, but in this case, they use the Qur'an instead of the Bible. They assume that the unregenerate person is both able and willing to accept spiritual truth even if it is so-called Christian doctrine in the Qur'an. However, Islamic material will not support the first two assumptions, and biblical material (see 1 Cor 2:14; 2 Tim 3:16) will not support the latter.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

Both CAMEL and IM are variegated entities with proponents that advocate stronger and weaker forms of both. They are not monolithic. However, the CAMEL method is easier to analyze than IM as Greeson and Garrison demonstrate its assumptions. IM has multiple proponents, with views of Muhammad as everything from an inspired prophet on par with the Old Testament prophets to “only a warner” (Qur'an 13:7).

In their historical and theological contexts, CAMEL and IM share antecedents in fulfillment theology, convergence thinking, and a Christianized qur'anic hermeneutic. In these ways, they are both much older than meets the eye. The latter was already in service with Paul of Antioch (1200s) and Nicholas of Cusa (1400s), and the former in the mid-1800s. As we have seen, convergence thinking was very much the brainchild of Massignon in Roman Catholic circles and came to full flower around Vatican II.

After examining the CAMEL corpus from 2003 to 2016 in its historical context, and comparing and contrasting its assumptions with those of IM, we can safely conclude that in most places, CAMEL is a weak form of IM and differs from IM in degree, not in kind. The reason we can attribute a weak form of IM to CAMEL is that it advocates Christian conversion and public displays of faith, whereas IM prefers to retain hyphenated-Muslim identities—“while remaining Muslim.” However, with the use of the term “Pakka Muslims” and assertions that the Qur'an is a valid source of Christian doctrine, CAMEL is close to the heart of IM.

As much as CAMEL declares that the Islamic Jesus is powerful and holy and knows the way to heaven, this is nothing other than a Christianized qur'anic hermeneutic. IM shares in this same interpretive scheme, and as a result, both of them have suffered from spurious conversions, which are not detailed in their glowing statistics. Both CAMEL and IM have adopted

¹⁰⁰ See Richard B. Gaffin, “Some Epistemological Reflections on 1 Cor 2:6–16,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 57.1 (Spring 1995): 103–24, who illustrates the darkness of the unregenerate mind due to the noetic effects of sin.

pragmatic means to achieving their numerical results, which are then used to justify their underlying methods and assumptions. Perhaps we might conclude that CAMEL and IM sing, “Traditional methods of evangelism and discipleship have slain their thousands, but we our tens of thousands.” Perhaps it would be much better to construct a new CAMEL scheme which affirms the following:

- the **C**hosen One of God as the Son of God
- the one worshipped by **A**ngels as God incarnate and whose conception was announced to Mary as the Son of the Most High with an eternal kingdom
- the promised Messiah whose **M**iracles usher in the new era and confirm his divinity
- the **E**ternal One “from of old” (Mic 5:2) and who is the Alpha and the Omega and who lives and reigns forever
- The way, the truth, and the **L**ife, who is the Living God himself.