

WHY CHRISTIANS CONVERT TO ISLAM: A FILIPINO PERSPECTIVE

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Little has been written about the experience of Christian conversion to Islam, though it is not an uncommon occurrence. Islam is slowly increasing as a percentage of the world population, and for this reason alone Muslims and Christians alike need to better understand each other's beliefs and customs. The Philippines has an increasing number of Muslims, both locally converted and those converted after exposure to Islam in other countries, particularly places where Filipino work as Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs). This study examines the views of Filipino male converts to Islam through in-depth interviews and participant observation. Data show that conversion to Islam in the Filipino context is frequently motivated by economic reasons, in addition to other factors such as indoctrination and marriage.

Key Words: missiology, Islam, Christianity, conversion, Philippines, mission

1. Introduction

Coming face-to-face with Muslims for the first time was a nerve-shattering experience for me. In 1988, I did a practicum as part of a course in Public Evangelism in Zamboanga City, a Philippine city with a large Muslim population.¹ As my partner and I explored the city on Friday, around two o'clock in the afternoon, we found ourselves walking along a winding, narrow street with high concrete walls on both sides. As we turned a corner, a great throng of mostly bearded people coming out of a large building (it was actually a mosque) behind the wall surprised us. These bearded people were also taken aback at seeing us wearing neckties, and clutching bags containing Bibles and evangelism materials. What I had known and feared about Muslims since childhood was that they are robbers, smugglers, kid-nappers, killers, terrorists, barbaric people, and are furious with Christians.

¹ While this project represents the joint efforts of both authors, it was Noel Nadado who was principally involved in the data gathering process. Therefore, any instances referring to "I" need to be understood in this context.

With much dread, I came face to face with these people. *Al-hamdulillah!* ['Praise God!']. We were not robbed, kidnapped, or killed!

Since my first encounter with Muslims sixteen years ago my outlook toward these people and their religion has significantly changed. As I started reading books about Islamic beliefs and culture, I learned to overcome my fear of Muslims. I began to initiate friendships with them whenever I had an opportunity. I began visiting mosques on Fridays. I prayed with them. I discussed my beliefs and practices as an Adventist Christian with them, and probed into theirs as well. I have realized that true Muslims are not robbers, smugglers or kidnappers. True Muslims are prayerful, peace-loving people. They are faithful worshippers of the one and only God in heaven.

This study is about Christians who convert to Islam. Unlike the conversions of Muslims to Christianity which, in many countries, is outlawed and incurs great personal cost, stiff social sanctions, and the penalty of death as the worst consequence,² Muslims welcome the conversions of Christians to Islam.³

- 2 Shahi Bukhari, "Dealing with Apostasies," Hadith 064, vol. 9, book 84, in *The Hadith Software*, version 1.0 (Build 1.25), Islamasoft Solutions, 2000–2002; Saleh Al-Fozan, *The Book of Tawheed* (trans. Mahmoud Ridha Murad; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997), 39; Heather J. Sharkey, "Arabic Antimissionary Treatises: Muslim Responses to Christian Evangelism in the Modern Middle East," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28 (2004): 98–104; Mohamed S. El-Awa, *Punishment in Islamic Law: A Comparative Study* (Indianapolis: American Trust, 1982), 49–56, 61–64.
- 3 A selection of studies dealing with the conversion of Christians to Islam includes the following: Abdul Malik Mujahid, *Conversion to Islam: Untouchables' Strategy for Protest in India* (Chambersburg: Anima Books, 1989); Larry A. Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 209–11; Ali Köse, *Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native British Converts* (London: Kegan Paul, 1996); idem, "Religious Conversion: Is It an Adolescent Phenomenon? The Case of Native British Converts to Islam," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 6 (1996): 253–62; idem, "The Journey from the Secular to the Sacred: Experiences of Native British Converts to Islam," *Social Compass* 46 (1999): 301–12; Madeleine Sultan, "Choosing Islam: A Study of Swedish Converts," *Social Compass* 46 (1999): 325–35; Ali Köse and Kate Miriam Loewenthal, "Conversion Motifs Among British Converts to Islam," *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 10 (2000): 101–10; Nuri Tinaz, "Conversion of African Americans to Islam: A Sociological Analysis of the Nation of Islam and Associated Groups" (Ph.D. diss., University of Warwick, 2001); Maha Al-Qwidi, "Understanding the Stages of Conversion to Islam: The Voices of British Converts" (Ph.D. diss., University of Leeds, 2002). For references on Muslim conversion to Christianity, Jean Marie Gaudeul, *Called from Islam to Christ: Why Muslims Become Christians* (East Sussex: Monarch, 1999), 299–304, provides eighty-seven references on Muslim

The research of Poston on the dynamics of conversion to Islam in the West is seminal in this area. He cites the works of Bulliet and Levtzion as the two most detailed studies about conversion to Islam,⁴ adding, however, that their studies "were confined to geographical areas that have been under the domination of Muslim peoples for centuries."⁵ Poston found that the dynamics of conversion to Islam in the American and European contexts involved a "rational" approach to religion.⁶ For him the "conversion experiences were the end result of a long process of seeking, a deliberate choice made after careful examination and consideration of alternatives."⁷

The present research found only two studies that looked into the story of Filipino Christian conversion to Islam. One large study (conducted over a period of nearly 30 years) looked mainly at male converts to Islam in Mindanao.⁸ The results show almost 90% of conversions taking place away from family and friends, while living in a Muslim community. The second study focused on Filipina (female) converts to Islam among domestic helpers in Hong Kong.⁹ Again, the conversions happen when the converts are away from home and family, and have mostly to do with romantic relationships or marriage.

Given the paucity of studies on the dynamics of Christian conversion to Islam in the Filipino context and the increasing growth of the Muslim population compared to Christianity,¹⁰ this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of why Filipino Christians convert to Islam.

converts to Christianity. Other books that provide references to Muslim converts to Christianity are Roland Muller, *Tools for Muslim Evangelism* (Ontario, Canada: Essence, 2000), 205–6, and Lewis R. Scudder, *The Arabian Mission Story: In Search of Abraham's Other Son* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 206–12.

⁴ Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 158–60; compare also Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Nehemia Levtzion, ed., *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979).

⁵ Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 160.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Luis Q. Lacar, "Balik-Islam: Christian Converts to Islam in the Philippines, c. 1970–98," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 12 (2001): 39–60.

⁹ Sithi Hawwa, "From Cross to Crescent: Religious Conversion of Filipina Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 11 (2000): 347–67.

¹⁰ Herbert J. Kane, *Understanding Christian Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 294. Kane projects that Islam will overtake Christianity in the total number of adherents by the end of the next century. The U.S. Center for World Mission projects that this may happen as early as the year 2023. Cf. A. B. Robinson, "Growth Rate of Christianity and Islam: Which

2. Research Setting and Design

The particular setting of this research was the community of Islamic Studies, Call & Guidance of the Philippines (ISCAG hereafter) in a suburban area of the Philippines. Filipino converts to Islam, formerly employed as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Saudi Arabia established ISCAG in 1991. It operates under a Board of Directors composed of ten Filipinos and five Arabs. Among its objectives are "to spread the true message of Islam and bring back the Filipinos to it," to "unite them together and take care of their affairs,"¹¹ and "to correct the negative perceptions of most Filipinos concerning Islam and Muslims."¹² Through the efforts of ISCAG, seven (7) mosques have been built in different locations in the Philippines. During its first 11 years of operation, ISCAG registered 4,550 converts to Islam.¹³

The present study used the qualitative research paradigm, including in-depth interviewing, participant observation, and narrative analysis.¹⁴ This combination of methods was used "to enhance the validity of [the] research findings."¹⁵ For the in-depth interviews, an interview guide was developed and loosely followed. Interview sessions were often interrupted by obligatory prayers in the mosque. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim in the language of respondents (usually Tagalog). I did not include most of the Arabic phrases. English translations were made for every direct quotation selected for use in this study. During both the interviews and casual (unrecorded) conversations, observation played an important role as the interviewee's actions and interactions were noted.

The primary data for this study were collected from five (5) Filipino male converts to Islam. Their ages varied from twenty-two to forty-nine

will be the Dominant Religion in the Future?" n.p. [cited 4 January 2005]. Online: http://www.religioustolerance.org/growth_isl_chr.htm. In the Philippines Muslims are also increasing as a percent of the total population as can be seen in the study by Thomas J. O'Shaughnessy, "How Many Muslims has the Philippines?" *Philippine Studies* 23 (1975): 382. See also David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World* (2nd ed.; 2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:594.

¹¹ ISCAG, "Notification Report," pamphlet, n.p., n.d.

¹² "What is ISCAG," n.p. [cited 16 May 2006]. Online: <http://www.iscag.com/>.

¹³ "History of ISCAG," n.p. [cited 16 May 2006]. Online: <http://iscag.com/iscaginfo.asp>.

¹⁴ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (3d ed.; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2002), 21–26, 115–18, 259–332, 339–427.

¹⁵ Sandra Mathison, "Why Triangulate?" *Educational Research* 17.2 (1988): 13.

(22–49) years of age. These five respondents were purposely selected based on social status, ethnicity or provincial origin, and former religious affiliation(s). The majority were either employees or volunteer workers at the Center. Most of them, for some years, either worked or had some close relative working as an OFW in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Compared to the 72 subjects in Poston's study of conversion to Islam in the West, the 322 subjects in Lacar's, and the unspecified number of respondents in Hawwa's, the sample in this study is very small indeed. Table 1 shows the profile of key respondents.¹⁶

Respondent	Age	Social Status	Ethnicity/Provincial Origin	Former Religious Affiliation(s)	Years in Islam
Abu Dâwûd	30	Married	Cebuan/Negros	Roman Catholic	8
Nasâ'î	22	Single	Tagalog/Bulacan	Seventh-day Adventist	7
Tirmidhi	37	Married	Tagalog/Cavite	Roman Catholic	13
Ibn Mâjah	37	Married	Cebuan/Cebu	Roman Catholic and (Iglesia ni Cristo)	4
Ahmad	49	Married	Waray-Waray/Samar	Roman Catholic and (Protestant)	4

Table 1: *Profile of Key Respondents*

All key respondents are *Balik-Islam*, which literally means, reverts or returnees to Islam.¹⁷ One respondent explained:

Abu Dâwûd: In Islam, the most appropriate word for Filipinos who embraced Islam is 'revert.' Because in reality [...] if the Spaniards who brought with them the Christian religion had not colonized us, we would have remained under the law of Islam.¹⁸

Dâwûd's premise seems untenable, however. When Islam spread northward from Indonesia into the Philippine archipelago, the religion of the natives was animistic¹⁹ and there was considerable variation between and within its islands in terms of religious beliefs.²⁰ Much later, when Spanish

¹⁶ To provide some level of anonymity, the study uses Islamic pseudonyms for key respondents.

¹⁷ A prime time local TV news report claims that the population of *Balik-Islam* has now reached more than 100,000. Mike Enriquez, "24 Oras," GMA 7, GMA Network, Inc., Philippines, 11 January 2005.

¹⁸ In the transcript of the respondents' answers [...] indicates that some part of the answer, not directly relevant to the question, has been omitted.

¹⁹ Caesar Adib Majul, "The Muslims in the Philippines: An Historical Perspective," in *The Muslim Filipinos* (ed. Peter G. Gowing and Robert D. McAmis; Manila: Solidaridad, 1974), 2. *ibid.*, 11–13.

friars arrived in the country, they found evidence of missionary activities of Muslim preachers and adherents in a number of places.²¹ So although Islam was not the original religion of Filipinos, had it not been for the Spanish colonizers, the Philippines would be a predominantly Muslim country today.²²

3. Dynamics of Filipino Conversion to Islam

My respondents appeared to have their own agenda in cooperating with my research. The interviewees' actions and words were indicative of their intentions to indoctrinate or proselytize me to the Islamic faith. One respondent expressed his joy at being interviewed, for it gave him the opportunity to share his Islamic faith:

Ibn Mâjah: Actually, I am glad you interviewed me because for the first time, I found someone listening to me speaking about Islam. In our place, nobody listens to me!

My conversation with one of the leaders of ISCAG whom I considered a friend increased my suspicion of the Center's agenda to convert me to Islam:

Khalil: How many interviews you have completed, so far, brother?

Researcher: Only four!

Khalil: So, how many interviews do you really need to have?

Researcher: Five!

With a grin on his face, Khalil jokingly articulated my suspicion: "OK, when you are done with five, you will become a Muslim!" With a timid smile, I was quick to answer him: "*In Sha 'Allâh!* [If Allâh wills!]." Then we both laughed.

Behind the laughter, however, a sense of fear dawned upon me. I began to realize that I was in a situation where 'my days' as a Christian were already 'counted' by my Muslim brothers. I sensed that their expectation for me to convert to Islam was very high. I asked myself: Could I be found wanting as a seminary-trained Adventist pastor after the fifth interview?

²¹ Cesar Adib Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines* (3d ed.; Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1999), 78-84. Cf., Peter G. Gowing, *Islands Under the Cross: The Story of the Church in the Philippines* (Manila: National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 1967), 11; Sonia M. Zaide, *The Philippines: A Unique Nation* (Manila: All-Nations Publishing, 1994), 146.

²² Gowing, *Islands Under the Cross*, 13; Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*, 82, 84.

After the fifth interview, Khalil told me to come back later to interview him about how he converts Christians to Islam. I said to myself: "This is it! He is really out to convert me! He is now after my decision! What should I do? How would I handle the situation?" I thought of not coming back anymore.

Two weeks passed. I went back again to verify some pertinent information for this report. It was during Ramadân. My respondents invited me to share some soup and dates with them, breaking the fast of the day. The invitation was a great honor for me. On my way home, I thought seriously that as an Adventist Christian I have not been religious enough to practice fasting and prayer as much as Muslims do. I look forward to again fasting and praying with them during Ramadân. I am becoming a Muslim in "forms," (i.e., adopting some Islamic behaviors and practices), though I remain an Adventist Christian in "meanings," (i.e., in values and theological positions).²³

This study is significant to both Christian and Islamic communities. For Christian communities, this knowledge may help church leaders develop strategies to contain Christian attrition to Islam. This study also seeks to provide Christians with a perspective whereby they might see and acknowledge what is "true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy" (Phil 4:8, NIV) in Islam. This study may also help to correct the usual prejudices against Muslims. For this reason ISCAG leadership gave their full support to this study. One of the ISCAG leaders, also a convert from Christianity, expressed his approval when asked if he would participate in the study by saying: "Sure! So that the misconceptions against us will be cleared up." I have endeavored, therefore, to be careful, fair, and objective in my analyses of interview data collected.

The present study is concerned only with Christian conversion to Islam in a Filipino context. A further limitation is that of gender;²⁴ due to the Islamic taboo of communication between the sexes, and being a male researcher, women converts to Islam were not included in this study.

At the onset, I foresaw that Muslim sensitivity and/or animosity toward Christians would limit the depth and scope of this study. Despite the endorsement and support of this research project, my motives, being a Chris-

²³ Cf. Charles H. Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 136-47, on the distinction between form and content or meaning.

²⁴ See here Lacar, "Balik-Islam," 39-60; Hawwa, "From Cross to Crescent," 347-67.

tian and an Adventist pastor, were suspect to at least one respondent. He candidly said:

Tirmidhi: Allâh *Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala* [hereafter abbreviated as s.w.t.]²⁵ will not bless us if our purpose is only for our selfish interest. For example, you are doing this interview because you wanted to have knowledge, so that you may personally benefit from [...] (pauses, appears cautious). It means your motive is not honor to Allâh [s.w.t.], but merely for your personal interest. You wanted to know what Islam is so that someday [...]. 'Ah, I know what the weaknesses of Muslims are!

Suspicion was mutual. While I perceived the Muslims as having their own agenda to convert me to Islam using the occasion of my research, my respondents perceived my intrusion into their privacy as seeking to find fault with them. Muslims in general perceive a Christian presence in what they consider Muslim territory as "dangerous."²⁶ Christians often feel the same about Muslims living among them. To the benefit of my research, however, good rapport with ISAG leadership was in place long before I ever thought of or embarked on this study. At the outset, I was open with them about my identity as an Adventist pastor and a graduate student in theology. I appreciate the trust of the ISAG leadership in welcoming this research towards the goal of mutual understanding. *Mâ shâ' Allâh!* [Allâh's will be done].

3.1. Negative Stereotypes

When asked about their perceptions of Muslims before they embraced Islam, a majority of the respondents held the misconceptions and stereotypes about Muslims common to Christians for centuries:

Nasâ'i: Muslims are bad people. Islam is a false religion.

Ibn Mâjah: Before, my perception of Muslims was that they were uneducated, unclean; no manners [...] the Moros are coming! [Our parents] used to frighten us that way: "Muslims are kidnapers!"

Ahmad: I heard from my grandmother that Muslims are murderers, robbers.

²⁵ "This is an expression that Muslims use whenever the name of Allah is pronounced or written. The meaning of this expression is: 'Allah is pure from having partners and He is exalted above having a son.'" This meaning expresses what monotheism is to Muslims, i.e., "Allah is the only God, the Creator of the Universe. He does not have partners or children." See here "USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Texts," n.p. [cited 25 September 2006]. Online: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/glossary/term.SUBHANA.html>.

²⁶ Sharkey, "Arabic Antimissionary Treatises," 100.

Despite the respondents' early preconceptions against Islam, they converted to Islam and are now among its faithful adherents.

One Muslim author has published his answers to the "top ten misconceptions about Islam"²⁷ on the Internet. This shows that Muslims themselves are aware of the negative stereotypes against them. Two of our respondents affirmed this awareness when they recalled the time where the *Imams* [worship leaders or priests] asked them probing questions before they recited the *Shahada* [public witness, oath, or profession of *iman* (faith) to Islam]:

Nasá'i: What? Do you really want to join Islam? Do you really want to embrace Islam? Don't you know that Muslims are bad?

Ahmad: What is the reason why you wanted to become a Muslim? Don't you know Christians are angry with Muslims?

Questions like these probe the sincerity of Christians wanting to embrace Islam. All other data above support the same idea that, before they received more knowledge about Islam, the respondents held the same prejudices against Muslims as other Christians. Data further show that Muslims themselves are aware of such common negative stereotypes. These probing questions also indicate that Muslims acknowledge the fact that some of their adherents are not living up to the ideals of Islam, and therefore the challenge is for every new convert to be faithful.

3.2. Knowledge of Islam

The respondents' first knowledge of the truths and ideals of Islam was received through direct and indirect *da'wah* approaches. Direct *da'wah* refers to "activistic preaching [...] the confrontation of non-Muslim individuals with specific precepts of the Islamic faith."²⁸ Indirect *da'wah* may be described in Christian terms as lifestyle evangelism, which spreads Islam "not by pulpit preaching and mailing Islamic literature, but by doing what Muslims ought to do, living, drinking, eating, sleeping and behaving as Muslims are enjoined to do."²⁹

²⁷ Huma Ahmad, "Top Ten Misconceptions About Islam," n. p. [cited 13 May 2004]. Online: <http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/Park/6443/Islam/top10.html>.

²⁸ Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 122.

²⁹ Muhammad M. Inran, *The Importance of Da'wah (Tabligh) in Islam* (Lahore, India: M. Sirajud-Din and Sons, 1976), 15, quoted in Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 117.

Islamic *da'wah* urges the personal involvement of all Muslims to spread Islam. In this view, the dichotomy between laity and clergy common in some forms of Christianity is absent in Islam. Poston affirms: "All Muslims without exception are responsible for carrying out the duties enjoined by their faith and these include the Quranic injunctions to engage in *da'wah* activity."³⁰ Some respondents also attest to this view:

Abu Dâwûd: The teaching of Islam encourages each Muslim to pass on the teachings of Islam to those who are ignorant about them.

Nasâ'i: We do not force anyone to revert to Islam. Allâh will take care of them. We are only His instruments that this is what we need to speak or proclaim Islam to you. It is all up to Allâh.

Tirmidhi: Allâh [s.w.t.] [...] does not need to convert people to worship Him. Whether you worship Him or not, that will not lessen His being God. He only warns the people. Those who do the work of conversion are the people. He commanded Prophet Muhammad [*pbuh*] to convert the people because they would be at a loss if they do not believe in His oneness, in hell, in paradise; in judgment [...] destruction awaits them. The conversion of man is not the work of God. The work of conversion depends on His people, through His Prophet. That was why He sent His Prophet [...]. If God did the work of conversion; there would have been no need for Him to send His Prophet.

Ibn Mâjah: As a Muslim, it is our responsibility to proclaim what we have learned. That is why I am glad for this interview. [...] It is my opportunity to share, even in a simple way. It is our responsibility to share, yet we do not have the right to compel you to become a Muslim. Only God can guide.

The dominant *da'wah* approaches involved in the conversion of respondents were personal witnessing and distribution of Islamic literature:

Abu Dâwûd: Somebody related it to me [...] also by reading some pamphlets.

Nasâ'i: On my own, I researched about Islam through the reading materials. After that, I further inquired from my Muslim friends.

Tirmidhi: At first, somebody taught me. It also included self-study as part of acquiring knowledge about Islam.

Ibn Mâjah: By self-study [of reading materials], I came to know Islam. My brother-in-law also gave personal witness to me.

Ahmad: He [a Sudanese co-worker] gave me a pamphlet in Arabic. The title of the pamphlet was *As-Salât*—it means, The Prayer.

³⁰ Ibid., 130.

These approaches facilitated knowledge and learning about the Islamic faith by the respondents. Based on other sources of data, other *da'wah* methods such as symposia or public lectures, radio programs, and recorded audio/video materials may further enhance the respondents' reception of knowledge about Islamic teachings and practices.

Islamic propagation approaches are comparable to Christian evangelistic approaches. The way our respondents came to know about Islam suggests Muslim awareness of Christian evangelization strategies. For instance, the Ahmadiya movement in America claims to have "imitated in its *da'wah* endeavors the Christian Missionary movement."³¹ Muslim scholars "discuss Christian evangelical methods for the sake of either resisting or imitating them."³² Thus, missionary approaches used by Muslims are not exclusively Islamic; some either imitate or adapt Christian method.

3.3. Attraction to Islam

When asked what attracted them to Islam, respondents shared similar perceptions. Most found the Islamic doctrine of monotheism, a prayerful lifestyle, and brotherhood or a sense of community among Muslims attractive.³³

3.3.1. Monotheism

The first article of faith in Islam is all about *Tawheed* or "belief" in the oneness of God. Islamic monotheism is embodied in the *Shahada*, the first of the five pillars of Islam, also called the *Khalima* "word". The phrases "There is no god worthy of worship except Allâh" constitutes a part of the *Shahada*, "which must be recited by anyone embracing Islam."³⁴ Belief in the oneness of Allâh is foundational to Islamic faith, theology, and practice. One respondent found this monotheistic concept of God attractive:

Ibn Mâjah: The first factor that attracted me to Islam was the worship of one God. Here, I found the true way of worshipping the Creator. [...] I

³¹ Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 115.

³² Sharkey, "Arabic Antimissionary Treatises," 98.

³³ Similarly, Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 176-78, describes the five attractive features of Islam as simplicity, rationality, universal brotherhood, all "this-worldly focus," as opposed to the "other-worldly" orientation of Christianity, and lack of a priesthood or medial agents.

³⁴ Mahmoud Murad, *This Message Is for You* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Cooperative Office for Call & Guidance, 1996), 21.

read from a pamphlet that they also worship one God. Thus, I said: "This is good!" I see that their teaching is good.

As a former member of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (INC),³⁵ which has a similar monotheistic belief, Ibn Mâjah found it easier to embrace Islam. He explained his desire to be free from the idolatrous system of worship in the Roman Catholic brand of Christianity. His rendezvous with the INC with its similar monotheistic doctrine of God served as a bridge for him to embrace Islam. For him, Christianity's worship practices and their concept of God are both idolatrous and, therefore, superfluous. Hence, he explains:

Ibn Mâjah: That is why I could say that my conversion this time is [...] this is much better than before [referring to the INC].

Attraction to the monotheism of Islam was also the experience of Tirmidhi. Having a comprehensive knowledge of this first article or pillar of faith has kept him from backsliding and helped him as a practicing Muslim:

Tirmidhi: Although, at the beginning I was not a practicing Muslim, when I learned that Allâh [s.w.t.] is the True Creator worthy to be worshiped by men [...] it was enough for me not to backslide. Truly, I became a full-fledged Muslim. I have become obedient—surrendering and submitting myself to the will of Allâh [s.w.t.]. That is why whenever trials come into my life, however heavy or bad these could be, I can say nothing but '*Al-hamdulillah!*' [praise be to Allâh!].

The Islamic doctrine of monotheism bolsters Muslim cohesion and sense of community across cultures and geographical boundaries. One Filipino Muslim author aptly explains:

Islam gives the Philippines [sic] Muslim [...] meaning and direction [in their life]. The concept of monotheism not only enlightens them on the absolute oneness of God, but emphasizes to them the quality of an *Ummah* [Islamic Nation] described by the Holy Qur'an, as a single nation (21:92) characterized by a fraternal bond binding all its members together. It accentuates the brotherhood of man and the kinship of Muslims.³⁶

A similar degree of faith in the oneness of God is desirable for both sons of Abraham. Where the convert is from Islam or Christianity, the surrender of one's will to the sovereign God should take precedence in this conversion experience. Mutual faith in God should bring about the same degree of

³⁵ *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (INC) or *Iglesya ni Kristo* (INK), Pilipino for Church of Christ, is a monotheistic religion in the Philippines, founded by Felix Manalo in 1914.

³⁶ Wadja K. Esmula and Muhidain B. Mutia, "Islam in the Philippines," n.p. [cited 5 January 2005]. Online: <http://www.islamawareness.net/Asia/Philippines/philippines.html>.

brotherhood or sense of community, respect, and understanding between Muslims and Christians despite the differences of opinion as to how each one perceives and serves the same God (Surah 29:46; cf. Deut 6:4–5; Mark 12:29–30).

3.3.2. *A Prayerful Lifestyle*

The prayerful lifestyle of true Muslims is another important feature found by respondents to be attractive. Muslims' strict daily observance of the five obligatory prayers exemplifies their faith and submission to the will of Allāh:

Ibn Mâjah: I observed that they always pray—at dawn, at noon, and in the afternoon. I asked: Are Muslims really that bad? Why—if this is the way they pray—almost the whole day? They spend all the time praying. [...] It softened me. [...] Why do we need to bring our [head] down on the ground [when praying]? It is because [...] this is the highest part of our body. Here, we find the eyes, the nose, the mouth [...] we bow them down to the ground to demonstrate that we are only servants of God. This is submission! This is what attracts me to Islam.

He further adds:

Ibn Mâjah: Islam [...] is a way of life. All that you do...just before I spoke to you here, I said: “*Bismillâh*,” in the name of Allâh [s.w.t.]. The *Du'a* and *Salât*, these are the prayers [...] both in going to and coming out of the restroom, we pray. Riding in a car, we pray. That was why I said: ‘here, you always think of God. If God responds to the prayers of those who pray like this [referring to the Christian form of prayer, i.e., by kneeling], how much more the prayer of those who put their head down like this? [referring to Islamic form of prayer, i.e., by prostration].

Data show that the faithful observance of *Salât* is central to the everyday life of all true Muslims. It is also a vital element in their homes, in the mosques, or anywhere. *Salât* is “an act of worship consisting of a series of movements, and Quranic recitations” and is “clearly the most important pillar after *shahada*.”³⁷ As an act of worshipping God, the strict observance of five daily obligatory prayers gives meaning, direction, and value to the everyday life of a practicing Muslim. The observance of *Salât* seems to characterize the humble, submissive, and worshipful attitude of all true Muslims. Truly, a consistent, prayerful lifestyle, be it in the Islamic way or the Christian way, is an admirable lifestyle worthy of practice in the daily lives of God's people.

³⁷ Murad, *This Message Is for You*, 27–28.

3.3.3. Brotherhood

What establishes the Islamic *Ummah* or community is the brotherhood of all Muslims across cultures. "In true Islam, the faithful, the submitted, comprise the *Ummah*."³⁸ In this view, "Islam preaches peace through submission to Allâh [s.w.t.] and the brotherhood of all Muslims."³⁹ This brotherhood expresses the concept of Islamic community as "rather like the Christian sense of belonging to the kingdom of God, a commitment that recognizes no earthly, political, geographical or temporal allegiances as ultimate."⁴⁰ One convert to Islam spoke more highly of the Islamic brotherhood than of Christianity's:

Ibrahim: The brotherhood in Islam is deeper and stronger. That is why I would prefer to stay here, and I enjoy it much more here than with my former religion. Because, here, everybody—rich or poor, all are equal. Most especially during the time of prayers, whatever your status or position in society—all are equal. You need to be in the line whether you are together with a rich man or poor. Unlike with my former religion, even in the seating arrangement, there was a division among the rich and the poor. Also, the sense of community there before—it was not deep-rooted compared to what I have found in Islam.

One of the reasons as advanced in the past by new Muslims as to why they embraced Islam is "that Islam promotes one community."⁴¹ In fact, this sense of community keeps Muslims faithful to Islam because it provides them "with a sense of belonging and all the security and satisfaction that it entails."⁴²

Abdul: I just find myself [with] nowhere to find a friend to turn to, but I find my brother in Islam. He guides me in the right path to follow Allâh.

Considering that the majority of the respondents come from a Roman Catholic background, the converts' perceived lack of cohesion among Christians is understandable. Coming as well from a Roman Catholic back-

³⁸ Anne Cooper, comp., *Ishmael, My Brother: Christian Introduction to Islam* (rev. and updated ed.; Tunbridge Wells, Kent: MARC, 1993), 271.

³⁹ Tokumboh Adeyemo, "Social and Theological Changes in Conversion," in *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road* (ed. J. Dudley Woodberry; Monrovia: MARC/World Vision, 1989), 225.

⁴⁰ Cooper, *Ishmael, My Brother*, 271.

⁴¹ Adeyemo, "Social and Theological Changes in Conversion," 226.

⁴² Donald N. Larson, "The Cross-Cultural Communication of the Gospel to Muslims," in *The Gospel and Islam: A Compendium* (ed. Don M. McCurry; Monrovia: MARC/World Vision, 1979), 76.

ground, I can personally empathize with the respondents because the sense of community in the Roman Catholic parishes is indeed lacking compared to that sense of community found among Protestant churches in general. It is interesting to know that this need for belonging or community was also instrumental in some cases of Muslim conversion to Christianity. Muller points out that "in most settings where large numbers have turned to Christ, the common attraction isn't contextualization, but rather the presence of community."⁴³

The strong sense of community is particularly imperative in the context of Islam, where it seemed characterized by unity in terms of uniformity and the equality of all Muslims. All are expected to follow prescribed practices taught in the Qur'an and exemplified in the *Sunnah* (sayings and practices or traditions) of Muhammad. What seems to unify Muslims across cultures is the belief in one God and the consistent communal observance of daily obligatory prayers. Tirmidhi explains:

Tirmidhi: For a Muslim [...] you only follow what it says in the Qur'an. If Prophet Muhammad [*pbuh*] [...] said to pray five times a day [...] there is no doubt because he was chosen by Allâh [s.w.t.] as the Prophet for His community that governs you and me.

Similarly, Abu Dâwûd explicitly enjoins all Muslims to submit to the authority and example of Muhammad:

Abu Dâwûd: In order to approach Allâh [s.w.t.], we need to follow Prophet Muhammad [*pbuh*]. If he said to pray five times, it's five times! He is our example. To a Muslim, he or she must pray in the way Prophet Muhammad [*pbuh*] prayed.

The doctrine of monotheism, a prayerful lifestyle, and Islamic brotherhood are three prominent features of Islam found to be attractive to the majority of respondents. The religious practice of obligatory prayers further reminds every Muslim of the Islamic teachings on monotheism. Communal prayers strengthen the Islamic sense of community. The example of practicing Muslims, particularly in observing obligatory prayers, serves as an enviably significant attraction for those respondents who have had similar habits of prayer in their previous religious experience as Christians:

Abu Dâwûd: One of my most desired activities was praying. When I was invited to pray in the mosque [...] since I also like to pray, I joined the line [of people praying].

⁴³ Muller, *Tools for Muslim Evangelism*, 82. Muller does not mention which particular Christian denominations were involved in the conversion of Muslims to Christ.

This implies that both in Islam and in Christianity, missionary efforts should respond to the felt needs or religious propensities of people. In other words, Islamic *da'wah* or Christian evangelism begins where the people are in their social or spiritual experience. As in the case of Abu Dâwûd, his fondness for praying made it easy for him to respond positively to the invitation of his Muslim friend to pray in the mosque.

3.4. Factors Relating to Conversion

Other factors also influenced the respondents to embrace Islam. In contrast to the traditional Western paradigm of religious conversion,⁴⁴ this study found three significant elements of Christian conversion to Islam in the Filipino context: doctrine, marriage, and economics.

3.4.1. Doctrinal Factors

Doctrinal factors refers to the converts' motivation to know a body or system of teachings or beliefs. One key respondent testifies how he became interested in the Islamic doctrine of God:

Ibn Mâjah: I read in the pamphlets that they [Muslims] also worship one God. Monotheism. It's only one, really! [...] I saw that the teaching is good [...] and I now believe that this is the true religion.

In the case of Abu Dâwûd, the Islamic teachings on obligatory prayers led him to study Islam further:

Abu Dâwûd: Practice of prayer in the proper way. Because of this knowledge, it all started here where I began to take an interest in Islam. [...] Seeking the truth gives us light. Why did I convert to Islam? First [it] was by receiving knowledge about the Islamic doctrines. Next, I was certain and sincere in my search for true religion, and then I submitted, obeyed and loved what I was doing.

⁴⁴ Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 154-57, describes this paradigm as involving: (1) an *integration factor*, i.e., "conversion involves commitment (or integration) to a theology, a worldview, an epistemology, an ontology, a moral ethic, and the like;" (2) *adolescence*; i.e., "conversion occurs most often during or in a period immediately following adolescence;" (3) *personal stress or anxiety*, i.e., conversion is consequent to "the psychological ability or inability of the subject to deal with stress;" (4) *interpersonal relationships*, i.e., conversion occurs not in isolation from other individuals; and (5) *conscious motivational factors*, which include fears or insecurity with regard to death and the afterlife, other self-regarding motives, altruistic motives, following out moral ideals, remorse for and conviction of sin, rational response to teaching, example and imitation, and urging or social pressure.

These two respondents were motivated by their interest in certain doctrines of Islam (e.g., monotheism and obligatory prayers). Their conversion to Islam evidently resulted from receiving convincing knowledge about these particular teachings and practices. Nasâ'i had a similar experience:

Nasâ'i: I did research on Islam. Later, I realized Islam is true. But I did not embrace it immediately. I studied it carefully just like what you are doing, brother. I was judicious like you. I did not immediately embrace this religion without knowing which direction it would take me. I read their pamphlets. I compared them with the Bible. I carefully saw to it before I decided to take my *shahada* that there is no other god worthy of being worshiped but Allâh [s.w.t.].

Nasâ'i's conversion experience may be regarded as intellectual or rational. Being a former Adventist Christian, Nasâ'i showed interest in Islamic doctrines and compared them with his beliefs. The study also shows the role of the intellectual assent of the respondents:

Ibn Mâjah: The first factor that converted me to Islam was the belief that only Allâh [s.w.t.] is the Creator, that there is no other god worthy to be worshiped than Him. I opened my mind. [...] I saw it to be good and I believed Islam to be the true religion. That is why I could say that my conversion today is for Allâh [s.w.t.], for the glory of God. My conversion to Islam is better than my previous conversion [to INC].

Ahmad: I did not have any knowledge about Muslims, or what Islam was. But when I read the pamphlets [...] the teaching about prayer was beautiful. It was all about prayer.

These data on doctrinal factors suggest that the conversion experience of converts to Islam in the Filipino context tends to be more rational or cognitive than emotional or affective. This result supports Poston's findings about the dynamics of Christian conversion to Islam in the West. Comparing Christian conversion to Islam with the characteristic of Muslim conversion to Christianity, Poston concludes:

Conversions to Islam, then, differ significantly from conversion to Christianity in that they appear to be "conversion of the head" (i.e., the intellect) rather than "conversion of the heart" (i.e., the emotion).⁴⁵

The majority of respondents in this present study admitted, either explicitly or implicitly, their intellectual assent to the Islamic faith. Knowledge of the Islamic doctrines was an important factor in their leaving Christianity. Conversion results from thorough indoctrination. This study suggest that even

⁴⁵ Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 171.

a simple curiosity to know a particular doctrine, be it Islamic or Christian, could become an opportunity for religious conversion if patiently followed up with consistent indoctrination, nurture, and example.

3.4.2. *Marriage*

Marriage is another vital element in Christian conversion to Islam in the Philippines. A romantic or marital relationship with Muslims has led some Filipino Christians to embrace Islam.⁴⁶ Surveys in the United States corroborate marriage as the number one reason for religious conversion.⁴⁷ This motivation towards religious conversion, however, is not necessarily a true conversion at the start. This was the case of Tirmidhi:

Tirmidhi: At first when I embraced Islam, I did not embrace it because I wanted to worship Allâh [s.w.t.]. That was not so. I met a girl from Mindanao, a Tausug. Because [...] a Muslim woman [...] could not be married to a non-Muslim, I converted to Islam right away, even though I did not have any knowledge about Islamic doctrines. [...] I could not consider myself a Muslim at the time. The old habits were still there—no changes!

Tirmidhi appeared thankful, however, that his marriage to a Muslim encouraged him to study more about Islam. He further explained his conversion process:

Tirmidhi: When I got married, I had only a little knowledge about the Islamic faith. Little by little, I continued to study and began to learn it. Only then could I say I truly embraced Islam. For me, that [getting married to a Muslim] was the initial step. Then I received more knowledge. Today, I could say that I am now a true Muslim who obeys, submits, and surrenders to Allâh [s.w.t.].

Marriage as a factor of religious conversion appears to be common to both Islam and Christianity. It is more likely for Christian men marrying Muslim women to convert to Islam, however, than for Muslim men marrying Christian women to convert to Christianity.⁴⁸ This tendency is normal because Islam strictly forbids intermarriage. In effect, Muslims welcome conversion

⁴⁶ Hawwa, "From Cross to Crescent," 347-67.

⁴⁷ PT Staff, "About Faith," n.p. [cited 13 December 2004]. Online: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/pto-20040709-000001.html>.

⁴⁸ Luis Q. Lacar, *Muslim-Christian Marriages in the Philippines* (Humanities Publication Series 2; Quezon City, Philippines: New Day, 1980), 38; Hawwa, "From Cross to Crescent," 356.

to Islam but forbid conversion to Christianity.⁴⁹ Consequent to intermarriage, Christian conversion to Islam may be more of a compromise or accommodation than a true conversion. The same may be true for Muslims who convert to Christianity.

3.4.3. *Economics*

On condition of anonymity, one convert confided that it was the financial advantage of being a Muslim OFW in Saudi Arabia that led him to embrace Islam. According to this respondent, Christian OFWs in Saudi Arabia receive lower remuneration or are given lower positions compared to their Muslim counterparts. This convert related the first time he received his salary as an OFW in Saudi Arabia, he noticed that his Muslim counterpart received much more than he did. When he asked this co-worker why his salary was higher, the latter answered him bluntly: "Because I am a Muslim!" With such thought of economic advantage, he deliberately planned to become a Muslim. For this convert, the initial motivation was economic expediency.⁵⁰

For Christian OFWs in Muslim countries, conversion to Islam offers them more economic advantage and stability than remaining a Christian in the Islamic workplace. Offers of higher salaries and wider employment opportunities in the Middle East seem to be accorded more to Muslims than to Christians. The economic advantage of being a Muslim seems to be one of the most significant reasons why many Filipinos working in Islamic countries embrace Islam. This coheres with the reasons advanced by Muslim converts from the Yoruba people of Nigeria who received "offers of material prosperity."⁵¹

The fact that the majority of key respondents were either former overseas contract workers or have spouses and/or close relatives currently on contract as OFWs in Saudi Arabia suggests the significant role of separation from home and family and working in a predominantly Muslim community.⁵² Here are their stories:

⁴⁹ In case a Muslim converts to Christianity, he or she will surely face serious consequences (Sharkey, "Arabic Antimissionary Treatises," 98).

⁵⁰ Economics was also a factor in conversion to Islam during its early history. See J. Dudley Woodberry, *Introduction to Islam* (Pasadena: Fuller School of Intercultural Studies, 2003), 215.

⁵¹ Adeyemo, "Social and Theological Changes in Conversion," 226.

⁵² Lacar, "*Balik-Islam*," 45.

Abu Dâwûd: I did have some questions in my mind. [...] Out of various religions around me, which among these is true?—until I went to Saudi Arabia, and there I saw the lifestyle of the Muslims. There, I witnessed how Muslims lived. I learned about the teachings of Islam in Saudi [Arabia]. My mother first came to Saudi [Arabia]; she first embraced Islam.

Ibn Mâjah: My wife's brother had worked in Saudi [Arabia]. He embraced Islam there. [...] By 1999, my brother-in-law became the manager here [ISCAG], so we stayed with him.

Ahmad: By the following year, I was not able to go abroad yet. Our means of support was already dwindling. [...] One time I cried in my prayer, asking help [from God] how to support my family. I finally told my wife the next morning: "I know, if God allows me to work again in Saudi [Arabia], I will be a Muslim!"

Casual conversations and observations further indicate the significant role of employment in the Middle East in their conversion. Due to "high unemployment and poor economic conditions coupled by high fertility rates, [and] unstable political situation, and slow economic and industrial development"⁵³ in the Philippines, the lure of economic expediency of overseas employment in the Middle East may continue to bring more OFWs into submission to the way of Islam.

4. Discussion

Table 2 summarizes the findings of the present study on the dynamics of Christian conversion to Islam in a Filipino context. It sums up the intervening factors that led key respondents to embrace Islam. It also alludes to the major Islamic *da'wah* approaches to non-Muslims.

⁵³ Moshe Semyonov and Anastasia Gorodzeisky, "Occupational Destinations and Economic Mobility of Filipino Overseas Workers" (paper presented at the ISA Research Committee on Social Stratification and Mobility, Oxford, 10–12 April 2002), 5 [1–32], [cited 5 January 2005]. Online: <https://www.nuff.ox.ac.uk/rc28/papers/Semyonov.pdf>.

Respondent	Knowledge of Islam	Attraction of Islam	Motivational Factor	Relevant background information
<i>Abu Dāwūd</i>	Personal witness	Prayerful Lifestyle	Doctrinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mother first embraced Islam in Saudi while serving as an OFW ▪ Former OFW in Saudi; also embraced Islam in Saudi
<i>Nasā'i</i>	Personal witness	Monotheism	Doctrinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uncle first became a Muslim who gave him personal witness on Islamic faith
<i>Tirmidhi</i>	Personal witness	Brotherhood	Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Muslim fiancée from Mindanao ▪ Currently working for an Islamic Center in Saudi responsible for the nurture of new Muslim converts
<i>Ibn Mājah</i>	Islamic Literature	Monotheism	Doctrinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brother-in-law first embraced Islam in Saudi ▪ Embraced Islam while living with his brother-in-law
<i>Ahmad</i>	Islamic Literature	Prayerful lifestyle	Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Former OFW in Saudi ▪ Embraced Islam while working in Saudi

Table 2: *Conversion Variables*

Despite their previously held negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims, the above data show that respondents embraced Islam through varied *da'wah* approaches resulting from diverse interests, motivations and circumstances. Based on the data, the approaches used by Muslims to convert key respondents in this study were both direct and indirect.⁵⁴ Activities such as personal witnessing, distribution of free Islamic literature, public symposia or polemics (direct *da'wah*) contributed to the conversion of respondents. Similarly, the converts' fascination with Islam's prayerful lifestyle and brotherhood, as well as the motivation of marriage and economic expediency played an indirect role in their conversion to Islam. Table 3 sums up the findings of this study:

⁵⁴ Cf. Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 117-30.

<i>Perception of Islam and Muslims before conversion</i>	<i>How did you learn about Islam and Muslims?</i>	<i>What attracted you to Islam?</i>	<i>Why did you convert to Islam?</i>	<i>Relevant circumstances leading to conversion to Islam</i>
All key respondents held similar negative stereotypes of Muslims before they embraced Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-study of Islamic literature ▪ Public lecture/symposia ▪ Discussion with Muslims ▪ Personal witness of Muslims ▪ Example or influence of a Muslim friend or relative ▪ Radio program ▪ Audio and video materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The doctrine of God (Islamic Monotheism) ▪ Brotherhood or sense of community ▪ Unity, equality and/or uniformity ▪ The prayerful lifestyle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ True worship of the true God ▪ Islam is the true religion ▪ Muslims are true and serious about prayer ▪ To be saved from hell ▪ To save my soul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment in Saudi Arabia ▪ Marriage to a Muslim ▪ Personal crisis ▪ Personal discontent with Christianity ▪ Personal search for the true religion

Table 3: Summary of Findings

What is distinctive in the dynamics of Christian conversion to Islam in this study is the economic expediency seen by Filipinos seeking employment opportunities in the Middle East. This economic expediency may well have influenced a majority of the respondents to embrace Islam as a rational option while serving as contract workers in Muslim contexts. This type of conversion may be categorized more as an external and/or authority level of conversion than as an ontological one.⁵⁵

Key respondents in this study seem to have experienced conversion at the ontological level only after going through conversion at the first two levels. Ontological conversion may then be the outgrowth of a long process of the indoctrination, consistent nurture, and strong sense of community or brotherhood which the new converts mentioned. From the Christian standpoint, however, changes in the life and character of a respondent may only be considered as reaching the ontological category if these changes result from remorse for and repentance from sin.

⁵⁵ Adeyemo, "Social and Theological Changes in Conversion," 219-30, describes the three levels of conversion as follows: the *external* level of conversion is marked by conforming to external forms, and is mostly being shallow, sometimes superficial, and transient. On the level of *authority*, the changes are deeper than on the external level and affect the underlying foundation of why people do what they do. Finally, the *ontological* level of conversion involves the very core of a human being and does not only involve forms but the entire existence. Adeyemo calls this "transformation" while at the authority level of conversion it is called "adaptation."

Other significant variables involved in conversion to Islam in the Filipino context include employment in Saudi Arabia, marriage, spiritual crisis, personal discontent or disappointment with one's former religion, personal search for the true religion or higher moral ideals, and other personal motives. These variables correlate with Lacar's and Hawwa's findings. Lacar reports that 90% of Christian conversions to Islam in Mindanao occurred while working or studying and residing in a predominantly Islamic community and neighborhood far from their immediate home and family.⁵⁶ The motivating factor that Lacar found for conversion to Islam, however, was concern for "their own physical security and well-being"⁵⁷ amidst the ongoing conflict between Muslims and Christians in Mindanao at the time of his study. Aside from marriage as a factor in conversion to Islam among female Christian OFWs in Hong Kong, Hawwa also points out prior contacts with Muslims in the Middle East among other motivating factors.⁵⁸ She points out that "the religiosity of the Filipinos and their prior tendency to shift between different denominations within Christianity also favor conversion,"⁵⁹ which appear to be true in the case of Ibn Mâjah and Ahmad of the present study. Overall, Filipino Christian conversion to Islam is consequent to being away from the immediate social or religious influences of their Christian community and family. Filipino Christian conversion to Islam, therefore, is socially, economically, and/or religiously motivated.

Like Roman Catholicism, Islam tends to be a works-based religion. It is likely that their similar emphasis on salvation by works made the conversion of Catholics easier than with Protestants whose strong emphasis is on salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. For this reason, the external-authority type of conversion could be consequential to the Catholic predisposition to external piety or work-based religiosity. The factors and type of religious conversion, however, seemed not exclusive to Christian converts to Islam. Similar factors and types of conversion may be observed as well in the experience of some Muslim converts to Christianity and also in conversions across Christian denominations.

One significant finding in this study, which supports Poston's findings,⁶⁰ is that, whether one is in a predominantly Islamic environment or not, the

⁵⁶ Lacar, "Balik-Islam," 45.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵⁸ Hawwa, "From Cross to Crescent," 353.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 364-65.

⁶⁰ Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West*, 179-80.

majority of respondents embraced Islam consequent to the personal witness of faithful Muslims. Lacar's generalization that "human beings anywhere react favorably to kindness"⁶¹ is worth noting by Christians and Muslims alike. This generalization calls both sons of Abraham, into what Moyer terms "'evangelistic attractiveness,' living in such an obvious way that people [find] us and our lifestyles attractive."⁶² To this end, may all Christians and Muslims, experience the guidance of God in this kind of *da'wah* "that cannot be done by proxy."⁶³ *In Sha 'Allâh!*

⁶¹ Lacar, "Balik-Islam," 54.

⁶² Bruce Campbell Moyer, "E-mail response to question from Noel Nadado," (20 February 2006).

⁶³ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1942), 147.