

AN ANALYSIS OF HOW BAPTIST CHURCHES IN UKRAINE ARE CONTEXTUALIZED USING THE C1 TO C6 MUSLIM SPECTRUM

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INTRODUCTION

Contextualization will always be a difficult subject for the church to discuss. Contextualization is part of the nature of the gospel (God becoming man in the flesh), yet churches continue to disagree on how much like the culture the church can become. I have lived in Ukraine from 2002 until 2006, and I have seen many different forms of contextualization within Ukrainian Baptist churches. Yet it has always been a problem to describe the differences between these churches. People ask, “Is this a traditional Baptist church?” “Is this a contemporary church?” “Is this a church for college students?”

Several years ago John Travis (a pseudonym), a long-term missionary among Muslims in Asia, formulated “a simple categorization for stages of contextualization within Islamic outreach. He defines his six Cs as ‘Cross-Cultural Church-Planting Spectrums’” (Parshall 1998:Par. 3). Another name for his system of categorization is called the C1 to C6 spectrum. When I first read Travis’ categorizations during my Cross-Cultural Contextualization masters course under Dr. Doug Hayward, I began to wonder if these categories could be used in a different context. I discussed this with other Ukrainians I minister with, and they were intrigued with the idea. Thus, these same six stages or categories of churches can become the template for looking at

other cultures as well. Specifically, I will use this format to evaluate the current level of contextualization of the Baptist Churches in Ukraine.

THE TEMPLATE: THE C1 TO C6 SPECTRUM

In 1998, Phil Parshall gave a critique of this spectrum and also described it accurately. He wrote:

The C1-C6 Spectrum compares and contrasts types of “Christ-centered communities” (groups of believers in Christ) found in the Muslim world. The six types in the spectrum are differentiated by language, culture, worship forms, degree of freedom to worship with others, and religious identity. All worship Jesus as Lord and core elements of the gospel are the same from group to group. The spectrum attempts to address the enormous diversity which exists throughout the Muslim world in terms of ethnicity, history, traditions, language, culture, and, in some cases, theology.

This diversity means that myriad approaches are needed to successfully share the gospel and plant Christ-centered communities among the world’s 1 billion followers of Islam. The purpose of the spectrum is to assist church planters and Muslim background believers to ascertain which type of Christ-centered communities may draw the most people from the target group to Christ and best fit in a given context. All of these six types are presently found in some part of the Muslim world (Parshall 1998:par. 30).

When using any culturally specific evaluation tool as a template, there will always be problems with transferability. This is also true of taking this categorization which is designed for the Muslim world and using it for a Baptist minority in a dual-faith Orthodox culture. Yet, surprisingly, there were many comparisons between the two different spheres. This will be shown in a chart that makes up the body of this research paper.

Before presenting this chart, the reader must have some context of the history of the Baptist churches in Ukraine.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BAPTIST CHURCHES IN UKRAINE

The Baptist churches in Ukraine began approximately 150 years and do not share the same branch of the church history tree with most American Baptist churches. These churches would resemble the Evangelical Mennonite Churches of America closer than their Baptist cousins in the states.

In 16th century Ukraine, there were Anabaptists, the predecessors of today's Baptists. The first Baptist baptism in Ukraine took place in 1864 on the river Ingul in the Yelizavethrad region (now Kirovohrad region), in a German settlement. In 1867, the first Baptist communities were organized in that area. From there, the trend spread to the south of Ukraine and then to other regions as well. ...

The Evangelical Baptist movement became more active after the Bolshevik coup of October 1917. With the blessing of the 1st All-Ukrainian Convention of Baptists in October 1918, active missionary and evangelization activity started (RISU 2006:par. 1).

Another important factor that has shaped Baptist church culture is the persecution the church received during the Soviet Union era.

From the 1920s, Evangelical Christians and Baptists were illegal in Soviet Ukraine and the whole USSR. To some extent, they were revived during and after World War II. In 1944, Baptists and Evangelical Christians united in the Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists (ECB). They were later joined by other smaller Baptist and Evangelical trends. At the end of the 1950s, 75% of the believers of the All-USSR Council of ECB lived in Ukraine.

During the large anti-religious campaign in the USSR at the beginning of the 1960s, the All-USSR Council of the ECB was divided. As a result, a parallel structure, the All-USSR Council of Churches of the

ECB was established, which was in stronger opposition to the communist regime (RISU 2006:par. 4).

Due to the denomination's Anabaptist roots and the time under communist control, most Baptist Union churches have a fortress mentality. Most members see a greater need in protecting the truth than on contextualizing the message to win the loss. Yet a missionary attitude still prevails in the church. The All-Ukraine Union of the Association of Evangelical Baptists (AUU AEB) is the largest evangelical denomination in all of Europe today. Over 1500 churches have been planted in Ukraine by the Baptists in the past 15 years.

Today, Evangelical Christian Baptists are one of the most active Christian confessions in Ukraine and the world. Nearly 90% of Baptists in Ukraine are united in the All-Ukraine Union of the Association of Evangelical Baptists (AUU AEB), established in 1994 at the 22nd Convention of the ECB of Ukraine.

Today, the union includes 3 seminaries, 2 universities and 15 bible colleges. The union is engaged in publishing activity and has an extended mass media network. The AUU AEB is governed by a council composed of senior presbyters (bishops) of regional associations headed by the president of the council. In 1990—2006 the council was headed by [Hryhorii Komendant](#). From May 2006 it's headed by [Viacheslav Nesteruk](#). The union closely cooperates with Ukrainian Baptists in the diaspora. The AUU AEB is a member of the European Baptist Federation and the Baptist World Alliance (RISU 2006:par. 6).

THE B1 TO B6 BAPTIST SPECTRUM CHART

For the past four years, I have visited over 30 churches all over Ukraine. Each region of Ukraine has different cultural distinctives within their churches. Each church's leadership has also chosen how "far" they want to contextualize the church

in order to reach their community with the gospel. Some pastors say that young people must dress appropriately, act appropriately and come to the church if they want to hear the gospel. Other pastors say that the church needs to adjust to the culture and that the members of the church must go to the youth outside the church in order to reach them. Through interviews with several Ukrainian youth pastors and pastors, I have developed the following chart to describe the contextualization differences within these churches. On the left side of the chart I have placed the C1 to C6 spectrum as a template. Each side of the chart does not match perfectly, yet there are many comparisons that can be seen. Example churches are also listed which will be described in the next section of the paper.

Muslim World	Baptist Churches in Ukraine**
<p>C1: Traditional Church Using Outsider* Language</p> <p>May be Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant. Some predate Islam. Thousands of C1 churches are found in Muslim lands today. Many reflect Western culture. A huge cultural chasm often exists between the church and the surrounding Muslim community. Some Muslim background believers may be found in C1 churches. C1 believers call themselves “Christians.”</p>	<p>B1: Traditional Baptist Church using only Baptist Language</p> <p>Words are carefully picked and tend to be more formal and religious in nature. There is no casual language used. The Russian Synodal of the original Ukrainian translation is exclusively used. Every worship service has 3 sermons. Only hymns are sung on Sunday mornings. A hierarchy of leadership is strictly observed. Married women must wear head coverings and there are many other rules of conduct. These churches will always be part of the Baptist Union or another conservative denomination.</p> <p>Example: Central Baptist Church, Kiev</p>

<p>C2: Traditional Church Using Insider* Language</p> <p>Essentially the same as C1 except for language. Though insider language is used, religious vocabulary is probably non-Islamic (distinctively “Christian”). The cultural gap between Muslims and C2 is still large. Often more Muslim background believers are found in C2 than C1. The majority of churches located in the Muslim world today are C1 or C2. C2 believers call themselves “Christians.”</p>	<p>B2: Baptist Church using Typical Christian Language which is Cautiously Using New Ideas</p> <p>This is also probably a Baptist Union church, but is using new ideas such as the use of choruses in Sunday morning worship. Typically, these churches are less than 10 years old. The church is open to doing away with some traditions. Most women will still wear scarves, but some younger women are not. Guitars may also be used in worship, but drums are still not welcome on Sunday mornings.</p> <p>Example: Hope Church, Kiev</p>
<p>C3: Contextualized Christ-centered Communities Using Insider Language and Religiously Neutral Insider Cultural Forms</p> <p>Religiously neutral forms may include folk music, ethnic dress, artwork, etc. Islamic elements (where present) are “filtered out” so as to use purely “cultural” forms. The aim is to reduce foreignness of the gospel and the church by contextualizing to biblically permissible cultural forms. May meet in a church building or more religiously neutral location. C3 congregations are comprised of a majority of Muslim background believers. C3 believers call themselves “Christians.”</p>	<p>B3: Contextualized Churches Using Casual Language and not meeting in a Traditional Church Building</p> <p>These churches may be a church plant from another Baptist Union church. The church may choose to join the Union or not. Contemporary music is used regularly and drums may be a part of a worship band. The churches are usually less than 5 years old and are renting space from another business or government building. These churches may use PowerPoint for worship and print bulletins.</p> <p>Example: Pechersk Church, Kiev</p>
<p>C4: Contextualized Christ-centered Communities Using Insider Language and Biblically Permissible Cultural and Islamic Forms</p> <p>Similar to C3, however, biblically permissible Islamic forms and practices are also utilized (e.g. praying with raised hands, keeping the fast, avoiding pork, alcohol, and dogs as pets, using Islamic</p>	<p>B4: Contemporary Baptist Youth Church with almost all First-Generation Believers</p> <p>Some Baptist churches would view this as a Charismatic group even though it is not theologically. Some of these churches will still be part of the Baptist Union, but some churches will choose to part of other evangelical fellowships.</p>

<p>terms, dress, etc.). C1 and C2 forms avoided. Meetings not held in church buildings. C4 communities comprised almost entirely of Muslim background believers. C4 believers, though highly contextualized, are usually not seen as Muslim by the Muslim community. C4 believers identify themselves as “followers of Isa the Messiah.”</p>	<p>These churches will use exclusively contemporary music Christian music. Drums can be a part of the worship band. PowerPoint and Computer/Video Projectors are part of the ministry.</p> <p>Example: Calvary Church, Lutsk</p>
<p>C5: Christ-centered Communities of “Messianic Muslims” Who Have Accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior</p> <p>C5 believers remain legally and socially within the community of Islam. Somewhat similar to the Messianic Jewish movement. Aspects of Islamic theology which are incompatible with the Bible are rejected, or reinterpreted if possible. Participation in corporate Islamic worship varies from person to person and group to group. C5 believers meet regularly with other C5 believers and share their faith with unsaved Muslims. Unsaved Muslims may see C5 believers as theologically deviant and may eventually expel them from the community of Islam. Where entire villages accept Christ, C5 may result in “Messianic mosques.” C5 believers are viewed as Muslims by the Muslim community and refer to themselves as Muslims who follow Isa the Messiah.</p>	<p>B5: Contemporary Youth Club that is Not Viewed as a Church</p> <p>These clubs usually do not meet on Sundays, yet may be considered to be a new church plant. Non-Christians may not notice that this is a Christian group at first. Its focus is on relationship building. The word Baptist is rarely used, and the club will not be registered as a church. The club may start with a high percentage of non-Christians, but this changes with the longevity of the youth club. These clubs may turn into a church after a couple of years of ministry. Dancing may be allowed. Secular and Christian contemporary music will be used.</p> <p>Example: Incense Youth Club, Lutsk</p>
<p>C6: Small Christ-centered Communities of Secret/Underground Believers</p> <p>Similar to persecuted believers suffering under totalitarian regimes. Due to fear, isolation, or threat of extreme governmental/community legal action or retaliation (including capital punishment), C6 believers worship Christ secretly (individually or perhaps infrequently in small clusters). Many come to Christ through dreams, visions, miracles, radio</p>	<p>B6: Small Group which Meets in an Apartment or Home</p> <p>Some small groups are formed to reach non-Christian youth in their homes. When one of the youth becomes a Christian, he may not feel comfortable in any church and stay in the small group where he feels comfortable. He feels like an outsider. He may join a youth club (B5) if that was an option in his area, but going to a B1 or B2 church is probably not an option. The group has Bible</p>

<p>broadcasts, tracts, Christian witness while abroad, or reading the Bible on their own initiative. C6 (as opposed to C5) believers are usually silent about their faith. C6 is not ideal; God desires his people to witness and have regular fellowship (Heb. 10:25). Nonetheless C6 believers are part of our family in Christ. Though God may call some to a life of suffering, imprisonment, or martyrdom, he may be pleased to have some worship him in secret, at least for a time. C6 believers are perceived as Muslims by the Muslim community and identify themselves as Muslims.</p>	<p>studies, but they will usually address the needs of the students and answer current questions.</p> <p>Example: Non-believers' Small Group, Rivna</p>
<p>* "Insider" pertains to the local Muslim population; "Outsider" pertains to the local non-Muslim population.</p>	<p>** Based on interviews with several youth pastors and pastors from Kiev, Rivna and Lutsk.</p>

EXAMPLES OF B1 TO B6 BAPTIST CHURCHES

One example was chosen for each category of contextualization used in this chart. The churches range from traditional to unorganized.

The B1 church is the Central Baptist Church of Kiev. The church is over 100 years old with over 2,000 people in attendance. Sunday morning worship begins at 10:00 am and normally lasts for 2 hours. Sunday School is available for school age children up to 13 years old during the service. I am not aware of any Baptist churches with nurseries in any category. Communion is held on the first Sunday morning of the month, and is reserved for those who have repented publicly in the church and been baptized. Wine and bread are served in communion. For many years, the wine was served by deacons of the church from 12 goblets to the entire congregation. Services usually include 3 sermons with hymns, traditional choir numbers and public prayers placed in between the sermons. Married women are required to wear head coverings

and dresses to church. People are also required to stand during all prayers and public singing. If the choir's number sings the name of God, the congregation must also stand during the duration of the song. The senior pastor of the church has most of the power in leadership, and delegates responsibilities himself. A Brothers Council will also deal with serious issues of the church. Prayer is highly emphasized as well as chaste living. The church holds four worship services weekly in which members are expected to attend. I attended this church for six months during our first year of service in Kiev.

The B2 church example is Hope Church, which is located in the high-rise residential districts of Kiev. Hope Church is six years old, and planted by American missionaries. I have attended this church for the past three years. The church is part of the Baptist Union, yet has been called a contemporary church by traditionalists. A visiting American would never call this church contemporary. The church also has Sunday morning service at 10 am which lasts two hours. There is only one sermon which tends to be expositional in preaching style. Choruses and hymns are sung in the service and a dedicated prayer time is held at the end of the service for the needs of the congregation. Occasionally, the youth of the church plan and run the service. Guitars are acceptable, and drums are allowed for special youth concerts. Women may wear head coverings if they desire. Communion is still reserved for those who have been baptized. Youth ministry and mentoring is a focus of the church. One hundred and fifty people currently attend the church.

The B3 church example is the Pechersk Church located in downtown Kiev across from the Sports Palace. The church rents a café every Sunday and conducts

several meetings on Sunday to reach the intellectual community of Kiev. The three-year old church uses Power Points for worship and scripture readings. The Pastor of the church was a former engineer. A bulletin is printed every Sunday with sermon notes. A worship team is used to lead choruses, but drums are not encouraged. A tea and cookie fellowship time follows every Sunday morning service. Every Sunday afternoon an English club meets for relationship building with non-Christians. A Christian movie is also shown after the English club meeting. The church also sponsors a bi-weekly Youth Club which targets non-Christian college students where a live band usually plays. Approximately fifty people attend the church.

The B4 church is Calvary Church in Lutsk. The church rents a discothèque near the center of the city every Sunday morning. The church was planted by another B4 church in Lutsk in 2003. The church uses a worship team to lead contemporary choruses. Power Points are also used for the sermon as well as video aids during the sermon. Christian Rock music is an accepted tool for conveying truth in the Sunday morning service. The pastor is a Kiev Theological Seminary graduate who can speak English as well. Expository preaching is used in a contemporary style. Tea and coffee are served before and after the church service. The church is made up of mostly young families with many young children. Approximately one hundred and twenty people attend the church. The church also has many small groups and a drug rehabilitation ministry. The pastor's focus is to develop small groups that can meet the needs of anyone in the community, and that the church is known as a place where people's needs can be met.

The B5 example is the Youth Club of the Incense Church in Rivna. This youth club existed from 1995 to 1997 before any church was organized. A Christian contemporary musical group started the club to reach non-Christians. The leader of the musical group eventually became the pastor of the church in 1999 and has remained the senior pastor of the church. The church hired a youth pastor in 2005 who is now the leader of the youth club. The youth club and the church meet in a non-traditional building. Over 100 youth (ages 16-24) attend the youth club weekly on Saturday nights. The club has a worship band with drums and electric guitars. They use dramas, original videos as well as live interviews to discuss a weekly topic planned by a leadership team. The youth pastor is studying as one of my students in the first youth ministry major in the country. The club itself does not baptize or serve communion, but announces church services and small group Bible studies. The church itself is now a B4 church with 350 in attendance in two Sunday morning services.

The B6 example is a small group in Rivna organized to reach non-Christian youth. The group meets in a small home led by a seminary youth ministry student every Monday night for a couple of hours. The young people have hair and body jewelry that would not be accepted in most Baptist churches. The group spends the first hour talking about life and then the leader directs the group to Bible passages that help answers questions they have been discussing. After the meeting, the group will walk downtown together for a couple of hours. The leader of the group sends text messages to the young people's mobile phones twice a week to remind them about the upcoming meeting with scripture verses. Some of the youth have become

Christians and stayed in the group – not yet feeling comfortable enough to attend a church.

CONCLUSION

Prayerfully, this paper will be a tool for those who are coming to Ukraine to minister with Baptist churches for the first time. Further development of this chart will only help Ukrainians and American alike in understanding the contextualization issues which are involved in church ministry.

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