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## ABSTRACT

Constructing a Kazak Christian Identity Using Collective Memory and Critical Contextualization

Constructing a new identity is at the heart of this study. It develops a system of cultural identity by utilizing collective memory theory and a translation model of critical contextualization to analyze Kazak Christian practices. The reconstituted memory is integrated with contextualized biblical understandings in Alexander Laszlo's four-step synthesis model. The result is social reconstitution of Kazak identity as Kazak Christian identity. A case study regarding Christian marriage to a non-Christian, and participant observations of the complete Kazak Bible publication, and Kazak learning style, are examined and evaluated to understand how Kazak cultural identity influences Christian life and religious practices.

One case and two participant observations demonstrate that Kazak Christians are exposed to Kazak Muslim interpretations of Christian life. Such interpretations emerge from Kazak collective memory generated on the national level by a politically motivated master narrative, and on the local level by commemorative feasts, landscapes, and Kazak language, which are all endowed with Muslim meanings and remembrances of ancestors.

The study asserts that collective memory is manipulated according to which memories are deemed important to local groups and national memory makers. Therefore, Christians are able to establish their identity within Kazak culture and begin to transform society with their new life ways. There is also an indication that Bruce Privratsky's four parameters of collective memory are helpful for understanding Kazak religious beliefs and practices.

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Kris Stewart Kappler

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Dr. Eunice Irwin, Reader

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# Constructing a Kazak Christian Identity

## Using Collective Memory and Critical Contextualization

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Missiology

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Lalsangkima Pachuau, Mentor

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By

Kris Stewart Kappler

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# CHAPTER 1

An Introduction to the Kazak Context

Collective memory is a significant concept for understanding culture and the cultural artifacts in Kazakstan that evoke religious and national memories. This chapter will preview the scope and significance of the study and provide a review of the relevant material. Attention is given to introducing the Kazak[1] context, the theoretical and methodological parameters of the study, and the research problem and thesis.

## A. Experiences in the Kazak Context

My wife and I were commissioned by PNT International in January of 1998 as missionary trainers for Koreans in Seoul. After four years of engaging missionary candidates and university students with a vision for world missions we were convinced of a growing desire in us to participate in a pioneering context where we would be involved with theological education and church planting.

Recognizing the need for missions to Muslims and living in the generation of "911" and terrorism, we decided to seek out a country where Islam was the majority religion and ministry opportunities complemented our skills. We chose Kazakstan because it fit our desires for a pioneering context. The seminary where I would teach, OPECS, was founded by Dr. Lee, Min Cheol, a missionary who worked closely with PNT International.

Between the time we left Korea and arrived in Kazakstan I completed post-graduate coursework in intercultural communications at Asbury Theological Seminary.

[1] Kazak can be spelled with or without an h. For the purpose of this study it is spelled without an h because

During that time I read Bruce Privratsky's book, *Muslim Turkistan*, from which I gained much inspiration to minister among Kazaks. Therefore, I arrived in Kazakstan with a heightened sense of the need to understand the people among whom I would be working.

Until our arrival PNT International participation in Kazakstan was limited to membership on OPECS board of directors and monthly salary help for local Kazak and Russian church planters. What we found when we arrived was that Kazakstan was a nation of multiple ethnicities, and even among Kazaks there were different cultures. Much has changed in the intervening nine years due to immigration of Kazaks from other countries and Russians back to Russia.

We completed language study in Almaty, where the seminary is located. My wife studied Russian because it is the dominant language in society. I studied Kazak because it is the mother tongue of Kazak people and useful for communicating with those living in villages.

We became acquainted with OPECS students and graduates who had planted churches, mostly in Almaty and further south near Shymkent and west near Qyzylorda. I began visiting pastors in their local contexts, traveling by train to remote locations to learn more about ministry and life in the Kazakstan context. I found that many Kazaks and Russians had remarkable testimonies of deliverance from lives of crime, alcoholism, atheism, and Islam. I met former Imams, shamans, and criminals who had spent time in prison. I met a few people who had come to faith in Jesus as a result of dreams. What impressed me most were testimonies of OPECS graduates who had been persecuted for their Christian beliefs. Family members criticized some, others had been beaten, and

there was at least one case of church members who were beaten when thugs entered their worship service to intimidate them.

I was given the task of overseeing Burkit Group churches, comprised of pastors who had graduated from OPECS and the congregations they served. Through conducting seminars, regular pastors meetings, social interaction at mealtimes, and conversations on overnight travel by train I was able to make significant observations of Kazak Christian life. Some of those are shared in the main text of this study.

I approached seminary teaching by trying to discern the learning styles of Kazak and Russian students. The fact that we had separate departments for each group helped that process tremendously. When relating to pastors and local churches I paid attention to voiced frustrations to discern what contextual issues needed to be addressed. I noticed that in formal settings Kazaks would generally not express their opinions. On the other hand they would share passionately in settings they had prepared, and they would speak their mind over a meal and tea.

The issue of dependency permeated ministries among both Kazak and Russian pastors. There were even local opinions expressed in the media that foreigners were paying people to attend church. I felt that with such publicly broadcasted exaggerations, something ought to have been done to increase the credibility of local pastors. At the same time PNT made a major shift in church planting methodology, from traditional churches to church planting movements.

Part of the implementation of CPM (church planting multiplication) methodology was the principle of paying salaries only to trainers of house leaders. Therefore, within one year I ended the practice of paying pastors salaries. I was told to expect that a

majority of pastors who received salaries would leave Burkit Group. I willingly took that risk because I believed most churches were able to pay pastors a small amount, and they could find work if they really needed it. Contrary to my hopes Burkit Group reduced in number of churches from twenty-two to nine during the period from 2008 to 2013. Remarkably, even though Kazak village pastors struggle economically more than Russian pastors in cities, most of the Burkit Group Kazak pastors remained with their congregations and found new ways to provide for their living needs. By God's grace, today the main churches that originally defined Burkit Group are still organized and faithful, in spite of the new Law on Religion that caused the dissolution of the association's legal entity.

From the time salaries were stopped I started paying careful attention to issues of Kazak identity, out of an assumption that Kazak pastors and congregations no longer find themselves in a position where they feel pressured to act in certain ways to avoid jeopardizing their salaries.

I often used Kazak translators when teaching and tried to observe their spiritual journeys. While most of them lead admirable Christian lives, a few surprised me by abandoning their faith, and one started devoting herself to Islam. Those observations led me to consider the efficacy of Christian conversion among Kazaks in general. I determined to integrate the theory of collective memory from my readings of Privratsky, and critical contextualization from my post-graduate coursework. These considerations helped me conclude that the contextualization process among Kazaks will be assisted by understanding collective memory.

**B. Historical Background**

The first thirteen years of Kazakstan's independence witnessed the fastest growth of Christianity in its history. That growth took place primarily among Russians, but Kazaks also responded to the gospel through many Kazak-run churches. A large majority of Kazaks who joined the ranks of new Christians during that time spoke Russian as their first language. In general Kazaks have consistently shown signs of resistance to the gospel message, Christian books and media widely available in the Russian language. Christian literature in the Kazak language is sparse.

Political, economic, and cultural factors may account for Kazak resistance to the gospel and a significant drop in conversion rates after 2004. Politically, government incentives have assisted in repatriating descendants of Kazaks who fled to surrounding countries during the Soviet era. Moreover, government officials have intentionally tried to restrict religious freedoms granted in Kazakstan's founding Constitution. Economically, Kazakstan opened her markets to international trade that caused an influx of foreign products. Culturally, the Kazak people consider themselves Muslims.

Kazak culture is richly influenced by its nomadic history on Central Asia's vast steppe. Images of yurts dotting the landscape engender memories of legendary Kazaks battling foreign invaders while raising families, horses, and sheep. Kazaks tame birds of prey such as eagles and falcons, and wolves are held in honor as lords of the steppe. Kazaks no longer live nomadic lives, but they look to the past with romantic longings, because Russian-enforced sedentary living has deprived them of that part of their history, and increasing globalization won't let them return to it. Since independence from the Soviet Union was achieved without war, post-Soviet reconstruction rather than post-war

rebuilding was necessary. Kazaks began reconstructing a new national identity, establishing their Kazak culture as unique among the former Soviet states.

The politics, economics, and culture surrounding the Kazaks, slows the advancement of the gospel. However, there is a larger story; a metanarrative exists that slows the gospel's advancement. That metanarrative, I suggest, is the Kazak cultural identity. In this study, I propose that this identity is best understood through the Kazaks' collective memory. Identity and memory are closely related. There is an existing collective memory and a need for Christians to consider how their new collective memory will develop. The old and new collective memory relate through processes of critical review, reception and contestation.

The Kazak people have existed on the Central Asian steppes since antiquity, achieving a distinct ethnic identity around the fifteenth century. However, their collective memory unites them with the nomadic hordes of Huns, Mongols and Turks who ruled the steppes long before a Kazak nation emerged. The pre-Kazak peoples provide two major spiritual influences that have contributed to Kazak identity: Tengrism and Islam. In spite of the ancient missionary work by Nestorians, and the Russian Orthodox Church's presence since the 19th century, Christianity cannot be considered a major influence in forming Kazak identity. On the contrary, Christianity seems to have served more as a counter influence as something distinct from Kazak culture.

The influence of Tengrism does not dominate as an organized religion, but it bears the attitudes and images of a nomadic culture. "Tengrism appears to be a monotheist natural religion whose last traces would be found in shamanism" (Laruelle 2006, 3). A.M. Kanagatova, Vice-rector and Doctor of Philosophy of Science with the

International Academy of Business in Almaty, Kazakstan, has contributed to articles focusing on Kazak culture and cross-cultural communication. She writes, "All elements of Kazakh identity including history, society, intellectual, political, and ethical values are based in Tengrism. Every facet (sic) of Kazakh self-understanding is registered in this system" (Kanagatova 2011, 15). Both Laruelle and Kanagatova represent a socio-evolutionist understanding of the development of religion. Their conclusions support Kazak romantic attachments to the past. According to Laruelle,

> [Tengrism] also allows, in urbanized and deeply Russified circles, a hope for reconnecting with the past: nomadism, yurts, cattle breeding, the contact with nature, all those elements that form part of the Kyrgyz and Kazakh national imaginative world which people have tried to rehabilitate since the disappearance of the Soviet Union and its ideology (Laruelle 2006, 4).

In conjunction with the Tengrism influence, Islam includes the presence of Turkistan in the national consciousness, as well as a pilgrimage destination. Construction of a shrine in Turkistan to commemorate the Sufi Muslim saint, Qoja Akhmet Yasawi, served as a unifying presence for Muslim identity among Central Asian peoples. But the city is more than a spiritual center. "Turkistan was also a political center (*orda*) of the Kazak khanate and therefore of all three hordes in their common Kazak identity" (Privratsky 2001, 35).

Simon Braune's excellent scholarly bibliography about the practice of Islam among Kazaks exposes two shortsighted, commonly held conclusions about the Kazak practice of Islam. First is the perception that Kazaks came late to Islam, under the efforts of Catherine the Great who sent Russian-Tatar Muslim missionaries to teach the Kazaks. Braune notes and Privratsky validates a claim that Kazaks came to Islam in the fourteenth century under Ozbek Khan (Privratsky 2001, 19). The other perception is that Kazaks display a nominal, syncretized form of Islam with shamanism. Braune believes this

perception is incorrect and outdated, "I was particularly surprised about the low number of dissertations on the topic. I also found it interesting that, despite recent research many scholars, both in Kazakstan and the U.S., continue to advocate the superficiality of Islam among the Kazaks" (Braune 2005, 4). The claim of nominal Islam has been recently opposed in scholarly publications, most notably by Bruce Privratsky who writes, "Kazaks who intone Valilkhanov's ideas and claim that their old religion was shamanism are confusing it with their domestic cult of ancestor-spirits, for which the Kazak *baqsi* never took responsibility" (Privratsky 2001, 17). Privratsky's research leads us to conclude that Kazak religious practices are more a local contextualization of Islam than a shamanistic residue from antiquity. Ritual meals for Kazak ancestor commemorations and funerary practices, rather than Islam's five pillars, typify Kazak Muslim heritage (Privratsky, 2001). A key point to remember is, "Kazak ancestors are thought of as Muslims" (Privratsky 2001, 19).

Beyond Tengrism and Islam, influence is evident among people who attended Soviet schools prior to Kazakstan's independence. As the state-enforced teaching, atheism served to suppress Islam during the twentieth century. Today many Kazak atheists do not think of themselves as Muslim except in a collective sense, and they decline gospel invitations with hopeless resolve that learned atheism is difficult to unlearn. To a degree, atheism has been discredited due to its collusion with failed Soviet policies and the reality of everyday spiritual experiences. In spite of being discredited, atheism has left Kazak cultural identity somewhat demeaned. "The intrusion of the Soviet state was arguably a central force that informed self-understanding among Central Asians in the twentieth century" (Esenova 2002, 12).

Today Kazakstan claims the largest geographical area in Central Asia, in spite of the fact that its population is estimated at only 65% of her southern neighbor, Uzbekistan. Yet Kazaks trace their heritage to the Uzbeks from whom they separated to form their own ethnicity. Among members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Kazakstan has more and richer land than the others, and the most significant Muslim shrine in Central Asia. Moreover, Kazakstan is the banking center of Central Asia. Kazakstan's president continually reinforces his vision for Kazakstan to become the Tiger of Asia by 2030, a goal of economic competitiveness. Kazakstan has demonstrated more political stability than the other countries in Central Asia; many have experienced either revolutions or oppressive despots in the last twenty years. Nevertheless, Kazaks struggle to harmonize their inherited Soviet influences with a desire to be a truly Kazak nation. This period of transition is characterized by certain crises and efforts to stabilize their socio-political condition as well as cultural identity. A passionate desire to assert Kazak identity characterizes Kazakstan more than any other factor.

On the one hand, part of this identity assertion is a reasonable reaction against seventy years of Soviet oppression. On the other hand, the Kazak people's relatively short history makes them feel vulnerable to foreign pressures. Current national boundaries do not reflect historic ethnic divisions. For example, Turkistan was once a vast region stretching from the Caspian Sea to western China. Now it is only a city in southern Kazakstan. However, Central Asians know the historical significance of ethnic divisions. China enters Kazakstan's eastern border through building pipelines for oil and gas that crisscross the country. To the south, Uzbekistan's president officially declared the ancient Turkish-Mongol king Tamerlane as the founder of Uzbekistan. Tamerlane

ruled all of Central Asia and built the Muslim shrine to Yasawi in the southern Kazakstan city of Turkistan. Since Kazaks were once joined with Uzbeks, a considerable amount of ethnic tension exists between the two groups. To the north, Russians are still the majority who populate Kazakstan's northern borders. Furthermore, Kazakstan's northern railroads continued to be operated by the Russian railroad system fifteen years after independence. Finally, President Nursultan Nazarbayev took a defining step to assert Kazak identity and insulate the culture from foreign pressure by overseeing the construction of a new national capital, Astana. As a beautiful showcase city for Kazakstan, Astana replaces the old capital Almaty and asserts Kazak identity over all other ethnic groups.

Kazakstan is the largest of the former Soviet states, which may be why significant pressure is attached to Kazak cultural identity. External pressure on Kazak identity is matched by internal pressure. Internationally, Russian and English overshadow the Kazak language. Russian remains dominant because of its versatility. English is coveted because of its perceived potential economic benefits. Chinese, Turkish, and Arabic also vie for the attention of young people pursuing their dreams. The Kazak language is not an international medium of communication, but it is a benchmark for Kazak cultural pride. Therefore, among Kazaks there is significant pressure to establish themselves in a rapidly changing world and a need to study identity formation as it relates to biblical faith. Thus, the Kazak people provide us with a unique opportunity to observe the importance of Christian identity formation among a group of people who put a premium on their own ethnic identity. This current study is based within the context of Kazak speakers, primarily those who speak it as their first language, because they have proven to be more resistant to the gospel than Russian-speaking Kazaks.

## C. Review of Literature

Collective memory, as it relates to Kazak identity, came to light in Bruce Privratsky's ethnography, *Muslim Turkistan* (2001). Since the Soviet Union was dismantled, in 1991, Kazak society has raised cultural identity to the level of national priority to counter the effects of 200 years of Russian and Soviet domination. Understandably, Kazaks are trying to revive their identity, and predictably the narrative harkens back to great kings who established the nation. Frameworks of remembrance found in the writings of Halbwachs (1992), Schwartz (1982), Nora (1989), and Olick (1998), and explicated by Privratsky (2001) describe public representations of Kazak identity.

New converts to Christianity find themselves caught between their allegiance to Christ and expectations of Kazak Muslim culture. For them Kazak collective memory presents an overwhelming flood of cultural content. They need a way to apply collective memory so that what is constructed is actually reconstituted Kazak Christian collective memory. Therefore, a review of existing collective memory scholarship will provide an understanding of how cultural identity is perpetuated in existing groups and reconstituted in newly formed groups.

Newly forming Christian communities cannot rely on existing collective memory alone to construct Christian identity. As it is, collective memory includes uniquely Muslim identity content that goes unchallenged without uniquely Christian identity content to counter it. Collective memory also depends on active input from group members. Therefore, a process must be developed to help Kazak Christians understand the Bible and express their allegiance to Christ within their culture. This study looks to

existing scholarship in the area of cross-cultural contextualization of the gospel for that process. Important scholars include Hiebert (2009), Moreau (2012), Bevans (1985), Van Engen (1996), and Niebuhr (1951).

Attention must also be given to the role of religious conversion in forming identity. Conversion is explained from a socio-psychological perspective by Lewis Rambo in *Understanding Religious Conversion* (1993), and from a theological perspective by Timothy Beougher in *Richard Baxter and Conversion* (2007). A study was conducted among Christians in Kazakstan in order to understand how Kazaks understand their conversions to faith in Christ, EP3 (Every Place, Every People, Every Person) qualitative study (2007). Ninian Smart's *Dimensions of the Sacred* (1996) provides a perspective on the boundaries of culture, which broaden our understanding of conversion beyond a narrow spiritual assumption.

Paul Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts* (2009), sheds fresh light on the interdisciplinary nature of missiology with the concept of a system of systems approach to contextualization. This idea holds great promise for integrating collective memory, contextualization, and conversion for the purpose of promoting Christian identity among Kazak Christians. Collective memory is a system of memory reconstitution that directly affects culture and identity. Contextualization is a system of gospel and culture understanding based on agreed upon presuppositions. Conversion is a system of personal, social, and spiritual transformation. Kazak Christian identity is a result of integrating collective memory, contextualization, and conversion into one system of systems, with a goal of developing holistic identity among Kazak Christians. While Hiebert is the inspiration for a systems approach, Ludwig von Bertalanffy introduced and clearly

explicated General System theory. Alexander Laszlo (1997, 2012) described and gave examples of the integrative steps that synthesize sub-systems into a system of systems. Conversion, collective memory, contextualization, and system theory are the four major issues reviewed in this section.

Conversion generally refers to religious change. However, an interdisciplinary approach reveals that conversion takes place from various perspectives, all of which inform our understanding of identity. The EP3 qualitative study (2007) produced many helpful insights into what motives drove Kazaks to seek God, how they characterized their lives after coming to faith in Jesus Christ, and the length of time involved in conversion. Beougher's theological approach helps to describe the spiritual process involved in conversion. Rambo's socio-psychological approach helps Kazaks view conversion as a complex process of increasing awareness and commitment. Smart, on the other hand brings to light the multifaceted nature of conversion.

Ninian Smart's book, *Dimensions of the Sacred* (1996), attributes a chapter to defining and describing each of seven dimensions of religion. Smart's intention to write about religion from a cross-cultural perspective resulted in the "need to reflect on what the boundaries of cultures are" (1996:4). The boundaries of culture also provide useful material for both contextualization and collective memory.

The term *collective memory* has its origin in the writings of Maurice Halbwachs, who inspired a generation of scholars in the area of memory studies. Halbwachs argues, "It is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive" (Halbwachs 1980, 80). He divides thought into two

categories: (a) impressions that come and go within individual consciousness, and (b) memories that are constructed by the groups with whom we associate (Halbwachs 1980, 126). Halbwachs holds firmly to the idea that memory is socially constructed. "Yet it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (Coser 1992, 38). Bruce Privratsky defined collective memory as "a sociopsychological process that evokes a cultural present from its historical sources. Commemoration or 'remembering together' is the public expression of the collective memory, but collective memory is a broader concept and runs deeper. It is a processing mechanism by means of which people reach back into their past, idealizing and criticizing it, and thus articulate a future for themselves. Collective memory is a theory of culture and enculturation that has particular value for the study of religion" (Privratsky 2001, 19).

Barry Schwartz, arguably the foremost American authority on collective memory writes, "Memory is a fundamental property of the mind, an indispensable component of culture, and an essential aspect of tradition. Although individuals alone possess the capacity to remember the past, they never do so singly; they do so with and against others situated in different groups and through the knowledge and symbols that predecessors and contemporaries transmit to them" (Schwartz 2013, 4).

Collective memory is about the past, constructed in the present, and significantly influences the future. Regarding memory makers, Schwartz writes, "Images of the past bear the imprint of the present not because of an impersonal affinity between them but because of the actions of people who feel deeply about both, and in some measure successfully impose their convictions upon contemporaries" (Schwartz 1991, 317).

Schwartz claims that we can "underestimate the present's carrying power by failing to recognize that the same present can sustain different memories and the different presents can sustain the same memory" (Schwartz 2000, 247). What he means is that historical events can be remembered differently by different social groups and in different eras.

Halbwachs eschewed the idea of objective history. "The past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present" (Coser 1992, 40). This is now a popular thought as postmodern historiography challenges some modern myths about objectivity. The present "is not contrasted to the past in the way two neighboring historical periods are distinguished. Rather, the past no longer exists, whereas, for the historian, the two periods have equivalent reality. The memory of a society extends as far as the memory of the groups composing it" (Halbwachs 1980, 82). Schwartz writes in his essay, "Where There's Smoke There's Fire", "Both statements—history is subjective and situationally-dependent; history is objective and situationally transcendent—provoke ambivalence because both are partly but not absolutely true" (Schwartz 2013, 1). Schwartz concluded from his review of American iconography that, "While the results of this study come down on the side of a theory which attributes the importance of social origins to the context in which they are recalled, they do not permit us to go as far as Maurice Halbwachs in denying the objectivity of history" (Schwartz 1982, 396).

Collective memory is an essential component of this study because the Christian message and lifestyle are intended to influence society. If Kazak Christians are to overcome Moffett's perception that chronic numerical weakness kept the ancient Central Asian church from growing to the point where it was able to influence society, then society must be the arena for display of their personal testimonies and transformed

lifestyles (Moffett 1998, 503). Therefore, Christians need a social structure that produces collective memory.

> Collective memory theory is a mediating hypothesis that may yet open up a better dialogue on the way to a general theory of religion. It helps us avoid Durkheim's premise that religion is to be explained without residue from social processes alone, on the one hand, and uncritical theistic doctrines on the other, such as the Jungian aberration, or Karl Barth's clarion call (1928) that true faith is a product of pure revelation, never of the social form of religion. A theory of collective memory works dialogically by acknowledging that religion is experienced as both a social and a spiritual force. To make it one or the other – social for Marx and Durkheim, spiritual for Barth and Jung – is to distort it (Privratsky 2001, 251).

Collective memory is a general term that may refer to culture, commemoration, or even myth. Its usefulness is precisely because it is general. It has its greatest impact as a general term. Attempts to divide collective memory into sub-terms produce helpful insights, but I assert, do not serve the purpose of connecting individual identity to group identity.

Jan Assmann seeks to divide Halbwachs' concept of collective memory into the concepts of cultural and communicative memory. He refers to cultural memory as a collective concept and communicative memory as "those varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications" (Assmann 1997, 212). The distinctions are helpful, but "just as the communicative memory is characterized by its proximity to the everyday, cultural memory is characterized by its distance from [sic] the everyday" (1997, 213). Cultural memory to Assmann is that memory which allows a society to retain its traditions and identity throughout successive generations.

Privratsky addressed this issue when he suggested that the word *culture* often refers to high culture and not lifeways. Therefore, I will continue to use the term *collective memory* because it combines everyday communication with cultural memories. Everyday communication is vital for promoting biblical character and life habits. Biblical faith is more than remembering what God has done in history. Believers must

interact with the Lord and his word on a daily basis in order to build a Christian community. This would not be as vitally important if church growth depended only on procreation, but the emphasis on conversion highlights the need for communicative memory.

Barry Schwartz asserts that there are two categories of the politics of memory based on John Bodnar's *Remaking America*. The first is "state-sponsored commemorations of familiar national events," termed *official memory* and the second is "ethnic, local, and regional communities' recollection of subnational pasts," termed *vernacular memory* (Schwartz 2011, 243). This division of collective memory does not negate certain types of collective memory, and is thus helpful for our discussion.

Whereas later scholars (Schwartz 1991, Jordan 2006, Confino 2007) wrote about agency contributions to memory, Halbwachs speaks only of the group. The term *agency* emphasizes individual contributions to collective memory. Agency answers the questions who, when, where, and how and thus gives a context and a narrative to the remembrance. Schwartz writes that the role of individual agency "has been most commonly ignored in collective memory research" (Schwartz 1991, 317). Ten years later, Wulf Kansteiner adds "most newer studies on memory tend to reduce collective memory to an effect of human agency" (Kansteiner 2002, 182). Most recently, Jenifer Jordan expressed her preference for the term *remembrances* over memory because remembrances invoke the "centrality of agents of memory" (Jordan 2010, 8).

Agency is important in so far as it provides a way for individuals to add meaningfully to the public negotiation of memory. The personal testimony, so common in Christian relationships, is a primary example of agency. However, agency does not

reduce the social nature of memories. In order to avoid falling into a pattern of collected memory (as opposed to collective memory) that is an aggregate of individual memories, I assert that collective memory more adequately serves the purpose of integrating individual memories into a perspective of the past that a group can embrace.

Whereas cultural identity is the overall focus of this study, the integrating principle of system theory refers to a system of identity. Conversion, collective memory and contextualization, sub-systems of identity, each have something to contribute to a fully integrated, holistic identity. Halbwachs argues that "what strikes us about this memory, however, is that resemblances are paramount. When it considers its own past, the group feels strongly that it has remained the same and becomes conscious of its identity through time" (Halbwachs 1980, 85). Erik Erikson, foremost scholar on identity writes, "The term identity expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (Erikson 1959, 102). Jeffrey Olick, editor of *The Collective Memory Reader*, describes collective memory's effect on identity as "the active past that forms our identities" (Olick 1999, 335). He emphasizes the social character of collective memory as "the social and cultural patternings of public and personal memory" (1999, 333). He further emphasizes the negotiated character of collective memory by referring "to public discourses about the past as wholes or to narratives and images of the past that speak in the name of collectivities" (1999, 345). Rebecca Copenhaver writes, "Though memory is not the metaphysical ground of personal identity, it provides first-personal evidence of it" (Copenhaver 2012).

The identity-forming aspect of conversion led Gillespie to define identity in general sociological terms as "knowing where one fits" (Gillespie 1979, 126). Another possibility is that the drag of existing culture can be strong enough to persuade new converts that their decision was somehow manipulated and thus non-binding. Rambo offers a perspective on this, "However exciting the new option may be, the convert may not want to give up past relationships and modes of living that are still in many ways a part of his or her core identity" (Rambo 1993, 54).

Critical contextualization is a method of examining and evaluating cultural practices based on biblical understandings. It is essential for the process of identity formation because of its insistence on biblical congruence (Moreau 2012, 61). V. Bailey Gillespie writes, "Who people really are becomes the biblical identity question" (Gillespie 1979, 127).

Solutions for making the gospel understandable in culture are generally formulated as models of contextualization. Stephen Bevans is most widely known for his *Models of Contextual Theology* (1992, 2002). Scott Moreau has provided a thorough discussion of the various models in *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (2012). Paul Hiebert may be the foremost author on cross-cultural communication of the gospel, and is well known for his formulation of critical contextualization. Hiebert's model may be categorized as a translation model according to Bevans and Moreau, because of the requirement of biblical congruency.

This study presents a challenge to the translation model because once the gospel is understandable in Kazak culture, it must still overcome Muslim concepts and beliefs. The challenge is that Kazaks consider their culture to be Muslim, and Muslims do not

accept the authority of the Bible. Further, Islam came to the Kazaks as a foreign religion and was thoroughly contextualized in Kazak traditional feasts. These two barriers produce an environment where converts to Christianity are considered traitors to the Kazak culture. Membership in a church is seen as stepping away from one's own culture into an isolated sect. On the other hand, collective memory offers a practical way for new Christians to participate in the continuity of Kazak culture and the discontinuity between Islam and Christianity. It is, in a sense, praxis of memory. Kazak Christians may utilize the cultural understandings gleaned through critical contextualization in their daily conversations that form the ongoing negotiations of Kazak memory. They may participate in the Christian community to develop their new identity, and reach out to their family members on the basis of their Kazak identity. For some, the Christian community will serve as a new family.

System theory is the integrating principle in this study. Conversion, collective memory, and critical contextualization are integrated through this approach. Conversion is the act of identity change. Contextualization is the process we follow to understand that change, and collective memory is how we apply that change in our lives. These are all sub-systems that interact with each other to produce a system of identity. System theory comes out of the field of biology, from the writings of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *Perspectives on General System Theory* (1975). However the idea of a system was clearly stated by Aristotle, "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts" and applies directly to the concept of identity. Allen Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research* (2008), demonstrates that constructing systems is another way of thinking interdisciplinarily. He writes, "Holistic thinking involves thinking about the problem as part of a complete

system" (Repko 2008, 46). This study draws from system theory by considering cultural identity as an integration of collective memory, theology, and contextualization, which represent an interdisciplinary approach to, or a system of, identity. Alexander Laszlo (1997, 2012) provides the needed guidance for integrating collective memory, conversion, and contextualization findings so that we arrive at a holistic understanding of Kazak identity.

**Previous Scholarship**

Much of available scholarship on identity comes from the discipline of psychology. Erik Erikson's writings are foremost in that field. However, a system view of identity for cross-cultural communication of the gospel utilizes a more sociological approach. Hiebert's critical contextualization is appealing because of its commitment to exegeting both Scripture and the local context. Critical contextualization is a translation model that describes the theoretical approach to contextualization in this study.

Current scholarship suggesting identity studies are more suited to anthropological models of contextualization, or to Schreiter's two contextual models, are based on a premise that cross-cultural communication ought to start with understanding and considering the needs of the local context. Moreau writes, "The first, the ethnographic contextual model, focuses on identity theologies. It begins with the concrete situation of constant and rapid cultural change of the people and focuses on their need for cultural identity. Agents of ethnographic contextualization intend to build up or affirm an identity among the marginalized or denigrated. It has strong parallels to Bevans's anthropological model" (Moreau 2012, 43).

The multifaceted character of a system approach does not start with one sub-system in a linear process of understanding the gospel in culture. Rather a system tries to integrate sub-systems. So aspects of the local context that come into direct contact with biblical understandings are transformed in communicable ways. Whether we begin with a local context or Scripture is not as significant as holding in tension Scripture's fidelity to Truth and human fidelity to context. A System approach recognizes these fidelity issues and respects input from each sub-system. This is the advantage of a system approach to understanding identity.

**Further Research**

Privratsky's use of collective memory to uncover Kazak *lifeways* proved helpful to the process of reconstituting Kazak identity from a Christian perspective. Collective memory provides space for the present amidst continuity with the past, and a vision for the future. As a result, new movements, such as introducing the gospel, in a culture have a greater chance of being sustained over time.

Hiebert's interest in the system metaphor, describing an interdisciplinary approach to cross-cultural communication of the gospel, allows participating disciplines to make unique contributions toward fully integrated understandings. As such, the term *system* is a useful metaphor for building holistic understandings and emphasizing purpose. Integration of collective memory in a system approach results in placing Christian testimonies in the public arena as legitimate remembrances that can influence local and national narratives. Therefore, future research is needed to understand the nature of influence Christian testimonies have on local and national narratives, to what extent

Christians ought to focus efforts on one or the other, and what determines the negotiating value of a Christian testimony for inclusion in collective memory.

### D. Theoretical and Methodological Approach

The study draws from available data including participant observations, findings of other dissertations, a qualitative research report done in the Kazak context, published materials, and a case study. The case study and participant observations demonstrate important issues of identity change within a culture where bridges and barriers to biblical faith exist. The qualitative research report includes a section designated for Kazak speaking respondents, from which I use survey results regarding the topic of conversion.

I evaluate the case study and two participant observations with critical contextualization principles to discern what the causes of an undesirable result that occurred were. In chapter 8 I perform systems analysis on EP3 survey results regarding Kazak conversion to Christianity. The system analysis includes perspectives from critical contextualization, collective memory and conversion.

Because identity is both a complex way of understanding humans within their various contexts, and is constantly changing, collective memory provides a useful process of reconstituting identity. The purpose of this study is to examine identity formation as it pertains to establishing followers of Jesus Christ[2] through three steps: (1) conversion, (2) integration with a community of believers, (3) and understanding the gospel in culture. These three steps represent spiritual, social, and cultural systems depicted as sub-systems of an overall system of identity. A certain identity corresponds to each sub-system, and

[2] Kazak believers do not use the term *Christian* because Russian Orthodox adherents are generally referred to as such, and Kazaks consider Christianity to be a Russian religion and Jesus to be a Russian god. Rather, Kazaks who follow the historic faith taught in the scriptures, generally understood as a Protestant Evangelical faith, call themselves *believers* or *Jesus' disciples*.

they combine to produce an identity that adequately defines believers within specific socio-cultural contexts. The interworking of sub-systems is intended to highlight both the development of new believers' identity and their contextualized understanding of the gospel in order to make possible relevant communication of the gospel to non-believing members of their culture and society. The interrelationship of sub-systems is critical to holistic identity formation. In the case of Kazak believers, this approach to identity formation charts a pathway for individuals to transition from their Kazak/Muslim identity to Christian/Kazak identity with conflict only where it is essential to retain fidelity to God and Scripture. A person who understands identity in Christ as a system ought to be able to present a confident biblical lifestyle witness while demonstrating God's love to unbelievers, especially family members. Three processes are active during identity change. They are conversion, collective memory and critical contextualization. These three processes encompass construction of social identity and critical review of the gospel in culture. I intend to show how these processes work in parallel to establish a new collective memory that is congruent with biblical understandings and fully Kazak in expression. Collective memory is a process of socially constructing identity. Therefore, the system of identity is a system of systems. The use of system theory conforms to the thought process of Aristotle. "Aristotle's statement, 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts,' is a definition of the basic system problem which is still valid" (Bertalanffy 1975, 149). A system of systems of identity will be delineated using Alexander Laszlo's four-step model of synthesis.

Collective memory has pervasive nationalist tendencies due to the national political narratives that inform it. This is a source of impediments to the gospel.

Therefore, I do not intend to add critical contextualization to it. That would produce an undesirable pluralism. Rather I plan to critique the content of collective memory with critical contextualization. In the Christian community I will analyze the results of critical contextualization and collective memory to give the critical evaluative mechanism an opportunity to evaluate local collective memory. A challenge for Christians is that the national memory remains dominant and the Christian memory will be localized.

A goal of this research is to train Christian Kazaks to contribute their Christian voice to the collective memory of the Christian community and then to society. I want them to first recognize that the existing collective memory significantly informs members of the church. The goal is to have members of the church recognize that perhaps some of their opinions and beliefs may be influenced, as memory consumers, by the nationalist identity and that they would be benefited greatly by taking two distinct actions. First they should engage in critical contextualization with the church. Second they should seek opportunities to share testimonies of what God has done either in their lives or in history, and in this way begin to influence collective memory, as memory makers. So, the synthesis is not between Nationalist/Muslim and Christian/Kazak, but rather it is a synthesis for Christian/Kazak church members who are inundated with the Nationalist/ Muslim collective memory.

The most significant contrast in Kazakstan between the Soviet era and the present is the rejection of soviet civil and religious ideology, termed Rusification. It has been replaced by a new emphasis on Kazak ideology, called Kazakization. It is a constant and dramatic national transformation. A new requirement for government employees to pass a Kazak language fluency exam accounts for a sudden and dramatic increase in Kazak

government employees. This new emphasis on Kazak identity is only heightened by a massive influx of Kazak residents from other countries, and in like manner a massive outflow of Russian and German residents to their respective homelands. Some view this as reactionary, effectively suppressing other ethnic identities. However, Kazak political leaders see it as the time in history to re-establish a place for Kazakstan among the world's nations.

This sudden and often emotion-charged emphasis on Kazak identity calls for a missiological response to the influential role of identity as it applies to religious commitment. Janet Gebelt argues that identity and spirituality are strongly linked, "spirituality is not simply a domain of identity, but rather the central feature around which identity is organized" (Gebelt 2009, 181). Francisco Perlas Dumanig agrees, "in short, there is a tendency for people to move towards spirituality and spirituality leads to person, group, or societal identity" (Dumanig 2011, 322). These views are consistent with the order of creation where humans are formed in God's image, and thus seek to understand their connection with spiritual things.

Dewi Hughes, a contributor to the theological working groups of Lausanne and WEA[3], posits a need for addressing the issue of identity in missions and specifically among new Christian communities: . . . "the relationship between the community of the church and the ethnic community has been neglected in evangelical ecclesiology and missiology to the detriment of the church's life and mission" (Hughes 2007, 331). Relating to one's own ethnic group is precisely where most new Kazak believers struggle. They struggle as a less-reached people group due to their general resistance to the gospel

[3] WEA: World Evangelical Alliance is an international organization committed to advancing the evangelical message. Website: <http://www.worldea.org/>

based on their Muslim identity which has inherent disagreements with Christianity and biblical teachings. "It is surprising that with the heavy emphasis on unreached people groups in the last few decades there is hardly any evidence of thinking about the significance of the collective identity of the groups that need to be reached with the gospel" (Hughes 2007, 337). Hughes' point of view ought to intrigue missionaries who often labor among distinct people groups such as Kazaks. These very groups struggle to rebuild their unique identities under a residual cloud of Marxist social order that sought to homogenize whole populations and Capitalist globalizing movements that promise greater prosperity through homogenized diplomatic, business, and communication networks. This leads to the obvious conclusion that evangelism must take into consideration individual and corporate ethnic identity.

To address identity issues exploration is needed of the Scripture's teaching about the people groups we are trying to reach, the *ethne*. Scholars have unquestionably determined the negative effects of imposing one's culture on those one seeks to lead to Christ. However, in addressing identity we must ask, "are ethnic distinctions important?" In other words, should missionaries seek to preserve a person's ethnic identity along with assisting in the transformation of his or her spiritual identity? If ethnic identity preservation is important, then it will not be enough to avoid cultural imposition while communicating Christian (biblical) faith. Intentionality must be vigorously applied to recognizing, respecting, and affirming the ethnic identities of new converts to Christ.

A cursory reading of the development of ethnic identity in the Old Testament reveals somewhat of the value God attributes to ethnic differences. Ethnic groups were clearly part of God's plan before the tower of Babel was built. Likewise, ethnic groups

are honored before the throne of God at the close of the age. The command to "be fruitful and multiply" was spoken to Adam (Gen. 1:28), Noah (Gen. 9:1, 7), and Abram (Gen. 17:6). It was also prophesied that Ishmael would produce many nations (Gen. 17:20). Jacob received the same message when God renamed him Israel. On the occasion of his renaming, God commanded him to be fruitful, which meant he would become not only a nation but also a community of nations. Each of those moments in history included God's promise to make a community of nations. Isaac (Gen. 28:3) was blessed to be fruitful for the purpose of becoming a community of nations. Jacob (Gen. 48:3, 4) interpreted God's command/promise of fruitfulness leading to multiple ethnicities as applicable to Joseph's sons, who were born of an Egyptian woman. Thus, within Jacob's descendants, according to his understanding, there were to be a multiplicity of nations.

Nimrod's plan of building the Tower of Babel to restrict language diversity and produce prosperity was clearly viewed as an impediment to God's plan. Whereas Babel is often criticized as the place where God cursed the people by making many languages, one must consider the view that creating multiple languages was God's way of protecting sinful people from exalting humans to a place of authority reserved only for God. In a positive light, many languages displayed God's love for diversity, already evident in creation. Many languages also facilitated new ethnicities and thus a diversity of identities. The simple fact that people are recognizable as 'other' by displaying diverse identities is an expression of God's triune nature in which God is one and yet, within that essence relationships among others exist.

Clearly one's language is a major factor in determining identity. If the gospel is best communicated through one common language, there would be no need to learn heart languages. As it is, missionaries agree that one of the greatest compliments one can give to another is to learn their language. This is surely true in Kazakstan where Russian still dominates, but missionaries who visit Kazak groups need to speak Kazak.

The Kazak language is quickly gaining cultural prominence in Kazakstan. However, current laws restricting gospel communication indirectly silence Christians thus impeding Christianity's entrance into Kazak language discourse. Closure of the most prominent Christian publishing house in Kazakstan is evidence of this silencing of the gospel. An untimed and unintentional counter to this trend is the Kazak Bible's first full publication in 2010. Since the Bible is the literary source of Christian identity, it stands to play a significant role in instilling confidence in Christians to communicate their faith to others and interact with non-Christian Kazaks.

The current study focuses on the role of identity, revealed in Kazak Christians' self-understanding as a significant factor in communicating the gospel to non-Christians. This significance stems from two identity sources. First, Kazakstan society produces a commonly accepted Kazak identity. Although one precise all-encompassing Kazak identity cannot be defined, certain traits permeate society and are strongly encouraged by political leaders. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the presence of Kazak Muslim identity has resurfaced as a publicly accepted aspect of Kazak identity. This Muslim identity among Kazaks has religious meaning but tends to be more culturally observed than in more traditional Muslim countries. However, the Kazak Muslim community strongly resists any offer of conversion to Christianity. The greater Kazak Christian

community is another source that produces a new identity, distinguishing Christians from non-Christians. The Kazak Christian community comprises all Kazak churches, house groups, Bible classes, and any group that brings Kazak Christians together in ongoing social relationships.

Second, the process of identity change presents a pathway for Kazak Christians to consider inherent conflicts between Christian identity and Kazak/Muslim socio-cultural identity. The challenge is to chart a new path for the church, to exist within the Kazak society as a sub-group, effectively communicating the gospel through word and deed. It is crucial for them to neither exalt Kazak culture above Christian identity, nor to think of themselves in terms of a Christian ghetto within the Kazak society. They must consider the identity change as a fluid process that continually reinforces and develops their Christian identity while communicating the gospel to non-believing Kazaks by integrating Christian ethical norms into social behavior. This study puts forth collective memory as a process that makes interaction and integration possible.

Jesus and the apostle Paul offer excellent examples of the process of identity change. They both spent a brief time separated from society to clarify their understanding and challenge their belief before presenting the gospel to society. Kazaks who follow their examples will gain a firm grasp of their identity in Christ before reaching out to their ethnic community. Limited separation, I contend, must have temporal/spatial and social components. Temporal/spatial separation refers to an initial time of separating oneself in order to challenge and clarify one's beliefs. Social separation refers to the ongoing identification with a local church where Christians receive daily encouragement to interact with those outside the church.

Nick Hopkins' interview with a British Muslim about faith-based schools highlights the need for minority groups to build their identity: . . ."minority group members need the social space in which they can develop the confident identity that the interviewee regards as the precondition for successful interaction" (Hopkins 2011, 536). His sociological view remarkably describes collective memory's contribution to the church. "In other words, there is a sense in which within-group bonding activity is construed as a precondition for successful participation in bridging network" (Hopkins 2011, 536). This is not a defense of faith-based schools but rather recognition of the necessity of collective memory processes among church members.

Kazaks do not expect to hear the gospel from other Kazaks, especially in the Kazak language. For this reason Kazak believers must have a firm grasp of who they are as Christians if they are to persuasively communicate the gospel to their own people. In other words, Kazak Christians must grasp their new identity in Christ if they are ultimately to succeed in expressing and demonstrating their truest beliefs to those within the greater Kazak society.

Two general identity issues must be considered in regard to Kazaks. They are the national political narrative and the local group narrative. Identities, whether local or national, are formed interdependently, thus one's Kazak heritage and Muslim heritage are bound together in one identity. These issues of Kazak identity often overlap, thus blurring the lines between ethnic and religious realities. A significant result of this blurring is the widely held attitude that all Kazaks are Muslim, and that they cannot escape their Muslim conditioning/heritage. Second, general perceptions of Christianity among Kazaks lead to questionable opinions about churches and individuals who convert

to Christianity. One example is the widely held opinion that Kazak Christians have betrayed both their people and their Muslim heritage. Popular Muslim teachings about the Bible reinforce this attitude. These two issues must be taken into account as Kazak Christians seek to establish churches and advance the gospel among their people.

When considering both the emerging Kazak Christian community and Kazaks in general it will be helpful to recognize that cultural identity is dynamic rather than static, constructed within an ever-changing socio-cultural context. We must also consider identity as a complex of systems that affect Christians not only culturally, but also socially and spiritually. Consideration of these three perspectives as systems will produce a more holistic understanding of identity and facilitate advancing the gospel.

The spiritual aspects of culture and society, cultural understanding of the gospel, and social interaction among Christians and Christians with unbelievers, must all relate to one another. This study utilizes two theories, collective memory and critical contextualization, for the analysis of Kazak identity. It also utilizes survey results of Kazak Christians who shared their perceptions on conversion. Common ground among these theories and survey results will define our system of identity or more specifically, identity change.

I argue that it is this common ground between differing perspectives, or systems, where integration takes place to produce a better understanding of Kazak Christians. Once integration has become a practical process within the church, Christians ought to be able to seek common ground with unbelievers outside the church. The point here is that this study utilizes multiple perspectives of identity change in developing a holistic

understanding of Kazak identity. The outcome, I further argue, will facilitate communicating Christ and a biblical message.

Integrating Kazak identity within the church must be an intentional process. Such a process will adapt biblical messages to be consistent with the identity formation process, thus strengthening the church. Biblical consistency requires an understanding of Kazak collective memory outside the church in terms of its barriers. Then and only then will the doors open to the gospel. Many common barriers are explored in this current study. One case study and two participant observations include marriage between Christians and non-Christians, availability of the Bible in Kazak, and Kazak learning styles. These are utilized to discover what the Bible says so that Kazaks can understand that message. Moreover, Kazakization is introduced in order to equip Christians with an understanding of a current national political narrative that is driving the revival of Kazak cultural identity.

A national political narrative is generally a noble view of the dominant culture promoted by politicians to fulfill some ideological agenda. It is intended to permeate social consciousness, thus captivating the minds of individual people who, in turn, accept it as part of collective memory. If Individuals accept a political narrative, it stands a good chance of being incorporated into the national collective memory because individuals, rather than groups, have the ability to remember (Halbwachs 1980; Privratsky 2001). Individuals who remind each other of the past construct the memories we associate with groups, and they interpret it through frameworks of memory. Therefore, group, or collective, memory is fluid, not static. It is negotiated and not dictated. It is agreed upon rather than enforced.

Currently political narratives are used to diffuse a static view of Kazak culture in Kazakstan. A "1996 official statement of Kazakhstan's state ideology, or as it is formally termed, its state identity" recognizes a multi-ethnic population, while clearly elevating Kazak ethnicity above all others as the source of national patriotism (Olcott 2002, 60). Any such statement by an elected official will likely have a marginalizing effect on other ethnicities. But this is an example of ideology that seems noble, but actually promotes a political agenda. Kazaks, whether political leaders or laypeople, who embrace the idea that Kazak culture defines, or ought to define Kazakstan, have stepped over the line separating healthy ethnic pride and oppressive inequality, thus marginalizing minority peoples and religions. "Expressions such as "the mind of the people" (*haliqting sanasi*), which is then said to be "stored in our memory" (*esimizde qalip qalgan*), are used frequently by Kazakhs to justify not only their Muslim identity but intolerance of those who are different" (Privratsky 2001, 249).

Kazak Christians feel oppressed by the national narrative. They have looked back into their past with gratitude to their ancestors and love for their land, but they see no clear way to receive divine forgiveness or the assurance of heaven. They consider Muhammad, who had no assurance of eternal life, and they are perplexed. They want their descendants to know eternal life as they now have discovered it through faith in Jesus Christ. Because memories of their ancestors are bound up in Muslim frameworks they feel compelled to increase their efforts of self-critical interaction aimed at developing a new identity. They practice collective memory, but those who seek to impose a static Kazak culture on society have position and the power of public persuasion on their side.

Politicians and national leaders have limited ability to impose their ideas on society, but ultimately it is a self-critical view of history that promotes objectivity, at least to some degree. After all, "collective memory which a culture preserves is capable of being negotiated by individuals in various ways" (Privratsky 2001, 250). Taking a self-critical perspective of one's culture seems counterproductive from a political vantage point. However, Christians are learning to do this.

> One of the things the Kazak nation will prove to itself in the 21st century is whether it is capable of sustaining a self-critical experience of its memory of religious things. If it insists on enforcing a rigid idea of group mind, there will be serious consequences for personal liberties and inter-religious relationships in Kazakstan. Turkistan is a Muslim city, but it is ethnically varied and religiously complex. It will join the modern world only if it lets people negotiate their identities (Privratsky 2001, 250).

Privratsky introduces the term, group mind, which simply refers to an agenda driven view of culture and identity that is intended to become part of collective memory. Soviets imposed atheistic education and Marxist philosophy and economics on society. They also imposed strict restrictions on Muslim religious expression. In the end all three of those agendas were overturned. They were not strong enough to supplant the dominant collective memory of Kazaks; only suppress it for a time. Now a Kazakization agenda restricts Christian religious expression. The problem with manipulative agenda driven perspectives is that they are often assumed to be unchallengeable. But it is precisely a self-critical view that searches out facts and seeks the truth, thus producing more accurate contributions to collective memory negotiations. Therefore, a self-critical society seems more likely to avoid the kind of social upheaval seen when Soviet ideology failed.

Christians will do well to exploit this conclusion by promoting self-critical experiences of Kazak memory regarding religious matters. Self-criticism ought to expose

inconsistencies in culture that have been promoted by political agendas, thus giving the gospel entrance into the public discourse. In addition to self-criticism, relationship building is an essential aspect of collective memory. It is generally understood that memory is a highly social activity. Therefore, church planters and church leaders ought to consider ways to make their Christian communities places where relationships are built and sustained. What that process will look like is going to depend on church leaders' ability to involve members in vertical and horizontal relationship building. That is, the church must emphasize intentional relationships that bring people into contact with God, each other, and society. Relationships are essentially the building blocks of collective memory. Therefore, greater frequency of purposeful God-centered interaction among Christians must result in a process of developing Kazak Christian identity.

This study represents identity change from three perspectives: (1) the spiritual, dealing with Christian conversion; (2) the social, focusing on personal transformation within a Christian community; and (3) the cultural, engaging contextualization. Emphasizing the multi-faceted character of identity change demonstrates its dynamic nature. A dynamic process of reconstituting identity provides opportunities for Kazaks to participate as agents in developing their new identity. I assert that this process, utilizing collective memory, engages Kazaks in building their own biblical communities, thus dramatically minimizing foreign footprints on the church. I also assert that the current period of rapid social change is suitable to the kind of self-critical analysis provided by critical contextualization.

Collective memory is a process for observing and facilitating identity change. Commemorations of important people, places, and events are integral parts of collective

memory. They are public participations in the enculturation process. Commemorations are remembrances of a real past, which is remembered according to the accepted narratives of those who participate. It is important to understand from the outset that collective memory is not based on objective views of history, but it focuses on the past. It is a view of the past constructed in the present, with all the aspirations, prejudices and agendas of the present, and it helps group members look hopefully to the future. How collective memory is received, and even contested, determines what is remembered. The goal of this study is to involve the Christian biblical ethos in the changing process and formation of a new identity, rather than promote forms of church planting, evangelism, worship rituals, and rites of passage. However, because collective memory is a social process, contextualized ministry provides input into the change process. Intentional steps must be taken to facilitate collective memory processes in the church because that produced in the greater Kazak society constantly reminds new believers of their Muslim roots and current socio-cultural expectations. Collective memory that develops within a believing community will display two distinctive results. First, it will build believers' confidence that they are members of God's family. Second, they will express biblical love to their unbelieving family members and avoid constructing barriers to gospel communication.

### E. The Research Problem, the Approach, and the Thesis

This section describes some of the prominent challenges facing Kazak churches during the period of time from Kazakstan's independence from the Soviet Union until the present. From these challenges one overriding problem is distilled and considered as the

primary research problem. The thesis incorporates the research problem into a relevant research plan based on the materials reviewed earlier.

**Problems and the Metaproblem**

Missionaries have been working among Kazaks for twenty years with varying degrees of success. One can examine those years to see what methods were used for church planting, gospel presentation, leadership development, micro business, teaching English, and other forms of engaging Kazaks to bring them knowledge of Christ.

In the early years, traditional church planting models were common, primarily because existing religions (Islam and the Russian Orthodox Church) utilized free standing buildings and formally trained professional clerics. The mantra of Kazaks hoping to start churches was, "We must have a building in order to be a legitimate church." Missionaries provided funds to buy buildings for churches in those days because land prices were cheap and supporters felt satisfaction in realizing great benefits from relatively small financial sacrifices. However, unforeseen problems arose using traditional church planting methods. The most prominent was a learned style of leadership. Missionaries who tried to turn over leadership to local pastors found some of those same pastors engaging in despotic behaviors, appropriating church assets for personal gain, moral problems, and questionable teachings. These experiences led some to believe that such church planting methods were the greatest problem facing the young church. Others blamed the inherited Soviet culture, or pressure from Muslim family members as possible key problems.

The new law on religion[4] was promulgated in 2011, requiring churches to comply with many restrictive provisions that impede evangelistic activity. Re-registration is required of all religious organizations, stipulating a minimum of fifty founding members identifying themselves with name, address, and phone number. Compliance by Kazak churches to this provision is very difficult, since many of them average less than fifty members. The new law distinguishes between traditional and non-traditional religions; a distinction that existed in political public opinion long before being codified. Churches started by Protestant missionaries and other religions were labeled sects, because they did not adhere to state-approved Muslim teaching or Russian Orthodox membership. Russian Baptists were considered a sect even though they existed in Kazakstan during the Soviet era. Some understand this labeling of Jesus' followers as a sect, as the main problem that needs to be overcome.

From 2004 to 2008 foreign mission agencies started reducing their financial commitments in Kazakstan in an effort to thwart unhealthy dependency trends. At the same time Kazakstan's economic markets opened to the world, flooding Kazakstan with products and opportunities to earn money. These changes directly affected the church. Fewer people were converted to Christ, fewer churches were planted, and fewer qualified students applied to seminaries. These economic changes forced believers to think about smaller churches, cell groups, and bi-vocational pastors. Several conferences and

[4] The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan about Religious Activity and Religious Associations, draft from October 11, 2011, is translated into English and available at the end of this report in APPENDIX A. It is a comprehensive law that emphasizes national and social stability through approval of traditional religions in order to guard against non-traditional religious activity such as radical Islam, evangelical Christianity, and other religious groups that are considered sources of social instability. This law is being interpreted and enforced in ways that human rights groups oppose. Cf. <www.forum18.org> for articles of human rights infringements.

seminars promoted house church methodology that is currently popular in many countries. This situation also views church planting methodology as the main problem to be solved.

In sum, the first twenty years of evangelical missions in Kazakstan were marked by challenges in the following areas of church development: problems related to contextualization of church planting methodology, leadership development, learned styles of leadership, religious laws, and being labeled as sects. This study recognizes these areas as problematic but sees another metaproblem, the need for understanding identity change. This metaproblem occurs in many areas, most prominently the three focus areas of this study. Certainly church planting methods are related to Kazak identity and might even hope to solve the identity problem indirectly. They are focused primarily on forming churches that can exist within Kazak culture. But contextualizing church planting methods does not directly deal with the need for reconstituting collective identity. Therefore, I assert, the primary issue that must be resolved is the need for reconstituting the current Kazak Muslim identity as fully Kazak and fully Christian. Kazak people cannot think of their past without thinking of their Muslim heritage. Therefore, this study recognizes conversion that causes discontinuity between a Muslim past and a Christian present, collective memory that promotes continuity with the past and the prospect of a reconstituted Kazak identity, and critical contextualization to bring a measure of critical realism based on congruency with biblical understandings. I contend that this approach will help Kazaks recognize their Muslim past, while anchoring their identity in God's transforming work, holding continuity and discontinuity in tension. Full continuity with the past would force Christians to live as Muslims. Likewise a decision for full

discontinuity with the past would force Christians to isolate themselves from their own culture.

Kazak Muslim heritage is inextricably bound up with Kazak identity. The two are often indistinguishable. Russian tsars and Soviets tried to annihilate that identity and now Kazaks are restoring it again. Their aggressive attempts to restore Kazak identity regretfully harken back to Soviet methods of Rusification. Therefore, Kazak Christians are faced with a challenge of leading people away from their Muslim beliefs to follow Christ, while at the same time preserving their Kazak identity. However, preserving Kazak identity must avoid nationalist sentiments which discriminate against non-Kazak citizens and oppose biblical understandings. Therefore, self-critical analysis ought to accompany the question, "What is Kazak?" Therefore, my research question is: How can the Christian faith and community form in Kazakstan to lead people to Christ and preserve Kazak identity?

**Approach**

Many factors bear upon the current Kazak efforts to restore and develop their identity. One is the political narrative. Included in this are stories of great heroes of the past, great traumas of the past and great economic opportunities for present and future. Globalization also influences the revival of Kazak identity (economically, politically, and religiously). The increase in global economic potential also inspires Kazaks to think about an autonomous military that does not depend on Russia, but is able to defend Kazakstan if needed. In other words, influential ideas vie for the attention of society. Kazak people will choose what seems best to them and the collective memory will herald this generation as the one that emerged from a Marxist, atheistic, communist past and

charted a new course. Whatever contributions Christians can make to this new collective memory will have far reaching implications.

To put collective memory into perspective we note "three types of historical factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artifacts according to their own interests" (Kansteiner 2002, 180). These factors favor collective memories that are promulgated through political channels. As a result, national political narratives profoundly influence master narratives.

Kazak Christians most often find themselves as memory consumers; they would scarcely become memory makers if it were not for the nature of Christian testimonies. A testimony bears witness to a Christian's claim about God's acts in creation, and is thus the most convincing tool Christians have for influencing collective memory. Therefore, first hand witnesses of God's supernatural acts identify a person as belonging to God, and bring Christian testimonies into the ongoing conversation of negotiating collective memory.

The most important Christian testimony is a conversion testimony because it demonstrates a change in one's identity. That change can be described as a trauma, not necessarily in the usual negative sense. A cultural trauma is an event or happening in society that brings about a decisive change in one's worldview or tradition. Ron Eyerman writes, "As cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory" (Eyerman 2001, 1). Whether conversion happens over a short or

long period of time, one of the urgent results is that new Christians need to understand their new faith from the perspective of their culture. They need to understand for their own spiritual growth, but more urgently for their existing relationships.

Christians who cannot explain their faith to distraught Muslim family members may experience deep hurt from the reactions of relatives who feel betrayed. Therefore, Christians urgently need to understand the gospel in their culture. This calls for critical contextualization. Critical contextualization is a process of analyzing Scripture and culture, and evaluating culture on the basis of congruency to Scripture. This process of understanding what one believes in relation with one's culture is an enlightening exercise.

The three perspectives just introduced are conversion, collective memory, and critical contextualization. These three answer important questions. Conversion answers the question, whom have I become? Collective memory answers questions about individual and group identity. Critical contextualization answers questions about the gospel's meaning in the Kazak context, for example. It also answers questions about relationships within and outside of the Christian community.

The questions and answers listed above overlap in their meanings and implications. However they deal with unconnected realities about identity. Integration is needed in order to produce a holistic identity. A system approach to integrating identity is utilized in this study. In *General System Theory* Ludwig von Bertalanffy introduced social systems with the metaphor of an organism (Bertalanffy 1975, 75). An organism is "a conceptual model; that is, a construct of cultures as 'systems,' with general principles or laws applying to such entities. The question, then, is empirical, i.e., whether such a

model is useful; leads to explanation of facts, to synthesis of otherwise unconnected data, and to verifiable predictions" (Bertalanffy 1975, 76).

**Thesis**

Despite the church's lack of an extensive historical past, an assumption in collective memory processes, and the flood of existing Muslim collective memories, forming Kazak Christian identity is best understood through the crucial contribution that collective memory makes in developing identity. In other words, God's supernatural transformative role in conversion lays the foundation on which to build new parameters of memory. Moreover, the church is a distinct group within society and as such must communicate a message consistent with its group identity.

Current weaknesses in Kazak churches reveal the effects of secular collective memory. Fear of losing Kazak identity is a cultural norm. This fear is not as strong among believers, but it does account for alarming trends that severely impede advancement of the gospel in Kazakstan. Among those trends is the idea that Kazaks do not need to attend worship service regularly. This nominal trend is a direct transfer from Kazak Muslim practices. This trend is manifested in churches that meet only for weekly worship but have no discipline of biblical education or weekly intensive prayer meetings. One would also expect disciplined efforts to serve the poor, and fellowship designed for sharing testimonies. Nominal trends lead to young believers marrying unbelievers, a drain on believing communities. When a believer marries an unbeliever, rarely does the unbeliever gain faith in Christ. On the contrary, the believing spouse reduces or terminates participation in the believing community.

Kazaks begin with skepticism or attitudes of outright rejection regarding the gospel. These attitudes are formed within culture and are widely accepted. The gospel is thus considered a foreign message to be rejected. Therefore, apologetic discussions may bring to light important truths and differences between Muslim and Christian doctrines, but Kazaks also need to see and experience demonstrations of God's love before they will begin to accept the message. Foreignness is something to be feared because of the potential threat to Kazak identity. Kazak evangelists can fall prey to thinking of the gospel in foreign terms when people remind them of their Muslim heritage. This was demonstrated by a village pastor who had shared the gospel with virtually everyone in his village, with scant success. Afterward he asked the author what he could do since he had already shared the gospel with his whole village. His efforts were admirable, but he obviously thought of the gospel in formulaic terms rather than as a living message. As long as the gospel is simply a formula for eternal life, health, or prosperity, it remains foreign and threatening to Kazak identity. When Kazak evangelists communicate the gospel strictly in formulaic terms they give assent to the idea of a foreign gospel.

Missionaries and Kazak believers must give attention to developing a Kazak Christian identity through a process of self-critical collective memory in order to replace the Kazak Muslim identity that lingers in the minds of many Kazak believers. Most of them would not consider themselves to have retained aspects of their Muslim identity, but significant residues certainly exist. At this point Muslim identity is subordinate to Kazak identity, but the two are inseparable until one becomes a believer. Kazak believers must enact collective memory strategies to strengthen their believing communities, developing social understanding of what they know to be true from the Bible.

## Scope and Limitations of this Study

This dissertation interacts with Kazak identity from the perspectives of conversion, collective memory, and critical contextualization in order to form a holistic understanding of Kazak Christian identity. These perspectives utilize general system theory as an integrating principle. Relevant material related to these three perspectives and the integrating principle was obtained through Asbury Theological Seminary library and its member databases, interlibrary loan and published and unpublished articles available through the Internet. The EP3 research report (Appendix E) was obtained by permission from the EP3 research group in Almaty, Kazakstan. It includes a survey of Kazak responses to questions about Christian conversion. The purpose of incorporating the EP3 report is to help determine what perspectives inform Kazak understanding of conversion.

All of the above mentioned sources were employed to construct a system of Kazak Christian identity for the purpose of helping Kazak Christians further understand the complexities of their conversion experience and their identity as Christians. The research is delimited to Kazak Christians who use Kazak as their first language, largely drawing from students and graduates of OPECS and pastors of Burkit Group. The EP3 report was conducted among students of CALTC seminary. Students who studied at these two seminaries account for a large percentage of Kazak Christian leaders. Kazaks who use Russian as their first language and those who do not speak Kazak were not considered in this research because observable differences from Kazak speakers exist in their cultural understandings.

## Significance of the Study

Previous efforts at contextualization of the gospel in Kazak culture focused on church planting methodology and the use of proverbs. They provided excellent research for their intended purposes, but did not deal with the complexities of cultural identity. This dissertation is the first to incorporate the theory of collective memory as a praxis component in the contextualization process. Utilizing system theory to draw together three strands of identity provides, for the first time, a holistic understanding of Kazak Christian identity. The result is a way for Kazak Christians to confidently live out their beliefs and values within their culture. A significant new insight discovered through this research is that the theory of collective memory obligates Christians to actively share their testimonies as a condition for Christian memories gaining access to the negotiating process of collective memory. In view of the complementary observations that few memory studies have focused on religious subjects, and that religious sentiments permeate human memory, this dissertation can serve as a catalyst for further research in the related disciplines.

# CHAPTER 2

## Collective Memory

Peter L. Berger holds that conversion means social changes must take place. He writes, "Individuals who change their meaning systems must, therefore, change their social relationships" (Berger 2011, 220). This maxim is foundational to all new Christians, especially the Kazaks, the focus of this study. Because of the Kazak Christians' Muslim or atheist background there is a missiological concern about the nature of such changes. Do they require new believers such as relatives and friends to reject their established groups? I contend that such separation is not necessary and could be harmful to families, social associations, and the spread of the gospel. Changing social relationships does not mean or even suggest, extricating a person from his or her Muslim family or separating them from existing non-Christian social associations. It does mean, however, that new Christians need to acquire a biblically grounded understanding of what conversion means to them individually and as members of a local fellowship of believers, as well as the global Christian community with its deep historical roots. It also means that new Christians must acquire skills to express Christ's love to relatives and friends.

A change in one's meaning system is tantamount to changing one's identity. As individual identity is socially constructed, the social changes that accompany conversion describe the new group with which a convert identifies. Often, experiences that cause change are remembered affectively. However, cognitive forces generally come into play when a person considers the nature and ramifications of such a change. Evidenced by

their commemorative feasts and pilgrimages, the affective aspect of religion characterizes the Kazak people more than the cognitive.

Social construction of memory has been termed collective memory, and collective memory is a rapidly developing "into a specialized area of research" (Duling 2011, 1). Alon Confino writes, "The notion of 'memory' has taken its place now as a leading term, recently perhaps *the* leading term, in cultural history" (Confino 1997, 1386). The term collective memory was introduced by sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs (1877 – 1945) who argued, "It is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive" (Halbwachs 1980, 80). Therefore, collective memory can be seen as that river into which no one can step twice. Either the composition of the group changes, people age, and remember differently, or groups cease to exist altogether. A memory is real in the minds of people who belong to groups that perpetuate it, regardless of that particular memory's veracity or historical reality. Instead of being an accurate picture of the past, collective memory is an idea of the past viewed from the present, and that view is particular to a specific group.

People interact with each other through drawing out, reminding, and collaborating to form memories. They remember through their group relations. An individual's memory may be strengthened or even corrected sometimes by his or her being a part of a group. These "others," however, are not just any set of people, rather they are groups who conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of their past" (Assmann 1995, 127). A community's perception is shaped by several factors including the communal experience of the people and their understanding of history. "The present" "is

not contrasted to the past in the way two neighboring historical periods are distinguished. Rather, the past no longer exists, whereas, for the historian, the two periods have equivalent reality. The memory of a society extends as far as the memory of the groups composing it" (Halbwachs 1980, 82).

This argument explains why scant evidence of Central Asian Christianity after 1500 A.D. can be attributed to Christian groups passing away through natural causes or as victims of Tamerlane's genocidal pursuits. Therefore, members of groups who, having the power to perpetuate their memories, will choose to neglect them, forgetting beliefs and events that ought to be remembered. This is certainly true of oral societies, but is also true of literate societies because memory is selective. Things that are important to groups are remembered, and the unimportant things are not. Furthermore, written historical records are by no means exempt from error.

"In effect, there are several collective memories" (Halbwachs 1980, 83). People remember the past differently than it actually happened, which is why people are eager to remember what seems important to them. General Dwight Eisenhower demonstrated this at the end of World War II while liberating prisoners of Nazi concentration camps.

> But the most interesting -- although horrible -- sight that I encountered during the trip was a visit to a German internment camp near Gotha. The things I saw beggar description. While I was touring the camp I encountered three men who had been inmates and by one ruse or another had made their escape. I interviewed them through an interpreter. The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where they [there] were piled up twenty or thirty naked men, killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so. I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda' (Eisenhouwer 1945).

Halbwachs was first influenced by his teacher-philosopher Henri Bergson who wrote about the nature of time. Later he followed sociologist Emile Durkheim (Halbwachs 1992, 3). His association with Durkheim earned him a reputation as a

member of the "so-called Durkheim school" (Emirbayer 1996, 265). Halbwachs' thinking differed on the subject of individual consciousness from philosophers who studied time, such as Bergson, and the psychologists of his day. Whereas they considered memory as thought within individual consciousness, Halbwachs divided thought into two categories: (a) impressions that come and go within individual consciousness, and (b) memories that are constructed by the groups with whom we associate (Halbwachs 1980, 126). The difference is significant since individual consciousness considers the individual as the cause of thoughts (impressions and memories), whereas collective memory considers the negotiation of individual memories as the cause, and groups as the custodians of memory. This difference is all the more significant when considering a person's identity. "The term identity expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (Erikson 1959, 102). Regarding collective memory, Halbwachs argues that "what strikes us about this memory, however, is that resemblances are paramount. When it considers its own past, the group feels strongly that it has remained the same and becomes conscious of its identity through time" (Halbwachs 1980, 85).

As a term of study, *collective memory* continues to wrestle with alternatives such as *social memory*, *national memory*, *cultural memory*, etc. Jennifer A. Jordan advocates another alternative term, *collective remembrance*, which seeks to emphasize agency in the construction of memories. Agency answers the questions who, when, where, and how and provides a narrative attached to a context as a remembrance (Jordan 2006, 8). In contrast, Halbwachs' strong sociological emphasis minimized agency; however, Alon

Confino leans toward the term, *collective mentalities* which "provide a comprehensive view of culture and society that is often missing in the history of memory, whose fragmentary tendency is to focus on distinct memories" (Confino 1997, 1389). What is most important is not so much the term as the methods of interacting with memories; considering their context and "placing them in relation to one another and society as a whole" (Confino 1997, 1390).

In agreement with Jordan, Confino recognizes Jay Winter's "widely accepted points" in his argument "for the importance of agency in the making of memory and for the centrality of social practice in analyzing it" (Confino 2007, 1132). Confino sees "three areas of convergence" that influence holistic construction of identity: "the connection of the political with the social in the history of memory, the issue of reception and evidence, and the relationship among memories within a given society" (Confino 1997, 1392). Similarly, Barry Schwartz argues for two categories of the politics of memory based on John Bodnar's *Remaking America*. The first is "state-sponsored commemorations of familiar national events," termed "official memory" and the second is "ethnic, local, and regional communities' recollection of subnational pasts," termed "vernacular memory" (Schwartz 2011, 243). Furthermore, Confino agrees: "It is obviously important to avoid essentialism and to reject arguments that impose cultural homogeneity on a heterogeneous society" (Confino 1997, 1400).[5]

[5] The term *essentialism* defined by the following two sources, can be harmful when governmental leaders impose one culture on a diverse society. Essentialism: an educational theory that ideas and skills basic to a culture should be taught to all alike by time-tested methods. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/essentialism>.
Essentialism: a doctrine that certain traditional concepts, ideals, and skills are essential to society and should be taught methodically to all students, regardless of individual ability, need, etc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/essentialism>

As agency became normative in defining the collective memory process, the concept of reception emerged as a significant contributor to constructing memory. Many factors go into creating memory, and thus identity. Therefore, whatever is accepted socially as a memory within a group will impact the group and individual identities. Traditionally, memories were received as factual representations of history. Now with an understanding that memories actually emerge from group interaction it may not occur to some that "people and groups fight hard for their stories. Contestation is clearly at the center of both memory and identity" (Olick 1998, 126). On a national level, leaders may promote an ideological agenda with a master narrative. A local example can be taken from what occurred to our organization, OPECS, when people demonstrated outside our main gate. The demonstration, filmed by local network TV cameras, propagated negative ideas about our group, calling it a sect. Both of these examples depict narratives that can be received passively or questioned as to their legitimacy. Because memory is not static, but dynamic and processual, there is a strong implication that memories are valuable enough to be defended. Memory studies benefited greatly from two World Wars in the twentieth century. One of the most widely studied WWII memories is the Holocaust. The memory boom that followed the two world wars facilitated a significant expansion of Halbwachs' idea about memories being localized in groups. "It brought to the fore the subjective experience of people and especially a new form of remembrance, that of the witness and the survivor" (Confino 2006, 1132).

The aforementioned recent scholarship in memory studies highlights the dynamic tensions between national and local memories, as well as group and individual memories. The tension clarifies that memory is created both from top to bottom and from bottom to

top; national to local, and local to national. National memory makers seek to dominate through creating master narratives. Local narratives tend not to dominate, but they can be established as long as their associated groups exist. Local groups also in evaluating any existing evidence that supports a master narrative can decide whether they will accept it. "The dominance of national memory over other memories thus not only excludes other contestants for control over the national identity but maintains the primacy of national over other kinds of identity for primary allegiance" (Olick 1998, 127). It is evident we should not only ask how memories are formed but we should look at ways local and national memory makers influence each other.

In support of this argument, Wulf Kansteiner considers communication between memory makers and memory users as a critical area of needed focus. He states, "We have to further collective memory studies by focusing on the communications among memory makers, memory users, and the visual and discursive objects and traditions of representations" (2002 197). He suggests,

> We should conceptualize collective memory as the result of the interaction among three types of historical factors: intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artifacts according to their own interests (Kansteiner 2002, 180).

Although collective memory is a sociological theory of culture, Christian conversion narratives and Christian recollections of God's interventions in human life include a plethora of testimonies about the spiritual nature of reality. Such narratives become social artifacts when shared in groups, but they also testify to a spiritual reality in nature. "Religion makes claims about the spiritual nature of reality" (Privratsky 2001, 253). Christians who share first-hand accounts of God's interventions in human contexts are adding individual foundational stories to the group's collective memory. Each group

has its own foundational story called a local master narrative. Moreover, the constant addition of first-hand testimonies serves to strengthen the master narrative and add to the group's longevity. These narratives also foster the spawning of new groups. However, first-hand testimonies are difficult to refute, but identity change, whether group or individual, is encouraged through the repetition and multiplicity of testimonies.[6] In many ways, the task of cross-cultural missions, in communicating the gospel, is to provide an opportunity for people to experience the truth and presence of the living God. As a result, cross-cultural missionaries often become part of the local master narrative. The degree that people experience the living God will be reflected in their collective memory.

Collective memory manifests itself in national and local traditions. Discussions about culture and how the past influences the present often refer to tradition; yet tradition is not synonymous with collective memory. Collective memory encompasses much more than tradition. Traditions make people proud of their ethnic identity and include rituals that help people remember their ancestors. Valued by society, traditions are commonly understood as actions that promote ethnic identity and societal stability.

Major dictionaries define tradition by emphasizing either the content or the action that we think about when we encounter the word *tradition*. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary[7] emphasizes action, "the transmission of customs or beliefs from

[6] For this study a testimony is defined as a narrative of God's supernatural interventions in human contexts. These gain credibility when they are clearly described, verifiable, aligned with scripture, and short enough in duration for listeners to remember them. Groups trained to present testimonies publically will benefit from this clarity.

[7] "Tradition." Oxforddictionaries.com. Accessed September 30, 2013. http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/tradition

generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way." Merriam-Webster[8] emphasizes content, "an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior." Even though traditions can and will change over time, people treat them as non-changing parts of culture because of the assumed cultural stability that accompanies them. People tend to strive for cultural stability as opposed to instability, so they resist change even though change is inevitable. Traditions seek to give static expression to beliefs, doctrines, rituals, rules, and institutions. Tradition's goal is to pass on these fixed items to future generations.

Collective memory is fluid, like a river, continually reconstructed by members of society interacting with one another. It describes history in a way that finds approval in the present. It can also voluntarily suppress the past when society is threatened by an oppressor, only to recall that history when the oppression ends. Collective memory is selective, and remembers what is deemed important. What is equally intriguing is that collective memory forgets what is deemed unimportant, embarrassing, and shameful. Collective memory exalts the present by enshrining a perceived past for the sake of creating a glorious future. On the other hand, "history is interested primarily in differences and disregards the resemblances without which there would have been no memory, since the only facts remembered are those having the common trait of belonging to the same consciousness" (Halbwachs 1980, 84).

It is ironic that Halbwachs, killed in a Nazi concentration camp, gained a reputation as the architect of an area of research that many utilize to preserve the memory

[8] "Tradition." Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed September 30, 2013. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tradition

of the Holocaust (Halbwachs 1992, 7). Halbwachs' significant points about collective memory are:

- "The greatest number of memories come back to us when our parents, our friends, or other persons recall them to us" (Halbwachs 1992, 38).
- "Yet it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (Halbwachs 1992, 38).
- "The past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present" (Halbwachs 1992, 40). This is now a popular thought as postmodern historiography challenges some modern myths about objectivity.
- Collective frameworks are "precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society" (Halbwachs 1992, 40).
- "The memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories" (Halbwachs 1992, 40). Agency, as mentioned above, now challenges this point by adding an individual component to collective memory.
- "Memory as it manifests itself in the traditions of the family, of religious groups, and of social classes" (Halbwachs 1992, 40).
- "No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections" (Halbwachs 1992, 43).
- Language is the first social framework of memory. Halbwachs makes this point through his analysis of "aphasia, many degrees of reduction of memories that are its effects" (Halbwachs 1992, 43).

- "Hence, verbal conventions constitute what is at the same time the most elementary and the most stable framework of collective memory" (Halbwachs 1992, 45).
- "One can escape from a society only by opposing to it another society" (Halbwachs 1992, 49).
- "We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated" (Halbwachs 1992, 47).
- "The mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society" (Halbwachs 1992, 51).
- Memories relate and are part of a group rather than a moment in time (Halbwachs 1992, 52).
- "But individual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory, since each impression and each fact, even if it apparently concerns a particular person exclusively, leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that one has thought it over – to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu" (Halbwachs 1992, 53).

Furthermore, in regard to families and domestic groups, which may also include house churches, Halbwachs argues,

> We must acknowledge that the expressions and experiences of individuals who are united by relations of kinship are given their form and a large part of their meaning from those conceptions which we understand and by which we are impressed because of the simple fact that we enter into a domestic group and take part in it (Halbwachs 1992, 56).

In contrast to Privratsky's ethnography of Kazak people in Turkistan that emphasizes collective memory as it is observed and processed in Kazak society,

Halbwachs' comments about family and kinship make it clear that various groups within society produce unique collective memories while remaining members of a larger society. Jesus and his disciples, producing a foundation for the church that resulted in evangelism and cross-cultural communication of the gospel, demonstrate this principle. "That is, the group of believers became the body of Christ, and as such ministered to each other individually and collectively" (Coleman 1993, 40). Moreover, "there was undoubtedly a period in which the family constituted the essential social unity, religion was practiced within its framework, and religious beliefs were perhaps formed within the organization of the family and fashioned in its image" (Halbwachs 1992, 64). Halbwachs makes a surprising comparison between families and other groups with which individuals identify. The comparison illustrates that through "particular images, each of which corresponds to a single fact or circumstance" and through "pronouncing their names" we identify ourselves with the group (Halbwachs 1992, 71). Privratsky's definition of collective memory is as follows,

> Collective memory is a sociopsychological process that evokes a cultural present from its historical sources. Commemoration or "remembering together" is the public expression of the collective memory, but collective memory is a broader concept and runs deeper. It is a processing mechanism by means of which people reach back into their past, idealizing and criticizing it, and thus articulate a future for themselves. Collective memory is a theory of culture and enculturation that has particular value for the study of religion (Privratsky 2001, 19).

He observed the staying power of collective memory among the Kazaks as they were able to retain their religious beliefs in spite of the Soviet suppression of Islam and the regime's insistence on the tenants of atheism.

> I argue only that the affective 'mnemonics of the body' have been one cultural mechanism for the persistence of Kazak religion. When science finds itself surprised that religion is still around after reason was supposed to have won the day, neglect of the affective dimension of culture is probably the source of the problem. In the Soviet period the Kazaks were at an advantage for having learned to live their religion at an affective and non-intellectual level (Privratsky 2001, 22).

Collective memory clearly has significant applications for vigorously retaining religious beliefs. Islam's existence in Kazakstan today testifies to that. This current study explores ways for cross-cultural missionaries to better understand the affective assumptions of Kazak Christians and work to increase awareness of the significant role memory narratives play in constructing Christian identity.

Studies on collective memory such as those conducted by Halbwachs, Privratsky, Schwartz, and others recognize that memories are not exact representations of the past, but constructed within the framework of social influence. These very same memories may be remembered differently at different stages of life. Sometimes memories can be suppressed in order to protect life, and later released to re-establish social stability. The term *cultural present* refers to assumptions and meanings associated with current symbols and forms that exist in society. Barry Schwartz uses the term *cultural present* in his discussion of political memory. He writes, "The theory of the politics of memory properly anchors collective memory in the present. Its error is to underestimate the present's carrying power by failing to recognize that the same present can sustain different memories and the different presents can sustain the same memory" (Schwartz 2011, 247). For example, Americans can understand this phenomenon of cultural present by contemplating the various ways Abraham Lincoln has been remembered. Depending on the era, he has been remembered differently. "The Civil Rights Movement lessened historians and the public's interest in Abraham Lincoln as the Savior of the Union and instead emphasized his role as The Great Emancipator" (Schwartz 2013, 23). Historical sources include written documents from history as well as sources that depict history as it is remembered. Scholarly works, media productions, and politically motivated depictions

of history may be included in historical sources. These 'texts' produce a view of history within the collective memory milieu.

Privratsky clarifies commemoration as "the public expression of the collective memory." Good examples of this include specially arranged celebrations of Kazak history on traditional holidays or the installation of a new statue or shrine depicting a famous Kazak ancestor or king. Often these commemorations include recitations of the Qur'an and a traditional Kazak singer who sings an historical account of Kazak history consistent with government statements. These rituals illustrate that collective memory is deeply embedded in the public consciousness. Typically an examination of political or national memory and local memory reveals that collective memory begins with the present and imposes a perspective of the past consistent with an elevated view of the group in the present. Defining collective memory as a processing mechanism simply categorizes it as a natural or intentional social process. The mechanics includes a four-step process: (a) idealizing (a present exalted view of history not excluding hagiographic tendencies), (b) criticizing (delineating events and people in order to present the past in an acceptable way in the present), (c) articulating (describing a desirable future; and (d) vision casting such as President Nazarbayev's perennial campaign to epitomize Kazakstan as the Tiger of Asia by 2030 A.D.)

Lastly, defining collective memory as a theory of culture and enculturation[9] entails acknowledging the parameters (frameworks) of memory, introducing, reminding and reinforcing culture, and more importantly identity. These parameters include the idea that memory is primarily affective and secondarily cognitive, that memory denotes

[9] "the process by which an individual learns the traditional content of a culture and assimilates its practices and values." "Enculturation." Merriam-Webster.com. Accessed November 30, 2013. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/enculturation

embedded behaviors, and memory is evoked through landscapes and language. Each parameter influences memory affectively and subsequently in cognitive ways (Privratsky 2001, 21).

Through enculturation one acquires an understanding of Kazak culture, including religious sentiments. Without the analysis and evaluation performed in critical contextualization Christians would have much difficulty choosing which religious sentiments to follow. This reality is born out in the case study and participant observations in chapter five. Critical contextualization also helps the enculturation process avoid naïve acceptance of political narratives and blending of Christian beliefs with nationalist attitudes.

The "value of collective memory for the study of religion" is so because religious sentiments permeate culture (Privratsky 2001, 19). Such diffusion is clearly demonstrated by Muslim heritage in Kazak culture. Therefore, one may examine cultural narratives to find religious content. Religions are comprised of rituals, edifices, and landscapes that interject meaning into culture. Moreover, religious meanings attributed to such symbols bind societies together with transcendent values, and the study of religion draws out those meanings by considering the context of each symbol, including historical and current meanings attributed to it.

There is a relationship between group memory and identity. Halbwachs writes, "When it considers its own past, the group feels strongly that it has remained the same and becomes conscious of its identity through time" (1980 85). For Christians, especially new believers, their past is no longer just their ethnic and national past, but the way God has led his people through history. It is important for them to recognize that they have a

rich past, a past that they share with all other Christians, as well as ancient Jews from whom the scriptures originated. The collective memory of the believers, then, is a combination of their national or ethnic memory and the memory of their faith tradition. In the case of the Kazaks, such a combination strengthens their part in the Christian collective memory in ways that develop a truly Kazak Christian identity. Whole new vistas could open up to them of God's wonderful works in history, especially those works that pertain to present sufferings and joys.

> Collective memory theory is a mediating hypothesis that may yet open up a better dialogue on the way to a general theory of religion. It helps us avoid Durkheim's premise that religion is to be explained without residue from social processes alone, on the one hand, and uncritical theistic doctrines on the other, such as the Jungian aberration, or Karl Barth's clarion call (1928) that true faith is a product of pure revelation, never of the social form of religion. A theory of collective memory works dialogically by acknowledging that religion is experienced as both a social and a spiritual force. To make it one or the other – social for Marx and Durkheim, spiritual for Barth and Jung – is to distort it (Privratsky 2001, 251).

This explanation helps clarify the use of collective memory in constructing Christian identity. Although it is a social process, spiritual content is included as it is shared publicly. Christian testimonies can be as much a part of collective memory as political narratives. Nothing is barred that a group or society desires to remember. Collective memory needs a critical evaluation mechanism in order to help churches decide which memories should be remembered and which should be forgotten. This study will consider critical contextualization as that mechanism. However, collective memory provides the material for constructing a new Kazak Christian identity.

# CHAPTER 3

## The Kazaks: A Brief History

Twenty-first century Kazaks are inheritors of a country that bears their name, and it is no small country. Approximately 1,050,000 square miles in size, Kazakstan borders the Caspian Sea to the west and China to the east, Russia to the north, and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to the south. Kazakstan's sheer geographical area and rich natural resources lead to an assumption that the rulers of this country have a place among the world's great peoples. Certainly that is the hope of most Kazaks, but they must first overcome a history of conflict and oppression in their quest to build an identity equal to the impressive land they have inherited. Inherited is an appropriate term because the Soviets gave it up without a fight.

### Christian Seeds, Muslim Roots, and Ethnic Domination in Central Asia

Missiological inquiry into the Kazaks begins with wondering what, if any, Christian influence they encountered in history. A case can be made for such influence in Central Asia during the seventh to fifteenth centuries when Nestorian missionaries traversed Asia from Iraq to China, winning souls to Christ and setting up bishoprics in significant cities. Samuel Moffett describes the Nestorian missionary movement as the single opportunity for Central Asia and China to hear the gospel before, during, and until the end of the great Genghis Khan dynasty. Moffett gives seven reasonable explanations and one debated factor for the weakness of the church in Asia.

> Of the reasons this survey has from time to time suggested for the turbulence of the course of Asian church history – its sudden disappearances, its equally surprising reappearances – the most reasonable perhaps are these seven: geographical isolation, chronic numerical weakness, persecution, the encounter with formidable Asian religions, ethnic introversion, dependence upon

> the state, and the church's own internal divisions. Much debated and often cited is another, eighth factor, the theological (Moffett 1998, 503).

To clarify some of Moffett's reasons for the turbulence, the word *isolation* refers to the geographical distance from bishoprics and lack of communication. It also refers to periods of time without spiritual leadership due to various circumstances. Chronic numerical weakness refers to never growing to the point where the church was able to influence society. Persecution refers to the periodic social and political repression that culminated in wholesale massacres by Tamerlane, the last of the Khan Emperors. Ethnic introversion refers to the foreignness of the Christian message in Central Asia. Apart from dependence upon the state, all of Moffett's suggested weaknesses should be considered as warnings to the church today. Not that they are immediately applicable, but the current restrictive environment has the potential to promote similar weaknesses.

In addition to his reasons for the turbulence, Moffett also records an ancient observation of nominal religious roots in Central Asia. In the following quotation Turkestan identifies the area of land from central Kazakstan to western China. Tashkent is the capitol of Uzbekistan, an overnight southwest journey from Almaty, Kazakstan by train and taxi today.

> Before the division of Turkestan, the sixth khan, Mubarak (in 1266), had professed Islam in Tashkent, the first of the Chagatai line to do so. But his conversion was superficial. Mongols still spurned Arabic and governed themselves not by the Koran but by Mongol law, the yasa of Genghis (Moffet 1998, 481).

Kazaks today still do not learn Arabic even though daily Muslim calls to prayer in Arabic drone out from mosques. Although a revitalization movement exists among young people, most Kazaks are quite nominal in their Islamic practices, compared to the practices of more traditional Muslim nations. Do the Mongol rulers of antiquity still influence the religious practices of Kazakhs? It is hard to say, but Kazak boys continue

to be named after great Mongol rulers. And the ancient power demonstrated by the Khan dynasty pervades the minds of Central Asians, as Rome and Alexander do in the minds of westerners.

Stephen Neill calls the Nestorian mission to Central Asia and China, "one of the most remarkable of Christian adventures, the penetration of China by Nestorian Christians in the seventh century" (Neill 1990, 81). He, along with others, wonders how biblical understandings deeply penetrated those cultures due to the Nestorians' foreignness, especially noting that "Nestorians were monks" (Neill 1990, 83). As such they were easily identified and persecuted when opposing rulers had a taste for religious persecution. He goes on to discuss the Nestorian missions but says nothing about any kind of mass awakening.

According to Neill, "From the beginning of human history, the Central European plain, with its vast extension through Russia to the steppes and deserts of Central Asia, has been what a Roman historian called it, *officina gentium*, a factory of nations" (1990, 53). Ancient peoples who are the Kazaks of today come out of that 'factory of nations'. After 1200 A.D. Mongol hordes dominated the land, thus strongly influencing racial traits and legendary myths. Although Kazaks existed in the steppes of Central Asia during those centuries, they only came into their own as a people after the end of the Mongol empire.

> In 1395 Tamerlane, the warlord of Turko-Mongol descent who founded the Timurid empire, defeated the rivaling Mongol khan Tokhtamis in Central Asia. That moment marked the beginning of major power changes in the region and in the 15th century two new confederations of Turkic nomadic tribes were created, one of which was the Uzbek Khanate. Internal power struggles quickly developed, and soon the Kazakhs split off to form a separate Kazakh Khanate (Olcott 1987, 7-9).

By resisting Uzbek advances the Kazaks achieved their distinct identity and over time became the Kazak people we know today.

Although Islam is firmly established in Kazak collective memory, "Islam had had little foothold among the Kazaks until the Empress Catherine II (reigned 1762-1796), under the mistaken impression that Kazaks were Muslims, ordered schools opened along the borders of the steppe under Kazan Tatar mullahs" (Bacon 1966, 41). Therefore, Tatar mullahs are credited with spreading Islam among Kazaks, even though Kazaks look to Yasawi, the Sufi saint, as a symbol of their Muslim identity.

Russians ruled Kazakstan practically under the Tsars and officially under the Soviets. Either way, "Kazakhs agree that they suffered at Russian hands for more than two centuries and that the reestablishment of the Kazakh state must compensate for that" (Olcott 2002, 53). Without a doubt, Russian influence runs deep in Kazakhstan.

**Soviet Influence in Kazakstan**

Persistence of communist thinking in Central Asia has had the effect of severely hindering the presence of democracy and the spread of Christianity, primarily due to Islam's promotion of religious principles through a collective social structure similar to communism. Nielsen writes, "In the absence of democratic traditions and the dominance of traditionalism in both the political and personal spheres, the prominence of Islam in the political struggle has become a stable and, perhaps, the most regular feature of the social situation in central Asia" (Nielsen 1998, 60). In addition, the people are accustomed to strong authoritative leadership. Therefore, Kazaks resist the entrance of missionaries and small religious groups. In particular, they resist any dissenting voices.

Two main obstacles prevent establishing democracy in Kazakstan: (a) the

existing Communist structures, and (b) the tradition of Islam. Both spurn democratic processes. Nielsen writes, "The Soviet mentality has proved more stable there than anywhere else . . .. According to this logic, the main obstacles to the creation of a democratic society are the surviving, though modified, Communist structures and institutions" (1998, 51). This argument is not an effort to compare Christianity and democracy. The point here is that Central Asians resist democracy because they are rooted politically in Communism, and religiously in Islam. Democracy, on the other hand, is intended to give voice to minorities and opposition parties. Simply put, there is an idea that lingering Communist structures and Islam are barriers to anything new and foreign, and that would include gospel and biblical understanding. The observable fact that one man has served as president of Kazakstan since its inception in 1991, consistently winning every election with over 90 percent of the vote, leads to the conclusion that Kazakstan is not a democracy as westerners understand the term.

Nielsen identifies two important characteristics that apply to Kazakstan. The first is "the priority of the collective over the interests and freedom of the individual, resulting in his or her submission to the collective." The second is, "the authoritarian character of state power" (Nielsen 1998, 52). Both characteristics demonstrate the Kazak government's intention to control its society.

To summarize, the Kazak people are in pursuit of a uniquely Kazak identity that will help them connect to a rich past of powerful rulers, an abundant present characterized by control of a vast geographical area with its accompanying natural resources, and a glorious future of national stability, economic prosperity, peaceful international relationships, and superiority of Kazak/Muslim ethnicity within Kazakstan.

The structures currently in place seek to accomplish these goals through recognizing the collective over individual freedom and authoritarian rule to guarantee state power. These very structures may also produce such weaknesses as ignoring/neglecting human rights, not listening to individual and marginalized voices, making people afraid to speak the truth, distorting history, hindering people from thinking by reducing the freedom to publish and challenge state opinions, producing economic prosperity for a few while the masses stagnate, and creating an elite class of people who enjoy controlling political power.[10]

The above weaknesses are mentioned only because they were commonplace in the former Soviet Union from which Kazakstan emerged. It would be a tragedy for Kazakstanis to unwittingly follow the same course as the Soviets, albeit as Kazaks in place of Russians. In contrast, this epoch, although unnoticed by the vast majority, could be characterized by the gospel of Jesus Christ that offers holistic identity transformation, God's relational love, and the hope of heaven. Inclusion of a gospel perspective in the identity formation process is essential to a systems approach to identity. I assert that this, rather than an ethno-nationalist ideal, will give the Kazak an unshakeable identity.

[10] The following news services have reported, some regularly, human rights abuses or restrictions on religious freedom in Kazakstan: Forum 18 News Service, <http://www.forum18.org/> ; Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/europecentral-asia/kazakhstan>; Amnesty International, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/kazakhstan>; The Real News, <http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=9735 >.

# CHAPTER 4

## The Gospel and Kazak People's Collective Memory

Collective memory refers to life patterns that include traditions, rituals, and ideologies associated with high culture, and the everyday behaviors and expressions that are often left out of discussions about culture. Bruce Privratsky utilized this concept in his ethnological study of the Kazak people. He preferred the term 'collective memory' to 'culture' because he argued it expresses life patterns rather than cultural standards. "As a processual concept, collective memory suggests religious vitality better than the culture concept in both English and Kazak" (Privratsky 2001, 20). He explains the four parameters of collective memory as follows: (a) collective memory is primarily affective, only secondarily cognitive (2001, 21); (b) collective memory is "embodied" (2001, 21); (c) landscape evokes collective memories (2001, 22); and (d) languages store collective memories (2001, 23).

When we arrived in Kazakstan as religious workers we were already sensitive to the fact that many Kazaks resisted Christian teachings. They would tell us that "it is impossible for Kazaks to become Christians" because they are born Muslims. They also said they were "afraid of the cross and felt very uncomfortable when they looked at it" because it represents the Russian Church. They had been taught for generations "Christ is a Russian god." These barriers to the gospel were the first we encountered. We also learned about Russian imperialism, which differed from European imperialism found in Africa and the Americas, because some Russians were also victims of imperialism. The Soviets aggressively took over as imperialistic conquerors without regard for race and

ethnicity. All religions were rejected. Stalin even utilized Orthodox cathedrals for his military, a possible cause of Kazaks' confusion between state and religion. "When Stalin purged all nationalist and religious opposition in the decade between 1927 and 1937, it was the public face of Muslim life that was attacked. All mosques were closed for a time in Turkistan, as everywhere in the USSR." (Privratsky 2001, 2)

In addition to the aforementioned Kazaks' confusion between the Russian regime and the Russian Orthodox Church, the Kazak family context is arguably the greatest impediment to the gospel. When family meals are shared, the embodied actions of prayer remind everyone that they are Muslim. Traditionally the elder at the table will offer a prayer that officially ends the meal or the gathering time around the table. Stories are also told in the family context. Storytelling time often includes the extended family such as uncles, aunts, and grandparents as the elder family members tell stories with more skill and authority. In this context a stream of memories are shared that shape the collective memory of Kazaks from childhood. Their individual identity is bound up with their ethnicity and religion through the family.

It is evident that Kazaks do not respond well to the gospel because their identity is strongly determined by their families. Moreover, beloved family members who feel betrayed inundate Christians with reminders of who they are (were). Kazak women (who make up 80% of the church) find themselves stifled within their own families. Many of them are forbidden to attend church and are beaten when it is discovered they do. In light of this impedance to the gospel, a case can be made for strategic evangelism of the Kazak men in hope that, when converted, they will bring their families to Christ. Then they will

be able to begin to build a collective memory founded on Christ. In that case, collective memory will no longer be an impediment to the gospel but rather a means of advancing it.

**Examples of the Collective Memory Barrier**

The purpose here is to examine the collective memory of the Kazak people to discover what role it plays in closing people's minds to the gospel and biblical understanding. There is much evidence that collective memory has hindered gospel communication among Kazaks. The following list includes public activities that combine to produce a continuous public conversation intended to remind Kazaks they are Muslim, and that foreign cultures and beliefs are not welcome. This is the essence of the public impedance of the gospel. Omitted from this list are the private conversations Kazaks have in their homes that reinforce Muslim identity.

The aforementioned parameters of collective memory are active in developing this identity. Whether it is an emotion one feels when passing a Muslim cemetery, shrine, or mosque, or a comment such as, "Oh Allah" made by an exasperated Kazak sales clerk, or brushing one's face after a meal to receive Allah's blessing, or the customary shaking of hands when greeting someone in public while saying, *as-salaam 'alaykum*, which means 'peace be upon you', and the appropriate response, *wa 'alaykum salaam* which means 'upon you be peace'.

One interesting trend away from this pervasive assumption that being a Kazak means one is a Muslim is the dramatic change in monetary currency. Privratsky reported that the landscape of Turkistan excelled in popularity because it was the capital of the former Kazak kings and is the site of the sacred shrine of the Arab teacher of Islam, Qoja Akhmet Yasawi (Privratsky 2001, 35). That popularity earned images of Turkistan a

place on Kazakstan's currency, thus publicizing national identity for all to see. However, those images have been replaced by new ones featuring Kazakstan's new capital Astana and scenes of nationally renowned geographic wonders. Among the new images is a picture of President Nazarbayev's right hand molded in brass that tourists may touch when they visit the Bayterek tower in Astana. Clearly Kazakstan's currency has been redesigned to extoll President Nursultan Nazarbayev as the founding father of a new Kazakstan rather than Kazak/Muslim heritage. This change helps emphasize Kazakstan's commitment to a secular government, in line with worldwide secular trends, in order to avoid any possible association with worldwide radical Islam.

Cemeteries are part of the commemorative landscape in Kazakstan and are easily seen by train and bus passengers. Russian cemeteries are filled with Christian symbols, whereas Kazak cemeteries are filled with Muslim symbols. These sacred places are often located in easily recognizable areas, somewhat elevated, outside of town. Passing by a cemetery is a reminder of one's Muslim heritage and Muslim ancestors: "Kazak ancestors are thought of as Muslim" (Privratsky 2001, 19). Kazak/Muslim grave markers are visible from a distance, often constructed with bricks in a form that resembles a mosque.

Although Kazakstan is committed to a secular government, mosques tend to be centrally located in cities and villages. Most commuters (university students, the poor and the elderly) ride busses and hear the name of each bus stop announced, "We are preparing to exit at the mosque." Multiple daily broadcasts of Muslim calls to prayer are heard in every city. Since 1991 thousands of mosques have been built or reconstructed, making this a significant social reminder. Although these calls to prayer are in Arabic, they have become part of the social landscape and have become fixed in public memory.

Every time Kazaks hear the call to prayer they are reminded of their Muslim identity. Those who are neither Kazak nor Muslim also hear these calls to prayer, reminding them which ethnic group dominates the public space.

Statues also make up a significant part of the commemorative landscape in Kazakstan. Many statues represent the Kazak rather than the Muslim heritage. These include famous Kazak kings (Khans) majestically riding their stallions, decorated Kazak poets, scholars, and political leaders sculpted in a distinguished fashion, and act as signs directing travelers to the nearest holy shrines. Nonexistent before 1991, these monuments now signify the eager attempt to reinstate Kazak identity after seventy years of Russian attempts to bury it forever through efforts like the Virgin Lands program.[11] In addition, a multitude of cities, roads, and streets have been renamed with Kazak names.

Included in this category is the national capital where Kazak culture is on display. Kazakstan's president has turned "the windswept, but centrally located, provincial city of Akmola--now renamed Astana--into a model twenty-first-century capital" (Olcott 1998, 102). Astana appeared like a beacon out of nowhere declaring a prosperous and peaceful future for Kazakstan. Moreover, some landscapes in Kazakstan evoke memories of the Kazaks' Muslim heritage, while others evoke their history. Together they create a national Kazak/Muslim narrative.

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[11] The Virgin Lands program was but one example of Soviet intrusion that produced resentment among Kazaks. Kazaks do not often voice their resentment publically but it drives their passion to revitalize their identity. "In many ways Kazakhstan's two major ethnic groups live in different countries. To Russians, Kazakhstan is an extension of the Siberian frontier, into which Russia expanded in the eighteenth century and which the Soviet Union developed in several waves of settlement. The Kazak understanding of that same history was forcefully expressed by the Kazak poet Olzhas Suleimenov in the June 8, 1989 *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, where he enumerated all that the Kazakhs had suffered at the hands of the Russians: forced sedentarization at the end of the nineteenth century; political repression on the eve of the revolution; famine during the civil war; near annihilation by Stalin in the 1930s; the final disruption of their traditional culture with Khrushchev's Virgin Lands Program in the 1950s; and, finally, systematic poisoning of their environment by the Soviet military-industrial complex. These wrongs, Suleimenov stated, had cost four million Kazakhs their lives, a debt that history must now repay" (Olcott:1995:24).

Kazak rituals are commemorative in nature, remembering an earlier belief or tradition that helps to establish their identity. Muslim rituals are attended by a local mullah who prays for Allah's blessing. In the case of circumcision, it "is the rite of passage that makes a boy a Muslim (*musilman qilu*), and it is widely observed among the Kazaks as a high ceremonial occasion" (Privratsky 2001, 63). Family and friends attend the official ceremonial feast (*sundet toy*). Circumcision does not require a person to live according to the Law of Moses, but rather to the religion of Abraham (Surah 16, 123). Muslims teach the religion of Abraham as submission to Allah, in contrast to Judeo-Christian faith in YHWH. Some Kazak Christians continue to practice circumcision as a part of Kazak culture rather than a statement of Muslim identity. Those who do (with blessing from a pastor instead of a mullah) must understand that they are assigning a different meaning than Muslims assign to the same form. One can only wonder how Kazak Christians will view circumcision as they develop their identity in Christ.

Kazak identity is not so rigid as to exclude someone because they have not been circumcised. While not circumcising one's son may not actually exclude him from a true Kazak identity, the practice is certainly looked down upon. Therefore, the parents, who are responsible for arranging the ritual, may be shamed more than the son.

Since marriage is the foundation of society, traditions surrounding marriage profoundly influence social identity. Many ethnic groups live as neighbors in Kazakstan. "The influences of 'tradition', 'religion' and parental approval are among those which have been invoked to explain the relatively high rate of endogamy within one's ethnic group which is reported among the Kyrgyz, Kazaks, Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks, Turkmen and

Tajiks" (Lewis 2000, 135). However, in spite of traditional attitudes, there are many examples of intermarriage in Kazakstan.

> But a Kazak woman who marries a non-Kazak man cannot bear Kazak children in the patriline, and if her husband is also non-Muslim, she not only dilutes Kazak "blood" but bears children who are "pagan" (kapir). She is described as "lost" (adasip ketken) or "disappeared" (joq bolip ketken) in ethnic terms, or as a child of hell (tozaq) if religious judgments are applied (Privratsky 2001, 62).

Similarities exist between western church weddings and Kazak weddings as a religious official seals the couple's bond in addition to their civil registration. Kazak weddings reinforce Muslim identity through the marriage where "the couple 'cut' the marriage-covenant with a mullah and drink water" (Privratsky 2001, 96). Included in the ceremony are a Muslim confession of faith, recitation of the Qur'an, and a sermon of exhortation for the new couple to live according to their roles as Muslim husband and wife (Privratsky 2001, 96).

Funerals are also significant for establishing Kazak/Muslim identity. Family members prepare an unthinkable amount of food for all who come to pay respects. A constant stream of guests enter the home for three days, greet grieving family members before moving to another room where tables are prepared with all kinds of food. Once they have eaten, they must leave in order to make room for other arriving guests. Usually tables are set up in two or three rooms. As is customary at all meals, a prayer is spoken and people brush their faces, symbolically receiving Allah's blessing.

The actual funeral service is officiated by an Imam in the yard of the house in order to accommodate more people. The most interesting aspect of the funeral is that all the elder family members and friends gather close to the imam to hear his words, prayers, and reciting of verses from the Qur'an. Others stand behind the elders to observe and listen. There is a sense among the young that someday they too will be elders and stand

near the imam to hear his words. "The only part of the Shariah Law the Kazaks observe strictly is the burial of the dead (*janaza*). Not to receive a proper burial is more unthinkable than lapses of devotion or ritual purity during this life" (Privratsky 2001, 96).

The rituals surrounding circumcision, marriage, and funerals, and the feasts that accompany them, are affective examples of Kazak identity constructed through participation.

Sacrifice holiday (*Korban Ait*) is an important holiday celebration in post-Soviet Kazakstan. Although missionaries use the theme of sacrifice as a bridge to discussing Christ's sacrifice, the analogy stops there. *Korban Ait* commemorates a Muslim rendering of the story found in the Qur'an and the Bible where Abraham tried to sacrifice his son. The Muslim storyline focuses on Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, and Ishmael's willingness to be sacrificed. This holiday captures the attention of the whole society because local bazaars (outdoor markets) become beehives of people buying and selling sheep. Shepherds from the countryside bring in truckloads of sheep for sale. Traffic is often interrupted by people carrying sheep to their cars (some alive and some not). Sheepskins are also for sale.

The other main Muslim holiday observed nationally is Ramadan (*Oraza*) that commemorates Allah's revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad. In my observation this holiday inspires Kazak men, more than any other event, toward devotion to Islam and their Muslim identity. The purpose is to honor God's revelation of the Qur'an, central to the Islamic faith. *Oraza* calls Muslims to fast during daylight hours, and those who complete the thirty-day fast gain a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. These two Muslim holidays make Kazak Muslim identity conspicuous, one by feasting and the other

by fasting. As national holidays, both *Korban Ait* and *Oraza* are included in the national master narrative. As such they create national allegiance through Muslim religious commitment, thus impeding the acceptance of the gospel.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Kazakstan was left void of a viable government, economy, and religion. The new Kazakstan Constitution defended religious freedom, but after missionaries from different religious groups began converting Kazaks, government leaders saw such conversions as a potential threat to national unity and social stability. Their concerns were legitimized by civil unrest taking place in neighboring Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan. The Kazak parliament began voting to restrict religious practice, and two important bills were signed into law in 2005 and 2011. Since the enactments of the 2011 harsh religious law, one instance of a court-ordered burning of religious material was recorded as the first of its kind since Kazakstan's independence from the USSR (Corley 2013). However, these religion laws are not specifically directed against Christians. On the contrary, the Russian Orthodox Church enjoys a high profile position in Kazak society. Officials were targeting non-traditional religions known as sects, which include evangelical Christian groups. The practical result is that people are free to stay within their existing religious groups but are discouraged from trying to proselytize others. In terms of collective memory, laws against religious freedom are the outworking of political leaders preserving national identity. They impede the gospel because they add punishment to existing prejudices.

Language is where collective memory is stored. There is an obvious increase in Kazak language fluency compared to twenty years ago; however, Russian is still the dominant language for politics, business, education, and medicine. Kazak is making a

strong comeback, but it will take time as Russian is seen as valuable among the upper class. Linguists are working to overcome the limited Kazak vocabulary in a variety of subjects, and young people are eager to learn foreign languages. Billboards along highways and in cities even encourage people to learn their mother tongue. A growing number of Russian-speaking Kazaks are learning Kazak or at least helping their children to learn it. Because language stores collective memory one can expect that increased Kazak language use will promote Kazak/Muslim allegiance.

Media is a powerful contributor to collective memory, both for and against the Christian faith. Evangelical Christianity is considered a sect in Kazakstan because it is not associated with the Russian Orthodox Church. Likewise, Muslim groups that do not relate to the government-approved Muslim religion are considered sects, and being labeled a sect means the group is a non-traditional religion. Unfortunately, the Kazak government and society have adopted the attitude that non-traditional religions create instability and are a threat to the Kazak culture. Television news reports often criticize anyone who participates in evangelical churches. Impedance of the gospel comes primarily from opinionated broadcasts that can be passively accepted without verification of evidence. The media also provides many opportunities for the propagation of the gospel for those who know Russian, English, Korean, etc.

This inconclusive list depicts the ways Kazak socio-cultural activity reminds Kazaks of their Muslim heritage and impedes the free communication of the gospel. As Privratsky writes, "Commemoration or 'remembering together' is the public expression of the collective memory" (Privratsky: 2001: 19). Hearing and seeing these reminders is regarded as part of the natural process of collective memory.

**Kazakization**

Since Kazakstan received its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, public officials have embarked on an unofficial nationwide movement to reestablish Kazak culture and identity. Kazakstan literally means the Land of the Kazaks, and sixty-five percent of the population is Kazak. It is reasonable to celebrate this new era of Kazak culture and identity. Celebrating does not impede the gospel, but the creation of a Kazak national narrative when thirty-five percent of the national population is non-Kazak not only impedes the gospel, but suppresses minority cultures.

This nationwide movement is termed Kazakization and is an example of collective memory because this effort is part of the collective memory process. Kazakization is an excellent example of how memory makers dominate the collective memory by constructing a national narrative that suites their desire for a glorious future for Kazakstan.

Persecution is a present reality in Kazakstan for people who belong to non-traditional religious groups including non-approved Muslims, evangelical Christians, and others who practice and propagate their religious beliefs. Regular reporting of non-adherence to the laws governing religion is done by watchdog organizations that publish their findings on the internet. Since the aforementioned new religious law was enacted in October 2011, there has been an expectation of new waves of persecution. The case of persecution in Karaganda[12] is only one example among many. Although persecution

[12] Grace Presbyterian Church in Karaganda, Kazakstan endured a 15-hour raid by national police who searched the church, prevented anyone from leaving, and forced those present to make written statements. The article is available at: <http://www.persecution.org/2007/08/29/why-was-church-in-kazakhstan-subjected-to-15-hour-raid>. These surprise raids have increased, and fines and punishments have been levied since the new Law on Religion was passed in October 2011.

exists in Almaty, the largest city in the country, clearly most of the severe police raids happen in other parts of the country where government officials mostly raid large churches in order to make a statement against the Christian community. This is disturbing because it denies people the right to their own beliefs. This trend is expected to continue, which is why believers must develop ways to avoid persecution and pray for the conversion of government officials.

The policy of Kazakization is only possible because Kazak people monopolize government positions. Some reasons for this may include a Kazak language requirement for employment. Accompanying this movement is a not-so-subtle characteristic of fear among Kazaks. It is the fear of losing their identity. Anything that hints of a foreign threat to Kazak identity is held in suspicion or even targeted as harmful to society. Evangelical Christianity is one of those foreign threats.

**Case Studies and Participatory Observations**

The following case study and participatory observations give further evidence of how Kazak collective memory's impedes the gospel. What these show more than anything is that collective memory has the potential for promotion of the gospel, not only its impedance. To clarify, the current state of gospel resistance in Kazak culture ought not to be attributed to the methods and frameworks of collective memory but rather to the content of collective memory. These examples include the issues of marriage to non-Christians, publication of the complete Bible in Kazak, and Kazak learning styles. The first emphasizes avoidance of shame. The second demonstrates storing divine revelation as collective memory in language form. The third emphasizes affective modes of learning over linear and abstract approaches among Kazak speakers.

## 1. Akgul's Story

This case illustrates and questions how identity is influenced by one's biblical and cultural knowledge. There is an underlying assumption that collective memory produces one's identity through group involvement. Society, a community of Christians, and family are all groups, and each has its own collective memory that creates one's identity. People exist as members of multiple groups, but multiple identities do not often pose serious conflicts that lead to untenable relationships. On the contrary, a person's multiple group involvement produces a holistic human identity for that person. When a member breaks a group's behavioral expectations and belief commitments, there are reactions. Since Kazak culture is thoroughly group oriented, the community may shame individuals who live contrary to group norms. They may also criticize those close to the person.

A Kazak woman who has a Christian daughter named Akgul found herself in a serious dilemma. She would be shamed if her daughter did not marry by age twenty five, and most Kazak men are not interested in a Christian wife.

Akgul was a young woman in her late teens when she came to work for OPECS as a translator. At that time she attended the church where she had come to know Jesus Christ as her Savior and Lord. While Akgul attended the church, there was a pastoral change. Moreover, the woman (Raushan) who had taught her about God's forgiveness and the promise of eternal life was the founder of that church, but she left to pursue employment with another Christian organization, and Sebidullah, a Kazak man, became the pastor of the church.

According to Akgul, her mother had discouraged her from working at OPECS because it was a Christian organization. She wanted Akgul to work in a secular business. She also wanted her to marry a good man, from a good family, who was working at a good job. One day Akgul met an old friend and they started to keep in touch. After some time they started dating. Akgul was living with her mother at the time, but she used a dormitory room at OPECS for many weeks when the relationship with her mother became strained. At first her mother did not like Akgul's boyfriend, because his family was not rich. He was only working as a taxi driver, but later she accepted him. That was the beginning of a long and emotionally eruptive roller coaster ride that culminated in Akgul's marriage to a non-Christian.

Since Akgul was advancing in her translation ability she often interpreted for church association leaders and missionaries during administrative meetings and sometimes difficult disciplinary interviews. She was also asked to translate sermons for the OPECS director in a church he started. Akgul not only developed her translating ability, but she also took on a church leadership position. She started a Bible study with young women in her village and demonstrated growing confidence in her Christian faith and her understanding that Christians must only marry Christians. As a young woman of twenty, like most young believing Kazak women, she prayed for a believing husband. This prayer is more than a hopeful desire; it's a matter of great importance. There are many examples of young women who have prayed for more than five years with no results. In the end they married non-Christians because no Christian men appeared. When that happens, the believing women are usually not permitted to attend church. Sometimes they are not even permitted to read the Bible in their own homes.

Since Akgul had learned so much under the OPECS director, she was sad when he decided to leave Kazakhstan. Akgul disagreed with Mustafa, the new pastor, on theological issues, and she was soon asked to stop leading her Bible study. At that point Akgul started attending Naizabai Zhol, the Kazak church that met in the OPECS building. Pastor Ulmes welcomed Akgul, but she felt uncomfortable at the Naizabai Zhol church. After all, her friends were still at her former church that she had left. Akgul did not take on leadership at Naizabai Zhol church; she attended but did not advance in her faith.

During the time Akgul was struggling with pastor Mustafa's teaching, Akgul's mother began pushing her daughter toward marriage to a man she approved of. Even though she wanted to marry, Akgul vacillated between the extremes of a desire for marriage and the biblical teaching about Christians only marrying Christians. Akgul seemed to desire marriage to a Christian man, but her circumstances pulled her toward a non-Christian. Over a period of two years Akgul demonstrated vacillating behavior. At times she strongly adhered to her biblical understanding that Christians must not marry non-Christians.

This all came to a head about the time Akgul turned twenty five years old, an age that carries cultural significance among Kazaks. A Kazak woman with a daughter older than twenty five feels some shame if she has not found a suitable match for her. Akgul's mother began pushing the marriage with much urgency. Akgul eventually gave in and accepted the engagement along with plans for a wedding feast. However, she could not bring herself to follow through with her mother's plans and decided to run away. The wedding feast was cancelled.

Akgul took a night train to a faraway city where she met an older woman from the Burkit Group who temporarily welcomed her into her home. With Akgul's sudden disappearance her mother began calling everyone she could to search for her daughter. After about a month of living away from home, Akgul suddenly returned to her village and married the young man. Her actions were very surprising from a foreigner's perspective, but may not have surprised Kazak people. Was she giving in to her own culture and denying biblical teaching? Must there be a sharp separation between biblical teaching and Kazak culture? Could there have been a way for her to satisfy both biblical truth and her culture? Now that she seldom attends church does she regret her decision? Does she still consider herself a Christian?

To summarize Akgul's church experience, it is clear that she was influenced by five pastors during six years, and a degree of disappointment accompanied her experience with each one. The two pastors she admired most moved on to other ministries. The other three pastors actually had children who married non-Christians. While it is expected that leaders may disappoint, in most cases they model the corporate identity of their groups. More importantly, the group itself must embody a process that builds a stable and enduring Kazak/Christian identity.

Did Akgul's church experience produce memories in parity with or against her Bible knowledge? Was she forced to choose between her Kazak identity and her Christian identity? Was she forced to choose between her church identity and her family identity? How would she have benefited from understanding Hiebert's "levels of identity" (Hiebert 2009, 74)? According to Hiebert eternal aspects of identity ought to form the

basis of how we look at other people. When temporal aspects are primary "underlying differences will divide us" (Hiebert 2009, 75).

The issue of identity can be further investigated by seeking ways for Christians to demonstrate godly love toward their Muslim parents. At this point there may be little hope for Akgul's mother to become a Christian. Her experience with Christians has likely left her feeling angry and attacked. What could Akgul have done, as a Christian, to show Christ's love to her mother in the process of seeking a husband?

Akgul's collective Christian memory consists of an excellent conversion experience and cognitive understanding of the Bible as God's word. She has mixed memories of church and employment. However, she may have had difficulty articulating a desirable future based on these negative affective and cognitive experiences including having changed church affiliation multiple times as well as enduring undesirable events related to church pastors. She may have also had undesirable experiences relating to both her family, and her society, but her Kazak identity has deeper roots than her Christian identity. Akgul's experience may be viewed as a situation where existing Kazak collective memory motivated her decision to marry a non-Christian rather than follow her recently acquired Bible knowledge about marrying a Christian. In other words, her affective assumptions related to Kazak collective memory were stronger than her affective assumptions related to Christian identity. Moreover, the cognitive dissonance in her Christian understanding resulted in difficulty to rationally engage with her Kazak culture.

## 2. Availability of the Kazak Bible

This participant observation seeks to answer the question, what role does Scripture play with respect to a person's identity? The Bible claims to be the word of God, as does the Qur'an. As the word of God there is an implied relationship with humanity because God is understood as the Creator; therefore, whatever holy book a people choose of their own will substantially informs their identity. The Bible and Qur'an occupy similar status within their respective communities, but the nature of their influences differs. Clearly, holy book status is a significant aspect of identity. Kazaks have only recently begun to enjoy the privilege of a complete Bible in their own language. But now that it is available, what difference will it make? History records many instances of social upheaval related to publication of the Bible in common languages. Typically, the number of new believers increases after a fully translated Bible is available. Persecution also increases. It is not surprising, then, that the first court ordered burning of religious literature was recently broadcast in Kazakstan (Corley 2013). In many respects the situation in Kazakstan is following historical patterns. What then are the important principles of Bible knowledge acquisition that inform collective memory within the Kazak Christian community?

In January 2005 I led a Bible seminar at Hope Church in Bezenbek[13], a city in central Kazakstan. I remember opening my Bible to the Book of Joshua and asking the others to do the same. After a brief uncomfortable pause, pastor Almat and his wife Gaziza[14] said, "We don't have that book in our Bible." I was quite unprepared for such a comment. I had been given a copy of the Kazak Bible but was entirely unaware of its

[13] Hope Church in Bezenbek is a pseudonym
[14] Almat and Gaziza are pseudonyms

deficiencies. At that point I had not progressed sufficiently in language studies to read Kazak. I then learned that entire books were missing from, and only portions of other books were included in, the Kazak Bible. It did, however, contain the four gospels and other important books for communicating the gospel.

Gaziza explained to me that supplements were published whenever new books were translated, but few people owned supplements. It was also plain that those who owned supplements did not bring them to Bible study or church meetings, and some churches kept only a few copies of supplements. Because I had prepared my seminar with the Book of Joshua in mind, I decided to simply tell the story of Joshua and follow up with my prepared teaching points. Some had heard portions of Joshua from the Russian Bible or a Kazak supplement. At least they were not unaware of Israel's entrance into the Promised Land. Kazak Christians' Bible knowledge became a concern of mine after that experience. This concern is for Kazaks to gain biblical knowledge and to grow in their mastery of it, but it is not restricted to only reading and studying the Bible; it also includes producing faithful Bible translations.

We can rejoice in the availability of the first complete publication of the Kazak Bible in 2010. Yet included in this translation is an unsettling rendering of the familial term, "Son of God." Verses such as John 1:34 (Құдайдың рухани Ұлы, God's spiritual Son) and John 1:49 (Сіз Құдайдың рухани Ұлысыз, You are God's spiritual son) exemplify this rendering. While some assert Bible translators err by accommodating Muslim ideas with non-offensive words, Rick Brown of SIL/Wycliffe writes, "Translators are not trying to remove original meanings from the translation that might

offend the audience. On the contrary, their concern is to avoid incorrect meanings" (Brown 2011, 109).

In Kazak, as in many languages, it is hard to find a word that conveys the full meaning intended by a biblical author. To a rapidly growing biblically illiterate American audience even the English phrase, Son of God, does not convey a biblical meaning of Jesus' relationship with the first member of the Godhead (Carson 2012, 85). "In Arabic and in Central Asian languages such as Uzbek, Kazakh, and Turkmen, the words commonly used for a son usually signify a direct biological relationship, an offspring" (Brown 2011, 112). This is not a mere translational matter. "No language, no culture, means by 'Son' what Jesus means in John 5—yet 'Son' is the category Jesus uses, even though nothing in English, or Urdu, or Arabic, prepares us for a Son of God whose relationship with the Father is anything like what the text describes" (Carson 2012, 103). The Bible undergirds Christian faith and therefore must convey biblically correct meanings (and explanations where necessary) because Christian identity is directly impacted by what a person believes.

Certainly not having a complete Bible hinders Bible knowledge acquisition. While I prayed for the full Kazak Bible publication other possible hindrances presented themselves. For example, I began to ask about Kazak reading habits. Do Kazaks who were not educated in Russian-speaking schools enjoy reading books? Did they read the Qur'an before becoming believers? What is their most common source of information other than TV news? Is there a typically Kazak learning style? What cultural expectations do Kazaks have of a holy book?

I found that most Kazaks do not take time to read the Qur'an. This opinion, though not proven, is commonly held and I have not heard it refuted. The Arabic language Qur'an is highly respected in Kazakstan, but few Kazaks know Arabic. Mullahs receive offerings for praying and reciting verses from the Qur'an. Kazak funeral ceremonies include Arabic language prayers and recitations of the Qur'an, but the Kazak people generally do not understand what is being said. If an Arabic version of the Lord's Prayer were substituted for an Arabic Muslim prayer the fact that it would be a prayer in Arabic might be acceptable in the Kazak culture.

How Kazaks view the Qur'an is a starting point for understanding how new Kazak Christians might view the Bible. Kazaks understand the Qur'an as "the divine revelation as transmitted by the Prophet Muhammad" (Dutton 1999, 154). The idea of being transmitted infers Muhammad's role as a conduit. There are stark differences between the meanings of 'transmitted' as it applies to the Qur'an and 'inspired' as it applies to the Bible. The idea of God inspiring biblical authors incorporates culture, personality, and genre into what was written. Therefore, the Bible can be accepted as equally authoritative in different languages as long as the authors' original intentions are preserved. On the other hand, the idea of God transmitting the Qur'an in Arabic leaves Muslims with a sense that what was written is so holy that even the language cannot be changed.[15] Any attempt to translate the Qur'an into other languages is understood as less authoritative than the Arabic Qur'an. Since many Muslims in Kazakstan do not

[15] Since Jesus' identity derives from biblical descriptions of God's nature, great care must be exercised when translating familial terms relating to Him. Tensions surrounding translation of the familial term *Son of God* stem primarily from the two ways of approaching translation. One way favors anthropology and seeks to emphasize the meaning within a specific culture. Another way is textual; seeking to emphasize the biblical authors intended meaning. D.A. Carson provides an excellent critique of Brown and a thorough exposition of the issues involved in translating biblical familial terms in chapter 3 of *Jesus the Son of God* (Carson 2012).

understand Arabic, the Qur'an is not read or studied. Often verses are memorized for the purpose of reciting, but that does not guarantee that the memorizer understands the meaning. The Qur'an, to Kazaks, fits in the category of a revered, holy object rather than a book to be read and understood. Any influence upon identity is by association rather than by transformation.

In contrast, the Bible is intended to influence identity both by association and by transformation. Therefore, the Bible must be read, understood, and applied in daily life. Since the Bible is the basis of belief in Jesus Christ, its message significantly contributes to Christian identity and culture. Kazaks who begin with a Muslim understanding of the Qur'an may understandably view the Bible as they formerly viewed the Qur'an. However, because Christians hold different expectations of their holy book than Muslims do of theirs, one must ask the question, where in Kazak culture do people expect to find divine instruction for daily living? This is a contextual question and will be addressed later. As it is, the Kazak language Bible is a significant addition to the Kazak Christian community because it is divine revelation embodied in the local language where collective memories are stored. As such, the Bible is foundational to the Kazak Christian Church. It is a historical document that links Christians with God in history and lends credibility to genuine Christian experiences today. Biblical passages can and do find their way into Christian testimonies that form the basis of the local master narrative, for local Christian communities. Old Testament texts like Joshua are affective examples of God working in the past. These examples can help Kazak Christians better understand the Christian faith.

A holy book bears directly on a person's identity; moreover, it helps define who they are. It also explains how they became the people they are. Although many people cannot read the Qur'an, they derive their identity from it because it is considered to be God's revelation within their community. It is part of their social landscape. They may look to an imam for religious instruction but think that he derives spiritual authority from the Qur'an. That is why Muslims can become outraged when a copy of the Qur'an is defiled, and why burning a Qur'an can become an international incident.

The Bible explains its own influence on identity when it refers to Christians who know scripture using the generic term *man of God* (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Any believer in Christ takes on Christ's identity and joins a lineage of faith that begins with Abel. Once a person understands the power of God's word to transform their life, they have the distinct possibility of becoming a person of the book. John Wesley referred to himself as a "man of one book," the Bible. As an Englishman, he lived in the English culture, and read the Bible in English (not Greek). In other words, he integrated the Bible and his cultural identity. In his life the Bible was a symbol of his identity.

It is reasonable to assume that the same could be said for anyone who trusts the Bible as God's Word, meditating on its verses, reading it regularly, searching its pages for answers to life's questions, and then willingly conforming to its teachings in his or her daily life. That identity must also be developed within the person's culture, and communicated. For these reasons the Kazak Bible may be considered the single most significant contribution to Kazak Christian collective memory.

To summarize, the Bible fits more than just the category of a collective landscape for believers, commemorating the God of the universe. It fits every aspect of Privratsky's

collective memory framework. It appeals first to Kazak affective assumptions of what a holy book is and goes further by its affective appeal based on the Kazak language, as it opens relationship opportunities with the living God through what is written and how it is experienced. It appeals to a Kazak cognitive need to explain and interpret God's revelation. Following the biblical instructions for incorporating the word of God into everyday life creates embedded behavior, a commemorative landscape, and language to store collective memory. Recent publication of the complete Bible can be seen as a landmark historical event for Kazak believers and for the Kazak people.

In order to integrate the Bible into the collective memory of the Kazak people, certain suggestions may prove helpful. First, there is a need to avoid the prevalent Muslim conception of a holy book as something to be respected but not expected to facilitate personal transformation. Kazaks have demonstrated a willingness to read Christian literature, but a cultural affinity to storytelling combined with globalization's utilization of media technology may lend credibility to the technique of Bible listening groups. These can be audio listening groups facilitated by internet streaming, Bible CDs, or MP3 players. Readers who select passages and read them aloud to a group may just as easily conduct such groups. In either situation, discussing what was heard follows listening. These groups do not end by only allowing participants to verify what they heard by accessing their Bibles. Rather, participants are asked to keep a journal of what was learned. I have facilitated listening groups on three occasions, sensing they produce new insights into the Bible text. My observation is that people hear a story differently than they read it. This method of Bible hearing has substantial potential for contributing to a biblical collective memory in the church.

Learning biblical languages will be a significant milestone for Kazak believers to reach. While the Kazak Bible is fully accepted as divinely inspired, unlike the Kazak Qur'an, knowledge of biblical languages will help Kazaks refine and update the current translation of the Bible. Knowledge of biblical Hebrew and Greek will serve the church well by helping Kazak scholars communicate with Bible scholars from other countries, thus developing their collective memory as members of the international Christian community. Knowledge of biblical languages will also open up significant dialogue with Russian Orthodox scholars as religious peers rather than the current relationship categorized as a traditional religion versus a sect.

**3. Participant Observation of Learning Styles**

A study of learning styles can elicit an expansive discussion about psychological evaluations and approaches. However, the scope of this current study does not include psychological perspectives. Rather it is concerned with a sociological perspective, more specifically an examination of collective memory. Memory and learning are directly related. All learning assumes memory, and vice versa. And collective memory bears directly upon how people learn. The primary local collective is the family. On a national level political institutions are primary, including strong memory makers who seek to create national identity. Observations made at various teaching venues (OPECS, South Kazakhstan churches, and Towering Tree Retreat Center) reveal Kazak learning style as a significant collective memory issue. I participated as a teacher and observed other teachers that included resident and non-resident missionaries, visiting professors, and local teachers at each location. Almost all Kazak students who studied in the Kazak department of OPECS completed their secondary education in villages where the Kazak

language was used in public education. On the other hand, Kazak students who studied in the Russian department generally completed their secondary education in metropolitan Russian language schools. An understanding of Kazak learning styles is informed by historical tensions between Kazak and Russian cultures, and the language hegemony in Kazakstan public education.

OPECS served as a laboratory for understanding different learning styles. Students who had received primary and secondary education from Russian schools differed significantly from those educated in Kazak schools. OPECS staff included translators who were fluent in Russian and Kazak. Typical daily schedules included two teachers, one in each department, teaching at the same time. Classes were three hours long and included tea breaks. After lunch the same two teachers switched departments and presented their lectures again. Throughout the day teachers were able to interact with students representing different cultures. Tea times and lunch provided opportunities to talk. There were no discussions about a policy for recognizing and addressing learning styles. However, such a discussion would have proven very helpful for contextualizing lectures. Instead of officially recognizing different learning styles, teachers were left to themselves to modify their lectures.

One course I taught at OPECS was History of Christian Thought, and its contents included a chronological series of biographies about great Christian leaders who introduced or defended significant Church doctrines. I found that Russian department students were able to write essays about their favorite doctrines, and students in the Kazak department preferred giving verbal testimonies about the lives of their favorite Christian leaders. Final exams were formatted with multiple-choice biographical and

doctrinal questions. Although I had not received training in storytelling or teaching oral learners, I felt that a discovery had been made, that is, attention must be given to alternate learning styles.

Furthermore, I recognized an interesting similarity between the experience with Russians and Kazaks compared to my former experience as pastor of two churches in rural Michigan, USA. One congregation was made up of school teachers, business owners, and retired transplants from Detroit. The other congregation was primarily comprised of active and retired dairy farmers. School teachers appreciated sermons with three points and visitation by appointment, whereas dairy farmers appreciated narrative stories and pastoral visits in corn fields or dairy barns. Of course, cultural differences were minute in rural Michigan, but the general principle was the same. Russian and Kazak cultural differences require different preaching and teaching approaches.

In 2007 a house church training event was held for OPECS students and Burkit Group pastors. The purpose of the seminar was to introduce house church planting methodology and encourage pastors to adopt it in their ministries. Pastors participated in the entire conference, but students attended only briefly because the OPECS curriculum already included it. The conference was held at Tall Tree Retreat Center with natural springs so that participants could enjoy the health benefits. It was greatly appreciated by the pastors, many of whom had poor health and sore joints. Two things contributed to the pastors' excellent comprehension of the new church-planting concept. First, participants were asked to apply what was taught by writing a plan on poster paper for their own church to incorporate a house church method. Once they had produced a comprehensive plan they were given opportunities to explain their plans to the group. Fun times also

included dramatic skits depicting evangelistic encounters. These non-formal adult-learning techniques resulted in learners acquiring sufficient understanding of the subject matter to take action.

Because all of the participants ministered in traditional church settings, they opposed house church methodology as a primary way to structure their churches. However, many Kazak churches are already small (less than 35 members) and can easily incorporate house church methodology if interest grows. Increasing government restrictions on churches have also pressured pastors to think of new ways of doing ministry. The house church method provides helpful insights for traditional church pastors to adjust their ministries. Even those who are committed to a traditional model of church planting now have useful ideas to help them minister in an environment of persecution.

From 2004 to 2012 I travelled frequently to villages for the purpose of meeting with pastors and providing teaching and training. Those opportunities included worship and prayer led by villagers, counseling for pastors in crisis, teaching times mingled with discussion about the topic at hand, eating and sleeping as a group, in a village setting that did not include city plumbing. The lack of city plumbing is the norm in Kazakstan villages, meaning humble hosts meet their guests with a pitcher of water and a towel. The ritual of cleaning one's hands and face made for a pleasant entrance. Every aspect of those meetings was in conformity with Kazak cultural patterns, and, as a result, learning took place more effectively. In village training the Kazak language was used almost exclusively. Lecture times were preceded by robust worship in the heart language of the people. In that context I was reminded of the advice Kazak pastors had offered to me

back in Almaty, "If you come to preach in the village, do not use Russian." It wasn't a request but a warning. I realized that most worship at OPECS was conducted in Russian language because of the multiple ethnicities represented among students.

These experiences highlight the need for recognizing the importance of various learning styles in formal classroom settings, informal conference/seminar settings and village settings. The same can be assumed, even more profoundly, in non-formal settings. If attention to learning styles helps people understand biblical truth more adequately, we can conclude that these same learning styles are useful tools for developing Christian identity through a collective memory process.

Three aspects of collective memory should be considered when applying it to Kazak learning styles. They include the affective nature of collective memory, embedded behaviors, and language for the storage of collective memory. Because collective memory is primarily affective and families wield enormous influence on what is remembered, Kazak learning styles will continue to emphasize methods that appeal to emotions, such as storytelling. Kazaks learn how to show respect through embedded behaviors. They show respect for their ancestors, elders, and guests. Simple yet profound behavioral manners such as brushing the face to signify receiving Allah's blessing and insisting that an elder or a guest sit at the head of the table signify respect for age and a desire for harmonious relationships with neighbors and foreigners. Furthermore, because embedded behaviors are employed to remember and learn how to show respect for others, they must also be used to show respect for oneself by remembering what has been taught.

Language is considered the storage place for collective memories. Kazak language was developed for centuries as a nomadic Turkish language. Due to the dominance of the Russian language for the last 200 years, the Kazak language did not keep pace in the areas of technology, medicine, politics, etc., until Kazakstan's independence. As mentioned, the current revival of the Kazak language is characterized by a diligent effort to increase Kazak language vocabulary. In the short time from 2004 to 2013 I have noticed a dramatic increase of new vocabulary in public discourse. The drive among Kazaks to re-learn their mother tongue started out as a national narrative and has now blossomed into local allegiance to that narrative, primarily through the public education system. Alongside the obvious interest in foreign languages, fluency in Kazak has become an important national goal. This trend will result in greater longevity for the Kazak culture. A growing emphasis on Kazak language is not necessarily helpful to Islam which insists on an Arabic Qur'an. On the other hand, evangelical Christians are committed to using the Kazak Bible. To date, there is no evidence that the Russian Orthodox Church has authorized a Kazak version of the Bible. Attempts have been made, though not successful.

When family and national institutions produce a harmonious narrative collective memory constructs an unusually resilient cultural identity. But they are not often in harmony. For Kazak people their national/local harmony appeared when Kazak identity was attacked. As long as that period of oppression lives in the memory of Kazaks, there will likely be cohesion in their effort to build a national identity. But now it is already twenty–two years since Kazakstan received its independence, which means a young

generation of Kazaks that did not directly experience Soviet oppression is entering the marketplace of business and politics.

The current generation looks to president Nazarbayev as the beginning of a new era of prosperity, a new era of Kazak identity with a global component. The Bolashak Program characterizes the hopes and dreams of this generation more than anything else. Its goal is to train a new generation of national leaders by sending top students to the best universities around the world. With this new generation some divergence is taking place between local and national collective memory. Families still consist of multi-generational relationships where parents and grandparents remember Soviet oppression. However, on the national level people are looking to a prosperous future.

Will this new generation abandon their culturally conditioned semi-oral learning styles? That remains to be seen. When one considers the role of family in constructing learning styles it seems likely that oral learning styles will prevail in Kazak culture for generations to come.

Just as Kazaks construct religious understanding primarily through affective means, Kazak learning styles reveal the same tendency. This case focuses on examples of Kazak oral learning styles, which call for new teaching methods rather than linear thinking and essays. Kazak culture prefers oral learning because it is the way people remember within their families. Much of Kazak history and culture is remembered during conversations over a few cups of tea. Intergenerational family sharing at mealtimes and tea times instills a deep sense of rootedness within young people.

Kazak culture has seen oppression for the better part of the last 200 years. It is a culture of indirect meaning where people are able to 'connect the dots' in a conversation

without saying specifically what they mean. It is a culture that comes out of a nomadic past and values visiting family and friends more than communicating through electronic means. Kazak culture embraces the stories of life.

Before the Soviets and the Tsars, Kazak children grew up illiterate. "Poor boys often dropped out of school at the age of ten or eleven to work for their fathers; those of more prosperous families continued up to the age of thirteen. Despite this long course of study, students in most mektebs learned very little" (Bacon 1966, 82). Today mektebs are public schools, but in former generations they were often associated with mosques and led by mullahs.

Soviet efforts to educate Kazaks had an ulterior motive, "the point of the educational policy was to create conformity of ideology in these years when the Great Terror raged" (Olcott 1987, 196). Soviet Russians prioritized their political goals and suppressed Kazak political and cultural aspirations. There were no organized efforts for increasing cultural understanding or cultural intelligence. Li, Mobley, and Kelly explain, "Cultural intelligence reflects the abilities to deal effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds" (Li 2013, 32). Policies influenced attitudes and Russians developed a general stereotype of Kazaks as poor students. However, poor academic achievement by Kazaks likely resulted from resistance to Soviet ideology, non-industrial lifestyles lacking a felt need for formal education, and Russian teachers ill-equipped to educate oral learners. Russians, well versed in Marxist sociology, discriminated between classes of people. Thus, propagating an ideology was intended to bring the whole country into ideological conformity, but their approaches did not erase Kazaks' penchant for oral learning.

Privratsky's conclusion was instructive, "In the end only 'land' and 'blood,' both of which are imbued with Islamic meanings in their association with each other, have strong issue-salience in setting the ethnic boundary for Kazaks in Turkistan" (Privratsky 2001, 59). Kazaks, living in their own country under the political control of Russians clung to their ethnic identity as the one thing that differentiated them from those in power. As a result, Kazak cultural identity, in many ways, strengthened under Soviet rule. Duling captures this in his definition of ethnicity. He defines ethnicity as "self-imposed – socially constructed – by groups themselves in order to describe themselves, as well as to differentiate and separate themselves from other groups in their immediate environment" (Duling 2011, 8).

Russian learning styles clearly contrast Kazak styles. Russians emphasize abstract thought, reading, memorization, scientific studies, and essay writing. Even though concrete and abstract thinking are individual traits, Russian educational processes clearly follow abstract tendencies. On the other hand, traditional Kazak learning styles do not emphasize essay writing or technical vocabulary found in natural sciences. Instead, traditional Kazak styles are concrete, emphasizing Kazak literature and memorization of verbal texts. On special occasions Kazak history is presented musically, especially in song. Kazak proverbs are learned, and Qur'an verses are memorized even though the meaning was not understood. Joseph Pitts characterizes in general terms how affective learners learn, "An affective learner learns through feelings and emotions" (Pitts 2009, 226). Affective learning happens more through experience than through passive listening. "Experiential learning is defined by Kolb (1984) as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Li 2013, 34).

Given the semi-oral history of Kazak education, twentieth century Soviet-enforced ideology, and a culture of bribes that exists today, the current transition to international standards of education is available most readily to those who can afford it. Affective learning continues to characterize much of the Kazak population, and semi-oral learning styles are most effective in communicating biblical content.

The above case study and participant observations exemplify important lessons: Akgul's identity crisis brought out for our consideration the value of consistent attendance at one church, developing a family character among church members that connects with Kazak society as agents of God's love. There should be a focus on shared biblical learning and training to express God's love to non-Christian family members and friends. Because the Bible is considered part of the historical basis for Christian faith, a corresponding task would be for new Christians to complete a program of in-depth Bible study to master the main messages offered by the Bible and to be able to identify a consistent flow of thought connecting the books of the Bible.

Publication of the Kazak Bible revealed the idea that believing communities must associate God's word with the full framework of collective memory in order to transition from the Muslim concept of a holy book to a Christian concept of a holy book. The full framework includes affective and cognitive processes, embedded behavior, landscape, and language. The case about Kazak learning styles related memory to learning and emphasized the phenomena of families where much learning takes place through the creation of memory.

Lastly, this chapter also revealed the principle that resistance to the gospel stems not from methods and frameworks of collective memory, but rather from its content. As

such, collective memory can be considered as a process of culture and identity reconstitution that Christians can utilize for constructing Kazak Christian identity within Kazak culture. This topic needs to be seen through the lens of critical contextualization. The affective nature of collective memory has been established as a significant factor in Kazak identity. This significance must be taken into consideration when undertaking to construct a Kazak Christian identity.

# CHAPTER 5

## Critical Contextualization: Relating the Gospel to the Kazak Context

Since the fifteenth-century founding of the Kazak Khanate under Kerei and Janibek, Kazaks have distinguished themselves from neighboring peoples. The founding (re-establishment) of Kazakstan in 1991 simply represented a new chapter in a historic struggle for Kazak identity. Although globalization seems to have ushered in an era of stability and expansion of Kazak identity, many forces seek to pull and push Kazak identity in many directions. Democracy and capitalism seek to influence the master narrative through a generation of eager young professionals. Over one hundred ethnic groups live in Kazakstan, giving the nation a multi-cultural face with an ethnocentric name. A nationally approved form of Islam follows the Hanafi School of Sunni Islam. The Russian Orthodox Church, Russian Baptist, and many small evangelical churches are also registered in Kazakstan. At the same time, President Nazarbayev, the former leader of the Soviet communist party in Kazakstan, has formed a nearly autocratic government. Nazarbayev's approach may harken back to the Kazak khanate when strong kings ruled and preserved the nation from foreign control. It was only after the khanate broke up into three hordes that foreigners began to take advantage of the country's natural resources. Eventually Kazakstan lost its national sovereignty under the Soviets.

In this environment Kazak Christians, who came to believe an evangelical version of Christianity, communicate the gospel. Missionaries continue to influence the spread of the gospel among Kazaks, but a Kazak Christian community has taken root sufficiently enough to expect a continuous evangelical witness that will contribute to the Kazak

collective memory. It would be too ambitious to claim that an evangelical voice influences society, but the fact that many evangelical churches have now received official registration is a sign of continuity for the future.

This generation of Christian Kazaks continues to distinguish itself from their neighbors. Among the challenges of identity construction are many foreign influences seeking to make claims on Kazakstan's resources, and Kazaks are sensitive to this global economic influence. As such, they may have cause to think that a fellow Kazak might be paid by foreigners to propagate religion if they see a foreigner with that person in a village. For this reason church leaders often suggest that missionaries not participate in village evangelism.

An informant named Ulmes spoke of his childhood when his parents warned him from going outside because "Russians might find him and eat him" (Ulmes 2007, Interview). It was an exaggerated way of teaching the child not to talk with strangers but buried deep within those words of caution could very well have been a sense of fear based on the Soviets' colonial aggression that had deprived Kazakstan of its sovereignty and killed multitudes of Kazaks in the early part of the twentieth century.

Upon arrival in Kazakstan and introduction to the leaders of the Burkit Group, Ulmes and another pastor named Almat instructed me to only speak Kazak when visiting villages. They were simply making it clear to me that the gospel for Kazak people ought to be spoken in the Kazak language. As noted previously, I found out later that most Kazaks think Christianity is a Russian religion and Jesus is a Russian god. I, therefore, understood the imperative that foreigners must preach the gospel to Kazaks in their mother tongue.

I developed a close relationship with another informant, Osken, who is also an ordained pastor in the Burkit Group. I learned that Osken was not the founding pastor of his church, and that in earlier days foreign influence in his church's leadership had been quite strong. Other pastors, especially Russians, invited me to preach in their churches, but in those cases foreigners had purchased the church buildings. Evidently, missionaries had caused some negative feelings among church members at Osken's church. He hesitated from inviting missionaries to speak to his congregation; however, he did attend seminars where I and other foreign teachers taught. He also encouraged his church members to attend them.

After I had lived in Kazakstan for six years I decided to open an English teaching business. My friend Osken criticized me for becoming a businessman when he thought I should have spent all of my time as leader of the Burkit Group. I explained that Burkit Group pastors ought to take full leadership for the group, and that I needed some way to meet and develop relationships with the Kazak people and that I felt teaching English was my way of meeting and interacting with them. Osken finally understood that Burkit needs a local identity and that missionaries are temporary. He no longer criticized my English teaching efforts, especially because the president of Kazakstan had issued a pronouncement stipulating that all Kazaks schools should teach English. Osken's interaction with me demonstrated his wisdom in seeking to benefit from what foreigners have to offer and avoid any dangers of allowing foreigners to control his life and ministry. Initially I didn't comprehend why church leaders resisted missionary participation in village evangelism until I learned that conversion to faith in Christ directly affects Kazak identity. To Kazaks, Christianity is a foreign religion, specifically a Russian religion.

The very sensitive issue of building Kazak identity and shedding two hundred years of Russian influence characterizes this current era.

It is no secret that Russians oppressed Kazakstan during the Soviet era, though many Kazaks credit the Soviets with introducing public education. There is a tension between desiring the benefits of living next to a world power and fearing their domination. As explained previously, China currently represents a threat of domination while at the same time offering the benefits of open market economies. Moreover, Americans are looked upon as people who bring opportunities to Kazakstan. Nevertheless, Americans are foreigners and must understand their limits as foreigners because Kazakstan has a history of being treated poorly by foreigners.

This truth confronted me when I visited the regional mayor's office in order to renew my religious workers' permit in 2007. Religious work permits must be renewed annually, and are a work permit is required to obtain a visa. The region in which I live has a history of rejecting those applications; therefore, I, and another foreigner, made an appointment with the regional vice-mayor to discuss our applications. The vice-mayor did not approve our applications and told us we should leave Kazakstan and return to our own land because Kazakstan neither wanted nor needed our help in developing their country. I was never able to obtain a religious work permit in that region but had to apply in a different region using a different address.

### A. Evangelical Christianity Considered an Outsider to Kazak Identity

Kazak narrative images define Christian symbols as 'other.' Orthodox cathedrals are other landscapes. The cross is a symbol of another religion. Evangelical churches are foreign-initiated and thus other in nature. The nature of the threat is demonstrated in

biblical teachings, traditional versus non-traditional religions, and Islam as bound up with Kazak identity.

Despite some similarities between Islamic beliefs and biblical teachings, sharp differences cause Christianity to be considered outside of the boundaries of Kazak identity. Here again there is the challenge of being different or other. Key evangelical teachings include: Jesus is the Son of God, God is a trinity, and the Bible is God's word. Related teachings about Jesus include: Jesus died for other people's sins, and Jesus rose from the dead. Conversations about faith usually break off at the introduction of these issues.

The crucifixion of Christ is symbolized in Kazakstan by crosses on Russian Orthodox cathedral towers, cross-shaped jewelry, and cross symbols on Bibles and other Christian materials. These symbols represent the Russian culture to Kazak observers, and thus outside of Kazak culture. *Korban Ait* (Festival of Sacrifice) reflects the Kazaks' deep need for sacrifice. Once a year Kazak families celebrate this traditional holiday by sacrificing a sheep and having a large feast, inviting family and friends over, or taking a plate of food to a neighbor. There is a sense of payment for sins in shedding the sheep's blood, and a resulting bridge for the gospel.

Although Islam and Christianity teach monotheism, the Christian teaching of one God in three persons is substantively different from Islam's monotheism. Thus, the Christian God is outside Kazak cultural boundaries and considered other. Conversations about God's nature tend to be unproductive, but a testimony of what God has done interests Kazak listeners.

Evangelical Christianity is not a traditional religion in Kazakstan. Despite a guarantee of religious freedom in Kazakstan's constitution, lines are being drawn to ostracize religious groups who do not fit the category of 'traditional'. Missionaries from evangelical groups, Jehovah's Witness, Hare Krishna, and more radical Muslim groups are considered sects. The Kazak government's intolerance of these groups is an example of the power of tradition to shape public opinion and law.

For many generations Kazak/Muslim identity has been generally accepted among Kazaks. During the seventy years of Soviet control everyone was considered atheist, but Kazak collective memory stored the peoples' Muslim identity until it could resurface without fear of reprisal. Now that Kazakstan is an independent sovereign nation, national leaders covet social stability. Sadly, non-traditional religions are seen as destroyers of this emerging social stability. The Law on Religion restricts religious practice outside the bounds of legal registration. There is ongoing debate over whether churches should apply for legal registration. Some want to comply while others think it is not biblical. Still others think officials will use registration information to spy on churches. Locally legal registration is not as easy to enforce because people have neighborhood relationships, but nationally unregistered evangelical Churches have no voice. They are considered outsiders.

Evangelical Christianity is neither traditional nor Kazak. In spite of evidence of an ancient (Nestorian) Christian presence in Central Asia and Kazakstan, Kazaks have a deeply rooted belief that to be Kazak is to be Muslim (Neill 1964; Moffett 1998) . This belief is connected to the influence of the city of Turkestan in the Kazak collective memory. It is a city of religious significance and stands out as an example of the power

of landscape to define ethnic identity. Because important Kazak kings ruled from Turkestan and a great Muslim missionary was buried and enshrined there, Kazaks deem it a sacred city. Another salient point is that current national boundaries were drawn up by Russians and Chinese and do not reflect traditional tribal domains. Western China is named Xinjiang Provence. Xinjiang simply means New Land and was named as such when China annexed it. Turkestan originally spanned an area from the Caspian Sea to parts of Western China; therefore, Kazaks are very sensitive to land that relates to their national identity. Both Kazaks and Uzbeks show some inter-ethnic rivalry because before Soviet control, mostly Uzbeks populated the city of Turkestan. Nevertheless, the city of Turkestan is located within Kazakstan national borders and provides historical credence to the existence of Kazak people.

In summary, Christianity's status of being other, different or outside Kazak identity relates to biblical teachings, religious tradition, and collective memory. In other words, systems of identity combine to present a formidable task for bringing the gospel to the Kazak people. Kazak believers must carefully consider how to make Christianity meaningful so that non-Christians will be able to understand the gospel as a message from God to them.

**B. The Essence of Kazak Identity**

Abai Kunanbaev is remembered as a truly great Kazak poet/philosopher. After the Soviet Union broke apart, many villages and streets were renamed with Kazak names. Abai became the new name of many villages and roads. Abai's bigger-than-life statue stands at the end of Abai Avenue, the main east-west road in Almaty. Abai wrote candidly, about things that most authors would be ashamed to write when referring to

their own people: "Where lies the cause of the estrangement amongst the Kazakhs, of their hostility and ill will towards one another? Why are they insincere in their speech, so lazy, and possessed by a lust for power?" (Abai 1995, 99) Moreover, he poetically wrote, "Our people talk too much, they're not a good example. One word hastens after another – there's no understanding them. With tears from eyes, with blood from hearts – it's impossible to thaw the ice of their souls." (Abai 1995, 64)

Abai wrote such words during the era before Soviet rule of Kazakstan and because he deeply loved his people, he hoped for their advancement as a respected group. Russia had not yet pressured Kazakstan into giving up its sovereignty, so many Kazak leaders looked to Russia with respect. They especially admired Russia's educational system. Abai also admired this and hoped his nomadic countrymen would someday embrace that kind of learning he felt was needed for the progress of the society. Unfortunately, he felt a sense of hopelessness when describing Kazak proverbs: "Now, what do they tell us? It is not learning and knowledge, nor peace and justice that the Kazakh holds dear – his sole concern is how to get rich" (Abai 1995, 107).

Abai's words are relevant today. They give foreigners insight into the underlying reasons for some of the Kazaks' behaviors. At times the poet/philosopher even seems to be crying out for someone to come and save the Kazak people from themselves: "Despite themselves, the common people get involved in dirty business. Who is strong enough to uproot this evil" (Abai 1995, 122)? We must conclude that deeply rooted immorality is part of the essence of what it means to be Kazak. And apart from the transforming grace of God in Jesus Christ this is the lot of all peoples.

Kazak identity is rooted in the lives of ancient Mongol and Turkish kings who devastated Central Asia during their military campaigns and in great Kazak kings who ruled after the Khan dynasties. Those ancestors established Islam as the people's religion, thus creating an enduring heritage enshrined in the city of Turkistan where the mausoleum of Qoja Akhmet Yasawi was constructed by Tamerlane, a Turkish/Mongolian, and the last of the Khan dynasty. Yasawi's mausoleum is known today as the Second Mecca. Turkistan was also a political center (*orda*) of the Kazak khanate and therefore of all three hordes in their common Kazak identity (Privratsky 2001, 35). As such, Turkistan represents the heart of Kazak religion, political history, and ethnic identity. Pilgrims regularly travel there to visit the shrine and receive Muslim blessings.

Any exploration of Kazak identity must not overlook the influence of Turkistan. It not only bears enormous historical significance for Kazaks, Uzbeks, and all Turkish people, but it also endured seventy years of Soviet Communism and has been a focus of Kazak cultural and spiritual revitalization since. "It changed hands several times during the 16$^{th}$ century, but by 1599 Turkistan was firmly established as a Kazak town under Esim Khan. Today the former Lenin Square bears his name" (Privratsky 2001, 45). Although Turkistan has no industry and provides sparse employment opportunities, neighborhoods of large clay brick homes sprang up between 2004 and 2012. "For the Kazak khans to settle down in Yasi was to lay claim to two related identities. One was the Islamic heritage of Qoja Ahmet Yasawi. The other was the Timurid legacy, the memory of Tamerlane who had built the Yasawi Shrine" (Privratsky 2001, 45).

Yasawi brought a Sufi form of mystic Islam to Central Asia. After Tamerlane had the shrine constructed, other Kazak kings made Turkistan their capitol. Privratsky implies that seventy years of Communist rule, in which atheism was emphasized, could not destroy Yasawi's shrine or remove its influence in the collective memory of Kazak people.

Privratsky further argues that, though the Muslim heritage of the Kazak people was suppressed during the Soviet era, the collective memory of Kazak people facilitated its survival. He writes, "For the Kazaks it was their 'Muslimness' that surfaced again, and it turned out that much had been suppressed but very little forgotten. Except for the utter failure of its economic theory, nothing discredits Marxism more than the persistence of religious memory (Privratsky 2001, 246).

Messages of hope and salvation from the Bible do not seek to suppress current collective memory but to create new collective memory. But the existing (Kazak/Muslim) collective memory passionately resists it. Therefore, we must begin to think about specific patterns of Kazak culture that exist because of collective memory. Moreover, we must creatively build a Christian community with certain behaviors that promote a new collective consciousness. Privratsky introduces the term *anamnesis* to help us understand how we can address the issue of collective memory. "In its Greek form the word anamnesis, remembrance, means 'non-amnesia,' the ability not to forget. Kazak rhetoric in Turkistan is studded with exhortations not to forget (*umitpai*)" (Privratsky 2001, 247). Since these are days of rebuilding the Kazak nation and identity, it is imperative that Christians contribute to the rebuilding process and give voice to their faith with a goal to spread holiness across the land.

Soviet communism left Kazak people fractured into three groups: (a) those who live in villages who speak Kazak fluently and Russian poorly or not at all; (b) those who were born in villages and have since moved to cities and speak Russian with variable fluency and Kazak with interspersed Russian vocabulary; and (c) those who were born in the city and educated in Russian schools who speak Russian fluently and Kazak poorly, but current Kazak language education is challenging this trend. These respective groups apply cultural traditions with different intensities. Nevertheless, over the last twenty years there has been a resurgence of Kazak culture including contextualized Muslim religious identity. Moreover a synergy exists between Kazak ethnicity and contextualized Muslim religious identity, thus making the two inseparable in Kazak culture. Such synergy results in an exclusivity that benefits Kazaks to the disadvantage of others. Since ethnicity and religion are both dependent on humanity rather than humanity being dependent on them, non-Kazaks experience a measure of discrimination. Therefore, this study asserts that consideration of a person's humanity ought to have priority over his ethnic and religious identity. Applied in Kazak culture, this assertion will have profound implications for Kazak identity during this era of identity reconstitution.

### C. Collective Memory and Critical Contextualization

As discussed, collective memory is a process of reconstituting culture and identity. It is an ever-flowing stream of memories that shape the way we think about ourselves and everyone else. The Kazak branch of that stream carries along a well-accepted Muslim heritage. If the Kazak church is to expand to the point where it significantly influences the Kazak society, a new flow of Christian memories must enter that stream. In other

words, a new Christian Kazak collective memory must be constructed that joins the existing Kazak collective memory. Constructing new memories involves understanding how collective memory is influenced and analyzing the existing collective memory to understand how it relates to the gospel message. The following are some of the ways collective memory can influence a society:

- It provides the material for constructing new identities;
- It can be influenced by the lives of individual people, especially through testimonies;
- It takes notice of remarkable events and remarkable people; Its frameworks can be analyzed;
- It is flexible, so that new memories can be adopted without evicting old memories; while national memories dominate a culture, local memories tend to be more authentic; and,
- It is primarily affective, making it amenable to the gospel message that addresses heart issues such as hope, trust, fear, the past, future possibilities, family relationships, and love.

Although collective memory is not *per se* an analytical method, it can be quite useful in the analytical process, thus we now turn to a discussion on contextualization.

Three aspects of Kazak culture add to the challenge of discerning cultural meanings: (a) the need for a fluid contextualization during times of rapid change, (b) the need for affective understandings to promote cognitive analysis, and (c) a version of Islam that is contextualized in Kazak commemorative feasts, thus not easily separated from the culture.

Andrew Walls writes about the *pilgrim principle* and the *indigenizing principle* that exist in tension because of the nature of Christ and the Christian life. Christ is both God and human, and the Christian life is both in a human context and allied with God. This argument does not set the divine in opposition to people or their human contexts. "Along with the indigenizing principle which makes his faith a place to feel at home, the Christian inherits the pilgrim principle, which whispers to him that he has no abiding city and warns him that to be faithful to Christ will put him out of step with his society" (Walls 1996, 8).

Such words faithfully begin this section on contextualization. Although the goal is to understand the gospel in culture, one can never expect the gospel to be completely comfortable in culture. There will always be a tension between the gospel and the culture of the people whom missionaries and national Christians seek to reach. So we must affirm Walls's argument that as for culture, "the Church belongs there," but the church is "not fully at home in this world" (Walls 1996, 53-54).

Contextualization is a methodical process of relating the gospel to culture. As culture is always changing, analytical methods easily fall behind, especially during times of rapid culture change. "Proponents recognize that the task of contextualization is never-ending, though they usually do not expand on the recursive nature of the process. If they do, they envision each use of the process as discrete" (Moreau 2012, 192). Moreover, affective models of contextualization abound (i.e., anthropological, praxis, semiotic, etc.), but models that stress scriptural authority tend to be cognitive. Therefore, a commitment to biblical congruence, such as I contend, must recognize that as an analytical tool, contextualization is primarily cognitive, even when analyzing affective

cultural artifacts. I assert that collective memory assists by providing analytical meaning in both areas—the need for dynamic contextualization and the need for affectively understanding the gospel in culture. As such, I assert that collective memory, because of its affective emphasis, can enrich the contextualization process.

Tension between the gospel and Kazak culture brings us to consider collective memory together with contextualization. How are the two related? Collective memory is a process of enculturation and culture change, without presuppositions other than it is bound to reflect the negotiated views and meanings related to events and people in history. It constructs a negotiated memory. For that reason it is crucial. The current Kazak collective memory is controlled by culture, and it is also changing culture. Collective memory is so closely related to culture, it can be called the river of culture. It is neither above nor below culture. More than anything else it describes culture, or rather, the "life-ways" of the Kazak people (Privratsky 2001). Kazak collective memory currently opposes the gospel, or what it perceives to be the gospel. However, the presence of Kazak Christian churches in Kazakstan indicates that the gospel is already negotiating its place in Kazak collective memory. The question we must ask is how should the gospel relate to Kazak culture? What model will appropriately evaluate the Kazak culture from a biblical perspective?

A first step in developing local models of contextual theology is to look at how we should approach the task of doing theology. Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way* (1996) designed three presuppositions (a) biblical authority, (b) the church's missional context, and (c) the church as a hermeneutical community (Van Engen 1996, 23-25). A. Scott Moreau also recognizes biblical authority (Moreau 2012, 57). He contends, "Since

the Bible is transcultural, congruence with the Bible is not negotiable" (Moreau 2012, 61). In contrast to Charles Kraft's argument, Moreau addresses that meaning is inherent in forms and messages as an important contextualization presupposition. Furthermore, he posits that separating the message and form from meaning "divorces meaning from REALITY" (Moreau 2012, 87). His basis for such a claim is his commitment to critical realism that holds to the existence of an ultimate REALITY that we know only imperfectly. REALITY is inherent in messages and forms, thus the importance of retaining the connection between message/form and meaning (Moreau 2012, 81). A critical realist position is cautious about what forms appropriately communicate God's word in a culture.

Stephen Bevans defines contextual theology as, "A way of doing theology that takes into account four things: (a) the spirit and message of the gospel; (b) the tradition of the Christian people; (c) the culture of a particular nation or region; and (d) social change in that culture" (Bevans 1985, 186).

Scott Moreau has surveyed the evangelical world of contextualization and noted three perspectives that come into tension in the contextualizing process: (a) "biblical revelation," (b) "agents of contextualization," and (c) the "recipients of contextualized efforts" (Moreau 2012, 35). He describes contextualization as

> The process whereby Christians adapt the forms, content, and praxis of the Christian faith so as to communicate it to the minds and hearts of people with other cultural backgrounds. The goal is to make the Christian faith *as a whole* – not only the message but also the means of living the faith out in the local setting – understandable (Moreau 2005, 323).

Paul G. Hiebert utilizes the term *human context* to emphasize the revelatory nature of the gospel and a holistic view of gospel recipients; including their culture and society (Hiebert 2009, 31).

Typically those who write about contextualization construct models. Richard Niebuhr presents five models that reflect tensions whenever we seek to understand how Christ relates to culture: (a) "Christ Against Culture," (b) "Christ of Culture," (c) "Christ Above Culture," (d) "Christ the Transformer of Culture," and (e) "Christ and Culture in Paradox" (Niebuhr 1951). Aspects of each model apply to the process of relating the gospel to culture. He describes Christ as one who "confronted Jewish culture with a hard challenge" (Niebuhr 1951, 3). Christ clearly challenged cultural presuppositions and forms, but on the other hand, he was a perfect example of a missionary who spoke from within culture.

"Christ the Transformer of Culture" appeals to the evangelical impulse and describes many missionary approaches to cross-cultural missions. Indeed, in the former Soviet Republic many evangelism strategies sought to reach orphans, alcoholics, drug addicts, and women caught in human trafficking. Moreover, it is not uncommon to meet church leaders and church members who have such pasts. John Stackhouse states that the transformer model is "the most common mediating position in evangelical circles" and that "society is to be entirely converted to Christianity" (Stackhouse 2002, 80). Hiebert expresses his adherence to a transformer model with three principles of relating the gospel and human contexts. They are, (a) "the gospel must not be equated with any particular human context," (b) "the gospel must be put in specific sociocultural contexts," and (c) "the gospel is transformative – gospel transforming culture" (Hiebert 2009, 31). This model seems to reflect more of a mission and evangelism mentality than "Christ of Culture" that tries to "understand Christ through culture" (Niebuhr 1951, 83). "Christ Against Culture" reflects an opposition to culture that seems harsh in some respects and

not always helpful for gospel communication. At the same time prophetic declaration, which may characterize ministries of "Christ Against Culture," is found in the biblical example of Jonah.

Niebuhr's models and the models introduced by Stephen Bevans and others provide us with tools to help make sense of the reasonable approaches to missions. Eugene Nida gives a balanced perspective regarding the models we choose to contextualize the gospel message.

> It is inevitable that in all these attempts to solve the problem of the church and culture, there has been a commingling of behavior, motivations, and beliefs, for man is not so easily compartmentalized that he can act out his life by playing two roles on the same stage and during the same scene (Nida 1960, 209).

Niebuhr's models were presented over fifty years ago, and much has been written since that time. However, Bevans's models of contextualization offer a variety of approaches for understanding the gospel as it relates to culture. Most recently, Moreau added a template for evangelical analysis of the gospel and culture.

Bevans's models assume all theologies are contextual in nature. His five models are lenses through which practitioners can better understand their ministry contexts. Bevans's first model "The Anthropological Model" is culture-focused (Bevans 1985, 187). This model explores people and their cultures without evaluating them against any standard such as scripture. It posits an assumption of "the basic goodness of human nature and human culture" (Bevans 1985, 188). In light of the cultural emphasis, God is assumed to be in culture. Therefore, the role of missionaries is to find God in culture rather than to convert people or the culture. Second, "The Translation Model" gives primacy to scripture as a "supra cultural message" in contrast to the anthropological model's primacy of culture (Bevans 1985, 190). This model assumes cultures have

"corresponding structures" that allow for cross-cultural translation (Bevans 1985, 191). Because scripture is above culture, the gospel message must be undressed from its biblical culture and messenger culture before it can be dressed in the receptor culture (Bevans 1985, 191). A key question for the use of dynamic equivalence translations is whether the new translation's meaning is wholly determined by the receptor culture or if it has inherent meaning in its original form. Bevans's third model "The Praxis Model" is about action and "focuses on Christian identity within culture, from the point of view of social change" (Bevans 1985, 192). There are similarities between praxis and a collective memory process. Praxis involves social action and collective memory is constructed by active purposeful sharing of testimonies. Whereas collective memory is a process of culture change, and takes place within a group it is not based on action but on memory within groups. Furthermore, collective memory makes no claim about the Bible and revelation but simply processes claims about scripture that are acceptable within a group. On the other hand, "the praxis model understands revelation as God's ongoing action in history" (Bevans 1985, 192). Collective memory tries to look into the future based on present representations of the past. Therefore, collective memory may focus on God's past miraculous works. The praxis model holds great potential for theological usefulness as long as it is grounded in biblical revelation. Its emphasis on action strongly inspired liberation theology to engender caution about possible agenda-driven motivations. The fourth model, "The Synthetic Model" (Bevans 1985, 194) seeks to foster communication about the uniqueness and shared aspects of culture. "Perhaps the most significant thing about the synthetic model is the method of dialogue" (Bevans 1985, 195). More than the first three models, the synthetic model provides a way for

messengers and receivers of the gospel message to come together in conversation and mutual learning. Similar to an anthropological model, Bevans's fifth model "'The Semiotic Model' focuses on symbols resident in a culture and expects to find God in culture. It suggests an 'occasional nature of theology' and produces theology when it is needed" (Bevans 1985, 197). This fifth model presents a way of doing theology, for example, for historic events, and dramatic social trends. As in the other models, the semiotic model promises to bring out significant meaning in a culture.

Models have also specifically been constructed for Muslim cultures. Because Kazakstan has a secular form of government, and it is legally permissible for Kazaks to be Christian, less concern exists for insider movements and radical contextualization of the gospel. However, Christians are concerned about their faith as it relates to Muslim culture. The group-oriented nature of Kazak culture causes Christians to wonder what their friends and family will think about their decision to follow Jesus. Christians who are the sole believers in their families, and Christian women who marry Muslim men feel the greatest clash between the gospel and culture.

Of the churches now existing in Kazakstan most are traditional in structure (C1, C2).[16] The majority of missionary pastors who lead Kazak language congregations speak in Kazak (C2). Local pastors who speak Kazak and consciously try to incorporate local cultural forms lead many Kazak village churches and house church networks (C3). C4 through C6 ministries are rare in Kazakstan. However, many Kazak Christians have opted for the terms *believer* or *follower of Jesus*. Women who were Christian prior to marriage are most likely to be described as (C6) followers of Jesus, underground

[16] A description of the C Scale for contextualizing the gospel among Muslims can be found at: <http://thepeopleofthebook.org/C1-C6_Spectrum.html>

believers. Data need to be collected to determine if these woman follow Christ, and if so, what form their Christian life takes. Clearly among Kazaks the C5 category is unacceptable. Kazaks who attend mosques consider themselves Muslim, and those who practice Muslim prayer (*намаз*) are Muslim in the minds of Kazaks. However, one must remember that Kazak Muslim religious practices are primarily contextualized in commemorative feasts. Taking this contextualized Islam into consideration ought to make C4 forms very attractive among Kazaks. A C4 form could acceptably use a Kazak Bible for Christian instruction and an Arabic Bible for recitations at commemorative feasts.

I use Scott Moreau's example from "Contextualization that is Comprehensive" as a basis for my contextual theory of Kazak culture (Moreau 2006). *Dimensions of the Sacred* (Ninian Smart 1996) describes dimensions of religion, which I utilize as my analytical framework. My model is a translation model that uses critical contextualization (Paul G. Hiebert) for cultural analysis and reflection. It is not exclusively a translation model because the processual nature of collective memory adds an element of praxis.

For this study a developed model of contextualization is an affective approach to stimulate Kazak collective memory. The purpose of an affective approach is to prepare an environment that evokes memories. For Kazaks "theologizing and historicizing processes go to work only when allowed to do so by social feelings" (Privratsky 2001, 21).

Critical contextualization should be done in an environment where Kazaks' have an affective connection to their identity. Possible considerations include a room with a

low table so that people can sit on the floor. Beautifully designed thin mattresses are used for sitting. Carpets hung on one or two walls display traditional Kazak patterns. A single light bulb hangs from the center of the ceiling, and scheduled tea times are prepared during the discussion. Wall carpets bring to mind memories of ancestors who lived in yurts, and one light is a symbol of the *shangarak*, an opening in the top of a yurt to let in sunshine. Moreover, Kazaks will eagerly join in critical discussions with other Kazaks in this setting. When non-Kazaks attend or lead critical discussions, Kazaks may feel that the discussion is not about Kazak beliefs and practices. Care should be taken to include church leaders in contextualizing before church members are included in the process.

**D. Examples of Critical Contextualization**

This study blends translation and praxis into a single model that speaks to Kazak collective memory. It employs a critical contextualization method to develop comprehensive understanding of the gospel in Kazak culture. It follows a process of analysis and evaluation with collective memory processes and critical contextualization operating in parallel with one another. Therefore, the process is described with bullet points instead of numbers. The following main and sub points represent categories in a parallel process of analysis and evaluation of collective memory and critical contextualization:

- Frameworks of Collective Memory

  Recognition of the affective

  Embedded

  Lanscapes

Language

- Affective preparation for theological conversations

  Environment

  Storytelling

  Testimonies

- Critical Contextualization: starting questions, exegesis

  Starting questions

  Biblical norms

  Cultural bridges

  Social change

  Exegesis of Scripture and culture

  Biblical norms, cultural bridges, and social change

- Dimensions of religion

  Social, Ritual, Experiential, Material

  Doctrinal, Myth, Ethical

Table 1 below introduces starting questions for doing local theology. The main categories of Scripture, Setting, and Social Change orient a group to consider priorities such as congruency with scripture, understanding and communicating in meaningful ways in the local context, and coming face to face with needed social change.

Next is a visual depiction of two processes, collective memory and critical contextualization, working in parallel to analyze and evaluate a context in relation to biblical standards. Although the processes are separate and different in character they occur simultaneously. One analyzes scripture and culture expecting to produce transformation, while the other negotiates memories in order to preserve a desired culture. Differing processes such as these have different basic assumptions. However they both

offer insight into culture and identity. Therefore, their basic assumptions must be evaluated to understand points of common ground.

| Starting Questions | | |
|---|---|---|
| The Scriptures | The Setting | Social Change |
| What has God revealed about the Christian faith that is essential to be incarnated or indigenized in each religious dimension of this culture? | Cultural bridges – How has God already been revealing Himself in and through the various religious dimensions of this setting? What bridges for contextualization are present in each dimension? | What areas within the religious dimensions of the setting are in need of social change?<br><br>Who and where are the oppressed and marginalized?<br><br>How might the gospel enable them to live Kingdom-centered lives in each of the religious dimensions in the midst of oppression (Moreau 2006, 329)? |
| What does the Bible affirm in each religious dimension, and what does it condemn? | How can these dimensions be best used to make the whole of our faith indigenous in the setting? | |

Table 1. Starting questions for local theologizing

**1. A Critical Contextual Examination of Marriage with a non-Christian**

The first example concerns the issue of inter-marriage between Christians and non-Christians. Akgul's case about marriage to a non-Christian brought to light a need for the stable socialization of church members, developing a family of God awareness among members that connects with Kazak society as agents of God's love. The question remains, what should Christian women do about marriage, as there are so few Christian men? Does the church have a responsibility to match young men and women in marriage? However, there are many more Christian women than men. Kazak parents want their

daughters to marry and will work to find a good match among Muslim men. The problem arises among Christian women who hope to marry a Christian man. When they attain the age of twenty-five or so, they decide that a Christian man will not appear and they go ahead and marry a Muslim.

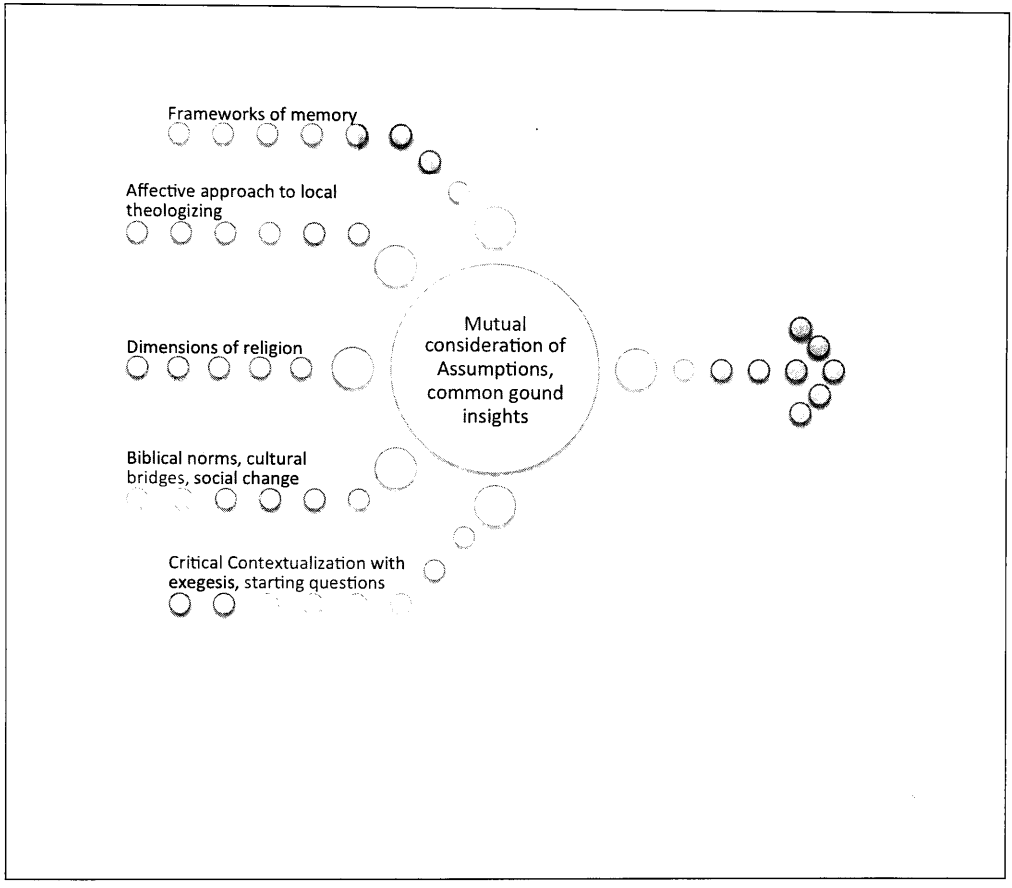



Table 2. The gospel in Kazak culture: A local model for the gospel among Kazaks

Marriages to non-Christians have been handled in various ways. Churches have sponsored regular youth retreats where issues of dating and marriage were taught. Youth

groups exist to help young Christians grow in their faith among peers. Nevertheless, the most common way to address this issue has been for Christian women to stop looking for a Christian husband and marry a Muslim man. One typical consequence of this solution has been for Christian women with a Muslim husband to stop participating in church activities.

Certainly conflict arises between family members when a Christian girl refuses to marry a Muslim. If she is the only Christian in her family the conflict can be severe. As a result some girls have married a Christian husband secretly; thus when it becomes known, there is little that can be done by her parents to oppose the marriage. When there is no prospect available some girls have run away hoping to start a new life without their parents. However, running away does not solve the problem. It only makes it worse because the girl becomes isolated and anonymous.

Some girls fight with their parents against the prospect of marrying a Muslim man, but this does not solve the issue either. Some girls accept marriage with a Muslim, but this has consequences for the rest of their lives, and their children, as well as the church. Some women have accepted being single as an alternative to marriage. This solution may encounter resistance from parents who want their daughters to marry but in reality presents the least amount of criticism from family members.

The following four considerations will help facilitate a discussion about Christians marrying non-Christians. First, what guidelines are there in the Bible about marriage to non-Christians? Second, how do honor and obedience to parents relate to finding a spouse when the spouse is not a believer? Third, what are the marriage customs

among Kazaks? Fourth, what is the role of the church in helping young people find a spouse?

An examination of Kazak marriage customs begins with general attitudes, Privratsky writes, a woman who marries a non-Kazak "is no longer a Muslim" (Privratsky 2001, 62). It is a harsh attitude but may not be so strictly applied in society. "The one form of ethnic boundary crossing with which Kazaks are most familiar is when a Kazak woman marries a non-Kazak . . . It may be scorned, but it is common enough" (2001, 62). Parents play a significant role in arranging the weddings of their children. "Traditional Kazak weddings are a complex of events which takes several weeks or months of interaction between the couple and the two families" (2001, 95). The actual wedding ceremony (*neke qiyar*) is performed in private before intimate family members by a mullah who drinks water with the couple symbolizing the marriage covenant. Typically there is a reading of the Qur'an and exhortation from the mullah about being a good Muslim husband and wife. Just before the bride is presented to the groom's family there is a brief veiling of the bride so that the veil may be removed in the '"ceremony called the *bet ashar*, "revealing the face"' (2001, 95). "This brief veiling of the bride is the only use of the veil in Kazak culture and suggests Islamic influence"(2001, 95). The mullah "briefly recites verses from the Qur'an (*Quran oqitu*) and asks the couple to confess the faith of Islam" (2001, 96)

An examination of the relevant scriptures regarding Christians marrying non-Christians begins with the most often quoted verse, 2 Corinthians 6:14ff, that does not specifically use the word marry but logically differentiates between Christians and non-Christians, using the phrase, "Do not be yoked together." Romans 7:2,3 clarifies that a

marriage relationship is a life-long commitment. Among Old Testament texts, Ezra 10:11 considers marriage with foreign wives to be a sin worthy of confession. Abraham also told his son Isaac not to marry foreign women (Gen 28:1,6). Although the Old Testament highlights ethnic differences as a reason not to marry, examples of godly leaders who married foreign women are conspicuous. Moses and Boaz married women of different ethnicities who demonstrated biblical faith, and were accepted by God. On the other hand, Solomon is said to have done evil by honoring idols as a result of marrying women who worshipped idols (1 Kings 11:6-8). To conclude that marriage must be restricted to one's own ethnic group is not supported by these examples. Rather there is an assumption that one's worship practices, which are tied to their ethnic upbringing, tend to influence their worship practices in marriage. It is reasonable to conclude that prohibitions against marriage to foreigners were for the purpose of protecting against unbiblical beliefs and practices. Therefore, there is a general assumption that the people of God should be free from marriage relationships that bind them to people who do not know God (Ezra 6:21).

Evaluating past customs recognizes that decisions by Christian women to marry Muslim men go against the general teaching of scripture. Scripture simply does not support decisions to marry based only on desire for marriage, honor to parents, and unavailability of potential Christian spouses. Muslim meanings and Islamic confessions of faith in the Kazak marriage ceremony come after the decision to marry and thus are moot issues. Nevertheless, biblical guidelines can be contextualized in the current Kazak marriage customs. The forms can be contextualized for Christian marriages. Only the

mullah's activities of the Qur'an reading, exhortation, and leading in confession of the faith of Islam are outside the realm of acceptable Christian marriage customs.

Two practical issues bear on this problem: (a) the practice of praying for a husband, and (b) dating non-Christians. The Bible does not include any specific promise that God will provide a marriage partner. On the contrary, many examples exist of people seeking partners while praying for God's guidance in the process. Therefore, an absence of potential suitors should not be construed as God not answering one's prayer to provide a spouse. Although dating a non-Christian may bring a hope that the Muslim will convert to faith in Jesus Christ, there is no guarantee. There is also a risk that someone may confess faith in Christ for manipulative reasons. In general, it seems that a dating relationship has the potential to become a marriage relationship, thus the same guidelines ought to apply.

A decision about the issue of Christians marrying non-Christians will have an immediate effect on Church members. This is only an example of what critical contextualization could look like. In actuality a church community will go through these steps. They are presented here as a model for local churches to follow. Since marriage is a very sensitive issue, any decision the church makes should be considered in terms of how it might become a blessing for those involved. If someone has sinned, there must be the goal of reconciliation and restoration. If someone finds a community decision difficult to accept, there must be attempts by the church to help that person abide by the decision without being isolated or ostracized.

Therefore, a decision about Christians marrying non-Christians ought to address the specific issue as well as lesser supporting issues. The main issue is clearly delineated

as being opposed to God's Holy scripture. Two lessor issues include how single Christians relate to their Muslim families and to the church. When a Christian follows the strong desires of their heart in opposition to scripture it may be an indication of insufficient discipleship training and a weak social relationship with the church as the family of God. Being single ought to be considered a valuable option, not as an alternative to marriage. There is much in praise of being single in the Bible. Therefore, an attitude of acceptance and honor for being single ought to be learned by the church. In a Muslim society, churches might need to consider their responsibility for social outreach to non-Christian relatives of church members. They may also need to consider taking a greater role in finding employment and marriage partners for their young church members. Churches might also find it beneficial to institute Kazak cultural marriage customs that honor Kazak culture while being Christian in content.

Two primary new practices can be gleaned from this critical review. First, it is important to consistently attend church. Although no research is available to confirm a relationship between frequency of church attendance and vitality in Kazak Christian living, memory is developed through repetition. This principle of memory forms the basis for this new practice. In addition to weekly worship, personal disciplines of daily Bible reading and prayer, weekly Bible training, social outreach teams, corporate prayer meetings at least weekly are all necessary to build a Christian identity. I have observed the value of practicing community meals after weekly worship. Some complain about the expense, but I contend even a very simple meal does more to build community identity than no meal.

Second, the church is the family of God and will be recognized as such. People will be taught to take responsibility for each other. They will be taught that their two primary identities are human and Christian. The goal of this practice is to base identity and respect for other people on eternal rather than on temporal levels of identity (Hiebert 2009, 74). This practice will result in people being able to celebrate different ethnicities, which exist in Kazak churches, while in times of crisis they will bond together. Family is very important to everyone. It displays God's image; therefore, everyone must be part of the family. Single people must see the church as their eternal family. If they do, the possibility will be greater for them to approach major decisions, such as marriage or singleness, with a balanced perspective and stable emotions.

Other related practices will be developed from these two primary principles. How these new practices will be recognized within the dimensions of religion will be explicated in the discussion about general systems theory.

**2. A Critical Contextual Examination of the Nature and Role of the Bible**

As we learned in the complete Bible publication discussion, believing communities must associate God's word with the full framework of collective memory in order to transition from the Muslim concept of a holy book to a Christian concept of a holy book. Remembering the recent occasion of the Kazak Bible's first complete publication (2010), this current study makes a critical contextual examination of the nature and proper role of the Bible in Kazak Christian life. Kazaks are understandably excited about this new publication. While translation was yet incomplete, a Kazak Bible was available, albeit lacking some of the sixty-six books. Supplements were available

that included individual books and groups of small books. Now the whole Bible has been updated and published in one volume. The question that drives this critical contextual evaluation is simply, what is the nature and proper role of the Bible in Kazak culture?

In the past, the Bible has been viewed as God's word (*Құдайдың сөзі*) and the holy book (*Киелі кітап*), terms that also apply to the Qur'an. Kazak Christians consistently studied the Bible and memorized specific verses, often as aids for evangelism. When comparisons are made between Christianity and Islam the Bible is usually compared with the Qur'an.

In evangelistic dialogues we learn the Bible is typically something that good Muslims read, inferring that listeners ought to read the Bible if they want to be good Muslims. It was unlikely that the evangelizers' goal was to make good Muslims. The reason some Muslims contend they should read the Bible is because it contains the books of Moses (*Таурат*), the four gospels (*Інжіл шариф*), and the Psalms (*Забур*), all highly respected by Muslims. On the other hand, the Bible is considered by some Muslims to be corrupted. Furthermore, there is a Watchtower Society Bible used by Jehovah's Witnesses. That Bible is not accepted by Protestant Christians, but Jehovah's Witnesses believe themselves to be Christians and their book to be the Bible. The two competing Bibles do not reflect favorably on Christian claims of veracity and authority of the Bible.

There are some considerations that can guide the analysis. The Qur'an is considered to be Allah's revelation, and thus to Muslims, it is a holy presence. Christians consider the Bible to be God's word and completely holy, but God's presence to Christians is more than the Bible. God's presence is personal, relational, and

omnipresent. Although there are differences between the two books that ought to be examined, my examination is limited to the nature and proper role of the two holy books.

Because the Bible is considered by Muslims to be a corrupt work, it doesn't gain authoritative status by telling Muslims they ought to read it and referring to famous Kazaks who encouraged reading the *Таурат*, *Інжіл шариф*, and *Забур*. Enjoining someone to be a good Muslim seems to miss the point with Kazaks, but that is the indirect message that is being spoken. There is no evidence that famous Kazaks who recommended reading the *Таурат*, *Інжіл шариф*, and *Забур* ever became Christians. Rather Christians may be seen as manipulative and ingenuous when we recommend that people read the Bible because famous Kazaks also recommended it. Kazaks generally do not aspire to be good Muslims in the sense that traditional Islam is practiced in other Muslim countries. On the contrary, Kazaks practice Islam by remembering their Muslim ancestor in commemorative feasts. They may also aspire to a more spiritual life by fasting during the month of Ramadan (*Ораза*), and practicing prayers (намаз).

Another consideration is the inclusion in the complete Bible of books such as Joshua that make significant analogies to the Christian life. Israel's entrance into the Promised Land and subsequent conquering of indwelling nations there is a very important Bible story, and it needs clear explanation, especially in this day of religious violence around the world.

To examine the cultural customs we must first consider a comparison of the Bible and the Qur'an. The main difference, apart from its content, is the expectation placed on each book. Kazaks expect the Qur'an to bring blessing to them when it is in their house, and when mullahs recite verses on their behalf. There is no expectation that personal

transformation will happen as a result of study, memorization, listening, and public reading, meditating, and praying according to what is written in the holy book. In contrast, these expectations are central to Christian views of the Bible (Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:15; John 17:17; Joshua 1:8). This difference leads to an assumption that the Bible might be more aptly compared with something else in Islam, and that the Qur'an might be more aptly compared with something else in Christianity. Taking the basic assumptions, that the Qur'an is God's revelation and holy presence on earth, and that the Bible is God's transformative word on earth, the Qur'an might be compared to the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night in the days of Israel's exodus, or to Jesus Christ who is God's personal revelation. On the other hand, the Bible would have to be compared with those aspects of Kazak religion that produce spiritual and social transformation according to God's will. A question that may help solve this dilemma is; where do Kazaks look for religious or spiritual information to help them live their lives?

A comparison of the Qur'an and Jesus is beyond the scope of this study, and is also irrelevant, but comparing the Bible with Kazak sources of spiritual information is revealing. Here again, Christians define spiritual information as revelatory and Kazaks consider it as wisdom or insights that help them find their way in life. Such sources include religious leaders, Kazak proverbs, commemorative landmarks (monuments and shrines), feasts, pilgrimages, dreams, and fortune tellers. One need only walk by the main road in front of the Almaty Central Mosque and observe the grass median separating traffic to see many fortune tellers sitting at small tables for the purpose of helping people solve their life problems and understand the future. This evidence leads to an assumption that the Bible must prove its ability to provide spiritual information to

Kazak Christians. Rather than assuming it will be studied, we must consider the possibility that Kazak Christians will compare the Bible with the Qur'an and assume that it plays the same role. This is a potential area for syncretism to slip into the church. Therefore, church leaders must be equipped to teach biblical truth consistently in a way that it will be applied to the lives of church members.

By examining past customs we find that Kazak church leaders consistently demonstrate a grasp of Bible knowledge. Most of them have attended at least one year of seminary education. Some have developed or adopted systematic plans of character formation and discipleship. A Bible knowledge survey of church members would provide helpful information to determine what role Kazak Christians attribute to the Bible. Simply referring to the Bible as the holy book (*Киелі кітап*) or God's word (*Құдайдың сөзі*) is not substantively different from how people refer to the Qur'an. Trying to convince Kazaks to read the Bible based on a recommendation from famous Kazaks or even from Imams, may create a level of interest, but also risks communicating a goal of becoming better Muslims instead of followers of Jesus.

Although the temptation is great to speak about the Bible on par with the Qur'an, significant differences exist between them. Most of the biblical evidence promotes using the Bible proactively rather than comparatively. Comparing the Bible with the sayings of other religions is presented rather as a contrast than a comparison (Isaiah 45:20-21).

The decision about this issue recognizes a significant new understanding that surfaced in this process. Although the Bible and Qur'an are often compared they are actually very different in nature from each other. They play different roles in their respective religions. Therefore, the terms holy book (*Киелі кітап*) and God's word

(*Құдайдың сөзі*) must be considered to have meanings specific to their respective religions. This is not an argument to stop using those terms to describe the Bible. On the contrary, it is an argument to utilize the Bible in such a way that Kazak Christians and non-Christians will conclude that those terms are appropriately suited only to the Bible. The role of the Bible is to equip God's people to do God's will (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The church must develop training that helps people practice living the Christian life. This is already happening in many churches, but significant life issues need to be addressed. Specific training should prepare people to find biblical answers to everyday life issues.

A related issue is how Christians ought to handle the Bible in public. Should they write in it or set it on the floor? Muslims do not treat the Qur'an in those ways because of their understanding of the concept of what is holy, and what is clean. Christians ought to treat the Bible with respect because it is God's word but writing in it and setting it on the floor are basically non-issues because the Christian understanding of what is holy refers to God's essence rather than material objects and places. It would be appropriate for Christians to explain why they write in their Bibles and do not shelve them separately from other books.

Three main types of new practices emerge from this critical review of the nature and role of the Bible in Kazak culture: (a) public manner, (c) equipping of Christians, and (c) apologetic communication. How Christians handle or treat the Bible in public will communicate its value to them. Examples include, Christians carrying their Bibles with them to public worship, similar to Kazak men wearing a head cap or Kazak women wearing a headscarf to public worship. Another example is for Christian families to set a

Bible within reach of the dining table so that an elder can read it at mealtime. Equipping practices must be the foundation of Christian instruction. Affective approaches of informal and non-formal teaching methods will be utilized and complemented by demonstrations with an expectation that what is learned will be practiced. Care must be given in the area of accountability as Kazaks retain a memory of Soviet overseers that may negatively affect accountability practices. Rather, accountability will be handled through testimonies, group dynamics, and coaching techniques. Apologetic communication will engage Kazak sources of spiritual information. Verses from the Qur'an may enter into Christian apologetics, but most likely Kazaks will resonate with Kazak proverbs, teaching from Imams and mullahs, commemorative landmarks (monuments and shrines), feasts, pilgrimages, dreams, and fortune tellers. Apologetic conversations that focus on spiritual information from these sources will create a place for God's word in the dynamics of Kazak spiritual understanding. These new practices ought to engender testimonies because of the public nature of their applications.

### 3. A Critical Contextual Examination of Kazak Learning Styles

Kazak learning styles were highlighted as the second participant observation because OPECS' Kazak students excelled at telling stories and personal testimonies, which diverged somewhat from the typical lecture/essay communication in classrooms. It was thought that students needed to receive as much information as possible during their seminary study program before being sent out to plant churches. On the other hand, students complained periodically that the classes needed to be more practical. Those experiences give rise to the question: Are linear, logical teaching styles adequate for communicating the gospel to Kazaks?

In the past, Kazak learning styles have been recognized as different from those familiar to missionaries from many countries. Most missionaries have used primarily linear methods of instruction, common in lectures and sermons. Conferences and seminars also tended to be lecture presentations. However, adult learning styles were successfully incorporated into some conferences. Linear styles introduce abstract concepts that tend to be detached from practical applications and everyday life. In other words, the content that students received was hard to process because Kazak students were not able to relate it to life experiences. If Kazaks were naturally abstract thinkers, they would have enjoyed the information that was delivered logically and linear. As it was, they wrestled to find meaning, an indication of a preference for affective learning styles as Kazak culture is highly relational.

By examining Kazak learning styles we recognize that our observations related memory to learning and emphasized the phenomena of families where much learning takes place through the creation of memory. Collective memory is a process of constructing memories in story form, referred to as narrative. Erik Aasland wrote a dissertation about Kazak proverbs and he argued Kazaks also need a narrative, a context, in order to communicate meaningfully. "Although proverbs express an idea, they cannot stand on their own as a story. Instead, they are integrated into a broader narrative" (Aasland 2012, 166). Unfortunately, content that has no context outside of the classroom is easily forgotten. Kazak proverbs are memorized in public schools, but their lack of a context does not present difficulties to students because those same proverbs are repeated in daily conversations and adult storytelling. They are part of a larger narrative that connects both local and national narratives.

Kazak collective memory is simply life pictures connected to stories repeated over and over within families and other groups. We learn from the construction of memory that Kazak learning styles are a product of the Kazak group dynamic, especially families. Just as people remember who they are in relation to the groups with which they associate, they also learn when ideas are related to contexts. A Kazak proverb says, "The good person has no vengeance; the bad person has no ancestry" (Aasland 201, 175). Having no ancestry is a physical impossibility, but no memory of one's ancestry makes a person bad— a reference to the Kazak cultural assumption that everyone must know the names of their seven ancestors.

What are the relevant scriptures regarding Kazak learning styles? Commands to remember were associated with God's miraculous deliverances under Moses and Esther, and this is remembered with commemorative feasts. Jesus also instituted the Lord's Supper as a commemoration of his sacrificial death. In contrast, God's judgment came upon those who feasted while forgetting God's deliverance (Numbers 11:33; Daniel 5:22). Israel forgot God's salvation when they stopped celebrating memorial feasts, and they reinstituted those feasts in order to remember again. These examples demonstrate the affective nature of memory. In addition to the Lord's Supper, Jesus facilitated affective learning through the use of parables, healings, miracles and object lessons.

To evaluate past customs of Kazak learning styles we consider biblical examples of remembrance. From these examples of remembrance we can conclude that memory is assisted by affective learning. Kazaks also have developed affective learning skills within their families as ways to remember their past and honor their ancestors. Kazak proverbs join with narratives as powerful tools of memory among Kazaks. Kazak

commemorative feasts are the central means for Kazak religious identity to persist through remembering that their roots are in their Muslim ancestors.

A decision about the issue of Kazak learning styles is based upon the dynamic relationship between memory and learning among Kazaks, which suggests that Kazaks learn best through affective means. This is not to say that linear or logical learning styles are to be neglected. Linear forms are very important, but affective learning styles connect content to narratives and contexts, thus producing memories that can be applied practically. Therefore, Kazak churches will build collective memory, establishing and extending their Christian identity through affective means. As a result, church leaders and missionaries will design their teaching and training around affective techniques. Certainly the Lord's Supper ritual to commemorate Christ's death is the most prominent technique of affective learning within the church.

Four categories of new practices emerged out of this critical review. They include affective teaching and training principles and three categories of contextualized commemorative feasts: family feasts (circumcision, marriage, and funerary), national holiday feasts (*Korban Ait* and *Ramadan-Oраза*), and new Christian Community feasts. The fourth category is celebrations within Christian communities, designed by and relating to the community. These may include feasts for Christ's death and resurrection, birth, new believer baptisms, secondary graduation, harvest, etc. Some of these exist in Kazak culture, such as harvest feasts that are already being celebrated in churches.

In Kazak culture there is a tradition during community feasts of people voicing blessings, perhaps the result of Soviet influence. Blessings are spoken that are appropriate to the occasion and consist of people in turn saying blessings such as "may

the next year's harvest be full" or "may your children all be healthy." People are encouraged by such words, but they speak about the future, and memories are not made out of future hopes. So the blessing is an effort to build community harmony. In order to build community identity a tradition of blessing ought to be supplemented with a tradition of testimonies. Blessings and testimonies can be shared in the same setting. Community sharing of God's acts and blessings will construct memories.

# CHAPTER 6

## A Systems Approach to Christian identity

In chapter 5, critical contextualization was used to design culturally appropriate new practices. This chapter continues the discussion of understanding the gospel in Kazak culture by introducing a systems approach to religion. "Missiologists have long recognized that the whole of the Christian faith must be contextualized—but few have tried to provide approaches that help understand how to put feet on this mandate" (Moreau 2006, 328). One assumption about the use of systems for understanding human identity is that multiple perspectives about a given subject produce a fuller understanding of that subject. In this current study the subject is Kazak Christian identity in Kazak society.

A systems approach will be fruitful for any ethnic group's self-understanding, but all the more so for one where ethnicity is bound up with religious identity as in Kazakstan. In his book, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*, Paul Hiebert introduced a systems approach to understanding humans in context. His purpose was to "integrate their findings to get the whole picture of what it means to be human" (Hiebert 2009, 127). Alexander Laszlo in "Systems Theories: Their Origins, Foundations, and Development" also writes about systems, "In the broadest conception, the term connotes a complex of interacting components together with the relationships among them that permit the identification of a boundary-maintaining entity or process" (Laszlo 1997, 7). In *Perspectives on General System Theory* Ludwig von Bertalanffy writes, "The consideration of culture as 'systems' is a useful model which can form the basis of a science of 'culturology,' opening new

vistas and approaches toward understanding the phenomenon of civilization" (Bertalanffy 1975, 74).

The term *system* refers to multiple disciplines that can be employed to create a more complete picture of humans in context. Clifford Geertz defined religion as a system.

> Religion is 1) a system of symbols which acts to 2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by 3) formulating concepts of a general order of existence and 4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factualness that 5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz 1993, 90).

In the current study systems refers to social systems, which can be thought of metaphorically as organisms (Hiebert 1999, 45; Bertalanffy 1975, 75). The body of Christ is a metaphor that refers to the community of Christians, or even to a local church. The family of God also applies to this particular study. Therefore, I refer to systems (i.e., a general system of identity) as metaphorically complex organisms, an affective understanding that will be useful for applying in the local Kazak church.

Such an approach will assist missionaries toward greater understanding of the people they serve. Adopting a systems approach to identity will also reduce identity dissonance (inconsistency in one's identity) among Christians living among their own people as their newly acquired beliefs about God challenge current cultural presuppositions. The goal is to help Christians view themselves first as human and Christian within their Kazak socio-cultural environment, as well as to be treated that way by others. The role missionaries play in this approach has changed somewhat from being agents of change to what Hiebert calls, "inbetweeners" (Hiebert 2009, 120). The term is helpful because it infers that Kazaks are agents of change in their collective memory, and that missionaries direct their attention to the gospel as it relates to culture.

There is a clear expectation that the gospel will bring cultural change, first to Kazak Christians and then to the Kazak society. The current course of events, the revitalization of Islam and a harsh new Law on Religion, may cause Christians to be fearful or timid, but that does not have to be the case. "History takes place not as an evolution of an amorphous humanity or of the species Homo sapiens, but is the evolution of holistic entities or systems called cultures or civilizations, localized in space and time" (Bertalanffy 1975, 77). Currently Kazak culture is returning to its Muslim identity, and in many ways stronger than before the Soviet era. However, the gospel is a powerful change agent, especially for those who will become agents for relevant communication of the gospel to Kazaks. Addressing cultural change, Bertalanffy argues, "Cultures show autonomous development in the sense that their changes are not completely accountable as changes of their environment, physical or cultural" (Bertalanffy 1975, 78). "They are 'inner-directed'; they are systems that are not merely 'reactive' in response to stimuli, but are 'active' or 'creative'" (1975, 78). A systems understanding of the gospel in culture will help individuals break down an otherwise abstract grasp of the Kingdom of God into a more concrete affective experience useful for connecting faith with action. Seeing God work wonderfully in their own culture may give rise to a rallying cry for all Christians, "Culture traits do not a culture make" (Bertalanffy 1975, 78).

According to Hiebert, "Culture consists, in part, of belief systems made up of three interacting dimensions: ideas, feelings, and values" (1999, 36). The dimensions of religion are patterns, sometimes referred to as systems themselves, within the systems that make up one's beliefs. "To understand religion as a cultural system, it is important to study the signs people use to reflect their beliefs, feelings, and values" (Hiebert 1999, 39).

Moreau further proposes seven dimensions of religion based on "Ninian Smart's model of seven dimensions of religion" (Moreau 2006, 328). The proposed dimensions include: "the doctrinal, the mythic, the ethical, the social, the ritual, the experiential and the material" (Moreau 2006, 329). These two dimension groupings are not in conflict; however, Smart's model is more detailed and more amenable to analysis.

In mission studies, differences of opinion have existed between scholars representing different disciplines. For example, theologians have been somewhat skeptical of anthropological studies because of their heavy focus on culture to the perceived neglect of scriptural primacy. On the other hand, anthropologists seek to counter the tendency of theological imperialism that results from insensitivity to culture. Critical contextualization and a systems approach to culture seek to overcome these differences by producing glocal theologies[17] and contextualized ministries. Critical contextualization lays out a well-defined process for applying biblical truth to local problems, and a systems approach helps us look holistically at how to relate the gospel to all of culture. I assert that combining the two methods will produce greater understanding of the gospel by Kazak Christians and a greater awareness for targeting needed social change.

A systems approach suggests a revealing study of ethnic identity. Although many systems can be considered, this current study focuses on three, social, cultural, and spiritual. Collective memory relates to social theory, whereas critical contextualization combines cultural theories and theology. Moreover, a general systems theory of identity

[17] *Glocal* is replacing the terms local and indigenous. Hiebert referenced this term as "the fact that people live locally, but participate to varying degrees in the emerging global networks of goods, services, and information" (Hiebert 2009, 118).

combines the three disciplinary perspectives to help Christians see how faith affects every aspect of daily life.

Kazak and Russian cultures, in Kazakstan, place great value on positions of influence, professional titles, and official certifications such as certificates and diplomas. As such, society is not primarily concerned with who someone is in terms of ontological reality. What is important is who or what a person is presented to be. This may be true in most cultures, but it opens an opportunity for a three-fold system of identity to exploit for Christian witness. The current national narrative opposes evangelical Christianity, but individual organizations and people have expressed gratitude to Christians who have served them and expressed God's love in practical ways. Could this gratitude represent the first fruits of a systems approach to identity? Holistic Christianity happens when Christians peacefully express their spiritual identity, relate insightfully to their own culture, and confidently engage their society with the gospel.

**Contextualization as Part of a Systems Approach**

Contextualization methodically examines beliefs and culture to find common ways to express the gospel within culture. In a complementary way, collective memory works primarily within affective frames to construct identity change. In one sense collective memory can be utilized to apply what critical contextualization learns, but in another sense collective memory supplies the needed information for critical contextualization to allow for critical reflections. Therefore, a continuous cyclical relationship forms, helping Christians grow in their understanding of who they are in Christ within Kazak culture. However, there is a caution for missionaries to avoid

thinking that their excellent contextualization efforts will solve the cultural divide. Darrell Whiteman expressed a concern of many missiologists,

> We can celebrate the incremental progress that has occurred over the past twenty-five years, but there is still a gap – and at times an enormous gap – between our scholarly books and articles on models of contextualization that we write to one another and the actual practice around the world, where in far too many corners of the globe, Christianity is still identified as a Western religion and where for various reasons people have missed the universal appeal of Jesus (Whiteman 1997, 5).

This gap may be due, in part, to the role of identity. Here identity refers to the messengers as well as the receivers. Even a holistic approach to identity formation will often lack excellence in practice. Contextualization of some degree will have to emerge as missionaries meaningfully communicate the gospel to the people they serve. However, for fuller contextualization, missionaries have to consciously grow in their own self-awareness, recognize and acknowledge their limitations, and identify with the people they serve and affirm God's work among them. What stands before missionaries is often their pride and failure to see God's work among the people they serve! Whiteman rightly assesses contextualization's challenge.

> Although we can see the obvious need for contextualization, the actual practice of it is not easy. Blinded by our own ethnocentrism and ecclesiastical hegemony, we find it is very difficult to cultivate the art of listening and learning from those different from ourselves. But in a spirit of humility this is a fundamental requirement for contextualization (Whiteman 1997, 6).

**An Assessment**

Ethnographic studies and contextualization plans are scholarly efforts. They are academic strategies that require some learning to be performed well. On the other hand, collective memory is a naturally occurring process in every society, though it can also be influenced by agents. Collective memory reinforces tradition but can hinder the reception of the gospel until a preacher of the gospel appears and begins to establish bridges for gospel understanding. Missionaries utilize collective memory by helping people recognize what they already know in many cases, that their identity is constructed by

their society and the groups with which they associate; and that they also are agents in that construction. At the same time, missionaries utilize collective memory to help Christians recognize what they may not have yet considered, that they belong to a long heritage of God's wonderful works of salvation. They utilize the scripture to help Christians understand that their heritage is bound up together with Abraham, the people of Israel, and Christians throughout all generations. Therefore, collective memory may be utilized immediately by recognizing the works of God in transforming individuals. The same process that once hindered the gospel becomes an advocate for biblical truth and the existence of a community of believers in society. The parameters of collective memory are tied to society and culture, providing an anchor of indigenous character formation.

Hiebert's system's approach, used earlier in biology by von Bertalanffy and others, emphasizes its social and cultural aspects, "In general, social systems are patterns and structures of social behavior. Cultural systems interpret that behavior" (Hiebert 2009, 159). This dissertation argues that identity is a system that includes social, cultural, and spiritual aspects. There is an assumption that spiritual systems account for social and cultural systems; that, in fact, social and cultural systems are rooted in God's nature, and cannot be studied separately from recognition of that fact. However, Hiebert concludes, "Finally, they may appeal to spiritual systems to decide what to do" (Hiebert 2009, 159). With this statement Hiebert rightly expresses the ultimate place of revelatory truth in contextualization. That places the spiritual system where it ought to be, providing a new context for existing social and cultural norms to experience transformation within a balanced system of identity change. A rigorous interaction between biblical exegesis,

missional theology, sociology, anthropology, and other disciplines ought to provide meaningful direction to social and cultural investigation. Those who hear God's call to reach the nations for Christ are motivated primarily by the eternal 'lostness' of all people groups. But that spiritual motivation must not be lost in a cultural and social fog.

# CHAPTER 7

## Sub-Systems of Identity

Collective memory's appeal is its ability to socially construct identity. While memory is intimately related to identity, the two are not synonymous. However, persons who have no memory will have forgotten who they are. Rebecca Copenhaver writes, "Though memory is not the metaphysical ground of personal identity, it provides first-personal evidence of it" (Copenhaver 2012). The focus of this chapter is constructing new identity. Collective memory is the primary tool in this process. And identity, in turn becomes a foundation for new collective memory.

Christian conversion happens as a response to the gospel, and directly or indirectly in relation to a church. First, second, and third hand testimonies about a conversion to Christ quickly enter the social network of relationships that make up a church. Such dynamic interactions both add to the collective memory and begin a process of building identity for the new convert. The convert, like all group members, is adopted into the group identity as long as an association continues between the two. As a group expands its membership, and by extension its collective memory, it also adds to the collective memory of a larger society. This is evidenced by an experience I had near the OPECS seminary bus stop. The bus stop was traditionally named "kindergarten stop" due to the fact that the seminary building formerly housed a soviet kindergarten. Although the statue of Lenin had been removed from its place on the OPECS property, bus drivers still announce "kindergarten stop" as they approach the bus stop. On one occasion a man sitting in front of me heard the announcement and turned to his neighbor

and said, "It's gone to a church." That is an example of new collective memory entering the larger society. It remains to be seen if local bus stop name givers will rename the stop. What happens in conversion and community is then further understood through culture.

These three components describe systems of identity change. They are separate parts of a larger system of identity. Each part is distinct but relates to the others. Therefore, conversion, community, and culture must first be considered individually, and then relationally.

**Spiritual System: The Basis for a New Collective Memory**

Conversion by its very nature is a change of identity. It is a transformation of a person's self-awareness. V. Bailey Gillespie writes, "Who people really are becomes the biblical identity question" (Gillespie 1979, 127). Thus a person's identity is reflected most clearly in what God says about the person rather than what society intimates about the same person, in spite of social and cultural currents to the contrary. Therefore, it is the task of believers to establish God's view of identity both personally and corporately.

The identity-forming aspect of conversion led Gillespie to define identity in general sociological terms as "knowing where one fits" (1979, 126). These two ideas, who I am and where I fit, became a topic of discussion among Kazak students and visiting professors at OPECS. Visiting professors would sometimes come to a Pauline passage of scripture that included the phrase 'In Christ,' an important phrase for understanding a believer's identity. One key example of this phrase is found in 2 Corinthians 5:17. There the Greek phrase ἐν Χριστῷ was translated into English as 'in Christ,' and into Kazak as 'біреу Мәсіхпен тығыз байланыста болса' which, in English,

is 'if anyone is in close relationship with Christ.' Kazak students struggled with the English wording because it was not in their Bible, and because the visiting professors insisted on the English translation. The Kazak word for "in" (*ishinde*) also means 'in the belly.' Therefore, Bible translators came up with a solution to "render the semantic content of the figurative expression 'in Christ'" (Talim 2013). The Kazak rendering of the term 'ἐν Χριστῷ' in Pauline literature, answers the question of 'where I fit' more than 'who I am' and it refers to the close relationship one has with Jesus after being born again. Interestingly, Kazak preachers often use the above expression to exhort their congregations to more intimate faith and greater church participation.

Here I put forth two assertions that, I believe, place conversion and identity in their proper relationship. First, conversion happens in relation to a Christian community (Rambo 1993, 1,142). Second, collective memory is a socially constructed view of history that has transformational impact within one's identity. These two assertions lead to a conclusion that conversion's effect on identity must have profound consequences in one's relationship with his or her affiliated groups and society as a whole. This is far from a western individualist conception, but it is a principle that holds true for people of all cultures, because it is based in the nature of God. What this means is that a person cannot be explained apart from his or her relationship with God and others. Dennis Kinlaw elucidated this emphasis on relationships in his book *Let's Start with Jesus* where he posited that theology ought to begin with faith in God's self-revelation rather than with philosophical reasoning. He stated, "Human persons were made for each other. Our fulfillment in life depends on other people; this need for another is a reflection of the

triune God who lives in a community of three persons" (Kinlaw 2005, 106).[18] Identity is bound up together with our affiliated groups (family, ethnicity, social groups, society, nation). When our identity changes through the influence of the gospel we become part of the church, which is a social institution. Therefore, conversion begins a process of solidifying a new believer's place in community with Jesus' followers and reciprocally destabilizes any relationships with existing affiliated groups that oppose Jesus Christ.

Since these consequences can include criticism and ostracism from kinship members, social and economic marginalization, imprisonment, and even death at the hands of those who formerly expressed their undying love and loyalty, converts are faced with two possible conclusions. First, they follow what they believe to be the truth for which they are willing to die, or have been deceived into thinking they are following the truth when in fact they are willing to die for a lie. Psychologist William James wrote about conversion as a change of "the hot place in a man's consciousness, the group of ideas to which he devotes himself, and from which he works, call it *the habitual centre of his personal energy"* (James 1958, 162). While this description rightly characterizes human thought and emotion, it fails to engage conversion's source, which is faith. It does not answer the questions, why a person willingly converts, where that willingness comes from, and how the conversion was effected. In fact, social sciences are not able to probe beyond human limitations.

> Now if you ask of psychology just *how* the excitement shifts in a man's mental system, and *why* aims that were peripheral become at a certain moment central, psychology has to reply that

[18] Kinlaw explains this concept in detail, "Their Being is one, but their persons are differentiated. The second is called the Son of the Father through the Spirit, and the third we name the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. They exist in a communion that is characterized by reason because it is verbal. So they are of one mind. And they are of one spirit because they share their common life with each other. Two of these persons exist in a familial relationship, and the Spirit is the Spirit of the other two. In other words, one is not thinkable without the others" (Kinlaw 2005, 70).

> although she can give a general description of what happens, she is unable in a given case to account accurately for all the single forces at work (1958, 162).

This limitation, inherent in psychology, in particular, and social sciences in general, brings to light the importance of faith in what the Bible claims to be true about social activity. Faith in the biblical testimony must inform our understanding of conversion and the other two areas of focus that contribute to collective memory highlighted in this dissertation; culture and community. In this chapter I will explore conversion as it relates to community and identity, specifically Kazak conversion, the church and identity.

Conversion and the subsequent development of identity suddenly bring us to consider people outside the Christian community as other. It is only through contrast and comparison with an 'other' that we develop identity. Psychology contrasts the other in order to differentiate ourselves, thus creating personal identity. Sociology, viewing identity through a corporate lens, joins other members of our group who co-create social identity with us through the process of collective memory. Both personal and group identities take history into consideration. They recognize time's role in identity development. Time (or history) includes events and experiences that help form our identity. Some of the events and experiences of history are institutionalized as traditions and rituals that profoundly shape our identity. Halbwachs' conception of identity assumed that history is reconstructed through eyes of the present. He wrote, "I believe that the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society" (Halbwachs 1992, 51). Therefore, historical events and experiences are remembered in such a way as to fit our socially constructed identity.

Some middle aged Kazak unbelievers demonstrate this when referring to themselves as atheists and Muslims, but unable to explain the logical impossibility of the

fact. Collective memory embedded in their minds an atheistic identity influenced by Soviet education and social pressure. That identity lingers because it was established in childhood's formative years. Current collective memory is being influenced by a nationalistic trend to regain pre-Soviet Kazak/Muslim identity. Kazak group orientation pressures and shames people into acknowledging Kazak/Muslim identity as patriotic, ethnic, and historical. Government officials commonly ask believers why they have betrayed their people by following Jesus. Left unchecked this trend will result in a stronger, more pervasive Kazak/Muslim identity. Kazak identity is utilized by society to facilitate a Kazak future based on a perceived Kazak past. There is no Kazak/Christian identity that reaches back into the past (beyond the 1990s) to a Christian history. The Russian Orthodox and Russian Baptist communities in Kazakstan did not include any measurable number of Kazaks during Soviet years, and those who did join were considered betrayers, and apostates. So conversion to Christ among a believing community becomes the historical source for a new collective memory; a new community.

A person who experiences conversion to faith in Jesus Christ does not throw away historical content in order to accept a new identity. The new identity becomes problematic when conflicts develop with historical commitments to tradition. History's significance in developing identity comes to the fore in conversion. Conversion does not neglect, ignore, or seek to change history. Rather conversion sees history as it is, and chooses to deviate from the course constructed by society's existing collective memory. This is only possible because collective memory is socially constructed. If collective memory understood history accurately there would be a one to one correspondence

between constructed reality and ontological reality. As it is new believers are challenged to recognize two competing identities; that of their sociocultural environment, and that of their new Christ-centered community. These identities conflict at points. Some of the conflicts can be overcome with thoughtful communication skills, and other points are so fundamentally different as to be irreconcilable. The challenge is to decide exactly how to deal lovingly with these points of conflict.

Christian conversion includes changes in such things as personal allegiance, authority, group association, worldview, religious rituals, habits and definitions of words. The former identity was filtered through an underlying perception of history and a desired future. The new identity that came about through Christian conversion is the basis for a new collective memory, a new historical beginning with God as Creator, Jesus Christ as Lord, and the Bible as definer and explainer, and the church as interpreter of the new identity. The term interpreter refers here to socially constructing what has already been created ontologically. Therefore, believer fellowships (groups) continue to reconstitute social identity through the process of collective memory, with this underlying ontological reality; a supernatural change caused by God breaking into time and space to transform a person. God is infinite and beyond our complete comprehension. Therefore, believers seek to understand and promote the new identity with varying degrees of fruitfulness. Three biblical metaphors are particularly helpful in describing Conversion's effect. They are a new creation contrasted with a worldly life (2 Corinthians 5:17), citizenship in heaven as opposed to a destination of hell (Philippians 3:20), and cultural change based on a relationship with Christ rather than bloodlines (Galatians 3:28). These

changes highlight points of tension between new believers and unbelieving members of society, in particular relatives.

Conversion is incorporation into a new community. Conversion as a process is significant for Kazaks, because the greatest challenges Kazaks face when converting to faith in Jesus Christ have little to do with their newfound hope, but much to do with consequences. Kazaks are often concerned about how conversion will affect their relationships. In an article that Lewis Rambo co-authored, his process model is described. "*Stage 7, Consequences*, are not only at the culmination of the process when experiences, identities, and commitments are consolidated. The model suggests that the potential convert is constantly assessing the effects of the new religious option" (Paloutzian 1999, 1072). The EP3 qualitative research survey conclusions included observations that most Kazaks were led to Christ by relatives and most persecution came from relatives. Islam was the most significant worldview that they seriously considered before conversion. And those who had Muslim faith considered it the strongest impediment to accepting Jesus. (EP3 2007, 12-17). The conclusion that family members were the strongest supporters as well as detractors suggests Kazak people have close family bonds.

Rambo's socio-psychological conversion process includes context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences, all of which describe conversion as it involves experiences, people of influence, and the person being converted (1993, 165-170). This view of process is helpful for discerning the role relationships and rituals play in identity formation. However a social process is quite different from a theological process.

A theological perspective on conversion is offered in Timothy Beougher's *Richard Baxter and Conversion.* Beougher writes about a divine/human interactive process, which includes "cause", "means", "preparation", "channel", and "result", all of which describe the working of God's grace with a positive response from the person being converted (Beougher 2007, 77-97). Robert E. Coleman's *The Heart of the Gospel* expresses both divine and human participation by likening conversion to repentance (Coleman 2011, 154). Characteristic of conversion is a change of heart, so aptly described by the word *repentance*, and so indicative of identity change.

It is understood that this theological process takes place in relationship with a community of believers, but the emphasis is on God's grace rather than community influence. Therefore, theology enriches a social view by describing a dimension of identity change not visible from the social sciences; God's converting acts, thus contributing valuable content to issues of memory and identity as they pertain to collective memory. A Kazak theological explanation of conversion has yet to be written.

The process of conversion is a fundamental change that draws a person into a new community of Jesus' followers. Therefore, it is essential that Muslim converts to Jesus Christ gain their religious identity through their relationships with Jesus and his followers. This new community will necessarily mingle a biblically based church identity with the already existing social and national identity. New community becomes the place where contextualization is discussed, and where collective memory builds. Conversion to Christ creates a new collective memory, and thus a new identity, as a church within society.

Kazak conversions are as complex as those of any other group who start off with very little information about Christ. Some of what new believers do know is tinged with Kazak sayings and Islamic nuances. There are also many testimonies of miraculous healings and dreams that ultimately led to individual conversions. However, the most common and profound way of conversion has been Kazak believers sharing their own testimonies with family members and friends (EP3 2007, 1-18).[19] A qualitative study performed in Kazakstan revealed helpful insights into Kazak conversions. Four are highlighted here.

- They came more to Christ through relatives and neighbors than the non-Kazak students.
- In their case, a personal testimony is even more important.
- Health problems were an important motive to seek God.
- In light of the fact that they mention sin as a relatively significant motive to seek God, it is remarkable that the category God's forgiveness in my life is completely lacking as a characteristic of their new life (EP3 2007, 17).

Is conversion remembered in collective memory? Certainly Muslim identity is an established aspect of Kazak collective memory. In order for Christian identity to replace Muslim identity care must be taken to understand differences in meaning between Muslim and Christian devotion. For example, each religion has its respective holy book, which is also revered differently. The Qur'an is considered by Muslims to be a blessing to any household that possesses a copy. Muslims consider the Arabic translation of the

[19] Results of the EP3 qualitative study are in Appendix E

Qur'an to be most blessed, even if they cannot read and understand that language. On the other hand the Bible is understood to bless people who learn to trust God's written word. Christians hold that God's word has a transforming effect on their lives as they read, study, ponder and obey what is written. These are two very different ways of viewing holy books. If new Christians treat the Bible as they formerly treated the Qur'an, their Christian faith will soon fade. This is not to say that they considered themselves nominal Muslims. They would be perplexed by such a suggestion. Therefore, the memory of conversion is necessary for constituting a new identity, and not conversion alone. Every Christian remembrance of divine encounters provides the basis for a testimony that ought to inform collective memory. What is considered to be a divine encounter will be established by interaction that takes place within Christian communities as people compare and discuss life experiences in relation to what is understood from the Bible. Biblical understanding among lay Christians is considered a protection against error and in the extreme, apostasy.

Collective memory offers a solution to apostasy, nominal belief, and syncretism. In as much as collective memory can impede the gospel, it can also be used to advance the gospel through emphasizing conversion for all it is meant to be. There must be a real break with one's past in order to create a new beginning with conversion. Ron Smith's study on plain-folk Christian living in nineteenth century Kentucky sheds needed light on this concern. For the plain-folk of Kentucky "conversion forced one to alienate oneself from the past – the path to the convert's future was irreconcilable with the path of the world" (Smith 2005, 48).

It is typical of Kazaks to begin their testimony by saying, "I repented," and proceed to describe their conversion. That is a great way to talk about meeting Jesus. It describes the essential act in conversion. The idea of repenting infers that the one doing the repenting has made a full commitment to God, and truly left the old life.

Conversion must also embrace the believing community, the source of a new collective memory. It is this author's conviction that embracing a community of believers so firmly establishes one's identity as a follower of Jesus Christ that faith becomes a way of life. We now turn to a discussion about community as an essential context for developing collective memory.

**Social System: The Subject of Collective Memory**

During the first decade and a half after the end of Soviet Communism the gospel has produced many new churches. William Clark observed, "Protestant Christianity, which along with Islam and Orthodox Christianity was marginalized during the Soviet period, has become part of the social landscape of the country" (Clark 2009, 129). The church is the social expression of converted believers in association with each other. A significant ecclesiological search exists among believers in Kazakstan over the public expression of church. What should it look like? Contextualization, pragmatism, as well as constraints relating to the new Law on Religion, drive this search. Therefore, this section will briefly expose some of the prominent issues regarding public expression of church.

Without regard to church size, all of Burkit Group churches were planted according to a traditional model, employing theologically trained leaders. This was the general pattern of missionary activity throughout Kazakstan until 2008 when official

seminaries were closed. Some larger churches have facilitated cell group ministries, but house church planting and networking did not take root as a bona fide method until formal theological training became untenable. Currently some successful house church ministries exist and are growing.

Many definitions of a church exist. One this author offers as a working definition is: A church is a community of Jesus Christ's followers, watching over one another in love, directed by the Holy Spirit, where the word of God is faithfully preached and taught, the sacraments are properly administered, and the lost are found. If we accept a general definition of the church as a community of believers, we risk overemphasizing social relationships to the neglect of God's word, and personal responsibility. Without real clarity as to the church's identity, Kazaks who are indefatigably passionate about relationships might fall prey to a nominal expression of Christianity based on their current expression of Islam.

In 2007 a group of missionaries printed, *Starting a Church in your House*, complete with a leader's guide, in English, Russian, and Kazak. This book is a remarkably useful tool for starting churches. It is designed to facilitate group discussion and inductive learning. Church is defined in the following way, "Throughout this book we define a church as a group of baptized believers who meet regularly together, celebrate the Lord's Supper and worship together, and are obedient to fulfilling the great commandment (Matt. 22:36-37) and the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20) together" (Jamison 2007, 28). This book includes references to Jesus modeling preaching for his disciples, but interaction with the Bible in the church is primarily depicted as group discussion through inductive learning, a very effective teaching method. The book

reflects principles of church planting elucidated in David Garrison's popular book, *Church Planting Movements* (2004). However, there is somewhat of a de-emphasis on preaching. I assert that a culturally appropriate prophetic ministry is essential to every Christian community.

"To follow Christ means to relate to one another with the mind of Christ, that is, to relate to one another as Christ did to us – in Servanthood an humility" (Hiebert 2008, 281). Given the strong Kazak cultural trait of kinship, new believers must recognize the church as a new family. This simple recognition, when applied practically in relationships, ought to serve as a contextual bridge that helps believers overcome the weight of persecution they receive from birth relatives. "The church is also a people who share a new life and blood. It is a new kindred, a new family" (Hiebert 1999, 124). Therefore, the supernatural transformation of identity in conversion is given a place to be confirmed, affirmed, enjoyed, protected, more adequately understood and further transformed.

An assertion that biblical identity is the result of a personal ontological change necessitates a brief discussion about the nature of that change. It has already been discussed that conversion is a transforming act of God in a person's life. God's gracious forgiveness, and our adoption as children of God is part of conversion. That act is both spiritual and social, both ontological and contextual. Conversion incorporates new believers into a community of God's holy people. As a result, converts are properly identified as 'holy' because of their relationship with God, who is holy, and to the church which is becoming holy. Allan Coppedge in *Portraits of God* clarifies, "Any understanding of biblical holiness must be centered around the Old Testament word

*qodesh* (קדש) and its derivatives" (Coppedge 2001, 54). Strong scriptural and historical evidence supports the idea that conversion is followed by a second work of grace called entire sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1Peter 1:13-16; 1John 4:16-18; 1Corinthians 13:10). Various terms describe the second work of grace, such as 'second blessing' 'full salvation' and 'Christian Perfection' (Lindstrom 1980, 127).[20] The common term, 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit,' also describes entire sanctification but it is usually associated with reception of spiritual gifts rather than a putting to death the sinful nature, full surrender to God, and an infilling of divine love. This author patiently waits for Kazak scholars to arise who have mastered biblical languages and are able to produce their own theology of God's sanctifying work from conversion to full salvation.

It is through this instantaneous act that believers are given grace to love God with their whole hearts, thus enhancing their identity as followers of Jesus. We can logically conclude that although believers are holy, and that is how the apostle Paul addresses them in scripture, they are not fully holy as a result of conversion. Conversion brings a person into a holy relationship with God through forgiveness of sins. A second work of grace is needed for holy living.

> The nomenclature for the category of full sanctification is found in the closing of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, where he prays for them, "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly," that is, fully or entirely (5:23). The verbal form of Paul's prayer is turned into the nominal form for this descriptive term of "entire sanctification" or "full sanctification." God's work in the believer's total being – including his spirit, soul and body – is necessary to make the believer entirely holy (Coppedge 2001, 82).

This section on community is an appropriate place to consider entire sanctification because it occurs within a social context just as conversion does. The new social context of the Christian community provides Kazak believers with examples of how to live as

[20] Additional explanations of this second work of grace that further transforms and magnifies believers' self-identification with Jesus are given by Coppedge in *Portraits of God*, John Oswalt in *Called to be Holy: A Biblical Perspective*, Harald Lindstrom in *Wesley & Sanctification.*

holy people. A Christian community also provides a reason to consider how Christians ought to live between the times of conversion and when they complete their earthly life. The community provides an immediate realization that Christian faith is much more than a promise of eternal life, although that very promise is what brought many to Christ in the first place. Terms such as full surrender, a crisis of faith, perfect love, or abundant life, may not mean to Kazaks what they do to English speakers. Kazaks may introduce terms that shed new light on what it means to be sanctified.

It must be noted that church gatherings are not pure representations of the church because nonbelievers are almost always present. "The Church is an entity which is properly described by its centre. It is impossible to define exactly the boundaries of the Church, and the attempt to do so always ends up in an unevangelical legalism. But it is always possible and necessary to define the centre" (Hiebert 2008, 280). Nevertheless local expressions of the church remain the primary context of God's supernatural activity. Even when God initiates miraculous events in unbelievers' lives outside of a believing community, those people begin associating with a church in order to confirm their faith and begin a believer's life of pilgrimage, or they too fall away.

Kazak culture is highly group oriented in social structure, decision making, identity, and intergenerational relationships. A positive fruit of this cultural trait is strong loyalty among those who see themselves as part of a group. But believing communities cannot depend on group orientation alone when developing group identity because that same group orientation can pull them toward established Kazak/Muslim attitudes and behaviors which oppose biblical faith.

Some concern has been voiced among Kazak believers about conversions that do not blossom into active church participation. When a person accepts the gospel, and yet demonstrates no life change, the conversion's genuineness may be called into question. Another possibility is that the drag of existing culture can be strong enough to persuade new converts that their decision was somehow manipulated and thus non-binding. Rambo offers a perspective on this, "However exciting the new option may be, the convert may not want to give up past relationships and modes of living that are still in many ways a part of his or her core identity" (Rambo 1993, 54). So there is a conflict of the will, but a clarification of the efficacy of God's grace in conversion is also in order. Indeed, identity is supernaturally transformed in regeneration that accompanies conversion. Social construction of identity within believing groups has to do with development of a transformed person. Since identity is a social construction, churches will do well to consider funneling much energy into developing the identity change that God made efficacious through conversion.

Four areas of community have been revealed as essential to developing biblical identity among Kazaks: Bible knowledge, marriage, youth, and vocation. Vocation took precedence in the early years of missionary activity because of rampant unemployment in Kazakstan. As the economy opened to world markets jobs became more available. While unemployment is still twice that of the U.S.A., many Kazaks exist partially as subsistence farmers. Vocation's challenge today is to train believers to start and operate their own businesses because so much business is family owned and operated. Of course government offers employment to many Kazaks, but those positions are almost exclusively filled by Kazaks who identify themselves as Muslim. Bible knowledge,

marriage, and youth require community instruction and participation in order for members to grow in their understanding of biblical identity and to reorient their assumptions and habits to express that identity.

The Bible is a holy book just as the Qur'an is in Kazak thinking. Therefore, a concern arose that Kazaks might not read the Bible because they generally don't read the Qur'an. However the Bible in the Kazak language is very attractive to Kazaks. They have that and read it diligently.

Biblical ideas about marriage confront Kazak culture significantly pertaining to mate selection, male and female roles in marriage, and living with an unbelieving spouse. When a female church member marries an unbeliever, her attendance often stops. She is cut off from the community that exists to develop her identity as a believer. Her contribution to the development of others also vanishes. Since the Kazak population of believers is comprised of about 80% women, not many examples exist of men who marry unbelievers. Certainly more concerted efforts to win men to faith in Jesus Christ may lead to more believing families in the church, rather than the current imbalance of women.

These three areas of community may serve as bell weathers of biblical identity development among Kazak believers. The more believers participate in the church, the more they will demonstrate biblical identity with confidence and persuasiveness. Social and ethnic identities bombard new believers with worldly concepts and behaviors so that they struggle with the constant pressure to conform to Kazak/Muslim culture. That pressure exerts itself even when a person is alone because Kazak/Muslim identity is part of their collective memory.

Time spent alone is filled with influences from the primary group with which one identifies. Since a new believer has a new primary identity, there must also be a change in their primary group. That primary group is Kazak society. Believing communities are so small when contrasted with society that only an unshakable sense of group and individual identity will perpetuate the group. Group identity grows and strengthens as one participates in group activities and commemorations. Halbwachs writes,

> The fact that we could think about a certain object only because we act as a member of a group is sufficient reason to state that an obvious condition of that thought is the existence of the group. Hence, a person returning home by himself has undoubtedly spent some time "all alone," as the saying goes. But he has been alone in appearance only, because his thoughts and actions during even this period are explained by his nature as a social being and his not having ceased for one instant to be enclosed within some group (Halbwachs 1980, 34).

Community builds on conversion as a second context in which collective memories germinate. While it is not novel to put forth an idea that identity develops socially, it is significant to note that Halbwachs considered identity as the result of an established community interacting with its own past, creating a desirable identity from present views of that past. When there is no significant past to speak of, community identity must still be developed. Since most congregations are relatively new, and marginal within Kazak social consciousness they must create their own history through activities that demonstrate separation from other groups, relationship building among members, and outreach to potential future members. There is a difficult line to walk here, between believers' group memories and the prevailing culture's constant vying for attention of individual group members. Collective memory has an important place in the church through the new birth metaphor. Yael Zerubavel used that metaphor to describe the formation of new groups: "Birth symbolizes at one and the same time a point of separation from another group and the beginning of a new life as a collective entity with a future of its own" (Zerubavel 1995, 238). This is not a rejection of society and culture.

Rather it is a beginning of a small group within a large group. Without question certain aspects of different groups are incompatible and even oppositional. That is true of most groups in society as they compare themselves with other groups. It is a demonstration of freedom, and human rights, to believe as one chooses, and to associate with other like-minded people.

New communities of believers have limited options when considering their past. They may look to the wonderful acts of God that account for their conversions. Biblical biographies are another source because they provide records of the patriarchs, Jesus, and his followers, and their spiritual ancestors. They may also read ancient and recent accounts of God's salvific work in other societies. Kazak believers are such a community with virtually no Christian history to draw from. Although there is a history of Nestorian missionaries in Central Asia, their bishoprics were located mainly in Uzbekistan. Only faint traces of Christianity in Kazakstan can be found, and those were all but wiped out by the end of the 15th century A.D. After Nestorian Christianity vanished from the steppes of Central Asia, Russian Orthodox churches appeared, yoked with Russian colonial activity. Cultural barriers are too high for Kazaks to accept the gospel from Russian Orthodox preachers at this time. Therefore, as Kazak Christians further develop their unique Christian qualities such as storytelling and tea-time evangelism, their place in society will become more noticeable as an established group. This is already happening in some communities.

Community immediately invokes the concept of ecclesiology, which has come into some debate as it relates to non-western contexts. Kazakstan is a case in point. The Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Baptist Union are two ecclesial bodies in

Kazakstan that have taken root, survived the soviet communist era and continue to have significant adherents. However these churches have, until recently, never used the Kazak language or allowed Kazak cultural expressions in their worship. This author is not aware of any Russian Orthodox Congregations worshipping in the Kazak language, or of their liturgy having been translated into Kazak. In spite of the strong emphasis on Russian language in Baptist Union churches, a few Kazak congregations exist as healthy and growing churches. The Russian Baptist Union has a promising future among Kazaks where they continue to communicate to Kazaks within their cultural framework. Evangelical missionaries have made the greatest effort to evangelize Kazak people through their own language. It is to this branch of missions that we must turn because it offers the most opportunities to encourage existing congregations, reach Kazak speaking people with the gospel, incorporate them into the church, and prepare them for church leadership.

Outreach to Kazak speaking people must incorporate cultural expressions for the Kazak church. When the author arrived in Kazakstan, in 2004, the prevailing attitude among Kazak believers was that without a building they could not be considered a church, but a sect, no different from Jehovah's Witnesses, radical Islamists, and Hare Krishna's; all harassed by government officials. There were a couple of reasons for that strong opinion. One was the Kazak concept of what is holy. Historically Islam designated certain places as holy places, including mosques, shrines, and cemeteries. Those places were to be respected; separate from ordinary society. That distinction between sacred and secular was a source of great surprise to the author on his first trip to Turkistan. He was given the respect normally accorded to Q*ojas* ("Families claiming Arab descent

from Ali and Muhammad") that was, in some sense, transferable to evangelical missionaries (Privratsky 2001, 1,3). A new convert to Jesus introduced himself as a former Mullah, and listened attentively during each teaching session. When evening came sleeping pallets were rolled out on the floor of our lecture room for the men, but the speaker was given a room separate from the others. The new convert insisted on sleeping in the same room with the missionary because he wanted to be close to the 'holy man'. To the author's relief the room had no door, and he was given a bench to sleep on while the former Mullah slept on the floor. That experience emphasized the Kazak cultural understanding of holy things (which also includes the Qur'an); however such was not the case in other villages. Only in Turkistan did the author encounter such strong thinking, and that diminished over my eight years there. Nevertheless Kazak believers insisted on having a physical structure as a meeting place for a church. In their minds a church was not a church without a separate, designated place of worship. Missionaries, therefore, purchased buildings for all of the Kazak churches in Burkit Group. Those buildings were used for church activities as well as pastors' family residences. Unfortunately some pastors who did not continue in the ministry insisted on retaining the buildings for their own purposes, which caused the church association to suffer. It also caused the author to soften somewhat his Kazak cultural understanding of holy and unholy things. However, I was reminded of Privratsky's notion that Kazak ethnic identity is reducible to basic elements as earlier noted, "In the end it is 'land' and 'blood' which comprise a symbolically meaningful culture in the Kazak collective memory" (Privratsky 2001, 34). Therefore, Kazak ethnic identity took priority over their religious understanding of holy and unholy. This re-evaluation of what is holy would be tested when, in 2011, the

government passed a harsh new Law on Religion that allowed large churches to retain their buildings, but churches under fifty in membership lost their legal registration. In many cases small churches had no other choice but to begin meeting in homes, much like the 'underground' (unregistered) churches popular in China.

With the rise (or return) of Islam in Kazakstan, part of a resurgence of Kazak ethnic identity and culture, has come social pressure on Kazaks to give public expression to their Muslim religion. Expressions may be as simple as joining with Muslim prayers at meals, or attending Friday prayers at a mosque. However, a pervasive assumption exists that if a person is Kazak they are also Muslim. Any Kazak who converts to faith in Jesus Christ is seen as a betrayer. The first fears to invade the minds of potential believers are expected reactions from friends and relatives. This social pressure is likely responsible in some degree for the appearance of C5 evangelism efforts among Kazak believers. C5 efforts are being cautiously observed by believers, at the moment, but increasing emphasis on Islam may result in more acceptability among Kazak believers.

An anthropological approach to missions may energetically embrace C5 movements and what some have called "Churchless Christianity" giving rise to the need for a biblical ecclesiology (Tennent 2005, 171). Tennent reviews the debate between M.M. Thomas and Leslie Newbigin about "Churchless Christianity" in his article "The Challenge of Churchless Christianity: An Evangelical Assessment." In that, Tennent defends the importance of a visible believing community separate from other religions within the same culture. He writes, "Indeed, good biblical exegesis united with solid historical and theological reflection must be the ultimate arbiter of this debate" (Tennent

2005, 173). I agree in principle with Tennent, citing the value of missional theology.[21] A full translation of the Bible in the local language greatly enhances this essential effort.

Systematic theology is laden with cultural baggage that gives missionaries a sense of confidence when teaching, while local believers remain mentally and emotionally disengaged. Systematic theology answers questions that theologians struggled with over centuries, based on philosophical underpinnings. Among Kazaks, at least, current theological struggles include family relationships, spiritual experience, and the place of church in society. All of these relate directly to identity. Once stable biblical identity is established, Kazaks will be able to pursue systematic theology as a local inquiry into biblical truth.

Community, because of its social nature, utilizes collective memory to develop identity. A community of believers, known as a church, develops a shared identity among its members that includes socio-religious (temporary) aspects and socio-spiritual (revelatory) aspects. These aspects must be distinguished because they are formed differently. Temporary aspects are purely social constructions, whereas revelatory aspects are memories of divine interventions in time. Religious time is objective, mechanical, and measureable, while spiritual time is intuitive and subjective, in sociological terms (Halbwachs 1992, 7). To Halbwachs' sociological understanding of time can be added the term revelatory, for the purpose of declaring God's involvement, taking sociology beyond its prescribed limits. Nevertheless God's involvement must be remembered if faith is to live.

[21] Tite Tienou and Paul G. Hiebert have written a helpful chapter explaining and distinguishing missional theology from systematic and biblical theology in Hiebert's book, *The Gospel in Human Contexts, Chapter 2.*

Halbwachs' first mentor, Henri Bergson, referred to inner time as duration, which "provides access to philosophical and spiritual knowledge" (Halbwachs 1992, 7). Later, Halbwachs followed Durkheim who held that time is a social construction. Durkheim wrote, "Observation establishes that these indispensable points, in reference to which all things are arranged temporally, are taken from social life" (Durkheim 1995, 10). Halbwachs' view seems to have changed to favor a sociological understanding, as he wrote, "Time is real only insofar as it has content, insofar as it offers event as material for thought" (Halbwachs 1980, 127).

Perpetuating religious (temporary) identity is primarily a passive process where symbols and forms evoke members' memories. Perpetuating religious (revelatory) identity is primarily an active process where memories are stimulated by personal preparation and participation. Contexts for this participation include personal and corporate confession, repentance, prayer, Bible reading, worship, and heart surrender. The Lord's Supper illustrates this point. Scripture instructs participants to examine themselves before taking the elements (1 Corinthians 11:26-29). There is an assumption that recipients of the bread and wine believe and are committed to a covenant with God to love and obey him in light of Christ's obedient death as payment for our sins, and in light of God's offer of forgiveness, and Christ's promised future return. They declare all of this with their actions. If so, their actions have perpetuated Christ's memory. If that commitment does not exist among communion participants, Christ is not remembered as the powerful Savior that he is. So participants must actively examine themselves to avoid falling into a formal, powerless, religious state that perpetuates a false memory of Christ; resulting in nominalism.

Initially defined through conversion and later more comprehensively defined through entire sanctification (a definite work of grace after regeneration), religious identity develops socially. The term 'revelatory' in this context refers to God's supernatural transforming act that brought into being a new identity. That new identity is not fully understood until one meets God beyond the confines of earthly life. Therefore, social development of identity is an interaction that takes place among believers, leading to fuller comprehension of their God-given identity. It is remembered, celebrated, demonstrated, distinguished, internalized and passed on in association with a body of believers. In this way we can refer to our identity as socially constructed. Halbwachs wrote, "Religion is expressed in symbolic forms that unfold and cohere in space. This condition alone guarantees its continued existence" (Halbwachs 1980, 153). His sociological understanding will resonate with social scientists, because sociocultural processes have the ability to perpetuate themselves with or without spiritual content. In fact, people do remember places (church buildings), symbols (crosses, paintings, robes) rituals (baptism, communion, worship times), and behaviors (prayer postures, fellowship).

Upon reflection, one realizes there are social aspects that evoke religious memory and different social activities that evoke the memory of living faith. Remembrance of religion's form develops genuine (temporary and revelatory) religious identity only when it is accompanied by remembrance of religion's faith. In fact many examples exist of the aforementioned symbolic elements, where biblical faith has been forgotten. Halbwachs lived in France and Germany during the last quarter of the 19$^{th}$ and first half of the 20$^{th}$ centuries, thus his religious understanding was based on religious forms and symbols of that day.

Therefore, elements of community that specifically strengthen and propagate faith must be primary in this discussion about collective memory, leading to identity. We must be careful to develop a faith identity that goes beyond religion's identity in order to guard against dead religion and having the form without the power. Privratsky's framework prioritizes the affective aspect of collective memory before the cognitive, and then embedded bodily behaviors, landscapes, and language.

Burial options in Kazakstan include Russian cemeteries and Kazak cemeteries. As expected, Russian cemeteries display crosses and crescents are found in Kazak cemeteries. The believing community includes participation in the burial of believers, a profound act of collective memory. However some Kazak believers have not been afforded a believer's burial. Since Kazak churches do not display crosses, some other form of symbolism must be chosen to designate their graves as locations where followers of Jesus the Messiah are buried.

Memories of faith must be the business of the church. Too much focus has been given to memories of religion in the past. From Jerusalem to Almaty, religious memories detached from faith memories, actually hinder the advancement of the gospel. My first stumblingly awkward success at leading a youth to faith in Jesus is emblazoned on my mind, whereas I cannot remember the particular Christian camp where it happened. Many such remembrances of spiritual activity live in believers, and are brought to remembrance in community with fellow believers. Things such as moments of repentance, answers to prayer, God's miraculous guidance, personal testimonies, and God's glorious attendance in worship services, are relived and passed on in community.

Passing on these memories requires culturally sensitive communication, especially when sharing with people outside of the church. That is the task of critical contextualization, which we will take up next.

**Cultural System: Rooting the Gospel in Culture**

When Christian missionaries entered Kazakstan (1991) they did not encounter groups of people characterized as *tabula rasa*. On the contrary, they found forms of Christianity that would both help and hinder their contextualization efforts. They found folk Islam in the process of being revitalized from a comatose state. Among Kazaks, tradition, Tengrism, shamanism, and atheism existed under a meta-religious Islamic identity, which persists today. Kazaks had grown up mostly with Russian bosses in labor situations, and Russian specialists in education and technical environments. In some sense foreign missionaries, business experts, and government consultants replaced the former Russian bosses. Therefore, any comparisons between foreign missionaries and former Soviet bosses would naturally introduce issues of trust. Could Kazaks really trust the new foreigners? Was the gospel really communicated? Certainly many genuine believers came out of those early days, and today's leaders were converted during that time. Those days are remembered as the greatest movement to Christ in the history of Kazakstan.

Issues of contextualization were being asked from the beginning of missionary work in Kazakstan. Central Asia had been an area of interest, but scholarship for contextualizing the biblical message was sparse.

Islam can be recognized as a revitalization movement within Kazakstan. Evangelical missions are seeking to contextualize the gospel amidst a culturally changing

environment. Since change is happening so rapidly, lines are often blurred between existing Kazak identities. Seiberhagen recognizes three distinct identities, "Traditional, Modern, and Russified Kazakhs" (Seiberhagen 2012, 58). These identities are synonymous with village, city-village, and city Kazaks mentioned in this study. Traditional Kazaks are depicted as those who utilized collective memory to form and perpetuate their traditional Kazak identity. In this Seiberhagen demonstrates his awareness of Privratsky's theory. However, collective memory is only associated with traditional people when Halbwachs' concept of identity is embraced. Halbwachs would assume that current identity constructs a past that validates itself, and then articulates a desirable future. This study takes a view of collective memory that articulates a desirable future based on God's supernatural act of conversion, incorporation into a community of believers, and sanctification. Using collective memory, Kazaks seek to develop their identity as they interact with scripture, each other, and God's wonderful works in their lives, thus creating their own church. So, collective memory is a process employed by Kazaks for the sake of their own indigenous religious identity. This process will greatly assist the contextualization of church planting because it is an indigenous process related to foundational self-understanding. So it's not the idea of making churches suitable to the Kazak context. Rather, leading Kazaks on a journey of conversion and sanctification and allowing them to develop their own churches.

All religion was suppressed under Atheistic communism. Islam was suppressed publicly, but kept alive through simple acts such as honoring ancestors in dreams and by baking commemorative bread (Privratsky 2001, 123). "Ahmet Yasawi was relegated to the remote status of a medieval poet and philosopher, marginalized, his Sufi identity

ignored – but he was preserved in the collective memory in a cauterized state" (2001 247). The end of the Soviet era set Kazaks free to pursue traditional practices and new religious options. Opening society to democracy and market economics also provided opportunities for protestant Christian missionaries. At the same time, Kazak leaders' desire to revitalize Islamic tradition is evident in the multitude of new mosques in Kazakstan. "Like Turkey, Kazakhstan seems to be forging a different Islamic identity to that of the Middle East" (Seiberhagen 2012, 89). Kazak language and culture share historical affinities with Turkey, which give Turkish universities easy access for developing new campuses in Kazakstan. Islamic revitalization is perceived as a return to Kazak roots, and a reaction against Soviet atheism and democratic capitalism accompanied by protestant missionaries. Widespread interest in Islam today can be attributed to a deep desire among Kazaks to form an identity that will sustain them in the future. "The Soviet concept of inevitable progress has been replaced by a sense that progress is impossible now without a sense of who we are as a people, and from whom we have come" (Privratsky 2001, 247).

Different seasons of evangelism have characterized evangelical missions in Kazakstan, and thus different emphases on contextualization. The first ten years of mission (1991 – 2001) were years of aggressive evangelism, church planting, and theological education. Very few social barriers to sharing the gospel existed. Missionaries tended to be pioneer type people who evaluated personal success by numbers of converts, ability to organize and build churches, and frequency of hosting foreign professors and short-term mission teams. That first season was characterized by extreme economic disparity between Kazakstan and mission sending countries. A natural

consequence of the economic situation was that missionaries purchased properties for churches, and paid salaries to pastors. Todd Jamison lamented the fact, "Particularly troubling is that every school pays a stipend to Kazak students who attend the schools" (Jamison 1999, 187). Jamison went on to clarify, "The paying of stipends is not limited to theological schools, this is also the practice of secular institutes and universities and was characteristic of the Soviet system" (1999, 187). The Soviet state was a nanny state of the first order. Citizens were trained to depend on the state, and when the state fell they seemed like orphans. Dependence was not thrust on new believers by missionaries. Rather Kazakstan's social environment gave birth to dependency that missionaries encountered, sometimes unaware. About those early days, missionaries often recollect that even if they had money there was nothing on the shelves to buy. So, giving stipends, salaries, and 'help' seemed the better part of generosity. This author believes that missionaries were simply perpetuating a very harmful habit that enslaves individuals in poverty. However missionaries were somewhat trapped, having been recognized first as wealthy foreigners, known to have money. They were forced to pay bribes to greedy officials and exorbitant prices to quick thinking merchants. Missionaries would have described those officials and merchants as corrupt, but the officials and merchants would not have seen themselves in the same light.

The second decade of missions (2001 – 2010) was characterized by moderate evangelism, an emphasis on conferences and seminars, while continuing an emphasis on theological education, and increased government legislation to restrict missionary activity. During the second decade many pioneer missionaries concluded their work and departed

the country. Remaining missionaries and new arrivals were more conscious of contextualization, especially in the area of church planting.

In addition to Privratsky's ethnographic study (2001) of Kazak culture, based on its Turkistan roots, significant (English language) dissertations have addressed contextualization of the gospel in Kazakstan. Lee, Min Cheol, founder of OPECS, a Korean by birth, employed a community approach to theological education in hopes of providing a multi-cultural liminal experience of egalitarianism to help students shed oppressive styles of leadership learned under Soviet communism. Classes were divided into Russian and Kazak departments in order to meet language needs. A positive unintended consequence of separate departments was a unique opportunity for observing learning style differences in laboratory-like conditions. Meals, chapel services, and social activities included all students together as one community. In a sense it was a laboratory for cultural learning. Lee did not have the privilege of available scholarship such as this study cites. Having opened the seminary in 1993, most of his work was attempted before publication of Privratsky's study.

Lee placed visiting professors and local teaching staff in a community relationship with students, rather than a hierarchical teacher student relationship of information transfer. One of his goals was to promote new identities as teachers and students interacted in discussions about course topics. Lee's educational strategy was intended to help both local students and foreign teachers learn from each other, a very insightful approach given the desperate need in Kazakstan to overcome racist attitudes at that time. His methodology created an environment of mutual respect. Continued collegial relationships among OPECS graduates are evidence that Lee's educational

strategy still bears fruit. OPECS was closed in 2008, as were all official seminaries in Kazakstan. Had Lee's educational strategy been allowed to thrive it may have been a catalyst for significant positive culture change, providing integration and respect among different people groups.

Erik Aasland completed a dissertation in 2012 on the use of Kazak proverbs for introducing scripture into the Kazak education system. T. Jamison produced the first dissertation (1999) that specifically engaged contextual issues in church planting. He highlighted the positive use of cell church approaches in Kazakstan:

> In the same way that innovative mission strategies of the latter part of the twentieth century aided in bringing the Gospel to the Kazaks, the cell church movement has also influenced the evangelism and church planting efforts among the Kazaks. This influence has come directly through Richard Niebuhr and Faith Community Baptist Church in Singapore and their connection with Joy Fellowship, but the cell church model has been adopted in various forms by several mission groups on the Kazak field (Jamison 1999, 176).

D. Seiberhagen has written most comprehensively on contextualization and church planting in Kazakstan. He also concludes, with Jamison, that house churches most adequately address Kazak culture. "The theory that emerges is that the house church model is very applicable to the Kazakh context. Whilst other models may also be used, effective church planting that reaches all Kazakhs in their particular contexts must involve house churches. At the very least a church must make use of small groups where believers can live out their faith together" (Seiberhagen 2012, 177).

It seems that since Jamison wrote before Garrison's book was published, Jamison reflected on strategies being used in Kazakstan at that time. Since then house church vocabulary has catapulted to prominence, and strategic differences between cell groups and house churches have been noted. The strength of house churches is their economic appeal, hospitality, and intimacy, all within the context of a Kazak home. Weaknesses include their small, almost inconspicuous size and independent autonomy in contrast to

ostentatious mosques and Orthodox churches that define acceptable public religion in Kazakstan. House church leaders who formerly received theological training and ordination consider themselves credible and legitimate church leaders. They may resist giving the same status to house church leaders who lack the same experience. House church leaders who lack mentors and comprehensive training risk theological err. Therefore, house churches need a network in order to help them avoid heretical tendencies. Seiberhagen and others have inspired a network of house church leaders that will hopefully address this concern.

On the other hand cell groups relate to a mother church that determines a church-wide theology. The cell group approach to theology can be seen as hierarchical and a barrier to contextualization. It can also be seen as a way for cell group members to be lazy in the area of theological reflection. While some of the larger existing churches employ cell groups, many small churches are beginning to consider a house church model. Having spent much time in Kazak homes I understand the importance of relationships around a table. I concur with the scholarship that puts Kazak homes at the center of church planting strategies. There are barriers to house churches in spite of their cultural appropriateness. When the father is opposed to Christian faith that home is not amenable to Bible studies and other Christian gatherings. One strange barrier to house church planting is government perception that radical Islamists also employ house group strategies. So, this medium that reflects aspects of Kazak culture may pose an increasing danger to those who employ it.

There is a concern, however, with focusing on church planting methods in general when contemplating how to reach Kazakstan with the gospel. Beyond doubt,

missionaries have worked diligently to employ the best available methods since doors to the gospel opened. In each case a chosen church planting method presupposed a bright future. Traditional church planting models looked to mega church examples as their desired long-term realization. Today house groups hope to produce a growing network of second, third, and fourth generation house churches that spread across the country and change society and culture. Both traditional and house methods claim biblical authority, or at least biblical examples for their justification. Seiberhagen demonstrates this idea of a biblical plan for church methodology, "Our goal has been to use a Biblical blueprint for church with the basic concept that it is a community of believers" (Seiberhagen 2012, 14).

**Recent Developments in Contextualization**

Formal efforts at contextualizing the gospel in Kazakstan are being carried out primarily through a group of local and mission leaders who exchange ideas. Members of that group organized a research and outreach committee named EP3 who seek to engage Kazak believers to find out what practical and theological issues they encountered in their churches. The EP3 committee developed seminars to address some issues and offered training in different regional locations, open to all who were interested. Those seminars were well received in the various locations. The contextualization work being initiated by missionaries is commendable, however limited. Kazaks may not initiate such a work on their own because of an almost expected inability of young churches and new believers to articulate what areas need contextualizing. Local believers in Kazakstan often hesitate to say what they think are good topics to learn. Unless a specific topic urgently addresses itself, such as marriage relationships, they are satisfied to listen to a topic chosen by a visiting teacher. Missionary assistance is needed, and at the same time

Kazaks do have the ability to integrate their culture and biblical teachings into biblical expressions of the church in Kazak culture, through collective memory processes. The church acts as a small group within the larger group (society).

A promising development for Kazak contextualization of the gospel is the annual meeting of Kazak pastors, called Kuraltai. Every year pastors travel from far off to attend this meeting. It serves the need of strengthening and encouraging communities of believers through nationwide identification. Kuraltai also meets an immediate felt need of Kazaks to travel for the purpose of building relationships. Although Kuraltai is not a meeting of scholars, it is a gathering of all church leaders from every denomination, association, and churches in the country. To be sure, some pastors attend Kuraltai who embrace questionable theologies. They are not silenced, but discussions take place and consensus opinions have been stated in favor of, and in opposition to, teachings embraced by various congregations and/or associations. Kuraltai might be seen as a context out of which structures of local theological education will arise. There is already a sense that Kazak protestant churches have gained national credibility, through Kuraltai, on their way to being accepted as a traditional religion in Kazakstan. It may be too early to make such a bold statement, but a nationwide network of believing congregations speaks a loud word to lawmakers and other religious leaders.

**Communication and Identity**

This study looks at collective memory's impact on identity change. Kazak culture's affective way of understanding suggests that non-cognitive dimensions of religion ought to be a starting point for contextualization. Contextualization studies often focus on cognitive dimensions of religion such as those mentioned by Scott Moreau:

doctrinal, mythic, and ethical (2006). Translation models of contextualization focus on cognitive understandings of doctrine, while considering affective dimensions only secondarily. The non-cognitive dimensions of religion are social, ritual, experiential, and material. Privratsky's framework for collective memory also suggests affective, rather than cognitive, influences are primary in constructing memory. Of these four non-cognitive dimensions, "all are found in the practical expressions through which religious identity is founded and lived out in the real world" (Moreau 2006, 329).

While scholarly work on contextualizing church planting tends to focus on methods, this study focuses on persons, specifically identity change that is scripturally defined, socially developed, and culturally communicated. Identity content is transferred through Kazak traditions, rituals, and commemorations, which are contextualized as Muslim, thus creating a culture of folk Islam. Folk Islam currently enjoys passionate revitalization with the full sympathy of government officials and the majority population. This ingrained identity is the focus of holistic identity change. Using a system approach draws multiple perspectives of identity to bear upon the process. Perspectives such as sociology and culture open up many new applications for the gospel in the Kazak context. And new believers who have the tools to look at multiple aspects of identity from a biblical perspective will have opportunities to make significant cultural changes. Identity change must be an intentional task with a goal of leading Kazak believers to shed Muslim aspects of their identity that oppose biblical teachings.

Training in biblical identity and social construction of identity will significantly affect church planting success. A general assumption can be made that people will follow a leader, and that godly leaders will lead people to God. Molding godly leaders

must take precedence over church planting methodology, as important as that is. The current wave of training in house church methodology in Kazakstan will benefit from having leaders who understand and embrace their new identity in Christ, rather than simply repeating what they've been taught. "Christian faith has always had an organizational component, and the organizational structures and leadership roles are built on the cultural values that regulate how people relate socially in religious contexts" (Moreau 2006, 331). A focus on the social dimension of religion must recognize the formal organization and the development of leaders. For leaders to lead, they must first know who they are and where they are going. Jesus did not entrust his disciples with the great commission until they had spent considerable time observing his life.

Erikson places trust/mistrust as the essential characteristic of infant identity formation (1959, 120). Trust is also necessary for believers, especially new believers. An initial conversion experience may be remembered for life, but trust must also be built with God and with other believers if that convert is to be able to lead others. Since Kazakstan was ruled by the Soviet Union where trusting relationships were rare, and the Kazak tendency to distrust foreigners was deepened, new believers must learn to trust God and those who claim to be followers of Jesus. Developing trusting relationships is essential to developing one's religious identity as a follower of Christ. While missionaries are constantly on the lookout for trustworthy cultural insiders to explain their hosts' thinking and behavior, new believers also desperately need to be able to trust that they are becoming biblical insiders.

Gospel communication relates to biblical identity in that the messenger, in large part, is the message. Every Kazak believer is a transformed follower of Jesus Christ.

Their very lives are testimonies. Therefore, biblical identity is a powerful individual and corporate reality. It is not simply an expression of a group's unique character. On the contrary, a community of believers is truly a point of light in a very dark world. Believers are noticeably different than other people in qualitative ways (cf. Acts 4:13, 2 Corinthians 2:14, 15). Once biblical identity is established through conversion, and developed within a nurturing community of believers, it must be communicated to those outside the church. These tasks are not intended to describe a required chronological progression, but a logical order necessary for each believer and church in the process of identity change.

Communicating God's word and salvation to Kazaks is a multifaceted task. Many Kazaks will generalize, "All Kazaks are Muslim." However there are atheists, animists, non-traditional beliefs and various kinds of Muslims as well. This umbrella statement in a society where many faiths exist, displays a meta-story that embraces all Kazaks. It also reveals an attachment to history that fuels the current revitalization of Islam in Kazakstan. I observed three distinct contexts in which Kazak people find themselves. The three contexts include city, village, and recently moved from village to city.

To explain, some Kazaks were born in large cities like Almaty (the largest city in Kazakstan and former Capitol). These cities were the focus of Soviet influence during the Soviet Communist Era that ended in 1990. Russian language is dominant in public and private life in the city. City Kazaks do not understand Kazak language beyond the phrases and expressions they pick up in public or hear from relatives who live in villages. And all Kazaks have a network of relatives! City Kazaks reflect back on Soviet influence

and are grateful for the establishment of public education, in spite of many horrendous acts of oppression against Kazak people during the twentieth century. They go along with public opinion that Kazak should be the national language, but they are torn between learning Kazak or some other language that might help them reach education and economic goals (e.g. English, Arabic, Chinese, French, German). They believe that Russian language and Russian style education are tickets to success in life. They identify religiously with Islam, Atheism, or a non-traditional religion. Their food choices reflect Russian influence (salads and soups). They are not against the idea of intercultural marriage.

Recently moved-Kazaks were born in villages where they learned Kazak as their first language, but moved to a city for work or education. These people may have spent part of their youth in Kazak speaking schools, and part in Russian speaking schools. If they only attended Kazak schools, they may have learned Russian in the military. Many recently moved-Kazaks populate the edges of cities in newly built homes. Their food reflects more Kazak traditional tastes (Meat, potatoes, bread, and rice). They may seek a marriage partner from a village, but send their children to university in the city. They identify religiously with Islam, or a non-traditional religion. They also struggle with a nationalistic hope for Kazak language and a utilitarian desire to learn internationalized languages.

Village-Kazaks speak Kazak language fluently and struggle with Russian. They experience discomfort when Russian language is used in multicultural environments. They eat Kazak traditional food and engage at least minimally in subsistence farming. They are persuaded only when a matter is presented to them in Kazak language (e.g. the

gospel). Instead of pursuing economic success in a city, they seek to have their own land. They are indirect communicators. They seek to marry other Kazaks and have many children. However they despair when they see so many youth moving to cities. When given a choice to learn a foreign language they may choose Chinese, English, or Arabic before Russian.

These three contexts produce indistinct worldviews. Russian linear thinking and Kazak narrative thinking may be combined with Muslim, Atheistic, Animistic, biblical, or syncretistic views of reality. In most situations an assumption of some form of syncretism will facilitate conversation. Speaking with a group of Kazaks provides an opportunity for lively feedback and fruitful discussion, thus greater communication. Speaking to multicultural groups reduces feedback from people who don't share the language of the speaker or the translator. When more than one translator is present, overall communication suffers. In addition to all of the aforementioned, government incentives to learn Kazak and English are making a difference that feeds national pride as well as economic greed.

**Believing Communities**

Communities of Kazak believers exist within Kazakstani society. The word *Kazakstani* refers to all of the various people groups who dwell on the Central Asian steppes; citizens of Kazakstan. A more representative name might be, Central Asian Republic, but for a majority of Kazaks who populate government positions, ensuring Kazak culture's representative dominance and well-funded expressions. For centuries, Kazak culture has embraced Islam's monotheistic worldview. At a deeper, more ethnically significant level, Kazak culture is based on animistic beliefs and ancestor

influence. Although Privratsky's Kazak ethnography focused specifically on the people of Turkistan, their culture dwells at least partially in the hearts of all Kazaks. "The ancestor cult is a contextualization of Islamic belief and ritual that substantially defines the Kazaks and their acculturation to Islam" (Privratsky 2001, 114). Therefore, a Kazak/Muslim worldview is at the heart of Kazak culture and self-understanding. This worldview was created and continues through an ongoing process of collective memory thus not easily changed or abandoned.

When converts to Christ join churches they associate with likeminded believers. Together they are trying to acquire a new worldview. The challenge for believers becomes navigating a culture, considered their own, and yet antithetical to their newly embraced Kazak/Biblical worldview. This is no easy task, nor should it be considered a passive activity. On the contrary, believers ought to understand the nature of their situation, and any necessary steps required in order to accomplish their goal. The first step is to recognize their new identity in Christ. "This belonging to a new community is our eternal identity" (Hiebert 2009, 75).

**Witnessing to Kazaks**

On a number of occasions I travelled with Kazak local pastors to distant villages for the purpose of teaching and training church members. Those trips afforded me opportunities to witness gospel presentations by my Kazak friends. Each experience provided me with insights into the task of contextualizing the gospel. Trips almost always required overnight travel on sleeper trains, equipped with a small table in each coupé, and hot water pots available at the end of each wagon. Hot water pots were important because Kazaks cannot engage in conversation without having tea to drink.

Four people slept in a coupé, and shared whatever food they brought or purchased at stops along the way.

The most distinctive aspect of Kazak gospel presentations is a personal testimony. My Kazak companions expressed with emotion and visible sincerity their narratives of life-changing encounters with Jesus, and the others listened. Unbelievers would periodically interject questions, and there were times of verbal pause when presenter and listener reflected. Given the Kazak cultural trait of storytelling, some presentations lasted over four hours. Osken, an informant referred to earlier, explained that in childhood he would sometimes stay up late listening to his father and uncle tell stories. Evidently his uncle could hold the attention of listeners until midnight or even two o'clock in the morning. Excellent storytelling ability is recognized by how long one holds the undivided attention of listeners. I was thankful that those train trips lasted about nineteen hours.

Employing doctrines as a method of witnessing is particularly unfruitful aspect of gospel presentations. Doctrinally focused gospel sharing on train trips often degenerated into disagreements and arguments. On occasion my companions would get bogged down in tense discussions about Jesus as the Son of God, Christianity's Russianness, the Trinity, or which son Abraham tried to sacrifice. A certain conversation stopper, injected into any conversation was a statement that there's only one God, Allah, whom we all worship. Therefore, storytelling served as a way to introduce Christ's sacrificial death for sins, and each person's obligation to respond with repentance and faith. First hand conversion experiences are a style of storytelling that focus on how Jesus Christ makes a difference in life, begging the question: Can Jesus do that or something similar for me?

Doctrinal teaching seems to be best achieved during Sunday school type settings, and conferences, where Bibles are readily available. The Kazak Bible cover is decorated with Kazak traditional patterns, giving it the look of a religious book. It is written in Kazak so that people can immediately grasp its meaning. Media is also available in the Kazak language in narrative form. After Campus Crusade for Christ published *The Jesus film* in Kazak, they followed up with a version narrated by the character, Mary Magdalene. The Kazak version is titled, *Daughter, Why are you Crying?* It appeals particularly to women, who respond well to the gospel, but men and youth also like it. Most recently, the full Kazak Bible has been made available for download to smart phones. We may expect this technological advancement to have wide ranging effects, since owning a cell phone is almost as important to Kazaks as drinking tea.

The three processes that produce collective memory's content establish biblical identity for individual believers and for the church. These three components describe a system of identity that is grounded in biblical revelation. These are not separate parts of a system that act independently. On the contrary, each component is a part of the system only in as much as it relates to the other parts. Therefore, conversion, community, and culture must be considered in relation to each other and to the whole.

# CHAPTER 8

## A Synthesis of Systems: Toward a Kazak Christian Identity

In this chapter we will synthesize spiritual, cultural and social identities into one complex Kazak Christian identity. Collective memory narratives are contexts that can be analyzed. As was written earlier, "collective memory is an interaction among three types of historical factors: the intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers who selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions, and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artifacts according to their own interests" (Kansteiner 2002, 180). Consideration is given to these three factors and what they teach us about a group, or groups, they represent. They reveal identity, motivations, social conditions, and tendencies. Collective memory is the material for identity change.

Critical contextualization is a method of examining and evaluating cultural practices based on biblical understandings. It is essential for the process of identity formation because of its insistence on biblical congruence (Moreau 2012, 61). Whereas collective memory is a process of constructing identity, critical contextualization is a process of critical review leading to new ways of expressing identity. Globalization intensifies the need for critical contextualization. We can no longer look at people as isolated from the world, but we can look at their identities as distinguishable from others. Critical contextualization in the twenty first century must build upon any given people group's self-understanding (identity).

Synthesizing human identity begins with understanding people as complex beings. That is why this study utilizes a systems approach, Hiebert (2009), to observe identity change and create a context that fosters biblical identity change among believers. An initial lesson learned from system theory about identity is that many efforts at cross-cultural understanding, through the discipline of contextualization, are based on a single idea that in every culture that has been experienced, and every people group that has been encountered by missionaries, there has existed "an order or *kosmos* which was intelligible and hence controllable in thought and rational action" (Bertalanffy 1975, 149). Problems arise when ministries are designed according to this idea because of the mercurial nature of identity, and culture for that matter. Unforeseen variables inevitably appear and create misunderstandings and miscommunications, thus hindering cross-cultural communication. These risks multiply in multi-cultural societies like Kazakstan. A systems approach recognizes this complex reality and takes advantage of its natural process of change.

Alexander Laszlo offered a helpful definition of system, "In the broadest conception, the term connotes a complex of interacting components together with the relationships among them that permit the identification of a boundary-maintaining entity or process" (Laszlo 1997, 7). In this identity is the complex system, and its components are the three sub-systems: spiritual, social, and cultural. Synthesizing three systems of identity is a highly relational enterprise. One need only consider the relationships within the Godhead (perfect love; perfect submission; perfect honor) to recognize how important it is for believers to engage one another in relational activities where Christ and Scripture are the focus.

Old and New Testament passages support the idea of relationships intensified by the Lord's presence and by the word of God. Deuteronomy offers a defining passage that identified Israelites as God's people:

> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Many New Testament passages instruct believers to carefully and intentionally talk about Christ and scripture every day. The apostle Paul pinpointed the importance of a relational, believing community in his first letter to the believers at Corinth, "What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church" (1 Corinthians 14:26). Paul's instruction infers, quite emphatically, that believers ought to prepare ahead of time by seeking what the Lord would have them say by way of encouragement to other believers. Preparation would necessarily include intentional relationships combined with focused prayer and scripture readings, for these are the wells from which encouragement is mined.

In order to conceptualize a collective memory process within a system of identity change we begin by restating the problem. The metaproblem to be addressed is identity change from Kazak/Muslim to Kazak/Christian. This problem is broken down into three sub-systems that include spiritual, social, and cultural systems of identity. Change in the sub-systems happens respectively through conversion, collective memory, and critical contextualization.

## Alexander Laszlo's Four-Step Synthesis Model

Laszlo gave a four-step approach to analysis and synthesis. His four steps are as follows:

1. Consideration of the embedding context that includes, and is to some extent defined by the phenomenon under consideration (Laszlo 1997, 14). Here we describe the identity of our group, Kazak Christians. We also consider the master narrative, or political narrative, which is a national metanarrative promulgated by political memory makers. We consider group members' conversion testimonies and other testimonies about God's work in their lives. And then we consider what it means to be Kazak, Muslim, and Christian in order to understand what identities influence the group directly or indirectly.

2. Description of what may be defined as 'sub-wholes within the embedding whole': identifiable discrete entities existing in their own right within the larger framework of the overall ensemble (Laszlo 1997, 14). Step two breaks down identity into 'sub-wholes' according to Laszlo; spiritual, social, and cultural. Sub-wholes, referred to as sub-systems, are patterns that can be viewed as layers of the larger identity system. Dimensions of religion are also patterns within the sub-systems, and help to determine each system's purpose.

This separating and distinguishing illuminates critical areas of change for better understanding and analysis. In this study, smaller 'sub-systems' reveal areas of cultural change, but also clarify needs for contextualization. The 'sub-systems' level is where purpose must be determined. Purpose can only be determined at the general identity level after the 'sub-systems' purposes are clearly delineated. Russell Ackoff was

professor emeritus of management science at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and wrote in the area of organizational systems. According to Ackoff, the environment of every social system contains three levels of purpose: "the purpose of the system, of its parts, and of the system of which it is a part, the suprasystem" (Ackoff 1981, 23). Table 1 outlines each sub-whole pattern and its associated purpose.

The role of each sub-system is to develop group and individual identity from the perspective of that system. The social system's function is to construct identity through the process of collective memory. The cultural and spiritual system's function is guided by critical contextualization to design culturally relevant cultural and spiritual identities.

3. Attention shifts to the specialized parts (religious dimensions and narratives) within the identifiable wholes (sub-systems), with emphasis on understanding the structures, their compositions and modes of operation (Laszlo 1997, 14). This follows the traditional process of inquiry:

3.1. Break down the system into its separate parts. Thoroughly deconstructing Kazak identity can be done by reviewing the definition of collective memory (chapter 3), and noting hindrances to the gospel (chapter 4), and sources of Kazak identity (chapter 5);

3.2. An attempt at formulating explanations of Kazak identity patterns (spiritual, social, cultural) brought us to the realization of a need for a systems approach to identity (chapter 6);

3.3 Synthesis of explanations into aggregate understanding. Each sub-system of Kazak identity is an autonomous pattern that contributes to a whole (Laszlo 1997, 14). This is described in chapter 7. This step leads us to consider a group's identity as an embedding context. Consideration must include both collective memory analysis and

critical contextualization analysis. Privratsky's frameworks of collective memory have already been recognized: "primarily affective and also cognitive, embedded, landscapes, and language" (Privratsky 2001, 21). Most recently Barry Schwartz described collective memory as: "(1) the past as it actually was; (2) history, which refers to linear representations of the past that take the form of oral and written narratives, (3) commemoration, whose symbols lift from the historical narrative those parts which best express society's ideals, and (4) social memory—how individuals, in the aggregate (sic), think and feel about the past" (Schwartz 2013, 6). Schwartz' inclusion of the past as it actually was does not infer that current knowledge of the past is accurate, just that the knowledge we have of the past exists as evidence of an actual past. Also the placing of the affective framework first by Privratsky may more adequately reflect the Kazak context. Critical contextualization's methodical steps were outlined earlier and include examinations of the culture and scripture, evaluating past practices based on what was learned through examining scripture and culture, deciding how this critical review ought to guide new practices, and designing those new practices.

Critical contextualization and collective memory work in parallel; one constructing and the other evaluating and expressing group identity in culturally meaningful Christian expressions of faith. What emerges from this analysis is a whole Kazak Christian identity that is non-divisible.

4. Return to the embedding context, identity, integrating the perspective obtained at each of the preceding steps in an understanding of the overall phenomenon, including its internal and external context (Laszlo 1997, 14). This is where we add up all we have learned about collective memory and the three distinct systems (sub-wholes or patterns)

of identity change. We recognize the internal context of the believing community and the external context of Kazakstan society. Since biblical faith is lived out socially, collective memory process essentially provides the construction material for building a new group identity. And since relationships are central to Kazak identity, collective memory processes are desperately needed.

The four steps of analyzing and synthesizing a system produce a rich store of relational information necessary to understanding Kazak believers within Kazakstan society. Collective memory is the product of structure through which relational interactions take place. It is also the product of these relationships. I assert that these relational interactions form the basis for human identity. Reciprocal influences also exist. Therefore, construction of identity is assisted by relevant contextualization, meaningful local theologies, and ministry design among Kazaks. "Key to this understanding is the emphasis on function as well as structure, on relationships and bonds in addition to the elements and components to which they pertain, so that the resulting understanding of the entity or process under consideration is expressed in terms of its roles and functions within the embedding whole" (Laszlo 1997, 14).

A systems approach is a comprehensive way of causing the gospel to engage culture. The complementary relationship between collective memory and critical contextualization produces a new identity which has social, cultural, and biblical traits, but it is more than the three sub-systems in that it is a living identity. As a result Kazak Christians will live in society as witnesses for Jesus Christ, participants in cultural activities, fully devoted to Jesus Christ as understood from scripture, and able to defend their faith when the gospel confronts people through their witness.

**An Example of System Analysis**

In table 2, step one organizes Kazak and Christian system information in relation to Laszlo's four step synthesis model. The embedded context of Kazak and Christian identity considers master narratives, Christian testimonies and the meaning of Kazak, Muslim, and Christian within the Kazak context.

The Kazak context includes a belief that by the year 2030 Kazakstan with be the economic tiger of Asia, because of abundant natural resources, Kazak families find strength by looking back to great Kazaks in history and remembering their own ancestors who were Muslim, going on pilgrimage to Turkistan.

The Christian context includes personal testimonies of God's supernatural acts and answers to prayer, assurance of a place in heaven, a mandate to love one's neighbor, ability to participate in most aspects of Kazak culture including rituals, feasts while seeking to contextualized those activities for the gospel, the Bible must be obeyed as God's word.

Muslim context may include greater devotion to traditional Muslim activities, but most likely involves participating in feasts, blessings, occasional prayers, respect for elders and sacred sites. In table 2, step two describes the sub-wholes of identity which correspond to spiritual, social, and cultural systems of identity. The processes associated with those systems are conversion, collective memory, and critical contextualization.

Table 2, Step three shifts our attention to the specialized parts which I have as Ninian Smart's dimensions of religion. These dimensions include the following seven key terms with comments about potential common ground between Christian and Kazak dimensions. The first is doctrinal, which can cause sharp disagreements, but personal

testimonies are responsible for bringing more Kazaks to Christ than any other method. Therefore, testimonies are a point of common ground. The second is mythic, which initially places ancient Kazak heroes on the same level as God's story which includes stories that make sense out of life's questions: who am I, why am I here, what will the future hold, what is the meaning of everything? Kazak poets give us clues about the spiritual needs of some Kazak people. The third is ethical, which relates to proper behavior. Kazaks have been impressed by the kindness shown to them by Christians. As a result some Kazaks have become followers of Jesus. The fourth is social and represents shared beliefs and attitudes. Among Kazaks the family is to be protected and those outside are considered to be other, or different. Christians consider the social dimension by referring to the church as the family of God. Family is a positive metaphor, but may come into conflict with non-Christians on the basis of allegiances. The fifth is ritual, which refers to religious rituals. Christians can contextualize many rituals. The sixth is experiential and relates to emotional attitudes that we have in relation to religious and sacred experiences. The seventh is material, which refers to places and objects that are considered sacred.

Among seven dimensions, doctrinal testimonies of God's acts can help to build common ground with Kazaks and avoid conflict that might otherwise arise. Similarly Christians can demonstrate godly ethical kindness, and love toward their Muslim neighbors as a way of witnessing to them. Kazaks have shown interest in the gospel after observing the kindness of Christians. Kazaks and Christians both honor the family. This can be a point of common ground even though Christians refer to the church as the family of God. Kazak language can also be a common ground factor. From the above steps

doctrinal testimonies, ethical kindness, and social family emerged as having greater potential for common ground than the others. The next step is four, where we utilize these three points of common ground to integrate Kazak Christian identity. The points are highly relational, but they also have transcendent qualities. Testimonies are hard to refute, especially if they are genuine. Kindness is difficult to reject, but must not be used manipulatively, and family is such a powerful concept among Kazaks, that new Christians must receive training on how to love their families. Kindness is a reflection of God's love. There is also an assumption that kindness genuinely acts sacrificially. Family incorporates new believers and trains them to reach out in love to their relatives. In fact, the family of God must teach and train others to follow this message.

The purpose of these common ground points is as follows. Testimonies are intended to convince others and remind us of what God has done for us. Kindness is intended to consider another as more important than oneself. Family is for nurture, training, encouragement, and responsibility. Therefore, Kazak Christian identity can develop in this direction and broaden its scope.

In order to incorporate the three points of common ground they are matched with the processes of identity: social, spiritual, and culture. A social system's purpose is to facilitate, construct and recognize groups that contribute to the system's orderly advancement. Testimonies and kindness are passionate about that very thing. A spiritual system's purpose is to know God and make him known. Cultural system is for maintaining traditions and beliefs. Interestingly the three points fit into all three sub-systems. Therefore, they will find common ground in the general system of identity.

| Analysis of systems with Laszlo's four step synthesis model | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| STEP 1. Consideration of the Embedded Context:<br>Kazak Christian identity<br>Consider master narrative<br>Consider testimonies<br>Consider meaning of Kazak, Muslim, Christian | MN. Kazakstan Tiger of Asia<br>T. God has saved me<br>K. Born in Kazakstan, celebrate feasts, considered Muslim, Keep good relationships.<br>M. feasts, pilgrimage<br>C. Bible is standard | | |
| STEP 2. Describe sub-wholes<br><br>Social, Spiritual, cultural<br><br>Processes: Conversion, Collective Memory, and Critical Contextualization | **Social** –<br>Issues with marriage, work ethic,<br>**Cultural** – Feasts, rituals, Muslim expectations<br><br>**Spiritual** – different views of Bible and Qur'an | | |
| STEP 3. Attention shifts to specialized parts<br><br>Dimensions of Rel.<br><br>Doctrinal<br>Mythic<br>Ethical<br>Social<br>Ritual<br>Experiential<br>Material | Narratives-Nat'l local<br>Religious dimensions<br><br>-D-Testimonies<br>-M-Kazak heroes/ God's sty<br>-E-Kindness<br>-S-family, friends, Ch.<br>-R-Muslim meanings<br>-Exp –emotional<br>-Material- sacred obj. | Common Ground<br>1.Speak Kazak language<br>D-**Testimonies of God's acts should create common ground** instead of doctrine<br>M- K poets may give clues to the spiritual needs of K<br>E – **K are impressed by C kindness**<br>S – **Church is the family of God, relatives are to be loved**<br>R – needs crit. cont.<br>E – Kazak setting<br>M- dramatic differences | Key analysis points<br>-Common ground in doctrine through the use of testimonies. --- The Acts of God can be affirmed.<br>-Kindness is unwrapping the gospel<br>-Family must take responsibility<br>-Need Christian rituals<br>-Emotional is sensitive to Kazak style |
| STEP 4. Return to embedding context | Testimonies, Kindness, Family | Relate to spiritual, social, and cultural systems | |

Table 3. Analysis of systems with Laszlo's four-step synthesis mode

According to table 4, testimonies are part of the spiritual sub-system and describe one's relationship with God. The purpose of testimonies is to convince others and remind witnesses that they belong to God. The system is spiritual and answers the question, "Who am I in relation to God?" The purpose of the system is to experience a relationship with God, demonstrated by Christlikeness, and commitment to biblical values, and social action. The system of systems, identity, is ultimately based on the testimony, and integrates testimonies with other sub-systems and their parts. According to table 4 family is part of the social system and describes one's pattern and structures of social behavior. A family's purpose is to nurture and encourage its members. The system is social and it answers the question, "Where do I fit?" The purpose of the system is to conform to society or group standards. In this example the family will conform primarily to group standards and secondarily to society's standards. The system of systems, identity, is ultimately based on the family, and integrates family and other sub-systems and their parts.

| The Part | Purpose of the part | The System | Purpose of the system | The system of systems | Purpose of the System of Systems |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Narratives (testimonies)<br><br>Religious Dimensions<br><br>TESTIMONIES | To describe one's relationship with God<br><br>TO CONVINCE AND REMIND | Spiritual identity<br><br>WHO AM I IN RELATION TO GOD? | To experience relationship with God, bringing Christlikeness, biblical values, social action | Kazak Christian Identity<br><br>Primary Human identity and Primary Christian identity<br><br>(Hiebert 2009, 74) | To relate the sub-systems so that they fully integrate and operate as one system.<br><br>The supra-system perpetuates identity change processes through regular analysis by collective memory and critical contextualization<br><br>so that believers will confidently demonstrate the biblical mandate to live in the world while counting their primary allegiance to Christ and his word, found in John 17:14-19 and Romans 12:2 |
| Narratives (memories)<br><br>Religious Dimensions<br><br>FAMILY | To describe one's "patterns and structures of social behavior" (Hiebert 2009, 159).<br><br>NURTURE/ ENCOURAGE | Social identity<br><br>WHERE I FIT | To conform to society or group standards of behavior | | |
| Narratives (traditions)<br><br>Religious Dimensions<br><br>ETHICAL/ KINDNESS | To interpret one's social and spiritual behaviors<br><br>CONSIDER OTHERS FIRST | Cultural identity<br><br>MY VALUES INCLUDE KINDNESS | To interpret changes in one's social and spiritual behaviors. | | |

Table 4: Breakdown of a System of Identity into its component parts 'sub-wholes'

According to table 4, kindness is a part of the cultural system and interprets one's social and spiritual behaviors. The purpose of kindness is to consider others first. The system is cultural and it answers the question, "What are my values?" The purpose of the system is to interpret changes in one's social and spiritual behavior. In this example kindness holds family and testimonies together. The system of systems, identity, is

ultimately based on kindness, and the system of identity integrates kindness and other sub-systems and their parts.

My testimony describes my relationship with God. My Christian family describes my social relationship with God. My kindness describes my social and spiritual behaviors. Since kindness interprets changes in social and spiritual behaviors, then kindness interprets my relationship with God (testimony) and my social relationship with God (family). In other words, kindness is the face of my identity system, as recognized by Kazaks who came to Christ because of the kindness of Christians. It is through kindness that my testimony is shared and lived out, and it is through kindness that I participate in the family of God.

# CHAPTER 9

## A Collective Memory for Kazak Christians

At the beginning of this study five significant issues were delineated regarding all that the young Kazak evangelical community has faced during its first two decades. They include, but are not limited to church planting methodology, leadership development, learned Soviet-styled leadership, religious laws, and being labeled as sects. Other traditional issues also challenge the Kazak church such as dependency, hearing the gospel through translators, and theological training. However the cultural identity of Kazak Christians surpasses all other issues because it is the root issue. Identity speaks of the foundational relationships of the Christian life, one's relationship with God and with one's own socio-culture people group. Therefore, I assert that identity change is the most significant issue Kazak Christians face today. For that reason it has been termed the metaproblem of this study.

Identity emerged as a metaproblem out of historical, religious, social, and cultural forces. Historically Kazaks were ruled by Russians for two hundred years, often referred to as two countries, Russia and the Soviet Union. They endured much hardship during that time, and are now zealously re-establishing their national and cultural identity. Kazaks look to great kings of the Kazak khanate who ruled much of modern day Kazakstan, always defending the land from outside armies. The ancient city of Turkistan, in South Kazakstan, is memorialized in Kazak Culture as a spiritual center and an ancient capital of Kazak khans. It is the location of the famous Qoja Akhmet Yasawi shrine, a pilgrimage destination referred to as the Second Mecca. The Shrine was built under

Tamerlane, ruler of Central Asia and last great emperor of the Genghis Khan dynasty, who was recently lionized as the founder of Uzbekistan. Such juxtaposition characterizes a degree of cultural tension between Kazaks and Uzbeks who were originally together, but separated to form different kingdoms. Therefore, Kazaks are eagerly working to re-establish a national cultural identity to distinguish them from their neighbors. Kazak Christian identity must be developed and flourish within this context in order for the church to rightly reflect her claim to be the people of God.

Kazaks' self-understanding as Muslims reflects religious identity. They characterize themselves as Muslim from birth. Although often chided as nominal Muslims by foreigners, Kazaks hold firmly to a contextualized form of Islam. They celebrate commemorative feasts to recognize their ancestors and celebrate their Muslim identity. Kazak Christians are faced with the challenge of contextualizing Christian faith so that Kazaks can understand it in their culture. Risk is involved with this endeavor because Islam has already been contextualized in Kazakstan. Kazak Christians run the risk of new Christians viewing the Bible as Muslims view the Qur'an, and treating attendance at church the same way Muslims treat attendance at mosques. These issues and others are successfully confronted through combining cultural analysis and agent-initiated social construction of memory. This comprehensive approach by missionaries and Kazak church leaders will be recognizable to Kazaks, respecting all that is good in Kazak culture. At the same time it is faithful to scripture.

Kazakization is the politically driven movement on which Kazak social identity is based. The goal is to re-establish primacy of Kazak ethnicity in Kazakstan. It is a master narrative that works against Christian self-understanding. Motivation for Kazakization

comes from a desire to make up for two hundred years of oppression. There is also a sense that this is an epoch in Kazak history when Kazaks will reach their potential and become an economic powerhouse. Current Kazak social identity is effectively promulgated in all levels of society, producing a sense of cultural pride. Into this social context Kazak Christians must establish their own uniquely Kazak narrative.

Commemorative feasts and memorial landmarks characterize Kazak culture. Therefore, any identity change must be relevant to Kazak cultural norms. Cultural identity pays close attention to family position and respect, thus making it difficult for Kazaks to become Christian. Those who do gain faith in Christ find themselves alone or even ostracized if they are the first or only Christian in their family. This cultural challenge to Kazak Christian identity demands a biblically based method for engaging Kazak culture with biblical understanding.

For the above reasons this study adopted collective memory and critical contextualization as processes that work in parallel to introduce Kazak Christian identity. Thus the thesis,

> Despite the church's lack of an extensive historical past, an assumption in collective memory processes, and the flood of existing Muslim collective memories, forming Kazak Christian identity is best understood through the crucial contribution that collective memory makes in developing identity. In other words, God's supernatural transformative role in conversion lays the foundation on which to build new parameters of memory. Moreover, the church is a distinct group within society and as such must communicate a message consistent with its group identity.

Collective memory is the primary process for transforming Kazak Muslim identity into a new Kazak Christian identity because it continuously reconstitutes memory with current understandings of that past. And even though there is a commitment to preserving culture and traditions, the very fact that the past is understood through the present demonstrates that the present understandings influence culture. The close relationship between memory and identity justifies use of this theory. As was noted earlier,

Privratsky's Kazak ethnography demonstrated that Kazak scholars also affirm the efficacy of the theory of collective memory as a process of culture change (Privratsky 2001, 237).

Memories become part of the collective memory of a group, society or culture through a process of reception and contestation. Memory users receive and contest memories that are presented by memory makers. There are also different kinds of memory. National memory, sometimes called a master narrative, is often influenced by political agendas. Local memory, also called communicative memory, tends to be more authentic than national memory but is considered temporal in nature. Memory is subjective, but becomes objectivized when accepted as a cultural artifact. Collective memory is socially constructed, but has no mechanism for evaluating culture through a scriptural lens. This is the task of critical contextualization. This method of examining culture through the lens of scripture provides Kazaks with the critical evaluative tool they need to understand how the gospel relates to culture. The process includes exegesis of various cultural aspects with a corresponding exegesis of scripture to bring biblical understanding to bear on culture. Evaluation of cultural practices as understood through exegesis provides a basis for action. Such action is designed as new practices.

This study evaluated one case and two participant observations as examples of critical contextualization. In practice, however, cases will be evaluated by local churches. The case here addressed the issue of Christians marrying non-Christians, and participant observations addressed the nature and role of the Bible, and Kazak learning styles. All were important, relating directly to Kazak Christian identity as it engages culture. Each example produced new insights and practices based on biblical understandings.

A translation model describes the theoretical approach to contextualization. Its fidelity to scripture insures that new practices are designed to demonstrate biblical congruence. In lieu of current scholarship suggesting identity studies are more suitable to anthropological models of contextualization, or to Schreiter's contextual approach using an ethnographic model, this study preferred a translational model (Moreau 2012, 43). In addition to emphasizing congruence to scripture, a translation model seeks to transform culture out of a critical realist orientation that assumes forms and messages carry meaning (2012, 87). At the same time this study considers its emphasis on collective memory as an element of praxis.[22]

Critical contextualization specializes in understanding culture and designing culturally relevant practices. Yet, because collective memory socially reconstitutes culture, the two processes are complementary. This complementarity leads to the introduction of a systems approach to identity change. Alexander Laszlo's four step synthesis model brings together the strengths of collective memory and critical contextualization in order to produce a new Kazak Christian identity based on biblical understandings of Kazak culture and Christian's active participation in memory making.

A system of identity is the result of collective memory constructing a new identity using results from critical contextualization as frames for many narrative contexts. Church planters now have a tool that has always been available but little used. Christians can recognize their ability, even their responsibility, to engage in making memories of their experiences of God. Giving testimonies has always been part of church life, but awareness of memory's influence on identity will motivate Christians to incorporate

[22] "*Praxis*: to work or execute, often refers to action by Christians that engages the society around them in order to transform it" (Moreau 2012, 138).

testimonies in everyday conversation. Christians, who were timid about expressing their faith in word and deed, will realize that a continuous stream of memories in the public square vie for the attention and affections of people. This is a call for Christians to recognize that their faith is a social, rather than a private faith. There is an assumption that testimonies of genuine faith must be recounted in the church and society.

The lack of a historical past in the Kazak Christian community is overcome by two factors. First, God's miraculous acts that create faith in Jesus Christ among Kazaks are akin to collective memory's need for a founding event or a collective trauma. Second, Kazak Christians become part of an extensive Christian past through faith in Jesus Christ. They share a family relationship with God's people, Israel, whom God delivered from slavery and established in the Promised Land. The Old and New Testaments combine to provide a master narrative for Kazak Christian beginnings. Kazak Christians also relate to Christians in every nation, throughout all ages, as brothers and sisters in Christ and citizens of God's eternal kingdom. This truth holds promise for future of dialogue and friendship with members of the Russian Orthodox Church in Kazakstan. However cultural and political barriers currently impede such hope.

Not forgetting is a hallmark requirement for Kazaks. As earlier quoted, Privratsky introduces the term anamnesis to help us understand what we can do about collective memory. "In its Greek form the word anamnesis, remembrance, means "non-amnesia," the ability not to forget. Kazak rhetoric in Turkistan is studded with exhortations not to forget (umitpai)" (Privratsky 2001, 247). The tradition of remembering one's seven fathers is very important. Surely most Kazaks who live in villages are able to recite their ancestors, but migration to the cities tends to blur one's

history. Nevertheless Kazaks hold to the tradition and will not shy away from saying that it is required to remember one's seven ancestors. It is likely that the Soviets so devastated the Kazak population that some family lines were lost or confused. So the principle is still there and young Kazaks today are seeking to fulfill it to the best of their ability.

Since these are days of rebuilding, it is imperative that believers contribute to the rebuilding process. The first and best way to build a believers' memory is to survey how important God considered memory. The Bible abounds with examples of covenants, exhortations to remember, and records of devastations due to loss of memory.

Memory is more valuable than we often give it credit for. It may be that the only people who really appreciate memory are those who are losing it. An eighty-nine year old person hesitates while talking in order to search her mind for a word or memory, and becomes agitated. She expects her mind to work better. Alzheimer's patients live very confused lives. In the final stages of that disease patients can no longer care for their own needs. It would not be an overstatement to say that losing one's memory is a very scary thought.

**Practical Suggestions for Implementing Kazak/Christian Identity**

Practical suggestions for implementing identity construction are relationship oriented. Kazak people are highly relational and their believing communities reflect that trait. Biblical teaching about the church also describes a highly relational community. Relationships also define the Godhead. In Kazak society relationships hold society together by keeping others out. Believers are different. Those who follow Jesus build a new society by reaching out to others.

Therefore, current Kazak congregations strengthen their collective memory when they meet often, focused on Christ and the Bible. On the other hand, congregations continue to think of their biblical faith as a foreign religion when their meetings are sparse and lack focus.

Suggestions for building relationships as believers include the following areas: community relationships, encountering scripture, family relationships and marriage, training for outreach.

Kazaks are very relational people and understand the dynamics of community relationships better than the missionaries who insist on the importance of *koinonia* or fellowship. A community of believers must engage in worship. They must teach adults, youth, and children how to read, memorize and study the Bible. They must share their faith with others, and serve the needs of the poor. It might be helpful for community members to recognize that their new identity as children of God within the body of Christ must be reinforced in order to overcome the daily reminders of their former Kazak/Muslim identity.

One intriguing observation is, in every Kazak worship place belonging to Burkit group, there is an offering box with 2 Corinthians 9:7 quoted and affixed to the box. It would be great to see more verses displayed in worship places that relate to Christian identity in Christ.

Bible listening is a relatively new approach in Kazakstan. Many Kazak believers already know important Bible verses needed for evangelism. Now that the full Bible is available opportunities exist for people to learn how all the books relate to each other and to a unified whole. It will enrich each person. Now that the full Bible is available via

internet, in written and audio format this task will be easier. Listening groups ought to produce noticeable benefit to Kazaks who grew up listening to stories. Listening groups may also be helpful to all children and those who might be embarrassed reading in public.

Two great areas of need are systematic study of the Bible and experiencing the transforming effect of God's promises in a believer's life. Now that formal theological education is banned in Kazakstan church leaders ought to train members to be competent to lead listening groups, memorize scripture, and study the Bible with an eye toward personal transformation.

The most popular subjects at retreats and conferences are family relationships and marriage. Kazak believers have wisely identified these areas as significant for developing their faith and offering hope to their children. Continued emphasis in this area ought to result in believing Kazak families leading non-believing families to relationship solutions through faith in Jesus Christ.

Outreach training for evangelism can be done in very relational ways. Typically class instruction and tea-time or public witness have characterized evangelism training. Current house church strategies may produce new ways of witnessing to neighbors and relatives. Whichever method is chosen for evangelism, believers will surely benefit from well-planned evangelism that gives opportunities for people to testify to others about their experience immediately after witnessing. Kazaks have been very good about sharing their faith. Many examples exist of whole villages hearing a gospel presentation. However few converts result, thus leaving some believers discouraged. The Law on Religion also restricts public evangelism so believers will need to pray more diligently for God's wisdom in their evangelism outreach.

These are initial thoughts on areas of need. Actual implementation of a system of identity will be very exciting. It has potential for expanding beyond enriching Christian faith experience to influencing how theology is done and how society is engaged in word and deed.

## APPENDIX A

Analytical Definitions of Key Words

**akhmet yasawi shine** – 12th c. poet and teacher of Islam whose shrine is located in the city of Turkistan, Kazakstan. Tamerlane built the shrine in the 15th c. Today Kazaks revere it as a unifier of Kazak identity. The yasawi shrine is considered an alternate pilgrimage destination for Muslims who cannot afford travel to Mecca.

**collective memory.** – A social system of memory that understands the past from the perspective of available historical sources, and has direct implications for enculturation, and reconstituting culture and group identity. Collective memories exist through the negotiation of individual memories within a group or society. Collective memory within Kazak Christian groups recognizes continuity with past Kazak lifeways and discontinuity with Kazak Muslim identity. "It is a processing mechanism by means of which people reach back into their past, idealizing and criticizing it, and thus articulate a future for themselves. Collective memory is a theory of culture and enculturation that has particular value for the study of religion" (Privratsky, 2001, 19).

**conversion.** – A change of identity and personal allegiance congruent with biblical understandings, taking place within a social context, creating a basis of cultural identity change; A transformation of a person's self-awareness having profound consequences in one's relationship with his or her affiliated groups and society as a whole (Rambo 1993, 1,142).

**critical contextualization.** – A system of critical analysis that evaluates aspects of culture based on biblical congruency, and designs new ways of making biblical meanings understandable in a given context. Applied specifically to the Kazak/Muslim context, critical contextualization determines which aspects of Kazak culture are continuous and discontinuous with the Christian life, and what behaviors will best communicate biblical understandings within the Kazak context.

**frameworks of memory.** – Artifacts and phenomena that exist in society for the purpose of enculturation. Frameworks, or parameters, of collective memory are "precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society" (Halbwachs 1992, 40). Frameworks include primarily affective and secondarily cognitive processes, embedded behaviors, and landscapes and language (Privratsky 2001, 21). Without frameworks memory is not possible.

**group mind.** – A non-self-critical view of culture, often agenda-driven. Group mind is intended to become part of the collective memory. Group mind promotes noble aspects of identity and ignores less positive ones, from preferred historical sources. The result is a perceived cultural superiority. Examples include Rusification during the era of Russian domination in Kazakstan, and Kazakization today.

**identity.** – A system of cultural, social, and spiritual sub-systems that produce a holistic understanding of who one is and "where one fits" (Gillespie 1979, 126). A system of systems, identity is more amenable to change than a more restricted view of identity found in its component sub-systems.

**islam among kazaks.** – A form of Islam contextualized in Kazak culture through ritual meals, birth, circumcision, marriage and funerary practices, pilgrimages, ancestor remembrances, embedded behaviors, greetings and blessings. A national narrative promoting Kazak Muslim identity encourages mosque attendance, but the five pillars of Islam are not widely practiced as part of Kazak culture.

**kazakization.** – An agenda-driven national narrative that transforms Kazak culture and identity in order to overcome more than 200 years of Russian influence. A consequence of this narrative is a ubiquitous inferiority of all non-Kazak ethnic identities.

**kuraltai.** – Annual gathering of all Kazak church leaders where major topics of interest are discussed, worship and fellowship are enjoyed, and relationships are renewed. This gathering serves as a forum for doctrinal discussions and discipline.

**local narrative.** – A story that depicts local and national history more accurately than master narratives, but remains mostly localized and short-lived. Local narratives are resident in social groups such as a Christian fellowship.

**master narrative.** – A politically motivated national story intended to draw people to a noble view of their history and a great vision for the future. Negative and shameful historical narratives from trusted sources may nevertheless be selectively ignored in master narratives.

***намаз.*** – Prayer. The various postures and words repeated during scheduled daily Muslim prayer times. Although known as one of the pillars of Islam, most Kazak Muslims consider those who practice *намаз* to be exceptional.

**nestorians.** – Christian missionaries who took the Gospel from Persia through Central Asia to China from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries A.D. They were named after Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople and associated with the ancient Assyrian Church of the East. Concerns about possible theological err regarding the nature of Christ caused some to regard their mission work as syncretistic.

Such concerns are noted in reference to ancient Christian graves which display different religious symbols.

**rusification.** – an agenda-driven national narrative that actively transformed twentieth century Kazakstan through Soviet civil, religious, and military ideology. Rusification was diffused through mass killing of dissidents, the introduction of public education and restrictions on Kazak language learning in major population areas.

**tengrism.** – ancient natural religion, monotheist in nature, but associated with shamanism (Laruelle 2006, 3). Tengrism does not dominate as an organized religion in Kazakstan, but it bears the attitudes and images of a nomadic culture.

**turkistan.** – religious, historical center of Kazakstan. Pilgrims refer to this town as, "holy ground (*kiyeli jer*), a city of saints (*auliyeli qala*), and the "Second Mecca" (*ekinshi Mekke*)" (Privratsky 2001, 53). It is also a city where ancient Kazak kings ruled and are buried, thus linking Kazak religion, heroes, and politics in collective memory.

# APPENDIX B

Introduction to the English Translation

of the Law on Religion of the Republic of Kazakhstan

This appendix is a translation of the Law on Religion that was passed on October 11, 2011. It was later signed into law by the president of Kazakhstan, and enacted one year later. I feel confident that it is a good translation because the translator was my employee, and I am familiar with his ability.

Among the more restrictive requirements are the following: A ban on unregistered religious activity, a ban on unregistered missionary activity, and a ban on participation of minors in religious activity on the objection of one parent or legal guardian. There is a requirement for all churches to register anew with a minimum of fifty founding members. There are also stipulations that are somewhat vague, and may have been left that way intentionally to allow local authorities the responsibility of interpretation.

## APPENDIX C

English Translation

of the Law on Religion of the Republic of Kazakhstan

**The law of the Republic of Kazakhstan from**
**On October, 11th, 2011 № 483-IV**
**About religious activity and religious associations»**

The present Law is based on that the Republic Kazakhstan confirms itself the democratic, secular state, confirms the right of everyone to a freedom of conscience, guarantees equality of rights of everyone irrespective of his religious beliefs, recognizes historical role of Islam of the Hanifi school and orthodox Christianity in development of culture and spiritual life of the people, respects other religions which match (are in harmony with) the spiritual heritage of the people of Kazakhstan, recognizes importance of interconfessional harmony, religious tolerance and respect of religious beliefs of citizens.

### Chapter 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

***Article 1. The basic concepts used in the present Law***

In the present Law following basic concepts are used:

1) a cult building (construction) – a place intended for worship services, prayer and religious meetings, religious reverence (pilgrimage);

2) religious activity – the activity directed on satisfaction of religious needs of believers;

3) priest – the person, who is authorized by corresponding religious association for spiritual, preaching ministry;

4) religious association – voluntary association of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and persons without citizenship, in an order which is established by legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which have united on the basis of common interests for satisfaction of spiritual needs;

5) missionary activity – activity of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners, persons without citizenship on behalf of the religious associations registered in Republic of Kazakhstan, which is intended for spreading of teaching in the territory of Republic of Kazakhstan;

6) the authorized body (authority) – a state authority, which is carrying out state regulation in the sphere of religious activity.

*Article 2. The legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan on religious activity and religious associations*

1. The legislation of Republic of Kazakhstan on religious activity and religious associations is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and consists of the present Law and other standard legal acts of Republic of Kazakhstan.

2. If the international agreement, ratified by Republic Kazakhstan, establishes other rules, than what are provided in the present Law, then the norms of the international agreement are applied.

*Article 3. The state and religion*

1. The state is separated from religion and religious associations.

2. Religious associations and citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and stateless person regardless of their relation to religion are equal before the law.

3. No religion can be established as a state religion or as obligatory.

4. The system of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan, except for the spiritual (religious) educational organizations, is separated from religion and religious associations and has secular character.

5. Hindrance of lawful religious activity, violation of the civil rights of physical persons because of their relation to religion or an insult of their religious feelings, desecration of religious articles, buildings and places, which are held sacred by followers of any religion, are not allowed.

6. Everyone has a right to adhere to religious or other beliefs, to propagate them, to participate in the activity of religious associations and to be engaged in missionary activity in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

7. Nobody has a right being motivated by his own religious beliefs to refuse the duties, provided by the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan who are priests, missionaries, leaders or participants (members) of religious associations, can participate in political life on the same level with all the citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan only on his own behalf.

8. In accordance with the principle of the separation of religion and religious associations from the state, the state:

1) doesn't interfere in definition by the citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the foreigner and the stateless person, of their relation to religion and a religious affiliation, in education of children by parents or by any other lawful representatives in accordance with their own beliefs, with the exception of cases when such education threatens the life and health of a child, infringes upon his rights and limits responsibility, and also if it is directed against the constitutional system, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

2) doesn't assign to religious associations performance of functions of state structures;

3) doesn't interfere with activity of religious associations, if the activity of religious associations doesn't contradict the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

4) promotes an establishment of relations of mutual tolerance and respect between citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and stateless persons, who are confessing a religion and aren't, and also between various religious associations.

9. In accordance with the principle of the separation of religion and religious associations from the state, the state religious associations:

1) don't carry out function of state structures and don't interfere with their activity;

2) don't participate in activity of political parties, don't give them financial support, do not engage in political activity;

3) are obliged to observe requirements of the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

10. Activity of parties on religious bases, foundation and activity of religious associations, the purposes and actions of which are directed toward establishment of leadership of one religion in the state, fomenting of religious strife, including one's which are connected with coercion or appeals to violence and other unlawful actions are forbidden.

11. Activity of the religious associations which are not registered in accordance with the established, by the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan, order and equally any compulsion (coercion) of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and stateless persons in choosing their relation to religion, to participation or nonparticipation in activity of religious associations, in religious practices and (or) in religious training aren't allowed.

12. The activity of religious associations which are involved in showing violence against citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and stateless persons or other trespasses to their health or divorce between spouses (family disintegration) or the termination of related relations, moral damage, violation of rights and freedom of human being and of the citizen, motivation of citizens to refuse the discharge of duties, provided by the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and other infringement of the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan isn't allowed.

13. Activity of the religious associations involving in the activity of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and persons without citizenship by coercion, including by means of charities, and (or) preventing people from getting out of religious associations, through blackmailing, violence or threat of its use, with use of material or other dependence of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and persons without citizenship or by a deceit isn't allowed.

14. Coercion of participants (members) of religious association and religious followers alienate their property in favor of religious association, its leaders and other participants (members) isn't allowed.

15. Decision making and fulfillment of actions with use of religion and the religious views, obviously capable to disorganize activity of state structures isn't supposed, to break their uninterrupted functioning, to lower controllability degree in the country.

16. The leader of religious association is obliged to take measures to a non-admission of involving and (or) participations of minors in activity of religious association at objection of one of parents of the minor or its other lawful representatives.

## Chapter 2. STATE REGULATION In SPHERE of RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

### *Article 4. The competence of the authorized body*

The authorized body:

1) participates in formation and realization of the basic directions of a state policy in the field of interaction with religious associations;

2) does studies and analyses of the activity of religious associations, missionaries, the spiritual (religious) organizations of formation done in the Republic of Kazakhstan's territory;

3) provides clarifications on questions, related to its competency;

4) develops suggestions on improvement of the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan about religious activity and religious associations;

5) coordinates activity of local executive powers of regions, cities of state importance and capital concerning religious activity and interaction with religious associations;

6) provides carrying out religious expertises and checking of lists of citizens-initiators of creation of religious associations;

7) examines appeals individuals and the legal bodies, concerning the infringement of legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan on religious activity and religious associations;

8) organizes and carries out cooperation with the authorized bodies of the foreign states in sphere of religious activity;

9) coordinates the activity of foreign religious associations on the republic's territory, appointing the leaders of religious associations in the Republic of Kazakhstan by foreign religious centers;

10) carries out other powers provided by the present Law, other laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan, acts of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

*Article 5. The competence of local executive powers of regions, cities of state importance and capital, concerning religious activity and interaction with religious associations*

Local executive powers of regions[23], cities of state importance and capital, concerning religious activity and interaction with religious associations:

1) study and analyse the religious situation in region;

2) put forward a suggestion to the authorized body on improvement of the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan about religious activity and religious associations;

3) do explanatory work at the local level on the matters under their jurisdiction;

4) confirm arrangement of special stationary premises for distribution of the religious literature and other information materials with religious contents, subjects with religious purposes, and also coordinate arrangement of premises for carrying out of religious practices outside of cult buildings (constructions);

5) make decisions by agreement with the authorized body about construction of cult buildings (constructions), about setting of their site (location), and also a restructuring of buildings (constructions) for a different function (change of functional purpose), i.e. into cult buildings (construction);

6) carry out in interests of the local state administration other powers assigned to local executive powers by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

*Article 6. Religious expertise (analysis)*

1. The authorized body provides carrying out religious expert examinations on following bases:

1) appeals of individuals and (or) legal bodies to the authorized body;

2) accession of religious literature , other information materials with religious contents to the library funds of the organizations of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and also to the authorized body;

3) application of individuals for registration as missionaries and registration of religious associations;

4) import of informational materials with religious content, except for the materials intended for personal use;

5) the order of the head of the authorized body.

2. as objects of religious examinations (expertise) are considered articles of association, and also other documents with religious content, spiritual (religious) educational programs, information materials with religious content and subjects of religious purpose.

[23] Here, oblast

3. Religious examination (expertise) is done by the persons possessing special knowledge in the field of religious studies, in case of need they will involve representatives of state structures and other experts.

4. The order of religious examinations is defined by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## Chapter 3. RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY In the REPUBLIC of Kazakhstan

### *Article 7. Religious practices (rites) and ceremonies*

1. Religious associations have a right to own places of worship.

2. Worship services, religious practices (rites), ceremonies and (or) meetings are held without hindrance in cult buildings (constructions) and in the territory allotted to it, in the places of worship, in institutions and premises of religious associations, on cemeteries and in crematoriums, living quarters, places of public catering in case of need under condition of observance of the rights and interests of people living nearby. In other cases religious events are held according to the order established by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

3. Holding (ministering) of worship services, religious rites, ceremonies and (or) meetings, and also missionary work are not allowed in the following buildings:

1) of state structures, organizations, except for the cases provided by points 2 and 4 of the present article;

2) of Military forces, other armies and military formations, judicial and law enforcement bodies, other services connected with public security, protection of life and health of individuals;

3) of educational organizations, except for the spiritual (religious) educational organizations.

4. To the persons containing in special establishments, providing time isolation from a society, being in the establishments executing punishments, being patients of the organizations of the public health services rendering the stationary help, passing social service in houses-boarding schools for aged and invalids, under their request or their relatives in case of ritual necessity clerics of the religious associations registered in an order, established by the Republic Kazakhstan legislation are invited. Thus fulfillment of religious practices, ceremonies and (or) meetings shouldn't interfere with activity of the specified organizations, to break the rights and legitimate interests of other persons.

### *Article 8. Missionary activity*

1. Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and stateless person can do missionary activity after registration.

2. Registration of the persons, who are doing missionary work, is made by territorial subdivisions of the authorized body, within the time not exceeding thirty calendar days

from the date of submission of the documents. Registration time stops in case of religious examinations, in order to get conclusion on the materials presented by the missionary.

3. Missionaries in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan are obliged to pass a re-registration annually in territorial subdivisions of the authorized body.

4. For registration missionaries present following documents and materials to the territorial subdivisions of the authorized body:

1) a copy of the passport or identification card;

2) an application with indication of territory and term (time) of missionary activity;

3) the document issued by religious association which gives the right to do missionary work on behalf of the religious association;

4) copies of the certificate of the state registration in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the regulations of the religious association, which is represented by the missionary;

5) the religious literature, other information materials with religious content, the subjects for religious purpose, intended for missionary activity.

For registration of foreigners and stateless persons as a missionary in the Republic of Kazakhstan, in addition, the following documents are submitted to territorial subdivisions of the authorized body:

1) legalized or document with apostille certifying that the religious association, which is represented by the missionary, is officially registered under the legislation of the foreign state;

2) the invitation of the religious association registered in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The documents, issued by the foreign states, are presented with notarially certified in the Republic of Kazakhstan with affirmation of validity of translation in the Kazakh and Russian languages and notarially certified affirmation of authenticity of the translator's signature in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

5. Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and stateless persons, who presented documents for registration as a missionary, are refused in registration on the basis of the negative conclusion of religious examinations, and also if his/her missionary activity poses threat to the constitutional system, to a public order, the rights and freedom of the person, health and morals of the population.

6. Use of the materials with religious content and subjects of religious purpose by missionaries are allowed after receipt of the positive confirmation of the religious examinations.

7. Realization of missionary activity without registration is forbidden.

*Article 9. The religious literature and subjects of religious purpose*

1. Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and stateless persons, religious associations have a right to acquire and use the religious literature, other information materials with the religious content, subjects of religious purpose at their own discretion.

2. Distribution of the religious literature, other information materials with religious content, subjects of religious purpose are allowed only in cult buildings (constructions), the spiritual (religious) educational organizations, and also in stationary premises specially defined, by local executive powers, areas, cities of republican value and of the capital.

3. Import of information materials with religious content into the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan, except for intended for private use, is carried out only by the registered religious associations after reception of the positive conclusion religious examinations.

4. The religious literature and other information materials with religious content published and (or) distributed by religious association, must have full name of the religious association.

*Article 10. Charities*

1. Religious associations have a right to carry out charities and to establish the charitable organizations.

2. Doing charity work, the use of material dependency (need) of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and stateless persons with a view of involving them in religious activity isn't allowed.

*Article 11. International contacts and contacts of believers and religious associations*

1. Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners, stateless persons and religious associations have a right to make and maintain international contacts and personal contacts, including trips abroad for pilgrimage, participations in meetings and other religious events.

2. Religious associations can send citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan abroad for training in the spiritual (religious) educational organizations and accept foreigners, stateless persons for training in the spiritual (religious) educational organizations in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## Chapter 4. CREATION, the STATE REGISTRATION, REORGANIZATION, LIQUIDATION of RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS

*Article 12. The status of religious associations*

1. Religious associations with local, regional and republic status can be established and operate in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

2. The religious association is recognized as local religious association, when it is formed with the initiative of number of people not less than fifty citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which operates within one region, a city of state importance and capital.

3. The religious association is recognized as regional religious association, when it is formed with the initiative of people not less than five hundred citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, who are participants (members) of two and more local religious associations, number of each is not less than two hundred fifty citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which represent not less than two regions (oblast), cities of state importance and capital.

Regional religious associations are created and carry out their activity within territory of activity of the given local religious associations.

4. Religious association is recognized as a national religious association, which is formed with initiative of at least five thousand citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, who represent all regions (oblast), cities of state importance and capital, having number of people not less than three hundred citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan from each of them, and also who have the structural subdivisions (branches and (representative offices) in all territories of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

***Article 13. Creation of religious associations***

1. Religious association is created at the initiative of the citizens of the Republic Kazakhstan who have reached of eighteen-years of age, who convoke the constituent assembly (congress, conference), on which decisions on creation of religious association, its name, the charter are made and its leading bodies are formed. Citizens take personal part in the constituent assembly (congress, conference) at their own will.

2. Religious association must have following characteristics:

1) uniform doctrine;

2) performance of religious rites, ceremonies and sermons;

3) religious education of the participants (members) and religious followers;

4) a spiritual oriented activity.

3. National religious associations and regional religious associations according to their regulations, have a right to create in the form of spiritual (religious) educational organizations, realizing professional curriculums for preparation of clerics.

4. Creation and activity of the juridical persons, who are engaged in religious activity, in other organizational-legal form, except as religious association, isn't allowed, except for the spiritual (religious) educational organizations.

5. Creation of organizational structures of religious associations in state structures, the organizations and institutions, educational organizations and health services isn't allowed.

***Article 14. The name of religious association***

1. The name of religious association should contain a religious affiliation and the status.

2. Full and abbreviated name and its symbols mustn't duplicate completely or essential parts of the state symbols of the Republic of Kazakhstan and other states, the name and symbols of state structures of the Republic of Kazakhstan, of the religious associations registered in Republic Kazakhstan, and also the religious associations forbidden and (or) liquidated in connection with infringement of the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

***Article 15. The state registration of religious associations***

1. Religious association gets legal capacity of a legal person from the moment of its state registration.

2. The state registration of national religious associations and regional religious associations is carried out by the Ministry of Justice of the Republic Kazakhstan.

The state registration of local religious associations, registration of branches and representative offices are carried out by territorial bodies of Justice department.

3. Within two-month after decision about establishing of religious association application is submitted to the registering body for registration. Following documents must be attached to the application:

1) the regulations of the religious association, signed by the head of religious association;

2) the constituent assembly report (congress, conference);

3) the list of citizens-initiators of religious association, which is being established, on electronic and paper carriers by form established by registering body;

4) the document, which confirms the location of the religious association;

5) printed religious materials, which unveil the history of its origin and a fundamentals of faith and contain data about their religious activity;

6) the document confirming payment of fee for the state registration of the legal person;

7) the decision about election of the head of religious association or in case of appointment of the head by the foreign religious center the document confirming the coordination with authorized body.

4. At registration of regional religious association, list of participants from local religious associations, who are initiating establishment of regional religious associations, in accordance with a set form of registering body, and also notarized copies of regulations of local religious associations.

5. With a year from the date of registration national religious associations for confirmation of their status are obliged to present to the registering body, copies of the

documents confirming passage of accountability registration by their structural divisions (branches and representations) in the territorial departments of Justice.

6. In case of failure to comply with the requirements of point 5 of present article national religious association is subject to reorganization or liquidation in the order established by the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

7. The state registration of religious associations and registration of their branches and representative offices, a re-registration, refusal in registration of religious associations are carried out according to the order and period of time provided by the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan «About the state registration of legal bodies and registration of branches and representative offices», taking into account the features provided by the present Law.

8. Period of the state registration (re-registration) is interrupted for carrying out religious expertise and checking the list of citizens-initiators of creation of religious association about compliance with requirements of the present Law.

9. The registering body within three working days from the date of decision-making on a break of term of the state registration (re-registration) sends the copies of the necessary documents for organization of religious expertise and checking of lists of citizens-initiators of creation of religious association.

10. Based on the results of testing of the presented documents on compliance with the legislation, religious expertise, checking the list of citizens-initiators of creation of religious association, decision on the state registration or on refusal of the state registration for religious association is made.

**Article 16. The regulations of the religious association**

1. Religious association carries out its activity on the basis of the regulations, which should contain:

1) the name, a subject and purposes of the activity;

2) the location and territory within the limits of which it carries out its activity;

3) structure, an order of formation and the competence of the board (governing body);

4) the rights and duties of participants (members);

5) a religious affiliation, fundamentals of faith and information on religious activity corresponding to it;

6) conditions and an order of admission to membership of religious association and an exit from it;

7) sources of formation of property;

8) an order of introduction of amendments and additions in constituent documents;

9) conditions of reorganization and termination of the activity;

10) an order of use of property in case of liquidation;

11) information about branches and representative offices.

2. The regulation of the religious association also can contain other provisions concerning its activity and not contradicting the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

3. Information on fundamentals of faith and religious activity must contain the basic religious ideas, forms of activity of religious association, peculiar of the relation to marriage and a family, formation, health of participants (members) of the given religious association and other persons, the relation to realization of constitutional laws and duties of its participants (members) and attendants.

***Article 17. Refusal of a registration of religious association***

1. Refusal of the state registration of religious association, registration of its structural division (branch and representation) is made according to the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and also in the cases, when the information containing in constituent and other presented documents are not true and (or) when created association isn't recognized as religious association on the basis of results religious analysis (expertise).

2. Refusal of registration can be appealed against in court.

***Article 18. Reorganization and liquidation of religious association***

1. Reorganization of religious associations can be carried out according to laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan by merge, joining, division, reorganization and separation according to the decision of the body, which is authorized by constituent documents of religious association, or by court decision. Religious association can be reorganized only into another religious association or into private institution. Organizations which are formed as a result of reorganization of religious associations can be registered as religious associations if it is in compliance with the present Law.

2. Suspension of activity and liquidation of religious association are made in an order established by laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

***Article 19. The state and foreign religious associations***

1. Realization of activity by the head of the religious association, who is appointed by the foreign religious center without the coordination with authorized body is not allowed.

2. For the coordination (endorsement) of the candidate to the post of the head of religious association, the foreign religious center submits the following documents to the authorized body:

1) the petition, containing data about the candidate, his previous activity in the foreign religious center;

2) the decision about the appointment of the candidate as the head of the religious association, operating in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan;

3) a copy of the passport or the identification card of the candidate to a post of the head of religious association.

The documents, issued by the foreign states, are presented with notarially certified in the Republic of Kazakhstan with affirmation of validity of translation in the Kazakh and Russian languages and notarially certified affirmation of authenticity of the translator's signature in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

3. The documents mentioned in point 2 of present article, are considered (examined) by the authorized body within the thirty calendar days from the date they were submitted.

4. The authorized body refuses in coordination of appointment of the head of the religious organization in Republic Kazakhstan by the foreign religious center, if its activity can create threat to the constitutional system, to a public order, the rights and freedom of the person, health and morals of the population.

***Article 20. The property of religious associations***

1. Religious associations have the right of ownership of property, bought or created by them at their own expense, donated by citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan, foreigners and stateless persons, the organizations or acquired on other grounds, which are not contradicting laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

2. The property of religious associations are real estate and personal estate, which is on the property right.

3. Religious associations can also own a property located outside of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

4. Religious associations have the right ask for voluntary financial and other donations and receive them.

5. The right of ownership of religious associations is protected by the law.

***Article 21. Using the property which is the property of the state, the organizations and physical persons***

1. Religious associations have the right to use buildings, territory and the property given to it on a contract basis.

2. The historical and cultural monuments, which have religious purpose, can be given for use to the religious associations according to the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

***Article 22. The disposition of property of the liquidated religious association***

1. In the case of liquidation or termination of activity of religious associations, the property, owned by it, is disposed according to its charter and the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

2. In case of absence of assignees the property passes into ownership of the state according to the state property legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## Chapter 6. FINAL PROVISIONS

### *Article 23. Liability for infringement of the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan about religious activity and religious associations*

Infringement of the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan about religious activity and religious associations entails the liability established by laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

### *Article 24. Transitional provisions*

1. Religious associations are obliged, within one year from the date of enactment of the present Law, to make appropriate changes in the constituent documents according to requirements of the present Law. Simultaneously the documents confirming the status of religious association are submitted to registering body.

2. The legal bodies, who are engaged in satisfaction of religious interests and needs and which are created before enactment of the present Law in other organizational-legal form, except as religious association, are obliged within one year from the date of enactment of the present Law to make appropriate changes in the constituent documents.

3. On the expiry of the specified period the legal bodies who have not brought the constituent documents into accord with requirements of the present Law, are liquidated judicially with appeal of the body which is conducting the state registration of religious associations.

### Article 25. Final provisions

1. The present Law will be enacted after ten calendar days after its first official publication.

2. To recognize as become invalid the Republic Kazakhstan Law, from January, 15th, 1992 «About a freedom of worship and religious associations» (Office of the Supreme body of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1992, № 4, item 84; 1995, № 20, art. 120, 121; Sheets of Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1997, № 13-14, art. 205; 2004, № 23, art. 142; 2005, № 5, art. 5; № 13, art. 53; 2007, № 9, art. 67; 2011, № 11, art. 102).

The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

N.Nazarbayev

Astana, Akorda, Oct. 11, 2011.

## APPENIDIX D

Introduction to EP3 Qualitative Research Report, 2007

This appendix is a copy of the EP3 Qualitative Research Report (2007) produced by the EP3 committee in Almaty, Kazakstan. The EP3 committee consists of about eight expat leaders and at least one local leader who meet monthly to discuss issues related to evangelism, church planting, and training needs that arise among churches and people groups in Kazakstan. The committee organizes an annual conference for expat workers.

The research report consists of survey based results and analysis that are relevant to this study. Attention should be given to the section titled, "Results for the Kazakh department in comparison to the group as a whole" and to "Conclusions for the 72 Kazakh-speaking Kazakh students"

# APPENIDIX E

EP3 Qualitative Research Report, 2007

## EP3 Qualitative Research Report [1] 2007

### How do people come to Christ in Central Asia?

By gaining an understanding of how people came to Christ in the past, this research seeks to contribute to more effective outreach to Central Asians in the future. This report presents the analysis of 192 testimonies of Central Asian believers. The testimonies were written by 72 Kazakh speaking and 120 Russian speaking students, who received full-time training at CALTC between the years of 1999 and 2007. They wrote their testimonies at the beginning of the academic year as personal introductions to their professors.

The EP3 working group realizes that this work carried out among students of just one school needs additional and complementary research in terms of methods, numbers and the variety of people. Recent EP3 quantitative research estimates that there are about 50,000 evangelical believers in Kazakhstan belonging to a wide range of denominations. In spite of its limitations, the working group believes that this research contributes greatly to a better understanding of the lives of believers in Kazakhstan and beyond.

Trends observed in this research correspond with the results of a survey conducted by Bible Mission International among 19,551 of their Bible Correspondence Course students in the CIS, in 2007.

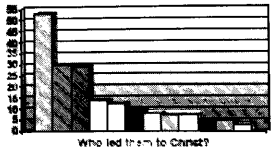
### Who are the students?

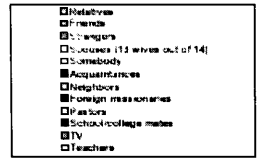
- The students come from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan en Mongolia.
- Ethnic breakdown: 68% Kazakh (55% of these students are Kazakh speaking), 18 % Russian, 8% Central Asian Korean, 2% Uzbek, 1% Uighur, 3% other.
- Gender: 25 % female, 75 percent male.
- Average age: 29.7 years. Every year the average age of students turned out to be the same: around 30.
- As of 2001, the students took classes in two different language tracks: a Russian speaking and Kazakh speaking track. This report contains a separate analysis for the Kazakh track.

[1] With the permission of BMI, Inc.

## Analysis

***Who led them to Christ?***

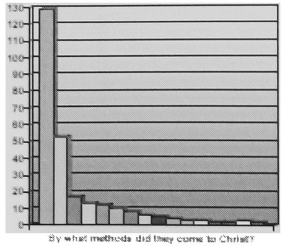


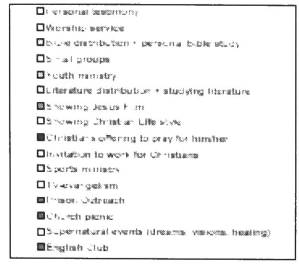




Observations

- *Relatives* are by far the most effective evangelists
- The categories *Relatives*, *Friends* and *Spouses* taken together demonstrate that the great majority of students came to Christ through people they were closely related to.
- Given the previous two points, it is rather surprising that a considerable number of students came to Christ through complete strangers – people they did not know at all. Possibly part of the category *Somebody* can be added to this category. In that case, this category even exceeds the category *Friends*. About 10% of these strangers shared the gospel with them during an outreach event. The rest shared their faith spontaneously on the bus, in the hospital, at a friend's place, etc.
- Fourteen students found Christ through their spouses. Please note the fact that thirteen women led their husbands to the Lord, but only one man led his wife to Christ. He decided with his wife's permission that he and his household would follow the Lord; a so-called household conversion.

***What methods were effective?***

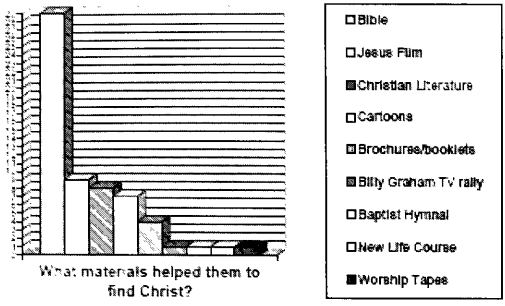



Observations

- Personal testimony (sharing the gospel in a personal conversation) is evidently the most effective method. Based on the previous chart, it is likely that most of these testimonies were shared by relatives, friends and spouses in the students' daily environment.
- It turns out, that for many students traditional worship services were instrumental in their coming to Christ. Some of them mention the sermon, a few that the service was in their heart language (Kazakh), but the great majority mention the friendly and open atmosphere during the worship services. "As if I entered another world", wrote a student. Remarkably, students could hardly make sense of what they heard during those services. Most of them say that their ears and eyes were opened after their conversion.
- In missionary circles, it is often taken for granted that in an Islamic context people come to Christ particularly through supernatural events such as dreams and miracles. Seen from that perspective, it is remarkable that only three students mention that they came to Christ through a miraculous event. Most miraculous events in the lives of the students occurred after their conversion. (See slide: Supernatural events)
- Two students came to Christ through an English club. On first thought, that seems to be a surprisingly low number. Churches invest a lot of time and effort in English clubs. However, one has to take into consideration that English clubs are usually "low-key" Christian events, where people seldom share the gospel directly with the students.

*What materials were effective?*

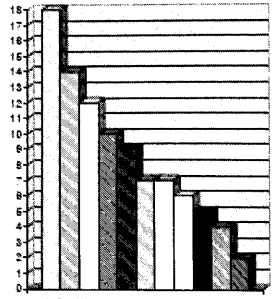



What materials helped them to find Christ?

Observations

- The *Bible* takes first prize. The *Jesus film* takes second place, which in fact is a screen version of the Gospel of Luke.
- "The Flying House" and the "Super Book" cartoons, broadcasted in the nineties were surprisingly effective. The first believer (to the best of our knowledge) in a city not far from the Aral Sea came to Christ through "Super Book". She and her brother thereupon led many others to Christ in that city.
- Besides the importance of *Christian literature*, TV and video play significant roles.

***What held students back from coming to Christ?***



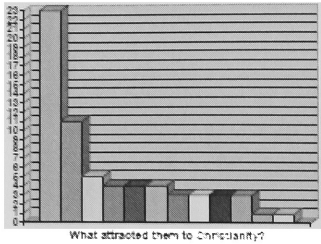

What held students back from coming to Christ?

- I am a Muslim, I am against it
- No understanding of Christianity
- I was not interested, I forgot about it
- I can't or don't want to give up life style
- Kazakhs can't be Christians, Jesus is Russian God
- Prejudice, stereotypes about Christians
- Spiritual battle, confusion
- Suspicion, new faith/Christianity is a sect
- Disappointment with Christians
- Doubts, questions
- Financial, family problems

Observations

- For many students their Muslim background was an obstacle. In addition to that, nine Kazakhs mentioned that by becoming Christians they felt that they had betrayed their ethnic identity. These barriers combined with categories such as *Prejudice, stereotypes of Christians* and *Suspicion. New faith/Christianity is a sect*, demonstrate that suspicion towards Christianity as a new, obscure or competing faith was the main obstacle.
- A significant barrier for students was that they could not make sense of the Christian faith. It was new and unfamiliar to them and they had to get used to other codes of conduct, but the main reason for not understanding Christianity was in their opinion a spiritual one: "their eyes were not opened yet".
- For 22 students no interest, indifference and a wild life style stood in the way. It took many heavenly appointments and a lot of struggle to commit themselves to a life of surrender, purity and commitment.

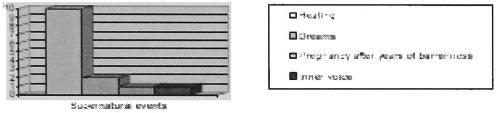
***What attracted them in Christianity?***




Observations

- Students were mostly attracted to Christianity by the loving attitude, different behavior and sincerity of Christians.
- Besides that, many students found the love of God a very attractive feature of Christianity.
- If we divide all the categories that are listed into two groups: what God does and what Christians do, then it turns out that there is not much to distinguish the two. The attributes of God and the attributes of Christians attracted them almost to the same extent.

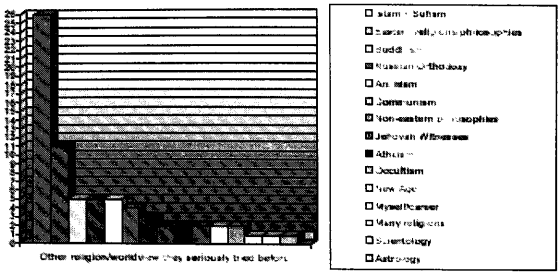
*What role did supernatural events play in their conversion process?*




Observations

- Twelve of the fourteen supernatural events mentioned by the students took place after their conversion.
- Ten out of the fourteen events are miraculous healings. Among them two healings of mental illnesses, one of tuberculosis, one of cancer, one of serious burns, one of psoriasis and two of serious addictions respectively to alcohol and drugs.
- Given the fact that people in Central Asia normally attach a high value to dreams, it is striking that only two students mention dreams.

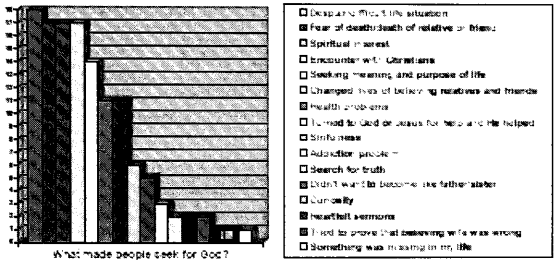
*What religions/worldviews did they seriously consider before their conversion?*




Observations

- It does not come as a surprise that Islam is in first place. One student already had the strong desire to become a Mullah since he was sixteen years old. Another student used to have a mullah as his personal mentor.
- A considerable number of students (16) tried out Eastern religions before they found salvation in Christ.

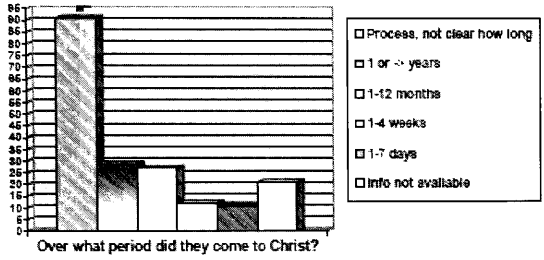
***What were the motives of people to seek God?***




Observations

- Despair, difficult life circumstances head the procession. Many categories can be summarized by the word crisis. Most students started searching for God during a crisis situation.
- Death set many students thinking: the death of their loved ones as well as questions about their own destiny hereafter.
- For a considerable number of students (17) it was not a crisis but spiritual interest (hunger) that made them seek God.
- In addition, the category of *Encounter with Christians* is not something to be sneezed at. Add the category *Changed lives of believing relatives and friends* and a significant positive motive turns up, that made 28 people search for God.
- A quest for the meaning of life ended for fourteen students in finding Christ.
- Health is important in every culture. It doesn't come as a surprise then that the category *Health problems* belongs to the seven major motives. Seven students desperately wanting health found the right track.

***Over what period did they come to Christ?***

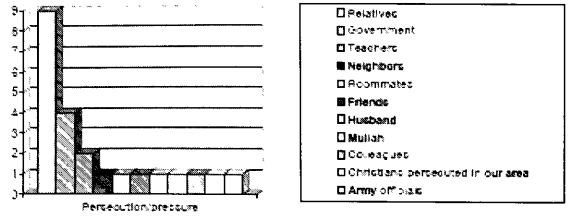



**Over what period did they come to Christ?**

Observations:

- It took 29 students a year or more to come to Christ.
- It took 27 students a month or longer.
- Eleven students came to Christ in a week or in less than a week.
- For 9 students it is clear, based on the story they tell, that it took them quite some time to come to Christ, but it remains uncertain how much.
- Based on the available data one can only tentatively conclude that it took the majority of students months or years to find Christ.

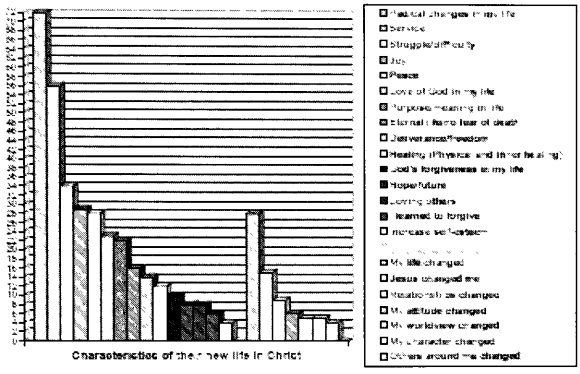
***Who persecuted them because of their new faith?***




Observations

- Relatives with whom they maintained strong ties
- Government bodies take second place.
- Two students spent some time in jail because of their faith

***What are the characteristics of their new life in*** *Christ?*




Observations

9

- Students mention ***Change*** as the most striking aspect of their new life. They experienced changes in their personal lives, their relationships, their worldview. As a result others around them changed.
- The changes bring joy, peace, freedom and many other virtues and blessings of the Christian life.
- The changes, however, also created tension in their lives. 34 students mention that they struggled in giving shape to their new life. Particularly character issues, old bad habits and patterns (their "old nature") are things they ran into. Additionally, they still had to bear the consequences of bad choices they made in their old lives.
- A large number (56) of students mention that their new life stirred a strong desire in them to serve God wholeheartedly.

## Conclusions

- The Gospel spread most effectively among these students through existing relationships. The key people who led them to Christ were the ones they felt close to: relatives and friends.
- The conclusion stated above does not alter the fact that strangers spontaneously sharing their faith definitely pulled some weight with the students.
- Further research needs to be conducted towards the remarkable fact that thirteen women led their husbands to Christ versus one man leading his wife to Jesus.
- The most effective method for evangelism was personal conversation in which somebody shared his testimony with the person at hand.
- A traditional worship service turned out to be an effective method.
- Only 1.5% of the students came to Christ through a supernatural event. The remaining 98.5% came to faith through the persevering outreach of Christians.
- Most supernatural events (86 %) took place after their conversion. Miracles and wonders confirmed their faith.
- Islam and various Eastern religions were for this group of people the major competing worldviews/religions in Central Asia.
- Relatives are the greatest evangelists *and* greatest persecutors.
- It probably took most students months to years to surrender their lives to Jesus.
- The major motive to seek God was a crisis of some kind in their lives.
- Other important positive reasons that made them seek God were spiritual interest, encounters with Christians and the changed lives of believing relatives and friends. (Gal 5:22)
- The main obstacles that stood in their way were either a strong conviction (mainly Islam, combined with ethnicity) or the lack of any real convictions (indifference, no interest, 'no morals') in their lives.

- The love of God and Christians attracted them most to Christianity. (John 13:34,35; John 17:26; I Cor 13:13))
- The Bible was the most effective evangelism material.
- Besides the importance of the Bible and Christian literature, TV and video turned out to be significant means of reaching out to people.
- The new life in Jesus brings a joy, peace, and wholeness that is quite new for them. However, there is a flipside to the new life: They have to fight their old life style, old patterns in relationships and their old mentality.
- The most outstanding characteristic of their new life is a strong desire to serve God wholeheartedly.
- There is no significant difference between the conversion stories of students who studied in 1999 and those who studied in 2006.

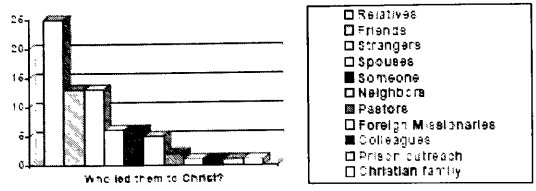
## Recommendations

- Christians should not underestimate the power of the Bible and a worship service.
- Training in evangelism methods should focus on sharing your personal testimony with integrity in conversations with people.
- Christians should not assume too quickly that non-believers are not interested in spiritual things.
- It is worth trying to distribute Christian literature, videos and films through regular bookstores. In many secular bookstores, there is an abundance of books available on Islam and Eastern religions but not many on Christianity.
- The church should provide opportunities for young believers to turn their desire to serve God into a ministry that fits their gifts.
- The church should use the opportunities modern media offer to reach out to people. Could "Super Book" and "The Flying House" be broadcast again?
- Christians should realize that non-believers in general take several months and need the influence of several people before they surrender their lives to Christ.
- "Let your gentleness be evident to all. (Philipp. 4:5)

## Results for the Kazakh department in comparison to the group as a whole

*(Only significant differences are listed)*

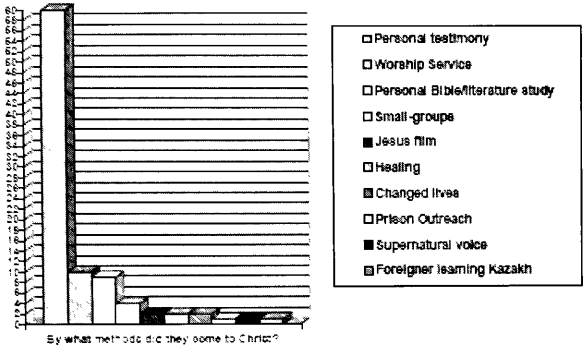
***Who led them to Christ?***




Observations

- The category *Acquaintances* is completely missing
- A higher percentage came to Christ through *Relatives*
- A higher percentage of *Neighbors* led them to Christ

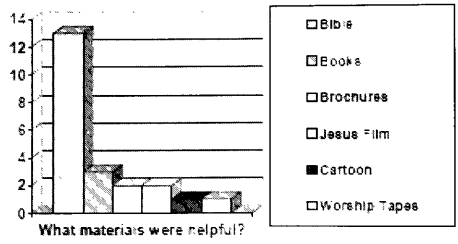
*What methods were effective?*




Observations

- A higher percentage came to Christ through *Personal testimony*
- A considerable number came to faith through a *Worship service.*
- A significantly higher number came to Jesus through *Personal Bible and literature study.*

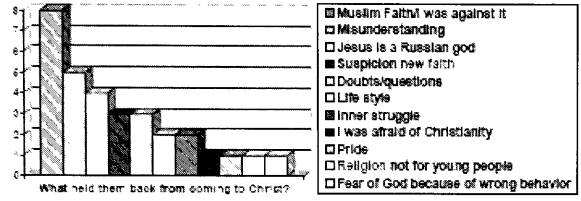
***What materials were effective?***




Observations

- The *Jesus film* scores lower than *Christian literature*. For the group as a whole the opposite is true.

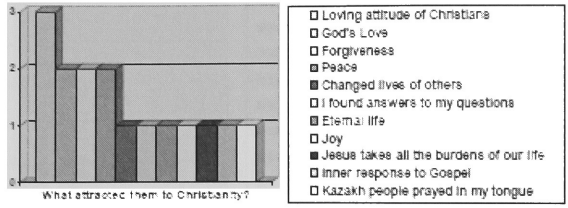
*What stood in the way?*




Observations

- The category *I was not interested/I forgot about it* is missing.
- The category *Lifestyle* is substantially smaller.

*What attracted them in Christianity?*




Observation

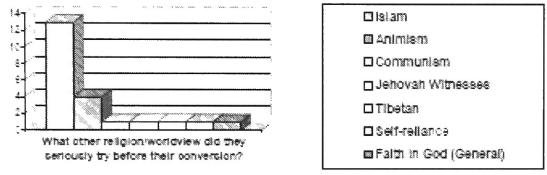
- They are far less explicit about what attracted them to Christianity.

*What role did supernatural events play in their conversion process?*


Observations

- No dreams are reported by them
- No miraculous pregnancy reported

*What religions/worldviews did they seriously consider before their conversion?*

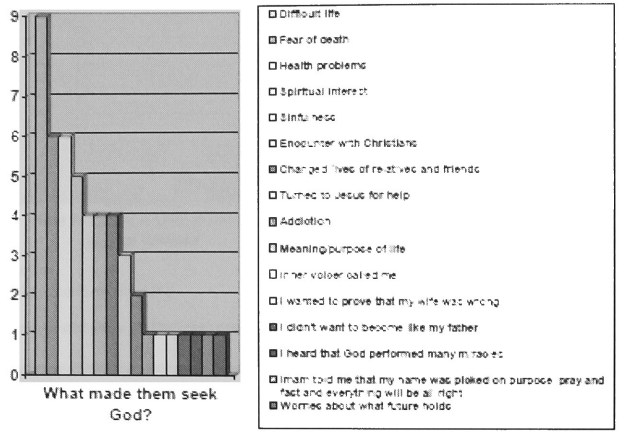



Observations

- Considerably higher percentage for *Animism*.
- The category *Buddhism* is missing.
- Hardly any Eastern religions are mentioned.
- The category *Russian Orthodoxy* is missing.

*What were the motives of people to seek God?*

14

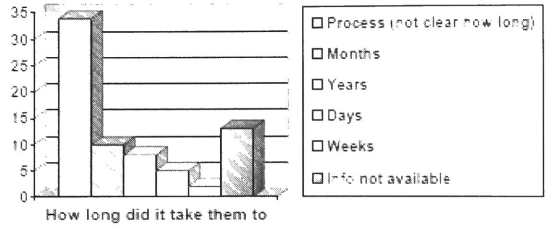



Observations

- The category *Health problems* takes third place as opposed to the group as a whole, where it takes seventh place.
- A significantly higher number mention *Sin* as a motive to seek God. (Fifth place as opposed to ninth place for the group as a whole)
- A considerably lower percentage mentions the category *Meaning of /purpose in life*.

*Over what period did they come to Christ?*

15

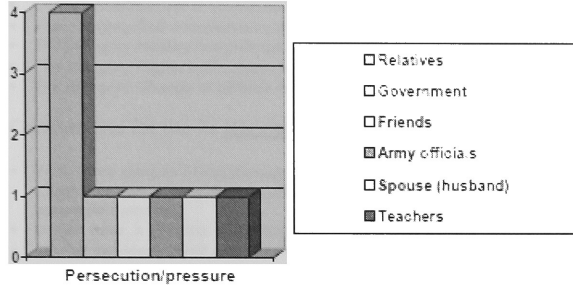



How long did it take them to accept Christ?

Observation

- No significant differences

*From whom did they suffer persecution?*

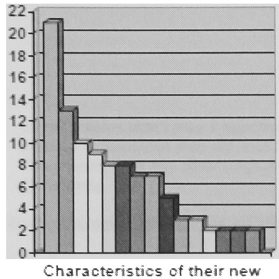



Persecution/pressure

Observation

- No significant differences

*What are the characteristics of their new life in Christ?*




Characteristics of their new life in Christ

Observations

- *Life has meaning and purpose* is significantly lower.
- *Deliverance/freedom* is considerably lower.
- The category *God's forgiveness in my life* is missing.
- The category *Healing* is significantly larger.
- The category *Higher self-esteem* is missing.
- The category *Change of attitude* is missing.

## Conclusions for the 72 *Kazakh-speaking* Kazakh students

- They came more to Christ through relatives and neighbors than the non-Kazakh students. They do not mention the role of acquaintances in their conversion process.
- In their case, a personal testimony is even more important.
- Church services played a far less important role in their conversion process.
- In general, missionaries assume that Kazakhs are not great readers. This research rather opposes than confirms that assumption. In the area of methods as well as in the area of materials, literature plays a rather significant role.
- A lack of interest in the Christian faith was not an obstacle for them in their coming to Christ.
- Health problems were an important motive to seek God. Probably related to this point is the fact that they mention healing more as a characteristic of their new life.
- In light of the fact that they mention sin as a relatively significant motive to seek God, it is remarkable that the category *God's forgiveness in my life* is completely lacking as a characteristic of their new life.
- The quest for the meaning of life seems to be a less pressing issue to them.

- Either dreams didn't play a significant role during their conversion or it was so obvious to them that they did, that the students didn't mention them.
- They hardly tried any other religion than Islam before their conversion to Christianity.

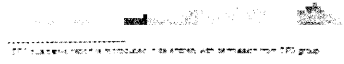
## Strengths and limitations of this research

*Strenghts*

- Students described their conversion in terms of what was important to them without leading questions asked by the researcher.
- The research is based on serious conversions. All of the students had been Christians for at least a year and they came to CALTC with a recommendation from their pastor.
- The use of archival material made it possible to study a considerably large sample. Research based on interviews could have handled a maximum of 30-50 interviews.
- The research questions were developed in a dialectical process with the text/in discussion with the text. The questions were not only dictated by the researcher in advance but also developed based on what students themselves mentioned in their testimonies.
- The group of students represents a considerable variety of people in terms of social status, denominational background, ethnicity, age and gender.
- The presentation of the testimonies in a few slides makes it possible to get a quick overview of how people come to Christ.
- It is possible to compare results for the Kazakh speaking students with the results for the group as a whole.

*Limitations*

- The disadvantage of using archival material is that the researcher can't ask clarifying questions. Though there were not many unclear passages in the testimonies, there were some parts where the researcher had to construct the meaning of the text.
- Despite the fact that the research questions were developed in conversation with the text, it was impossible to get answers from all students to all questions. This limits in some cases the reliability of the results.
- The testimonies were English translations of Russian and Kazakh originals, which the researcher unfortunately could not find in archives or computers at CALTC.
- The research is limited in terms of method and chosen sample.
- The presentation in charts reduces the richness and nuances of the testimonies.
- A small number of students came from countries outside of Kazakhstan. Their cultures and countries are very similar on the one hand, but also give evidence of differences.



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