TOWARDS CONTEXTUALIZED BIBLE STORYING:
Cultural factors which influence impact in a Sindhi context

by

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Submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

In the subject

MISSIOLOGY

At the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NOVEMBER 2004

Summary

Chronological Bible storying generally assumes a universality of the story teller's theological perspective in selecting and shaping Bible stories interculturally. This paper argues against this approach and proposes a method of crafting contextualized Bible stories which resonate with the worldview of a receptor culture. The influence of the theological and cultural presuppositions of the story teller is reduced through the utilization of the receptor culture's worldview assumptions - those values and beliefs through which the impact of scripture is experienced. The empirical research consisted of observing the responses of Sindhi Muslim men to a reading of John 13:1-10 and then interviewing them to generate cultural expressions which revealed a relationship between their culture and the scripture passage. Analysis of the data disclosed themes which have scriptural referents and can be used as the basis for selecting and crafting Bible stories that resonate with worldview assumptions.

Key Words

contextualization
Bible Storying
narrative referents
narrative impact
feet-washing
John 13
intercultural resonance
modified praxis cycle
Sindhi Muslims
cultural lenses

Contents

"God created people because he loves stories."

(A rabbinic saying as quoted in Inch 2000:4)

Aknowledgements

I am grateful to Sajjad Jatoi, Younas Pathan, Ghulam Mustafa Ansari, Deedar Mashori and Farhat Masih for their assistance in arranging interviews during my visit to Pakistan in May, 2004. Without their support the research for this paper would not have been accomplished.

Dr. JNJ (Klippies) Kritzinger has given inestimable help in guiding me through the process as well as provided insightful suggestions that have enhanced the quality of the dissertation.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Northwest Baptist Seminary (Langley, B.C., Canada) and FEBInternational for allowing me the opportunity to pursue this study project. Special thanks are due to FEBInternational under whose auspices my wife, Karen, and I were first introduced to the Sindhi people.

I am forever grateful to the prayers of all those who have supported our ministry over the years and whose financial sacrifice provided the opportunity to pursue the research for this study during one of my trips when I was working on the Sindhi OT translation project.

This paper would not have been possible without my wife, Karen, who has not only supported me during the hours spent on the project, but has provided invaluable help through her proofreading and constant questioning of my logic.

Finally, to the God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ by whose grace I stand, I offer praise.

Chapter 1
Theoretical Foundations for
Contextualized Bible Stories

1.1 Introduction

As evidenced in the book of Acts and throughout Christian history the communication of the gospel message across cultural barriers has consistently been both a challenging and rewarding aspect of the church's mission. Successful communication has occurred when the Christian message was "translated" by "relativizing" the culture from which it was proceeding and "destigmatizing" the culture into which it was moving (Sanneh 1989:1). However, the energy required to promote an emergent expression of the gospel that is both culturally fitting and scripturally honest is immense, especially in contexts where there are deep and long-standing barriers between the Christian community and the receptor culture. The recently popular approach of "Bible storying"[1] in evangelical missions holds great promise to make a significant contribution in this endeavor. The importance of stories, as reflected in the rabbinic quote at the front of this paper, is being rediscovered through this method and the telling of Bible stories is playing a prominent role in the cross-cultural communication of the gospel. Nonetheless, it is the contention of this study that lasting and relevant impact will only occur if the "storying" process includes cultural analysis as a central dimension. This paper develops an approach of "contextualized" Bible storying utilizing a "storying cycle" which proceeds from personal involvement ("insertion") and cultural analysis. This approach and the research presented here is, to a large extent, the fruit of fifteen years (1985-1999) experience among the Sindhi people when my wife and I were missionaries in Pakistan serving with FEBInternational, Canada.

While working in Pakistan I was impressed with the impact that the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet had upon Sindhi men. When I would read or tell the story, Sindhis would respond by saying, "Vah, vah," which is their expression of amazement and awe. The impact of this story within the Sindhi culture was obviously far greater than that experienced within my native western culture. In this dissertation, the cultural influences that cause Sindhis to be impressed with this story will be researched. The data from the research will be used to support a contextualized approach to Bible storying. This paper argues for a contextualized

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[1] The method of presenting a chronological corpus of Bible stories to a particular cultural group is commonly referred to as "Bible storying" or simply "storying" in evangelical missions literature. e.g. see www.chronologicalbiblestorying.com/articles/what_is_storying.htm. See also section 1.3.1 in this paper where "storying" is explained in detail.

method of Bible storying over against the more common "Chronological Bible Storying" and further proposes a methodology for discovering those cultural and theological assumptions that are appropriate guides in the crafting of Bible stories. The methodology will be used to disclose the "basic meanings conveyed by a culture" (Schreiter 1985:68) - i.e. the primary assumptions, values and ideals - of a segment of the Sindhi population that resonate with the John 13:1-10 incident. A proposal concerning the use of this data in choosing and shaping Bible stories relevant to the Sindhi culture will be presented.

The group targeted for the research will consist of literate Sindhi Muslim men. Literate people have a different relationship to story than those who are solely oral communicators and the inclusion of the latter could bring an element of complexity that would detract from the primary aim of the research. Also, literate Sindhis tend to be less awed by educated foreigners and thus are better able to comprehend and respond to the research requirements. Limiting the participants to Muslims will ensure a more uniform worldview and consistent theological assumptions. Women and children have very different roles and concerns within a Sindhi society than men, which will affect their perspective concerning the theological import of John 13:1-10. Their response to this passage could very well be different from the response of the men, and thus it would be better not to add that extra cultural variable to this study. Pragmatically, this represents the cross-section of the Sindhi population to which I have the greatest access and those people with whom I have related to and worked with for over fifteen years.

This study is of particular relevance and importance among evangelical missions due to the increasing popularity of Chronological Bible Storying. While heralding this movement as one that can yield significant results for the kingdom of God, nevertheless I hope to address a glaring weakness in the current methodology. Rather than basing storying on an unexamined preunderstanding and western theology, I will attempt to develop a methodology for constructing Bible stories based on the worldview assumptions of the receptor culture. The research is limited to the initial analytical stage[2] as foundational in selecting and crafting a corpus of Bible stories for the Sindhi people.

An important impetus for this paper comes out of my experience as an evangelical western missionary working among Muslim Sindhis. Western theological gospel presentations and explanations do not resonate in the Sindhi context. The gospel that speaks to us in our culture does not have significant meaning to the Sindhi hearer. As commonly presented, the gospel is perceived as irrelevant to the reality in which they live. As a follower of Christ convinced that the gospel message is for the whole world, I believe that much of this perception

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[2] See 1.3.3.1 "Storying Cycle" below for a more comprehensive discussion of all the stages.

is precipitated by a gospel message defined by cultural assumptions foreign to the Sindhi worldview. Thus a major struggle of my ministry within that culture has been to discover within biblical revelation the message of God to the Sindhi people which can be presented within their understanding of reality. This paper seeks to provide a methodology for this through contextualized Bible storying.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 Impact and Resonance

Important concepts for this research proposal are the words "impact" and "resonance". *Resonance[3]* moves beyond mere cognitive understanding to indicate the relevance of a concept to the culture. It indicates how a story "strikes a chord" with the listener. A presentation that resonates with an audience deals with issues related to the hearers' basic beliefs and values. The idea of using "resonance" to describe the relationship of a concept to a person's values and beliefs stems from exposure to the Sindhi word *laggarna*. *Laggarna* is used to describe one's sense of "fit" or "rightness" towards an idea or proposal. It assumes understanding but goes beyond to provide a value judgment according to the code of life to which one is committed.

Although the word "resonance" can have a positive nuance indicating acceptance and confirmation by the culture, a more inclusive meaning is intended that embraces both resonance and dissonance. "Resonance" as used throughout this paper presumes neither an amicable nor a conflicting relationship with the worldview, only that the concept can be identified as one that has significance for the culture.   Certain aspects of the Christian message will affirm the values and ideals of the culture while others will cause offence. The message will be perceived to conform to "patterns for identity" or "patterns of threat to identity" (Schreiter 1985:68) of the culture. When a story resonates with the hearer, it will be because of its perceived relevance to important aspects of her/his worldview. Resonance refers to any concept which speaks either negatively or positively to the reality within which the person lives, provided it speaks relevantly and significantly. Resonance describes the way any presentation - limited to story in this study - affirms, confronts, delineates or shapes a person's worldview.

Impact describes significant resonance that provokes response due to the importance of a particular concept to the hearer. This follows Kraft's (1979:149) use of the term in referring to "communication that goes beyond the cognitive level to affect the integral belief and value

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[3] This is somewhat similar to the concept of "horizons of meaning" (e.g., Bate 2001:17), but "resonance" is being used here to emphasize the importance of cultural impact through the interaction of story with a person's beliefs and values.

system of that culture" (Naylor 2003:13). With both resonance and impact, meaning is considered a subjective experience of the hearers as they perceive and evaluate a communication event according to their particular "pool of meaning" (Kraft 1979:148). This is not a denial of an absolute reality; it is a recognition that we need to take into account the subjective reality of the receptor culture in cross cultural communication. Communication occurs through the matrix of the receptor community's worldview.

The crafter of contextualized Bible stories first discovers how a scriptural narrative resonates with the culture and then shapes the story according to that resonance to provide impact. Impact in life formation is the primary concern of Bible storying rather than a satisfaction with intellectual comprehension. Impact occurs within the cultural context, through recognized and interpreted symbols, and affects the values and beliefs of the hearer. To use the categories of Ford (1989:199), impact occurs within the "indicatives of history, horizon, expectation and key relationships." When impact occurs the hearers are faced with a dilemma. The communication event cannot be dismissed as mere information or irrelevant nonsense. It has touched a core of meaning within their worldview. It must be rejected to maintain worldview integrity, assimilated in a way to affirm the worldview perspective, or allowed to shape or adjust the worldview as a resolution to the dilemma.

This concept of resonance and impact corresponds with Niebuhr's (1951:191) conversionist typology of Christ and culture. The relationship of culture with revelation is of utmost importance, both in instances that involve conflict and tension and where there is fundamental agreement between the two. The goal is positive transformation within people's lives as the stories of the Bible are selected and shaped to facilitate the interaction of God's message with their reality. For the teller of contextualized Bible stories this message is not assumed a priori, but emerges from the dynamic of the culture - revelation tension[4]. That is, the message will be understood as an expression of the reality assumed by the culture while simultaneously confronting the cultural values and beliefs.

The proposal of this paper and research project is that Bible stories can be crafted for the purpose of impact and that this should, at least initially, take priority over theological agendas. Second, it is proposed that the worldview influences which cause impact can be discovered. Third, those worldview influences must play a determining role in the crafting of contextualized Bible stories so that their relevance to the culture will result in appropriate impact.

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[4] The importance of this tension in the storying method is further explored in 1.3.3.2 "The Culture - Revelation Tension".

1.2.2 Crafting Bible Stories

"Crafting" or "shaping" Bible stories refers to the choosing and adapting of story and story elements according to criteria external to biblical narrative. The criteria may be based on cultural assumptions or a theological premise or a combination of the two.[5] These subjective criteria are inevitable because an objective position from which the narratives are deliberately altered from their original form is impossible. A responsible and ethical methodology of story crafting will recognize and explicitly declare the assumptions which determine the choices shaping the story.

The concept of crafting Bible stories may be objected to on the grounds that God's word should not be altered. However such thinking ignores the strong Christian tradition of bringing cultural questions to scripture from which passages are selected, rephrased and summarized in the form of creeds and doctrinal statements. Lochhead (1996:405), in referring to the Apostle's creed, states that "the telling of the [gospel] story has differed markedly at different times and in different places. Some elements of the story are glossed over. Other elements are given special emphasis. The concrete form that the story takes in any telling of it reflects the ongoing dialogue in which the story teller is engaged with his or her world." In the Protestant homiletical tradition of "sermons," those points which speak to the people being addressed are deliberately filtered out from the scriptures for presentation in altered form.

Repeating the process of crafting scripture through cultural lenses should not be construed as undermining the gospel as experienced within one context, but it does prevent one cultural and theological perspective from being universalized for all. The crafting of Bible stories assumes that there are specific and unique ways that the gospel will interact or resonate with another context. Contextualization is an ongoing process that resists the uncritical transference of one understanding of scripture to a foreign context.

My experience of working with wood has been formative in understanding the concept of "crafting." When wood is shaped or carved to result in a particular form, the artisan does not add anything to the wood, but through the shaping process removes extraneous portions and accentuates other parts of the wood. In the same way stories are crafted according to the way they relate to the culture. Nothing is added to the story that is not implied in the text, but it is shaped and polished to bring out a meaning that resonates with the culture. New beauty is discovered in the process.

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[5] Other bases such as manipulation or deception are possible, but it is the cultural and theological concerns which reflect the stated purposes of the storying method.

1.2.3 Contextualization and Inculturation

As in a previous paper (Naylor 2003:3), I would like to maintain a distinction between the definitions of contextualization and inculturation. Contextualization describes the activity of the outsider who seeks to communicate cross-culturally. Inculturation will be reserved for the description of the insider's assimilation of the message. Contextualization requires an exploration by outsiders into the insiders' world in order to discover those cultural elements[6] that resonate with the message that they desire to communicate. Inculturation describes an *emic* shaping of that message. Our concern in this paper is with the process of contextualization, an *etic* position, as it relates to Bible storying.

The ultimate goal for the evangelical story teller is the inculturation of the gospel. However the best that is possible for an outsider is the analysis of the receptor culture to allow for relevant adjustments to the story. But analyzing the experience of, for example, eating an apple is far different than the experience itself. The experience of eating the apple is the reality itself, is independent of the analysis and can occur without the analysis. The converse is not true: The analysis of the experience cannot occur without the experience itself. Thus while both an *emic* and *etic* shaping of the message are "true" and "valid," the limitation of the analysis and its application in storying, is that it is an intermediate step. The cross-cultural story teller readjusts her/his own perspective towards the other's cultural view, but still remains a step away from the reality that the other experiences.

The research project is designed for the story crafter who is an outsider to the culture. In order to decrease the influence of preformed assumptions in the shaping of Bible stories for another culture, this paper proposes a method of identifying those cultural elements from an *etic* position that can guide the construction of relevant and impacting Bible stories. But the culmination will be the initiation of a process of *emic* Bible storying as the gospel is inculturated.

1.2.4 Bible narrative and Bible story

For the sake of clarification this paper makes a distinction between Bible *narrative* and Bible *story*. Bible *narrative* will refer to portions of scripture which have been translated into local languages according to basic translation goals of representing the original author's message and intent as clearly and completely as possible. The research process outlined below will begin with a passage of scripture read to Sindhi hearers from The New Testament in Sindhi (1997). As a translation, this has already been crafted using Muslim Sindhi language structure and vocabulary and as such represents to some extent the theology and cultural perspective of Sindhis because

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[6] Although defined in greater detail later on, cultural elements for this paper can be thought of as a person's verbal expressions - stories, poetry, proverbs, etc. - of their cultural values and beliefs.

the symbols used will be interpreted according to common understanding. Moreover, it is also influenced by western exegetical scholarship as well as being a representation of first century Christian values and beliefs.

Nonetheless, this is an appropriate starting point, not only because a truly objective stance is impossible, but because the intent and the effort of the translators has been to represent the original text as accurately as possible. That is, the passage has not been deliberately edited according to a theological agenda. It seeks to represent a body of literature from one culture into another without making a judgment call about the relevance of the material to the cultural setting. Controls are in place to ensure accurate communication, integrity with the original intent and impact comparable to that of the original audience.

Bible *story* assumes the *selective and prioritized* use of those narratives to reflect or communicate *a priori* cultural or theological assumptions. Although it may be informed by biblical understanding, any and all editing of scripture is based on extra biblical assumptions. Recognizing this, Bible storying *deliberately* edits to facilitate a cultural and/or theological agenda. My argument leading to a suggested methodology is that the editing should be informed, guided, and even determined by the receptor culture.

There are elements of the Bible which will initially resonate more with one culture than another. These need to be discovered and considered as representative of those aspects of God's revelation which are particularly relevant to a specific culture. These elements then form the matrix within which Bible storying can function in a contextualized manner.

1.2.5 Cultural Elements

The research project focuses on the identification and analysis of verbal *cultural elements* in Sindhi conversation. Although other forms of communication could be studied - e.g. gestures, facial expressions - which are also cultural phenomenon that provide meaning, the data considered in this project is limited to the expressions - stories, poetry, proverbs, etc. - of Sindhi men in conversation given to verbalize the areas of resonance between their culture and a passage of scripture.

1.2.5.1 Semiotic and Sociolinguistic bases for Cultural Elements

Cultures provide stability and control over the environment through a limited and filtered view of reality. The reality "out there" is reduced to manageable components by a process of valuing and prioritizing. Cultures filter out potential options (Bate 2001:215) and thus provide meaning to events as well as the means to cope with changing circumstances. A process of categorizing occurs which encourages those activities which contribute to the ongoing stability and productive

functioning of society. This directs the members of the society to focus on a limited number of issues which have been determined to be important.

In the semiotic model of culture that views culture as "a vast communication network" (Schreiter 1995:49), this perspective of reality is expressed through the use of symbols. The semiotic approach is especially helpful in describing intercultural communication in that it permits close examination of communication events. Cultural elements are one aspect of the "signs" that are given to communicate a society's perspective on reality. What I have termed as "cultural elements" in this paper relates closely to Pijatigorskij's description of "culture texts" (:55). Schreiter (:55) explains that "the text is seen as the basic cultural unit of investigation, containing a single sign or series of signs, bearing a message." The sum of texts concerned with a single unified theme is termed a "semiotic domain" (:62).

The elements of concern in this research could also have been termed "discourse elements" (McCarthy 1998) which refers to genre analysis in speech. Discourse elements are the conversational units represented by a single genre and encompassing a single theme, e.g. a story or a proverb. Nonetheless there is significance in insisting on the term "cultural elements" that relates to sociolinguistics, the discipline whose "basic tenet is that context shapes the creation and use of language" (Blount 1995: vii). First, the elements that are chosen as data exist as aspects of culture in their own right. They are not merely verbal symbols pointing towards "true" objects of culture, but are themselves forms of language and legitimate parts of culture. Second, the object is not to break down a language into elements of speech and mere semantic codes, but to utilize the elements as windows that reveal the worldview of the culture. Third, the cultural elements are the expressions which indicate the "particular slices" perceived within the "meaning potential" (: viii) of the referent.

In a similar way, when describing the concept of form versus function, Luzbetak (1976:139) defines "meaning" as the "totality of subjective associations attached to the form - the various connotations and associated values." The term "cultural elements" refers to those subjective associations that the participants make when responding to a particular referent in the narrative. That is, through the expression of their subjective associations to the narrative they have heard, they reveal the meaning that the referent has for them within their cultural setting. The referent is the "form" and the cultural elements are the expressions of the "meaning" that the hearer considers relevant to the referent. The participant communicates her/his impressions, values, attitudes and connotations - the *meaning* of the referent for the hearer - through corresponding cultural expressions.

Put another way, the identification of cultural elements provide a means by which Bultmann's variables of "preunderstanding" and "life-relation" (Blount 1995:31) can be explored. Preunderstanding refers to the hearer's historical context and how that individual's understanding

of the narrative is shaped by her/his relationship to that context. Life-relationship refers to the existential relationship of the individual with the narrative. The passage will speak to that person according to the reality within which she/he has been shaped historically and contextually. It is that view of reality that we are seeking to discover through the generation of cultural elements which express that reality.

1.2.5.2 Inward Direction and Inferential Mode of Cultural Elements

Sillars and Gronbeck (2001:143) provide a helpful concept of *direction* within symbol systems: "Symbol systems are both outwardly and inwardly directed social structures." That is, they represent or "stand in the place of" an object or concept (outward) as well as "stand for ideas and feelings we associate with them" (inward). It is this inward perception of reality that I am seeking to delineate in this research paper; the reality as perceived by and which has significance for the hearer.

Furthermore, Sperber and Wilson (1995) provide two modes of decoding messages in a semiotic model of culture. Through the coding-decoding mode "communication is achieved by encoding and decoding messages" (:24) and the understanding "must be strictly limited to mutual knowledge" (:18). In the inferential mode "communication is achieved by the communicator providing evidence of her intentions and the audience inferring her intentions from the evidence" (:24). The research of interest in this paper focuses on this latter concept by seeking to generate[7] such "evidence," referred to here as "cultural elements," that delineate the "intentions," i.e. the expression of worldview values and beliefs or "messages ... [that] comprise the basic meanings conveyed by a culture" (Schreiter 1985:68) with which the referents in the narrative have resonated.

The cultural elements are the "signs" that express those "messages" which delineate the identity of the society. They are used by the insider to express meaning like the body clothes the soul. It is the body that allows us to relate to each other and to provide expression to our inner "true" self. There is not strict one-to-one application as in the "outward" direction of signs or the coding-decoding mode. Rather, as expressions of values and ideals, they are far more complex and less precise in forming contours around the worldview and thus provide an oblique understanding rather than direct explanation. The inferential process adopted here results in conclusions which may not *define* the worldview value or belief, but it will *delineate* or *trace the*

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[7] The term "generate" is used to indicate that the cultural elements are human constructs which are created by the cultural insiders in response to the narrative. Nonetheless, terms such as "discover" (in 1.4.2), "judge" (1.5.1) and "identify" (1.6) are also used to reflect the perspective of the outsider in the process of cultural analysis. See further explanation below in 2.3 "Generating Cultural Elements".

contour of the value or belief sufficiently so that comparative analysis can be attempted through the selection and crafting of stories to fit within those parameters and thus resonate with the worldview. Sperber and Wilson (1995:8) note that

> cultural phenomena do not, in general, serve to convey precise and predictable messages. They focus the attention of the audience in certain directions; they help to impose some structure on experience. To that extent, some similarity of representations between the artists or performers and the audience, and hence some degree of communication, is achieved. However, this is a long way from the identity of representations which coded communication is designed to guarantee.

1.2.5.3 Identifying Cultural Elements

Cultural elements are the verbal reference points that the insiders of a culture will utilize to express the way a particular concept or item has affected them. They represent the culturally shaped perspective of reality within the person's mind. They are the symbols of the cultural experience that express the values and beliefs which are self-evident to the insiders. This perspective follows closely Schreiter's (1985:69) description of semiotic domains in recognizing that the insiders' expressions are "signs" or "signifiers" representing values and beliefs - the "root metaphors"[8] which "can and do shape other parts of the [sign] systems" (:55) - collectively assumed by the insiders. The parameters of meaning for these cultural elements is delimited according to culturally determined "codes" which are the accepted rules of communication ("syntactics") and communal assumptions ("semantics" and "pragmatics") about the ideal or value that is being referenced.

The cultural elements are the "language" by which the meaning of the Bible narrative as perceived by the insider is expressed. Thus these texts are not mere words, but words as signs representing specific concepts and meanings. This illustrates the coding-decoding mode. The words do not delineate the concept or capture the essence of the concept, they merely represent or indicate the concept for the hearer who understands the meaning according to his/her own experience and understanding of the concept. In contrast, the inference mode consists of emotions, instincts (conscious, subconscious), attitudes (beliefs, views), identity, cultural or

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[8] i.e. A particular concept which "governs" (Schreiter 1985:69) a semiotic domain. Certain values and ideals of the culture are incorporated into the root metaphor. For example, a root metaphor found in the book of Ruth is represented by the concept of the "kinsman-redeemer" (Ruth 2:20). The root metaphor is an outworking or expression of the values of loyalty, mercy and the patriarchal structure of the society. See section 1.5.2.2.1 "Cultural Elements and Narrative Referents" which develops this further as it relates to Bible storying.

social constructions, experiences, stories, texts, behaviors, social relations, social or cultural practices, morals or social structures (adapted from Mason 1996:12). In generating data through the research interviews, the cultural elements were limited to explanations, traditional stories, personal narratives, proverbs, metaphors, and dialogue[9], all of which reveal to some degree the worldview of the Sindhi people. As Sillars & Gronbeck (2001:212) point out, "people define their world by telling stories about it and their place in it."

1.2.5.4 The Importance of Cultural Elements

Cultural elements do not define or capture the essence of the concept, they represent or indicate the concept providing *direction and indication* in exploring the culture's root metaphors. Rather than providing logical justification for their values and beliefs, which are deemed self-evident, the members of the society provide cultural elements to express a particular worldview ideal. Schreiter (1985:57) explains that from the *emic* perspective description is narrative - e.g. a story of a disastrous marriage - while the "explanation" - e.g. Poles shouldn't marry Irish - remains internal to the system and is not intended to *explain* the reason, but to *reinforce* the value. Thus statements from the outsider - e.g. "that doesn't make sense" - are irrelevant because that is not the purpose of insider's contribution. For example, my wife, Karen asked a friend why women wear the head covering in Pakistan. The response was "izzat" (honor). She asked "Whose izzat? the man's or the woman's?" This was met with puzzlement and the person was unable to answer, not because he was ignorant of an existing answer, but because the question was incomprehensible within the cultural perspective and thus could not be answered. Using Hofstede's (1997:50) terminology[10], Karen's "individualist" assumptions raised a question that did not resonate with my friend's "collectivist" cultural understanding. However the parameters of meaning concerning the implications of head coverings for Sindhis can readily be ascertained through stories and personal narratives which provide value judgments rather than logical explanations.

Furthermore, cultural elements engage more than reason and provide more than the understanding of abstract ideas; they appeal to the imagination and to emotions (cf. Ryken's description of biblical elements, 1984:21). A culture cannot be reduced to propositions, but

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[9] Originally poetry was expected to be one of the elements encountered in the interviews as the Sindhis are a very poetic people.

[10] Hofstede (1997:51) explains that "individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose. Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning authority."

requires a holistic approach or "thick description"[11] to be known in a relational and complex sense, rather than a purely abstract sense. Thus the cultural elements generated in the research express not just the participant's intellectual comprehension of a narrative referent, but his relation to the referent in terms of emotion, commitment, priority and value.

Paralleling Schreiter's (1985:52) three reasons why a semiotic approach is suitable for construction of local theology, there are three reasons why research to generate cultural elements is a constructive approach towards crafting Bible stories. (1) It is one aspect of an interdisciplinary approach to storying and it demonstrates concern for the complex dimensions of culture, that is, it is holistic. It views cultural aspects in an interdependent way which lessens the risk of reductionism. (2) It provides the means of describing cultural uniqueness to the outsider. The sign systems (cultural elements) allow for the identity of the culture to be explored. (3) There is concern for patterns of change. As Schreiter (:56) clarifies concerning local theologies, "when interconnections between sign systems are made, they should, at some point, make sense to those who live with them. Ordinarily this would come as a new insight into behavior and identity, which reinforces the individual's or the community's sense of what they are about, who they are, and where they are located in the world". Thus the referents of a biblical narrative or contextualized story will relate to the cultural elements (sign systems) in a way that will make a contribution of communicating God's word to a people in a way that not only makes sense to them, but further impacts them according to the relevance of the issue to the values and ideals of their culture. A fourth reason why a semiotic model is suitable for this approach lies in the fact that it views culture as a communication network; and communication is the storying objective.

1.3 Missiological Method

1.3.1 Bible Storying

The title "Towards Contextualized Bible Storying" indicates both the intent and limitations of this research proposal. There is a recent trend in evangelical missions towards "storying" as a means of teaching Bible truth evidenced by the increasing amount of literature and web sites designed to help people utilize this approach in their ministry as well as Bible colleges which teach courses on "Bible storying."[12] Although this is often viewed as merely one more "tool" for evangelism, it does indicate some dissatisfaction with the traditional approaches in

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[11] This follows Geertz concept of gaining "empirical access to [symbol systems] by inspecting events, not by arranging abstracted entities into unified patterns" (in Schreiter 1985:53).

[12] Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary claims to be "the first seminary in the United States to teach Chronological Bible Storying" (CBS 2003).

evangelical missions which present "well planned, logical messages [which are] not comprehended, not remembered" (F--- 200-:web site)[13].

Evangelical missions have had a tendency towards a reductionist view of mission. The focus has been on methods and techniques to communicate the message of salvation. The weakness of this is primarily in two areas. First, the message as shaped by western culture and theology is considered universal and thus the goal has been to transplant this version of Christian thought into contexts which cannot assimilate that perspective easily. Not only is the cultural shaping of this theology ignored, but the need for a cultural theology shaped by the receiving culture is downplayed. Secondly, one effect of the Enlightenment and Modern age is the tendency to seek out methods and techniques that will work machine-like in getting the job done. Thus salvation and spiritual life is reduced to formulas and step-by-step instructions for spiritual formation. Structured programs of systematic evangelism, i.e. Evangelism Explosion (1983), and concepts such as "praying the prayer," making a "decision for Christ," are based on reductionist assumptions concerning methods by which one becomes a Christian. In expressing his alarm over such reductionism of spiritual life within Christian circles, Kenneth Leech (2001:xvii) foresees that such "'salvation by technique' will be an increasing problem in our technocratic age."

Bible storying represents a trend that moves away from "formula faith." Rather than propositional truths based on western theological assumptions,[14] the Bible storying approach is viewed as more culturally appropriate, especially for oral cultures. Rather than a "supracultural" or "transcultural" representation of the gospel message, the goal is to "give the hearer a Bible that is immediately available in his heart language" (F--- 200-). Although in actual practice the stories are largely viewed as illustrations of or introductions to the truth of the gospel which finds its clearest representation in propositions,[15] some have expressed a preference for using story as the content of the gospel message *as opposed to* a western propositional approach.[16] This is a tacit recognition that narrative as scripture's primary genre cannot be summarized into

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[13] Due to confidentiality, the author's full name was not disclosed.

[14] This is not to discount the value of those doctrines which are the crystallization of years of meditation and scholarship within a particular religious tradition. The intent here is to affirm the need to replicate the *process* from the original narratives when entering another culture, rather than merely importing doctrinal statements with all their cultural and theological baggage.

[15] For example Akins (1995:103) provides a list of "basic Bible truths" to be presented as the "criteria for an outline of a core set of stories... that could be used for evangelizing when the storyer *knows nothing about the worldview of the target people*" (Emphasis added).

[16] For example in explaining communication for oral communicators, Slack (2003) states that "oral communicators do not isolate these teachings, ideas, truths, and principles from their stories."

propositions without filtering the meaning through cultural bias and thus allowing limits external to the text play a role in determining what is understood. It also demonstrates an appreciation for the complex dynamic of story and the nature of narrative as theology.

1.3.2 *Contextualized* Bible Storying

In many cases, unfortunately, the storying method has been enthusiastically adopted without serious consideration of the role culture plays in the choosing and shaping of stories. Unexamined western theological and cultural assumptions are often accepted as universal and transcultural.[17] These greatly affect the shape of the Bible stories by regulating both the choice of the biblical narratives and of the story elements considered essential. This approach to storying may provide a sense of unity within evangelical missions efforts through its obvious connection to the propositional approach, but it can also result in unhelpful dissonance with the receptor culture and even be a subtle form of intellectual imperialism. The lack of awareness of these biases prevents the establishment of appropriate safeguards which could aid in reducing this negative aspect.

The generally accepted method for producing a corpus of Bible Stories for a particular people group begins with a theological premise or "biblical principle".[18] This is most commonly a tracing of "salvation history"[19] through scripture and the stories are chosen and crafted around the key historical events that illustrate this theme. In some cases the stories are merely illustrative of doctrinal teaching according to a western theological perspective.[20] In each of these cases the theological assumptions of the story teller are primary with the hearer conditioned to engage the biblical narrative on those terms. What is lacking is an attempt to consider a beneficial tension between the receptor culture and the narrative as a guide to interpreting the passage through culturally sensitive eyes. There are calls to consider the

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[17] The emphasis on a *chronological* telling of stories is a major assumption that warrants examination. However time and space do not permit this aspect to be singled out.

[18] The first step in Snowden's "Ten Step Process For Chronological Bible Storying" (2004b) is choosing a "biblical principle or truth". Worldview considerations are mentioned secondarily, but without clarifying how these are determined nor the extent to which they should influence the process.

[19] For example, an abstract on *The Story* by Ted Miller (Terry 2004a) writes, "enough story detail is retained to show the work and purpose of God in carrying out His work of redemption." Another abstract on *The Witnessing Kit* by Johani Gauran states that this work "is suggestive of methodology for chronological-theological presentation of the plan of redemption" (Terry 2004a).

[20] For example, an abstract on *Wilmington's guide to the Bible* provides this description, "The Bible story is first presented chronologically-expositionally. This is followed by a section ... in which the major doctrines are presented" (Terry 2004a).

receptor worldview, but the interpretation of the narrative is assumed to be the prerogative of the story teller.[21]

    This methodology needs to be called into question as the imposition of an a priori theological premise may actually compromise the original intent of the passage, predispose the listeners to one narrow way of perceiving the meaning of scripture thus neglecting the richness of alternate views, and fail to resonate with the needs and perspectives of the receptor community leaving the impression that the Bible is irrelevant to their concerns. It is primarily these three weaknesses that will be addressed in this research project which allows the receptor culture a major role in establishing the parameters for the crafting of *contextualized* Bible stories. When the crafters of Bible stories first seek to discover how Bible narratives resonate with the culture, effective contextualization of the gospel is possible.

1.3.2.1 Intuitive Understanding of Story

A priori assumptions concerning the meaning of a Bible narrative for the receptor culture indicates a lack of awareness about how cultural perspectives and theological assumptions shape or inform the story as it is being crafted. This is especially unfortunate when coupled with a presentation of the stories as if they are an unbiased report of the original biblical record. However even as "it is now readily recognized that translation is inevitably interpretation" (Bailey 1976:36), so too does the presentation of a Bible story involve the theological interpretation of the story teller. It is the assumption of this paper that in crafting a story the meaning cannot be "decoded" into supracultural propositions and then the unaltered message "recoded" into another form. Rather the story is shaped and reemphasized, clarified and edited according to a specific cultural and theological bias. Recognizing this inevitability, it is proposed that the bias of the receptor culture play a significant role in the crafting of story with the aim of providing appropriate and accurate impact.

    Contextualized Bible storying as presented here assumes that the biblical narrative is interpreted through an intuitive inductive method by the hearers which associates their life experiences to the whole presentation of the narrative. This defines "appropriate and accurate impact". "[T]ruth is an evasive concept" and people view the world and thus the narrative according to "their own interpretations, rationalizations, fabrications, prejudices, and exaggerations." (Bogdan & Taylor 1975:9). God's word will have impact upon different cultures in different ways. The goal is to discern the "truth" of the narrative as it relates to and is

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[21] For example, in a description of Bible storying, Cain writes that after the story is told the teacher "poses questions designed to *reinforce the teaching* found in the passage. As the stories progress ... the listeners gain a solid understanding of Scripture and the plan of salvation" (2003, emphasis added).

expressed by the receptor culture: How the narrative "fits" into their cultural and worldview framework. As mentioned above, this can take the form of either affirmation of cultural values or as a challenge to accepted beliefs. The key is to define appropriate communication of the biblical narrative by the direct relevance to their worldview assumptions. It is the contention of this paper that the poorly crafted story does not address the concerns of the hearers in terms they understand. The properly crafted story will evoke a response that reflects relevance to their lives, whether it makes them uncomfortable, pleased or challenged.

A further assumption is that this impact reflects God's intention for this people and needs to be pursued, not according to the outsider's agenda, but according to the way God is working in the receptor culture. This approach also acknowledges the complexity of the reality presented in the narrative and attempts to avoid the reductionism of breaking down a story into parts or propositional statements. Shaping a story according to one propositional teaching will result in a story that has meaning for the presenters, but may not resonate with the hearers nor maintain the intent found in the original complexity of the passage. As Bailey (1976:42) observes, "Who is to say that John 3:16 discusses only 'love' or 'the world' or 'believing' or 'perishing' or 'eternal life'? This does not mean that there is no unity in this verse, but it does signify that the unity is found in a theological cluster of concepts."

Crafted stories which are uninformed by the receptor culture can be vague, naive and reductionist. The stories are vague when the intent is not articulated in culturally relevant ways. They are naive when they primarily function as an illustration to truth that must be articulated propositionally or proved on other bases and so the power of the story is lost. They are reductionist when story is not viewed as truth or theology in itself, but as a vehicle for the truth. Thus story becomes merely the bait to draw people to the truth, rather than an expression of truth itself. Such a perspective misunderstands the relationship between story and life. It does not comprehend that God has deliberately presented truth through history, story and narrative because any other form is inadequate and reductionist. The fullness of story overcomes the restrictive nature of cognitive theological reasoning. Theology in story is not concepts written or articulated, but a personal and communal narrative of life expressing the glory of God. Story which draws out such a response has expressed true theology in a way that propositional truth is inadequate to represent. It is this realization that validates the process of contextualized Bible storying. As Dodd (1935:21) writes regarding parables, "While the allegory is a merely decorative illustration of teaching supposed to be accepted on other grounds, the parable has the character of an argument, in that it entices the hearer to a judgment upon the situation depicted, and then challenges him, directly or by implication, to apply that judgment to the matter in hand."

1.3.2.1.1 "Looking Along"

In *Meditations in a Toolshed,* C.S. Lewis (1985:50) makes a distinction between "looking at" and "looking along." Using the illustration of a shaft of light observed in a toolshed, he points out that looking *at* a beam of light is very different from looking *along* the beam. When he moved from looking at the beam to looking along the beam, "the whole previous picture vanished." He no longer saw the beam but he saw "leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside." From this he proposed that "you get one experience of a thing when you look along it and another when you look at it" (:51). Lewis' illustration is fitting for Bible storying. The cross-cultural Bible story teller's "beam of light" will not be that same "beam" along which the receptor culture is looking. Thus, in order to present contextualized Bible stories, story tellers must not simply look "at" another culture's "beam" and assume that it matches their own "beam." To ensure that a Bible story will be seen "through" or "along" the "beam" of the receptor culture, the story tellers must readjust their preunderstanding to match the assumptions of that culture.

The goal of the outsider involved in contextualized Bible storying is not to break into the culture with messages of assumed universal relevance; messages that speak to the culture of the story teller, but may not have the same impact for the hearers. Rather the initial task is to discover within the receptor culture those elements which resonate with the Biblical narrative. Contextualized Bible story is thus an attempt to obtain from those looking "through" culture an indication of *insider* delineated parameters which provide guidance to the *outsider* in choosing and shaping Bible stories that will provide relevant impact. It is out of a tension between revelation and the *receptor* culture that God's message will emerge. This message will eventually take the form of *inculturated* Bible stories by means of which the emic insider further explores the ongoing dynamic of the culture - revelation tension.

1.3.2.2 Crafting Story According to Cultural Elements

This questioning of evangelical Bible storying methodology should not be interpreted as a dismissal of western theology or a rejection of a salvation historical understanding of scripture. Centuries of meditation and inquiry concerning the implications of the cross of Christ are a large part of what the western church can offer an emerging church in another cultural setting. The proposal is not dependent upon a claim that certain theological presuppositions are invalid or irrelevant for another culture. Rather the argument is predicated upon an unwillingness to give any theological position a priori acceptance that does not take into account the cultural factors that determine the perception of reality for the intended recipients of the story. In other words, the contention and focus of this methodology of Bible storying is that the selecting and crafting of Bible stories must be predicated upon a process of cultural exegesis. Unless there is appropriate cultural exegesis involving listening and understanding, the opportunity to interact

with and engage the culture is lost. If story tellers are intent on presenting their own teaching, they will be unable to comprehend what is being heard and understood. The result is that the members of the receptor culture will assume either that the story teller doesn't understand and therefore cannot contribute to the life needs, or they will assume that the teaching is beyond their understanding and experience and therefore irrelevant to their lives.

The position of this research project is that the *initial* foray of storying into the receptor culture must be determined, to as great an extent as possible, by the cultural elements that result in impact. The *receptor* culture's theology and worldview assumptions are the elements through which communication can occur and thus the story must be crafted in such a way that it resonates with those a priori suppositions of that culture. Before a theology can shape a culture, it must first belong to that culture. This "belonging" does not occur through a transplanting of theology or perspective from one culture to another, but by recognizing that the theology already present within the culture is the "language" to be used so communication of the message can occur. Bible stories are developed in an incarnational fashion which simultaneously presents the stories within that theological and worldview framework and at the same time works towards gospel transformation.

Moreover, it cannot naively be assumed that the use of cognate symbols and parallel story elements will result in a corresponding impact within the receptor culture. For example, as will be noted in the research, the concept of "cleansing" in western thought is either understood metaphorically in a spiritual sense or in a literal physical sense. The Sindhi participants, on the other hand, merge the two concepts into one with a preunderstanding of ritual cleansing that has spiritual power.

Nor should the goal of storying be to stimulate impact paralleling that of the culture of the story teller by prejudicing the story towards a specific response - for example, a sense of guilt for past actions, or acknowledgment of a particular doctrine. Rather the goal is to discover the ways Bible narrative impacts the culture and identify those cultural elements by which that impact is described. This emphasis on cultural sensitivity recognizes that God speaks to cultures in ways specific to their framework of understanding. For example, a shame/honor society will be more sensitive to the concept of Jesus' removing our shame, than to the idea of Jesus removing our guilt (cf. Muller 2000:100ff.). In such a context the concept of salvation as overcoming sin needs to be carefully dealt with. Sin is conquered by restoring honor to those dishonored (Sidebotham 2002:1). To address concepts of sin or salvation in terms that do not speak to a felt need is to be irrelevant and unhelpful. When the premise of a Bible story is incompatible with the receptor culture's worldview, there will be limited understanding and no impact. The communication of truth has not occurred. Moreover when there is *initially* no

impact, the desire of the hearers to pursue such teaching will be lacking as they will not perceive any relevance to their lives. Such a scenario can leave people inoculated against the gospel.

Story crafting determined by the cultural and theological biases of the receptor culture can only take place within the life context of those who will be the audience for the story. The research proposed for this dissertation will focus on the incident of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples as found in the Pakistan Bible Society Sindhi translation of John 13:1-10. The perceived impact of the story upon the Sindhi audience will be explored to determine important cultural and theological beliefs and values that need to guide the choosing and crafting of stories for the Sindhi people.

1.3.2.2.1 Storying as Theology

Theoretically an objection may be raised concerning the impropriety of rewriting scripture that is implied in storying, especially in dealing with Muslims who have a high regard for the sacredness of holy scripture. However storying is better understood as a form of theology which is, in a sense, a constant rewriting of scripture into our own private narrative. The theologian crafts the story to utilize those aspects of theology, i.e., those conceptual categories which define personal reality and that are evident as part of the narrative of people's lives. It is the resonance between the "referents" (Bailey 1976:39) within the story and people's lives which guides the story crafter in presenting theology as story.

Storying as a method of theology can play an important role in missions. Theology is a human expression of spiritual realities and Christian theology in particular is founded both on the Scriptural record and the Spirit of God moving within human history. Bible storying brings the two together by rephrasing God's word according to cultural and historical perspectives that have meaning for the story teller. Thus it has the capacity to realize the "meaning potential" (Blount 1995:15) of the text in culturally relevant ways that cause significant impact upon the audience.

The importance of story as theology is emphasized when we realize the limitation of propositional truths to adequately represent reality. Theology cannot be written down on paper, it must be lived. Only a symbolic representation of theology remains of the real and true theology when the theologian writes. Truth is truly known and expressed within subjective realities, objective realities are illusory. In Christian theology the Absolute exists as a subject, there is nothing higher – the higher we climb the more we see of the personal God within whom and from whom Truth and Life and Love flow.

Narrative or story as a means for doing theology is not a new concept, although in western evangelical circles we have been slow to understand both the positive and negative implications. Some understanding of the principles, as well as the pitfalls, in crafting narrative theology can provide guidance in developing story as theology in the Sindhi setting. For

example, an allegorical approach to scripture provides cultural relevance but causes the texts to be emptied "of their own reality, and treated only as symbolic expressions of a deeper truth." (Ellingsen 1990:11). This extreme must be avoided in order to maintain the tension between cultural categories of meaning and the integrity of the intended meaning of the text.

Enthusiasm for Bible storying is found in statements such as "Chronological Bible Storying is changing Christian communication forever. Emphasis on oral learning preferences is the next wave of missions advance" (Snowden 2004). This is no doubt an extreme and overstated sentiment, but nonetheless Bible storying has the potential to alter the shape of current evangelical missions. A return to the Bible as narrative provides opportunity for more than one interpretation and application. This is conducive to ecumenical concerns which would base unity on believing and living a common story rather than unified acknowledgment of a traditional interpretation. It can also promote the development of indigenous theologies. As the stories are heard within a specific cultural context, their meaning will be shaped and developed by that context.

1.3.2.3 The Role of the story teller

As commonly expressed in current evangelical missions the role of the Chronological Bible Story teller is as a conveyer of information. The content is predetermined and the goal is to communicate the Bible stories so that the members of the receptor culture will change and accept the underlying theology, usually representing a salvation-history view of the Bible. The content is minimally shaped or determined by the receptor culture, primarily due to the necessity of using their language. Cognate concepts from the receptor language are used to communicate the Bible story which is shaped by the outsider's theological perspective.

The contextualized Bible story teller plays the role of a catalyst. In scientific use, a catalyst "is a substance that increases the rate of a reaction without being consumed in the reaction" (McMurray & Fay 2001:508). A catalyst mediates the reaction between two substances which otherwise would only react slowly to form a new product. During my educational experience in pursuing a BSc. degree in chemistry, one memorable experiment stood out. Two reactants did not produce the expected product until a lump of coal was added. The reaction then proceeded at a significant rate, without altering the coal. In a similar way, the goal of contextualized Bible storying is to bring together two elements, the culture and God's message, while minimalizing the story teller's own bias. The metaphor, however, should not be taken too far. Although the coal is unaffected by the product of the reaction, the story teller's theology and cultural perspective will inevitably undergo significant development through this process.

Perhaps a better analogy, and one with a closer relationship with Bible storying, is my experience in Bible translation. As the "primary exegete" or "scholar"[22] for the Sindhi OT translation project my role is to bring together Hebrew and translation scholarship with well crafted Sindhi. My training and experience neither equips me to translate from the Hebrew without aid, nor to craft Sindhi sentences in ways that would be at the caliber required for the Sindhi reader. However my education in the biblical languages as well as my training and experience in the Sindhi language enables me to act as a mediator, facilitator and bridge builder to ensure both appropriate Sindhi and an accurate translation. I am able to interact with both the scholarship provided and with the Sindhi translators to this end. Without my role as catalyst, the translation would hampered by the translators' inability to properly understand the text and the result would be unacceptable. The story teller for contextualized Bible storying plays a similar role. The story teller seeks to discern the areas in which God's word speaks to the values and ideals of the culture and then brings the two together through stories shaped in ways that maintain faithfulness to both the culture's worldview and the scriptural message

1.3.2.3.1 Dialogue in Story Crafting

In Chronological Bible storying the story teller is the "knower" who presents Bible stories according to assumptions shaped by the outsider's theological and cultural setting. Story telling is monologue presenting biblical truth to an audience in the form of stories.[23] In contrast, from the inception of the process, contextualized Bible storying cultivates dialogue between the story teller and the receptor culture. Contextualized Bible storying recognizes that the impact from a story comes from within the world of the hearer as the message resonates with the values and ideals of the culture. Because the hearers respond to the story through the lens of their culture, it is imperative that the story teller utilize that lens in the shaping of the story to ensure communication. Because the story teller is an outsider, the story teller must initiate the process through dialogue with the hearers.

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[22] Terminology used by the United Bible Societies.

[23] This is a generalization based on typical training in Chronological Bible Storying in which the first concern is to "identify the Biblical Principle or truth you want to communicate" (Snowdon 2004b). In contrast contextualized Bible storying grants predominant focus to an observation which is only given passing mention in Chronological Storying articles. For example, J.O. Terry (2004b), a pioneer in Chronological Bible Storying, while assuming the a priori ability of the story teller to select and shape stories coupled with the "Spirit's use of a storyer to present the Bible story lesson," notes that in the storying process "there are some interesting dynamics at work. Many of those who hear the stories may be in a better position to correctly interpret or at least to perceive the elements in the story than the storyer. Many of these listeners live in a surviving Old Testament world culture."

In presenting his thesis that "mission is fundamentally dialogue [as opposed to monologue] with the world," Lochhead (1996:407) speaks of a "dialogical imperative" as "attitude" and "relationship" which is the "universally binding" imperative of entering relationships "marked by openness, honesty, and the search for understanding" (:403). For the story teller, the story is not an illustration of a predetermined principle, but it initiates resonance within the hearers' life in a way that leaves them free to respond in ways appropriate to their *Sitz im Leben*. It is this dialogue between the story teller and the hearers as they respond to God's word, which guides the production of contextualized Bible stories. This "attitude" of dialogue, which places the story teller in the position of learner, follows the NT pattern of the post-ascension apostles as they sought, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to discover the true expression of the gospel within their first century setting.[24]   As Lochhead (1996:405) notes, "The Hellenistic form that the telling of the story took in the early Church is the result of the necessary dialogue of the early Christian community with its own time and place."

This call to dialogue as fundamental to the storying process is based on three assumptions. First, people are, in general, interacting with their environment in sensible ways; their *Sitz im Leben* is legitimate. In speaking of his dialogue with Buddhists, Lochhead (1988:93) affirms that, "All that I need to believe, for genuine dialogue to begin, is that Buddhists are not out of touch with reality." Second, based on the commonality of humanity, God's word will also speak relevantly to them. Third, because each culture is unique, God's word will speak uniquely to those people. In all cultures the gospel remains the one eternal gospel, yet each culture embodies that gospel through the symbols that speak to that culture. It is with this last assumption that contextualized storying is particularly concerned and on which the methodology proposed in this paper in focused. The *lines of intersect* between God's word and the receptor culture need to be discovered through dialogue in order to appropriately select and craft Bible stories.

The methodology of this research project deals with the first two steps of the storying cycle (see below) during which dialogue continues to be an important factor. Contextualized Bible storying provides a forum within which the story teller, through an ongoing storying dialogue with the culture, promotes the dynamic tension between culture and revelation.

1.3.2.3.2 Interculturation and the story teller
When the tension between revelation and culture is perceived and appropriately dealt with, the insider's reductionist view of life can be transcended. This change is not from the outside, but from the inside as the former boundaries of meaning are eclipsed with the new and relevant

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[24] For example, the issue of circumcision and the acceptance of Gentile believers (Acts 15).

messages from God's revelation. Because contextualized Bible storying is not a process of monologue, but dialogue, a reciprocal transformation is expected for the story teller. The reductionist views of the outsider are also challenged as the new messages are discerned by the insider and communicated to the outsider. The Bible stories are seen in a new light with unexpected impact as the outsider begins to perceive the meaning through the worldview grid of the insider. Joseph Blomjous coined the term "interculturation" to describe this process and to "safeguard the reciprocal character of mission" (Shorter 1988:13).

1.3.3 *Towards* Contextualized Bible Storying

As implied by the title, a full examination of the Bible storying process is beyond the scope of this project. Rather the hope is that helpful insights will be offered concerning the initial efforts required to generate contextualized Bible stories. The investigation will be limited to testing a methodology within a Sindhi context that will reveal those cultural influences which cause story impact. Criteria for assessing the data will be proposed as well as some direction concerning the appropriate application of the data.

As with all who consider themselves evangelical missionaries, my assumption concerning the Bible is that God's revelation as given in scripture is for all people and therefore must, in some way, speak to all. It is this assumption that drives Bible translation, a ministry in which I continue to be heavily involved. In a sense Bible storying is a form of Bible translation because the intent is to present God's word in a way that is clear, meaningful and impacting to a particular people group.

The proposal is not to seek an illusive objective stance in order to produce Bible stories, for that is untenable. Nor is the goal to follow a theological premise from an outsider position, for that will be shaped by cultural assumptions and thus runs the danger of irrelevance or lack of comprehension for the receptor culture. Instead the proposal is that stories be crafted according to the theological assumptions and values of the *receptor* culture. The guiding structure for choosing and shaping Bible stories is developed from those cultural elements that *resonate with* corresponding aspects of the biblical narratives. Maintaining a dialectical relationship between culture and biblical revelation in a dynamic and ongoing self-correcting process of Bible story crafting assures both impact in the culture and integrity with the original intent of the scriptures.[25]

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[25] Luzbetak (1976:164-169) provides an illustration of such a dynamic process in his cautious representation of Catholic ecclesiology using the theme of "clan" in the Middle Waghi (New Guinea) culture. Comparisons and contrasts between the concept of "ecclesia" and "clan" are explored through the representation of "ecclesia" *as* "clan". Similarly in contextualized Bible Storying the first effort is to recognize those themes in the culture that have their cognate form in

<u>1.3.3.1 Storying Cycle</u>

A "missiological cycle" such as that proposed in a previous paper (Naylor 2002:7) which is adapted from the Holland-Henriot praxis model (Cochrane, de Gruchy & Peterson 1991:14), provides a helpful guide for this process. The cycle begins with "The Moment of Insertion" which in this case would be the reading of a biblical narrative and the personal involvement of the researcher with members of the receptor culture. This is followed by "Social Analysis" in which data from the observed impact upon the target audience is sorted and analyzed. "Ecclesial Analysis" considers the relationship of the story elements with and resultant impact upon the local church. "Theological Reflection" seeks to maintain the culture - revelation tension by considering where and how the hearers' response is addressed in God's revelation. "Spiritual Formation/Empowerment" evaluates the impact of the story in the context of broader kingdom values and spiritual experiences, e.g. such as prayer. "Planning and Action" reengages the culture by choosing and shaping Bible stories according to what has been learned through the cycle.

This research project is limited to the first two stages of the cycle: "Insertion" and "Social Analysis". The desire is to present a methodology which will effectively initiate a dynamic storying process that will utilize the analysis of cultural elements leading to the crafting of contextually sensitive Bible stories. By discovering the cultural elements that cause impact in storying, the Bible story crafter gains valuable insight into the cultural and theological mindset of the receptor culture and thus is capable of drawing on those elements of the scriptural narrative which will resonate with the culture.

This methodology has potential to overcome the three weaknesses of the current method of crafting Bible stories in the evangelical camp which were mentioned above. First, the dynamic process of maintaining tension between revelation and culture overcomes the danger of compromising the original intent of the passage by ensuring that one theological presupposition is not permitted to dictate and control either exegesis or interpretation. Second, the potential richness of alternate interpretations leading to indigenous theologies is preserved by allowing scripture to be viewed through the "lens" of culture. Third, the concern for cultural resonance and impact ensures that the Bible story will be relevant to that worldview.

This dissertation focuses on the initial stages of the storying cycle by examining a methodology by which the role of the receptor culture in influencing story impact can be determined. Since the goal of this paper is to assist those within an evangelical missions setting,

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scripture. Through selecting and shaping relevant Bible stories a creative tension is cultivated between the scriptural teaching and the cultural theme.

the research method and the posture of the researcher will model a scenario that is realistic for such cross-cultural communicators.

1.3.3.2 The Culture - Revelation Tension

The methodology proposed in this paper follows a missiology that demands both a high view of culture and a high view of scripture (cf. Inch 1982:24). A healthy missiology requires the relationship between the two to be one of dynamic tension resulting in a true cultural expression of the gospel. Culture engages scripture by demanding relevance to its setting, and scripture engages culture by confronting it with truth that demands transformation. Not only must the cross cultural story teller ensure that neither is compromised, but the integration and interaction of the two resulting in positive transition must be cultivated. Thus a primary goal of this proposal of contextualized Bible story is not only to ensure biblical integrity *alongside of* respect for the receptor culture, but to further propose a means by which the culture - revelation tension can be utilized to accelerate the process of positive engagement of God's revelation with culture. As I (Naylor 2003:23) noted in a previous paper:

> A dialectical relationship between the message and the specific context it addresses stimulates that creative struggle which results in spiritual growth and transformation. This is accomplished with integrity by trusting that the message is not contradictory to truth and must remain historically consistent, while at the same time recognizing that the message occurs within a specific historic moment and unique cultural framework that fundamentally shapes the way that message can be comprehended.

The methodology proposed through this research is a means of *beginning* a "hermeneutical spiral" (Carson 1984:16) or storying cycle that uses Bible stories as the medium within which God's revelation interacts with the root metaphors of the culture. The initial task focuses on the *culture* aspect of the culture - revelation tension by identifying cultural elements that resonate with God's Word. An important *subsequent* step[26] is to ensure that the integrity of God's word has not been compromised by illegitimate exegesis and misunderstanding of the passage. If God's word has not been understood according to appropriate hermeneutical principles, then the impact observed will not truly represent the tension between culture and revelation. It is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for a participant to provide a cultural element based on her/his perception of the passage; that perception must also reflect a legitimate

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[26] By logical necessity this is a subsequent concern to generating cultural elements, for it is by means of the cultural elements that the referents in the passage are determined, and it is the relationship of the cultural elements to the referents that discloses the interpretation of the passage.

message of the passage or else the relationship between the culture and what God is saying through the passage is not established. This is not to say that the contribution by a participant may not provide valuable insight into the culture, nor that God's word may not address that issue in another passage. But because the objective of contextualized Bible storying is to utilize the culture - revelation tension, the story teller must maintain the integrity of the word by ensuring exegetical validity.

A presentation of a hermeneutical methodology for this subsequent step beyond generating cultural elements is outside the scope of this research paper. During the sorting of the data elicited during the research, those cultural elements based on blatant misunderstandings of the text will be rejected. However, no attempt will be made to prove that the cultural elements selected for social analysis demonstrate an exegetically legitimate perspective of the passage. Exegetical analysis of the passage is a necessary step to validate the data, but it is beyond the two initial stages focused on in this study.

1.3.4 Narrative Theology and Bible Storying

Much has been written concerning narrative as theology and the essence of oral communication. These studies have influenced evangelical missions in the area of Bible storying through their validation and recognition of the place story plays in the life of a community. However the relationship between culture and revelation as it relates to storying has not been fully realized, particularly in the way theology and worldview determines the choosing and shaping of Bible stories. This research project hopes to bring application of that scholarship to the storying method of evangelical missions.

1.3.4.1 Narrative and Parabolic Theology

The scholarship that has been done on the parables of Christ provides important background in understanding the relationship between story and culture. A number of works on the parables by C.H. Dodd (1935), E. Linnemann (1966), J. Jeremias (1972), D.O. Via (1974), and K. Bailey (1983) provide significant insight into the function of and potential for story as theology, as well as guidance in determining a relevant methodology to explore the ways culture influences the impact of story. Although the focus of the scholarship concerning Jesus' parables is primarily upon discerning the effects of first century culture upon the understanding of his audience, many of the insights are applicable to the subject at hand.

Parabolic scholarship relevant to this paper is seen in the "rediscovery" of the insights that cultural perspectives provide to reveal the original intent of the parables (Bailey 1976:ix). While Bailey's work examines the ways that cultural studies and perspectives illuminate the original text, my task in this paper is to discern, albeit in a limited fashion, the manner in which

receptor cultures affect the way Bible narratives are understood and how this should guide the Bible storying method. Based on those discoveries, more effective ways of crafting stories as theology can be utilized.

1.3.4.1.1 The Piano analogy

The relevance of Bailey's (1976:35) work is evident in his piano analogy. "The story teller interrupts the established pattern of behavior to introduce his irony, his surprises, his humor, and his climaxes. If we are not attuned to those same attitudes, relationships, responses and value judgments, we do not hear the music of the piano." It is this "music" that "contains significant aspects of the theology that called the story itself into being."

This "grand piano" idea is further developed by Bailey (1980:xiv) in another work in which he writes that the "teller and the listener throw an invisible mental switch. Everyone knows how the characters are expected to act...." The "known pattern of life" from the setting of the story is the "piano" on which the story teller plays. "The main points, climaxes, bits of humor, and irony are all heightened by 'variations on a theme.'" The same story told to another cultural group will not have the same impact - the "music" will not be heard because the "common culture and history with the story teller" is missing. This insight into the function of story guides this research project with the recognition that there is a cultural gap to be crossed so that the music of the piano for the Sindhi people can be discerned. If stories are not crafted according to this "music," communication of the truth will not occur.

1.3.4.1.2 Middle Distance and Hermeneutics

The concept of the "middle distance"[27] (Ford 1989:191) perspective is also helpful in seriously considering the narrative genre of the gospels as theology rather than as illustrations requiring a reduction to propositional forms. The concept alleviates the influence of western cultural and theological bias evident in propositional forms of theology. As Ford (:199) notes concerning the Gospels' "realistic narratives written in the middle-distance perspective," "There is nothing objectionable in the use of more than one genre, but what may be disputed is the attempt to reduce one to another, especially if this violates the genre that was in fact considered most appropriate by the early church. The Gospels must by no means be invulnerable to criticism, but they must be defended against misconstruals that judge them by inadequate criteria." What we want to avoid is the "inadequate criteria" caused by the reductionism and cultural narrowness of

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[27]   Ford (1989:195) borrows this terminology from J.P. Stern to refer to "the ordinary social world of people in interaction." The "middle distance" is lost by narrowly focusing in on a single person's consciousness or, alternatively, by making broad generalizations.

western theology[28] in judging which cultural elements should be included or excluded in storying.[29] The response of the receptor culture to a biblical narrative will be a guide to the shaping of biblical stories so that the result is transforming impact.

Furthermore, the critical analysis of scholars such as D.O. Via, Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling (Via 1974:34) raise important hermeneutical questions for the story crafter. For example, Via (:36), in his comments on the Abraham story of sacrificing his son, points out that the obscurity of the background and the limited explicitness calls for interpretation. It "is permeated with suspense, remains mysterious, and is 'fraught with background.'" Thus the crafter of the story must make subjective decisions: How much mystery needs to remain and what should that look like? What are the areas of convergence between receptor culture and revelation that will determine this? How much background should be made explicit? On what grounds can that be determined? How much is left obscure or implicit to avoid irrelevant tangents and how is that decided?

Guidance towards resolving these issues is the purpose of this paper. Although specific answers to these questions will only arise in the actual crafting of Bible stories, the hope is that the research presented here will provide a practical methodology that will generate the necessary material needed to discover the answers.

1.3.4.2 Scholarship on Phenomenology and Qualitative Analysis

This research project is a form of ethnography in that it features "a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them" (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994:248). Anecdotal evidence, that is, the observed phenomena and expressions of story impact, is the data to be gathered and analyzed. The aim is to utilize a justifiable methodology with a logical analytical design that flows "from the research questions and the conceptual framework surrounding those questions" (Marshall & Rossman 1999:11). Rather than vindicating a hypothesis about certain elements of culture, the hope is to discover those elements that can guide the shaping of story for impact. Both scholarship on qualitative analysis and methods of exploring phenomenology will inform the research portion of this paper.

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[28] I am not arguing here that western theology is internally deficient, nor is that assumption necessary to validate this thesis. Rather the argument is that western theology is an inadequate basis for forming Bible stories *cross-culturally*.

[29] An interesting example was the telling of the story of Noah and ark by an outsider to a group of Sindhis familiar with the story. The story teller deliberately edited out mention of the dove and at the conclusion of the story the people exclaimed, "You left out the most important part!" referring to the dove that was sent out and didn't return.

Principles from J. Mason's work on *Qualitative Researching* (1996) are utilized in developing a consistent research design. For example, the research is formulated around what Mason refers to as an "intellectual puzzle" (:6) and seeks to discern the cultural cause for the perceived effect of impact. This approach also implies what Marshall & Rossman (1999:4) have termed as "traditional" qualitative research. That is, knowledge is viewed as subjective in belonging to the Sindhi people, and the researcher is capable of discovering this knowledge with some degree of neutrality. It also assumes that society has sufficient structure and order so that constructive generalizations can be made which guide the production of impact generating stories for Sindhis.

Phenomenological perspectives on the subjective view of reality provide guidelines in respecting the subjects' views as well as in honoring ethical concerns that could be undermined when outsiders interpret the data according to their assumptions. The focus, in Shutz's (quoted in Holstein & Gubrium 1994:263) words, is to view the "life world" as "the experiential world every person takes for granted [and] is produced and experienced by members."

1.3.4.3 Oral Communication

Studies on the unique characteristics of oral communication in the storying method are also germane to this paper. Moving from a written to an "oral Bible" (Slack 2003: web site) raises a number of issues and complications. As H.V. Klem (1982:110-113) points out, the importance of story in a culture, story as art raising the issue of multiple layers of meaning, and the cultural perspective of the power of the spoken word are all issues that affect the outsider who wishes to tell Bible stories. Although of greater concern during the actual crafting of story, it is of relevance at this stage as the attempt to observe story impact will begin with the oral communication of a biblical narrative.

1.4 Culture and Communication

1.4.1 Epistemological Limitations

The ontological position upon which this project is based is that a people's understanding and perspectives are "meaningful properties of the social reality" (Mason 1996:39). The epistemological assumption is that interaction and observation provide access to these "meaningful properties." Specifically for this research project the position is that a person's, and therefore derivatively a culture's beliefs and values are revealed through the phenomenon of Bible story resonance and impact. Resonance is communication that has occurred on the worldview level of a culture, that is, the values and ideals have been addressed. Impact is resonance that provokes response, either negative or positive, from the hearer. Since the

existence and power of these values and ideals resides in life experience, they cannot be adequately known in the form of abstract descriptions, but they can be identified sufficiently for the purpose of story crafting. Resonance with the biblical referent will give rise to interpretation of the resonance expressed in terms of the recounting of significant aspects of life, society and culture. Resonance expressed through convergence of story referents with cognate narratives, poems and proverbs present within the culture provides a window through which the root metaphors of the culture can be discovered and explored.

It is not necessary that a description of the resonance be formulated with clarity in the participant's mind or clearly articulated. Rather it is the disclosure of those cultural elements that the hearer intuitively recognizes as convergent with the story that become the data informing the storying method. There is no "right" or "wrong" response to the story, for it is the nature of the response as freely expressed by the hearer that is important. The cultural elements as expressed will provide the contours, boundaries and parameters through which the essential meaning experienced by the hearer can be perceived.

This theory is based on an epistemology that we cannot know what another knows or experiences, nor can we hear the story another hears. Culture is a communal "lens" or view of reality which is further complicated by individual perspectives and experiences within the parameters of that culture. Therefore a reductionist *explanation* or *propositional form* of a message considered transpersonal or transcultural is not the goal, for that explanation is subject to and interpreted by the categories which are assumed by the hearer. Rather the goal is the *identification* of the message *in the form of* cultural expressions. It is these cultural expressions which can be identified and defined, and which provide the means of communication by which the worldview is shared and passed on. In a sense I am following Wittgenstein's philosophy in considering the essence of life something that cannot be described, only circumscribed. He took great care in drawing boundaries "between what can intelligibly be said and what cannot be said" (Pritcher 1964:326) and it is what cannot be said that is infinitely more important. The application is in the cultural expressions used by people which reveal their inexpressible convictions concerning reality. These can be used to construct parameters of meaning by means of which the story teller chooses and crafts Bible stories to ensure relevance and impact. There are aspects of convergence between culture and revelation that can be discovered and these are the arenas in which effective contextualized Bible stories can be crafted.

A specific example is the concept of *gherat* in the Sindhi culture which is based on a shame-honor value system. *Gherat* is often translated as "zeal" in the English language. But the meaning of *gherat* can only be grasped through the life experience of the people. The reality of *Karo Kari* (the killing of relatives defiled by socially unacceptable relationships), the ostracism of the convert from Islam, and the refusal to drink from a cup that a Hindu has used all provide

parameters within which this concept can be vaguely discerned by the outsider. Rather than assuming abstract knowledge of *gherat* from one's personal standpoint and addressing it in a propositional manner, the approach advocated here is to recognize parallel biblical examples of *gherat* - such as David's passion for God's honor which drove him into battle with Goliath - and present those as God's story relating to their reality.

1.4.2 Culture as Communication [30]

Communication is not only an experience of culture, but is part of the very nature of culture. Culture is both the tongue by which one speaks and the ears by which the other hears. Schreiter's (1985:49) semiotic model of culture as "a vast communication network" is a foundational working assumption for this paper. A person's "everyday world [is] the basic source for assigning meaning to objects and events" (Cicourel 1974:97). Thus all communication and the assigning of meaning to symbols occur within cultural parameters. Contra Hesselgrave (1991:117) there is no "supracultural" gospel, nor is there a "balcony" as proposed by Hiebert (1994:87) from which one may objectively examine another culture. Both these latter approaches tend to lead to a reductionism that elevates one's own perspective to unwarranted status. For example, if a method of presenting the gospel assumes that a "supracultural" element is the goal of obtaining entrance into heaven, this concept will be presented uncritically across cultures without recognizing the cultural factors of the proclaiming culture that have shaped this understanding of salvation. Thus this paper does not propose a means by which Bible stories can be crafted *without* cultural or theological influence. It is only *through* cultural categories of understanding that stories which contain a biblical message can be given voice.

Fortunately, it is not necessary for the outsider to be an integral part of the culture in order to discover the relevant cultural elements that describe the root metaphors, although significant contact is required to generate accurate data. The more familiar a person is with the culture, the more valid the conclusions are likely to be. However once cultural elements are communicated, they can be utilized by the outsider to explore the subjects' worldview. Nonetheless these cultural elements merely *indicate*, rather than *define*, the worldview. They do not reveal the goal, but provide a direction to pursue. They do not give a specific answer, but a topic of concern. They do not conclude, but signify. Yet this is sufficient because the discovery of cultural elements is part of a self-correcting ongoing process rather than a foundation which

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[30] Culture as "the process by which meaning is produced, contended for, and continually renegotiated and the context in which individual and communal identities are mediated and brought into being" (Davaney 2001:5), or simply as "a design for living" (Luzbetak 1970:60) is not being overlooked by this perspective. However, it is the nature of culture as a communication network that is particularly germane to Bible storying.

must be exact in order for the end result to be valid. The reference to David and Goliath given above is illustrative of this process. Although the concept of *gherat* may be only imprecisely perceived by the outsider, the many cultural elements of *gherat* observed indicate potential resonance between the biblical story and the Sindhi culture. A story can be crafted with these cultural elements as a guiding factor and then the ongoing storying cycle will provide the corrections and adjustments needed to maintain a creative culture - revelation tension.

1.4.3 Creative Tension between cultures

There are three cultural "worlds" that must be treated seriously in storying: The culture of the story teller, the culture of the hearers and the culture within which scripture was given. The application to storying is the realization that certain stories and aspects of the narrative resonate more closely with some cultures than with others. It is those resonating elements that need to be discovered and emphasized to ensure impact in crafting stories.

The implication is that story crafting will be a dynamic and ongoing process not only by maintaining the culture - revelation tension, but also through the development of creative tension between the three cultural "worlds". The formation of impacting stories is not produced by the application of an algorithm[31]   but through mature judgment that is only developed with the passage of time, which Ford refers to as "temporal distance" (1989:199), as these tensions are maintained and explored. Moreover the need for continuous development will become more obvious as the depth and complexity of both God's revelation and of a culture's worldview are experienced.

Further the Bible stories need to be subject to an ongoing critique in recognition of the fact that neither one culture nor one cultural expression of scripture can claim normative status. Neither is the goal the *resolution* of alternative perspectives. Rather a continuing tension aids the development of the facets of revelation that a variety of cultural views affords, and ensures that story crafting reveals and does not subvert biblical truth.

If *contextualized* Bible storying (etic) becomes *inculturated* storying (emic), a positive tradition forming corpus could be developed which would express the gospel in relevant terms even as it affirms and transforms cultural values and beliefs. Stories that resonate with society's understanding of reality and provide significant impact according to God's word will be valued, passed on and used to preserve the beliefs and actions that are deemed important.

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[31] An extreme example is the woman who approached me after a lecture on translation and declared that all that she needed to translate the Bible was a King James Version of the Bible and a thesaurus for the target language.

It is possible that an objection concerning the process could be made on the basis that culture, as a human structure, is an unworthy guide for editing revelation. Allowing impact to dictate the shape of a story runs the danger of misrepresenting the message. If Richardson (1974:177) had allowed the impact of Judas' betrayal on the Sawi people to guide the shape of his message in their celebration of betrayal as a virtue, he may never have discovered the redemptive analogy of the Peace Child. It is true that this danger exists, but the solution is not found in an attempt to exclude culture from story crafting. What is required is ongoing exegesis of *both* culture and revelation to inform the process. The storying cycle is the methodology proposed to ensure that this occurs. Where culture and revelation converge there we find the message that God has for a particular people. In the case of Richardson's experience, he found that convergence in the cultural value of the Peace Child which also gave answer to the Judas question.

1.4.4 The Bible and Culture

The assumption behind Bible storying, and accepted as a fundamental assumption for this paper, is that the Bible is God's word for all humanity and as such has a message for all people that needs to be heard. Nonetheless it needs to be recognized that not only have the biblical cultures shaped the form and meaning of that message, but all students of the Bible interpret that message through the lens of their own culture. Malina (1981:10) informs us that misinterpretation comes from "identifying your cultural story with human nature." Because this is the way we do it, all must do it this way. For example, Jesus condemned divorce. But do marriage and divorce in our culture mean the same thing that Jesus was referring to? What is the meaning of these things in his culture and how do they relate to ours? This type of misinterpretation is found in the rationale used by some within my own fellowship of churches who are seeking to prevent women from being appointed to the pastoral office. The "plain sense" hermeneutic - "if the plain sense makes good sense seek no other sense" - is often quoted as definitive when interpreting 1 Tim 2:12 as prohibiting women from exercising authority. Unfortunately, both the 1st century influences in this passage as well as their own cultural biases are not recognized and thus not taken into account.

Malina (:154) sees this perspective as fundamentally flawed theologically:

> The problem with a fundamentalism that is interested only in what the Bible says - and not in what it means in terms of the social context in which it emerged - is that it implicitly denies the Incarnation. It denies the full humanity of the God-man, Jesus. It implicitly denies that Jesus was like us in all things save sin.

Even as Jesus was fully God and yet fully human, enculturated within a particular socio-historical context, so the Bible must be approached as God's authoritative word given within a context that determined the shape and content of the message. This insight calls for the validation of the message as understood within the cultural parameters of the original setting, as well as affirming the challenge of scripture towards counter-cultural transformation.

This dynamic is played out again and again through history as God's word is presented relevantly to a new culture. The Bible has spoken to members of the proclaiming culture within their reality and it is that experience, understanding and theology which they can offer to those within the receptor culture. However, because the culture of the outsider is different from the insider, the message of the Bible when inculturated will be different in important ways as it is filtered through their worldview grid. Both the insider and outsider will value and prioritize the message according to their implicit and internalized cultural assumptions. Their interaction with each other then has potential to be formative in producing further spiritual growth and insight, but only when that is preceded by an appropriate inculturation of the message in terms of each culture's values and ideals. It is for this reason that the initial challenge for story tellers who seek to present contextualized Bible stories is to refrain from imposing their own theological perspective and instead expose the insider to scripture in a way that provides impacting resonance with the assumptions of the *insider's* culture. This does not undermine the legitimacy of the story teller's theology, which can be presented at a later date, but it provides opportunity for the hearer to experience and assimilate the message without being overwhelmed by foreign interpretations.

1.5 Research Method

The purpose of the research project is (1) to draw attention to the cultural aspects of meaning in terms of resonance and impact, (2) to propose a methodology for the initial task of determining the cultural elements that provide a basis for story crafting, (3) to explore the implications of those cultural factors towards crafting story, (4) to point towards a method of storying that is determined by receptor culture factors, and (5) to do this through a specific case study within the Sindhi context. Although focusing on one narrow section of Sindhi society and one short passage of scripture, it is hoped that this will open up possibilities for more generalized application; a practical methodology that can be replicated in other contexts with other receptor cultures.

The primary concern is to overcome, in Schreiter's (1985:41) words, "the problem of one's own ethnocentricity." Patterns and themes of western theology will be avoided and the meaning of a specific passage as perceived by Sindhis within their context will be explored. The response is not prejudged, and when properly perceived it will provide the context within which

contextualized Bible stories can be developed. The observed responses to a Bible narrative will be pursued in a conversational setting to produce cultural expressions for the resonance and impact experienced. The desire is not to develop an abstract description of the response, but to discover those cultural elements that relate to or resonate with the narrative. These elements are a doorway into the world of that culture, the world which determines significance and meaning for that people group.

1.5.1 Research Question

The main research question is "What are the cultural elements provided by the Sindhi hearer which indicate resonance between worldview beliefs and values and the story of the washing of the feet?" The assumption is that a recognition of the relationship between cultural expressions and referents within the biblical narrative provides identification of relevant cultural assumptions or root metaphors which then guides the task of story crafting.

From the main research theme certain sub-questions need to be explored: How can one judge which cultural elements are actually caused by resonance with the passage? What is the procedure for determining the connection of cultural elements to worldview as well as the correct identification of the referents of the passage with the cultural elements? Can the cultural elements be categorized in a specific way that will adequately identify a value or belief? How can such a procedure avoid a narrow reductionism on the one hand and unhelpful broad generalizations on the other?

1.5.2 The Observed Phenomenon of Impact

In this model of contextualized Bible storying, the influence of the story teller's cultural or theological bias is limited by the method of choosing and crafting a story on the basis of impact for the hearer. Thus the research does not focus on an application of narrative theology or oral communication, nor is it initially concerned about the function of stories in a Sindhi context. The study begins with an observed phenomenon, the impact of story, and with an assumption that the observed impact indicates the presence of theological or worldview assumptions within the culture that *resonate* with the truth that God is speaking. These assumptions are not described in abstract terms to provide a basis for storying, the goal is to reveal cultural elements - experiences, personal narratives, stories, poems, proverbs, etc. - which parallel, explicate or contradict the truth that was heard in the story. This method seeks to capitalize on that observed phenomenon by identifying those cultural elements that express the impact experienced.

The research is "an examination of the interpretive sensibilities that attend methods" (Theil 1994:xi) to discover what God has said and is saying to these people. The observation of phenomenon is not followed by working backwards and formulating a cultural mapping or a

specific theology. Rather those specific elements which resonate with God's word become the data for future crafting with the goal of impact. The discovery of the cultural elements together with the corresponding narrative referents provide an appropriate and necessary first step towards discovering the relevance of the passage for the Sindhi people. The premises, assumptions and theological focus signified by those cultural elements will hopefully be useful to guide future choosing and shaping of Bible stories for the Sindhi people eventually resulting in the impact of an inculturated gospel.

1.5.2.1 Initial use of Bible Narrative

The first step towards the process of storying, and the essence of the methodology proposed in this paper, is to use a Bible narrative as a bridge into the receptor culture. In order to discover the cultural elements needed to inform the formation of a story, story - in this case Bible narrative - must first be used to draw out those elements from the cultural insiders. In this research, impact will be explored through the way John 13:1-10 is perceived, interpreted and understood by Sindhis.

This is not a measure of the ability of Sindhis to "accurately exegete" a Bible passage, but an exploration of the resonance experienced in order to reveal their cultural beliefs and perspectives. Since the point is to establish the *receptor* culture's input into crafting a suitable story, the priority is the resonance of the Sindhis' worldview with the passage and not with ensuring the integrity of the meaning of the passage in its original context (as far as this can be reconstructed[32]). What is of interest is exploring the cultural theology and worldview as it presently exists for the Sindhi men being interviewed. At this stage, the relationship of the comments to the original story will be for the purpose of *discerning* the theology, rather than *critiquing* the theology. An empathetic approach is desired which allows the researcher to experience the story from the participants' point of view. Using exegetical tools to affirm the assumption concerning the original intent of the passage would be a necessary subsequent exercise in order to complete the "theological analysis" step of the storying cycle proposed above.

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[32] The concept of "original intent" is highly controversial and much has been written on the topic. Any consideration of the arguments is outside the realm of this paper, but suffice it to say that the original author intended communication to occur through the vehicle of language. Therefore this step is based on the assumption that, as long as due care is taken, the reader is able to sufficiently comprehend and experience an intended impact from the text.

1.5.2.2 Identifying Impact

The phenomenon of impact indicating resonance is the response to a Bible narrative indicated by verbal expressions.[33] Expressions of agreement or disagreement as well as thoughtful reflection suggesting a challenge to or an endorsement of personal values would be an expression of impact that confirms resonance of the passage with cultural assumptions.

1.5.2.2.1 Cultural Elements and Narrative Referents

A legitimate method is required to move from *observing* a phenomenon to *using* that phenomenon to identify those specific cultural elements which can be utilized as a guide for crafting story. Two aspects need to be identified which have meaning for the hearer: The referents within the narrative and the cultural elements as expressed by the participant. While representing two separate directions, the former towards the narrative, and the latter towards the culture, they are inextricably related through a convergence of the narrative with culture. The narrative speaks precisely *because it is already a part* of the culture. What a person gains from the story in terms of impact, i.e. meaning, represents some aspect of culture. Through the cultural elements used to express that impact, root metaphors of the culture - with their attendant values and beliefs - are indicated which guide the construction of contextualized Bible stories.

For example, my friend Izhar's enthusiastic response to Ecclesiastes and Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount can be directly traced to his exposure to Sufi teaching. The Sufi stories and poetry that resonate with the biblical passages are the cultural elements that indicate relevant values and ideals in terms of root metaphors. It is important to note that such an identification is not so much an attempt "to discover and show the assumptions that underlie events or actions" (Mauch & Birch 1998:18), as an *acknowledgment* of those assumptions or ideals expressed by the cultural elements. The root metaphors found in the cultural elements such as stories and poems, are not filtered out as propositional descriptions of values and ideals. The cultural elements themselves indicate the parameters and emphases according to which the biblical story can be shaped. Thus we have three basic elements: *Referents* (Bailey 1976:39) within the narrative which correspond to and generate the *cultural elements* which are expressions of *root metaphors with their corresponding values and ideals*.

For example, in Chronological Bible Storying a commonly used story is that of the flood which illustrates "the plan of salvation" (Cain 2003). The narrative referent for the story teller is God's mercy on Noah's family. The cultural element for the story teller to which the referent

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[33] As noted above other forms of communication could be considered - e.g. gestures, facial expressions, silence - which are also cultural phenomenon that provide meaning. However the data considered in this project is limited to verbal expressions.

relates is "the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ [as] He alone is the answer to our sinful and helpless condition before a holy and righteous God" (Cain). This expression of the story teller's theology provides direction and indication towards one of her/his root metaphors - i.e. the sin-sacred dichotomy viewed as a fundamental aspect describing the relationship between humanity and God. This root metaphor is an outworking or reflection of the values of justice and mercy within the evangelical soteriology. In this scenario Chronological story telling seeks to convince the hearers of the story teller's theology of salvation history using the root metaphor of the proclaiming culture.

In contextualized Bible storying, the goal is to have the *receptor* culture play a major role in choosing the narrative referent for the purpose of discovering relevant root metaphors. This is done by generating cultural elements from members of that culture and recognizing how they provide direction and indication towards root metaphors of the receptor culture. Corresponding referents in other Bible passages are sought out and a story shaped that emphasizes that referent. For example, the story of Jacob's sons revenge upon Shechem the son of Hamor (Gen 34), provides a referent that generates many cultural elements in terms of stories and settings very similar to this incident within Sindhi culture. The outsider story teller recognizes the root metaphor of honor-shame to which these incidents point. In response she/he may take the story of David and Goliath and shape it to emphasize David's passion and zeal for God's honor (positive resonance affirming cultural values), or take the story of the Prodigal Son and emphasize the father's response to the son who had caused such dishonor (negative resonance challenging cultural values).

1.5.2.2.2 "Themes"

Once cultural elements are identified and the relation to the narrative referent is established, common themes may be determined. The concept of "themes" follows Opler's theme theory in which cultures have "several closely related and interrelated 'themes'" (Luzbetak 1976:159). These themes need to be "dug out" (:160) and Luzbetak outlines a number of inquiries that can be made to discover these themes. This research project narrows the research focus to the intersect between God's word and the Sindhi culture discovered in a conversational setting. Bailey (1980:xiv) also speaks of "variations on a theme" in developing his concept of the "grand piano" in which the story teller and the listener both "tune in" to the same theme which is developed by the story teller within culturally recognized parameters. Fitzpatrick, Secrest & Wright (1998:22) also speak of "themes in what people do, say, and report as their experience". This concept corresponds to the "valid descriptions" referred to by Schreiter (1985:41) which are "affirmed as true by a significant segment of the culture itself, and ... understood by a significant number of persons from other cultures...."

<u>1.5.2.2.2.1 Theme Parameters and Highlights</u>

The themes may be described by certain key words, e.g. "humility," "obedience," etc., that symbolically represent the concern of the participants or the "domains of experience which are important to cultures [and so] get grammaticalized into languages" (Romaine 2000:29), but it is the cultural elements which describe the parameters (boundaries) and highlights (focal points) of those themes.

In Schreiter's (1985:66) semiotic model, there is a concern beyond signs to "codes of behavior" which "help to locate the boundaries and the boundary markers" within the sign system, i.e. what is theft, murder, incest, who can marry whom, etc. "By investigating the signs and codes in a culture text, one can start to move toward discerning the messages" (:67). The "codes of behavior" indicate the emphasis a culture gives to a particular theme which corresponds to the idea of highlights or focal points. The boundary markers define the parameters within which the theme has meaning within a culture.

Romaine (2000:30) writes of "context relativity of ... observations" and "multiple conceptualizations of the 'same' events" which describes the variety of the highlights or focal points between people and cultures within a specific theme. This also corresponds to Kraft's (1979:58) description of worldview in pointing out that different worldview assumptions lead to a different "focus" on the "data" (i.e. the reality "out there"). The highlights or focal points can also be understood as a microcosm of what Luzbetak (1970:62) refers to as "cultural constituents" or the "roles each part plays".

The concept of parameters or boundaries relates to Kraft's (1979:59) description of how various concepts are "linked" to one another. The relationship of two concepts in one culture that is lacking in another, indicates contrasting conceptual boundaries.[34] These boundaries relate to Luzbetak's (1970:63) description of the "integration" of "constituents" into a "single whole". Luzbetak is concerned with describing a culture as a whole, but the description applies as well to specific themes of culture as described above. The "arrangement" of the constituents describes the relationship of the constituents to each other and thus delineate culturally derived parameters. The examination of cultural elements according to relevant themes allows the researcher to explore both the parameters and the highlights of the particular themes.

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[34] As mentioned earlier, for example, my wife's question about honor (izzat) indicated a link to a value that was outside of the parameters that my friend considered valid when discussing "izzat."

1.5.3 The Role of the Researcher

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994:249) argue that "all social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being a part of it." The investigator engages with "the persons and events and the ambiances studied as an integral part of the study process" (Mauch & Birch 1998:18). This research project attempts to recognize and account for the subjective role of the researcher as a legitimate part of the process. As the investigator I am placing myself in the role of one seeking to formulate contextualized Bible stories as an outsider and thus take the necessary first step of discovering the cultural elements of the receptor culture that resonate with biblical narrative. In particular, the insertion stage of the storying cycle requires the personal involvement of the researcher in initiating and guiding discussions that produce those cultural elements.

The role of the researcher is conditioned by the ultimate goal of communicating God's revelation in an impacting and relevant way. This realization both guides and biases my attempts to explore the views of participants as I explore the relationship between the cultural elements and the referents of the narrative. Moreover, the study will hopefully benefit not only those seeking to contextualize the gospel in a Sindhi culture, but also those who hold a similar *etic* position whatever their culture of interest.

1.5.3.1 Personal History

It is my history among Sindhis[35] that provides the context within which valid identification of cultural elements can occur. Both the dissimilarity of the Sindhi worldview with my native Canadian worldview as well as the surprising commonality of experience and understanding has shaped me during my 19 years of interaction with Sindhis. Therefore I am in a unique position to recognize the complexities that require cultural analysis before a Bible story can be adequately crafted. Yet at the same time I am not confident that I have comprehended those aspects of culture that require consideration for the storying effort. Nor do I know what the implications for story crafting will be once those aspects have been identified. These uncertainties are the impetus for this research project.

Who I am as an outsider has been shaped by both positive and negative interaction, assessed in terms of development of or damage to relationships, by my time living among Sindhis. This shaping will act as a grid through which the generation and analysis of data will take place. This grid is not only a linguistic filter dependent upon the categories of vocabulary and descriptive concepts familiar to me, but also a broader cultural filter. This can be understood

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[35] The Sindhis are an ethnic group residing in southeast Pakistan numbering over 17 million. They are primarily Muslim and have a history in that area of over 5000 years.

in a semiotic sense in that I have a prejudice in interpreting the signs or cultural "language"[36] of the Sindhi people that has been developed through my relationships with them. Successful interpretation of cultural signs and symbols has been maintained through the positive reinforcement of my Sindhi acquaintances. Their consistent and predictable reaction to certain aspects of my relationship with them is the basis for the assumption that I have attained common understanding in those areas. Unsuccessful interpretations, which are forgotten for the most part, have been dismissed as they have been critiqued and rejected by Sindhis. This developed prejudice will be the subjective grid through which I will experience the data.

However it must be emphasized that this aspect of researcher subjectivity is a strength since familiarity with the culture provides proportional assurance that I, as the outsider, am capable of recognizing the cultural elements that reflect the receptor worldview. This developed prejudice affects the methodology by which the data will be prioritized and interpreted. Although there are other guides to aid in determining the relevant cultural elements, familiarity with cultural norms and values allows me to assess their importance and priority. These guides for testing and evaluating the data are developed below, though the ultimate confirmation that the cultural element chosen truly reflects important values and beliefs will be a crafted story that produces a predicted impact and draws the hearer further into interaction with God's revelation.

I have also worked since 1989 in the translation of the Old Testament into the Sindhi language. This has helped me develop sensitivity to both the profundity and limitation of language as well as the way the Sindhi language describes the particular contours of reality experienced by the Sindhi people. For example, the sensitivity of the Sindhi people to concepts of ritual cleansing greatly influenced the phrasing of those descriptive passages in the books of Moses which deal with purity and holiness (heb.:*tahowr*).

Both the generation and analysis of the data will be shaped by my personal history among Sindhis (cf. Creswell 2003:19). I will look for and draw out from the data those aspects that (1) conform to my previous experience and understanding of the Sindhi people, (2) are confirmed by a general consistency and agreement between the participants or (3) can be validated through support by material referenced outside of the collected data, such as poetry, texts, proverbs and stories. My limitations as an outsider will be evident in both the data generation and analysis. It is not possible for the outsider to properly grasp the complexities of the conversation in terms of unspoken assumptions, innuendoes, references to common experiences, etc. Thus avenues of thought that would produce greater insight may not be explored and some aspects of the data will not be analyzed as clearly as it would be if done by an insider. Awareness of these limitations is

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36 The meaning here is metaphorical refering to all the cultural signs which communicate meaning including, but more extensive than linguistic concerns.

important to ensure that clarification of thought with insiders is pursued rather than assuming that a particular perception is correct. This also reemphasizes the need for a dynamic self-correcting storying process.

1.5.3.2 Limiting Researcher Bias

Although the data generation and analysis will not be devoid of the interviewer's bias or interest in the story, negative effects of the bias can be lessened in a number of ways. The influence of the following factors can only be reduced and not entirely eliminated: (1) The project is foreigner initiated, (2) it is carried out with the guidance and participation of a foreigner, (3) a tape recorder will be used to record the conversation and (4) notes will be taken by the researcher. These factors will provide a scenario that is somewhat unusual and could cause the participants to wonder if they are being tested or to act in a way they think will please the interviewer rather than respond naturally to the story. Also the questions formulated by the researcher will demonstrate personal preferences and priorities. The procedure for generating the data outlined below has been designed to reduce these negative influences.

Limiting researcher bias will hopefully provide greater exposure to the theology, values and concerns of Sindhis. The primary context for data generation will be conversation with much freedom given for discussion so that people may speak as they see fit. Care will be taken in recording the data to represent the participants' comments appropriately with a sensitivity to the danger of prejudging and "correcting" the responses given.

1.5.4 Defense of Methodology

The methodology for generating cultural elements utilizes Bailey's concept of narrative referents together with Schreiter's semiotic model of culture. The root metaphors relevant to the narrative, with their corresponding values and ideals, are signified by the cultural elements. As an outsider, I will not have direct access to the values and ideals of the receptor culture but must rely on the signs provided by the receptor culture in order to gain an understanding of and appreciation for the primary assumptions or root metaphors that shape the participants' response to the narrative.

The methodology proposed deals directly with the active interplay of human conversation and avoids the generalities of "eastern culture" which has been written about extensively. It is an appropriate method to explore directly the significant values and beliefs of people who are active participants within a specific setting. The discussion of religious/mystical writing is both natural and common to the Sindhi and is a normal cultural practice through which the spiritual outlook of the people is both revealed and shaped. The Bible is a recognized and accepted sacred text and so is suitable for such a setting. The Sindhis do have their mystical authors who articulate

their religious experiences in writing, however, there are not, to my knowledge, any who have articulated the impact of biblical texts upon their lives.

But if the idea is simply to discover a culture's root metaphors in order to craft Bible stories, why begin with a Bible narrative? Why not begin with religious/mystical material common to the Sindhis? Although such a study would reap rich results and can provide an immensely valuable contribution to the crafting of Bible stories, Bible narrative was chosen as a starting point for the following reasons. The view of the Bible affirmed here is that it is God's revelation with a message for all people in all cultures, even though the message will resonate in different ways. So we begin with Bible narrative, with Bible stories as the desired result. Although any element of the culture may be a bridge towards understanding, we are seeking to explore the ways that God addresses this culture. This does not deny the reality that God is working in the culture in other ways and revealing his will, but we are limiting ourselves to the revelation of scripture assuming that it is as internally claimed, the word of God. The impact sought is that of God speaking to this culture. Therefore we begin with God's revelation as spoken in scripture.

The methodology seeks to avoid two major a priori assumptions which can lead the unwary into reductionist and irrelevant directions. First, by stimulating the Sindhi men to express their beliefs as it relates to a specific passage of scripture, we avoid generalizations about Sindhi beliefs. Second, by exploring the Sindhi response to and understanding of a specific passage of scripture, we avoid an a priori interpretation and theology in Bible storying.

This research project is also "pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in the lived experiences of people" (Marshall & Rossman 1999:2). Marshall & Rossman (:2) summarize eight characteristics of qualitative research and investigators which are evident in this research design. The research (1) takes place in natural world of the Sindhi, (2) respects humanity of participants by validating their explanations of impact, (3) is emerging and evolving by operating within a paradigm of tension between cultural and revelation which shows respect for a people's worldview as well as the need for scripture to speak to the values and ideals of their culture, and (4) is fundamentally interpretive in that the data of cultural elements points to worldview realities. As the investigator, I seek to (5) view the social world as "holistic and seamless" rather than seeking to define one aspect of worldview in a reductionist fashion, (6) engage in systematic reflection of my own role in relating to the Sindhis, (7) be sensitive to my personal biography and how that will influence the study, and (8) use complex reasoning that is multifaceted and iterative as it dialectically moves between deductive and inductive modes of analysis.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined the parameters within which the following research and analysis will be conducted. In preparation for the construction of contextualized Bible stories a procedure will be attempted involving interviews with Sindhi Muslim men for the purpose of generating cultural elements as they response to a biblical narrative. This procedure is based upon an assumption that Sindhi worldview assumptions which resonate with the biblical narrative - in this instance John 13:1-10 - can be identified. The cultural elements are the explanations, personal examples, illustrations, traditional stories, common sayings and dialogue that reveal root metaphors of the Sindhi people. The cultural elements constitute a "thick description" of core values and ideals which provides the story teller with an awareness of the Sindhi worldview so that she/he can select and shape Bible stories that resonate with the Sindhi culture as well as maintain a culture - revelation tension that will result in transforming impact. The missiological cycle of insertion, social analysis, ecclesial analysis, theological reflection, spiritual formation/empowerment and planning and action is utilized as a guide to the process of constructing contextualized Bible stories. The first two stages of insertion and social analysis as the initial steps in the storying cycle for the Sindhi people are the focus of the remainder of the paper.

CHAPTER 2
Data Concerning John 13:1-10
Generated from Interviews

2.1 Description of Interviews

A total of seven interviews were conducted between the dates of May 2, 2004 and May 15, 2004 in four different cities of the upper Sindh, Pakistan: Shikarpur (2), Khanpur (1), Naodero (2) and Larkana (2). The interviews in Shikarpur were conducted at the same location, but on different dates. The interviews at Naodero were conducted at the same location during the same visit but subsequently with different participants. The interviews in Larkana were on different dates and in different locations. All the participants in the interviews were only involved in one interview. A total of 25 literate Sindhi Muslim men participated in the interviews: Three interviews consisted of two participants, one interview had three participants, two interviews had four participants and one interview had eight participants. The comprehensive organization of the data obtained from the transcripts of the interviews is given below.

2.2 Relevance and Reliability of Data

The reliability of the data will be judged by the participants' agreement with and affirmation of each other's comments. The assumption is that the sampling of culture texts provided by the participants will provide relevant insight into the values and ideals of the culture. This was maximized by the number of interviews (7) held to confirm the generalizability of the data collected. Confirmation of the generalizability in this way is important because within any group there are both common assumptions that provide group identity as well as individuals with their own unique perspectives. People interpret experiences differently and they focus on different aspects (Bogdan & Taylor 1975:10). Therefore a larger sampling will provide greater confidence that cultural elements stressed by the participants are communally recognized rather than individual concerns not reflected within the larger populace. Repetition in data collection permits individual peculiarities to be noted and avoided and allows the common elements to be pinpointed. The attempt is "to understand observed regularities, patterns, commonalities, and/or themes in what people do, say, and report as their experience" (Fitzpatrick et al 1998:22). In speaking of cultural theologies, Schreiter (1985:41) underlines the importance of a larger sampling in determining the authenticity of a cultural perspective: "If the cultural description can be affirmed as true by a significant segment of the culture itself, and can be understood by a significant number of persons from other cultures, then the description can be considered valid."

Relationship of the sample with the wider society is not in terms of *representation* (cf. Mason 1996:92) of the society at large, i.e. as a microcosm of the larger society. The goal is not to "generate empirically representative samples" (Mason 1996:93). Rather the research examines a sample of a particular unit of the society (specifically literate Sindhi men) as members of the society in a significant way (that is, their position as insiders indicates that they are both shaped by and are qualified as shapers of their society), and therefore they provide a key to the society's values and beliefs. As the cultural elements of the participants are explored through the interaction with the biblical narrative, this will, to some extent, reveal root metaphors of the culture at large. However the examination of another unit (e.g. consisting of women) could result in different cultural elements reflecting different root metaphors - or another facet of the same root metaphors - which can inform story crafting. In order to maintain the possibility of comparison of the common cultural elements, and for pragmatic reasons, this project is limited to literate Muslim Sindhi men. This is a form of "theoretical sampling" which selects "groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to [the] research questions, [the] theoretical position, and analytical framework, [the] analytical practice, and most importantly the explanation or account which [is being developed]" (Mason 1996:94). That is, the choice of literate Muslim Sindhi men as a part of Sindhi society has theoretical meaning because it will generate data that can be used as a framework within which story crafting can be developed and tested. A story crafted on the basis of such data may have relevance to all levels of Sindhi society, but is unlikely to have the same impact as with those represented by the participants, that is, literate Muslim Sindhi men.

2.3 Generating Cultural Elements

In obtaining the data care was taken to avoid strictly personal influences causing impact[37] as these are not generally the experiences or forces around which a community maintains its identity. Rather the desire was to determine communal reasons for impact, those "generalizations ... which have a wider resonance" (Mason 1996:6). The goal was, through systematic and rigorous qualitative research, to find cultural elements that resonate with Sindhis generally and point to a cultural worldview and common experiences. That is, the goal in collecting the data remained consistent and the methods used, though not rigid or overly structured, were constant so that the common features would not be suspect or obscured.

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[37] For example, the incident of Jesus' walking on water could impact someone due to a personal encounter with drowning. Nonetheless, if the research took place in a fishing community, this individual reaction could also indicate significance for the entire community.

The concept of "generating"[38] as opposed to "collecting" data follows Mason (1996:35) as the appropriate description of the process. The stimulation of the Bible passage read as well as the inductive questioning was designed to draw out from the Sindhi hearers their response and reaction to the narrative. The passage was read aloud which indicates to the hearer that this is a story to be told and responded to, as opposed to a passage silently read indicating that it is to be studied and analyzed.[39]

The data sources were literate Muslim Sindhi men residing in the Sindh province of Pakistan, including some who are especially religious as practicing Muslims and some who are familiar with the Bible. The method of data generation was a loosely structured interview which Burgess (1984:102) describes as "conversations with a purpose." John 13:1-10 was read aloud from the The New Testament in Sindhi (1997:277). Notes were taken down on paper as well as recorded on audio cassette.

Using inductive questioning I asked them to comment on the impact experienced by hearing the story and sought to elicit cultural elements that they believed relate to the meaning of the story. In this process I was not an objective outsider to the conversation but part of the group, a participant rather than a mere observer. That is, I both engaged the participants and was engaged by them. The understanding that I, as an outsider seeking insider information, was engaging them to hear their response to the story was clearly stated and obvious throughout.

This method of data generation is appropriate to the research question. The cultural elements required as data depend upon a subjective response to the stimulus of the biblical narrative which is provided through the interview process. To ensure that data generation and analysis is thorough, careful, honest and accurate and not misrepresented or carelessly handled (cf. Mason 1996:146), the data was recorded and transcribed into a form that sought to demonstrate "strict and scrupulous accuracy and honesty in conducting and reporting" (Mauch & Birch 1998:19).

To ensure an appropriate ethical standard I explained the purpose of the interviews to the participants and obtained their permission before taping the interview.

2.3.1 Interview Process

There are a number of reasons why a loose conversational structure was more appropriate than a formal interview. Sindhis enjoy conversation, interacting with others' opinions and having their ideas heard. The popularity of tea shops in Pakistan consisting of an intimate arrangement of

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[38] As noted earlier, while "generate" is used to focus on the insider's act of constructing illustrations and explanations for the resonance experienced, cultural elements from the outsider story teller's point of view are "identified," "discovered," and "judged."

[39] The observation of this phenomenon is drawn from personal experience.

tables and chairs bears witness to this as well as the common meeting room for men, called *otaq* in Sindhi, in most people's homes. In addition, the goal was for people to respond naturally and freely in giving their perspective on the narrative. In a more formal interview the tendency would be to provide a response they believe the interviewer wants to hear. A natural conversational setting encourages Sindhis to present their views in an uninhibited manner providing a "fairer and fuller representation of the interviewees' perspectives" (Mason 1996:42).

The questions (described below) were non-directive in nature. In each interview session I followed specific lines of conversation that arose at the time and were therefore unpredictable. Maximum flexibility in maintaining the correct direction of the interview was required to generate those cultural elements that adequately represented the impact of the narrative.

2.3.1.1 *Otaq*

The meeting room or *otaq* was the location for the interviews. The *otaq* in middle class homes is usually a small room set on the side of a house with an informal arrangement of chairs, sofa sets or simply a carpet to sit on. The essence of the *otaq* is not the physical setting so much as its function as a meeting room for men thus maintaining *parda,* the separation of men from female members of the household. For example, the two interviews in Shikarpur were held in the translation office. However, apart from the presence of the desks, the seating arrangement and atmosphere of discussion were comparable to an *otaq* setting. Tea and cookies were served as is culturally appropriate. The interviews were arranged by Sindhi friends who invited their acquaintances together for a time of religious conversation and tea.

The purpose of the project was explained to my friends beforehand to prevent any uncomfortable situations and to ensure that the participants were chosen according to the parameters of the research. Nonetheless at the beginning of the interviews all participants seemed uncertain about what to expect. This feeling quickly dissipated as the conversation developed. Discussion of religion as well as personal, historical or allegorical story telling, are both natural and prevalent in the *otaq* setting. Passages of poetry or newspaper articles are often read aloud and discussed which ensured that the reading of the Bible narrative was not out of place.

The interviews were done in the Sindhi language and the Bible narrative was read to the participants after explaining the purpose of the exercise. While not as common as informal and impromptu discussion, the setting was such that it was not viewed as unnatural. The method was both strategic and contextual (Mason 1996:5). It was contextual by taking place within a culturally natural setting, and strategic because the context was compatible with the aims of the research.

2.3.1.2 Researcher's Interaction with Participants

2.3.1.2.1 Introducing the sessions

Four types of interaction were used to guide the discussion and interact with the participants. At the beginning of the sessions, I introduced the time by explaining that a passage from the Bible would be read to them and they were to respond with their understanding of and reaction to the passage. I asked for them to comment on how the passage related, or did not relate, to their lives and their culture and to provide any stories, anecdotes and personal experiences that would illuminate their perception of how the narrative touched on issues that were important to them. Following the reading of the passage, I made a further brief comment to encourage their response.[40] For example, in interview #1 I said,

> OK. So now if you will express your opinion that would be appreciated. If there is anything like this in your society, if there is a virtue or a deficiency that you see in this, then please tell us.[41]

2.3.1.2.2 Inductive Questions

An inductive approach was used to generate cultural elements that the participants used to describe the impact of the narrative, an approach which is "concerned with understanding human behavior from the actor's own frame of reference" (Bogdan & Taylor 1975:2). The questions I constructed as the interviewer were designed to encourage the participants to share their thoughts and feelings and respond to the story by means of cultural examples, rather than leading them to think in a specific way about the story.

Through the discussion of the story the participants were encouraged to express their perception of how the story related to their lives. While it is recognized that the researcher's assumptions and framework are embedded in the way the questions are formed (H. Becker cited in Bogdan & Taylor 1975:7), the intent of the questions was to stimulate the participants to articulate in a variety of ways the connection they were drawing between the narrative and their societal context. The conversation was controlled to the extent that those topics germane to the goal of the research were maintained while ensuring that the participants responded according to

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[40] The one exception to this was interview #2 when the translator who read the passage then made comments on the passage which would have affected the response. I sought to correct this by encouraging them to respond according to their first reaction to the passage.

[41] The translations into English do not attempt to model correct written English but reflect the unstructured nature of conversation and often follow Sindhi grammatical patterns. "MN" refers to myself as the interviewer, "P" indicates the participant, while the numbers following the "P" indicate different participants.

their subjective commitment rather than motivated by their perception of the interviewer's need. Some sample questions taken from the transcripts:

> What do you sense is the meaning and purpose of this? Why do you think that this does not occur in your society? [Asked in response to a comment about Jesus' washing the feet.]

> But how does this strike you? Is it a good thing or bad thing? [Asked in response to a comment that a master washing the disciples' feet is unheard of in their culture.]

> Can you explain to me how that example relates to the Bible passage?

> Have you ever seen anyone serve in a like manner? Is there any example in your culture, or in your experience?

> Can you tell me how Peter showed bitterness (bugz)[42] ? [Asked in response to someone who stated that Peter showed bitterness.]

> What is the significance of having someone else wash another's feet? If you were to see this, what would you think?

> Do you have this kind of teaching in your society?

> Do you have an example or story that would illustrate this humility? [Asked in response to a comment that Jesus' demonstration of humility was good.]

2.3.1.2.3 Clarification

In addition to soliciting information through questioning, I would occasionally rephrase or repeat a participant's comments to ensure that I did understand his intent. The purpose was not to elicit further information but simply to ensure that communication had occurred. Nonetheless my comments often encouraged further clarification, especially if my rephrasing did not appropriately capture the meaning to their liking. A few examples:

> MN: So you see this as an example of kindness, like the kindness of a parent.
> P1: More than kindness. If a teacher sees a student's need and teaches him skill, that is kindness. But this is more. If a teacher not only teaches the student, but also serves the student, then that is much greater.

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[42] Where there is some significance to the actual Sindhi word and clarification is required, it is transcribed in brackets beside the English translation. Where the significance is germane to the analysis, explanation will be given in the manuscript.

MN: 2 things you mentioned. First, Jesus humility is seen. Great virtue in putting aside his greatness to be an example of humility.
P1: Yes, this is a great example.
MN: Secondly that Peter's refusal is very wrong. Even though he did not understand, and even though he was concerned about the teacher's honor, it is very wrong to refuse a teacher's command. correct?
P1: Yes, totally.

MN: A question. You said this was service (khidmut) and those whose heart was pure (saf), those feet Jesus would wash. But those whose hearts were not pure, their service he could not do because they did not want to become holy (pak).
P2: Yes, this is the meaning.
MN: You asked a question before the second reading: Is this service (khidmut), or is this ritual cleansing (pak)? But in your answer both ideas came up.
P1:Yes, both. Jesus both made them holy and served them.
MN: Jesus served them so they would become holy.
P2: This is because...

2.3.1.2.4 Dialogue

Occasionally I sensed the need to go beyond soliciting or repeating the information to challenging the speaker concerning his statements. Whenever I perceived a contradiction between the participant's comment and my previous understanding or observation, or between the comments of two participants, I would question this and ask for further clarification. The goal, as before, was not to add information or to dismiss the observation; rather the intent was to elicit further clarification or examples. Nonetheless, as explained below in considering the types of cultural elements generated, the interactive format demands that the researcher's comments be considered part of the data. This is an example of "dyadic communication" (Borden, Gregg & Grove 1969:103) which cannot be separated into distinct meanings but reflect "one inter-influential set of behaviors and consciousnesses which reshape one another from moment to moment as information flows" (:103). The following dialogue challenges a participant concerning his claim that he would slap his teacher, knowing the honor that Sindhis hold towards their elders:

> P1: This is also the lesson of word over honor and command over word (adab khan ammr ain ammr khan hukam). So the command of the teacher is above his honor. If I honor my teacher and my teacher tells me to slap him, then I need to obey my teacher more that follow my feelings of honoring my teaching by not hitting him. We also have this example in Sindhi. So word (ammr) that is, command (hukam), is more important than honor (adab). It is necessary that I obey the command, even if he says to slap him. in that case we are not to honor, but obey.

MN: So is it true? would you really follow what you have just said and slap your teacher?

P1: If I want to remain the student and not break the relationship of teacher/student, then I will obey his command.

MN: But Peter also showed this desire to remain the student by saying "not only the feet by the hands and head."

P1: No, that is wrong. If my teacher says "slap me" will I then obey by saying, "I will not only slap you but I will do more and punch you in the face"? No that is not right. If this should happen then I must also realize that there is some wisdom in this.

2.4 Turning the interview into data

Neither the taped interviews nor the transcripts are the data. Rather the data are those cultural elements generated by me as researcher from the views expressed by the participants that relate to the issue of impact. Together with their respective narrative referent, these cultural elements have been collated in text form under thematic headings. It is through conversation with the participants that the impact felt from the narrative is verbalized, and the identification of a particular referent with the cultural elements provide insight into cultural values and beliefs which are summarized with the thematic headings.

The data is derived from the interviews primarily in an interpretive sense (as opposed to literal or reflexive sense - see Mason 1996:54). That is, the cultural elements are validated according to their relevance to a particular referent in the narrative. The aspects of the interview which are important are those which reveal to the story crafter some personal or cultural reason for the impact experienced by the participants.

This generation of data entails a certain subjective element in the choosing and sorting in order to provide relevant data. Fortunately, there are a number of criteria utilized in the data analysis that prevent the story crafter's outsider perspective from having undue influence in evaluating or prioritizing the root metaphors of the receptor culture. The cultural elements are the textual data which are evaluated according to these criteria to ensure that logical conclusions result.

2.4.1 Sorting the Data according to "Themes"

A method of indexing and sorting the data will be required according to the identified referents of the narrative. By grouping the data according to the referents a number of common themes emerge corresponding to worldview values and beliefs. The cultural elements must meet two criteria in order to be grouped together. The first is that they must correspond to the same referent and second they must have a corresponding theme.

The data is organized in a "non-cross-sectional" way (Mason 1996:128) as the goal is to look for the particular elements that indicate an underlying value, rather than quantitatively noting common elements used by more than one person. The data is not sorted according to the types of cultural elements as outlined below. Instead the specific units of speech as given by the participants are kept intact as it is not simply the cultural elements individually, but also the relationship between the elements that provides insight.

2.4.2 Referents and Cultural Elements Obtained from Interviews

The referents are translated from the Sindhi version to which the participants were exposed. Certain cultural elements are dependent upon the Sindhi phrasing or nuance which will be made obvious in the translation. Although the referents are given as short phrases and sentences, very often the referent is broad enough to encompass the entire event, or intersects with other referents. Thus the phrases should be understood as *representative* of the referent which elicits the response, rather than as a precise description.

2.4.2.1 Cultural Elements Acceptable as Data[43]

There are six genres of data generated and identified, all of which will be used in the analysis to identify root metaphors present in the culture of the Sindhi people which are relevant to the passage. Although the genre categories provided are my own, the concept of genre is well represented in sociolinguistics, notably through the work of Dell Hymes who suggests that "it is heuristically important to proceed as though all speech has formal characteristics of some sort as manifestation of genres" (quoted in Briggs & Bauman:1995:574). Genre refers to "clearly demarked types of utterance" (Wardhaugh 2002:248) and for the sake of this research are classified as explanation, personal example, metaphor, traditional story, common sayings and dialogue.

2.4.2.1.1 Explanation

The participants sought to *explain* the impact received from the passage by describing their *understanding* of the meaning in their own words or by expressing their *evaluation* of the perceived meaning of the referent. However, it also needs to be recognized that any abstract formulations given by the participant that demonstrate impact - e.g. under theme #3 one participant stated that Jesus "showed that humility (nivrat) is a good thing." - do not provide the

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[43] Poetry was an expected cultural element and it is intriguing that there was no poetry quoted in any of the interviews. Sindhis are a very poetic people and their poets are highly esteemed as artists and saints who have captured the essence of their values in poetic forms. During conversation a person will often quote poetry in support of point being made.

cultural context by which that concept can be understood in a strictly Sindhi way. Such statements have little value by themselves and require elucidation from other cultural elements to provide insight into the meaning and importance of the concept in the life of the Sindhi people. Abstract statements do provide secondary confirmation of the primary data of the cultural elements and in many cases can be used to articulate the general theme. However, if an explanation seems to conflict with those cultural elements used to express the impact, then that dissonance needs to be explored to ensure that the researcher does not to edit the cultural elements based on a subjective understanding of the concept. For example the concept of "service" (khidmut) was explored through dialogue to ensure that cultural elements describing what "service" looked like in the participants' lives would be elicited.

The following are some of explanations provided:

> We haven't got an example in our society in which the teacher washes the student's feet. [But] this is a very good thing.

> If a teacher not only teaches the student, but also serves the student, then that is much greater.

> It was a great matter that Jesus would wash their feet and dry them with a towel.... This was a great thing and evidence of great love that he would show that he was not greater than his students so that even through he was a messenger and prophet he did not think less of his students.

> There are a couple of things here. Perhaps Peter is recognizing his position with Jesus. He knows that he is not holy (pak) with Jesus, that he is not being true (sacho). So he refuses to have his feet washed.

2.4.2.1.2 Traditional Stories

One of the requests made was for the participants to provide traditional stories that would illustrate the teaching or value they understand from the passage read. A number of stories were provided. For example, in explaining the importance of humility, one participant provided the following story:

> There is a story about hazarat Umer who was a Caliph of Islam. A person heard about him and had a desire to meet him. So when he came to the meeting room he found a number of people seated on the floor. There was one person there sleeping so he woke him up and said, "I have come to meet Hazarat Umer". Hazarat Umer said, "That's me." The man was amazed that such a great person would just be seated on the floor.

2.4.2.1.3 Personal Examples

Participants constructed stories about their lives that illuminated or illustrated in some way their experience of the impact of the biblical narrative. Personal stories will likely be more helpful than relating a traditional story in that the connection to their personal feelings and life reality will more closely reflect the reasons for the impact. Oblique references which only have slight relevance to the impact of the biblical narrative may trigger the remembrance of a traditional story. This does not negate the value of the traditional story as data, but requires the researcher to be cautious in the analysis of data. The following are personal examples:

> Once with a friend I went to see a religious teacher (murshid). I had a hat (topi) on, he did not. When I went to the Murshid he gave me his hand, but he did not give my friend his hand. Why? Because in a spiritual way this was rude and improper.

> When I have my small child in my lap and the child urinates or defecates[44], then I do not get upset as if this is inappropriate because I am a father and recognize the child as small and incapable of other behavior.

2.4.2.1.4 Metaphors

The participants also provided occasional metaphors that may be common analogies within their society or be a result of their own personal observation. For example:

> The one who is humble will produce "fruit", the one who is proud (garoor) will not show any "fruit". The mango tree is an example of this, the tree that has much fruit, the branches are bent over, which is an example of humility. God favors the thing that is bent over (i.e. in humility). That which holds itself up in greatness is only the right of God. This is an ordinary example in the world.

2.4.2.1.5 Common Sayings

Common sayings were repeated by the participants which seemed to capture, for them, the essence of a particular concept that they valued. For example, one saying that was repeated often to emphasize the importance of submission and obedience was "obedience is more important than honor (adab khan ammr)."[45]

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[44] Infants do not wear diapers in Sindhi culture.
[45] Literally "above honor [is] word".

2.4.2.1.6 Dialogue[46]

There were times during the interview when I, as the researcher, sensed that further development of a line of thought could provide important insights. Although I did not add to the information obtained from the participants, my line of questioning determined to some extent the explanation given. Thus this part of the data requires the inclusion of my contribution as part of the overall meaning or intent of the interaction. For example, in the following dialogue an illustration of the farmer/landowner relationship was given. I sought to discover if the reversing of roles in that setting would be viewed positively or negatively:

> P3: As for the actual washing. In our culture it is not the farmer who receives service from landowner or the student from the teacher (murshid), but they serve the landowner or teacher.
> MN: This is a good example of the farmer and landowner. The farmer serves the landowner, not the other way around.
> P3: Yes, that is right.
> MN: But here is our passage Jesus is in the place of a landowner, or better, teacher (murshid), and the students are like farmers or students. Here Jesus did the opposite. What do you think about this, is this a virtue or a vice? good or bad thing? What would people think if such a thing happened in your culture?
> P3: Sir, when the prophet Mohammad PBUH... [illustration of a similar virtue found in the prophet of Islam].

2.4.2.2 Cultural Elements Rejected as Data

During the interviews there were cultural elements generated which were unhelpful for the selection and shaping of Bible stories or were outside of the parameters set for the proposed methodology. The cultural elements which have been rejected as data fall under three basic categories: Misunderstandings, irrelevant comments and religious doctrine.

2.4.2.2.1 Misunderstanding the Narrative

Because the goal of the exercise was to find areas of resonance between God's word and the root metaphors of the participants' culture, any misunderstanding of the text must be dismissed as irrelevant. Because the message of the text has been misunderstood, the comments made did not deal directly with God's revelation in the passage. This does not mean that the issue is not worth pursuing nor does it deny that God's word may address it elsewhere. However for the limitations of this dissertation, any blatant errors in understanding the meaning of the passage were discarded as data.

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[46] Although, technically, this could be seen as a subset of explanation, the importance of the interactive dynamic warrants a separate category.

For example, in John 13:2 Judas Iscariot is called the son of Simon in whom Satan enters. Many of the participants understood this to be the same as Simon Peter in verse 6 and made a connection between the refusal to have the feet washed and the rebellion associated with Satan. One participant stated,

> This student is showing a lot of rebellion because Satan is in him. Not only did he refuse to have his feet cleaned, but then his further rebellion is seen in asking for more - hands and head as well.

Thus, even though the concept of Satan and rebellion may be profitably explored with relevant stories found in the Bible, the concept of Satan influencing Peter in verses 6-8 invalidates this cultural element for the purpose of understanding how the passage according to its original intent impacted the participants.

2.4.2.2.2 Irrelevant comments

The second category of cultural elements that are invalid as data relates to comments that appear to be irrelevant to the passage. Because the relevance of any cultural element as data is dependent upon legitimate correlation to the biblical narrative, if a referent is lacking, then the cultural element cannot qualify as data. This is based on the assumption that God is speaking through the narrative to the culture, and it is those cultural elements that are of interest. Therefore, those expressions which may have been stimulated by the discussion or Bible reading but have no corresponding referent within the narrative are discounted as data.

For example, in giving an example about Jesus as a child to prove a point of doctrine, one participant went on to state,

> The child spoke himself that he was from God (Rabb). Which God (Rabb)? the one who created the whole earth. My idea is that everyone in this world recognizes that God (Rabb) exists, who created the world. Take this pen for example. Did it come into existence by itself? No, it had a maker. In the same way every one knows that God is the creator of all.

2.4.2.2.3 Religious Doctrine

Many Sindhi Muslims are sensitive to theological hotspots that occur between Christians and Muslims. Any expression that may contradict one of these theological concerns is addressed with commonly accepted and oft repeated religious teaching and rationale. The reason for this tendency is quite complex relating to a desire to defend the honor of their religion, a need to demonstrate the superiority of Islam and a sense of fulfilling the duty of a true Muslim. The degree to which any particular religious issue actually touches their worldview, apart from the

three reasons given above, is difficult to determine. Although many evangelical missionaries tend to engage Muslims on these issues, the discussions usually are on the level of logical arguments based on conflicting assumptions and are thus seldom fruitful. Furthermore, because the motives for defending these theological premises are complex, the relationship of the argument to the speaker's core values and beliefs is unclear and thus does not provide adequate guidance for the purposes of this paper. As mentioned in chapter one, the goal is not to engage the people at a propositional, logical level, but to identify, through the cultural elements, those values and beliefs according to which Bible stories can be selected and shaped so that they will resonate with the root metaphors of the culture.

For example, in response to Jesus' saying that he was going to the father, some participants noted that in Islam God is not Jesus' father and provided religious anecdotes to illustrate the point. Such comments were not included as relevant cultural elements.

2.4.2.3 Determining Data Validity

There are a number of criteria that determine the validity of the data. First, the cultural element must be *intelligible* to other participants (cf. Schreiter 1985:107). When there is affirmation from others within the group concerning the relevance of a particular statement, there is confirmation that it represents a common understanding of the referent meaning. This does not mean that *any* disagreement over a cultural element disqualifies it as data, but a general lack of support for a proposed cultural element's relation to the referent would disqualify it as data. An illustration of such confirmation is found in the following dialogue under theme #2:

> P3: I would think this is good (sutho).
> MN: Like a type of good service (neki)?
> P3: Yes. Or that the person was sick and needed help.
> MN: So this is service (khidmut) for another.
> P3: Yes.
> MN: So you see this, in the passage, as Jesus' service to his disciples. But what was the need if they were not sick? If you saw someone washing another's feet who was not sick, what would you think?
> P1: This is a good thing, to serve another.

Second, the cultural element must be *credible* to the participants (cf. :107). That is, the element expressed must be confirmed by the others as a true concern of the culture. A general rejection of any cultural element as irrelevant or unimportant would result in that element being rejected as data. However, as will be discussed in the analysis, disagreement over the legitimacy of an expressed value - as in the clash between the virtue of humility and maintaining societal roles in theme #1 - provides an expression of impact important for the story crafter.

Third, a cultural element is confirmed as a legitimate expression of impact when it is supported by a variety of other cultural elements. For example, the first conversational unit given under theme #1 (below) contains two illustrations and a personal example in support of the evaluation that the example of the teacher washing the student's feet is "a very good thing."

Fourth, a cultural element is confirmed as legitimate through equivalent or cognate cultural elements given in other interviews. Under theme #2 the same story of riding a camel was given in two separate interviews, although attributed to different saints. Also, the saying "obedience is greater than honor" was repeated in a number of interviews.

Fifth, a cultural element is validated as data if it can be confirmed through external sources. The value of hospitality mentioned in theme #4 is well documented and something our family experienced often while residing in Pakistan.

When a particular cultural element is validated by a number of these ways it indicates (1) the importance of the belief or value in the lives of the participants and (2) its greater influence beyond the participants into the community, especially when traditional sayings and stories are recited.

2.4.3 Data sorted according to Theme and Referent

The data is organized with a description of the theme given first followed by the referent from the passage and the cultural elements. Often the referent was not explicitly mentioned, but the relationship to the referent was usually clear from the context. Each unit of speech by a participant which deals with a particular theme is separated by a line space and is indicated by the interview number for reference to the research transcripts. The cultural elements are not disengaged from the conversational unit to which they relate as the interrelationship between the elements is important to the meaning. Instead the types of cultural elements are noted according to the following abbreviations which are italicized and follow the particular element they signify:

Explanations *(expl)*
Personal Examples *(pers)*
Illustrations *(Ill)*
Traditional Stories *(Trad)*
Common Sayings *(Comm)*
Dialogues *(Dial)*

The themes are phrased to indicate the commonality between the cultural elements that follow which is the basis for their grouping. Information not pertinent to the cultural elements has been excluded.

Theme 1: Humility and service as reversing, or transcending the traditional role of teacher being honored and the student serving.

Referent: Verse 5 - then he placed some water in a dish and began to wash his disciples' feet

Cultural Elements

We haven't got an example in our society in which the teacher washes the student's feet. [But] this is a very good thing. *(expl)* This is a superior teacher whose kindness is like a mother who cleans her child's bottom. *(Ill)* This is an example of love. This is the kind of teacher who doesn't consider his students to be merely students, he sees them as small children. It is like a mother or father. *(Ill)* When I have my small child in my lap and the child urinates or defecates, then I do not get upset as if this is inappropriate because I am a father and recognize the child as small and incapable of other behavior. *(pers)* (Interview #1)

If a teacher not only teaches the student, but also serves the student, then that is much greater. It is the kind of teaching that comes out of your idea that God is father. *(expl)* Just like the example I gave of the child making a mess on the parent's lap. The mother will clean up the mess, she will not get angry and throw the child aside. Even as a mother or father cares for the child and cleans them, so Jesus cared for his students. *(Ill)* (Interview #1)

It was a great matter that Jesus would wash their feet and dry them with a towel.... This was a great thing and evidence of great love that he would show that he was not greater than his students so that even through he was a messenger and prophet he did not think less of his students. *(expl)* If a teacher comes into a class, all the students will rise. *(Ill)* But that kind of thinking Jesus did away with. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

[In arguing against the interpretation above] He is not just a teacher, he is a prophet. So he is teaching something more than being a teacher. This is a prophet thing, not a teacher thing. So in our society a teacher would not do anything like this. The teacher is not really a parent to the students, nor is he expected to be. Will a teacher clean up a student if he messes himself? I don't think so. The duty of a parent is different than that of a teacher. In our society the student must give honor to the teacher and the parent. This is the right way in our society. To reverse it, is a bad thing. Why should a teacher wash the feet of student? It's not right. We can't take from this the idea that this is the way teachers and students should act. We need to read ahead and see if there is another religious lesson to be gained from this. This is a prophet teaching a lesson and to find out what it says, we must read ahead, but it is not a lesson about how teachers and students should relate. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

   In our culture it is not the farmer who receives service from landowner or the student from the teacher (murshid), but they serve the landowner or teacher. *(Ill)* (Interview #2)

   When the prophet Mohammad PBUH was off preaching there was a woman who, whenever she passed by, threw dirt on him. Our prophet for whose good (sadgay may) the entire universe was created - and we believe this and will not be moved from this - the kind of prophet for whom the universe was created - about whom in your Injil it is written that there is a prophet coming whose name is hazarat Mohammad Mustafa. You have written "Ahmad" we have "Mohammad" - so when he was traveling by the alley, the woman was throwing dirt on him. But one day what happened? She did not throw dirt. So the prophet thought, "whenever I pass by, she throws dirt on me, why not today?" So he asked someone who said, "She has become sick." So what did he do, he went and visited her to show concern for her health. *(Trad)* So, see, what did Jesus do? with his students he serves [uncertain word] them. Our prophet does exactly the same thing. so we see that this is a completely good thing. One prophet does one thing, another does another, but they mean the same. *(expl)* (Interview #2)

   If a general does not love the soldiers, the soldiers will not obey him. In order that the commands be obeyed, it is necessary that the leader be a lover. *(Ill)* (Interview #2)

P2: Of course, this is the main point. It is a very important point to teach people how to deal with those who are older and those younger and with guests. We teach and learn how to treat our elders and teachers and how we are to treat each other.
MN: So people are not to consider themselves greater than others.
[break in tape]
P1: People's roles are different. Father is separate, mother is separate. Everyone has their own level, stage. So we are to treat mother in a special way and treat father in a special way. They also teach us how to treat the elders and guests. How do we treat the younger and our friends. This is taught from the beginning.
MN: Every one has his or her place.
P1: They have their level. That is, they have their honor [izzat]. The father has his honor, and the mother hers, etc. So then we know how to give honor and how to receive honor. We treat each other with the proper respect [izzat] and then we can expect [umeed] to receive that kind of respect in return. If you give someone respect, then he will in turn give you the same and more respect.

It is true that there are different kinds of people. However with true friendship there is the proper give and take of respect.

MN: Now, Christ gives Peter honor [izzat] and washes his feet.

P1: Yes

MN: But Peter refuses this and says, "No". So how does this relate to the concept of honor in the Sindh

P1: There are a couple of things here. Perhaps Peter is recognizing his position with Jesus. He knows that he is not holy [pak] with Jesus, that he is not being true [sacho]. So he refuses to have his feet washed.

The second possibility is that he does not have proper respect for Jesus. He doesn't think that Jesus is worthy and so thinks, "Why should I let him wash my feet". There are two possibilities here. If it is the second, maybe he is afraid that he will become unholy [napak] if Jesus washes his feet. If it is the first then maybe he is acknowledging that he is not a true follower of Jesus and so refuses.

MN: One question. If you are a landowner and you have servants, everyone knows your level. The landowner commands, the servants obey. The servant brings chai and gives it to the guests. But what if the landowner takes over from the servant and in the servant's place serves the guests, what would people think?

P1: In our culture, the person who is greater will show it by what he does or doesn't do. The greater person will be seated and if he has four servants they will be doing all the work and people will see this and know that he is an important person. But actually the true meaning of being a leader is that he does justice and makes right decisions for people. But here people act the opposite. The leaders actually try to get people to fight with each other. If they fight, then the leaders will be called in to make a decision about the case and it is beneficial to them. Actually if they did what they are supposed to do, all fighting would stop in one day. But they are all just thinking about their throats, what they can swallow. Their servants are not just servants but guards, called upon to fight for him.

MN: You think this is bad.

P1: Yes, it is bad. When a case comes to the leader, he should make a just decision. It is not bad to be a leader, but the decisions should be just and fair.

MN: What we just read. Is this a lesson for leaders [vaddera]?

P2: Absolutely. There is a great difference between the vaddera and hazarat Jesus. Jesus is a prophet.

P1: No, that's not what he means. He is asking if there is a lesson for leaders. The answer is yes. The leaders need to think of people as equal. If a prophet treats people equally, so much so that he washes their feet, then leaders ought not to treat people unequally.

P2: Yes, they shouldn't cause people to fight. They need to do work from which people are not harmed.

P1: Leaders look for ways to have benefit for themselves. If they see someone in a big car, they want to have one too. This is not good. The passage teaches us to treat each other equally. Every one deserves their right. This is the lesson. *(Ill) (Dial)* (Interview #5)

We have examples of the prophet getting water for people and getting water for a woman. Also we have the example of the 2nd Caliph Zahif Kumar (unclear)[47] who carried water up on his shoulder. So we have examples of those who are great [vadda] happily serving the lesser. *(Trad)* (Interview #7)

Theme 2: Service to one another as a virtue to be emulated.
Referent: Verse 5 - then he placed some water in a dish and began to wash his disciples' feet
Cultural Elements

There is another great meaning and lesson here as well. That is, Jesus means that if I who am the teacher do such a great service to you, then you also must do that kind of service to humanity.   That was also the meaning which they [disciples] did not understand. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

If you will not serve human beings, then you need to be cleaned on the inside. No matter how much you are called good on the outside, but until your heart, your intention [ne-at] is clean, there is no benefit. *(expl)* I can talk to you with smiles, but if I am thinking in my heart to give you harm, then this is a not a good thing. *(Ill)* Once the inside is clean, then you will reach the goal and will serve people. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

Hazarat Ali, the relative of Mohammad PBUH, went out to do business of trade. There was a camel and there was a servant with him. The distance there was to go was great and so Ali said to the servant, "You take a turn riding the camel, for the distance is great and you also are human [insan]. You also have a need to rest. Simply because I am the lord [aqa] does not mean that I should always ride. You are human like me. You have 2 feet like me, 2 eyes, 2 hands, so you also ride." So much so did Ali see the need for equal treatment that when they reached the city, it was the servant's turn to ride and so the servant rode into the city with Ali walking and everyone saw this. *(Trad)* This is humanity [insaniat]. The lesson we learn is that whoever is the

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[47] After the first Caliph, Ali Bakr, died in 634, Umir Ibn Ali Khattab became the second Caliph. This may the person referred to by the participant.

teacher [murshid], or lord [aqa], or prophet, and there are 124,000, this is the teaching of them all - humanity [insaniat]. In our society, if people do not serve each other, then the society will not be good [suTho]. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

There is another example about hazarat Umer. He was traveling to another region, a new region that he hadn't seen before. It was just Umer and his servant and they had an animal to ride on . Umer said, "half the time you ride and half the time, I'll ride." So half of the journey the Caliph rode and for half of the journey the servant rode. When they arrived it was the turn of the slave to ride and so they entered the city like this. The people were amazed and said to him, "We have a prophecy that the teacher of the true religion, which is successful, when he comes will be walking with ordinary clothes and his slave will be riding on the camel." *(Trad)* This was a symbol of love and fairness. Many people were convinced because of this. *(expl)* (Interview #7)

In our culture there are two kinds of people, those who love and those who hate (bugz). Those who love serve others. Whoever comes to them, their friends and guests, they serve them and show love. This is present in our society. *(expl)* (Interview #2)

MN: What is the significance of having someone else wash another's feet? If you were to see this, what would you think?

P3: I would think this is good [sutho].

MN: Like a type of good service [neki]?

P3: Yes. Or that the person was sick and needed help.

MN: So this is service [khidmut] for another.

P3: Yes.

MN: So you see this, in the passage, as Jesus' service to his disciples. But what was the need if they were not sick? If you saw someone washing another's feet who was not sick, what would you think?

P1: This is a good thing, to serve another.

MN: In that culture, it was a servant at the door who would wash the feet of the guests. In this instance, there was no servant to wash the feet. They did not wash each other's feet because that was not customary. But Jesus served them in this way. Do you see any reason why Jesus would do this?

P2: Well, it is your book. Read further, maybe there is an answer.

[friend reads further in passage to give Jesus' explanation]

MN: Is that the answer?

P1,2: Yes, there is the answer. *(Dial)* (Interview #3)

We also learn here not to despise or look down on anything. Look, Jesus is a great personality, but he also can wash feet. In order to save humanity, he gave a great sacrifice. From this we learn that we too should not despise any act for others. Anything that will be of help for others we are not to despise. *(expl)* (Interview #5)

If this was not in our society, we would not be able to sit together with each other. We would say, "Get out of my house. Why should I serve you." *(Ill)* (Interview #5)

It is a very important point to teach people how to deal with those who are older and those younger and with guests. We teach and learn how to treat our elders and teachers and how we are to treat each other. *(expl)* (Interview #5)

In our Sindhi culture washing another's hands or feet, is thought of as service (khidmut). In our culture whenever a guest comes or there is someone whom we love, we get up and wash their hands and feet in service. *(Ill)* The one who is loved, who is true, is treated in this way. However those who are enemies or deceivers [dagabaz] are not treated this way. *(expl)* (Interview #6)

Our prophet Mohammad PBUH ... is the best example of how we are not to hesitate in serving those who are younger/lesser [nandha]. His character/attitude [tabeat] was such an example.... *(Ill)* (Interview #7)

`There are many teachers who show themselves loving to their students. But the greatest example of this is our own prophet. Through his life he showed great humility and love for others. He used to pass through a road where there was a woman who was afraid of him. Someone had told her that whoever he talked to, that person would become his follower....[interrupted] Well, that example of the old woman I was telling you about. The woman was afraid that if she met the prophet he would convince her to change her religion, so she took up her bedding and left the area, but it was too heavy and she couldn't carry it. Then a man came along who said he was going in her direction and would carry it for her. She explained to him as they went along that she was fleeing this person who must be some sort of magician that when he spoke to people they became his followers and she didn't want this to happen to her. When they reached the destination the old woman asked the man for the bedding. When he gave it to her she said, "Thank you very much. But who are you that has helped me so

much?" He said to her, "I am the reason why you are fleeing from one city to another." *(Trad)* This is an example of love. *(expl)* (Interview #7)

[Note also the dialogue under Theme 5 which draws an interesting connection between being holy [pak] and service (Khidmut)]

Theme 3: Humility and equality one with another as a virtue to be emulated.
Referent: Verse 5 - then he placed some water in a dish and began to wash his disciples' feet
Cultural Elements

We are one. There is no greater or lesser. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

Jesus' washing the feet as an expression that all people are worthy of honor and justice will only occur when this happens. *(expl)* (paraphrased from Interview #4)

We are not to look at caste or position, but regard each other as equal people, as humans [insaniat]. *(expl)* We are now seated together. Why? Because we are not looking to see if one is of one caste or another? No. We see that we are all created equal before God. *(Ill)* We must show love to each other. *(expl)* (Interview #5)

[NOTE: The dialogue given in Theme 1 also relates under this theme regarding the concept of "roles" and "equality".]

Our prophet Mohammad PBUH ... gave examples of how he was together with us. *(Ill)* (Interview #7)

This teaches us something else, that we should not be proud. By washing his disciples' hands (sic) he showed that humility [nivrat] is a good thing. *(expl)* (Interview #7)

The person who is humble will be successful. The one who is humble will produce "fruit", the one who is proud [garoor] will not show any "fruit". *(expl)* The mango tree is an example of this, the tree that has much fruit, the branches are bent over, which is an example of humility. God favors the thing that is bent over (i.e. in humility). That which holds itself up in greatness is only the right of God. This is an ordinary example in the world. *(Ill)* (Interview #7)

There is a story about hazarat Umer who was a Caliph of Islam. A person heard about him and had a desire to meet him. So when he came to the meeting room he found a number of

people seated on the floor. There was one person there sleeping so he woke him up and said, "I have come to meet Hazarat Umer". Hazarat Umer said, "That's me." The man was amazed that such a great person would just be seated on the floor. That is an example. *(Trad)* (Interview #7)

Theme 4: Hospitality as a type of service.
Referent: Verse 5 - then he placed some water in a dish and began to wash his disciples' feet
Cultural Elements

Hospitality is the custom of the Sindh. When a guest comes you serve them, that is wash their hands and you help them with what is needful. *(expl)* (Interview #7)

This washing of the feet is without doubt an example of showing hospitality. We also consider it a joy to serve our guests by washing hands and feet. *(expl)* (Interview #7)

I have an example for hospitality. There was a guest that came into the gathering of Mohammad Mustafa. Mohammad asked the leaders [sahibs] there if there was anyone who could put up the guest and feed him. So Hazarat Mahaboob said he could put him up and feed him. He took him home and said to his wife, "I need to feed this person and put him up for the night. It is the command of Mohammad Mustafa." This was before electricity so Hazarat Mahaboob said to his wife, "When you set the food before the guest, be sure to snuff out the candle so that he eats in the dark." so he ate in the dark. When he finished, he asked, no, hazarat Mahaboob told him that there was only food for the guests... [interrupted and finished by another] No, it was the guest that figured out that there was only food for him and that is why he snuffed out the candle so he would not know that there was only food enough for the guest. This was a type of sacrifice for the sake of the guest. *(Trad)* (interview #7)

Theme 5: The relationship between ritual cleanliness and spiritual cleanliness
Referent: Verse 10 - Jesus said to him, "To the one who has bathed, there is no need other than to have his feet washed, but he is wholly ritually clean [pak]."
Cultural Elements

From a religious point of view it is important that a person be clean. When a person walks it is especially his feet that become dirty and so they must be cleaned so that a person can be religiously clean [pak]. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

Another thought is that within our culture and religion we have the belief that by washing we become ritually clean [pak]. This idea is also present in Jesus' words. By washing a person becomes completely clean [pak]. Then when a person leaves the house, their feet will touch an

unclean spot, or some other place and their feet become filthy [kharab]. Because of this hazarat Jesus washed their feet. This is clear in the passage. *(expl)* (Interview #2)

P1: This is correct also for our culture. If a person has bathed, he is ritually clean [pak] he doesn't need to bath again. He doesn't even need to wash his feet. However when we come to worship then we need to wash our arms, face, nose and feet. We do this so we can worship.

If a person is already clean, he doesn't need to wash, but if he is not clean then he needs to go through the procedure of washing 3 times, first left side and then right. But if he is clean, he doesn't need to wash, not even his feet.

MN: So this is what you understand from the passage, that Jesus said that one needs only wash the part that is not clean [pak] for the whole body to be clean.

P1: Yes. In fact, if we are clean and then go out to worship and we get some dirt on the side of the foot, it doesn't matter. We are still clean and can worship.

MN: Good. Anything else?

P2: There are a number of things related to religion. some right, some wrong. Hazarat Jesus Christ said, do God's work, not bad work. The one who had Satan said "How can I let you wash my feet."

MN: You mean Peter?

P2: Yes, he knew that he was a sinner and so wouldn't let Jesus wash his feet. But he still wanted to be ritually clean [pak saf].

MN: So the point is that Peter didn't want Jesus, who was holy [pak], to touch him because he was unholy [napak].

P2: Yes, because there was sin in his heart. *(Dial) (expl)* (Interview #5)

Jesus meaning, as far as I understand, is this. He was a prophet of God. According to this book and according to our faith, he was a beloved prophet of God. God gave him all knowledge to know who was true to him and who deceived him. So God gave him the wisdom to know how to make his followers holy [pak]. This means that there was a message [busharat] here that Jesus said he would wash their feet and make them holy [pak], that is draw them [razi? or razib?] towards him. With his hands he would wash the feet, make the person holy [pak] and so draw the person [razi? or razib?] towards him. *(expl)* (Interview #6)

MN: A question. You said this was service [khidmut] and those whose heart was pure [saf], those feet Jesus would wash. But those whose hearts were not pure, their service he could not do because they did not want to become holy [pak].

P2: Yes, this is the meaning.

MN: You asked a question before the second reading: Is this service [khidmut], or is this ritual cleansing [pak]. But in your answer both ideas came up.

P1: Yes, both. Jesus both made them holy and served them.

MN: Jesus served them so they would become holy.

P2: This is because the prophet is a leader [rahabar], a guide [rahanmau]. He had two things: Love [shafqat], love [mohabbat], a true way and lastly a way of worship. He tells the followers the straight path. Those who walk on it will receive their objective [manzal]. After this they receive passage, a way [guss?], a road. Then it is obvious that when they go this way and reach their objective [manzal] that they will then worship.

MN: Can you give an example from your society or your own life that illustrates this?

P2: There are many examples. We have one relationship, that of saint [pir] or holy teacher [murshid]. You have the same type of arrangement. Our arrangement is first prophets, then vallie, then valliat, then naibs, followers, etc. We have in our religion a thing that we come to the worship place, to the holy [muqqadas] place, cover your head and come. Those who are of God, that is his prophets, they have been given spiritual eyes with which they can measure people (i.e. discern their heart). *(Ill)*

P1: They know who will betray [daga].

P2: I will tell you an example. Once with a friend I went to see a religious teacher (murshid). I had a hat (topi) on, he did not. When I went to the Murshid he gave me his hand, but he did not give my friend his hand. Why? Because in a spiritual way this was rude and improper. Whenever you come to a holy place and meet a good [sutho] person, then the cultural [sakafat] and religious custom is to cover one's head. If one does not do this then this is a sign that they despise what is holy. If the hat is not worn, this is rude. It means that he really does not want to meet with the Murshid. *(pers)*

P2: This is the same thing. The hidden things of the heart, the mysteries [raz] that only God knows, these are the things that are revealed to God's prophets. They can read people's hearts. Whether or not we believe in telepathy according to science, we are all religious people in our own faith and know that the prophets have this power to know the mysteries [raz] of the heart.

MN: Anything else? Another example?

P2: In the Koran is written: "If you remember me, I will remember you." That is, this is a matter of love. If you love me, I will respond in love. But if you show hatred, then naturally there will be hatred in my heart. *(Ill)*

MN: What is the relationship of this to the passage?

P2: The relationship is this. When hazarat Jesus saw those around him who travel with him and serve [khidmut] him, then, at the last he says, "I will grant them an honor [sharf], which honor?

an honor of truth [baqaey] and an honor of service [khidmut] and a lesson of service, so much so that their children also will become holy [pak]."

MN: So your meaning is that Jesus serves them and if they will accept that service he makes them holy [pak]. And if they refuse...

P2: Then, that's it [bus]. There is no compulsion here.

P1: It must be stated that a prophet does not despise anyone [nafrat]. Because a prophet is sent from God to show kindness to people.

P2: But it must be said that if someone hates [nafrat] the prophet does not hate in return, but merely breaks the relationship [la talak]. This is necessary.

MN: He sets them free.

P2: Well, he leaves them without relationship. You could say that he says, "Fine, take your own path." It is obvious that if he refuses the prophet's road, he will take his own road. He will miss the right path [Bhatki] *(Dial) (expl)* (Interview #6)

Our prophet Mohammad PBUH gave examples of how we are to wash when coming to the mosque. *(Ill)* (Interview #7)

Theme 6: Being properly related to a prophet and being on the right path.
Referent: Verse 8 - Jesus said to him, "If you do not have your feet washed (by me), then your part in me will not remain."
Cultural Elements

This is a matter of gaining faith. Jesus said, if you will have a part in me you must do this. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

Jesus point is that everyone is equal, the same. There is no one that should not be related properly to him. Jesus was teaching that no one should be with him who was not properly related to him. Peter said "no" but Jesus said "it must be" so that all may be properly related to me. This was a lesson about love. There should be no difference between people. Yes, people will have different ideas, but there should not be difference in love. *(expl)* (Interview #5)

Another thought concerning this incident at the Passover celebration concerns Peter's response of not letting Jesus wash the feet and Jesus said, "Then you will have no part in me." The meaning is this, Jesus wanted to show the successful road. Those who allowed Jesus to wash the feet were holy [pak] and successful [kamiab]. Jesus' work was with them, not with others. This is why, when Jesus said that he didn't need to wash the hands and head, just the feet,

he meant that they were already successful and the washing of the feet was a sign of their success. *(expl)* (Interview #7)

It is the showing of success [kamiabi] that is the greatest service. It is the duty of the prophet to show his people [ummat], his followers the way of success so that they will not fall into unsuccessful ways and get on the way of hell (janam). *(expl)* (Interview #7)

Theme 7: Submission and obedience
Referent: Verse 8 - Peter said to him, "I will never have my feet washed by you,"
together with Referent: Verse 9 - At this Simon Peter said, "O Lord, then don't just wash my feet, wash my hands and head also."
Cultural Elements
The teacher's [ustad] commands must not be disobeyed. (Interview #1) [Note: This point was repeated several times and is not repeated as often here.]

What is clear is that the student should obey the command of the teacher. He ought not to refuse any wish of his spiritual teacher [Murshid]. *(expl)* When God told Satan to bow down to human kind [insan], he reasoned that "human kind was created from dirt from before my eyes and therefore it is beneath me to do such a thing because I am created from fire. I am greater than him, he is less than me. I will not bow before him." Because of this the curse of God came upon Satan, because he did not obey [manyarna] God's command, he did not obey [manyarna] his word [ammr]. *(Trad)* But here if a teacher [murshid] commands, the student must obey. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

If he does, then he has become disobedient [inkari], even as Satan disobeyed [inkar] God and was commanded to leave. *(Ill)* (Interview #1)

 If the teacher commands the student to give his head, the students should do that. He should not refuse the teacher. Even for an ordinary teacher, that is what should be. But this is with a prophet, this is a religious matter. Even if the teacher asks the student to give his head, the student should not refuse. *(Ill)* In this instance it was only a matter of feet washing. What is so difficult in that? It is not a big deal that it should be refused. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

The teacher's words must be law [ammr], command. If the student refuses [inkari] then he has turned away. When the teacher gives such commands, why does he do it? He does it for your good [bhalaee]. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

It is better that we do not question the teacher. The teacher is greater than us and what ever he wants is for our good [Bhallai] *(expl)* (Interview #1)

It is also the place of the teacher to test [azmaish] the student. The teacher tests the student to see if the student will really obey. Jesus washes their feet to test them and see who among them will refuse to obey [inkar]. Disobedience should not be. *(expl)* (Interview #1)

P1: This is also the lesson of word over honor and command over word [adab khan ammr ain ammr khan hukam]. *(Comm)* So the command of the teacher is above his honor. If I honor my teacher and my teacher tells me to slap him, then I need to obey my teacher more that follow my feelings of honoring my teaching by not hitting him. *(Ill)* We also have this example in Sindhi. So word [ammr] that is, command [hukam], is more important than honor [adab]. *(Comm)* It is necessary that I obey the command, even if he says to slap him. In that case we are not to honor, but obey. *(expl)*
MN: So is it true? Would you really follow what you have just said and slap your teacher?
P1: If I want to remain the student and not break the relationship of teacher/student, then I will obey his command.
MN: But Peter also showed this desire to remain the student by saying "not only the feet by the hands and head."
P1: No, that is wrong. If my teacher says "slap me" will I then obey by saying, "I will not only slap you but I will do more and punch you in the face"? No, that is not right. If this should happen then I must also realize that there is some wisdom in this. (Interview #1)

I also remember a story about a king, I think. He had a servant by the name of Ayaz whom he loved a lot. The other officials became jealous of this and asked the king why he considered Ayaz of greater importance. He replied, "The virtue in him is not in you." They said, "What virtue?" They kept asking him and bothering him until he got tired of resisting their request and called all the officials into his court and said, "I will test [azmaish] you." He brought out a diamond that was of such worth that all the wealth of Larkana could not have bought it. He asked, "What is the worth of this diamond?" They replied, "It is so valuable that it does not even have a price." So he commanded one, "Throw it down and break it to pieces." He replied, "How can we do that? Such an expensive item, how can we break it? I cannot do that." So he asked them one after another until all the officials there had been asked, and they all refused. Lastly it came to Ayaz and the king said, "Take this in your hand, throw it on the ground and break it in pieces." Immediately he took it, threw it down and broke it. They others were all amazed that

he would do such a thing. But the king said, "You have all disobeyed my command." *(Trad)* But from this we learn that whatever the teacher [murshid] says, the student ought to obey. But honor and other things, they pale in significance next to obedience. *(expl)* If we say "I respect you, I honor you, I wash your feet" - whatever, but perhaps it is only show. *(Ill)* (Interview #1)

If I say, "I fall at your feet, I honor you" but I do not obey what is commanded! *(Ill)* If you say, "give me water" and I reply "I love you" but I don't give you water - what kind of great love is that! That ought not to be. *(Ill)* (Interview #1)

There is another example of a king who said to his servant, "Jump in the water, but don't get wet." So the servant went and jumped in the water and got wet. The point is that even though the servant knew he would get wet, he still jumped to obey. This is better than not obeying because the second half is impossible. We must do what we can to obey. Not only that but the king said that whoever got wet would be punished - but he still jumped! *(Trad)* (Interview #1)

What we receive from this passage is that whenever there is a spiritual person among us, we need to obey his command. We are not to look for wisdom within the command when we don't understand the command. Peter, because of his respect for Jesus, said he would not let Jesus wash the feet, but we have the condition that we need to obey the command and not try to understand the wisdom. *(expl)*

Our prophet Mohammad PBUH when arriving in a place said to hazarat Ali, "Get up on my shoulders so that you can climb up." Ali honored the prophet, but considered his word [ammr] more important than the respect and obeyed. *(Trad) (Comm)*

In every religion in the world, it is obedience that is required first, then wisdom. If you obey the command, you will also gain the wisdom. Jesus in the passage when he washed the disciples' feet granted them a good thing. Peter granted Jesus respect, but he did not obey his word [ammr]. *(expl)* We have a Sufi saying that "command is greater than honor" [adab khan ammr]. *(Comm)* According to this Peter honored Jesus but did not obey. Therefore Jesus clearly said, "If I do not wash your feet, you have no part in me." Therefore it is this that the great personalities want their followers to be above all else to be faithful. If they want to do this, then there is benefit. They become firm. Their thinking is reformed and they become doers of the right. And they will never turn away. *(expl)* (Interview #2)

Obedience is more important than honor [adab khan ammr]. *(Comm)* But here in our culture it is the teacher that deserves the honor, not the student. (Interview #3)

Word [ammr] is more important. (repeated three times) *(Comm)* (Interview #3)

MN: So did Peter do right (by not allowing Jesus to wash his feet)?
P3: He did right
P1: But in disobeying this was wrong. He should have allowed it. He should have obeyed. *(Dial)* (Interview #3)

Theme 8: The importance of giving honor
Referent: Verse 8 - Peter said to him, "I will never have my feet washed by you,"
together with Referent: Verse 9 - At this Simon Peter said, "O Lord, then don't just wash my feet, wash my hands and head also."
Cultural Elements
        This is a matter of honor [toheen]. The student refuses here to honor the teacher [translation uncertain] *(expl)* (Interview #1).

        Here Peter showed his respect for the teacher not wanting him to wash his feet. Jesus is worthy of respect and honor so he didn't want the teacher to touch his feet. *(expl)* (Interview #2)

P2: There is the story of a man, Sayad by caste, which comes to mind. In him was politeness and propriety. Many people gave him great respect because he was worthy of great respect (last part unclear).
MN: So what you are saying is that Peter's action here was good to give Jesus great respect, because Jesus was worthy of respect?
P2: Yes.
MN: Even as you would not allow the Sayad to do such a thing out of honor [tazeem] for him, just like Peter did with Jesus. By refusing Jesus he allowed the respect to remain.
P2: Yes
 (Dial) (Interview #2)

P1: This is about Jesus. But explain this. If Jesus is God, then how can he wash feet?
MN: Have you seen this kind of thing in your culture? Is there anything in what you have heard that you see as important?
P1: If you accept Jesus as the son of God, then how can he wash feet?
MN: What do you think? Why do you raise the question?
P2: Well the question is, if Jesus is the son of God, why did he wash the disciples' feet?

MN: What is the meaning as you understand it? Why did he wash the feet?

P1: He honored the students.

MN: In this culture, that is a good thing?

P1: Certainly

MN: Then is there an example in your society whereby a teacher honors a student like this?

P1: This is what a student does for the teacher, not what a teacher does for the student. This is not in our culture.

MN: Is this something that should be, or shouldn't be? Do you have a story or saying in your culture in which the teacher gives this kind of honor to the student?

P1: No this is not in our culture. Of course, there could be spiritual meaning here of some kind. There are other things in this passage as well. *(Dial)* (Interview #3)

2.5 Summary

This chapter has provided an organized overview of the data generated from interviews with literate Sindhi Muslim men. In response to hearing the narrative of John 13:1-10 read aloud, the participants responded with explanations, personal examples, illustrations, traditional stories, common sayings and dialogue that provide insight into root metaphors of their culture. These cultural elements were sorted under 8 general themes within which the particular Sindhi cultural parameters and highlights will be identified in the following analysis. The reading of the narrative and the data generated from my interaction with the Sindhi participants represents the first stage, insertion, of the storying cycle used to guide the selection and shaping of contextualized Bible stories. The following analysis follows the second step, social analysis, of the cycle.

CHAPTER 3
Data Analysis

3.1 Holistic Analysis

While the cultural elements stem from and therefore indicate worldview assumptions, the goal is not to define those values and beliefs or root metaphors as if they can be fully described in an abstract and purely cognitive way. Rather, the cultural elements provide a "thick description" or a contour through which the worldview can be perceived indirectly. Thus the goal of the analysis is to identify key cultural and theological assumptions and beliefs indicated *through* the particular cultural elements expressed. The emphasis here is on depth and significance of the themes which may have more diverse expression in the broader culture, but are revealed through the resonance of the narrative with the participants. The desire is not to identify a key cultural element that may have been referenced a number of times so that it can be artificially inserted into a story. Rather the concern is to specify a variety of parameters and highlights which indicate the value and significance of a particular theme. The root metaphors of a culture may not be articulated without reductionism, but it is this attempt to describe the themes in terms of parameters (boundaries) and highlights (focal points) that provide the guidance in selecting and shaping Bible stories. In other words, the points of comparison between interviews are not "sited at the level of differences or similarities in people's answers to the same set of questions" (Mason 1996:41). Instead the essential aspects causing impact are conceptual instead of empirical, generated inductively *through* the data.

The worldview assumptions of the participants are complex (involving more than one single element), historical (resulting from a multiplicity of personal experiences and cultural traditions), multilayered (involving both conscious and subconscious influences), individual (based on each hearer's personal experiences and perceptions) and communal (based on commonly held ideals and beliefs of a particular group). The initial stages of story crafting are not dependent upon a thorough or comprehensive analysis as long as a dynamic and self-correcting rather than static concept of storying is maintained. Once even one particular, significant cultural element is perceived, the story can be shaped using that element as a guide thus contextualizing the Bible story with attempted relevance for the hearer. Nonetheless, it is only as the depth and complexity of the concept is explored and integrated into the story will there be impact that speaks with transforming power to a community. The cultural elements will represent evidence for root metaphors of the culture, which will be so complex that a single cultural element will not suffice to reveal it and it will probably require several narratives, stories or biographical examples to express it adequately.

The data will be analyzed by developmental explanations (Mason 1996:137) to explore the basis for the connection between the Bible narrative and the cultural elements as expressed by the participants which, to them, illuminate its meaning. The meaning of the story, expressed in terms of impact on the hearer rather than as an exegesis of the passage, will be expressed using a variety of cultural expressions or examples. These will be considered holistically and explained descriptively with the goal of circumscribing a value or belief. The elements will be compared not as unrelated items, but as parts that make up a whole worldview and outlook on life in terms of values and beliefs. They will be used to discern the important aspects of the reality in which the Sindhis live, as perceived by the participants.

3.2 Consistency between Samples

The samples are not compared or contrasted with each other to determine if one is "better" or "more accurate" than the other, because there is no objective standard that is capable of such a judgment. The validity of the data is based on "a judgment about whether or not it measures, explicates or illuminates whatever it claims to measure, explicate or illuminate" (Mason 1996:89). In this case the critical issue is whether or not the cultural elements gained from the interviews actually provide a "window" into the worldview. The cultural elements must allow the crafter of Bible stories to choose and shape a Bible story that will be consistent with these "windows" and speak to the worldview. In one sense the validity of the data cannot be known until the Bible story is crafted and the impact of that story analyzed. But if the cultural elements are clear indicators of the values and beliefs of the Sindhis, then their common features should provide sufficient consistency which would indicate relevance to the storying goal. Once a possible value or belief is indicated then the biblical corpus can be examined for relevant narratives containing those themes which have resonance for the Sindhi people.

Another important question to consider is whether a slice of data is *formative* of the themes proposed in the sorting or *illustrative* of a pre-formed theme (cf. Mason 1996:143). The hope is that the cultural elements will serve to reveal the worldview rather than illustrate a pre-formed hypothesis. At the same time, the search for resonance with a specific biblical narrative indicates that there will be certain limitations to the understanding of the worldview framed by the relevant elements of the passage. This raises the question of whether a true picture of the theology, values and beliefs of the Sindhi people is being generated. Does the categorizing of the cultural elements under the themes indicated truly reflect the Sindhi worldview? This can never be answered objectively or with complete certainty. However the use of "strategic comparisons" with other data where there is "no reason to suspect atypicality" (Mason 1996:154) allows for confidence that through the analysis of the theme some aspect of the Sindhi worldview is being

recognized. Again, the ultimate test would be the crafting of a Bible story to reflect those values, but that is beyond the scope of this research project.

3.3 Subjective Analysis of Researcher

The explanation of the themes and Sindhi worldview in this paper is inevitably filtered through my own subjective grid and understanding so that a neutral or objective outcome is not possible. Instead, I will attribute greater and lesser importance to certain cultural elements based on my formative experiences with Sindhis over the past nineteen years as well as my perception of their relevance to the Bible passage. This will give the analysis a distinctly personal flavor reflecting my evaluation of Sindhi priorities, values and beliefs. However the intent is that the subjective aspect of the analysis be influenced and guided by the intended communication of the participants in the interviews. The Sindhis are the "knowers" from whom the cultural and theological picture is obtained. Thus the cultural elements generated by the research are not only formative in shaping my understanding of their cultural assumptions, but the data is also interpreted through a grid that has developed through significant exposure to the Sindhi culture. This provides sufficient confidence that an valid and helpful representation of the root metaphors of the participants' culture will result, providing that legitimate emphases of the participants are represented.

3.4 Tools for Analysis

The primary assumption behind the analysis of the data is the semiotic model of culture that views cultures as a communication network and the cultural elements as "signs" or windows into the worldview of the culture. The cultural elements generated in the interviews are analyzed to disclose root metaphors of the culture. Two sets of tools will be used to analyze the cultural elements so that the parameters (boundaries) and focal points (highlights) of the identified themes can be described. As these functions are used in the analysis, the numbers (A-1, B-2, etc.) associated with the items in each set will be given in brackets to indicate their relationship to the commentary.

3.4.1 Cultural Lenses

The first tool set utilizes the five "cultural lenses" of J. Wurzel and N. Fischman as described by P. Lane (2002). These lenses focus on five important areas of worldview distinctives by the use of contrasting pairs. Sindhi values and beliefs within the various themes will be identified according to these five measurements or "lenses".

The lens of context (A-1) describes cultures in terms of "high" or "low" context cultures (: 49). A high context culture has strict rules of protocol and behavior in certain settings, while low context cultures allow a greater range of acceptable behaviors. Generalities concerning cultures as a whole are inappropriate since every culture has rules and protocols for its social settings. However this is a helpful tool in considering culturally distinct ranges of behaviors within specifically defined themes.

The lens of activity (A-2) describes cultures in terms of "being" or "doing" (:62). This tool allows the researcher to evaluate the value placed on relationships within a culture as opposed to a system that judges success according to one's accomplishments.

The lens of authority (A-3) describes cultures in terms of "egalitarian" or "hierarchical" (:72). People living in a formal structure of society based on considerations of caste, gender, religion, etc., will experience the implications of biblical narratives in a different way than those living in more informal egalitarian societies.

The lens of identity (A-4) describes cultures in terms of "individualistic" or "collective" (:87). People's sense of security as well as the way decisions can be made depends on the level of autonomy they experience within their society.

The temporal lens (A-5) describes cultural values of time in terms of "abundant" or "limited" (:99).[48] People who are event oriented are less inclined to view time as something which can be "saved," "wasted" or "kept".

It might be objected that this is a simplistic and artificial grid used to analyze the data. However, it is a practical and flexible tool that can be used effectively in many settings. A more crucial benefit is that these lenses deal with *common areas of conflict and contrast between cultures*. Thus the cross-cultural story teller, in utilizing this grid to analyze the worldview of the receptor culture, is made aware of areas of possible cross-cultural misunderstanding or misattribution that need to be avoided. Phrased positively, story tellers can use this tool to limit the effect of their own biases and to find the values and beliefs of the receptor culture which are reflected in scripture.

3.4.2 Worldview Functions

The second set of tools follows Kraft's (1985:54-57) five functions of worldview. In Kraft's description worldview (1) explains the "how and why things got to be as they are," (2) evaluates,

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[48] The temporal lens would be better understood as a lens of "limits" as culturally defined concepts of limited and abundant resources go beyond the temporal. For example Malina's (1981: 71-93) concept of limited good is significant in analyzing synergistic relationships within a society. This has not been developed here since it is not particularly relevant to the themes generated in this research.

that is, judges and validates, the "basic institutions, values and goals of a society," (3) provides psychological reinforcement by encouraging members of the group to continue or by stimulating them to other action at times of crisis, (4) integrates and systematizes their "perspectives of reality into an overall design," and (5) is dynamic as shifts in perceptions do occur moving away from the stability of conservatism.

The cultural elements provided by the participants can be used to identify their particular worldview perspective in terms of Kraft's five functions. However, rather than beginning with a worldview that is known and identifying the functions, the goal is to work backwards from the cultural elements to describe the worldview perspective in terms of the five functions.

The first function becomes an identifying tool (B-1) by focusing on cultural elements that reveal worldview assumptions concerning "how and why" a value or belief has importance. As the participants engage the text and provide stories, sayings or explain their understanding of the narrative, the assumptions that prompt such responses can be discerned.

The second function becomes a tool (B-2) by identifying the evaluations and judgments that point to Sindhi values and perspectives. As the participants express their approval or disapproval of ideas understood from the narrative, they disclose the values and beliefs that comprise their worldview.

The third function becomes a tool (B-3) by recognizing those comments that reinforce actions cultivated within the culture or by suggesting alternate actions to protect basic cultural concerns.

The fourth function becomes a tool (B-4) by specifying those cultural elements which indicate a larger systematization or design within which a belief or value "makes sense."

The fifth function becomes a tool (B-5) by finding evidence of contradictions or conflict within the participants' remarks and interaction that indicate a dynamic shift or tension occurring within the culture.

As with the first set of tools, these five functions are also limiting. Other delineations or evaluating matrices could be used to discern the cultural perspectives of the Sindhi participants. At the same time, these functions provide a helpful complement to the cultural lenses in that, rather than focusing on a *contrast between* cultures, as with the first tool, they describe *functions common to all worldviews which provide the patterns and performances of culture*. A recognition of these five functions expressed through the cultural elements generated from the participants, enables the story teller to discover the values and beliefs that relate to the narrative.

3.5 Data Analyzed to Identify Themes

Each of the eight themes derived from the sorting of the data is dealt with individually and the Cultural Lenses and Worldview Function tools are used to describe the Sindhi worldview parameters and highlights. However, as will be noted in the analysis, the themes are interrelated and each one contributes to a holistic understanding of the impact of the narrative upon the Sindhi hearers.

3.5.1 Theme 1: Humility and Service Contrasted with Traditional Roles

In this theme concepts of humility and service seen in a context which upsets or transcends the traditional role of the teacher's place of honor and the student's role as servant were discussed. It was disputed among the participants as to whether this action was a value of humble service to be emulated or a destructive action that undermines stabilizing social structures. The Sufi value of humility and the love of paradox seen in the greater humbling herself/himself before the lesser clashed with traditional roles of the lesser honoring the greater. While many participants, to one degree or another, praised this action as "an example of love" to be emulated, others felt uncomfortable by the implications: "People's roles are different. Father is separate, mother is separate. Everyone has their own level, stage. So we are to treat mother in a special way and treat father in a special way," and "This is a prophet thing, not a teacher thing.... In our society the student must give honor to the teacher and the parent. This is the right way in our society. To reverse it is a bad thing. Why should a teacher wash the feet of student? It's not right... it is not a lesson about how teachers and students should relate."

This perspective points to a strong hierarchical understanding of authority and the roles that provide structure and stability to society (A-3, B-4). Even those who were impressed with the act of humility as something to be emulated were not suggesting that the structure should be altered; concepts of prophet, parent and teacher were consistently referred to with respect. The dispute centered not on the elevated place of those considered worthy of respect, but on what constitutes the appropriate action and attitude of the greater toward the lesser. Even when concepts of equality are introduced, as in the dialogue in interview #5, they refer to a felt need for justice and basic human rights practiced *within* a hierarchical system (B-2) rather than a call for an egalitarian arrangement. The greater have power and responsibility as is their right within the system, but their "decisions should be just and fair." This is poignantly illustrated by the statement that "the leaders (literally, the 'great ones') need to think of people as equals (literally 'same to same')." The hierarchical understanding of their culture is accepted without question, but it is the liberties the powerful take with their authority in providing benefits to themselves to the hurt of others that are challenged.

Nonetheless there was clash concerning the appropriate actions for those holding respected positions. Jesus' action represented a challenge to a traditional understanding of how leaders fulfill their roles. The collective (A-4) and hierarchical (A-3) structures that provide security for the Sindhi way of life (B-4), expressed in cultural roles of the lesser serving the greater and showing respect to the greater are held in significant contrast to Jesus' action of humbling himself in the passage, even to the extent that one participant suggested with approval that Jesus "did away with" such ideas as students rising when a teacher enters the room.

This contrast of values is an indication of the parameters of this theme or how these concepts are "linked" to one another (Kraft 1979:59). There is a desire to maintain the hierarchical structure as well as ensure appropriate honor for the lesser and the greater. However the many evidences of abuse within the hierarchy caused some participants to question the validity of common expressions of the honor given by the lesser to the greater. This tension parallels Jesus' own explanation of his action in that the intent was not to undermine the honor due the teacher, but was to demonstrate appropriate behavior *within* the system. He did not say "I am not your teacher anymore," that relationship remained. However, he did say, "You call me Teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:13, 14 NRSV).

The disagreement is also evidence of a dynamic shift occurring within the Sindhi culture over the rights and role of the elders (B-5). Many of the elders and leaders within Sindhi society who have been able to rule with impunity and whose crimes never come to light, are being challenged. A case in point is the practice of *Karo Kari* - the killing of the relatives defiled by socially unacceptable relationships - which is seen as necessary and justified in some quarters but is rejected as unjust and cruel by others. Because of this tension there is a shift in the perspective concerning how much freedom a leader has to punish. However this occurs within a context of respect for and a desire to maintain the present hierarchical structure.

The appropriate actions and attitudes of a leader demonstrated in this action of Christ were further described by the participants in terms of the service a parent provides a child, love for the students in terms of giving honor, and showing concern for others. These concerns demonstrate Sindhi evaluations and judgments (B-2) based on a concern to care for the weak, respect for those in a low position as well as high and a recognition of the importance of interdependence within community (A-4).

3.5.2 Theme 2: Service to One Another

In contrast to the above dispute concerning the relationship between teacher and student within a hierarchical setting, the concept of service to others is praised as a great virtue (B-2). Even without reading Jesus' comments about being an example for how the disciples were to treat each

other (John 13:13), one participant commented that "Jesus means that if I who am the teacher do such a great service to you, then you also must do that kind of service to humanity" (interview #1). A popular story was told in two separate interviews about a famous religious figure who served the lesser to illustrate the concept that "In our society, if people do not serve each other, then the society will not be good" (interview #1). Although it was the same story, different historical personages were given credit and the details varied significantly. However the essence of the story in demonstrating "humanity [insaniat]" was the same. This demonstrates the power of the myth in the meaning of the story, over the necessity of factual accuracy.

The importance the Sindhi participants placed upon service to one another exhibits a value of "being" over "doing" (A-2) as essential in maintaining the identity of being human in community (A-4). Concern for the well-being of another shows the importance of interdependence by stressing that the action of providing some level of comfort for another person is what holds society together. As an expression of what it means to be human, it points to a basic worldview assumption that the essence of humanity stems from how we treat each other (B-1, B-4). There is also a strong stimulus towards the action of service (B-3) driven by a conviction that this is an essential part of being human and participating in human community.

It is significant that in these conversations the possibility of conflict with a person's personal goals, time and accomplishments is not considered (A-5). This reflects the value Sindhis place on such relationships which ideally outweigh personal goals and ambitions.

An interesting point brought out by one participant, but was also an underlying assumption of others, was that such service and giving honor to another is reserved for the one "who is true" and not for those "who are enemies or deceivers" (interview #7). This defines a parameter to the concept of service based on a "collective" view of society (A-4). The one who functions appropriately within community (and this includes the stranger, see hospitality below) is worthy of service, whereas the enemy - the one who threatens the lives, values or systems of society - is not deserving of service.

3.5.3 Theme 3: Humility and Equality

In contrast to the tension between the honor due the teacher and the acts of service that may undermine that honor in theme #1, humility and equality are praised without reservation. Sindhi society is strongly hierarchical and the structures and relationships within Sindhi society - e.g. teacher/student, parent/child, religious leader/adherent - reflect this in that equality in social status is nonexistent and expressions of humility are one way. For example, a follower of a religious group will greet the leader by bending low and touching his feet or knees. Nonetheless, humility coupled with equality is highly valued among Sindhis. If a person does not bother to rise to his feet to greet a guest, this is regarded as a slight and more often than not attributed to

the person's pride. There is also evidence of a shift in Sindhi Muslim society (B-5) away from valuing a person based on their caste. However a religious tension remains with those who belong to the Saeed caste: Because they claim a relationship to the prophet, they command a certain respect lacking with other castes.

Humility is not defined as lowering oneself beneath another, but rather negatively as *not* raising oneself proudly above another, thus the connection with equality. Jesus' action is therefore not interpreted as placing himself *beneath* his disciples in a place of lesser honor; instead his action is one of ascribing them honor by providing service rather than demanding service to himself. This virtue of humility is based on two assumptions (B-2): (1) God's favor is towards the humble and he has contempt for the proud (interview #7) and (2) "we are all created equal before God" (interview #5). According to Sindhi belief the greater context of living in submission to God as the supreme creator is the larger systematization within which the value of humility and equality "make sense" (B-1, B-4).

The importance of humility is also related to the collective nature of the Sindhi culture and its stress on "being" over "doing" (A-4, A-2). Success is not attributed to a person's ability or persistence in a task, but in their right orientation to others - an orientation of humility - that results in God's blessing.

3.5.4 Theme 4: Hospitality

Hospitality is one form of service especially important for Sindhis. It could be argued that this is merely a cultural illustration of theme #2: Service. However its importance in the culture as a duty expressing the honor of the family and the sanctity of the guest/host relationship warrants its inclusion as a separate category. A telling point comes in the error made during the presentation of the story of Hazarat Mahaboob (interview #7). Sindhi hospitality demands that the best be provided for the guest with the indication of abundance. There is always more food to be placed on the table and the one who is eating always leaves some food on the side of the plate to indicate that they are fully satisfied. The guest honors the host by eating without showing concern about the cost to the host. Thus the idea that Hazarat Mahaboob would tell the guest that there was only a small amount left was improper and immediately corrected by another participant who provided a more culturally appropriate ending to the story (B-2).

This is an indication of the Sindhi culture as a "high" context culture in the area of hospitality (A-1). To have guests is a matter of strict protocol that signifies honor for both the guest and the host. Rather than being simply a time for food and friendship, the guest's appreciation of the food and the open giving of the host described as "joy" (interview #7) signify deeper concerns for honor and respect (B-1). This value of giving respect and receiving honor points to a fundamental systematization (B-4) in Sindhi culture by which people are validated in

their identity and place in society, and the means by which the stranger enters into appropriate relationship with the insiders as illustrated by the story of Hazarat Mahaboob (interview #7).

3.5.5 Theme 5: Ritual and Spiritual Cleanliness

The concept of being ritually or religiously clean is a foreign concept in North American thought. Concepts of sanitation and germs so dominate our thinking that, apart from occasional religious rituals which are primarily symbolic, the idea that physical cleansing could affect spiritual health seems strange to us. However for the Sindhi people and, as will be noted in Chapter 4, for most of the biblical cultures, physical and spiritual cleansing are not conveniently separated. Comments such as "[a person's feet] must be cleaned so that a person can be religiously clean [pak]" (interview #1), point to a larger system of reality within which this belief "makes sense" (B-4).

Because of these religious assumptions (B-1) the participants did not see Jesus' action as one of a sanitary concern, nor even merely one of bestowing honor or service. Their perspective also included a belief that by washing one becomes ritually clean [pak]. The meaning of the word "pak" in Sindhi is difficult to convey adequately in English. The word "clean" is inadequate because it conveys a concern for the purely material and sanitary. Words such "holy" and "pure" in Christian vocabulary are deficient because they are often viewed primarily as antonyms of guilt. The concept of "pak" can be, at least partially, understood as the opposite of shame. In order to be pure from that by which one is defiled - whether it is dirt on the feet, a drop of urine on the clothes or sexual intercourse - a cleansing action must be taken. If appropriate action is not taken, the defilement is not removed and one is faced with the possibility of being dishonored. This value of being "pak" is evidence of a worldview that is heavily weighted towards concepts of shame and honor (B-2). Muller's (2000:18-19) proposal that a mixture of three "emotional reactions" to sin - guilt, shame and fear - are the basis of all worldviews is helpful in recognizing the importance of the shame-honor emphasis in Sindhi culture.

Jesus' action was not merely symbolic of spiritual cleansing but is seen as the means by which Jesus could "make the person holy [pak] and so draw the person towards him" (interview #6). This perspective is affirmation that Sindhis live in a "high" context culture (A-1) in terms of spiritual realities. Religious rituals are not merely symbolic or arbitrary but are holistic acts, i.e., the act of cleansing physically in the narrative was also indivisibly a spiritual act as well. Three aspects are required to bring about the result of holiness: Desire of the disciples to be holy, the physically act of washing - for being "pak" involves the whole person - and the performance of the true prophet who guides people in the way of truth. In the dialogue clarifying the relationship between Jesus' act as service and as making the disciples holy (interview #6), a participant explained that the spiritual desire to become "pak" is met by Jesus through the

spiritual service of washing their feet. His action fulfilled that desire and made them "pak" thus sealing them in their relationship with him as part the larger religious design for life (B-4).

3.5.6 Theme 6: Relationship with a Prophet and Being on the Right Path

In Sindhi thought the teacher [murshid] and the prophet are essential for a person to gain the right path to God and avoid destruction. Thus Jesus' statement to Peter that "your part will not remain in me," was significant to some of the participants (B-4). In order to be successful [kamiab], one must remain in a right relationship with the prophet. This concept of "kamiab" in this context is, like the word "pak," not divided into spiritual and material success. Rather it is the recognition that success in finding the meaning to life in a holistic sense is only found in a right relationship with the one who can show the way of God (B-1).

The importance of this concept of "murshid" - "the one who guides aright" (Leech 2001:36) - in Sufi and thus derivatively in Sindhi thought, cannot be overstated. Sindhi communities have murshids whose role and authority are passed on from generation to generation. One acquaintance explained to me that he was the chosen one from his father's sons to be the next murshid. He claimed that he did not believe that he was special, nor that he was especially religious and in touch with God but was a seeker himself. The reply from his followers was, "It does not matter what you believe. You have a responsibility as our murshid." At times of trauma and difficulty a murshid is sought out as a first resort, whether because of sickness and infertility or for protection from evil or for spiritual direction.

This perspective of the participants reveals that they live in a "being" culture (A-2). Being on a true path is not a matter of personal accomplishment, or of exceptional effort on the part of the follower. Rather everything is precipitated upon a right relationship with one who can "show the successful road" (interview #7). Success is phrased in terms of being a "part of" a relationship rather than looking for a means to obtain power. This attitude reinforces loyalty to their own prophet or murshid (B-3). In the narrative, the loyalty was directed towards Christ as the prophet for his people [ummat]. The participants would understand this as a call for them to be loyal to the prophet of Islam and remain as a part of his people [ummat]. "Ummat" is the Arabic term borrowed by Sindhis to describe those whose relationship and identity is with a particular prophet of God. Thus this teaching about relationship with a prophet stems from a belief in the way God has brought people to himself throughout history (B-1, B-4).

3.5.7 Theme 7: Submission and Obedience

The attitude of submission on the part of the student towards the teacher was stressed clearly and repeatedly in a number of interviews. Even the fundamental concern for honor must give way to the teacher's command. Paradoxically, such disregard for common expressions of honor for the

greater is actually an expression of the highest honor - that of absolute trust (B-2). It is better to obey "than not obeying [just] because the second half [of the command to jump in the water but not get wet] is impossible" (interview #1). Following the true teacher demands total trust and obedience from the student even in the face of all that seems to contradict that trust: "Honor and other things, they pale in significance next to obedience" (interview #1). The participants focused on Peter's refusal and were confirmed in the conviction that the essence of discipleship is total submission and obedience to the teacher despite normally unacceptable demands (B-3).

The motivation for submission to the teacher is the conviction that the teacher desires the good of the follower (B-1). "It is better that we do not question the teacher. The teacher is greater than us and whatever he wants is for our good" (interview #1). Such faith in the benevolence of the greater towards the lesser, as ultimately expressed in the Islamic formula, "in the name of God, the most merciful, the most beneficent," provides stability to the hierarchical structure of the Sindhi society (A-3, B-4). Abuse of the system in Sindhi society by teachers acting unjustly towards their followers is not interpreted as a failure of the system, but furthers the resolve to search for the true teacher.

Nonetheless one dialogue (interview #3) demonstrates the difficulty some people had in reconciling the call to obedience with the call to honor which demonstrates an important parameter of this theme:

MN: So did Peter do right [by not allowing Jesus to wash his feet]?
P3: He did right.
P1: But in disobeying this was wrong. He should have allowed it. He should have obeyed.

The participants were not in disagreement with each other. The first was insisting upon honor to the greater. The second pointed out that supreme honor for the teacher is in obedience.

This concept of submission and obedience is closely related to maintaining a right relationship with the true teacher (theme #6). Obedience is required to remain on the right path (B-2, B-3). It is disobedience that removes one from the right relationship with the teacher and off the right path: "If I want to remain the student and not break the relationship of teacher/student, then I will obey his command" (interview #1).

3.5.8 Theme 8: Giving Honor and Showing Respect
The importance of giving honor is closely related to the theme of submission and obedience and is an essential concern that influenced the responses of the participants in every interview. As pointed out above honor is the value that reinforces the necessity of obedience (B-3). However in this theme, the focus in on the need to preserve cultural expressions of honor. This places it in

a position of tension with the theme of submission in that the focus of the participants was on the dishonor that touching the feet signified, rather than the need for obedience (B-1).

Although the desire of the participant in interview #3 who asked, "if Jesus is the son of God, why did he wash the disciples' feet?" was to discuss the controversy surrounding the concept of Jesus as God, the assumption underlying his logic reveals the important value that touching the feet is a dishonorable act (B-2). The unwillingness of Peter for Jesus to touch his feet was, for the participant in interview #3, a means of protecting Jesus' honor and was a commendable act. This, again, indicates the underlying belief in a hierarchical order in which honor plays an important role to validate that system, as well as the concern for its stabilizing effect to be maintained (A-3, B-4).

3.6 Summary

An analysis of the data generated from the interviews with Sindhi Muslim men was accomplished by the use of two analytical tools with the goal of describing some of the parameters and highlights of the Sindhi worldview. These worldview descriptions were identified through the cultural elements given by the participants which resonated with the John 13 passage. These "windows" into the Sindhi worldview can guide the story teller in selecting and shaping Bible stories that will be relevant to Sindhi culture. The following chapter provides some direction towards the development of Bible stories based on the understanding gained through the analysis.

The first set of analytical tools consisted of five cultural lenses which used contrasting pairs to identify common areas of conflict and contrast between cultures. The second set of tools followed Kraft's five worldview functions to identify patterns and performances of culture. The analysis pointed out key parameters and highlights of the Sindhi worldview within 8 specific themes.

CHAPTER 4
Applications in Selecting
and Crafting Bible Story

The parameters and highlights of each of the themes accentuated in the analysis above can now be used to direct the selecting and shaping of contextualized Bible stories. While not providing a complete or detailed method for applying the data to produce Bible stories, the hope of this chapter is to demonstrate the potential for and benefit of constructing Bible stories according to receptor culture factors. The storying cycle introduced in chapter 1 will serve to delineate the steps a story teller can use in order to produce impacting Bible stories for the Sindhi people based on the data generated.

4.1 Application through the Storying Cycle

The initial insertion was the reading of a Bible narrative, John 13:1-10, together with the generation of cultural elements through discussion with the Sindhi participants. This was followed by social analysis to determine the cultural elements and to identify significant worldview parameters and highlights. In order to come full circle around the storying cycle and be prepared for further insertion with appropriately contextualized Bible stories, it is important for the story teller to work through the other stages of the cycle. Initial thoughts about "Ecclesial Analysis," "Theological Reflection," "Spiritual Formation/Empowerment" and "Planning and Action" will provide guidance by clarifying some of the issues that need to be considered during each stage. The "Planning and Action" stage will include examples of how selected Bible narratives can be shaped to produce contextualized stories.

4.1.1 Ecclesial Analysis

The step of Ecclesial Analysis considers the response of the present Christian community to the themes and emphases reflected in the data obtained from the Sindhi Muslim participants. In the Sindh there is not a strong church among the Sindhi people. Nonetheless the reaction of those who have become followers of Christ to these perspectives needs to be taken into account. Does this narrative resonate with them in the same way as those interviewed? Would they phrase the response to the impact in the same way? Do they view things similarly or has commitment to Christ altered their worldview and concerns in any significant manner? How is their theology shaped by the perspectives presented by the participants? In their view, what biblical narratives would address these values and beliefs raised in the interviews?

The church which has the strongest spiritual and political influence in the Sindh consists primarily of Punjabis. They have significantly shaped the gospel expressions to which the Sindhi people are exposed: Church leaders and evangelists are primarily Punjabi, the translation of the Jesus Film follows Punjabi Christian vocabulary rather than Muslim vocabulary, the Bible society is run by Punjabis, mission organizations and seminaries are either run by Punjabis or have significant Punjabi influence. Thus, their reaction to the participants' response to this narrative is also important. Would they be offended by stories selected and shaped by these concepts? Would this be enlightening for them and open up the scriptures for them? Could these concepts and the resulting stories serve as a bridge between the two communities? Could this process function as a point of departure for healthy dialogue? How is their theology shaped or challenged by these worldview assumptions?

4.1.2 Theological Reflection

The step of Theological Reflection is critical to ensure that the culture - revelation tension is maintained. The intersection of the Johannine narrative with the Sindhi worldview must not result in an artificial resolution of the tension through the lack of a hermeneutically sound method of critiquing the Sindhis' response to the text. At this stage M.A.K. Halliday's "macro-functions" of the textual, ideational and interpersonal (Blount 1995:11) would be appropiate tools to use in the attempt to do justice to both the "meaning potential" (:15) of the text and the legitimacy of the hearer's response.

Even at this stage, story tellers must be careful not to present the Bible stories according to their own cultural and theological biases rather than building on the Sindhi values that have been discovered. Otherwise the story teller will run the danger of simply demonstrating to the people the foreignness and irrelevance of the Bible to their lives. The goal at this stage is not to "correct" the values and beliefs that have been discovered through the generation and analysis of the cultural elements, but to discover where and how God's word speaks to these themes. The parameters and highlights of the themes as delineated through the analysis are to be the lenses through which the word of God is understood and shaped resulting in contextualized stories in which the relevance to Sindhi values and beliefs are immediately evident.

For example, an egalitarian conviction and concern to address the abuse prevalent in hierarchical structures may cause the story teller to shape the Bible story for the purpose of undermining the hierarchical structure so evident in the Sindhi culture. However, societal hierarchy is an underlying assumption to which the participants gave unequivocal assent as foundational to their view of reality. To address this directly would simply demonstrate to the Sindhi people the irrelevance of scripture. Instead the story teller must recognize that the tension between traditional roles and the value of humility (theme #1) is a legitimate issue that scripture

addresses but which must occur within the hierarchal assumptions of the Sindhi people. For the most part, the Bible represents God as dealing with people *within* a hierarchical structure rather than drawing them out of such a structure. A legitimate view of scripture will maintain this and the parallels between scripture and the culture emphasized. At the same time, deliberate clashes of cultural values within the biblical cultures that parallel clashes in the Sindhi culture must also be clearly presented. For example, Jesus the holy one touching the defiled contradicts common understanding of what makes a person "unclean". In the Johaninne passage Jesus the honorable teacher transforms a task that is perceived as dishonorable in order to serve his disciples.

One important aspect of the Johaninne narrative notably lacking in the interviews is that the event takes place in the "shadow of the cross" (e.g. Jn 13:1). The Islamic rejection of the crucifixion is one of the fundamental differences between Christianity and Islam and so the lack sensitivity to the significance of the approaching cross in Jesus' words and action on the part of the participants is not surprising. At this stage of the cycle the Bible story teller will need to take seriously the message of the cross underlying the narrative and consider its relevance to the themes obtained through the data analysis. Examples demonstrating possible approaches are given below.

4.1.3 Spiritual Formation/Empowerment

The step of Spiritual Formation/Empowerment considers the expressed values and beliefs of the participants within the context of broader kingdom values and spiritual experiences. The purpose in this step is to identify those values and beliefs already present within the culture that are affirmed in scripture and explore culturally appropriate ways they can be celebrated, encouraged and emulated. This process both prepares the hearers to hear other relevant Bible stories as well as reinforces the values in their lives. For example, in the Sindhi culture poetry recitation is one of the more significant acts of spiritual experience, many of which have themes of humility and service. Also the popular form of the *melad al nabi* (celebration of birth of the prophet) has been utilized by Christians to hold a *melad* for Sindhi women at Christmas to celebrate Christ's birth. An important impacting narrative is Mary's response of submission at the angel's announcement.

4.1.4 Planning and Action

The Planning and Action step prepares for further insertions by selecting and shaping other Bible stories according to the understanding gained through the application of the cycle. Although the stages of Ecclesial Analysis, Theological Reflection and Spiritual Formation have not been addressed, significant guidance for the crafting of Bible stories can be obtained from the analysis of the data generated in the interviews. The following are examples of how Bible narratives may be selected and crafted into contextualized stories that will impact Sindhis. Each theme will be

looked at to propose how the initial narrative of John 13 can be shaped to address the participants' theme recognized within the narrative and secondly other possible passages will be proposed which lend themselves to crafting following the emphases identified through the analysis. Since this is only a proposal of a way forward, using the "preunderstanding" and "life-relation" (Bultmann's categories given in Blount 1995:31) of the participants as discovered through the analysis in preparing contextualized Bible stories, the actual exegetical and hermeneutical work required to ensure integrity with the text is lacking and would be required through the theological reflection stage to ensure appropriate use of scripture.

4.1.4.1 Theme 1: Humility and Service Contrasted with Traditional Roles
In crafting the narrative to address the concerns of the participants, their expressed desire to maintain the hierarchical structure along with appropriate honor for both the lesser and the greater needs to be taken seriously. Jesus definitive comment in John 13:13, 14 exegeting his own action for his disciples places the story within parameters that appropriately engage the Sindhi context. An approach to the story that would elicit approval from a Sindhi audience is to describe the important place as teacher and lord that Jesus had in relation to his disciples. This affirmation of an important societal structure provides the opportunity to present Jesus' unique perspective of maintaining the system - "You call me Teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am" - while readjusting the purpose of the power: Service for others. Valuing the structure while redefining the use of the power thus serves to bring the teaching of Jesus into the context of the Sindhi people in such a way that it positively influences pre-existing tensions within authoritative structures.

The concern demonstrated within this theme that the powerful utilize their authority for the good of the weak and dependent finds support within scripture. Stories about God's demand for justice from the powerful, such as David and Uriah (2 Sam 11) or Jeremiah's condemnation of Shallum son of Josiah (Jer 22), provide teaching for those in power to exercise their authority in the fear of God without attacking their position as leaders. Alternately Jesus' proclamation of his mission of freedom (Lu 4:16-30), would provide hope for those oppressed that God cares for their situation and not only demands that the leaders bring justice, but has and will act to see it happen. Even as God did not assert his will over his people from the outside but Jesus was incarnated within the Jewish setting, so the good news, the liberty, the recovery of sight and the freedom for the Sindhi people that Jesus brings can occur within Sindhi society in a way that will not destroy the value of interdependence inherent in the structure.

The cross of Christ can also be used to illustrate this Sindhi perspective. The Father had "given all things into his hands" (13:3 NRSV) and Jesus used that authority for the good of all people by humbling himself "to the point of death - even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). Jesus'

ultimate service for humanity is seen in that the one who had the authority to raise others from the dead was willing to die so that all might live.

4.1.4.2 Theme 2: Service to One Another

In Sindhi culture, according to the participants, service to others is an essential part of what it means to be human. Community is founded upon the interdependent way people relate to each other and provide for each other's needs. This is especially praised when the greater voluntarily denies herself/himself of some comfort or honor for the sake of providing that comfort or honor to the lesser. In crafting the John 13 narrative according to this perspective, Jesus' instruction to his disciples in 13:14 would be a key element. However, in contrast to the use of Jesus' statement in affirming the hierarchical parameter within which the instruction is given as suggested above, this crafting of the story would highlight the importance of disregarding one's own honor and comfort for the sake of another.

In contrast to the concept that giving service and honor to another should be only for the one "who is true" and not for those "who are enemies or deceivers" (interview #7), the story can be crafted to emphasize the point that Jesus washed all the disciples' feet, even Judas' who betrayed him and Peter who showed disrespect by refusing at first. This allows the biblical concept to be presented within the story and according to the cultural value of service, yet allow Jesus' action to challenge the limits that the Sindhi culture has placed upon such actions. The story of the cross underlines this point dramatically as Jesus dies for the sake of others, even those who nailed him to the cross.

Another story that fits this theme well is the Good Samaritan (Lu 10:25-37). In this story an emphasis on humanity (insaniat), expressed through one's actions toward another rather than one's status or heritage, would fit well with the participants' expression of the value of service. In addition, Jesus' deliberate use of a despised race attacks the characterization of viewing a collective group of people as "enemies or deceivers" (interview #7), thus challenging the assumption that enemies should not be served. The story of Jonah would also be a fitting narrative that can be shaped to bring out the tension inherent in this parameter of the Sindhi value of service. Jonah was called to serve an enemy nation for their good based on God's compassion for humanity. This action would both be praised by the Sindhi people as well as provoke empathy with the personal struggle of Jonah in fulfilling this desire of God.

4.1.4.3 Theme 3: Humility and Equality

Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet is a supreme example of the Sindhi values of humility and becoming "one" with others. Coupled with the *kenosis* of Christ as described in Philippians 2, this story can be crafted to demonstrate Jesus as God's example to us in treating each other with

humility and respect. Rather than reacting with pride of status as the holy one of God, Jesus acts consistently with his claim that he came to serve rather than to be served (Mk 10:45) - even to the point of his sacrifice on the cross - and calls his disciples to emulate his actions. Like the mango tree bent over in fruit, so we fulfill God's design for us in community with each other when we follow Christ and serve each other.

The Sindhi value of humility is predicated upon belief in the supremacy of God as creator and our relationship to him as created beings. Moreover, "we are all created equal before God" (interview #5). This double emphasis of humility before God and equality with each other has much in common with scriptural teaching. The story of the tower of Babylon (Gen 11:1-9) can be presented to encourage the attitude of humility before God and God's opposition to the proud. Jesus' example of coming to a wedding and not taking the highest place (Lu 14:7-11) is culturally appropriate for the Sindhi culture which provides couches and elegant chairs for the special guests. The story of the Pharisee and publican at prayer (Lu 18:9-14) can be shaped around the attitude and action of the Pharisee focusing on his arrogance towards the publican and his presumptuousness before God. In both of these latter selections for storying, the reward for humility is honor before God and people. This biblical paradox that only the humble will be exalted resonates well with the Sindhi expectation that "the person who is humble will be successful" (interview #7).

4.1.4.4 Theme 4: Hospitality

In the Sindh the host is honored by the open and appreciative acceptance of service by the guest. In the Johaninne narrative, Jesus puts on the towel and takes on the role of the host. The story can be legitimately shaped around this concept exploring the relationship of the disciples, particularly Peter, to Christ as viewed through the cultural value of hospitality. The Sindhi host enters into a relationship with a guest that is complex and culturally binding. To refuse an invitation is to refuse a relationship and an unexpected guest, even if one's lifelong enemy, must be treated with respect and courtesy. When Peter's interaction with Jesus is understood within these contours the consequence of no longer "having a part" in Christ has significant impact for the Sindhi.

Hospitality is an important concept in the scriptures and selections for storying are many. When Jesus suggests that the disciples feed the crowd (Lu 9:10-17), the thought for the Sindhi is not simply the pragmatic need for finances to fulfill the need at hand, but the implications for the honor of both host and guest if there is insufficient food. The Sindhi guest would be extremely insulted if the host failed to follow through on the promise of an invitation. Moreover, the gathering up of the leftovers in the baskets are often explained in the west in terms of "waste not,

want not." However, the Sindhi will see this as a proclamation of the abundance that God provides as well as a sign of honor from God and the people for both Jesus and the disciples.

Abraham's speech to the three men who appeared by his tent (Gen 18:1-5) resonates with the Sindhi value of hospitality. His anxiety that they not pass by his tent without opportunity to serve them with rest and food is tied to the honor that is received and accepted in the host/guest relationship. Furthermore the hospitality sets the scene for both the blessing of the child and Abraham's opportunity to plead for Sodom. The honoring of a guest brings blessing from God and the resulting relationship sets the stage for further interaction in each other's lives.

One of the most significant acts in the story of Jesus' meeting the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is when Jesus acts as if he will carry on past their house. For the Sindhi it is pregnant with meaning: Will the disciples invite Jesus in or will their paths part? It is then at the table with the breaking of bread that the true relationship with the guest is revealed. Such a story not only confirms the Sindhi's view of hospitality but it leads to an invitation to join with the disciples in meeting with Christ at the table.

Elijah and the widow in Zarephath (1 Ki 17:8-16), demonstrates to the Sindhi that the host who gives all will be blessed by God. To refuse hospitality because of personal need is to court disaster, while giving all results in abundance from God. This not only reiterates the dependence of humanity upon God, but underscores the interdependence of community which demands that the need of the guest take preeminance over personal concern.

4.1.4.5 Theme 5: Ritual and Spiritual Cleanliness

A dichotomy between spiritual and physical cleanliness is a basic assumption in western thought which is lacking in the biblical cultures as well as in Sindhi culture. Because of this more holistic worldview Sindhis are able to relate to many of the biblical customs and decisions that connect holiness to physical action. The John 13 passage can be told using this perspective as the filter through which the significance of Jesus' action is understood. The words of Jesus in John 13:10, "Anyone who has taken a bath is completely clean and does not have to wash himself, except for his feet. All of you are clean - all except one" (TEV), then become the core concept around which the story is shaped. The desire to be holy is met with the power to be holy. Jesus fulfills that desire by making his disciples "pak." These words will not be interpreted as merely metaphorical, but will communicate a holistic cleansing for the whole person that seals the disciple in a holy relationship with the Lord. "Jesus said he would wash their feet and make them holy [pak], that is draw them towards him" (interview #6). This also has great implication for an understanding of baptism as a means of being made "pak" and becoming a part of Christ.

Stories crafted around this theme of becoming holy through physical action could include Hezekiah' purification of the temple (2 Chr 29:3-17) and Jesus' cleansing of the temple (Mk

11:15-18). In addition, the cleansing rituals of Leviticus, including rules about not touching the dead, sexual purity and the defilement caused by women's menstrual cycles have strong parallels in Sindhi thought.

David's position as "a man after God's own heart" can be understood in Sindhi culture in terms of passion for God's honor, that is, a desire for God to be treated as "pak." In the story of David's fight with Goliath he explains his passionate reaction as a desire for God not to be defiled by this "uncircumcised Philistine" (1 Sam 17:26). To be "uncircumcised" in the Muslim Sindhi's mind is to be "unclean," and this fits well with David's abhorrence to the situation he was facing.

Salvation understood in a shame-honor system lays great emphasis upon becoming pure [pak] rather than being declared innocent as in a guilt-innocence system. The story of prodigal son can be shaped to communicate this perspective. The son who has shamed his father, his family, his nation and his religion by becoming defiled through many activities, arrives home and is immediately made holy by the father: The robe removes his defilement, the ring provides a new identity of honor, the shoes cover the greatest place of impurity.

Jesus' cleansing of the leper (Mk 1:40-45) is a story that reverses the expectation of the Sindhi hearer concerning defilement. Touching a dead body defiles the one who touches the body, the drop of urine or blood defiles the whole suit of clothes. But in Jesus' case the holy one touches the impure and, rather than becoming defiled, makes the leper pure. The significance of this act for the Sindhi people is provided by the paradigm concerning holiness and defilement within which they live. The paradigm provides the parameters within which the Bible story can be crafted to provide the greatest impact for them.

The meaning of the cross can also be expressed using the concepts of cleansing which are found in Sindhi thought and evident in the passage. The metaphor of feet washing points to the greater work of service to come as Jesus loves them "to the end" (13:1). The necessary work of the cross "fulfills all things" so that his disciples can be made pure and holy and fit for the kingdom of heaven.

4.1.4.6 Theme 6: Relationship with a Prophet and Being on the Right Path
The relationship of Jesus as the *murshid* with his disciples (the *mureed*) in the Johannine passage was significant for the participants. This aspect is further developed by Jesus in 13:20, "whoever receives anyone I send receives me also; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me." These words of Jesus together with the *murshid/mureed* paradigm of the Sindhi people form a powerful context within which the story can be shaped. The interaction of Peter with Jesus and its lesson of being in a right relationship with the teacher both affirms the Sindhi conviction concerning the role of the *murshid* in the life of the disciple and proclaims Jesus as a true

murshid that provides a path to God. Even as Jesus challenges his disciples to stand firm in their faith and commitment to him, so the Sindhi people are challenged to enter into this relationship with Christ as a *mureed* and be committed to him in order to receive the one who sent him. This theology of trust in the *murshid* is lacking in North American evangelical circles as is evidenced by the felt need for "assurance of salvation." But the Sindhi who comes to trust Jesus as his *murshid* does not have a crisis of assurance. Total trust in the *murshid* is part of the nature of being a *mureed*.

Other narratives can be used to communicate the concept of Christ as a true *murshid*. The *logos* of Jn 1, in which Christ is the true Word of God, provides the picture of the *murshid* as one with the wisdom of God who communicates the true mysteries of God. The incident of John the Baptist with the Pharisees concerning of the "Prophet" and the "one" that they were searching for (Jn 1:21, cf. Lu 7:19), can be readily crafted to bring out the expectation and need for a true *murshid* who provides the path to God. Other messianic passages also have valuable parallels with the *murshid* concept that can be utilized to craft Bible stories for impact in the Sindhi context.

4.1.4.7 Theme 7: Submission and Obedience
The importance of submission and obedience is tied closely to the relationship of the *murshid* with the *mureed* in the previous theme. The distinction comes in the orientation or focus of the story when it is crafted. In theme 6 the concern was on Jesus as the true *murshid* and the need to have a relationship with him. Following the parameters and highlights for the Sindhi people as provided by the analysis for theme 7, the focus shifts towards the attitude and action of the student or *mureed* to the *murshid*. The interaction with Peter will be used but with a recognition and emphasis of the implications for discipleship in exploring the correct orientation towards the *murshid*.

The concept of the submission of the student to the teacher finds many other parallels in the Bible that can be selected and shaped to bring out a biblical perspective that will resonate with Sindhi thought. The incident of the prophet who commanded another to strike him, and the results of the disobedience (1 Ki 20:35, 36), as well as Elijah's anger towards the king Jehoash (2 Ki 13:18, 19) for his weak obedience in striking the ground with the arrows, resonates well with the Sindhi concept of submission to the "man of God."

Mary's reaction of total submission when the angel comes to her (Lu 1:26-38) will be viewed as right and good by the Sindhi hearer even though the context is one in which she has placed (in the Sindhi mind) her life in jeopardy. This claim to absolute obedience is echoed in Jesus' teaching and is natural for the Sindhi people. In the incident of Peter walking on the water, Jesus' response to his failure is, "Where is your faith?" (Mt 14:31). In the west we are

often impressed that Peter got out of the boat; in the Sindhi perspective, as is also indicated by the passage, the lack of total trust is the issue.

<u>4.1.4.8 Theme 8: Giving Honor and Showing Respect</u>

In washing his disciples' feet, Jesus deliberately went against the cultural value of the time and disregarded his own honor. This disregard for one's own honor and the importance of showing respect for others is a key element of this act around which the story can be shaped. Following this theme, the concern is to emphasize Jesus' perspectives on how personal honor is to be viewed and how others are to be honored. Peter's unwillingness to have Jesus wash his feet did not just demonstrate a desire to honor Jesus, but an unwillingness to follow Jesus in similar actions himself. The connection between disregarding one's own honor ("denying self" Mt 16:24) and giving honor and respect to others is an area that touches upon Sindhi sensibilities.

The logic of Islamic theology proclaims that Jesus could not have died on the cross because God would not allow his holy one to become dishonored. Yet Paul, living within a similar shame-honor culture, teaches that God allowed the cross for that very purpose (Gal 3:14, 15). This aspect of disregarding personal honor by taking on the shame of the world is foreshadowed by Jesus' action of washing the disciples' feet and the story of the cross of Christ can be shaped to fit with the assumptions of honor that underlie the Sindhi culture and Islamic theology. In doing so the impact of the cross will be felt in the contrast between the natural desire to maintain one's honor and the noble sacrifice of setting one's honor aside for the sake of another.

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4.2 Conclusion

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In contrast with Chronological Bible Storying, contextualized Bible storying is a far more complex and demanding procedure. Chronological Bible Storying approaches the receptor culture with theological premises that determine the selection and shaping of the Bible stories presented. Although considered, the influence of the receptor culture on the stories is limited to discovering appropriate language within which the predetermined principles and message can be communicated. Contextualized Bible storying begins the process of Bible storying by identifying the ways God's word resonates with the receptor culture to create impact. The culturally determined parameters and highlights of the identified themes that are addressed within biblical narratives are assumed to be God's message to the receptor culture. These themes along with the parameters and highlights specific to the receptor worldview are identified through an analysis of the cultural elements generated from response to a passage of scripture. The identification of these values and beliefs which resonate with God's word can then be used

as a guide to selecting and crafting Bible stories. There will be both positive and negative correlation with the culture. Bible teaching that affirms cultural beliefs and values can be used to demonstrate relevance of the Bible to the culture. Bible teaching that challenges cultural beliefs and values can be presented in ways that correspond to the worldview assumptions that describe reality for the Sindhi people.

An overall guide to the process was provided through a storying cycle. The inductive research approach which generates cultural elements through interviews allows the researcher to identify correspondence between the biblical narrative and worldview. Analytical tools of Cultural Lenses and Worldview Functions were introduced as guides to determine specific cultural parameters and highlights within identified themes. Although the heart of the paper was to provide a case study of the first two steps of the missiological cycle in storying, examples of possible storying results for the Sindhi people were proposed.

Contextualized Bible storying takes both scripture as God's word to humanity and the validity of cultural variety seriously. Rather than assuming that the way scripture speaks to one - i.e. the proclaiming - culture will be universal to all cultures, contextualized Bible storying explores the preunderstanding of the culture and views the impact of God's Word within that context as authentic engagement with God's message. At the same time, the meaning that resonates with a culture must be a legitimate interpretation of scripture and this requires a development of appropriate hermeneutical approaches that utilize but do not override the possible meanings of the text. This research project has attempted to demonstrate both the value and the feasibility of this approach in identifying those cultural elements that resonate with God's word. Although further work is required to ensure a maintenance of the culture - revelation tension resulting in culturally impacting Bible stories, it is hoped that this initial step will prove to be a productive way forward.

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