

Movements 2.0: Stewarding the Pain and Promise of Movements to Christ in the Next Generations

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Introduction: Living in the Tension of Promise and Pain

We live in remarkable times. Across the Muslim world, in regions that for centuries seemed impervious to the gospel, new communities of Christ-followers are taking root. What once looked like isolated conversions has become a discernible pattern of multiplication. North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian world, Central Asia, South Asia, and Europe's diasporas all tell the same story in different accents: men and women from Muslim backgrounds are finding Christ, forming

communities, and embodying the gospel in ways that are creative, courageous, and costly.

For many of us, this moment feels like stepping into the book of Acts. There is so much joy in seeing movements spread through kinship networks, through digital connections, through refugee camps, and through prison walls. We are astonished at the speed with which small fellowships reproduce, and we are grateful that the church's prayers, sown over decades, are bearing visible fruit. But there is also pain. First-generation believers often pay a terrible price. They lose family, livelihood, social honour, and sometimes their lives. And as these movements mature, the questions they face are no longer those of conversion but of continuity.

What happens when the children of these first believers grow up? How does faith take root in a family, in a marriage, and in a community under pressure? What does pastoral care look like when your elders have been scattered by persecution? How do we form leaders who can sustain communities for the long haul, rather than simply respond to crisis? These are the questions of what we are calling "Movements 2.0"—the second chapter of the story that began with extraordinary awakenings and is now pressing toward maturity.

These questions occupy our prayers and work. Our partnership exists to amplify the wisdom of believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs), curating their experience so that the global church might learn from their insights. Our distinct vocation is to make BMB voices and perspectives a theological resource for the whole church. We are convinced that the story of God's work among Muslims will only be told truthfully when told with the voices of those who live it.

Hikma's partnership in the Motus Dei network, and our participation (Pat and Soroush) in its recent "MQ Symposium" (May 2025),¹ sharpened this conviction. At that gathering, leaders from every continent reflected

1. "MQ" for the conference organizers refers to "movemental intelligence," comparable to "IQ", or "EQ" ("emotional quotient") with respect to emotional intelligence.

on the maturing of movements. Scholars, missionaries, and BMBs spoke candidly about the promise and pain of this moment. We listened as movement leaders described the challenges of leadership transition, of pastoral care for those suffering trauma, of family life under persecution, and of the haunting reality that some believers fall away. One breakout group at MQ wrestled with the painful and perplexing topic of “reversion”—BMBs returning to Islam—and in that room we encountered a vital corrective to careless statistics and alarmist narratives. Those conversations pushed us to be both more honest and more hopeful. The room felt lighter when one BMB leader said quietly, “We are not statistics. We are sons and daughters who stumble, who fall, and who are raised again.”

This article is written from a space between honesty and hope. We write in the first-person plural because the concerns we raise are communal—shared by many leaders, and best answered, we believe, together. Our aim is not to present an exhaustive programmatic manual but to contribute to a reflective and practical conversation: to describe the Movement 2.0 challenges, to highlight what Hikma brings to the table, to present preliminary research on discipling journeys among BMBs, to interrogate the popular reversion narrative, and to offer concrete reasons for the global church to invest deeply in the second generation. We will weave in voices and findings from our research and from the MQ Symposium breakout discussions, especially where those conversations correct widely repeated but largely unsupported claims.

We do not pretend to have all the answers. What we do have is testimony from those who have paid a price for their faith and who, through suffering and perseverance, have gathered spiritual and practical wisdom. If the church will take this wisdom seriously — bringing it into conversation with practitioners, scholars, and pastors from other contexts — we may move more confidently from initial conversion to enduring, generational discipleship.

The Meaning and Importance of Movements 2.0

When David Garrison first published *A Wind in the House of Islam* (2014), the world of mission was electrified. Here was evidence that entire networks of Muslims were coming to faith—something that had seemed impossible a century earlier. Garrison chronicled dozens of Church-Planting Movements (CPMs) characterised by rapid multiplication, indigenous leadership, and evangelistic fervour. His tone was not triumphalist but awestruck. God was doing something new, and few had eyes to see it.

Yet even in that early optimism, Garrison foresaw the next challenge. If the first task was to recognise the movement, the second would be to shepherd it toward maturity. In the session that we co-presented with him at the MQ Symposium, David Garrison spoke of Movements 2.0—the reality that initial growth must be followed by deep formation. Movements do not simply need to start; they need to endure.

Garrison's reflections form a crucial backdrop to the challenges of Movements 2.0. Indeed, our (Pat) first engagement with the Motus Dei network in its inaugural conference (1-3 October 2020) and our contribution—alongside another mature In BMB leader, Rania Mostofi—resulted in the co-authoring of the chapter entitled "Movements in Iran and Algeria: The Second-Generation Challenge" in, *Motus Dei: The Movement of God to Disciple the Nations* (2021). So, in a very real sense, these Movements 2.0 challenges shape our ministry and are our particular contribution to the Motus Dei network.

At the recent MQ Symposium, David Garrison described our moment as "New Testament times," echoing Paul's description of yeast working its way through dough. There is ferment and vitality, but also the heat of persecution and the danger of distortion. For Garrison, the most pressing question is not only whether God is moving, but whether the church is learning. His warning was clear: the church can celebrate numbers while neglecting the souls behind them. If movements are to

become mature expressions of the body of Christ, they require patient discipleship, robust theology, and resilient community life.

Garrison also exhorted those present at MQ about the importance of this knowledge circulating *within* the global church. “The body of Christ must learn from the body of Christ,” he said—a statement that cuts across the old hierarchies of sending and receiving. The experience of believers under persecution, their theology of suffering and perseverance, and their creative expressions of community are treasures for the wider church. If we ignore them, we impoverish ourselves.

Movements 2.0, then, is not merely a phase or strategy but a call to deeper ecclesiology. It asks how movements become more ecclesially traditioned, how converts become disciples, how disciples become elders and leaders, and how communities become families of faith. It asks how the Spirit’s fire can be stewarded into lasting light.

Amplifying BMB Voices and Sharing Wisdom: BMB Voices on Marriage

Converts from Islam are often seen as case studies instead of valued members of Christ’s body. Their testimonies are frequently filtered through Western mission strategies rather than acknowledged as contributions to understanding God and his Word. To reshape this dynamic, our aim has been to create spaces for BMB leaders to share their insight. We have learned that real contextualisation does not mean trimming sound doctrine but discovering what biblical truth sounds like in a new key. A concrete example is our partnership’s work on BMB marriages, where theology and culture intersect. We launched online forums in April 2023, followed by an expert panel in February 2024. This led to a course-writing team developing a BMB marriage course, expected to be completed by 2026, and an edited book reflecting on challenges in BMB marriages, to be published in 2026. What we discovered in this research about marriage in BMB contexts is instructive for Movements 2.0 more broadly.

Firstly, marriage touches simultaneously on legal, pastoral, and theological questions. For example, how do we understand covenant versus contract in contexts where civil registration, tribal identity, and Islamic family law complicate Christian marital norms? In some contexts, polygamy reappears among early converts, raising urgent pastoral questions about justice, conversion, and witness. We found BMB leaders wrestling with the theology of singleness and celibacy in contexts where marriage is inseparable from social survival.

Secondly, pastoral issues are acute. Leaders reported cases of coercive behaviour, domestic abuse, and the trans-generational transfer of trauma. Many BMBs carry the scars of war, displacement, or prior abusive family systems. Discipleship that ignores such embodied pain will be brittle. Thirdly, legal status creates structural vulnerability. In Egypt, a BMB woman's choice to marry a Christian can entail legal and social impossibility. In Iran, registration ambiguities make custody, inheritance, and civil recognition fraught. Practical ministry in these environments requires legal literacy as much as theological formation.

The marriage project showed us the shape of Movement 2.0 ministry: multidisciplinary, long-haul, and deeply incarnational. This method highlighted the value of bringing BMB leaders around the table, developing local materials (rather than defaulting to translated templates), and producing outputs that are both academic and pastoral. This project has taught us what Movement 2.0 work looks like in practice. It is slow, dialogical, and embodied. It requires lawyers and pastors, sociologists and theologians, men and women sitting together to discern how to live faithfully under pressure. Above all, it requires trust—the courage to share pain and to believe that God can turn it into wisdom for others.

Through initiatives like this, Hikma has become a bridge between lived experience and missiological reflection. We are discovering, alongside BMB leaders, what sustainable discipleship looks like when the church is young, scattered, and under scrutiny.

Amplifying BMB Voices and Sharing Wisdom: Listening to Discipling Journeys

Another window into Movement 2.0 issues comes from some preliminary research we embarked on regarding discipling journeys among BMBs in Tunisia, Egypt, Indonesia, and Afghanistan, which we (Soroush) shared at the MQ Symposium. The purpose of this preliminary research project was to investigate some of the ways that are proving useful in equipping BMBs in discipleship towards maturity and ministry within BMB church contexts. Each of these majority-Muslim contexts has its own texture, yet the interviews revealed striking commonalities. We interviewed seven participants (five male, two female) from five different nations, working in five different contexts. Five were BMBs, one Christian from a majority-Muslim nation, and one believer from the Global North working among BMBs in majority nations for several decades.

Every respondent described discipleship as relational rather than programmatic. It is “life-on-life” formation—a shared walk rather than a syllabus. One Tunisian leader explained, “We start discipling from the first day, not after conversion. The journey of faith and the journey of learning are the same.” This echoes Jesus’ invitation, not to a class but to a road: “Come, follow me” (Matt. 4:19 and Mark 1:17). The leaders also emphasised the power of contextual authenticity. Locally written materials—whether a catechism in Tunisian dialect or a Bible study framed through local proverbs—connect more deeply than imported ones. Language, humour, and imagery all shape how truth is received. What outsiders sometimes perceive as syncretism is often simply the gospel translated into the cultural idiom of hospitality, family, and honour.

Security realities have also formed the character of discipleship. Small groups are not only safer but spiritually fertile. In one Indonesian fellowship, house groups gather secretly in different locations each week, combining worship with mutual accountability. The pattern has produced strong bonds and, in many places—though not all—spontaneous multiplication. Interestingly, persecution seems to have

reintroduced the early church's rhythm of home fellowship and itinerant teaching. Across a range of contexts, leaders highlighted the need for integration between spiritual and practical life. Discipleship that does not address marriage, work, and social pressure remains fragile. A leader in Egypt told us, "We need materials that teach how to live under pressure—how to forgive, how to endure, how to hope." In other words, discipleship is not an escape from reality but a deeper immersion into it with Christ.

Perhaps the most profound finding was how maturity is measured. Success, in these communities, does not appear to be counted in numbers but in continuity and resilience. The marks of growth are perseverance under pressure, leadership that reproduces itself, and the emergence of second and third generations of believers. The very existence of BMB Christian families—parents raising children who have never known Islam—is a sign of theological revolution.

These findings are preliminary but revealing. They suggest that movements are healthiest when discipleship is holistic, contextual, and relational. They also underscore the importance of long-term accompaniment: the kind of mentorship that outlasts crises and cultivates depth.

Rethinking the Reversion Narrative

During a breakout discussion facilitated by one of the Motus Dei MQ Symposium core leadership team, Dave Coles, some fascinating and somewhat surprising insights arose on the topic of reversion. In almost every training course on evangelism or church planting among Muslims, someone repeats the same grim statistic: that 80 or 90 percent of Muslim-background believers eventually revert to Islam. The figure, often attributed to the "Camel Method" popularised by Kevin Greeson, has gained the status of fact. Yet when it was examined more closely, during our discussion, BMB leaders and mission practitioners robustly challenged this "myth" with both evidence and experience.

Firstly, no reliable research appears to support the claim. It rests on anecdote and hearsay, not any kind of longitudinal study. In fact, many of us who have walked with BMBs for decades can testify that the majority persevere. Yes, some drift or recant under duress, but others return quietly to faith when circumstances change. One Iranian leader described how believers who were forced to sign public renunciations later rejoined the church in secret: “We think they are lost, but God keeps them in his hand.”

Secondly, the statistic misreads the problem. Where attrition occurs, it usually points to inadequate discipleship structures rather than defective faith. If converts are isolated, unsupported, or shamed for weakness, they are left vulnerable. The issue might therefore be more pastoral than statistical.

Third, in our discussion, some pointed out that the narrative itself causes harm. When outsiders assume most will fall away, they invest in speed rather than depth, celebrating conversions but neglecting care. It creates a culture of cynicism where believers are treated as disposable. One participant in the MQ discussion said, “If you expect failure, you build failure.”

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the reversion narrative forgets grace. In Scripture, even Peter denied Christ publicly, yet was restored and became a pillar of the church. Why should modern believers be treated differently? BMB leaders at the symposium called for a theology of restoration: a church culture that welcomes back the wounded and walks with them until faith is rekindled.

In Hikma we have resolved to challenge the careless use of statistics and to advocate for longitudinal, contextual research that tells the fuller story. We also want to normalise restoration as part of discipleship, not its failure. Falling and rising again is part of following Jesus.

An experienced North African BMB brother and colleague has carried out a piece of research titled “Closing the Back Doors.” The research investigates the question of reversion, seeking to draw on the experience

of BMBs. The preliminary observations of the research revealed that although not all the 56 participants (from 14 nationalities of origin, based in 15 countries) are currently part of a worshipping community, they would all consider themselves as followers of Christ. Seventy percent of participants have been followers of Jesus for five years or more. We are personally aware of some individuals who declined to complete the questionnaire due to the very painful nature of their experiences of trying to connect with churches. They did not want to revisit this pain, although they continue to be followers of Christ.

Stories That Teach

That MQ Symposium's breakout discussion overflowed with stories—some painful, others enlightening. Each one, in its own way, illuminated what Movements 2.0 entails. We heard of a young North African woman thrust into leadership before she was ready. Her zeal was mistaken for maturity, and when persecution came, she buckled under the weight. Without mentorship or community support, she withdrew, convinced she had failed God. Yet years later, with pastoral accompaniment, she returned, stronger and gentler. Her story reminds us that leadership must grow slowly, like roots before fruit. We heard of a man who publicly recanted under pressure while his fellowship looked on in silence. They did not know how to respond. The shame of his denial became a mirror for their own fear. Later, through tears, they realized they had abandoned him when he most needed love. Out of that repentance came a ministry of restoration for others who had fallen.

Another story came from Southeast Asia. Conversions there often begin with dreams of Jesus or miraculous healings. These encounters ignite faith but can leave believers vulnerable to disillusionment when suffering returns. "The fire burns bright," one pastor said, "but it needs the oil of Scripture and community to keep burning." Perhaps the most poignant moment came when an Iranian believer described feeling "orphaned twice"—rejected by his Muslim family, then never fully accepted by Christians who viewed him as exotic. His words silenced the

room. They exposed how cultural barriers within the church can wound as deeply as persecution from outside.

Yet amid the pain came also glimpses of resurrection. One house church in North Africa began hosting weekly “restoration nights,” inviting those who had drifted away. Through prayer and patient friendship, several returned. “We stopped seeing them as failures,” a leader said, “and started seeing them as our story.”

These vignettes reveal the texture of Movement 2.0: fragile beginnings, costly perseverance, and the slow miracle of restoration. They teach us that discipleship is never linear, and that the church’s greatest witness may lie not in perfection but in grace.

The Way Forward

If the first chapter of the movement story was about breakthrough, the second must be about building. The need now is for depth, stability, and family. Movements will endure not by refining strategy but by embodying love. This means apprenticing new believers through years of mentoring, forming communities that care for marriages and children, training leaders to handle Scripture wisely, and creating churches that are hospitable to those who have failed.

It also means rethinking how we measure success. Numbers of baptisms or fellowships tell only part of the story. The true test is whether communities can sustain faith under pressure, raise the next generation, and contribute to the wider body of Christ. For international partners, this requires patience and funding long-term formation rather than quick reports. For seminaries and training institutions, it means welcoming BMB theologians as peers and allowing their insights on suffering, family, and community to reshape the curriculum.

Conclusion: Hope for the Long Road

The phenomenon of Muslim movements to Christ is one of the great chapters of our story—a story of God’s mercy at work. Yet his mercy also

brings responsibility. The ferment we witness today could, without care, dissipate into disappointment. Or, if stewarded with wisdom and patience, it could become one of the church's most enduring gifts to the world.

We have attempted in this article to speak both frankly and constructively. We have acknowledged that movements to Christ among Muslims are real and remarkable—that is the promise. We have also insisted that movements' endurance will not be automatic; it requires careful theological reflection, hard pastoral work, and long-term investment—that is the pain and the challenge.

Movements 2.0 is not a crisis to be managed but a calling to maturity. It invites us to trade triumphalism for faithfulness, statistics for stories, speed for depth. It calls the global church to humility—to learn from BMB brothers and sisters whose theology has been forged in fire. The task ahead is long. It will require churches that know how to be family, leaders who know how to mentor, and partners who know how to wait. It will require us to normalise restoration, to reject the myth of mass failure or of silver bullet strategy that can solve all the problems movements face. It will also move us to see every conversion and even re-conversion, every reconciliation, as another chapter in God's patient story of grace.

To those who have laboured among Muslims for years: we want to say thank you. Your experience is a treasure—full of pain and glory, of failures and resurrection. To those newer in this field: welcome. Be prepared to be both exhilarated and humbled. And to the broader church and funding partners: please do not treat Movement 2.0 as a problem to be solved with a three-point plan. It is kingdom development requiring decades of faithful stewardship.

If we choose to respond in humility—listening to BMB leaders, supporting long-term formation, normalising restoration, and rejecting sensational statistics — the future is hopeful indeed. The "new wing" of God's household, which we are privileged to witness, need not be fragile (Brittenden and Ghulam 2024, 249-250). With wise, patient investment in discipleship, leadership, family life, and community care, it can become a

robust, dynamic part of the global body—the church that both suffers and rejoices, that perseveres and multiplies, that is formed by the cross and fuelled by resurrection hope.

At Hikma, we remain convinced that the future is hopeful. The same Spirit who began this work is faithful to complete it. The new wing being built in God's household is not temporary scaffolding or a quaint temporary annex; it is part of the dwelling where all his people belong. If we will walk together in humility and endurance—BMBs and non-BMBs, scholars and practitioners, sending and receiving churches—we may yet see what the Master Builder had in mind all along: a global church more beautiful for its diversity, more resilient for its suffering, and more radiant in its witness.

In our commitment to walk this long road with our BMB brothers and sisters, we will continue to curate their wisdom, host conversations, and resource the formation of disciples who can stand. Our hope and prayer is that the global church would increasingly join in to listen, to learn, and to labour for a future in which movements to Christ are not fleeting flames but permanent lamps lighting the world.

The pain is real, but so is the promise. The question is whether we, together, are willing to stay long enough for the yeast to finish its work.

Questions for Conversation

1. The authors begin their article speaking about "living the tension of promise and pain." How does this phrase resonate with you?
2. What were your understanding and opinions about church-planting movements before reading this article? How did the article influence your perspective about church-planting movements going forward?
3. The authors advocate listening to the wisdom of local believers (e.g., of Muslim background) in understanding and addressing the discipleship and ecclesiological challenges they face. What are some practical ways to amplify the voices of believers of Muslim (or other) backgrounds to shape your approach to ministry?

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Continuing Conversations