Over the past 120 years the Seventh-day Adventist witness in Muslim lands is a history of difficulty, discussion, and dialogue. This article looks at three periods of Adventist witness among Muslims: (1) early Adventist mission, (2) post World War II mission, and (3) recent developments. The scope of this study cannot include all interaction or mission activities; rather it is intended to point out the overarching trends of Adventist mission among Muslims.

**Early Adventist Mission**

The Adventist movement developed during the declining years of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman territory covered parts of Southern Europe, across North Africa, Asia Minor, and the Middle East. During the time when the Advent movement was developing in response to the preaching of William Miller and other early Adventist promoters, the Ottoman Empire was still a major political force in Islam (Damsteegt 1977:27). The earliest Adventist reference to the Ottoman Empire provided a strong impetus for missions among early Second Advent believers when Josiah Litch predicted
that the Ottoman Empire would fall on August 11, 1840.

Two weeks prior to August 11 Litch predicted the end of the sixth trumpet of Revelation 9 represented by the end of the dominance of the Ottoman Empire. On the date in question a significant restriction of the Ottoman control was realized (Damsteegt 1977:28). News came back to North America that his prediction has been fulfilled, giving early Adventist believers new motivation for mission. Seeing prophecy fulfilled before their eyes, Adventists were given courage to publish the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14 and share it with the world (26).

The early years of Adventist engagement in Islamic lands is essentially a history of Adventist presence in Muslim lands, but often lacking any significant witness among Muslims. During this period there was a continuing effort along traditional lines of Adventist outreach including publishing, medical work, and correspondence schools (Bethmann 1950:255-279; Far Eastern Division 1961; Oster 1963).

In 1840 the Ottoman Empire was no longer at the peak of its political strength, but long after the prophetic interpretation of Litch, the Ottomans still ruled vast areas of the world. Out of necessity Adventist missionaries and leaders interacted with the Ottoman government years into the Adventist mission in the predominately Muslim areas of Asia Minor and the Middle East (Pfeiffer 1981:35).

The first known Adventist missionary to the Muslim areas of the world was Alexander Ribton, a doctor, who became an Adventist through the work of J. N. Andrews, the church’s first official missionary to Europe. Ribton soon raised up a group of believers in Naples, Italy (Schwarz 2000:142). It was this group that began sending Les Signes de Temps to an Italian colony in Alexandria, Egypt.

Ribton, who spoke fluent Arabic (Bethmann 1950:256), moved to Alexandria in 1879. Dr. Ribton met Guiseppe Rupp who had a love for the advent message, and who had prepared a young Israelite for baptism (256). While learning Greek, Ribton opened a day school and held Bible classes, sometimes supporting himself as a physician (256). He worked among the sailors in the port and was active with door-to-door visitation and translating literature into Arabic (Schwarz 2000:143). The group Dr. Ribton started in Alexandria was primarily made up of expatriates. Ribton’s main objective was to train each member to spread the advent message, claiming in one report that soon his group would be able to do so in at least five languages (Bethmann 1950:257). Sadly, in 1882 Ribton and some of his colleagues were assassinated during the Arabi Pasha riots (143). Pfeiffer reports,
The first attempt to enter the Arab world suddenly ended disastrously on June 11, 1882, when during the anti-western uprising by Colonel Arabi Pasha, Dr. Ribton and two of his followers were killed in Alexandria. With the loss of its leader and the dwindling foreign community, Seventh-day Adventists were also dislocated from Egypt and the mission was forced to withdraw. (Pfeiffer 1981:51)

The work in Egypt lay dormant until 1898 when Elder H. P. Holser visited, and soon afterward he issued an appeal for workers. A team of self-supporting missionaries restarted work in Cairo. They started a nursing home, conducted Bible work (Bethmann 1950:258), included health training, colporteur work, and vegetarian cooking. This resulted in activity among the expatriate community but was not effective in reaching many Egyptians (Schwarz 2000:51). In 1901 Brother ‘Awayda ‘Abd al Shahid of Luxor, a Protestant minister, became the first baptized Egyptian Seventh-day Adventist.

Holser also visited Palestine in 1898 and upon his return to Germany he recruited J. H. Krum and his wife (Bethmann 1950:263). After his arrival in Joppa Krum began studying with some Germans, but after being disappointed with their resistance to the message, he began giving simple water treatments to a Muslim boy. The boy improved and as Krum became known for his water treatments, requests for his help began coming in from several Muslims in the area. Eventually Krum opened up a hydrotherapy room in Jaffa (264).

Sheikh Shakir (264), a Muslim, became a believer in Jesus through Krum’s witness, but when he attempted to share his faith with other Muslims he was arrested. While confined for seven months, Krum requested a leave for him for one night and, under the cloak of darkness, baptized Shakir as a Seventh-day Adventist (265). Shakir was deported for his faith, and eventually moved to Aden (Yemen) where he taught the Bible. Shakir, who was fearless in his witness, was badly beaten there in Yemen and was later sent to Egypt (265).

Krum also studied with and later baptized several other Muslims around this time. After the men were baptized they were stoned by the entire community, including their own wives (266). The new converts fled to Gaza, but when their faith became known, they moved on to Beirut, where any record of these men was lost. The dangerous circumstances made it advisable for Krum to leave Palestine, and finally, due to illness, he relocated to Jerusalem (266).

In other parts of Asia Minor work began among the Armenian Turks (Schwarz 2000:213). Several groups were started in Asia Minor by Theodore
Anthony and Z. G. Baharian (General Conference Mission Board 1891:56), but the two workers often worked under intense persecution. By the end of the 19th century several hundred Adventist believers were found in Turkey (Schwarz 2000:214). In 1900 the Adventist work in Alexandria was cautiously restarted (214) by opening a restaurant. In 1901 Elder Conradi organized the first Adventist church in Egypt (214).

The calling of the faithful was, of course, not extended to the Muslim communities . . . due to the lack of cultural and religious affinities . . . even though some similar views on doctrines existed. The hostile relationship between Islam and Christianity in the Ottoman Empire did not inspire Seventh-day Adventists to take the initiative toward Islam but caused them rather to remain aloof since they, like other Christian communities, felt the oppressive presence of Islam. Thus Seventh-day Adventism basically remained a mission among Christians. (Pfeiffer 1981:37)

The killing of Adventist leaders in Muslim lands was not limited to Alexandria (1892). In 1909 the Adventist leaders of the Armenian mission in Turkey were lost in a massacre of Christians, highlighting the tension between religious groups in that era (38). The Adventist membership in Turkey experienced a significant decline during World War I through evacuations and massacres, including the murder of Elder Baharian, President of the field (50).

In 1908 George Keough began work among the Coptic Fellahin people along the Nile, living and working with the people. Working together with Yacoub Bishai, Keough sought to adapt ministry to the people of the area. Some of the Fellahin responded and several were baptized. Keough's early success among the Fellahin provided a new incarnational model of witness that gave hope for reaching people of Eastern cultures. In response to the work of Keough and his plea for greater training of missionaries, the School of Oriental Studies in Cairo was founded. Missionaries were required to study both Arabic and Islam to prepare for service in the Middle East (58).

In 1908 W. K. Ising joined George Keough in Egypt for a short time before moving to Beirut to work (267). Ising held Bible studies at his home with four young men, and after baptizing them in 1912 he trained them to be literature evangelists. One of these men, Ibrahim al Khalil, had become a Christian from a Muslim background. Another, Bashir Hasso, returned home to Mosul, Iraq to share the good news with his family. When World War I broke out in 1914 Ising was sent to a British prisoner of war camp in Malta (Hasso 2010; Bethmann 1950:270). Ising worked tirelessly to follow
up interests (268), in one case riding his horse to a far away village to find a young man who had read the *Review and Herald*. He found Shukri Nowfal who studied and eventually became the first ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister in Syria and Lebanon (268).

When Ising was released at the end of WWI he surveyed the Adventist work in the Middle East. In a 1920 visit to Mosul (275) Iraq, he found that Bashir Hasso had seven people prepared for baptism (Hasso 2010). The first group in Iraq was organized with eight members and Bashir Hasso became its first leader. The new Adventist group included Bashir’s brother, Nasif Hasso, and other family members. Over time the Adventist message spread along family lines in Iraq including the Hasso, Fargo, and Sa’itih families.

In 1929 Ising became the Middle East Union President and held strategy conferences in 1929 and 1935 on how to reach Muslims. He established a working group “to find ways of approaching Islam from a Moslem point of view” (Pfeiffer 1981:55). This committee included Wilhelm Lesovsky and Erich Bethmann (86), however, the work of Ising and others was interrupted by the start of World War II.

George Keough served in Upper Egypt from 1908 until 1929 after which he taught at Newbold College. He returned to the Middle East twice for extended periods of service, 1937-1942 and 1946-55 (*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* 1996:863). Keough was also the key figure in a training program for missionaries to the Middle East initiated by the General Conference in Washington, DC (863). Throughout his years of service he had a major impact on missionary training and methodology.

In 1911 Pastors F. F. Oster and H. Dirksen were the first Adventist missionaries to arrive in Persia (Bethmann 1950:271). Dirksen returned to the United States in 1913, but Oster settled in Maragha, now Azerbaijan (Bethmann 1950:271). The Osters, with a brand new baby along with many Christians, fled their home in Maragha and escaped over the mountains when war broke out. During the war the Osters stayed in Tabriz ministering to the waves of refugees which settled in the city. Groups of Sabbath keepers were started in Tabriz and in the nearby villages (272). Later, the first Adventist hospital was established in Qum in 1923 by Dr. Arzoo (272).

World War I had a devastating effect on the young Adventist churches in the Middle East. According to Bethmann there was only one church left in Istanbul, two village churches in Egypt, and a few members remaining in Palestine, Syria, and Iraq.

Adventist missionary Erich Bethmann came to Upper Egypt in 1927, learned Arabic, and ministered there for four years. He was a pastor in Jordan
from 1933-36, and in Iraq from 1936-39 (Kilgore:41). Bethmann became a respected specialist in Middle Eastern affairs and was often consulted as an expert for various publications which benefitted missionaries of the time (Pfeiffer 1981:87). He authored Bridge to Islam (1950) and encouraged a spiritual approach when working with Muslims (Bethmann 1950:287; Pfeiffer 1981:88). Bethmann was in Bagdad when World War II broke out and was a prisoner of war for seven years (Bethmann 1950:278; Pfeiffer 1981:88).

Bethmann developed some key insights into missionary outreach to Muslims. He wrote, “Christ on the Eastern road should be clad in Eastern garb” (Bethmann 1950: 287). Pfeifer considers Bethmann’s key missiological insights to include (1) considering Mohammed to be a prophet to his own people, (2) encouraging a much deeper learning of Islamic culture and beliefs, and (3) encouraging an approach of respect to Islam (Pfeiffer 1981:86). Following his work as a missionary Bethmann was one of the co-founders of the American Friends of the Middle East, an organization encouraging understanding and friendship with the Middle East (Kilgore 1991:41).

Wilhelm Lesovsky was another pioneer worker among Muslims who served from 1920 until World War II. Lesovsky was an important conceptual pioneer for Adventist views toward Islam. He personally admired the lifestyle of the Bedouins and warned against capitalism (Pfeiffer 1981:94). He considered “the people of the book” from Sura 5:85 to be significant. Lesovsky wrote, “God has used Islam as a religious, political, and social reform movement. . . . Seventh-day Adventists should take up the role of the Nazarenes who are recognized in the Qur’an and restore in Islam its keenness which it had possessed under the influence of the Nestorians” (quoted in Whitehouse 2008:2).

This brief survey shows that the early Adventist witness was marked with persecution of the believers, difficulty for the missionaries, and even death for some of the pioneers. However, the work of men like Keough, Ising, Bethmann, and Lesovsky laid a solid missiological framework for Muslim work, but unfortunately this did not translate into evangelistic success. As history indicates, there was a strong reliance on traditional methods that did not bring Christ any closer to the minds of many Muslims (Pfeiffer 1981:62, 63).
Post-World War II Mission

World War II brought about major changes in Seventh-day Adventist mission in Muslim lands. While most of the Middle East was not part of the main theater of war, the war caused turmoil throughout the Arab world. At the beginning of the war most of the foreign missionaries were German and were evacuated as the war began (Bethmann 1950:278).

According to Bethmann the General Conference did not see this as a time of diminished mission, “During all these times of upheaval and stress, the General Conference never for a moment considered the possibility of retreat. Instead greater plans were laid” (Bethmann 1950:279-280). To prepare future candidates for mission service the General Conference hired George Keough who began teaching an Arabic course at the Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. As a result, in 1950 Bethmann notes that several of those trained were doing “good service in Muslim lands” (280).

In 1947 Francis D. Nichol, editor-in-chief of the *Review and Herald*, travelled to parts of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East to see Adventist Mission work first hand (Nichol 1948:7). He records impressions of the work in several Muslim countries. During Nichols visit, Neal Wilson, who would later become General Conference President, was the president of the Egypt Field (82) and E. L. Branson was the President of the Middle East Union. That union spanned North Africa, Israel, the Middle East, and included Turkey and Iran.

By 1947 there was a church and a school at the Egypt Field office in Heliopolis (81) and an orphanage in Cairo (85). A seventy-acre tract of land in Fayum had been purchased for a school near Cairo where the students were meeting in tents for classes. This school later would become Nile Union Academy (119).

Adventist mission work in Iraq during this time included a hospital in Bagdad with two doctors from the School of Medical Evangelists (102) and a school with 150 students—both largely the result of the faithful work of the Hasso brothers (Nichol 1948:101; Bethmann 1950:282).

In Nichol’s account mention is also made of a hospital in Tehran, Iran, under the direction of Dr. H. E. Hargreaves, an eye specialist and Dr. A. Arzoo (105). Nichol also records a mission station 600 miles to the south of Tehran staffed by second-generation missionaries, Kenneth and Dorothy Oster (107). He reports at least two congregations meeting and outreach work among Muslims in three parts of Iran, which he points to as hopeful for the future (108).

Bethmann records the membership of the Middle East in 1948 to be 1,236 baptized members (Bethmann 1950: 286), which included:
In his book, Bethmann laments the vast unentered territories and the groups of people among whom the gospel had not yet been heard (1950:286).

In 1960 the General Conference Autumn Council recommended that each of the five world divisions with a significant concentration of Muslims should convene a division-based conference. These conferences were “to ascertain what has already been done, and the best methods of approach to Moslems, in an endeavor to plot a course of action for the future” (Far Eastern Division 1961:A-1). Each of the five world divisions held the conferences, the final one being held in the Far Eastern Division from September 7-12, 1961 in Singapore (A-1). It was also voted that if these regional Islamic conferences merited follow up a world-wide conference would be convened. This follow up was held on the campus of Middle East College in Beirut, Lebanon in September of 1963 (Oster 1963: Foreword).

Representatives from various administrative levels and local fields gathered at these conferences to discuss (1) beliefs of Islam (Far Eastern Division: C 1-47; Oster 1963:29-57), (2) Adventist attitudes and understanding of Islam concerning the Qur'an and Mohammed (Oster 1963:58-105), and (3) ideas generated from each department in regards to the methods and approaches thought to work better among Muslims (Oster 1963:109-225).

While the majority of the topics in these meetings focused on traditional Adventist methodology (i.e., temperance, correspondence schools, health, personal work, branch Sabbath Schools, filmstrips), there were a number of key questions that were addressed by Ralph Watts, General Conference Field Secretary (later Vice President), during these meetings. Watts asked how Adventists should view Muslims and how Mohammed should be viewed. Regarding Adventist attitudes toward Muslims Watts concluded:

If we are to reach Muslims we must lay aside our prejudices and preconceived erroneous concepts . . . We must probe deeper into the areas of agreement in our beliefs and strive to establish more firmly the commonality between our religions and thus avoid making prominent the points in which we differ. We must stress our brotherhood with Muslims and point out that Seventh-day Adventists are the spiritual descendants of Abraham and firmly believe in all the prophets of old, and that today we are attempting to adhere to the great principles enunciated by them. (Oster 1963:101)
A Brief Overview of Adventist Witness

After a summary article of various views and data regarding the role of Mohammed, Watts proposed that Adventists should develop a new attitude toward Mohammed.

We now come to the important question, was Mohammad then a prophet of God? Many ask this question. I cannot fully answer. Perhaps much more needs to be known than is known; but we cannot escape that he was an instrument or “tool” in the hand of the Eternal God, raised up to provide millions of men in his generation with a better religion than they had before, and to testify that there is no god but God. (Oster 1963)

Watts’ comments challenged those in attendance, most of whom were active in Adventist witness among Muslims, although it is unclear if Watts’ recommendation had a significant impact at that time.

One of the active participants in the Muslim conferences was Kenneth Oster who was the editor of the minutes for these meetings. Oster was raised in Persia, also served there as a missionary with his wife, and remained active in witness. Oster authored two books in which he shared mission insights: *Islam Reconsidered* (1979) and *To Persia, With Love* (1980).

Robert Darnell also attended some of those conferences and was voted to be the director of the Islamic Study Center, even though he never took up that post. Though the Islamic Study Center was opened in 1989, Darnell was never associated with it. Darnell, as the Middle East Union president, created Thrust for Evangelism Among Muslims (TEAM). TEAM developed significant materials for outreach to Muslims including one book of sermons (Middle East Union TEAM:1972) which was field tested by Kenneth Oster. Darnell’s theoretical work became foundational to Adventist contextual ministries among Muslims. Darnell also served as a mentor to several people, significant among them was Jerald Whitehouse, who later became the director of the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations (Whitehouse 2008:2).

**Recent Developments**

Børge Schantz became the founding director of the Global Center of Islamic Studies in 1989 and served in that position until 1995. Schantz also taught a yearly class on ministry to Muslims at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University and raised awareness of the needs of the Muslim world through newsletters (Schantz 1991a:1). During his time as director, Shantz organized symposiums and
seminars around the world (Whitehouse 2008:3; Schantz 1991a) and published several books with information and suggestions for church members on how to reach their Muslim neighbors. More than anything Shantz was a tireless promoter in urging the church to have a strong witness among its Muslim brothers and sisters.

One of the more recent examples of creative outreach among non-Christians was the work of Jerald Whitehouse in an unnamed Muslim nation (Islamex). Whitehouse had been a medical missionary in Libya and Sudan off and on from the 1960s to the 1980s. Whitehouse, influenced by the theoretical work of Robert Darnell, began to develop a contextualized approach to ministry among Muslims (GCAMR 2000).

This approach promoted a system in which new Adventist believers would not be extracted from their culture and would be able to remain within their Muslim context. Rather than promoting a rejection of the new believer’s background, the Faith Development in Context (FDIC) approach sought to critically sift that culture and religious background through the biblical message.

The ministry that began in 1990 in Islamex is still active and has been duplicated in several countries today (Whitehouse 2008:6). Leaders of these ministries have been primarily mentored by Whitehouse, but are led by local believers. This type of ministry begins where people are in their context, leads people to believe in the Scripture as the basis for faith and religious life, and encourages the believers to accept Jesus (ISA) as Lord and Savior as they live out their life of faith within the Islamic context.

Since this movement does not extract followers from their Muslim context, it allows for the adherents to use the Qur’an as a sourcebook of spiritual encouragement (GCAMR 2008:FDIC, C1-C6) while moving them into accepting the ultimate authority of the Bible and encouraging them to develop a deeper study of God’s word. The movement encourages a gradual approach to conversion (FDIC, C1-C6) following a receptor oriented spiritual path. While no official membership records of Muslim background Adventists is available, as a result of these receptor oriented ministries, there is a growing number of followers of Christ today in several Muslim countries. These followers have a basic Adventist understanding of Scripture but are not officially recognized by the church.

While official numbers are impossible to know, ministry leaders suggest that approximately 4,000 Muslim background believers become followers of Christ each year. Current estimates indicated that there are about 30,000 Adventist Muslim background believers globally, including those who have an open Adventist identity and those who are part of a contextualized ministry.
Guidelines for this type of ministry were officially voted by the General Conference in July of 2003; these guidelines outlined various issues related to the use of other sacred writings, transitioning to the use of the Bible, transitional structures and their relationship to the church, and how structures of this type are to be developed (Global Mission 2003).

Discussions about this type of insider ministry have been heated at times with two distinct sides: those who support it as a way of impacting Muslims with faith in Christ, and those who see this ministry as over-contextualization. In reaction to perceived over-contextualization, meetings were held in January, 2005 at Andrews University. Papers covered a wide range of biblical, theological, and practical issues, and were presented by scholars from a theological and missiological perspective. Those papers were later published as a book by Bruce Bauer, Chair of the Department of World Missions at Andrews University (Bauer 2007).

The General Conference Missions Issues committee recommended new guidelines in April 2005, allowing for Special Affinity Groups (insider movements with no official connection with the denomination) and Special Arrangement Structures (creative church structures in areas that are difficult to access politically or religiously), but restricting the ability for local entities to create them without permission from the higher levels of church structure (Bauer 2007:277).

During the time Whitehouse was the director of the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations the center grew to include three associate directors. The staff of the center focused on mentoring leadership, fostering a biblically centered critical contextualization process, pioneering ministry among women, and developing curriculum for Islamic studies within the Adventist Church.

In 2008 major training events were held for those engaged in Muslim ministries in several regional territories. One training event was coordinated by the Southern Asia-Pacific Division in September (Southern Asia-Pacific Division 2008). This training brought together instructors from the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations (GCAMR) and eighty participants with a background in Muslim witness. The focus of the training was to encourage Adventists to communicate their faith to Muslims in a way that is peaceable and cordial.

As director of the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations Whitehouse made several significant contributions to Adventist witness among Muslims. These include (1) the encouragement of a cordial witness to Muslims, (2) training initiatives conducted in many locations around
the world, (3) the development of various models of how Adventists can develop positive relationships at the local church and institutional level with Muslims, and (4) the pioneering of and participation in interfaith dialogue. Jerald Whitehouse retired in 2009, passing the torch to Lester Merklin Jr. who became the new director of the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations.

Recently, interfaith dialogue has been given new significance. Prior to 2007 scholars, including the directors of GCAMR, were engaged in interfaith dialogue. In 2007 the General Conference appointed William Johnsson, former editor of the *Adventist Review*, as a coordinator for Adventist interaction with other world religions. Adventists participated in two conferences in 2008. The one in Doha, Qatar featured adherents from Islam, Christianity, and Judaism and had presentations by two Adventists. Adventists also participated in the Common Word meetings, in an interfaith dialogue in Jordan, and an interfaith dialogue between Adventist and Muslim scholars in the Philippines (Krause 2008:16).

While many reasons for interfaith dialogue exist, these dialogues are held with the goal of seeking to understand more clearly people from a Muslim background, but also to aid in clearing up misunderstandings Muslims may have toward Seventh-day Adventists. The role of interfaith dialogue between Adventists and Muslims is continuing with additional representatives from the Biblical Research Institute and Global Mission joining in the discussions (Johnsson 2010:11). There are other examples of interfaith relations within Adventism, such as Faith House Manhattan founded by Samir Selmanovic. Selmanovic attempts to provide a faith community which learns from all faith backgrounds (Krause 2008:19).

Another unique form of interfaith dialogue was pioneered by Oscar Osindo in Kenya. Osindo, who currently serves as an Associate Director of GCAMR, conducted televised debates with Muslim leaders, but under the ground rule that they had to be gentle and respectful. These debates have become quite well known and have developed some notoriety in Kenya.

The historical witness of Seventh-day Adventists, as found in hospitals, schools, and in ADRA, still provide a strong basis for interaction with Muslims around the world. Many Adventist hospitals remain popular among Muslims because of the dietary restrictions and similar faith backgrounds. Outreach using literature and correspondence schools are still being used today, but the landscape of Muslim ministry has changed dramatically with the development of incarnational mission models and their implementation in ministry.
Critical Issues in Witness

As noted above, with few exceptions, the early Adventist witness in Muslim lands largely focused on sharing Adventist beliefs with other Christians, both foreign groups living in Muslim lands and indigenous communities. The actual engagement with Muslims through traditional Adventist approaches was in large measure ineffective. As I have surveyed the historical trends and literature regarding Adventist mission a few important qualitative issues have surfaced that I feel have enough importance and potential to include here.

While the discussions regarding outreach and methods of the 1960s do not seem to have had an immediate impact, out of those meetings came a move to begin a different kind of engagement with Muslims, largely as a result of the theoretical work of Robert Darnell. It was during the conferences held in the 1960s that the idea of starting a study center for the purpose of developing a deeper understanding of Islam and fostering useful approaches to other world religions was placed on the agenda. Unfortunately those centers were not started for many years.

The development of the Global Mission initiative eventually led to the establishment of the Islamic Study Center, followed soon after with centers for the other major religious groups. Today there are study centers for each of the major world religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and for Secular/Post Moderns). The study centers are positioned to provide solutions as the church faces critical issues in its witness among all the world religions.

In the area of Adventist witness among Muslims there are three important areas for future development: evaluation, leadership development, and theological reflection. Development in these areas is needed to assist the Adventist Church as it seeks to expand its witness in the world, not only in its work among Muslims but also in any ministry that is attempting to share the gospel.

Evaluation

The Adventist Church and its supporting ministries are engaging more and more in non-Christian environments. As these ministries engage new people groups among the world religions and try new methodologies Adventists need to be more active in evaluating the effectiveness of its mission endeavors. With Global Mission and many supporting ministries working in the area of church planting and other types of evangelistic outreach, the
church needs to analyze and evaluate training programs, policies, funding, methodologies, and the goals of each of the various programs.

Without evaluation the same programs and methods are used year after year, sometimes for generations, with no evaluation to measure the effectiveness of a ministry. Evaluation can provide needed feedback that could alter strategies, budgets, and ministries, and lead to better use of funds and personnel. The evaluation needs to have criteria based on models that are not tied to baptismal rates. Although we need to know membership statistics, the criteria for evaluation should be based on broader discipleship and wholistic ministry approaches so as to provide a balanced perspective on a ministry.

Leadership Development

After more than 100 years of work in Muslim nations and areas, the need for a cordial witness has not diminished. Adventist pastors and church members around the world face the immediate challenge of building relationships in a world that is more polarized than it was even fifty years ago. There is a great need for the development of leaders who understand issues in outreach toward other religions.

Admittedly, there is a positive upswing in the development of future leaders due to education and training. Educational institutions are beginning to focus on Islamic studies. Newbold College had a program in Islamic studies. Currently Andrews University is offering a masters degree, the first of its kind, focusing on the Muslim world. Regional training by the staff of GCAMR has also helped develop significant leadership. In spite of these fragmented approaches, more systematic leadership development for mission in these areas is still lacking.

In order to foster an active and positive witness among Muslims, Adventists must face the important challenge of leadership development for Islamic witness in Africa, Central Asia, South and South-East Asia, and the Middle East. Adventists have the ability to foster meaningful relationships in local neighborhoods and through education and healthcare; but in order for this to happen significant progress must be made to break down fear and prejudice. As is clear from the history of Adventist interaction with Muslims, witness in this critical area is not a fast process; it is one that demands thorough research, long term thinking, and a sacrificial missional purpose—qualities that result from intentional training and education.
Theological Reflection

In the current missiological arena several foundational theological issues remain inadequately addressed from a biblical and Adventist perspective. Some of these issues are so foundational to the current discussion that without deeper reflection it seems unlikely that a more effective witness among the world religions can develop.

Over the past few years papers from conferences on witness and missiological books have been published by the Department of World Mission at Andrews University. A systematic theology of mission including biblical soteriology and ecclesiology is needed as the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces the challenges from the world religions in new settings.

Critical theological issues include: (1) an Adventist understanding of its own identity as it relates to the world religions, (2) a biblical understanding of the theological and theoretical foundations for authentic contextualization, (3) understanding the role of hermeneutics and epistemological concerns in applying biblical principles in non-Christian settings, and (4) issues regarding inclusive and exclusive views of salvation.

As these issues are addressed in witness among Muslims, Adventists will have a better chance of maintaining a prophetic and cordial witness which will sow seeds for the expansion of God’s kingdom in preparation for Christ’s second coming.

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