Section 1

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

a man of

PASSIONATE REFLECTION
Introduction

An issue of high interest in Seventh-day Adventist mission is ministry among the world’s 1.2 billion Muslims. Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in Adventist engagement in Muslim ministries as well as a debate on how best to go about it. Much of the subsequent missiological work and tools developed have helped make the witness of the gospel culturally relevant in Muslim contexts. However, with all the necessary focus on the recipients of this witness, less anthropological attention has been paid to the bearers of the Adventist message. While some emphasis has been put on modifying the messengers’ surface-level behavior, the deep-level cultural values held by many Adventists has remained mostly unchanged and unchallenged. In consequence, the Adventist Church has tended to view culturally sensitive approaches to Muslim mission as simply programs or techniques that will bring Muslims “into the fold,” complete with traditional Adventist ways of behaving and thinking. When this does not occur, it leaves both Adventists and Muslim converts confused.

This article is a case study of a current ministry in the process of developing
a biblically and anthropologically sound worldview among both Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims—a worldview that enables cordial witness, joint ministry, and the development of communities of submitted followers of God through Christ. This process entails six stages of transformation, each illustrated with examples from the ministry under study. Also identified are the likely pitfalls caused by ignoring critical anthropological and missiological principles at each stage. It is my hope that this case study will stimulate further examination and application of worldview transformation in the field of Adventist-Muslim relations.

**Background**

The Adventist Muslim Fellowship Association (AMFA) is a ministry that began in Atlanta, Georgia in late 2007 when God brought together a unique team of Adventists with a passion for Muslims, a commitment to ministry among them, and a willingness to pioneer new biblically-based approaches. These members all have significant and positive cross-cultural experience and/or experience working among Muslims in various parts of the world. Working alongside us are the Muslim members of AMFA, united “under the common belief in the One, True, Creator God (Allah in Arabic) and choosing to live their lives in preparation for the return of Jesus (Isa) and the final Day of Judgment” (Adventist Muslim Fellowship Association of Atlanta website 2008).

AMFA’s ministry arises in a unique anthropological context. Muslims in the United States are some of the most diverse in the world; only Makkah during the Hajj (pilgrimage) rivals the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of North America’s Muslim population (Marion 2006). Likewise, American Muslims’ socioreligious views span the Islamic spectrum, ranging from militant fundamentalism to traditionalism, from modernist to progressive, and even secular. This variety of perspectives is guaranteed to remain intact by the steady influx of Muslim immigrants (Maloof, Ross-Sheriff, and Asani 2003) and the fact that over one third of American Muslims are native-born (Pew Research Center 2007:1). Given this great diversity, no one set of cultural features can be isolated with which to develop a single Adventist witnessing technique that is culturally appropriate for all Muslims in the United States.

This impossibility proved to be crucial to the development of AMFA, for it forced us to take a step back and see the larger issues. What emerged was the realization that Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims alike need complete
life transformations if they are to display the glory of God to the watching 
cosmos and thus call all to a final decision for or against God. Far deeper 
than a few surface-level behavioral adjustments is the need for change of 
the deepest levels of culture. These deep levels constitute one’s worldview, 
defined by Kraft as “the culturally structured assumptions, values, and 
commitments/allegiances underlying a people’s perception of reality and 
their responses to those perceptions” (1996:52).

Thus, AMFA has chosen to work toward biblically transformed 
worldviews in both the Adventist and Muslim communities, which will 
provide the foundation on which significant spiritual development and 
change can occur. Thus, AMFA focuses first on worldview transformation 
among Adventists which leads to the first of the six stages of ministry.

**Stage One**

Before Adventists can approach people with different opinions and value 
systems, they must themselves be grounded in key spiritual matters. Do they 
see the entire Bible as one coherent story describing the sovereign kingship 
of God? Do they understand that Satan has challenged God’s authority and 
method of governance? Do they understand the means by which God will 
restore his Kingdom once and for all? Do they understand that salvation 
is primarily about raising up people who are safe to save because they 
are so convinced of the trustworthiness of God and the rightness of his 
government that throughout eternity sin will never spring up again? Do 
they have a picture of God as a compassionate Savior who is passionately 
pursuing all his children in all times and places? Most importantly, do they 
have an experiential humility arising from being broken and receiving the 
overwhelming grace of God?

Thus, the first stage is the creation of a core of Seventh-day Adventists 
who have their worldviews firmly rooted in the principles of God’s righteous 
governance of the universe. This worldview understanding is closely 
connected to the concepts involved in the Kingdom of God. As used in this 
article, the Kingdom of God includes not only the established evangelical 
definition of the Kingdom as “the sovereignty, reign, or rule of God” 
(Achtermeier 1985:527) but also the particularly Adventist focus on the 
cosmic controversy over the right of God to reign and the methods by which 
he governs his kingdom.

Creating a cohort of Adventists who view reality through the lens of 
the Kingdom of God entails first an intentional focus on worldview issues,
since people seldom question or are even conscious of these deep-level assumptions. Second, it calls for continual encouragement to check all ideas against the criterion of the Kingdom and the Bible. Adventists may find that a surprising number of long-held “truths” and standards turn out to be Western cultural interpretations and assumptions. As Brown perceptively notes (2006:130), “there are no Christian denominations that are in perfect harmony with the Biblical worldview; all have syncretistic worldviews to some extent.” Third, is the realization that facilitating paradigm shifts in long-held missiological and theological assumptions takes time and much repetition.

Case Examples

AMFA prioritizes the task of giving Seventh-day Adventists a solid framework for mission. Thus, it always begins by focusing and spending significant time on Kingdom worldview matters prior to addressing Islam. Some of the issues that are discussed include our pictures of God, the great controversy between God and Satan (Hart 2006; Maxwell 2002; White 2005), the way God is working to reveal himself to all peoples (Olson 2005; Richardson 2003, 2005), our attitudes toward people with different viewpoints, principles for ministry from the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, the Kingdom of God and the church (Ladd 1993), exclusivist versus inclusivist views of salvation (Bauer 2008), bounded versus centered set approaches to salvation (Bauer 2007:59–78; Hiebert 1994:107–137), and the Kingdom circles illustration (Common Ground Consultants 2009:7–17). We address these concepts in various ways, both directly and indirectly. Only after these worldview values are in place do we move on to an introduction to Islamic beliefs and practices, appropriate ways of relating to Muslims, and various tools for building relationships. Throughout this latter process we continually reinforce the worldview concepts previously introduced.

AMFA has used a number of educational vehicles to help Adventists embrace a Kingdom worldview and find ways of relating positively with Muslims. One is a training seminar and accompanying manual entitled Called to Display His Glory: Giving and Being the Loud Cry (North American Division Center for Adventist Muslim Relations 2005). The first half of this seminar is devoted to intentionally addressing Kingdom worldview issues; the second half connects these principles to Muslim ministry. Other tools that AMFA has found helpful in providing the worldview and cultural understandings for work among Muslims include the books A Deadly
A Case Study of Worldview Transformation

Misunderstanding (Siljander and Mann 2008) and Muslims, Christians, and Jesus (Medearis 2008), as well as the informative conferences offered by Common Ground Consultants. AMFA also works to promote worldview transformation among Adventists through various training sessions at churches, camp meetings, academies, universities, Adventist-laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) conventions, and regular Adventist Muslim Relations Summits.

These methods of worldview transformation are proving effective at various levels. For instance, I was invited to speak about understanding Islam at an Adventist academy. The presentation focused on helping the students discover and apply biblical principles for relating to people with differing beliefs. A few weeks later, a student described the changes that had occurred among fellow classmates: “Before that class, a lot of students were saying bad things about Muslims, but now they don’t say those things anymore” (personal communication, March 7, 2009).

Although AMFA is working in a North American context, this first stage of worldview transformation is crucial and relevant wherever Adventist engage Muslims, for worldview issues are universal. The most important result of Stage One is the creation of a core of Seventh-day Adventists who are well prepared to interact with people of other faiths. Having adopted a Kingdom worldview, they are ready to live out God’s compassion for people, look for evidence of God’s work in other people, and invest in long-term, loving relationships. In addition, Stage One creates automatic support for ministries such as AMFA. When the worldview issues become clear and people can see a ministry that actually operates according to these values, very often, they become supporters of this work, whether financially or by lending their voices in support of and in helping others understand the issues.

Potential Pitfalls

Unfortunately, we as Seventh-day Adventists have often been quick to point out the need for worldview transformation among Muslims but remiss in calling for the same in ourselves. This utterly fails to take seriously the need for change in all of us. As Foster points out, “It is essential to realize that barriers to change are at least as prevalent within the innovating organization as within the target group . . . and that it must be studied just as thoroughly as the target group if results are to be optimized” (1973:180). Thus, Adventists must be willing to subject their own encultured
interpretations and presuppositions to the judgment of the Word of God. Conn terms this process *de-contextualization* and says that “the demand for de-contextualization, ignored largely by both liberation theologian and evangelical, becomes as important as contextualization. It does not take up the questions of culture without evaluating the legitimacy of the questions themselves” (1984:258).

There are serious consequences to approaching a Muslim ministry without first establishing a Kingdom worldview in the Adventist messengers. Lack of attention to one’s own deep-level assumptions and those of others promotes a monocultural perspective that is ethnocentric and absolutistic and that affirms a naïve realist/idealist epistemology, in which one’s perceptions of reality are equated with reality itself (Kraft 1996:69–70; Hiebert 1994:26).

Adventists who approach life from this viewpoint are preoccupied with truth and falsity, based on the assumption that their understandings of reality are complete and without cultural bias; thus, anything that does not agree with their point of view must be wrong. Such an approach is also absorbed by comparative issues—for instance, the inspiration of the Qur’an versus the Bible, the life and role of Muhammad versus Jesus, and the use of “Allah” versus “God.” Likewise, they can find good in Islam only as far as it agrees with their views. In short, they limit their perspective so that the truth they have equals all truth.

This is not to say that truth is not of vital importance. Instead, it seems wiser to recognize that “now we see in a mirror dimly” and “know in part” and that only in eternity will we “know fully” (1 Cor 13:12, NASB). Thus, not only should we remain open to further truth but we should also expect others to be discovering God-inspired truths that will enable every person to make an informed choice for or against God. Nor does acknowledging truth outside of our own perspectives automatically open the door to theological pluralism or compromising ecumenism. Rather, we evaluate all truth by the Bible, which is “the final criterion against which to measure theological truth” (Hiebert 1994:30). If Adventists attempt to do ministry among Muslims without addressing these deep-seated assumptions, it will simply be a case of pouring new wine into old wineskins (Luke 5:37), as new points of view and sources of truth simply do not fit into narrow, black-and-white understandings.

Finally, embarking on Muslim ministry without dealing with the messengers’ worldviews leads to a focus on techniques rather than transformed thinking. A clear example of this is the current controversy over contextualization. Many Adventists seem to have assumed that
contextualization is a means of making the system of Christianity culturally acceptable. Thus, contextualization become a technique by which Christians can facilitate the transfer of their fairly complete understanding of truth to people who do not have those understandings. In contrast, few Adventists seem to have considered Hiebert’s description of contextualization as “an ongoing response that sees the gospel as outside culture . . . the message of salvation, not from West to East, but from God to peoples in all cultures” (1994:64; italics mine). Note the emphasis on the gospel, without any direct association of it with Christianity. This latter definition calls all God-followers to the continual process of examining and aligning their contextually influenced beliefs and practices with the worldview of God’s Kingdom. Thankfully, those involved in Adventist-Muslim relations are giving increased attention to Adventist worldview transformation.

Stage Two

Once Adventists have embraced a Kingdom worldview, the next stage can occur. Stage Two is the development of logical, appropriate, and real reasons for interactions with Muslims. First, ambassadors of the Kingdom need reasons for interaction that their communities see as relevant and valid. Note the example of the Apostle Paul, whose manual labor gave him credibility and allowed working-class Gentiles to identify with him (Siemens 2009:760). In addition, those seeking to work among Muslims should focus their initial interactions on people’s felt needs before moving on to the ultimate human need for salvation (Hiebert 1994:66). Finally, Adventist interactions with Muslims are best when they are done cooperatively, doing things with the local Muslim communities instead of for them. Examples could include any jointly done humanitarian activity, refugee resettlement services, micro-enterprise development, after-school tutoring programs, practical skills training, and community-based programs that take a stance against problems such as domestic violence, human and sexual trafficking, drug use, or gang involvement.

Case Examples

AMFA has connected with the Muslim communities around Atlanta in various practical ways. One of our best bridges into the community has been the establishment of an educational center that addresses the English language and literacy needs of the immigrant Muslim community. Muslims
in the area invited AMFA members to help in this area of immense need, and the response has been far greater than we imagined. Not only do students continually refer other Muslims to this center, but the deep relationships formed there have also enabled rich interactions between Muslims and Adventists outside the walls of the center.

In addition, AMFA has found valid reasons for interaction through the avenue of health. Muslims and Adventists have partnered in running a number of health expositions within Muslim communities in the area and elsewhere. These interactions have not only enabled AMFA to bless Muslims and address felt health needs, but they have also provided opportunities for Adventists and Muslims to work side by side, getting to know each other while they meet community needs. Such cooperative events have incredible potential. For example, after AMFA's first health expo, Muslim community members insisted that the next event be held at the local mosque and that we train their Muslim young people how to hold a health expo.

AMFA is still developing further opportunities for interaction. One of the neighborhoods where we work has a large number of Muslims who are refugees; thus, job creation and training are high priorities. In response, AMFA is considering setting up a business that will provide jobs for refugees, offer on-the-job training in English and customer service, and create logical opportunities for regular interaction with Muslims.

Potential Pitfalls

Stage Two represents Adventists’ first interactions in a Muslim community and thus an opportunity to create goodwill and open doors to further relationships. However, Adventists who do not embark on this process with a Kingdom worldview can cause roadblocks to relationships. Many view this stage as merely a technique to get a foot in the community so they can begin the “real” work of evangelism. This ignores the fact that followers of God are called to minister to needs simply as expressions of God’s love and compassion (Luke 6:35). In addition, Muslims will quickly detect the ulterior motives behind such an approach and resent the duplicity.

Another danger is that the establishment of programs to meet needs will be seen as the final goal. Given that the American church has a Western worldview, “the tendency for westerners (and those trained in western ways) is to be program oriented rather than people oriented” (Kraft 1996:410; italics in the original). Thus, Adventists may become so focused on social and development programs that building relationships with actual Muslims becomes eclipsed.
Stage Three

The group interactions in the previous stage provided opportunities for Adventists and Muslims to meet each other and connect. Stage Three is the deepening of these connections as individuals of each faith get to know each other on a personal basis. The product of such relationships is what Hiebert terms a “bicultural bridge,” where members of two different cultures learn to understand and adapt to each others’ culture; in turn, these bridge builders work as insider advocates to help their own communities understand and accept those of the other culture (1994:147–149).

Stage Three is a crucial stage, for in it Muslims have the chance to see the uniqueness and beauty of the Adventist faith. Adventists can discover admirable points in Islam, and both must lay aside misconceptions of each other. A humble, teachable attitude is essential here. As Donald N. Larson notes, in “entering a new community as a sincere learner . . . the missionary approaches the local residents with humility, offering dignity to the people from whom he [or she] learns” (2009:455).

This stage builds a solid framework of trust, which must be in place before more testing truths can be tackled (White 1905:143; 1915:119–120). As in the previous stages, the Stage Three relationship building process cannot be rushed. It takes time and regular interaction for any deep relationship to form, longer still when there are fourteen hundred years of prejudices to undo.

Case Examples

The members of AMFA are regularly engaged in pursuing deeper and more informed relationships with members of the Muslim community. Relationships with students and professors in university have continued long after graduation. English tutoring sessions have turned into mutual sharing of life’s joys and crises and faith. Educational efforts and health expos have resulted in Adventist members invited to serve on the boards of local Muslim organizations.

While the Muslim members of AMFA explain their particular cultural and faith practices, Adventists help Muslims navigate the confusing web of American bureaucracy, culture, and pluralism. Members attend an Islamic cultural festival one month and share Thanksgiving dinner the next. Thus, there is evidence of traffic in both directions across the bicultural bridge.
Potential Pitfalls

Stage Three ties with Stage One as being most critical for successful ministry among Muslims, yet unfortunately it is frequently ignored or treated lightly. One danger for Adventists is an attitude of superiority; this may stem from ethnocentricity, ethnic prejudice, or denominational pride (Brown 2006:129). A lack of humble teachability can quickly ruin a promising relationship, particularly in the spiritual arena. Other Adventists appear eager to learn about Muslim culture and beliefs; however, they are only looking for openings, which they can leverage to make their theological points. Neither approach allows Muslims to challenge Adventists themselves to grow in their own faith. A final problem is the desire to rush through relationship building to get to the next stage. This may result from an attitude that values programs over relationships or results over process. Regrettably, these tactics short-circuit the very point of Stage Three: building a foundation of trust that will be able to handle heavy truths. All of the above problems stem from worldview issues that should have been addressed in Stage One.

Stage Four

Deep relationships between Muslims and Adventists naturally lead to discussion of shared spiritual interests as there is an automatic spiritual bond between people who seek to live fully submitted to God. The fourth stage of ministry intentionally fosters opportunities for Adventists and Muslims to interact spiritually. This is also the stage where we focus on spiritual growth and joint worldview transformation.

Case Examples

AMFA is currently in Stage Four. In order to create space for spiritual sharing between Adventists and Muslims, we have established a weekly study group that looks for important spiritual truths that affirm biblical doctrine and teaching. We have begun with the Qur’an, knowing that many Muslims have inherited prejudices against the Bible that preclude their reading it. Our inductive studies follow the lives of the biblical prophets mentioned in the Qur’an and focus on what the Qur’an terms “ayat,” or signs that point us to God. Through these studies, we are laying the foundation of a Kingdom worldview. Core truths that we emphasize include the trustworthiness of God, Satan’s battle for our allegiance, the waywardness of humanity,
affirmation of truth wherever God reveals it, the unity and perpetuity of the message of the prophets and the Holy Books, the need to base all belief and practices on God’s Word over traditions, God’s way of bringing people into the Kingdom, the future and full establishment of God’s Kingdom throughout the universe, characteristics of a true believer, and many more. Adventist members regularly mention the Bible in the discussions; when the Qur’an makes clear reference to it and our Muslim members are ready, we will begin studying the Bible inductively.

There are several unique aspects of these studies. First, AMFA members have openly Muslim or Adventist identities, yet both groups strive to use culturally appropriate language and practices in order to demonstrate respect for the other. This makes it a safe environment for learning and growth. Second, members do not simply compare and contrast the respective beliefs of Adventism and Islam but rather approach these studies as people of faith journeying side by side in search of further truth. Each member views the others as believers in God from whom much can be learned. Furthermore, these studies are immensely practical. Whenever truth is found, members seek to incorporate it into their lives, encouraging and praying for each other in the application of this truth.

AMFA is still in the early phase of Stage Four, slowly building a Kingdom worldview from what we find in the Qur’an and later from the Bible. Christians unfamiliar with the process often ask, “So, when are you going to get the Muslims to accept Jesus?” While this is something we pray will happen, we have chosen to focus on the transformation of their worldview so that it can accommodate the earth-shaking understanding of Jesus’ identity and role, rather than trying to force Jesus into an unchanged Islamic worldview. As Hiebert emphasizes, “Although conversion must include a change in behavior and beliefs, if the worldview is not transformed, in the long run the gospel is subverted and becomes captive to the local culture. The result is syncretistic Christo-paganism” (2008:315). Thus, AMFA’s approach is not a technique to simply get Muslims to accept Jesus but rather a whole way of thinking. We believe that if we follow biblical principles, create a safe environment, ground all our beliefs in the text, and apply every truth we discover, Muslims will come to an understanding of who Jesus is when the time is right. Like Simon Peter, they will be able to confess, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” when God reveals this to them (Matt 16:16–17, CEV).
Potential Pitfalls

Critical to reaching this point is the groundwork laid in Stage One. Such studies of the Qur’an would be impossible if members did not have worldviews that view all truth as from God (Ps 31:5; White 1964:207), believe that God has left truth in every culture (Eccl 3:11; Rom 2:14–16; White 1975:638), and focus on lifting up truth instead of pointing out error (1 Cor 13:6; 1 Thess 5:21; White:207). Likewise, we as Adventists must take seriously the injunctions to begin our witness where people are (1 Cor 9:19–23; White 1900:58). We are reminded, “as God meets us where we are, so we are to meet men where they are. Let us not, by refusing to meet our fellow-men where they are, place ourselves outside the compass of God’s love and mercy” (White 1902:1143). Finally, the trust built in Stage Three is also necessary, as both Adventists and Muslims are out of their religious comfort zones.

Stage Five

With a solid groundwork of trust and foundational principles in place, we are ready for Stage Five: the formation of a unique and self-sustainable Adventist Muslim fellowship. Let me immediately clarify that we are not advocating that Adventists and Muslims abandon their original faith and adopt a sort of hybrid Adventist-Muslim religion. Rather, we envision this fellowship group as a safe spiritual environment where Muslims and Adventists can each grow in true faith and invite others to embark on a similar spiritual journey. This is also the stage where the group becomes a known presence in the community.

It is important that this step take place, for at some time Muslim members of the group will face the question of allegiance. Will they choose to follow the religious traditions, interpretations, and teachers they have grown up with? Or, will they have found such hope and truth in what they have discovered that they will be willing to shift their primary allegiance to scripturally defensible positions? This does not necessitate the total renunciation of their cultural structures (including faith practices and religious communities); rather, it is an internal allegiance shift to a Kingdom worldview. Nor does this allegiance change mean that they are now Seventh-day Adventists or that they are finally saved according to the traditional Christian understanding. Instead, participation in Stage Five represents a transitional move, from traditions to a more Scripture-based worldview.

Stage Five is also the culmination of the worldview transformation...
process that has been taking place all along. At this point, Adventist and Muslim group members intentionally examine every aspect of their cultures and worldviews and bring them into alignment with their allegiance to God. This conversion of worldviews involves three steps: (1) phenomenology—collecting and examining data about one’s beliefs and practices; (2) ontology—studying Scripture, critically evaluating one’s beliefs in light of that, and formulating new, more biblical ways of looking at reality; and (3) missiology—discipling believers to live out a Kingdom worldview (Hiebert 2006:30–33). In short, all members must be involved in the process of critical contextualization.

Case Examples

AMFA has not yet reached Stage Five, although the groundwork is being laid. We have consistently emphasized the importance of turning to God’s written revelations for authority over our own traditions, as well as the regular practice of applying what we learn to our lives. In addition, one of AMFA’s strengths is that members come from multiple cultural backgrounds, which help in avoiding the biases that occur when contextualization is done without consultation with the global hermeneutical community.

Potential Pitfalls

Critical contextualization is essential in Stage Five to avoid the syncretistic extremes of under-contextualization and over-contextualization (Bauer 2005; Brown 2006). Hiebert suggests a number of safeguards against syncretism (1994:91). First, believers must take Scripture seriously as the final rule for faith and practice. As Hesselgrave affirms, “Acceptable contextualization is a direct result of ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text, consciously submitting to its authority, and applying or appropriating that meaning to a given situation. The results of this process may vary in form and intensity, but they will always remain within the scope of meaning prescribed by the biblical text” (1995:116). Second, Hiebert continues, that critical contextualization recognizes that the Holy Spirit is able to guide all believers to apply scriptural truths to their lives. Third, contextualization is the responsibility of the entire body of believers and should be done with reference to both the global community and historic understandings.

It is important to remember that Stage Five is transitional. Thus, participants will go through the same transitional quandaries experienced by
all communities of faith who are involved in critical contextualization. One particularly thorny but expected issue is the use of the Qur’an. Members in this stage will likely refer to both the Qur’an and the Bible, as the Kingdom worldview and epistemology laid out in Stage One allow for God to reveal truths about himself in sources outside the Judeo-Christian Scriptures (for Adventists) and outside of the Qur’an (for Muslims). However, as the process of allegiance change takes place, the Bible will naturally rise in significance. To condemn the use of the Qur’an entirely at this stage is to forget the transitional nature and role of the contextualization process.

Stage Six

The final stage is the multiplication of the group. As members share with their communities what they have learned and live out transformed lives, it is natural for their families and friends to want to know more. Thus, Stage Six focuses on the birth of new Adventist Muslim Fellowship groups from the original group.

Multiplication takes place in three directions. In one direction, Adventist members of AMFA raise up new biblically grounded Seventh-day Adventists. This follows Ralph D. Winter’s idea of E-1 evangelism, or using messengers of the same culture as the receivers (Bergquist 1981:67). Kraft terms these messengers “in-culture advocates” (1996:401). In a second direction, Muslim members of AMFA work within the Muslim community, again following Winter’s E-scale typology and Kraft’s in-culture advocates. They share what they are experiencing and learning with their immediate families and larger Muslim community. Testimonies such as these from within the Islamic community build goodwill, create interest, and prepare other Muslims to join the fellowship groups. The third direction of multiplication is the formation of completely new AMFA groups.

Case Examples

Although AMFA is only at Stage Four, members are already laying plans for multiplication. Work among Adventists has begun in various areas, with AMFA members accepting speaking engagements and training opportunities in churches and at conferences, addressing issues of worldview in preparation for further training in ministry among Muslims. At Southern Adventist University, we discipled a student-led small group focused on understanding and loving Muslims, drawing on the material
from the *Called to Display His Glory* training manual. Meanwhile, Adventist members of AMFA have responded to requests from evangelical groups in the Atlanta area for training in how to connect with Muslims. This has opened up wonderful opportunities to share Adventist truths in the context of discussing worldview transformation.

Elsewhere, the Muslim members of AMFA are working as in-culture advocates within the Muslim community. The following is how one Muslim member expresses her role: “If people here [referring to the local Muslim community] ask what we are doing, why we are meeting together with non-Muslims, I tell them, ‘These Adventists are good people. They’re true believers. They know the Qur’an better than most Muslims. Of course we should meet with them!’” (personal communication, n.d.). This young woman shows strong leadership qualities and a deep understanding of spiritual issues and is already engaged in the transformation of her community.

In addition, new AMFA groups are coming into being. The student-led group at Southern Adventist University attracted the attention of the wider community, whose interest was reinforced by an Adventist Muslim Relations Summit hosted on the campus in early 2010. This has led to the establishment of an AMFA chapter in the Chattanooga area. The group is working through Stages One to Three, and strong relationships have already been built with local Muslims. Meanwhile, God is creating spiritual interest among new communities of Muslims in the Atlanta area. Current AMFA members, both Muslim and Adventist, have already volunteered to start up new AMFA chapters around these communities.

**Potential Pitfalls**

Stage Six is basically the cumulative results of Stages One to Five. Thus, failure to adopt a Kingdom worldview and use basic missiological and anthropological principles for ministry will become most evident at this stage. In that case, one of three results is likely: (1) the original group will remain as it is with no multiplication occurring, (2) new groups will be formed but will die off quickly or become absorbed into traditional Adventism or Islam, or (3) new groups will embrace a syncretistic blend of Christian and Muslim beliefs and practices. Thus, it is absolutely essential that a solid biblical foundation be laid from Stage One onwards.
Conclusion

This article described the general ministry plan used by AMFA in connecting Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims in the United States. The six stages above are as far as we have been able to foresee. Note that these stages do not represent six discreet periods that occur in a sharply linear, chronological manner. Instead, many of these stages overlap or even occur out of order. For example, AMFA is currently focusing on developing shared spiritual interactions (Stage Four). However, we continue to work on new interaction opportunities (Stage Two) and new relationships (Stage Three), while various members are already preparing new territory (Stage One) for the formation of a new group (Stage Six). We are still in process and recognize that there may be further stages which have not yet been envisioned, as well as further development and refinements of each stage.

In addition, there are aspects of our ministry that require additional study. For example, we are still in the process of understanding and developing ways that facilitate a shift from a naïve realist/idealistic epistemology to a critical realist outlook. This is an issue that is relevant to many outside the sphere of Adventist-Muslim relations. Also, AMFA’s ministry plan has not followed standard church-planting principles of focusing on one family group or people group and letting the gospel spread through natural relational networks (Patterson 2009:633–642; Lewis and Lewis 2009:690–693; Garrison 2004). More attention needs to be focused on planting fellowship groups within existing communities. Perhaps the second generation of AMFA groups will be more organic in its approach. We welcome critical input from the wider community of Adventists working among Muslims.

Although we recognize that AMFA’s approach is imperfect, we believe that it offers an important contribution to the largely untouched field of Islam in America. AMFA is breaking ground in exploring new ways for Seventh-day Adventists to relate to Muslims in a Western context. We have been encouraged by the enthusiasm with which this ministry has been received by Adventists and Muslims alike. More importantly, we have seen God working to steadily transform worldviews so that they reflect the values of his Kingdom. We pray that we will remain fully submitted and available to God so that through AMFA, many Muslims and Adventists will be part of the people of God who stand in the last days of earth’s history, humbly displaying the character of God before the entire universe. May we be just one glimmering facet in the vindication of God’s glorious name so that Christ can come at last to take his people home.
Works Cited

Adventist Muslim Fellowship Association of Atlanta website. 2008. Welcome page.  
Bauer, Bruce L. 2005. Avoiding Comfortable Syncretism by Doing Critical  
______. 2007. Bounded and Centered Sets: Possible Applications for Adventist  
______. 2008. The Availability of Salvation. Lecture presented at Middle East  
University, Beirut, Lebanon, July 7.
Bergquist, James A. 1981. Evangelism in Current Ferment and Discussion: A  
luthersem.edu/word&world/Archives/1-1_Evangelism/1-1__Bergquist.pdf  
(accessed May 21, 2010).
Frontier Missions 23, no. 3 (Fall): 127–133. http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/23  
_3_PDFs/brown%20c45.pdf (accessed May 23, 2010).
Conn, Harvie. 1984. Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and  
Foster, George M. 1973. Traditional Societies and Technological Change. New York:  
Harper and Row. Quoted in Charles H. Kraft, Anthropology for Christian Witness  
World. Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources.
htm.pdf (accessed May 18, 2010).
International Journal of Frontier Missions 12, no. 3 (July–September): 115–119.
Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
______. 2006. Worldview Transformation. In From the Straight Path to the Narrow  
Media.
Books.


North American Division Center for Adventist Muslim Relations. 2005. Called to Display His Glory: Giving and Being the Loud Cry. Loma Linda, CA: North American Division Center for Adventist Muslim Relations.


