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A Strategy to Engage Islamic Youth and Young Adults in Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia

Matthew F. Kamara

Andrews University

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ABSTRACT

A STRATEGY TO ENGAGE ISLAMIC YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS
IN GRAND CAPE MOUNT COUNTY, LIBERIA

By

Matthew Foday Kamara

Advisers: Bruce C. Moyer
Bruce L. Bauer

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Document

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGY TO ENGAGE ISLAMIC YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN GRAND CAPE MOUNT COUNTY, LIBERIA

Name of Researcher: Matthew F. Kamara

Name and degree of faculty advisers: Bruce C. Moyer, STD and Bruce L. Bauer, DMiss

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Problem

Since the arrival of the first official Adventist missionaries to Liberia in 1926, evangelistic efforts have been focused on non-Muslim communities. The nation's 14 years of civil crisis left 105,000 disarmed combatants who are mainly young people. Most of these young people are found in Grand Cape Mount County, a predominantly Islamic community where they are engaged in illicit diamond mining, illegal harvesting of latex, and other criminal activities for their income. There is a need for the Adventist church to use this situation as an opportunity to reach out to them with pilot projects that will empower them for economic sustenance and spiritual development. This may initiate deeper relationships between the church and the Muslims in that community.

Method

Current literature including articles, journals, and books dealing with Christian-Muslim relationships and with contextualizing the Adventist message in Muslim culture were reviewed through library research. Literature on historical, cultural, social, and political analyses of Liberia and specifically Grand Cape Mount County were also reviewed. The project will include a Leadership seminar, study of Islamic culture, implementation of pilot projects, and placement of tentmakers in Grand Cape Mount County. Finally, the project will be evaluated with recommendations made to stakeholders at the close of the project.

Expectation

The implementation of this project will begin a new era in Adventist-Muslim relationships in Liberia. Participants trained by this project will be assigned to conference tentmakers who would be placed in strategic locations in the county. These tentmakers will introduce participants to business enterprises where they will gain work experience, which will motivate them to establish their own small businesses or work to earn wages for their sustenance. The goal is that, occupied with their new vocation, these young people will recede from criminal activities and become contributors to the economic development of their community. Adventist Conference leaders may also appreciate the new development as an opportunity to establish relationships with the Muslims in the county. Through such friendship evangelism, the church and stakeholders may be encouraged either to continue their support for the project or to introduce similar new projects (elementary school, clinic etc.) that will meet the needs of the community and strengthen relationships with the people.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A STRATEGY TO ENGAGE ISLAMIC YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS
IN GRAND CAPE MOUNT COUNTY, LIBERIA

A Project Document
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Matthew F. Kamara

May 2014

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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Adviser
Bruce Campbell Moyer

Director, DMin Program
Skip Bell

Bruce L. Bauer

Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
Jiří Moskala

Kelvin Onongha

Date approved

To God Almighty;

Who's Noble Grace Sustains Us.

To Nerissa; My Confidante and Companion in Ministry

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	A Common Word—Between Christians and Muslims
AMFA	Adventists Muslim Friendship Association
ASWA	Adventist Seminary of West Africa
FDIC	Faith Development in Context
GC	General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
GCAMR	Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relationship
IAM	International Assistance Mission
MBMSI	Mennonite Brethren Mission Service International
MuCARD	Muslim-Christian Agency for Rural Development
TEAM	Thrust for Evangelism Among Muslims

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Islam is the world's second largest religion with 1.6 billion adherents, compared to Christianity with its 2.2 billion members worldwide (Pew Research Center, 2012). The inceptions of these two world religions in the Middle East among the Semitic people are traced to two historical figures (Jesus and Muhammad) who had similar humble beginnings (Mark 6:2,3; Az-Zukhruf 43:31,32), and were descendants of prominent ancestors in their respective communities (Woodberry, 2005, pp. 49, 50). Both religions trace their histories to Abraham (Michel, 2010, p. 82; Musk, 2005, p. 12), the patriarch who is designated in both the Bible and the Qur'an as a friend of God (Isaiah 41:8; Jam 2:23; An-Nisa 4:125). Both communities assert monotheistic belief (Deut 6:4; Al-'Imran 3:64) and proclaim the extension of God's kingdom on earth (Mark 1:14, 15; Al-'Imran 3:26).

However, despite the positive influences of these two religions which have shaped the lifestyle of over half of earth's 6.9 billion inhabitants (Pew Research Center, 2012), evidence of antipathy between them has been manifested throughout the centuries by continuous resistance and persecution. Unfortunately, the effect of those past grievances is still affecting the relationship between the two religions and is often expressed through

immense atrocities (Esposito, 2010, p. 11). Christian missionaries who venture to reach out to communities with Islamic *shari'a* laws enacted are either denied access to those communities or persecuted as enemies to their society. Although some Christian denominations have adopted various methods of evangelism to fulfill the proclamation of the gospel in Islamic communities, not much has overturned the resistance.

Nevertheless, popular uprisings resulting in civil conflicts in some nations have left large numbers of youth and young adults without jobs to sustain them; they are without careers to face the present global economic challenges. For instance, the Liberian 14-year's civil crisis left 105,000 disarmed combatants who are mainly young people (Medeiros, 2007, p. 499). Most of these young people are found in Grand Cape Mount County, a predominantly Islamic community, and are engaged in illicit diamond mining, illegal harvesting of latex, and other criminal activities for their sustenance. The Adventist Church can use this situation as an opportunity to reach out to these young people with pilot projects that will make a difference in their lives, empowering them for their economic sustenance and their spiritual development. This may lead to a meaningful relationship between the church and the Muslims in that community.

The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to establish meaningful relationships between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Muslim community in Grand Cape Mount County through pilot projects that will engage and train youth and young adults for their economic sustenance and spiritual development. Engaging them with vocational training (tailoring and carpentry) and religious studies from both the Qur'an and the Bible will

help them face economic challenges and assist them in developing deeper spiritual insights about God for their salvation.

Through this project, Palm Seventh-day Adventist church members will learn about Muslims and how to build relationships with them, especially in regard to concepts of honor and shame as a dynamic phenomenon of life upheld by Muslims (Dumitrescu, 2005, p. 17). It will also expose members of both religions to the similarities in their respective beliefs; this may enhance the possibility of contextualizing and attractively presenting the gospel with sensitivity (Dumitrescu, 2005, p. 37; Parshall, 2003, p. 35). It is hoped that this will result in tolerance and peaceful coexistence between the two faith communities. This approach may also increase the possibility of establishing Seventh-day Adventist churches and institutions in that community.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project is for the Adventist Church to reach out to the Muslim community of Cape Mount County by establishing pilot projects, which will equip youth to be useful citizens through economic development. The venture is to intentionally engage young people with practical training in tailoring and sewing that will also include religious study. The religious study will be based on spiritual values in the teachings of the Bible and Qur'an. This training and study will afford them the opportunity to build vocations and develop spiritual insight for their salvation.

Justification for the Project

The Great Commission to the disciples in Matthew 28 and Christ's mission on the shores of Galilee gives "confidence that the gospel is for all men" (Winter, 1999, p. 339). With Christ as our example, White (1911) affirms that Christians are to impart light

received from the Source of wisdom to those in darkness. They are to be instruments, “working agency, through which the gospel exercises its transforming power on mind and heart” (pp. 110, 134). This project is the gospel in practice. It is important because there has been no attempt made in the past to take the Seventh-day Adventist message to the people of Grand Cape Mount County. The success of this strategy rest on the following reasons: it will help the church fulfill its mission to the Muslim community in Cape Mount County, develop the young people of the county to be self-reliant, and prepare these young people to be economic contributors to the development of the community. This will help reduce criminal activities in the community, enable the church to establish trustworthy relationships with the people, and initiate the presence of the church there.

The inclusion of religious study will also help the young people to build relationships that God can use to their salvation. Finally, the strategies developed in this project may be implemented in other Islamic communities as practical demonstration of Christ’s method of reaching people by mingling with them, desiring their good, sympathizing with them and ministering to their need (White, 1942, p. 143).

Basic Assumptions

Evangelism is a primary purpose of the Adventist movement. It is therefore assumed that Palm Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is close to the Muslim community, will embrace the idea of structuring a committee of change agents in the church able to study about Muslims, engage them, and share the gospel with them sensitively to establish a positive relationship with them. Because this project would serve as a means of initiating Adventist contact with the inhabitants of Cape Mount

County, it is assumed that the conference headquarters will see it as an opportunity and provide the necessary support for the success of the project. Rather than stressing theological differences that may jeopardize the venture, it is also assumed that Adventists will recognize the similar values found in the two faith communities as a divine provision to initiate a relationship that the Holy Spirit can use to lead the people to the truth.

Definitions of Terms

There are terms used in this paper that readers may not be familiar with which need to be defined.

Dawah—evangelism, a means of spreading the faith by words or action

Dhimmi—Arabic word that means “under the protection of a new master”

Hanif—the one-God worshipers in Arabia, existed before the advent of Islam

Jahiliyya—the time of pagan ignorance before the emergence of Islam

Jihad—formerly a physical holy war but now designated as a battle with self

Ka'ba—Islamic shrine that pilgrims visit in Mecca

Lex talionis—the ancient Near Eastern law of retaliation

Shirk—the gravest offence of equating God (Allah) to any other being in Islam

Tawhid—the one-God phenomena in Islam

Zakat—alms giving or caring for the poor, a fundamental pillar of the Islamic faith

Limitations

This project is designed for the Liberia Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Its scope is limited to Palm Seventh-day Adventist church on Bushrod Island to be implemented in the Islamic community in Cape Mount County.

The literature review will be centered on Christian-Muslim relationships and is not intended to give an exhaustive account on the subject; the emphasis is on establishing relationships. It will focus on the following: an overview of Christian-Muslim relations in the past and the present, Adventist-Muslim relationships as experienced by the pioneers, Ellen White's view of contextualizing the Christian faith in other cultures and communities, and the activities of other denominations in Muslim communities.

Methodology

Current literature including articles, journals, and books dealing with Christian-Muslim relationships and contextualizing the Christian faith in Muslim culture were reviewed through library research. Literature on historical, cultural, social, and political analysis of Liberia and specifically Grand Cape Mount County were also reviewed.

Preceding the implementation of the project, Liberia Conference authorities will be informed and their approval requested for this venture. Following this, a leadership seminar in the Bushrod Island district will lead to the formation of a change agent committee in the Palm Church, to be followed by a special study program on Islamic history and beliefs. This will prepare the change agents to relate to Muslims for a successful implementation of the project. There will be an orientation workshop to assign roles of individual stakeholders. Meetings to review progress and to reaffirm the roles of stakeholders or to make necessary adjustments will be held as the project progresses. Then the pilot projects will be launched, beginning with the tailors, followed four months later by the carpenters. Tentmakers (trained tailors and carpenters) will be placed in strategic locations in the county to encourage and supervise the activities of the young

trainees as the training sections come to a close. Finally the project will be evaluated and recommendations will be made to stakeholders.

Expectations From the Project

The implementation of this project will begin a new era in Adventist-Muslim relationships in Liberia. Palm Church members have the essential knowledge about Muslims and how to relate to them with Christian love. These members will be delighted when they are used by the Holy Spirit to reach out to their Muslims brothers and sisters in the community. The young tailors and carpenters assigned to conference tentmakers placed in strategic locations in the county will be introduced to business enterprises where they will gain work experience that will motivate them to establish their own small businesses or work to earn wages for self-sustenance. These young people will recede from criminal activities to become contributors to the economic development of their community. It is also possible that through this project, the Islamic community in Cape Mount County and the Seventh-day Adventist Church will begin a relationship through friendship evangelism that may encourage the presence of the church in the county. This may also encourage the church or stakeholders to either continue their support for the project or introduce new projects to meet the needs of the people in the community.

Outline of the Project

There are five chapters in this paper with chapter one giving the synopsis of the project beginning with the problem.

Chapter two provides the theological foundation of the project with a focus on the promise made to Abraham, which is fulfilled in the Messiah through whose good news the world would be saved.

Chapter three presents the review of literature on Christian-Muslim relationships in the past and present, Adventist Muslim relationship in the past and the present under the auspices of Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relation (GCAMR) and bridge building strategies through contextualization of the gospel as a way of building on what the Lord had already started in the Islamic cultures.

Chapter four illustrates the historical, cultural, social, political, and religious analysis of the people in post-war Liberia with an emphasis on the inhabitants in Grand Cape Mount County. It further explains how the project strategies will be implemented, beginning with the training of the church members. The project utilizes the Log-frame Matrix evaluation criteria and shows the timeline of periodic activities in Gantt charts for years one and two.

Chapter five presents the summary of the project implementation, intervention logic, conclusion, and essential recommendations that deal with Christian-Muslim relationships.

Finally the appendix includes my personal history, ministry, temperament types, spiritual gifts, and areas of leadership strength with their relevance to ministry. It also has figures, tables, outlines of leadership seminar, and religious study guides for Christian-Muslim relationships enhancement.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION: GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION FOR ISHMAEL AND FAMILY

Introduction

Christians and Muslims disagree on the understanding of who the promised heir to Abraham is. According to Christians, the promised heir is Isaac. Muslims on the other hand strongly believe Ishmael is the legitimate son and heir according to the promise made to Abraham.

This chapter is not aimed at resolving this controversy. Its purpose is to point out that although Ishmael may not be the son of promise according to Christians, God nevertheless bestowed blessings upon him and has a place for him and his descendants in His plan of salvation. Because both Christians and Muslims claim to be descendants of the Patriarch Abraham (Rom 4:17; Al-Baqarah 2:135), how can God's promise of blessing to Abraham and his descendants be a bridge for a peaceful relationship between Christians and Muslims? Abraham received the promise and peacefully dwelled among the tribes in Canaan. Can Christians and Muslims emulate his act for peaceful coexistence to advance God's Kingdom?

God's Call and Promise to Abram

The fall of Adam and Eve in the Genesis narrative initiated the historical separation between God and His Creation. As a solution to accomplish reconciliation, God promised salvation through the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). The promise was underlined with enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent. This marked the beginning of the aged controversy that Paul would later refer to as the Christians experience of wrestling against principalities, powers, and spiritual hosts in heavenly places (Eph 6:12). Nevertheless, God made a gracious provision by the shedding of blood for sin to maintain communion “with man on the basis of His promise of a coming Redeemer, whose shed blood would be the price of redemption” (Morris, 1976, p. 133). However, despite the provision, sin perpetuated wickedness that displeased God (Gen 6) and He eventually decided to put an end to it through the Great Flood (Gen 7).

The Postdiluvian generations through the descendants of Noah, were also entangled with apostasy that led to division among them. White (1890) says those who were not pleased with the restraint caused by the teachings of God's law and desire to forget the Creator, separated themselves from the true worshipers of God. They moved to the plain of Shinar and, like their predecessors before the flood, they nurtured wickedness in their heart, which caused God to confuse their language (pp. 118-119) and disperse them on the face of the earth.

From Shinar, the nations became corrupt and perverse in idolatry again. However, there were still “few (as illustrated by Job, Melchizedek, and others) who genuinely loved God” (Morris, 1976, p. 293) and kept the knowledge of God among these recalcitrant idol worshipers. It was at this juncture that God choose a new approach when he called

Abram, a descendant of Shem the son of Noah, through whom He decided to fulfill His plan of salvation for the recovery of His creation.

From Haran to Canaan

Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.... So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Gen 12:1, 4.

The name “Abram or Abiram” in its original form means “the father or my father (relating to deity) is exalted” (McKenzie & Kaltner, 2007, p. 84), was later changed to Abraham but not without theological significance. The biblical narrative presented this important figure in religious history as the son of Terah the descendant of Shem who lived in the city of Ur but later journeyed to Haran with the purpose of going to Canaan (Gen 11:10-32). Scripture is silent on the activity and influence of the patriarchs in the land of Mesopotamia before the departure for Canaan. Though no reason is given in the Scripture for Terah’s sojourn from Ur to Haran (Gen 11:31), speculations hold that in the patriarchal age, famine (Gen 12:10; 41:57; Ruth 1:1) and climatic changes were often the cause of relocation.

There is no indication given for Terah’s motive of leaving Ur. However, Janzen (1993) suggested that the narration of the departure was preceded by two facts: Haran, his youngest son died and Abram his oldest son had no children (pp. 20-21). Whether these calamities influenced his departure in search of a better fortune, remains a mystery. Sarna (1970) reasons that because no external sources have been discovered that refer by name to any of the patriarchs or personages associated with them, the biblical data are all we have to fall back on (pp. 81-82).

Nichol (1976) claimed therefore that the journey was in response to God's call to Abram but because societal or cultural norms could not attenuate Terah, as head of the family, being led by his son, the father therefore assumed his status as head in leading the family out of Ur. This condition expresses the extent of Abram's influence on the family (p. 291). Nichol argued that the call is believed to have occurred in two phases: the first in Ur and the second in Haran. Such a view seems to be appropriate in view of the patriarch's prompt response without question or doubt about the call in Haran. Abram's immediate response to the call suggests that a previous contact with God must have taken place; so, without reluctance he left relatives and a highly civilized culture with rich fertile grazing land, to live in an arid, mountainous country among tribes of materially lower culture and degraded religion, compared to what was practiced in Ur with its riches and great temples.

A sacrifice of this nature must have been built on trust in a relationship and not just a single call from an unknown God. Furthermore, with Melchizedek as his contemporary, the situation agrees with Morris' (1976) claim that there were worshippers of the true God here and there among the nations in the postdiluvian world (p. 293).

For Shelley (2001), this call is evidence of a bridge building process to enhance God's ongoing interaction with man, which had been consistently hampered by rebellion from Eden to the Tower of Babel where human efforts strived for tributes to themselves (pp. 6-7). Nee (1995) stretched this view further by affirming Abram's importance in the new dispensation of man's redemption story. He argued that Abram was the "starting point in God's plan of redemption and in His work of recovery" (p. 16). Such an expression sounds hyperbolic because Christ, the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the

world” (Rev 13:8) had already started the process. And the shedding of blood for sin introduced to Adam after the fall, as faithfully demonstrated by Abel had also been part of the process of redemption that was pointing to the Savior to come (White, 1941, p. 152).

Thus Abram was called to be the progenitor of the new dispensation of God’s approach to reconcile man to his Creator. This reveals the depth of God’s love for His creation with a plan that is older than Creation itself, through which “exclusivity is determined by God as a way to be in relationship with humanity with the intent of inclusivity as the ultimate goal” (Shelley, 2001, p. 7) for the salvation of all.

Abram in Canaan

When Abram finally accomplished his journey, he arrived in Shechem in the land of Canaan. The oak tree at his encampment in Shechem was a sacred site where homage was paid to diverse gods among the ancient Semites in Canaan (Parrot, 1968, p. 67). In the midst of idol worshipers, the patriarch demonstrated his commitment to his purpose by building an altar to worship the God he obeyed (Gen 12:6, 7). From this, one may infer Joshua’s reasons for assembling the Israelites at Shechem (Joshua 24), to decide who to serve among the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and the Amorite gods, or Yahweh the God of Israel.

To affirm the prevalence of idolatrous living in Abram’s days, Joshua linked Terah himself to the worship of other gods beyond the river (Josh 24:2). Laban the uncle of Jacob accused Jacob of stealing his gods (Gen 31:30-32). Nevertheless, there is no scriptural reference of Abram paying homage to a god or gods. He rather kept his focus on the God Scriptures reveal called him out of Ur to sojourn in Canaan; where, according

to Kuschel (1995) he built altars in Shechem and Bethel on sites that were “of Canaanite sanctuaries”(p. 16). To prove idolatrous practices in Canaan before Abram’s arrival, Gaubert (1968) attested to archeological discoveries that show that Canaanites were worshippers of high places: “mountains, raised stones, caves, isolated trees and springs” (p. 62). Though he was worshiping the true God in the midst of idolatrous shrines and altars, the patriarch left a legacy of peacefully dwelling among the Canaanites without coercing or intimidating anyone on religious matter.

A Blessing to all Nation

The promise to Abram embedded between the call and his response that took him to Canaan, is the ultimate focus of the Abrahamic story to fulfill God’s redemptive plan for His creation. Scripture declared:

I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless: I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Gen 12:2-3)

Responding to God’s call to leave Mesopotamia for Canaan, Arnold (2009) says that Abram made a sacrifice of his potential security, including the familial support that is central to ancient tribal sensibilities. Leaving country, kindred, and his father’s house was not common in his days (pp. 130-131) . However, Kuschel (1995) argued that as a reward for his obedience, the promise to Abram was embedded with three promises that form the basis of the Abrahamic stories. In his view, the promise enhances the theological focus, giving a well-thought-out and profound theology of Abraham himself (p. 17), to which Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have access to build their faith communities. The promise therefore made Abram a blessing not only to his descendants but also to all

nations as plainly stated by God in the Scripture, “I will make your name great and you will be a blessing.”

God promised to Abram innumerable descendants (Gen 12:2; 15:5), land ownership in Canaan (Gen 12:7; 15:7), and a blessing that would be extended to his descendants and all the nations without cost attached (Gen 12:3). This was unrealistic to the human mind for the following reasons: (a) Abram was 75 years old and his wife Sara was beyond childbearing age, (b) he was a sojourner, a Hebrew with fewer rights compared to prominent tribes such as the Kenizzites, Kandmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Jebusites, and Rephaim he met dwelling in the land (Gen 15:18-20).

The promise of innumerable descendants and a blessing that will not be limited to Abraham and his descendants, but extended to all the other nations with no cost attached (12:3), was a graceful promise that involved Abram’s wife Sarah and her maid Hagar. They also received the pronouncement from God of having children who would be the ancestors of great nations (see Appendix E). To Hagar the angel of the Lord said, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude” (16:10). While speaking to Abraham, God made reference to Sarah when He said, “And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her” (17:16).

Further analysis of the promise reveals that at 99 years of age, after the birth of his son Ishmael, God re-affirmed His promise to Abraham and his progeny with the extension to other people and nations, confirming His covenant in the following words:

As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be

Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. (Gen 17:4-7)

With these statements from God Himself, rejection of people not descended from Isaac is out of place in this covenant. Since Abraham was now destined to be the ancestor of a multitude of people and nations, the blessing is therefore not an exclusive possession of a particular nation; rather it “extends beyond Israel and embraces people who do not stand in the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (Kuschel, 1995, p. 22). Thus it is appropriate to say that the authority and scope of Abraham’s blessing is actually universal, which Old Testament scholar Westermann (1987) endorsed when he said “the blessing of God announced in the promise to Abraham does not achieve its purpose until it encompasses all the families of the earth” (p. 99).

Since such a promise would not possibly be fulfilled in the lifetime of the recipient, Sarna (1966) claimed that its acceptance reveals not only Abram’s compliant personality but also the magnitude of his faith (p. 100). Commenting on the promise of a great nation, Sarna further stressed that a radical break from the tradition of polytheistic paganism practiced in Mesopotamia and the surrounding nations, was a necessity for the fulfillment of God’s purpose of recovery from the rebellious fall in the Garden of Eden, which would be made possible only through the mediation of a new people (p. 101). In agreement with Sarna, Westermann (1987) says that Abram’s call was to start a nation, hence “Abraham will become a great nation; the nation descended from Abraham will have a great name” (p. 99).

After analyzing the historical activities of Abraham and his connection with the nation of Israel based on the Yahwist and the Priestly writing, Fretheim (2007), asserts

that the patriarch Abraham is Israel's progenitor and therefore the father of the nation (pp. 22-26). Such an affirmation unequivocally places Israel as the rightful custodian of the truth that should guide the nations to fulfill God's purpose of recovery in the redemption story that Abram was called to initiate in Canaan.

Citing the importance of the promise, Kuschel pointed out its astonishing effect when compared to the constant disobedience of earth inhabitants from the fall to the construction of the tower on the plain of Shinar, yet God pronounced such an unrestrained promise on them (Kuschel, 1995, p. 20). The promise marked the beginning of an unfathomable privilege, with no threat of extinction; instead the assurance of salvation was given through Abraham and his descendants—indeed a deliberate gift from God. Abraham and his descendants were to occupy a special position among the nations of the world, destined to be mediators of blessings from God to the people of the world. The nation of Israel, as descendants of the recipient of the promise, therefore had no choice but to shoulder the responsibility of revealing the true God as a blessing to the nations.

White (1898) held a similar view when she asserted that Israel was chosen by God to reveal His character to men. According to her "He desired them to be wells of salvation to the world... the Hebrew people were to be among the nations. They were to reveal God to men" (p. 27). Rabi Abraham Joshua Haschel (cited in Greenleaf, 1977) stretched that concept further when he compared the Jews and their religion (Judaism) to a messenger that forgot the message (p. 266), indicating that Israel as a chosen nation failed to accomplish the purpose of her calling in blessing the nations with the knowledge

of God. They rather took God to be their personal God that should have nothing to do with other nations.

According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, all other promises in the Scriptures to the patriarchs and to Israel in particular, are top-ups that either illuminate or amplify the salvific promise offered to the human race through Abraham (Nichol, 1976, p. 294). The covenant is “everlasting” (Gen 17:7), that is why Moses referred to it in Exodus 32:13, and God’s response reveals how “God so commits the divine self to these promises that, even in the wake of massive Israelite idolatry, Moses can appeal to them as still binding for God” (Fretheim, 2007, p. 30). It is therefore appropriate to say that God is still committed to His promise for the good of all nations made to Abram.

Ishmael as a Beneficiary of the Blessing

The universality (all nations) of the Abrahamic promise demands the inclusiveness of all families on earth. On a deeper level, the patriarch’s descendants are the privileged class, the subject of the covenant to be God’s people forever in Genesis 17:4-7. In other words, the covenantal family is to be divine agents to reveal the true God, the creator of the world to the postdiluvian idolatrous generation. However, it is emphasized glaringly in the Scriptures (Gen 25:1-6, 12-18) that Hagar’s (i.e., Ishmael) and Keturah’s descendants (Abraham’s children) are among the Arabian tribes (Kuschel, 1995, p. 22). Ishmael was circumcised along with his father as the covenant demanded (Gen 17:23), and therefore a beneficiary, not merely by the privilege extended to other nations but by birth as a son of Abraham. It is therefore appropriate to say that the Abrahamic pedigrees are extended to the Arabian community and that they are

beneficiaries of the Messianic prophecy embedded in the Abrahamic promise. It is a reality that cannot be denied and a challenge to the Christian community in its mission to reach the world with the gospel.

Place and Purpose of God for Ishmael and Family

Among the world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam stand out to be the only three religions claiming ancestral heritage to Abraham and to appeal through their traditions of having the “Abrahamic faith” (Lodahl, 2010, p. 9). However, while Jews and Christians point to Isaac as their ancestral connection to the patriarch, Muslims designate their relationship through Ishmael the older son of Abraham by Hagar the Egyptian maid of Sarai, Abraham’s wife (Gen 16:8). Although the Bible designates Isaac as the legitimate heir to Abraham, the biblical narrative reveals that God’s purpose for Ishmael and his family obviously includes them in His plan of salvation to recover the lost creation.

The Birth of Ishmael

Abram was childless when he finally arrived in Canaan. In the course of his relationship with God, Abram engaged Him in a conversation for his need of a familial heir in his own house to perpetuate his progeny; this was a crucial matter in Abram’s days. He appealed to God and God responded as seen in their conversation below:

But Abram said, “Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!” And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” (Gen 15:2-5)

The verse after this dialogue affirms that Abram believed all that the Lord said to him and was considered as righteousness. However, the apparent delay in the fulfillment of God's promise to the patriarchal family after ten years (Gen 16:3) set the stage for doubt and speculation; so Sarai urged Abram to take Hagar, her maidservant, as a wife with the hope of raising descendants through her since, according to Sarai, God had obstructed her child-bearing (16:2). From the scriptural perspective, it was Sarai's idea and, without hesitation, Abram succumbed to the suggestion made by his wife, which led to Hagar becoming pregnant (Gen. 16:1-4). The pregnancy brought dissatisfaction in the patriarchal home when Hagar started disrespecting Sarai.

Sarah's harsh response to Hagar's disrespectful attitude caused Hagar to flee into the wilderness (16:6)—a phase that reveals God's involvement in the family pandemonium even though the scriptural narrative gives no indication of His initial participation. Surprisingly, Hagar's encounter with God in this narrative marks the first appearance of an angel in all the scriptures; Ishmael is also the first baby named by God Himself (Nelson, 2011, p. 302). To protect the child, the angel of the Lord told Hagar to go back and submit to her mistress, with the promise of increasing her descendants through the child she was carrying; the child was to be named Ishmael, meaning "God hears" (16:9-11). Robert Darnell claimed that it is the theological efficacy coupled with the promise embedded in the name "Ishmael, God hears or God will hear" that gave Hagar the courage to return and submit to her mistress. The significance of the name was demonstrated again when God heard the lad's cry in the hot desert of Beersheba (Gen 21:17-20) where they became stranded after Abram sent them away (J. W. Whitehouse, 2004).

Unlike during the fall when God chided Adam and Eve for their disobedience (Gen 3:16-17), amazingly, the narrative in Abram's story does not have a single word of rebuke from God for the patriarch and his wife's misconception of God's plan, or for going contrary to His plan with their personal scheme. Instead, the Lord reaffirmed His covenantal promise with Abram, changed his name, and further amplified His promise that He will make him the father of many nations (17:4-8).

The Lord then instructed Abraham to circumcise every male in his household as his part of the covenant, a command that should be observed by his descendants in every generation as a sign of a perpetual covenant with God (17:9-13). Abraham took his son Ishmael who was 13, and all the males born in his household, and carried out God's covenantal mandate that same day (17:23), indicating that Ishmael was a part of God's covenant made with Abraham. And being his son, Ishmael and his descendants were to uphold the knowledge of God through this covenant and its sign (circumcision) through succeeding generations. No curse, God's covenant was a blessing for Abraham and his descendants. Only candid "objective handling of God's word can brighten stereotypes darkened over centuries of biased tradition," especially about Ishmael among evangelicals and some Christian leaders (Maalouf, 2003, p. 44).

In Esposito's (2002) view, it was the fear that Ishmael will overshadow Isaac to become the prime inheritor of the Abrahamic heirloom that impelled Sarah to pressure Abraham to send Hagar and her son away (p. 5). The narrative at this juncture has no explicit record of God denouncing Ishmael, nor excluding him from the promised blessing, nor from the Divine-Abrahamic covenant established with Abraham and his descendants (Gen 17:10-13). The Divine oracle instead blessed him and his descendants.

Promise to Ishmael's Descendants

It was unfortunate that the anticipated joy of the patriarchal family that had been craving for a legatee turned sour when Hagar's pregnancy became known (Gen 16:4-6) and escalated when Isaac was born. The birth of Isaac seems to have eradicated the tolerance that previously sustained the family tension. A spark of mockery from Ishmael towards his brother triggered the historical separation that Abraham found difficult to endorse (21:11). However, divine counsel, including a promise of safety and multiplication of the young man's posterity, helped to calm the patriarch's distress (21:11-14). In His own words, God said:

Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed. (21:12-13)

Theological scrutiny of this text reveals that Hagar was not the wife that the Lord approved to be the mother of the Messianic promise. She is referred to in this context as a bondwoman. However, that did not exempt her and her descendants of the privilege of salvation through the promise. The dilemma in the patriarchal home between the two mothers was actually focused on who was the heir to the inheritance of Abraham. Apparently the spiritual promise to bless the world (that Paul referred to as pointing to Christ as the promised seed (Gal 3:16, 19) was possibly not even known to Abraham himself. As such the focus on inheritance was based on the traditional values of the times. However, Nichol claimed that Ishmael's continued mocking or taunting of Isaac not only disturbed the peace of the household, but was rooted in jealousy that could have led to strife over the question of who was to be the heir to the patriarch. Paul rendered that narrative as persecution of Isaac by Ishmael (Gal 4:29-30), which noticeably suggests a

future threat to Isaac, for which Sarah concluded Hagar and her son Ishmael had to leave (Nichol, 1976, Vol. 1, p. 344).

However, Jewish theologians certainly uphold that “the God who guides the history of Israel also guides the destinies of all peoples” (Kuschel, 1995, p. 131). Such a view suggests that God had a plan for Ishmael and his descendants, as He repeatedly stated that He would make him a great nation. These affirmations were heard from the angel to Hagar (Gen 16:9; 21:18) and from God Himself when He assured the patriarch concerning a blessing for the son of the bondwoman because he is Abraham’s *seed* also (21:13).

The Abrahamic narrative maintains focus on Isaac and his descendants and gives no actual detail on Ishmael and his children. However, in Janzen’s (1993) view such summary material in the biblical narrative about Ishmael and his descendants does not in any way make the people less important. Rather it reveals the wider nature of the human story and their “kindred connections, all under the aegis of the God of heaven and earth” (p. 92). In accordance with His plan, God did protect Ishmael and his mother in the wilderness by providing a well in the desert for them to drink from. Ishmael grew and dwelt in the wilderness of Paran and took a wife from Egypt (21:18-21). And as an authentic fulfillment of God’s promise to him (17:20), he had 12 sons with distinctive names who became princes in their nations (25:13-16). Though Bible writers gave no details of these Ishmaelite princes and their nations, it is amazing that extra biblical records have linked them to great nations and empires in what is known today as the Middle East.

The Children of the East

From the scriptural analysis about Abraham's family, it is implicit that his descendants are divided into two groups: the children of the East—comprising Keturah's and Ishmael's children that he gave gifts to and sent away to the East (Gen 25:5-6), and the Hebrews—the progenies of Isaac, the son of Sarah (17:19). God's plan for the children of Abraham was to preserve the truth about Himself as the Creator, which is explicit in His covenantal statement. The Bible says: "And God said to Abraham: 'As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations'" (17:9). As a sign of the covenant, males were to be circumcised in their generations as affirmed in verse ten. As children of the covenant, it means the children of the East would work in partnership with Isaac to preserve the knowledge of God, and as traders, take that light of truth about God to distant places to fulfill the promised blessing made to Abraham in Genesis twelve.

Regardless of tribal differences, there are indications in the Scripture that some of the children of the East stayed close together in their choice of livelihood as caravan traders. Notice the description ascribed to them in Gen 37 by Jacob's sons when they were about to sell their brother Joseph:

So Judah said to his brothers, "what profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt. (Gen 37:26-28)

The above text is using Ishmaelite and Midianite interchangeably, obviously referring to the same group of people. However, unknowingly the Ishmaelites became an instrument of salvation to rescue Joseph from the hands of his brothers. He was then sold

in Egypt, a misfortune that God's providence reversed to make Joseph a great leader in Egypt in order to preserve the remnant of Jacob (Bechara, 2011, p. 207)

The rescue provision resulted in the slavery of the Israelite in Egypt. It is interesting that Moses, a Hebrew who would later lead the children of Israel out of bondage from Egypt ran for safety to Media, when pursued by Pharaoh for killing an Egyptian. He was trained in the house of a Midianite priest call Reuel (Exod 2:16,18) who will later become his father-in-law. Reuel (Jethro) was not a pagan priest; God preserved His truth with the Abrahamic covenantal children of the East. Jethro was a priest of God; Scripture affirmed that he rejoiced, blessed the name of the Lord for His goodness to Israel and offered burnt offering and other sacrifices to God (Exod18:9-12). Aaron came with the elders of Israel to eat bread with Jethro before the Lord. It is important to note that Jethro not only guided Moses to increased knowledge of God during the years spent with him (Musk, 2005, p. 302), but also counseled him on shared leadership to save both Moses and the people from burnout (Gen18: 15-24). Notice also that Moses appealed to Hobab the son of Reuel (Jethro) his father-in-law to stay with the children of Israel with a promise of sharing the blessings that Israel would receive from God (Num 10:29-33). The narrative reported no refusal from Hobab, and the cordiality in Moses' appeal is glaring in the text.

Although there is no etymological certainty about the origin of Balaam and his name, Jewish tradition designated him as a prophet for the Gentiles (Maalouf, 2003, p. 196). Scripture ascribed him to as prophet who was not a Hebrew. He was from the East and was recognized by the inhabitants of the community to be someone with the spirit of God, capable of cursing and blessing people (Num 22:6-7). When asked to curse the

children of Israel by Balak the king of Moab, Balaam consulted with God, and the Lord instructed him to say only what He would tell him (22:21, 35). He made sacrifices to the Lord and blessed the children of Israel instead of cursing them (23:8-10).

Balaam's story is another perspective on how God maintained the knowledge of His existence among the covenant children of the East. His prophetic message about the scepter that would arise out of Israel (24:17) was clearly a Messianic prophecy pointing to the coming of Jesus Christ among the Jews in Israel. This prophetic message was kept and remembered by faithful adherents of the Abrahamic promise among the children of the East. As a fulfillment of their expectation, some of them appeared in Jerusalem under the direction of a star to seek and worship the Messianic king of the world when Christ was born in Bethlehem (Matt 2:1-3). These biblical truths cannot be ignored.

Job is another distinct character who believers admire in the Scriptures but without a documented familial connection. Musk (2005) claimed that he lived in the days of the patriarchs in the land of Uz, which the Septuagint of the Old Testament (OT) designated to be in the land of the Aistai located in the Arabian desert (p. 248). The Ishmaelites are the same people referred to as the children of the East and are also designated as the Arabs; Job is reckoned to have been one of them. This view is accepted because Job's name is attested to outside of Israel (Maalouf, 2003, pp. 112, 113, 121). However, Scripture describes him as a great man, upright and just among the people of the East (Job 1:1-3), whose faith has become admirable in the Christian and Muslim communities.

Westermann (1987) designated the names listed as descendants of Keturah and Ishmael as being Arabic names. Keturah, meaning "incense," he claimed must have come

from Arabia the land of incense (p. 176). Indeed God manifested His presence among the people of the East, keeping His covenant made with Abraham that is embedded with the promise concerning a multitude of descendants, which is the focus of the Genesis story (Paulien, 1998, pp. 47, 48).

Melchizedek, whose background is not mentioned in the Scriptures, stands outside the Abrahamic tradition, depicted as greater than Abraham (Musk, 2005, p. 250) and was a contemporary of Abraham and Lot. Biblical narrative confirms that he was the king of Salem (peace) and “the priest of the God Most High” who blessed Abraham after the rescue mission of his nephew Lot (Gen 14:18). Melchizedek’s mysterious appearance in this narrative underscores John Paulien’s description of God as “the unpredictable God” (Paulien, 2011, p. 85). We often think that Abram was the only true worshiper of God in his time but Melchizedek proved that concept to be wrong. Bechara (2011) therefore summed it up saying that God’s people have no monopoly on the redemptive plan to save humanity (p. 209). God is in the midst of His people and we are not to forget that He is always there before us (Taylor, 1963, p. 10).

To illustrate the phenomena of partnership in the worship of the true God, the prophet Isaiah brought into his prophetic picture the children of Abraham from the East in his message to the Hebrews:

The multitude of camels shall cover your land, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba shall come; They shall bring gold and incense, And they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together to you, The rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; They shall ascend with acceptance on My altar, And I will glorify the house of My glory. (Isa 60:6, 7)

In an affirmation of praise to the true God, the prophet urges the inhabitants of the earth to sing praises to the Lord. Again Abraham’s descendants from the East are brought into his prophetic picture, when he said:

Sing to the Lord a new song, And His praise from the ends of the earth, You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, You coastlands and you inhabitants of them! Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, The villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, Let them give glory to the Lord, And declare His praise in the coastlands. (Isa 42:10-12)

The view of partnership is glaring in the prophet's emphasis on a joint recognition and praise to the Lord. It definitely affirmed the Abrahamic ecumenism by mentioning the names of the patriarch's descendants of the East. According to the prophet, they will come to the light of Israel with wealth and flocks; specific names like Kedar and his brother Nebajoth (Gen 25:13) the sons of Ishmael, Midian, Ephah, and Sheba (Gen 25:2-4) the children of Keturah (Isa 60:6, 7) are mentioned.

Isaiah's prophesy could be related appropriately to the visit of the Magi, who came from the East to see the Lord at His birth with valuable gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matt 2:1, 2, 11); this could be considered as a possible fulfillment of that prophecy. The text affirmed that they came to worship the Lord, and in their own words they said, "where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him" (verse 2). The prophet Isaiah's inclusive message to the Hebrews at a time of spiritual lethargy in Israel is a reiteration of God's promise to Abraham.

Robert Darnell, a former president of the Middle East Union, and an authority in the Abrahamic covenant (as affirmed by the mentioning of his name in the bibliography of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*), and advocate for reaching Muslims in their context, asserted the reality of the partnership as seen in the use of incense received from the children of the East for temple worship in Israel as recorded in Leviticus and Numbers (as cited in J. W. Whitehouse, 2004).

Relationship Between Ishmael and Isaac: A Prototype for Christians and Muslims

Ishmael and Isaac are the two sons of Abraham that Christians and Muslims regard as important figures in their faiths. God's call and promise to Abraham was a recovery approach to reconcile people to their Creator in the postdiluvian world. In the covenant to Abram God said, "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and your descendants after you" (Gen 17:7). Theological assurance in the context of this covenant, suggests Abraham's descendants as people of God. And being an everlasting covenants, both sons and their posterities have rights to the God of their father if they maintain the requirement of the covenant.

Abraham lived an exemplary life for his sons and servants to emulate. He dwelt peacefully among the tribes in Canaan building alters in Shechem, Bethel, and Mamre that were renowned idol worshiping centers in Canaan (Parrot, 1968, pp. 70, 76, 77). However, Parrot further says that although "Abram and his family worshipped in the same cultic centers, they still kept their distance" (p. 113). It indicates that Abraham worshiped his God peacefully without coercing or intimidating others in the communities he dwelled in Canaan. For Gaubert (1968), the patriarch's religious experience in the midst of other cultic practices was exceptional. He asserts that Abram's "jealous attachment to his one God, a God of justice and purity, enabled the Hebrew to set out on the path leading to an ever nobler moral, religious and social life" (p. 53). It was such a lifestyle that moved Abimelech, the Philistine king, and Phichol, his commander to

establish a non-aggression treaty with Abraham so they could live peaceably in the land of Canaan (Gen 21:22-23).

The Abrahamic narrative as a whole affirms that God was pleased with the patriarch's exemplary lifestyle; three times he is referred to in the scriptures as a friend of God (2 Chron 20:7; Isa 41:8; Jam 2:23). Unequivocally, the patriarch's lifestyle must have made an indelible impression on the minds of his two boys. Their faithfulness to the God of their father as shown in the narratives presented in the Bible and the Qur'an, is a factor in the argument between Christians and Muslims on the son Abraham was tested by God to sacrifice. Although the purpose of referring to this argument is not in any way to decide on who is right or wrong on this age-old debate between Christians and Muslims and among Islamic scholars (Caspi & Cohen, 1995, p. 96), it nevertheless provides some theological insight on the character of the two boys and how they may have related to each other. In both narratives in the Bible and the Qur'an, the victim willingly submitted to be sacrificed by his father to please his God (Gen 22:1-13; As-Saffat 37:101-109). It therefore suggests that the boys were wholly committed to the God of their father as well.

Presumably, with their knowledge of God, these two brothers may have lived in harmony with each other because there is no record in either the Bible or the Qur'an of any conflict between them. Together they buried their father in Machpelah on the property that Abraham purchased from the Hittite (Gen 25:7-11). Esau, the son of Isaac, married Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael (28:9), indicating that their children lived in harmony with each other as well. It is also appropriate to say that through God's providence, Joseph's angry brothers did not kill him, but sold him to Ishmaelite traders

who took him to Egypt as a slave (Gen 37:28), only to become a savior to Jacob's family during the famine season in Canaan (Gen 42). However, the famine relief resulted into slavery.

Decades later when Israel returned to Canaan from bondage in Egypt, there was still evidence of a positive relationship between the children of Ishmael and the children of Isaac. Maalouf (2003) affirms this view for the following reasons; throughout David's military campaigns in Canaan, Ishmaelites were not listed among the victims of his plunder even though they were dwelling in Shur, the designated community of his raid (1 Sam 27:8; Gen 25:18); David's sister Abigail the mother of Amasa, was married to Jether the Ishmaelite (1 Chr 2:17); Obil the Ishmaelite and Jaziz the Hagarite were among David's administrators placed in charge of his camels and flocks respectively (1 Chr 27:30). This suggests that Ishmaelites were in the kingdom of Israel during the reign of David as king.

Solomon also experienced positive relationships with the descendants of Ishmael. During his reign, he received gifts constantly from traveling merchants and Arab kings in Arabia (1 Kgs 10:15). In Maalouf's (2003) view such a relationship must have had religious impact, which he claims Christ Himself affirmed, by making reference to the queen of Sheba (Matt 12:42; Luke 11:31) as a believer (p. 118).

It is unfortunate though, that the Abrahamic narrative maintains a focus on Isaac and his descendants without any details on Ishmael. The reason for this according to Janzen (1993) is to maintain the focus and order of the story. However, in his view the summary kindles the importance of the characters as well and reveals the wider nature of

human story and their “kindred connections, all under the aegis of the God of heaven and earth” (p. 92).

The above records of positive relationship between the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac are good examples that Christians and Muslims can reflect on in their claim to have the faith of the patriarch Abraham (Gal 3:6,7 An-Nisa 4:163) through his two sons. Their positive examples are necessary reality check by adherents of both faith communities in this 21-century. Abraham’s exemplary lifestyle is revealed in his peaceful, moral, and noble character, his influence on his two boys, and the fact that they were committed to their father’s God.

In pursuit of fulfilling God’s plan of reconciliation, it would be appropriate to say that true believers in the God of Abraham will emulate the patriarch’s example of love, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence he exhibited with people in his community in Canaan. Kung (2007) says Christians and Muslims are the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. He affirms that “Israelites felt related to the early Arabs in origin” and lived together peacefully with economic ties from the time of Solomon the king to the time of Muhammad (pp. 53, 87). Therefore, the unfriendly relationship between the two religions expressed through Crusades, terrorism, and other forms of persecutions in the past, should not prevent them from peacefully fulfilling their obligation of presenting the Abrahamic faith to the world. Like Abraham, adherents of the two religions are to demonstrate in words and actions the true love of God they believe in. Thus, positive relationships and peaceful coexistence between the two religions will provide an opportunity of learning of God’s revealed truth to people of other cultures in His redemptive plan to save the world.

Strategy for a Peaceful Co-existence

Christ's method of relating to people of non-Jewish descent is the foundation needed for Christians to adopt in their approach to Muslims for a peaceful coexistence with them. In His conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus started from the known context and eventually led a multitude of the Samaritans to believe in Him (John 4:5-26). Notice that Samaritans were enemies of the Jews as stated in the context of the conversation. It would be right to say that the "bridge building" initiated by Christ Himself in this passage suggests that God's plan of salvation promised to Abraham (Gen 12, 18 and 21) is inclusive and not limited to race, group of people or a nations. In the gospels, Luke affirmed this further in his report on Jesus' message to believers in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4). In that narrative Jesus made reference to Namaan commander of the Syrian army, who came to Israel for healing from leprosy while lepers in Israel did not experience the miraculous healing power of God.

It is obvious that Samaritans and Syrians were not friendly to Israel; they were enemies. Surprisingly it was through a Jewish maid—a captive—that Namaan was introduced to the divine power in Israel (2 Kgs 5) as the solution to his problem. The divine power was promised to believers (John 16:7-10) and is still available to God's people as the solution to their problems. Christ's act of making this reference suggests that individual differences that affect theological approaches to each other, does not in any way change God's inclusive purpose of recovering and reconciling with His creation. Jesus Christ's approach to the Samaritan woman was a contextual approach base on

theological facts known by both Jews and Samaritan, which He carefully presented with love that made the Samaritans believe.

The Great Commission to reach out to the world with the gospel (Matt 28:19) is in line with the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to bless the nations of the world through him (Gen 12:2-3). However, Ellen White says that the gospel is often presented in an indifferent manner that makes no impression on the conscience and lives of the people. She therefore affirmed the following:

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." (White, 1942, p. 143)

Her analysis of Christ's method of becoming one with the people by mingling with them and meeting their need in order to win their confidence, unequivocally suggests that this is the appropriate strategy to employ in the fulfillment of the Christian commission to the Muslims. In this paper the method will be approached in two dimensions: a theological approach, and the practical demonstration of love approach.

Theological Approach to Muslims

As demonstrated by Jesus and the disciples in the New Testament, dialogue in a contextual theological trajectory is not new in gospel outreach ministries to other cultures. The concept endeavors to present the Christian faith in the context as understood by the people. It may appear in many ways to be a radical departure from traditional theology, but in reality it affirms the old tradition in a new way (Bevans, 2002, p. 3). Approaching Muslims in their own context with the gospel should be focused on the biblical truths the Lord has already planted in their midst (see Appendix G). Parshall, who lived among Muslims in Asia for 37 years and is one of the leading authorities in

ministry to the Muslims, affirms that a “proper usage of contextualization can maintain total fidelity to the Word of God.” Stressing that “the gospel should be attractively presented into the context of any given group of people” and must be done with great sensitivity (Parshall, 2003, pp. 22, 35).

Parshall’s (2003) emphasis on sensitivity in the Christians’ approach to any group of people demands a careful reflection on the culture and its implications. Reaching out to Muslims with the gospel requires knowledge about Islam and the culture of the people. The Islamic religion started in Arabia, in a community that was already experiencing the influence of three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism (Caspi & Cohen, 1995, p.96). It resembles Judaism in its emphasis on text, laws, and duty with a firm monotheistic belief in “Tawhid,” the oneness of God (Geisler & Saleeb, 1993, p. 17; Troll, 2009, p. 23). Unfortunately it is the theological understanding of the oneness of God phenomena that forms the bases of the theological differences between Christianity and Islam. Oster, an Adventist missionary pioneer among Muslims in the Middle East, claims that Jews, Christians, and Muslims recognize one God (Deut 6:4; Mk 12:29; Al-Baqarah 2:255), “but each stresses a different aspect of the One God: Judaism the holiness of God; Christianity the love of God; and Islam the omnipotence and greatness of God” (Oster, 1979, p. 87).

Basic Knowledge About Islam

It is appropriate to know that Muhammad, the founder and acclaimed prophet, was of Quryash descent who grew up as a caravan trader (Hitti, 1940, p. 111; Riddell & Cotterell, 2003, p. 19). His experience with monotheistic worshippers during his caravan expeditions in and around Arabia gave him the divine impression that the idolatrous

practices of his kinsmen were wrong. However, he was also aware of the religious feud between Jews and Christians and the riotous conflicts among the Christians of the Eastern Churches over theological differences (Dermenghem, 1930, pp. 56, 57). Although Muhammad was determined to lead his people to the worship of God, he had no intention of uniting them to what he saw to be confused and quarrelsome religions as Judaism and Christianity were practiced in his day. According to Vander Werff (1977) the political instability in Rome and Persia and the riotous feud among the ancient churches coupled with the Christians' inability to present the gospel to the Arabs actually prepared the situation for a new religion (p. 7). The Qur'an has reference to some of the prevailing controversies that were in the eastern churches (Al-Imran 3:103- 105; Al-A'araf 7:157), which Muslims still refer to as ungodly practices, and use them to criticize Christians, and affirm Islam as the true religion.

Elass alleged that Muhammad received detailed understanding about God from Jews, Christians, and Judeo-Christian traditions experienced in Western Arabia in the seventh century. As such, the Qur'an contained inspired biblical teachings about God (see Appendix G and H). In his view it would be "grossly unfair to state unequivocally that Muslims and Christians believe in different God" (Elass, 2004, p. 83). Addison also claimed that Islam is indebted to Christianity "for its original tenets and for its developed theology (Addison, 1942, p. 11). Such assertions cannot be denied because of Muhammad's close association with Christians before his prophetic proclamation. According to Dermenghem (1930) Muhammad was in close association with Christians such as the Nestorian monk called Bahira, a Christian in Mecca named Wraqa, Abyssinian Christians most of which were slaves, Copts and even Yasar his personal

friend who was a Christian from the country of Rum. The Quaraishites believed Yasar had actually inspired him (pp. 103, 104).

Muhammad did not deny “having gained instruction from the Christians and from the Bible stories” (Dermenghem, 1930, p. 104). As recorded in the Qur’an, he told his followers that they worship the same God with Jews and Christians (Al-Ankabut 29:46) and directed them to consult the people with the previous revelations (Jews and Christians) if they are in doubt of what is revealed to them through him (Yunus 10:94). However, Muhammad did criticize the Jews not the Christians for wrongly interpreting the revelations they received from God; but not the text itself (Al-Imran 3:78; Al-Maidah 5:12-14).

Muslims hold the Qur’an in high esteem and its content is cherished as a copy of God’s word in heaven. Unfortunately, despite their ardent prayer life, most Muslims do not read the Qur’an and therefore are not familiar with some of its vital contents. Muhammad himself affirmed that Christians are the nearest friends to Muslims (Al-Maidah 5:82). Most Muslims are not aware of this. Therefore, Christians should not only reveal the important truth embedded in the Qur’an to Muslims, but also demonstrate friendship in words and action. As the Apostle Paul would say; “...I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22). To achieve true success, the approach should be maintained in what Andrea and Leith Gray call “Context and Background Information” that gives credence to: “honor and shame, hospitality, generosity, and family and community solidarity” (A. Gray & Gray, 2011, pp. 33, 34), which are basic cultural practices and values in the Muslim community.

Contention Over Jesus

Although Muslims claim to be worshipping the same God with Jews and Christians (Al-Ankabut 29:46), it obviously would be disastrous to approach them in theological dialogue without knowing their main point of objection to the Christian faith. Samuel Zwemer, who is designated in missionary history as an Apostle to Islam, claimed that Christ and His cross are the objectionable factors in the Muslim creeds (see Appendix H-2). He affirmed that Jesus is ascribed with titles that gave Him the highest honor among the prophets but Muslims emphatically “deny his death and his atonement” (Zwemer, 2002, pp. 41, 42). In agreement with Zwemer, Busse (1998) made reference to Muhammad’s first meeting with Christian delegates from Nadjran in the early days of Islam. Busse claimed that at that meeting Muhammad used syllogism on the qualities of God to refute the deity of Jesus (p. 54). According to Miller (1976), when the delegates insisted that Jesus was God, Muhammad suggested that they should have an imprecation, an example of which is written in the Qur’an (Al- Imran 3:61). However, when the delegates refused to take the oath, He told them to worship as they pleased but pay taxes to the Muslims for their protection (Miller, 1976, pp. 35, 36). Muslims deny Christ’s deity and regard Him as a prophet, a view that underlines the rejection of the Trinity (An-Nisa 4:71), and claim Muhammad as the last and greatest prophet (Geisler & Saleeb, 1993, p. 227).

But for Christians Jesus is God in human flesh, and His death as atonement for sin is the core value of the Christian faith (Dederen, 2000, p. 174; Holbrook, 1996, pp. 77, 78), which is symbolized in the faith community by baptism and the communion service (Matt 28:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-25). The issue of Christ’s death has been and is still a main

point of theological contention between these two religions. Moreover, “Muslims see Christians as those who worship more than one God, worship idols, demonstrate offensive moral values, and use forbidden things such as alcohol and pork, and are into gambling” (Porter, 2011, p. 43). Such a blanket description of the Christian community with multiple denominations is not authentic and contradicts even the Qur’an that affirms the existence of faithful Christian (Al-Imran 3:113; Al-Maidah 5:82).

Bridge Building With Muslims

The idea of context for appropriate dialogue with Muslims should be focused on what Muslims believe or better said, what truth God has already revealed to them in their culture. Christians need to analyze their own individual and denominational theological content and the Islamic theology for similarities (see Appendix G and I). This may foster better relationships to enhance appropriate bridge building between the two religions (Parshall, 2003, pp. 43, 44). This is in line with Christ method of mingling and winning the confidence of the people before urging them to follow Him (White, 1942, p. 143).

From Parshal’s (2003) analysis, there is no better shortcut in effective bridge building with Muslims than appropriate use of the truth available in the scriptures. God has already provided significant biblical truths in the Qur’an (see Appendix G and Appendix H-1). These divine treasures can be used as a basis to start effective dialogue for the establishment of a progressive relationship with Muslims (Porter, 2011, p. 43). As in the case of Namaan when God demonstrated His power by healing him, the power of the Holy Spirit promised to believers (John 16:13) may help lead Muslims to a conviction about the truth. Zwemer expressed a similar view, emphasizing prayer for the outpouring

of God's Spirit. He affirmed, "The Holy Spirit is the one and only source of all true power for evangelism" especially among the Muslims (Zwemer, 2002, p. 33).

Using the Qur'an for Bridge Building

In an attempt to identify truth in the Qur'an, Lodahl (2010) presented astonishing similarities between Psalm 104 and Sura 16. After analyzing and comparing the texts, they revealed remarkable parallels in their ecstatic description of the Creator and His creation. In his view both texts are hymns that invite readers to the "celebration of creation's bounties and goodness" (p. 59). What should these similarities suggest to faith seeking believers of the two religions? From a historical perspective although both religions started in the Middle East, they actually emerged at different time in history among people who have developed and adapted to different cultures. God in His recovery program through Abraham and his descendants spoke to the Jews through Jesus in their cultural context (Heb 1:2), which resulted in Christianity (Acts 11:26). However, because Christianity made no positive impact on the idol worshipping Arabian community (Addison, 1942, pp. 11, 12), God used Muhammad to direct the Arabs to the Creator, a movement that resulted also in the emergence of the Islamic religion. Lodahl's analysis of the two texts would therefore suggest God's effort to rescue His creation from these two communities in their individual cultural context.

Regardless of their difference and rivalry, in a theological analysis of their scriptures, Christians and Muslims both believe in the God who made the heavens and the earth in six days (Exod 20:11; Qaf 50:38). They share the same ancestral background in the person of the patriarch Abram (Gen 12:2-3; Al-Baqarah 2:125-8). In glaring print, the Qur'an affirms that Muslims worship the same God as Jews and Christians do (Al-

Ankabut 29:46). Christians and Muslims believe God transcends His creation (Ash-Shura 42:11; Isa 6:1) and emphasizes His closeness to His creation (Isa. 6:8; Maryam 19:65; Qaf 50:16). They talk about God's mercy, judgment, and heaven as a reward for the faithful (Rev 21:1-2; Al-Maidah 5:12). What is happening? Why the similarities? I suggest that these similarities of biblical truths are divine provisions made to fulfill God's purpose in the two cultures. They could be used as common ground by the Holy Spirit to establish peaceful coexistence between the two faith communities.

Volf, founder and Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture and Professor of Theology at Yale University Divinity School, claims that Christians and Muslims worship the same God and that there is a need for the religions to forge a bond for a peaceful coexistence rather than bemoan their differences (Volf, 2011, p. 187). Amjad-Ali, the Martin Luther King Jr. Professor for Justice and Christian Community at the Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, counsels that Christians need to adopt a new theological discourse to enhance better relationships with Muslims. In his view, Christians with all their differences have unanimously considered Islam to be the "other," and in the past have related to this "other" mainly in a negative manner (Amjad-Ali, 2009, p. 567). Identifying biblical truths in the Qur'an is an unavoidable necessity for establishing relationships while the Holy Spirit convicts of deeper truth.

Efforts of Adventist Pioneers

The use of the Qur'an as a bridge to the Bible was validated by passionate Adventist pioneers who worked among Muslims in the Middle East. Among them was Kenneth Oster who succeeded in establishing a promising Sabbath School that was later closed because church leaders considered the method to be sacrilegious (Lekpe, 2011, p.

33). However, GCAMR, a Seventh-day Adventist organization for Islamic relationships has now rediscovered the Qur'an as a tool for building a credible spiritual relationship with Muslims that would lead them to the Bible for the complete truth (J. W. Whitehouse, 2004).

Whitehouse and others, who spent years in working with Muslims, claimed that a careful study of the Islamic faith and cultural practices are necessary for building relationships with Muslims. From their observations, they claimed that God's presence had been with the Muslims and suggested the following:

It has been found more effective to use an approach that builds on the spiritual foundation present in the people. God is at work among the people and gems of truth are present that need to be gathered up and put in their true perspective. Our first question therefore is not what are we doing in the Muslim world, or what should we do in the Muslim world, but what is God doing in the Muslim world? There is convincing evidence Biblically of God's preservation of truth in the Eastern or Arab peoples. The implication for Adventists is their understandings of Islam are important for developing effective relations with Muslims. If we perceive Islam as having spiritual roots in the line of truth that God was preserving in the Eastern peoples (children of the east, descendants of Abraham via Hagar and Keturah, see Genesis 25: 1-18), it allows us to relate to Islam in a much more respectful manner. We can then see their spiritual heritage as a foundation upon which we can build in a spiritual growth process. It provides for us a common ground on which to build the common ground of being "fellow believers" instead of kafirs (blasphemers). We can then be perceived by Islam as not antagonistic to or trying to overthrow their basic core values, but rather as enhancing and building upon them....(J. W. Whitehouse, 1997, pp. 1-1)

This analysis deems it necessary for Adventist Christians to identify these gems of truth as a basis of relating successfully to Muslims. The similarities between the Bible and the Qur'an provide opportunities the Lord has made available to reach that community and should not be overlooked. The creation story in both scriptures should remind Christians, Jews, and Muslims that we are all God's children. And the Abrahamic ancestry should also remind us that God's promised blessing is for all nations in the world (Gen 12:3). The Qur'anic affirmation that Muslims worship the same God that

Christians worship (Al-‘Ankabut 29:46), should encourage Christians to relate to Muslims as fellow believers of the one true God that Abraham worshiped.

Volf (2011) agrees because of his view of a common God that Christians and Muslims worship for two reasons: (a) “to the extent Christians and Muslims embrace the normative teachings of Christianity and Islam about God” as revealed in their scriptures, “they believe in a common God,” (b) “to the extent that Christians and Muslims strive to love God and their neighbor,” from sincere hearts, “they worship the same true God” (p. 123).

It is therefore appropriate to say that these discernable similarities are divine provisions to achieve God’s purpose. They could be utilized for dialogue to enhance peaceful coexistence and bridge building to fulfill the Great Commission, which would be in line with the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abram. The Holy Spirit does the conviction but our duty is to establish relationships.

Building Trust With the Gospel

The command, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” can be effectively accomplished among the Muslims by the use of Christ’s own method, which does not begin with and is not limited to preaching. White (1949) counseled, “Preaching is a small part of the work to be done for the salvation of souls” (p. 455). She (1942) analyzed Christ’s method of recovering souls for the kingdom in the following progression: Christ mingled with them, He desired good for them, He sympathized with them, He ministered to their need, He won their confidence, and finally bade them to follow Him (p. 143). Interestingly, preaching, which always seems to be in the forefront of Christian evangelistic programs, is the last step in Christ’s method as analyzed by

Ellen White. It is the last but not actually the least. It is indicated to be the most important and must be presented at the appropriate time of harvest after sowing and nurturing are gainfully accomplished.

The act of mingling with people and desiring their good naturally demonstrates love that makes more of an impact on minds than multiple words without affection. It is with such understanding that Maxwell (1999) asserts, “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care (p. 103). The Christian gospel is to affirm, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). And loving is not only what activities accomplish but is also “the inner content of all the doctrines of Christianity” (Guy, 1989, pp. 34, 35). This must be practically demonstrated in the gospel ministry.

The Word of God became flesh to demonstrate the care Maxwell (1999) talks about. Christ identified himself with the Jews for the purpose of seeking “to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Ignoring the national dispute between their two nations, Jesus approached the Samaritan woman with the assurance that henceforth “true worshipers will worship the father in spirit and in truth; for the father is seeking such to worship Him” (John 4:23). Notice that Christ’s dialogue was focused on common ground: worship of the Father, the Creator of the universe. He successfully accomplished this cross-cultural dialogue with the Samaritan woman without demeaning cultural principles, which is an appropriate example for taking the gospel to Muslims.

Mingling with people affords the opportunity to experience their problems. Through His association and experience with the people of Palestine, Jesus sympathized and ministered to their needs. He healed the sick, the blind, the cripples, and fed the hungry (White, 1898, pp. 266, 365). By doing so, Christ sowed the seeds of truth that

won their confidence. Actually, the Apostles at the beginning of their ministry reaped from what Christ had already sown to make up the early NT church in Jerusalem. They followed their master's example by mingling and ministering in their communities. To meet the needs of others, some sold their possessions and divided the proceeds according to individual needs (Act 2:45), which enhanced their success. Scriptures say:

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

The disciples' "having favor with all people" as stated in the text, actually suggests a positive relationship with the people of their community. Conversion is from the Holy Spirit; through prayers the apostles experienced signs and wonders (Acts 2:43) and the Lord added new believers to their group daily. Through prayers, the Holy Spirit that inspired "and operates in the everyday life of the New Testament church" (Burgess, 1984, p. 17), can still endow believers with favor to present the gospel to the Muslims.

In his observation of cultural implications, Kraft (1999) counseled that the challenge of reaching people of other cultures should focus on speaking and behaving in the appropriate context that honors the way of life the people know as the standard in their culture (p. 386). Successful association with the Muslims therefore requires respecting their cultural beliefs and relating to them with sincere love in obedience to the gospel command to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39).

The present global crisis caused by epidemics, uprisings (like the "Arab Spring"), and natural disasters are actually opportunities for the gospel to be applied practically. Christ's compassionate character, as shown in the gospel for suffering people, has given rise to ministries that are actively engaged with local international assistance to the needy

(World Relief Corporation, 1999, p. 569). In His analysis of the judgment to come, Christ affirmed to inheritors of His kingdom: “I was hungry you give me food; I was thirsty you gave me drink...I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me” (Matt 25:36). Ministering to the needs of the impoverished and incarcerated makes them feel loved and encourages them to become better people, which will win their confidence to enhance meaningful relationships.

Hospitality and generosity, noble traits traceable to Abram, are highly esteemed in the Muslim community. Muslims believe that caring for a stranger or a guest is a binding religious duty; tradition demands compliance from both the giver and the receiver (Patai, 1983, pp. 84, 88). This suggests that hospitable moments spent with Muslims are an appropriate time to pray for the Holy Spirit to enhance a positive relationship. The Holy Spirit works in everyone and in several ways (Starkey, 1962, p. 20). The love for hospitality and generosity found in Muslims could be a divine vehicle that should initiate relationships to fulfill God’s purpose promised to Abraham.

Summary and Conclusion

This study revealed God’s redemptive promise to save the world embedded in the Abrahamic narrative. It went further to show the positive relationship that existed between Ishmael and Isaac, and between their descendants, a relationship that was maintained even when Israel returned from Egypt and became a nation in Palestine. Despite the theological arguments between Christians and Muslims, who both trace their ancestral origin to the Patriarch Abraham through Ismael and Isaac, the study revealed undeniable similarities between the two religions. The existence of biblical truths in the Qur’an suggests they worship the same God. However, though they claim to worship the

true God, which Islam affirmed as the one God mentioned in the Qur'an (Al-'Ankabut 29:46), Christians and Muslims still maintain the following:

1. They use their theological differences to isolate each another; often causing antagonism that leads to the destruction of lives and properties.

2. They fail to utilize their similarities to promote the peace they claim to propagate to the people they are preparing for the kingdom of God.

3. Muslims are still persecuting missionaries and Christian converts in some Islamic countries.

4. Tough shar'ia laws are put in place in some Islamic countries that prevent missionaries from sharing the gospel with the citizens.

5. Open condemnation and verbal attack by some Christians is often experienced in some Christian communities.

6. Despite the biblical truths found in the Qur'an Christians with their denominational differences in doctrines continue to regard Muslims as the "other" in a negative manner.

Explicitly, Abraham's exemplary faith of non-violence in the communities in which he dwelt is also revealed in this study. The patriarch lived peacefully in Canaan to fulfill God's purpose without coercing anyone to accept his faith. Both the Bible and the Qur'an also mention no violence between Ishmael and Isaac, which suggests that they lived by the standard of their father's faith, peacefully dwelling with each other and with their community members. An example of such a peaceful coexistence is seen in the archipelago nation of Indonesia where five principles known as *pancasila* affirms religious tolerance and social justice for all its citizens (Poerwowidagdo, 1994, pp. 23,

24). The North American constitutional provision of religious liberty is also affording tolerance and peaceful coexistence of religions of its citizens.

True Abrahamic faith, as revealed in this study, demands no violence against one's neighbor; since violence was not part of the patriarch's character. The Prophet Muhammad did warn his followers not to hurt the people of the Book and told the Christian legate from Nijran to continue their worship of Isa (Jesus). It is therefore appropriate to say that Isaiah's prophetic inclusive reference to the children of the East (Isa 60:5-7), the coming of the Magi with gifts to worship the baby Jesus in Bethlehem (Matt 2:1-2), and the Christian "marching order" to take the gospel to every nation (Matt 28:18-19), unequivocally reveal God's inclusive plan in the fulfillment of his promise to bless all nations and people through Abraham.

The Seventh-day Adventist church is unique among the denominations in the Christian community and has been given a special message for the world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit the similarities the church has with Muslims and the biblical truths found in the Qur'an can be used to establish a Faith Bridge that will successfully present the gospel in the context and understanding of the Muslim community in Grand Cape Mount County.

Caring for the poor through practical programs that will alleviate poverty in an impoverished Islamic community is the second phase of the strategy for initiating peaceful coexistence between Adventists and Muslims. It will begin with the strategy of engaging the youth with pilot projects that will prepare them to be both spiritual and economically self-reliant as detailed in chapter four.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW ON RELATIONSHIP AND DIALOGUES BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS

Introduction

Christians and Muslims are the two major world religions representing over half of the world's population (Muhammad, 2010, p. 5). Unfortunately, there has not been a praiseworthy relationship between them in the past hundred years of their existence, and especially since the Crusades. Their encounter, according to Nazir-Ali (2006), can be reflected upon as times of “intermittent conflicts along with periods of tolerance” (p. 109). Unfortunately the conflicts recorded in history do not represent their common messages of *loving God and neighbor* as proclaimed in their teachings (Muhammad, 2010, p. 10). It is sad to say that the age-old controversy has become an inherited and coercive pattern of lifestyle for some adherents, which is often expressed through hateful comments, persecutions, and diverse forms of terrorism (Kerry, 2010, p. 193). However, under state supervision in some nations such as Indonesia and North America cooperation is promoted by both sides to maintain some form of tranquility and peaceful coexistence, which is beneficial not only to the parties but also to their communities.

However, these cooperative efforts for peace in the community are often undermined and eroded by grumpy fundamentalists who under religious epithets carry

out subversive activities to create instability or chaos. The results have often been catastrophic with the destruction of innocent lives and properties. To avert such destructive practices, there is a need for interfaith dialogue. Such a discourse should be based on mutual understanding for tolerance with an intentional focus of establishing peaceful coexistence between the two religions. This is a crucial matter in Africa and Liberia in particular where both religions are experiencing significant growth in membership.

This chapter will be limited to building bridges of understanding between the two religions, and will not probe deeply into their sad relational-hurting past. It will review literature on: (a) Christian and Muslim relationships, (b) dialogue between Christians and Muslims, (c) Adventist-Muslim relationship, (d) other missionary approaches to Islamic communities, and (e) Adventism's obligation to the community.

Christian and Muslim Relationship

Abraham a Symbol of Love and Tolerance

Since the fall in Eden God has been intentional in fulfilling His purpose of restoring the fallen human race to Himself. According to White (1911), through the Holy Spirit God had used human instrumentalities to accomplish that purpose as manifested in His dealing with the patriarchs (p. 53). Nevertheless, the call of Abraham marks the beginning of a new dispensation in God's plan of restoration. Although Abraham was not directly linked to idol worship in the biblical narrative, he dwelled with his father Terah in Ur, a city of the Semites known for idol worship (Gaubert, 1968, pp. 23, 24). The family later migrated to Haran where Abraham eventually received his call from God to go to Canaan (Gen 11:31).

The affirmative statement from God “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (12: 3), unquestionably expresses the love shown to the patriarch Abraham. In the same note love is extended to the rest of the nations on earth thus making Abraham a symbol of God’s love in His quest to restore the fallen race to Himself. To demonstrate the intentionality of His love, God committed Himself to make Abraham, a childless 75-year-old man with a barren wife, a great nation (Gen 12:2). It is the reality of this promise that gave rise to the Jews, Christians, and Muslims (Fretheim, 2007, p. 93).

These faith communities are the leading monotheistic religions that proudly cherish the patriarch’s symbolic status, referring to him and his God as their religious foundation and designating Abraham as their spiritual ancestor (Mohammed & Ovey, 1999, p. 50). Abraham lived by God’s directives and scriptures referred to him as a friend of God (2 Chron 20:7; Jam 2:23). However, unlike these monotheistic communities who are engaged in rivalry with each other, in his lifetime Abraham dwelled peacefully upholding tolerance among idol worshipers in Canaan. Isaac and Ishmael continued their father’s peaceful legacy in their respective communities and together they buried their father without any record of coercion from either side (Gen 25).

Volf (2011) referred to this divine privilege extended to the patriarch as a gratuitous love that was not limited to the biological descendants of the patriarch but meant for both Jews and Gentiles (p. 229). In his view, the great missionary to the Gentiles, Paul, was commissioned to initiate the fulfillment of the universal purpose of the promise. His mission was to decouple religion from ethnic belonging and proclaim God’s sovereignty and His love for all nations. Commenting further on the common

ancestral and spiritual background, Volf affirms that the relationship between Christians and Muslims is also evident in the “parallels and overlapping sections of the Bible and the Qur’an” (p. 87).

Incontrovertibly, both books contain the following divine truths: (a) there is only one God (Deut 6:4; Mk 12:29; Muhammad 47:19), (b) God created everything (Gen 1:1; Ash-Shura 42:11), (c) Creation lasted for six days (Ex 20:11; Qaf 50:38), and (e), God is omnipotent (1 Tim 6:16; Al-Anam 6:103). It is obvious that these texts in the Bible and the Qur’an are referring to the same God. To eradicate doubt about the textual similarities, the Qur’an sums it up in sura Al-Baqarah 2:136 in the following words:

Say (O Muslims), “We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma’il (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya’qub (Jacob), and to Al-Asbat [the offspring of the twelve sons of Ya’qub (Jacob)], and that which has been given to Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus), and that which has been given to the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to him we have submitted (in Islam).”

Comparing this text to some biblical statements shows not only similarities in the human characters involved, but must also be referring to the same God (see Appendix G). For instance, God’s statement to Moses in Exodus 3:6: “Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ In his preaching to the Jews in Solomon’s portico after the crucifixion, Peter the disciple of Jesus Christ made this statement in Acts 3:13: “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.” Note also Stephen’s address to the Jewish leaders in Acts 7:2: “And he said, ‘Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran....” And in verse 32 when he was explaining Moses’ burning bush

experience to the leaders, he also quoted God's statement to Moses: "saying, 'I am the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'" "

It is therefore obvious in both the Bible and the Qur'an that these religions are holding onto a common Abrahamic heritage about God. This is an Abrahamic ecumenism that cannot be denied or ignored. It also requires gainful dialogue for theological understanding between the parties to enhance tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

The Common Word

As an unavoidable invitation to dialogue, leading Islamic scholars and intellectuals signed an open communication addressing the world Christian churches but specifically directed to Pope Benedict VI. The letter is titled "*A Common Word Between Us and You*" and was launched on October 13, 2007 (Muhammad, 2010, p. 3). The communiqué is focused on identifying similarities between the two faith communities (Christians and Muslims). It surfaced on the religious scene after the heated global Muslim contention against Danish satirical caricatures of Muhammad, and Pope Benedict's offensive speech on faith and reasoning at the University of Regensburg. According to Volf (2011), the letter signed by the Islamic leaders and scholars was meant to refute the Pope's statement that presented the Muslim's God as a God who demands obedience and promotes violence. In his lecture at Regensburg, the Pope asserted that the Islamic faith was spread by the use of the sword. On the contrary, he identified the Christian God as a God who not only acts reasonably but He is Reason itself, and therefore "encourages reasoning, deliberation, and persuasion" (p. 24).

The Muslims' launching of "A Common Word" (ACW) was meant to affirm that Christians and Muslims worship the same God, an act that has ushered in a new era in Christian-Muslim relationships. The initiative has met with comments and approval from Christians and Islamic scholars, intellectuals and universities. It also initiated events that have brought religious leaders and scholars together for dialogues, which has enhanced "joint declarations, establishment of institutes and immense publications about the relationship (2007). However, the purpose of ACW according to H. R. H. Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad of Jordan is not for a merger or capitulation. It is for reconciliation and mutual understanding to enhance equal peace for both faith communities (Muhammad, 2010, p. 11).

Dialogue Between Christian and Muslims

Despite the spiritual effects and positive values these two faith communities have delivered to over half the earth's population, it is unfortunate that Christianity and Islam did not receive any form of festive reception at their inception in their individual communities. Both Jesus and Muhammad had humble beginning but were born in families of prominent ancestors (Woodberry, 2005, p. 49). However, they became subjects of persecution with the goal of deterring them from the fulfillment of their purpose.

Persecution of Christians, which would later spread to the rest of the Roman Empire, started in Jerusalem. The Jews in Palestine accused Jesus of being an impostor and a blasphemer (John 5:16-19) for which He was condemned to death in Pilate's hall and handed over to Roman soldiers to be crucified (John 19). According to Rhee (2006) Jesus was mercilessly abused and handed over to soldiers to be crucified (pp. 3, 4). The

persecution later spread to other part of the Roman Empire where Christians experienced martyrdom and excruciating suffering (Robeck, 2006, p. 63).

In Arabia, Muhammad's message to the Arabian clans was considered a threat to the stability of the Quraysh economic and cultural values (Hitti, 1964, p. 113; Lewis, 1966, p. 40). According to Dermenghem (1958) Muhammad's message at the beginning of his reformation was considered by some of his tribesmen as provocative and disrespectful to their clans and the gods of their ancestors (p. 22). Riddell and Cotterell (2003) claim that the resistance from the Quraysh clan leaders was actually meant to protect their customs and prevent Muhammad from deluding the tribes. However, the opposition that started by taunting him as a crazy man became severe and aggressive when he started gaining followers, and at one point he narrowly escaped an assassination attempt (p. 26). It is unfortunate to see Christians and Muslims whose ancestors were victims of persecution now actively engaged in persecuting each other, a situation that possibly could be avoided through intentional dialogue.

Dialogue between Christians and Muslims may seem strange to their present adherents but it was an effective means of maintaining harmony between the two religions in the early years of Islam. Advocates for peace between these communities often refer to two historical dialogues that took place in the seventh century when Islam was emerging into prominence. The first was in Abyssinia, when Jafar the cousin of Muhammad defended the Islamic faith in the palace of the Christian Negus (Dermenghem, 1930, pp. 102, 103). The second was when Muhammad met with the Christian delegates from Nijran (Miller, 1976, p. 36). Dialogues at these meetings not

only enhanced harmony, but established the common ground for peaceful coexistence, which was upheld during the lifetime of Muhammad and the early Caliphs after him.

ACW may also be a conduit for the establishment of harmony in this 21st century between Christians and Muslims. It has been popularly accepted and endorsed as a basis for intentional dialogue in leading universities, and in both Christian and Muslim communities around the world (Volf, 2010, p. 20). So far, all leading ACW discussions held internationally and locally have focused on the dual phenomenon of loving God and loving neighbors, which are teachings that are emphasized in the Bible and the Qur'an as fundamental teachings of both faith communities. Though their basic ideological understanding of God, love, and neighbor may differ, their similarity (as revealed in their holy books and as stated in ACW) should afford a peaceful milieu for dialogue to increase tolerance and the promotion of peaceful coexistence.

Religious Tolerance

God's response to Cain's intolerant act of killing his brother suggests His uncompromising support for tolerance among His children. The question, "where is Abel your brother" (Gen 4:9), suggests that accountability will be demanded from those who exercise judgment on others. However, according to Klautke (2004), God went further to demonstrate His willingness to bring reconciliation even to His disobedient child (Cain), by placing a mark on his forehead to protect him from being murdered (p. 26). This is a mark of divine tolerance, which is seen throughout the scriptures for the purpose of establishing what Klautke called God's kingdom of peace.

To further affirm religious tolerance from the divine perspective, God told Moses to tell Pharaoh to let the children of Israel leave Egypt and worship Him (Exod 5:1; 7:16;

8:1, 20). Pharaoh understood that Israel was going to sacrifice to the Lord (8:8) and that he was to respect Israel's religious rights and allow them to go. However, he failed to do so and the consequence is stark in the scriptures. In like manner Paul affirms the law of liberty that should be based on individual conviction (Rom 14:5). He concluded his counsel with the following questions and affirmative statements:

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God' (Rom 14:10-12).

These texts unequivocally affirm tolerance as a norm among God's people.

Commenting on religious pluralism in the Bible, Kimball (1991) reminds his readers of the complex picture of intolerance in the relationship that existed between Christianity and Judaism. He argued that though identification with Jewish tradition made it difficult for early Christians to extend the gospel mission to the gentiles, Paul the Apostle defended the legitimacy of the gospel for both Jews and gentiles, and maintained that emphasis in his letters about God's continued love for the Jewish people (p. 58). Such divinely initiated pluralism (Jews and Christians) also suggests God's approval of religious tolerance.

Muslim scholars also claim that the Islamic faith endorses religious pluralism and tolerance. In his article on peace in Islam El-Khayyat (2004) reminded his audience of the Islamic decree and commitment to human brotherhood, and asserts the faith's rejection of ethnic and religious fanaticism. In his deliberation on the word "salam," which he claimed appears in various forms in the Qur'an and is frequently used by Muslims for greetings, Abdul-Aziz sustained his argument that "salam's" basic meaning could be interpreted as "serenity, human co-operation, peace of mind and equanimity"

(pp. 17, 18). However, he argued that though the information is in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the text is without value if not believed and put into practice by Muslims. Indisputably, the Qur'an admonished Muslims on the appropriateness of treating non-Muslims as friends and not enemies (Al-Mumtahanah 60:8). It also warned Muslims not to dispute with the people of the book –Christians and Jews (Al-'Ankabut 29:46) and forbids conversion by the use of force (Al-Baqarah 2:256).

Clearly, both the Bible and the Qur'an have teachings on tolerance and peace. Such an understanding casts doubt on malignant interpretations of the scriptures that have been responsible for the perpetuation of intolerant behaviors that undermine peace in both Christian and Muslim communities whose members may be sincerely seeking for the truth to serve God. According to John Esposito, Founding Director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University and a past president of the Middle East Studies Association, Christian and Muslims are children of Abraham and their common future depends on a broad "sense of pluralism and tolerance built on mutual understanding and respect" (2002, p. xv).

In his discussion on peace between Christians and Muslims, Hofmann (2004) reasoned that the problem with religious pluralism and tolerance between the two religions is based unquestionably on fear. He claimed Christians in the West still perpetuate legends that present Islam as an inherently aggressive religion that gained propagation by the sword, and thus label every violent action in the Muslim world as "holy war." He asserts that memories of the crusades, Reconquista, and the colonization of Muslim's homeland all sum up the fear that is responsible for resentments between these faith communities (p. 48).

However, Esposito's (2002) view of the problem seems not to be based on fear. He argues that despite their conflicts during the crusades, Muslims exercised tolerance for other religious communities in the practice of their faith. Jews and Christians were regarded as the protected people (dhimmi) of the book (p. 71). He also mentioned the privilege of religious pluralism accorded by the Ottoman Empire when they recognized four religious groups (Greek Orthodox, Armenian Gregorian, Muslims, and Jews) referred to as the "millets" (p. 84).

Although Esposito gave no specific description of tolerance in the Ottoman Empire and other Muslim communities, Menocal (2002) said that tolerance in the established caliphate of Cordoba had restrictive regulations that in actuality did not render complete religious freedom. She argued that though worship was permitted, the regulations forbid Christians and Jew from proselytizing or converting Muslims, building new places for worship, displaying crosses or ringing bells and in some instances forbidding any public display of their religious rituals (p. 73). In Menocal's view, these regulations are repressive and thereby rendered what Esposito called tolerance a hollow formality.

Despite the repressive measures claimed to have surrounded the Islamic religious tolerance, Esposito still believes it was better than the intolerant acts of the Christians during the crusades. He asserts that Islamic tolerance was undeniable because it afforded Saint Francis of Assisi the opportunity to engage the Muslim Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil with the Christian message (Esposito, 2002, p. 84). He also emphasized the Sultan's kindness in not only granting freedom of worship to more than thirty thousand Christian prisoners but also offering them the choice of returning to their own countries or joining

his armies. On the other hand Crusaders saved no prisoners. Though the Crusades movement was organized in the West by church leaders and was characterized as a religious war, it was not a war about theology. The Crusades were rooted in political and economic motives of expelling Muslims from the territories they had occupied (Cantor, 1969, p. 319; Kung, 2007, p. 308).

However, for the two leading world religions tolerance is needed for the sake of peace between the two communities and society. Islam does not have an obscure origin; it emerged in the full light of history in a community where Christians and Jews were present. Islamic tradition holds that a Christian monk named Bahira was the first to recognize Muhammad as a prophet (Riddell & Cotterell, 2003, pp. 20, 21, 66). Waraqa, the cousin of Muhammad's wife Khadija, was a Nestorian Christian who also recognized him as a prophet to the Arabs. Christians in Abyssinian provided safety for Muhammad's fledgling followers when the Quraish clan of Mecca threatened their lives (Dermenghem, 1958, p. 25). Muhammad himself met with a Christian delegation from Nijran and permitted them to continue worshipping as they pleased (Miller, 1976, p. 36). These were crucial instances in religious history that could be a starting point for the two faith communities today. It is our turn to invest for positive change for the good of all God's people.

With the present global expansion of both religions, there is a need for positive dialogue. It will reduce the recurrence of conflicts as experienced in the form of the crusades, terrorism, and other forms of conflict encouraged by religious and political leaders in the past (Nazir-Ali, 2006, p. 32). Adherents of both sides need to respect and tolerate each other without religious bias.

Having realized the unavoidable contact between the two faith communities in the face of present global challenges, over 30 Christians and Muslims, delegates from South-East Asian assembled in Hong Kong on January 4-10, 1975 for a dialogue. At the close of the meeting, the delegates unanimously endorsed the following:

Our purpose in Hong Kong has been to face up to the fact that we come from religiously pluralistic societies in South-East Asia, wherein not only is conflict clearly disastrous but even peaceful co-existence is an inadequate condition for the urgent needs of our developing societies. Our respective national societies, we feel, have a right to expect from the faithful communities of Christians and Muslims not conflict, not mere coexistence, but good-will, a readiness to confer with each other and an eagerness to cooperate in every possible way. Muslims and Christians need each other's help to ease tension, secure justice, relieve pain, and otherwise promote the social, material and spiritual wellbeing of all people. (Brown, 1989, p. 59)

A declaration of this nature suggests that interfaith dialogue should not only focus on common goals in community development but should also share spiritual values. Adherents in both parties are to be compassionate and respectful in their approach to each other's culture. Engagement of this nature will reveal the rich divine truths of loving God and loving neighbors embedded in their respective teachings and upheld in ACW phenomena to fulfill God's purpose.

Peaceful Coexistence

The Hebrew prophet, Amos, considered agreement as the basis for two people to walk together (Amos 3:3). Nichol (1976) analyzed the statement to mean, "two people do not walk together unless they have a common purpose" (p. 4:963). Though the prophet's statement was referring to Israel's unfaithful relationship with the Creator, Christians and Muslims have ancestral and theological reasons to agree with each other. And with such a heritage one would expect them to come together and fulfill their common purpose of extending God's kingdom by leading the world back to its Creator.

Fasching, deChant, and Lantingua (2011) assert the following as rooted in the traditional views of Jews, Christians, and Muslims: human beings are children of one God, the Creator of all things; Adam and Eve are the first human parents on earth; all three trace their religious traditions to Abraham and designate him as true model of their faith; they believe that the problem of life is sin which is responsible for injustices; and the only remedy is to restore divine standard (p. 35). These parallels are rooted within rich cultural values that provide common ground to share, learn, and foster positive relationships and a peaceful coexistence among them.

To further strengthen the necessity of the dialogue, Woodberry (2009) endeavored to carry out an analysis on *witnessing* in the eyes of Islamic *da'wah* and Christian *mission*. His scrutiny not only revealed similarities between *da'wah* and mission in their purposes as enjoined in the Qur'an and in the Bible, but pointed out scriptural grounds for a common witness (p. 172). He listed those grounds as follows: worship of one God, honor of Jesus, humans as God's stewards, acceptance of God's law, importance of faith and work, and finally, affirming that both faith communities are enjoined to uphold what is good and to forbid what is bad. Therefore, he suggests that these teaching are not only equitable tools for tolerance but could also foster peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims.

According to Guillaume (1955), Muhammad's appearance and the expansion of Islam through conquest was relatively impartial about the Christian community which was experiencing intolerance and heretical turmoil. The expansion gave some Christians certain advantages they had longed for. They experienced prosperity and unaccustomed tolerance that brought them much relief (p. 25), compared to their Byzantine oppressors,

whose lordship the Copts in Egypt despised (Addison, 1942, p. 20). This suggests that the emergence of Islam was a form of blessing, helping to liberate suppressed heretic Christians.

Coexistence in the age of the Caliphates

In his analysis of the age of the Caliphates, Musk (2005) asserts that most of the advancements discovered and inherited by Arabs in the conquered areas were absorbed and became contributing factors to the achievement of their New Empire (p. 256). In support of Musk's view, Al-Hassan, Professor Emeritus, University of Aleppo and a member of the International Scientific Committee of the UNESCO's project on Islamic Culture, claims that the expansion of the Islamic Empire during the Jihadist's conquest led by the Caliphates did not interrupt activities in the conquered areas. Muslims preserved the administrations, religious institutions, industries, and the cultures of their new regions (Al-Hassan, 2009).

During the golden age of the Umayyad and the Abbasid Caliphates, Christians were among the prominent scholars who occupied high positions and were actively involved in the tolerant administration of the Caliphates in Damascus, the seat of Islamic power. Among them was the notable theologian John of Damascus. Like his father, he served in a high position in the court of the Caliphates. Al-Kindi was another learned Nestorian Christian at the time and was held in high esteem and also held a high position in the court of the Caliphs (Addison, 1942, pp. 26, 27; Al-Hassan, 2009).

In Musk's (2005) analysis, Nestorian Christians were positive contributors to Islamic civilization. He affirms that they were actively engaged in translating important classical works into Arabic. And when the "House of Wisdom" was constructed by

Caliph al-Ma'mun in Damascus, it became the host of the first institution of higher learning in the "Islamic and Western worlds" (p. 256) with Christians as active participants.

However, in spite of all the meaningful contributions Christians gave in service to the Islamic empire, they did not study the Islamic religion carefully to determine a better approach to Muslims. Theologians often engaged in vehement and aggressive debates with Islamic scholars, writing hard-hitting polemic narratives that presented Islam as the enemy to Christianity and depicted Muhammad as the devil and a false prophet (Addison, 1942, pp. 26, 28, 29). These debates made no positive impact in presenting the gospel to Muslims. In Addison's view the debates not only disrupted peaceful coexistence but also created a situation that fanatic Caliphs built on to set regulations that prohibited Christians from attacking and influencing Muslims. This made life difficult for Christians, ranging from driving them from civil office to outbursts of persecutions that often led to the destruction of churches (p. 24), a situation that deteriorated even further during the crusades.

The lack of success when Christians approached the Muslims with debates confirms White's (1892) view that debate is not the appropriate tool for presenting the gospel. In a plain and simple statement she said, "those who engage in debates are not the most successful laborers, and the best adapted to build up the cause" (p. 181). Dialogue built on love and respect for Muslims possibly would have made a difference. However, Raymond Lull, a lay Franciscan, born on the Island of Majorca, was the first westerner to devise a mission strategy with peaceful motives which he carried out among the Muslims in North Africa (Addison, 1942, p. 42). Though suspicion could not be extinguished

between the parties, after the hostile experiences of the Crusades, Lull endeavored to introduce a loving persuasive approach in presenting the gospel to the Muslims.

Dialogues for peaceful coexistence have since been the focus in the relationship between the two faith communities. For Baker (2009), dialogue is a sacred duty to not only create awareness of universal truth but for the collective good of humankind. He traced its origin between the two religions to two important instances in religious history: in the palace of the Negus of Abyssinia, and in the act of the prophet Muhammad himself when he engaged the delegate from Nijran (pp. 148, 149). These dialogues led to peaceful coexistence and are recorded in history to remind the two faith communities of their obligation to peace. Peaceful coexistence in history has been an effective means for societal development and the evidences are still with us.

The Effects of Peaceful Coexistence

The prosperity and intellectual development of Cordova with its 70 monumental libraries is an impressive example of remarkable achievements in peaceful coexistence. Musk (2005) attributed this success to the combined resources of Christians and Muslims joined in an effort to build positive relationships and peaceful coexistence in Spain (p. 256). Cordova became a great cultural center for learning with the world. It attracted “Christians and Muslims not only from Spain but from other parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia” (Hitti, 1968, pp. 128, 131). During the progressive period in Spain, Arabic was the prevailing language of communication. According to Menocal (2002), although Christian literature was written in Latin and regarded as obsolete, the Caliphate encouraged a peaceful coexistence that created a milieu for effective learning, which young Jews,

Christians and Muslims gainfully utilized to develop their talents and to participate in the development of their society (p. 75).

The 21st century also has Indonesia as a perfect example of religious pluralism and peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims. With a population of 185 million in 1994, 85% of whom were Muslims, Indonesia is still not an Islamic state. Though the government recognizes six religions and considers the rest cultural manifestations, the constitution regards all religion as equal and provides freedom of religion for all its citizens (Poerwowidagdo, 1994, p. 23). The constitution of Indonesia, which guides the nation's religious liberty, is based on five principles: (a) "belief in the one supreme God"; (b) a focus on a "just and civilized humanism"; (c) the "unity of Indonesia"; (d) respect for the "sovereignty of the people"; and finally (e) "social justice for the whole people of Indonesia." What is obvious in the Indonesians' constitution is its affirmation of love for God and community, which is present in the teachings of Christians and Muslims.

The Southern Philippines on the Islands of Mindanao and Sulu Archipelago have been a scene of devastating violence between Christians and Muslims; but in the 21st century cooperative ventures emerged as a possible basis for harmony, religious tolerance, and peaceful coexistence in the community. A region of brutal conflicts including death, kidnapping, burnt villages and towns, and hundreds of thousands of refugees has finally began a tolerance initiative that has given birth to an effective development program called Muslim-Christian Agency for Rural Development (MuCARD) (Michel, 2010, pp. 29, 30). Through MuCARD Christians and Muslims in

that once volatile region are now experiencing peaceful coexistence and respecting one another as they find solutions to their common challenges.

Approaches to Dialogue

Interfaith dialogue in the face of our communities and global challenges for peace and safety is not an option; it is a must. It requires the involvement of all faith communities. Brown (1989) compiled reports of Christian-Muslim conferences held in cities and in some leading universities in the world; the purpose of these meetings was to establish common ground for positive relationships. In his report on the conference held in Kolymbari, Greece, in September 1987 with the theme *Religion and Society*, Brown said the two days were gainfully spent on discussing two subjects: (a) “the place of religious pluralism in today’s social and political structures,” and (b) “the role of believers in promoting mutual trust and community.” He asserted that the active participation of the delegates, including women, left a hallmark of “new insights and renewed commitment to the cause of inter-religious harmony” (p. 156)

After his keen observation of interfaith dialogues, Michel (2010) argues that if religious dialogue is intended to affect the behavior of adherents of various religions to create a positive change in their relationships, then the conversation should not be only among intellectuals. He suggests it should involve ordinary believers with a focus on their needs and with respect for their cultures, including the intention of improving the economic standard of their society (p. 33).

Reflecting on the importance of such dialogue, Michel went further to say that dialogue should not be limited to theories. He asserts that it must include personal interactions between members of the opposite parties to enhance the positive relationship

intended. As a member of the Jesuit order, Michel claimed that since 1995 they had committed themselves not only to be “actively engaged in interfaith dialogue,” but to also “create a culture of dialogue” (p. 31). To achieve their goal they have prepared young Jesuits to interact with peers of other faith communities. The experience is not only to inform them of beliefs and practices of other religions but to also encourage discussions on matters of common interests in God, “faith, life, society and ethics” that may lead to a change in attitude towards one another (p. 32). His report shows that the plan has been effective in some Muslim communities where young people have been actively involved in religious programs with their peers.

Adventist-Muslim Relationship

Relationship between Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims has improved considerably under the supervision of the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relationship (GCAMR). Comments from various Adventist leaders show that, as early as the 19th century there was practically no cordial relationship with other religious entities. Some of the leaders referred to Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists as “ponderous and soul-crushing establishments,” and Islamic belief in particular was referred to as “Christless creed with blighting influence,” (Krause, 2011, p. 227). These religions were described as false religions and the influence of Islam on Christianity was said to be as a “deadly as the sting of a scorpion” (p. 228). However, the church’s global evangelistic activity has led to a gradual growth in seeing the need for a positive engagement with other religious entities, and especially Islam.

Early Adventist Approaches to Muslims

A private individual called Bertola initiated some of the earliest Adventist evangelistic activity among expatriates in the Islamic community in North Africa. He was an Italian merchant who accepted the Adventist message in Naples through the teachings of J. N. Andrews in *The Signs of the Times* publications in Europe (Bethmann, 1950, p. 256). Through these printed materials, Bertola successfully introduced the Advent message to his friends in Alexandria. And on September 29, 1878 eight of them were baptized.

Bertola's success caused ripples of excitement among Adventists, which motivated Dr. Herbert P. Ribton a "former Methodist medical-missionary" and a passionate believer in the Adventist message to leave Naples for Alexandria (Pfeiffer, 1981, pp. 51, 52). According to Bethmann (1950), Ribton met with Guiseppe Rupp in Alexandria. He was an Italian and a convert of Bertola's effort, zealous and very eloquent in the Arabic language, (p. 256). Due to the lack of affinity with the indigenous Arabs, early ventures by these pioneers in the Islamic communities were mainly focused on expatriates (J. W. Whitehouse, 2004). However, Herbert Ribton's arrival changed the story. He did not limit his contact to only the Italian communities who were more receptive at the time, but also attempted to extend his activities to the Arabs and other foreign communities in Egypt (Pfeiffer, 1981, p. 51).

To enhance his missionary activities with the people of the community, Ribton started a language school scheduled during the day, a Bible class in the evening, and offered medical assistance whenever it was required (Bethmann, 1950, p. 527). According to Pfeiffer (1981), though Ribton's venture was promising among the

expatriates, the lack of affinity with the Arabs made it difficult to involve the indigenous Egyptians (p. 51). Unfortunately, the program came to an abrupt stop when Herbert Ribton and his friends were killed in an anti-western uprising in Alexandria on June 11, 1882.

Alexandria was not the only scene of disaster for these passionate pioneers among the Muslims; Adventist leaders were also killed among the Armenians in Turkey (p. 38). Nevertheless, despite these tragic experiences, the church continued its support of missionary activities in the Muslim communities. It started again when Elder H. P. Holser visited Egypt and Palestine in 1898. After Holser's visit, L. F. Passebois' family and Ida Schlegel accepted an assignment in Cairo. The new group started with a health food restaurant and a nursing home, which was coupled with Bible work to reach the members of their new community (Bethmann, 1950, pp. 257, 258). Their effort led to the baptism of Awayda 'Abd alShahid, the first Egyptian protestant minister to accept the Adventist message.

While the work was gaining a foothold in Egypt, Elder H. P. Holser's desire for missionaries after his visit to Palestine, encouraged elder J. H. Krum and his wife in Germany to accept assignment in Palestine. Though the family was initially unsuccessful in making inroads with the Adventist message to citizens in Palestine, Krum's water treatment (hydrotherapy) skills won him some favor as he served people in the Arab communities (Bethmann, 1950, p. 264). Krum's team eventually made some progress but the converts went through excruciating persecutions that caused them to flee for their lives, some to unknown destinations (p. 266).

Although the later pioneers did not face threats from the Egyptians like their predecessors, illness kept them from staying longer in the field. Some were replaced because of their poor health, while others came to be trained and so increased the number of helping hands in the missionary community. Elder George Keough, who arrived in Egypt in 1908, was privileged to establish a church with 16 members in an Egyptian village called Beni ‘Adiat. Keough’s approach to the context of his designated group became a successful mission strategy for working with the Coptic Fellahin people along the Nile. His approach not only served as a model of witnessing to people of the Eastern culture but also served as a basis for the establishment of the “School of Oriental Studies in Cairo” (McEdward, 2011, p. 240).

Hearing about Keough’s success, W. K. Ising and his wife passed through Egypt for a tutorial from Keough before going to their assignment in Beirut. It was through their ministry in Lebanon that the kind hearted Ibrahim al Khalil and Shukri Nowfal were baptized and later became the first ordained Adventist Arab ministers in Syria and Lebanon (Bethmann, 1950, p. 268). There are many more Adventist pioneers who dedicated their active service to Arab Islamic communities in the Middle East. Among them are H. Erzberger from Switzerland who worked in Beirut; pastor F. F. Oster and H. Dirksen who settled in Urmia in the province of Azerbaijan; Dr. A. Arzoo who established the first mission hospital in Persia (now Iran); Dr. Hargreaves from London; Brother Tulaczewsky and Brother R. Langholf both from Germany who settled in different sections in Persia (pp. 270, 271, 278). These passionate servants, whose goal was to let the Advent message be heard among the Muslims, can be designated as the foundation of Adventist-Muslim Relationships (AMR).

Other pioneers who set the stage for AMR by reaching indigenous Arab people in their context were Wilhelm Lesovsky, Robert Darnell, Rafai Berhanuddin, Kenneth Oster, and Erich W. Bethmann (J. W. Whitehouse, 2004, pp. 4, 5). Bethmann was against any form of strategy that promoted Western culture. He believed that Western cultural symbols were not an appropriate media or means of approaching Muslims with the gospel (Pfeiffer, 1981, p. 91). Pfeiffer affirms that Wilhelm Lesovsky, one of the Adventist pioneers based in Damascus, had a similar view for approaching people in Arab communities. He developed an affinity for the Nestorian Christians who he claimed retained the traditions of the Nazarenes by keeping the Sabbath, rejecting icons, abstaining from unclean meat, etc. (p. 94). It is clear that these pioneers had their focus on presenting the gospel in the context of the cultural understanding of the Arab people.

Adventist Contemporary Approaches

The goal of AMR that led the pioneers of the Adventist Church muster courage through pain and even death in Islamic communities in the past decades was to fulfill the gospel commission to the Muslims. To facilitate the work of AMR in the Middle East, TEAM (Thrust for Evangelism Among Muslims) was established when Robert Darnell took office as President of the Middle East Union in 1970. With Kenneth Oster as Director, TEAM was to produce materials adapted to Muslims and develop strategies for reaching out to them. A book of evangelistic sermons for Muslims was produced along with Sabbath School lessons and a set of tracts. The use of the Qur'an to preach to the Muslims was attempted but not largely implemented because the church at large did not accept it (J. W. Whitehouse, 2004, p. 7).

However, the establishment of the Global Center for Islamic Studies by the General Conference at Newbold in 1989 (J. W. Whitehouse, 2004, p. 8), and the establishment of the Center at the Headquarters of the church in Washington to promote dialogue with Muslims have brought in a new era in the Adventist-Muslim Relationships. Within the plan of the center, a three-year evangelistic pilot project proposed by Jerald Whitehouse and implemented in the Muslim community in Bangladesh, had overwhelming results with 7,500 members in 64 districts. In East Africa, under the supervision of Oscar Osindo a representative of the center who is base in Kenya, Faith Development in Context (FDIC) ministries in the Muslim communities in the region obtained a membership of 3,400 (p. 10).

Jerald Whitehouse took over the Center as director of Islamic Studies in 1995 with the mandates to inspire models of gospel outreach plans among Muslims and to support subsequent converts in their communities. The center was renamed Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relation (GCAMR). For the fifteen years he served in that capacity, the Center was actively involved in ministries and dialogue with Muslims in many countries (J. D. Whitehouse, 2011, p. 12). The center has since been an active participant in the Mission Issue Committee meetings that are held annually at the General Conference. It has also hosted special conferences for the purpose of networking, sharing experiences that would assist the spread of the Adventist message to other areas in the Islamic world. For instance, the FDIC conference held in Cyprus in 2003 and named the “Building Bridges Conference,” brought over 190 delegates from 70 countries. The discussions were mainly centered on AMR activities (J. W. Whitehouse, 2004, p. 11).

AMR has also been engaged with programs in multinational cities. The formation of the Adventist Muslim Fellowship Association (AMFA) in Atlanta, Georgia, has initiated a positive relationship between Adventists and Muslims in that community. According to Guttschuss (2011), AMFA initiated programs that are helpful to the communities including an educational center that addresses the English language literacy needs of Muslim immigrants. The association also involves Muslims to carry out health expositions in Muslim communities (pp. 321, 322). Guttschus' analysis is that the English tutoring sessions eventually became bridge-building periods for sharing experiences and faith, which not only strengthened the relationship but resulted in the invitation for Adventists to serve on the local boards of Muslim organizations (p. 323).

AMFA's success in building this relationship was based on six stages of ministry beginning with changing the worldview of the Adventist participants. Through a series of studies participants developed what Guttschuss called God's "Kingdom worldview," learning about Islam before engaging them appropriately (pp. 317, 318). The organization is now actively engaged in deepening the relationship.

Adventists on Bridge Building With Muslims

Through studies and interactions with Muslims and the Qur'an, GCAMR discovered God's footprints of truths as preserved in Muslim tradition (J. W. Whitehouse, 2005, p. 13). These divine provisions can be utilized to build understanding of and a biblical faith connection to the indigenous values of the Islamic culture. According to Whitehouse (2004) this approach allows Adventists to utilize the Qur'an as a tool to establish credible spiritual relationships to lead Muslims to the Scriptures (p. 12). Diop (2005) agrees with Whitehouse because of the Qur'an's designated appeal to Muslims as

guidance, criterion, light, and “good news of a magnificent reward,” which informs and influences Muslims’ thinking and worldview (pp. 153, 168). He asserts that ignoring the importance of the Qur’an as an appropriate tool for initial bridge building in mission to the Muslims may hinder engagement with them (p.169). This fits White’s (1942) description of Christ’s method of “accessing people by the pathway of their most familiar association” (p. 23).

In Phillips’ (2012) analysis of how to resolve tension and eradicate suspicion in the Adventist approach to the Muslims, she asserts that the Qur’an cannot be ignored because of its contemporary relevance in politics, legal issues, and faith matters in the Muslim world (p. 76). She suggests that Adventists read the Qur’an but not with biblical eyes for the purpose of dominating. Rather, the Qur’an should be given “freedom to establish its message,” its “relationship with the Bible” and how its “biblical language...advances the qur’anic religious meaning...in harmony with the previous revelations.” She goes on to say that “engaging the Qur’an is lending ‘our biblical eyes’ to Muslims so that God’s Spirit could use the building blocks that are familiar to them to build a fresh understanding of his self-revelation” (p. 77). To achieve this, Whitehouse (2004) suggests that the traditional witnessing method of “indoctrination” should be replaced with a focus on spiritual growth through understandable Qur’an/Bible study guides (p. 12).

Commenting on bridge building, based on her experience with the Muslims and the Qur’an, Whitehouse (2011) claims that the Qur’an is incomplete, but given by the Lord God to the people of the East to serve as a bridge to lead them to biblical truth (p. 17). Though Bahadur (2012) agrees with Judy Whitehouse on the use of the Qur’an for

effective witnessing to Muslims (pp. 203, 213), church leaders in the early years of AMR found it difficult to accept the Qur'an as an appropriate medium for evangelizing the Muslims. However, according to Lepke (2011), despite the negative reactions of some of these leaders, the pioneers eventually discovered the Qur'an to be the most successful way of initially reaching Muslims (p.33).

Moskala (2012) believes that bridge building with the Muslims has to begin with a positive attitude towards them (p. 164). He argued that not only do our actions speak louder than our words, but Muslims keenly observe the lifestyles of Christians, which is crucial in every relationship. Commenting on dialogue with Muslims, Moskala counseled that Adventists are to be sensitive to Muslims' objections and avoid early conversations on the Trinity. He reminded readers that "*shirk*" in Islam is offensive because it equate God to someone or anything else. It is the most abominable offence in Islam and in the religious views of the Muslim that is what the Trinity doctrine portrays (p. 164). In his view conversation on the Trinity requires a conscious, gradual, and careful preparation that cannot be done in a short time. He suggests beginning by encouraging a Muslim friend to "know God on an existential level" (p. 165).

Moskala's suggestion is carried out in Christ's manner of presenting truth to his audience. Being sensitive to His audience and the message He had for them, Jesus said, "I still have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). Paulien (2005) translated this text to mean that Jesus had much more to tell His listeners than they could have handled at that moment. He therefore says "truths that may be sweet at a later time can provoke unnecessary opposition when given before the listeners are ready. In line with Moskala's views for approaching Muslims, Paulien counseled that "in a hostile

environment, a slow, steady approach results in the strongest foundation” (p. 238). This suggests that in bridge building vital truths are to be presented at appropriate moments to accomplish their intended purpose.

Bridge building between Adventists and Muslims has significant advantages to help create a healthier community and society in general. Socially it will eradicate suspicion, build trust that may develop positive relationships between the adherents of both parties, and increase their ability to work together in their community for a common good (Guttschuss, 2011, pp. 321, 322). Theologically, it reveals the manner in which God has placed His truth in other cultures, thereby helping members appreciate the traditional values of these cultures for spiritual growth (Roennfeldt, 2005, p. 37). Finally it enhances peaceful coexistence.

Insider Movement

Shenk (2007), a staunch advocate for new strategies in mission praxis, suggests the shedding of the old for new strategies as possible methods for crossing frontiers that separate people (pp. 8, 9). He claimed that mission challenges the status quo and questions present methods responsible for inactivity in mission (p. 26). In line with Shenk’s suggestion, the insider movement also known as Faith Development in Context (FDIC) is now a ministry utilized by the Seventh-day Adventist Church to place the gospel message in the cultural context of Muslim nations that are closed to missionaries.

In this ministry, Muslim believers are trained and sent back to live their normal lives among their people (Roennfeldt, 2005, pp. 36, 39). They remain attached to the general cultural practices of their people, which include worship practices, and are to contextualize the gospel by their lifestyles and the truth God has already made available

within the culture (p. 41). Although the movement is said to be succeeding, it has raised serious debates among Adventist theologians. Some doubt its effectiveness in identifying true biblical principles for a balanced contextualization in the prospective culture, and its paradoxical identification with the mainstream Seventh-day Adventist Church (McEdward, 2011, p. 247; McVay, 2005, p. 50).

In his response to Roennfeldt's (2005) paper on the progress and achievement of FDIC ministry, McVay (2005) claims to have no problem with the principles (p. 50), but nevertheless stated his dismay about FDIC ministry's identification status with the church. Using the apostle Paul's ministry to support his argument, he reiterated the apostle's activities emphasizing his habitual public declaration of Christ as the Savior. His reference to Paul's form of church organization, as he understood it, compelled him not only to cast doubt on the theological validity of FDIC's ecclesiological identity but also affirmed that "to be a member of the church in Corinth" in Paul's days "is to identify with the church in Jerusalem" (p. 53). Thus he meant that FDIC isolation from the mainstream Adventist Church is biblically inappropriate.

Another major issue some scholars have identified with the FDIC approach is the risk of introducing syncretistic practices that could quench the effectiveness of the gospel message. For instance, Martin (2005) believes many missionaries have often adopted a low view of the scriptures in order to achieve social contextualization, and that such a view eventually blends Christian beliefs and practices with the dominant culture. In his view, this causes Christianity to lose its distinctive nature (pp. 35, 36). Therefore he asserts that faithfulness to the Word of God is the standard of genuine contextualization.

In his attempt to suggest a balanced approach to contextualization, Bauer (2005a) reminds readers that contextualization is not only a challenge to Adventist mission activities but also a solution to fulfilling the right of every person to hear the good news “unencumbered by syncretistic cultural baggage.” He asserts that much of the syncretism in the world is caused by poor contextualization, which is responsible for skewed presentations of biblical truth that lead to what he called garbled messages that misrepresent the Good News (p. 18). He suggests that communicators of the gospel are to be culturally sensitive to accomplish contextualization in the right way so people can hear the clear gospel in their own culture.

Johnson (2012) who describes the Insider Movement as “Contextualized Discipleship” ministry, place it on the C-5 category of John Travis’ spectrum of missionary contextual approach (pp. 18, 19). He argued emphatically that the movement is biblical and therefore not only legitimate in purpose of ministry but a divine imperative that is to “bring the great commission to a successful completion in these last days” (p. 20). He organized his biblical evidences into three case studies.

In case one, God is the creator of all nations and desires neither death nor suffering for the wicked (Johnson, 2012, p. 21). In case two he identified individuals who were insiders of other nations and were not part of God’s covenantal people but were counted as faithful servants of God. Among them, he mentioned Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law; Balaam, who lived in the east; Naaman, the general from Syria; and the wise men who came to see the baby Jesus (p. 22). In the New Testament he mentioned Paul meeting with twelve individuals who were baptized in the baptism of John and knew nothing about the Holy Spirit. Finally, case three is about Jonah and Nineveh. In his view

the people of Nineveh repented with no record of their connection with God's covenantal people (p. 25). Johnson's analysis is that his argument unequivocally depicts God as the Creator who cares for nations and individuals who were not a part of His covenant people. He therefore upholds the biblical rationale for FDIC.

Addressing the FDIC ministry's relationship with mainstream Adventism, Bauer (2005c), recognized FDIC ministry as appropriate for initiating and securing Adventist work in communities which restrict missionary activity. Reflecting on the Vietnamese house church experience, Bauer suggests that FDIC ministry continue as a "parallel structure" to the mainstream Adventist church. In his opinion, that method will avoid hindrance of the common work of sharing similar beliefs (p. 260), and at the same time, secure the safety of converts and workers in the focused communities.

Adventists and Muslims in Liberia

The presence of Islam in West Africa dates back to the eleventh century and eventually reached Liberia through immigrants and Islamic traders from the upper Niger region and Futa Jallon (Clarke, 1982, pp. 20, 107). Clarke's historical reflection asserted that the Gola, Vai, and Mandingo were the initial tribes who were influenced by the Islamic religion. However, the religion has thrived in the past decades, gaining converts among the Gbandi, Kpelle, and other tribes in the country. It is one of the officially recognized religions in Liberia with a population estimated at 13% (455,000) of the nation's 3.5 million people (Vision Liberia 2027, 2008).

According to Ciment (2013), Lott Carey, one of the initial settlers from America in the 1820s came with the determination to evangelize the natives of Liberia to Christianity. Carey succeeded in building a missionary school in Cape Mount. However,

this venture, which was considered his only successful attempt to reach the natives, was shut down by the local Muslims (p. 50). The region has since been a Muslim dominated community.

On the other hand, the Seventh-day Adventist message was first introduced in Liberia 1863 by Hanna Moore, an employee of a British missionary society (Owusu-Mensa, 2005, p. 8). Although there is no written record of her missionary impact with the Adventist message, 63 years later in 1926 two men (R. Helbig and E. Flammer) were sent officially by the world church as missionaries to Liberia (Neufeld, 1996, p. 922). They established the first inland mission in Grand Bassa County with a clinic and a school in Seahn. The church has since been active in evangelism and through its traditional methods of outreach ministries from 1926 to 2011, has experienced a membership growth of over 25,000 (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2013).

Adventist evangelistic progress so far in Liberia has been in non-Muslim communities. In 1988 the president of the Liberia Mission Dr. O. E. Gordon and his officers made the first attempt to establish relationships with Muslims. They took an action to build a multipurpose structure in the Gola Muslim community in Saah, Bomi County. The building was completed in 1989 and became a center where community meetings were held and was sometimes utilized by the local Muslims for prayer meetings (O. E. Gordon, personal communication, September 2, 2013).

However, the initiative was disrupted by the fourteen-year civil crisis that started in 1989. Unfortunately the Adventist friendship building was among the buildings destroyed in the Saah community. The opportunity still exists to rekindle the old friendship. However, the church leaders have not yet developed an effective plan on how

to engage that community positively or other Muslim communities in the country. Chapter four develops a possible response to the need for initiating relationship with Muslims in that community.

Adventists' Obligation to the Community

The Gospel to all Nations

Adventists' obligation to each ethnic community is rooted in the Christian marching order of the Great Commission "to make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:18-20). The church expresses this missionary mandate in its prophetic interpretation of the proclamation of the Three Angels' Messages (Rev 14:6-9). In her interpretation of these messages, White (1946) asserts that they are warnings to the world and that "the destiny of souls hangs upon the manner in which they are received" (p. 53). The church, considering itself as a messenger to the world with this distinct message was therefore designed by the pioneers as a movement of people who are motivated to be missionaries to the world (Cauley, 2012, p. 15).

The Advent movement emerged in the nineteenth century three hundred years after the Reformation. Unfortunately the Christian church before the reformation era had adopted and maintained syncretistic practices. Two of them still stand out today: "Sunday keeping and belief in the immortality of the soul" (Johnson, 2012, p. 26). The Seventh-day Adventist Church has since been presenting the Sabbath, State of the Dead, Health Reform, and the Sanctuary Service (Vyhmeister, 2000, pp. 1, 5), as special messages given to the church to rectify these errors introduced into the Christian church. As viewed by White (1933) the church's dual approach is (a) to alter the lifestyle to

enhance healthful living and (b) to present Christ's intercessory ministry in the context of the gospel, thus fulfilling its obligation to the global community (p. 5).

However, while the church appears to be making progress in non-Muslim communities, it has been difficult and in some cases almost impossible to have access to some of the Arab nations with Islamic laws. From a statistical analysis done in 2001, Chase (2005) presented data showing Adventism's presence in 203 countries out of 228. He revealed that 25 countries including some highly populated Muslim nations, are yet to be reached with the Adventist message (p. 86). Although the 2012 statistical report shows a slight change, with Adventists present in 209 countries out of 232 (General Conference, 2013), the fact remains that there are countries where it is difficult to gain access. For example, the Greater Middle East Union Mission has a population of 491,645,000 with a total Adventist membership of 3,003 (General Conference, 2012)

However, the 2001 statistics show thousands of hidden members in some of these Muslim dominated countries (Chase, 2005, p. 91). He suggests the need for a change in approach in countries with strict Islamic laws where public acceptance of the Adventist message is detrimental to the converts and further mission activities. Chase further expresses doubt of future success if our evangelistic approach continues as usual in some of these countries (pp. 87, 88). Situations of this nature are responsible for what Merklin and Bauer (2007) refer to as "the unfinished task;" 2.6 billion people have yet to hear the gospel that Adventists are obligated to take to the world (pp. 29, 41).

In their analysis of the least evangelized nations in the Seventh-day Adventist Divisions, Merklin and Bauer discovered that in the Euro-Africa Division alone, 245 million people live in seven Muslim-dominated countries without a single ordained

Seventh-day Adventist pastor (p. 34). However, in agreement with Chase (2005), they also recommend that “creative types of workers and strategies” are needed to enhance contextualized methods in outreach endeavors to Muslim communities (Merklin & Bauer, 2007, p. 35).

Caring for the Impoverished

Adventists also take into consideration God’s concern about the poor as revealed in the scriptures (Isaiah 58:6-8). In the early years of the Advent movement White (1952) counseled that “God’s people would be tested upon this point of making homes for the homeless” (p. 170). In another statement on approaching indigents with the gospel, White (1933) encouraged members of the movement to begin by caring for their needs in the following words:

The work of gathering in the needy, the oppressed, the suffering, the destitute, is the very work which every church that believes the truth for this time should long since have been doing. We are to show the tender sympathy of the Samaritan, ... feeding the hungry, bringing the poor that are cast out to our homes, gathering from God every day grace and strength that will enable us to reach to the very depths of human misery and help those who cannot possibly help themselves. In doing this work we have a favorable opportunity to set forth Christ the Crucified one (p. 24).

From its inception the Adventist movement made provision to care for the needy in its structural development. The movement has since been actively involved in giving relief to multitudes through its local churches and established entities such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and medical missionary programs to feed and heal the needy. However, the present trend of religious antipathy, terrorism, wars, and conflicts such as the Arab Spring is surge of violence has swelled the number of people in poverty, leaving millions homeless and young victims with virtually no hope for the future. This seems to have not only increased the obligation but has developed

decisive new challenges for the Adventist Church to fulfill its calling in the global community.

For J. W. Whitehouse (2005) the surge of present global violence is rooted in vengeance sentiments by individuals or groups of people who cherish retaliation as the only means of restoring honor for shame incurred from others or believed to have been incurred. Nevertheless, with Adventists' knowledge of the Great Controversy, Whitehouse suggests that now is the time for the church to fulfill its obligation of presenting the message of God's remedy for sin—the ultimate cause of shame in the universe. He therefore urges Adventists to fulfill their obligation by being at the “forefront of relieving suffering, mediating conflict, and facilitating reconciliation” (p. 13) to establish peace in the society.

God's counsel to His people (Deut 15: 7-11; 1 John 3: 17-19; Matt 25: 35, 42) is to be compassionate to the impoverished in society. In line with this divine counsel, White (1933) asserts that the hardship of the deprived should not be a deterrent for believers to fulfill Christ's mission among the poor and suffering (p. 23). She (1942) insists, “We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the suffering and the afflicted. We are to minister to the despairing, and to inspire hope in the hopeless” (p. 106). In His own words Christ said:

For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. (Matt 25:35-36)

Adventists are committed to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It is therefore appropriate to say that we are aware of the fact that to neglect caring for the needy is to neglect fulfilling our service to the Lord. The presence of the church in Liberia has blessed the nation with a hospital and an eye clinic. These facilities are

located in the capital Monrovia. However, with the rapid growth in membership extensions should be made to other parts of the country.

Other Denominations' Approaches to Muslims

Mission is God's means of transforming and redeeming His creation through the power of the gospel but there is no strategy stipulated in the scriptures (Shenk, 2007, p. 23). Shenk argues that the Holy Spirit's activity in mission is an implicit strategy that cannot be ignored (p. 24), a view Venden (1980) affirms in his four phases of the work of the Holy spirit; convicting, converting, cleansing, and commissioning for service (p. 328). Truly the Spirit has been guiding denominations in various ways in their missionary undertakings to Muslims.

The Episcopal Church has gained much influence in the Philippine Islands through the establishment and maintenance of Brent Hospital at Zamboanga in Mindanao which is predominantly a Muslim community in the south of the archipelago. In the same community the mission also established a home and a school for young Muslim girls (Addison, 1942, p. 323). Through the influence of these achievements, Dr. Frank C. Laubach, under the auspices of the American Board, launched a literacy program that has helped to improve the ability to read of over sixty percent of the people around Lake Lanao to read. Laubach also introduced other activities that fostered improvements in agriculture, an established press, plus library and medical programs that have created positive relationships between Christians and Muslims in the community (Addison, 1942, p. 324).

Afghanistan had experienced Christianity long before Islam took over the land. Evidence of ornate historical Christian graves are present in the city of Harat. A cadre of

Christians from the West with various professions appeared in Kabul in 1952 to embark on mission activities that would develop the community and improve the well-being of the people (Friesen, 2005, p. 156).

According to Friesen (2005) the Mennonite venture in Afghanistan actually was started in 1969 by Ruth and Herb Friesen who were joined by other workers in subsequent years. Their focus was to provide medical treatment for the eyes. For twenty-eight years these pioneers teamed with Mennonite Brethren Missions and Service International (MBMSI) and the International Assistance Mission (IAM) in expanding and carrying out programs not only in Afghanistan but also in communities in Pakistan. Though war and terrorism affected some aspects of the operations, mission programs in agriculture and health care are being sustained in Kabul and other cities. Mission experience in Afghanistan taught the Mennonites believers that Islam as a religion affects the whole life of a Muslim in the Afghan culture. These missionaries claim that Christians could learn from Muslims' "God-consciousness, devotion, hospitality, modesty, self-discipline, and family values" (p. 157).

Mennonite Christians are also present in Turkey. Commenting on experiences in that part of the world, Stauffer (2005) claimed that the focus had been in the southeastern part of the country where they were working in three cities and had three cell groups meeting in neighboring villages. Stauffer asserts that the goal of the venture is not to promote Christianity as a religion but rather to introduce the people to the living Jesus as the only hope that makes a difference in the individual's daily life (p. 163).

Hyderabad, a community in India dominated by Muslims for more than 500 years was the initial mission station for the MBMSI. However, an outcry intended to prevent

the baptism of Muslim converts stirred up tension that caused the relocation of the mission venture to a Hindu community (Nickel, 2005, p. 164). Nevertheless efforts to pursue relationships with the Muslims in India did not cease; missionaries served Muslims at three mission hospitals and gave them access to radio programs run by missionaries. An interfaith project to learn the local language was also established. This was intended to enhance relationships with the Urdu-speaking Muslims and to help present the gospel clearly to them in their language (p. 165).

Indonesians' religious harmony actually gives a fascinating picture of Christian - Muslim relations. Both religions obtain their religious vocabulary from the Arabic language (Jameson, 2012, p. 170). With the strong cultural and social solidarity between them, Christians comfortably use the name Allah when they are referring to the God they worship. Unlike Muslims in the Middle East, most Indonesian Muslims also believe they will meet with Isa whom Christians call Jesus as judge at the end of the age (Yoder, 2005, pp. 170, 171).

In Egypt where Christianity was the initial dominant religion in the sixth century but is now a Muslim-dominated nation, the Catholic Church has established an institution for studying the Arabic language and Islamic culture in Dar Comboni (Showalter, 2005, pp. 181, 182). This institution has not only been effective in language and Islamic study, to helping missionaries in their endeavors, but also informed them about Christian experiences in other Muslim nations. It prepares and equips them for better engagement in both Arabic and non-Arabic speaking Muslim countries.

Christians' approach to the West African tribes has been of a similar pattern through educational and medical assistance. In Liberia Christianity was first introduced to

the natives in 1820 by the freed slaves sent by the American Colonization Society (ACS) in their pursuit of freedom. However, the lack of affinity caused successive clashes between the natives and the settlers (Brawley, 1921, pp. 190, 191) which did not permit a successful presentation of the gospel. Nevertheless Lott Carey, who was determined to convert the natives, succeeded in building a missionary school in Cape Mount, but it was shut down by the “Muslims—mostly Mandingo traders” who were engaged in spreading the Islamic faith through their trading activities (Ciment, 2013, pp. 50, 68).

Traditional churches such as the Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, and Baptist denominations are firmly established in Liberia. They have hospitals and schools. Nevertheless these developments have been concentrated in Monrovia and some of the larger cities. Islamic-dominated communities like Cape Mount County, Bomi County and Lofa County have yet to experience development programs that will bring Christians and Muslims together to commence meaningful dialogues for the common good.

Summary and Conclusion

In summary, the age-long antipathy between these two world religions has neither represented their core teachings of *loving God and neighbor*, nor represented Abraham whom they claim as their spiritual ancestor. Through the patriarch Abraham these two world religions along with Judaism inherited a monotheistic worship that has converted over half of the world’s population. Despite their ideological differences on the one God phenomena, the similarities revealed in the Bible and the Qur’an have been utilized by Christian missionaries as admirable points of contact to enhance positive relationship between the two faith communities.

Although their differences have sometimes been used for non-theological reasons for conflict with each other, through the decades the two religions have been engaged in dialogue in search of common ground to maintain tolerance and a peaceful coexistence. Missionaries and some Christian denominations have established special organizations with Muslims. Some have embarked on projects that are actively assisting in the areas of health, education, and small businesses to heal, educate, and empower Muslims in impoverished communities. Most of these ventures have had a tremendous impact on the lives of the common people and have improved the relationship between Christians and Muslims considerably in some nations.

In conclusion, the patriarch Abraham is recognized as the spiritual role model in both religions. When he accepted God's mission call, he dwelled peacefully among the Canaanites. Violence and hatred, which have pervaded Christian-Muslim relationships through the centuries, are still hurting people in the 21 century. This is clearly not the character of the patriarch Abraham. Adherents of both religions should be encouraged to emulate the patriarch's example in his relationships even with idol worshipers in Canaan.

The fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise in Christ (Gal 3:29) and with the foreknowledge of the Great Controversy, Christians are to be sympathetic and tactful in presenting the gospel to Muslims. They are to approach them with love and together uphold the core values of their common message of *loving God and neighbors*. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit this Abrahamic monotheistic ecumenism may eventually be the herald of peace to the world to fulfill God's purpose of extending His kingdom.

God's kingdom can be extended through the following steps: (a) use Christ's methods of meeting people where they are, (b) have respect for each individual's

religious view, (c) afford opportunity to intentionally engage in dialogue for the promotion of peace, (d) tolerate others' religious practices that do not infringe on the law of the land, and (e) encourage a peaceful coexistence to enhance the common goal of proclaiming in a tactful manner the one God in whom Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe (Mclaren, 2012, p. 90) and allow the Holy Spirit bring the conviction.

Chapter four presents the approach of this project dissertation to engage, train, and empower Muslim youth in Cape Mount County to be productive citizens in Liberia.

CHAPTER 4

A STRATEGY TO ENGAGE ISLAMIC YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN GRAND CAPE MOUNT COUNTY

Introduction

The fulfillment of God's promised blessing to Abram and the nations appears to be impeded by grievances that started in the Middle East. Unfortunately, Christianity and Islam, which share the same community through their Abrahamic descendants, have been influenced by that very controversy. Polemic theological statements have fueled dissension and frustrated tolerance and peaceful coexistence between adherents of the two religions. Unfortunately, the absence of peace has not only eradicated positive relationship between the parties, but has also created suspicion, and introduced persecution between their members (Esposito, 2010, p. 12). These conditions have led to a prohibition of missionary activities in some Muslim communities. As a result both Christians and Muslims have reduced opportunities to fulfill their religious obligation to care for the impoverished in their communities leaving victims of such circumstances to languish in misery.

This chapter proposes initiating a positive relationship between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Islamic community in Cape Mount County in Liberia. The goal is demonstrating practically the value of love as portrayed in the gospel. The approach

will engage and empower youth and young adults through pilot projects, enabling them to be economically self-reliant and encouraging spiritual development.

Country Analysis

Geographical Description

Liberia is situated on the west coast of Africa alongside the Atlantic Ocean, bordering Sierra Leone in the West, Guinea in the North and Cote d'Ivoire to its east (Wikipedia, 2012b). The coastline is 370 miles long with four seaports (Brawley, 1921, p. 187; Hadden, 1998), and covers a total area of 111,370 sq km (43,000 sq mi) within the geographic coordinates of 6° 30' North latitude and 9° 30' West longitude (Maps of the world, 2011).

The country is located south of the Tropic of Cancer, a few degrees north of the equator with a tropical solar radiation that maintains warm temperatures and a climate that causes more rainfall than other West African nations. Liberia has a minimum rainfall of 100 inches inland while the capital Monrovia along the coast receives about 180 inches annually (Hadden, 1998). Obviously this favorable climate gives rise to and maintains the tropical rain forest with its various creatures forming the ecological system of the nation.

There are seven major rivers in Liberia: Cavalla, Cestos, Lofa, Mano, Morro, Saint John, and Saint Paul River. The Cavalla River is in the southeast; the Mano and Morro are in the northwest. These rivers form boundary lines with the neighboring nations on the east and west. All the rivers flow from the high inland planes to the coast. Unfortunately, the rivers are not navigated because of the irregularities of their riverbeds with falls, rapids, sandbanks, rocks, and steep waterfalls. Some of the rivers have been dammed to provide hydroelectric power.

History and Demographical Analysis

According to Liebenow (1969) “it is difficult to assert with any confidence when the earliest human settlement took place in Liberia” (p. 34). According to the oral traditions before the arrival of the freed slaves from America early inhabitants of Liberia were derivatives of the Mande, Kwa, and the West Atlantic speaking people who were migrants from the collapsed Songhai Empire. Although linguistic classification places them in three tribal groups, there are actually 16 tribes in Liberia: Vai, Mandingo, Gbandi, Kpelle, Loma, Mende, Gio, Mano, Gola, Kissi, Bassa, Dey, Grebo, Kru, Belle, and Krahn.

Because archaeological study has not confirmed the actual time of human settlement in the Atlantic region of Sierra Leone and Liberia, it is believed that the settlers were fairly recent arrivals. And because there were no regulated boundaries in the region, some of the tribes moved back and forth among neighboring communities to renew and maintain ties with their kinsmen. Tribal conflicts often caused stronger tribes to drive the weaker ones out of the territory. However, these tribes had reached their present locations when the freed slaves from America arrived in the nineteenth century (Liebenow, 1969, pp. 34-37). It is appropriate to say that the arrival of the freed slaves marked the beginning of the waves of independence and sovereignty in Africa with Liberia becoming the first independent state.

The leaders of the American Colonization Society (ACS) thought to rid the American cities of freed slaves of color who possessed vague social status, because their presence had become a source of constant social friction. Thus it was decided to repatriate them to the West Coast of Africa (Liebenow, 1969, pp. 1, 2). The first settlers

arrived on the shores of Liberia in 1822, and on July 26, 1847 Liberia was declared an independence state (pp. xvii, 5). Unfortunately the new independent state had divisions among its citizens. The Americo-Liberians, as the freed slaves were called, were not friends with the native tribal people they met in their new community. The natives opposed their presence and their forceful control, and often engaged in fierce battles with them (Brawley, 1921, pp. 188, 190). Brawley compared the settlers' situation in Liberia to that of the Pilgrim Fathers of America. In his view, "as the Pilgrims had to subdue the Indians, so they (the Americo-Liberian) had to hold their own against a score of aggressive tribes" (p. 191).

Liebenow (1969) claims that the natives were abused in several ways. Though they paid taxes to the government, the legislation and the constitution of 1847 did not recognize them as citizens. As a result the natives were not a part of the political governance of the new republic, were conscripted to carry government official in hammocks as they toured the districts, and were recruited forcibly to work on the private farms. Such a situation introduced a class system with the Americo-Liberians as the elites (pp. 25, 53, 67, 68).

Although some of the nation's leaders in the 20th century endeavored to bring about changes by involving the natives in the political spectrum of the state (Liebenow, 1969, p. 73), the supremacy of the Americo-Liberians did not change. Some politicians used the condition to incite native soldiers in the Liberian army to overthrow the government in a coup in 1980 (Ciment, 2013, p. 241; Ellis, 1999, pp. 53, 65), which led the nation into a ten-year military rule, followed by a fourteen-year civil war. The crisis left the nation in a devastated condition with about 105,000 disarmed combatants, mostly

young people (Medeiros, 2007, p. 499) who had no industrial training to support themselves economically or contribute to the development of the nation.

Liberia is administratively divided into 15 counties with its political and national capital Monrovia located in Montserrado County (see Appendix A). It has a population of 3.5 million with 16 recognized ethnic groups. Although English is the official language for communication, the inhabitants speak over thirty indigenous languages (Wikipedia, 2012b). The religious affiliation of the people is distributed among three officially recognized religious groups: Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion (Vision Liberia 2027, 2008).

Overview of the Religious Context

The Bible mentioned Africans' role in Christianity as early as in the days of Jesus, in the persons of Simon of Cyrene and his two sons, Alexander and Rufus (Matt 27:32; Mark 15:21). Cyrenaica was located in North Africa where Libya is today and was a Greek and later a Roman province (Clarke, 1982, p. 8). White (1898) claimed that Simon was not a disciple of Jesus but his children were and he was grateful for the providence of carrying the cross of Christ, an experience he cherished forever (p. 742).

Another early Christian connection with Africa is the Ethiopian eunuch. Though the activities of these men remain a mystery, North Africa was a prominent scene of Christian activity in the days of Tertullian (160-220), Cyprian (died 258), Origen (182-254), Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Clement of Alexandria (150-215) in the four centuries before the emergence of Islam. However, as the Eastern Church was weakened by theological controversies, the Church in North Africa was also confronted with doctrinal dispute and heresies, which not only incapacitated the leadership but also halted

its advance against paganism (Addison, 1942, p. 16). In such a weak state, the jihadist's campaign successfully gained control of all of North Africa. By 642 A. D. Islam became a naval force when it took the seaport and dockyards of Alexandria. It established a naval and military base in Kairouan from whence it advanced westward across North Africa; in the first decade of the eighth century Islam had North West Africa under its control (Clarke, 1982, p. 8). Unfortunately, there is no record of a Christian presence or missionary activities south of the Sahara or specifically in West Africa during the Christian era in North Africa before the Islamic takeover.

Trimingham (1955), a Church Missionary Society representative who made a survey of Islam in West Africa in 1952, claimed that Islam began its penetration in West Africa in the eleventh century (p. 9). Such a claim is arguable because in the eighth century Islamic traders from the north were obtaining slaves and foodstuff from West Africa in exchange for clothes, salt, and horses. Muslims merchants also settled in the commercial center in West Africa to buy gold which was then very important in the Muslim world (Clarke, 1982, p. 10). Clarke further affirms that there was a trans-Saharan trade link in the eighth century between Tahert in present-day Algeria and Gao in West Africa. Avery (1980) agrees when he says "Islam crossed the Sahara by the desert trade routes" (p. 113). Archaeological discoveries further show that Gao not only existed in the ninth century but also was using imported goods from North Africa, suggesting commercial ties and earlier Islamic contact with the region (Kemezis, 2011).

Islam finally reached the west coast of Africa and attained popularity in the eleventh century. According to Clarke (1982) this was made possible because of the trans-Sahara trade with its strong economic trade link between the Almoravids and the

West African states. However, when Islam finally reached Liberia through the upper Niger region, the Vai, Gola, and Mandingo became the first tribes to be influenced by the Islamic faith. The Islamic community gradually increase in 18th century when Muslims from Futa Jallon started migrating to the coast for trade and relocation in the tropical forest (pp. 20, 107).

On the other hand, Christianity in West Africa is dated to the seventeenth century when missionary work was dependent on colonial and commercial expansion in Europe. Precisely it was in 1662 when a Vatican committee was established by the Pope to send and supervise missionaries in Africa (Gray, 1980, p. 14). According to Ayandele (1980), by 1708 there were no less than 100,000 Christians in the Kingdom of Kororofa in Northern Nigeria, where Catholic priest had built a sixty-bed hospital facility (p. 133). Thus, although the first black Christian settlers from Europe may have been pioneers of the gospel in Sierra Leone in 1787 (Avery, 1980, p. 105), Catholic missionaries were already in Nigeria by 1708.

Liberia has no colonial roots with Europe; it was the settlers from America who first introduced Christianity to the native Liberians. These settlers were not committed nor interested in converting the natives. Liebenow (1969) says the settlers treated the natives as “savages” and were arrogant in their manner of approach to them, which created a hostile climate in their relationship (p. 27). The Americo-Liberians could relate more amicably to other African settlers brought in from captured slave ships on the high sea by British Royal guides than to the natives of Liberia. Clearly the natives did not experience true love inspired by the gospel from the “civilized” settlers.

Bushrod Island District

It was in 1863, the year the Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized as a denominational body, that Hanna More, a native of Massachusetts and a convert through the ministry of Stephen Haskell, one of the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that the Adventist message finally reached the West coast of Africa. Hanna was not a missionary sent by the church to West Africa; rather, she came to Liberia as an employee of a British missionary society (Owusu-Mensa, 2005, p. 8). However, the first Seventh-day Adventist missionaries (R. Helbig and E. Flammer) sent officially to Liberia were from the European Division. They arrived in 1926 and established the first SDA inland mission with a school and a clinic in Seahn Grand Bassa County (Neufeld, 1996, p. 922). About 150 years after the appearance of that lone missionary to Liberia, the Adventist Church has developed into a conference and two missions with a membership of over 24,000. Bushrod Island district, the host of this project, is one of the four districts created in Monrovia in 2003. These districts were created to ease the administrative burden and to promote evangelism in the densely populated areas in the city like Bushrod Island.

Palm Seventh-day Adventist Church

Bushrod Island is located on the west of Monrovia along the coastline. Freeport, the largest of the four seaports in the country, is also on this Island. This island is located at the entrance of one of the major highways (Banbagida Highway) that connects the city to the three counties in the northwest and the neighboring state (Sierra Leone). It also hosts the Duala Market, the second largest market in the city. These three important features: the seaport, the highway, and Duala Market, have made this island a densely

populated commercial and multicultural community. It is on this Island that Palm Church, the second oldest Adventist church in the city, is located.

Palm Seventh-day Adventist Church is the mother church of four churches that forms the Bushrod Island district. Its membership is about 430, 80% of which are youth and young adults. The church runs an elementary school for children up to the seventh grade. Through this school the church has not only gained a good reputation in the community, but the school has also been a channel for bringing visitors to the church. Some of the visitors become members of the church.

Prior to the civil crisis in 1989, the church initiated an evangelistic missionary venture in Bomi County. A multipurpose building was erected in Saar that was to be used for a school and church in that Gola community. Unfortunately, the civil war disrupted the effort and the program was shut down. Because of that initial outreach experience and the church's proximity to the designated community, Palm church, will therefore become the host for the implementation of this project in Cape Mount County.

Coordination Committee (Change Agents)

Engaging Muslims directly with biblical theories has not been effective in the past decades by other Christian denominations in the country. The concept of *tawhid* in Islam, which stresses the oneness of God, is the foundation of Islamic monotheism and implies that the “transcended God can never become incarnate in a human body” (Cornell, 1994, pp. 61, 65). This is in direct opposition to the heart of the Christian theology with its Trinitarian concept that affirms Jesus Christ of Nazareth as God, which Islam refer to as “*shirk*, the unforgivable blasphemous sin of associating other beings with God” (Volf, 2011, p. 129).

As part of the preparation for the project, a two-week leadership seminar (see Appendix C) will be conducted for the youth and young adults of Bushrod Island district in the months of January and February 2015. It is at the close of this seminar that nine active participants will be selected to form a coordination committee of change agents at Palm church. This committee will be a permanent group that will be focused on an outreach ministry to Muslims with the goal of coordinating and implementing the project in Grand Cape Mount County. The committee will be engaged in studying about Islam and Christianity (see Appendix D), planning the project, and developing a partnership with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

Partnership With ADRA

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency is well known for its participation in development and sustenance programs in Islamic communities in Africa, but not everyone knows the church it represents. This project is an answer to the former ADRA president Rudi Maier's appeal at the Pan African symposium 2009 at Andrews University seminary chapel, when he presented a paper on Africa's self-reliance and sustenance. In his presentation, Maier (2011) affirmed the need for ADRA and the church to work together in community involvement to fulfill the mission of the church, which he suggested is not limited to preaching the gospel but also healing and caring for the poor (pp. 1, 3).

ADRA is presently involved with a series of programs that include the following: agricultural (ECHO Food Security) project distributing seeds and tools to farmers; DRIP/DANIDA—a housing project that is building new homes for villages that had been burnt down in postwar Liberia; and facilitating functional adult literacy programs known

as the FAL program which is currently active in 51 communities in Liberia (ADRA Liberia, 2009). So far, according to the director, Dr. Emmanuel George, ADRA has not implemented any active project in Cape Mount County in 2009 and there is no past record of any project activity in the county (E. George, personal communication, June 5, 2012). Collaborating with ADRA on this project may generate worthy advantages such as:

1. ADRA's influence as a philanthropic organization will give moral support to the project. If the community realizes that ADRA is the caring arm of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to meet the needs of impoverished communities, it will remind Muslims of the church's act of fulfilling what Islam refers to as *zakat* (Aminu, 1993, p. 94), a fundamental pillar of the Islamic faith, that encourages caring for others, especially the impoverished (Watt, 2005, p. 379). The effectiveness of the project may encourage the rest of the churches to commit to faithfully fulfill the task of helping to shape the lives of the youth in that community. Possibly this outreach will remind Muslims of the group of Christians that the Qur'an (Al-Imran 3:110) refers to as faithful. The Adventist Church should accept this idea as they initiate relationships with the Muslims in that community.

2. Through ADRA, donors may contribute to boost the project and possibly extend it to other Islamic communities.

3. By ADRA becoming a part of this project it may expose the organization to the needs of the people in that region and enable it to appeal to donors on their behalf.

4. With its developmental experience and expertise, ADRA may assist in supervision for successful outcomes through the use of methodologies like the Logical

Framework Analysis and the Gantt chart matrixes used by developmental organizations. ADRA is therefore indispensable to this project.

The coordination committee (Agent for Change) will meet with ADRA's project officers in April 2015 after a careful study of the project document for a discussion to finalize the following: (a) affirm ADRA's supervisory role of the project, (b) set the date for the commencement of the project in Grand Cape Mount County in 2016, and (c) decide the duration of the project based on the project curriculum, methods of evaluation, and discussions on seeking donors.

Project Implementation: Logical Framework and Gantt Chart

The Log-Frame Matrix Analysis

The project will utilize the Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) matrix as a guide in the implementation of the program. The matrix seeks to improve situations in development projects and has proven to be an efficient tool for project analysis and design. It can ensure that the project ideas are relevant, feasibility, and sustainable (ITAD, 1999, pp. 15, 16). LFA matrix also provides necessary information for understanding the operation and for intervention activities by setting objectives in a systematic and logical way to enable an evaluation of the progress achieved (PARTICIP, 2005, p. 7). As a tool used for community developmental projects, it structures the program's strategies with clear concepts. It provides an approach for project stakeholders and funders to gain an overview of the project's related events. It gives a focused management plan during implementation for collecting data needed to monitor and improve the quality of the program (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, pp. 5, 11).

The LFA approach analyzes the project in its larger context with a focus on the relationship between the various activities in the project and facilitate interventional logic. It does so by concentrating on variable indicators of achievements and assumptions outside the consortium's responsibility that are necessary to achieve the specific objective (NORAD, 1999, pp. 9, 11). However, the systematic application of the LFA method with good judgment not only contributes to goal achievement but also helps to identify other problems and needs in the community (Ortengren, 2004, pp. 3, 5).

Project evaluation is part of the LFA matrix analysis, ensuring stability and maintaining the focus on an achievable end. This project will employ three phases of evaluation to influence the activities and the outcomes of the project effectively. The project will include responsive, formative, and summative evaluations. Responsive evaluation takes its cues not merely from theoretical information, but from matters relevant to the local audience; formative evaluation modifies and improves project design to fit the local context; summative evaluation critiques, certifies, and warrants the entity for local use (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, pp. 38, 50). These essential evaluations are made possible through the variable indicators within the scope of the project. Evaluation in the context of LFA is an assessment of the impact, relevance, and sustainability of the project undertaken by external collaborators for the purpose of learning, guidance, and control based on the project's achievement (NORAD, 1999, p. 90).

However, despite the qualities mentioned about the LFA, it does have its limitations. The common dictum "garbage in, garbage out" is applicable to the Log-frame matrix, hence its quality depends on the following: information received, the ability of the project planning team, and the consultation from stakeholders to ensure that there is a

balanced representation of different interests, including the vulnerable group (PARTICIP, 2005, p. 8).

Though in its basic form the chart of the Log-frame matrix has four columns and four rows (ITAD, 1999, p. 23), an expanded matrix layout table that gives detailed information on the various aspects of the activities in a systematic order has five columns and five rows. The first column and the top row carry the headings of the project profile. They display the objectives, intervention logic, indicators of achievement, sources and means of verification, and the reasonable assumptions that enhance the feasibility of achieving the project's objectives at all the levels in the hierarchical arrangement within the larger context of the project (p. 33), as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

The Summary Content of a Log-frame Matrix for Project Management

	Intervention Logic	Objective Variable, Indicators of achievement	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Overall objective	What is the overall objective to which the project will contribute?	What are the key indicators related to the overall objective?	What are the sources of information for these indicators?	
Specific objective or purpose	What specific objectives is the project intended to achieve	Which indicators clearly show that the specific objectives of the project have been achieved?	What are the sources of information that exist or can be collected? What are the methods required to get this information?	Which factors and conditions are necessary to achieve the specific objectives? Which risks should be taken into consideration?
Expected result Result 1 Result 2 etc.	What are the expected project results (output) that will achieve the specific objectives? Who will take responsibility for securing each result.	What are the indicators to measure whether and to what extent the action achieves the expected result?	What are the sources of information for these indicators?	What external conditions must be met to obtain the expected results on schedule?
Activities Activity 1.1 Activity 1.2 Activity 1.3 Activity 2.1 Activity 2.2 etc. Activity 2.3 etc.	What are the key activities to be carried out and in what sequence in order to produce the expected results...?	Means: What are the means required to implement these activities, e. g. personnel, equipment, training studies, supplies, operational, etc.	What are the sources of information about activity progress?	What preconditions need to be met before the project starts; what conditions have to be met for the implementation of the planned activities?

(<http://www.migration4development.org/docs/logframe.pdf>)

The Objective

The objectives of the project shown in the first column give a picture of the future situation when the project is completed (Ortengren, 2004, p. 11). They also demonstrate the structural features of the program activities, which are arranged by levels, and set out the basis of the intervention logic of the project (ITAD, 1999, p. 23).

Intervention Logic

The second column presents the intervention logic statements, which are the underlying strategies of the project. This column gives the descriptive narrative of the four levels of the “hierarchy of objectives” of the project (ITAD, 1999, p. 71). The overall objective (goal) is the first in the objective column, and its intervention logic is the importance of the project to the society on the basis of long-term benefit. The specific objective (purpose) addresses the core problem and its effect on the designated group. The expected results (output) deals with service delivered to beneficiaries or the designated group. And the activities, in descending order deal with goods and services delivered by the project (p. 23, 24) to enhance the objective result.

Objective Variable Indicators

The focus of the project is to tackle problems facing the community; the only means of evaluating the effectiveness of the project is through indicators. These indicators show whether or not the project accomplishes its purposes or whether achievements are sustainable when the project is completed (ITAD, 1999, p. 66). Project

objective indicators are the evidences or performance measurements of achievement and form the basis for monitoring the project implementation (Ortengren, 2004, pp. 10, 29).

Sources and Means of Verifications

The fourth column gives narratives of the sources of the Indicators, which are expected to be authentic sources to enhance reasonable verifications as to the expense of “time, money and effort.” The possible means include a “progress report, project account, project records and official statistics” of achievement from the project management team, the designated groups, and the community beneficiaries (ITAD, 1999, pp. 30, 31).

Assumptions

There would be indications during the analysis stage that the project cannot achieve its objectives alone without certain external factors not included in the narrative of the intervention logic. Such external factors are classified as assumption in the LFA, and are included in the matrix as needed to support the project to achieve its goal (PARTICIP, 2002, pp. 49, 50).

The Gantt Chart

The Gantt chart is a visual tool or graphical representation to schedule project activity to help management be cognizant of progress achieved within the specified time. It serves as a relevant visual tool in planning and showing schedules of project activities that help in monitoring the progress of the program (KADASA, 1920). Gantt charts give the duration of the project, identify project phases and related tasks, give work breakdown structures, show dependencies among tasks, and present graphically what should be achieved at various points in time (MindGenius, 2012).

Table 2

A Sample Gantt Chart of Activity Time Schedule

Activities	Feb						March			
	21	22	23	24	25	26	1	2	3	4
Meet with church officials	█	█	█	█						
Compile suggestions				█	█	█				
Brainstorm ideas		█	█	█	█					
Develop Proposal				█	█	█				
Assign team jobs	█	█								
Meet with team leaders				█	█	█				
Develop templates							█	█		
Create timeline										
Implement survey						█	█	█		
Engage designated group							█	█	█	█

Description of the Project Strategy

The actions of radical Islamic militants have aroused hateful comments from among Christians, ranging from calling Islam an evil religion and calling Muhammad a terrorist. This has caused Muslim phobia among Christians and created a milieu that has hindered evangelism in Islamic communities during the past decade ("Muslim phobic no more," 2002). However, despite their irreconcilable differences, Islam and Christianity still have some practices and beliefs in common: "the belief in the power of prayer, belief in authoritative revelation from God, and a vision for a moral, just society" (p. 28). These commonalities could be a divine provision to open the door for the Holy Spirit to establish love among the parties and move them towards peaceful coexistence. This project is meant to reach out to the Islamic community in Cape Mount to ease the impoverished conditions by training young men and women to become tailors and carpenters. These new professionals will then be assigned to tentmakers in different localities in the community to help them adapt to their new professional enterprise.

Application of the Logical Frame Approach

The Overall Goal

The overall goal or the ultimate benefits of this project to the church, residents of Cape Mount County, and society at large, is to improve the economic and moral standard of the community. Cape Mount County, a community of predominantly Muslims, is one of the counties in Liberia that has not experienced any developmental program to help the young people be self-reliant and contribute to the economic development of the nation. This project is meant to bring a change in the lives and in that community.

The Purpose

As laid out in the Log-frame matrix, the entire scope of this project is training. The purposes of this project are to train Adventist youth in the church to be active leaders, empowering them with tact in approaching other religious adherents, and to train and empower community youth in tailoring and carpentry. The development of spiritual discipline is also a goal. This will bring about change in the community and give hope for a better life economically and spiritually.

Table 3

Application of Project Events in the Log-frame Approach Matrix

Objectives	Intervention Logic	Variable Indicators of Achievement	Sources and Means of verification	Assumptions
The Overall Objective – Goal	Increase in economic development and economic activity; reduction in crime	Fabric stores in Cape Mount, presence of active tailoring shops, reduction in criminality	Economic statistics before and after the project, police reports on crime,	The church leadership at the Mission Headquarters in support of the project
The Specific Objective – Purpose	1. Youth and young adults have become active tentmakers (tailors and carpenters), 2. Young people participating in leadership roles,	More young people interested in the training, tailor shops and carpentry workshop established in the community	Records of the number of youth trained, community records of youth in leadership capacities	The youth are willing be trained and community leaders are willing to accept the program.
Expected Result – Output	1. Sewing shops and household furniture shops in the cities in Cape Mount, 2. Fabric stores increase 3. Seventh-day Adventist friendship evangelism in progress 4. Other denominations with other project may follow	1. The number of tailor and carpentry shops in the community increases 2. Number of shops for fabrics and furniture materials increase 3. Adventist presence for the first time in the community	The project’s records on file, evaluation of the changes in the community, the presence of new shops, the continued presence of Adventist in the community	Community members will choose to have their sewing and furniture making done in their community rather than paying more for it outside the county

Table 3—Continue

Activities – Input	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership workshop in Palm church 2. A study program about Islam and Christianity 3. Workshop for tentmakers 4. Training of tailors 5. Training of carpenters 6. Placement of tentmakers to supervise the young people 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workshops and study programs at palm 2. Palm church members supportive of the project 3. Member of the coordination community active 4. Training of tailors and carpenters in Cape Mount 5. Church’s support plan for the first trainees as new tentmakers 	Project records with the coordination committee at Palm church and with ADRA, project material present in Cape Mount	Support from church headquarters, Palm church, and ADRA for the project
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The Output

The new lifestyle of self-reliance coupled with new spiritual insight will gradually alter the worldview of the young people in the community and will help to teach love and appreciation of others. Love, the core value of the gospel would be the theme of the project to foster good relationships. Church members with these professions would be encouraged to join the team of tentmakers. They would be assisted to establish workshops and business centers to have these young men and women employed to further their careers as they earn their living. This will improve the economic standard of the young people and keep the community free from criminal activities. Members trading in fabric will also be encouraged to extend their trading activities in the region, a move that may not only initiate an Adventist community in the county but may also attract other business people to the community.

Application of the Gantt Chart

Leadership Seminar at Palm Church

The traditional Adventist approach to Muslims has not been very successful in the past decades. Developing the members' understanding of how to relate to non-Adventist religious groups should be a priority. This approach will not only help foster meaningful relationships with them but it will also encourage the use of tact when combating the present challenges deterring the church from presenting the gospel successfully to the Muslims. For an effective approach to Muslims McEdward (2011) suggests that the church needs to focus on three areas for development: "evaluation, leadership development, and theological reflection." (p. 249).

The leadership seminar will serve as the foundation of this project. It will bring the young people of Bushrod Island district together at the Palm church to be trained as leaders. Youth of the present postmodern generation place a high value on community building versus individualism (Long, 2004, p. 53). And because African cultures are community oriented, training the youth in transformational leadership skills will equip them to be proactive in the church and I anticipate some will become actively involved in the implementation of the project as they pull their peers together in Cape Mount County.

The seminar will run for two weeks and will focus on Christian leadership principles. Emphasis will be placed on servant leadership as suggested in the principles of Ellen White's perception of a true leader, as revealed in Philippians 2:5-8—a text that portrays Christ's selflessness as demonstrated by leaving His comfort, authority, and power to mingle with sinners to reconcile for their sin (Tutsch, 2008, p. 49). However, other leadership theories and styles with emotional influences (Goleman, 2011, p. 67)

will be included in the curriculum for the purpose of comparing them to Christian leadership (see Appendix C). The goal of the seminar is to motivate and build the confidence of the young people to fulfill the mission of the church, eliminate the preconceived concept that traces leadership to special people and view leading practices as a process to learn.

Christ's methods of reaching out to people will be carefully presented at the seminar to affirm the importance of relationships and service in ministry. This will help the church members to learn how to humbly and respectfully relate to other religious organizations, especially Muslims who are often neighbors to Christians in Liberia. A peaceful atmosphere accorded by a positive relationship with neighbors, would also enhance the work of the Holy Spirit promised to believers (John 16:7-8) to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

The seminar will encourage the young people of the Bushrod district to become proactive in the ministries of the church in the community. A committee of nine members will be selected from among the active participants at the end of the seminar. They will form the nucleus of change agents that will plan, organize, and implement the project in collaboration with ADRA.

The project objective is to train young people to be tailors and carpenters in the Cape Mount community. The committee's first obligation will be to search for six vocationally trained tailors and carpenters (three of each) within the church that will be added to the team as tentmakers in charge of the training aspect of the project. The total membership of the committee or change agents will be 15.

The theological objective of this project is practical Christianity as demonstrated in Christ's method of reaching people. He mingled with them, met their need, won their confidence, then He asked them to follow Him (White, 1942, p. 143). To engage Muslims with this project, the committee must first learn about Muslims and their beliefs. This will not only assist in building relationship but it will also increase understanding for possible contextualization that will enhance bridge building between the Adventist Church and Muslims in Cape Mount County (CMC).

Study of Islam and Christianity

This program will be a special ministry in Palm Church that will focus on reaching out to Muslims. The team will therefore endeavor to know more about Islam through organized study programs focused on the history and doctrines of the Islamic faith, a program to be conducted in Palm church with a carefully designed curriculum (see Appendix D-I).

The study about Christianity and Islam at Palm SDA Church for the preparation of the coordination committee (change agents) will help the members not only know about Muslims but also help them to be conscious of how to avoid arguments and relate to them in a Christ-like manner to fulfill the purpose of the gospel. Like Christians, there are different sects among the Muslims with diverse interpretations of Islam based on schools of theology and law (Esposito, 2002, p. 49). There are three main groups of Muslims in Liberia: Sunni, Ahmadi, and Shia. Sunni Muslims are in the majority, followed by Ahmadi; Shias' are few in number (Wikipedia, 2012a). Occasionally, within the scope of the study, the committee will invite Imams to speak on specific Islamic beliefs. This will help to give insight on how to identify different Islamic sects and to

determine how to approach them with a focus on the possibility of contextualizing the Adventist message.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has for decades been engaged in building relationships with Muslims. Departments have been structured in some of the Adventist higher education institutions to coordinate the activities (J. W. Whitehouse, 2004). A program of this nature at the local level to promote cordial relationships with Muslims in Cape Mount County may receive some guidelines from these institutions to help fulfill the mission of reaching out to Muslims.

Table 4

Gantt Chart for Leadership Seminar and Islamic Studies

Activities	Year One 2015											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Leadership Workshop												
1. 1 Classical View of Leadership		■	■									
1. 2 Leadership Principles		■	■									
1. 3 Emotional Intelligence		■	■									
1. 4 Leadership Styles		■	■									
1. 5 Eight Leadership Theories		■	■									
1. 6 The Mentor Leader		■	■									
1. 7 Servant Leadership/Biblical		■	■									
1. 8 E. G. White’s view of a leader		■	■									
1. 9 Transformational Model		■	■									
2 Study of the Project Dissertation				■								
3 Islamic Study at Palm SDA												
3. 1 Christianity 1-6 Century – Overview					■	■	■					
3. 2 Arabs in Arabia in 5 th -6 th Centuries					■	■	■					
3. 3 Muhammad the Prophet					■	■	■					
3. 4 Muslims and the Qur’an					■	■	■					
3. 5 The Qur’an and the Hadith					■	■	■					
3. 6 Abraham the common Ancestor					■	■	■					
3. 7 Islamic Allah and the Christian God					■	■	■					
3. 8 Islamic Beliefs					■	■	■					
3. 9 The Five Pillars of Islamic Faith					■	■	■					
3. 10 The Act of Worship					■	■	■					
3. 11 The Forbidden Food					■	■	■					
3. 12 Immodesty in the Modern Age					■	■	■					
3. 13 Barakat Allah Study Guide					■	■	■					
3. 14 Islamic View About Isa (Jesus)					■	■	■					
3. 15 What Adventist Need to Know					■	■	■					

Table 4—Continue

4 Orientation Workshop													
5 Meeting with Community Leader													
6. Preparation of Training Site (T)													
7 Acceptance of Students -Tailors													

Workshop for Committee Members (Tentmakers)

The 15-member “change agent committee” with three tailors and three carpenters included, will be part of a three-day workshop with ADRA officers at the Mother’s Pride School, where an adult training program in tailoring is presently going on. The purpose of the workshop is to carefully analyze the role of the individual participants, the activities involved and the time duration expected in the implementation of the project in Cape Mount County. These activities will be shown on a Log-frame Matrix table and Gantt chart for a general overview of the entire project. Also to be presented at the workshop will be the available resources and physical samples of the tools and equipment available for the project.

The focus of the task is composed of two pilot projects: tailoring and carpentry. For adequate appraisal, the project implementation in Cape Mount County will begin with tailoring training in February 2016, to be followed by carpentry training four months later in June. The committee at this workshop will give information on the training sites, while ADRA will give counsel on community development guideline.

The project is a development program to improve the quality of life in society. The county authorities would be informed and would be special guests at the official launching of the training program on January 15, 2016. Conference officers and Palm members will also be there for the first public interaction between the Adventist church members and the Muslim community in Cape Mount County.

Training of Tailors

In his reflection on ADRA's transition from emergency relief to developmental programs in Azerbaijan, Kuhn (2011) referred to the program as a holistic development program, hence holistic ministry (pp. 466, 467). In his view, transitional development is meant to restore human dignity. A similar goal is a part of this project. It is intended to provide hope and future for vulnerable youth living in that part of postwar Liberia. To restore and maintain the human dignity that Wagner Kuhn mentions, the program in Cape Mount County will include religious studies from the Qur'an and the Bible. Pastors and Imams will conduct these studies.

The curriculum for the tailors' class has nine items to cover to prepare the young people for their new career. The syllabus will be organized to accommodate even beginners without former education. It begins with basic tools and ends with sewing African costumes. Trained professionals whose ultimate goal is to help transform their lives will teach them. However, the instructors will emphasize the importance of practice and will make the tools (machines) available to them at all times, with strict instructions to follow safety measures. Most of the equipment for this program will be manually operated.

The tailoring training will last for six months, at which time plans will already be in place to team the graduates up in groups of two or three to work with conference tentmakers placed in strategic locations in workshops to supervise them. They will still be considered trainees but not novices and it will be the responsibility of the tentmakers to gainfully acquaint them with their career as part of their preparation for community enterprise. It is from here, when the individual feels capable of starting a personal business, he or she will be assisted and encouraged to do so, with free and regular consultation opportunities from the conference tentmakers. The tentmakers will encourage them to form tailor or carpenter associations by which they will share information that will help them become successful in their vocations.

The success of this project will be in agreement with what White (1948) calls a Christian's duty to alleviate the burden of poverty in the world. It is done by helping the poor develop their talent; provide them with work by teaching them a useful trade or occupation. She affirms, "We are to educate the poor to become self-reliant. This will be true help, for it will not only make them self-sustaining, but will enable them to help others" (p. 278).

Training Carpenters

The training in carpentry begins four months after the tailoring training begins, allowing the opportunity for the coordination committee to assess the community for an ideal location of the program. To become an expert in carpentry cannot be accomplished in eleven months but this training is to give the young people a start that will motivate and encourage them to pursue advancement in this area.

Like the tailoring program, simple mechanical tools like hammers, handsaws (panel saws), planes, tape measures, etc., will be the preliminary tools at the commencement of the program. ADRA and the mission headquarters will seek to appeal to donors for support to get advanced tools. As seen in the curriculum the program is professionally designed to enhance learning ability and to develop the young people for a promising economic future.

At the end of the 11 months of training, the coordination committee must have made plans for the trainees. They will be organized in groups of two or three, and placed under the supervision of conference tentmakers who will assist in establishing workshops in strategic locations for mission outreach in the towns in the county. News about the training program will encourage the community leaders to participate and the community will welcome the availability of affordable furniture.

Developing others to fulfill God's purpose (Eph 1:11) and to be self-reliant is obedient to the commandments Christ referred to as the two great commandments of loving God and loving one's neighbor, upon which all the law and the prophets hang (Matt. 22:37-40). According to Volf (2010), loving God and one's neighbor are the basic tenets in the Abrahamic faith communities, which the Islamic leaders regard in their open letter (The Common Word) to Christians as bases for building relationships between the two religions (p. 19). Therefore believers are to obviously fulfill their moral obligatory duties to God and His creation, which include man. According to White (1948) God's people are not to ignore "families living in hovels with scant furniture and clothing, without tools, without books or other marks of refinement about their homes" (p. 188). In her view believers are obligated to empower the impoverished to make use of their

energies to improve their living condition, an act Christ would do were He in our place.

Table 5 provides a graphic presentation of the project with its various segments and scheduled times.

Table 5

Gantt Charts of Project Activities in CMC

Activities	Year Two 2016											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
8 Launching of Training program	■											
9 Training of Tailors												
9.1 Orientation		■										
9.2 Basic Tools in Sewing		■										
9.3 Safety Measures in Sewing		■										
9.4 The Sewing Machine - Parts		■										
9.5 Introduction to Sewing			■									
a. Measurement in Sewing			■									
b. The Acts of Cutting			■									
c. Sewing Patterns			■									
9.6 Sewing fabrics			■									
a. Types of Stiches			■									
b. Attaching Buttons			■									
9.7 Sewing Blouse and Skirt				■								
9.8 Sewing Shirt and Trousers					■							
9.9 Embroideries						■						
9.10 Sewing African Costumes							■					
10 Placement of Tentmakers in CMC								■				
a. Tentmakers as supervisors								■				
11 Acceptance of Students – Carpenter				■								
12 Training of Carpenters												
12.1 Orientation						■						
12.2 Basic Tools in Carpentry						■						
12.3 Safety Measures						■						
12.4 Introduction to Woodwork						■						
a. Types of Woods						■						
b. Woods for Furniture						■						
c. Wood for Construction						■						
12.5 Making Furniture							■					
a. Measurement in Carpentry							■					
b. The Acts of Sawing Wood							■					
c. Joining Woods Together							■					
i. The use of Glue							■					
ii. The use of Nails							■					

Table 5—Continue

d. Making Simple Benches													
e. Making Tables													
f. Making Chairs													
g. Making Bed													

Activities	Year Three 2017												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
12. 6 Building Construction													
a. Simple Wooden Door													
b. Simple Wooden Window													
c. Simple Roofing													
13 Placement of Tentmakers													
a. Tentmakers Supervise													
14 Friendship Evangelism													
a. Using Qur'an and the Bible													

Placement of Tentmakers

In light of the present global job market expansion, Moyer envisioned “tentmaking” as a possible strategy for placing missionaries in communities which are closed or restricted to mission activity (Moyer, 2011, pp. 509, 511). Though other vocations may be utilized based on the needs of the community, this project is focused on utilizing tailors and carpenters as tentmakers in Cape Mount County. Biblical tentmakers like Priscilla, Aquila, and Paul were transient tentmakers constantly moving between cities. However, this project will be focused on training and establishing permanent tentmakers to assist in the economic development of the young people and their community.

In collaboration with ADRA and church leaders the committee will seek donors who will assist these tentmakers in their small business ventures at the end of each training program. The tentmakers will be located in strategic areas that would make their services accessible in the neighborhoods. They will serve as supervisors to encourage and get young tailors and carpenters involved in their new enterprise for both their sustenance and the development of their community.

The tentmakers will encourage the formation of tailors' associations and carpenters' associations. Through these associations they will be able to share experiences of successes and difficulties, which will help them find solutions to their individual challenges in their localities. Finally, the successful implementation of this project may not only inform this community about who Seventh-day Adventist Christians are, but may also usher in a new era of Adventist-Muslim relationships in Liberia. Such an initiative may foster tolerance and respect that will enhance positive relationships between the two religious communities.

Evaluation of Project Activities

Project evaluation by management is the periodic assessment of the efficiency with the aim to determine the effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and relevance of the project in the context of the objective. It is actually the examination of the background, objective, activities, result, and means deployed, with a focus on various milestones to guarantee progress and the quality of the project activities. Evaluation also provides authentic lessons to guide management in making decisions (PARTICIP, 2002, p. 99). Systematic evaluation is therefore a must in this project.

Accurate evaluation of progress achieved is done in three phases: at the level of project implementation, impact on the designated group, and relevance to the community. It involves analyzing all available indicators as the project proceeds on a systematic basis. This will help to reveal what is going wrong and indicate the necessary adjustments needed to avoid problems or improve on the implementation process.

Summary

The overview of how Christianity and Islam finally reached the west coast of Africa suggests that they are both foreign religions to that community. Neither one has the right to claim supremacy over the other. Thus tolerance, which this project seeks to initiate, is a necessity for peaceful coexistence.

The project is presented in four major phases to help fulfill its goals in the church and the designated community in Cape Mount County. The leadership seminar is to equip both the young and the old members of Palm church to be courageous leaders with tact to approach people of other religious groups and any other challenges the church may face in its evangelistic activities in the community. The Islamic studies and lectures from Imams will help the church members to know what Muslims believe and how to approach them to establish cordial relationships that will enhance peaceful coexistence to enable friendship evangelism among them.

Both the carpentry and the tailor training programs, carefully implemented, will help to transform the lives of young people and give them hope for their future. The situation eventually will increase the interest for friendly relationships between the Adventist Church and Muslims in that community. This accomplishment will be made possible by utilizing the control mechanism of the Logical Framework Approach analysis

and the Gantt chart. These tools give a general overview of the entire scope of the various events and the duration of each phase of the project. The LFA matrix will not only show the necessary link among the activities but also suggest the intervention logic at each level, objective variable indicators, and the assumptions that enhance authentic evaluation to control and lead the project to its successful achievement.

The final phase of the project is the placement of tentmakers in strategic location in Cape Mount, helping them establish workshops for small businesses where the new trainees would be supervised as they are initiated to public contact with their new careers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is obviously unrealistic to achieve success in a project of this nature without experiencing setbacks. The LFM contribution to the achievement is not a magical means of ensuring a project is successful. The successful accomplishment of this project will depend on the commitment of the stakeholders, designated groups, and above all the coordination committee (the change agents and the tentmakers) who have been empowered through various training programs to motivate and encourage members for their full participation. At the height of their obligation they need to seek divine guidance to lead in the management of the project activities. This project will not only improve the economic well-being and reduce crime in the community but it will also initiate cordial relationships between Adventists and the Muslim communities in Cape Mount County.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This project is intended to initiate and establish a cordial relationship between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Islamic community in Cape Mount County (CMC). The strategy in Chapter Four is focused on impoverished youth and young adults who will be engaged in pilot projects embedded with religious education that will prepare them to be economically self-reliant and spiritually nurtured. The project strategy is designed with four interrelated phases:

1. A leadership seminar that will lead to the formation of a coordination committee (change agents) for the project.
2. Contextual Bible and Qur'anic study to inform committee and church members about Muslims beliefs and how to relate to them.
3. Pilot projects for economic empowerment of the young people in the Muslim community of CMC.
4. Placement of tentmakers to introduce the young people to occupational enterprises.

This chapter will present a summary of how the project will be implemented, what will be accomplished in terms of relationships between the church and the designated community, and the expected impact of the project on the church and the Islamic community. This will be followed by conclusions, recommendations for Adventist approaches to Muslims, and suggestions for further study.

Intervention Logic

Although the Adventist message came to Liberia in 1863 (Owusu-Mensa, 2005, p. 8), the first official missionaries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, R. Helbig and E. Flammer, arrived from the European Division in 1926 (Neufeld, 1996, p. 922). According to the General Conference Annual Statistical Reports for 2011 the membership has grown to 25,927 (General Conference, 2013). However, the church has not yet made any ventures to reach the Muslim communities in the country.

The uprising against the Liberian government in December 1989, which lasted for 14 years, left over 105,000 disarmed combatants (Medeiros, 2007, p. 499), predominantly youth and young adults. These young people are scattered in various parts of the country and are without occupations. Because of their jobless situation, some in the Islamic community in Cape Mount County (CMC) are involved in illicit mining and other criminal activities that have become a problem for the citizens in the county. This project is therefore designed to effect change in the lives of some of these young people and to introduce Adventist mission activities among Muslims in that community.

Project Implementation Summary

Ministering to Muslims directly with the Bible has seldom been an effective method of taking the gospel to them. Practical Christianity to change lives through

Christ's method of mingling, sympathizing, and ministering to the needs (White, 1942, p. 143), is the method to be used in this project to reach out to the inhabitants of CMC.

However, the goal will be achieved through the effective training featured in the project and the commitment of the stakeholders. The project will commence after a careful study and approval of the strategy by the conference authorities in Monrovia. With the conference's approval and promise of support, an announcement will be made to the churches on Bushrod Island for a two-week leadership-training workshop to be held at the mother church (Palm SDA Church) as the first phase of the project.

The leadership seminar is intended to begin in February 2015, and will focus on helping the youth and young adults of the church to recognize their leadership potentials. The seminar materials will introduce them to leadership principles and styles with an emphasis on Christ-centered transformational servant leadership. This will cause what Kuhn (1962) calls "a paradigm shift." It will not only change the participants' views about leadership but will motivate them to be passionate about their new discoveries. Upon discovering their leadership potential by the end of the seminar, they will be empowered to become proactive in the church's mission to share the good news with their neighbors with enthusiasm.

At the end of the seminar, a nine-member committee formed from the active participants who are Palm Church members will be selected as a coordinating committee for the project. At this stage the new leaders will be guided to practice the teamwork and the shared leadership styles discussed during the seminar (see Appendix C). The committee will begin by searching for three carpenters and three tailors to be added to the group as tentmakers. This 15-member committee will be the change agents in Palm

church with a focus on developing an outreach ministry to Muslims. They will be responsible for coordinating and implementing all project activities to achieve the goals for CMC.

Beginning in April of the first year, the team will study the objectives of the project, including the second phase: the study of Islam and Christianity (see Appendix D). This study will be limited to an overview of their inception and relationship. Because the goal of this project is to build relationships between Adventist and the Muslims in CMC, the study will include tracing biblical truths and Muslim and beliefs from the Qur'an that will help the change agents familiarize themselves with differences and similarities between the two religions. This will help the team members to relate amicably with the Muslims in CMC and to establish fellowship with them. During the course of study, Imams will be invited to speak to the group on specific topics, especially areas that are common to both religions (see Appendix G and I). This will increase the understanding of the team members of Islamic beliefs and should improve their skills for contextualization and bridge building between Muslims and the Adventist Church in Liberia.

The third phase of the project is the training of tailors and carpenters in the Muslim community in CMC. This phase will begin with an orientation workshop to acquaint the facilitators and organizers with their individual roles in the project. Because this phase initiates direct interaction between the church and the community, it will be different from the traditional Adventist method of holding public campaigns by preaching from the Bible, which has not been effective in Muslim communities in the past. This

phase of the project will focus on practical Christianity in caring, sharing, and loving to create a sincere relational bond.

According to the McWhirters' (2007) analysis of youth development in society, social and economic environments were linked as crucial determinants for the overall well-being of young people (p. 31). Their analysis suggests that involvement in the community with vocational training and religious study programs from both the Qur'an and the Bible may lead not only to economic empowerment of these young people but it may also facilitate their spiritual development. The goal is to prepare the youth to be self-reliant, spiritually inclined toward salvation, and afford them with the knowledge of the distinctiveness of Adventists from other Christians.

This project does not focus on traditional conversion methodologies. The purpose is to engage intentionally in establishing friendly relationships with the community through the empowerment of young people. This venture seeks to establish an atmosphere where the Holy Spirit, who dwells in believers to teach them all things (John 14:17, 26) and guides them into all truth (16:13), may acquire a channel to accomplish His mission that Venden (1980) referred to as convicting, converting, cleansing, and commissioning for service (p. 328) in the CMC community. Such an intervention utilizing practical training is in line with White's (1942) counsel on teaching boys and girls useful trades (p. 194). It expresses the practical Christian attribute of love, which Christ commanded Christians to demonstrate (John 13: 34-35) as a sign of discipleship.

Placement of conference tentmakers (tailors and carpenters) in strategic locations in CMC is the fourth phase of the project, scheduled at the close of each training session of the project. The graduates from the training programs will be assigned to the

conference tentmakers for further growth in their various career enterprises; they will earn wages for the sustenance of their families and prepare to establish their own businesses. When the community members see their children working with the tentmakers in harmonious relationships to empower them economically, they will consider the church to be a friend to the community.

Expected Impact and Accomplishment

Placing tentmakers in strategic locations to expose the young people to their new careers will not only prepare them for business but will guide them intentionally into a culture of Muslim-Adventist relationships geared towards improving the livelihood of the people. This goal is in line with AMFA's health initiative in the Muslim communities in Atlanta and with Bauer's (2005b) form of incarnational ministry that he suggests would bring healing to and ease suffering in impoverished African-American communities in North America (p. 51). By training needy young combat victims to be tailors and carpenters, the project will contribute to the overall economic development of the county and through religious study the Adventist Church should be regarded as a repository of truth and a relevant entity to their community.

As relationships improve and the numbers or friends of Adventists in the community increases, the conference would be encouraged to establish an elementary school in the community. Such a school would introduce religious study with a special curriculum that would utilize the similarities revealed in the Bible and the Qur'an. This form of religious study for the elementary school would focus on the Kingdom of God, God as the Creator, and Abraham as the spiritual ancestor of both faiths (Muktar, 2005, pp. 60, 61; Woodberry, 2005, pp. 48, 50). GCAMR leaders would be consulted for advice

on such a curriculum. Tentmakers and members in the new community would be encouraged to heed Moskala's (2012) counsel on believers' lifestyle and its consistency with their faith (p. 164). Reserving vital truth to be presented at the appropriate moment, when hearts and minds are fully prepared for it, is not syncretism (Paulien, 2005, p. 237). Therefore, Moskala's (2012) counsel to start building relationships by presenting God to the Muslim brothers on an "existential level" (p. 165) will be considered in the religious study proposed here.

Since Adventists have much in common with Muslims, there should be no hesitation to prepare such a curriculum. For instance the church is a movement with the "Three Angels' message" of Revelation 14 as its prophetic warning that affirms the fear of God and giving glory to Him, worshipping Him as the Creator, and the Judgment to come. These are also the basic tenets of the Muslims faith; they too believe in the worship of one God and the judgment to come (Diop, 2005, p. 162).

Seizing the opportunity to implement this project will demonstrate to the community the differences between Seventh-day Adventist Christians and members of other Christian denominations. And since the Qur'an affirms the existence of righteous believers among Christians (Al-Imran 3: 110), this may begin a new chapter of understanding between the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Liberia and the Muslims in CMC. These trained young tailors and carpenters with religious knowledge of God will be encouraged and assisted to begin their own businesses, which will get them actively involved in the development of their county. This intentional intervention may bring about economic improvement and reduction of criminal activities in the community.

Conclusion

Since its inception the Adventist movement has experienced its greatest successes in Christian communities where the use of the Bible and the emphasis on doctrine were the ultimate strategy (Bauer, 2007, p. 59). Such an approach has not and will not be effective for initiating relationships with Muslims who are already ambivalent about Christians' interpretation of the Bible and its doctrines. Although Islam did not predate Christianity in West Africa, some Muslims consider Christianity a foreign religion brought in by European colonialists. Nevertheless, some non-Muslims point out that Islam is as foreign as Christianity and it imposed its form of colonialism through jihads; therefore neither religion has a right of superiority above the other in the region (Turaki, 2010, p. 36). Such a view places both religions of Liberia on an equal level that eliminates the Islam phobia surging in the Western world.

Unlike the Western individualistic culture, the African tribal cultures are established on relationships with religion as a core value, an instinct that permeates all departments or systems of life in the African context (Mbiti, 1969, pp. 1, 4). Religious study as part of this project is therefore an appropriate tool to prepare these needy young people emotionally to fulfill their religious need. It will also give them a clear understanding of what Adventists believe about God. This understanding could be a starting point to establish positive relationships between Adventists and the community of CMC.

Recommendations

A careful analysis of this project and its intentional engagement with the young people in the Muslim community of Cape Mount County, forecasts commendable

outcomes in the anticipated relationship between Adventists and the people of the county. However, an evaluation of the culture and the needs of the people suggests the need for the following recommendations:

1. With the present global economic crisis caused by terrorism, war, and natural disasters, an Adventist approach to Muslim communities should focus on providing for the pressing needs of the people. Although this project is focused on vocational training for young people, communities have diverse needs, like clinics, schools, agricultural programs, etc. To be successful in our interactive ventures with Muslims, the communities need to experience how much Adventists care for them, and through the influence of the Holy Spirit we may arouse their interest in what we have to offer because “people don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care” (Maxwell, 1999, p. 103).

2. Twenty-first century Adventists should approach Muslims with empathy and tact to fulfill the purpose of the gospel rather than condemning and demeaning their faith and culture through polemic rhetoric (Addison, 1942, p. 29).

3. Adventists should utilize what the Lord has already planted in the Muslim culture for bridge building between the two religions (Parshall, 2003, pp. 143, 144). With Diop’s (2005) assertion about what the Qur’an has in common with biblical faith (pp. 169, 170), identifying these biblical truths in the Qur’an for use as bases for conversation would be an effective approach to the Muslims.

4. Adventists and Muslims consider loving God and neighbor the most important teachings of their religions (Accad, 2010, p. 157). One way of expressing love for neighbors is to economically and spiritually empower youth and young adults in Muslim

communities. Thus a training program would be a strong method of initiating relationships with Muslims. Such an approach must be done with the spirit of true love as demonstrated in Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-27). Involvement in the lives of needy young people will win their confidence and create an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to guide them into truth.

5. In an approach to Muslims, Adventists must repudiate the Western immoral life-styles (Porter, 2011, p. 43), ideology and foreign policies (Volf, 2011, p. 2; Woodberry, 2002, p. 3) that have caused many of the grievances held by some Arabs in the Middle East and their sympathizers worldwide. Muslim need to know that many Christians who live in the West are not responsible for the ungodly practices of many Westerners or the unjust foreign policies of their leaders. True Christianity, like Islam, believes in dignity expressed through a modest lifestyle and a love for justice. Adventists should demonstrate such a standard in word and lifestyle as they engage Muslims in the community

6. Adventist should study the Qur'an carefully to discover the rich ideas that have often been wrongly interpreted by Muslims or not even noticed. In this endeavor, Adventists will discover the following:

- That there is not a single statement in the Qur'an or the Hadiths claiming the Bible texts have been corrupted. Rather the Qur'an affirms the Bible as the valid Word of God that existed before the Qur'an (Al-Imran 3:3).
- The Qur'an affirms the Bible as the standard of judgment for mankind (Al-Maidah 5:44).

- Jesus (Isa in Arabic) affirmed the Bible's authenticity as the right path to follow (Al-Maidah 5: 46).
- The Qur'an affirms that Christians must judge and live by the standard of the Gospel (Al-Maidah 5; 47, 68; 7:157).
- Muslims are not to argue with Christians because they worship the same God (Al-'Ankabut 29: 46).
- Muslims are to consult the people of the book (Christians) if they are in doubt of the message they received from the prophet Muhammad (Yunus10:94-95).
- Finally, the Qur'an affirms that God's Word is unchangeable (Al-An'am 6: 115), indicating that the Bible is still intact.

7. By reading the Qur'an, Adventists will also discover the following:

- That the notion held by some Muslims that the revelation of the Qur'an abrogated the validity of the Bible (Parshall, 1980, p. 132) has no substantial proof in the Qur'an.
- That the Qur'an was given to Muhammad for the Arabs, who had no scripture at the time and were virtually without knowledge about the true God. They were idol worshippers (Al-Ahqaf 46:12) in a period known to Muslims as Jahiliyah (Hitti, 1940, p. 87).

These salient truths could be possible basis for dialogue to form what Parshall (2003) calls the necessary narrow areas of the river that bring the banks of the two religions close enough for bridge building (pp. 143, 144). Adventists should not ignore

these opportunities in their outreach ministry to the Muslims. They are to approach them with love as Christ would have done, and let the Holy Spirit do the convicting.

APPENDIX A

Map of Liberia with its fifteen counties



APPENDIX B

Map of Grand Cape Mount County



APPENDIX C

Curriculum for Leadership Seminar

Involving young people as partners in leadership roles will be rewarding to the church. It will bring changes in the lives of the youths themselves, the adults, and the organization (Leifer & McLarney, 1997, p. 5). This seminar in Bushrod Island will prepare the young people to be proactive in the fulfillment of the mission of the church and to be effective participants in the development of their communities. The discussions will introduce them to basic tenets of leadership.

1. Traditional view of leadership, “the great man theory and “trait theories” that were considered as standards of leadership theory.
2. Principles of ethical leadership in line with Peter G. Northous’s (2010) analysis to help members learn to have respect for people, serve others, manifest honesty, support justice, and build community.
3. Primal leadership based on Emotional Intelligence, which will give awareness on the four dimensions of emotional control—self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and managing relationship as analyzed by Daniel Goleman (2011).
4. The eight leadership theories and their basic interpretations—Great man, trait, contingency, situational, behavioral, participative, management, and relationship theories.
5. Leadership styles and how they can be successfully utilized—visionary, democratic, affiliation, coaching, pacesetting, and commanding.
6. A mentor leader—how the leader imparts his or her life experience in others.
7. Transformational model of leadership—leadership that moves people from where they are to where God want them to be. Henry and Richard Blackaby’s (2001) counsels on Christian leadership is considered.

8. Ellen White's view on leadership—Christian leadership that focuses on divine guidance in the restoration of God's image through which the "Godhead achieves intimacy of companionship with their created beings."

APPENDIX D

Comparative Study of Muslims and Christians

This three-week study is to help Palm Seventh-day Adventist members develop a clear historical understanding about the emergence of Islam, Islamic beliefs, and the pillars of the Islamic faith. It will also include inviting Imams to give lectures on specific issues (beliefs) that will help church members and the change agents for the project know how to relate to their Muslim brothers and sisters. The focus will be on the followings:

1. History of the two religions
 - a. Changes in the Christian church from first to the sixth century.
 - b. Arabs in Arabia from the fifth to the sixth century—period of *jahiliya*.
 - c. Emergence of Islam and the Jihadist movement
2. Who God is and His relationships in both religions
 - a. People common in both religions—prophets (Appendix G)
 - b. Abraham the common ancestor—Jews, Christians and Muslims heritage
 - c. Christian God and the Muslim Allah—relationship to the God of Abraham
3. The writings in both religions and parallel between them
 - a. The Bible and the Qur'an
 - b. Parallels and overlaps (Appendix G)
 - c. Sunnah and the Hadith—sayings of the elders and practices of the prophet
4. Beliefs and worship styles in both religions
 - a. The God concept in Christianity and Islam
 - b. Issues about the Trinity in Christianity and Islam
 - c. Who is Jesus (Isa) to the Muslims and to the Christians (Appendix H)
 - d. Worship in both religions
5. Worldviews and the expected Lifestyles in both religions
 - a. Modesty (immodesty) as seen in the teachings of Adventist and Muslims
 - b. Forbidden foods—Adventist and Muslim perspectives

APENDIX E

Biblical and Historical links Among the Children of Abraham

Sarah Abraham's wife Gen 11:29	Abraham the Patriarch Gen 11:26; 12:1-3	Hagar Sarah's Maid Gen 16:3
Isaac (The Promised Son) Gen 18:10; 21:1-3	The Brothers buried their Their father Gen 25:8-9	Ishmael (Sarah's idea for a patriarchal heir) Gen 16
Joseph the son of Jacob the son of Isaac Gen 30: 24, 25	Joseph rescued by Ishmaelites and Midianites Gen 37	Ishmaelites and Midianites (Children of Hagar and Keturah) Gen 16; 25
Moses born in Egypt, son of Amram descendant of Jacob Exodus 2:1-10	Moses was taught and counseled by Eastern People Exodus 2; 18; Job 1	Jethro and Job were People of the East
Moses and Joshua led Israel to the Promised land	Moses received guidance from the children of the East into the promise land	Hobab the son of Jethro, Caleb (an Arabic name) Num 10:29-33; 30; Joshua 14
Needs of the Sanctuary of the Israelites	Anointing oil and Spices provided by the people of the East Exodus 30	Anointing oil and spices provided by Eastern traders
The children of Israel in Canaan	Israel was not only blessed by Baalam but also prophesied of the Messiah in Israel Num 22-24	Balam was from Aram in the mountains among the children of the East (Num 23:7)
With David as king of Israel	Abigail the daughter of Nahash sister of Zeruiah mother of Joab was a wife to Jithra the Ishmaelite 2 Sam 17:25	Jithra the father of Amasa was an Ishmaelite who was connected to Jesse's family. Gen 17
With Solomon (Soleiman in Arabic) as king of Israel	King Solomon received gifts from the Queen of Sheba and other kings of Arabia I King 10:10-15	The Queen of Sheba from the East.
God through prophet Isaiah predicted Messiah's glory among the Jews to whom gentiles will also respond (60:1-3).	The children of Ishmael and Keturah will come with their sacrifices to worship in Israel Isa 60:6-7	The prophet mentioned Midian, Ephah (children of Keturah), Nebaioth, and Kedar (children of Ishmael) Gen 25
Christ was born a Savior for all people (Luke 2:10, 11) The birth of Christ did attract Arabs to Israel	Wise men from the East came with gifts and worshipped the baby Jesus in Bethlehem (Matt 2:11)	Wise men follow a star from the East to Jerusalem with firm prophetic belief of the birth of an expected king (Matt 2:1-2,9)

APPEDIX F

Muslim Beliefs and Practices

Islamic beliefs and practices are base on the Qur'an, the sayings of the elders (sunnah), and the practices of Muhammad as presented in the hadiths. The beliefs are sum up in the following:

1. One God who created the world in six days (Al-Baqarah 2:177; Hud 11:7; Al-Sajdah 32:4, 7; Qaf 50:38)
2. Angels (Al-Baqarah 2:177)
3. Holy books of God, which include the Torah and the New Testament (Al-Baqarah 2:53; Al-Imran 3:3, 84; Al-Maidah 5:44, 46)
4. All the prophets including those of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament (Al-Nesa 4:163; Al-Baqarah 2:136)
5. Last day (Al-Baqarah 2:177; Al-Isra 17:13-14, 15)

The Five (5) Pillars or Practices of the Muslims

1. Confession of faith in the oneness of God (Shahada—Al-Imran 3:18). It appears 30 times in the Qur'an but without Muhammad's name attached to any one. However, the prophet's name is attached because of Al-Munaafeqoon 63:1, which declares Him as God's messenger.
2. Ritual prayer as an act of submission to Allah (Salat—Al-Baqarah 2:3-5, 43, 45; Al-Ankaboot 29:45; Al-Hijr 15:98-99; Ta Ha 20:14)
3. Almsgiving (mandatory charity) for the poor in the community (Zakat—Al-Anbya 21:73; Al-Baqarah 2:219)
4. Observance of the month of Ramadan by fasting to commemorate the revelation of the Qur'an (Sawm—Al-Baqarah 2:183, 184; Al-Ana'm 6:141)
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj—Al-Baqarah 2:125, 158, 189, 196)

APPENDIX G

Parallels and Overlaps in the Bible and the Qur'an

There are parallels and overlaps in the Bible and the Qur'an texts about God that adherents in both faith communities need to consider for appropriate engagement in dialogue for tolerance. Both books claim the following:

1. There is only one God (Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29; An-Nisa 4:1, 116; Az-Zumar 39:45; Muhammad 47:19).
2. God (Allah) is the Creator of the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1; Isa 45:7; 66:2 Eph 3:9; Ya-Sin 36:81; Az-Zumar 39:46; Ghafir 40:62; Ash-Shura 42:11)
3. God created the world in six days (Gen 1:3-31; Exod 20:11; Al-A'raf 7:54; Qaf 50:38).
4. God is Omnipotent (1 Tim 6:16; Rev 19:6; Al-Anisa 4:56; Al-An'am 6:103).
5. God is Omnipresent (Ps 139:7-10; Al-Baqarah 2:115, 255; Qaf 50:16)
6. God is Omniscient (Ps 139:4; Isaiah 46:9; Matt 10:30; Yunus 10:61; Hud 11:5).
7. Judgment and hell fire in the last day (Zeph 1:17, 18; Matt 5:22; Al-Anisa 4:56; Yunus 10:60)

The Qur'an not only affirms the parallels and overlaps but also mentions characters that are in the Bible in Al-Baqarah 2:136 in the following words:

“Say (O Muslims), ‘We believe in Allah and that which has been sent down to us and that which has been sent down to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), and to Al-Asbat [the offspring of the twelve sons of Ya'qub (Jacob)], and that which has been given to Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus), and that which has been given to the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to him we have submitted (in Islam).”

While some Islamic scholars and Western theologians are engaging in debates over ideology about the nature of a God they have not seen, Adventists should approach

Muslims as brothers and sisters of “God’s kingdom in fulfillment of God’s promise to the nations” (Accad, 2012, p. 38) and allow the Holy Spirit to do the conviction as Christ promised (John 16:8).

APPENDIX H

What the Qur'an Says About Isa (Jesus)

There have been disagreements with the interpretations of some texts in the Qur'an among Islamic elders and scholars (ulamas). However their joint agreement has been the basis of governance in the larger Islamic community of the Sunni. However, the subject of Isa (Jesus) has been a point of contention in the past centuries between Christians and Muslims, which Samuel Zwemer (2002) claims only the Holy Spirit will solve. The Qur'an says the following about Isa (Jesus):

1. He was born of a virgin (Maryam 19:20; Al-Imran 3:45)
2. He is the Word of God (Maryam 19:35; Al-Imran 3:45)
3. He is Messiah with honor on earth and in eternity and is near to Allah (God) (Al-Imran 3:45)
4. He is an incarnate of the Spirit of God (Al-Anbiya 21:91)
5. He is a sign to mankind and a mercy from Allah (God) (Maryam 19:21)
6. He is righteous with a sinless character (Maryam19:19)
7. He performed miracles: healed the sick, raised the dead, restored visions, etc. (Al-Imran 3:49; Al-Maidah 5:110)
8. His life was terminated on earth and He was taken to heaven (3:54-55)
9. He was not crucified, he was taken to heaven (An-Nisa 4:157, 158)
10. People of the scripture must believe that Isa (Jesus) is only a messenger (An-Nisa 4:159, 171)

There are discernible similarities in the above texts that are in line with biblical records about Jesus Christ. These truths can be utilized to initiate friendly conversation in dialogue with Muslims.

The Denial of Isa (Jesus) as Savior

Though Muslims accept Isa's (Jesus) miraculous birth and His sinless life, they hold onto the belief that He is not God, did not die for our sin, and did not die on the cross. The Qur'an affirms the following:

1. Muslims reject the concept of the Trinity (An-Nisa 4:171)
2. Jesus the Messiah is not God and He will testify to it on the day of resurrection (Al-Maidah 5:17, 116, 118)
3. Jesus was a messenger (An-Nisa 4:171; Al-Maidah 5:75)
4. He is listed among the prophets (Al-An'am 6:84-87)
5. Jesus told the children of Israel to worship God (Al-Maidah 5:75)
6. He is not the Son of God; God has no son (Al-Isra 17:111)

APPENDIX I

Ten Areas for Possible Bridge Building

Bridge building between Christians and Muslims is a necessity to initiate and facilitate dialogue between the two faith communities. This is possible if adherents in both faith communities recognize and respect each other's faith and culture. It will encourage tolerance for a peaceful coexistence in our communities. Here are ten areas to initiate friendship with Muslims for possible bridge building:

1. Belief in the God of Abraham
2. Love for God (Allah) and love for neighbor
3. The struggle between good and evil (The Great Controversy)
4. The act of being compassionate to the poor and being generous to others
5. Living in accordance to the will of God (Allah)
6. Concern about immorality of the present world
7. The importance of prayer and the judgment on the last day
8. Belief in the resurrection of the dead and the destruction of the ungodly
9. Jesus (*Kalimat allah*) in the presence of Allah in Heaven
10. Jesus second coming on the last day of earth's history

APPENDIX J

Spiritual Foundation

Life Journey

I was born and raised by Muslim parents. I became acquainted with Christians during my elementary and high school days. Actually the Catholic Church was the only Christian denomination I was very familiar with in those early years but I did not experience any significant spiritual impact from the teachings. Perhaps because growing up in a Muslim home the knowledge of the Creator of the universe known as God (Allah in Arabic) was ingrained in me unquestionably. I grew up with that belief. I made many Christian friends; some of them were schoolmates. Although they knew I was a Muslim these friends of mine often invited me to their churches on special occasions. It was through these visits that I started noticing the differences among the Christian churches. My perceptions about the Almighty God did not really agree with what I was experiencing during my visits to these churches—the images, paintings of saints, statements and emphases made about individuals portray them to be divine, from my Muslim perspective were all wrong. I started asking questions, but the limited knowledge of my friends offered no impressive response that matched my understanding about God.

However, gradually I became very curious to know more about Christianity. A yearning that I would later perceive as the Holy Spirit at work leading me to the truth about God.

My Christian Experience

The transition started after the completion of my training as a heavy-duty mechanic at Camp Mechline in 1983. I arrived in Monrovia at a time when a young man, Joseph J. Rodriguez, from Oakwood College was conducting a public campaign in the city. I was attracted to the campaign site by a large crowd I saw in and around a large tent listening to a speaker with a foreign accent. The voice was integrating historical events with Bible stories. It was fascinating and the audience was quiet and attentive to his message.

I was very impressed by the presentation that first evening; I was told the Seventh-day Adventist church, a church I knew nothing about, had organized it. With the ears of my mind, I heard a voice saying to me: "Here is where you will get all your questions answered." At the close of the meeting that first evening, I accepted the invitation to come the next day. I went earlier the next day and attended the Bible class before the preaching session. Although I was three weeks late, the study was inspiring and very educative. I continued attending for the remaining three weeks. During those three weeks, I asked questions and received convincing answers based on historical facts I was already aware of. At the close of the effort, over nine hundred precious souls were baptized; I was one of them.

I could not understand completely what was happening to me; I was absolutely powerless to resist the spiritual dimension into which I was being led. The believers in my new community made no negative statements about Islam or Muslims, which would have instigated annoyance and caused me to leave; rather they kept encouraging and praying for me. Conceding that I had been caught in a spiritual web, I prayed for

commitment to the purpose of knowing more about Him, the one and only true God. As an answer to that prayer, I became very active and popular with my peers in the church and was always ready to serve those who needed my help. The church was virtually a new congregation, 95% of its membership were newly baptized members. I actually used my first year to get acquainted with the members and to learn more about the church.

My Early Activities in the Church

I started spending more time with the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy books introduced to me by some of the elders. After reading books like *Steps to Christ*, *Desire of Ages*, and *The Great Controversy*, my religious worldview was drastically altered. This was followed by the first Revelation seminar conducted in our church. The seminar actually eroded all my doubt and gave me the assurance that I was not wrong but God was leading me to the truth. It was after that seminar I finally committed my life to the Lord to serve Him as long as I live, but not with the thought of becoming a minister of the gospel.

My first team initiative in the church was to organize a prayer band. Not too long after, I found myself leading the young people in home visitations, praying for the sick in hospitals, and praying for inmates in prisons. The prayer band became the “heartbeat” of the church, to the point that even pastors could depend on their prayer team when they conducted revival meetings and evangelistic campaigns. During those active years, we introduced “night vigil” and “dawn broadcasting” in our youth activities through which many precious souls were added to our congregation. True Christian love gives hope to people and establishes relationships that bring them together. This was evident in the number of visitors we received every Sabbath. These visitors were welcomed heartily

into our fellowship and were provided with refreshment by our hospitality committee. Many became regular visitors and eventually became members. We had baptisms every quarter, a situation that made Better Living SDA Church the fastest growing church in Monrovia before the civil conflict.

My commitment and evangelistic involvement in the church moved the pastor (now Dr. Andrew L. Ewoo) and the elders to counsel me to prepare for the ministry. I did not take it seriously; of course I was not thinking of becoming a pastor. I already had a profession and was contributing to the progress of the church; I was comfortable with that.

On February 11, 1990, I was married to Nerissa, a beautiful Christian lady whose coming into my life changed the story. I was ordained that year as an elder of the church. The church continued to flourish, with new members added to our congregation daily. However, our joy was cut short when the enemy of peace ushered in the civil war. The conflict scattered the members in and out of the country, causing many to die, some to be missing, never to be found, leaving some of us with memories to reflect on forever.

Ministry During the Civil Crisis

The cataclysmic dispersion from Monrovia, when the rebels finally entered the city in September 1990, took my wife and me to Salayea, a small town in Lofa county, not too far from the Guinea-Liberia border. The town was in rebel-held territory and because of harassment, unnecessary shooting, and forceful recruitment by the rebels, many of the young people fled across the border to Guinea, while some decided to stay on their farms that were far from the town. The town was left virtually empty, with only the old people who were not capable of trekking long distances in the woods and over

mountains. However, some fortunate ones had brave grandchildren who often sneaked into their homes at night, bringing few items for their sustenance. This was the town that the Lord led my wife and me with two other church members (Daddy Kroma and Cynthia Cocker), to minister to the old people in that rebel-controlled territory.

All the churches were closed when we arrived in town. We were told by some of the old folks that the churches closed when the rebels entered the district, which was over a year before. I believed it because when I first went to our small Adventist church building I found termites and bugs in the doors, the pulpit, and some of the benches, which had been made locally with untreated wood. There were also cobwebs in all the corners of the building. We did a thorough cleaning of our church edifice and started consistent visitation to the homes of the old folks. On our first day of worship, we had about sixteen of these elderly men and women in church. At the end of the divine service, I proposed a group Bible study for the evening and they all agreed to come. Some came with their friends; our Bible study that evening was a full house and I reckoned that a sign that the Lord was leading.

Not too long afterward, the Lord granted us favor in the eyes of the new rebel commander who was assigned to the district. She visited our mid-week worship and expressed a desire to come again. The next Sabbath, she came with eight of her bodyguards. Although it was surprising to the old folks the Lord was on His business of changing stony hearts again. It was this service that also marked our engagement with the rebels as we established a relationship with them and started ministering to them through counseling and Bible study as they explained their experiences to us. Through this relationship, we started encouraging our church members who were living on farms to

come back home. Our church members also encouraged their families and friends to come home. In the space of five months, the town became lively again with the rebels and the people interacting peacefully. The church became the reconciling center where both rebels and civilians met every Sabbath and Wednesday to worship.

During that peaceful period, in our sixth month in Salayea, we organized a two-week revival that ended with 34 precious souls, including 5 rebels, who gave their lives to Christ through baptism. I invited Pastor D.A. Mason from Konola Academy at the time to grace the occasion for us. Most of those baptized are still in the church today. All five of the converted rebels are still active saints in the Adventist Church; two of them are serving as elders in two of our churches, while one has discovered his musical talent and is now serving as a choir leader. To God be the glory.

We returned to Monrovia during a fragile cease-fire between the rebels and the West African peacekeeping forces (Ecomug). However, because of the sporadic attacks on the city by the rebels, and for the safety of my wife who was now pregnant with our first son, we finally decided to leave Liberia for Nigeria.

Ministry outside of Liberia

In Nigeria, we were heartily welcomed by Pastor Luca Daniel (the president of the Nigerian Union at the time). He advised me to seize the opportunity of going to the seminary (ASWA) to prepare myself for the ministry as we prayed for the war to cease. I was still not ready to actually become a fulltime pastor. So, we left for Ghana after eight days stay in the Union guesthouse in Lagos.

Our arrival in Ghana was as if we were on an evangelistic expedition. Most of the Adventists who left Liberia during the crisis were scattered into nearly all the churches in

Accra and its suburbs. I was receiving preaching invitations from most of the churches in and around the city. As a result, I had preaching assignments every Sabbath and in some cases conducted weeks of prayers in some of the churches. It was from this experience I had my final conviction that ministry was where I belonged or else I would plunge into Jonah's rebellious syndrome. Through the encouragement of my wife and two other ladies, Mildred Taylor and Sister Gusthavson, I finally accepted the call and through God's providence we enrolled at the seminary in Nigeria, where I studied theology as major and business as my minor. My wife studied religion as her major and public health as her minor.

My personal conviction placed a burden on my heart to reveal Christ my Lord anywhere He deemed it necessary for me to do so. During my undergraduate study at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA), ministry was woven into my campus life. We established two companies and a prison ministry; God's providence opened the Shagamu prison door to us in Ogun state. Not only did that opportunity permit us to take the gospel to these inmates, it also gave us the privilege of building a baptistery in the prison compound, which was the first of its kind. Our first baptism in that prison was 26 inmates. We were told that most of them were incarcerated for armed robbery, but by His grace those precious soul gave their lives to their Master while serving their prison term. I have heard from the Nigerian brothers that the prison ministry is still going on in Babcock University. To God be the glory.

Before leaving for ASWA In 1994, I encouraged two elders to help us establish a company in Lashibi, a residential area where I used to live on the outskirts of the city (Accra). Our first worship service was held at Elder Ayietey's home. That goal was

successfully attained and I have been fortunate to meet with two members from that church here at Andrews. They told me that the congregation is now an organized church where most of the Adventist parliamentarians and other government officials worship.

Ministry After Studies at ASWA

Back home in Liberia after our undergraduate study, we were very active in church planting. When I was elected treasurer of the Liberian Mission, my wife was also elected as the children's ministry director. By His grace, despite our workload, the Lord led us to encourage others to establish five churches and four companies through evangelism and small group programs in and around the capital, Monrovia, before I left for study here at Andrews. This is a summary of what the Lord led us to accomplish in His vineyard in West Africa. However, I am still obligated to take this message to my own people (Muslims), which is the goal for which I am constantly seeking the Lord's guidance and a careful preparation.

Here in America, I have not been dormant either. My first move was to get involved in the literature ministry in summer 2008, which took place in Indiana under the directorship of Ron Clarke the publishing director for Illinois Conference. Teaming up with other international students, we were privileged to train high school students to reach out to communities with our printed messages. This experience gave me a glimpse of what relational evangelism looks like here in America compared to that of West Africa. Working for the Lord in every aspect in His vineyard is fun for those who are called. My experience in Indiana acquainted me with non-Adventist friends with whom I still communicate in Noblesville, Cicero, and Kokomo. These are men and women into whose homes our printed pages were accepted. The seed was sown and some visited the

church while we were there. My earnest prayer is that somehow the good news in those materials will be made effective by the Holy Spirit to move these families to accept the Lord as their Savior before He comes.

Here on the Andrews University campus, while actively engaged with my academic responsibilities, I accepted the responsibility to serve as president of the West Central African Student Association (WAD) for two terms that ended in 2011. Through committed teamwork with George Murumba and other African students, we were blessed to establish a company that is today a church worshipping in the Community Congregational Church building in South Bend.

In summer 2010, I was invited by the Liberian Adventist church in North Minneapolis (The All Nations Seventh-day Adventist Church) to assist as a Bible worker in a three-week evangelistic campaign that ran from July 18th to August 1st. As usual, I inspired and carefully organized the young people and, by His grace, the effort ended with a baptism of 29 souls. An additional eight declared their intention of becoming members of the church when the salvific opportunity call was made at the close of the baptismal ceremony.

Back home in Liberia, my wife Nerissa is also very active in her commitment to the ministry. Before my departure for Andrews, she started a school she named Mother's Pride through which we are now engaged with the community we live in Monrovia. The school has been growing steadily, with 402 registered children this semester. Through the school, a congregation has been established where some of the students and their parents along with the teachers meet to worship every week. Amazingly, I was told that Muslims

in the community are now sending their children to the school. With no doubt, we believe our Lord who called us into the ministry is still leading His children in His service.

The Lord has blessed our marriage with two smart young men, Emmanuel, who is now 20, and his brother Matthew, 18. Emmanuel is in his second year in college while Matthew is in his first year. These two young men are gifted with musical talent, and their first gospel album titled *New Life* is now in circulation in Liberia. They are presently actively involved in the new congregation their mother has established in the Sara community.

Leadership Competency

Some practitioners believe that a leader emerges in two ways. The first by voluntary services to others for which the caregiver becomes recognized and is depended on for guidance and support as suggested in Robert Greenleaf's (1977) *Servant Leadership*. The second is by appointment or selection through which responsibility is conferred on an individual to lead for the purpose of attaining a common goal. In their response to these functional views Ronald Heifetz and his colleagues (2009) therefore affirms that leadership is a practice and activity that some people do.

A careful reflection on my past activities both in ministry and in my personal life suggests that I am people-centered, ready to help or serve others. This I do without favoritism. I have always loved meeting with strangers and for that reason I have the privilege of making friends with people I meet or associate with. I have often initiated relationships simply by giving a helping hand to them, which I did not actually consider as a trait of a leader. A keen look at my parental background, psychologists may say I either inherited or learned the act of serving others from my mother. The reality is, she

kept me busy in my youthful age running errands that were geared to serving people. Those ingenious errands to family members and her friends gave me a better start on how to relate to people I never met. It helped me to develop my relational values that recognize the importance of others, which has been and is still a tremendous help to my ministry.

Studies in leadership reveal eight traits of a leader that are based on “relationship and service.” It suggests an ideal definition of leadership by Stanley Patterson as “a relational process between leaders and the led, where gifts and skills are neatly utilized for the achievement of a common purpose (Patterson, class lecture 2013- *Clarifying Mental Models*). Such a view is not contrary to Robert Greenleaf’s (1977) ideal of a true leader whose “natural desire to serve emerges intuitively,” for the common purpose of meeting the need of others and not for the love of impressive recognition.

Critical analysis suggests “relationship” and “service” as the core of leadership theories. Unquestionably they are also the two essentials for ministry; hence without the building of relationship and the willingness to serve there will be no ministry. This is a view I definitely recognize in ministry.

Temperament

Being aware of my love for people and my joy in serving them, the leadership Strengthsquest test and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) results about me presented nothing opposite to who I perceive myself to be as deduced from my psychological preferences. The Strengthsquest instrument shows that out of the 34 variable strength-base characteristics, five showed up to be the dominant themes of talents in my psychological department. They rank as follow: Responsibility,

Connectedness, Learner, Belief, and Woo. The responsibility theme of my disposition forces me to take psychological ownership of what I commit myself to. Connectedness builds my notion that despite who we are as individuals, we are responsible for our distinctive judgments and free will, yet we are all connected and are part of something larger. The learner characteristic shows I find delight in learning, moving from ignorance to competence. The belief theme makes me spiritual, altruistic, family-oriented, valuing obligations and high ethics in others and myself; this is a core value that affects my behavior and gives my life meaning and satisfaction. Finally, the woo trait stands for winning others and how much I enjoy the challenge of meeting new people.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) labels me as ESTJ (extrovert, sensing, thinking, and judging). The E reflects my habitual interest in persons and things around me, the S for my interest in what is genuine and can be seen, T for my rational focus and working with cause and effect, and the J stands for my love for taking initiative in organizing, planning, and deciding. These psychological prognoses about me are manifested in my past activities in ministry and therefore seem to be accurate. Actually, since I accepted the call, I have always lived a ministry-centered life, with awareness of being accountable for every soul within my reach to save.

The biblical, theological trajectory of a leader being a follower is a view that is undisputable because leaders in the Bible received instructions from God. In other words, they were leaders in their communities and followers of the directive of God who was actually leading them. It is therefore appropriate to say that a Christian leader is a follower of the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ. As a leader, Christ affirmed His presence with His disciples on the day of Pentecost through the power of the Holy Spirit and has

been head of His church through the ages as He promised (Matt. 28: 20). This is a belief I cherish and my devotion to Christ as the source of my wisdom and strength is demonstrated in my daily prayer life.

Cindy Tutsch (2008) claimed that Ellen White's leadership worldview emanated from Paul's description of Christ's servant leadership in the following texts:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Phil 2:5-8)

Paul's view in these texts according to Tutsch, reveals Christ's selflessness that Christian leaders should emulate in their pursuit of souls for whom He gallantly gave his life on Calvary when He declared "it is finished" (John 19:30). Piously, the Savior left His comfort zone of grand exaltation and glory to take the form of a servant and mingled with sinners to fulfill the conciliatory demand for their salvation.

Ellen White (1889) linked the Christian leader's qualification to a living connection with the Master Himself, who knows what it takes to save (p. 423). Such an established relationship will mold the leader into absolute obedience to His will and demonstrate Christ's character passion to save sinners in this degenerating world.

To remain connected with the Lord has always been and is still the focus of my daily prayer. It is my experience with the Lord that affords me the passion of leaping into the restless burden of concern for souls; He suffered and died to fulfill the promise given to Abraham for the salvation of all the nations on earth (Gen. 12:3). Christ is therefore the source of my competency; without Him I can do nothing, but through Him, with Him, and in Him I am more than a conqueror.

Focus in Ministry

I have always cherished relationship and service as priorities in ministry. I am now preparing to focus resourceful actions in two areas in the field after the completion of the Doctor of Ministry study. The first task, which will be the groundwork for the second, will be focused on preparing Adventists youth for leadership in the four districts in Monrovia. This will help them to be pro-active to move the work forward in their communities. The preparation will be done through the implementation of leadership seminars. These seminars, will introduce them to the various leadership traits, principles, and styles that will help build their confidence and motivate them to view leadership as a process to learn. It will eradicate the preconceived concept that traces leadership to special people. However, emphasis would be placed on the importance of Ellen White's principles on servant leadership that are based on Christ's example as revealed in Philippians 2:5-8.

During the seminars, emphasis will be placed on "relationship and service," which are the key factors to a successful ministry. This subject will be studied in two dimensions: (a) relationship with God and relationship with their fellow man and (b) service to God and service to their fellow man. The prominence of "relationship" in this discussion will also be analyzed on the bases of Daniel Goleman and Peter Northouse phenomena of "emotional intelligence" that stresses on "driving emotions in the right direction (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013, pp. 3, 5; Northouse, 2010, pp. 23, 36). This will help them to be effective leaders in their communities. They will be encouraged to relate humbly to adherents of other religious organizations, especially Muslims who belong to the second largest religion after Christianity in the world.

My second area of interest after a successful preparation of young leaders in the church is to develop strategies for the Adventist church to engage Muslims in Liberia. This is necessary because of the rapid growth of Christian and Muslim populations in the country. The goal of this venture is to establish positive relationships that will enhance tolerance for a peaceful coexistence between the two faith communities.

The strategic approach to the Muslims should be intentional and should be based on love. A possible approach begins by recognizing them not as the “other” but as one of us—children of God and thus relate to them as our brothers and sisters. We are to strengthen the relationship by building their trust in us, which is possible by helping to alleviate their economic and social problems. Postwar Liberia, with over 105,000 young ex-combatants scattered around the country with no career for economic sustenance, has been my focus in this approach. Many of these youths are found in Cape Mount County, a predominantly Muslim community where they are engaged in illicit diamond mining and other criminal activities.

I finally concluded that approaching these young people with pilot projects embedded with religious studies may lead to a change in their lives and in their community. I am anticipating that training them to work and earn wages or establish their own small businesses for their economic sustenance will not only reduce crime in that community but it will also make them productive citizens. It is with this view that chapter four of this project dissertation was designed to be an initial attempt by the Adventist church to reach out to Muslims in Liberia.

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VITA

Name: Matthew F. Kamara

Date of Birth: Nov.11, 1958

Marital status: Married to Nerissa Tokpa, February 11, 1990

Education

- 2014 DMin in Global Mission Leadership
(Andrews University, USA)
- 2011 Master in Divinity (MDiv)
(Andrews University, USA)
- 1999 BA Theology/Business
(Andrews University, ASWA Campus Nigeria)
- 1983 Heavy Duty Mechanic
(Camp Mechlin/Liberia Japanese Training Center, Liberia)

Relevant Work Experience

- 2001 Treasurer, Liberia Mission
- 2000 District Pastor, Bushrod Island, Liberia Mission

Other Work Experience

- 1987 Master Mechanic, Ministry of Public Work, Liberia
- 1984 Chief Mechanic, Feeder Roads Construction, MPW, Liberia
- 1983 Heavy Duty Mechanic, Robert International Air Port, Liberia