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ABSTRACT

ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES TO THE EVANGELIZATION  
OF MUSLIMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by

Ray Lee Roth

Chairman: Walter B. T. Douglas

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

A Project Report

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES TO THE EVANGELIZATION OF MUSLIMS  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Name of researcher: Ray L. Roth

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Walter B. T. Douglas, Ph.D.

Date completed: August 1983

Problem

Although programs for evangelizing Muslims have been studied and proposed at all levels of church organization, until now few if any of these studies or proposals have led to successful evangelization of Muslims in the Middle East countries. It was the purpose of this present study to develop biblically sound attitudes and approaches to Muslim evangelization for the use of administrators, teachers, pastors, and other church members in the Middle East.

## Method

Writings of the New Testament and of selected past and present authors have been investigated in order to identify principles and attitudes of evangelism as they might relate to or affect the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Middle East.

The project was organized into four main areas of study: (1) a brief historical overview of the Gospel to the Muslims of the Middle East, (2) a study into current problems and obstacles hindering the evangelization of Muslims, (3) an analysis of New Testament evangelism in the book of Acts, and (4) the identification of positive workable concepts and attitudes toward Muslim evangelism in the Middle East.

## Results

Statistics show a marked decline in Seventh-day Adventist mission thrust to the Middle East. Major causes of this decline were found to be apathy, lack of evangelistic thrust, and other varied causes. Obstacles hindering the evangelism of Muslims include (1) lack of coordinated administrative planning for evangelism, (2) a weak spiritual commitment of some witnesses, (3) the rise and spread of nationalism, (4) prejudice between Christians and Muslims, (5) revolution and war, and (6) fear of religious persecution.

## Conclusions

Three basic concepts need to be fostered among Seventh-day Adventist pastors in the Middle East: (1) The pastor must be

a role model for evangelism, (2) evangelism is not an option, and (3) the success of evangelism is not measured by the number of persons converted.

A study of the New Testament church in Acts revealed five characteristics of evangelism recommended to the present day church in the Middle East: (1) The sharing of the message in all places by all Christians, (2) the use of effective methods, (3) the divine power which impelled early Christians, (4) the ingenious manner in which they evangelized under every kind of hinderance, and (5) the organization of lay evangelism.

In order for Seventh-day Adventist laity to successfully communicate the Gospel to their neighboring Muslims they must: (1) become acquainted with Muslims, (2) demonstrate love to the people of Islam, (3) teach the Bible to inquirers, (4) emphasize what is unique in the Gospel, (5) make clear what it means to be an Adventist Christian, (6) introduce converts to a church which welcomes them, and (7) avoid controversy and debate with Muslims whenever possible.

There are important reasons why Muslims should be evangelized today: (1) Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations, (2) God's love brings reconciliation to all who receive Christ, (3) Islam's failure to meet all of man's moral and spiritual needs, (4) the value of each soul worthy of evangelization, (5) the beneficial influences that attend the Gospel, and (6) the need to facilitate the realization of God's promises.



Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES TO THE EVANGELIZATION  
OF MUSLIMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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

by  
Ray Lee Roth  
August 1983

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Aug 5, 1983  
Date approved

## DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my wife Bev who in the midst of her own demanding M.A. program at the time this was written faithfully stood by me with devotion and loyalty.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	vii
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	ix

### Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Justification of the Study . . . . .	2
Limitations and Parameters . . . . .	3
Definition of Terms . . . . .	4
Overview of the Project . . . . .	7
II. THE GOSPEL TO THE MUSLIMS OF THE MIDDLE EAST: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW . . . . .	8
Introduction . . . . .	8
Historical Extension of the Gospel Commission . . . . .	10
Medieval Period . . . . .	10
Early Medieval Period (A.D. 600-1000) . . . . .	10
Period of the Crusades (A.D. 1095-1270) . . . . .	12
Late Medieval Period (A.D. 1100-1400) . . . . .	15
Modern Period . . . . .	16
Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries . . . . .	16
The Nineteenth Century . . . . .	18
Methods Used to Propagate the Gospel	
Commission since Early Church Times . . . . .	21
Proclamation . . . . .	21
Medical Mission . . . . .	23
Education . . . . .	24
Literary and Publication Work . . . . .	28
Social Services . . . . .	29
An Analysis of Success or Decline . . . . .	32
Statistics Revealing Decline . . . . .	34
Decline in World Mission of Major Denominations. . . . .	34
Decline of Protestant Missions in the Middle East . . . . .	40
Decline of the Seventh-day Adventist Missions in the Middle East . . . . .	41
Major Causes of Decline . . . . .	49
Apathy and Indifference . . . . .	49
The Crusades . . . . .	50

Chapter

II. (Continued)

Opposition from Other Churches . . . . .	51
Lack of Evangelistic Thrust . . . . .	53
Inadequate Staffing . . . . .	53
Emigration of Nationals . . . . .	54
Summary . . . . .	54

III. PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES HINDERING CURRENT  
EVANGELIZATION OF MUSLIMS . . . . .

Introduction . . . . .	57
Lack of Coordinated Administrative Planning for Evangelism . . . . .	58
The Necessity of Planning . . . . .	60
A Critique of Past Planning . . . . .	61
Interdivision Islamic Institutes (1961-1963) . . . . .	62
Thrust for Evangelism among Muslims, (TEAM), 1971-1976 . . . . .	64
Weak Spiritual Commitment of Some Witnesses . . . . .	68
The Rise and Spread of Nationalism . . . . .	70
Nationalism and the Sovereign State . . . . .	70
Nationalism within the Church . . . . .	72
Prejudice between Christians and Muslims . . . . .	75
Christian Disdain of Muslims . . . . .	76
Revolution and War . . . . .	78
Difficulties Created by Political Events . . . . .	78
The Mission's Reaction to Political Events . . . . .	81
God's Prerogative in Political Events . . . . .	83
Fear of Religious Persecution . . . . .	85
Brief Examples of Persecution in the Middle East . . . . .	85
Religious Persecution of Christians by Muslims . . . . .	88
Summary . . . . .	92

IV. NEW TESTAMENT EVANGELISM IN THE BOOK OF ACTS . . . . .

Introduction . . . . .	94
Christ and the Gospel Commission . . . . .	97
Methods of the Gospel Commission . . . . .	98
Witness (μάρτυς) . . . . .	99
Teaching (διδάσκω) . . . . .	100
Preaching . . . . .	101
Baptizing . . . . .	102
Content of the Gospel Commission . . . . .	104
The Identity of Jesus Christ . . . . .	104
The Nature of Christ's Death . . . . .	105
The Fact of Christ's Resurrection . . . . .	106
The Hope of Christ's Return . . . . .	107
The Extension of the Gospel Commission . . . . .	108
The Gospel to Jerusalem . . . . .	109

Chapter

IV. (Continued)

The Gospel to Judea and Samaria . . . . .	110
The Gospel to All the Earth . . . . .	111
Discrepancies: Christ's Early Limitation of the Gospel to the Jews . . . . .	112
The Authority and Power of the Gospel Commission . . . . .	116
Christ's Authority Extends into the Apostolic Church . . . . .	116
The Power of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel Commission . . . . .	117
Summary . . . . .	117

V. CONCEPTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD MUSLIM  
EVANGELISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST . . . . .

120

Introduction . . . . .	120
Concepts to be Fostered among Pastors . . . . .	121
The Pastor Is a Role Model of Evangelism . . . . .	121
Evangelism Is Not an Option for Pastors . . . . .	122
Numerous Conversions Are Not the Only Measure of Success . . . . .	123
Concepts Regarding Lay Ministry in Society . . . . .	126
Lay Witnessing . . . . .	126
The Use of Simple Methods . . . . .	129
The Reliance on Divine Power . . . . .	130
The Ability to Endure and Persevere . . . . .	130
The Organization of Lay Evangelism . . . . .	132
Practical Suggestions for Evangelism . . . . .	133
Become Acquainted with Muslims . . . . .	133
Demonstrate Love to the People of Islam . . . . .	134
Teach the Bible to Inquirers . . . . .	135
Emphasize What Is Unique in the Gospel . . . . .	136
Make Clear What It Means to Be an Adventist Christian . . . . .	138
Introduce Converts to a Church Which Will Welcome Them . . . . .	139
Use Controversy with Discretion . . . . .	141
Reasons Why Muslims Should be Evangelized . . . . .	142
Because of the Gospel Commission . . . . .	142
Because of Divine Love . . . . .	143
Because of the Inadequacy of Islam . . . . .	144
Because of the Value of Each Person . . . . .	145
Because of the Beneficial Influences of the Gospel . . . . .	146
Because of God's Promises . . . . .	147

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	149
------------------------	-----

VITA . . . . .	166
----------------	-----

LIST OF TABLES

1. Christian Crusades against Muslims . . . . .	13
2. Missionary Advances in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century . . . . .	19
3. SDA Secondary Schools in the Middle East . . . . .	27
4. Comparative Overseas Missionary Task Force . . . . .	34
5. Percentage Decline of Overseas Missionaries (1962-1979) . . . . .	37
6. Comparative Decline in Number of Protestant Career Missionaries in the Middle East . . . . .	40
7. Comparative Middle East Missionary Task Force . . . . .	42
8. General Comparative Statistics of the SDA Mission in the Middle East Union . . . . .	44



## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Missionary Strength of Six Major United States Denominations . . . . .	35
2. Comparative Decline of Career Missionaries (1962-1979) . . . . .	38
3. Working Force Decline: Foreign Protestant Missionaries in the Middle East . . . . .	41
4. Missionary Strength of Fourteen Protestant Denominations in the Middle East . . . . .	43
5. Regular New SDA Workers Accepting Calls Outside the Home Division . . . . .	43
6. Working Force Decline: Total Active SDA Workers in the Middle East Union . . . . .	45
7. Working Force Decline: Ordained and Licensed SDA Ministers in the Middle East Union . . . . .	46
8. Membership and Enrollment Decline in the Middle East Union of SDAs . . . . .	47
9. Comparative Decline in Number of SDA Institutions and Societies in the Middle East Union . . . . .	48

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A review of the history, theology, and leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church suggests that the principal objective of this global organization is to proclaim to the whole world the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ. This church endeavors to touch lives with redemptive action, teaching all peoples to live in today's complex world according to the principles that guided Christ's life nineteen centuries ago. It also attempts to promote these saving principles within the church through Christian education (home, school, church) and without the church through public witness and mission (preaching, teaching, proselytizing).

The SDA Church believes that its mission and message are to be decisive factors in God's eternal judgment of earth's millions before the final disposal of Satan and sin.<sup>1</sup> Victories in evangelism must and can be realized now, if members fully obey the revealed will of God.

However, success in the evangelistic thrust of SDA missions in the countries of the Middle East has been limited.<sup>2</sup> In fact

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<sup>1</sup>"The Remnant and Its Mission," Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Annual Statistical Report (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, 1951-1982).

some would suggest that it has been almost a failure.

An important cause of this lack of success might be a misunderstanding of the Gospel Commission (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:8). Examples of this evangelistic misunderstanding surface in attitudes expressed by Christians living in the Middle East Union toward evangelizing Muslims,

They (Muslims) have a religion well-suited to their needs and their environment. They believe in God. Why bother them?

We have no right to shove our religion down the throats of people who do not want it!

Since work among these people has shown so little in return, we should let it go and concentrate on areas where the people are more receptive to the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

These attitudes imply that certain peoples of the world can be arbitrarily overlooked in the church's implementation of Christ's Gospel Commission. Implications are also drawn supporting the attitude that "if you can't baptise and keep a Muslim in the Christian church why bother to evangelize his kind to begin with?" These and like misunderstandings of the Gospel Commission have affected the success of the SDA mission thrust in the Middle East countries.

#### Justification of the Study

Several circumstances make this an important study:

1. Seventh-day Adventist pastors in the Middle East Union often experience frustration in motivating their local congregations

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth S. Oster, "Legitimacy of Mission," (book manuscript, 1981), p. 33.

to evangelize Muslims. In view of this, it is imperative that intentional and continuing study be devoted to the identification of principles and approaches whereby the causes of these frustrations may be successfully understood and dealt with.

2. In spite of programs for evangelizing Muslims studied and proposed at all levels of church organization, there is still a great need for further study because, until now, few if any of these studies or proposals have led to successful evangelistic outreach to Muslims.

3. The degree of prejudice and theological misunderstanding in contemporary Middle East church communities with respect to evangelizing Muslims demands the development of biblically sound concepts and attitudes toward Christian brotherhood which will challenge and correct prejudices and misunderstandings.

4. To assure success in motivating local SDA church members in the Middle East to support and participate in evangelizing Muslims, it is imperative that evangelistic methods be based upon sound theological principles.

#### Limitations and Parameters

This study relates directly to the needs of Seventh-day Adventist administrators, pastors, teachers, and church members in the Middle East. It is not representative of all other cultures, races, political environments, socio-economic settings in other areas where Islam has been propagated.

Writings of the New Testament and of post and present selected authors have been investigated in order to identify principles of

evangelism as they might relate to the mission of the SDA Church in the Middle East. This study is based on the presupposition that Christ's gospel commission was intended to be given to all peoples of earth including the Muslims of the Middle East. A limited number of baptisms should be no deterrent to carrying out the command of Christ.

Admittedly, this study is only a partial report of the research and study begun centuries ago on the topic of evangelizing Muslims. The problem of discovering and applying workable methods and successful approaches to the evangelizing of Muslims is, indeed, enormous.

#### Definition of Terms

Adventist or SDA. These terms are used as abbreviated forms of Seventh-day Adventist. The SDA Church is "A conservative Christian body, worldwide in extent, evangelical in doctrine, and professing no creed but the Bible. It places strong emphasis on the Second Advent which it believes is near and observes the Sabbath of the Bible, the seventh day of the week."<sup>1</sup>

Baptism. Also termed "believer's baptism" or "adult baptism," this is the Christian rite of total immersion of the believing candidate in water. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church it directly precedes becoming a church member.

Bible Instructor. In the Seventh-day Adventist program of evangelism, a Bible instructor is a person who dedicates himself, or herself, to the teaching of the Scriptures, generally to

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<sup>1</sup>"SDA Church," SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., p. 1179.

individuals or to small groups. Such persons may be assigned to local churches, to institutions, or may be asked to work with public evangelists. Generally, personal Bible instruction is given in the homes of interested people. Traditionally most Bible instructors in the Seventh-day Adventist Church have been women.

Church Growth. A term meaning "all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship with Him and into responsible church membership."<sup>1</sup> Used in a technical sense, it may refer to a particular school of thought originally founded by Donald A. McGavran. The term denotes the application of biblical, theological, anthropological, and sociological principles to congregations, denominations, and communities through planned activity in order to bring the greatest number of people into a meaningful relationship with Christ and His Church.

Discipling. The bringing of a person to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ--i.e., from unbelief to an all-encompassing acceptance of Christ as Lord. This must lead to the tangible result of baptism and church membership.

Ellen G. White (1827-1915). "Cofounder of the SDA Church, writer, lecturer, and counselor to the church, who possessed what SDA's have accepted as the prophetic gift described in the Bible."<sup>2</sup>

Evangelism. The specific proclamation that is intended to recruit new members.

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Wagner, Your Church Can Grow (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, A Division of G/L Publications, 1976), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>"White, Ellen Gould (Harman)," SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., p. 1584.

Health work. Hospitals, clinics, doctors' offices, or health-teaching programs associated with Seventh-day Adventists. These may include cooking schools, 5-day Plan to Stop Smoking, health screening, etc.

Indigenous minority churches. Older established Christian churches native to the Middle East but representing only a fraction of the population compared to the number of adherents to Islam. These include Armenian, Assyrian, Catholic, Coptic, and Greek Orthodox churches, etc.

Literature Evangelist. A term used by Seventh-day Adventists to designate specially trained and authorized salespersons of religious literature. Such salespersons are also called colporteurs.

Local Church. An organizational unit in the Seventh-day Adventist structure, a church community in a particular place having specific officer and member structures and processes for nurture and outreach.

Middle East Union. The administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church composed of the following countries: Arab Republic of Egypt, Bahrain, Cyprus, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Sultanate of Oman, Qatar, Saudi-Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen Arab Republic, and Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen.

Pastor. A clergyman who is the spiritual leader for a congregation (to be distinguished from an administrator, teacher of religion, or other church-employed worker who might be ordained and addressed by the title "elder").

Public evangelism. This term is used in contrast to personal



evangelism. It is the spoken word of proclamation of the gospel to a large gathering of people. This good news proclamation is addressed "to every creature" (Mark 16:15), "throughout the whole world" (Rom 1:8), both to believers in Jesus Christ (Matt 28:6-10) and to non-believers (Acts 8:35-38).

Voice of Prophecy. A daily and weekly network radio broadcast originating in Thousand Oaks, California, heard throughout North America, Latin America, Japan, and many other countries. The Voice of Prophecy also operates a Bible correspondence school. Around the world, 194 Bible correspondence schools offer courses in some 80 languages and dialects.<sup>1</sup>

#### Overview of the Project

Chapter I is an introduction to the dissertation. Chapter II presents a historical overview of the Gospel to Arab Muslims, examines methods used in the past to evangelize them, and analyzes the decline of missions to Muslims in the Middle East in the twentieth century. Chapter III outlines current obstacles hindering evangelization of Muslims. Chapter IV is a study of the Gospel Commission. It stresses attitudes and concepts exemplified in the early church that might apply to current Muslim evangelization. Based on this study, chapter V proposes appropriate concepts and attitudes toward Muslim evangelism for administrators, pastors, and church members. It concludes with a study of reasons why Muslims must be evangelized.

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<sup>1</sup>"Voice of Prophecy," SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., pp. 1558-61.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GOSPEL TO THE MUSLIMS OF THE MIDDLE EAST A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

#### Introduction

The extent of the expansion of Christianity in the first century is amazing. Paul states that in his day the gospel had been preached "to every creature under heaven" (Col 1:23).<sup>1</sup> Early traditions give a record of the apostles' work. It is certain that Paul reached Asia Minor, parts of Greece and Italy, and his letter to the Romans suggests that he also made a missionary journey to Spain (Rom 15:24).<sup>2</sup> Clement of Rome, writing from Italy to Corinth c. A.D. 95, stated that Paul had "reached the bounds of the west," an expression that may mean Spain.<sup>3</sup> An explicit claim that Paul reached Spain with the Gospel commission is found in the Muratorian fragment written in the second half of the second century A.D.<sup>4</sup>

Did the church of the first century bring to fulfillment Christ's Gospel commission? Evidence seems to indicate that the

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

<sup>2</sup>Rolf A. Syrdal, To the End of the Earth (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1967), p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>"Spain," Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (1960), p. 1038.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Early Church felt it had. Rolf Syrdal states: "The Great commission was thought to have been fulfilled in the Apostolic era, so that it no longer applied to the Church."<sup>1</sup> In later centuries Luther made reply to this interpretation in a sermon based on Mark 16:14-20:

A question arises about this passage, "go ye into all the world," as to how it is to be understood, since the apostles certainly did not visit all the world. No apostle came hither to us; and many a heathen island has since been discovered, where the Gospel has never been preached. Yet the Scriptures say:

"Their sound went out into all the earth." Rom 10:18.  
 Answer: Their preaching went out into all the world, although it has not yet come into all the world. This going out has been begun and continues, although it is not yet completed; the Gospel, however, will be preached even farther and wider, until the judgment day. When this preaching shall have reached all parts of the world, and shall have been everywhere heard, then will the message be complete and its mission accomplished; then will the last day also be at hand.

The preaching of this message may be likened to a stone thrown into the water, producing ripples which circle outward from it, the waves rolling always on and on, one driving the other, till they come to the shore. Although the center becomes quiet, the waves do not rest, but move forward. So it is with the preaching of the Word. It was begun by the apostles, and it constantly goes forward, is pushed on farther and farther by the preachers, driven hither and thither into the world, yet always being made known to those who never heard it before. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Besides the implication that the Gospel will naturally spread from one age to the other and from one area to the other, Luther is clear in his teaching that messengers must be sent with the Gospel commission if the desired results are to be actualized. In his meditation on Psalm 117 Luther writes:

Now if all heathen are to praise God, this assumes that He has become their God. If He is to be their God, then they must

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<sup>1</sup>Syrdal, p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>John Nicholas Lenker, Luther's Works, 36 vols. (Minneapolis: Lutherans in All Lands Company, 1907), 12:201-02.

know Him, believe in Him, and give up all idolatry. One cannot praise God with an idolatrous mouth or an unbelieving heart. And if they are to believe, they must first hear His word and thereby receive the Holy Spirit, who through faith purifies and enlightens their hearts. One cannot come to faith or lay hold on the Holy Spirit without hearing the Word first, as St. Paul has said (Rom 10:14): "How are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard?" and (Gal 3:2): "You have received the Spirit through the proclamation of faith." If they are to hear His word, then preachers must be sent to proclaim God's Word to them; for not all the heathen can come to Jerusalem. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The Turks were, at this time, the closest non-Christian people to the Germans, and Luther urged that the Christians seek to bring these Muslims to the faith of Jesus Christ, specially mentioning the opportunity of those who were slaves of the Turks to so serve that they might, in their capacity as slaves, become preachers of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose and intent of this chapter is to trace a brief historical overview of the Gospel to the Muslims and close with an analysis of the success or failure of this commission to Islam in the twentieth century.

### Historical Extension of the Gospel Commission

#### Medieval Period

##### Early Medieval Period (A.D. 600-1000)

The earliest known carriers of the Gospel commission to Muslims were the Paulicians of Asia Minor (seventh to tenth

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<sup>1</sup>Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., Luther's Works, 54 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 14:9.

<sup>2</sup>Syrdal, p. 108.

centuries).<sup>1</sup> The founder of these faithful early Christians was Constantine of Manales (near Samosta).<sup>2</sup> Under his leadership, the Paulicians steadfastly maintained their primitive position against the use of images, Mariolatry, and other practices of the Eastern Church. There was a revival of the older Christian faith of Cappadocia and Armenia.<sup>3</sup> Their missionary labors carried them over large areas of Asia Minor, especially Pontus and Cappadocia south of the Black Sea. Constantine Silvanus himself continued his witnessing for twenty-seven years and was stoned to death in A.D. 684 by Byzantine officers.<sup>4</sup>

Upon the Paulicians fell persecution by the Byzantine Empire and Church, inspired, it is said, by "the fanatical Empress Theodora." It is estimated that not less than one hundred thousand lost their lives by hanging, beheading, or drowning. Those who survived fled among the Moslem Saracens to whom they had witnessed and fought with them against their Christian persecutors.<sup>5</sup>

Others worked for Muslims during the early Medieval Period. These included John Damascene (d. 754), who held office under the Muslim Caliph of Damascus, and Al Kindi, who wrote (c. 830) an Apology for

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<sup>1</sup>V. Raymond Edman, The Light in Dark Ages (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1949), p. 293.

<sup>2</sup>F. C. Conybeare, The Key of Truth: A Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), pp. ci-cxii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Augustus Neander, General History of the Christian Religion and Church, 12th Am. ed. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1871), 3:251-52.

<sup>5</sup>Conybeare, pp. cxxxvii-cxxxviii.

Christianity, written to Muslims and often circulated in later years by Christian missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

In his Mourouj-al-Dhabab (The Fields of God), an encyclopedic work composed in Jerusalem between A.D. 940 and 944, the Muslim Al-Mas'oudi (c. 956) reports what a Coptic theologian said in explanation of his Christian faith:

The proof of the truth of the Christian religion lies in the fact that it is exclusive and antinomic in respect of the laws of reason. Reason leads to it but the reasoning spirit finds no satisfaction, because of this inherent opposition. For the senses do not reinforce it and logic fails to resolve this antinomy. No rational proof sustains it by its own resources of knowledge when it contemplates it and analyses it. I have nevertheless seen very diverse nations and great kings with perfect knowledge of things and prudent in understanding submitting to its law and following its practices. I have learnt that they accepted this religion and practised it, despite its opposition to the binding laws of reason, only because of certain proofs, prodigies and miracles which they witnessed and which led to their allegiance.<sup>2</sup>

This Coptic theologian, while explaining simply the "exclusive and antinomic" character of the Christian religion, witnessed also to the reasons for the credibility of the Christian faith and for adhering to it. The Muslim questioner was evidently impressed, since he recorded this account for generations of readers to come.

#### Period of the Crusades (A.D. 1095-1270)

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries western Christians tried to advance their religion by force of arms.<sup>3</sup> All civilizations

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Henry Robinson, History of Christian Missions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), p. 466.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Hajjar, "The Bible and Christian Witness in Islamic Countries," International Review of Mission 70 (July 1981):171.

<sup>3</sup> John S. Oyer, "Responses to Unbelief: Crusades and Missions," Mission Focus 10 (June 1982):25.

in world history have used warfare to promote political ends, but few have used warfare to promote a religious ideal. Christianity and Islam stand almost alone in this respect. A total of seven such wars (called Crusades when fought by Christians) were conducted against the Muslims in the Holy Land, as is shown in table 1.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 1  
CHRISTIAN CRUSADES AGAINST MUSLIMS

Crusade	Date	Outcome
First	1096-1099	Took Jerusalem
Second	1147-1149	Unsuccessful
Third	1189-1192	Conquest of Acre
Fourth	1202-1204	Established Latin Empire in East
Fifth	1228-1229	Jerusalem re-taken (lost in 1244)
Sixth	1248-1254	Unsuccessful
Seventh	1270	Unsuccessful

In July 1099, almost four years after Pope Urban II promoted the First Crusade at Clermont in southern France, the Crusaders finally reached Jerusalem. They had come overland through Asia Minor and down the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, fighting many battles en route. Their approach to Jerusalem is described by John Oyer:

They were electrified by the sight of the city; in their lively imaginations they easily exchanged the earthly Jerusalem for the heavenly one; they constantly expected miracles. They marched around the city seven successive days, singing and praying as they went, in imitation of Joshua at Jericho

<sup>1</sup>William Allan Neilson, ed., Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language (Springfield, MA: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1957), p. 636.

(medieval people often found biblical models for their acts). But they marched in stifling midday heat, at the height of summer, encased always in armor. The Crusaders derived intense inspiration from the marching and finally stormed the walls successfully.<sup>1</sup>

A description of the events that followed is given by an anonymous Christian chronicler:

But now that our men had possession of the walls and towers, wonderful sights were to be seen. Some of our men (and this was more merciful) cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them into the flames. Piles of heads, hands and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one's way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened at the temple of Solomon. What happened there? If I tell the truth, it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much, at least, that in the Temple and the porch of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins. Indeed, it was a just and splendid judgment of God that this place should be filled with the blood of the unbelievers, since it had suffered so long from their blasphemies. The city was filled with corpses and blood. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Following the battle for Jerusalem the Crusaders gathered together at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where they publicly gave thanks to God for a resounding victory.<sup>3</sup>

The most calamitous result of the Crusades was the alienation of the entire Muslim world. The fact that the Christian church would resort to war to propagate itself was a denial of the Christian religion. Once the victim of Muslim Holy Wars, the church now became the aggressor. In Christendom the Crusades have largely been forgotten, but their sordid memory remains to this day in the minds of the

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<sup>1</sup>Oyer, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>August C. Krey, The First Crusade (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith Publishers, 1958), p. 261.

<sup>3</sup>J. Herbert Kane, A Concise History of the Christian World Mission (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 54.



Muslims of the Middle East. The hate engendered at that time has not been dissipated even after nine hundred years. Christianity's reputation for cruelty and revenge is a millstone around the neck of every Christian missionary today in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

Late Medieval Period  
(A.D. 1100-1400)

Petrus Venerabilis, a Benedictine abbot of Clugny (d. 1157), translated the Koran and pleaded for a translation of the Bible into Arabic. He condemned the Crusades and wrote, "I come to win the Moslem, not as people oft do with arms, but with words; not by force, but by reason; not in hatred, but in love."<sup>2</sup> Another exception to the general belief of mission by the sword was St. Francis of Assisi (d. 1226) who attempted to preach Christ persuasively to the Muslims. In 1219 the Sultan of Egypt, El Kamil, received him with respect.<sup>3</sup>

During this period it was rare for anyone to speak of the possibility of converting Muslims.<sup>4</sup> Raymond Lull, "The Enlightened Doctor" (1235-1315), was an exception.<sup>5</sup> He had been inspired by the example of St. Francis of Assisi to become a missionary to the Muslims.<sup>6</sup> Lull is the first known Christian missionary to have

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, p. 466.

<sup>3</sup> Leslie Davison, Sender and Sent (London: Epworth Press, 1969), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Harold R. Cook, Highlights of Christian Missions (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), p. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Davison, p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Robinson, p. 466.

dedicated his whole life to working for Muslims.<sup>1</sup> For many years he labored in vain to persuade the representatives of the Church, the Pope included, that the policy of the Crusades was anti-Christian and to interest them in plans for developing missions to Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

Taking the attitude that Muslims could be converted by reason rather than the sword, Lull studied their faith and developed what he considered an infallible method for disputing with them.<sup>3</sup> He took these methods to North Africa near Tunis where after working and preaching for one year he was imprisoned and expelled from the country. After this, Lull worked at establishing missionary colleges for the propagation of the Gospel commission to Muslims. Later he returned to North Africa for work among the Muslims and was again imprisoned, this time for six months, and expelled. At seventy-eight years of age, Lull returned to North Africa the third time, and while preaching to the Muslims there, was stoned to death outside the city walls of Bugia in 1315.<sup>4</sup> Lull was important because of his new approach to missions, the example he set, and the influence he has had on later generations of missionaries to Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

#### Modern Period

##### Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries

In 1523, just eleven years before the institution of the "Company of Jesus," Ignatius Loyola had himself left Spain with the

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<sup>1</sup> Sherwood Eddy, Pathfinders of the World Missionary Crusade (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, p. 466.

<sup>3</sup> Cook, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Eddy, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Cook, p. 36.

avowed object of converting the Muslims of Palestine to the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> On September 4, 1523, along with other pilgrims, he arrived in Jerusalem. The Superior of the Franciscan convent in the city, who had been given control over the Christian pilgrims by the Pope, refused, however, to allow Loyola to stay.<sup>2</sup> Despite the failure of his efforts in Jerusalem, Ignatius Loyola is still remembered as one of the earliest missionaries who made definite attempts to convert Muslims by means other than by the sword.

In addition to Luther's (1483-1546) interest in evangelizing Muslims (outlined in the introduction to this chapter), it is significant that his Augsburg Confession and other of his writings were translated into the language of the Crots and Wends, in an effort to reach the Muslim Turks with the Gospel.<sup>3</sup>

Justinian von Welz, another visionary of work for Muslims, wrote a treatise (c. 1641) dealing with the obligation of Christians to send the Gospel to those in darkness, especially to Muslims.<sup>4</sup> To reinforce his public utterances Welz contributed generously to the establishment of a seminary for the training of missionary candidates, and strongly advocated the establishment of missionary departments in colleges and universities.<sup>5</sup>

In the spring of 1747 the United Brethren Church of Herrnhut, East Germany, sent Dr. Hocker, a physician, and Dr. Rueffer, a surgeon, to Persia for missionary work among the Muslims. Due to political unrest the attempt to establish a mission was

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<sup>1</sup>Robinson, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>3</sup>Syrdal, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup>Edman, p. 351.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

abandoned in February 1750.<sup>1</sup> Two years later (1752), Dr. Hocker returned to the Middle East where he worked among the Muslims, Abyssinians, and Copts of Egypt and Arabia. Joining them in later years were: John Danke (1769), John Antes (1769), Mr. Bruce (1773), Mr. Roller (1772), and Mr. Wieniger (1774).<sup>2</sup> By 1782 the political situation in Egypt became so violent that the missionaries were forced to close work and return to Europe.<sup>3</sup>

### The Nineteenth Century

The first twenty years of the nineteenth century of missions were spent largely in "spying out the land."<sup>4</sup> The account of two missionaries, Eli Smith and H. G. O. Dwight, who reported their journey from Constantinople to Tabriz, Persia--traveling 2,500 miles on horseback and 1,000 miles by water through a "wild country beset with robbers and perils of every kind"--is one example of the reconnaissance of nineteenth-century missions to the Middle East Muslims.<sup>5</sup> The remainder of the century witnessed a sudden and surprising growth of Christian missions to Muslims. Table 2 chronicles this period of growth.

By the end of the nineteenth century, missions had been planted all over the Middle East. The twentieth century was a

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Smith, The Origin and History of Missions (Boston: Walker, Lincoln and Edmands, 1832), pp. 167-68.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-71.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>4</sup>William H. Hall, The Near East: Crossroads of the World (New York: Interchurch Press, 1920), p. 117.

<sup>5</sup>Robert H. Glover, The Progress of World-Wide Missions (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925), p. 215.

TABLE 2  
MISSIONARY ADVANCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN  
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Name (Individual or Society)	Field Entered	Date	Comments
Henry Martyn	Shiraz, Persia	1811	Translated Bible into Persian
London Missionary Society	Egypt	1815	Did not remain
Pliny Fiske and Levi Parsons	Beirut, Lebanon	1819	Remained five years
American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions	Turkey	1820	Primary mission for Muslims and Jews
Pliny Fiske and W. Jowett	Palestine, Egypt	1823	Travels "Spying out the Land"
Dr. Joseph Wolff	Persia	1827	Preached the second advent of Christ
C. G. Pfander	Persia	1829	Wrote and circulated book comparing Christianity with Islam
Associate Reformed Church (U.S.A.)	Damascus, Syria	1849	
Church of England Zenana Society	Palestine	1851	Woman missionaries reaching Muslim women
Irish Presbyterians	Damascus, Syria	1854	
Friends Church	Lebanon	1860	
R. Bruce	Ispahan and Julfa, Persia	1869	

TABLE 2--Continued

Name (Individual or Society)	Field Entered	Date	Comments
Presbyterians of America	Syria, Persia	1870	
Church of England	Ispahan and Julfa, Persia	1875	A medical missionary and women arrived 1879
Hon. Ion Keith-Falconer	Aden	1885	
Dr. B. S. Cowan	Sheikh-Othman, Aden	1887	Died of unknown causes four months later
Dutch Reformed Church (U.S.A.)	Arabia	1889	
Dr. Samuel Zwemer	Arabia	1890	
Bishop French	Muscat	1891	Died after four months residence
Dutch Reformed Church (U.S.A.)	Muscat, Bahrein	1894	

SOURCE: Edwin Munsell Bliss, The Missionary Enterprise (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1908), pp. 221-25; Robert H. Glover, The Progress of World-Wide Missions (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925), pp. 214-17; Charles Henry Robinson, History of Christian Missions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), pp. 269-73; Thomas Smith, The Origin and History of Missions (Boston: Walker, Lincoln and Edmands, 1832), p. 620.

period of internal growth of many varied mission societies, with no major thrusts establishing new missions in un-entered territories.

Methods Used to Propagate the Gospel  
Commission since Early Church Times

Through the years since Early Church times great difficulties have confronted mission work in the Middle East. In some countries public preaching of the Gospel is forbidden in the streets and bazaars. The opening of mission schools for Muslim children has not proven easy, many schools being forcibly closed by command of the local mullah or government officials. The distribution of the Scriptures is frowned upon, and the publishing of polemic literature directed against Islam is unlawful. These great obstacles, and many others too numerous to cite, have led many to conclude that the time has not yet arrived for Christians to work among Muslims.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Christian missions for centuries have relied on five basic methods of propagating the Gospel commission: Proclamation, Education, Medical Mission, Literary and Publication Work, and Social Services.

Proclamation

In the Early Church preaching was the heart of the Gospel commission. Paul looked upon this method of proclamation as ordained by God for the bringing of salvation to mankind, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased

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<sup>1</sup>Julius Richter, A History of the Protestant Missions in the Near East (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), pp. 77-78.

God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (1 Cor 1:21).

Henry Martyn, missionary to Persia (1811), believed in preaching by argumentation.<sup>1</sup> Paul had used this method often when preaching to the Jews: "And Paul went in, as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving" (Acts 17:2-3). In later years, however, Martyn wrote: "I have lost all hope of ever convincing Muslims by argument . . . I know not what to do but pray for them."<sup>2</sup>

This silent praying presence did not satisfy other missionaries. From the beginning of Modern Missions it was realized that emphasis and stress was to be laid upon the training of preachers.<sup>3</sup> The Baptist Missionary Society, formed in 1792, established a mission policy that was generally accepted by other groups during the nineteenth century. The first and most important method of missionary labor advocated in this mission policy was extensive evangelistic preaching.<sup>4</sup> In more recent years this evangelistic preaching has taken on a new dimension. The Gospel is now being beamed into Muslim countries by radio. Powerful broadcasting stations in Seychelles, Monaco, Cyprus, and Monrovia have daily programs aimed at the Muslim world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Roelf S. Kuitse, "When Christians and Muslims Meet," Mission Focus 9 (March 1981):2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Bliss, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup>Syrde1, p. 127.

<sup>4</sup>Kane, A Concise History, p. 119.



### Medical Mission

Mission work among the Muslims has differed from that among other peoples. Along with Christian literature work, schools, and social work, medical mission has been used to prepare the ground.<sup>1</sup> This was a key method used by Christ in His own ministry, "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages . . . healing every disease and every infirmity" (Matt 9:35). The book of Acts states that the people "carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall of some on them . . . and they were all healed" (5:15-16).

Many since the days of the apostles have come to experience the healing of God through dedicated medical missionaries. In the spring of 1747 the United Brethren sent Dr. Hocker, a physician, and Dr. Rueffer, a surgeon, to Persia for medical missionary work among the Muslims.<sup>2</sup> In later years, Dr. Hocker also worked among the Muslims of Egypt and Arabia.<sup>3</sup> In 1851 the Church of England sent six medical missionaries to staff its clinics in seven different cities of Palestine.<sup>4</sup> It was reported that during the latter part of the nineteenth century a change of attitude in favor of Christianity was brought about among the common people in those districts where medical missions had been stationed.<sup>5</sup>

In recent years, however, there have been tensions created between Christian missions and Muslims over the use of health in

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<sup>1</sup>Richter, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Smith, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>4</sup>Robinson, p. 271.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

evangelism. An article written in 1978 by Robert Pickett and Rufino Macagba states:

Nothing has been more misunderstood by Muslims than the biblical concept of the gospel meaning God's concern for the whole man. How many times we have to face the charges that we "use" any physical, medical, and educational inducements to try to "make" Christians out of unfortunate Muslims.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps this same issue was at stake when the ruler of the synagogue became indignant at Christ's healing of the woman infirmed by a bent back for eighteen years (Luke 13:11-14).

### Education

The Matthean version of the Gospel Commission introduces Christian education to missions: "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (28:20). After leaving Athens, the apostle Paul took the gospel to the people of Corinth where "he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11). The method of education as used by Christ and the apostles has constituted the most effective means of presenting the Gospel commission in the Middle East to this day. All of the greater mission organizations have laid the stress here.<sup>2</sup>

During the Medieval Period the Paulician missionaries (A.D. 600-900) established mission schools. Their teachers were conspicuous for their use of apostolic names, their humility, austerity, zeal, and knowledge of the Word.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Phil Parshall, New Paths in Muslim Evangelism (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>William Owen Carver, The Course of Christian Missions (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1939), p. 225.

<sup>3</sup>Edman, p. 294.

When the Protestant missionaries first arrived in the Middle East (1747), there was hardly any educational work being done by the established older churches (Eastern Orthodox, Armenian, Coptic, etc.), and, as a result of this educational neglect, there was much ignorance and superstition.<sup>1</sup> The first Protestant schools were not opened, however, until the early nineteenth century when J. R. T. Lieder of the Church Missionary Society founded a training school for Coptic boys in Cairo (c. 1825).<sup>2</sup>

In 1834, the Mission of the American Board, founded by the Congregational Church (U.S.A.), opened a grammar school and seminary in Constantinople for Armenian youth.<sup>3</sup> It soon became evident, however, that this project would fail. The leading Armenian bankers, not liking to see the Americans monopolize higher education, set up their own rival schools.<sup>4</sup>

Some may question why Christian schools were not established during these years for Muslims. The best example that can be cited to answer this question is the account of the American Presbyterian Mission in Persia. When the Presbyterians entered Persia in 1870, they resolved not to confine their work to the Nestorians, but to open new stations among the Muslims. In 1872 they opened a station in Teheran and, in 1873, another in Tabriz.<sup>5</sup> They found it extremely difficult to make a new beginning in these fields. Direct missionary work among Muslims was found to be almost impossible. Even ten years later, in 1880 and again in 1881, the situation had hardly

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<sup>1</sup>Richter, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

changed, causing the mission to recommend: "It is not our duty, nor is it wise to open schools for Muslims at the present time."<sup>1</sup>

As time moved on and Persia came into closer connection with the outside world, particularly after the Shah Nasir-ed-Din had visited Europe, the conviction dawned on the Persians that it was in their own best interests to fall into line with the universal progress of civilization.<sup>2</sup> This situation prompted the Presbyterian mission to open a boys' school for Muslims at Teheran in 1887. The school enrolled only 30 pupils the first year, but expanded in just a few years to 236, of which 130 were Muslim pupils.<sup>3</sup>

Major educational institutions of higher learning established during the nineteenth century include: Robert Noble College, established by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions at Constantinople in 1834;<sup>4</sup> The Syrian Protestant College, established by Danile Bliss (Presbyterian Board), at Beirut in 1866 (in 1921 the name was changed to the American University of Beirut);<sup>5</sup> and the American University of Cairo established by the United Presbyterians at Cairo in 1921.<sup>6</sup>

The major secondary educational institutions opened by the SDA Church in the Middle East are shown in table 3. Most of these secondary schools began as elementary schools. Not listed but noteworthy was the founding of two SDA primary schools in Iran in 1923. One served the Assyrians, the other

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Robinson, p. 270.

<sup>5</sup>Carver, p. 225.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

TABLE 3  
SDA SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Year Founded (Listed Chrono- logically)	Name of School	Location of School
1927	Arabic Union Mission Training School	Matariah, Egypt
1929	Ecole Adventiste	Beirut, Lebanon
1929	Mouseitbeh Adventist Secondary School	Beirut, Lebanon
1931	Iraq Training School	Mosul, Iraq
1939	Bourj-Hammoud Adventist School	Beirut, Lebanon
1939	Middle East College	Beirut, Lebanon
1942	Amman Adventist Secondary School	Amman, Jordan
1946	Aramoun Adventist School	Aramoun, Lebanon
1946	Fayoum Training School, Seila	Fayoum, Egypt
1946	Iran Adventist Academy	Tehran, Iran
1953	Beirut Overseas School	Beirut, Lebanon
1953	Heliopolis Secondary School	Heliopolis, Egypt
1955	Nile Union Academy	Gabal el-Asfar, Egypt
1956	Bishmezzine Adventist School	Bishmezzine, Lebanon
1960	Boushrieh Adventist Secondary School	Beirut, Lebanon

SOURCE: SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed.

Armenians.<sup>1</sup> In 1929 a third primary school was established for Muslim students in Iran at the request of the local Muslim community leaders. It opened with 31 students and by 1931 increased to 126 pupils.<sup>2</sup>

#### Literary and Publication Work

In Isa 55:10-11, God emphatically states that the word that goes forth from His mouth "shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it." In his gospel John wrote that the signs and words of Christ had been ". . . written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:31). After relating God's dealing with sin in the camp when 23,000 were slaughtered by God in one day, Paul states: "Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they are written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor 10:8-11).

One of the earliest records of the Apostles having baptized individuals as a result of the publishing work is that of "a high official of the Kandake" who was found by Philip reading himself into the Early Church from the scrolls of Isaiah (Acts 8:27-40, NEB). Since then the Scriptures have been an important means of spreading the gospel. When printing was discovered, it was used to multiply available copies of the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup>"Development of SDA Work," (Iran), SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., p. 677.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

The first mission press in the Middle East was set up at Malta, until conditions permitted its removal to Beirut in 1833. Dr. Eli Smith, who established and for thirty years directed the press, and Dr. C. V. VanDyck, his successor, rendered monumental service by their translation of the whole Bible in Arabic. This was published by the Beirut press in 1865.<sup>1</sup> Later translations of the Bible were made into Turkish and Persian.<sup>2</sup>

It has been possible for colporteurs to pioneer for the missionaries and often to distribute the Bible in regions where no missionary could work.<sup>3</sup> Religious literature of various kinds has, of course, been extensively produced also. In the past decade missionaries have had great success with Bible correspondence courses in the Muslim countries. In 1960, eighteen thousand people signed up for written Bible courses.<sup>4</sup> So popular were these courses that the Tunisian government closed the bookstore from which the courses were sent. The operation was moved to France where it became part of the Radio School of the Bible's outreach.<sup>5</sup> In Iran the requests for Bible correspondence courses were so numerous that missionaries had to be taken off other jobs to cope with the mail.<sup>6</sup>

### Social Services

The essence of social services is found in Christ's statement recorded in Matt 25:35-40:

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<sup>1</sup>Glover, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>Carver, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>4</sup>J. Herbert Kane, Understanding Christian Missions (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 194.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 431.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. . . . Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.

James broadens the social services spectrum of Christ to include the visiting of "orphans and widows in their affliction" (Jas 1:27).

Christian missions have emphasized the importance of witness through service. The care of the weak, the poor, and the sick--those who have no helper--has been regarded by some as the only necessary and possible witness among Muslims. In many Islamic countries (Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, etc.) any other form of presence or witness is not possible or tolerated by the government.<sup>1</sup>

In 1851, the Church of England opened centers in Palestine in the cities of Jerusalem, Nazareth, Nabulus, Jaffa, Gaza, Haifa, and at Salt on the east of the Jordan. At each of these mission stations special efforts were made by women missionaries to reach Muslim women and children in their homes.<sup>2</sup>

In 1870 the American Presbyterian Mission established stations in Persia.<sup>3</sup> Large numbers of lady missionaries were sent to the city of Hamadan to do social work among the Persian Muslim women in their homes.<sup>4</sup>

The social gatherings in these homes and the visits they make, are all means to conquer the deep-rooted antipathy, and superstitious fear of the Persian women, thus helping the missionaries to come into closer relation with them, and bringing into their dull and dark lives some rays of new hope and heavenly light.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kuitse, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Robinson, p. 271.

<sup>3</sup>Richter, p. 317.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 327.



The Anglican Church Missionary Society used women missionaries after a similar fashion in the Persian cities of Kirman, Yezd, and Shiraz (1897-).<sup>1</sup> Their work was described as a labor among women;

. . . visiting them and inviting them to their homes, and making tours through the villages. Every opportunity is seized to gain a hold upon the women (Muslim). The number of those who have joined the mission church is according to the official reports, as large as that of the men.<sup>2</sup>

The American Mission in Egypt by 1900 had nineteen lady missionaries engaged in working among the harems of Muslim families, doing Christian social work.<sup>3</sup>

Another method used, related to social work, was that of helping the insane. Theophilus Waldmeyer of the Friends Mission had set his heart on ministering to the needs of numerous insane who were being cruelly treated by their ignorant neighbors. Finally in the year 1900 he opened an asylum in Asfurie, Lebanon, served by one doctor and several male and female nurses. It was the only institution of its kind in all of Lebanon and Syria.<sup>4</sup>

Yet another successful outreach of social service was that of childrens' orphanages. In 1871 the Female Education Society founded an orphanage and several day schools in Nazareth, which were later operated by the Church Missionary Society.<sup>5</sup> About the same time four other orphanages were established: The Kaiserswerth Deaconesses' Homes in Syria and Palestine, the Jerusalem Union and Syrian Orphanages in Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> In 1947 the Matariah Mercy Home

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 332-33.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 204-05.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 149-50.

was founded in Cairo under the direction of A. G. Zytkoskee and Erna Krueger. The orphanage accommodated about fifty boys and girls.<sup>1</sup> In 1969, the Amman Care Home was founded in Jordan. This orphanage is currently directed by Bishara Aziz and accommodates approximately twenty to thirty boys and girls.<sup>2</sup>

It is estimated that since World War II some thirty million persons have been rendered homeless. The best-known group are the Palestinian refugees of the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> In every case Christian organizations came to the aid of the homeless: Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, World Relief Commission, Church World Service, Mennonite Central Committee, Lutheran World Federation, World Vision International, and others.<sup>4</sup> Millions of dollars raised every year by these organizations are sent to the affected areas. Wherever missionaries have gone the story has been the same. They have consistently followed the steps of their Master who "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).<sup>5</sup>

#### An Analysis of Success or Decline

No enterprise known to man has been 100 percent successful. Man is a finite, fallen creature, and his most noble efforts have been marred by imperfection and failure. The missionary enterprise has been no exception. Stephen Neill expresses it well:

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<sup>1</sup>"Matariah Mercy Home," SDA Encyclopedia (1976), p. 860.

<sup>2</sup>Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983), p. 349.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, p. 333.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 337-38.

Christian missionary work is the most difficult thing in the world. It is surprising that it should ever have been attempted. It is surprising that it should have been attended by such a measure of success. And it is not at all surprising that an immense number of mistakes should have been made.<sup>1</sup>

An often expressed opinion is that mission work among the Muslims of the Middle East has been a total disaster. Father Jean Corbon, headmaster of a Catholic secondary school in Beirut, states: "In thirteen centuries we have made hardly any progress."<sup>2</sup> Others look optimistically to the future. Speaking of the Arab world, Harry Genet, former TEAM missionary in Beirut, said:

Over the last decade increasing exposure to the rest of the world, migration to larger cities, and secular higher education, have all been undermining Islam's dominance in society. An increasing openness in exploring Christian belief has surfaced simultaneously. The Middle East, once widely regarded as impregnable, is clearly shifting into the winnable camp.<sup>3</sup>

In the early part of this century it was thought that Islam would not be able to survive the collision with modern civilization based on science and technology. Islam would disintegrate and die; Christianity, on the other hand, would be the surviving victor. This concept was fathered by the American missionary, Samuel Zwemer, known as the "Apostle to Islam." In 1916, he wrote a book describing the disintegration of Islam.<sup>4</sup> Some fifteen years later, Zwemer acknowledged he had been wrong in his expectations. In his inaugural

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Neill, Call to Mission (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Corbon, "Islam and Christianity," Student World 58/1 (1965):68.

<sup>3</sup> Howard Whaley, "Penetrating the Muslim World," Moody Monthly, May 1974, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> Kuitse, p. 1.

at Princeton he spoke about the subject, "The Renaissance of Islam."<sup>1</sup>

It is commonly admitted that Christianity has not made much progress in areas where Islam is the foremost religion. The following section presents statistics to support this statement.

#### Statistics Revealing Decline

##### Decline in World Mission of Major Denominations

There has been a marked decline in missionary interest and activity on the part of mainline denominations in the West. At a time when the burgeoning world population calls for more and more missionaries, these churches are retreating and retrenching.

Table 4 and figure 1 give comparative missionary statistics of the overseas task force of six large denominations.

TABLE 4  
COMPARATIVE OVERSEAS MISSIONARY TASK FORCE

Overseas Task Force	1958	1971
American Baptist Convention	407	290
United Presbyterian, U.S.A.	1,293	810
Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.	504	391
United Methodist Church (incl. EUB)	1,453	1,175
Protestant Episcopal Church	395	138
United Church of Christ	496	356
Total	4,548	3,160

SOURCE: "The Missionary Retreat," Christianity Today, November 19, 1971, p. 26.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

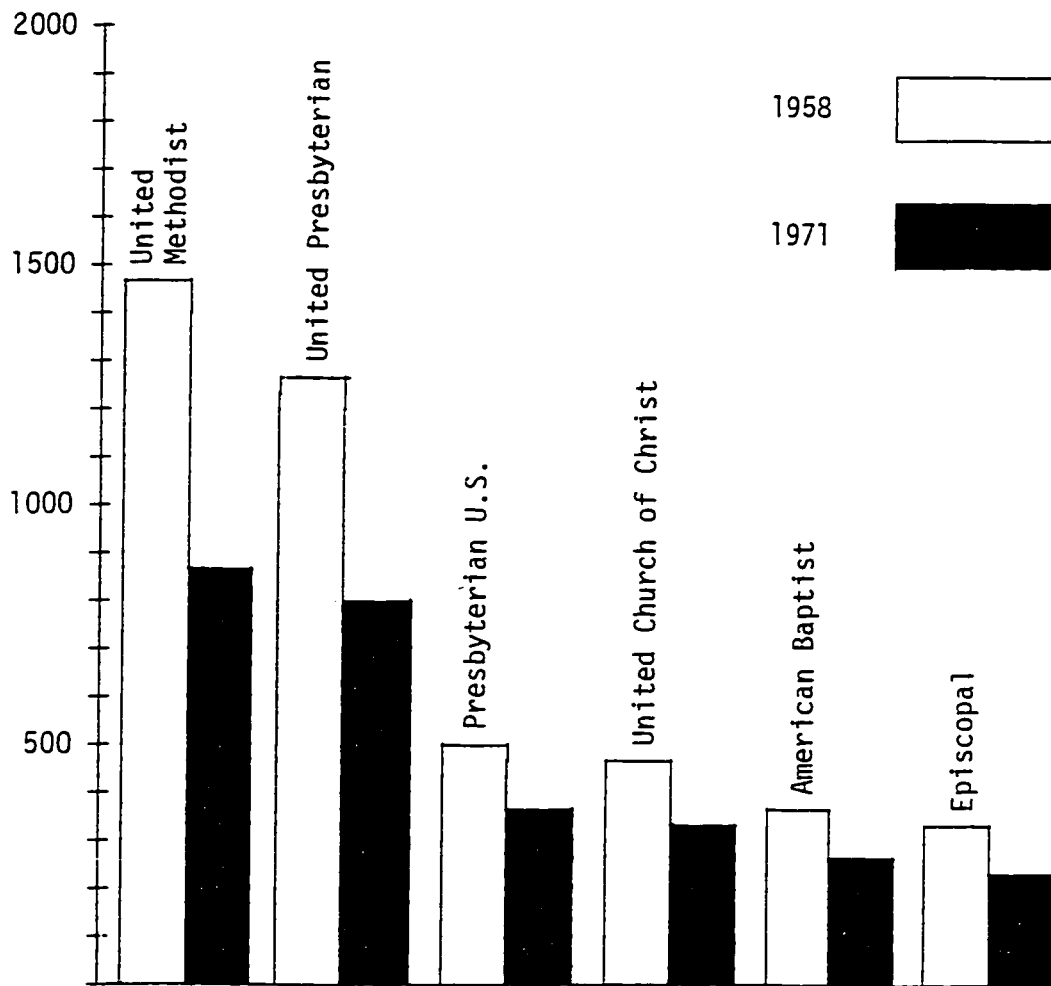


Fig. 1. Missionary strength of six major United States denominations.

SOURCE: "The Missionary Retreat," Christianity Today, November 19, 1971, p. 26.

In an address to fifty missionaries on furlough, Dr. David M. Stowe, mission executive for the United Church Board for World Ministries, noted a 10 percent decrease in missionary personnel of major U.S. Protestant denominations from 1968 to 1971.<sup>1</sup> At approximately the same time, COEMAR, missionary arm of the United Presbyterian

<sup>1</sup>"The Missionary Retreat," Christianity Today, November 19, 1971, p. 26.

Church, U.S.A., dropped its budget (1972) to \$13.6 million from the 1971 budget of \$14.7 million. Overseas personnel were reduced the following two years by 220: 100 through retirement and resignation, and 120 by relocation to other work, mainly in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The 1980 Consultation on World Evangelization (COWE) at Pattaya, Thailand, emphasized strategy: developing a methodology to evangelize the world before the coming of Jesus Christ. In doing this, Consultation on World Evangelization took a hard look at such major opponents of the Christian faith as Marxists, Muslims, cult advocates, secularists, Buddhists, and Hindus.<sup>2</sup> Responding to the enormous need, COWE advocated an all-out missionary advance around the world. Participating mission boards were faced with the challenge of enlisting 200,000 missionaries by the end of the twentieth century.

Harold Lindsell, retired editor of Christianity Today (1968-1978), responded to COWE's all-out missionary advance proposal by stating "this country will not raise up 200,000 missionaries now or in the near future."<sup>3</sup> Lindsell explains:

Why do we make such a statement? Because the recent history of some of the major denominations, relative to evangelism at home and missionary outreach abroad, reveals retreat and retrenchment, not growth and advance.<sup>4</sup>

The recent dramatic missionary retreat referred to by Lindsell can be understood in light of the percentage decline in the number of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Harold Lindsell, "The Major Denominations Are Jumping Ship," Christianity Today, September 18, 1981, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

overseas career missionaries among seven major denominations between 1962 and 1979 as detailed in table 5. Many factors have contributed to this loss of missionaries among the traditional ecumenical denominations. However, it is legitimate to say that these figures are a rough index of the depth of conviction about basic Christian doctrine--the nature of the gospel, the lostness of mankind apart from Christ, and the necessity of obeying biblical mandates calling on sacrifice and discipline for the sake of advancing God's Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 5  
PERCENTAGE DECLINE OF OVERSEAS MISSIONARIES  
(1962-1979)

Sending Denomination	Percentage of Decrease
Episcopal Church	79
Lutheran Church in America	70
United Presbyterian Church in U.S.A.	72
United Church of Christ	68
Christian Church (Disciples)	66
United Methodist Church	46
American Lutheran Church	44

SOURCE: Harold Lindsell, "The Major Denominations Are Jumping Ship," Christianity Today, September 18, 1981, p. 16.

The dramatic decline and retreat of overseas career missionaries is further illustrated in figure 2. This graph shows thirteen major denominations comparing the decline of career missionaries from 1962 to 1979.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

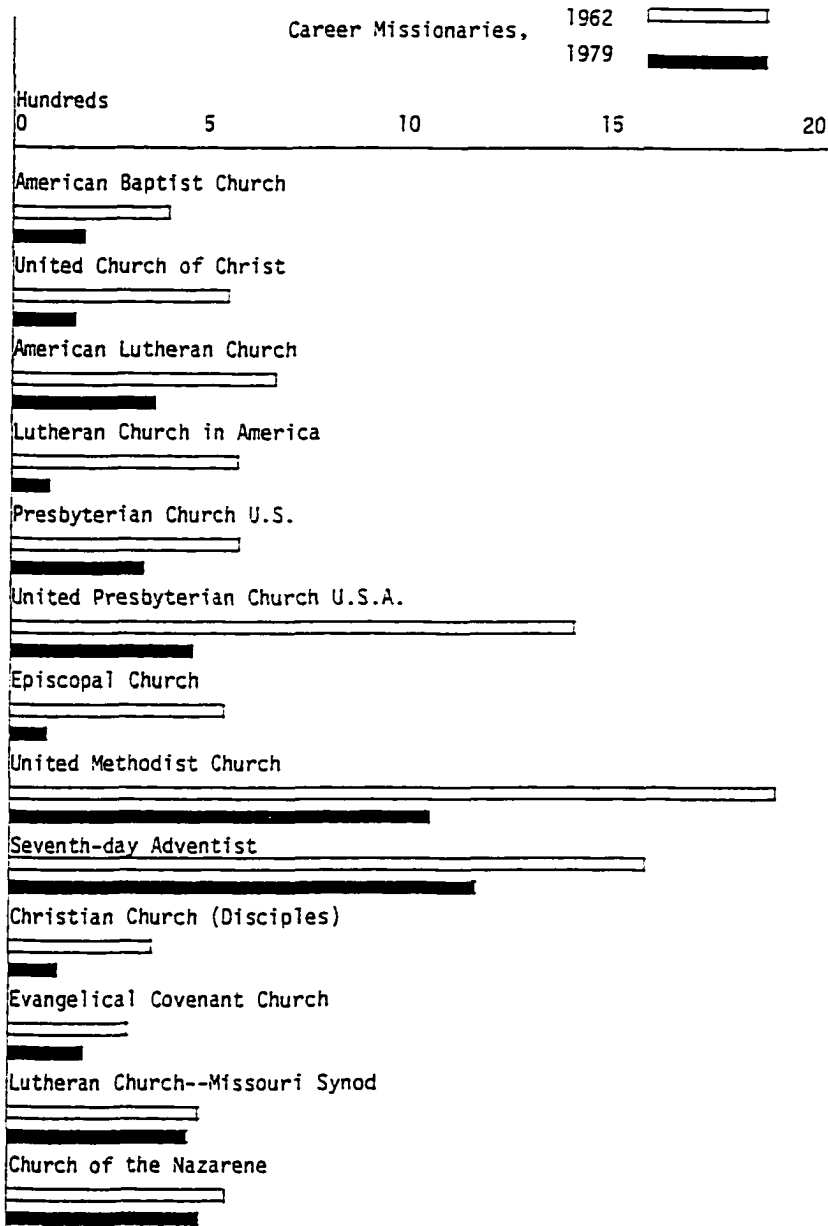


Fig. 2. Comparative decline of career missionaries (1962-1979).

SOURCE: Harold Lindsell, "The Major Denominations Are Jumping Ship," Christianity Today, September 18, 1981, p. 17.



There are four factors contributing to this decline of career missionaries: (1) The national churches have in most cases achieved independence and maturity and as a matter of policy, the sending mission boards have gradually and purposely reduced their overseas forces. (2) With nationalism making life and work in the mission field more and more difficult, to say nothing of the problem of closing doors, the home boards are not recruiting candidates in the same numbers as before.<sup>1</sup> (3) Many of the mainline denominations have experienced a marked drop in contributions to the administrative budget. Conservative church members are opposed to the increasing commitment on the part of the leaders to civil rights, social action, nation building, and even revolution.<sup>2</sup> They have decided for the time being to withhold their mission contributions. (4) Theological liberalism, especially neo-universalism, is slowly cutting the nerve of Christian missions.<sup>3</sup> If it is true that all men are already saved without a knowledge of Jesus Christ (Rom 2:12-15), there is no compelling reason why the church should extend itself to share the gospel with Islam, especially when home needs are so great. Few people realize, however, that of the approximate 55,000 Protestant missionaries throughout the world today, only 2 percent work among Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kane, Understanding Christian Missions , p. 165.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 165-66.

<sup>4</sup>"Regional News," Asian Missions Advance, November 1981, p. 24.

Decline of Protestant Missions  
in the Middle East

There has simultaneously been a marked decline in missionary interest and activity on the part of Protestant denominations in the Middle East. At a time when the population increases of the Middle East demand even more missionaries, these churches are withdrawing and, in some countries, phasing out their mission institutions. A comparative study of the decline in numbers of Protestant career missionaries in eleven Middle East countries is illustrated in table 6 and figure 3.

TABLE 6

COMPARATIVE DECLINE IN NUMBER OF PROTESTANT  
CAREER MISSIONAIRES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Country	1961	1972	1979
Iran	208	114	57
Iraq	20	2	0
Jordan	77	40	87
Lebanon	150	195	88
Libya	5	39	2
Saudi Arabia	88	0	3
Sudan	177	18	136
Syria	153	3	0
Turkey	112	65	66
Egypt	269	41	70
Total	1,259	517	509

SOURCES: W. Stanley Rycroft and Myrtle M. Clemmer, A Factual Study of the Middle East (New York: Commission On Ecumenical Missions and Relations, 1972), p. 140; Samuel Wilson, ed., Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas, 12th ed. (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center, 1979), pp. 39-45.

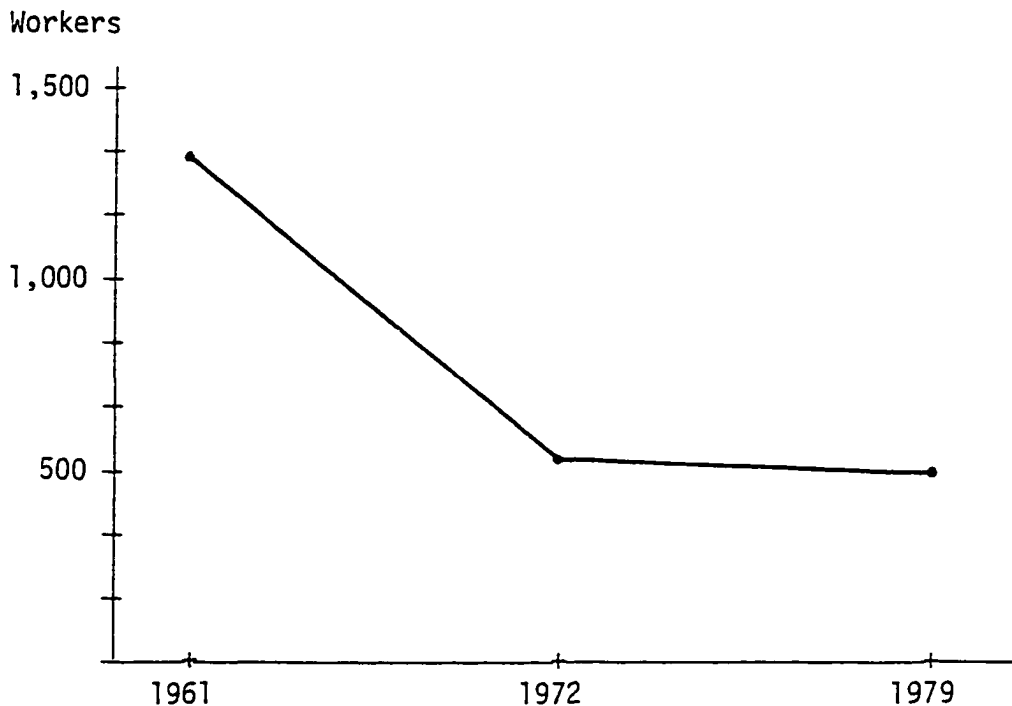


Fig. 3. Working force decline: Foreign Protestant missionaries in the Middle East

SOURCES: W. Stanley Rycroft and Myrtle M. Clemmer, A Factual Study of the Middle East (New York: Commission On Ecumenical Missions and Relations, 1972), p. 140; Samuel Wilson, ed., Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas, 12th ed. (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center, 1979), pp. 39-45.

Table 7 and figure 4, in which fourteen American Protestant sending organizations are studied, show a comparative decline in career missionaries by denomination. Statistics are for the following Middle East countries: Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, and Egypt.

#### Decline of the Seventh-day Adventist Missions in the Middle East

Since the first SDA missionaries were sent out eighty years ago, a total of 15,272 new workers have accepted calls to serve in the denomination's world mission centers. Figure 5 traces the increase

TABLE 7

## COMPARATIVE MIDDLE EAST MISSIONARY TASK FORCE

Middle East Task Force	1972	1976	1979
Assemblies of God	21	24	16
Baptist Bible Fellowship, International	8	10	6
Bible and Medical Miss. Fellowship, Canada	7	3	1
General Conf. of Seventh-day Adventists	107	34	14
International Christian Fellowship	5	3	0
International Missions, Inc.	25	36	2
Lutheran Orient Mission Society	3	3	2
Operation Mobilization--Send The Light, Inc.	30	10	30
Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.	4	5	0
Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.	1	1	2
Southern Baptist Convention	51	60	33
United Pentecostal Church International	2	2	0
United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.	79	51	47
Worldwide Evangelization Crusade	5	1	1
Total	348	243	153

SOURCES: Edward R. Dayton, ed., Mission Handbook: North American Ministries Overseas, 10th ed. (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1973), pp. 483-602; *ibid.*, 11th ed., 1976, pp. 545-702; Samuel Wilson, ed., Mission Handbook: North American Ministries Overseas, 12th edition (1976), pp. 545-702.

and decline of the number of workers sent out from 1951 to 1981 (30 years).

Table 8 and figures 6-9 give comparative missionary statistics showing the decline of the Seventh-day Adventist mission in the Middle East Union. During this same period four SDA medical institutions were closed: The Istanbul Adventist Dispensary (1973), the Benghazi Hospital in Libya (1969), the Dar El Salaam Hospital in

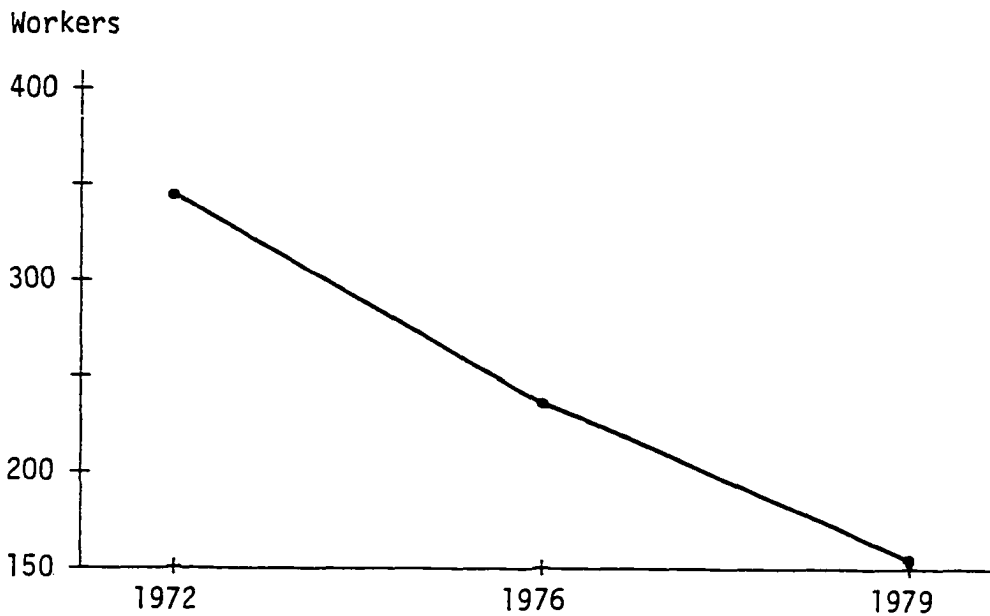


Fig. 4. Missionary strength of fourteen Protestant denominations in the Middle East.

SOURCES: Edward R. Dayton, ed., Mission Handbook: North American Ministries Overseas, 10th ed. (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1973), pp. 483-602; *ibid.*, 11th ed., 1976, pp. 545-702; Samuel Wilson, ed., Mission Handbook: North American Ministries Overseas, 12th edition (1976), pp. 545-702.

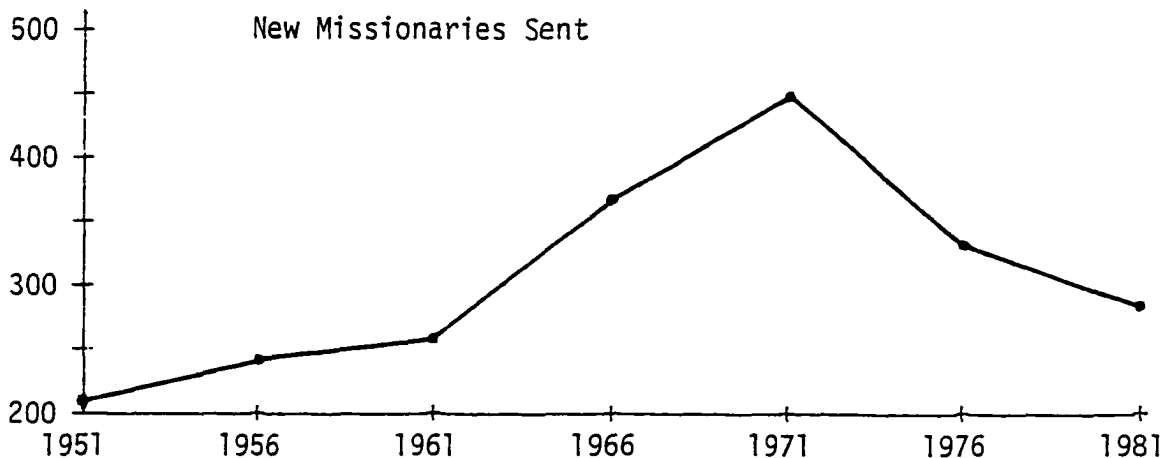


Fig. 5. Regular new SDA workers accepting calls outside the home division.

SOURCE: Annual Statistical Report (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Archives and Statistics), 1951-1981.

Baghdad (1959), and the Tehran SDA Physical Therapy Clinic in Iran (1979).<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 8

GENERAL COMPARATIVE STATISTICS OF THE SDA  
MISSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST UNION

Variable Area	1951	1961	1971	1981
Total active workers	200	285	236	190
Ordained ministers	33	52	37	23
Licensed ministers	22	20	23	7
Church membership	1,466	2,170	3,881	2,826
Number of churches	34	43	41	35
Sabbath School membership	1,813	3,572	3,339	1,500
Number of Sabbath Schools	42	72	54	38
Primary school enrollment	1,083	1,263	3,217	1,524
Number of primary schools	15	14	15	3
Youth Society membership	708	2,287	1,450	168
Number of Youth Societies	17	59	37	10

SOURCE: Annual Statistical Report (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Archives and Statistics), 1951-1981.

When viewed together, the statistics from tables and figures support voiced concerns that there is a decline in missionary interest and activity on the part of many mainline denominations in the West. This decline is especially significant to the work in the Middle East for Muslims. Any marked decline in missions today, or in the near future, will adversely affect what little work is already being done for Muslims. Only Iron Curtain countries compete with the Middle

<sup>1</sup>Annual Statistical Report (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, 1951-1981).

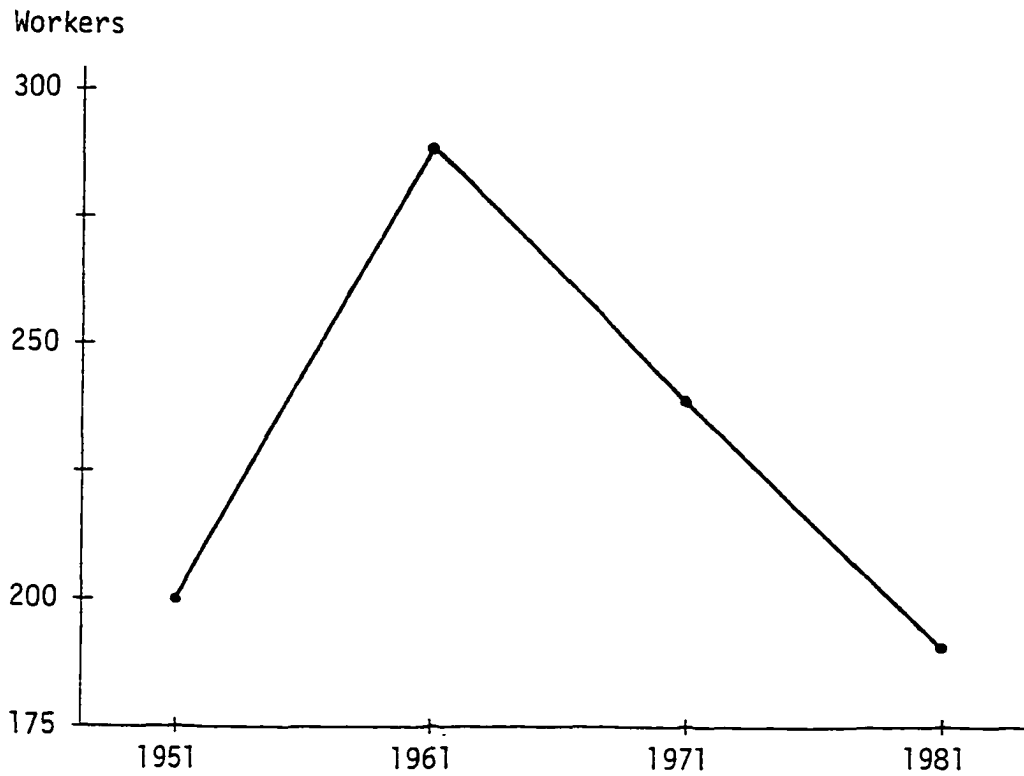


Fig. 6. Working force decline: Total active SDA workers in the Middle East Union.

SOURCE: Annual Statistical Report (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Archives and Statistics), 1951-1981.

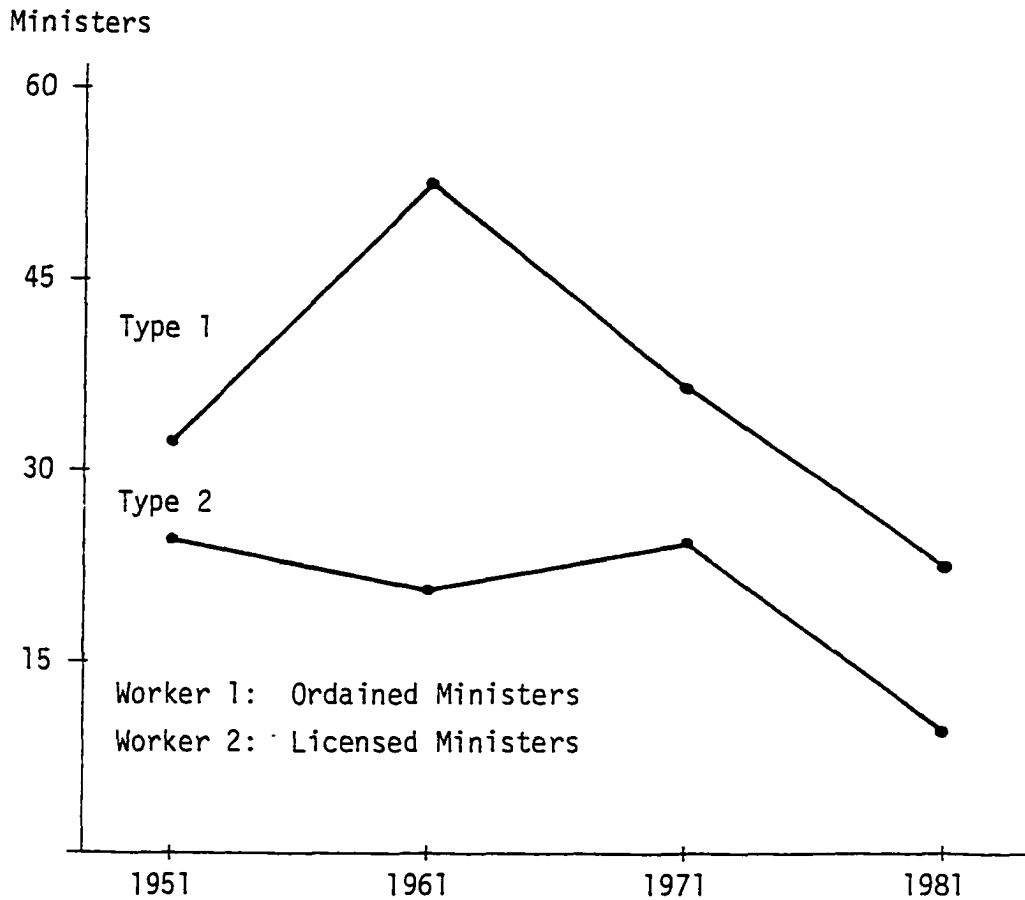


Fig. 7. Working force decline: Ordnained and licensed SDA ministers in the Middle East Union

SOURCE: Annual Statistical Report (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Archives and Statistics), 1951-1981.



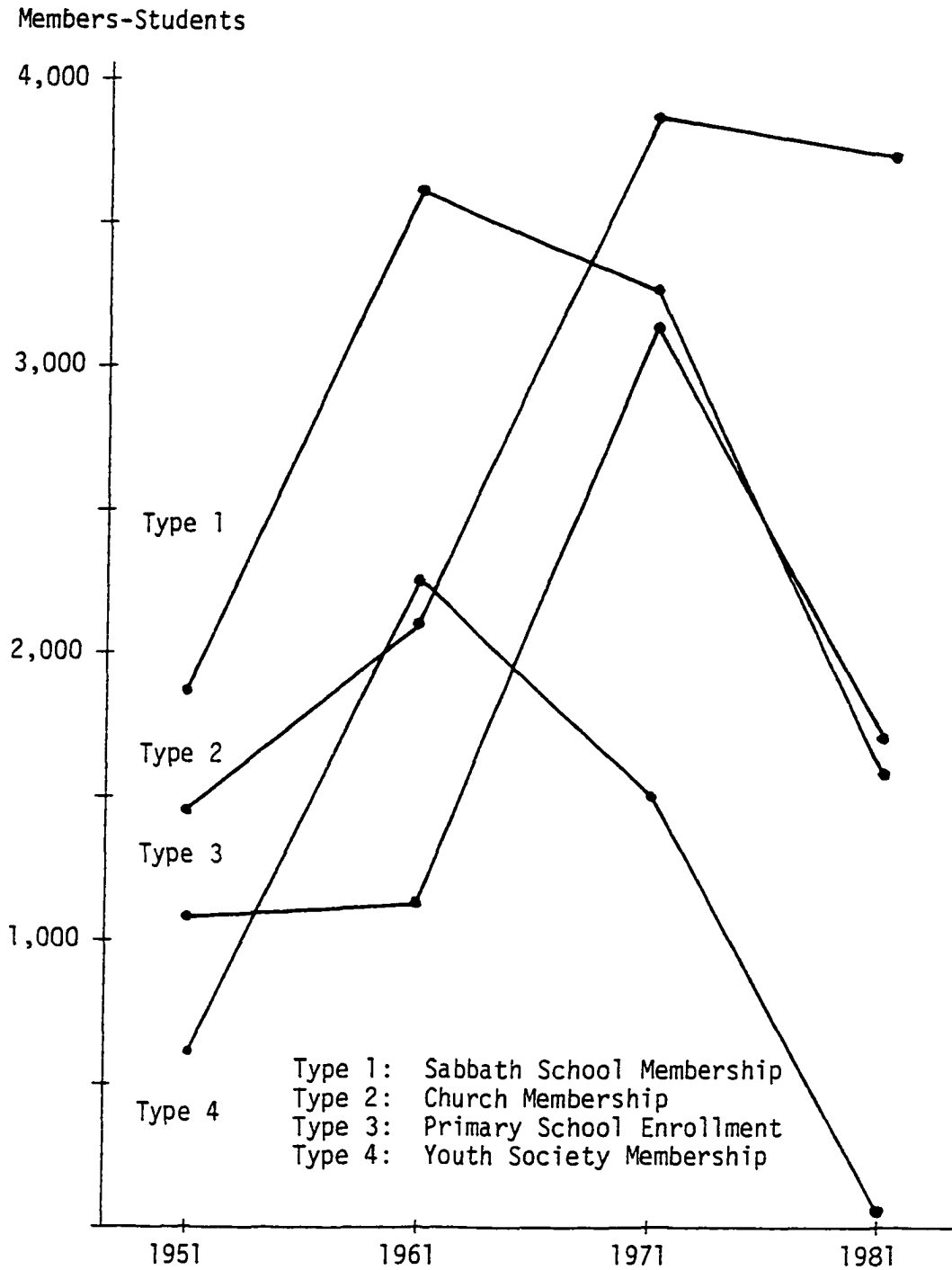


Fig. 8. Membership and enrollment decline in the Middle East Union of SDAs.

SOURCE: Annual Statistical Report (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Archives and Statistics), 1951-1981.

## Institutions-Societies

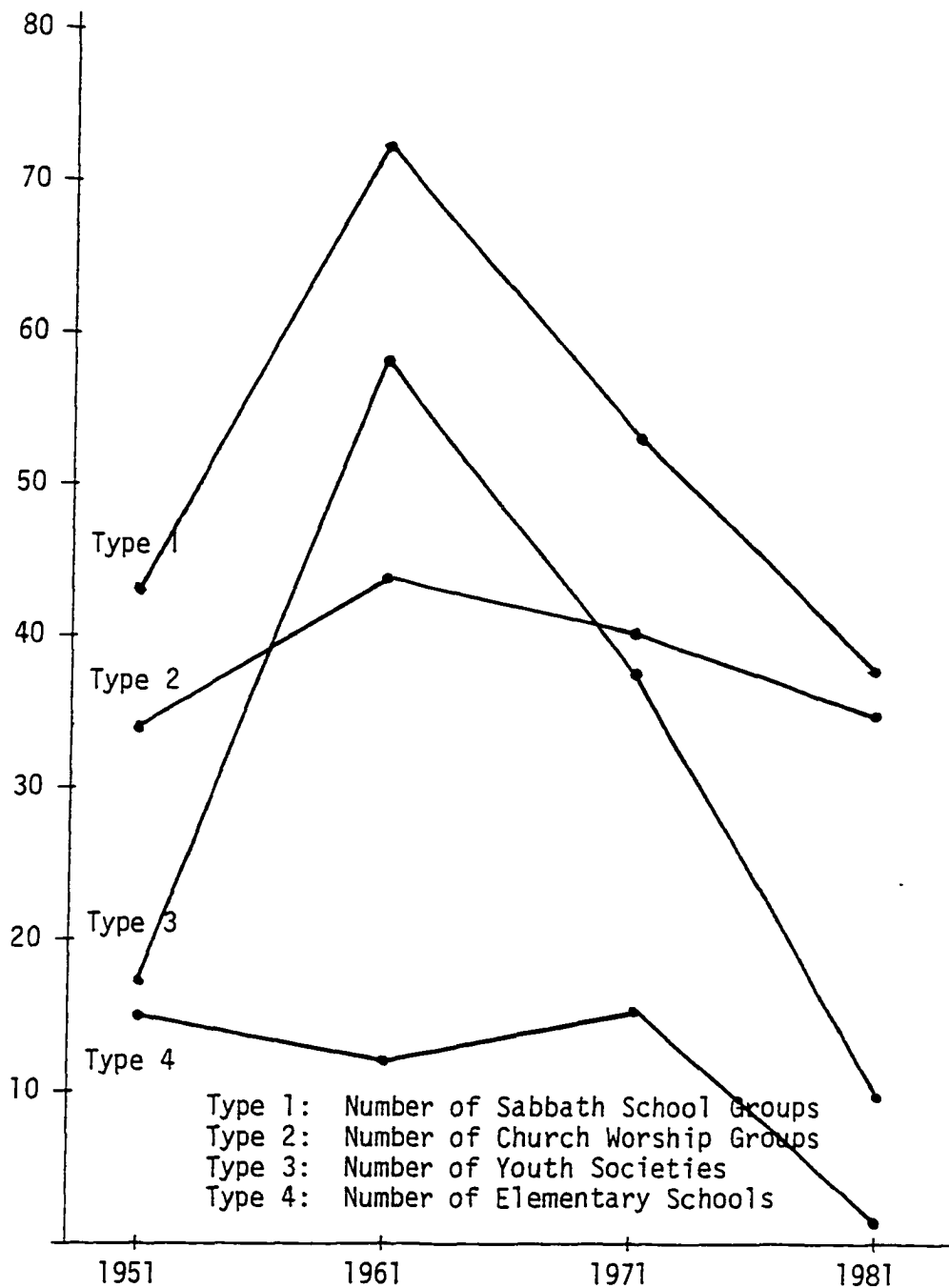


Fig. 9. Comparative decline in number of SDA institutions and societies in the Middle East Union.

SOURCE: Annual Statistical Report (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Archives and Statistics), 1951-1981.

East for the dubious distinction of highest population-to-missionary ratio. The average is more than 225,000 Arabs for every North American missionary.<sup>1</sup> Don M. McCurry, founder and director of the Samuel Zwemer Institute, concludes:

The reading of these "Status of Christianity Country Profiles" should lead us to tears. The work of the Lord has suffered some tremendous reverses. The reasons can be laid at the feet of the Christians, both eastern and western. It is time for new approaches in Muslim evangelization.<sup>2</sup>

### Major Causes of Decline

From the beginning the missionary enterprise has been beset by difficulties of one kind or another. There is no reason to believe that the future will be any different from the past.<sup>3</sup> But if some of the causes of the decline of missions can be seen in history, the lessons learned might prevent future problems of mission decline. This section reviews some of the major problems affecting decline: Apathy and Indifference, the Crusades, Opposition from Other Churches, Lack of Evangelistic Thrust, Inadequate Staffing, and Emigration of Nationals.

#### Apathy and Indifference

A candid observer with historical perspective would be tempted to inquire: What has happened to the Gospel commission to preach the Word in the Middle East? Looking back

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<sup>1</sup>Whaley, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup>Don M. McCurry, ed., World Christianity: Middle East (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center, 1979), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, A Concise History, p. 178.

through the centuries, one sees a worldly and weak Church, ecclesiastical princes without spiritual power or human compassion, ignorance of the Word of God, and gross indifference toward the conversion of Muslims.<sup>1</sup> Ellen White wrote:

We have before us a great work,--the closing work is giving God's last warning message to a sinful world. But what have we done to give this message? Look, I beg of you, at the many, many places that have never yet been entered. Look at our workers treading over and over the same ground, while around them is a neglected world, lying in wickedness and corruption,--a world as yet unwarned. To me this is an awful picture. What appalling indifference we manifest to the needs of a perishing world.<sup>2</sup>

### The Crusades

To Christians in the West, the Crusades were a bad dream of which we have only the faintest recollection; but to the Arabs they are the greatest proof of the Christian's hatred for Islam.

The Crusades were perhaps the greatest blunder ever made by the Christian church. The worst result was the alienation of the entire Muslim world.<sup>3</sup>

To the devout Muslim, Christianity is the domestic religion of an aggressive, unscrupulous Europe bent entirely on world domination. Under the blows of the Crusades, Islam became intolerant and bigoted; a rigid and fanatical fundamentalism replaced the old Islamic tolerance. It gripped the Muslim world and petrified its development for centuries.<sup>4</sup> Eight hundred years of history have

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<sup>1</sup>Edman, p. 323.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1902), 7:103.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, A Concise History, p. 117.      <sup>4</sup>Davison, p. 65.

failed to obliterate the Crusades from the memory of the Arabs. To this day they continue to fester in the body politic in that part of the world.<sup>1</sup>

### Opposition from Other Churches

Missionaries assigned to work alongside Christian workers of national minority religions have charged them with having lost the missionary spirit.<sup>2</sup> One of them, Father Vincenzo Succi, who spent twenty-five years as a missionary in Turkey, described the problem in these words:

When I arrived in Turkey in 1955, I asked myself why in this area, where Christianity had experienced such glorious pages of history and the Holy Spirit had worked in such visible fashion during the first centuries, the Church would have remained almost moribund, and the Christians here only superficially faithful. I sought the reason for this and found that the priests here were more concerned with preserving the Christianity of the past than with carrying on direct activity with the Moslems. On the other hand, I am convinced that Christ sent us to preach the Gospel to all and that we should begin with the most numerous nucleus composed of Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

Christian missionaries face a different situation in the Middle East from what they faced in lands like China, Japan, and Korea. Nominally Christian churches are already established in the Middle East: churches far older than the Western church. Harold P. Cook of the Moody Bible Institute speaks of them as

. . . minorities which have long lost their missionary spirit. But they are exceedingly jealous of their prerogatives as legally recognized minority groups. They do not appreciate foreigners who come in to disturb the status quo. And when one

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<sup>1</sup>Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Cook, p. 185.

<sup>3</sup>Cirillo Tescaroli, "Turkey: Shepherding a Small Flock," World Mission 32 (Fall 1981):16.

speaks of Christianity to anyone in the Middle East, it is of these groups that the addressee is likely to think. From these groups most of the people form their ideas of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

Never has the work in this part of the world been easy or outstandingly fruitful. Added to the difficulties of working in a militant Muslim country was the opposition of some of the already existing churches, in spite of the attempts by the early missionaries to find ways of cooperating with them. Cook singled out Iran and Lebanon as examples of opposition by existing minority churches:

In Iran the church at first welcomed the missionaries. Then, after new life began to stir in the church, some of the leaders began to fear that their own leadership and privileges might be jeopardized and they turned against the missionaries. Nevertheless, some of the young people continued in the new movement. In Lebanon the opposition of the Maronites was exceedingly bitter and led to deeds of violence and even murder.<sup>2</sup>

Bliss concurs with these charges, stating:

That the attitude of the Armenian, Greek and other ecclesiastics should be hostile is scarcely surprising. A few indeed, were shrewd and far-sighted enough to see the advantages that might result from reform in the Church, and especially from alliance with foreign influences. The great mass, however, looked upon every attendant on Protestant services as false not merely to the Church, but to the nation, and thus weakening the strength of his own people in their constant fight against the oppression of the Turk.<sup>3</sup>

And yet, it is from these ancient churches that most of the converts have come, especially from the Armenians, Nestorians, and Copts. When missionaries sent to evangelize Muslims recognized this, they realized that their work among the old Churches was leading not to but away from mission work among Muslims. The gulf separating the Christians and Muslim populations is so deep that it is nearly

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<sup>1</sup>Cook, p. 185.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 185-86.

<sup>3</sup>Bliss, p. 226.

impossible to reach both by starting from the same point and employing the same missionaries.<sup>1</sup> To counteract this problem some missions have begun a Muslim work side by side with their work among the old Churches. Glover summarizes the problem by stating:

Experience has proven, sadly enough, that the religions which possess a partial knowledge of Christian truth, but without its saving message, far from being a stepping-stone to Christ offer a more stubborn resistance to Christianity than even rank paganism. All three of the dominant religions of the Middle East present peculiar and formidable difficulties to gospel effort.<sup>2</sup>

### Lack of Evangelistic Thrust

With few exceptions, Christian schools in the Middle East today are intended to be primarily academic in nature, with little effort made to convert the students. Dr. Daniel Bliss, founder of the Syrian Protestant College, which in 1920 became the American University of Beirut, made this quite clear when he said:

A man white, black or yellow; Christian, Jew or heathen, may enter and enjoy all the advantages of this institution for three, four, or eight years; and go out believing in one God, in many gods, or in no God. But it will be impossible for one to continue with us long without knowing what we believe to be the truth and our reasons for that belief.<sup>3</sup>

### Inadequate Staffing

In addition to losing their evangelistic thrust, Christian mission schools are facing other problems: inadequate staffing and misuse of mission personnel. In some schools only 60 percent of the teachers are Christians.<sup>4</sup> This naturally vitiates the

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<sup>1</sup>Richter, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Glover, pp. 219-20.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, p. 321.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 323.

evangelistic thrust of the institution. In many missions, pastors, missionaries, and evangelists (if there are any) must do double duty, dividing their time and strength between the church and the school. This results in poor performance in both areas.<sup>1</sup> "Ways should be sought for disengaging pastors and missionaries from such administrative involvement so that their training and experience can be used effectively."<sup>2</sup>

### Emigration of Nationals

A great disadvantage to the success of missions in the Middle East is the ever-increasing emigration of national church members, students, and workers. It is a consoling thought, however, that by means of this emigration the value of the schools established by Protestant missionaries is being recognized far more widely than formerly.<sup>3</sup> The hope may also be voiced that these Christian emigrants, after gaining further education and prosperity abroad, will, in view of the better political conditions which are being established in their home, return there to be a blessing to their own people.

### Summary

In this chapter the growth and decline of the proclamation of the Gospel commission to the Muslims from early Medieval times to the present has been reviewed. Beginning with the commendable

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>All Africa Churches Conference, Christian Education in Africa (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>Richter, p. 413.



missionary thrusts among Muslims by the Paulicians of Asia Minor and continuing with the individual contributions of great men like John Damascene (d. 754), Raymond Lull (1235-1315), Dr. Hocker (1747), Henry Martyn (1811), and Joseph Wolff (1827), there has been faithful presentation of God's Word to the Muslims of the Middle East.

The methods used to proclaim the Gospel commission have been Proclamation, Medical Mission, Education, Literary and Publication Work, and Social Services. These five basic methods were at times adapted and modified due to difficulties encountered from government regulations and Islamic confrontations.

An analysis of the success or failure of the mission enterprise in the Middle East shows both a decline in the world mission enterprise and in the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Middle East. In the world mission enterprise major mainline denominations have cut back sharply their overseas missionary task force. Challenges by the 1980 Consultation on World Evangelization to enlist 200,000 missionaries by the year 2000 appears to be difficult if not impossible. Simultaneously these world mission organizations have withdrawn and, in some instances, phased out their evangelistic centers in the Middle East countries.

In the Adventist mission thrust to the Middle East there has been marked decline in medical missions, youth societies, number of schools, number of Sabbath School members, etc. Over the last decade statistics showed a status quo in church membership, even a small decline, showing that even biological growth is not contributing to sustaining the established church, to say nothing of evangelistic outreach.

Finally, major causes of the decline were outlined including: Apathy, the Crusades, problems of contentions with the established minority churches, lack of evangelistic thrust, and other varied causes.

## CHAPTER III

### PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES HINDERING CURRENT EVANGELIZATION OF MUSLIMS

#### Introduction

Seventh-day Adventists certainly are not prepared to consider the establishment of indigenous minority SDA churches in a few major cities, as having fulfilled the missionary mandate. The original commission called for the evangelization of the world, which includes preaching the gospel everywhere and making disciples of all peoples: the Middle East cannot be omitted.

SDA missions were first established in the Middle East in the spring of 1878 when Romualdo Bartola, an Italian self-supporting missionary, formed a group of seven newly baptized persons in Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>1</sup> From that small beginning one hundred and five years ago among the Coptic Christians, the church's missionary enterprise has expanded, despite besetting difficulties and obstacles, but only among the indigenous minority churches. In Egypt the constituency is almost exclusively from the ancient Coptic Christians. In Cyprus the membership is made up of former members of the Orthodox Church; in Iran, Armenians; in Iraq, Assyrian Christians; in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, Orthodox and

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<sup>1</sup>"Development of SDA Work," [Egypt], SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., p. 60.

Catholic peoples, and in Turkey, Armenians and Greek Orthodox.<sup>1</sup> More than 95 percent of the present constituency throughout the entire Middle East Union is composed of people converted from these Christian minority groups who make up less than 5 percent of the total population of over 155 million.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter major causes of this one-sided approach to Middle East evangelism are considered: (1) Lack of coordinated administrative planning for evangelism, (2) Weak spiritual commitment of some witnesses, (3) Rise and spread of nationalism, (4) Prejudice between Christians and Muslims, (5) Revolution and war, and (6) Fear of religious persecution.

#### Lack of Coordinated Administrative Planning for Evangelism

Although converts to the church were made, the record shows lack of coordinated administrative planning for evangelism. The spread of Christianity in the early centuries does not appear to have been carefully planned by the church leaders. The organization of the church's leadership seems to have been a step or two behind what was taking place.<sup>3</sup> This was true when church officers sent Barnabas to confirm the new believers in Antioch (Acts 11). It was also true when church administrators decided to add their approval to the work that Paul and Barnabas had already done among the Gentiles (Acts 15).

This lack of planning evangelism is not confined to the early centuries. The church at large today is not employing an

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth S. Oster, "Evangelism Among Muslims" (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, 1975), p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>3</sup>Cook, p. 18.

adequate evangelistic plan.<sup>1</sup> In an analysis of Seventh-day Adventist planning of evangelism in the Middle East, Kenneth Oster writes:

The fact that in almost a hundred years of their [SDA] presence in the Middle East, they have not addressed themselves to the task of evangelizing the Muslims in the heart of the Muslim world, accentuated the urgency of careful self-examination--an examination of objectives, methods, and attitudes.<sup>2</sup>

Evangelism is the general theme of some stimulating publications produced in North America during the past ten years. Recently a number of books have appeared on the more highly specialized subject of Personal Evangelism.<sup>3</sup> Similar concepts and methods of evangelism might be applied in a practical way to the evangelizing of Muslims, but to date have not been promoted or utilized by the SDA church in the Middle East.

A principal lesson of the past century seems to be that where evangelism lagged behind and slackened, the Christian enterprise suffered grievous loss, tending to resemble "a stream of fresh water that runs straight into a desert wasteland."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wade C. Smith, New Testament Evangelism (Richmond, VA: Onward Press, 1930), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Oster, "Evangelism Among Muslims," p. 120.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., Jard DeVille, The Psychology of Witnessing (Waco: Word Books, 1980); George Knowles, How to Help Your Church Grow (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981); Richard G. Korthals, Agape Evangelism (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1980); Will Metzger, Tell the Truth (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1981); Virginia Stem Owens, The Total Image (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1980).

<sup>4</sup>Edward J. Jurji, "Christianity in the Middle East," Theology Today 8 (April 1951):69.

## The Necessity of Planning

One of the greatest needs of evangelism in the Middle East is the formation of some plan of action.<sup>1</sup> Many persons who are spiritually lost are lost because no one laid plans to save them.<sup>2</sup> The work of saving souls cannot usually be done except by means which are the result of well-understood plans.<sup>3</sup>

Why plan for evangelism? Why not just go and be faithful servants? Proverbs 16:9 observes that "A man's mind plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps." Planning for evangelization and working under the Lord's direction make a powerful combination, which provides God with the opportunity to direct our steps in new and creative ways. It forces us to put our faith into action, transforming our desire to see people come to know Christ into specific actions.<sup>4</sup> The task God has given us to evangelize Muslims demands careful understanding and disciplined planning. Ellen White describes such a lack of disciplined planning in these words:

Vast territories are opened before us where the light of truth has never penetrated. . . . There must be a decided change in the church which will inconvenience those who are reclining on their lees, before laborers who are fitted for their solemn work can be sent into the field. There must be an awakening, a spiritual renovation. The temperature of Christian piety

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<sup>1</sup>Bliss, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur C. Archibald, New Testament Evangelism (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1946), p. 52.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Evangelism (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 94.

<sup>4</sup>Edward R. Dayton, That Everyone May Hear (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advance Research Center, 1980), p. 50.

must be raised. Plans must be devised and executed for the spread of truth to all nations of the earth.<sup>1</sup>

God has ordained the planning process and it is legitimately viewed as a primary means of achieving the very "mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16). Collection of facts, prayerful consideration of goals, determination of strategy based on awareness of Middle East situations, measurements of effectiveness, an evaluation that asks God to teach His servants so they can be more effective in the future--all of this is the very essence of stewardship.<sup>2</sup> Great evangelistic programs do not just happen. Great results are not accidental.<sup>3</sup> The task of winning souls to Christ and of building Christ-like characters in them should not be done spasmodically. It is a perennial program of planned evangelism to which Christ has commissioned his church.<sup>4</sup>

#### A Critique of Past Planning

In the past one hundred years of Adventist Missions in the Middle East, little or no planning concerning Muslim evangelism has taken place. Only two major administrative undertakings were planned: the Interdivision Islamic Institutes, and Thrust for Evangelism among Muslims, neither of which succeeded in its original objectives.

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1882), 5:203.

<sup>2</sup>James F. Engel, Contemporary Christian Communications (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), p. 321.

<sup>3</sup>Roland Q. Leavell, Evangelism, Christ's Imperative Commission (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 95.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

Interdivision Islamic Institutes  
(1961-1963)

In 1961 two men were chosen by the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the purpose of researching and designing a new approach for working among Muslims. Dr. Robert C. Darnell was appointed by the Middle East Division of SDAs as Secretary of the Religious Research Project, whose task was to give study to the problems of evangelism among Muslims and organize Islamic Conferences where solutions could be discussed and plans made for work among Muslims. To coordinate the Islamic Conferences in six divisions where there are strong Muslim populations, Elder R. S. Watts was appointed by the world headquarters church as Coordinator of Muslim Affairs.<sup>1</sup>

The first "Institute of Studies Concerning the Adventist Work among Islamic People" was conducted by Darnell August 21-24, 1961, at Beirut, Lebanon. Twenty papers were read by national and expatriate workers on topics related to outreach and mission work among Muslims.<sup>2</sup> Similar conferences were convened in five other divisions before an Interdivision Islamic Institute held in Beirut, September 6-19, 1963, with leaders and evangelistic workers representing the entire Muslim world field.<sup>3</sup>

At the final consecration service of the Beirut Institute, Watts summarized the accomplishments of the Institute by stating:

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<sup>1</sup>Oster, "Evangelism Among Muslims," p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 105.



1. We have reached a recognition of the common points of our problem; wherever we meet Muslims, we meet the same difficulties and prejudices.
2. We have been able to formulate a general method of approach.
3. We have a wider scope and will make a greater impact, through radio, television, etc. on mass media.
4. This institute has clarified our Adventist attitudes toward Islam, its founder, and his followers.<sup>1</sup>

It was hoped that this report of the Institute would engender interest in developing a more fruitful relationship with Muslims, and that it would prove helpful in providing the tools to accomplish the task. However it is seriously doubted that any Muslims even knew of the Institute's report. Concerning its benefit to the church Oster reflects:

We wish we could report that during the twelve years which have passed since those Islamic Conferences were convened, that, as an outgrowth of them, the work has gone forward in the development of materials and methods in laboring for Muslims, and that vast numbers of believing Muslims had come to believe also in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. We cannot . . .<sup>2</sup>

Thousands of dollars were expended to fly church leaders and evangelistic workers from five division areas of the Adventist world church to this Institute in Beirut. Thousands of valuable man-hours were pooled together in a serious attempt to launch the first major Adventist planning session on evangelistic methods for reaching Muslims. How could such a well-planned Institute fail its purpose? Failure came, says Oster, because

The church has not been fully ready yet to accept one of the crucial statements that emerged from the conference--that Mohammed was a prophet sent from God to accomplish a specific task on earth! This statement created a stir in the higher organizational structures of the church, and reports of the Conference were withheld from even the workers!<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-09.

Thrust for Evangelism among Muslims,  
(TEAM), 1971-1976

The creation of TEAM in 1971 was a response to the recognition of special needs connected with Adventist outreach among the Muslims in the Middle East. Eight major areas of difficulty need to be addressed: (1) social, (2) economic, (3) political, (4) theological, (5) communication, (6) cultural, (7) church, and (8) organizational problems.<sup>1</sup> There was a serious lack of experiential knowledge from which to analyze these problems because only a few Seventh-day Adventists had cultivated relationships with Muslims at any level. Due to the failure of the Interdivision Islamic Institute and the intentional withholding of its findings from church workers, there were few established guidelines and only meager tools or materials for those who wished to work among Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, recognizing the need for further research and study, the Middle East Union established TEAM. This program, directed by Oster, coordinated all aspects of evangelism for Muslims: (1) public lectures, (2) personal and private Bible study, (3) correspondence courses, (4) radio and television, (5) literature evangelism, (6) public press, and (7) mass media.<sup>3</sup>

A personal letter from Darnell, then President of the Middle East Union of Seventh-day Adventists, dated December 13, 1974, notes frustrations facing Muslim work:

The misinformation available in the church exceeds the information and produces counter-productive attitudes which stimulate rash moves on one hand or bottled up action on the other. While the existing level of Adventist communication is low, it is nevertheless mostly wasted because it is either

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 111-12.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 112.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

contentious or un-understandable. We do not see the likelihood of progress [among Muslims] until the church adequately researches the problems and makes the findings available.<sup>1</sup>

Over a period of five years TEAM brought out six major items for testing and subsequent release for use by church workers and laymen interested in the evangelization of Muslims. These were:

1. "Highways to Health and Happiness." A twenty-one lesson health correspondence series intended to be used as an integral first-step follow-up for the Five Day Plan to Stop Smoking.<sup>2</sup>

2. "Today's Faith." A series of twenty-one Bible study lessons with accompanying test papers.<sup>3</sup>

3. "The Straight Way." A series of fifty-two full-message lesson quarterlies designed to be used as study guides by individuals on a daily schedule for one year. Groups of interested Muslims would be organized, and a leader chosen to direct the discussion of these weekly lessons as they met together each Sabbath. They were also intended to be used as lesson quarterlies in local church Sabbath School classes for visiting Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

4. "Moslem-Oriented Spearhead Evangelistic Sermons." A book of sermons directed exclusively to a Muslim audience and written in a way to minimize debate, hostility, and prejudice. The sermons present a respectful and honorable approach to Islamic ideas and institutions.<sup>5</sup>

5. "In Search of the Straight Way." A series of nine tracts written from the viewpoint of a Muslim. The course leads Muslims

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 111-12.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 132-33.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 148-49.      <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

step by step from the Christ of the Koran to the Christ of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

6. "Cosmic Perspective of God and Man." A book written from the viewpoint of the Muslim telling the story of God's love for man, His plan to save man, and His return to Paradise.<sup>2</sup>

Tens of thousands of dollars were expended on TEAM, and almost uncounted hours of labor were spent by TEAM members in a serious attempt to launch the second major Adventist thrust to organize and facilitate methods and materials for the evangelization of Muslims. How could such a well-funded, well-planned project fail in the realization of its goals? Four years after the founding of TEAM, Darnell said this about church planning for Muslim evangelism:

You request a statement concerning my administration's position on Adventists and Islam in the Middle East Union. We have not defined as yet an administrative position.<sup>3</sup>

Darnell's appraisal of the success of TEAM's work was that

The creation of the TEAM was our response to the recognition of a special need. . . . It is readily recognized that there are problems related to this work. These problems, of course, are far from solved. . . . The range of church attitudes [toward TEAM work] is wide, and there is always a body of difference . . . there exists both support and opposition. I think it is now widely accepted throughout the Middle East church constituency that there is a moral inconsistency between the profession of Adventism and the failure to act constructively in the Muslim community. The work of preparing our constituency to receive Muslims faces many complexities.<sup>4</sup>

The presentation of the Gospel commission to Middle East

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 158-59.

<sup>3</sup>Personal letter from Robert C. Darnell, President, Middle East Union of Seventh-day Adventists, Beirut, Lebanon, 13 December 1974.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Muslims through the work of TEAM failed because of popular criticism of TEAM's methods and program in the following five areas:

1. Use of TEAM Muslim materials for Adventists. The incident referred to here concerns a Sabbath School class taught at Middle East College by Oster. To test TEAM produced materials, "The Straight Way," Muslim-oriented Sabbath School Lesson Quarterlies were used as a basis of study in a voluntary class of college students. The Division President, M. E. Lind, hearing of the Sabbath School class, feared "Muslim" indoctrination and ordered the college president to stop the class and discontinue TEAM efforts at the college.<sup>1</sup>

2. The use of the Koran on an equal basis with the Bible in TEAM lectures and lessons. It was felt by some that TEAM materials treated the Koran as an authentic continuation of divine revelation.<sup>2</sup> In response to this criticism TEAM members contend that "never once has the Koran been used to prove a single point of doctrine or principle."<sup>3</sup>

3. Identifying Papacy as at its height at time of Muhammad's appearance. This charge concerned historically incorrect TEAM statements in lectures and lessons. Facts show that the papacy had barely emerged from the ravages of the northern invaders, and that Eastern Christianity was stronger than the Western Church when Mohammad appeared (622 A.D.).<sup>4</sup>

4. Considering Jesus as only the greatest of the prophets.

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<sup>1</sup>Oster, "Evangelism Among Muslims," pp. 112-13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>4</sup>Personal letter to Robert Darnell from Erich W. Bethmann, May 7, 1973, used by his permission.

This charge concerned TEAM understanding of Christ's divinity. Statements in lectures and lessons presenting Christ as the greatest of the prophets were identified by some as "coasting dangerously close to Arianism."<sup>1</sup>

5. Identifying Islam as the locust power in Rev. 9. This identification was upsetting to those who saw the fulfillment of this chapter in the Arabs and the Turks.<sup>2</sup>

For those already negative towards Muslim evangelism, including church administrators and laymen, these problem areas were considered cause enough to scuttle TEAM's entire program. None of the materials produced by TEAM for evangelizing Muslims are in use today in the Middle East Union. What few and incomplete sets of materials remain are packed in one or two small boxes and stored at the Middle East Union Adventist headquarters at Beirut. New workers in the Middle East generally have no knowledge of TEAMS efforts, they do not even know what the letters TEAM represent.

#### Weak Spiritual Commitment of Some Witnesses

At least one major difference between the situation of the Early Church and the situation today seems evident. The Early Church was just beginning; it had no sad history in its background. The church today is faced with the problem that nominal Christians of many different church organizations through the years have produced in Muslims negative views of Christianity. Before the Holy Spirit can lead these souls to conversion, these negative images

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

must be corrected. This is an internal problem of the church which has implications for evangelism.<sup>1</sup>

The believer is part of the Adventist community, and his or her manner of life in the community contributes to or destroys the reputation of the church. Once a church has acquired a bad name, its witness to outsiders is seriously impaired. On the other hand, if all the members of the church covenant with each other to live in a Christlike manner in their community, a good foundation for evangelizing Muslims has been laid.<sup>2</sup>

That Paul was concerned about the reputation of the churches he had founded can be illustrated from his first letter to the Corinthians in which he wrote concerning grievances in the church that were being settled in court "before the unrighteous" (1 Cor 6:1). The apostle was not raising the question of whether pagan judges were righteous in their judgments of Christians or not, but they were unbelievers (vs. 6), and the reputation of the church would be ruined if it washed its soiled linen in public.

It is true of churches, as of individual Christians, that they live as Christ lives in them. When they do not, the mission thrust of the church suffers.

He does Protestant missions in the Middle East a bitter injustice who refuses to recognize that the central purpose of such missions has been to make the spirit of Christ regnant alike in church life and in the life of the individual.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John T. Seamands, Tell It Well: Communicating the Gospel across Cultures (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1981), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>David Ewert, "Evangelism by Lifestyle," Mission Focus 9 (December 1981):81.

<sup>3</sup>Richter, p. 415.

Mission is effective only when the power of the Holy Spirit radiates from those who publicly represent Christ. The picture of the effective missionary is described by Paul: "And my speech and my message were not plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit" (1 Cor 2:4). Those to whom Paul preached desired proof that Christ was speaking through him (2 Cor 13:3). It was only when they saw Christ "living by the power of God" (2 Cor 13:4) within Paul that they readily accepted his message.<sup>1</sup>

How Christians live must be consistent with what they preach. Wade Smith describes the immeasurable damage that has been done by Sabbath-keeping Christians who fail to live consistent lives:

You cannot expect God to bless your efforts to win souls when you are breaking the Sabbath day and engaging in things clearly forbidden. One cannot live a life of worldliness even a small part of the time without the loss of effectiveness in Christian service, if not, indeed, suffering a total failure. . . . If our prospect sees us seeking satisfaction in practices or indulgences contrary to the spirit and letter of our Lord's revealed will, our most painstaking efforts will fall to the ground. We will have done more harm than good.<sup>2</sup>

### The Rise and Spread of Nationalism

#### Nationalism and the Sovereign State

Colonialism, the strongest force during the nineteenth century, has given way to nationalism, the strongest force in the present century. Modern nationalism in the Third World countries was a direct result of colonialism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ion Bria, ed., Martyria Mission (Geneva: Imprimerie La Concorde, Epalinges, 1980), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Wade Smith, pp. 28-29.

<sup>3</sup> Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, p. 256.



Under the colonial system, a Western missionary could come and go as he pleased with little difficulty. Today the situation is quite different. Every sovereign state has the right to exclude or expel anyone it deems undesirable. Many Muslim countries have closed their doors to the Christian missionary. Others, acting in national self-interest, have enacted laws banning or restricting missionary activities.<sup>1</sup> Today, Western missionaries must have, in addition to visas, residence and work permits. Sometimes these are granted; at other times they are either withheld or interminably delayed to the frustration of the missionary.

Strange as it may seem, missionaries helped sow the seeds of nationalism. By opening schools, reducing the native language to writing, translating books, especially the Bible, they did more than anyone else to promote the ideas and ideals of Western democracy, including such concepts as the dignity of labor, the worth of the individual, social justice, personal integrity, and freedom of thought and speech.<sup>2</sup>

From a statistical point of view Christian missions have been the least successful in the Muslim world; but even there they have had a profound effect on the development of Arab nationalism. Protestant education, though it observed uniform neutrality in political matters, appears to have been more responsible than any other agency for training the men who administered public and private affairs and prepared the way for Arab independence.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kane, A Concise History, p. 178.

<sup>2</sup>Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, p. 257.

<sup>3</sup>Jurji, p. 64.

While it may be true that the missionaries sowed the seeds of nationalism, neither they nor the indigenous Christian churches actively participated in the various struggles for independence. There may have been some individual Christians who joined the independence movements; but they acted largely on their own. The churches, as churches, did not play any significant role in the liberation of their people.<sup>1</sup>

Inasmuch as nationalism is directed against "outsiders" and all missionaries are expatriates, it stands to reason that nationalism will pose a problem for many years to come. With the passing of time nationalism will gradually give way to the rise of internationalism.

#### Nationalism within the Church

"In the Middle East," wrote Lord Bryce, "a church is merely the foremost aspect of a nationality."<sup>2</sup> Most of the writers about the Christian East have commented similarly that the close relationship between church and nation is one of the striking aspects of Eastern Christianity. Some are perplexed by this virtual identification of church and nation. Others are scandalized because in their eyes this kind of relationship contradicts the ecumenical character of the Christian church and impedes its universal mission.<sup>3</sup>

This is not a simple problem of modern origin and interest,

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<sup>1</sup> Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> Kerakin Sarkissian, "Church and Nation," Student World 58 (First Quarter 1965):49.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

but a complex phenomenon brought about by various historical conditions. As Professor Dvornik puts it:

The problem of nationalism and universality in the church is as old as Christendom, and the whole evolution of Christianity down to our own days is characterized by repeated attempts, more or less successful, at discovering the right balance between the national and the universal elements present in the church.<sup>1</sup>

The Armenian church is an example of this nationalism in the extreme. Beyond its organizational manifestations, the church was, in fact, the incarnation of the Christian faith in Armenia and its incorporation in the very texture of the nation's life through a process of what we can call "Armenization." This indigenization of the Christian faith meant its identification with the nation. Bria states:

This identification was so intimate in its nature, so profound and far-reaching in its impact and so extensive in its scope that one could draw a line between the ecclesial and secular, the sacred and profane, or more simply, the church and the nation. The church, throughout the vicissitudes and upheavals of Armenian history, became the anchor of the nation's existence, both the cause and the focal point of national unity and one of the authentic and tangible expressions of national identity.<sup>2</sup>

Because of this extreme example of nationalism, the Armenian Church has refused to be confined to a specifically religious evangelistic mandate. Instead, witnessing to Christ is manifested through a continuous participation in the nation-building process, a pivotal role in creating and enhancing Armenian culture. In other words, witnessing was never considered an ecclesiological concept in a rational sense, but rather a Christ-centered action

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<sup>1</sup>P. Dvornik, "National Churches and the Church Universal," Eastern Churches Quarterly 5 (1943):172.

<sup>2</sup>Bria, p. 55.

embracing the totality of the life of the Armenian nation.<sup>1</sup>

The Armenian people consider the church to be their national home in the most genuine sense of the term, and they look to it for care and leadership.<sup>2</sup> The concern for preserving their national home has had a negative effect on the evangelistic outreach of the Armenian people. The main concern of Armenians today is not evangelism but survival. A cursory glance at the history of these people shows what survival has meant to a nation and church whose entire life has been one of almost constant hardship, persecution, massacre, and deportation. There were times when, as an absolute necessity for survival, the Armenian church was imprisoned in its tradition and hence reduced to a ghetto existence.<sup>3</sup>

The Armenian is confronted with two problems: (1) How to live as a minority in a predominantly non-Christian Middle East? and (2) How to preserve a culture of Indo-European origin in a Semitic world?<sup>4</sup> The pre-occupation of dealing with these problems has put evangelizing of Muslims as the least of priorities. Bishop Kerakin Sarkissian<sup>5</sup> addresses the Armenian issue with constructive criticism, noting that in the view of Armenians, "National traditions, customs, and patterns of self-expression are secondary to the universal message of the Christian faith."<sup>6</sup> However, as he concludes:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>5</sup> A Bishop of the Armenian Orthodox Church and Director of the Theological Seminary at Antelias, the Catholicosate of Cilicia, near Beirut.

<sup>6</sup> Sarkissian, p. 54.

They are important for the communication of the message, but in themselves have no absolute value. All nations are equal in the eyes of Christ and must be so in the life of His church. The historical temporal mission of ancient Israel came to an end in the incarnation of the Son of God and the continuation of that event in the church. . . . The national character of the church must be kept in its proper place and within its proper limits: we must realize that it is not everything. If it were so, it would result in absolute nationalism, which cannot be justified by any Christian standards, and would be a negative element.<sup>1</sup>

### Prejudice between Christians and Muslims

When a Muslim Arab pictures a Christian, he sees adherents of traditional churches which have survived in his region--probably not a Seventh-day Adventist with a life-style less at variance with his own. He sees the Greek Orthodox, the Assyrian descendents of the Nestorian Church, the Coptic, Syrian, and Armenian Orthodox Churches, and the uniate churches, loosely tied to Roman Catholicism. These are churches of icons, of incense, and often of unfamiliar chants. He sees many of these Christians attending X-rated cinemas, eating pork, drinking alcoholic beverages, and dressed in what he considers the immodest apparel of Western society.

When the Muslim rejects Christianity as idolatrous, intemperate, immodest, and totally inconsistent with what scripture teaches, he sees his own religion as far superior, if for no other reason, than that it is consistent with what he accepts as God's revealed will. What he sees as the errors, traditions, and inconsistencies of Christianity obliterate from the Muslim's view those Biblical truths God intended His church to propagate.

The greatest opposition and prejudice to Christian missions

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 54, 59.

proceeds from this deep-rooted popular distrust and dislike of Christianity as a religion and of Christians as individuals, and from the fanatical hatred of converts to Christianity, sanctioned by the Koran.<sup>1</sup> Before any successful evangelization of Muslims can take place, it will be necessary for Adventists to address the barriers of prejudice, suspicion, and fanaticism of Middle East Arabs. It is a task of unusual difficulty, to be sure.

Mission work among Muslims must for some time differ greatly from that among other peoples. Its policy is conciliatory rather than aggressive. It is the part of wisdom to be quiet about such few conversions as occur and to be reticent in giving mission reports. In preaching the Gospel, anything that might excite Islamic fanaticism must be avoided, attention rather being drawn to the points of doctrine in common between Adventists and Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

#### Christian Disdain of Muslims

Muslim misconceptions and prejudices, while serious, can be dealt with. Christian prejudices and misconceptions about evangelizing Arabs are more subtle and sinister. Henry Genet, who served with TEAM in Beirut states:

The preponderance of nominal Arab Christians do not believe their Muslim countrymen can be converted, and would not receive them into their churches if they were. Centuries of being on the defensive has dried up any missionary zeal they once may have possessed.<sup>3</sup>

In many minds the stereotype of the Arab persists: a stubborn oil hoarder closed to Christ. A fresh view of Muslims by Christians is long overdue. Even the late Israeli Premier Golda Meir dropped

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<sup>1</sup>Richter, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>Whaley, p. 62.

the habit of referring to Muslims as "the enemy," and began calling them "neighbors."<sup>1</sup>

Adventists who would draw Muslims to Christ must love them first. This reminder is necessary, for it is easy to think of Muslims as enemies to avoid rather than as lost children of God to be sought and saved. We know that Islam has for 1,300 years denied the basic truths of Christ's deity, His death on the cross for sinners, and His resurrection. It has followed another prophet in His place. It is not surprising that zealot Christians eight hundred years ago launched the Crusades to break the power of Muslim rule and deliver the Holy Lands. They hated the "infidels" and slew them with the sword, contrary to the command of Christ, until they were finally defeated by the Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

This tragic mistake planted seeds of bitterness which remain in the Middle East till now. Adventists would never want to fight Islam with sword or bomb. However, as we fight against the false teachings of Islam with spiritual "weapons," we may be tempted to hate also the people who hold these beliefs. We may desire so much to see them defeated in argument that we are tempted to put more importance on the triumph of truth than on the salvation of sinners. A better approach is indicated:

Whatever the difference in religious belief, a call from suffering humanity must be heard and answered. Where bitterness of feeling exists because of difference in religion, much good

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> William McElwee Miller, A Christian's Response to Islam (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), p. 133.

may be done by personal service. Loving ministry will break down prejudice, and win souls to God.<sup>1</sup>

### Revolution and War

Somehow, in the last quarter of this twentieth century the church must learn to live not only with tension and terror but also with danger and death from political wars and revolutions.<sup>2</sup> In this section the following are considered: (1) Difficulties created by political events, (2) The missions reaction to political events, and (3) God's prerogative in political events.

#### Difficulties Created by Political Events

The work of evangelizing Muslims is very directly affected by events in the political world. Revolution, resurgence, revival-- these and other words are being widely applied to Islam in the Middle East as it is currently manifesting itself on the political scene. Islam is a supremely political religion. Over the centuries Islam has provided the language and vocabulary in which all political activity had to be expressed.<sup>3</sup>

In Islam there is a religio-political system in which "church and state" are united. The laws of Islam are both civil and religious, and no distinction is made. Thus Islam includes all aspects of life-- personal, social, economic, cultural, religious, and political.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), p. 386.

<sup>2</sup>J. Herbert Kane, Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 287.

<sup>3</sup>Jorgen S. Nielsen, "The Resurgence of Islam," IDOC International Bulletin, January-February 1982, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Miller, p. 94.



When, through revolution and war, a secular government is defeated and power is taken over by the religious, as in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the political change brought about can be a serious threat to Christian missions. Shortly after assuming power in Iran following the Iranian revolution, Iman Khomeini stated:

The governments of the world should know that Islam cannot be defeated. Islam will be victorious in all the countries of the world, and Islam and the teachings of the Koran will prevail all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

Iman Khomeini's "hanging judge" Ayatollah Khalkhali who sentenced over 400 people to death in Tehran alone stated in a speech during the summer of 1979: "The Mullahs are going to rule now. We are going to have ten thousand years of the Islamic Republic."<sup>2</sup>

The early phases of exuberance over the Islamic revolution have yet to provide the practical answers to problems of social and economic justice. But for the time being, at any rate, Muslims in some parts of the Middle East have moved towards taking political control over their own destinies for the first time since the eighteenth century and are picking up the threads of history which they were forced to drop at the decline of the Ottoman empire.<sup>3</sup>

The Iranian Revolution is only the beginning of political unrest in the Middle East. In the past, the masses were resigned to their fate. They thought the kind of life they lived was the only kind possible. Men simply accepted life the way it had to be. But resignation or what passes for contentment has disappeared. The masses are learning that they do not have to live in perpetual

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<sup>1</sup>V. S. Naipaul, Among the Believers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1981), p. 82.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 37, 55.

<sup>3</sup>Nielsen, p. 3.

poverty. Educated men inform them that they have a right to plenty and organize and arm them to wrest their share of this world's goods from the privileged. This is the revolution which seethes in the Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

The Marxists and Capitalists are determined to use this revolution to their advantage. The first believe their system offers the only way by which the masses, through class struggle and rulership of the proletariat, can wring justice out of the reluctant classes. Capitalists look to the West for an economic model. Idealists among the university students, chafing at the oppression which present systems impose on the multitudes, demand change. Patriots, seeing that nations composed of hereditary elites seek advantage over a vast illiterate peasantry, seek to enfranchise the latter so that their countries may become powerful. Whoever does it--Marxists, Capitalists, idealists, or patriots--the masses are being roused, organized, and pushed into the battle for more of the good things of life.<sup>2</sup>

Because of its immense power and worldwide political interests, the United States, directly or indirectly, is involved in international disputes in the Middle East. Whatever side it takes it is likely to offend one of the disputants, and American missionaries in that country will be in trouble. Thus it comes about that the American missionary is often caught up in the crossfire of international politics.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Donald McGavran, The Revolutionary Masses and Christ's Will (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, p. 165.

Another problem is that missionaries customarily place a high value on the educated and wealthy classes. This is dictated and inspired, not by the Bible but, unconsciously, no doubt, by the extraordinarily affluent society of which most missionaries are a part. Thus they devote themselves to maintaining cordial relationships with that class of society which the uneducated poor masses seek to overthrow. When revolution finally comes, these missionaries suddenly find themselves fleeing the country in fear of their own lives.<sup>1</sup>

There is also the growing notion in third world countries that unless the Christian missionary is engaged directly in "nation building," he is not really making much of a contribution to the host country. Consequently he is the least desirable of all expatriates. When the political situation finally explodes the first person to be expelled is the professional missionary.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Mission's Reaction to Political Events

Some mission societies react too quickly to unfolding political events. At the first sound of the revolutionary rifle, mission institutions are closed and expatriate workers are hustled out to "safer countries," while national church workers and laymen are left, often without forethought or emergency planning, to survive as best they can. A review of past political uprisings in the Middle East shows that this has not always been the correct policy to follow.

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<sup>1</sup>McGavran, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, p. 389.

In spite of this fear Kane points out that there may be little reason for missionaries to flee.<sup>1</sup> In the postwar period almost one hundred buildings owned by the United States government in various parts of the world have been destroyed. And no one has counted how many times the American flag has been burned in anti-American demonstrations. In contrast, very few mission buildings--churches, schools, hospitals, or missionaries' residences--have been destroyed. When embassy buildings have been attacked and United States Information Service libraries burned to the ground, church and mission buildings in the immediate vicinity have usually been spared.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from Zaire, relatively few missionaries have lost their lives by hostile action. In several countries the Peace Corps volunteers have been asked to leave, while the missionaries have been permitted to remain. In the recent overthrow of the Shah of Iran only Catholic and Episcopal Christian missions suffered any reproach. Six weeks after the American Embassy personnel were incarcerated by Iranian revolutionaries, the sole American Adventist mission family remaining was granted new work and resident permits entitling them to remain and continue their mission work. In spite of this kind gesture on the part of the new Iranian government, the Adventist mission board insisted that the family leave the country at once. Even after the failed rescue mission to free the American Embassy personnel, the same Adventist family of five returned to Iran on their own and served the mission for six weeks

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 389.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

without incident. The American family could still be serving there today except for the mission board's decision to permanently transfer them to a "safer place," Beirut, Lebanon!

In a public message to the country's Christian minorities in March of 1982, Iran's prime minister assured them that they "enjoy a total respect" and thus have "their part in the Islamic republic."<sup>1</sup> To date, the Adventist mission board considers it unwise to return the American missionaries recalled from Iran.

### God's Prerogative in Political Events

What men need today is a fresh look at what Scripture says about the sovereignty of God. He knows the end from the beginning and is even now working all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph 1:11). He has a plan and purpose for all peoples (1 Cor 10:32). When the exiled King Nebuchadnezzar regained his sanity he had to acknowledge that the Most High does "according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say to Him "What doest thou?" (Dan 4:35).<sup>2</sup>

In every age and in every country, missionaries have been called upon to meet bitter opposition from those who deliberately chose to reject the light of heaven.

Often, by misrepresentation and falsehood, the enemies of the gospel have seemingly triumphed, closing the doors by which God's messengers might gain access to the people. But these doors cannot remain forever closed; and often, as God's servants have returned after a time to resume their labors, the

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<sup>1</sup>"Ecubits: News in Brief," Ecumenical Press Service, March 21-31, 1982, 82.03.91.

<sup>2</sup>Kane, Understanding Christian Missions, pp. 93-94.

Lord has wrought mightily in their behalf, enabling them to establish memorials to the glory of His name.<sup>1</sup>

Even when the doors to missions are open evangelizing Muslims can be very difficult. God's command to missionaries, however, is to get on with the job of evangelism whether the circumstances are favorable or not. The work for Muslims cannot wait for fair skies and calm seas. "The king's business requires haste: (1 Sam 21:8). In this world of sin we will always have wars and revolutions (John 16:33). Bonds and afflictions awaited Paul in every city (Acts 20:23), but he never allowed them to delay or deter him (Acts 21:13). He was always ready for service (Rom 1:15) or sacrifice (Phil 2:17).

Once Paul received his marching orders, he pressed forward without hesitation, knowing that God would hold Himself responsible for all the consequences that flowed from his obedience. He realized that safety and security are no guarantee of success. On the other hand he recognized that difficulty and danger do not necessarily spell disaster.<sup>2</sup>

Missionary work for Muslims in the Middle East must be carried on in fair weather and foul. The real tragedy does not lie in the closed countries that we cannot enter, but in the open countries that we do not enter. Closed countries are God's responsibility. We can safely leave them with Him until He chooses to re-open them as promised. Open countries are our responsibility, and we neglect them at our peril.

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 179.

<sup>2</sup>Kane, Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective, p. 107.

### Fear of Religious Persecution

The history of the human race is one of conflict--conflict between the woman's seed and the serpent's seed (Gen 3:15), the church and the world; conflict primarily between Christ and Satan. Ever since the fall of man into sin Satan has done his utmost to arrest the spread of the evangel or to render the gospel ineffective.<sup>1</sup> One of the profoundest mysteries of history is that God permits Satan to rape His church with such inhuman persecutions that even our children can never be told the whole sordid truth in detail. Since persecution is a mystery it is feared with a fear of the unknown.

In order to understand why fear of persecution prevents Christians in the Middle East from evangelizing Muslims, one must review the history of religious persecution in these countries.

#### Brief Examples of Persecution in the Middle East

When Christ sent out the twelve apostles on their first missionary journey in the Middle East, He warned them: "Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and flog you in the synagogues" (Matt 10:17). So violent was the opposition going to be that Jesus compared the apostles to "sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt 10:16). Indeed, He went further to warn them that "the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think that he is offering service to God" (John 16:2).

The history of the Christian church in the Middle East is one

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<sup>1</sup> Kuiper, p. 195.

of numerous violent persecutions. In A.D. 410 the Synod of Mar Isaac seemed to herald an era of toleration for Christians in Persia. But as matters turned out, the freedoms extended were short-lived. A bishop ('Abda) in Hormizdardashir destroyed a Zoroastrian fire-temple next to his church. Later, the bishop refused to reconstruct the pagan structure, although he was warned that if he did not do so, all the Christians would suffer. He was executed, and his followers persecuted.<sup>1</sup>

A similar story is told of Narsai from Beth Razigaye in Media, who also refused to build a fire-temple he had damaged. His subsequent execution was made a public spectacle. In A.D. 446 a massacre of Christians lasting several days occurred outside of Karka of Beth Selak. The number said to have perished is given as 153,000. It is evident from the known facts that the fifth century was a time of serious persecution for the Christian church in Persia.<sup>2</sup>

Raymund Lull (A.D. 1235), first foreign missionary to the Muslims, longed for the crown of martyrdom. If we consider the age in which he lived and the race from which he sprang, this is not surprising. Even before the thirteenth century, thousands of Christians died as martyrs to the faith in Spain; many of them cruelly tortured by the Moors for blaspheming Mohammed.<sup>3</sup> Zwemer describes Lull's "self-murder" in these words:

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<sup>1</sup>W. Stewart McCullough, A Short History of Syriac Christianity to the Rise of Islam (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 126-27.

<sup>3</sup>Francis M. DuBose, ed., Classics of Christian Missions (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), p. 125.



At length, weary of seclusion, and longing for martyrdom, he came forth into the open market and presented himself to the people as the same man whom they once expelled from their town. It was Elijah showing himself to a mob of Ahab's! Lull stood before them and threatened them with divine wrath if they still persisted in their errors. He pleaded with love, but spoke plainly the whole truth. The consequences can be easily anticipated. Filled with fanatic fury at his boldness, and unable to reply to his arguments, the populace seized him, and dragged him out of the town; where by the command, or at least the connivance, of the king, he was stoned on the 30th of June, 1315.<sup>1</sup>

The Armenians have the distinction of having been the first nation to adopt Christianity, toward the end of the third century, when their king led the way by receiving baptism from a Christian bishop. There has probably not been a more persecuted body of Christians in recent times than the Armenians. Through centuries of persecution and repeated massacres they have held tenaciously to their faith and have displayed the greatest fortitude. The wholesale massacres of Armenians in 1895-1896, 1909, and 1915-1917, planned and carried out by the Turkish authorities, stand out among the most heinous national crimes in history.<sup>2</sup>

During the massacres of Armenians in Turkey, Adventist colporteurs, though often imprisoned and beaten, traveled through the country and placed thousands of pages of SDA publications in the homes of the people. Eventually all Armenian Adventist colporteurs but two, Nicolos Trifonides and Dicran Derhousikian, were killed. So many Adventists were killed in the massacres that an orphanage was opened in Constantinople for their children. Open for only one year, the orphanage had to be moved to Thessaloniki,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-28.

<sup>2</sup>Glover, The Progress of World-Wide Missions, p. 205.

Greece because of renewed persecutions.<sup>1</sup>

Religious Persecution of Christians  
by Muslims

It is generally believed that the Muslims in their conquests gave their victims a choice between the Koran and the sword. This is not correct. Christians and Jews were regarded by Muhammed as "the people of the book" and were accorded a special status--dhimmis, or protected people. They were allowed to continue the practice of their religion, under certain restrictions, provided they rendered to the new Caesar the things that belonged to him, particularly a heavy form of taxation.<sup>2</sup>

In Egypt and Syria non-Catholic Christians fared better under Islam than they had under the Christian Byzantine rulers, who were not adverse to using pressure to propagate the Catholic form of Christian faith. Likewise, the Nestorians in Persia were better off under the Arabs than they had been under the Zoroastrian rulers.<sup>3</sup> Even in more recent years Moslems in Iran have been far more tolerant and approachable than other sects of Muslims in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup>

As long as Christianity leaves Islam alone and tends its own house, persecution generally ceases to exist. When missions attempt to evangelize Muslims, to convert them from Islam to Christianity, persecution reappears. This is why the old churches

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<sup>1</sup>"Turkey," SDA Encyclopedia, 1976 ed., 10:1506.

<sup>2</sup>Kane, A Concise History, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>4</sup>Glover, The Progress of World-Wide Missions, p. 209.

of the Middle East abandoned attempts to propagate the gospel. For reasons of self-preservation these churches turned their evangelism inward.

Western Protestant missions, quick to condemn the old established churches for their lack of evangelistic thrust, learned quickly that the Law of Apostasy, still in force in Islam, permitted the community to kill any member who defected from the faith. The Law is not always followed, but it is there and it acts as a strong deterrent. To initiate a Muslim into the Christian faith by baptism is almost certain, even today, to precipitate a communal riot in most Muslim countries.<sup>1</sup>

Another law of Islam warns Muslims not even to befriend Jews or Christians. The Koran reads:

O ye true believers! Do not become friendly with Jews or Christians! Kill the idol-worshippers wherever you find them, take them prisoner, besiege them, lie in wait for them. When you meet unbelievers, cut their heads off, make a blood bath out of it.<sup>2</sup>

This law is still upheld in Turkey where hatred of Christians has renewed religious persecution.

With the cry, "Turkey for the Muslims!", women and children are being murdered and men castrated (a measure taken so that the victims will have no sexual temptations in the afterlife) before they are killed. President Bulent Ecevit reportedly has said that it is a case of genuine whole-sale murder. In Turkey there have been more victims than in Iran, but the press has not reported it.<sup>3</sup>

In Iraq, six hundred Christians were arrested in

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<sup>1</sup> Kane, A Concise History, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Marius Baar, The Unholy War (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-87.

1978-79, some of them foreign missionaries. In Yemen Arab Republic all members of the Evangelical Mission were deported in 1979 after being forced to sign a statement that they would never talk about Christ or distribute Christian literature again. On July 15, 1974, the Afghan government decreed the destruction of the sole remaining Christian church in the country and it was razed by the bulldozer. The American pastor had been forced to leave the country three months earlier. Permission to build the church had been granted to the Kabul congregation in 1959 during a visit by then U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower.<sup>1</sup>

With the resurgence of Islam in the Middle East, fears of renewed persecution rise among national Christians. They and foreign missionaries can read the handwriting on the wall. The question is not "Will persecution come?," but "When will persecution come?" Don McCurry, founder and director of the Samuel Zwemer Institute, states: "There is no doubt that Christian missions are on a collision course with the plans of Muslim leaders."<sup>2</sup> Marius Baar, who worked among Muslims for twenty-five years, writes in his new book The Unholy War:

Make no mistake: Islam will not stop at the destruction of Israel. Anyone not submitting to it will be attacked and annihilated. Today this attitude shows through only once in a while, but it will become evident more and more often as the Islamic world becomes increasingly conscious of its power.

The Young Muslim People's Front comments concerning Persian Jews: "Every generation needs its Hitler to weed out the Jewish vegetation. Leave our land or be slaughtered whether you are young or old." Such hatred and its effects will certainly not stop with Israel. . . this rage is directed mainly against Jews and Christians.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 88-89.

<sup>2</sup> McCurry, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Baar, p. 133.

Somehow in this last quarter of the twentieth century Christians in the Middle East must learn to live not only with tension and terror but also with danger and death. At the same time evangelization of Muslims must not suffer because of what man might or might not do to us. There is no waiting for more opportune times to evangelize. "Persecution in its varied forms is the development of a principle which will exist as long as Satan exists and Christianity has vital powers."<sup>1</sup> Ellen White continues:

Hatred of the pure principles of truth, and reproach and persecution of its advocates, will exist as long as sin and sinners remain. The followers of Christ and the servants of Satan cannot harmonize. The offense of the cross has not ceased. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."<sup>2</sup>

This same writer continues:

There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. . . . Why is it, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is, that the church has conformed to the world's standard, and awakens no opposition. . . . Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled.<sup>3</sup>

There is still relative peace in which Middle East evangelism can be conducted. We do not have much time left, however, to do the work that must be done for Muslims. What is not done today will be much more difficult tomorrow.

The work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity, she will have to do in a terrible crisis, under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances . . . this day is just before us . . . we who occupy this solemn, responsible position, what are we doing, what are we thinking

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 610.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 507.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

about, that we cling to our selfish love of ease, while souls are perishing around us? Have our hearts become utterly callous? Cannot we feel or understand that we have a work to do for the salvation of others?<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

In recent times God has called a number of laborers, faithful men and women, to devote themselves to the task of taking the gospel to the people of Islam. In attempting to fulfill this work they have encountered many problems and obstacles hindering the evangelization of Muslims including: (1) Lack of coordinated administrative planning for evangelism, (2) A weak spiritual commitment of some witnesses, (3) The rise and spread of nationalism, (4) Prejudice between Christians and Muslims, (5) Revolution and war, and (6) Fear of religious persecution.

Because of these problems and obstacles, the soil has been difficult to work, and the lack of a good harvest among Muslims has turned most of these laborers to the proselytizing of Christians from the old established churches who are more ready to accept the gospel. It must be confessed that, with few exceptions, the Adventist church has signally failed to obey Christ by sending laborers to sow and reap a harvest among the Muslim peoples.

Even today, the number of Seventh-day Adventist missionaries, national workers, and laymen working in Muslim areas with the definite purpose of leading Muslims to faith in Christ, compared with those seeking to convert non-Muslims, is small. The point is this: "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who

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<sup>1</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:463-64.

sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Cor 9:6).

Church leaders and laymen must not allow the problems and obstacles noted in this chapter to deter them from the command of the Gospel commission. Plans must be coordinated and executed by church administrators to do Muslim evangelization. Church leaders and pastors must encourage and tactfully instruct those within the church mission work who have weak spiritual commitments.

Principles that interreact with the problems of prejudice and fear of persecution must be clearly presented at workers meetings and to the laymen from the pulpit. The problems of nationalism and the obstacles of revolution and war must also be considered and plans laid to prepare for and meet them.

## CHAPTER IV

### NEW TESTAMENT EVANGELISM IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

#### Introduction

This chapter investigates evangelism in the Early Apostolic Church, as reported in the book of Acts. Because the Gospel commission is not unique to Acts, its contents in the Gospels are also noted.

The book of Acts describes the amazing expansion of Christianity in the first century. The church was of Jewish origin, but it could never fulfill a worldwide mission if it were to remain an exclusive religion such as Judaism was. It had to free itself from exclusiveness. Acts outlines the steps by which Christianity grew from a Jewish sect to an international religion.<sup>1</sup> The reason for this unparalleled growth lay in its spirit and in methods which were thoroughly evangelistic.

The purposes of this paper do not demand a detailed study of the authorship or date of the Acts. However, the date has been estimated variously from the seventh decade of the first century to the middle of the second century.<sup>2</sup> Adolph Harnack states that Luke

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<sup>1</sup>"Theme" [Acts], SDA Bible Commentary (SDABC), ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953-57), 6:114.

<sup>2</sup>John Knox, Marcion and the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 121.



may have written the book of Acts as early as the seventh decade of the first century.<sup>1</sup> A majority of conservative scholars accept A.D. 61 as the date for the book of Acts.<sup>2</sup>

There is little doubt that the same author who wrote the Gospel of Luke also composed the book of Acts. Both books are dedicated to the same person, Theophilus (Luke 1:1; Acts 1:1) and the opening statement of Acts acknowledges the writing of the Gospel (Acts 1:1). In the second century Irenaeus claimed that Luke wrote Acts,<sup>3</sup> and the anti-Marcionite prologue to Luke (A.D. 150-180) states: "Moreover the same Luke afterwards wrote the Acts of the Apostles."<sup>4</sup> Currently, there is little discussion among scholars about the Lucan authorship of Acts.<sup>5</sup>

In the book of Acts, Luke does not attempt to give a step-by-step account of events connected with the rise of the Early Church. The purpose of Acts was to show that the Gospel commission of Christ, lived out in His life throughout the four Gospels, was now to be carried on by the Holy Spirit through His disciples. By writing: "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1), Luke seems to suggest that Acts is a continuation of his Gospel of Luke. What Jesus began to do was continued in the book of Acts.

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<sup>1</sup>Adolph Harnack, Acts of the Apostles (New York: G. P. Putnam's Son, 1909), p. 297.

<sup>2</sup>Charles W. Carter, Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. xi.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

The series of events recorded in the book of Acts carefully outlines the Early Church in its various stages of advance.<sup>1</sup> First is revealed the growth of the church in Jerusalem. This phase of Early Church growth ends with the summary: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

The statement "The word of God increased . . ." (Acts 6:7) points out the value of adequate organization wisely directed.<sup>2</sup> When the apostles' hands were freed by the work of the deacons, they were given the necessary time to preach the word. When the Word of God is increased, the number of believers multiplies.

Luke then adds an astonishing statement: "And a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). That Jewish priests yielded obedience to the faith is a unique piece of information.<sup>3</sup> As far as is known, none of Christ's immediate followers was a priest, and no priests were named among the early converts. But under the power of the Holy Spirit, such preaching drew "a great many" of them into the church.<sup>4</sup> Josephus reported that there were some twenty thousand priests at this time.<sup>5</sup> "A great many" could

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<sup>1</sup>William Barclay, Acts of the Apostles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>C. E. Autrey, Evangelism in the Acts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>W. O. Carver, Acts of the Apostles (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1916), p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>"Company of the Priests" [Acts 6:7], SDABC 6:191.

<sup>5</sup>Ralph Earle, Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), p. 89.

have referred to hundreds of converted priests.

The second phase of evangelism in Acts sets forth the spread of Christianity throughout Palestine (Acts 6:8; 9:31). This period of growth is summarized by the statement: "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied" (Acts 9:31). Three things characterized this period: The church had peace, it was edified, and its number was multiplied.

The next step tells of the spread of the church through Asia Minor (Acts 12:25; 16:5). Luke closed his record of this period by stating: "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily" (Acts 16:5).

The final phase of evangelism in the Early Church reveals its spread into Europe and throughout the world. It began in Jerusalem and gradually became global.<sup>1</sup> Luke summarizes his description of this phase in one short statement: "So the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily" (Acts 19:20). In this context the word "mightily" is used in a military sense.<sup>2</sup> It has the significance of a massive army of conquests. The church was a grain of mustard seed in the early ministry of Jesus; but by the time we reach Acts 19, it is a powerful force for God.

#### Christ and the Gospel Commission

A clear understanding of God's principles and plan of evangelism must naturally be based on Christ's Gospel commission,

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<sup>1</sup>Autrey, Evangelism in Acts, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Earle, p. 290.

found in five different forms, in Acts 1:8, and once in each Gospel (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:19-23):

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." (Matt 28:18-20)

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15)

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:45-49)

Jesus said to them . . . "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:21-23)

These five forms of Christ's Gospel commission constitute His marching orders and divine authorization to be His ambassadors in every nation of the world.<sup>1</sup>

#### Methods of the Gospel Commission

In the Gospel commission Christ gave clear instruction to His disciples. Their methods were to be: "Witness" (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8), "Teaching" (Matt 28:20), "Preaching" (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47), and "Baptizing" (Matt 28:19).

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Peters, A Biblical Theology of Missions (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 178.

## Witness (μάρτυς)

μάρτυς in its general use means "witness to facts," i.e., the man who can speak about the facts from his own direct knowledge. As used by Luke (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8), it takes on a special use, used only by Luke, to denote a combination of witness to facts and witness in the sense of evangelistic confession.<sup>1</sup>

The very nature of evangelism in the book of Acts was witnessing. "And you shall be my witnesses . . ." (Acts 1:8). Carter suggests that the entire outline of the book of Acts is evangelistic witnessing.<sup>2</sup> He divides it as follows: (1) The witness in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7); (2) the witness in transition (Acts 8-12); and (3) the witness in all the world (Acts 13:28). Everywhere Early Church Christians worked they were to be found "gossiping the gospel" to their friends, neighbors, and to the village or city within which they lived.<sup>3</sup> The discerning Bible student understands that it was not Peter's sermon alone which won 3,000 to the Lord at Pentecost. Before Peter preached, 120 prayerful, Spirit-filled Christians had been personally witnessing all over the city.<sup>4</sup> "Each one heard them speaking in his own language" (Acts 2:6). The personal work of those Christians was a vital part of the witnessing aspect of Christ's Gospel Commission.

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Schneider, "μάρτυς," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964-76), 4:489, 492.

<sup>2</sup>Carter, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Dayton, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Leavell, p. 7.

## Teaching (διδάσκω)

The Greek word διδάσκω, to teach, comes from di-dak-sko (root dek-, to accept, extend the hand to). The reduplicated stem and inchoative suffix convey the idea of repeatedly extending the hand for acceptance; the word therefore suggests the idea of causing someone to accept something.<sup>1</sup> The use of διδάσκω in Matt 28:20 and Acts 5:42 denotes the teaching of Christ's teachings, undertaken by the disciples of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

In the Gospel commission Christ charged His disciples with teaching. It was His desire that men everywhere be taught ". . . to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20; Acts 5:42). The duty of teaching stands out as an exceedingly important aspect of the Gospel commission.<sup>3</sup> As baptism constitutes the existence and the nature of discipleship, teaching constitutes the ways and works of the disciples. "To teach," διδάσκω, is the function of the prophet and teacher by preaching and instruction.<sup>4</sup> This function of the gospel commission is clearly evident in the example set by the disciples in the book of Acts. "They entered the temple at daybreak and taught" (5:21). "And everyday in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ"

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<sup>1</sup>Klaus Wegenast, "διδάσκω," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 3:759.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, "διδάσκω," TDNT 2:145.

<sup>3</sup>R. B. Kuiper, God-Centered Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), p. 57.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald H. Anderson, The Theology of the Christian Mission (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961), p. 68.

(5:42). "The priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, annoyed because they were teaching the people . . ." (4:1,2). These teaching sessions bore good fruit, for "many of those who heard the word believed" (Acts 4:4). This was the unfolding of truth through the educational process, which involves not simply the passing of ideas but the sharing of lives and experiences.<sup>1</sup>

### Preaching

Εὐαγγελίζομαι means to bring good news, proclaim glad tidings, proclaim, preach.<sup>2</sup> The term is used in the Gospel commission for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the most familiar method of proclaiming this Kingdom of God was through preaching. The first thing the Apostles did when they could get a crowd was to preach. The book of Acts is filled with sermons by Peter and Paul (2:14-36; 3:12-26; etc.), most of them delivered on the spur of the moment as opportunity was afforded.<sup>4</sup>

Early church workers preached the Gospel in one fashion or another and under compulsion. The Sanhedrin arrested Peter and John and commanded them that they speak no more nor teach in the name of

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley C. Brown, Evangelism in the Early Church (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Friedrich, "εὐαγγελίζομαι," TDNT 2:719.

<sup>3</sup> Ulrich Becker, "εὐαγγέλιον," NIDNTT 2:107.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley Brown, p. 43.

Jesus, but Peter and John replied, "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). They had no choice but to preach. If they had not spoken out, it would have been like "a burning fire shut up in their bones" (Jer 20:9).<sup>1</sup> The command of Christ in the Gospel commission obligates His church to preach the gospel.<sup>2</sup>

Those who preached in Acts witnessed to those things God had done for them in their experience of Jesus Christ. As they preached of the risen Lord, He was dynamically present. Those who heard with open hearts and minds were able to experience Him too, and the deed was recreated.<sup>3</sup> Donald Miller states:

True preaching is an extension of the Incarnation into the contemporary moment, the transfiguration of the Cross and the resurrection from ancient facts of a remote past into living realities of the present. A sermon is an act wherein the crucified, risen Lord personally confronts men either to save or to judge them. . . . In a real sermon, then, Christ is the Preacher. The Preacher speaks through the preacher.<sup>4</sup>

### Baptizing

βαπτίζω means to dip, immerse, submerge, or baptize.<sup>5</sup>

Baptism seems to have accompanied the proclamation of the gospel from the beginning of the church's mission (Acts 2). Luke's understanding of Christian baptism appears in Acts 2:38. Baptism is conversion-baptism; it is administered "in the name of Jesus Christ," i.e., in relation to Jesus Christ and with the use of His name, so that the baptized calls on the name of Christ (Acts 22:16) even as

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<sup>1</sup>Autrey, Evangelism in Acts, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Peters, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup>Stanley Brown, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup>Donald G. Miller, Fire in Thy Mouth (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup>G. R. Beasley-Murray, "βαπτίζω," NIDNTT 1:144.



the Name is called over him, signifying to whom he belongs (cf. Jas 2:7); it is "for the forgiveness of sins" and with a view to the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

In the Gospel commission Christ directed His disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19). Two activities are involved in making disciples of the nations, not successively, but somehow contemporaneously, "baptizing" and "teaching."<sup>2</sup> In the book of Acts baptizing is the function of objectively introducing others into the Christian church. Jewish custom prescribed baptism as a cleansing bath intended to certify a state to be attained. A Gentile slave was administered baptism as a sign of his liberation on leaving a Jewish home.<sup>3</sup> Baptism in the Christian church means to give to someone the cleansing bath which certifies to him and to others that he belongs to God. Baptism is the state of total well-being that follows from man's peace with God, with his neighbor, and within himself. One of the methods of the Gospel commission then, is to bring this peace and reconciliation to men through baptism.<sup>4</sup>

Summarizing then, the methods of the Gospel commission given by Christ to His disciples included Witnessing, Teaching, Preaching,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>Robert D. Culver, "What Is the Church's Commission?" Bibliotheca Sacra 4 (July 1968):244.

<sup>3</sup>Anderson, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>John Power, Mission Theology Today (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970), p. 91.

and Baptizing. In the content of the great commission these instructions of Christ are a command not only to His immediate apostles but to all who were baptized into His name.

### Content of the Gospel Commission

The witness of the apostles in the book of Acts revolved around a central theme: Jesus Christ. Peter at Pentecost said: "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). Philip went down to the city of Samaria and "proclaimed to them the Christ" (Acts 8:5). When he encountered the Ethiopian eunuch, he told him "the good news of Jesus" (Acts 8:35). Paul summed it all up when he wrote: "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Cor 4:5). The content of the Gospel commission involves four important truths regarding Christ: (1) The identity of His person, (2) the nature of His death, (3) the fact of His resurrection, and (4) the hope of His return.

### The Identity of Jesus Christ

In the Gospel commission Christ said, "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). Jesus has laid it clearly and definitely upon every Christian to tell others of Him. This means to tell who He is, what He did, and why He did it.<sup>1</sup> In his opening statement-- "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1)--Mark identifies the person Jesus Christ as the Son of God and says the story he is telling is the good news about that person.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wade Smith, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Robert T. Henderson, Joy to the World: An Introduction to Kingdom Evangelism (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), p. 28.

Christ is further identified as the Son in the Gospel commission injunction, that followers were to be baptized ". . . in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19).

Jesus also identified Himself to the Jewish people as their Messiah, but they rejected both Him and His offer of the Kingdom because they expected a different kind of Messiah. The apostles in their teaching insisted that in spite of His humble origin and His refusal to speak out against Roman rule, Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the King of the Jews; and their failure to recognize Him as such was due to ignorance (Acts 3:17). The apostles hoped to dispel this ignorance in their giving of the Gospel commission by proving from the scriptures and from the miracles that Jesus was indeed their Messiah, the Son of God.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Nature of Christ's Death

That Jesus died under Pontius Pilate about the year A.D. 30 is a matter of history.<sup>2</sup> That He died for the sins of the world is a matter of revelation (1 Cor 15:3); for clearly, we would not have known it had it not been revealed to us in the scriptures. In the giving of the Gospel commission the apostles showed that the death of Christ by its sacrificial nature made possible the forgiveness of sins.<sup>3</sup> In the death of Christ, God's righteous claims against sin have been satisfied. His law has been vindicated (Rom 3:31);

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<sup>1</sup>Kane, Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>"Year of Crucifixion," [A Basis for New Testament Chronology], SDA Bible Commentary (1956), 5:253.

<sup>3</sup>Kane, p. 58.

His righteousness has been preserved (Rom 3:25). He can now dispense mercy without doing violence to His holiness. He can be just and at the same time be the Justifier of all those who believe in Jesus (Rom 3:26).

It is because of this that Peter was able to close his sermon at Pentecost with this appeal: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). Paul closed his message in the synagogue at Antioch with even stronger words: "Let it be known to you, therefore, brethren, that through this man [Christ] forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). The doctrine of forgiveness of sins is written in bold letters across the pages of scripture and is one of the fundamental revelations of the Gospel Commission.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Fact of Christ's Resurrection

The fact of the Resurrection is an integral part of the content of the Gospel commission. Without the Resurrection the death of Christ would have no more meaning than the death of Socrates.<sup>2</sup> This was clear to the apostles; hence their insistence in the Gospel preaching on the fact of the Resurrection. Paul says: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15:17).

Wherever the apostles went, they preached "Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18), knowing well that the idea would be

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<sup>1</sup>Peters, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Kane, p. 58.

repugnant to the Greeks and heresy to the Sadducees. This, however did not deter them. They were eye witnesses of the unique event and they knew it to be a fact.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, they were aware of its theological implications, and, therefore, made it the burden of their testimony. They preached it to the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 4:2), the Gentiles in Caesarea (Acts 10:40), and the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:31). It was the central issue in Paul's defense before Felix (Acts 24:15,21), Festus (Acts 25:19), and Agrippa (Acts 25:8,23). That it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day is a biblical summary statement of the salvation God has wrought for mankind through Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Hope of Christ's Return

God's plan for the restoration of all things, summed up by Jesus in the concept of the Kingdom of God, is the main theme of hope in the Gospel commission. This event, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, is referred to by the Apostle Paul in Titus 2:13 as "our blessed hope."<sup>3</sup> At the time of Christ's ascension, the promise of this blessed hope was confirmed by the angels: "This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Both Peter and Paul linked the preaching of the Gospel commission and the call to repentance to God's intervention at the

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<sup>1</sup>George F. Vicedom, The Mission of God (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup>Peters, p. 192.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Hall Glover, The Bible Basis of Missions (Los Angeles: Bible House of Los Angeles, 1946), p. 124.

end of time, which they thought was not far away. Peter said to the Jews in Jerusalem:

Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom the heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old. (Acts 3:19-21)

Paul in his address to the philosophers in Athens warned that since the coming of Christ a drastic change had occurred in the economy of God.<sup>1</sup>

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)

When the church has finished its appointed work of giving the Gospel commission Christ will return to earth with power and great glory.<sup>2</sup> This great event is the climactic conclusion to its own proclamation.

A summary of the contents of the Gospel commission reveals four major aspects of its theme, Jesus Christ: (1) His identity, (2) the nature of His death, (3) the fact of His Resurrection, and (4) the blessed hope of His soon return.

#### The Extension of the Gospel Commission

Jesus Christ, in the first chapter of Acts, gave the Divine plan of how the gospel was to be spread. He said: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall

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<sup>1</sup> Kane, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 111.

be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

### The Gospel to Jerusalem

In doing their world-wide evangelism work, Christ's disciples were to begin at Jerusalem (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:47). Jesus had begun His work in Jerusalem (Matt 4:17) and the disciples were to do the same.<sup>1</sup> It was the divine plan that the chosen people should have the first opportunity to benefit from the apostles' ministry (Luke 14:21-24). During this brief time thousands of Jews believed (Acts 2:41,47; 4:4,32,33; 5:14; 6:17).<sup>2</sup>

It seems clear that the early Christians expected the Lord to return in their lifetime. Certainly the apostles entertained this hope. Otherwise why were they so loath to leave Jerusalem? Luke states that when the church in Jerusalem suffered a devastating persecution at the hands of Saul of Tarsus, the believers were scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria but the apostles remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). When the Samaritans first received the gospel (Acts 8), the church in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria to look over the situation. As soon as the apostles' mission was accomplished they quickly returned to Jerusalem (Acts 8:25). The same thing happened after Peter preached the gospel for the first time to a Gentile--Cornelius. Immediately he returned to Jerusalem to make his report to the leaders there (Acts 11:2). When Paul and Barnabas wanted a definitive statement regarding the status of

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<sup>1</sup>"Beginning at Jerusalem," [Luke 24:47], SDA Bible Commentary (1956), 5:886.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6:124.

newly baptized Gentile Christians, they referred the matter to the apostles who were then still in Jerusalem (Acts 15:2).<sup>1</sup>

How are we to explain the reluctance of the apostles to leave Jerusalem for any length of time? Doubtless it was because they expected the return of the Lord momentarily and did not want to be caught in Antioch or Ephesus or Corinth when that event occurred. They wanted to be on hand to meet and greet Him.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Gospel to Judea and Samaria

The first seven chapters of Acts indicate that the apostles obeyed well the first part of Acts 1:8 ". . . be my witnesses in Jerusalem." They did faithfully witness in Jerusalem. They stood up boldly and gave the Word. They were thrown in prison because of it (Acts 5). God permitted persecution to come after the stoning of Stephen. "They were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). Those who were scattered went about "preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). They were scattered to the very places Jesus had told them to go and to which they had refused to go.<sup>3</sup>

Philip, one of the seven deacons, was among those driven from Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> Luke records in Acts 8:5-8 that

Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he did. For unclean spirits came out of many who were

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<sup>1</sup> Kane, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> David M. Howard, The Great Commission for Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 106.



possessed, crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.

Philip's work in Samaria was marked with great success.

### The Gospel to All the Earth

The disciples must have been shocked when Christ commanded them to be His witnesses "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This was an assignment of eleven men against the world. This feeble--by human standards, utterly negligible--group of men were given orders to conquer the glory that was Greece and the grandeur and might of the world-spanning Roman empire "together with whatever wild tribes might be dwelling beyond Caesar's domain."<sup>1</sup> With Christ's command to "go" came the enabling power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). Thus empowered, Christ's disciples were presently proclaiming the gospel in many languages to men "out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:4-6). Before they fully realized what they were about, they found themselves preaching the gospel to "proselytes" and Gentiles, as well as Jews (Acts 2:10).

The evangelist Philip was led by the Spirit to bring the gospel to an Ethiopian who in turn confessed Jesus Christ as the Son of God and was baptized (Acts 8:26-39). The gospel was preached in Phoenicia, Cyprus, Syrian Antioch (Acts 8:4; 11:19), and in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 9:15-30; 11:25; Gal 1:21,23). Paul extended even these national boundaries in his great missionary journeys (Acts 13 to 28). Paul states that in his day, the gospel had been preached "to every creature under heaven" (Col 1:23).

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<sup>1</sup>Kuiper, p. 59.

Discrepancies: Christ's Early Limitation  
of the Gospel to the Jews

A study of the synoptic gospels leaves the impression of unrestrained universality of the Gospel commission. John the Baptist had warned the Jews against trusting too much in their genealogy: ". . . do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt 3:9). Christ addressed his disciples as the "light of the world," not of Israel (Matt 5:14), and as the "salt of the earth," not of Palestine (Matt 5:13). The universalist tone of Christ's parables is unmistakable: "The field is the world" (Matt 13:38), "It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches" (Luke 13:19).

There are difficulties, however, in this impression of unrestrained universality of the Gospel commission. First, Christ's witness to His Father seems to have been limited to His fellow-Jews; He did visit non-Jewish territories briefly, but there is no evidence that He preached there. Also, some phrases attributed to Christ in the synoptic gospels reflect unfavorably on the Gentiles, for example: "In praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words" (Matt 6:7). Some of His instructions to the Twelve prior to their preliminary mission have a disturbing sound: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:5-6). Many readers have wondered at Christ's abrupt reply to the despairing Canaanite woman: "I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. . . . It is

not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (Matt 15:24,26). It even appears that Christ would return before the Gospel commission had reached all of Israel, let alone the Gentile nations: "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes" (Matt 10:23).

Two facts about these texts are important: They all occur in Matthew and all in the first part of his gospel. Matthew's gospel was written by a Jew and chiefly for Jewish readers, and therefore contains many nuances of specific Jewish origin and for obviously Jewish consumption.<sup>1</sup>

Schlier attempts to explain these verses in Matthew by stating that Jesus lived in the immediate expectation of the last judgment and believed that He would not complete His task with Israel before it arrived. The mission to the Gentile heathen is said to have come into existence when the resurrection of Jesus, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the continued deferral of the end of the world made room for the mission to the Gentiles and supplied the presuppositions for it.<sup>2</sup>

T. A. Hegre believes that Christ never intended that apostle missionaries be sent to the Gentile heathen. He says:

Possibly then we would not even need missionaries. One convert in a foreign land would witness to another, and that one to yet another. Finally the gospel would get to the border of a country where everybody would be bilingual. Then it would jump the borders from one country to the other, and before we knew it, the gospel would be all over the world. Perhaps that was Christ's

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<sup>1</sup>Power, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>H. Schlier, "Die Entscheidung für die Heidenmission in der Urchristenheit," Evangelische Missionszeitschrift 3 (1942):181.

original plan. But the church is so far from obedience to God's ways that we have to use another method--foreign missionaries.<sup>1</sup>

The question remains whether the Matthew quotations must necessarily be interpreted this way. Jesus' restriction to Israel may well have been a temporary self-restriction of His saving endeavor for the sake of the ultimate reception of His message by all men. If it was to become effective, it must be concretized in a congregation. There must be a people which believed the Gospel, watched over it, and guarded it so that it could not be misused by mankind. Vicedom puts it this way:

The Gospel has to strike roots before it can grow into a tree. It is not a parasite which attaches itself everywhere and anywhere and sucks itself full. Rather it must first of all be independent and exclusive before it can become worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

Another view as to why Christ did not personally engage in a missionary approach to the Gentile nations is that it was in His plan to reveal the universality of the Kingdom of God only gradually. This is perfectly in harmony with other aspects of His ministry; the unveiling of His messiahship and, even more so, of His divinity was done slowly. John Power supports this view stating that Christ did not abruptly snatch Israel's ancient privileges from its hands; He offered the Jews the opportunity of being first to embrace the new covenant. Only when their lack of comprehension was clearly established did He pronounce the inevitable result:<sup>3</sup>

There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. And men will come from east and

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<sup>1</sup>T. A. Hegre, The Cross and Sanctification (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1960), p. 263.

<sup>2</sup>Vicedom, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Power, p. 84.

west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the Kingdom of God. (Luke 13:28,29)

This must not be interpreted as a condemnation of Israel, but rather as a factual description of a situation--the situation over which Paul agonized so painfully in Rom 9-11. Schlier sums it up in these words:

Through the resurrection the missionary commission of the resurrected One legitimately cancels His prohibition against going to the heathen, and this prohibition is the legitimate preliminary step to His missionary commission.<sup>1</sup>

Christ's death is the open door through which all men can return to the Father; there is no ambiguity in John's phrase 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me' (John 12:32). Power states that Christ could have anticipated all this in His personal mission, but He chose to leave to His followers the honor of putting universalism into action. But only after His death and resurrection have they the historical Good News to carry, and only after the coming of the Spirit have they the light and the courage necessary to carry it out.<sup>2</sup>

Christ had commanded His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until the Spirit came: "But stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). In short, the missionary message of the Bible passes from the ideal to the real order only after, and by means of, Christ's passion and Pentecost.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Schlier, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>Power, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The Authority and Power of  
the Gospel Commission

Christ's Authority Extends into  
the Apostolic Church

When Christ gave the Great commission--"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations"--He linked it with the preceding affirmation--"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"--and the succeeding assurance--"Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:18-20). In this promise Christ would continue to be their authority as they went on and out through Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. This promise was fulfilled in the person of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Christ had said to His disciples, "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7). By Christ's ascension and the Holy Spirit's descent, Christ exchanged His bodily presence with His then disciples at Jerusalem for His spiritual omnipresence with disciples everywhere. The Holy Spirit became His authoritative viceregent on earth. Just as Jesus while on earth had represented His Father, so now the Holy Spirit was to represent the Son.<sup>2</sup>

The spiritual presence of Jesus, and the authority it continued to empower them with, was the inspiration of their service (Acts 27:21-25), their protection in life (Acts 18:10), and their solace in death (Acts 7:54-60).

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<sup>1</sup>Kane, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Glover, p. 56.

The Power of the Holy Spirit in  
the Gospel Commission

Already in the Old Testament it had been taught: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zech 4:6). The story of the giving of the Gospel commission in the book of Acts is a record of invincible power, not man's power, but the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through men.<sup>1</sup> Since the Spirit that filled them was holy, they became holy. When they preached, an awareness of sin became evident. Through the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit a great need for God was felt, and often the people would cry out, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). An atmosphere of God-consciousness coupled with a Spirit-empowered testimony becomes dynamic material in the giving of the Gospel Commission. A message thus empowered is an instrument in God's hands for the conversion of sinners.<sup>2</sup> The disciples were possessed, cleansed, controlled, directed, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. God found in them a channel in and through which He could work to reach a world that was lost. Spirit-filled living and powerful evangelism was the norm for the day.<sup>3</sup>

Summary

Luke states that his "first book" dealt with "all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). With clear historical insight he recognized that the work of Christ on earth was but a beginning, which beginning he recorded in his Gospel. But he knew that his

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<sup>1</sup>Peters, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Autrey, Evangelism in Acts, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Clyde W. Taylor, A World to Win (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1966), p. 16.

history would be incomplete without an account of what Jesus did through the infant church after His ascension. In the book of Acts, Luke describes the continuation of Christ's work through the ministry of His disciples. This work encompassed four basic methods of operation: Witnessing, Teaching, Preaching, and Baptizing. Through the varied implementations of these four methods, the disciples presented four integral aspects of the Gospel commission: the identity of Christ, the nature of His death, the fact of His Resurrection, and the hope of His soon return. This four-fold Gospel commission is described by Luke in Acts as being carried out in a systematic way in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Christ's almost exclusive ministry to the Jews as recorded in the Gospels was in apparent contradiction to the universality of the commission. However, a careful study of the Gospels and Acts shows that the limitation of Jesus' ministry was more an interpretation by and for Jews than a pattern for evangelism. The book of Acts views the church as Jewish in origin but shows that it could never fulfill a worldwide mission if it remained within the limits of an exclusive religion like Judaism. The church had to free itself from such exclusiveness. Luke outlines the steps that led to freedom. His narrative describes the growth of Christianity from a Jewish sect to an international religion, until the day came when Paul could say that the gospel "has been preached to every creature under heaven" (Col 1:23). Luke records that thousands of Jews, including priests, early accepted the gospel (Acts 6:7).

The author of Acts fully recognized the power and authority



that the Holy Spirit brought to the Gospel commission in its presentation in the book of Acts. The book may therefore be said to stand as a partial record of the Spirit's accomplishments through the apostles and their followers. We say this because Luke seems to have felt the book of Acts was but a continuation of Christ's life from the Gospels. What Christ had begun was now continued in the book of Acts. In essence then, the book of Acts is a record of Christ's Kingdom empowered by the Holy Spirit, and seen expanding throughout the world to victory.

On the basis of the early church concepts, attitudes, and methods described in this chapter, chapter V suggests concepts and attitudes to be developed in the SDA church in the Middle East today.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCEPTS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD MUSLIM EVANGELISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

#### Introduction

The church has been called to devote itself to the task of taking the gospel commission to the people of the Middle East. But because of the lack of visible church growth in Muslim communities, most of the efforts have ended in apparent failure.

After returning to America from the Middle East, Zwemer often preached sermons based on the text: "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets" (Luke 5:5). "Fishers of men" have truly in some Muslim lands toiled not just "all night" but all through years and decades without having seen people commit their lives to Christ or churches established.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, in some of the lands of the Middle East such as Syria, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran, members of the ancient Christian churches have lived in close and often friendly contact with Muslims for some 1,300 years without having been able to draw any considerable number of them to faith in Christ.

This chapter proposes concepts and attitudes toward Muslim

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<sup>1</sup>William Miller, p. 90.

evangelism for pastors and laymen in light of frustrations and failures of the past.

### Concepts to Be Fostered among Pastors

Three basic concepts need to be fostered among SDA pastors in the Middle East: (1) the pastor must be a role model for evangelism, (2) evangelism is not an option, and (3) the success of evangelism is not measured by the number of persons converted.

#### The Pastor Is a Role Model of Evangelism

Church members as a general rule depend on their pastor as a model for knowledge, zeal, consecration, or sacrifice. They are usually ready--at least a large proportion of them--to follow a leader. The pastor, more than any other individual, has the opportunity of influencing his congregation to evangelize. But that influence will be exerted and be effective only in the measure in which he himself has caught the evangelistic vision and perceives his role as that of inspiring and leading his flock to assume their part in carrying out Christ's gospel commission.<sup>1</sup> When a pastor models evangelism, his church may be expected to participate in evangelistic activities.

Stacy R. Warburton elaborates on this point:

If the missionary work of the churches is to be fully successful the leaders of the churches must come to understand the missionary purpose of the church. . . . Missions will not take its rightful place in the program of the local churches, and the missionary efforts of the churches and denominations will not achieve their full success, until pastors and other church

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<sup>1</sup>Glover, The Bible Basis of Missions, pp. 43-44.

leaders understand the primary work of their churches to be missions, of which everything else is a part and for which it is a preparation. . . . Primarily the responsibility rests upon the pastor; his attitude, his ideals, his aims, his intellectual and spiritual horizon, his interpretation of the Gospel of Jesus and of the mission of the church, will inevitably determine the interests and activities and achievements of his church.<sup>1</sup>

The local church pastor holds the key to the success or failure of his church's evangelistic outreach. In fact, the history of a local church's numerical growth or decline often corresponds to the periods different pastors served.

From what has already been said, two conclusions may be drawn. First, the local church pastor must have a positive attitude toward evangelism among Muslims; and second, he must fit himself for the role of instructing and leading his church toward the same attitudes. Every person entering the ministry should honestly consider the question of his duty to do Muslim evangelism. Certainly every pastor must see himself as fulfilling the Gospel commission. This must include teaching, guiding, and inspiring his parishioners to the end that they will join him in their church's outreach to Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

#### Evangelism Is Not an Option for Pastors

While it is true that not every minister is blessed with all the gifts of the spirit, it still remains that the work of evangelism is an important and indispensable part of every Seventh-day Adventist pastor's job description.

In my opinion of all the problems that have induced decline

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

in SDA church growth, none has been as fatal as the tacit admission by some pastors that the work of public evangelism is not a part of the ministerial task as they see it. Everything about the pastoral role tends to prepare a man to do the work of an evangelist.

Granted, a pastor needs to develop ministerial skills. However, he should not expect to acquire a special skill in order to tell the story of God's redeeming love to a sinful world. If he is willing to tell it in his own way, in his own words, and not in imitation of past successful pastors, any man called of God to preach may give the evangel, the good news of salvation.

Some pastors are too quick to convince themselves that they cannot be successful evangelists. Because they have tried it several times and have seen little or no results, they have been all too ready to classify their pastoral role as an "administrative" or "teaching" ministry and thereby escape the role of evangelist. Any pastor can preach effectively to the unsaved and can win them if he chooses, though perhaps not with the same measure of success as others, be it from lack of experience working with a particular culture or in an environment not as productive as other localities.

Finally, as noted in the study of the Gospel Commission, the task of witnessing to the gospel cannot be limited in time or space. No believer can escape the obligation put on him--much less can a pastor avoid the responsibility.

#### Numerous Conversions Are Not the Only Measure of Success

J. I. Packer is quoted as saying that the successful pastor is the one who is faithfully out evangelizing:

The way to tell whether in fact you are successful in evangelizing is not to ask whether conversions are known to have resulted from your witness. It is to ask whether you are faithfully making known the gospel message.<sup>1</sup>

The success of a pastor's seed sowing in the Middle East must not be evaluated by the number of members baptized in a given year. Evangelism should be evaluated by the extent and quality of the seed-sowing--not on the basis of how many ears of corn have been harvested. A pastor's reward is not dependent upon his seeming success but upon the spirit in which he does his work.

When the redeemed stand in the presence of God, they will see how short-sided were their conclusions as to what heaven regards as success.<sup>2</sup>

To evangelize in the New Testament usage does not exclusively mean to win converts, as it usually does in today's ecclesiastical parlance. Evangelism is the announcement of the Good News.

A healthy New Testament evangelism will add great numbers to our churches. But the goal of the evangelism of Jesus is the conversion of the individual, and not an ever lengthening church roll. Never decry numbers if numbers represent redeemed souls, but make sure your goal is to redeem rather than to count.<sup>3</sup>

Wilbur Schramm sees the possibility of the latent effect in evangelism:

What if no response is observable at the moment? Can we assume that there has been no effect? Certainly not. The situation may not yet be ripe for action. Perhaps a change has taken place within the receiver that will show up when the time is right or when enough change has accumulated to cause action.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John R. W. Stott, Christian Mission in the Modern World (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), pp. 39-40.

<sup>2</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 7:28.

<sup>3</sup>C. E. Autrey, Basic Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1959), pp. 27-28.

<sup>4</sup>Wilbur Schramm, Men, Messages, and Media (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 196.

The good seed of evangelism may for a long time lie unnoticed in a cold, selfish, or worldly heart, giving little or no evidence that it has taken root; but later as the Holy Spirit works on the individual, the hidden seed comes to life and finally bears fruit to the glory of God. In the work of evangelism, the pastor does not always know how many souls will respond in seeking baptism and church membership. The pastor is simply to do his part and leave the results with God.<sup>1</sup> The results of Christ's evangelistic ministry should be noted:

As the world's Redeemer, Christ was constantly confronted with apparent failure, He seemed to do little of the work which He longed to do in uplifting and saving. . . . But He would not be discouraged.<sup>2</sup>

Many hearts were moved that for a time made no sign. During the Saviour's life, His mission seemed to call forth little response of love from the priests and teachers; but after His ascension "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."<sup>3</sup>

In the Middle East the work of the pastor generally appears to be fruitless. His efforts in evangelism may be earnest and persevering, yet he may never see with his own eyes the results of his faithful work. To him the effort exerted appears wasted. But Christ assures that our work is noted in heaven (Matt 10:32). Paul wrote, "Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart" (Gal 6:9). White concludes:

What if means are used and yet we cannot see that souls have been saved by it? What if there is a dead loss of a proportion of our means? Better work and keep at work than do nothing. You know not which shall prosper--this or that.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>White, Christ's Object Lessons, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 6:307.

<sup>3</sup>White, Evangelism, p. 300.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

Concepts Regarding Lay Ministry  
in Society

Of necessity the New Testament is a guide and inspiration for Middle East lay evangelism. The situation of the Early Church is similar to that facing the church today. One strongly suspects that spiritually devitalizing forces such as those in the Arab world today existed in the first-century Middle East. Archibald suspects that if one could transfer the Early Church into the Muslim world today, it might turn events upside down as it did so successfully in the same world of its day.<sup>1</sup>

Five characteristics of evangelism are especially notable in the church of the book of Acts: (1) The sharing of the message in all places by all Christians, (2) the simplicity of their methods, (3) the divine power which impelled them, (4) the ingenious manner in which they evangelized under every kind of hindrance, and (5) the organization of lay evangelism.

Lay Witnessing

The Christian church today needs to follow the example of the Early Church in expansion. When a church in this age, or in any age, becomes satisfied with its advances or blind to its listlessness, it dies.

Early Church members had a burden to evangelize. They compelled themselves to go where the people were and give their witness without apologies. They went into synagogues and market places as did Christ, taking advantage of every opportunity to present in

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<sup>1</sup>Archibald, pp. 39-40.



relevant terms the redeeming truth of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Evangelism must not be left to pastors alone. The Adventist preacher is but one whose contacts are limited. No community can be thoroughly reached unless the numerous contacts of the laymen are utilized evangelistically. Archibald says, "The man in the pew today must assume again evangelistic responsibility along with his first-century brother."<sup>2</sup>

Oosterwal summons Adventist laity to involvement in community life:

They have an entrance where the professional minister cannot enter, or is no longer heard: on the campuses of the universities, in the factories and in the laboratories of the world, in the market places, and in the offices. There's where our ministry lies, according to the special gifts we received at our baptism.<sup>3</sup>

Lay members can extend their effectiveness in many ways that will result in genuine and healthy church growth. They can work their way into every type of group life. Professors and teachers who are dedicated Christians must tactfully witness to and bring under the influence of the Gospel not only their non-Christian students but also their non-Christian fellow teachers. Educated, dedicated, teachers can more effectively reach students and fellow teachers than any pastor or evangelist.

Dedicated businessmen and women may witness to people from their respective occupations. Nurses may work for nurses, and

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<sup>1</sup>Autrey, Evangelism in Acts, p, 79.

<sup>2</sup>Archibald, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>Gottfried Oosterwal, "The Role of the Laity," Focus 9 (July-August 1973), Supplement No. 23.

secretaries with secretaries. Housewives can reach housewives with the Gospel. Christianity must "leaven the whole lump" (1 Cor 5:6).<sup>1</sup> Lay Christians must be alert and concerned enough to work their way into every profession and group and then use their influence and the word of God to bring as many as possible to know Christ as Savior and Lord.

There has been a teaching among Christians to ignore the profound emphasis to "go" in their Gospel witness. The lost do not come seeking for someone to tell them the way to God. Christians must go tell them the story of Christ. Autrey states:

Men can be saved in homes, office buildings, on street corners, in trucks, on planes, and everywhere. They are out there by the millions in all places where we do not go with the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

Muslims in the Middle East rarely come to Christians seeking a God they feel they already know. Christians must seek them. Christ said, "The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). He also said, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21). When the church obeys' this mandate as the Early Church did, it will expand.

Personal witness must be given to people in all places. There has been a tendency to confine evangelism to specific institutional centers when the Gospel light should have expanded beyond. Christ commanded: "Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find" (Matt 22:9).

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<sup>1</sup>Autrey, Evangelism in Acts, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

## The Use of Simple Methods

The methods of the church in Acts were simple: witness, teach, preach, and baptize. Their organization was not complex. They were so dedicated to Christ that they used effectively these simple techniques described in chapter IV.

In the early church, Christianity was taught in its purity; its precepts were given by the voice of inspiration; its ordinances were uncorrupted by the device of men. The church revealed the spirit of Christ, and appeared beautiful in its simplicity. . . . Multitudes were won to Christ, not by display or learning, but by the power of God which attended the plain preaching of His word.<sup>1</sup>

Their message was not much more than a personal testimony:

The first works of the church were seen when the believers sought out friends, relatives, and acquaintances, and with hearts overflowing with love, told the story of what Jesus was to them.<sup>2</sup>

They went everywhere talking and preaching what they knew about Jesus, what they had seen Him do and what He had done for them.

The content of their message was intriguing and startling. They told how Jesus was killed, not because He was a dangerous politician, but because He was good and kind and because He claimed to be the Son of God. They told the world that God raised Him from the dead. They told about His life after His resurrection, and that He ascended into heaven leaving behind over five hundred disciples who claimed that He was the Messiah.<sup>3</sup>

The first Christian church did not have all the privileges and opportunities that are available today. Its members were poor in

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<sup>1</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:166.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Welfare Ministry (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), pp. 64-65.

<sup>3</sup>Autrey, Evangelism in Acts, p. 83.

earthly goods, but rich in the truth. They felt that the salvation or loss of the world depended upon their faithful witnessing.<sup>1</sup> The methods of evangelism used by the New Testament church (explained in detail in chapter IV) should be the pattern followed by the church in the Middle East today.

The more closely the New Testament plan is followed in missionary<sup>2</sup> labor, the more successful will be the efforts put forth.<sup>2</sup>

### The Reliance on Divine Power

The New Testament church was keenly aware of the presence and divine power of the Holy Spirit among them. The book of Acts sets forth in all certainty the fact that they were moved by the power of God. They were impelled by an inner force which transcended human ambition or energy.

When the Sanhedrin tried Peter and John and strictly forbade them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, they replied, "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). They had no choice.<sup>3</sup> The Christian church today must know and feel this same compelling power of Christ through the Holy Spirit before the Gospel commission can successfully reach Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

### The Ability to Endure and Persevere

The Christians in Acts endured many forms of intimidation but continued their witness to Christ. For example, when the

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<sup>1</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:156.

<sup>2</sup>White, Welfare Ministry, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>Autrey, Evangelism in Acts, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup>Glover, The Bible Basis of Missions, pp. 70-71.

Sanhedrin placed Peter and John in prison, an angel of the Lord released them and said, "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20). The disciples went without delay to the temple and began to teach (Acts 5:21). They did not complain that the religious rulers or civil authorities had laws forbidding it, nor asked to be excused on the grounds that such action had no advantages or future.<sup>1</sup>

The twentieth-century SDA church in the Middle East must decide what its goals and priorities are. Does it want a good name in Lebanon? Does it want all Egyptians, including members of the Coptic church, to speak well of it? Is its primary concern that the Iranian authorities might discover converted Muslims on its church books? Is it afraid to preach an aggressive yet tactful gospel to Muslims because Islamic laws forbid it?

What are the convictions that determine our present course in the Middle East? The Christians in Acts believed that Jesus was the Son of God. They believed that He was the Savior. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The Early Church believed in the atoning death of Christ. They believed in His bodily resurrection (Acts 2:26). Adventists who have lost their first love of these Gospel truths are challenged:

Have firm convictions as to what you believe. Let the truths of God's Word lead you to devote heart, mind, soul, and strength to the doing of His will. Lay hold resolutely upon a plain "Thus saith the Lord." Let your only argument be, "It is written." Thus we are to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

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<sup>1</sup>Autrey, Evangelism in Acts, p. 84.

That faith has not lost any of its sacred, holy character, however objectionable its opposers may think it to be.<sup>1</sup>

Autrey's concern is the spirit of contemporary Christians:

We have all the truths the early Christians had, plus a much better system of communication. The difference lies in our spirit. This generation of Christians is indifferent and unspeakably lethargic. We do not care if systems of error blind the people. We do not seem to care if the world goes to hell. We are indifferent about the great truths God has entrusted to us, and we are unconcerned about the spiritual condition of our fellows.<sup>2</sup>

The twentieth-century church is challenged as in the first century.

#### The Organization of Lay Evangelism

The organization of Jesus for evangelism was very simple. He gathered to Himself a little group to train for this work. He never asked them to do what He would not do Himself. He took the group through Galilee on a field extension school of evangelism, that they might learn by observing Him at work. Later He organized them and sent them out two by two in all parts of the country.<sup>3</sup> Although simple, the rudimentary principles of organization and delegation are discernible.

Similar basic organizational principles emerge under the leadership of the apostles. In Ephesus Paul gathered his converts and John's disciples into a training school and later sent them out; so that he could say "that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:1-10)--something that would have been impossible

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<sup>1</sup>White, Evangelism, p. 361.

<sup>2</sup>Audrey, Evangelism in Acts, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>Archibald, pp. 42-43.

for Paul to have accomplished alone.

The New Testament example seems to indicate that church communities are meant to function not only as centers of worship, Bible study, fellowship, and social service, but also as centers of organized evangelism. The church members as a body are to participate in evangelism as faithfully, systematically, and devotedly as they do in any other aspect of church life.

A church organized around the example of the laymen in the New Testament church will be a year-around evangelistic church, its entire membership imbued with the evangelistic spirit, and all departments making evangelism the chief objective.<sup>1</sup>

#### Practical Suggestions for Evangelism

This section presents some of the practical ways in which SDA laity can communicate the Gospel message to their neighboring Muslims. Suggested are: (1) Become acquainted with Muslims and with Islam, (2) Demonstrate love to the people of Islam, (3) Teach the Bible to inquirers, (4) Emphasize what is unique in the Gospel, (5) Make clear what it means to be an Adventist Christian, (6) Introduce converts to a church which will welcome them, and (7) Use controversy with discretion.

#### Become Acquainted with Muslims

Muslims are not generally won to Christianity over a short period of time by mere casual acquaintances. They must be reached through an extended friendship. They can be invited into one's home

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<sup>1</sup>Wade Smith, pp. 89-90.

and shown personal care, especially in times of illness or bereavement.<sup>1</sup> Barriers that separate Christian and Muslim can be broken down through acquaintance and friendship.

Start in the ordinary way of greeting and smiling. Pay visits to show your friendliness. Give respect to whom respect is due. Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.<sup>2</sup>

Personal acquaintance precedes the trust needed if Muslims are to be open to ministry.

Adventist laity should also become acquainted with some of the customs, beliefs, history, and practices of Islam. When they know something about Islam they will be able to present Adventist teachings in a way that will be intelligible and attractive to Muslims. At the same time, they will be able to avoid misunderstandings.

Everyone concerned about evangelization of Muslims should read at least a part of the Koran and also several of the excellent books on Islam listed in the bibliography. If the layman shows that he is knowledgeable of Islam, he can expect his Muslim friend to listen seriously.<sup>3</sup>

#### Demonstrate Love to the People of Islam

The most powerful witness to Christ is the revelation of His love in human form among His followers. There is a proverb

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<sup>1</sup>Seamands, p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>Christian Witness among Muslims (London: Billing and Sons Ltd., 1973), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>William Miller, p. 132.



that reads, "What love cannot do, is not worth doing," and another, "The person we love, his house is never far away."<sup>1</sup>

This love is not necessarily an emotional attraction, for the people we are to love may not always be loveable. It is the kind of love described in 1 Cor 13, the kind of love revealed by Christ on the cross. It is love that is ready to give, not only for a friend but also for one's enemies.<sup>2</sup>

This love can be shown in many ways:

Show your love by co-operating with Muslims for the welfare and progress of your community. Islam and Christianity both call for justice and for compassion towards the sick and needy.<sup>3</sup>

Love is shown by identifying with the needs and problems facing Muslims.

#### Teach the Bible to Inquirers

How does one tell the Good News to Muslims? There is no fixed pattern. Each person is different, and each must be approached in the way most appropriate for him or her. As a result of friendship or conversation, or the reading of Adventist literature, a Muslim may express a desire for further information. At this point present the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

The Muslim does not have a true image of Christ revealed in the Koran. He or she should be exposed to the Biblical account of Christ--His true character, His claims, His sinless life, His death

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<sup>1</sup>Christian Witness among Muslims, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>William Miller, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup>Christian Witness among Muslims, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>William Miller, p. 140.

and resurrection. Do not give the Muslim copies of Mark's gospel to begin with, for the very first verse speaks of Jesus as "the Son of God." Rather give a copy of the Gospel of John, for it begins with Jesus as "the Word of God," a term that the Muslim is already familiar with. Matthew's gospel can also be helpful because it traces the genealogy of Christ back to David and Abraham, and describes the virgin birth of Christ--all of which are acceptable to the Muslim.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years there has been limited success in the use of Bible correspondence lessons for Muslims. Most of the Bible students have been college-age young people who live far from Adventist churches, or people who prefer to study privately on their own rather than to face possible harassment by going openly to an Adventist center. The Bible correspondence lessons for Muslims, produced by Dr. Kenneth Oster and TEAM, and which were widely distributed in Iran in 1979-80, were highly successful in presenting the Word of God to Muslims.

#### Emphasize What Is Unique in the Gospel

Laymen presenting Adventism to Muslims sometimes ask whether emphasis should be placed on the similarities or differences of the two faiths. It is well, at least at the beginning, for the laymen to assure the Muslim that he agrees with him in the belief that God is one and that He alone should be worshipped (Deut 6:4; Mark 12:29, 30; Rom 3:29-30; 1 Cor 8:5-6; Eph 4:4-6;

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<sup>1</sup>Seamonds, p. 213.

Koran, The Cow 2:555; Cattle 6:103).

Also, both Adventists and Muslims are aware that they have sinned and need God's forgiveness (Rom 3:23; Koran, Women 4:17-18, 64, 106, 110; The Table Spread 5:39). And other similarities regarding diet, dress standards, music, drugs, cinema, etc., may be mentioned to establish a friendly understanding. Emphasizing the likeness, however, may lead the Muslim to conclude, "We are really one; why should I be baptized into your church?" The emphasis of similarities will never convert a Muslim to Christianity.

The method that has induced Muslims in the end to come to Christ is not the emphasis of similarities, but rather the great differences between the Gospel of Christ and the religion that has Mecca as its center. Several great differences emerge: The difference between faith in a loving Father in heaven and submission to the unpredictable will of an all-powerful God who is unlike anything that one can imagine and is therefore unknowable;<sup>1</sup> the difference between putting one's trust for salvation and forgiveness in God's Son who died as a sacrifice for sinners and for attempting to save oneself by doing works of merit is to be stressed; following a living Lord who is with His followers always rather than making a pilgrimage to the grave of a man who died over 1,300 years ago and whose tomb is not empty.<sup>2</sup> Distinction must be made between the possibility of living a pure and holy life in the power of the Holy Spirit and struggling in one's own strength to overcome sin and Satan and live a life pleasing to a holy God. Having as one's

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<sup>1</sup>William Miller, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

example and guide the sinless Son of God is not the same as following the "prophet" from Mecca who, according to the Koran, was only a man like other men and was commanded by God to repent of his sins.<sup>1</sup>

There is no similarity between facing death with the assurance of an imminent resurrection and undergoing the terrifying questioning of two angels with the immediate possibility of banishment into the fires of hell. The realization of these and other basic differences between Adventism and Islam has brought sincere seekers for God to choose the "Pearl of Great Value" (Matt 13:45).<sup>2</sup>

#### Make Clear What It Means to Be an Adventist Christian

As a general rule, the applicant for baptism should understand clearly what it means to be an Adventist Christian and what his responsibilities will be. He should be given some time to show in his life that he has indeed understood and accepted the baptismal requirements.

At the same time there is danger in requiring a long testing period. Cut off from the full fellowship that comes with baptism, the individual's faith may grow dim. One must rely prayerfully on the Holy Spirit to indicate to the church when the right time has come for baptism.<sup>3</sup>

In welcoming Muslims who express a desire to profess faith in Christ and become Adventists, it is necessary to follow Christ's example and not assume that every expression of faith is genuine. The Apostle John states that in Jerusalem "Many believed in His name

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Christian Witness among Muslims, p. 84.

. . . but Jesus did not trust Himself to them, because He knew all men" (John 2:23-25).

Only God knows men's hearts and motives. But one should remember that in Muslim lands the "convenient lie" is not considered an offense. It is thought better to tell such lies than to speak words of truth that may cause trouble or even unhappiness. Therefore, when a Muslim knows that his Adventist friend is very desirous that he become a member of the church, he may, to please his friend, or for some other purpose, profess a faith which he does not sincerely possess within.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it is imperative to make sure the new convert understands clearly the responsibilities of church membership. New Christians should practice what they profess--thus the possibility of a feigned conversion may be avoided.

#### Introduce Converts to a Church Which Will Welcome Them

One reason why some Muslims refuse to become or remain Christians once baptized is that they are not attracted to or welcomed by the churches with which they are acquainted. In some areas of the Middle East there are older churches whose members can trace their history back to apostolic times, who for various cultural, ethnic, or political reasons do not feel friendly toward Muslims, and do not desire Muslim converts to attend their church services.

Concerning this problem Miller states the ideal solution:

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<sup>1</sup>William Miller, p. 142.

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither Turk nor Armenian, and God wishes all who have become His children through Christ to be members of His Family, which is the church, where all will be one. This unity will be a powerful testimony to the world that Christ is indeed from God (John 17:21).<sup>1</sup>

In some countries of the Middle East, Adventists have earnestly endeavored to bring together into one church all believers from different races, cultures, and languages. Sometimes this effort has met with success, but more often it has failed. Accordingly, some advocate the formation of separate churches composed largely of Muslim converts. Though such churches may not witness clearly to the oneness of all believers in Christ, it is probable that they will be able to attract and hold more believers from Islam than the other established churches have done. Such churches composed of new believers will, of course, for a time lack the experience of mature Christians and may have the same kind of problems as those which arose in the church in Corinth in Paul's day (1 Cor 3:1-3).

It is of utmost importance that local churches prepare to accept new converts. The acceptance of converted Muslims is not to be the rational reception of all inquirers of truth, but the warm opening of arms into brotherhood. The SDA church must become family to the Muslim convert who will probably have had to leave his or her blood family to become a Christian. There must be social and spiritual fellowship.

Whether the converted Muslim joins a church made up of those of Muslim background or a group with Christian roots, the welcome he or she receives is vital to permanence and growth.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

## Use Controversy with Discretion

One may ask whether debate with Muslims is a proper form of Adventist witness. In past years it was sometimes possible to arrange public debates in which learned representatives of Islam and Christianity would debate the merits of the two faiths. These discussions, of course, aroused much interest in religious matters, and at times resulted in actual baptisms of converted Muslims.

There was always the danger, however, that the defenders of the gospel might lose their tempers rebutting what the Muslim side said, or unkind words might be spoken which would drive the Muslims farther away from truth. The Apostle Paul counseled:

Avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. . . . The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will . . . come to know the truth. 2 Tim 2:14, 24-25.

Such public debates are usually impossible today, due to lack of religious freedom in most Muslim countries.

Some very powerful books were published in past years written to demonstrate rather straightforwardly the inadequacy of the Muslim faith. An example is the book The Balance of Truth written nearly a century ago by the German missionary Dr. C. G. Pfander. The book was published in Persian, Arabic, and English and produced an angry response from Muslims.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this, the book profoundly influenced a number of Muslims who became outstanding Christians.

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<sup>1</sup>Recently re-published in Arabic and English in Beirut. In America, copies may be secured from Fellowship of Faith for Muslims, Room 25, 205 Yonge Street, Toronto, Canada M5B 1N2.

Perhaps the age of controversy and debate between Muslims and Christians was blessed by the conversion of more Muslims than has the present age of dialogue and conciliation.<sup>1</sup>

Reasons Why Muslims Should  
Be Evangelized

In an effort to instill correct concepts and attitudes regarding evangelism of Muslims, it is necessary to present important reasons for such evangelism. Some of the outstanding ones are:

(1) Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations, (2) God's love which brings reconciliation to all who receive Christ, (3) Islam cannot meet all of man's moral and spiritual needs, (4) the value of each soul is worthy of evangelization, (5) the beneficial influences that attend the Gospel, and (6) to facilitate the realization of God's promises.

Because of the Gospel Commission

Christ commissioned His church to preach the gospel to everyone in the world (Mark 16:15) and to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19). Surely this command includes the one-seventh of the world's population who profess the religion of Islam.

Some say that Muslims have rejected the gospel and that Christianity should therefore shake the dust from its feet (Matt 10:14) and leave Muslims to perish in unbelief. This may be true of some past generation, but what of this generation of Muslims, many of whom have never heard the Good News? Only when the three Angels' Messages have been adequately made known to this generation

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<sup>1</sup>William Miller, p. 150.



can it truly be said that Muslims have rejected God's offer of salvation.<sup>1</sup>

In the Middle East today, few Adventist pastors, Bible workers, or laymen actually serve God among the Muslim peoples, and the number of converts to Adventism has been proportionately small. The absence of work among Muslims in the past was probably not due to the result of an adopted policy but rather to a natural tendency to work fruitful ground. Pastors eager to see results conducted their evangelistic outreach in areas where they suspected there might be results. Unresponsive Muslim areas were passed by, not so much because of policy but through neglect.

Church administrators should give careful consideration to this selective evangelization of the Middle East. It is imperative from our study in chapter IV that the good news of salvation is to be preached to every kindred, nation, tongue, and people. The whole world is the field to be sown. Even the stony ground is to proliferate with the seeds of truth.

#### Because of Divine Love

The Good News of Christ must be made known to Muslims because they constitute such a large part of the "world" which God loved so much that He gave His own Son to save it. God loved and loves not only the children of Israel but also the children of Ishmael, not only the Orthodox Christians but also the Muslim Gentiles.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Counsels to Writers and Editors (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), pp. 26-27.

<sup>2</sup>William Miller, p. 158.

Paul states that he and the other apostles were constrained by Christ's love to them to beseech men to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:11-15). Even if Christ had not commanded His followers to make disciples of all nations, His amazing love to them would have impelled them to give to Jews and Gentiles the gospel which had brought salvation to them. White wrote:

Every man or woman who has tasted of the love of Christ, and has received into the heart the divine illumination, is required of God to shed light on the dark pathway of those who are unacquainted with the better way.<sup>1</sup>

Christ has died for us, and we must not rest until we have shown our gratitude by telling the world of Him. The divine love that carried Paul across the Roman world constrains Adventists today to go all across the Muslim world telling the Good News of Christ.

#### Because of the Inadequacy of Islam

If, as some may claim, Islam were adequate to meet the moral and spiritual needs of mankind, there would be no reason for trying to convert Muslims to Adventism. However, Islam is not adequate, as many Muslim converts to Christianity have testified. Miller identifies some of these inadequacies:

Islam fails to diagnose man's condition as a sinner unable to know and obey God perfectly, it fails to reveal God in His holiness and his love for sinful men, it fails to give the sinner assurance of forgiveness and peace with God, and it fails to supply the Holy Spirit to teach and guide and sanctify the believer. It points men to a dead prophet and not to the Lord Jesus, who conquered death and is alive. . . .<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:555.

<sup>2</sup>William Miller, pp. 160-61.

Regarding the inadequacy of Islam to deal with the problem of sin, Bethmann writes:

Naturally, as there is no deep conviction of sin in Islam, no feeling of an estrangement between God and man, there is no need for reconciliation, no need for redemption, nor for a Saviour from sin, no need for a complete turn in life, nor for being born again in the likeness of the spirit. And here lies the deepest gulf which separates Christianity from Islam.<sup>1</sup>

Sin and its redemption is the center of all religious thinking. All other theological subjects dealt with in religion are of a secondary nature, so that one might say that if it were not for sin and the feeling of guilt, no religion would ever have been conceived. Therefore a religion such as Islam which loses sight of this, its prime object, namely, sin and its removal, or sin and redemption from it, is downgraded to nothing more than a philosophy or good ethical code.<sup>2</sup>

#### Because of the Value of Each Person

Seventh-day Adventists should continue to pray and labor for the salvation of Muslims because of the value in God's sight of every man, woman, and child whom He has created. White states that "The true value of the soul can be estimated only by the cross of Calvary."<sup>3</sup>

It is sometimes erroneously supposed that missionary effort is justified only when large numbers of people are converted.

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<sup>1</sup>Erich W. Bethmann, Bridge to Islam (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1950), p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1944), p. 185.

Certainly Christ desires the salvation of "a great multitude which no man could number" (Rev 7:9). If Christ left the ninety-nine in order to find and save one lost sheep, can we be justified in doing less? Christ said there was joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. Then if only one Muslim were saved as a result of a century of Christian effort, would not this effort have been justified? White states that

The worth of one soul cannot be fully estimated by finite minds. How gratefully will the ransomed and glorified ones remember those who were instrumental in their salvation! No one will then regret his self-denying efforts and persevering labors, his patience, forbearance, and earnest heart-yearnings for souls that might have been lost had he neglected his duty or become weary in well doing.<sup>1</sup>

For the conversion of one soul, every Adventist should tax his or her resources to the limit.<sup>2</sup>

#### Because of the Beneficial Influences of the Gospel

One wonders whether, since the number of converts to Christianity in the Middle East countries has been so small, perhaps the evangelistic effort there has been of no value. On the contrary, a great deal of service that honors Christ has been performed by Christians, both national and foreign.

Doctors and nurses in Christian hospitals and clinics have treated in the name of Christ untold thousands of Muslim patients. As they have healed the sick as Christ commanded His disciples to do, they have by deed and word given their testimony to the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup>White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:620.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 622.

Christian teachers in schools and colleges have also in the name of Christ trained thousands of Muslim youth, inspiring many of them to serve their own people with a truly Christian spirit, even though most of these students never became baptized Christians.

In times of earthquakes, famine, pestilence, floods, and war, Christians have assisted the afflicted masses and have even laid down their lives on occasion to give relief to Muslims.<sup>1</sup>

Partly as a result of the presence and labors of foreign missionaries from old times, tremendous changes have occurred in the Muslim world. Women, partly through the efforts of Christian school graduates, have, to some extent and in some places, been emancipated from the confinement and injustices imposed upon them by Islam.<sup>2</sup> The health of the Muslim population in most countries has been much improved. Efforts have been made by enlightened Muslims to care for people formerly much neglected--lepers, the blind, orphans, beggars, and the mentally ill.<sup>3</sup>

#### Because of God's Promises

Adventists must continue to pray and work for the salvation of Muslims because they believe the promises of God. The Lord said:

This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come. (Matt 24:14)

Before Christ returns the second time, the Gospel commission will be proclaimed throughout the whole world, including the Muslim world.

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<sup>1</sup>William Miller, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Though the Christian church has been about this work for nearly 2000 years, it is yet to be completed.

The faithful proclamation of the Gospel will not be ineffectual. A day will come when the vision of John on Patmos will come to pass--that of

a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb . . . crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev 7:9-10)

By God's grace every Muslim "tribe" and people of every Muslim "tongue" may be represented in that company of the redeemed. And when Christ returns the third time with His holy angels and the multitude of every nation redeemed, then all Muslim knees will bow, not toward Mecca, but to Christ, and all Muslim lips will confess that He is the Lord; the redeemed Muslims with joy, the lost Muslims with shame and anguish (Phil 2:10-11).

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