

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST APPROACHES TO OTHER RELIGIONS: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM 1930–1950, PART II

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The first part of this article articulated the wider setting of the Christian movement as it related to world religions from the early part of the twentieth century up to the 1940s. As noted in that article, Seventh-day Adventists had been engaging in world-wide mission for roughly four decades prior to 1930. In comparison to the wider Protestant mission enterprise, Adventists were over one hundred years behind most other Christian denominations. Therefore, Adventist approaches to other religions were not as developed as many of the other Christian groups around them.

Various theological approaches to other religions were being explored by Christians during the early decades of the twentieth century. The first article highlighted fulfillment theology, which had become popular during the 1910 Edinburgh mission conference but was rapidly declining by the 1930s and 1940s due to the impact of the two World Wars dampening the progressive outlook needed to sustain fulfillment theology. Others were advocating an approach to other religions that was much more open, even to the point of arguing that other religions contained truth and therefore missions to those in other religions were no longer needed. This was most clearly stated in W. E. Hocking's seminal work, *Re-thinking Missions*, published in 1932, which argued for a moratorium on missions.¹ Just six years later, at a major mission conference in Chennai, India, known as the Tambaram conference, Hendrik Kraemer published his study of other religions, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, which argued in favor of mission to other religions and was written, in many ways, in opposition to Hocking's work.² These two books represent the tension-filled atmosphere that surrounded much of the discussions on world religions that Christians were engaging in during this time.³

While there is not much evidence of Seventh-day Adventists participating directly in any of the above discussions, they were affected by the views that were being debated, as these two articles attempt to show. The period of the 1930s through the 1940s is important to Adventists because they were beginning to reflect more carefully on other religions after getting over the initial shock of encountering these religions that were so different than what they were

¹William E. Hocking, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after 100 Years* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932).

²Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938).

³For more details on this, see Andrew Tompkins, "Seventh-day Adventist Approaches to Other Religions: Preliminary Findings from 1930–1950, Part I," *AUSS* 54 (2016): 333–348.

accustomed to seeing. They were also very cognizant of other Christian viewpoints and approaches toward other religions and were influenced by them.

In the first article, key moments for the Adventist approaches to other religions were highlighted and analyzed within the framework of the wider Christian movement. They set the stage for what follows in this article. Therefore, it is advisable to read that article prior to this one to gain a better understanding of the background and key events that inform this article.

Key People

The first half of this article ended by looking at key moments that occurred between 1930 and 1950; part two begins by looking at key people. While the list of Adventists interested in or publishing on world religions during this time period would be quite large, there are a few specific individuals who are more prominent in their published works. This first section will give a brief synopsis of these individuals in an attempt to show their importance in the development of Adventist understandings and approaches to other religions. Because this research is not a biographical essay, little space will be spent on biographical details for each person mentioned.⁴

The second section will describe some of the broader trends in Adventist approaches to other religions during this time period. These are more general in nature and, as will be seen, are meant to foster further discussion and research.

Roland E. Loasby

Roland E. Loasby spent his entire professional career in service to the Adventist Church. He was born in England but came to the United States at a young age and studied at Washington Missionary College before going out as a missionary to Bermuda in the early part of the twentieth century.⁵ He did not stay long in Bermuda, however, but moved to India in 1915, where he and his family worked until 1938. In that year, Loasby moved to Takoma Park to become a full-time professor in the recently established Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.⁶

During his time in India, Loasby worked primarily in what is today the State of Maharashtra. He, along with his family, worked primarily in locations where there was no prior Adventist presence.⁷

⁴What is really needed is scholarly biographical articles on each of the people who will be mentioned; some of them may even deserve to have books written about them.

⁵The *Sligonian* lists Roland Loasby as one of the first five graduates of Washington Missionary College. J. L. Shaw, "Early Beginnings and Growth of the College," *Sligonian* 3.7 (March 1919): 8.

⁶The voted action for Loasby's permanent return can be found in General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, DC), Minutes of Meetings of the General Conference Committee, 3–30 June 1938, meeting of 30 June 1938, 805.

⁷For a description of some of the work Loasby did in India, see J. B. Trim, "Help India," *British Advent Messenger* 74.25 (5 December 1969): 1–2; idem, "Obituary," *Southern Asia Tidings* 69.11 (June 1974): 10–11.

As a result, he became well acquainted with many Hindus and some Muslims. This triggered much reflection on the part of Loasby and eventually manifested itself in published articles and even academic work. Loasby was also somewhat of a linguist, becoming proficient in several spoken Indian languages, as well as Sanskrit, Greek, and Hebrew.

Loasby published many descriptive articles in several Adventist publications, primarily on Hinduism, but he also did a series in *The Signs of the Times* (*ST*), which included articles on Muslims and Buddhists as well as Hindus.⁸ Loasby spent a lot of time studying the ancient scriptures of the Hindus, especially the *Bhagavad Gita*.⁹ He wrote about various Hindu rituals, practices, and beliefs that he observed in the field.¹⁰ He also recognized that there was a major disconnect between the way Western missionaries did mission and how they were perceived by adherents of these various religions.

As noted in the first part of this article, he led out in a major discussion concerning the cultural practices of converts at the Biennial Council of the Southern Asia Division in 1933. This discussion reveals that he was dissatisfied with the trend of Western missionaries in forcing their cultural ways on Indians.¹¹

During one of Loasby's furloughs to the United States, he completed an MA at Columbia University. His mentor at Columbia was Robert Ernest Hume, considered by many at the time to be one of the foremost scholars in the area of comparative religion. Loasby's thesis focused on the *Bhagavad Gita*. Throughout the thesis he makes comparisons between concepts in the *Gita* and the Bible. The thesis was completed in 1932 and reveals a very deep knowledge of not only the *Gita* but of Hindu sacred scripture in general. He found much spiritual depth in the *Gita* and recognized its value to Indians.¹² Loasby felt that in the end, however, the *Gita* was in many ways profound but unclear in its approach to salvation.¹³ He also carefully critiqued the Hindu understanding of avatar as it related to the biblical concept of incarnation, and attempted to show that the two terms meant very different things within their

⁸Roland E. Loasby, "Hinduism Under the X Ray," *ST* 62.12 (19 March 1935): 6–7; idem, "Islam Under the X Ray," *ST* 62.14 (2 April 1935): 6–7; idem, "Buddhism and Christianity in Contrast," *ST* 62.11 (12 March 1935): 7, 14.

⁹In Loasby's article on Hinduism for the *ST* in 1935, he spends most of the space describing various sacred Hindu texts, such as the *Vedas*, *Brahmanas*, *Upanishads*, and *Bhagavad Gita*, which he felt stood "out above all the rest of Hindu sacred books." See idem, "Hinduism under the X Ray," 6–7.

¹⁰Examples of this can be found in idem, "Strange Gods," *ST* 61.17 (24 April 1934): 7; idem, "Idol Worship in India," *ST* 62.13 (26 March 1935): 6–7.

¹¹See M. E. Kern, "Southern Asia Division Roundtable Discussions," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 110.24 (15 June 1933): 10. Future references to the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* will be abbreviated with *AR*.

¹²Loasby, "Some Gita Teachings Compared with Orthodox Hinduism and Modern Tendencies" (MA thesis, Columbia University, 1932), 6.

¹³Loasby frequently cites lack of coherence and focus as a major issue in the *Bhagavad Gita*. For example, see *ibid.*, 22, 40.

respective religious contexts.¹⁴ At the same time, Loasby commented on, what he felt were bridges between the *Gita* and the Bible, especially in the type of language that was used to describe God or the Supreme Being. Portions of the *Gita* reminded him of John 14:20, “I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”¹⁵ The final sentence of his thesis reads: “Yet the existence of the *Gita* is itself proof eloquent that the heart of India longs for a personal Saviour; and when India’s millions bow down to Krishna, they are unknowingly expressing their cry for the incarnate Son of God, the Chief among ten thousand.”¹⁶ There may be a hint of fulfillment theology in this sentence, which would not be surprising during this time, especially considering the educational background Loasby had.¹⁷

Loasby would continue his study of the *Gita* as the focus of his doctoral work at American University located in Washington, DC. He would complete his doctoral dissertation, entitled “Lokamanya Bala Gangadhara Tilak (1856–1920). His Reorientation of the *Gita* Tradition: A Factor in the Rise of Indian Nationalism,” in 1942. At American University, Loasby’s primary mentor was Ralph Turner, who had become famous for his two volume work *The Great Cultural Traditions*.¹⁸ Loasby’s dissertation was focused more on historical developments rather than religious developments. Yet he still found a way to incorporate an edited form of the majority of his MA thesis into the first half of his dissertation, presented as a kind of background to the *Gita*. He then moved into an historical study of how Tilak, one of India’s most famous freedom fighters, made use of the *Gita* as a tool for inspiring militant followers.

Loasby was one of the first Adventist educators to receive a PhD. The newly established Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary hired Loasby as its primary instructor in Greek and Hebrew. In many ways, this marked the end of Loasby’s engagement with other religions. One wonders what might have been had he continued as a professor of world religions rather than Greek and Hebrew. Loasby’s last published article on Hinduism was published in the 1964 issue of *Andrews University Seminary Studies (AUSS)*. It dealt with

¹⁴Ibid., 23–25, 62–68.

¹⁵Ibid., 45.

¹⁶Ibid., 139.

¹⁷There were other moments where Loasby made statements that sound like fulfillment theology, for example, “Jesus fulfills the Indian thought, and more. He is the realization of the Indian ideal, but adds a distinctly additional element.” See idem, “Hinduism under the X Ray,” 7.

¹⁸Ralph Turner, *The Great Cultural Traditions*, 2 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1941). Turner subscribed to the anthropological and sociological strain of thinking that presupposed the evolutionary theory as the foundation for human society and culture. The copies of his book—both volume one and two—contain the sticker of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Takoma Park, MD, which means they were most likely in the Seminary library during the time period that this paper addresses.

the *Bhagavad Gita* and was in many ways similar to his MA thesis. To date, it is the only article on Hinduism that *AUSS* has ever published.¹⁹

As noted in the first part of this article, Loasby was involved in mission initiatives in the Seminary. Loasby played a major role in the training of potential missionaries in Arabic with the intention of sending them out to work for Muslims.²⁰ In an article that appeared in *Spectrum*, Loasby's name appears in a list of the top ten most influential Adventist educators.²¹ He was one of the few Adventists who had thoroughly researched another religion, as demonstrated in his early publishing career and in his academic work. To date, there are few, if any, Adventist scholars who have done as much research and publishing on Hinduism as Loasby.

Erich W. Bethmann

Erich Bethmann's name was mentioned in the first part of the article which highlighted the work in the Middle East, alongside that of W. K. Ising and Willy Lesovsky. What sets Bethmann apart from these two men is the amount of published work he produced. He published a number of articles in various Adventist periodicals throughout his time in the Middle East, and later published several books as well. Bethmann, with his family, went to the Middle East at a young age and immediately showed a gift for languages. He became proficient in Arabic, but also was an able student in Arab culture. He eventually became somewhat of an expert in Islam as well.

Bethmann, with Lesovsky, spent time in the Newman School of Mission, which would have broadened his mission horizons beyond the educational background of most other Adventists of the time. His keen interest in the culture and religion of Palestine, in particular, also set him apart from many of the other Adventist missionaries in the Middle East. In a time when most Adventist writing about Islam was connected to prophecy, Bethmann was learning about Islam and thinking about the best methods and ways to share the Gospel with Muslims.

Under the encouraging leadership of W. K. Ising, Bethmann was made the secretary of a special committee that the Arabic Union put together in 1935 to help the Adventist Church move forward in its understanding and approach to Muslims. Bethmann himself wrote articles that painted Islam in a much more positive light than many of his predecessors had. He also wanted more literature to be produced in Arabic, lamenting the fact that there were only "four [Adventist authored] books in Arabic and twenty tracts, many of them probably out of date" and that of those there was only "one book which

¹⁹Loasby, "The Challenge of the *Bhagavad-gita*: *Krishna*, and the *Bhakti-Marga*," *AUSS* 2 (1964): 79–96.

²⁰See General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, DC), Minutes of Meetings of the General Conference Committee, 2–30 July 1942, meeting of 9 July 1942, 507; B. P. Hoffman, "Toward New Advances in the Moslem World," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald (AR)* 119.47 (19 November 1942): 17.

²¹"A Profile of North American Religion Teachers," *Spectrum* 18.1 (1987): 34.

is marked acceptable to Muslims.” He argued that it was not acceptable to simply “translate Christian books into Arabic” because these were, in his view, “acceptable for Christians only, but not for Muslims in general.” He wanted books written that took seriously the mind of Muslims.²²

Because of Bethmann’s German citizenship, he was taken by the British to an internment camp in India for seven years, spanning the duration of World War II (WWII) and beyond. He was separated from his family and colleagues during this period. After the end of WWII, Bethmann was released, at which time he moved to the United States.²³

In 1947, Bethmann wrote an article in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, which revealed much about his own understanding of Islam. He decried Adventists’ total lack of work in the Middle East among Muslims as unacceptable. He also admitted that he did not have all the solutions, but he knew for sure that, “we need men who will get acquainted with the Moslem outlook, with the Moslem train of thought.” He wished the church would inspire young people, who were creative, to come up with new ideas and methods for working among Muslims. He advocated “going out two by two, explaining the Koran, preaching the gospel.” Bethmann was fully aware that this was a method not currently accepted by Christians, but after many years in the Middle East, Bethmann was convinced something different had to be done. In a somewhat prophetic statement, Bethmann ended the article by saying: “I am not certain whether I myself am prepared yet to try this method, but one day it will be done, and if it cannot be done by us white men, it will have to be done by our native brethren.”²⁴

In the United States, Bethmann attended the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary starting in 1947 and completed his MA degree in 1950. He also published his most well-known work in 1950 through the Southern Publishing Association. *Bridge to Islam* was the first book of its kind to come out of an Adventist publishing house.²⁵ According to Bethmann, the book was written “to stimulate thinking, and, if possible, to kindle the desire for further investigation and awaken the urge to make a contribution to a solution” towards the challenge of Islam.²⁶ There is a significant chapter devoted to a comparison between Christianity and Islam, as well as a final

²²Erich W. Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1950), 283–284.

²³See C. A. Hart, “Freed From Internment,” *Eastern Tidings* 41.17 (1 September 1946): 8; W. P. Bradley, “Internees Arrive From India,” *AR* 123.49 (17 October 1946): 16.

²⁴Erich W. Bethmann, “The Moslem Challenge,” *AR* 124.1 (2 January 1947): 15–16.

²⁵According to the minutes of the General Conference Committee from 25 September 1947, Bethmann was asked to write this manuscript in order for it to be used in mission preparation. See General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, DC), Minutes of Meetings of the General Conference Committee, 1–29 September 1947, meeting of 25 September 1947, 694.

²⁶Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam* (1950), 2.

chapter documenting the history of the Seventh-day Adventist work in the Middle East up to that time.²⁷

Bethmann would leave official Adventist Church employment soon after this, and join a cultural think tank in Washington, DC called American Friends of the Middle East (AFME).²⁸ The United States government often consulted with AFME concerning Middle Eastern policy. Bethmann would work at AFME for the rest of his professional career and continue to publish culturally focused manuscripts and documents on the Middle East.²⁹ He would even republish his *Bridge to Islam* with another publisher in 1953.³⁰ This copy was more widely reviewed, including by Hendrik Kraemer, who reviewed it with a positive assessment.³¹

Like Loasby, Bethmann was ahead of his time. In many respects, Bethmann and Lesovsky, under the guidance and encouragement of W. K. Ising, set the foundation for the future work that would grow more than any other Adventist work among other religions. Bethmann predicted that the work among Muslims would one day become strong, but he also predicted that this would require a new approach that was more radical and more open than the church had been using up until that time.

It can be hard to measure the impact of individuals from an historical viewpoint. With that said, there is no doubt that Erich Bethmann is an important figure in the history of Adventist approaches to other religions, specifically in his role in laying the foundation for a new approach to Islam. Bethmann's desires were often left unfulfilled; he longed for the day when

²⁷Idem, *Bridge to Islam* (1950).

²⁸The following is found in the General Conference Committee minutes from 2 April 1951: "VOTED, That in view of circumstances that prevent his continuing in the organized work, the services of E. Bethmann, who has been on the General Conference payroll for some time, be terminated as from March 31, 1951" (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists [Washington, DC], Minutes of Meetings of the General Conference Committee, 2–15 April 1951, meeting of 2 April 1951, 351). For more on Bethmann's time with AFME, see Garland Evans Hopkins, "American Friends of the Middle East: First Annual Report of the Executive Vice President to the Board of Directors and the National Council of the American Friends of the Middle East, Inc., May 15, 1951 to June 30, 1952," (New York: AFME, 1952), 11–12, 15; Andrew I. Killgore, "Erich Waldemar Bethmann: A Lifelong Servant of Truth," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (May–June 1991): 41, <http://www.wrmea.org/1991-may-june/erich-waldemar-bethmann-a-lifelong-servant-of-truth.html>.

²⁹Some of these published works include Erich W. Bethmann, *Decisive Years in Palestine 1918–1948* (New York: AFME, 1957); idem, *The Fate of Muslims under Soviet Rule*, (New York: AFME, 1958); idem, *Yemen on the Threshold* (Washington DC: AFME, 1960); idem, *Steps towards Understanding Islam* (Washington DC: AFME, 1966).

³⁰Idem, *Bridge to Islam* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953). This edition did not contain the chapter on Adventist mission work.

³¹For this review, see Hendrik Kraemer, "Studies of Islam," *International Review of Mission* 40.158 (1951): 223–224. It was also reviewed in Garland Evans Hopkins, "Middle East Reaches Print," *The Christian Century* 69.6 (1952): 159.

“Christ on the Eastern road” would be “clad in Eastern garb.”³² It was Bethmann’s desire to see Muslims drawn to Christ and this had inspired much of his work and effort in his years of mission service.³³

Other Prominent Figures

There are other figures who are important to this work and, in many ways, deserve much more attention. Below is a brief description of their contributions to Adventist approaches to other religions.

W. K. Ising

W. K. Ising was a student of culture and mission. He spent the better part of his career either in the Middle East or promoting and administrating mission projects from the division home base in Germany. Bethmann mentions that Ising was the superintendent of the Arabic Union from 1928–1936, at which time he returned to Europe to work at the headquarters of the Central European Division, which oversaw the Adventist work in the Middle East.³⁴

Ising was adamant that Adventists needed to focus more intentionally on the world of Islam. He had seen the church grow very little in the Middle East, and felt that one of the reasons was due to a poor understanding of Islam. He was the primary encourager of Erich Bethmann and Willy Lesovsky³⁵ and gave them the freedom to explore new areas of mission among Muslims. This was done at a time when most Adventists struggled to develop new methods beyond the usual focus on education, health, literature, and public evangelism.

While Ising would not live to see any major successes in the Middle East, he helped to train and encourage young mission workers who would lay the foundation for a new approach to Islam. His legacy lives on in that the Adventist work has grown and expanded in the Muslim context more than any other major world religion.³⁶

L. G. Mookerjee

L. G. Mookerjee was the descendant of the first Christian convert of William Carey in India. Mookerjee’s father had converted to Adventism

³²Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam* (1950), 287.

³³Ibid., 289.

³⁴Ibid., 276.

³⁵Much more research needs to be done on Lesovsky. He did not publish near as much in English as Bethmann, but he did publish in German, which I was not able to access for this article.

³⁶An interesting side note to Ising is the fact that his daughter, Dorothea Ising, served as the private nurse for the grandson of King Abdullah of Transjordan, and actually lived in the palace for a period of time. This was a rare example of an Adventist living and working with a Muslim family in such close quarters. See Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam* (1950), 277. For more on Ising’s contributions to the work in the Middle East, see Tompkins, “Adventist Approaches, Part I,” 333–348.

and, thus, he was raised as an Adventist. At a time when missionaries were still the primary official church workers in India, and certainly the ones doing most of the publishing, Mookerjee's name is often found, rather remarkably, as the author of many denominational articles. It was uncommon at that time to find an Indian publishing as much as Mookerjee in periodicals, such as *The Advent Review* and *Ministry*.

Mookerjee was a well-educated and articulate man who was aware of many of the challenges that the church faced in the Hindu and, to a lesser extent, Muslim contexts. He recognized that the church appeared foreign to Indians and that there was much within Indian culture and even Hinduism that was of positive value. He spoke openly about the need for more local leaders, concluding that much of the failure of the missionaries related to their inability to understand "the people [of India] and gain their confidence and affection."³⁷ Mookerjee felt that "next to the Holy Spirit, genuine Christian politeness goes farther toward converting the Hindus."³⁸

Many of his articles reveal that Mookerjee was a student of Hindu sacred texts and knew much about the beliefs and practices of Hindus.³⁹ He wrote articles that described, in detail, beliefs and practices that were meant to help the church get a clearer understanding of what Hindus actually believed. While Mookerjee did not have a lot to say directly about methods, he did advocate a Bible study approach with Hindus that was more chronological in nature, starting with Gen 1 and moving forward.⁴⁰ He recognized the need for new approaches and even employed Hindu terminology in his writing, such as referring to Christ as "our divine Guru" and "the attainment of mukti (salvation) . . . is offered free of cost by Christ."⁴¹ This was highly unusual for an Adventist at this time, but was not uncommon in Christian writing in India at the time, as a reading of the works of writers such as Sadhu Sunder Singh, N. V. Tilak, V. Chakkarai, and E. Stanley Jones reveals. He felt that the work of spreading literature was also a priority.

Mookerjee's career in India produced much in the area of education, where, with his American wife, he helped to establish several prominent educational institutions. After his wife contracted a major illness, Mookerjee would go to the U.S. for a brief stay. After the death of his first wife, Mookerjee remarried and returned to India, where he worked in a number of capacities to the end of his career. He was one of the first Indian leaders of the

³⁷L. G. Mookerjee, "Proper Approach to the Hindu Mind," *Ministry* 12.4 (1939): 11.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 11–12.

³⁹For an example of Mookerjee's knowledge in Hindu sacred texts, see *ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 12.

⁴¹*Idem*, "Proper Approach to Hindu Mind: Continued from Last Month," *Ministry* 12.5 (1939): 16. He ended this article with the following statement: "We, as Indians, see in Christ 'our Oriental Brother'" (*ibid.*, 17).

Seventh-day Adventist Church in India and was one of the more outspoken in his push for mission among Hindus.⁴²

F. H. Loasby

F. H. Loasby was the older brother of R. E. Loasby, and was also interested in other religions. Because he worked most of his career, more than thirty years, in parts of North India that are now known as Punjab and Pakistan, his primary interests lay in the work among Sikhs and Muslims.

Like many others of the time, his published work lacks much in the area of new approaches and methods. At the same time he clearly recognized a need for something different, even if he did not know what that was. As noted in the first part of this article, in the section on the Biennial Council of the Southern Asia Division, F. H. Loasby was the leader of the discussion on Islam. He was adamant that argumentative approaches to Muslims would not work and that, in order to work in Muslim contexts, it was essential to become versed in the Qur'an and Islamic history. He later published an article in *Ministry* on Islam that reemphasized the need for the workers among Muslims to be well-versed in the Qur'an and Muslim history.⁴³ At the same time, Loasby was reluctant to go too far with this method. In another article, he wanted to be clear that he did not equate the God of the Bible with the god of the Qur'an.⁴⁴

His overall impact is hard to ascertain, however, there seems to have been little follow-up to his advice. The church in Pakistan and North India, where he worked, has not developed many new approaches, and has had a limited impact in either the Islamic or Sikh contexts to this day.

R. B. Thurber

R. B. Thurber spent most of his career in India as well. Thurber published articles on several occasions that dealt with other religions. But unlike those discussed above, his focus was on the negative aspects of these religions and their evidential demise, in his eyes. He was quick to fault other Christians, such as E. Stanley Jones, for "compromising" the Christian faith by using inappropriate contextualized methods.⁴⁵

⁴²For more, see Gordon E. Christo, "Lal Gopal Mookerjee," *Southern Asia Adventist Heritage Blog*, <http://sudheritage.blogspot.com/>.

⁴³F. H. Loasby, "The Challenge of Islam," *Ministry* 10.4 (1937): 10, 22. In a footnote within this article, Loasby explains that the terms he has chosen to use is out of a desire to be more respectful to Muslims. See *ibid.*, 10n.

⁴⁴F. H. Loasby, "The Anomalies of Islam," *Ministry* 12.8 (1939): 4.

⁴⁵R. B. Thurber, "Religious Trends in India—No. 2," *Ministry* 10.12 (1937): 9–10. Thurber did not use the word contextualize, as it had not yet been coined, but the ideas he was opposed to were contextualized methods. E. Stanley Jones was a well-known Methodist missionary who lived most of his adult life in India. He is best known for his creative use of the Christian "ashram" approach to mission that he promoted. Ironically, four years earlier the *AR* had published a short three paragraph

It is important to take note of Thurber for two reasons. One, because of the frequency with which he published on the topic of other religions, which could mean that the church would have been impacted by his viewpoint. And two, he probably represents what, in many ways, was the predominant viewpoint of Adventist mission workers of the time. A survey of articles related to Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism during the twenty-year span of this article reveals a predominately negative view of other religions as heathenistic peoples to be avoided.⁴⁶

O. B. Kuhn

O. B. Kuhn worked for many years in mainland China in the medical field. While Kuhn's name is not as prominent as those discussed above, he did write several articles on Buddhism as he encountered it in China. Most of his articles are descriptive in nature, simply detailing what he saw and experienced. Usually toward the end of the articles, however, he briefly assessed the Buddhists and their practices, and almost always this was a negative assessment. He was willing to enter Buddhist temples and attempt to learn about Buddhism, even if he struggled to view Buddhists as much more than souls entrapped in darkness. Kuhn is important in another way, in that he is one of very few Adventists who wrote on Buddhism with some regularity.⁴⁷

D. E. Rebok

D. E. Rebok will only receive brief mention here because his impact is outside the time period covered by this study. Rebok spent many years working in China, mainly in the area of education. His time there gave him a chance to witness and reflect on many other religious faiths as they were practiced in China. Eventually, he would return to the United States to take up the presidency of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. It is during his early years as president that a new emphasis on mission and world religions, in particular, was reignited at the Seminary. A book of what may have been class lectures reveals that Rebok had spent much time thinking about other

quotation of Jones's, so apparently not everyone felt the same way about him. See E. Stanley Jones, "Living Our Religion," *AR* 110.33 (17 August 1933): 10.

⁴⁶For examples, see R. B. Thurber, "Religious Trends in India—No. 1," *Ministry* 10.11 (1937): 19, 23.

⁴⁷See O. B. Kuhn, "One Essential Difference," *AR* 107.43 (7 August 1930): 22. In this article, Kuhn was willing at least to enter a Buddhist temple. See also idem, "Revival of Buddhism," *AR* 108.21 (21 May 1931): 19. In this article, Kuhn documents the perceived revival of Buddhism in China, but there is very little about mission. See also idem, "A Chinese Christian Funeral Service," *AR* 110.14 (6 April 1933): 10. While a word search for "Buddhist" or "Buddhism" at General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, "Online Archives," <https://www.documents.adventistarchives.org>, gets a number of hits, few of them actually contain detailed thoughts on methods or approaches to Buddhists. Kuhn is a rare exception to this trend.

religions and how Adventists should approach them.⁴⁸ For the most part, he did not see any value in other religions and believed that they could be judged as false based on their fruits, which, for him, was demonstrated in the “uncivilized” countries dominated by non-Christians.⁴⁹ His writing, in some respects, is reminiscent of Hendrik Kraemer’s work.

Key Trends

Initial research points to a few trends that deserve more careful and detailed research going forward. This section reviews several broad trends, as well as taking a closer look at each of the three major religions—Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism—and the trends of Adventist approaches to each of them. A summary of the trends that have been isolated here concludes this section.

Eclipse of Other Religions

Adventists published or quoted other published works which foretold the demise of other religions on a frequent basis. This concept grew out of an anthropological approach to religions that had its roots in evolutionary theory. The theory presupposed that religions were also on an evolutionary track, moving from the most basic form of religion—animism—on an upward scale toward the most civilized religion, Christianity. In the early part of the twentieth century, it was common to see this theory being propagated in Christian literature, devoid of direct reference to the evolutionary theory behind it. The supposed demise of other religions was even being “documented,” yet it became more and more obvious that this was not the reality.

Some Adventists were slow to recognize that other religions were not dying out and continued to predict the downfall of major religions. Statements such as “the arrows point to the slow disintegration of Hinduism,”⁵⁰ or “Islam is hopelessly divided and impotent”⁵¹ were not uncommon. The theory was, for the most part, abandoned after the two World Wars revealed that the “Christian” West was not immune to imperfections and “Western” religion was unable to stave off such atrocities as the Holocaust.

⁴⁸For more on Rebok’s work in China, see Handel Luke, “A History of Seventh-day Adventist Higher Education in the China Mission, 1888–1980,” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1982).

⁴⁹For a more detailed description of Rebok’s view of other religions and the mission task to them, see D. E. Rebok, *Go—Make Christians in all Nations: The Mission Enterprise of the Christian Church*, unpublished manuscript (accessed through James White Library, Andrews University).

⁵⁰Thurber, “Religious Trends in India—No. 1,” 19. See also T. M. French, “Continual Growth in Christian Character and Service,” *AR* 112.15 (11 April 1935): 5–6. F. C. Gilbert claimed that “Idolatry and the caste system are really crumbling” (“Southern Asia Division Annual Committee Meeting,” *AR* 117.17 [25 April 1940]: 22).

⁵¹T. M. French, “The Seven Trumpets and Their Meaning: Part IV—The Sixth Trumpet,” *AR* 112.33 (15 August 1935): 9–11.

However, this was a significant theory for Adventist approaches to other religions. For those who believed that other religions were fading out, there was little incentive to develop new methods for reaching out to adherents of a dying religion. Mindsets that viewed other religious adherents as “coming from savagery, from heathenism,” were allowed to continue because they were a dying breed.⁵² In effect, this was a barrier to mission, which took a long time to subside.

Description without Method

Much of the Adventist literature—especially that in the 1930s, but also into the 1940s—was primarily descriptive of other religions and did not offer any type of approach to these other faiths. This literature was often based on observation or study of a given religion’s sacred texts, through the lens, primarily, of Western missionaries. Many missionaries detailed visits to temples or the witnessing of prayer times at mosques. It was a time of learning and growing in the basic understanding of many new religious forms that most Adventists were not familiar with.⁵³

Because Adventism was born and established in North America, it is not surprising that the encounter with other religions created a sense of shock and bewilderment. Key periodicals such as *The Advent Review* and *The Signs of the Times* were interested in publishing articles that were more like *National Geographic* in nature than characteristic of a faith-based periodical. This would have been the only way Adventist members in North America learned about other religions, hence their significance.

While most of the articles in this genre tended toward negativity in their descriptions of other religions, there were exceptions. Some authors were able to recognize important similarities between the practices and beliefs of Christians and others, as they reflected on what they observed. Many, however, only saw “heathens” who were engaging in idol worship or worse, and their descriptions of the other religions betray a colonialistic ethnocentrism.

Lack of Success and the Overwhelming Challenge

As the 1930s moved into the 1940s, a steady flow of articles, either on particular religions or non-Christians in general, bemoaned the total lack of success experienced by the church.⁵⁴ Prior to 1930, these types of articles were

⁵²J. L. McElhany, “Our World Problem,” *AR* 115.29 (21 July 1938): 6. The title of another article reveals much about the presuppositions of the times, see Medical Missionary, “Blasting at the Rock of Heathenism,” *AR* 107.9 (27 February 1930): 16.

⁵³For examples of this type of writing, see T. A. Lambie, “A Moslem View of Mohammedanism,” *AR* 110.49 (7 December 1933): 2; W. B. Votaw, “Modern Movements in Hinduism,” *Ministry* 13.1 (1940): 4–6; Ruth Simon Mazat, “What is Confucianism?” *Ministry* 21.9 (1948): 13–15; Marcadene Wood, “Buddhism and Its Teachings,” *Ministry* 21.12 (1948): 19–20.

⁵⁴For examples, see C. L. Torrey, “A New Day Dawning for India,” *AR* 112.37 (12 September 1935): 10; E. E. Hargreaves, “The Advent Message and the Moslem

not as common, mainly because insufficient time had elapsed since the entry and exposure of Adventist missionaries to other lands and religions. But by the late 1930s, it had become apparent to many that these world religions were not only going to continue to survive, but even thrive.⁵⁵ This created an overwhelming challenge to many who realized that the current methods and approaches were not effective.⁵⁶

This recognition of a developing crisis in the church, led some Adventists to realize that there were whole portions of the world's population who were almost completely resistant to the Christian message.⁵⁷ In attempts to address the challenge, most authors were unable to see beyond the common ways of doing mission that the Adventist Church had developed over the previous fifty years. Education, health facilities, the sale and distribution of literature,⁵⁸ and public evangelism were repeatedly promoted as the only ways to do mission.

Most of the "success" stories found in the relevant literature during that time period were about individual conversions from Hindu, Muslim, or Buddhist backgrounds.⁵⁹ They often contained details of the tremendous amount of persecution and ill treatment that the convert had endured. There was almost no literature that detailed any long term or semi-long term successes among any of the major world religions during that time period—a trend that generally held true with all Christians, not just Adventists.

World," *AR* 123.16 (18 April 1946): 16.

⁵⁵In the December issue of *Ministry* in 1939 there is an extensive quote from the periodical *The Presbyterian*, which gave statistical details of all the various religions that were represented in the United States and the challenge this posed for mission. See "Home Missions," *Ministry* 12.12 (1939): 37.

⁵⁶In the Hindu context, there were several issues relating to caste and gender, which the church struggled to know how to handle. See E. M. Meleen, "Facing India's Problem—No. 2," *Ministry* 12.12 (1939): 15–17.

⁵⁷Interestingly, there was even a recognition that all the world's major religions were more and more represented in the United States and that this posed a huge mission challenge, see Louis Halswick, "Foreign Literature Work in the North American Field," *AR* 117.20 (16 May 1940): 21.

⁵⁸In India, several articles mention the distribution of literature at the large *melas* (festivals) at which millions of pilgrims were present. This was considered one of the best methods of evangelism. There is very little data to support that this actually resulted in conversions. For examples of this, see J. C. Craven, "With Our Believers in India," *AR* 112.13 (28 March 1935): 13–14. O. O. Mattison tells an incredible story where he asks an owner of an airplane if they can drop literature from the airplane onto the crowds of a festival gathering. See O. O. Mattison, "Tract Distribution by Airplane," *AR* 124.1 (2 January 1947): 20.

⁵⁹There is even a claim that some Buddhists in the United States had been baptized, although there are no details given. See Louis Halswick, "More Cheering Reports," *AR* 122.16 (19 April 1945): 24. For other examples, see Gentry G. Lowry, "Turning from Darkness to Light," *AR* 117.2 (11 January 1940): 12–13; Vera Chilton, "Soul Winning in Islam: He First Findeth His Own Brother," *AR* 107.13 (27 March 1930): 26–27; A. L. Ham, "First Pathan (Moslem) to Accept the Message," *AR* 122.27 (5 July 1945): 13–14.

Major change in methods and approaches would have to wait for the future. However, in order for change to take place, recognition of the problem was needed. By the 1940s, this recognition was taking place on a regular basis. While some Adventists simply accepted that other religions were basically impossible to evangelize and, therefore, time should not be wasted by trying to do so,⁶⁰ many others were not willing to settle for that type of fatalism. In the Islamic context, there was an intentional focus on the challenge at hand, and this momentum eventually led to new approaches in the late 1930s and into the 1940s.

Trends in Approaches to Islam: Momentum Building

For much of the early part of the 1930s, Islam was frequently mentioned in Adventist periodicals, but not in a missional context. Because of the way world events were unfolding, especially in Turkey, there was a major emphasis on the role of Islam in prophecy. Prior to the Adventist Bible Conference of 1952, a majority of Adventists taught that Armageddon was a literal battle that would take place in the Middle East just before the Second Coming. Any little change or stirring in the Middle East often resulted in a slew of articles on Islam and Armageddon. Some were historically accurate, while others were not. Either way, when hearing the term “Islam,” most Adventists probably thought of prophecy and not mission.⁶¹

As time progressed, articles on Islam and prophecy continued, but more on Islam and mission began to be written. W. K. Ising and George Keough were some of the earliest advocates for a more focused mission to Muslims. Ising also helped to mentor two young men, Willy Lesovsky and Erich Bethmann, who probably became the most important early figures in Adventist mission to Muslims. Willy Lesovsky and his wife started a kindergarten school specifically for Muslim children, however, the long-term results of this endeavor are unknown.⁶² While neither Bethmann nor Lesovsky could point to any major successes among Muslims, they did learn a lot about Islam and pushed the church to increase its general knowledge of Islam and to also alter its methodology and approach to Muslims.⁶³

⁶⁰Francis D. Nichol records that he spoke to a native Protestant worker in the Middle East who categorically stated that they refused to even work for Muslims. He uses this as a lead in to a comment that ninety-nine percent of the membership was being drawn from ten percent of the non-Muslim population (Francis D. Nichol, “Across the Syrian Desert,” *AR* 124.42 [16 October 1947]: 6).

⁶¹For examples of this, see Heber H. Votaw, “The Future of Islam,” *AR* 108.19 (7 May 1931): 3; C. P. Bollman, “Islam’s Rebirth in Turkey,” *AR* 110.11 (16 March 1933): 4. Amazingly, a few weeks later Bollman published a statement retracting certain “facts” that were inaccurate in the above article, which were crucial to the whole premise of the article. See C. P. Bollman, Untitled, *AR* 110.16 (20 April 1933): 24; T. M. French, “Studies in the Book of Daniel: The Eleventh Chapter—Demise of the Turk,” *AR* 112.4 (24 January 1935): 3–5; W. L. Emmerson, “The Magnet of Armageddon,” *AR* 124.11 (13 March 1947): 7–8.

⁶²Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam* (1950), 276.

⁶³In the December 1937 issue of *Ministry*, there is another article about mission

In the Southern Asia Division, there were stirrings concerning mission among Muslims as well. F. H. Loasby, R. E. Loasby, and L. G. Mookerjee all published articles on Islam and the challenge of mission to Muslims.⁶⁴ In the long run, however, very little was started in the way of intentional mission to Muslims in this part of the world, and, by the late 1940s, little was being published on this challenge in the Southern Asia context. Even in the Far Eastern Division there was an attempt to improve mission to Muslims, which even included “quiet talks with Mohammedan *hadjis*, *imams*, and old men” because “different methods” needed to be used.⁶⁵

The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, on several different occasions, focused on Islam and mission. They invited the “Apostle to Muslims,” Samuel Zwemer, to do a special lecture series for the Seminary students and then published those presentations in the most prestigious Adventist journal at the time, *Ministry*. During WWII, George Keough came to the United States as an appointee to the Seminary in order to help with the offered courses that focused on Islamics and the Arabic language. Some students focused on Islam in their academic studies and wrote MA theses that dealt with aspects of Islam.⁶⁶ R. E. Loasby was also behind a push to specifically train several families in the study of Arabic and Islam with the intention of sending them to the Middle East to work among Muslims.

Unfortunately, there is little evidence that any of these families actually engaged in direct work with Muslims. After Bethmann was released from seven years of internment in India during WWII, he came to the United States and published the most in-depth book on Islam that had been published by

to Muslims, in which it is advocated that use of the “Koran” is a must in order to reach Muslims (J. F. Hunergardt, “Approach to Mohammedans,” *Ministry* 10.12 [1937]: 10, 26). The author of this article, J. F. Hunergardt, deserves to be researched more. Initial efforts turned up very little about him.

⁶⁴See L. G. Mookerjee, “Among the Muslims of India,” *AR* 115.7 (17 February 1938): 14–15.

⁶⁵L. B. Mershon, “Capitalize Mohammedan Beliefs,” *Ministry* 11.2 (1938): 10, 42–43. Vernon Hendershot also wrote an article with the context of the Far East in mind, in which he stated you could show the “superiority of Christ” in the “Koran.” See Vernon E. Hendershot, “The Challenge of the Moslem World,” *AR* 122.4 (25 January 1945): 8, 15.

⁶⁶For examples of this, see Wadie Farag, “Eschatological Teachings of Islam,” (MA thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1949). This thesis was primarily a study of the Qur’anic view of eschatology, but it also compared the Islamic view with that of the Bible. The author felt that there were many similarities between the Qur’anic understanding of the final judgment and the biblical view. His thesis is very sympathetic to the Islamic view and is therefore an important part of this study. Erich Bethmann also completed his MA thesis during this time. See Erich W. Bethmann, “The Mohammedan Menace at the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century and its Influence Upon the Protestant Reformation,” (MA thesis, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1950). Bethmann’s thesis, however, is not directly about Islam, but rather about the historical engagement between Europe and the Turkish Empire that occurred during the early part of the Reformation.

an Adventist at the time.⁶⁷ Bethmann was strong in affirming the need for mission, but also recognized that there was much in Islam to be admired and that many of the beliefs of Muslims as found in the Qur'an were potential bridges between the two faiths.

Judging from published periodicals and books, it appears that Islam received the most attention of the world religions during this time period. As a result, Adventist approaches to Islam were on a stronger footing than those to any other religion, when entering the 1950s.

Trends in Approaches to Hindus: Many Challenges, Few Solutions

While connections between prophecy and Hinduism were much less than those between prophecy and Islam, Hinduism was not immune to conspiracy-like theories. Some academics outside of Adventism turned toward Eastern religions during the early twentieth century. Some Adventist thought leaders postulated that this was the beginning of a trend toward pluralism and ecumenism, a sign of the end of time.⁶⁸

For the most part, however, Hindus were left out of the prophetic predictions. There were some Adventists during this time period who looked a little deeper and recognized a genuine search for spirituality among Hindus. R. E. Loasby and L. G. Mookerjee were the most prominent writers in this camp.

T. R. Flaiz, who was instrumental in establishing a boarding school and hospital in India that have survived to the present, also took time to research Hindu sacred texts and beliefs. He wrote an article in *The Advent Review* that details several bridges he felt existed between the ancient Hindu religion and the Bible. These included the correct understanding of sacrifice and even the keeping of the Sabbath, as Flaiz saw certain castes who refused to work for a certain amount of hours on the seventh day of the week.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, there is no record of Flaiz exploring these bridges with actual Hindus.

The Southern Asia Biennial Council of 1933 took seriously the challenge of Hinduism and began discussing proposals for rethinking mission approaches. This was a time of upheaval in India as the nation moved toward independence and low castes began fighting for more rights. Some Adventists saw this as a sign that the time was ripe for many to leave Hinduism and join the church.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Idem, *Bridge to Islam* (1950).

⁶⁸For examples of this, see Marian Offer, "The Yoga System of Philosophy," *Ministry* 21.2 (1948): 36–37. In this article, Offer attempts to describe the connection between yoga and Hindu mythology. W. A. Spicer, "Meeting Present-day Revivals of Ancient Error—No. 2," *AR* 123.9 (28 February 1946): 4–5. In another article, Spicer even hints that the sun worship of some in India is an old error that will return to prominence. See W. A. Spicer, "Where Rites of Sun Worship Still Persist," *AR* 125.24 (10 June 1948): 3.

⁶⁹T. R. Flaiz, "Hindu Sabbath Observance," *AR* 111.2 (11 January 1934): 14.

⁷⁰G. F. Enoch wrote a fairly lengthy article for *Ministry* in 1936 on caste issues in India. See G. F. Enoch, "Concerning India's Untouchables," *Ministry* 9.11 (1936): 10, 22.

Loasby published a number of articles that carefully analyzed Hindu beliefs and practices and were meant to help people understand this ancient faith.

S. Thomas recognized that much of Adventist mission work up to that time had been overly focused on the negative aspects of Hinduism. He advocated for less focus on the perceived evils of Hinduism and more emphasis on Christ. He even listed several theological themes that he felt should be the focus in mission to Hindus. The second half of his article, however, fails to keep the momentum going. Thomas reverts back into promoting “open-air preaching,” and “distribution of literature” as the best methods for reaching Hindus.⁷¹

In general, the momentum that appeared to be building in Adventist approaches to Hindus began to slow down. This is in contrast to the Adventist approaches to Muslims, where the momentum pressed forward in a more dynamic way.

Trends in Approaches to Buddhists: The Least Developed

Of the three major religions discussed here, mission to Buddhists was the least developed. Theodore R. Flaiz lamented the lack of success among Buddhists in Siam (present-day Thailand). However, Flaiz offered very little in the way of a solution and instead reemphasizes medical work, which had been present for many years in Siam already.⁷² Buddhism does not appear to have received the sustained study that either Islam or Hinduism received. There are significantly fewer articles on Buddhists that contain missiological approaches.

In the few relevant articles, there was a tendency to see a few positive elements in Buddhist thinking, but these were overshadowed by the “satanic” elements, to use the language of one author.⁷³ O. B. Kuhn felt there was heavy satanic influence in the Buddhism he witnessed at a funeral in China.⁷⁴ M. E. Kern went so far as to say that the people of Burma were “in spiritual stupor through the opiate of Buddhism.”⁷⁵

More study needs to be done to determine why Buddhists and Buddhism appear to receive less treatment. The conclusions of this research point to Adventist approaches to Buddhists being the least developed of those to the three major world religions during this time.

Move towards Fundamentalist Exclusivism

The twenty-year period studied for this article reveals that there was a wide variety of understandings of other religions being promoted. Most Adventists leaned toward the view that other religions were in decline and would soon

⁷¹S. Thomas, “Reaching the Non-Christians of India,” *Ministry* 14.11 (1941): 5–6.

⁷²Theodore R. Flaiz, “Bangkok Sanitarium,” *Ministry* 21.7 (1948): 27.

⁷³Otto H. Christensen, “Lamaism—Satan’s Great Counterfeit—No. 1,” *Ministry* 13.4 (1940): 5–6.

⁷⁴Kuhn, “A Chinese Funeral Service,” 10.

⁷⁵M. E. Kern, “Progress of the Threefold Message,” *AR* 111.45 (8 November 1934): 11.

disappear. A few seemed to adhere to a type of fulfillment theology, although certainly not on the scale of Farquhar's *The Crown of Hinduism*.

A few others had what is now called a more "inclusivistic view;" they saw God at work in other religions even before Jesus was introduced to them. Flaiz was able to publish an article in the *AR* that was basically a lengthy quotation of a Hindu prince. He prefaces the article with these words, "The truths and high ideals set forth below would be acceptable from the pen of the most devoted Christian writer. However, in fact, they were spoken by the maharajah of Bobbili, a powerful Hindu prince of Southern India."⁷⁶ Another fascinating exception is found in an article by H. G. Woodward entitled "Let Us Talk of Christ: India's Secret Disciples," which leans heavily towards a view that recognizes God at work among Hindus before they hear of Christ.⁷⁷

Towards the end of the 1940s, however, the effect of the debate between Fundamentalism and Modernism had taken its toll. This had major repercussions for Adventist theology as a whole and mission was not immune to it.⁷⁸ Statements such as, "We are as irreconcilably opposed to Modernism as any Fundamentalist could be" were not uncommon in Adventist publications of this time.⁷⁹ The writings of Rebok, who was president of the Seminary in the late 1940s, revealed a strong exclusivism that was akin to much of the fundamental Christian teaching of the time.⁸⁰ Rebok saw the world as being divided into two groups, those "who understand God" and those who do not. He also felt that with every minute that passed, many people around the world were being lost forever.⁸¹

In many ways, most Adventists were leaning already in this direction, and a prominent leader like Rebok was probably preaching to the choir. In the April 1949 issue of *Ministry*, there is a short quotation taken from the *Christian Digest* which is written in blatant exclusivistic terms.⁸² Where

⁷⁶Theodore R. Flaiz, "A Hindu Prince's Conception of God," *AR* 111.6 (8 February 1934): 13.

⁷⁷H. G. Woodward, "Let Us Talk of Christ: India's Secret Disciples," *AR*, 118.45 (11 September 1941): 10–11, 15. Woodward was willing to write that, "Throughout the length and breadth of India there are those who, while having no contact with the missionary, are nevertheless under the spell of Christ" (*ibid.*, 11). He even quotes C. F. Andrews, who was a proponent of fulfillment theology. See *ibid.*, 15.

⁷⁸Actually, all through the 1920s and 1930s there was a push towards fundamentalism among Adventists, which in many ways reached its peak in the 1940s.

⁷⁹Francis D. Nichol, "Macintosh Once More," *AR* 108.50 (10 December 1931): 12. To Nichol's credit, in the same article he actually defends non-Christians right to citizenship in the United States, which was in opposition to the predominate Fundamentalist outspokenness against their right to citizenship.

⁸⁰See Rebok, *Go—Make Christians in all Nations*.

⁸¹D. E. Rebok, "The Christian and Non-Christian Worlds," *AR* 124.47 (20 November 1947): 6–8. See also Rebok, "The Missionary a Link between the Christian and Non-Christian World," *AR* 124.47 (27 November 1947): 11–13.

⁸²"Tremendous Challenge," *Ministry* 22.4 (1949): 40.

this emphasis would lead, and how it would affect the understanding and approaches to other religions by Adventists, remains for another study that would look at the decades after the 1940s.

Summary

The evolution-based theory of religions was an unconscious player in the trends of Adventist understandings of religion, and appears to have played a role in how mission among other religions was undertaken in many regions of the world. Alongside this was the tendency to describe religions without discussing the possible methods or approaches that would be most appropriate for missions to them. This can partly be explainable by considering the historical background of Adventism in North America. It took time for Adventists to observe and describe what they were seeing, in many cases for the first time.

Eventually, there was a recognition that the common missional methods to which Adventists were accustomed were not working in the context of other major religions. This became a more frequent topic for writing, but little actually changed in methodological development. The work of moving forward would be left for subsequent decades. Islam, in many ways, was the religion that received the most attention by Adventists. Much of this was prophecy-related, but, even in the realm of mission, Adventist thinking about Islam eclipsed both Hinduism and Buddhism.

Overall, there was a leaning toward fundamentalism that bred exclusivism.⁸³ This was not surprising considering the context of the times in which there was a major confrontation between the ideologies of fundamentalism and modernism. The repercussions of this were beginning to manifest themselves in the discussions of other religions by the 1940s.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to begin uncovering the history of Adventist approaches to other religions. This article has attempted to place Adventist approaches in the context of the wider Christian movement, recognizing that Adventists did not engage in mission in a vacuum, but rather were influenced by the wider Christian movements around them as they related to other religions. While it is difficult to trace direct connections, the evidence points toward both fulfilment theology and a more exclusivistic theology influencing Adventist approaches to other religions.

⁸³For an example of an article with a strong bent towards exclusivist language see F. C. Gilbert, "He Was Moved with Compassion," *AR* 117.23 (6 June 1940): 12–13. Gilbert uses language such as "among these worshipers may be seen intelligent men and women; but they are heathen" and "a mass of humanity, all of them headed for Christless graves."