

A Call to Walk a Different Path

By VSC

Most of us can point to particular experiences and say, “these were defining moments,” the kind of moments in which we get the sense that God is calling us to be transformed in our thinking and actions and to walk a different path. Such extraordinary opportunities usually come to us when we least expect them. It certainly was that way for me eight years ago when I spent time with some Islamic nomadic women. That event marked the beginning of a journey that challenged me to rethink my perceptions and understanding about Islam and Muslim women in particular.

It all started early one evening, when, in search of a quiet moment with God, I made my

VSC is involved in ministry in a Muslim context and is committed to equipping others to minister effectively among the many diverse Islamic people groups in the countries of the 10/40 window.

way into the desert which surrounded the place where I was staying to watch the sun set. It was an incredibly beautiful sunset, with the sun dropping fast to the horizon with glorious orange rays spreading out over the hot sand of the desert.

As I sat there quietly, I suddenly became aware that the desert was alive. In typical picture postcard fashion, a distant camel train was silhouetted against the bright orange sun as it dropped over the horizon. Close by tiny little plants flourished despite the heat of the desert sun and a small animal scurried past disappearing down a tiny hole. And then I saw her, a small Muslim Arab girl on a huge camel just a few meters away. I watched fascinated as she ran her camel up and down in front of me, until finally, at her command, the camel dropped to its knees allowing her to step onto the sand. It was then that she danced, gracefully moving from one step to another with uninhibited freedom and joy. For a few precious, privileged minutes this little girl allowed me to be drawn into the beauty of her world. Then, without say-

ing a word this wonderful child of God slipped back onto her camel and disappeared into the gathering dusk.

A second major defining experience occurred a few days later in the same desert when a messenger came to tell us that one of the leaders of the local Arab Muslim tribe had had an accident. Several of us women, in the company of some trusted men, set out together for the cluster of shelters belonging to family of the injured man. On arrival we found several large mats spread out on the desert

of the men talked with the injured man and others prepared the evening meal, which in everyday life would be the task of the women. Before long a bowl of food and some water was brought to the mat I was seated on and we all proceeded to eat from the same bowl until it was scraped clean. The women stayed together, shoulder to shoulder, on the mats chatting quietly until finally it was time to go home. The men came to collect the women of their families to escort them back to their shelters.

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sand. The women moved towards one set of mats which were set the furthest away from the injured man who was lying on a bed outside his shelter. The men made for another set of mats close by him. A few minutes later the sun set and we were plunged into complete darkness.

Fortunately, the moon was full that night lighting up the white sand of the desert in stark contrast to the deep black night sky allowing me to have a clear picture of what was happening. We women stayed where we were on our mats, while some

Later, when reflecting on these two specific events and other experiences with this particular group of Muslim women, a kaleidoscope of snapshots flooded my mind: the grace and beauty of the little girl as she danced in the desert; the bond between animal, child, and land; the strong sense of community; a sense of order and defined roles for males and females; women's togetherness and resilience; issues of mobility for women of childbearing age; the strong sense of honor and shame; the hand of a woman on my shoulder when heart had

met heart; the desire to know more about what God requires; and a longing for connection and understanding on their part as well as mine. Before long, persistent questions began to emerge as I further thought through my experience. How do we relate with Muslims and what does God expect of Adventists as we minister among them? What is God's desire for Muslims and especially Muslim women? How do we reach the heart of a Muslim woman with the gospel? As I sought to answer these questions, I found that I had

our preconceived cultural and worldview assumptions and taking a journey into their world in an attempt to understand their culture and how they view God. It includes valuing them as God does.

The creation story is a good example of the value that God places on all of his creation, providing us with some interesting insights. We are all familiar with the account in Genesis as to how God created the world and humankind (male and female) in his image (Gen 1:27). Then God commanded humans to fill

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to change and develop in my own thinking in the following six areas.

Stepping into Their World: Building Loving Relationships

My first discovery was that if we are to relate to Muslims, especially Muslim women, it is vital to step out of our world and into theirs and try to see them as God does. In practical terms this means getting close enough to be in loving relationship with them, as close as Jesus was with people when he was on earth. This is not easy as it means first laying aside

the earth and to "have dominion over every living thing" (Gen 1:28). From the biblical account it is clear that both Eve and Adam were created in the image of God and were charged with the responsibility of caring for the earth. They in effect became the managers of the earth and all living things.

While the Muslim account of creation differs in some details from the biblical account, it can be conceived that the concept of *khalifā*, defined by Kasis (1983:688) as 'viceroy' or 'successor', can be understood to give similar purpose and value.

Musk (205:412) notes that the term *Khalifa* means “Caliph,” someone who is successor of the Prophet and head of the Muslim community. This person is the possessor of *khilāfa*. The word *khilāfa*, he states, has two meanings. On a political level it is succession to the rule of the Muslim community. On a theological level “it indicates the status of Adam, man as trustee for God in the world.” Miriam Adeney affirms this idea by describing Adam and Eve as being “commissioned to be God’s managers or *khalifa*.” In both cases (referring to Christian and Muslims), she says, “Humans are not owners but overseers. We hold delegated authority. It is under God that we administer and develop the earth” (2002:63).

Moreover, it is clear that the work of both sexes is honored at the time of creation from a biblical perspective as Adam and Eve were both commissioned to care for God’s creation (Gen 1:26). In the Qur’an similar value is placed on the work of both sexes. Surah 3:195 says, “And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them: ‘Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: Ye are from, one another’” (‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Alī translation). Many Muslim women (and men) act as good managers and trustees of God’s creation as indeed Adventist women do. In diverse parts of the world I have seen Muslim

women care for the environment, be spiritually attuned, give generously to others and care for their families, as they are able, within their particular social and cultural context.

Viewing Muslim women as managers and trustees of God’s creation along with ourselves, helps us to move away from any temptation that we might have of approaching Islam and its people with suspicion and confrontation. This does not mean uncritical acceptance of all that is involved in their religious and cultural framework, but it does mean starting our assessment and evaluation with an uncluttered and open mind. It means starting our journey from where they are, rather than from within our own cultural and religious framework.

Sharing Faith in Meaningful Ways with Muslims

Another important thing that I discovered in my association with Muslims is that we need to find a way of sharing faith from a biblical perspective which is meaningful in their context. Why is this important? It is because Adventist theology, along with Christian theology in general, is deeply rooted within the Western cultural context, rather than a Muslim context. Thus our theologizing or explanations of revelation are inevitably not meaningful to Muslims since they are not presented from within their context, sources, or categories of thought. “All

theologies are human creations seeking to understand divine revelation. . . . There are no culture-free and history-free theologies. We all read Scripture from the perspectives of our particular context” (Tiéno and Hiebert 2006:223). This is not to say that our theologies are totally culturally shaped and that there are no supra-cultural truths. As Adventists, we understand that God has revealed the essential elements necessary for people’s salvation in the Bible and that these elements can be known, understood, and shared among all people.

the major world religions who operate within honor/shame based cultures (2005:97). Gerald Whitehouse suggests that in the Muslim context two dynamics operate, *shame* and *fear*, with shame being predominant (2006b). Moreover he shows that references to “*shame* appears in ninety-nine verses in the Old and New Testaments (which often refer to the results of sin or wrong acts), while *guilt* appears twice, and *guilty* twenty-six times” (2006b). Such references provide opportunities for developing a biblically-based theology appropriate to

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Darell Whitman makes a significant point when he says that our culture is

like a straitjacket that fits so comfortably so we seldom make it explicit how it has influenced and shaped the way we think theologically, read and interpret the Bible and conceive of our mission (2006:68).

A good example of this is the traditional framing of the gospel as a substitutionary atonement with its guilt/innocence framework (which is a Western construct). H. Hoefler argues this is not understood by people of

the Muslim context within an honor/shame framework.

It is appropriate at this point to consider what is meant by the term theology. Today there are various types of theologies including systematic, biblical, and missiological theologies, each of which have their own strengths and weaknesses (Tiéno and Hiebert 2006). It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine each of these in any depth. However, for the purposes of this paper some recent definitions will be offered which place theology in relation to the

lived reality of people's everyday lives in their specific contexts. These definitions are very helpful when it comes to ministry in the Muslim context. Tite Tiénou and Paul Hiebert, based on the understanding that Scripture is the divine revelation of God, define theology as "our attempt to understand that revelation in our historical and cultural contexts" (2006:221). Kevin Vanhoozer defines theology as "the ministry of Word to the world: the application of the Bible to all areas of life" (2007:15). Jon Dybdahl, having noted that the Seventh-day Adventist Church needs to "redefine theology, particularly in multi-cultural environments" says that since current definitions seem "abstract and not helpful," proposes that "theology is prayerful, reflective application of Biblical content to a specific situation" (2007). These definitions clearly link theology with the context and open up the possibility of developing context specific theologies.

Many of the perceptions that both Christians and Adventists have about Muslims today derive from our understanding of the Bible or to put it another way, our theology. However, many Christians tend to equate theology with Scripture. Theology, they argue, "is an understanding of Scripture, not Scripture itself. Consequently, they must hold their theological convictions strongly, to the point of being willing to die for

them, but must not equate these with Scripture. They must admit that their understanding of truth is partial, biased, and possibly wrong, and test their convictions by returning to Scripture" (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiénou 1999:385).

In a sensitive and insightful reflection on the traditional Adventist definition of theology (delineated by Richard Rice 1985:2), Dybdahl says that we "seem to equate theology with a summary and examination of doctrine" (2007). The result of this is that to question theology is to question the doctrines of the Adventist Church (the teaching and beliefs which the Church holds to be standard), thus limiting our effectiveness, particularly in multi-cultural environments. Having noted the importance of the theological process, Dybdahl then goes on to affirm the Bible as the only authoritative canon and that to "question or alter theology is not to question or alter Scripture" thus opening up the way for Adventists to look at Scripture with fresh eyes. When considering Adventist doctrine Dybdahl (2007) notes that theology can "explicate, explain, defend, apply, question these doctrines on the basis of Scripture but is not limited to them in its scope."

Understanding God's Desire for the Descendants of Ishmael

Today, in response to what God is doing in the Muslim

world, Christian and Adventist academics, missiologists, pastors, theologians, and those ministering among Muslims are prepared to ask questions about whether the way that Islam has been perceived within the Western Christian/Adventist theological framework needs adjustment. Recently, attempts have been made to move beyond traditional interpretations relating to Hagar and Ishmael and their descendents. Such attempts have not only helped me personally to understand that God has a defined purpose for Muslims, but this concept has

of all his brothers,” whereas more recent translations have added a nuance of adversity in the prediction. Thus, the very popular NIV renders the expression “He will live in hostility towards his brothers.” The NRSV says, “He shall live at odds with all his kin.” But, Maalouf argues, the Hebrew translators since the post exilic era do not see any hostility or enmity in the term *al-penē* used here. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* renders the term “he shall dwell alongside his kinsmen and he shall be mixed (with them)” and in Gen 25:18 where the predic-

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also helped those I have been training to think in a different way.

Tony Maalouf (2003:73) has written on the often misunderstood oracle concerning Ishmael found in Gen 16:12 which places Hagar and her son Ishmael in alienation from, or in opposition to, the line of Isaac. In an interesting examination of the way that *al-penē* has been translated and understood, he notes that the KJV translates it “in the presence of all his brethren” and the NASB translates the term “he will live to the east

tion is stated as fulfilled, “he dwelt opposite all his brothers in his inheritance.” Similarly Maalouf says that *Targum Onqelos* translated 16:12 “and in the presence of all his brethren he shall dwell” and 25:18 “he dwelt in the presence of his kinsmen.” A recent Jewish translation renders 16:12 “he shall dwell alongside all his kinsmen,” and 25:18 “they camped alongside all their kinsmen.”

Summing up his thoughts Maalouf notes that “the expression *al-penē* literally means ‘before the face of’, or ‘in front

of. Rendering it 'at odds with' or 'in hostility with' has to depend heavily on contextual considerations" (2003:81). He then argues that the primary meaning of *al-penē* in Gen 16:12 is geographic rather than being predictive of Ishmael living in opposition to his brethren, as is commonly believed. Maalouf then explores the possibility that God's covenantal blessing delivered to Abraham also included Ishmael (who was also circumcised) albeit in a significantly different way since Isaac was the one to carry on God's covenantal promises in history (Maalouf 2003:81-82). "It is true that Ishmael cannot be the seed in whom the gracious implementations of God's covenant will take place. However, his obedience to circumcision put him under the spiritual blessings promised to Abraham. . . . The sign of the covenant in Ishmael's flesh makes him a primary example of the many people who were blessed through Abraham (12:4-5; 17:23-27)" (Maalouf 2003:83). The questions that arise out of this are, What informs these differing translations and what implication does this have for those ministering in a Muslim context? This topic needs to be addressed at another time.

Recently Bill Musk (2005:14) has also engaged in similar reflection. In a series of theological interludes he asks questions of the biblical record which are relevant to ministry in the Muslim

context. In one of these interludes he notes that Ishmael "is included in the covenant sign" but that Keturah's children "are not specially blessed" (2005:42). Musk concludes this particular interlude with Isaiah's vision (Isa 60) where the prophet sees a movement towards God, located at the end of time, which is expressed in terms which include "Ishmael's children with Isaac's in true worship of the living God" (2005:44).

Within Adventism, Jerald Whitehouse, who has worked for many years in different parts of the Muslim world, has consistently encouraged the Adventist Church to comprehensively reconsider its traditional view on Islam and the consequent approach to mission. Building on the work of Robert Darnell (1995), and thinking creatively from a theological and missiological perspective, Whitehouse says that "while Isaac, through his descendants, was to carry God's covenantal promises in history (Gen 17:19, 21) resulting in the birth of the Messiah, Abraham was given a special promise that Ishmael would also be blessed by God and made into a great nation (Gen 17:20; 12:2)" (2006a). Furthermore, he comments that these promises "did not alienate Ishmael and consequently Arab/Eastern people from God's spiritual and material care, but rather included them in God's overall purposes and plans for the world and its people groups"

(2006a). Whitehouse further explains that there is evidence of a spiritual partnership between the two groups of descendents which preserved the “knowledge of the one true God of Abraham and the coming judgment” (2006a).

With this understanding about God’s purposes and concern for the descendants of Ishmael, and the evidence of what God is doing in the Muslim world, the matter of rethinking the Adventist position on Islam and developing appropriate

ent to those that I might ask as a Western Adventist woman. It is important to note that there are two types of Islam. Orthodox Islam, which relates more to the cognitive aspects of faith. This has *theological* components and is concerned with orthodoxy and orthopraxy, and is focused around a comprehensive legalistic code of laws and rituals. Folk or Popular Islam, on the other hand, has more to do with feelings and the existential experiences of life (Woodberry 2004).

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theological and missiological responses becomes an urgent task which needs to be accomplished now, rather than in the future.

Ministering among Muslim Women

With this background of the need to re-evaluate our understanding of Islam, we now turn to look at ministry to Muslim women. Something that has become clear to me as I have been fortunate enough to be in relationship with Muslim women is that the life questions they ask (and the answers they require) are, in the main, entirely differ-

Folk or Popular Islam is rooted in an animistic worldview with a focus on magic, demons, and spirits. These demons and spirits dominate everyday life in the form of the evil eye, curses, *jinn*, or departed saints who exert power over the living. Usually the deepest felt need of a Muslim woman who is involved in popular Islam is to be able to manipulate and appease spirit power through magic or authority over them. Rick Love notes that around 75 percent of Muslims are involved in Folk Islam (2000:22).

While orthodox or formal religion does not condone folk as-

pects, the reality on the ground is that *imams* and ordinary people alike are involved along the different stages of a continuum between low and high practice, often slipping from formal to folk as the need demands. Love estimates that as many as 95 percent of Muslim women are involved [to a greater or lesser extent] in Folk Islam (2000:23). If this is the case then it follows that to reach Muslim women with the gospel our approach to ministry needs to focus on the matters of the heart—the things that affect women as they live out their lives from day to day.

The Questions Muslim Women Ask

One of the major things that I have understood during my personal journey is that it is important to understand the questions that Muslim women ask before we can be engaged in facilitating their discovery of answers from a biblical perspective. As has been noted the majority of Muslim women are involved in Folk Islam to a greater or lesser extent. Their response to the world around them will depend on where they are on the continuum between low and high Folk Islamic practice, or whether they are involved at all. If they are involved, they will be primarily concerned with existential questions originating out of their felt needs. Their questions are more likely to be based on an animistic worldview which focuses

more on “issues of power and success than truth and logical consistency” (Hiebert, Shaw, and Tiéno 1999:77). Thus a woman’s concern will be how she might obtain the power she needs to relate to the unknown, to deal with her powerlessness in her family life, her fear of the future, her helplessness in crisis and sickness, and her vulnerability (see “Felt Needs in Popular Islam” chart, Musk 2003:71).

When a woman’s husband dies she will probably not be primarily concerned with the larger question as to what will happen to her husband after death, although this will be of concern to her immediately after his death. More likely she will be more occupied with questions such as Why is this happening to me now and how will this affect me and my family? Who will pay the bills? This is especially so in contexts where a woman does not have regular income. In a world which is seen as unstable and unpredictable and full of evil powers, her main focus will be on how she can manipulate and control the evil powers which surround her by calling upon Allah, angels, saints, charms, good magic, and other powers to ensure a safe passage for herself and her family. Annette Hall notes that in her experience among North African immigrants, Folk Islam is one of the biggest issues that can keep a Muslim woman from living as Christ wants her to live,

thus it becomes an important issue that needs to be dealt with (2006:252).

Up until recently Christian theology and practice of mission had not directly and vigorously addressed the issues raised by the area of life which Hiebert (1994) refers to as the *excluded middle*, the realm of the spirit world. Lately there has been recognition that there is an urgent need to develop a biblically-based contextualized theology for the Muslim Folk Islamic context. This contextualized theology must address the needs and questions in a way that does not result in a syncretistic form of faith which looks biblically authentic on the surface but below the surface allows people to still be captive to an animistic worldview. Hiebert, Shaw and Tiéno refer to this phenomenon as a *split-level* or *two-tier* Christianity which has emerged out of a mission practice which rejected wholesale the old beliefs and customs (1999:15).

What has been discovered is that the best people to engage in this essential hermeneutical task of contextualization are the Muslim believers who have come to faith. They are the ones who understand the culture, beliefs, and practices at a very deep level. As this task is undertaken it is essential to prayerfully consider, in partnership with those from the wider hermeneutical community, what can remain, what can be

retained but with new meanings added, and what needs to be removed and replaced. This means approaching it from both an 'emic' (understanding culture from inside) and 'etic' (an informed outsider view) perspective (Kraft 2003:76).

Moreover, consideration needs to be given as to when and how to deal with folk practices as ministries develop among Muslim people. Given the *high identity, high practice* nature of the majority of the Muslim world (a community that is socially, economically, and religiously very tightly knit and where the practice of faith is high with regular attendance at the mosque, prayer five times a day as well as the paying of *zakat*, fasting, etc.) In this kind of context to become a Christian is unthinkable and brings shame on the community and would at the very least bring ostracism from the community or immediate death, could it be that ministries must reach a certain strength and size before certain issues are addressed in any significant way? Additionally, careful consideration needs to be given as to what will replace those beliefs and practices that need to be removed.

Another important point to consider is that women have a considerable role in Folk Islam. It gives them agency in a world that often leaves them with a feeling of helplessness and powerlessness. As the new replaces the *old*, the *new* believing com-

munity needs to redefine the roles of women, ensuring that biblical responses replace anything that might be removed. Issues such as these still need to be examined and resolved as ministries develop in various parts of the world.

Contextualization of the Gospel

Another major area of importance that I have come to understand is the need for Adventists to wrestle with the issue of contextualization. As the Adventist Church considers the diverse Muslim context, it is

tion defining it as “framing and explaining what we teach in a way other cultures can readily understand.” He argues that the hesitancy that Adventists feel about the matter is based on equating theology with Adventist doctrine as “truth that does not change.” Furthermore, he notes that many have used the term “the truth” as a synonym for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its belief system. Thus to some, attempts to contextualize the message is seen as a threat to truth as Adventists understand it. As has already been noted, Dybdahl’s

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challenged with the question, How can the heart of Muslim women be reached with the gospel? If Adventists are to answer this question they cannot avoid having in-depth conversations about contextualization which many missiologists and theologians see as the key to setting the gospel free in the Muslim context. This is certainly one of the most complex and urgent issues which the Church faces today as ministries emerge in the field in the Muslim context.

Dybdahl (2007) highlights his burden for contextualiza-

definition places theologizing within a specific situation or context, and Tiénou and Hiebert (2006:223) also place theology within a cultural and historical framework. Kevin Vanhoozer focuses on the application of the Bible to all areas of life, suggesting that faith should not only seek understanding of the Word but also of everyday life and that Christian witnesses should engage culture critically and constructively for the sake of the gospel (2007:18).

An Adventist approach to sharing the gospel with Mus-

lim women depends much on how Islam as a faith system is viewed. If we work from the premise that their faith system is their attempt to meaningfully encounter God, then, as Wilbur Stone notes, we can “work to build upon points of contact within Islam to demonstrate how Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of their religious quest” (2006). Furthermore, if we believe that God is active in revealing himself to all peoples (John 1:9 and White 1940:59, 60) then we can discover the gems of truth that God has preserved in Islam (Whitehouse 2004) and build on those as we walk together with Muslim people in their faith journey.

The questions that we are wrestling with now include, How can we make Christ relevant in an Islamic context and how do we frame our theology with the Muslim in mind? Fredrick Denny makes a relevant comment when he notes that the closest equal of dogmatic and systematic theology in Islam is *Ilm al-kalām* (2005:166). The word *theology* does not exist in Islam as an idiomatic or natural term. It can be expressed in Arabic in which it is known as *‘ilm-al-lāhūt*, the science of divinity, or *al-lāhūtiya*. *Kalām* means words, discussion, discourse, while *Ilm al-kalām* is the science of discourse on divine themes.

The Abbasid period (around 750 CE) was the time when Christian *mutakallimun* (spec-

ulative theologians) utilized *kalām* “as a method of intellectually commending the creditability of Christian doctrines” (Walters 2002:220-225). Thus they presented the teachings of the Christian church in an Arabic idiom conditioned by the Islamic theological frame of reference. This distinctive and creative approach to Christian apologetics was an attempt to find common ground in order to persuade Muslims on subjects such as the unity of the one Creator God, the Trinity of persons (or hypostases) in the one God, and the Incarnation of God the Word (Walters 2002:219, 220). For example, Ammar al-Basri, a Nestorian *mutakallimun* in the ninth century re-expressed the concept of the Trinity, engaging with Muslims on the topic from within their own theological framework. These are simply examples of creative attempts to work within a different framework of thinking which could encourage Adventists to move from the familiar to the unfamiliar in their theologizing.

H. Hoefler adds to the importance of thinking creatively and differently about mission when he advocates the proclamation of a “theologyless” Christ. He says, “What if we taught the story and let its spiritual meaning arise inductively rather than deductively, trusting the Holy Spirit at work through the Word? Might we allow new believers to frame their theological explanations with the

same diversity as we see in the New Testament and throughout the history of Christian theology? Might they come up with even different approaches to acknowledging Jesus' blessing and lordship? Or will we try to compel them to mouth the words that make sense to us, even though they make little sense to them?" (2005:98). While everyone may not agree with this, it is a creative attempt to think outside traditional presentations of Christ in the Muslim context.

visioned three major steps as necessary for ministry in the Muslim context. "The first is contextualization of the communication of the message. The second is contextualizing the new believer's response to the message. This is not something that is dictated to them, but rather they are guided in developing their own response to the gospel under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, the message must be formalized in an expression of theology from within their own framework."

True theology is done in the context of a heart of devotion and relies on the work of the Holy Spirit to guide and lead.

Conclusion

As I have moved along my own pathway of discovery and engaged in ministry in the Muslim context, I have found that presenting biblical truth to Muslims (and to women in particular) is a challenging but entirely possible task, one which needs to be carefully framed and thought through by Adventist missiologists, theologians, ministry leaders, and Muslim believers in cooperation with one another. Whitehouse, at a conference on 18 October 2007 with the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations (GCAMR) staff, said that he en-

To do this is certainly challenging, as any attempt on this level carries with it the risk of syncretism.

Wilbur Stone (2006) makes a very insightful comment which we should take note of when he says, "We need to confront our fear of syncretism. While acknowledging that any attempts at contextualization must deal with the real danger of syncretism, perhaps we need to rather accept that such risks are legitimate as we seek to develop more effective approaches to communicating the gospel among Muslim people." This does not mean an uncritical, unmediated

form of contextualization and theologizing which has created so many problems in recent years in some church planting contexts (Tiéno n.d.) but rather a clearly defined biblically-based process of critical contextualization and theologizing which provides opportunity for people to hear the gospel within their own context and within their own categories of thinking. Mark Harlan, when discussing the Middle Eastern context, makes the following important observation as he notes that “in order to avoid alienating Muslims from their community, mission theology for Arab Muslims must give great attention to adopting Islamic language, sources, categories of thought, customs, and cultural practices” (2005:64).

Finally, as I have ministered in the Muslim context, I have found myself agreeing with Tiéno and Hiebert that indeed “different human contexts raise different questions that require theological reflection” (2006:223). This is the urgent task that is before the Adventist Church as we join with God in what he is already doing in the Muslim world. As Dybdahl says, “True theology is done in the context of a heart of devotion and relies on the work of the Holy Spirit to guide and lead. The same Spirit that inspired the Bible leads the mind in theology. God’s guidance is prayerfully sought” (2007). Given the *high identity* and *high practice* nature of the majority of the

Muslim world and the social and religious framework within which the majority of Muslim women live out their daily lives, Adventists are challenged under the guidance of God to walk a different path as we minister in this context, both from a theological and missiological perspective.

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