

A Seventh-day Adventist approach to Islam

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Introduction

From its inception the Seventh-day Adventist church has espoused the belief that as a distinct organization it has a unique biblical message for a world on the verge of apocalyptic events. Its official doctrine teaches that Seventh-day Adventist self-identity, in a church composed of people from “every nation, kindred, tongue, tribe, and people”, is based not on the cultural uniqueness or the ethno-theology of indigenous religious movements, but upon broad biblical truths and principles applicable to all people everywhere.

This emphasis upon a universal message has had such great appeal around the world, that according to its own official documents it is one of the fastest growing Christian denominations and is represented in over 207 countries. However, this great missionary success in the conversion of individuals from various backgrounds, religions and people groups has not been translated into proportionate success in winning Muslims to the gospel. As in the mission efforts of other churches, the phenomenon of strong resistance of Islamic peoples to the gospel message and low conversion rates has led to greater discussion among Seventh-day Adventist missiologists of the benefits of applied contextualization theory. There is an ongoing discussion by Seventh-day Adventists concerning the creation of indigenous churches/worship groups among resistant Muslim peoples in an attempt to lower the cultural barrier that must be crossed for a Muslim to convert to Christianity.

There is however a particular theological dilemma that SDA's face in attempting to create fully contextualized churches of Muslim background believers because by definition fully contextualized ethnic or socio-ethnic religious bodies develop exclusive,

ethnic or cultural theology. The very real challenge is that the goal of creating culturally homogeneous “Adventist” worship groups among Muslims that in many respects resemble Muslim culture, belief and worship style, runs counter to the inclusive, universal Adventist theology and self image.

Given these dilemmas, in missionary efforts for the conversion of Muslim peoples to Christianity, an approach based on a thematic emphasis of Bible doctrine as believed and understood by the Seventh-day Adventist church and as outlined in its official doctrinal statements provides the ideal and superior alternative to missionary efforts based on contextualization theory by avoiding the theological inconsistencies for Seventh-day Adventists, the ambiguities and the predisposition to syncretism inherent in contextualization.

Research Scope and Methodology

This thesis used a descriptive–evaluative approach. The research relied for detailed descriptions of SDA doctrine and policy on its own official publications in book form, and electronic document format available on the church’s official web site. Equally broad descriptions of modern contextualization theory as it relates to missionary efforts among Muslims was provided with the aid of books on the subject, books in CD ROM format, online journals and pamphlets and brochures.

Descriptions of Muslims belief and doctrine were drawn from a variety of original sources such as the Koran, hadith material, Muslim commentaries and other original sources in both French and English.

In its evaluative aspect the thesis gave special significance to the SDA church’s official policy of the rejection of the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation

upon which much of the church growth and contextualization movements are based. In the evaluation phase this document sought to answer several research questions: How does SDA theology conflict with attempts to contextualize the gospel among Muslims? What ambiguities exist in such efforts that make this an approach that it is not ideal? What alternatives are there to contextualized ministry to Muslims?

The Seventh - day Adventist church like many other Christian denominations is grappling with the very real problem of how to win Muslims in larger numbers to Christ. As in many other churches, one vehicle being explored as a possible key to achieving the goal of seeing Muslim multitudes come to Christ is a contextualized approach that incorporates Muslim cultural and religious forms and seeks to blend these beliefs and practices with Christian worship and doctrine.

It is a goal of the research outlined in this thesis to study out, elucidate, and evaluate some of the dangers and problems of this approach especially as it relates to SDA doctrine and to propose an approach that is less problematic and has great potential for success.

It is vital that in such ventures as missions where syncretism is a potential hazard, that these dangers be clearly elucidated and that alternative measures be explored. As contextualization among Muslims is still a relatively new phenomenon in SDA circles, it is important that clear guidelines be established for all such ventures and where there have been errors leading to syncretism that these mistakes be corrected. As another voice in the debate and discussion surrounding how to approach Muslim people with the gospel, this paper has for another goal to lend a constructive voice toward developing an

Adventist approach to Islam that is true to the Bible and yet sensitive to the special issues surrounding Muslim evangelism.

Contents

Introduction	III
Research Scope and Methodology	IV
A. The foundations of contextualization placed in context (the 1970s)	8
B. Pre-contextualization missions thought	10
1.1. Accommodation	10
1.2. Indigenization and enculturation	11
C. Contextualization versus indigenization	12
D. Dimensions of contextualization	13
E. The theme of cultural relevance	14
F. Contextualization and dynamic equivalence theory	14
G. Dynamic equivalence churches	16
H. The influence of Phil Parshall	17
I. Contextualization as a hermeneutic principle	18
J. Dynamic equivalence, contextualization and hermeneutics	18
K. The theological foundations of contextualization	19
L. Presuppositions of higher criticism	21
M. Formulating a precise definition	24
N. Approaches to Muslim contextualization	24
O. Arriving at a system of classification	25
1.1 Ambiguities in Classification	26
1.2 Use of the Table and Further Refinements in Classification	27
P. The C4/C5 Controversy	28
Q. Revisiting hermeneutics	29
R. Seventh-day Adventists and Muslim contextualization	29
1.1 The historic Adventist message of the three angels and Islam	30
II. The Evangelical Contribution,	32
Contextualization of the Gospel Message among Muslims	32
A. A brief history	33
B. C4 level contextualization not new	35
C. A question of theology and hermeneutics, the great debate	35
D. The direction of contextualization theory, arriving at C5	36
E. A closer look at the rationalizations for C5 contextualization	40
1.1 Misleading assertions of C5	40
F. The vital question	42
G. Ethno-hermeneutics	43
1.1 Applied ethno-hermeneutics	44
H. Diminishing the importance of doctrine	46

III. The practice of high spectrum Muslim contextualization, considered from an Adventist perspective	48
A. The use of the Koran as an evangelistic tool	49
1.1 A question of objectives	51
B. Reciting the Muslim creed and praying the Muslim Salat	52
1.1 A displacement of true worship	52
1.2 The authority of Muhammad	53
1.3 The direction of the prayer	53
1.4 Ritual washing	54
1.5 Replacing objectionable aspects of the Salat	54
C. Other areas of C5 practice	55
1.1 Islamic Christology	58
1.2 The titles of Jesus	59
IV. Developing an Adventist approach to Islam	62
A. Step 1 Understanding deeply the Muslim mindset	63
1.1 Studying the culture	63
1.2 Areas for consideration	65
1.3 Variety of factors at work	66
1.4. Muhammad and the Koran	66
1.5. Polygamy	67
1.6. Very strong social ties	68
1.7. Other themes	69
B. Step 2 Initial spiritual contact, emphasize the similarities	69
1.1. Meeting objectives	69
1.2. Casual conversation	70
1.3. Emphasize holism	70
1.4. Emphasize prayer	72
1.5. Emphasize the importance of the family	73
C. Step 3 Dimensions of the Adventist approach, the application	75
1.1. The Practical component	75
1.1 A. Medical missions	75
1.1 B. Sanitariums	76
1.1 C. Public health education	77
1.1 D. Hygienic Restaurants (Health food restaurants)	77
1.1 E. Development work among the poor	77
1.1 F. Relief work	78
1.1 G. Other Areas of ministry	78
D. Presenting the Bible	78
1.1 The five pillars of Islam and Adventism	78
V. Weighing the Approaches	83
A. Adventists and C5 contextualization	84
B. Adventists reject historical criticism	84
C. SDA self identity	86
D. Contextualization an assessment by one of its authors	87
E. Considering our alternatives, reasons to adopt a holistic approach	89
1.1. Clearing the confusion of mandates	90
1.2. Developing an alternative, holistic apologetic	91
1.3. A high view of scripture	93
F. Characteristics of the integrated, holistic approach	94
1.1. A Belief in the prophetic messages of Revelation	94

1.2. Avoids the application of a Muslim hermeneutic to the Bible	95
1.3. The divine-human Christ as the Son of God and son of man	96
1.4. Will not diminish the importance of doctrine	97
1.5. Will avoid shallow understandings of scripture and history	97
1.6. Avoid unsound, high spectrum arguments	98
G. A final word	99
References	101

Review of the background

Contextualization of the gospel among Muslims has become a foundational and generally accepted principle of modern missions. Yet, defining the meaning, the limits, and the application of this term *contextualization*, especially as it relates to Muslim missions, has been an extremely challenging task. It has been so challenging a task that a simple, uniform definition of the expression still eludes Evangelicals, Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Seventh-day Adventists and many other Christian denominations and groups evangelizing Muslims. While most missions and missionaries seek to apply contextualization theory, the term is so amorphous that there exists a realization that there is not single, widely accepted characterization (Kärkkäinen 2000: 261-275). One leading missiologist admits that the term is in fact a description of multitudinous approaches when he says:

“It is obvious that a wide variety of meanings, methods, and models are attached to the word *contextualization*.” (Hesselgrave 1995a: 115-119)

In another place in almost humorous tones he says

“Still in its infancy, that word [contextualization] has already been defined and redefined, used and abused, amplified and vilified, coronated and crucified.” (Hesselgrave, 1984)

There have been some attempts at classifying the plethora of options available in contextualized hermeneutical paradigms, contextualized missiological models, and contextualized worship forms by reducing all to an uncomplicated matrix or continuum. While these attempts have been helpful they have done little to reduce contextualization to an unambiguous concept. Professor A. Scott Moreau, chairman of the department of Anthropology and Intercultural Studies at Wheaton College, has sought to classify and organize a sampling of varying definitions and approaches (Moreau 2004: 1-34). Yet even his masterful and comprehensive attempt to

synthesize, organize and classify the cacophony of contextualized definitions, approaches, and angles of doing contextualized missions yields a dozen definitions, a half dozen paradigms, and at least a score of models.

Table 1 Sampling of Definitions of Contextualization
(Adapted from the compilation of A.S. Moreau)

Definition	Key Thoughts
Contextualization is a dynamic process of the Church's reflection on the interaction of the Text as Word of God and the context as a specific human situation in obedience to Christ and His mission in the world...Contextualization is not a passing fad or a debatable option. It is essential to our understanding of God's self-revelation. The incarnation is the ultimate paradigm of the Text into context.... In his life and teaching he (Jesus Christ) is the supreme model of contextualization. <i>Bruce Nicholls, "Doing Theology in Context", pp. 101, 106</i>	Context driven, incarnation
Contextualization refers to the process through which the substance of biblical revelation is interpreted and applied in terms of the categories and thought forms of those who are receiving the message. Systematic theology, like counseling and homiletics, seeks to be context-specific in its application of biblical truth. <i>John Jefferson Davis, Theology Primer, p. 21</i>	Thought forms familiar to the culture
Contextualization is concerned with the communication of the substance of divine revelation into the forms and structures of the recipients' culture in such a way that the integrity of the gospel and Christianity are not compromised, but also in such a way that the gospel and the Christian way can be fully internalized by the person in that culture. Contextualization aims to address the person in his actual situation. <i>Stanley Gundry, "Evangelical Theology", pp. 11</i>	Transmission of the "substance" of the gospel
The contextualization of the Gospel and Christian theology then calls for a discerning of the times, involvement in one's particular situation, and participation in the ongoing mission of the church wherever it is situated. It brings the text (Bible) into a dynamic interaction with the context (life situation). From this interaction, a life-situation or contextual theology emerges. As a <i>theologia in via</i> (pilgrim theology), contextual theology is neither final nor complete. From this perspective, Christian theology is not static but dynamic, and theological reflection is an ongoing enterprise. <i>Rodrigo D. Tano, Theology in the Philippine Setting, p. 10</i>	The biblical text in a modern cultural context.
Thus, acceptable contextualization is a direct result of ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text, consciously submitting to its authority, and applying or appropriating that meaning to a given situation. <i>Hesselgrave and Rommen, Contextualization, p. 202</i>	Applying the meaning of the text to a given situation
Contextualization is the inner dynamic of the theologizing process. It is not a matter of borrowing already existing forms or an established theology in order to fit them into various contexts. Rather contextualization is capturing the meaning of the gospel in such a way that a given society communicates with God. Therein theology is born. <i>Tite Tienou, "Contextualization of Theology", p. 51</i>	Capturing the meaning of the gospel and transmitting.
... in using the word contextualization, we try to convey all that is implied in the familiar term indigenization, yet seek to press beyond for a more dynamic concept which is open to change and which is also future-oriented. Contextuality ... is that critical assessment of what makes the context really significant in the light of the <i>Missio Dei</i> . It is the missiological discernment of the signs of the times, seeing where God is at work and calling us to participate in it. Authentic contextuality leads to contextualization.... This dialectic between contextuality and contextualization indicates a new way of theologizing. It involves not only words, but actions. <i>Shoki Coe, "Contextualizing Theology", pp. 21-2</i>	A new way of theologizing.
Contextualization is not limited to Christian circles. All faiths must adapt to various cultural settings if they are to survive, let alone grow. David Hesselgrave provides a general definition that takes this into account. Contextualization is the process whereby representatives of a religious faith adapt the forms and content of that faith in such a way as to communicate and (usually) commend it to the minds and hearts of a new generation within their own changing culture or to people with other cultural backgrounds. <i>Hesselgrave, "Revelational Epistemology", p. 694</i>	Adaptation of the biblical message
Contextual Theology could be defined quite simply as the conscious attempt to do theology from within the context of real life in the world. The Institute for Contextual Theology of the AACC, "What Is Contextual Theology", p. 11 It is a way of doing theology that takes into account four things: (1) the spirit and message of the Gospel; (2) the tradition of the Christian people; (3) the culture of a particular nation or region; and (4) social change in that culture, due both to technological advances on the one hand and struggles for justice and liberation on the other. <i>Bevans, "Models of Contextual Theology", p. 186</i>	Doing theology from within the actual life context of the hearers
The development of a genuine "local theology" demands a "complex process, aware of contexts, histories, of the role of experience, of the need to encounter the traditions of faith in other believing communities. It is also obvious that contexts are complex that histories can be variously read, that experience can be ambiguous, that the encounter in faith is often dimly understood. But how do all these factors interact? I would suggest that their relationship be seen as a dialectic one, using the notion of dialectic in a broad sense. Dialectic is to be understood as a continuing attention to first one factor, and then another, leading to an ever-expanding awareness of the role and interaction of each of these factors. These three factors can be seen as roots feeding the development and growth of a local theology. They must interact to produce the full and living reality. The three principal roots beneath the growth of local theology are gospel, church, and culture. <i>Schreiter, Constructing, p. 20</i>	Developing a local theology

In spite of the admission of some of the field's most notable scholars that it is nearly impossible to define contextualization in simple terms, the preceding table adapted from Moreaus's reduction of contextualization theory does help to give some structure for arriving at an understanding of the most prominent features of this body of mission theory irregardless of the model.

- I. *Contextualization is dynamic and progressive.* For its protagonists this is good, as it reflects the ever-changing world in which we live. For its detractors this dynamic state of flux is one of its greatest weaknesses, giving evidence of its inclination toward syncretism. This paper will demonstrate that modern contextualizers in Muslim missions have already confirmed this inherent weakness by going far beyond what was intended by some of the pioneers of Muslim contextualization. See the table on the preceding page, especially the definitions of Nicholls, Coe, and Hesselgrave.
- II. *Contextualization relies heavily upon cultural anthropology* in its interpretation and application of the Bible. It is universally accepted that contextualization theory would not exist were it not for cultural anthropology (Moreau 1995: 121-125). By relying so heavily on cultural anthropology in both its theoretical structure and its methodological application, contextualization arguably gives undue weight to modern culture and other sources external to the Bible in interpretation and application (Madany 1995: 1-8). If this is true, contextualization theory especially on the higher end of the spectrum, is very vulnerable to the argument that it is in fact a form of "applied historical criticism" lifted from the seminary classroom and applied to the mission of the church.

III. *Contextualization tends toward a localization of theology.* With its emphasis on a given cultural setting and the interpretation of scriptures for that setting, contextualization engenders varying theologies finally arbitrated not by the Inspired Word itself but by the culture. There is therefore in high spectrum contextualization, an Asian theology, an African theology, a South American theology, A Muslim-contextualized theology and a theology contextualized for any number of peoples, tribes, nations, languages and religious backgrounds. While it is obvious that for many contextualizers this localization is only in cultural, non-biblical areas, for a great number of other contextualizers localization means the development of a distinct cultural theology or *ethno-hermeneutic* (Whelchel 2000: 125-133). An *ethno-hermeneutic* is a paradigm of scriptural interpretation rooted in a particular cultural setting. This paper will demonstrate that the ethno-hermeneutics of high spectrum contextualizers and the attendant self identity of heavily contextualized Muslim converts cannot logically coexist with a traditional, Biblically based Seventh-day Adventist hermeneutic and self identity.

IV. *Contextualization tends to interpret historical failures to win large numbers of Muslims to Christ as the result of the cultural insensitivity of past generations of missionaries.* There are several presuppositions inherent in this line of reasoning (Madany 1995:1-8):

- a) Large numbers of Muslims not converting to Christianity is interpreted as failure. This paper will weigh this assumption in

light of scriptural and historical evidence of what constitutes success in missions.

- b) This “failure” is seen to be the result of cultural insensitivity on the part of missionaries often to the exclusion of other factors such as cultural prejudice on the part of Muslims, the resources and emphasis invested in Muslim missions and the biased view of Christianity taught in the Koran.
- c) This “failure” of the church to win many converts is seen as less of a spiritual problem of the church than as an anthropological problem according to contextualizers.

The 1970’s would prove to be a turning point in officially inaugurating the concepts of contextualization; there were several streams of endeavor, somewhat independent, that would eventually coalesce to become the framework for this new field of study. Yet long before the 1970’s, here and there practices and philosophies, some biblical others not, were afoot that would greatly impact and shape the discussions and decisions of the seventies.

A. The foundations of contextualization placed in context (the 1970s)

Shoki Coe of Theological Educational Fund (TEF), an entity of the World Council of Churches, (WCC), first used the term in a report in 1972 (Hesselgrave 1995b: 139-145). As it was presented, this term was an expansion of the concepts *accommodation*, *indigenization* and *enculturation* which were already in use in missiological circles. Coe made clear that contextualization was intended to be a new way of theologizing. If it was to be a new way of theologizing then it was to have an accompanying hermeneutic for theologizing is done in the context of a

hermeneutical paradigm. It was to go beyond each of the previously mentioned concepts in both scope and application. Coe said that it must also account for “the process of secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice which characterized the historical movements in the Third World.

Contextualization theory did not spring up in a vacuum. In fact, if one is to be true to the principles of the theory, he must admit that contextualization was a product of its times. It was indeed a culturally conditioned notion that found its impetus in dissatisfaction with the status quo of theological education. Coe implicitly alludes to the fact that the Christian churches in Europe and North America, in the estimation of many, were not theologically prepared for the turbulent 1960’s and 1970’s. The early seventies were still pitched with the fervor of the vast social and political changes taking place in both the developed and two third worlds and at least a few saw the Christian church’s interaction with the world as irrelevant to the actual context. Some of the most influential voices of the late sixties had relegated the Christian churches in general to be irrelevant guardians of the status quo whose theology was built upon false concepts of colonialism and domination (King 1986: 497-504).

Coe in his Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund (1970-77), was underlining this growing realization and dissatisfaction with theological education. He in this document identified that there was a widespread crisis of faith in the face of the social justice and human development emergency of the times. The WCC sought to address this dichotomy that attested to the church’s perceived irrelevance. As Hesselgrave and Rommen point out, the Council and Coe in particular were dealing specifically with the areas of social injustice and crisis of faith (Hesselgrave and Rommen 1989: 28) in their formation of the new concept (Smith, R.A. 2004: 1-10).

Churches that were not part of the council initially looked askance at this new theory when it was first articulated in 1972. Dr. Charles Kraft describes best the reactions of much of Christendom:

“Though its World Council origins led many evangelicals to at first reject the term, during the mid 1970’s, we began to take seriously the broadening of the concept and to find both the term and the discussion useful and instructive.” (Kraft 2004: 1-2)

B. Pre-contextualization missions thought

1.1. Accommodation

The term accommodation, as used in pre-contextualist missions had to do with the missionary accommodating his religion to the cultural practices of the receptor community. Largely, a Jesuit concept used in India and China in the 1500’s it most closely resembles modern contextualist philosophy.

Established as an order in 1534 the Jesuits became a powerful missionary force for the Catholic Church from that time until the latter half of the 18th century. A priest and missionary by the name of de Nobili experimented heavily with what he called accommodation of the Christian message to the local Brahmin and Hindu culture. His conceptualization was chiefly concerned with the adaptation of local rites (in de Nobili’s case it was Hindu) and festivals to a Christian meaning. In one typical instance he replaced the idols in front of which each New Year the Hindus mixed their new rice with milk as an offering to the gods, with a cross (Johnson 1987: 1-7).

De Nobili’s work along with that of other Jesuits stirred what was called the Malabar rites controversy in the Catholic Church between the Dominicans and the Jesuits. The Church eventually decided in favor of the Dominicans who saw the work of de Nobili and others as scandalous and compromising.

1.2. Indigenization and enculturation

Paul Heibert (see Parshall 1980) states that indigenization is the adaptation or enculturation of the message of the gospel to the surrounding context; he further states that without this necessary step of enculturation making sure that a Christian meaning is conveyed, syncretism will result.

Indigenization is often linked to the three self concepts first proffered in the writings of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson in the middle of the 19th century. According to the three self model a truly indigenous church was to be self supporting, self governing, and self propagating. It asked such questions as “Who is in leadership?” and “Who ‘owns’ the church?” It dealt with areas of training local leadership and speaking the national language. Yet, by the 70’s these principles were coming under increased scrutiny as lacking in important cross-cultural missions qualities. By that time many were saying that the three self indigenization movement was superficial, for while planted churches may have been developing an indigenous face, the agenda was still western.

Charles Taber (Taber 1979) highlighted the growing dissatisfaction with indigenization among evangelicals when he compared the ideology of indigenization with the newer concept of contextualization. By the time that contextualized theory was coming into prominence most evangelicals in the mid seventies were already beginning to think of indigenization as a relic of the colonial era. It was felt that indigenization did not go far enough in dealing with the burning issues of the day. Taber and other scholars began to question whether a church run by nationals was necessarily truly indigenous. He suggested that contextualization recognizes the cultural context of the receptor of a biblical message and that indigenization did not necessarily do this. According to him indigenization contented itself with appropriate

liturgy, training of national leadership, and the proper use of symbols and architecture in cross-cultural evangelism. These he labeled as superficial. Taber argues that contextualization expands the indigenization concept of previous missionary eras to include political, social, and economic dimensions as well (Taber 1979).

Table II. Taber's Comparison of Indigenization and Contextualization

Contextualization Concepts	Indigenization Concepts
<i>Seeks to deal with the whole life of man and to adapt the gospel to his life circumstances.</i>	Indigenization focused on the cultural dimension of human existence to the exclusion of the social and political realms.
<i>Context sees culture as in a constant dynamic state and seeks to have a theology brought enough to account for cultural change.</i>	According to Taber indigenization saw culture as rather static and unchanging and did not take into account its dynamism.
<i>This theory accounts for the newer "global model" of missions in which the world, even its tribal elements, becomes more connected every day.</i>	He states that indigenization was based on the fading tribal model of missions, in which an isolated and primitive people was cut off from the rest of the world.
<i>"And since mission was going on out there, and the problems of cultural imperialism were real out there, indigenization took on a de facto exotic flavor. But contextualization insists on two additional insights: that the demonic as well as the divine is manifest in all societies and cultures, and that the same processes of cultural confrontation and/or syncretism plague churches in the West as in any other place, and must be faced with the same attitudes and means."</i>	Indigenization was seen as a "mission field" phenomenon only. It was not something that happened at the home level for missionaries.
<i>Contextualization theory de-emphasizes the transcendent aspects of the gospel and seeks to adapt the message to the specific cultural setting of the hearers/receptors.</i>	Indigenization dealt with the universality of the gospel and those aspects which superseded cultural boundaries and barriers. An important critique of Dr. Taber is that indigenization was tied to colonialism.
	Indigenization theory according to Dr. Taber did not allow for the full

C. Contextualization versus indigenization

Dr. Taber's characterizations of contextualization and indigenization raise two key issues that this paper will address. The first of these is his referral to the belief that every culture has within it both manifestations of the demonic and the divine. Many missionaries in the Muslim context, building on this principle have moved into syncretism. The reasoning follows like this: Mohammed brought about religious reforms calling his people back to monotheism and the worship of the one, true God; therefore he must have been led of God. If he was indeed led of God then Islam in its purist and original state is a God-inspired religion. Therefore, Islam today as a socio-religious system, although changed and affected by winds and currents of colonialism

and political domination, discontent, poverty and political corruption of Arab leaders, is essentially, at its core a manifestation of God at work in the social setting of the ancient East. The next conclusion of those following in this train of thought is startling:

“...since their religious heritage is not evil, Muslims should not have to give it up to become Adventist [Christian]”, (Tinker 1997: 1-4). As a result of such reasoning, questions such as the following are posed by growing numbers of missionaries: Should Muslims become Christians?; (Dutch 2000: 15-24) or should they pray the Muslim Salat?

The other controversial point that Dr. Taber underlined is that proper contextualization can be accomplished in Muslim ministry only when Christian missionaries possess a spirit of repentance for Christian sins toward Muslims of the past, such as the Crusades (Taber 1979). He underlines this suggestion with the proposition that the Muslim sense of history runs deeper than that possessed by the average Christian and thus he (the Muslim) in his world view sees the modern missionary as part of the same system.

D. Dimensions of contextualization

The 1980's saw two significant developments in contextualization theory, a full acceptance of and development of contextualization in the Christian community at large and the development of Muslim contextualized approaches.

Still without a consensus definition the outcome during this decade was to identify contextualization's dimensions and ramifications. For some, contextualization revolves primarily around biblical interpretation (Hesselgrave 1995a: 115-119). For others it is multidisciplinary and involves the application of

principles gleaned from the social sciences. R. A. Smith has greatly simplified the varying dimensions of contextualization into three classes: Linguistic contextualization involving only language forms and translation, liberal or syncretistic contextualization which makes anthropology normative, and finally modified, moderate contextualization in which the missionary examines his own pre-conceived ideas and then renders the biblical message as free of his cultural baggage as possible (Smith, R.A. 2004: 1-10). While Smith in his work admittedly refers to his classification as very simple, generally speaking contextualization efforts do fall into the classifications he has suggested and for purposes of this research these three classifications are used.

E. The theme of cultural relevance

Someone who would greatly come to influence both contextualization theory and Muslim missions in the eighties is Charles Kraft. From his post at Fuller Seminary, he worked to expand the theories in the area of cultural relevance and cross cultural gospel communication in his seminal work of 1979, *Christianity in Culture*. In this book he argued for the principle of “dynamic equivalence” churches (of) New Testament models as the appropriate approach to contextualization. He further expanded this idea for Muslims (Kraft 1980). In this work Kraft was building on what heretofore had been a linguistic principle invented and developed in the 1960’s by a leader and translator of the American Bible society, Eugene Nida.

F. Contextualization and dynamic equivalence theory

Dynamic equivalence was a theory he developed in response to the translation of the Bible into primitive languages that was at that time occurring. In dynamic

equivalence theory the translator seeks a “functional equivalent” to the intended meaning of the original author when translating a message into another language. The translator taking into account the meaning of the author as he understands it seeks to transfer the meaning into the new language using equivalent thoughts. He uses a host of anthropological and critical principles to determine what the biblical author said and then to determine how best to repeat it so that the message elicits the author’s hoped for response on the part of the receptor in the new cultural setting. There are at least two variables in dynamic equivalence theory: the translator’s understanding of the text and the projected (hoped for) response of the gospel’s receptors. These two variables are in turn dependent upon many other variables, chief of which is the Biblical scholarship paradigm and presuppositions used by the translator to arrive at his understanding of the text.

The product of this process is said to be a “dynamic equivalent”, a message as relevant to the receiver in his culture as the message was to the author (biblical writer) in his own culture. Although the substance of the message may have changed significantly in the process, those who use this principle argue that ideally it achieves in the hearer the intended response of the author.

Many examples from missionary experience exist that could be said to highlight the use of this principle. In one, the term “Ox of God” is used as a replacement for the term “lamb of God” used in the Bible in reference to Jesus. One author in referring to this practice points out how closely the ox is tied to East African Dinka culture (Anderson 1998: 1-3). There are so many parallels in their culture between the symbolic roles played by oxen and that of lambs in biblical culture that their hymns and other Christian adaptations of the gospel to their culture refer to the “Ox of God” instead of the Lamb of God.

Phil Parshall provides us with an even more powerful and controversial example when he suggested in his book *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism* that a dynamic equivalent to Christian baptism as an initiation rite be sought out for Muslims converts. His reasoning was that since Muslims are so resistant to conversion, even to the point of violence, that it would be better to find a rite of initiation into the church that would be more acceptable to the culture. His suggestion caused such a firestorm of opposition that he quickly retracted it.

The principle of dynamic equivalence contrasts with the more traditional word equivalent biblical translation method that binds the translator to follow the original text as closely as possible. There are many who take the position that dynamic equivalence makes the cultural context normative. The burden of the development of dynamic equivalence theory was cultural relevancy and a desired response. That the host culture must hear the gospel in representations that are understandable to it, is a basic tenet of this theory (Plastow 1999).

G. Dynamic equivalence churches

Charles Kraft drawing from Nida's theories built a foundation that would prove to be the basis for much of today's contextualization theory as it applies to Muslims. He was one of the first to call for the formation of "dynamic equivalence" churches in mission efforts. Adding his voice to Kraft was that of Paul Heibert (Heibert 1980) an anthropologist who stressed the creation or use of indigenous forms in worship that provided a functional equivalent (dynamic equivalent) to western, Christian forms.

H. The influence of Phil Parshall

While there are a number of individuals who served to build on Kraft's work none was more influential in the area of specific application of Kraft's principles to Muslim contextualization and the development of the definition of the term contextualization as it applies to Muslim evangelism than Phil Parshall. Parshall, in his own words was longing for a new approach to Muslim evangelism when he returned for furlough from several years of missionary work in the country of Bangladesh (Parshall 2001: 1-4).

He enrolled in a masters program at Trinity theological seminary for the 1972 – 1973 school years where the possibility of applying church growth principles to Muslim evangelism first occurred to him (ibid.)

Returning to the field with a team of over twenty individuals he experimented with a variety of Islamic forms and practices with the exception of the Salat, the Muslim ritual prayer, and accepting the prophetic role of Muhammad. In the late 1970's Parshall enrolled in a doctoral course under the guidance of none other than Charles Kraft at Fuller Seminary. His doctoral dissertation was crafted into the book *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism* (Parshall, 1980).

Interestingly, Parshall himself has come out quite strongly against the progressive application of the principles he pioneered into areas of Muslim doctrine that he believes should not be experimented with. He believes that efforts at contextualization in these areas would lead only to syncretism (Parshall 1998: 404-406, 409-410). Such practices as praying in the Muslim prayer line, attending prayers at the mosques, accepting the role of Mohammed as a true prophet of God, and conversion of missionaries to Islam are all accepted mission "practices" based upon the very principles that Parshall espoused (Massey 2000: 5-14).

I. Contextualization as a hermeneutic principle

Dynamic equivalence theory, a contextualized principle, gave birth to the paraphrased editions of the Bible in English, the best known of which is the Living Bible. The methods and presuppositions of dynamic equivalence and contextualization in their purest sense depend on one's view of the Bible, its inspiration, and textual criticism (Douglass 1994: 69-73). Gerhard Hasel seems to speak directly to this issue when he warns of the dangers of allowing the cultural context to influence the interpretation of the Bible to such an extent that the translation rendered is allegorical straying from the meaning of the original text (Hasel 1985: 72-75)

Since ultimately contextualization is a theological question, before arriving at a functional definition, the next section will explore the theological underpinnings of this system.

J. Dynamic equivalence, contextualization and hermeneutics

The linkage and parallels between dynamic equivalence theory, the historical critical method of biblical hermeneutics, and aspects of contextualization theory are incontrovertible. In his a book, *Reaching Muslims for Christ*, William J. Saal outlines several of the presuppositions of dynamic equivalence theorists as they seek to lift this principle out of its original linguistic realm and apply it to contextualization efforts among Muslims. He lists the following:

- 1. God created the human race in His own image.*
- 2. Man and woman, tempted by Satan, rebelled against God.*
- 3. God, in His providence and grace toward all people, restrains sin and corruption from bringing about humanity's total ruin and destruction*

4. *God has condescended to reveal Himself, using human culture as the medium for his self-disclosure.*
5. *The process by which God has revealed Himself to man (inspiration) is best described as a process of translation, not one of dictation.*
6. *The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the sole authentic repository of God's self-revelation.*
7. *The substance of the divine self-revelation is found in the gospel of the kingdom of God.*
8. *Books claiming divine authority, such as the Bible and the Qur'an, must be interpreted by the same principles and in the same manner as all other books and human communications.*
9. *The translation of the Scriptures into the different languages of the world is a part of the divine plan for mankind.*

Aspects numbers four, five and eight are extremely important to the issue at hand because they involve theological dimensions that are found in historical-critical hermeneutics. The suggestion that God uses culture to express himself to mankind does have elements of truth in it. However if a particular culture in its present manifestation is an expression of God's self disclosure to a particular people, that culture then can be normative in Bible interpretation. Culture is thus elevated to a place equal to that of the Bible.

K. The theological foundations of contextualization

During and after the enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries scholars in both North America and Europe began to apply newly constructed literary/critical tools to the research of the Bible. Thus began the science of higher biblical criticism.

As opposed to lower criticism which is chiefly concerned with internal textual criteria for determining the meaning of the biblical text, higher criticism brought external and “independent” scientific factors to bear in discovering the meaning of scriptures.

Higher critical studies of the Bible were greatly influenced by two German theologians: Ernst Troeltsch and Albrecht Ritschl (Microsoft 1999b). Ritschl a Protestant and influenced by the teachings of philosopher Emanuel Kant, taught that religious faith had to do more with judgments of value than with concrete fact (Microsoft 1999b). His chief concerns were an emphasis on history in religion, redemption, the atonement and the kingdom of God. His most influential work was *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (3 volumes, 1870-1874; trans. 1872-1900).

Ernest Troeltsch was greatly influenced by the teaching of Professor Ritschl and is generally credited with popularizing higher criticism of the Bible. He was especially marked by the special emphasis that Ritschl placed on history. Troeltsch denied that theology can attain an absolute dogmatic truth that transcends historical and cultural circumstances. In his work he tried to reconcile this historical relativism with his belief in permanent and universal ethical values. In writing of Troeltsch and his influence on critical study of the Bible E. Edward Zinke of the Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Research Institute (Zinke 1981: 1-8) says the following:

“The historical-critical method has been under development since the age of the enlightenment. It was popularized for biblical studies by Ernst Troeltsch at the end of the nineteenth century. He enunciated three basic principles to guide the historian: (1) the principle of criticism or methodological doubt indicates that all knowledge relies upon the judgment of historical science and receives a status or probability, (2) the principle of analogy indicates that present experience is the criteria of probability for that which took place in the past—all events are in principle similar, (3) the principle of correlation indicates that events are so interrelated that a change in one phenomenon necessitates a change in its causes and effects. Thus historical explanation rests upon a chain of cause and effect.”

10. Historical literacy criticism of the Bible as it is known developed largely in Germany where it took on several forms. Some of the more prominent manifestations are form criticism, structural criticism, source criticism, and redaction criticism. All of these used originally as tools for studying secular and classical literature during and after the enlightenment, sought to get at the true meaning and implications of a given secular text through the use of multitudinous academic methodologies, human reasoning, and the application of principles discovered in the sciences. Higher Biblical criticism is the application of these principles to the study of the meaning of the Bible. Mr. Saal's fifth aspect of contextualization in his list was that *Books claiming divine authority, such as the Bible and the Qur'an, must be interpreted by the same principles and in the same manner as all other books and human communications.*

L. Presuppositions of higher criticism

Higher criticism carries with it a large set of presuppositions about the Bible and the nature of inspiration that run counter to the belief of many conservative Christian and evangelical bodies and in a very special sense the Seventh-day Adventist church. Some of the more prominent of these suppositions are the following:

1. One must start with the secular world as a norm in determining meaning and deciding what happened in the past (Reid 2001: 1-8).
2. The Bible must be verified and studied as any other secular book, using secular science to confirm its veracity and to help decide its truest meaning and relevance (Zinke, 1981: 1-8).
3. The Bible is conditioned by the times and culture of its author and therefore the tools of secular science must be used to separate the meaning from the restrictive cultural elements (Reid 2001: 1-8).

4. Our contemporary biases impose meaning on the Biblical text and before any specific guidance for today can be applied there must be a mediating interpretive level of research between the biblical text and contemporary application. This process rules out that the text could bear directly on modern life and circumstances of an individual without this mediating level of contextualization (Reid 2001: 1-8).

5. More weight must be given to the changing nature of truth and revelation, adapting it to coincide with the times and context of a given people (Reid 2001: 1-8).

Cross cultural diffusion of the gospel is at its core a process of retransmitting the ideas, words, and concepts of the Bible into the language of the host, receptor people group (Hesselgrave 1995a: 115-119). In the context of this research the confusion concerning an exact definition of contextualization revolves fundamentally around how one views scripture, its inspiration, and human content. This therefore affects how one views the human role in the transmission process.

There is a tension in Christianity as to how to define contextualization because in its higher spectrum manifestations it employs most of the modalities, presuppositions, and theories (in a modified form) of higher critical study while purging it of its most evidently humanistic aspects (Koranteng-Pipim 2001: 455-472). Those who contextualize sensing the danger, often reaffirm a high view of scripture but this research has shown that the tools used in higher spectrum contextualization are basically based upon a modified version of the historical-critical method presuppositions.

Seventh-day Adventists in a special way are confronted with the dilemma of how to approach high spectrum contextualization and its hermeneutical suppositions, especially as it regards Muslim contextualization. Biblical scholars of the SDA church have recognized that there are two hermeneutical approaches existing side by side in the SDA church. The first, the historical, and officially held view of the church which maintains a high view of scripture and the second calling for a modified hermeneutic

abiding by of the less obviously humanistic presuppositions of higher criticism (Reid 2001: 1-8).

The Seventh-day Adventist church holds to a high view of scripture as outlined in its officially voted document *Methods of Bible Study* (Koranteng-Pipim 2001: 455-472). This document lists the presuppositions that naturally follow from the Bible's claims about itself, principles of Bible study based on those presuppositions, and finally the resulting methods of Bible study.

Presuppositions Arising From the Claims of Scripture

- 1) The Bible is the Word of God and is the primary and authoritative means by which He reveals Himself to human beings.
- (2) The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers with thoughts, ideas, and objective information; in turn they expressed these in their own words. Therefore the Scriptures are an indivisible union of human and divine elements, neither of which should be emphasized to the neglect of the other (2Peter 1:21; cf. *The Great Controversy*, v, vi).
- (3) All Scripture is inspired by God and came through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, it did not come in a continuous chain of unbroken revelations. As the Holy Spirit communicated truth to the Bible writer, each wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the aspect of the truth which he was led to stress. For this reason the student of the Bible will gain a rounded comprehension on any subject by recognizing that the Bible is its own best interpreter and when studied as a whole it depicts a consistent, harmonious truth (2Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1, 2; cf. *Selected Messages*, Book 1, 19, 20; *The Great Controversy*, v, vi).
- (4) Although it was given to those who lived in an ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean context, the Bible transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God's Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists 1986: 1-4).

Presuppositions numbers three and four are of special importance and concern to Seventh-day Adventists involved in contextualization efforts among Muslims.

These deal with both the cultural and human aspects of the Bible. Since contextualization is the attempt to separate the "core" of the gospel from its human and cultural limitations, high spectrum contextualization and a high view of scripture

as understood and taught by the SDA church are incompatible.

M. Formulating a precise definition

Having reviewed the major trends and a variety of definitions in the formulation of the theory of contextualization, one can with a greater degree of accuracy adhere to a definition that encompasses in as full a way as is possible all that is implied by the term. For the understanding that best fits these criteria, one is bound to adhere to the definition of the founder. Although there have been many attempts by biblical scholars to limit the amplitude of the definition and to trim away its historical-critical tendencies, Shoki Coe's original definition is the most complete. For the purposes of this research Coe's definition of contextualization as an expansion of indigenization referenced to the times and a new way of theologizing is the understanding adopted. (See table number 1)

N. Approaches to Muslim contextualization

A special issue of the International Journal of Frontier Missions (IJFM) dedicated solely to the topic of *contextualization* in Muslim missions confirms that there is great diversity of approaches. The titles of the articles found in this particular issue of IJFM represent only a small sampling of the vast differences that exist in the approaches and methods used by missionaries seeking to raise up followers of Christ among Muslims: *Muslim Contextualization*, *God's Amazing Diversity in drawing Muslims to Christ*, *Should Muslims Become "Christians"?*, *Jesus in Samaria: A Paradigm for Church Planting Among Muslims*, *First Century Jews and Twentieth-Century Muslims*, *The "Son of God"—Understanding the Messianic Titles of Jesus*,

Messianic Muslim Followers of Jesus, and the Ishmael Promise and Contextualization.

Among the more controversial approaches presented by some theologians, practitioners, and scholars as legitimate evangelistic methodologies and grouped under the general heading of contextualization are those that suggest that Muslim “converts” to Christ remain in the mosque, continue to practice Islam, and continue to accept the prophetic role of Muhammad. More shocking still is the suggestion by others that missionaries themselves pray at the mosque, accept the prophetic office of Muhammad, keep the annual fast of Ramadan, and consider officially converting to Islam. Some of the more benign appearing and less controversial approaches include conducting Christian worship services with an Islamic cultural flavor and the adoption of Islamic clothes and dietary practices by Christian missionaries to Muslims (Parshall 1998: 404-406, 409,410).

O. Arriving at a system of classification

To help in classifying the multitudinous approaches of contextualization efforts among Muslim peoples and the outcomes of such approaches John Travis designed a spectrum that arranged the approaches along a continuum that progresses through six stages. The number 1 at the low end of the scale is considered to be an extremely low contextualized approach and 6 at the other end would represent the highest most integrated levels of contextualization (Massey, 2000: 5-14).

Table III C1-C6 Muslim Contextualization Continuum

(Adapted from the continuum created by John Travis)

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
of the body of believers	A church foreign to the Muslim host culture both in cultural practices and language.	Like C1 but speaking the language used by Muslims, though their religious terminology is distinctly non-Muslim.	Like C2, but using non-Islamic cultural elements (e.g. dress, music, diet, and arts).	Like C3 but with some Biblically acceptable Islamic practices.	Like C4 but with a "Muslim follower of Jesus" self identity.	Secret believer may or may not be active in the religious life of the Muslim community.
	Christian	Christian	Christian	Follower of Issa	Muslim follower of Issa	Privately follower of Issa, or Muslim follower of Issa
	Christian	Christian	Christian	A type of Christian	A strange type of Muslim	Muslim

1.1 Ambiguities in Classification

The development of this continuum has provided a useful tool by classifying in some organized fashion the various approaches and stages along the scale. However, several authors with vast experience in the evangelization of Muslims have pointed out that while this progression helps in classifying strategies, it also has created some challenges. First, Phil Parshall indicates that there is such wide divergence in the usage of the different classifications that it is at times hard to determine the exact place along the continuum that a specific approach may fall (Parshall 1998: 404-406, 409-410). For instance a missionary espousing a C5 approach may officially convert to Islam while a colleague also espousing a C5 level of contextualization may vehemently oppose such a move as anti C5. The literature indicates that no satisfactory solution has been found to this dilemma and Parshall has in fact called for open dialogue and study on this issue (ibid.). The challenge here is

that there is an inherent weakness in seeking to classify and codify a theory that has an exponential number of possibilities.

1.2 Use of the Table and Further Refinements in Classification

In spite of this weakness, the progression chart designed by John Travis has become the standard for identifying and seeking to classify the level of contextualization that a particular mission agency or missionary is engaged in. Contextualization among Muslims is universally referenced according to the continuum.

C1 and C2 churches and missionaries are described as being culturally separate from the Islamic milieu in which they are located except that those at the C2 level use the local language avoiding Islamic forms. There are a few Muslim Background Believers in these churches but large accessions of Muslims to these churches are seen as practically unthinkable due to the cultural gulf that separates these churches from the Islamic culture. This approach is typically referred to as “traditional” evangelism by contextualists and in the literature is summarized as ineffective and undesirable.

C3 and C4 approaches begin to use more and more cultural and Islamic forms in the worship service, with C3 practitioners still clinging to a “traditional” Christian service. C3 churches use Islamic terms and some cultural elements in their worship of Allah while C4 churches have a liturgy that closely reflects a reinterpreted Islamic liturgy. Believers and missionaries are also encouraged to adopt Islamic lifestyle elements like the avoidance of pork and alcohol and Islamic dress.

C6 contextualization is according to some literature, less of a theory or methodology and really a survival mechanism for those living in areas of the world where open profession of faith in Christ and conversion to Christianity would mean

possible obliteration. Phil Parshall identified the crux of the Muslim mission debate as revolving around the C5 level. The reason that he does so is that it is at C5 that the greatest level of confusion and controversy exist. The confusion is most often related to Christian missionaries' use of Islamic forms as evidenced by Parshall's concerns (Parshall 1998: 404-406,409-410).

Parshall adds his own insights as to the meanings and categories of the C1-C6 spectrum. His insights preserve Travis's explanations except that he expands his description of the C5 level of contextualization (ibid.). This is the case because he expresses great concern for the tendency of C5 contextualization theorists to slip into syncretism. He has in fact suggested that anything beyond C4 is in reality syncretism (ibid.).

P. The C4/C5 Controversy

In the vast majority of the literature surrounding contextualization among Muslims, C5 contextualization (and sometimes C4) is the center of controversy. This is the level (C4/C5) at which believers are sometimes encouraged to stay in the mosque and call themselves Muslims; missionaries are encouraged to sometimes convert to Islam (Douglass 1994: 69-73 1994); Mohammed is accepted as a prophet and the Koran is accepted as one of God's divinely inspired holy books. C5 proponents suggest two general lines of reasoning for their approaches. The first is that many, if not most Islamic forms are redeemable. This supposition is based on another proposition that Islam is a religion with the same monotheistic and God inspired roots as Judaism and Christianity and thus at its core is essentially the same (Eenigenburg 1997: 310-315).

Q. Revisiting hermeneutics

The theological inconsistency of C5 proponents' common use of 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 and one or two other similar scriptures as justification for imitating Muslim practice and encouraging continued Islamic involvement and identification of new believers is a theme taken up repeatedly by several authors (Leffel 2004:1-14).

The linkage between high spectrum contextualization and historical-critical hermeneutic principles as this review has shown is strongly established in the literature. This theme runs as an often overlooked undercurrent in every debate about appropriate contextualization levels. One example of this underlying hermeneutic tension is the discussion surrounding the inclusion of the Koran as a holy book by Christian missionaries.

In the case of C5 contextualization, Samuel Schlorff has argued that an unclear and ill-defined Biblical hermeneutic is employed in Christian referencing of the Koran as a holy book (Schlorff 1980a: 143-151). His logical argument is that the Christian use of the Koran to support Biblical truth can only be successfully accomplished using a biblical hermeneutic on the Koran. This is no more acceptable to Muslims than the Muslim use of a Koranic hermeneutic on the Bible is to Christians, a method popularized by famed Muslim apologist Ahmed Deedat (Deedat, 1983). Schlorff's emphasis has been to highlight and seek to address the theological void that is not being filled by high spectrum contextualization theory. He calls for a new apologetic toward Islam, one that avoids the dogmatic errors of past centuries, one that is both appealing to Islam and firmly stands upon biblical truth (Schlorff, 1980b: 335-366).

R. Seventh-day Adventists and Muslim contextualization

As Seventh-day Adventists have sought to become more actively involved in winning resistant Muslims peoples to the gospel, their own debates and discussions have begun to track closely those of the evangelicals. This is due largely to the fact that C5 contextualization is gaining ground among Adventists as a legitimate alternative to other approaches.

C5 contextualization principles have been greatly encouraged among Adventists through the influence of the “hanif” movement . It is a typical C5 approach that among other things encourages Islamic self identity of “believers”, encourages continued participation in the mosque, and accepts at least in a limited fashion the prophetic office of Muhammad.

1.1 The historic Adventist message of the three angels and Islam

This research paper will systematically document why it is inconsistent for Seventh-day Adventists to practice contextualization among Muslims in the evangelical sense of the word and why the latest trends in evangelical contextualization as it applies to Muslims should be rejected. The first section will deal primarily with the theological aspects of this issue and will center on the following question;. Is high spectrum contextualization consistent with the high view of scripture held by Seventh-day Adventists? And from a Bible perspective is Muslim doctrine really benign as suggested by some SDA’s (Tinker 1997: 1-4)? Are C5 contextualization and Seventh-day Adventist self identity consistent? The theological section will look in a detailed way at Muslim doctrine and its coincidence and consistency or lack of it when measured by the Bible.

The Second section will look at practical issues and recommendations of alternatives to traditional contextualization. It will center on the following key questions: Does the non-use of highly contextualized principles preclude a judicious

attention to cultural factors in transmission of the gospel? And is there a better alternative to high spectrum contextualization as traditionally practiced? Special attention will be given to a variety of other approaches consistent with the Three Angels' Messages. Consideration is also given to the area of tact, resistance to the gospel and the issues of violence and physical danger of missionaries.

**II. The Evangelical Contribution,
Contextualization of the Gospel Message among Muslims**

A. A brief history

Since the birth of modern missions, the most successful missionaries have always practiced biblically sound cultural adaptations of lifestyle, language, and expression in seeking to reach the world with the gospel. Previous efforts at cross-cultural communication of the gospel in a culturally sensitive way were usually referred to as “indigenization” or one of several related terms (Mennonite Historical Society of Canada). Another related term was “enculturation” which had much the same connotation as did the terms based on the root word “indigenous” (Plastow 2004: 1-3). Many of the practices presently understood to be contextualization, aimed at reducing the foreignness of the missionary and his message to his hearers/receptors, were already being put into practice long before Shoki Cole introduced the concept of contextualization in 1972 (Kraft 2004: 1-2). The Biblical mandate for missionaries to seek to adapt culturally to their audience is clear. It was Paul that said “I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some.” (1 Corinthians 9:22).¹

William Carey mastered the Bengali language while also learning Sanskrit and Hindi in translating the Bible (Wellman 1997: 119-132); Hudson Taylor and associated missionaries adopted local dress and conducted worship in eastern style buildings. Taylor was already committed in the 1860’s to using what one author termed “amoral” cultural forms as a “courtesy to the natives”, (Christie 1999: 132). The Cambridge Seven, seven young men who would join Hudson Taylor in the China Inland Mission, also adapted local dress and learned to speak the local language,

¹ Historically, Seventh-day Adventists have understood this text to be referring to Paul’s desire and efforts to accommodate himself to the varied circumstances of his audience. He purposely made himself a servant (slave), verse 19, or a worker who works without pay, so that his lawful right and privilege of receiving pay would not become a stumbling block to his hearers. “Like a slave, wishing to please his master, or because he is forced to do so, he was willing to comply with the habits, customs, and opinions of others as far as possible, without compromising principle. God’s ministers must be ready at all times to adapt themselves and their ministry to the nature of those for whom they labor (see 2T 673).”¹ SDA Bible Commentary, CD ROM on 1 Corinthians 9:21, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown.

using cultural forms wherever it was biblically permissible, to teach the gospel (Pollock 1955). David Livingstone identified so fully with his Makalolo tribesmen that he was able to keep their loyalty as they traveled through hundreds of miles of dense wilderness and hostile tribes on foot (Wellman 1995: 109-143).

Although all of these early attempts at adaptation would now neatly fit into the contextualization continuum, none of these missionaries used a particular term for the process of learning, adaptation, and assimilation that must necessarily occur for a missionary to be effective in his work. Each wrestled with his own value systems and surrendered, sometimes painfully, cherished opinions, ways and thought patterns that would stand in the way of effective propagation of the gospel. Certainly the incarnational ministry of Jesus sets the standard for all missionaries to strive to reach in adaptation of their person, lifestyle and views to that of the people they want to reach with the gospel. Divesting oneself of one's own cultural, prejudicial views and seeking to present the gospel in terms unencumbered by the views, attitudes, and background of the missionary can justifiably be called a biblical mandate (1 Corinthians 9:12-25). It is this realization that has caused good missionaries for centuries to seek to adapt themselves and the words and images that they used into terms and images familiar to the hearers, as far as the Bible would permit.

However, when the discussion of contextualization in Evangelical circles is applied to the Muslim world the crux of the dissension and discussion among both proponents and antagonists of contextualization does not center on simple cultural adaptations. The nature of religion and its place in culture, while an issue, is not at the heart of the debate. To dress as Muslims, greet in the style of the local greeting, and even to observe some of their dietary rules are all seen as purely cultural and do not engender the heated debate of other more “highly developed” forms of

contextualization (Douglass 1994: 69-73). The use of “amoral” cultural forms is not a new² trend. As has been demonstrated, this form of missionary adaptation has occurred since the birth of modern missions.

B. C4 level contextualization not new

Contextualization up to the C4³ level, the level which seeks to use amoral or “Biblically permissible” cultural forms in evangelization efforts to Muslims, with a few exceptions is really but an extension into Muslim ministry of principles long used by missionaries like Hudson Taylor among Buddhists and others in the China Inland Mission and many other earlier missionaries in many other places. It involves the use of “amoral” cultural forms. By definition C4 contextualization is an attempt to use some Biblically acceptable cultural practices in mission efforts. (See Table III.) Yet, even among C4 contextualizers the debate as to where contextualization stops and syncretism begins is far from being settled (Parshall 2004: 288-293). Missiologists such as Heldenbrand see C4 as moving towards syncretism because the principles upon which it is based are the same as those for C5 (Williams 2003: 75-91). What’s the cause of this disagreement and dissension among contextualizers?

C. A question of theology and hermeneutics, the great debate

The great contribution of evangelicalism to cross-cultural mission theory was the development of the body of contextualization theory as a mission-theological principle by annexing Biblically sound mission principles to more questionable

² By “new” I mean any concept that arose after contextualization was fully accepted in Evangelical circles from the early 80’s onward.

³ The point here is that although the C1-C6 continuum was not in existence before the 1980’s, missionaries have always practiced common sense adaptations to the local surrounding based upon clear and sound Bible principles. This assertion is a rejection of the implication that all cultural sensitivity in cross-cultural gospel communication is contextualization.

presuppositions and methods of the historical-critical method of Bible interpretation and wedding those to the secular science of cultural anthropology (Kraft 2004: 1-2).

What developed was a type of “ethno/cultural-theology” mirroring the tools and presuppositions of the historical-critical method of Bible interpretation. Many conservative evangelical authorities saw this type of theological *mélange* as disturbing to basic principles of Bible truth (Heldenbrand 1982: 134-139).

One authority states unequivocally that, “Underlying the contextualization debate are different assumptions about the Bible itself (no question of it being God’s word) and its relation to culture(s), both ancient and modern. Where and how do the divine and the human come together in revelation, inspiration, and resulting scripture?” (Douglass 1994: 69-73)

A further fly in the ointment is the uneasiness about the influence of the social sciences. All contemporary cross-culture workers are indebted to the insights developed by the social sciences over the last fifty years...Some observers of contextualization conclude that theories of culture, with their social science moorings, have taken actual precedence over scripture”(ibid.).

The heart of the debate about just what contextualization is, and proper levels of contextualization in missions to Muslims centers on theology and hermeneutics (Schlorff, 1980a). Two key questions to be answered in the contextualization debate are the following: Does an assertion of *sola scriptura* (the Bible and the Bible only) allow missionaries to reinterpret scripture by external norms like contemporary culture, psychology, and or anthropology? Does a Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the nature of the Bible and proper hermeneutics allow for adherence to higher spectrum contextualization principles?

D. The direction of contextualization theory, arriving at C5

Since evangelicals fully embraced contextualization for Muslim evangelization in the early 80’s, several leading opponents have become increasingly

alarmed at the progression into what they would call syncretism. The issue is that somewhere along the continuum from C4 to C5 a step is made that passes from Biblically appropriate cultural adaptation to an accommodation of Muslim theology that develops finally into a syncretistic amalgam of watered down Bible truth guided not by a biblical hermeneutic but by a koranic one (Heldenbrand 1982: 134-139).

Their concerns find their confirmation in C5 Muslim evangelism. This level is the ultimate point to which contextualization theory in the evangelical church has tended due especially to a growing popularity of historical-critical hermeneutics. In fact one C5 missiologist says that C4 “paved the way” for C5 (Massey 2000: 5-14). One Christian who ministered to Muslims for many decades says that the tendency toward this new paradigm in Muslim ministry is founded not in a rediscovery over the last two decades of Bible truth, but an “inordinate fascination” with cultural anthropology to the exclusion of deep reflection on the theological implications of such an emphasis (Madany 1995:1-8).

Phil Parshall, the one who in 1980 very carefully laid out the case for contextualization efforts among Muslims in his pioneering work and his seminal book *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*, has been one of the most vocal voices against C5 Muslim evangelism (Parshall, 1998). In an article that he entitled *Danger! New Directions in Muslim Evangelism*, he identifies several practices inherent in most C5 efforts that run counter to the clear teaching of the Bible. Among these are performance of the Muslim Salat by converts and by missionaries to Muslims, continued mosque attendance and identification of converts as Muslims, the acceptance of the prophetic office of Muhammad by both missionaries and converts, the formal or informal conversion of missionaries to Islam and the recitation of the Shahada by both converts and missionaries.

While very many reject outright such practices as extreme and syncretistic, (Plastow 1999: 1-3) they can legitimately be classed as true contextualization based upon the breadth of contextualization theory and its inherent weakness as a pluralistic concept that accommodates even these syncretistic practices classing them not as syncretism but as another (more developed) high spectrum level of contextualization. That is why two individuals both calling themselves contextualizers may differ very greatly and even disagree in method and approach and still legitimately be practicing contextualization.

It was not long before Parshall drew strong reactions from some who went beyond what he outlined as the acceptable limits of contextualization. In his own words Parshall was “somewhat shocked to read the following statement by a respected Christian leader who is involved in a controversial approach to Muslim evangelism: I am praying that Phil will lift the *Fatwa* against our ministry among the followers of Ishmael.” (Parshall 1998: 404-406, 409-410)

The dilemma for Parshall, Hesselgrave and others who take a more moderate approach to contextualization and want to avoid syncretism is that many if not most of the hermeneutic principles upon which contextualization is based - even what they would consider acceptable - put heavy emphasis on factors external to the Bible such as culture and sociological context. People like Joshua Massey, a very progressive C5 proponent use the very principles that Parshall developed and articulated in disagreeing with him and stepping over into areas that Parshall would clearly class as syncretism (Massey 2000: 5-14), (Parshall, 1998: 404-406, 409-410). Massey goes so far as to suggest that becoming a Christian is not important for Muslim “converts”; he encourages and supports continued Muslim self-identity of “converts” and questions the importance of a clear Bible doctrine - the Trinity which he relegates to the be the

fruit of the Greek context of the emerging Christian church of the first century (Massey 2000: 5-14). These are all positions that Parshall has identified as syncretistic (Parshall, 1998: 404-406, 409-410). In the acknowledgement section of his book *New Paths*, in which he develops the conceptual basis for Muslim contextualization, Parshall thanks Dr. Charles Kraft for helping to guide him “through many of the foundational concepts found in this book.”

Charles Kraft although not the only one, was influential in pushing the outer limits of evangelical contextualization into its higher spectrum dimensions. According to him the preaching of the Bible message to different cultures “...should result in a culturally nuanced approach” (Hesselgrave 1995b: 139-145) In Kraft’s understanding the Bible is a “...cultural sea with supra-cultural truths floating around on it. The Bible is not revelation as such, but nevertheless, all is potentially revelatory. As for cultures, they are divinely ordained and give evidence of their divine origin in ways that they order life and values and allow societies to maintain themselves” (ibid.) According to Kraft the term “Son of God” is allegorical, not a reflection of a divine yet incomprehensible truth; Parshall agrees (Heldenbrand 1982: 134-139). Kraft emphasizes the importance of faith as opposed to the Western necessity for knowledge; the next logical step is to eliminate parts of “doctrinal knowledge” considered offensive or unimportant to Muslims. “He feels that it is wrong to hold a potential convert from Islam ‘accountable for a type of knowledge that (1) may be true, (2) may be appropriate for us, but (3) is not necessary and often very misleading for him’ (ibid.). It seems not to occur to Dr. Kraft that the Bible encourages an intelligent faith, based on knowledge and doctrine. Kraft further assigns the concept of individual guilt to Western acculturation and in the terms of one specialist, by doing this, “he has crossed over into Muslim turf.” (Heldenbrand 1982:134-139).

E. A closer look at the rationalizations for C5 contextualization

People who do contextualization at the high spectrum C5 level often base their efforts upon several key texts and lines of thought that this paper will now examine. Again Phil Parshall poses a piercing question (Parshall, 1998: 404-406, 409-410). Is the use of these several lines of reasoning a reflection of theological and hermeneutical integrity? That depends on the hermeneutical model used.

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some. 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.

Parshall says that the interpretation of these texts is something very different to the C4 proponent and the C5 proponent. To the C4 proponent, becoming a Muslim to a Muslim would stop at adopting biblically permissible Muslim cultural and religious practices. C5 proponents using the "all things principle" argue that it is not important that a Muslim-background convert leave off mosque attendance be identified as a Christian, or leave his Islamic culture (Massey, 2000: 5-14).

1.1 Misleading assertions of C5

While the real issue (in reference to 1 Corinthians 9:19-22) for Christian missionaries seeking to win Muslims to Christ is the question of taking practical steps to overcome prejudice and becoming adept and communicating effectively within a particular culture, the issue is often clouded by assertions that subtly undermine a sound Biblical hermeneutic. Did Paul indeed intend to intimate that a Christian missionary should consider the C5 approach of converting to Islam in order to win some Muslims? Did he intend that a Muslim who accepts Christ as Lord and savior continue to attend the mosque and recite the Islamic creed? Did he intend that

converts be encouraged to continue to identify themselves as Muslims? Most in the C5 camp would answer these questions in the affirmative. However, to do so would require a hermeneutic that gives culture and “context” normative value and also diminishes the importance of Bible doctrine and the Bible being its own interpreter.

This line of reasoning is often augmented by the assertion that the Islamic culture is a divine revelation of God’s moving in Arab society to call Muslims away from idolatry back to Monotheism (Tinker 1997:1-4). Though C5 proponents argue that Islam is not evil at its core, they evade another vital issue. The core question for Seventh-day Adventist Christians is not a semantic one about the relative “evilness” of a particular culture or faith system as some indicate (Tinker 1997: 1-4). The issue for the Seventh-day Adventist church is that its historic self-understanding, based upon its understanding of Revelation 12 and 14, as a movement with a message of apocalyptic significance, calling people out of spiritual confusion and into the body of believers who worship God and keep His commandments, does not allow for such a loose interpretation of scripture (Reid 2001: 1-8). Hermeneutic approaches to scripture that allow for the influence of extra biblical factors to have interpretive value on textual understanding and combined with an unbalanced view of history (Schantz 2003) are at the heart of C5 contextualization. The presuppositions about the viability of Muslim converts remaining Muslim, praying the Muslim Salat and worshipping as Muslims run counter to a Biblical theology of the end time “remnant” as understood by the Seventh-day Adventist church (ibid.). “Just as the Greeks were not required to adopt Jewish customs when they became Christians so Muslims should not have to stop being Muslims...” (Tinker 1997: 1-4)

For further confirmation of the C5 approach many C5'rs have gone a step further and now quote 1 Corinthians 7:20 as evidence that a Muslim “convert” to Christ

remain integrated religiously in Muslim life and practice. An experienced missionary to Muslims in Indonesia best rebuts this argument.

The context of 1 Corinthians 7 is addressing the issues of marriage and singleness: believers married to unbelievers; circumcision and uncircumcision and finally slaves and free. This passage has nothing to do with dictating that people from a false religion should remain in their false religion so as not to upset the apple cart. C5 proponents could be accused of isogesis here...This passage makes provision for believers remaining in their families and social status where they were prior to knowing Christ, but it is not giving an allowance for believers to remain in their former religion.

Scott Woods in (Parshall, 1998)

F. The vital question

Seventh-day Adventists have traditionally taught and believed that it was the Church's divinely ordained task to preach the gospel, to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people on the face of the earth (Revelation 14:6) inviting them to join God's remnant (Revelation 14:8) who keep all of the commandments of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Revelation 14:12; 12:17).

Our Mission--The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to communicate to all peoples the everlasting gospel of God's love in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12, and as revealed in the life, death, resurrection, and high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, leading them to accept Jesus as personal Saviour and Lord and to unite with His remnant church; and to nurture believers as disciples in preparation for His soon return. (Amended Seventh-day Adventist Church Mission Statement, voted at Annual Council, October 10, 2004, Silver Springs, MD)

Many C5ers say that Jesus told us to make disciples not converts (Massey 2004: 296-304). Certainly, it is the Holy Spirit that converts people to Christ but the intention of this C5 argument here is not so much an emphasis on human inability to convert another soul as it is to insinuate that one may remain a Muslim and knowingly follow Jesus while never moving toward the Christian church. Many C5ers have adopted the principle that it should never be the intention of Muslim background believers to become Christians (ibid). This is the thrust of C5 evangelization and to a

lesser extent C4 (Williams 2003: 75-91).

Closely related to continued C4/C5 attachment to Islam is the fact that such groups have at times tended toward a Muslim-like exclusiveness that again underlines the self identity problem of such “believers”. As is the case with Muslims, at least some C5 converts have considered traditional Christian believers as infidels (Williams 2003: 75-91).

“In contrast to this, C5 contextualists have sought in varying degrees, to separate themselves from the greater body in order to promote a Jesus movement within Islam.” (ibid)

Most of us [C5ers] do not want anything to do with Christian religion. We want Isa Almasih (s.a.w.) but not Christianity. It s a sad fact but does it mean that you will now allow us to go to hell because we do not want to be called Christians? Is it possible for us to go to heaven and remain to be real Islam? ibid.)

G. Ethno-hermeneutics

Closely linked to the Muslim/Adventist self identity problem of C4/C5 believers is the issue of homogeneity and *ethno-hermeneutics*. The term “ethno-hermeneutic” reveals the intent of the concept. Ethno-hermeneutics advocate that the interpretation of Bible truth must finally be predisposed to and ultimately influenced by the cultural milieu (ethnicity) of the receptor. Some have used the more benign sounding term of “receptor-oriented hermeneutical methods” (Tappeiner 1999: 223-232). The basis of this theory is a belief that each culture must use a contextualized Bible hermeneutic which would result in a message and meaning uniquely “adapted” to a particular people group. What would arise out of these hermeneutic methods? Muslims would remain in the mosque, accept many Muslim doctrines, and somehow call themselves Adventists but not Christians. All of this would be supported from the Bible. There would be a separate theology and potentially a separate set of beliefs for Hindu believers, another “contextualized” set of beliefs for Buddhists and yet another for

post-modern secularists.

Ethno-hermeneutics relies often on the related and underlying principle of homogeneity. This principle works from the premise that people become Christians fastest when the least amount of change is involved. The insinuation here is that one should not have to reject his culture to become Christian. The effort is toward a homogenous convert church that Parshall says has become “the only practical way” to bring Muslims to Christ for many missionaries (Williams 2003: 75-91).

Not only however, do ethno-hermeneutics pose problems for the Christian-Adventist identity of C5 believers but they also often create specific theological problems that lead away from basic Bible truth.

1.1 Applied ethno-hermeneutics

David Hesselgrave illustrates how ethno-hermeneutic tendencies work. In a very enlightening article he approaches the very thorny issue of contextualization of the gospel in a polygamous village of the Central African Republic (Hesselgrave 1995b: 139-145), a scenario which is very real for missionaries to Muslims.

The first approach he considers is a purely denunciatory, unsympathetic approach that does not seek to understand the causes, ramifications, pros or cons of polygamy. He does not label this approach as unsympathetic or unbiblical but as “under-contextualized.” Our only observation is that denunciation of sin has its place in every culture when done in the right spirit and with an understanding of the proper cultural manner to express such denunciations clearly transmitting the plain biblical message with no efforts to add to or attenuate its severity.

The second type of contextualization that Mr. Hesselgrave considers draws from the principles of Dr. Charles Kraft and is indicative of the theological trends of C5 level of Muslim contextualization and ethno-hermeneutics. Mr. Hesselgrave's

assessment of this approach is the following:

Returning to our African village mission/church scenario, the specific problem is polygamy and the focus is on 1 Timothy 3:1-9, especially verse 2. Since Kraft's missionary experience was among the Higi of Nigeria, those who would employ his approach in our village situation would have no difficulty knowing how to proceed. In the beginning they would translate (not just interpret) the passage differently. First the village culture valuing membership in the "royal class" maturity, and hospitality very highly, these would be placed at the top of the list of leadership qualifications.

Second, "the husband of one wife" qualification would be omitted and "one who manages his household well" would be modified. As we have seen in the African context, plural wives often elevate a man's social status and prestige. Moreover managing a household well is deemed to be demonstrated best in a polygamous household for any man should be able to manage a household with only one wife in it! (The Kru of Liberia have a saying, "You cannot trust a man with only one wife.") So the solution would be to delete "the husband of one wife" and change "one who manages his own household well" (verse 4) to one who manages his own (polygamous) household well."

Dynamic equivalent transculturation in our Central African Republic will involve a process. Those who pioneer the work will be armed with an understanding (misunderstanding?) of language and biblical revelation that allows for this kind of (over?) contextualization. They will be free to translate 1 Timothy 3:1-9 (and the rest of scripture) in the manner indicated, and they will teach scripture accordingly. Polygamy, therefore, will present no problem initially. (Hesselgrave, 1995b)

Charles Kraft, one of the most influential conceptual high spectrum contextualists illustrated the theological outcomes of a hermeneutic that contextualizes to the point of making the cultural milieu the normative factor in scripture translation and interpretation. It would result in an interpretation that would change depending on the culture.

In the same line of thought Joshua Massey (2004: 296-304), argues that clearly defined theological positions and fine categorizations are the result of the church's origins in a Greek society immersed in a philosophical approach of classification and categorization. In his estimation and that of others, the Trinity is a contextualized doctrine and not a divinely revealed truth. He goes on to make the claim that it is not that important that C5 believers accept the doctrine of the trinity

since it is really a cultural codification arising from the cultural milieu of the times (Massey 2004: 296-304). He says "The fact that not one biblical writer felt it necessary to extrapolate that God 'is' Father, Son, and Holy Spirit should cause us to pause in the above-mentioned evaluation of the C5 movement." Mr. Massey in order to eliminate the barrier that the belief in the Trinity poses to Muslims converting to Christ instead denies the universality of what is clearly a biblically founded doctrine.

He further develops the idea that this doctrine came about as the gospel permeated Greco-Roman society and as people began to ask questions that early Jewish believers never asked. He by this reasoning suggests that the inspiration for this doctrine is not Holy Spirit breathed but is a culturally adapted understanding.

H. Diminishing the importance of doctrine

Clearly then Mr. Massey not only assumes that the doctrinal development of the Trinity is a cultural phenomenon but also that a clear understanding of this doctrine may not be all that necessary for Muslims who come to Christ. This is understandable since even with C5 "converts" the acceptance of the truth regarding the divine role of Jesus as the Son of God is not generally and fully accepted.

Mr. Massey uses approximately 1500 words to lay out the case that the finished product of the Holy Spirit's work among Muslims may not look very Christian at all. They won't consider themselves Christian and their identity would remain Muslim. In fact he says that the C4 level of contextualization requires movement towards the Christian church which he deems entirely unnecessary and even harmful. He stresses that the concept of the "kingdom of God" in the Bible has less to do with being Christian than it does with following God. He says that

C5 Muslims don't have to worry about such religio-cultural gymnastics. They know they are Muslims, and they know they have been transformed by the

Spirit of God. Like the Hellenistic-Roman world, the Muslim world represents a total system of thought which must be penetrated with the gospel of the kingdom, rising through Muslim society like leaven.

This would imply that Muslims will develop beliefs, cultural adaptations like the belief in the Trinity for early Christians in the Greco-Roman world, that suit Muslims but are not necessarily important to the Christian body at large.

He then makes the case that God's movement among Muslims would result in a modified Islam not a forthright Christianity. To him as for many other C5 proponents, this is totally acceptable. "Unlike many Jewish missionaries of his day, Jesus did not ask Samaritans or Gentiles to convert to Judaism. Jesus did not call people to religion but to himself." Another major component of Mr. Massey's article is the insinuation, quite strongly made, that the final determiner of the rightness or wrongness of C5 contextualization is experience as opposed to the word of God (ibid.).

**III. The practice of high spectrum Muslim contextualization,
considered from an Adventist perspective**

A. The use of the Koran as an evangelistic tool

There is no doubt in mission circles concerning the effectiveness of starting with the known and moving into the unknown in evangelistic efforts among unreached peoples. Since the Koran has some surface similarities with the Bible and refers to many of the same themes, it is only logical that the missionary would, when first working with a Muslim and all throughout their interaction, show respect for, a knowledge of, and interest in the beliefs of the Muslim. This will necessitate the careful use and discussion of the Koran initially and in conjunction with the Bible.

However, the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura* and Biblical principles of inspiration such as those found in 1 Tim 3:16, 17; John 17:17 and Psalms 119:105 indicate quite clearly that the use of the Koran in discussions with Muslims is an initial, transient step only. Sound Bible doctrine does not allow for the use of a second supplementary "light" beside the Bible. The Koran contains many references and allusions to the Bible but still presents a religious system diametrically opposed to the Bible in many respects. Some of the more prominent areas in which the Koran disagrees with the Bible are the divine-human nature of the Christ, the atoning death and resurrection of Christ, the Old Testament history in many respects, and the need of a redeemer, the fallen nature of man, and the love of God.

Table IV
A Sampling of Disagreements between the Bible and the Koran

Contradiction as found in the Koran	Citation of the contradiction	The Biblical truth
There were eight days in creation.	Sura 41:9,10,12	There were 6 days of active creation and the Sabbath rest
One of Noah's sons refused to enter the ark and was lost.	Surah 11:32-48	All three sons entered the ark
The ark came to rest on Mount Judi	Surah 11:44	Came to rest on Mount Ararat
Abraham's father was named Azar	Sura 6:74	Terah was the name of Abraham's father.
Abraham lived in the valley of Mecca	Sura 14:37	Hebron
He built the Ka'aba in Mecca as a place to worship God	Sura 2:125-127	Was never in Mecca or Arabia
He was thrown into a fire by Nimrod.	Suras 21:68,69 and 9:69	They were not even contemporaries
Jospeh's master in Egypt was Aziz	Sura 12:21ff	Joseph's master was Potiphar
Pharaoh's wife adopted Moses	Sura 28:8,9	Pharaoh's daughter
Noah's flood occurred in the days of Moses.	Sura 7:136, compare 7:59ff	They were not even contemporaries
Haman lived in Egypt during the time of Moses and helped build the tower of Babel.	Suras 27:4-6; 28:38; 29:39; 40:23,24,36,37	They were not even contemporaries, the tower was in Mesopotamia, not Egypt
Crucifixion was used in the time of the Pharaohs	Sura 7:124	Used by Romans in time of Jesus
Mary gave birth to Jesus under a palm tree.	Sura 19:22	Luke 2:1-20
Mary the mother of Jesus and Miriam the sister of Moses were the same individual.	Sura 19:28	These two were separated more than a thousand years
The Jews made the golden calf in the wilderness at the suggestion of "the Samaritan."	In Sura 20:87,95	There were no Samaritans then
Abraham and Moses are cited alternately as the first to believe	Sura 6:14 versus 7:143	Conflicting facts
God holds mount Sinai over the Jews threatening to crush them with it in an attempt to get them to accept the law	Sura 7:171	This is not part of the biblical story.

C5'rs often insist that the Koran may be used indefinitely in conjunction with the Bible as both are God inspired, the Bible for the Jewish, Greco-Roman world, and the Koran for the 6th century Arab culture. They also suggest that many Bible truths can be mined from the pages of the Koran either implicitly or explicitly (Massey 2004: 296-304).

However, the weakness of these arguments is clearly demonstrated when Muslim apologists like Ahmed Deedat find convincing evidence in the prophecies of

Deuteronomy 18 and in the book of John predictions of the coming of Muhammad. Samuel Schlorff has quite ably pointed out that in order to find biblical truth in the Koran one must use a biblical hermeneutic with its attendant presuppositions (Schlorff 1980a: 143-151). This he says is no more legitimate than reading into the Koran Biblical understandings and interpretations.

There is another difficulty in giving equal weight to the Koran and the Bible. Schlorff rightly says that an authority conflict is set up. The unique authority of the scriptures as the rule of faith and action is compromised by an implicit recognition of the divine authority of the Koran.

1.1 A question of objectives

Schlorff goes on to ask if Christians can legitimately use the Koran in the long term based on the church's stated objective to plant the church in Muslim lands. The danger of the C5 approach, especially to Adventists, is that it shifts the focus from one of calling people out of spiritual confusion into God's remnant to calling them where they are into a "quality of faith" as one Adventist who uses high spectrum contextual approaches has stated (Whitehouse 2002: 1-8). Schlorff says:

Considering the authority conflict that it engenders, the conclusion seems inevitable that the Christian Koranic hermeneutic favors the creation of a new type of spirituality envisaged by the ecumenical movement, but is not favorable to the planting of the church in Muslim lands.

Research suggests that indeed the nebulous state created by the authority conflict is a reality in C5 Muslim contextualization. An empirical study of a C5 movement cited both by Parshall and Massey indicates some disturbing realities that support the contention of Mr. Schlorff that long-term use of the Koran is not conducive to the planting of a strong church. The study reflects the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of the leaders of a C5 group of believers. At the time of the study this contextualized movement was 15 years old. The study revealed that just over half of

the leaders polled believed in the Trinity. Obviously in fifteen years the koranic idea of the oneness of God still persisted. Other disturbing revelations of the study indicated that 96% of these “converts” believe there are four heavenly books. This is standard Islamic belief. Two thirds believe that the Koran is the greatest of these books (Leffel 2004: 1-14).

B. Reciting the Muslim creed and praying the Muslim Salat

Closely aligned to remaining in the mosque and being identified as a Muslim are the prayers said at the mosque and the recitation of the Muslim creed of faith as an integral part of worship. C5 contextualization necessarily includes these components or derivatives of them as it emphasizes that Muslim converts should stay in the mosque and continue to be identified as Muslims. Warren C. Chastain (1995: 161-164), a missionary of long experience in Muslim contexts has done an excellent job of highlighting why it is inconsistent with the Bible to encourage missionaries and by extension Muslim converts to pray the Muslim Salat.

However, before exploring aspects of his very detailed list of concerns it would be good to establish the significance of the Salat for Muslims. While Christians often equate the Salat (an Arabic term) with prayer its meaning to the Muslim is much deeper. There are other words in Islam (Arabic) that more accurately equate with the idea of prayer in the Christian sense. In the Muslim world view the Salat is the fundamental act of worship of Allah which may include a few prayers, in particular prayers for blessings on Muhammad and prayers for forgiveness. Other aspects of the Salat may include the recitation of the Islamic creed, not an actual prayer.

1.1 A displacement of true worship

Mr. Chastain states unequivocally that for professed Christians to take part in

the Muslim Salat is a displacement of true worship. He states that the Salat is a ritualistic act done neither in the Spirit, Truth, nor in the name of Jesus. While God is seeking worshipers He seeks those that will worship him in Spirit and Truth. Was Jesus arrogant to suggest to the woman at the well the Samaritans did not know the essence or meaning of true worship and that salvation was to be found revealed in a true understanding of the Jewish religious economy? Muhammad set up his religious and prayer system as a displacement of the true worship of God available even to Arabs in Muhammad's day (ibid).

1.2 The authority of Muhammad

Muhammad in rejecting the authority of the system left by Jesus set himself up as the supreme authority in religious matters⁴. Muhammad rejected the idea of worship being a loving act of children towards a loving father but rather stressed an attitude of servility as the slaves of Allah. The system of Salat that Muhammad instituted replaces the celebration of the Lord's supper instituted by Christ, the hearing and obeying of the Bible which Muslims teach has been corrupted, and the ministry of the exercise of spiritual gifts in the worship of God. His ritualistic pattern of words and movements also has an ethnocentric Arab emphasis. Mr. Chastain says that even though the ritual Salat does contain some motions and gestures and recited truths such as "God is Great", it simply fails the biblical test of what is considered true worship and thus is not justifiable for anyone who calls himself a true follower of Jesus.

1.3 The direction of the prayer

In Jesus' discussion with the woman at the well Jesus rejected the idea of worship being offered in a particular direction or at a particular spot. Islam stresses that worship must be accomplished toward Mecca and toward the Kaba a former

Arabic center of pagan, polytheistic worship. Although Muhammad did rid the Kaba of most of its idols and relics he did not possess the courage of King Josiah who destroyed the idols in the land as well as the places where those idols were worshipped. The black rock that was in the Kaba was kissed by Muhammad. He said it was a rock from paradise that has been laden with the sins of the people over the ages. It is toward this rock, a center of pagan worship that Muslims are taught to do all their worship and prayers.

1.4 Ritual washing

Another aspect of the Salat that is integral to performing it acceptably is that of the ritual washing. The prayer is not valid unless the Muslim goes through a ritual of cleansing that is both fastidious and predetermined. Jesus' answer to the Pharisees should give all missionaries who adopt this Muslim custom and true converts from Islam to Christ pause for thought.

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem saying, why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said to them, why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions...These are the things which defile a man: but to eat [or pray] with unwashen hands defileth not a man. Matthew 15:1-3, 20.

While ritual washing is considered as vital before coming to God in the Salat, the need for cleansing from sin is neither seen nor felt in Islam. Muslims reject the idea of the sinful nature of man and therefore reject the need of atonement for sin.

1.5 Replacing objectionable aspects of the Salat

Many C5 missionaries promote a modified Salat in which objectionable elements like the confession of Muhammad as the apostle of God is replaced by a kindred statement referring to Jesus. Prayers for Muhammad and his family may also

⁴ Koranic verses such as the following all cite the authority of Muhammad as one that must be obey unquestioningly (. Also because of the fact that Muhammad contradicts many key Bible teachings (see the subheading, *Use of the Koran*) he sets himself up even as an authority over the Bible.

be replaced as well. However, Mr. Chastain points out that the Salat allows for no modifications, particularly those that would uplift Christ.

Seeking to replace objectionable aspects of the Salat by C5 missionaries assumes that the form can be separated from the meaning. This is a supposition that many have called into question (Leffel: 2004: 1-14). Separating the Muslim meaning from an Islamic form for a Muslim background “believer” is a precarious task with questionable outcomes at best, as recent studies have indicated (ibid).

What message are Christian missionaries or Muslim background believers giving when they perform the Salat? Are they not giving a silent witness that they are in full harmony with the Muslim prayers for Muhammad, that he is the seal of the prophets, and that they are in fact Muslims in the truest and fullest sense of the word with all of its religious and cultural implications? Muslims that see others performing the Salat think they also are Muslim. C5 missionaries and “converts” in so doing deny the cross of Christ. There is no biblically sound theological principle that can change this fact.

After listing other legitimate problems with Christians performing the Muslim Salat Mr. Chastain comes to the following conclusion: "A Christian Salat is really a contradiction in terms-faithful to neither Islam nor Christianity. It is a dangerous mutation that makes Muhammad an authority in the most basic of all religious acts-worship. It is a new legalism, a bandwagon inviting us to get on board, leading eventually to contention, confusion in the Church, and compromise of the faith. Surely we are not going to give up our heritage of true, Christian worship, and certainly not exchange it for a mess of pottage-or a pseudo Salat."

C. Other areas of C5 practice

Another perplexing trend among those who practice high spectrum contextualization is the practice of replacing Biblical references to Jesus as the Son of God to Issa al Massi, the Messiah. While Jesus is certainly the Messiah, the anointed one, there is a clear distinction between Christ's role as Messiah and His role as Son. The former is an acceptable concept and term to Muslims, the latter is not. That Jesus in His earthly life was anointed and was specially chosen by God is not really a question. There are Koranic texts that support his place as a special servant of God. However, His title as ***Son of God*** is offensive to Muslims (Brown 2000: 41-52).

The role of Christ as the divine son of God is wholly rejected in the Koran in the strongest terms. To avoid this cultural and religious barrier C5 contextualists use the principle of dynamic equivalence to find a culturally acceptable, more suitable term, usually explaining the term as figurative. The reasoning behind these attempts is clear; the Muslim concept of what is meant by the phrase "Son of God" is loaded with misunderstandings and misconceptions in the Muslim psyche (Brown 2000: 41-52).

The problem of how to broach the issue of just who Jesus is has been one of the greatest challenges facing anyone attempting to win Muslims to Christ. Jesus and His divine-human nature, His role as mediator, His saving power, and His boundless love displayed in His death on the cross are foolishness against which the Muslim's spirit reacts violently. Dr. Samuel Zwemer best summed up what Christ is to the average Muslim in his book *The Moslem Christ*.

Islam is the only one of the great non-Christian religions which gives a place to Christ in its book, and yet it is also the only one of the non-Christian religions which denies His deity, His atonement, and His supreme place as Lord of all in its sacred literature. In none of the other sacred books of the East is Christ mentioned; the Koran alone gives Him a place, but does it by displacing Him. With regret it must be admitted that there is hardly an important fact concerning the life, person, and work of our Saviour which is not ignored, perverted, or denied by Islam.

Yet Moslems acknowledge Jesus Christ as a true prophet, and no less than three of the chapters of the Koran, namely, that of Amran's Family (Sura III),

that of The Table (Sura V), and that of Mary (Sura XIX), are so named because of references to Jesus Christ and His work. The very fact that Jesus Christ has a place in the literature of Islam, and is acknowledged by all Moslems as one of their prophets, in itself challenges comparison between Him and Mohammed, and affords an opportunity for the Christian missionary to ask every sincere Moslem, “What think ye of the Christ?” This is still the question that decides the destiny of men and of Nations.—Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ, An Essay On The Life, Character, and Teachings Of Jesus Christ According To The Koran And Orthodox Traditions* (Edinburgh: American Tract Society, 1912), In: Don McCurry (ed) *The World of Islam* [CD ROM]. Colorado Springs, Global Mapping International.

From Genesis to Revelation the Bible reveals the priceless gift that God gave in Christ and in the plan of redemption. Jesus said in John 5:39 that He himself is the major theme of scripture. The divine science of salvation has ever been and will continue to be a major stumbling block for those who are not saved. However, for the saved the science of salvation is the study of eternity. “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23, KJV). While Christian missionaries are experimenting with many ways of introducing Christ and his significance and nature to Muslims, the fact remains that Christians cannot minimize the importance of Christ’s role as divine Savior and Lord and be consistent with the clear teaching of the Bible. How to introduce this to a Muslim in an attitude of uncompromising sensitivity, love, and tact is a subject that must be prayerfully and carefully reflected upon by the Christian missionary. The divinity of Christ combined with His humanity, His role as the Son of God is at the very core, it is the very heart, the very essence of Christianity, and has to be addressed.

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, and precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed (1 Peter 2:6-8, KJV).

1.1 Islamic Christology

There is a picture of Christ that appeals to all mankind, the Muslim included. It is not the Christ of the movie screen, not the Christ of legend, not even the Christ at times portrayed by an often erring and wayward Christian church. No, the Christ that appeals to many Muslims around the world is the same Jesus that made demons tremble, the Jesus who stooped to listen to the faint plea of a child, the Christ who was not afraid of leprosy, disabilities, evil spirits, the evil eye, or a host of other things that intimidate and frighten mankind. He wasn't even afraid of death itself. The Jesus whose innate goodness was so powerful that without ever unsheathing a single sword or mounting a single horse for the purpose of battle, He conquered the greatest kingdoms of earth, winning the allegiance of old and young, rich and poor, slave and free, is the Christ that still attracts millions today. It is the Jesus who meets people at the crossroads of humanity's need for a deliverer, a protector, a savior, a friend that remains irresistibly drawing for even the Muslim mind. Yet, it is just this picture that has been distorted in the Koran. While the Koranic picture of Jesus does provide a starting point for dialogue with Muslims it is at the very best incomplete. For that reason the substitution of the term *Isah al Massih* (Jesus the Messiah) for Jesus the Son of God does nothing to expand the Islamic conception of Christ.

The best way to get a true picture of what Islam teaches about Jesus is to turn away now from history, the hadiths, other scholars, and even Muslim commentators, and to examine directly the contents of the Koran. What follows is a nearly exhaustive list of all that the Koran contains in mentioning Jesus. This is adapted from Zwemer's book.

1.2 The titles of Jesus

The most common name given to Jesus in the Koran is that of “Isa” generally with the prefix *Nebi* or *Nabi* (prophet), and often with the addition “Son of Mary,.” It is used 25 times in the following texts:

Sura 2: 87, Sura 2:130, Sura 2: 254, Sura 3: 40
Sura 3: 45, Sura 3: 48, Sura 3: 52. Sura 3: 78.
Sura 4: 156. Sura 4: 161. Sura 4: 169. Sura 5: 50. Sura 5: 82.
Sura 5: 109. Sura 5: 112.
Sura 5: 114. Sura 5: 116. Sura 6: 85. Sura 19: 35. Sura 33: 7.
Sura 42: 11. Sura 43: 63. Sura 57: 27. Sura 61: 6. Sura 6: 14.

El Massih This name, The Messiah, sometimes joined to that of Jesus and sometimes used by itself, occurs in the Koran eight times in the following passages. The word Messiah originates from the Hebrew word Mashiah and means “the annointed one.” There is much discussion among scholars of the Koran as to whether *Al Massih* and *El Massih* are of Arabic or Hebrew origin. The implications of the answer are far-reaching for many Muslims. It seems quite simple and indeed evident that the word Messiah was arabicized from Hebrew long before Islam came onto the stage, probably Arab Christians in the third and fourth centuries.

Sura 3: 40.
Sura 4: 156.
Sura 4: 169.
Sura 4: 170.
Sura 5: 19.
Sura 5: 76.
Sura 5: 77. The Messiah the son of Mary is only a prophet: prophets before him have passed away; and his mother was a confessor; they both used to eat food. (Yusuf Ali Translation)
Sura 9: 30. The Jews call ‘Uziar’ a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah; that is that is the saying in their mouth; (In this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah’s curse be upon them: how they are deluded on the Messenger and on the believers...

Kalimet Allah (The Word of God). This is used in the Koran twice in direct reference to Christ. In other passages it occurs, but not as one of the names of the Jesus.

Sura 3 : 40.
Sura 4: 169.

In these two passages Jesus Christ is clearly referred to as the Word of God and as a Word from God; Arabic usage clearly distinguishes between the Word of God in the form of writings, which is always referred to as *Kalam Allah*, and the

Word of God as His Messenger, which is *Kalimet Allah*. There are, however, only these two passages in which this New Testament title is given to our Savior.

The title given to Moses is *Kalaem Allah*, and the common explanation is that Moses was the mouthpiece of God in the sense that God spoke to him and made him His special confidant; but Jesus is the *Kalimet Allah*, or Word of God, because He communicates God's word, God's will to men.

Jesus is also referred to as Nabi (prophet) and rasul (apostle) in the Koran. However Zwemer observes that in Islamic teaching there were 100,000; 120,000; or 240,000 prophets. Considering the multiplicity of prophets, the fact that Jesus was one of the later prophets does not necessarily set Him apart as special. Jesus then, is a prophet but He is outstripped in every way by Muhammad who is the seal of the prophets.

Sura 19: 30 (Where Jesus speaks from the cradle, using these words), Verily, I am the servant of God, He has brought me the Book, and He has made me a prophet, and He has made me blessed wherever I be (Yusuf Ali).

Sura 57: 27.

Sura 4: 169.

Again Dr. Zwemer sums up for us the picture of Christ that one finds in the Koran, almost echoing the words of the prophet in Revelation 9.

As in a total eclipse of the sun the glory and the beauty of the heavenly orb are hidden, and only the corona appears on the edge, so in the life and thought of Muhammadans their own prophet has almost eclipsed Jesus Christ. The general idea of His life, as we have gathered it from many Moslem sources, is, after all, vague, shadowy, and not at all clearly outlined in the mind of Moslems. An Arab from Hassa expressed this truth a few days ago when he said to me: "Until my wife became a Christian I knew nothing of Jesus whatever, only His name, and that He was a Prophet!" Whatever place Jesus Christ may occupy in the Koran—and the portrait there given is a sad caricature; whatever favourable critics may say about Christ's honourable place among the Moslem prophets, it is nevertheless true that the large bulk of Muhammadans know extremely little, and think still less, of Jesus Christ.—Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Moslem Christ, An Essay On The Life, Character, And Teachings Of Jesus Christ According To The Koran And Orthodox Traditions* (Edinburgh: American Tract Society, 1912), In: Don McCurry (ed)

The World of Islam [CD ROM]. Colorado Springs, Global Mapping International.

Christians and Muslims can easily agree that the Koran accords a special place to Jesus saying that He never sinned and did many miracles. Muhammad also used in his teachings about Christ many titles or terms similar to those used in the Bible. “Aha,” one may say, “proof of His divinity.” However, the same Koran denies His death on the cross, denies that He is God’s Son, and denies other characteristics of His life and ministry.

The picture of Christ in the Koran is at best confusing and inconclusive. Like tepid water to the thirsty traveler, the Koranic picture of Jesus only leaves the true searcher longing for the cool, refreshing drafts of Bible truth. It is no wonder that Abdul Haaq in his book *Sharing Your Faith with a Muslim* makes the following observation.

Though hindered by their traditional attitude toward Christianity and notions about Christ, many of them today are possessed of a curiosity like the Hellenists of old who came to Phillip saying, “Sir, we would like to see Jesus” (John 12:21, NIV). A very small number of these find their way to Christian discipleship. But the majority of them remains on the level of inquirers highly fascinated by and drawn to Jesus Christ yet not interested in the church or even negatively disposed toward it.—(Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1980), preface.

May we Christians, representatives of Christ, present such a striking picture of Him that our Muslim brothers will, like the woman at the well, be irresistibly drawn to His loveliness and abandon all to become missionaries bringing their own people to Him. The end result however is an emasculated Jesus, subtly stripped of His divine nature and his prerogatives, position, and power as the divine Son of God.

IV. Developing an Adventist approach to Islam

A. Step 1 Understanding deeply the Muslim mindset

1.1 Studying the culture

Sympathy is the fruit of understanding. It is the very rare Muslim that will come to Christ without sensing first that he/she is understood on more than a surface level by those trying to win him/her to a saving faith in Christ. This sense of being understood lies at the base of the Muslim perceiving that the new religious experience being offered to him can meet his deepest needs. There are those who receive dreams or are miraculously drawn to Christ. However, it can be safely said that most will come to Christ when the word of God is presented clearly to them in a way comprehensible to them from their point of view. That is why the first step in the holistic Adventist approach to Muslim evangelism involves a period of exclusive study of the culture of Islam. While study and learning never end for the effective missionary, this is a time where the missionary gives all of his effort to absorbing as much of the knowledge, the language, and the tapestry of life that make up the culture of his target people. The goal at this stage is for the missionary to learn the culture of his intended receptors so well that several objectives are met:

- a. The missionary learns to understand the broad principles and beliefs common to all of Islam.
- b. The missionary gains a just appreciation of the many noble aspects of Islam.
- c. The missionary gains the important intangible of sympathy for the lost condition of his adopted Muslim people group.
- d. The missionary possesses or acquires the ability to effectively communicate to his hearer in a language comfortably used by both he and the hearer.

- e. The missionary identifies the particular differences of his Muslim culture that make it unique.

This learning stage is in fact a stage of ministry and preparation. It is during this stage that the missionary interacts with his target people manifesting a genuine interest in their every day lives and comes close to them in a personal way. The relationships established are working both ways to break down barriers of prejudice and misconception in both the missionary and his target audience (White 1900: 57). For this reason the learning stage is vital; it is a very important part of preparing Muslim hearts to receive the Word of God and the missionaries to be conduits to teach that Word. Charles Brock underlines the importance of this preparative stage in his book *Indigenous Church Planting* when he suggests that the goal of the missionary at this stage is to understand so fully the needs and attitudes of his people group that he can understand where they are theologically and spiritually so that he can begin the journey of leading them to where God wants them to be (Brock 1981: 47-54). He points out that the missionary neither condones or condemns at this stage; he simply gains understanding and at the given time leads (guides) toward the God's ideal. This principle underscores a difference between the C5 approach and the holistic Adventist approach. C5 contextualization condones wholeheartedly many aspects of Islamic religious life and practice. This comprehensive condoning does not give careful consideration to the implications of an indiscriminate acceptance of Islamic religious forms and meaning and the potential spillover into areas of Islamic religious life that may be altogether unworthy of acceptance. That is why C5 contextualization inevitably leads to syncretism.

1.2 Areas for consideration

Effective Muslim ministry can never be successfully carried out until each of the five previously mentioned objectives is met. That is why it is impossible to set a time frame for this stage of learning. In some settings several months may be sufficient if the missionary is already familiar with his adopted Muslim people group and may be from a closely related people group. In other settings a time frame of a great many years may be required. The locale, the skills, prior knowledge, and aptitudes of the missionary and the availability of learning resources will all be practical determining factors in completing the first step of learning the culture. The goal here is meeting the objectives not a particular time frame.

Any Seventh-day Adventist who works for the salvation of Muslims must realize that the Muslim way of thinking and relating to life is in many ways exceptionally different from his or hers. The Muslim way of viewing the world and interacting with it are different from the Christian's because although similar in some respects, Islam and Christianity differ in a great deal of other areas. If the Seventh-day Adventist missionary is also from the western world the differences are even more pronounced. Islam carries with it a set of presuppositions, viewpoints, and attitudes that are in fact so different from what a Christian of a non-Islamic background is accustomed to, that careful study, observation, and research are required in order to have some notion of what life is like through the eyes of one's Muslim acquaintance. Yet at the end of one's study and research what does the missionary come away with? Does he gain a knowledge that he can reduce into a set of do's and don'ts, a how to manual of Muslim mission? At the very least he should come away with an understanding of what Bill Musk calls the 'prevailing norms' of Muslim society (Musk 1995: 19). Prevailing norms are those ideologies that run as an undercurrent

through all Muslim societies in a greatly diversified Muslim world. Musk goes on to make the pertinent point that it is not enough for a Christian wishing to share the good news of the gospel with Muslims to have a checklist of guidelines of proper etiquette and cultural cues as helpful as these may be. Rather, he says, it is important that Christians understand the Muslim attitudes and assumptions about reality that lie at the heart of his way of relating to the world.

1.3 Variety of factors at work

Going a step further, the missionary must understand why Muslims think the way they do. Although not always clear cut, this step in the process of acquiring an intimate knowledge of his people is vital. There are several variables implicit in all Muslim societies that help shape the Muslim mindset and without more than a cursory knowledge of these, reaching Muslims for Christ becomes extremely difficult. It is essential that the Adventist Missionary seeking to apply the holistic approach to Muslim evangelism understand what factors have potentially shaped the world view of the Muslim.

1.4. Muhammad and the Koran

The Koran is the fundamental source of faith and practice for Muslims worldwide. It is composed of 114 suras (chapters) arranged by length from longest to shortest with the exception of the first. Every verse is called an ayah or sign because every verse is deemed by faithful Muslims to be a miracle of God. The Koran is believed to be the direct word of Allah dictated word by word into the ear of the prophet by the angel Gabriel. The word Koran or Qur'an literally means recitation because Muhammad was believed to have only been reciting what was revealed to him as the exact words of God. Written and arranged in an unorganized and

piecemeal fashion, the Koran proves challenging reading for those accustomed to following stories or themes with clear and distinct plot lines. It is a series of often unrelated recitations that usually were given by the prophet to address local or immediate issues.

Having been “revealed” in the Arabic language, and praised for its richness and style, translations are called interpretations by Muslims because it is believed that only the Arabic language can capture or express the fullness of meaning, depth of style, and the breadth of thought contained therein.⁵ Holy, uncreated, existing in original form with God Himself, the Koran is taken from the purest and truest source, the Mother of Books in the heavens.

The Adventist who works with Muslims must show great respect for Muslim belief and respect for the Koran. He must also understand its teachings and where it disagrees on a fundamental level with the Bible. The point here is to gain knowledge of where Muslims are; it is not to condone or condemn. Denigrating and disparaging remarks about the prophet or the Koran will effectively cut off all influence with Muslims at the very least and could at the worst cost a missionary his life and cut off all potential contact with a people group for years to come in some settings.

1.5. Polygamy

While all Muslim households are not polygamous, the influence of this practice is a general factor in the development of many if not most Muslims children. Polygamy in various forms is encouraged and practiced throughout the Muslim world. Most apologists for Islam cite its benefits but a voice of authority for Seventh-day

⁵ Muslims believe that Arabic is the language chosen by God because of its pure and Holy qualities. Accordingly, all translations are corrupt and are known as “interpretations” of the Koran. In order to read *The* Koran one must understand Arabic.

Adventists has clearly stated that in general the effects of polygamy are baleful.

Among these affects Ellen White lists the following:

The results of polygamy were manifest in the household. This terrible evil tends to dry up the very springs of love, and its influence weakens the most sacred ties. The jealousy of the several mothers had embittered the family relation, the children had grown up contentious and impatient of control, and the father's life was darkened with anxiety and grief. (White 1890: 209)

If polygamy is widely practiced in the Muslim society where a particular SDA Christian is seeking to reach out to them the realities of the influence of this practice on the characters of those he is trying to reach must be understood and taken into account.

Polygamy was practiced at an early date. It was one of the sins that brought the wrath of God upon the antediluvian world. . . . It was Satan's studied effort to pervert the marriage institution, to weaken its obligations and lessen its sacredness; for in no surer way could he deface the image of God in man and open the door to misery and vice. (White 1890: 338)

1.6. Very strong social ties

Muslim society is very heavily weighted to the shame and honor based Semitic ideas of antiquity. Right and wrong and sin and evil are determined in reference to what brings shame and honor to the family or 'group'. Reference to a set of laws or to an individual code of conduct is only secondary to the motif of shame and honor. What is right is what brings honor; what is wrong is what brings shame. This is why for the Muslim questions of morality though very real take on a whole different dimension often unfamiliar to the westerner.

This shame-honor is closely tied to the nuclear family and clan system. From a child's earliest days the idea of not bringing shame on the kin is one of the first rules of life. This concept built around the mutual obligations of the family is the single greatest factor that keeps Muslims from converting to Christ. Missionaries are then obligated to understand how they can safely and Biblically unite the concepts of the

shame that follows from the breaking of God's law. The Old Testament provides a great wealth of material in which the two ideas of the broken law and the ensuing shame are already melded. In fact, the Old Testament provides the perfect balance between the competing broken rule (law) view of traditional Christianity and the shame-honor understanding of Islam.

1.7. Other themes

Aside from this study there are several more themes that are common to almost all Muslim societies without exception. The themes are common but the application of them in a particular society takes on many forms. The following is a list of themes held in tension in the Muslim community as outlined by Bill Musk.

- Male and female relationships, the role of women
- Family and individual, individual expression
- Honor and shame
- Hospitality and violence
- Time and space
- Language and silence
- Brotherhood and rivalry
- Resignation and manipulation

When the five objectives of step 1 have been met, it is safe for the missionary to tactfully to move in his relationships with Muslims into the second step. The next step is seeks to establish a deeper level of contact in which careful, deliberate, non overt efforts are made at establishing spiritual understanding.

B. Step 2 Initial spiritual contact, emphasize the similarities

1.1. .Meeting objectives

It is assumed that each of the five objectives of step one has been met and that the missionary has a variety of friends and contacts in the Muslim community. Among them he can probably count one or two close friends with whom he shares a mutual and deep respect. As one moves into this stage there is one important factor to keep in mind. Borge Schantz suggests that there is no separation in Islam between religion and other areas of life. The Islamic approach to life is holistic. Every part of life affects every other. Business, politics, family relations, law and education are all closely related in Islam. This holistic approach to life necessarily will demand from the Seventh-day Adventist careful thought and consideration as he begins deeper contact with a Muslim individual (Schantz 2003: 19).

1.2. Casual conversation

The focus of stage two is conversation. These conversations could occur almost anywhere - in public transport, in a coffee shop, in a restaurant, in a family setting or anywhere that it is natural to interact. Seventh-day Adventists working for the salvation of Muslims should purposely and purposefully stress the points wherein Seventh-day Adventists can agree, at least thematically with Muslims. This is not a hard thing to do at this level because Seventh-day Adventist Christians, above other Christian denominations emphasize several themes that resonate in the Muslim mind. The most prominent of these areas are here listed.

1.3. Emphasize holism

Seventh-day Adventist Christians teach that true religion should affect every part of life. A true “believer” as Muslims call them, will manifest several characteristics that Muslims emphasize and appreciate. Among the emphases that are important to both Muslims and Seventh-day Adventists are modesty of women in

adornment and dress (White 1952: 423), (1 Timothy 2:9), the rejection of unclean foods including pork and alcohol (Deuteronomy 11 and 14), the rejection of lotteries and card playing as suitable pastimes ((White 1952: 498), and careful attention to the well being of the family (White 1952: 182). In initial contacts with Muslims emphasizing these similarities in belief is enough to pique interest and establish credibility and mutual respect. It is the privilege of the missionary to explain to his Muslim friend that there are many Christians of many denominations that hold these as important values. He is likely to have been taught to identify Christianity with lasciviousness, so this may be difficult for him to understand or accept. It will be especially hard for him to accept that there are Christians that don't eat pork or drink alcohol. Inevitably he will ask about prayer and fasting. It would be good to have prepared several tactful answers on this subject about the very spiritual, nature of both private and public prayer and fasting from the words of Jesus. One may cite the Bible here but it would not be at all times wise to open the Bible before one's Muslim acquaintance.

This emphasis on holism is vital to a Seventh-day Adventist approach and presents a striking difference from the C5 approach. The C5 approach seeks to win interest by showing similarity to the point of blurring the differences between Adventism and Islam. The holistic approach emphasizes real similarities while placing the differences between the two religious systems in tactful contrast. Judgmental words and attitudes are strongly out of place in the truly SDA approach to Islam while kinds words of genuine appreciation and deep understand are strongly recommended.

What many Muslims are seeking is a genuine religious experience. When they see this manifested, it will be appreciated and will be attractive to them. The holistic

approach to Muslim ministry is much more demanding of the missionary than the high spectrum contextualized C5 approach. In the contextualized approach missionaries are encouraged to adopt several practices and lifestyle habits like refraining from alcohol and pork so that Muslims will not be turned away. A type of double life standard is encouraged. Missionaries live one life when in the field with Muslims and another life when in each others' company. It doesn't take long however for the perceptive to decipher genuine conviction from an assumed lifestyle that is quickly shed when the missionary is out of eyesight of the Muslims he is trying to reach. This dichotomous method reflects western compartmentalization that divides life into sectors. C5 evangelism then ends up encouraging what it ostensibly tries to avoid. In encouraging missionaries to adapt unrealistically and not genuinely to the Muslim lifestyle it denies the holism that is the very essence of Islam and promotes a western dichotomous approach to evangelization. Will the C5 missionary profess the same conviction in the beauty of the Islamic religious system when he returns home to his Christian friends? The holistic, Adventist approach encourages an entire consecration of body and spirit to the missionary task. Non smoking, modesty, alcohol avoidance and a careful diet are all a part of a Christ centered Adventist lifestyle and are all greatly appreciated by Muslims.

1.4. Emphasize prayer

Although Muslim prayer is ritualistic and centered on the external, it is advisable to emphasize to Muslims that Adventist believe very strongly in prayer and God's willingness to answer the prayers of true followers. If the relationship can handle it, it may be good at this time to point out that truly answered prayer has conditions such as: a willingness to do God's will, the absence of cherished sin, a heart that has forgiven others and above all a firm faith in God.

The task of the Adventist is to delicately agree where possible and very tactfully draw distinctions where advisable. It is not the goal to so imitate Islam that there is no outwardly discernable difference between his religion and the missionary's. The holistic Adventist approach presents a happy alternative to Islam not a close imitation. The goal of the holistic approach is to present an attractive religious experience to those who are longing for something deeper, more spiritually satisfying than they now possess. If the missionary's religion models too closely the seeker's religious experience what will the seeker see in what the missionary proffers that offers something better?

It is important to emphasize the beauty of united and public prayer but also stress the blessing and benedictions of private prayer. Jesus warned against praying to be seen, so prayer must be stressed as a truly spiritual exercise between a soul and God.

A great many of the half truths that Islam teaches about the belief and practice of Christianity are untrue of many Christians and especially untrue of Adventist belief and practice. It is the privilege of Seventh-day Adventists to show the fallacy of these beliefs by tactfully affirming everything about the Muslim lifestyle that he biblically can and demonstrating through his own lifestyle that such assumptions are false. This approach requires much more of the missionary. His role is not an assumed role of different coats that he wears depending upon which society he is in but rather a holistic approach to life that remains constant in all circumstances and societies.

1.5. Emphasize the importance of the family

Muslims are often appalled at the lack of intrinsic respect built into what they consider to be Christian societies. It is not uncommon to find three generations living in Muslim households. The elderly, generally speaking, are greatly revered in

Muslim societies and their words are held in higher esteem than in the West. What are Muslims to think of those who put their parents away in institutions to live out their remaining days when the children could host them in love and honor? Seventh-day Adventist Christian missionaries must affirm in their life practice all that is good in the Muslim respect for the family. The area of respect for the elderly in Islamic society greatly exceeds many western societies. An Adventist missionary seeking to apply the holistic approach must give great consideration to the implications of the following texts in his own life:

Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I [am] the LORD. Leviticus 19:32.

Rebuke not an elder, but entreat [him] as a father; [and] the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 1 Timothy 5:1-4.

Protection of the chastity of women in a Muslim household reflects upon the honor of the whole house and the failure to protect the chastity of the women is one of the greatest shames to a Muslim family (Musk 1995: 2343). The holistic Adventist approach encourages missionaries to show as great a vigilance in protecting the chastity (even the appearance of evil or immodesty) of the teenaged girls and wife of the missionary family. Modesty should be modeled. The modesty of an appropriately covered frame in public and the modesty of a woman that avoids artificial adornment go a long way in awakening interest and dispelling the misunderstandings that Muslims have of Christians in this area of belief.

C. Step 3 Dimensions of the Adventist approach, the application

1.1. The Practical component

In order to develop a truly Adventist approach to Muslim ministry, returning to what has worked for previous generations of Seventh-day Adventists is helpful and necessary. The most prominent component of the holistic approach of Seventh-day Adventists has been medical missionary endeavor combined with gospel proclamation. The term *medical missionary* it implies much more than the traditional use of these words. Early in her ministry, Ellen White began encouraging Seventh-day Adventists to consider medical missionary efforts to be an “entering wedge” or the right hand of the gospel (White 1923: 523). Again and again she urged Adventists to accompany the preaching of the gospel with medical missionary efforts. This medical missionary endeavor was not to be however institutional in the traditional sense of the word. Medical missionary work was to include a variety of very small institutional and personal approaches in public health education, development and relief work, natural disease treatment and prevention,

1.1 A. Medical missions

The constant advice of one of the principle founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church and one of its most influential voices was that the goal of medical missions was not large medical complexes but rather small, scattered medical treatment facilities. The major focus of these plants was to be twofold:

- The natural treatment of sickness and disease
- Public health education

These two emphases must necessarily be adapted to the local health needs and cultural environment but provide an excellent entering wedge to one to one contact

with Muslims. Small plants avoid the bureaucratic, inefficient, impersonal atmosphere that has been the bane and impediment of effective medical missions since its inception. Phil Parshall has suggested that if missionaries want to successfully reach Muslims small medical facilities, not large hospitals, are an ideal method

1.1 B. Sanitariums

Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, founder of the famous Kellogg cereal company was the pioneer physician that experimented most heavily and successfully with this approach in the Seventh - day Adventist church. After attending medical school at the Bellevue Medical College in New York, he took over the supervision of the Battle Creek (Michigan) Health institution in 1875. It became the leading institution of its kind and achieved world renowned status as a place where people “learned to stay well”. Dr. Kellogg successfully treated a wide variety of sicknesses naturally using water therapy (hydrotherapy), dietary modification, health education, exercise, and other natural means. The vision for such an institution originated with two of the church’s prominent founders, James and Ellen White. The idea was that many such institutions very small and manageable would be planted around the world (White 1923: 501). The after history of both Dr. Kellogg and the sanitarium underline the importance of many small institutions scattered in various corners of the world. Dr. Kellogg against the urging of many church leaders developed a mammoth institution. Although it was world renowned, it eventually became unmanageable from its sheer size and other problems. It was eventually lost and became the largest military hospital in the US until the 1950’s. If the goal of medical ministry is winning souls and efficiency in doing this is important, then small seems to be the ideal. Dr David VanReken in an insightful series of articles on medical missions throughout Protestant mission history indicates that when conducted correctly medical missions conducted

on a local and small scale have always been an excellent means of opening the way to the gospel among resistant peoples. Also when conducted on a small scale they are both manageable and cost-effective (VanRekan 1987).

1.1 C. Public health education

Public health education can be carried on in conjunction with sanitariums or as an independent project associated with no medical facility. This type of work may take the form of door to door (or hut to hut) ministry with flip charts, basic medicines, visual aids and other teaching materials adapted to meet the health needs of the local community. Above others, this category of ministry allows for the entering into the lives of Muslims on a very personal level and praying with them and for them that God would heal their sicknesses. It also allows for women missionaries to have personal contact with Muslim women teaching them how to apply basic prevention principles. This opens many doors of ministry.

1.1 D. Hygienic Restaurants (Health food restaurants)

Coffee shops and restaurants are one of the main social centers for Muslim men. A restaurant carefully adapted to meet local standards that promotes healthful living is a very real option in Muslim areas of the West like southern France or in areas such as Beirut or Istanbul where secularism and Islam have combined to form a newer, more progressive type of Islam (White 1933: 22).

1.1 E. Development work among the poor

Development work among the poor in the area of food security, manual skills training, and mother infant nutrition is a vital component of medical missionary work. The greatest challenge to performing effective health ministry to Muslims is to avoid

the constant tendency to large projects where atmosphere, quality and objectives become less manageable.

1.1 F. Relief work

In the event of disaster relief work provides the perfect opportunity to create the type of good will that may later be followed up with more directed spiritual effort. Often the argument is heard that relief and development work are ends in themselves and should not necessarily be coupled with overt evangelism. This is true; however where development and relief work has opened doors for further ministry, this should be followed up with directed spiritual efforts.

1.1 G. Other Areas of ministry

In the past of other protestant missions and in the Seventh-day Adventist church, medical missions in the broadest sense of the term have been effective tools in opening resistant areas to the proclamation of the gospel. Medical ministry is therefore an integral component of the holistic Adventist approach to Muslim evangelism.

D. Presenting the Bible

1.1 The five pillars of Islam and Adventism

In this final area of the holistic Adventist approach to missions among Muslims the very difficult and challenging area of exploring the scriptures with Muslims is discussed. Muslims have a built in set of prejudices to the Bible, some of which are derived from the Koran and others from tradition. The more educated among them can with lucidity quote biblical scholars and Christian history to show why the Bible is unreliable and has been corrupted. Yet there is a way to deal with

almost all Muslim objections. The stories of the Bible present a method of dealing with sensitive Bible topics that is at once captivating and direct.

Jeff Morton suggests that when confronted with Muslim objections and prejudice, the best course is to appeal to Bible stories. Instead of falling into theological debates, treat the issues in their native context, the Bible histories themselves (Morton 2005). The stories of the creation and the fall, the Bible patriarchs, Balaam and Balaak, Daniel, and many others have levels of meaning for the Muslim that they don't have for the western Christian. The life of Jacob and his treachery with its consequences is fascinating to Muslims and the imagery and situations are more relevant to them than to westerners.

The following is an outline of presenting Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the important Bible doctrines in a form familiar to Muslims. There are seven "groups" of lessons. Each group theme is centered on a Bible story like that of Jacob for instance. The title of each theme (group) reflects a corresponding Islamic pillar or Muslim concept. Throughout all the lessons in this group the uniting theme is the story. When a doctrinal point is made it is the context of the overarching story.

The theology of Islam is built around a series of five doctrinal components. These are belief in:

- Allah
- Angels
- The Holy Books
- The Last Days
- The Judgment

For the purpose of covering all Adventist doctrinal points, two more themes have been added.

- Good and Evil
- Good Health

The doctrine of God (Allah)

This group of studies is centered on the creation story. All throughout the lessons the majesty, power, love, and other attributes of God are taught as they are revealed in the creation.

- God the creator
- God the all powerful
- A God full of love – First introduction to the fall and plan of salvation as revealed in Genesis 3:15
- God and His law – A first introduction to the Ten Commandments
- God the Savior – The plan of salvation from God's point of view
- God calls you – Making a decision to truly surrender to God.

The doctrine of angels

This group deals with several Adventist distinctive doctrines. It is based on the interaction of angels in the life of Jacob and his struggles throughout his life.

- The nature of the angels
- The ministry of angels
- An angel in rebellion – The beginning of the great controversy, the fall of Lucifer
- Three messages from three angels
- The fourth angel

The last days

This set of lessons finds its context in the days leading up to the flood and the momentous events surrounding the building of the ark and god's plan to save the world.

- 12 signs of the last days
- God's people in the last days – Characteristics of the faithful
- False believers in the last days – The fall of Babylon

The judgment

This set of lessons is based upon the stories of God's judgment on ancient Egypt during the time of Moses and God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah during the time of Abraham.

- Why the Judgment? The reasons for the judgment
- The reach of the judgment – the nature of the judgment
- The judgment and the righteous – Introduction to Daniel 9

Prophets and their prophecies

- The ancient prophets of God – Introduction to Bible predictions and prophecy
- Prophets and the last days
- Prophecies about the Messiah
- The messages of God's Prophets

Health

This set of lessons is supported by the story of Daniel and his friends of Daniel chapter 1 and their refusal to eat wrong food.

- The lifestyle of a true believer – Introduction to godly living
- Food and drink

- The 10 commandments and your health

Good and evil

This set of studies finds its context in the story of King Saul and the witch of Endor.

- Protection against evil
- Where are the spirits of the dead?
- Magic, sorcery, and curses
- Evil spirits
- Talking to the dead

The holistic Adventist approach provides a viable alternative to the high spectrum C5 approach. It avoids the pitfalls of C5 evangelism and its syncretistic tendencies. The final summary section will demonstrate why the holistic approach is the preferable of the two choices.

V. Weighing the Approaches

A. Adventists and C5 contextualization

In a very special sense Seventh-day Adventists have three very clear reasons to reject the reasoning that suggests that Muslims who convert to Christ should remain identified as Muslims, accept Muhammad as a prophet, and practice other Islamic forms firmly linked to Islam. 1.) Seventh-day Adventists have officially rejected the presuppositions of historical criticism which track closely with ethno-hermeneutics and C5 contextualization. 2.) The historical concepts of Seventh-day Adventist self identity would have to be reinterpreted to accommodate such theology. 3.) Such practices run counter to the Adventist understanding of the prophetic messages of Revelation.

B. Adventists reject historical criticism

Contextualization theory is very broad in its inclusion of views and methods. This accommodation has allowed for a very strong strain of historical-critical hermeneutics to take a prominent place. One prominent characteristic of historical criticism is its dependence on secular science as normative in the interpretation of scripture. The "new way of theologizing" called for by Shoki Coe gives equal prominence to anthropology, sociology and theology.

George Reid (Reid 2001: 1-8) very persuasively makes the point that Adventist hermeneutics have over the years reflected a stance where theology took precedence over sociology, anthropology, and critical studies. Adventists have traditionally held to a high view of scripture that rejects the idea that the messages of the Bible are culturally conditioned. The understanding of the meaning of the Bible was enhanced by the study of the historical setting and the grammatical structure of the texts. Finally, while the writings of Ellen White were not definitive they were

influential.

A careful reading of 1 Corinthians 9 and 1 Corinthians 7 using the Grammatical-Historical approach to hermeneutics, giving the proper weight to the 'context' would not allow for the loose interpretations of these texts that C5 proponents give them. It is an interesting paradox that C5 contextualizers ignore the specific historical context of 1 Corinthians 7:20-22 in their attempts to justify converts remaining Muslims in religion and practice.

One must use many of the newer hermeneutic principles based on the modalities common in historical criticism to arrive at C5 practice. Reid lists the characteristics of this hermeneutic approach as one that must (1) factor in the challenges and 'discrepancies' brought to light by social and physical sciences; (2) give added weight to the background cultural influences as a molding influence in the text and theology (using this line of reasoning some have said that the apostle Paul was more reflective of the prejudices and ignorance of his era in his prohibitions against homosexuality.); (3) that our own contemporary biases limit our ability to personally study the Bible and draw out applicable lessons and principles for modern life without a mediating interpretive level that eliminates the possibility of direct transmission of truth from the ancient text to today; (4) doctrine must not be allowed to a great a place in biblical interpretation; and (5) we must give added weight to the changing nature of revealed truth. (Reid 2001: 1-8).

The SDA church has officially taken a position against historical critical hermeneutics. The officially voted position is reflected in the document Methods of Bible Study. In this document, voted in 1986 in Rio de Janeiro, the Church set out the following principles: (1) The Bible is the Word of God and is the primary and authoritative means by which He reveals Himself to human beings.

(2) The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible writers with thoughts, ideas, and objective information; in turn they expressed these in their own words. Therefore the scriptures are an indivisible union of the human and divine elements; neither of which should be emphasized to the neglect of the other.

(3) All scripture is inspired by God and came through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, it did not come in a continuous chain of unbroken revelations. As the Holy Spirit communicated truth to the Bible writer, each wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, emphasizing the aspect of truth which he was led to stress. For this reason the student of the Bible will gain a rounded comprehension on any subject by recognizing that the Bible is its own best interpreter and when studied as a whole it depicts consistent, harmonious truth.

(4) Although it was given to those who lived in the ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean context, the Bible transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God's word for all cultural, relational and situational contexts in all ages.

C. SDA self identity

Of even greater concern to Seventh-day Adventists is the tendency of C5 and to some extent C4 contextualization promotes an unbiblical contextualization that result in a *reactionary particularism* ⁶ and ethnic and social homogeneity (Williams 2003: 75-91). The goal of the gospel and mission in preparation for the coming of Christ is ethnic universalism where the concept of exclusive homogeneity is a thing of the past (ibid). Certainly Seventh-day Adventist believe that their mandate is to make disciples and converts of every, nation, kindred, tongue and people whose self-identity (as Adventists) is linked less to particular religious or cultural forms and more to a set of

beliefs that they hold to be truth. Peter's vision in Acts 10 is resounding confirmation of God's intention that people from everywhere come together into the church to worship. This theme is repeated with greater force in the book of Revelation chapters 14 and 18. Clearly SDA self identity, linked as it is to the prophetic messages of Revelation is incompatible with and in many instances diametrically opposed to C5 (in some cases C4) contextualization in the area of self-identity.

D. Contextualization an assessment by one of its authors

Contextualization among Muslims will continue to be an alternative that many turn toward in the very difficult task of seeking converts to Christ and Bible religion among Muslims. However, has contextualization proven to be viable and effective alternative in winning them to Christ? Often great numbers of converts are said to have become 'believers' but the reality of these claims are often very difficult to substantiate. Without a clear definition of what a Muslim background contextualized C4 or C5 believer adheres to as a set of beliefs it is hard to differentiate between a Muslim interested in learning about the Bible and Christ and a C5 'believer'. Is there any difference? Another issue is that missionaries have a wide variety of what it means to become a believer. Does one profess faith in Christ as savior verbally to become a Christian? Does this confession include an affirmation of His divinity? What is the relation of the new believer to the organize action of the church in his country? Does he still see himself as a Muslim?

Charles Kraft in a lecture, after summarizing the reasons for his personal involvement in contextualization makes the following startling conclusions:

1. The peoples of the world are not much interested in contextualized theology.

⁶ Particularism deals with the cultural dimensions of Judaism. The word 'particular' refers to the belief

2. Most of the rapidly growing churches in the world do not practice

contextualization as he and others have developed it (Kraft 1999:1-18).

He goes on to say that contextualized approaches are relatively small and not influential when compared with some non-contextualized approaches gaining converts more efficiently.

By the end of his lecture Mr. Kraft comes full circle to what he sees as the crux of the problem in the failure of contextualized approaches. His call is to greater spirituality and more spiritual power among missionaries.

It was Jesus' authority and power that set Him apart from, the other religious teachers of His day. Most of what He said had been said before. The majority of His message, unlike ours, was in who He was and what He did, And He specifically taught that we are able, with the Holy Spirit, to follow His example (John 14:12), it is this authority and power that proved His relationship with the Father, He said He did nothing on His own authority (John 5:19, 30). He had set aside His own divinity (Phil 2:6-8). His works were endorsed by and empowered, not by Himself, but by the Father/Holy Spirit.

It is this authority and power that made His relationship with His followers life transforming; they went out fearless, taking on the whole Roman Empire, because of the transforming power of that relationship. An important concomitant of that relationship, then, was that Jesus gave them the same Holy Spirit who had empowered Him. Christianity without this authority and power has little to offer a world that Satan claims is his (Luke 4:6). We cannot fight Satan's power with rational, theoretical truth. You can fight error and ignorance with truth/knowledge, but you have to fight power with power.

We know and practice a good bit of the power of love but often with little of a spiritual dimension to it. But Jesus used spiritual power as an exciting way to demonstrate God's love. A lack of such demonstration makes most of our evangelical Christianity spiritually lifeless and unable to deal with the spiritual realities that Jesus, Paul, Peter and the rest of our NT authors were so conscious of. (Kraft 1999: 16)

Mr. Kraft goes on to state that for years the contextualized approach that he had been teaching was in effect “Christianity without power based on a contextualization of a powerless theology...” that he says was secular.

His final assessment is that instead of seeking to contextualize knowledge and

that for gentiles to embrace the Jewish faith that would have to embrace Jewish forms and leave their

theology missionaries need a real relationship with Jesus in order to be effective in winning souls to Christ in a cross-cultural setting. The tenor of the lecture seems to be setting a new orientation in contextualization for the future. While Mr. Kraft still seems committed to the concept of contextualization he also seems to be setting course for a more relational emphasis in the future. In this reorientation he admits that contextualization theory has been chiefly concerned with knowledge and academic pursuits as the answer to what are real spiritual problems. In his assessment he is correct. Contextualization as it has developed in its high spectrum reaches in Muslim missions has been primarily concerned with knowledge about culture and the proper application of this knowledge. Mr. Kraft after having “been involved in the contextualization for over forty years” comes full circle to the starting point. Although he sees a danger in overemphasis on Bible doctrine, he sees that contextualization theory is ineffective when the missionary has not a firm relationship with Jesus Christ. So, the assessment of one of the influential authors of contextualization among Muslims has brought us in the end to the beginning. Winning souls to Christ from among Muslims is a highly spiritual work and no amount of theorizing about culture, transculturation, dynamic equivalence, and indigenization can simplify the task or create ‘better’ converts. In the end winning Muslims to Christ is more a function of prayer, and faith and fidelity to a body of absolute truth.

E. Considering our alternatives, reasons to adopt a holistic approach

Seventh-day Adventists have realized that reaching the World for Christ and calling them out of spiritual confusion into the denominated remnant is the task left to them by Christ. As with other denominations the difficult issue of how to reach

“gentile” culture.

resistant, culturally isolated (from the gospel) groups of people has been heavily discussed. Muslims historically represent the most resistant major people group. Many Adventists in considering the challenges of Muslim evangelization have leaned heavily upon high spectrum contextualization theory giving increasing influence to a C5 approach.

Too often high spectrum contextualization theory has been presented as the only viable alternative for Seventh-day Adventists seeking to correct the errors of a few insensitive, paternalistic missionary approaches of the past and to do successful ministry among Muslims. However, contextualization theory is new on the scene but missionaries dating from the days of Samuel Zwemer have practiced culturally sensitive ministry adapting the emphasis and the tenor of their ministry to the manifest needs of the people for centuries. Avoiding high spectrum contextualization does not imply avoiding culturally sensitive ministry. There are others, often overlooked, who have experimented with a non high spectrum contextualized approaches and have found success in overcoming initial resistance to the gospel (Steinhauss 2000: 23-30). In fact there are a variety of options that are both enlightened and culturally sensitive but that do not fall within the rubric of contextualization (Terry 1996: 168-173).

1.1. Clearing the confusion of mandates

Seventh-day Adventists must redefine what contextualization means for them as a prerequisite step to arriving at a clear understanding of what Adventist ministry among Muslims is. As this paper has clearly demonstrated, to accept the commonly held evangelical definitions of contextualization is to become enmeshed in an array of theological positions and missionary practice that often run counter to Seventh-day Adventist, theology, self understanding, and goals. The better alternative is to adopt

the holistic approach of missionary effort. It is an approach already perfectly placed in context; it satisfies the theological fidelity required by the Bible while still adapting itself to meet the people where they are.

Another requisite step in coming to an Adventist understanding of proper contextualization of the gospel among Muslims is to clear up the confusion between the divine mandate given to the church to carry the messages of the Three Angels to the entire world and the supposed divine mandate to contextualize. Again the problem here is one of definition. A research paper by Felipe Tan of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, AIIAS, illustrates this confusion. Mr. Tan, (Tan1993) in his document lays out as a Biblical basis for contextualization seven texts that have traditionally been understood as key texts in the mandate that God has left for His true followers throughout all ages to infiltrate the world and to make disciples of all nations. The texts he cited are John 12:32, Genesis 12:3, Genesis 17:5, Isaiah 49:6, Acts 1:8 and Acts 19:6. Certainly in carrying out this mandate the Church would necessarily have to deal with issues surrounding the transmission of the gospel in foreign cultural settings. However, the mandate to share the gospel with the world is not the mandate to contextualize in the high spectrum evangelical sense of the word.

The SDA church at all levels needs to consider its viable alternatives to evangelical contextualization principles though alternatives have not often been presented.

1.2. Developing an alternative, holistic apologetic

The first aspect of an Adventist approach to Islam should be based on an alternative apologetic. The apologetic currently in vogue in Christian circles revolves around appeasing Islamic anger and accepting some Islamic misunderstandings. It's a

kind of trade off. We will accept some of their propositions if they will only accept ours. Seventh-day Adventists are poised to insert a new element into the realm of discussions with Muslims.

Historically the Seventh-day Adventist church has had no apologetic geared specifically toward Muslims and yet Seventh-day Adventist doctrine contains several key themes with which Muslims readily identify. This apologetic void has been filled in recent years by a contextualized apologetic that has been suspect to ceding too much theological terrain to Muslims by overtly or tacitly agreeing with biblically objectionable aspects of Islamic practice and theology. Even among evangelicals there have been calls for a careful, scriptural stance in the face of the prejudices and presuppositions that Islam brings to the Christian-Muslim debate. Realizing the ineffectiveness of the confrontational apologetic of the past (Schlorff 1980b: 335-366).

An Adventist apologetic to Islam based upon the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of its own prophetic role and an understanding of end time events inserts a new factor into the whole area of a Christian response to Islam. The historical messages of the Three Angels and all that they imply are perfectly adapted to the Muslim world. Seventh-day Adventists must rediscover the vitality of these messages and realize that the themes addressed by these messages are universal, supersede culture, and will arrest the attention of the Muslim world when presented in faith. Following are the distinctive subjects that are important in developing a theologically sound and historically consistent Seventh-day Adventist approach to Islam.

Themes upon which a consistent Adventist apologetic to Islam may center include the judgment, healthful living including alcohol and tobacco abstinence,

modesty and women (an important Islamic theme, an honest biblical appraisal of the errors and sins of Christianity throughout history, the antichrist (a theme discussed in Islamic hadith literature), the last days (a pillar of Islam), the return of Christ (although distorted, this is a koranic theme), and prophecy. This apologetic must necessarily include the production of materials for the purpose of evangelizing Muslims because as Borge Schantz says:

Much of the Christian literature on Islamics deals with Islam as a religion and how to relate and witness to Islamic people. Still more volumes, like this manual are written to teach Christians how to relate and witness to Islamic people. Very few publications are written to explain the Christian faith to Muslims (Schantz 1993: 19).

1.3. A high view of scripture

Seventh-day Adventists must avoid the tendency to slip into the humanistic reasoning that views the scriptures as a book with both inspired and uninspired parts which can be separated by the professed scholar or critic. Seventh-day Adventists hold to a high view of scripture one that uncompromisingly sees all scripture as supra-cultural applicable to all cultures and all people in all times (2 Timothy 3:16).

The implications here are far reaching. If Seventh-day Adventists are drawn into the evangelical debate about the cultural influence upon the writer of one text or another we open up a Pandora's box of speculation on just what parts are inspired and those that are not. Against the backdrop of the humanistic reasoning of the historical-critical method of Bible interpretation and much of contextualization theory stand these very stark warnings.

The union of the divine and the human, manifest in Christ, exists also in the Bible.... And this fact, so far from being an argument against the Bible, should strengthen faith in it as the word of God. Those who pronounce upon the inspiration of the Scriptures, accepting some portions as divine while they reject other parts as human, overlook the fact that Christ, the divine, partook of our human nature, that He might reach humanity. In the work of God for man's

redemption, divinity and humanity are combined (White, E.G., 1889. Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5, Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 747).

Do not let any living man come to you and begin to dissect God's Word, telling what is revelation, what is inspiration and what is not, without a rebuke.... We call on you to take your Bible, but do not put a sacrilegious hand upon it, and say, 'That is not inspired,' simply because somebody else has said so. Not a jot or tittle is ever to be taken from that Word. Hands off, brethren! Do not touch the ark. . . . When men begin to meddle with God's Word, I want to tell them to take their hands off, for they do not know what they are doing (White, E.G. White comments, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 7, 919-920).

The warnings of the word of God regarding the perils surrounding the Christian church belong to us today. As in the days of the apostles men tried by tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Scriptures, so today, by the pleasing sentiments of higher criticism, evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism, the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths. To many the Bible is a lamp without oil, because they have turned their minds into channels of speculative belief that bring misunderstanding and confusion. The work of higher criticism, in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God's word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives (White, E.G., The Acts of the Apostles, 474).

F. Characteristics of the integrated, holistic approach

1.1. A Belief in the prophetic messages of Revelation

The consistent Adventist approach to Islam will give due weight to the prophetic messages of Revelation especially those that treat directly the subject Islam. Because the traditional Adventist understanding of the fifth and sixth trumpets of Revelation 9 does not fit into the new hermeneutic there has been a tendency on the part of contextualizers in the Seventh-day Adventist church to undermine or question this teaching.

Adventists have traditionally understood that Islam served as a judgment from God on an apostate Christian church (Smith, U., 1944: 493-517). Interestingly enough a true Adventist understanding of the prophecies of Revelation 9 are quite fair to Islam. One scholar points out for example that the prophecy states unequivocally that while Muslim armies would overrun many Christian lands that they also would allow

the trees and the grass to grow (verse 4), a symbol of their magnanimity throughout many centuries towards true Christians of the East who were often persecuted by the Christians of the Roman Empire (Maxwell 1985: 228-257). Muslims allowed the Nestorian and other Eastern Christian groups to flourish and carry on missionary enterprises reaching even to China away from the reach of the Roman armies until finally the Ottoman Empire swallowed up the churches of the East in the 1400's.

The thrust of the prophetic revelations of Revelation chapter 9 give the Adventist church a biblical orientation toward Islam. Islam is there presented as a system used as the Babylonian and Egyptians of the Old Testament as instruments of God's wrath on the unfaithful among His chosen (Revelation 9:1-19). Some see a traditional Adventist approach to Islam based on the church's traditional understanding about Islam as militating against effective ministry to Muslims (Whitehouse 2002: 1-8). This does not have to be the case at all. The question is one of biblical orientation not evangelistic tact. Seventh-day Adventists, as do many other Protestants, reject the assertion and belief that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ on earth. It does not follow that rejecting this unbiblical claim is tantamount to bigotry and negates effectual relations and ministry to Catholics. Neither does it follow that rejecting the divine origins of Islam negates valuable ministry to Muslims.

1.2. Avoids the application of a Muslim hermeneutic to the Bible

Sam Schlorff insightfully saw the whole contextualization thrust as reflective of a deeper problem of hermeneutics (Schlorff 1980a: 143-151). He suggests further that what is needed is a new apologetic when dealing with Muslims (Schlorff 1980b: 335-366).

High spectrum contextualizers have focused more on what has been called a Bible-Koran hermeneutic. Schlorff has ably shown that comparing the Koran and the

Bible and seeking to make one support the other on anything but a surface level is inconsistent with a truly biblical hermeneutic or truly koranic hermeneutic.

Simple and direct materials are needed in many languages that are tactfully adapted to the Muslim mindset, presenting simple Bible truth. Themes that are truly biblical and with which Muslims can readily connect like the judgment, angels and prophets can be presented not in the high spectrum contextualized fashion of tacit acceptance of Muslim beliefs but in the spirit of the simple presentation of what the Bible teaches. Many Muslims are surprised to understand that there are Christians with whom they can agree and are further even more surprised to understand that the Bible teaches things that they had never thought possible.

1.3. The divine-human Christ as the Son of God and son of man

This is a subject that remains problematic for contextualizers. Studies have shown that among C5 Muslim converts the understanding of the Trinity and the role of Christ as Son of God were extremely weak (Parshall 1998: 404-406, 409-410). There has been an extreme sensitivity among contextualizers to approach this topic with Muslims. The replacement of the name Isa al Masih in translations for Jesus or Son of God by C4 and C5 contextualizers is more than a mere adaptation of a Muslim word. It effectively alleviates the pressure of having to deal with one of the most controversial of Biblical doctrines for Muslims. A growing number of voices are advocating that Muslims stay Muslims and “accept” Isa al Massih (Travis 2000: 53-59). The Koranic references to the fact that God has no son are well known. Many have attempted to spiritualize away the term in an attempt to pacify Muslim disdain of this doctrine.

Could it be possible that Muslims are coming to “Christ” without a true knowledge of who He is? Could it be that they are actually coming to the “Muslim” Christ?

1.4. Will not diminish the importance of doctrine

A consistent Adventist approach to Muslims will not diminish the importance of Bible doctrine. There are two pressures at work within evangelical contextualization that make the diminishing of doctrine an important missions practice. The first is the wide acceptance of the historical-critical hermeneutic with its emphasis on “context” has encouraged an approach to scripture interpretation that is pluralistic, robbing the scriptures of absolutes.

The second pressure arises from the nature of the Evangelicalism itself. There are a variety of churches in Evangelicalism coming from a variety of traditions. These biblical traditions and understanding while initially very important to the churches have necessarily been downplayed for the sake of greater unity among the various parties classifying themselves as Evangelicals. It is an approach that is very practical in the face of Islam.

Seventh-day Adventists while having been drawn from all of the Christian traditions have the unique privilege of speaking with a greater degree of unanimity than the evangelical churches. Seventh-day Adventists as a single denomination have the added advantage of not having to diminish Bible doctrine to present a united front to Islam.

1.5. Will avoid shallow understandings of scripture and history

Another characteristic of modern contextualization efforts among Muslims is the tendency to take a Muslim point of view when dealing with contentious historical

matters (Schantz 2003). While it is true that most western Christians do not adequately understand and are easily led to hold stereotypical views, it is probably truer of Islam. Islam's view of western Christianity and what constitutes true Christianity is riddled with misunderstanding as errors. Seventh-day Adventists who do not approach history from a balanced perspective seeking to admit Christian errors of the past but also respectfully disagreeing with false Koranic or Muslim assertions about Christians and Christianity strengthens Islam and does nothing for Christian witness.

Seventh-day Adventist stand in the unique position of being able to admit the errors that have affected Christianity over the years as part of the three angels' messages of revelation 14. They can also state that all religious systems including Islam will be judged by God on the coming day of judgment and only those who profess faith in Christ and by faith in Him keep His commandments will be saved (Revelation 14:12).

1.6. Avoid unsound, high spectrum arguments

A final step in developing an alternative Seventh-day Adventist approach to Islam requires that church avoid the unsound reasoning of high spectrum contextualization's proponents. These presuppositions are usually put forth in the manner of assertions but the whole contextualization "house" is founded upon them. Seventh-day Adventists must assess the following assertions with greater balance than has heretofore been given:

1. All previous (pre-contextualization) efforts at winning Muslims have amounted to failure (Kraft 1982: 139-142).
2. Presenting Bible doctrine to Muslims is ineffective and not useful (Tinker 1997:1-4).

3. That form and meaning can be fully separated from in Islam and that many Islamic forms can thus be reinterpreted and given a Christian meaning.
4. Traditional approaches to Islam have been (and are) condemnatory (Kraft 1982: 139-142).
5. Approaches not based on a high spectrum contextualized approach are not tactful, heavy handed, not sympathetic to Islam, or insensitive to Islam.
6. That the term Christian is so weighed with misrepresentation that Muslims should not be asked to become Christians.

Instead of readily accepting these often misleading and heavily weighted arguments, Seventh-day Adventists have the unique privilege of presenting an alternative to Islam that other faith communities may not be able to.

There are even those among Evangelicals that have suggested that high spectrum contextualization does not really allow Muslim background believers the freedom to develop their own orientation and approach to worship and Islam (Eenigenburg). Instead of imposing principles and approaches on “believers” that were thought up in a seminary classroom in far away America or Europe, the better approach would be to let them work through the issues with an open Bible (ibid).

G. A final word

It is with an open Bible that Seventh-day Adventists should approach the very difficult and challenging task of reaching Muslims for Christ. It is impossible for Seventh-day Adventists to be consistent and adopt or even adapt the methodologies of evangelical contextualization. Seventh-day Adventists claim the scripture as their final authority (Reid 1990: 1-4). If indeed Seventh-day Adventists hold to a high view of scripture and avoid the approaches of “higher” textual criticism then alternative

methods must be found and applied (Mueller s.a.: 1-5).

The effectiveness of story telling in conveying Bible truth has been demonstrated (Fritz 1995: 147-152). The importance of prayer in Muslim conversion to Christ has been highlighted (Wilson 1994: 61-66). Several other models of Muslim evangelism have also proven effective over the centuries.

A high spectrum contextualized model is not the only alternative open to Seventh-day Adventist seeking to plant the church among Muslims. If the goal of Seventh-day Adventists is to truly plant the church among Muslim peoples then high spectrum contextualized approaches do not offer the best alternative. John Mark Terry lists several alternative models: the confrontational, the traditional, the institutional, and the dialogical. While all of these have their weaknesses it would seem wise that Seventh-day Adventists study the strengths of each and develop an alternative approach based on the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*.

Seventh-day Adventist Christians must reject many of the principles associated with Muslim contextualization because they are based on ideas of inspiration and the Bible that run counter to the church's high view of scripture. It is extremely questionable whether it is possible to pick and choose from contextualized principles, use them, and still avoid the underlying principles.

However, rejecting high spectrum contextualization is not tantamount to cultural insensitivity and lack of respect or tact. Every consistent approach developed by Seventh-day Adventists will be full of tact and the love of Christ because it will be founded in His word.

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