

DAILY PREACHING THE WORD

By Shirley W. Madany
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As the world's attention is being drawn to the Arab world because of its oil wealth and influence, we appreciate this report from the wife of our Arabic Radio minister as she calls attention to our growing opportunity to bring the gospel there.

Radio's New Opportunity

Radio has given us the means to emulate an apostolic style of missions. Just as Paul was compelled to hold forth daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus, there in Ephesus (Acts 19:9), so we are holding a daily meeting in the Arabic-speaking world.

Through the providence of God the Christian Reformed Church began its foreign language radio work with the Arabic language. How that came about is a story in itself. Twenty years ago, the only available missionary radio station was looking for someone to prepare programs in Arabic. Rev. Bassam Madany, a Lebanese citizen and an ordained minister in the CRC was contacted by ELWA, the station in Monrovia, Liberia. The Back to God Hour was willing to stand behind this new venture. From small beginnings this Arabic ministry has grown to be international, with a daily broadcast and a total coverage of the Arab world. And the Back to God Hour has grown to include eight of the world's major languages.

There are 120 million Arabs living in the following countries which make up the Arab world: Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Yemeni Arab Republic, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. With the addition of the super-power AM stations our coverage of these countries lost the restrictions which hinder short-wave reception, and our response showed a dramatic increase. The following figures will indicate just how much that increase has been:

1974	2,747
1975	4,547
1976	9,382
1977	12,876

Radio has proven to be the only means which can get around the insurmountable barriers placed in the way of conventional missions to the Arab world. Through this amazing medium it is possible to penetrate thousands of homes? However it should be stressed that it is only out of a Reformed heritage that one can make programs which fully meet the needs of these people. It is the content of the programs which is attracting such response and eliciting such questioning and appreciation. Radio is only a means; it is the message which counts.

The kinds of programs which have been prepared are expository sermons, systematic Bible studies, series on Bible doctrine, and a study in Church history up to the time of Augustine. These tapes are always prepared with a view to being reused many times. This allows for a planned staggering of programs from the various stations. A person may pick up two or perhaps three different programs during one day, if he happens to live in the right area.

Overcoming Difficulties

So here we have an unbelievably open door. It permits one person to enter a million homes a day. Given a totally open atmosphere we could never begin to supply the workers needed even numerically, for such a task. On the other hand, one cannot imagine a more difficult mission field. Besides the physical barriers which have existed for centuries, in which it is an act of treason for any Muslim to consider becoming a Christian, there have been centuries of anti-Christian teaching and known cases of extreme persecution.

What has a Muslim been taught? For one thing, he has been brought up with an intrinsic trust in his holy book, the Koran. He believes that it was brought to him through God's messenger, the prophet Mohammed. Muslims claim that Mohammed was illiterate! The Koran was revealed to him by God, in the Arabic language. Thus the Koran becomes the very word of God. So the Muslim learns from childhood that the Christian scriptures have been falsified; that Jesus was merely the son of Mary but could never have been the son of God; that He was never crucified and that our doctrine of the Trinity is completely impossible to even consider. The Muslim prides himself in his pure belief in a unitarian, unknowable, awesome God. For 1300 years the Muslim has been Christianity's extremely vocal foe.

Many of the early missionaries to Islam found themselves engaged in polemics. Perhaps that was inevitable in a face to face encounter with Muslims. In radio missions it is possible, however, to simply dwell on the proclamation of the Word of God and have the speaker remain incognito. We have often been told by our Muslim listeners that when they first heard the program they listened because they were struck with how wrong every word was. Later, when they wrote, they would describe how they had been "compelled" to continue listening until they finally had to admit that here indeed was a "heavenly" religion. They see in Christianity truly a "right guide." And we see that with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, the pure Gospel is reaching the Arabs and bringing many of them to the foot of the Cross. [It is] God's good pleasure, through the foolishness of the preaching, to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21).]

The Mail Response

Naturally, when scanning great quantities of mail, we observe certain comments which are repeated often enough to make a refrain. One is the plea for longer programs. They feel that fifteen minutes a day is just not enough. (In the Middle East the first reply to such a letter brings the news that by switching stations they can get half an hour, as we

are on at 10:15 over one station and 10:30 another.) Another comment is the claim that they are regular listeners. They would never miss a program if they can help it. (They make sure they are home in time to be settled by the radio. Some invite their friends.) But most important, there is the expression of thankfulness for a teaching ministry. They say that they are being taught so much that they could never possibly find out as they have no recourse to Christian literature or to Christians themselves. Arabic-speaking people, as a general rule, have a very deep feeling for God and for His guidance and they say that now they have found the Word of God and are making it their "guide" in life.

A New Frontier

The Arabian Peninsula, which is the cradle of Islam, has become the new frontier of the world. Oil has made most of the countries of Arabia super-rich. As a result there is an interest in the Arab world which is global. Among Christians there is a great deal of discussion about possible new methods for reaching the Muslims. We are convinced, both on the basis of Scripture and of these 20 years' experience in radio missions to the Arabs, that the proclamation of the whole counsel of God is the way to bring Muslims to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, this proclamation has to be done with the full awareness of our historic Christian heritage and the present religious and cultural situation among the Arabs. The Bible must be proclaimed in the Arabic of today, to the Arabs of today.

The reading of 65,000 letters convinces us of a gigantic longing for the Word of God and its exposition. There is a very real desire for information about the Messiah. There is a tremendous need for counseling and help with personal problems. There is also an acute awareness of sin and a desire for repentance.

Christian Literature

Accompanying our radio ministry there has been a systematic follow-up through literature. *Saatu'l Islah* (the Reformation Hour) has published 15 books on a variety of subjects. Through a large mailing list, we have the means to distribute these books to people who are eagerly waiting to receive them. Thousands of Christian publications in Arabic are now on the shelves of homes throughout the Middle East and North Africa. At least 250,000 have been mailed.

To give you some idea of their contents we describe a few of them:

The Teachings of the Holy Bible (368 pp.) is a Reformation catechism in Arabic. The first of its kind. It is an adaptation of the Heidelberg and Geneva Catechisms and marks our 15th publication--15,000 copies.

The Mission and Message of the Prophets, is a book based on a series of messages on the Minor Prophets, with special emphasis on the Messianic element and the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Muslim is naturally attracted to the words of the prophets and it is news to him that Jesus was the fulfillment of so much prophecy.

Family Worship, now in its third printing, is a daily devotional guide for an entire year. It is like a compendium of the Christian religion and covers various Biblical and doctrinal subjects. It has been much appreciated.

Reflections in Contemporary Life is a four volume series which is specially appreciated by university students. It deals with the modern secularization of life and the Biblical answer.

Certainly God has given us a wide open door. We should not end this article without mentioning that it has never ceased to amaze us how He has answered our prayers almost before they could be uttered. More radio stations, the ability to publish Arabic literature right here in America, electric Arabic typewriters, etc.--the ministry has grown by leaps and bounds. We praise God for touching the hearts of His people in North America and moving them to support radio missions.

To God be the glory!