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RADIO'S PLACE IN THE CHRISTIAN MISSION TO ISLAM

Future historians will have to decide which was the most decisive day as far as North Americans becoming aware of Islam. It may be November 4, 1979 when the hostages were seized in Iran, or it may go back to the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 and the long lines at the gas stations. But certainly an event which took place early in this year will rank high in importance. This is when 40 Islamic nations met for a summit conference in the city of Ta'if, near Mecca in Saudi Arabia, to launch a program for mutual self defense as well as the promotion of Islamic interests in the world.

How thankful we must be to our sovereign God, who has led us, before this resurgence of Islam, to establish a solid approach towards its evangelization—by means of radio, correspondence and the printed page. Through the broadcasting of the Word of God in Arabic we have been able to show to the Muslims the Christian answer to the problems they are experiencing from secularization. By following firmly in the tradition of the historic Christian faith we present to the Muslims a message which is thoroughly theistic, Biblical and redemptive. While taking into account the traditional Islamic misunderstandings of Christianity, our approach has never been polemical, but rather irenic (peaceful).

Do we have indications that this approach is getting the Christian message across to the Muslims of the Arabic speaking world? Our answer, which is based on the study of thousands of letters which have come from every part of the vast Arab world, is a definite "Yes." The careful reading of over 80,000 letters leaves us with absolutely no doubts on this score.

We tend to forget that Muslims today are living in the same world, and coming under the same impact of anti-theistic worldview as we are. Looking at the discord in the Arab world (Morocco with Algeria, Libya with Egypt, Syria with Iraq and Syria with Jordan) an Arab cannot help but be confused. While he is told by his leaders that they all belong to the family of Islam still they do not see any fruits of this unity. The very fact that after six years of civil war not one Arab nation has come forward to help Lebanon gain true peace is an indication of the confusion that reigns within the Arab world.

It is no exaggeration to say that our broadcasts, which include sermons, Bible studies, doctrinal and practical messages, indicate to the Muslims of the Arab world that the Christian faith has real answers to the complex problems of today. While the Islamic prohibition of the re-emergence of the church is the main hindrance for the organization of national Christian churches in the Arab world, yet we should never forget that there are hundreds of converts from Islam. And they have been brought to the Lord Jesus Christ through listening to the Word of God over the airwaves. Radio missions may appear to be a new way to bring the Gospel to the Muslims, but it does not in any way represent a radical discontinuity from the past methods of missions, specially those which began in the 19th century. Radio is simply a new gift of God for

the ongoing mission of the church which allows us to get across the message of the liberating and redeeming Word of God.

After 23 years as a radio missionary to the Arabic speaking world, I am extremely hopeful about the future. My optimism is derived from two sources.

1. From the Bible which gives us ample indications concerning the ultimate conversion of people from every tribe and nation, before the end time.

2. From the enthusiastic and heart-rending responses of Muslims who appreciate so much the Gospel coming to them over the airwaves. They crave the privilege to belong to Christian churches.

Pray for new conditions which will allow such a thing to happen.