


ST. FRANCIS
MAGAZINE

By Arab Vision & Interserve

Vol 9, No 4 | August 2013

CONTENT

RADIO MINISTRY OF ARAB WORLD MINISTRIES (AWM)

Rev Dr Jos M. Strengholt[1]

Arab World Ministries (AWM), now amalgamated with Pioneers, was an important Christian radio producer with a long history of mission work in the Arab world. AWM worked in North Africa from the 19th century, but it was forced to leave during the 1960s. It found itself a radio production base in Marseille, France.

AWM's choice to use Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as the preferred language and the reasons therefore are discussed in detail in this article. For AWM, radio was mainly a means to enlist people for its Bible Correspondence Courses (BCC's). This article therefore describes the systems of enrolling people into those BBC's and the numbers of North Africans who have been following them.

This article addresses the increase and decrease of the audience response figures for the radio broadcasts. This was related to how the North African authorities tried to stop the relationship between AWM and its audience in North Africa.

Until 1987, AWM was called North Africa Mission (NAM). Therefore, until the moment the name was actually changed, NAM is used as the name for the organization. Its media ministry, based in Marseille since 1964, was called Radio School of the Bible (RSB) until 1987. Then the name of that ministry was changed to Arab World Media, so also AWM. In order not to create confusion, the name AWM is used, after1987, for the mission organization only. For the media department in Marseille, this article uses the name RSB, even after its name had actually been changed.

This article does not describe the present situation of AWM – Pioneers and its media ministries, but it aims to contribute to the memory and general knowledge of mission in North Africa.

1. History

1.1 Arab World Ministry's Organizational Development

The origins of Arab World Ministries (AWM) lie in the 1870s when George Pearse (1814-1902), a successful stockbroker from the United Kingdom, went to Algiers. Though Pearce and his wife Jane Bonnycastle were originally interested in reaching French soldiers with the Gospel, Jane was struck by the plight of the Kabyle Imazighen of Algeria. In 1881, with a team of other missionaries, the Pearses started the first mission station near the village of Djemaa Sahridj in Algeria. The work was called the Mission to the Kabyles.[2] In 1883 George Pearce, aged 69, handed the organization over to a council in Barking in the United Kingdom, while he and his wife moved to Algiers to continue their work with the Kabyles. The name of the organization was changed to Mission to the Kabyles and Other Races. In 1888 the name became North Africa Mission (NAM).[3]

NAM grew fast and had multiple posts in Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Egypt within ten years. In 1884, for instance, the organization started a medical work in Tangier, and shortly thereafter the organization opened the first ever hospital in Morocco in the same city. The smaller Southern Morocco Mission decided to join NAM in 1961. The Algiers Mission Band, begun in 1888 by Isabella Trotter, grew to thirty workers, mostly single women, and merged in 1964 with NAM.[4] In 1987 NAM changed its name into Arab World Ministries (AWM) as recognition of the fact that it did not only have missionaries in North Africa, but also in other parts of the Arab world.

---

[1] Jos is an Anglican priest in Egypt. This article is adapted from chapter 15 of his doctoral thesis entitled *Gospel in the Air: 50 Years of Christian Witness Through Radio in the Arab World* (Utrecht University, 2008).
gospelintheair.blogspot.com.au ; www.strengholt.info/images/stories/Table_of_Contents.pdf

[2] Francis R. Steele, *Not in Vain; The Story of North Africa Mission* (Pasadena, 1981), pp. 15-22.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 59-60, 135.

1.2 Radio Productions since 1955

1.2.1 The Pioneering Stage: 1955-1960

In 1955 NAM set its first steps towards radio production for North Africa. When NAM held its annual Field Administration meeting in June 1955 in its headquarters in Tangier, Field Director Harold W. Stalley minuted that 'the situation of the Tangier [radio] station was reviewed. It was evident that even an experimental broadcast could not begin before January 1956, when the station would be in a position to cover the North Africa territories'. This radio station was Voice of Tangier, which had just begun its broadcasts to Europe. During the meetings the need for 'recording machines' was discussed. Though these were in the first place needed for language studies of NAM missionaries, it was recognized that they could also be used 'for the eventual preparation of radio programs'.[5] In October 1955 Field Administration discussed again the possibility of involvement with radio broadcasting:

> The extension to [the station in Tangier] is expected to become effective before Christmas, and a close personal link is being kept with the Rev. Ralph Freed on developments. If we are to take advantage of the great opening offered us, we shall need to set apart someone as a programme director. Tom Wilson reports a personal contact with ELWA who have offered to broadcast tapes in Arabic beaming them to [North] Africa.[6]

By August 1956, NAM had been offered French evangelistic radio programs by the Belgian Gospel Mission. NAM could add its own credits and announcements to the tapes. This offer was accepted 'as an aid to beginning our own program of radio evangelism to [North] Africa, from WTAN, Tangier', that is, Voice of Tangier.[7] At the same time, NAM was thinking of producing its own 15-minute program in French, supplemented by a French Bible Correspondence Course (BCC). The number of North Africans able to read and write in French was much larger than those who mastered Arabic in those pre-independence days. Stalley reported about these developments to the Home Councils of NAM:

> The [Field Administration] proposes a weekly 15-minute program over WTAN for a trial period of 6 months. The total cost, apart from the cost of tapes, will be just over $300. We have nearly $100 toward this, and need $200 more. [...] We propose to get two months supply of programs from [Belgian Gospel Mission], and meanwhile [we] will complete the preparation for the remaining four months. We hope to start broadcasting in October [1956]. WTAN should have completed their technical tests for the area we want to cover, by then.[8]

The enthusiasm of the NAM missionaries in the field was not shared by the Home Councils in the USA, Canada and England. Stalley's wife Jessie wrote later that 'no steps were taken, as the time was not considered right for the new venture'.[9] This was probably a financial matter, not a matter of strategy, as the next Field Administration meeting again discussed broadcasting to North Africa. In March 1957 it 'reconsidered' the ideas and minuted, rather vaguely, that 'certain new arrangements [were] agreed for a further experimental period, this to be evaluated in June'.[10] In August 1958, Field Administration meetings discussed to 'keep provision of programs [...] under review'. NAM realized that someone should be set apart on a full time basis if advance in radio evangelism was to be made, but there was no one available yet for this ministry.[11]

---

[5] Harold W. Stalley, 'Memorandum to Home Councils from Field Director, Report of Field Administration Meeting, Tangier (15-17 June 1955)', p. 3, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing (England). Those files were kept in some boxes without being ordered.

[6] Harold W. Stalley, 'Memorandum to Home Councils from Field Director, Report of Field Administration Meeting, Tangier (20-22 October 1955)', from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[7] WTAN were the call letters assigned to the station by the authorities in Tangier. The 'W' has no meaning, while 'TAN' stands for Tangier.

[8] Harold W. Stalley, 'Memorandum to Home Councils from Field Director, Report of Field Administration Meeting, Tangier (30 July-2 August 1956)', p. 5, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[9] Jessie C. Stalley, *No Frontiers: The Story of the Radio School of the Bible* (Highgate, 1969), p. 46.

[10] Harold W. Stalley, 'Memorandum to Home Councils from Field Director, Report of Field Administration Meeting, Tangier (4-5 March 1957)', p. 3, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[11] Harold W. Stalley, 'Memorandum to Home Councils, Report of Field Administration (29July-2 August 1958)', p. 3, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

ELWA had in the meantime approached NAM, as ELWA had begun Arabic broadcasts and needed programs badly. Field Administration decided in August 1958 that ELWA should be contacted to find out what sort of Arabic tapes ELWA would want to receive. NAM was worried about the bad reception of the programs of ELWA, though. In January 1959 Stalley wrote that there was still no news from ELWA regarding 'developments that would make possible good reception in [North] Africa'.[12]

In 1959 Gordon Beacham, then Administrative Secretary of NAM in the USA, came for International Council meetings to Morocco.[13] ELWA had just bought a new short wave (SW) transmitter and antenna, for the special purpose of better reaching North Africa.[14] Beacham had in the past been the Field Director for ELWA after having played a role in setting up that station. His heart was obviously still in missionary radio broadcasting. It is not unlikely that Beacham played a major role in convincing International Council to let the Field proceed with developing radio production facilities.

During his stay in Morocco, Beacham met Don Harris of NAM. In the British army Harris had been assigned to a radio squadron, so Beacham challenged Harris: 'If ELWA is going to broadcast to North Africa, we shall have to provide them with programs. How would you like to take on this work?'[15] Field Council of NAM was convinced by Beacham's arguments, and probably the prospect of better reception due to ELWA's new transmitters and antennas was an added incentive. Harris was asked to set up a recording studio as a pilot project. Field Council minuted that 'a beginning be made by inviting sample and practice recordings from National Christians with the aid of missionaries owning recording machines'.[16]

NAM was convinced to become involved in program production through its contacts with North American Christians who worked with ELWA and Voice of Tangier, not through suggestions of indigenous North African Christians. NAM also decided from the beginning that its missionaries should not play a role in the actual programs, but that indigenous believers should be the speakers. The missionaries were to help with tape recorders only. That was a rather simple view of radio program production, but it shows that NAM from the beginning realized that the North African believers should be the ones evangelizing their own people. That was a good choice from the perspective of contextualizing the message for North Africa.

Harris was enthusiastic, as he had seen the effect of Gospel radio broadcasts in the USA. He wrote in 1959 that it 'has long been the prayer of missionaries [...] that Gospel programs in colloquial Arabic might one day be heard in North Africa. God is answering that prayer'.[17] The number of radios in North Africa had steadily grown. 'Missionaries, who have access to remote mountain villages, have noted that, even there, radios are to be found. These [...] are often up-to-date models. [...] North Africans everywhere are becoming accustomed to listening to shortwave programmes', Harris wrote towards the end of 1959.[18] It is important to note that NAM initially wanted to produce programs in colloquial Arabic, not in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

1.2.2 Radio Production in Morocco: 1960-1963

Early in 1960, ELWA was to start test broadcasts with its new transmitters and antennas for North Africa and the Middle East. Harris wrote in the magazine of NAM that action had to be taken now:

---

[12] Howard W. Stalley, 'Memorandum to Home Councils, Report of Field Administration Meeting (13- 14 October 1958)', p. 4, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing. Howard W. Stalley, 'Memorandum to Home Councils, Report of Field Administration Meeting (5-9 January 1959)', p. 3, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[13] In 1916, C. Gordon Beacham went to Nigeria as a missionary under the auspices of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM).

[14] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, p. 46.

[15] Ibid., pp. 46-47.

[16] 'Minutes of Meeting of Field Council held at Tangier (22-24 September 1959)', p. 3, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[17] Don Harris, 'Gospel Broadcasts for Morocco', in *North Africa* No. 29 (October-December 1959), pp. 70-72.

[18] Ibid.

> This then, presents us with an opportunity and a challenge to establish our own recording studios, that we may soon be able to send to ELWA suitable programme material in North African languages. To this end, the North Africa Mission envisages the setting up of perhaps four such studios in North Africa.[19]

Those were high goals of Harris. He probably wanted to set up four studios as NAM had workers in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, and those countries were NAM's field. Harris underlined, again, that programs were to be produced in the languages of those countries. That means MSA was not chosen as the language for broadcasting. The first studio was set up in Marrākush, in Harris' noisy dining room that edged on a busy street. Harris did that after having spent ten weeks with Voice of Tangier to learn more about program production, and in order to better know how to build his own recording studio.[20]

The fact that Morocco announced in 1959 that by the end of that year it would nationalize all broadcasting facilities in the country did not deter Harris from developing his studio project. It was decided that he would move to Immūzār, a mountain village close to Tangier, and combine his new studio with a rest house for missionaries. Harris and his wife Mary would be hosting that rest house.[21] In December 1960 Harris returned from an extended furlough, with production equipment he had bought in the United Kingdom. The Moroccan authorities allowed him to import that equipment, to everyone's amazement.[22]

The guardian's house on the premises of the rest house was rebuilt into a studio. In June 1961 the studio was opened and named the Olga Weiss Studio. G. Christian Weiss of the Back to the Bible (BTTB) broadcasts and formerly with Gospel Missionary Union (GMU) in Morocco wanted a memorial for his recently deceased wife Olga. With his donation, the equipment and its shipping had been paid for.[23] Later, NAM described this studio as 'a clandestine studio', and that 'the government was soon trying to search it out'.[24]

Harris produced one weekly program of 15 minutes that was broadcast on ELWA.[25] These early programs were produced with a young southern Moroccan Christian student, Yūsif, who worked with Harris during the school holidays as the 'voice'. He decided to go to Bible School in Lebanon.[26] In his summer holidays Yūsif would come back to Morocco for recording gospel messages with Harris.[27] ELWA broadcast this program twice every Monday, once to North Africa and once to the

---

[19] Ibid.

[20] 'RSB/AWM Media Historical Notes', received from Norm LeDuc of RSB in Marseille, in an email to the author (16 December 2002). Harris used the name 'Evangelical Broadcasts' as the name of the organization 'formerly known as *The Voice of Tangier*'. Don Harris, 'Gospel Broadcasts for Morocco', p. 71.

[21] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, p. 49. 'Minutes of the Field Council Meeting held in Casablanca (6-8 April 1960)', p. 3, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[22] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 49-52. This extended furlough was for the benefit of one of the Harris children who suffered from diabetes.

[23] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, p. 51. Fred Plastow, a former director of GMU in Malaga, remembered Weiss: 'He was a phenomenal man. He only spent about two and a half years in Morocco, as he was called back to the USA to assume the responsibilities of GMU president. This he did for about thirteen years before moving to the Back to the Bible broadcast in Lincoln, Nebraska. He became the mission radio voice for that organization for a number of years and was a well-known Bible teacher and conference speaker. He never forgot his missionary fervor and when he returned for a field visit to Morocco in the late 1960s when I had the responsibility for the Sunday morning Arabic services, I queried him if he would like me to translate for him in the morning service to which he had been invited to minister. He replied 'no' and that he thought he could handle it. He gave a beautiful message in Moroccan colloquial Arabic and when I questioned a believer about Mr. Weiss's Arabic, he replied, 'Ah! He speaks like those in the high social strata.' A great testimony to a man who had just returned to a land that he had worked in thirty years earlier! Fred Plastow, in an email to the author (9 February 2003).

[24] 'Radio– Today's Open Door', in *RSB News* No. 1 (1973).

[25] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, p. 53.

[26] 'Radio School of the Bible– History' (n.d., but from the 1990s), from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing. Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 52-53.

[26] Steve Vishanoff in an email to the author (14 December 2002).

[27] A brief description of Yūsif and his conversion and Christian life can be found in Muriel Butcher, *'By Faith…': Character Cameos from North Africa* (Highgate, n.d.), pp. 73-81. This booklet dates from the early 1960s, as at the time of its publication, Yūsif was still studying at Bible College.

Middle East. It did not charge NAM for this airtime.[28]

1.2.3 Closure of the Studio in Morocco: 1961-1963

In late 1961 NAM began distributing a Bible Correspondence Course (BCC) that had been developed by Warren Gaston, who had been NAM's Regional Superintendent for Tunisia since 1957. NAM used French and MSA for those courses. They were initially developed as a response to the growing need for a more systematic scheme of Bible study for the increasing number of inquirers and converts in North Africa.[29] During the Tunisia Industrial Fair in autumn 1961, NAM missionaries widely distributed a leaflet advertising the BCC. In the years thereafter they had a booth during that fair in which they advertised their 'Free Lessons on the Life of Jesus Christ and the Scriptures'. In Algeria, Operation Mobilization distributed the same leaflets. About 75,000 leaflets were spread in total, and 700 people asked for the first lessons. Later, most new students came because students told their friends about the courses.[30]

When William Bell, who worked for the BCCs of NAM, evaluated the success of the BCC's, he mentioned that many young people enrolled because they were very eager to read anything they could lay their hands on. Only when Tunisia and Morocco became independent in 1956 and Algeria in 1962, did public education became available for all. Many of the ones doing the courses were teenagers of 13 to 15 years old, who were the first in their family to be able to read and write. Bell realized that the 1960s were a special time for North Africa:

> I don't believe we could have done it in the middle 50's. I am not sure that we could do it ten years from now. But in this decade this was what was accepted in North Africa. This is why we find that the movement had snow-balled when we get into the village or quarter of the city where one or two students started reading the lessons and their friends heard about it and they all wanted it.[31]

NAM's experience was that of all people starting its first 'One God, One Way' course in the 1960s, 18 percent would finish the 12 lessons. While NAM was still allowed to work openly in North Africa, it organized public meetings where students of the BCC's would be invited for discussions of what they had been reading in the lessons. The students would come in good numbers. One goal of the organizers was to show that they were not attacking Islam. The approach would be 'simply basically to ignore Islam and to present the good news'. According to Bell, it worked 'very, very well in Tunisia'.[32]

In about 18 months from late 1961, about 20,000 teenagers in Tunisia enrolled in the BCC. Because of complaints to the minister of education, NAM's work was investigated. Warren Gaston later said that according to the Governor of the province of Tunis, NAM was on the verge of 'creating a Christian minority in the country'. Therefore in March 1963 NAM's *Centre Chrétien* (Christian Center) in Tunis was closed. Gaston and his house were placed under constant surveillance for months before they were escorted to a ship sailing for Marseille.[33] NAM decided that the BCC with its office staff in Tunis, and the radio production in Immūzār, should be taken out of North Africa, after their *Centre Chrétien* was closed.[34]

Shortly thereafter, NAM had to stop its work in Tunisia altogether. Bell thought that part of the trouble in Tunisia was caused by the fact that they ministered to children that were too young. 'It

---

[28] 'RSB/AWM Media Historical Notes.'

[29] Letter of Warren Gaston to Chris Ford (1 march 1994), from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing. Gaston wrote that 'Arabic correspondence courses were duplicated in our apartment in Tunis on a borrowed duplicating machine in 1957', but that date is most probably not correct in the light of all other publications that mention 1961 as the beginning of the usage of the first courses.

[30] 'Effective Methods in Reaching Muslims by Correspondence Courses - Report by William Bell - Radio School of the Bible', in Raymond H. Joyce (ed), *Message to Islam. Report of Study Conference on Literature, Correspondence Courses & Broadcasting in the Arab World including Panel Discussions on Communicating the Gospel to the Muslim* (Beirut, 1969), pp. 27-28.

[31] Ibid., pp. 28, 41.

[32] Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[33] Letter of Warren Gaston to Chris Ford (1 March 1994). Was this Industrial Fair in 1961? That is the year mentioned by William Bell in a letter to Chris Ford (14 March 1994), from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing..

[34] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 12, 26.

was the parents that got upset about it, and we feel they get less upset if the child is around 13, 14, 15 or over.'[35] In the North African society with its cohesive family structures, it was indeed unwise to approach children individually with the Christian message. That showed that it was not only important to ensure that the content of the Christian message was suitable for the North African context, but that the method of delivery also had to be contextually appropriate.

1.2.4 Move of the Studio to Marseille: 1964-1965

Before the decision was taken to move NAM's media operations to Southern France, Stalley had contacted *La Voix de L'Evangile* (Voice of the Gospel) in Marseille, an organization owned by BTTB. They were eager to cooperate with NAM in producing Arabic programs, for broadcasting on Trans World Radio (TWR), as Voice of Tangier was called after the station moved to Monte Carlo in Southern France.[36]

Stalley had been in touch with Freed in Monte Carlo. Freed told him that TWR was planning to have antennas installed in Bonaire, one of the islands of the Dutch Antilles, for broadcasting on SW to North Africa and the Middle East. TWR was very interested in the building up of a solid block of Arabic programs. 'It is understood that the offer of T.W.R. implies that sponsors will be needed to buy time on the air when facilities are provided', Stalley explained to an Emergency Field Council meeting in Casablanca in September 1963.[37]

In the light of these findings, and because of the critical situation in Tunisia, NAM decided to transfer its Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian BCC's to Marseille within three months. Gaston was appointed as the administrator for the new facilities in Marseille.[38] In January 1964 the radio production and literature ministries of NAM were registered in Marseille as *Ecole Radio Biblique*, or Radio School of the Bible (RSB). Some felt that this name was strange. 'We were neither a radio nor a school', Stalley wrote, but 'that was the name they felt God had given them'.[39]

Harris went on furlough early in 1964, and stored his recording equipment before leaving Immūzār. In January 1965, after his furlough, he moved to Marseille. Personnel from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia had already settled there. Harris worked in Marseille until 1968, and then in the NAM office in the United Kingdom until 1977. He then returned to Marseille for a new term of involvement in radio production.[40]

The move to Marseille in 1964 'turned out in some respects to be a step forward. When [the work] had to be transferred across the Mediterranean to the south of France the chief result was a wider scope of ministry', Francis Steele, the North America Director of NAM, concluded. 'More work could be done with no political restraint, and travel to all points of North Africa was much facilitated.'[41] In April 1964 Gaston explained to the supporters of NAM about his new location in Marseille: 'Some of you may have wondered if we were moving too far away from our students. The fact is, by the mail routes, we are closer to them than ever before! Mailings that sometimes took as much as ten days from Algiers now arrive in two or three.'[42] These advantages did not last very long. Steve Vishanoff, who worked with NAM in Tunis and moved to Marseille in 1975 for creating a better program format, remembered the problems of the location:

> When [our work] first moved to Marseille, there was a lot of coming and going between North Africa and Marseille. This was greatly reduced over the years as visas became more difficult to obtain. This

---

[35] Ibid., pp. 29, 42.

[36] 'Minutes of Emergency Field Council Meeting held in Casablanca (10-11 September 1963)', pp. 1-2, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Letter of Warren Gaston to Chris Ford (1 March 1994).

[39] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, p. 28.

[40] 'Radio! From Small Beginnings…', in *Frontline* (September 1978), pp. 4-5.

[41] Steele, *Not in Vain*, p. 76.

[42] Quote from Gaston in 'Radio School of the Bible– History'.

> reduction (call it a choking) of the flow of people became a great source of difficulty for the ministry. [...] This is of course related to the common border of the European Union.[43]

From the perspective of producing programs that were suitable for the context of North Africa, it was a disadvantage that the production facility was no longer in North Africa. Presence in the midst of the target audience is an obvious advantage; distance makes it harder, though not impossible, to create a message that is contextualized in the community of the churches of North Africa.[44]

In 1965 NAM bought a villa in a residential neighborhood in Marseille, with an old cheese factory on the first floor, as the permanent location for RSB.[45] In the fall of 1965, Gaston presented a long range plan for RSB to International Council of NAM at its meeting in Tangier. The multi-year plan outlined the personnel and financial resources that would be required for the continuing development of the RSB ministries. Some felt that the proposed plan was so radical that it did not deserve attention. Stalley persuaded International Council to accept the plan and to allow Gaston to implement it.[46] Throughout the years, both NAM and RSB sometimes wondered how wise it was to develop and maintain a media production organization within a mission organization.

1.2.5 Years of Growth: 1965-1976

In 1965 RSB began transmitting Arabic radio programs on SW through TWR's Bonaire transmitters, beside the ELWA SW transmissions to which it was already supplying programs.[47] Harris had to initially work in Marseille under difficult circumstances, as he transformed a toilet in his home into his studio. In November 1966 RSB moved into the premises it had bought in 1965, and Harris could begin building his studio in the fourth location in six years. He assumed that the refrigerator room in the factory would be a good location for the studio.[48]

RSB initially did not have its own presenters, and throughout its history the lack of Arabic program producers would remain a problem. In 1965 and 1966 NAM could use the services of a young Jordanian Christian, Ibrahim Marji. TWR allowed Harris and Marji to use its studios in Monte Carlo for recording their 'messages' until RSB had finished its own studio.[49]

Muhammad 'Shaf' Shafir, a Moroccan Christian who studied in the Lebanon Bible Institute (LBI) in Beirut, came to Marseille during his summer holidays between 1966 and 1969. NAM produced these programs on behalf of GMU. Each year Shafir worked for three months preparing 52 radio programs in Moroccan Arabic, and he helped with the BCC's. In September 1969 Shafir was to stay fulltime in RSB, but initially he had problems getting his visa in France as the Moroccan consul in Paris did not want to renew his passport in order to force him to stop his Christian work.[50]

In June 1966, two weeks after Marji had joined his parents in the USA, a Lebanese ex-Roman Catholic priest, Tawfīq Ghūrī, arrived in Marseille. He had been recruited by some missionaries in Beirut. He was a seminary professor in Arabic and Semitic languages, and had been working in a Christian literature ministry in Lebanon. In Marseille, he came to handle the Arabic correspondence and to prepare and speak the broadcasts.[51] He also produced a quarterly paper called al-Muftāh al-Ma'arifah (Key of Knowledge). Until the 1980s Ghūrī would be a major 'voice' in the RSB

---

[43] Steve Vishanoff in an email to the author (14 December 2002).

[44] For Paul H. Hiebert's *Warnings*, see chapter 1, Introduction.

[45] At a total cost of FF612,000, to be paid in one year. This was more than the general fund budget for NAM during that year. See 'RSB/AWM Media Historical Notes'. Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 37-38.

[46] 'Radio School of the Bible– History.' Hobe Dearborn in an email to the author (30 August 2003),

[47] 'RSB/AWM Media Historical Notes'. J. Maynard Yoder, 'A History of the Moroccan Radio Program (Arabic).' This document was received from the GMU office in Malaga. It is undated but must be from the late 1960s.

[48] *RSB News* No 2 (1972). Letter of George Rider (director of RSB at that time) to Christine Ford (17 March 1994), from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing. The studio of RSB in the old refrigerator room was totally torn down and rebuilt in 1972, as it was considered 'unsound'. TWR had one of its people design the new studio for RSB.

[49] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 53-55. 'Radio School of the Bible– History.'

[50] 'Mohammed Shaffir [sic]', in *Forward* (November 1969), p. 85. Muhammed Shafir's name created problems among Muslims and among Western and Middle Eastern Christians alike, so he changed it legally into Shaf Shafir. See Shaf Shafir, 'What is Your Name', in *Frontline*, (November 1975), pp. 6-7.

[51] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 56-58.

programs.[52] In the early 1970s Jūzāf Sīkālī, a Syrian Christian, came to work with RSB. He took over the responsibility for writing the Key of Knowledge from Ghūrī, to free Ghūrī for program production.[53]

RSB had excellent Arabic personnel in Shafir, Ghūrī and Sīkālī. However, from the perspective of RSB's wish to produce programs suitable for the North African context, it was not wise to have programs dominated by voices from Syria and Lebanon. Irrespective of their ability to speak excellent MSA, the accents of Ghūrī and Sīkālī always made the audience aware that they were not from North Africa.[54] More importantly, MSA was not the vernacular of North Africa. That created distance from the audience. For radio broadcasters, the issue of what language to use was important.

In 1966 RSB produced six weekly programs of 15 minutes. Gaston aimed at doubling those broadcasts.[55] This aim to grow, and the fast increase in personnel and output in the previous few years, must have created grave worries in NAM. By the time of its meeting in the fall of 1967, International Council wondered whether NAM should retain its relationship with RSB.[56] It was not without some difficulty that Stalley and Gaston were able to persuade Council that both ministries would be enhanced by complementing each other within the same umbrella organization.[57]

As far as RSB was concerned, more growth was needed. In 1969 Stalley wrote that for 'an adequate radio ministry to the Arabic-speaking Muslim world, two hours broadcasting time per day seems a minimum. This should be done in collaboration with other evangelical agencies working in the same language'.[58]

In 1973 RSB still produced 15 minutes per day, and the way forward was difficult. A lack of funds even threatened a cutback on productions.[59] In 1975 RSB's daily program of 15 minutes was broadcast on TWR, ELWA and Family Radio.[60] During that year RSB also placed its programs as 'a trial run' in the SW broadcasts of International Broadcasting Radio Association (IBRA) from Sines in Portugal.[61]

From the perspective of RSB, that wanted to be a professional media organization, there were worries about how NAM would meet its personnel needs. In 1975, there was some tension, as RSB had to 'insure all members of the mission that it [had] no intention of taking major independent action'. RSB was to stay dependent on NAM, but 'full use of R.S.B. resources will be impossible in the above relationship unless the N.A.M. becomes more aggressive in expansion. [...] N.A.M. must be in a position to supply long-term personnel needs'.[62]

---

[52] Muftāh, al-Ma'arifah started with 10,000 copies in Arabic. It was typeset in Lebanon and printed in Marseille. The French counterpart, *Clef de la Connaisance* was produced by the Vietnamese staff member of NAM, Tran Thuyen from April 1966. 'RSB/AWM Media Historical Notes'. Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 13,15,60,61,66. Vishanoff in emails to the author (13 September 2003 and 14 December 2002). 'The French Connection', in *North Africa Mission* (May 1975), p. 9.

[53] 'The French Connection', p. 9. By the end of 1996 the last issue of Key of Knowledge was published. This was both due to the retirement of the editors, and also because of the difficulty of getting it to the target audience of BCC students in North Africa. See Johanna Ruffin, 'Piercing the Heart', in *Contact* (April 1996), p. 1.

[54] The reason for RSB's choice for MSA is addressed in chapter 16.3.2 of the thesis.

[55] 'Transcript of Meetings (10-11 May 1966)', pp. 6-7, from the ELWA Archives at SIM, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programs, Beirut 1960-1972. Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 43,61.

[56] 'Radio School of the Bible– History'.

[57] Ibid. According to Dearborn, Stalley was only prepared to allow NAM to let go of RSB 'over his dead body'. Dearborn in an email to the author (30 August 2003).

[58] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, p. 85.

[59] 'Radio School of the Bible– History; Radio– Today's Open Door', in *RSB News* No 1 (1973). In 1982 most of the individual language services of any international broadcaster lasted between 30 minutes and 2 hours per day, often with repeat broadcasts during that same day. See Donald R. Browne, *International Radio Broadcasting; the Limits of the Limitless Medium* (New York, 1982), p. 5.

[60] 'The French Connection', p. 9.

[61] Vishanoff in an email to the author (13 September 2004).

[62] 'F. W. M. Regional Superintendent's Report to the Field Council (November 1975)', p. 3, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

The issue of personnel was an important one for RSB, as it urgently needed technically and otherwise qualified personnel, including secretarial staff. RSB spoke of a 'mismatch of personnel qualifications to our work load requirements'. NAM had the habit of accepting missionaries for 'spiritual' skills, while in RSB the main need was for people with professional skills. RSB felt that there were hardly any attempts 'to recruit personnel for specific needs'. The suggestion of RSB was that the NAM recruitment policies should be changed, enabling RSB to obtain qualified personnel. This would keep RSB from 'drifting away from NAM' and it would also ensure that RSB 'maintained a true missionary spirit'.[63] In subsequent years, NAM would advertise for concrete job-openings in RSB through its publications.

1.2.6 Light upon Light: 1977-1990

As of September 1977, TWR had a daily block in prime time on MW available for broadcasts to North Africa from its transmitter at Radio Monte Carlo's station in Monte Carlo (RMC-MC). Until then, TWR had only broadcast to North Africa over SW from Bonaire, with minimal MW broadcasts at low-audience hours since 1969 from RMC-MC. Steele encouraged NAM to not let go of the opportunity, in spite of the high cost. 'Until now it has been impossible to procure a fixed time slot in prime time for North Africa'.[64] Hobe Dearborn, director of RSB from 1976-1979, was instrumental in getting this MW airtime for North Africa on TWR:

> By 1976, I had a vision of reaching North Africa with a block of time on medium wave instead of short wave. There was a big problem, however. The Germans, the most influential part of Trans World Radio, had their block of Christian Programming right in the time slot that was optimal to reach North Africa. I made several trips to Monte Carlo, and boldly asked that they approach the Germans to not only give up their hold on the optimal two hour time slot, but also to help finance an outreach in Arabic to North Africa. I didn't think anything would come of that request, but we had nothing really to lose.[65]

The German partner of TWR, Evangeliums Rundfunk (ERF), agreed to give up its block of time. NAM and GMU agreed to take equal responsibility, both for programming and the increased cost of airtime.[66] Each produced three programs of 30 minutes per week. The programs were called Nūr 'alá Nūr (Light upon Light). Harris, who had returned to work in RSB, considered the broadcasts RSB entered into the 'heart of the current radio ministry to North Africa'.[67] Together with Ghūrī, he produced the programs. The productivity of RSB did not change with the cooperative approach with GMU, as instead of six programs of 15 minutes, it now produced three of 30 minutes per week.

In 1980, Sīkālī and his wife Mūná became RSB's hosts for Light upon Light, and they also produced those programs. On radio they were called Yūsif and Hudá, names that could be Islamic. Sīkālī's real name Jūzāf was recognizably Christian. This program was produced throughout the 1980s.[68] Sīkālī was not satisfied with the status quo, though:

> We have helped create a regular daily block of radio time with Trans World Radio. But what is one half hour in 24 hours. Some goals are [to] increase our radio time. We must grow in this highly potential ministry. [...] An increase in personnel is also necessary. We need dedicated Arabic-speaking personnel to support those presently with the RSB.[69]

In 1980 RSB not only broadcast its three programs of 30 minutes on MW by TWR, but it also had a 15-minute program each week on SW through ELWA and Family Radio. This 15-minute program was produced by Tālib Barwānī, a technician with RSB. RSB also contributed some materials for a weekly program of FEBA, while IBRA was broadcasting 2 programs of 15 minutes

---

[63] 'F. W. M. Regional Superintendent's Report to Field Council Appendix I (November 1975)', pp. 2-3, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[64] Francis Rue Steele, 'Breakthrough in Radio', in *The Cross and the Crescent* (Fall 1977).

[65] Hobe Dearborn in an email to the author (30 August 2003).

[66] More on this cooperation is described in chapter 17 of the thesis, on GMU.

[67] William Bell, 'Radio! From Small Beginnings…' in *Frontline* (September 1978), p. 5.

[68] '1964-1989 Acorns to Oak Trees', in *Contact* (April 1989), p. 1.

[69] Ibid.

each week from the transmitters in Sines. Radio Logos on Sicily was broadcasting the same programs that RSB put out on TWR, but through FM. Some local channels in France also carried the programs of RSB.[70]

By 1981, RSB had 28 personnel.[71] That was a very high number, considering RSB's output. On a weekly basis, about 2 hours of radio programs were produced. The BCCs received about 250-300 new applications every month, while there were about 1400 active students, and that probably created the need for many personnel. If it is true that the large number of personnel was mainly for handling the BCCs, that was done mainly by non-North Africans, as the majority of personnel of RSB were non-Arabs.

The few Arabs that worked in Marseille were treasured by the organization. '[The] gifts of our North African and Middle Eastern brothers and sisters are the backbone of many of our ministries. Without them there would be no radio programmes,' Field Director Keith Fraser-Smith wrote in 1985. 'We urgently need further native-speaking Arabic personnel to join our team.'[72] That same need was expressed again and again throughout the years. RSB's desire to have more Arab co-workers was hampered mainly by its system of missionaries being self-funded and, related to that, its lack of general funds for paying salaries to Arabic staff.

NAM changed its name into Arab World Ministries (AWM) in 1987. RSB at the same time changed its name in Arab World Media.[73] According to one staff member, RSB changed its name because 'the ministry covers more than radio, and it isn't really a formal school'.[74]

In 1988 RSB increased its broadcasts over ELWA by broadcasting the same programs they also supplied to TWR. This six-fold increase in airtime on ELWA was considered justified after research in Morocco showed that many people listened to ELWA, and that the signal was strong in the early morning and the early evening. ELWA also reached southern Moroccan areas where TWR was weak.[75]

1.2.7 New Directions for RSB's Media Ministries: 1990 and beyond

Co-Productions with GMU

From April to September 1990, RSB and GMU reduced their programs on TWR to 15 minutes per night, in order to use the production time for developing a new program format. The 15 minutes of airtime that became available on TWR for North Africa during those six months, were used for broadcasts of Kabyle, Tarafit and Tachelhit programs. RSB was involved in arranging cooperation between different agencies for those broadcasts, but not in the productions. In October 1990, RSB and GMU were back on TWR with an improved program of 30 minutes.[76]

Sīkālī had been away from RSB for some years, but returned to work there in 1989. He became responsible for all broadcasting of RSB. In October 1990 Sīkālī began with the new program format. The program was called Nimshī Ma'ān (Let's Walk Together). The personalities and abilities of the Sīkālīs were very important for RSB in the 1990s.

Vishanoff wrote about that:

> [Sikaly and his wife] gave cohesion of vision and personal presence to the program. He is a respected counselor in his family, effective in pastoral and evangelistic ministry on the personal level, and he has something of the poet in him. He also has very good literary Arabic (being university trained in law), and

---

[70] 'Awakening them By Radio!', in *Frontline* (September 1978), p. 6. Don Harris and Joseph Sikaly, 'What's Happening in 1980?', in *Frontline* (September 1980), p. 5. In 1985 NAM had its first programs broadcast in Toulouse. In 1986, RSB was also involved in local broadcasts in La Grande Combe, Valence, Grenoble and Strasbourg. This had become possible after France deregulated broadcasting. See 'On the Air in France', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1985), and 'Goal Reached in One year', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1986), p. 2.

[71] 'Radio School of the Bible', in *Cross & Crescent* (Winter 1981), p. 12.

[72] Keith Fraser-Smith, 'Looking Ahead with the RSB Director', in *Frontline* (March 1985), pp. 4-5.

[73] In order not to confuse the names, the thesis uses AWM for Arab World Ministries, the mission organization. For the offices in Marseille, it only uses the name RSB.

[74] 'Arab World Media', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1986).

[75] 'Electronic Worship for the Arab World', in *Frontline* (June 1988), p. 1.

[76] 'Berber Programs on the Air', in *Contact* (April 1990), p. 1. 'Arabic Programming', in *Contact* (April 1990), p. 1.

> generally prefers it, yet he has shown sincere appreciation for the value of the dialectical elements in the program and would even attempt to use a little dialect from the country of North Africa where they had lived for a while.[77]

Let's Walk Together was a cooperative effort between RSB, GMU and TWR just as Light upon Light had been during the 1980s. RSB and GMU decided to have a different production schedule now. Each organization would produce all programs during a three-month period, and then rotate. RSB produced from October-December 1990 and from April-June 1991.[78] Sīkālī was not happy with the three-month rotation:

> I have had to make six half-hour programs a week, and I always feel rushed. I don't have time to really put something of myself, something deeply personal, into the programs. This makes me sad.[79]

In October 1991, RSB and GMU decided to change the rotational system and tried a new system of real co-producing.[80] During the early 1990s there was an 'increased ownership of the media ministries by North African believers'. The first materials produced by AWM in North Africa, were used in 1993.[81] After more than five years of co-producing Let's Walk Together, RSB concluded that the complexity of the joint production with GMU exceeded its ability to accomplish what it set out to do.[82] This decision was taken during a period when RSB's leaders were avidly trying to set RSB on a new course with its media ministries.

New Media Strategies

RSB had some clearly defined ideas about how radio would develop in the years ahead. They believed that until the year 2000 radio would remain the predominant mass medium in the developing world. Fraser-Smith, Director of RSB from 1988-1993, wrote in Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMQ) in 1993 that SW broadcasting would decline and MW broadcasting would be relegated to 'an information only role'. RSB assumed that FM and satellite radio stations would expand to become the main entertainment sources.[83]

Those comments about the future role of SW, MW, FM and satellite radio reflected the results of a survey and interviews done in 1992 among 90 Arab Christian leaders and 60 expatriate missionaries in the Arab world. Comments from the central Middle East and North Africa indicated a very low interest and support for the continuation of short wave radio broadcasting. Both Arab nationals and expatriates felt that we need to monitor closely the changes in radio broadcast technology and be ready to exploit new opportunities on medium wave, FM and through radio-by-satellite, when such services begin.[84]

The report recommended that it should be 'a priority that Christian radio broadcasters make increasing use of medium wave, local FM and future radio-by-satellite opportunities to reach the Middle East/North Africa'.[85] The report noted that Arab nationals, in general, appreciated Christian radio as being an effective medium to reach non-Christians, especially in places with no official church.[86]

In 1993 RSB decided to add video production to its media work in Marseille. It seemed the role of radio in AWM was decreasing. The first step in RSB's involvement in video was in 1993 when

---

[77] Steve Vishanoff in an email to author (29 September 2004).

[78] 'Walking Together', in *Contact* (February 1991), p. 1. 'Triple Partnership', in *Contact* (February 1991), p. 1. 'Arab World Media - in Action', in *Contact* (April 1991), p. 2. 'For information & Intercession', in *Contact* (September 1991), p. 2.

[79] 'Team Effort', in *Contact* (February 1991), pp. 1-2.

[80] Keith Fraser-Smith, 'Media: Reaching the Arab World', in *Frontline* (December 1991-January 1992), p. 2.

[81] 'An Eye to the Future', in *Contact* (February 1993), p. 1.

[82] More about the reason for the breakup of the cooperation is in chapter 17 of the thesis, on GMU.

[83] Anonymous, 'The Mass Media and Church Planting in Restricted Access Countries', in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 1993), pp. 279-280. This anonymous writer was Keith Fraser-Smith.

[84] Abu Wasiim (ed), *Christian Mission in the Arab World: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Arab World– and Priorities for Christian Witness Today* (2nd edition, Nicosia, 1993), p. 45.

[85] Ibid, p. 89.

[86] Ibid., p. 45.

John Tender, formerly with FEBA in Beirut, was seconded to work at Middle East Christian Outreach (MECO) that had a video ministry in Larnaka (Cyprus). A taskforce was set up to come with a tentative proposal in January 1994 about what the role of RSB should be in video.[87] As there was also a large expected turnover of personnel, Dave Milligan, then Media Director of RSB, thought that the years ahead were a 'timely opportunity to review [RSB's] identity, structure and ministries'.[88]

The first decision regarding RSB's video ministry was taken in May 1994 by AWM's International Council. It approved the establishment of a Video Unit in Marseille, to complement the other parts of RSB.[89] At the same time, RSB underlined that radio would continue to play an important role. It published that '[in] spite of the increasing importance of television and video, radio still proves to be a powerful means of communicating the gospel to limited access countries of the Arab world'.[90] Not long before, Fraser-Smith had defended radio broadcasting, stating that it would remain of eminent importance for North Africa:

> Even though television and videos are the main source for popular entertainment, listening to foreign radio stations remains the most popular means of obtaining information. During the first three days of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Saudi Arabian stations in the Arab world gave no news of the action. As a result, the shops were quickly emptied of short-wave transistor radios. People were hungry for unbiased international reports.[91]

To its donors, AWM had to also defend why it went into video production. 'Satellite television, video and the more recent electronic information superhighway are media trends which are finding their way into the mainstream of life in the Arab world.[…] The medium of video [...] has established itself as a significant entertainment medium in modern Arab culture.'[92]

Continuation of Radio Productions

RSB's replacement radio program, after it stopped cooperating with MMC, was called Tarīqat al-Hayāh (Path of Life). From April 1996 that was broadcast on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings on TWR in the same time slot as Let's Walk Together had been previously. The Sīkālīs continued presenting the programs.[93]

In 1998, RSB decided that it would no longer broadcast over TWR's MW signal, at a time when audience response for radio was decreasing. That step to downgrade its radio ministry was a defining moment in RSB's radio ministry:

> If today's Arabs mostly watch satellite TV and surf the internet, we can hardly expect them to take in the gospel if we only broadcast it over the radio! Inevitably, we need to have our own media revolution in AWM. […] It has become increasingly clear AWM should give video film and TV production top priority. At the same time, we'll stop using medium wave radio from October this year. But we've not finished with radio! We're going to continue using short-wave radio and look into satellite radio.[94]

Jim Geisler, director of RSB from 1996-2003, defended this choice by saying that AWM did 'pull back from one very expensive medium, in order to devote more resources to other less expensive and potentially more effective media'.[95] RSB continued to broadcast its programs on SW through FEBA,

---

[87] 'Video Clip', in *Contact* (September 1993), p. 2.

[88] Dave Milligan, 'Musings from the Media Director', in *Contact* (November 1994), p. 1.

[89] 'The Time-line of the RSB', in *Frontline* (September 1994), p. 2. AWM wrote in November 1988 that it had 'moved into the world of video' when the literature center of RSB in Marseille began distribution of the Jesus Film in Arabic. To call that the beginning of RSB's video ministry is stretching it. See 'Into a New World', in *Contact* (November 1988), p. 1.

[90] 'Partners Through Giving', in *Contact* (February 1995), p. 2.

[91] Fraser-Smith, 'Media: Reaching the Arab world', p. 2.

[92] 'Partners Through Giving', p. 2.

[93] 'Path of Life', in *Contact* (April 1996), p. 2. 'A Modern Nicodemus', in *Contact* (February 1997), p. 1.

[94] Jacky Brister, 'Media: What's the Story?' in *Frontline* (September 1998), p. 1

[95] Ibid.

IBRA, and also on HCJB.[96] That was cheaper but response went further down.[97] RSB handled all audience response for HCJB.[98]

RSB got involved in radio broadcasting over an audio channel of EUTELSAT towards the end of 1998, when a partnership was formed with HCJB. RSB seemed to believe that audio broadcasting by satellite would be able to attract a good audience. 'Together, we believe that radio will continue to play a crucial role in the Evangelisation of North Africa in the 21st Century. Radio Al Mahabba [sic] is an exciting new project which has grown from this partnership.' The first program was broadcast in the autumn of 2000.[99] The audio channels of satellite broadcasts are able to deliver excellent, crisp audio, but as of 2004, they were not attracting an audience. Radio Al Mahabba did not generate the response RSB had hoped for and it withdrew from the project in 2003.[100]

Commitment to Churches of North Africa

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, RSB had decided that the 'most important thing is to train Arabs to reach their own people'.[101] In 2001, it summarized the changes that had occurred in North Africa and how that influenced the direction of its work:

> The most significant change to have taken place is undoubtedly the re-birth of the Church in North Africa. Those who have pioneered in the use of media, and most of those who have followed, have experienced ministry almost exclusively in the context of evangelism. The main activity was that of seed sowing; communicating the Gospel. Occasionally, they experienced the deep joy of seeing individual Muslims profess faith in Christ.
>
> Today, however, we are privileged to serve at a time when [...] there are strong and vibrant churches across North Africa. [Christian media] are increasingly involved in ministries of discipleship and leadership training of national believers. AWM Media continues to play a major role in evangelism but increasingly in also meeting needs of advanced discipleship and training. We are in a significant period of rethinking what we do with media, and how we do it.
>
> Throughout the years, we have known the participation of individual Arabs on our media team, filling roles they could better fill than westerners. The nature of mass media means that we need to continue our efforts from outside the Arab world, through television, radio, the Internet and literature (and so will continue to need gifted Arab individuals). However, as we continue we need to be doing so as an extension of the national Church. In doing so, our role will increasingly be to equip and train national churches in North Africa for media ministry. We need more Arabic speakers on our team than ever before but they will come as representatives of national churches and we will train them as trainers of others.[102]

RSB thereby stated unambiguously that it took the local churches of North Africa seriously, and that it wanted North Africans to work with them. This meant that it no longer needed Middle Eastern Christians to work in their radio programs. The churches in North Africa had now grown to such an extent that RSB could find North African believers to broadcast program to their own peoples. RSB now held that its work should be an extension of the indigenous churches of North Africa, whose representatives would be the producers of the radio programs. That was a total turnabout in the approach of RSB. The churches of North Africa were to be the community that decided about RSB's manner of contextualization, and instead of trying to create totally new Christian communities using Islamic forms, the unity of the congregation in North Africa was respected.

The changed approach of RSB had become possible as the churches of North Africa were maturing, and probably also because RSB's main producers, the Sīkālīs, had retired. This also enabled AWM to reconsider its commitment to using MSA and a return to producing programs in the North

---

[96] HCJB are the call letters assigned to a radio station that was begun in Ecuador during the 1930s. The organization liked to think that those letters meant Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings.

[97] 'Development', in *Vision* Vol. IV (1998), p. 2

[98] Ibid.

[99] 'A live radio station', in *Frontline* (April 2000), p. 1.

[100] For details about Radio Al Mahabba, see chapter 13 of the thesis, on HCJB.

[101] 'AWM Media; Why is Training a Priority', in *Vision* Vol. 1 (2003), p. 2.

[102] 'AWM Media; Past, Present & Future', in *Frontline* (April 2001), pp. 1-2.

African vernaculars, but whether that would happen was to be seen. In 2005, AWM expressed its 'commitment to indigenous national churches' as follows in its Mission Statement and Vision Statement:

> Mission Statement: Our purpose is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to Muslims of the Arab world, wherever they may be found, and to help those who believe to be integrated into local churches.
>
> Vision Statement: Our vision is to see mature and vibrant churches among Muslims of the Arab world. We believe in the need for those coming to faith to be integrated into autonomous local fellowships. Where there are no churches, they need to be formed through those who come to faith.[103]

AWM did 'not expect or encourage organizational control over the churches or other ministries that have resulted from efforts of AWM missionary personnel'. It did seek to establish churches that 'subscribe to the Biblical Christian faith, with the freedom to discern appropriate theological distinctives within that framework'. For the rather conservative organization that AWM was, this meant a clear commitment to the concept that the newly emerging Arabic churches in North Africa had to develop their own theology within the framework of their own context.

AWM also emphasized its support for the existent churches of the Middle East and North Africa, and thereby expressed that it was not interested in starting new congregations beside existent ones. It said in its Vision Statement that '[w]here the church does exist, we seek to support and encourage its ministry and outreach efforts and to work in partnership.'[104] In the context of the Middle East this meant a commitment to the existent Protestant churches.

2. Statement of Faith

Candidates who wanted to be accepted as missionaries with AWM, and all who were to work in radio production in Marseille, had to sign a doctrinal statement. Since the 1980s AWM used the following Statement of Faith:

> We believe the historical Biblical faith:
>
> The full inspiration of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; their authority, sufficiency, and inerrancy, not only as containing, but as being themselves the Word of God; and the need of the teaching of the Holy Spirit for a true and spiritual understanding of the whole.
>
> The unity of the Godhead and the divine co-equality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
>
> The utter depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall, and the necessity for regeneration.
>
> The absolute Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; His virgin birth; His real and perfect manhood; the authority of His teaching and infallibility of all His utterances; His work of atonement for the sin of mankind by his vicarious suffering and death; His bodily resurrection and His ascension into Heaven; His present high-priestly intercession for His people; and His Lordship over His church as its supreme Head.
>
> The justification of the sinner, solely by faith on the ground of the merits and vicarious sufferings, death, and bodily resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
>
> The necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in conviction of sin, regeneration, and sanctification, as well as in ministry and worship.
>
> The resurrection of the body, the judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; the eternal blessedness of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked.
>
> The personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.[105]

This was the sort of Statement of Faith any conservative Evangelical or Reformed organization could agree with. The choice of words, like 'inerrancy', and the selection of issues that were mostly related to personal salvation, were deeply rooted in how the Christian faith had been contextualized in a western cultural context. For an organization that wanted to find missionaries that were able to

---

[103] 'Mission Statement and Vision Statement', received from Alasdair McLaren (of AWM in the United Kingdom) in an email to the author (10 March 2005). McLaren wrote that this statement could possibly date from the 1950s.

[104] 'AWM Media; Past, Present & Future', pp. 1-2.

[105] Ibid.

communicate the gospel into the cultures of North Africa, this western expression of the Christian faith was not sufficient as a criterion for selecting candidates.

3. Target Audience and Preferred Languages

3.1 Aiming at North Africa

As NAM only worked in North Africa when it began its broadcasting ministry during the 1950s, it was so obvious that the organization was to produce programs for North Africa that no formal decision regarding its intended target audience seems to have been taken.

In 1974 George Rider, director of RSB at that time, was convinced they were reaching the educated people of North Africa, and he was satisfied with that. 'I still feel that we are reaching [...] the educated people. A number of letters are coming in; we are reaching the educated people through an educated presentation of the Gospel.'[106] That was logical, as RSB used MSA as the language of the programs, and that could only be understood by the educated elite. Moreover, those who were able to write back to RSB were also those who could read and write.

In 1980, RSB was speaking in much broader terms about its intended audience. 'Our objective is to reach as many Muslim people as possible. We try to transmit in a manner which will attract as wide an audience as possible rather than just a few people,' Harris and Sīkālī published in 1980.[107] This statement was probably for public relations only, as RSB knew its main audience was better educated.

Ken McBride, the director of RSB from 1979-1984, described the target audience of Light upon Light in 1982:

> Target audience of Nour ala Nour (Light upon Light) in standard Arabic is Arabic speaking North Africans 18-26 years old with at least 3-4 years of secondary education. They can use standard Arabic. We believe they are open to change because of confusion over values (traditional vs. modern secular) and frustration in their search for more education, work, marriage etc. It is also a time of life when people check out the options before making or confirming their major life commitments.[108]

McBride's assumption that North Africans with three or four years of secondary schooling would be able to meaningfully use MSA was too optimistic and it is contradicted by research done all over the Arab world.[109]

3.2 Preference for MSA

In August 1958, when Field Administration meetings in North Africa discussed the issue of becoming involved in program production, the term 'North African colloquials [sic]' was used. This gives the impression that from the beginning of NAM's interest in broadcasting, it wanted to do so in the spoken languages of North Africa. This might mean NAM considered broadcasting in Amazigh languages or colloquial Arabic. If NAM had thought of broadcasting in MSA, the minutes would have spoken about 'Arabic', not 'North African colloquials'.[110]

NAM's Field Council decided in 1959 that a start had to be made with simple Scripture readings in Arabic, colloquial, and Amazigh dialects. Later other types of programs had to be developed and would include 'Classical Arabic and French.'[111] This underlines that NAM's initial preference was for broadcasting programs in colloquial Arabic, not in MSA. Harris wrote in 1959 that it 'has long been the prayer of missionaries [...] that Gospel programs in colloquial Arabic might one day be heard in

---

[106] Transcript of a speech by George Rider, 'Demonstration of Media Solution– Case Histories' (20 February 1974, Marseille), p. 3, from the Archives of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, Collection 86, Box 27, Folder 28.

[107] Harris and Sikaly, 'What's Happening in 1980?', p. 5.

[108] Ibid.

[109] More on this issue is treated in chapter 3 of the thesis, on languages and literacy in the Arab world.

[110] Harold W. Stalley, 'Memorandum to Home Councils, Report of Field Administration (29 July-2 August 1958)', p. 3, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[111] 'Minutes of Meeting of Field Council held at Tangier (22-24 September 1959)', p. 3.

North Africa. God is answering that prayer'.[112] The first programs he produced were in Dārīyah (colloquial Moroccan Arabic).[113]

In 1963, at the time when the broadcasting facilities were being transferred from Morocco to Marseille, Field Council steered the radio work in a new direction. It emphasized its intention to give 'precedence to literary Arabic over dialect, with efficient field-wide coverage.'[114] This was not a wise decision, as MSA was not the spoken language of anyone in North Africa. It meant a choice for reaching the small, educated elites of North Africa. In the 1960s the number of North Africans able to read and write, and therefore to understand MSA proficiently, was still very small. It can be argued that in order to contextualize for that small, educated elite, MSA was a good choice, though any message in their heart language would probably have a deeper impact.

The minutes of the Field Council meeting did not describe the discussion that led NAM to take this decision, but the term 'efficient field-wide coverage' gives the impression that the decision was related to the fact that NAM's missionaries worked all over North Africa. As long as there was a chance that Harris' goal of setting up four studios in North Africa could be achieved, NAM's field personnel favored colloquial programs. When the decision was taken to have one studio, in Marseille, the missionaries must have been aware of the difficulty to get 'speakers' for programs to Marseille, so they decided that MSA would be the best choice to serve all. This analysis is supported by the fact that GMU, with workers in Morocco only, decided to use colloquial Moroccan Arabic only in its radio broadcasts. If this analysis is correct, NAM's decision to use MSA in its broadcasts was taken in order to maintain unity among its missionaries, and to a lesser extent for missiological or linguistic reasons.

In Marseille, the first Arab worker was Marji, from Jordan. In 1965 and 1966 he made programs in MSA. ELWA requested NAM to also continue with the programs in Moroccan colloquial Arabic because of a tremendous lack of programs, so Marji did not only produce two programs each week in MSA, but one in Moroccan Arabic too.[115] He probably spoke the programs in MSA while he used a Moroccan believer, maybe Shafir, for the Moroccan program. Ghūrī, who arrived at RSB when Marji left, 'presented [the messages] in a solemn and reverent manner, in excellent but simple literary Arabic,' according to Vishanoff.[116]

Though RSB wanted to produce programs in MSA, during the 1960s Gaston would also have liked to add French programs for Muslims in North Africa, and 'maybe Berber languages also'.[117] This underlined that in RSB there was a realization that MSA was not fully suitable for the audience. However, RSB never produced Amazigh programs, and it always focused on MSA.

In the 1980s there were various Arabs involved in the productions of the magazine-style programs. That change in style of programs created discussions and disagreement over the merits and usage of various levels of the Arabic language. At times there was acute conflict about the choice of language. Vishanoff, involved in those productions at that time, described the choice RSB made:

> In general, [in RSB our] rule was that the nature of the item determined the level of language: for instance, anything in the nature of an essay or set piece would be done in standard Arabic, while interviews etc. would be in whatever the interviewee could handle best. [118]

This did not indicate a major shift in RSB's approach. The format forced RSB to allow some colloquial Arabic for short parts of the program, and only if the person interviewed would not be able to speak in MSA. It seems that RSB's choice to allow some colloquial Arabic was partially because the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was also going through some policy changes related to the usage of language. Vishanoff described these changes in BBC:

---

[112] Don Harris, 'Gospel Broadcasts for Morocco', pp. 70-72.

[113] Vishanoff in an email to the author (14 December 2002).

[114] 'Minutes of Field Council Meeting held in Casablanca (8-12 July 1963)', p. 4, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[115] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 53-55. 'Radio School of the Bible– History'.

[116] Vishanoff in an email to author (14 December 2002).

[117] 'Transcript of Meetings (10-11 May 1966)', pp. 6-7. Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 43, 61.

[118] Vishanoff in an email to author (29 September 2004).

> Incidentally I have the impression that about the same period the Arabic Service of the British Broadcasting Company seemed to shift away from the dominance of standard Arabic, as more and more reporting from various areas included elements in non-standard Arabic (dialectical and "middle" levels), and even a few non-Arabs speaking imperfect Arabic in their areas of expertise.[119]

In the early 1990s, RSB began recruiting and training national believers to produce materials for the program in North Africa. This created a greater variety in voices and dialects, and a richness of materials produced in North Africa itself.[120] MSA remained the linguistic standard, though, which is clear from the agreement RSB made with GMU for their co-produced programs. The organizations agreed that the overall format was to be in MSA with inserts in North African colloquial Arabic. That arrangement did not work well, but it reflected RSB's linguistic choices. In 1991, in its magazine *Contact*, RSB published that for the Let's Walk Together programs, RSB would continue to focus on MSA broadcasts, with Moroccan Arabic inserts it received from GMU; GMU would use Moroccan Arabic with MSA inserts it received from RSB and TWR.[121]

4. Program Strategy and Actual Programs

4.1 Radio as the First Phase of Evangelism

From the beginning of NAM's thinking about producing radio programs, it decided that 'national Christians' were to be used as speakers and announcers whenever possible. There should be 'a careful editing of material extra to the Scriptures', and the 'place of singing and music in programmes' was to be 'carefully considered'. NAM agreed that the 'message [sic] to believers could provide a good though indirect approach to unbelievers'.[122] All these 'resolutions' were made years before actual production began. The idea to broadcasts messages that seemed intended for a Christian audience was probably the result of NAM not wanting to aim directly at Muslims, for reasons of security.

Throughout its existence, NAM has been formally and informally involved with the other Christian producers and broadcasters for the Arab world and, in that context, the organization has been discussing practical issues related to how to best produce programs for Arab Muslims. NAM seems not to have produced its own internal documents for whatever strategy it wanted to pursue.

In 1966 Gaston, the first director of RSB, described why NAM was interested to be involved in radio broadcasting to North Africa. He did that during a conference of ELWA in Liberia.[123] In general, Gaston considered Arabs the 'elite of Islam' and therefore the key to the whole religion of Islam. He considered the Christian Arabs as the key to reaching all other Arab Muslims.[124] He probably thought of the Christians of the Middle East, as the church in North Africa was virtually non-existent. It seemed NAM had an instrumentalist view of these Middle Eastern Christians. The language Gaston used gives the impression that the Christian Arabs were seen as tools for NAM for reaching Muslims. This was during a period when the word 'partnership' had not become *bon ton* yet.

The interest of Gaston in Christian radio to North Africa was related to the fact that missionaries were expelled from countries like Tunisia and Libya. In 1966, according to Gaston, there were only four missionaries left in Libya, 20 in Tunisia, 75 in Algeria, and 200 in Morocco. Gaston was glad that radio could be used in evangelism to reach closed countries, to reach a high number of illiterates, even in distant locations, and that it could speak to people every day in the seclusion of their homes.[125] The idea that NAM reached illiterates with radio was an illusion as the language of the programs, MSA, was not understood by illiterates.

---

[119] Ibid.

[120] 'An Eye to the Future', in *Contact* (February 1993), p. 1.

[121] 'Team Effort', in *Contact* (February 1991), pp. 1-2.

[122] 'Minutes of Meeting of Field Council held at Tangier (22-24 September 1959)', p. 3.

[123] 'Transcript of Meetings (10-11 May 1966)', pp. 1, 5-7.

[124] Ibid., p. 6.

[125] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

The difficulties North African converts from Islam were facing were another reason why Gaston considered radio so helpful. It could encourage and help them in their hard times, which often entailed suffering from physical attacks, threats, poisoning, stoning, stabbing, the loss of jobs, and imprisonments.[126] There was 'not yet a visible church in North Africa', and radio could encourage these young, isolated Christians.[127]

Shafir, one of the main speakers in NAM programs, stressed that radio was just the initial step in a process of changing people's mind about Christ. He believed the actual change of mind would occur through more personal contacts:

> Personally I prefer to speak to people face to face. But I do believe I get through better to my own people by radio than I do face to face, especially in first contacts and with groups. They cannot argue with radio. They usually listen to the end. They may get angry and turn it off, but they cannot argue with the speaker. And [...] the idea often is that anything coming over the radio just must be true. [...] Radio alone is not enough. It is just a medium to contact people, to get them interested, hungry, desiring to read and study the Gospel. Along with radio, we need the literature, Bible correspondence courses, follow-up and personal contact with those who respond to the radio programmes.[128]

In 1969, Bell reported that in Tunisia and Algeria the only places where converts from the radio broadcasts and BCC's were beginning to organize in groups, was where missionaries lived. 'I know of no place, where we have students in a village and where there is anything like the beginning of a group, where there is no missionary who is able to visit them.'[129] That meant for RSB, radio was a tool supporting its missionaries in starting churches, and not a medium in its own right. For NAM, Christian radio was the 'indispensable first phase of evangelism which stirred interest and developed contact for the missionaries in North Africa', according to Steele in 1980.[130]

Vishanoff wrote in 1981 that radio could awaken interest and communicate basic information, but 'then literature and correspondence courses enter the scene'. Thirdly, 'personal correspondence bridges the gap to the local church'. For those who became Christians and wanted to study further, NAM had a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) program.[131]

> Think about the automobile ads on radio. They don't say: 'Send us your cheque for £3000'. They say: 'See your local dealer'. [...] I mean that radio's natural role is to awaken interest. We encourage our listener to make personal contact with the 'local dealer' – that's us! We invite people to write and ask for literature. And when they do, among other things, we also send them the first lesson of a Bible correspondence course.[132]

This approach of NAM seemed to be in line with the opinions of James Engel, a missiologist who held that 'the basic role of the mass media is to change existing beliefs and attitudes, thus moving a person closer to decision. The actual decision, however, is usually stimulated through face-to-face conversation.'[133] In its *Frontline* magazine, NAM described in 1980 how that face-to-face contact was usually created with those who respond to the RSB radio programs.

> Our ultimate goal is to see churches established in North Africa. [When BCC students] realize that groups are worshipping together, they may get involved. [...] The initial contact is very important [and] is usually made by a letter from a missionary on the field or at RSB. If the response is positive, a meeting place is established or addresses or contacts are sent to the student. In general, the response has been good. Every worshipping group [in North Africa] has maturing Christians who were initially BCC students, either with NAM or other groups.[134]

---

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid., p. 6.

[128] Shaf Shafir, 'The Programme!' in *Frontline* (September 1978), p. 10.

[129] 'Effective Methods in Reaching Muslims by Correspondence Courses - Report by William Bell - Radio School of the Bible', p. 30.

[130] Steele, *Not in Vain*, p. 161.

[131] Ken McBride and Steve Vishanoff, 'Radio School of the Bible', p. 16.

[132] 'Awakening them By Radio!', p. 5.

[133] Dr. James Engel, Contemporary Christian Communications: Theory and Practice (Nashville, 1979), p. 44.

[134] *'Contact!'* in *Frontline* (September 1980), pp. 7-8.

With its BCC's and other materials, and missionaries on the ground in North Africa, RSB and AWM were in a good position to awaken an interest in people by radio, begin the process of corresponding by mail, and visit interested people in North Africa.

For RSB, its radio ministry was a tool for beginning personal interaction with the Muslims from North Africa. The lack of a visible Christian church and the need to create a beginning of churches in North Africa were the reasons for this approach. The disadvantage was that this led to the production of programs that mainly aimed for mail. This did not create the broad programming that radio and its audience deserved, but for an organization like RSB that produced a maximum of 90 minutes of programs per week, that was probably a wise decision. Moreover, the responsibility to create broad programming lay in the first place with the broadcasters, not with the producers

In order to attract its audience, in competition against other radio stations, Vishanoff believed that if 'we talk about what they are interested in, they may be willing to listen to something they hadn't thought about. If we tell them the truth about things they can check out, perhaps they'll believe us about other things. If we work hard to stay close to them, and give them an honest picture of God at work in North Africa, they may begin to believe that someone loves them.'[135] In order to keep in touch with what the audience was interested in, the workers of RSB visited North Africa regularly. Shafir was always listening to other Arabic broadcasts to know what was happening in that 'hotly competitive marketplace'. Vishanoff himself had studied communication in Tunis for two years.[136]

4.2 Actual Productions

The first programs Harris produced in Morocco were 15-minute programs that consisted mainly of Bible readings, sermons and speeches in colloquial Moroccan Arabic. These were produced with Yūsif, a southern Moroccan Christian student.[137] After moving to Marseille, the programs became different. In 1965, while RSB built its own studio in Marseille, TWR helped Harris by providing him with tapes in MSA. TWR allowed Harris to edit those tapes by adding RSB's announcements.[138]

Since 1966 Ghūrī has prepared and voiced the broadcasts. Rider described Ghūrī's style:

> Toufic Khouri's [sic] strongest point [...] when he speaks on the radio [is that] he pictures himself [...] as a teacher, as even a sheikh, presenting the message of the Gospel in the same way as the Muslim speaker in the mosque would present the message of Islam.[139]

This gives the impression that Ghūrī was able to create a style of programs that took the context of the Muslim audience into consideration, by adapting to the delivery style Muslims were used to in the mosques. It is unlikely, though, that RSB ever used a style that could be termed Islamic. Ghūrī's style, with his perfect and reverent usage of MSA, was probably just as sermons in Protestant churches of the Arab World were spoken. RSB would certainly not allow the usage of Islamic jargon. TWR would not have allowed broadcasts of that sort. RSB wanted to produce its programs in line with how the small congregations in North Africa thought, and that did not allow for the usage of Islamic forms. The intended *locus* of RSB's programs was the neutral living room, not the mosque.

Ghūrī's initial programs were based on one of the BCC's. Later, he would explain the Gospels or theological doctrines, or he answered audience questions. In most of his programs he would offer BCC's, Key of Knowledge, or some books. In the early 1970s, he sometimes included parts of programs of questions and answers of 'Adlī Fam of TWR.[140] Fam was an Egyptian Christian.

From the Middle East, many Christian materials were available for broadcasting, but they were considered unsuitable. Stalley wrote in 1969:

---

[135] 'Awakening them By Radio!', p. 6.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, p. 53. Vishanoff in an email to the author (14 December 2002).

[138] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, pp. 53-54. Letter of William Bell to Christine Ford (14 March 1994).

[139] Rider, 'Demonstration of Media Solution– Case Histories', p. 2.

[140] Ibid, p.1.

> Very little Christian material in Arabic or French is suitable for broadcasting to the type of Muslim listener we are reaching in North Africa. They have little knowledge of the Christian church. Arabic broadcasts prepared with the Middle East in mind take account of their much greater familiarity with the Christian church.[141]

This shows RSB was well aware that there was a large difference between the Muslims in the Middle East and those in North Africa, and that a Pan-Arab approach was not useful as it assumed a similarity among the Arab Muslims throughout the Arab World that did not exist to that extent. RSB aimed for an approach that took the differences between the Arabs seriously, although they did not change their linguistic choices or personnel because of that.

The programs RSB and GMU agreed to produce from 1977 had a new format as compared with those produced previously. Vishanoff had been asked by RSB to create a new program format and he advised the use of a magazine format program. This need for a magazine format program had been suggested by a NAM missionary in Algeria, according to Vishanoff:

> [It] became apparent to the people in Marseille that a magazine format program dealing with subjects of general interest would attract more listeners among the youth. They owed this partly to comments from friends in North Africa; it was one of the advantages of an agency that was involved mostly in direct work on the field.[142]

The programs that begun in 1977, Light upon Light, contained a continuing story, a human-interest item, music, a short message or an interview, and it answered listener letters. It invited the audience to write to the producer personally, and it offered some literature, often the Gospel of Luke.[143] This was a great change compared with the programs that had been produced before, but Vishanoff was not very satisfied:

> This sounds good, but the program itself was unsatisfactory. […] There were a number of participants, and a host from Morocco, but not one of them was fully committed to the program. I assembled programs using pre-recorded announcements and transitions, messages, songs, interviews, articles, book readings or whatever, using short musical transitions to reduce the clashing between disparate elements, but the program remained a patchwork without a pervading vision, atmosphere, and [intrinsic] message [though] the Gospel was always presented. [144]

Since 1980, the Sīkālīs had produced Light upon Light. 'The programs […] emphasize friendliness, openness and a smooth and beautiful presentation, easy listening in the late hours of the evening, all the while speaking about Christ in short talks, stories, music', RSB wrote in 1981.[145] Sīkālī himself said that these programs were 'not the classical method of presenting the Gospel. […] We present ourselves as friends of the listener – who is usually aged between 16 and 25 – in order to win his attention and to build a bridge of friendship. We try to show him his priorities in life, to be a mirror to show him who he is, and to help him set priorities in life.'[146]

The magazine format introduced by Vishanoff was not continued. Vishanoff described the change:

> In 1980, the program format had been changed. It was no longer the magazine format used before. Most programs began with a welcome and an editorial written by Sikaly regarding world events. One program would consist mainly of the Sikalys answering questions from listeners, the other two programs contained

---

[141] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, p. 60.

[142] Vishanoff in an email to the author (13 September 2003). VOA had been the first broadcaster using that magazine format. They began their Breakfast Show in their English-language service in 1962. That show contained popular music, news reports, features, interviews etc. Compared with other international broadcasts, the show gave the impression of being informal and unstructured. The program rapidly acquired a sizable and devoted audience. See Donald R. Browne's *International Radio Broadcasting: the Limits of the Limitless Medium* (New York, 1982), pp. 102-103.

[143] Shafir, 'The Programme!', p. 7.

[144] Vishanoff in an email to author (14 December 2002).

[145] Ken McBride and Steve Vishanoff, 'Radio School of the Bible', in *NAM 1881-198: Our God is Faithful* (1981), p. 16.

[146] 'Electronic Worship for the Arab World', in *Frontline* (June 1988), p. 1.

'messages' by Khouri and a discussion panel of three Egyptian Christians. Shafir would often have an interview with a North African Christian.[147]

The unmistakable Middle Eastern atmosphere of these programs, with presenters from Lebanon and Syria, and sometimes a panel of Egyptians, was not the best choice for a program aimed at North Africa. This impacted the extent to which the programs could speak to the audience in its context. For the listeners, these non-North Africans were foreigners. In spite of this, NAM could write, in 1985, that individuals 'all over North Africa – some who have never met a Christian believer – have trusted Christ as a result of the Light upon Light broadcast. Several of the church leaders of North Africa were first drawn to the Gospel by the [Light upon Light] program. [And] we are convinced there are many others who have not written us about their faith.'[148]

When RSB decided to broadcast over ELWA again, by the late 1980s, it decided to create worship programs for those unable to have communion with other believers. This program was to contain hymns, prayers and Bible readings. RSB was working on two pilot programs of 15 minutes and two of 30 minutes for evaluation purposes. These programs were done in MSA and colloquial Arabic. The first worship program broadcast by ELWA was on 26 December 1988. This was a 30-minute weekly program in classical and colloquial North African Arabic.[149] This project was cut short by the destruction of ELWA in 1990.[150]

Sīkālī's program Let's Walk Together used several different people in each program with a linguistic mixture of MSA and colloquial, and a rotation of presenters. The broad goal of the programs was to change the listener's negative attitude towards Christianity and to encourage the listener to correspond with RSB and to engage in BCC's. The program was not 'preachy', but had a 'low key' approach.[151]

Path of Life, the programs RSB produced since 1996, maintained the target audience and the program format of Let's Walk Together. Its aim continued to be 'to attract Muslim listeners who are not yet ready for extended Bible exposition. The programme is designed to interest them in the person of Christ and allow them to discover that the Bible offers true and satisfying solutions to the problems that trouble them', RSB reported. The Sīkālīs continued presenting the programs. [152]

While NAM's radio program format and name have changed several times since 1965, the purpose and intent remained largely the same. That was, 'to present listeners with a Biblical view of life so as to make following Christ a viable and understandable option for their lives'.[153]

This 'Biblical view of life' of NAM and later of AWM did not entail the idea that the gospel had a socio-political component, as in all of its programs RSB focused on the individual, his relationship with God, and on micro-ethics. Therefore, in its programs, RSB did not address important parts of the context of the people they were speaking to. This meant RSB was silent about an important part of the gospel, but also about a relevant part of the context of the audience.

---

[147] Harris and Sikaly, 'What's Happening in 1980?' p. 5.

[148] 'Airwaves for North Africa', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1985), p. 1.

[149] 'News in Brief', in *Contact* (November 1988), p. 1.

[150] 'Electronic Worship for the Arab World', p. 1.

[151] 'New Arabic Broadcasting!' in *Contact* (September 1990), p. 1.

[152] 'Path of Life', in *Contact* (April 1996), p. 2. 'A Modern Nicodemus', in *Contact* (February 1997), p. 1.

[153] 'Walking Together', in Contact (February 1995), p. 2.

5. Audience Response

5.1 Formative Years until 1977

For NAM, the main goal of its radio programs was to get people enrolled in BCC's. During the 1960s, the BCC's were popular in North Africa. 'God is at work in the area today, there is a moving of the Spirit of God', Gaston reported in a conference of ELWA that he attended in May 1966. Through the radio programs and through handing out brochures in North Africa, RSB received 'overwhelming response' for its BCC's, 'with over 50,000 students since November 1961'. All correspondents were put in touch with a missionary in his or her neighborhood. Since 1961, 2,870 students had completed the BCC courses that NAM had begun offering through its missionaries in 1961 in Tunis and 1962 in Algeria. These were in French and MSA. Most students preferred to use the French course, not the one in MSA. 'Some 2000 students indicated they made a decision to follow Christ,' according to RSB in 1966.[154]

In 1967, RSB had 3,000 active BCC students.[155] In 1968, the total number of North African people that had received a first lesson of a BCC had risen to 65,000. Much of this growth in the usage of BCC's was unrelated to radio programs of RSB though, as in its first report about audience response, RSB said it had received 525 letters only in 1967.[156]

In 1969, NAM had mailed the first lesson of its BCC's to 80,600 North Africans. Of the five different courses, one was specifically designed for Muslims; the others assumed that the students had become Christians. Until 1969, of all students 11,170 had finished at least the first course and 95 percent of all students were Muslims.[157] In 1969, NAM was the main organization working with BCC's, as can be seen in *Figure 1*. These details about the BCC's in the Arab world were supplied by the organizations themselves, in the context of a conference in Beirut where, among other things, follow-up through BCC's was studied.[158]

Organization	Response Address	# Courses Offered (*)	# of Persons Enrolled	% Muslims	# Persons finished a course	% Muslims
Middle East Lutheran Mission	Beirut	3	50,000	2,5%	4,500	5%
Baptist Publications	Beirut	2	6,000	60%		
Manārah Society	Beirut	6 (1)	10,000		5,000	
Assemblies of God	Beirut	5	28,000	60%	6,200	60%
Gospel Literature Service	Beirut	2	3,300		650	
Mideast Baptist Mission	Beirut	2	360	80%		
Operation Mobilization Lebanon	Beirut	1	11,000	30%	900	30%
Trans World Radio	Beirut	6 (1)	245	10%	80	
Lebanon Bible Institute	Beirut	3	120		12	
Youth for Christ	Beirut	1	375		85	

[154] 'Transcript of Meetings', pp. 6-7. '1964-1989 Acorns to Oak Trees', p. 1.

[155] Johanna Ruffin, 'Piercing the Heart', in *Contact* (April 1996), p. 1.

[156] Stalley, *No Frontiers*, p. 59.

[157] 'Arabic Bible Correspondence Courses March 1969', in Raymond H. Joyce (ed), *Message to Islam. Report of Study Conference on Literature, Correspondence Courses & Broadcasting in the Arab World including Panel Discussions on Communicating the Gospel to the Muslim* (Beirut, 1969), p. 81.

[158] Ibid.

Organization	Response Address	# Courses Offered (*)	# of Persons Enrolled	% Muslims	# Persons finished a course	% Muslims
Evangelistic Center	Beirut	1	600		200	
Fellowship Baptist Church	Tripoli	1	2,000			
The Conversion Center	Beirut	1	1,900			
Anonymous	Beirut	1				
Radio School of the Bible	Marseille	5 (1)	80,600	95%	11,170	95%
Gospel Missionary Union	Malaga	6 (5)	43,000	100%		
Mideast Baptist Mission	Alexandria	2	2,400			
Operation Mobilization	Amman	8 (2)	500	10%		

(*) *the figure in brackets signifies the number of courses specially designed for Muslims*

Figure 1. BCC's in the Arab world in 1969

In 1970, RSB received 9,722 new requests for BCC's. Most people who enrolled did not finish the course, and from many the first lesson was never received. That is clear as RSB reported that 4,384 students returned lessons in 1970. During that year, 2,813 courses were completed. Between January and October 1970, RSB faced a reduction of 50 percent in student enrollment 'because of the censoring of mail' in North Africa. In November and December enrollment picked up again, as 'envelopes were now hand addressed and mailed from several different post offices. Reports have come from North Africa of arrest, destruction of Bibles and all manner of persecution,' RSB reported.[159]

In its news magazine in 1972, RSB reported that about 600 new students began with BCC every month, but that the same number also discontinued. The average student was in touch with RSB for about 5 months in this period.[160]

The situation must have been confusing for RSB. The fact that it received no mail back from some students did not mean students had not filled in their lessons and returned the mail. 'BCC students are called to police stations for questioning and find that officials have regularly been reading their letters. They are warned not to continue. Some wish to continue but no longer get any mail,' RSB wrote in 1973. Active student enrollment dropped from a peak of 4,300 in 1969 to 2,000 by January 1973.[161]

During Ramadān 1972, RSB received 101 letters from North Africa based on its radio broadcasts. RSB was glad with that response. From Morocco it received 31 letters, from Algeria 11, from Tunisia 45, and from Libya 14. The response from Tunisia made RSB speak about a 'revival of interest,' as Tunisia had a much smaller population than Algeria and Morocco. The response from Libya was also considered high.[162]

1975 was 'one of the best years for radio response,' RSB wrote. Until October 1,200 letters were received. Assuming that from October to December the ratio was similar, it is safe to assume RSB received 1,500 letters based on its radio programs in 1975.[163] An interesting conclusion regarding the BCC's in 1975 was that there was an 'unmistakable shift toward Arabic as the preferred language

[159] *RSB* No. 1 (1971).

[160] *RSB News* No. 2 (1972).

[161] 'Radio– Todays open doors', in *RSB News* No. 1 (1973).

[162] Ibid.

[163] 'F.W.M. Regional Superintendent's Report to Field Council (November 1975)', p. 1,

for those enrolling.'[164] This was a reversal of the situation at the beginning of the BCC's of NAM. RSB had always offered its BCC's in MSA and French. The shift to MSA in 1975 showed how, after decolonization, students were now more Arabized. In Tunisia and Morocco two generations had now gone through Arabic public education since independence, while in Algeria one generation had finished. French was no longer the first language of instruction in schools.

When during 1975 some financial cutbacks were discussed, it was decided unwise to save money by doing fewer broadcasts over TWR. 'Such a measure would probably reduce listener response to almost zero since most of our response comes from [those].'[165] This means that NAM knew that it received hardly any response for its SW broadcast on ELWA, Family Radio and IBRA.

5.2 Years of Increase: 1978-1982

In September 1977, RSB began its new broadcasts over TWR, with three programs of 30 minutes each week instead of six programs of 15 minutes. Since the beginning of those broadcasts, RSB noted an increase in audience response. During the whole year, a total of 1,055 letters were received. In May 1978, 196 letters were received: 174 from North Africa, 6 from the Middle East, 16 from Europe.[166] RSB also saw how in Europe and the USA telephone was used for audience relationships. 'The members of the radio department [of RSB] desire to have this kind of contact with listeners throughout the Arab world, but circumstances are such that direct contact through telephone is not possible', NAM published in its Frontline magazine.[167]

A comparison between the figures as given by RSB and those of MMC show how carefully all interpretation should be made. As all mail received for the common series of programs went to Marseille, and MMC received roughly 50 percent of that, the figures of both organizations should be about equal. Both were convinced that almost all response they received came through the common TWR broadcasts. It seems that RSB used the total number of letters it received, both for its own and for MMC's programs, for reporting purposes. That is likely as RSB figures are, roughly speaking, twice as high as the figures given by MMC. It may also mean that RSB included its repeat response, while MMC maybe only reported unique response. It has not been possible to clarify this matter. Because of this, not too much attention ought to be paid to the finer details of the figures. It is more important to use them for understanding general trends.

In 1978 RSB received 2,061 letters. Vishnanoff assumed that the magazine format program he had started had 'hundreds of thousands of listeners'. That was impossible to know, however. In 1979 2,748 letters were received. Hundreds of those writers wanted to meet with a Christian, NAM wrote. The nightly Arabic programs over TWR on RMC-MC were seen as 'almost too successful.' NAM reported that there were not enough people to follow up these enquirers in North Africa.[168]

It seems that the increased response to these programs compared with the response to the six programs of 15 minutes that RSB had had before, was due to the switch from SW to MW broadcasting in prime time with TWR. Maybe the new format was also better at eliciting response.[169]

In 1980 3,813 letters were received. Most response came from Algeria, closely followed by Morocco then Tunisia, few from Libya, Egypt, France and Europe. Some letters came from the Middle East. The letters were mainly from young men between 16 and 25 years old. Only 5 percent came from women.[170]

In 1980, RSB published that, since it began with BCC's in the early 1960s, it had received 160,000 applications for enrollment in its BCC's in MSA. RSB had 1,150 'active students' in Arabic and 240 in French in 1980. Every month 250-300 students applied, but many of those never became 'active

---

[164] Ibid.

[165] Ibid., p. 2.

[166] 'They said it!', in *Frontline* (September 1978), p. 11.

[167] Ibid.

[168] 'Radio School of the Bible', in *Cross & Crescent* (Winter 1981), p. 12. William Bell, 'Radio! From small beginnings…', in *Frontline* (September 1978), p. 5.

[169] Francis Rue Steele, 'Breakthrough in Radio', in *The Cross and the Crescent* (Fall 1977).

[170] Mary Harris, 'But Who Hears Us?', in *Frontline* (September 1980), pp. 6-7.

students'. Of those who applied, 25 percent responded to radio programs. The majority applied because some friends recommended BCC to them.[171] In its Frontline magazine, NAM said:

> On a day when postage stamps cost the price of a loaf of bread, when there is so much unemployment in North Africa, when a certain percentage of our letters seem to get lost, it is amazing that so many young people can continue Bible studies.[172]

In 1981, the total number of letters received by the radio programs was 5,440, so the increase continued. The number of active BCC students remained stable, however, at around 1,400. Of those students, over 60 percent were from Morocco.[173] This increase in radio response, without a concomitant increase in active students of the BCC, might indicate that there was an increase in audience that wrote to RSB without an interest to study the gospel. It is also possible that more mail that was sent to the audience was intercepted by the authorities. Without more information, it is not possible to draw any conclusions. It is possible that the increase in radio mail was causing an increased audience, as RSB's broadcasts got much 'free advertising' in the media in North Africa. During 1981, the various ministries of the RSB were 'repeatedly attacked in the Muslim press.'[174] Probably this was related to the fear of King Hassān II of Morocco of a radical Muslim backlash, after Ayatollah Khomeini took power in Iran. King Hassān II invested much in presenting an orthodox Islamic image by sending Moroccan missionaries to Europe, and by an increased number of Islamic programs on radio and television. NAM-Media quoted an article in 'a North African Magazine' titled *The Christian Attack on North Africa:*

> The nations of the Arab Maghreb are being exposed to a vicious evangelistic campaign in the form of radio in the Arabic language… This attack also takes the form of thousands of letters and postal calendars in Arabic and French, which are sent to all who ask and those who do not ask … in the rural areas and in the cities, large and small… [This mail is] directed to the parts of society that are weak and poor and young, of limited culture… The letters which reach our country [come] to our Muslim citizens by thousands, and our brethren the postal workers noticed this.[175]

In 1982, the mail response went up further to 6,826 letters. Ken McBride, director of RSB from 1979-1984, said in that year that NAM's strategy was 'not to maximize letter response […] but to maximize total impact in the target area. This means longer broadcasts, more listening hours and good follow through.'[176] That was a unique idea for an organization involved in Christian radio in the Arab world, as all organizations measured their success by the number of letters received. That might have been the only manner of measuring impact for these organizations, but the medium of radio should not have been seen as a method to elicit mail only. Nothing was done with McBride's idea, though.

5.3 Years of Resistance and Decrease: 1983-1994

In autumn 1983, RSB reported that less mail came in from North Africa. Not only did the postal resistance and the heat of Ramadān during summer stop people from responding. More important, probably, is that RSB had decided to no longer offer certain gifts on radio to those writing to RSB. 'RSB learned that only a few of the books we sent were reaching the listeners. […] Getting good material into the hands of a few people isn't worth losing the trust of many more listeners. Offers were scaled down, sometimes stopped.'[177] NAM had researched the matter and concluded that of all books that were mailed to North Africa, only 5 percent arrived. Of all normal letters, 50 percent

---

[171] Tom and Fern Wilson, 'Why Marseilles?' in *Frontline* (September 1980), pp. 10-11. GMU had 90,000 students who had requested its colloquial Arabic BCC until 1980.

[172] Wilson, 'Why Marseilles?' pp. 10-11.

[173] 'Radio Mail Hits 5400', in *NAM-Media* (Spring 1982), p. 1.

[174] Ken McBride, 'Radio School of the Bible', in *Frontline* (May 1982), p. 14.

[175] 'Reactions', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1982), p. 1.

[176] KenMcBride, 'Missionary Project', in *Frontline* (July 1982), pp. 10-11.

[177] 'Lighter Mailbag', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1983), p. 2.

never reached the listeners.[178] The increase in radio response without a similar increase in active students may therefore be due to the fact that mail reached Marseille, but that BCC mail sent back to Morocco did not reach the audience.

In 1984, the situation for Christians in North Africa became harder. In Morocco, Christians were questioned nationwide by the police. RSB reported that North African governments were stepping up their efforts to block Christian materials in the mail. In June 1984, only 131 letters were received in Marseille. This was considered disappointing, so we may assume that before June the mail response had been better. From June, the number of letters received went up 'steadily' to 442 letters in May 1985.[179] RSB therefore received at least 2,000 letters for its radio programs in 1984.

Before 1984, opposition to Christian mail was an uncertain, regional phenomenon in Morocco. 'Now it is determined and widespread – though not total,' RSB reported in 1985.[180] This problem continued throughout the 1980s. In 1987, for instance, RSB reported that Christian books were confiscated, as they were not allowed in Morocco.[181] NAM-Media described how many of RSB's students in Morocco were arrested in 1984:

> Increasing interference from postal authorities in Algeria and Morocco continues to endanger our lifeline to curious young Muslims. In an attempt to intimidate the numerous Moroccan young people investigating the Bible, hundreds of BCC students were arrested and interrogated by Moroccan authorities last May [1984]. Now, 6 months later, the number of Moroccan young people requesting to study the Bible is back to previous levels and climbing.[182]

In January 1985, the total number of 'active students' was 846, of whom 640 did the MSA BCC. During that month, 712 first lessons were sent out. Radio received 337 letters. 'These radio letters represent thousands of listeners', according to NAM. In autumn of that year, RSB wrote that radio received 350 letters per month. That assured RSB that there were 'more than 25,000 who listen'.[183] There was no way for RSB to know these audience figures, but at least they were not inflating their assumed figures.[184]

In 1985, 500 to 1,000 introductory lessons were sent out each month. Of those, 80 percent were in Arabic and 20 percent in French. There had been a shift in how people got in touch with the BCC, for about half of these first contacts came from radio, while the other half was because students introduced friends to the courses.[185] This might mean that compared to five years earlier, students were less eager to speak to others about the courses they followed. That would not be strange, in a situation where RSB and its BCC's were vilified in North African media. RSB was convinced of the effect of the BCC's, and wrote in 1985:

> Bible correspondence courses have been sent into North Africa for over twenty years. Most, if not all, of the North African believers in these countries have at one time or another, been BCC students. The Church in Algiers is said to have got off the ground when young men, graduates of BCC, came forward able to teach the Bible to others. [186]

Similar testimonies to the effect of the BCC's could be heard from many missionaries involved in North Africa. One of those said in 1989 that out of the seven former Muslims he was working with, only one had not at one time in his pre-Christian or early Christian life been in touch with RSB and its BCC.[187]

---

[178] 'Rise in Radio Mail', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1985). One reason given by RSB for a downturn in audience relationships was a postal strike in France in 1983, lasting seven weeks. See 'Postal Problems', in *NAM-Media* (Summer 1984).

[179] 'Rise in Radio Mail', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1985).

[180] Ibid. 'RSB Mail', in *NAM-Media* (Winter 1983), p. 2.

[181] 'Waiting', in *Contact* (September 1987), p. 2.

[182] 'Transition: In Retrospect', in *NAM-Media* (January 1985).

[183] 'Will the Mail get through?', in *NAM-Media* (January 1985). 'People and the Media', in *NAM-Media* (May 1985), pp. 1-2. 'Airwaves for North Africa', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1985), p. 1.

[184] 'Rise in Radio Mail', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1985).

[185] Dave Robinson, 'Persuading the Muslim Mind– By Mail', in *Frontline* (March 1985), p. 7.

[186] Ibid.

[187] 'Fruits', in *Contact* (November 1989), p. 1.

As for RSB, the audience follow up had high importance: since 1986 it was involved in 'inter-mission follow up'. RSB joined other organizations working in the same area to pool resources. That was urgent because of faltering mail systems, but it would also allow the agencies 'to avoid duplication in contacting people that respond to different missions programs'.[188] Some North Africans had learned that by writing to the different Christians broadcasters, they could receive Bibles, books and other materials.

In mid-1986, RSB published that it had received 30,000 letters since Light upon Light began in 1977. These were, according to RSB, 'mainly based' on that program which was broadcast three times a week by TWR.[189] Fraser-Smith was careful in his estimation of how many North Africans listened to Light upon Light during the 1980s. 'It is very difficult to make even guesstimates at the numbers listening to Christian broadcasts in the area, but recent indications are that every evening there could be five-figure audiences; and over the period of a year, the number of at least one-time listeners could be in the order of 100,000. Reports further suggest that the greatest concentration of listeners are in cities like Rabat and Casablanca.'[190]

90 percent of the response to the programs was from men. Men 'have been more likely given a chance to finish secondary schooling. But even the ten percent of women responding is higher than the average for other radio programs,' according to Vishanoff, who was responsible for audience research. He found that the majority response was from urban men, with an average education to 17 years of age, and who were avid listeners to foreign radio broadcasts. They were 'frustrated' in their own country, with a 'desire' for anything western. According to Vishanoff's findings, many were unemployed or dissatisfied with their jobs.[191]

In 1987, 2,513 radio letters were received.[192] In the five years after that, Algeria faced many problems. Due to the civil war and possibly as a campaign against the Christian broadcasters, the mail in Algeria could not be trusted during those years. In 1990 RSB received 2,477 letters.[193]

In February 1991 the BCC section received encouraging numbers of letters from Algeria. Mail from Algeria began arriving again. In order to see whether contact with old contacts could be restored, RSB did a test. Of those who replied positively between 1962 and 1971, 200 were selected. They received a Gospel of Luke as a test to see whether contact could be reestablished.[194] It has not been possible to find information about the results of this test.

In 1992, RSB had 1,942 'active students' for the BCC's in MSA. There were 810 students doing the lessons in French. These students together would send 500 to 600 letters and lessons per month to Marseille. Of all students, 82 percent lived in North Africa, 10 percent in the Middle East, and the rest in Europe. Of the students from North Africa, 54 percent were from Algeria, 40 percent from Morocco, and 6 percent from Tunisia.[195] That the programs were listened to in North Africa was apparent from an article in a newspaper in 1992:

> Beware of the programmes on Trans World Radio… especially the programme Nemshi Maan [sic], which is prepared by persons who have learned the art of trickery and playing on people's minds – especially the youth who face many problems in life. They lead them to believe that Christ is the Saviour and that without Him there is no salvation. This is a false belief. […] So beware of these destructive programmes and don't let their beautiful words deceive you, nor their songs, which carry poison.[196]

---

[188] 'Follow-Up', in *Contact* (November 1987), p. 1.

[189] 'Bombs, Radio and the RSB', in *NAM-Media* (Autumn 1986), pp. 1-2.

[190] David Porter, *The Man Who Was Q: The True Story Of Charles Fraser-Smith, The 'Q' Wizard Of World War II. Appendix two: Open Doors– Media for Islam* (Carlisle, 1989), p. 178.

[191] 'Cry for Hope', in *NAM-Media* (Spring 1987), p. 3.

[192] Keith Fraser-Smith, 'Special Report', in *Contact* (March 1988), p. 1.

[193] Keith Fraser-Smith, 'Media: Reaching the Arab World', p. 2.

[194] 'Newsbriefs', in *Contact* (February 1991), p. 2. This booklet was called 'Skinny Luke' as it was printed in such a manner that it could be mailed in a normal envelop without attracting undue attention from the postal authorities.

[195] 'BCC at a Glance', in *Contact* (April 1993), p. 2. 'Partners in Prayer', in *Contact* (April 1993), p. 2.

[196] 'Radio Feedback', in *Contact* (February 1993), p. 2.

In May 1993, AWM published extracts from an article that had 'recently' appeared in a prominent Algerian newspaper. It described how 'preachers of Christianity are knocking at the doors of Algeria [...] through correspondence courses. Many Algerian youths have begun to follow religious courses by correspondence with foreign societies and broadcasts.' The article mentioned that many Algerians participated in these courses and that 'many women were won over' by BCC's. The tone of the article was mainly factual, without animosity.[197] In Algeria the situation for Algerian Christians and for receiving and sending mail to Christian organizations seemed to become easier.

The situation in Morocco remained confusing. In 1993, AWM's West Area Director concluded after a visit to Morocco, that there was an increasing openness and freedom in the country, and that there were hundreds of listeners to the Christian radio broadcasts and hundreds of BCC students. 'Inadequate follow-up resources are stretching the capabilities of Christian workers to the limits.' But as 'millions of people have not had a chance to hear and understand the Gospel,' he also concluded that 'effective use of radio, video, literature, correspondence courses and personal witness by both expat [sic] tentmakers and national Christians needs to be vastly expanded.'[198] For an organization that believed that radio should be the first step to create a more personal relationship with its audience, it was disappointing to conclude that the follow-up was inadequate.

During that same year, the police in Morocco began another campaign against Christians and BCC literature. On 8 November 1993 a French newspaper in Morocco carried an article about the police arresting students of BCC's in Casablanca. The article mentioned some of the materials RSB had sent to a certain Mustafá, and how he had become a Christian. 'On 25 October 1993, the police summoned a group of young Moroccans who had been in touch with the Monte Carlo station. All nineteen appeared, including Mustafá. The police asked them to sign a document in which they agreed to stop communicating with the missionary station. Eighteen out of the nineteen agreed, but only Mustapha refused, and was arrested.'[199]

Mustafá was sentenced to three years in prison, but he was released after a few months, when he returned to Islam and agreed to no longer receive BCC's. 'It is reported that other police stations in Morocco have been instructed to summon and investigate BCC students,' NAM reported.[200]

In 1994, RSB received 1,618 radio response letters. BCC handled 9,714 pieces of mail from BCC students.[201] RSB did not clarify how many of those were 'active' students, or how many were newly enrolled. Of interest is that, of that mail, 75 percent was in Arabic and 25 percent in French.[202] The high level of students in North Africa still preferring to use French should, within the context of the active efforts of the governments to Arabize society, be seen as a token of resistance.

The situation remained difficult in Morocco. In 1994 Frontline magazine wrote that 'postal authorities continue to confiscate Bible Correspondence Courses being mailed into the country, and police attempt to intimidate those involved, and imprison those not willing to drop their interest'.[203] Even in 1998, AWM was still aware that in some areas of Morocco people faced problems receiving mail. In other areas there was no problem anymore. There was, it seems, no longer a national policy to work against the Christian broadcasters and their mail.[204]

---

[197] 'Christ stays as a Guest in Algeria', in *Frontline* (May 1993), p. 1.

[198] AWM's West Area Director, 'Hunger in Morocco', in *Frontline* (June 1993), p. 2.

[199] Newspaper article quoted in 'Prosecuted for receiving Bible Correspondence Courses', in *Frontline* (March 1994), p. 2.

[200] Ibid.

[201] 'Media Report of RSB' (December 1995), from NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[202] 'Partners Through Giving', in *Contact* (November 1995), p. 2.

[203] 'Dispatches from the Arab World', in *Frontline* (July/August 1994), p. 3.

[204] Ted Fisher, 'Seeing the man at the top', in *Frontline* (May 1998), p. 2.

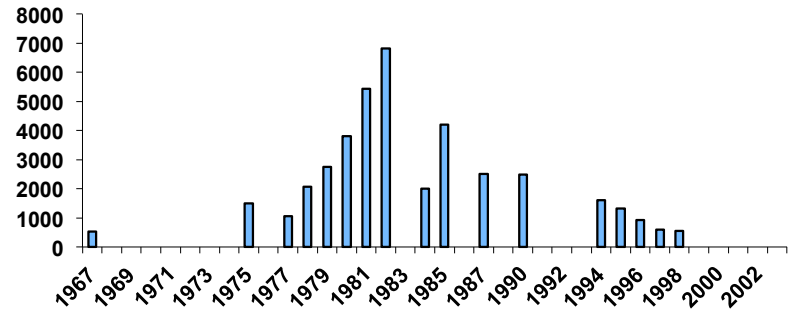

Figure 2. Letter Response to RSB Radio Programs

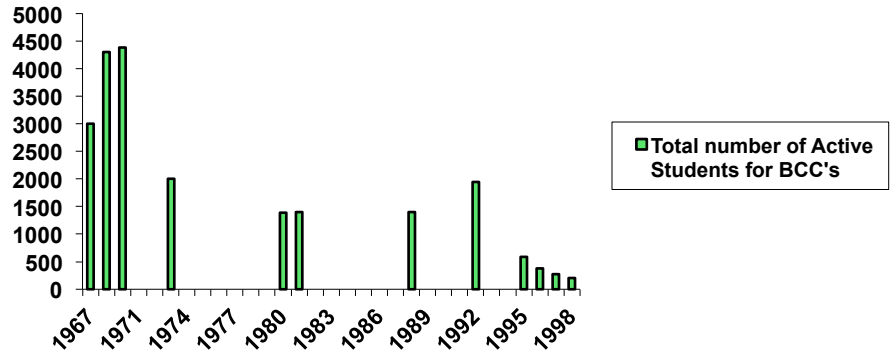

Figure 3. Number of Active Students of the BCC's

In 1994, RSB celebrated that it began 30 years earlier. Frontline magazine published that, since 1964, 3,700 programs had been produced, and 90,000 radio listeners had written to RSB and had received a reply. RSB also published that many North African church leaders, some of whom have suffered in prison for their faith, speak of the evangelistic and discipleship contribution that the radio made in their lives.[205] It also confidently wrote that 'based on secular research' it knew that 'for every listener letter, there are 800-1000 listeners'.[206] That 'secular research' referred to was probably the often-heard but unsubstantiated claim that every letter received meant 1,000 listeners.

Throughout the 30 years of RSB's existence, about one million BCC lessons have been mailed out. Until 1994, the total enrollment of the BCC's was 287,200 students.[207] The number of people who finished these courses was not mentioned. As the total number of radio respondees had been 90,000, it is clear that throughout the years, only about a third of all BCC students asked for the first lesson after having listened to radio. The other two-thirds came from referrals from advertisements in newspapers or magazines, friends, or from missionaries handing out invitations to participate. In total, RSB had produced eight different Arabic BCC's. [208]

[205] 'The Effectiveness of the Radio School of the Bible', in *Frontline* (September 1994), p. 1.

[206] Letter of Janet Tower to Chris Ford (10 June 1994), from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing. 'The Facts of the RSB', in *Frontline* (September 1994), p. 2.

[207] Ibid.

[208] Ibid.

5.4 Continued Decrease since 1995

In 1995, the radio programs elicited 1,324 letters.[209] The Arabic BCC's had an average number of 'active students' of 359. The French courses were done by an average of 225 students. Of those responding to radio, 55 percent were from Morocco, 12 percent from Algeria, 3 percent from Tunisia, 12 percent from the Middle East and 18 percent from other countries'. The active students of the Arabic BCC were: 31 percent from Morocco, 54 percent from Algeria, 8 percent from Tunisia, 1 percent from Libya, 1 percent from the Middle East, and 5 percent from other places. Of the 'active students' doing the French BCC's there were 22 from Morocco, 13 from Algeria and 3 from Tunisia. Most courses were done by students in West Africa and Europe.[210]

The trend was downward in 1996. Radio received only 917 letters. The average number of active students of the Arabic BCC's was 281, while French BCC's had an average of 100 active students. Of the respondents to radio, 31 percent were from Morocco, 52 percent from Algeria, 11 percent from Tunisia, 1 percent from Libya, and 6 percent from other countries. Of the active students doing an Arabic BCC, 56 percent were from Morocco, 13 percent from Algeria, 1 percent from Tunisia, 9 percent from the Middle East, and 22 percent from other countries. For the French BCC, RSB had 26 active students in Morocco, 8 in Algeria and 1 in Tunisia. [211]

In 1997, RSB's radio programs received 'over 200 letters per month,' the organization published in Frontline.[212] In reality, during the first eight months of the year, less then 400 responses were received.[213] The total figure for the year must have been in the 600 letters range. 34 percent of this radio response came from Morocco, 51 percent from Algeria, 10 percent from Tunisia, 1 percent from Libya, and 4 percent from other countries. The Arabic BCC's had an average of 196 active students and the French had 79 active students. Of the students of the Arabic BCC's, 49 percent were from Morocco, 9 percent from Algeria, 2 percent from Tunisia, 13 percent from the Middle East, and 27 percent from other countries. The French BCC's had an average of 20 active students in Morocco, 5 in Algeria, and 1 in Tunisia.[214]

For 1998, the information extant is for the audience response during 5 months of the year. During those months, 231 letters were received. Assuming that these are representative for the rest of the year, RSB received 554 letters in 1998. That figure is probably too high, as RSB stopped broadcasting over TWR in September 1998. RSB had throughout the years received most of its response for its MW broadcasts. In 1988, based on the information of 5 months, the number of active students of BCC's grew slightly, to an average of 202. The French BCC's lost much and had only 60 active students. That loss was mainly outside North Africa, as RSB still had 17 active students in Morocco, 5 in Algeria and 1 in Tunis. Radio response came from: 35 percent from Morocco, 46 percent from Algeria, and 9 percent from Tunisia, while 12 percent of the letters were from other countries. [215]

After that year, when RSB no longer broadcast over TWR on RMC-MC, the audience response to the radio programs came almost to a halt. The SW broadcasts to North Africa barely elicited audience response. The efforts of RSB to broadcast through an audio channel on satellite, together with HCJB, led to so little response that RSB withdrew from the project in 2003. AWM announced that, after two years of testing, it was pleased with the cooperation with HCJB, and also that many

---

[209] 'Media Report RSB' (December 1995).

[210] Based on all 12 monthly reports titled 'Media Report RSB', from January 1995 to December 1995, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[211] Based on all 12 monthly 'Media Report RSB', from January 1996 to December 1996, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

[212] 'Marseille Calling', in *Frontline: Introductory special issue* (n.d), but published in 1997, p. 3.

[213] Based on the monthly 'Media Report RSB' of January, February, and April-August 1997, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing. During those seven months, 340 letters were received.

[214] Based on the monthly 'Media Report RSB' of January-August 1997, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing. . During those eight months, RSB had an average of 196 active students in Arabic, and 79 in French.

[215] Based on the monthly 'Media Report RSB' of January-April and June 1998, from the NAM/AWM files in Worthing.

North Africans were trained in radio production, but 'the number of people listening was still so low that it was felt it did not merit the amount of money spent. '[216]

6. Conclusion

6.1 Indigenization

The beginnings of NAM's involvement in radio production were conceived among the western missionaries of NAM, and management of its media organization, RSB, was always fully western. The dependence of RSB on its Arabic production personnel ensured that in major managerial decisions their opinions would always be taken very seriously.

Initially, NAM and RSB endeavored to have North African speakers for its programs. However, since 1966 the main speakers in the programs, who also worked fulltime in RSB, were Arabs from the Levant. These people were invited to work for RSB as it was difficult to find staff from North Africa. From a Pan-Arab viewpoint that could be called indigenization, but from the perspective of the audience in North Africa, these Arabs were not indigenous.

6.2 Contextualization

NAM's initial choice to broadcast programs in colloquial Arabic and Amazigh was a choice to speak in the languages of its audience. The later choice to broadcast in MSA was made in order to be able to speak meaningfully to all of North Africa, as NAM had missionaries in all North African countries.

For radio broadcasts to North Africa, this choice of using Middle Eastern speakers using MSA created unnecessary distance with the audience. Not only did these speakers use a language that was not the mother tongue of anyone in North Africa, but they also had an accent in MSA that was not North African. The culture of these Middle Eastern speakers was Levantine and Christian, which was also an added hurdle for producing programs that were contextualized.
Immediately after independence, only a small minority in North Africa could read and write, hence understand MSA. The problem RSB's audience had with understanding MSA was clear from the fact that initially the majority of the audience was interested in doing the French, not the MSA BCCs.

During the 1980s and 1990s, RSB was prepared to use brief inserts in colloquial Arabic in its programs, but MSA continued to create the framework for the programs. At the beginning of the 21st century RSB underlined that it wanted to take the desires of the churches of North Africa seriously. That could possibly change RSB's language policies.

In its programs, RSB did not use Islamic language. That would have been unacceptable to the Levantine Christians in RSB, but it was also respectful to the Christian communities in North Africa. These converts from Islam wanted to distance themselves from the mosque, not perpetuate its forms.

The content of RSB's programs was, in general, focused on individuals and their most direct needs, without any reference to a Christian view of political matters like dictatorship or human rights. To those who were not interested in these issues, and who did not turn off their radio, these programs were obviously good, but the gospel should also address corporate evil, so this was a missed chance. Though RSB underlined that the gospel had concrete implications for the lifestyle of the audience, and the gospel was allowed to play its prophetic role in their lives, this was only adhered to in respect to the personal implications of the gospel, and not in its societal implications. That was a loss for the audience. At the same time, as the churches in North Africa avoided involvement in socio-political issues on a national scale, RSB's approach to not speak about politics or Islam in its programs was in a sense contextual.

6.3 General

AWM's Statement of Faith, that had to be accepted by all its missionaries including the Arabs working in RSB, was rather detailed and a western expression of the evangelical faith. It did show RSB's adherence to absolute truth as revealed in the Bible and Christ. It was commendable that the organization, at the beginning of the 21st century, expressed its belief in the liberty of the churches of North Africa to describe their own theology as they deemed suitable for their own context. It

---

[216] 'Prayer', in *Vision* Vol. 2 (2003), p. 4.

remains to be seen whether that meant that RSB would accept North African co-workers if they refused to sign AWM's Statement of Faith.

RSB's policy to use its programs for creating personal relationships with people only, was a rather restricted usage of the medium. With only 90 minutes per week, it was impossible to create balanced programming, so the goal to use radio for getting contact was probably the best RSB could do in the context of its aims in North Africa. RSB's broadcasts to North Africa have been effective in creating an interest in the gospel, and often also in encouraging people to take a decision to become a Christian. AWM, with its own missionaries 'on the ground', even after missionary work had become illegal, has played an important role in nurturing small groups of believers in North Africa.

During the 1990s, the audience response for programs of RSB declined steeply, probably as the general interest in radio diminished due to the development of satellite television in the 1990s. AWM envisioned dramatic changes in the media landscape, and made some strategic choices to diminish its radio production and to invest in video production and satellite radio broadcasting. At the beginning of the 21st century it seemed that RSB had not been able to decide about its new direction, though.

A ProvidentiaL Perfect Storm – the Internet Provides Gospel Access to Somalis

Ben I. Aram

1. Introduction

The term "perfect storm" entered popular usage in 2000 through the American film by that name. Based loosely on the true story of a fishing boat sinking in the North Atlantic in 1991, it depicted the confluence of several unrelated weather fronts with a hurricane. Since then, this term is used to describe a situation when multiple, seemingly random factors dramatically coincide and combine for dramatic (and usually disastrous) consequences. As Christians, we confess that all human history takes place under God's sovereign control, including the advance of the Gospel and the growth of Christ's Church. Seemingly unrelated or random events are actually orchestrated within God's eternal plan. The impact of Gospel communication to the Somali people via the Internet is a case in point. The results are fairly dramatic although I hope to avoid both triumphalism and exaggeration. With the eyes of faith, we recognize that separate cultural factors and historical events have been combined by Divine Providence into a "perfect storm" for His gracious purposes, taking place against a backdrop of tragic upheaval and national disintegration.

2. After a century of missions—meager results

While there is evidence that scattered churches existed on the periphery of Somali territory over a millennium ago, by 1500 the Somali people were entirely Islamized[1]. The modern missionary era began in 1880 with French Roman Catholic missionaries of the Capuchin order establishing work in Berbera and Seylac (Zeila) in British Somaliland. Protestant missions began in 1898 with the arrival of the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) at the port of Kismaayo in British East Africa[2], 1500 km to the south[3]. While a statistically exact study remains to be done, a general impression of the first century of modern Christian mission work among Somalis is that results were more meager than in comparable efforts in other majority Muslim lands. A rough estimate of Christians in 1990 (both Protestant and Roman Catholic) would be less than 1,000.

2.1 Somalia as a failed state

In late January 1991, the 22 year regime of President Maxamed Siyaad Barre collapsed. The civil war had begun in 1978 as disgruntled army officers attempted a coup after their disastrous defeat by Soviet forces during the 1977 Ogaden War. This conflict simmered in remote rural areas until mid-1988 when it finally exploded to full-scale warfare at Hargeysa in former British Somaliland. Following the fall of Barre's government, Somaliland has seceded and has become a reasonably stable, although unrecognized, nation. The rest of Somalia has lacked a truly effective government and has earned the dubious ranking of the world's most extreme case of "failed state"[4].

---

[1] Ben I. Aram. "Somalia's Judeo-Christian Heritage: A Preliminary Survey", *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* Vol. 22 (2): 3-28, (2003).

[2] This border area was later ceded to Italy and became part of its Somalia colony.

[3] Frank-Ole Toresen. *The Church as the Reconciled Community of Suffering Disciples of Ciise Masiix: Towards a Contextual Somali Ecclesiology*, PhD thesis. MHS School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway, (August 30, 2012), Chapter 4 summarizes mission history for Somalia.

[4] The efforts of African Union peacekeeping forces to support the Transitional Federal Government and the election of Professor Xasan Sheekh Maxamuud as president provide glimmers of hope for the rebuilding of this shattered nation.

2.2 Conditions for Christians within Somalia went from bad to worse

While some religious freedom existed under the Barre regime, it was tightly circumscribed[5]. During the civil war, converts to Christianity faced much greater risks from the insecurity than their Muslim neighbors. Some were killed and many fled to Ethiopia or Kenya. This grew even worse when the ultra-radical *al-Shabaab* jihadists gained control over most of central and southern Somalia after 2006. An Economist article asked: "Where is the hardest place in the world to be a Christian citizen? North Korea, perhaps? Saudi Arabia? Try Somalia. There are thought to be no more than a thousand Christians in a resident population of 8m people, with perhaps a few thousand more in the diaspora. The Islamist Shabab militia, which controls most of southern Somalia, is dedicated to hunting them down."[6] Since July 2011 *al-Shabaab's* power has waned to a degree, yet Christians within both Somalia and Somaliland lack freedom of worship. Some meet secretively in small house churches, while many remain totally isolated.

3. Elements of the "providential perfect storm"

At first glance, given the extremely grim situation of violence, insecurity and the total absence of religious freedom, Gospel witness and discipling inside Somalia appears to face insurmountable obstacles. Furthermore, even reaching members of the huge Somali Diaspora is daunting given the shortage of expatriate missionaries (whether African, Asian, or Western) who speak sufficient Somali to communicate the Gospel effectively. Language and cultural barriers are significant, and one cannot assume that refugees resettled in lands with religious freedom will easily encounter the Gospel message in an understandable form.

3.1 Relative linguistic homogeneity of Somalia

Standard Somali is the mother tongue of at least 70% of the population[7] and is used by over 95%. In contrast to most African lands, the official language is indigenous and not the legacy of colonialism.

3.2 News-hungry nomads

With the longest coastline of any African country, Somalis have had trade relations with Egypt, Arabia, Persia, India and China since the 2nd millennium BC. Culturally, Somalis have long held an interest in events of the outside world. Richard Burton was the first European explorer to enter Somali territories and noted this hunger for world news in 1854[8]. In addition, some Somali nomads spent considerable periods away from their ancestral territory, working as sailors or merchants in Yemen and East Africa.

3.3 A rich tradition of oral literature

As in other Islamic cultures, poetry is highly esteemed in Somali culture. Poems were very significant in terms of politics, being able to both incite and calm inter-clan conflict. The high regard in which poets were held, the rapidity with which orally composed poems could be accurately transmitted across long distance, and the way they could be remembered after many generations has

---

[5] For an excellent account of recent Somali church history see Ahmed Ali Haile. *Teatime in Mogadishu: My Journey as a Peace Ambassador in the World of Islam.* (Herald Press, Harrisonburg, VA, USA, 2011). Chapter 3 portrays conditions during the 1970s, chapters 5 & 6 cover the 1980s, and chapters 7-9 detail the current civil war period.

[6] Almost expunged– Somalia's embattled Christians, Nairobi, *The Economist* print edition, October 22, 2009. http://www.economist.com/world/middleeast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14707279

[7] Of the 30% for whom Somali is their second language, a high percentage speak closely related Eastern Cushitic languages.

[8] "The Somali Badawin have a passion for knowing how the world wags… No traveler ever passes a kraal without...demanding answers to a lengthened string of queries… Thus it is that news flies about the country. Among the wild Gudabirsi the Russian war was a topic of interest, and at Harar I heard of a violent storm that had damaged the shipping in Bombay Harbour, but a few weeks after the event", Burton, Richard F. *First Footsteps in East Africa, or, An Exploration of Harar.* (Originally published in 1894, London: Tylston & Edwards. Reprinted: Mineola, NY, USA: Dover Publications, 1987), p. 131.

been examined in detail by Said S. Samatar[9]. Oratorical skills also occupy a premiere place within Somali culture, with audiences willing to listen for hours to skilled speakers.

3.4 Early interest in radio

Both the Italian and British colonial governments introduced radio broadcasting in the Somali language to their respective territories several decades before independence in 1960. Later, as the Barre regime exercised exclusive control over the national radio station, the BBC Somali service achieved preeminent status of all broadcasts in the Somali language. While music was understandably popular, transmission of news and poetry commanded the highest audience interest[10].

3.5 Christian shortwave radio broadcasts in Somali for more than a generation

The first Christian radio broadcast, *Codka Nolosha Cusub* ("The Voice of New Life", henceforth: VNL) went on the air in 1974[11]. Over the ensuing decades, thousands of listeners came to know that at 2000 UST+3 they could hear a broadcast with totally different content from others aired in their language. The VNL staff developed a library of radio program series and hymns. In addition to audio resources, three series of Bible correspondence courses and other literature were translated and used for listener follow up.

3.6 Dictator ends orthographic argument

For the first decade of his 22-year regime, the President Siyaad Barre was a self-styled "Scientific Socialist". In 1972, three years after Barre assumed power in a coup, he ended a decades-long debate on which orthography would be suitable to use for the Somali language. He chose the Latin script rather than the Arabic or the indigenous "Osmaniya" scripts. He ordered an urban, followed by a rural, literacy campaign in 1973 and 1974[12]. This resulted in over a quarter of the Somali population being able to read and write their own language. In retrospect, this choice of the Latin script (following the examples of other majority Muslim lands like Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia) and the rapid growth in literacy was one of the few positive parts of this dictator's brutal legacy[13]. Nearly 20 years later, the eastern-most province of Ethiopia followed suit and adopted Somali as one of its official written languages. The translation of the Bible into Somali had been completed several years prior to the official choice of the Latin script. Since this translation had been done also in the Latin script, re-typing it to conform to the newly published official orthographic rules took only a year, with publication coming a few years later (NT in 1976 and full Bible in 1979)[14].

3.7 Somalia's telecommunication and internet facilities are among the best in Africa

The fact that a land languishing as a "failed state" for two decades boasts such high level of telecommunication and Internet access seems counter-intuitive[15]. These services (along with electricity) are solely the result of private companies and demonstrate the highly developed entrepreneurial skills of Somalis[16]. A recent BBC study stated: "A report by Somali

---

[9] Samatar, Said S. *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism.* (Cambridge University Press, African Study Series 32, 1982)

[10] Laitin, David & Said S. Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State.* (Boulder: Westview Press-Africa Profiles Series. 1987), p. 40.

[11] Helen Miller. *The Hardest Place; The biography of Warren and Dorothy Modricker.* (Guardian Books, Belleville, ON, Canada, 2006), pp.221-227. At present there at least four Somali Christian shortwave broadcasts.

[12] Lewis, I. M, *A Modern History of Somalia.* (Rev. ed. London: Longman, 1980), P. 216.

[13] In addition to employing oppressive secret police and ruining health care, schools and the economy, Barre's government forced out Protestant missionaries in the mid-1970's.

[14] Miller, pp. 205-211.

[15] Joseph Winter, *Telecoms thriving in lawless Somalia* (Story from BBC News, 19.11.2004: http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/africa/4020259.stm).

[16] Abdinasir Mohamed & Sarah Childress, Telecom Firms Thrive In Somalia Despite War, Shattered Economy, (*The Wall Street Journal*, May 11, 2010), p. B.1

Telecommunication Association (STA), in 2006, stated that the country had more than 234 cyber cafes, growing at a rate of 15.6% per year" [17].

3.8 Avid Somali Internet use

Somali involvement with the Internet extends back to its early days. In 1997, journalist and author Michael Maren estimated that Somalis posted more messages on the Internet than all other African nationalities combined[18]. A conservative global estimate of Somalis with Internet access would be 3,000,000. The vast majority of Somalis in the Diaspora[19] use the Internet daily to stay in contact with their relatives in the Horn of Africa[20]. "*Soomaali*" was one of only11 African languages recognized by Google in 2006. Norwegian social scientists did a detailed study of "transcultural" complexities of internet usage by young Somali immigrants[21]. At present, there are well over 300 Somali-language websites. The BBC report cited in 3.7 went on to say: "Facebook has taken off in Somalia since Islamist militants al-Shabab fled the city several months ago, loosening social restrictions and making the streets safer. New accounts have grown by 50% in the past six months, and there are now more Facebook users than estimated internet users in Somalia, thanks to mobile phones and computer sharing."

3.9 Jihadists fuel hunger for the Gospel

Aside from the above communication factors, the role of the ultra-fanatic *al-Shabaab* jihadists in instilling spiritual/theological dissatisfaction cannot be overestimated. Their downward spiral of violence based on a highly eccentric interpretation of *sharia* law began with suicide-bombings, decapitations and amputations, coupled with desecrating the tombs of Sufi saints[22]. Later, *al-Shabaab* forbade football as Satanic[23], banned *sambuusi* meat pies[24] while declaring hyena meat *halal*. This further heightened revulsion among many Somalis. This dissatisfaction built upon existing soul-searching and questioning[25] from many Somalis. They are asking themselves: why is a culturally homogeneous nation that is 99.99% Muslim embroiled in internecine conflict for 20+ years? Why did more relief aid come from Western "Christian" countries than from Muslim (particularly Arab) nations?

---

[17] Jonathan Kalan, *Somalia's ambitions online could bring Mogadishu to the world* (BBC News-Business, 23.10.2012: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19961266 . See also: *Digital Media, Conflict and Diasporas in the Horn of Africa; Mapping Digital Media*, Iginio Gagliardone and Nicole Stremlau. Open Society Foundation Reference Series No. 16. http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/digital-media-conflict-and-diasporas-horn-africa

[18] Personal communication. August 1997. Maren theorized that posting comments on Internet articles (especially in the chatrooms popular in those days) strongly paralleled the centuries old tradition of appending additional verses to orally-transmitted poems.

[19] Well over a million Somalis live outside their ancestral territory in Somalia, Somaliland, southern Djibouti, eastern Ethiopia and northeastern Kenya.

[20] Internet usage is not totally restricted to literates. Workers among Somali refugees have noted instances of illiterate grandmothers now being able to use a mouse to navigate the Internet sufficiently to access the online audio materials of the BBC Somali Service.

[21] *Mellom NRK og Somalinet: Transkulterelle liv blant somalisk ungdom i Kristiansand.* Mediehøgskolen Gimlekollen,v/førsteamnaneunsis Øyvind Økland, Norway. 106 p. (English summary on p. 7).

[22] Posted on YouTube and viewed by Somalis globally.

[23] Viewers of TV coverage of the World Cup were executed in Muqdisho in 2006 and 2010. The Taliban allows football, but forbids cheering.

[24] The three-sided shape was considered to be a Christian Trinitarian symbol.

[25] See Ayaan Hirsi Ali's books: *Infidel*, (Free Press, NYC, 2007, 353 pp.) and *Nomad. From Islam to America: A Personal Journey Through the Clash of Civilizations.* (Free Press , NYC, 2010), 277 pp. Despite leaving Islam to become an atheist, Ayaan ends *Nomad* with a remarkable challenge to the church to convert Muslim immigrants to Christianity.

4. "The New Life" website[26]: 24/7 & global

In 2001, several long-term VNL listeners wrote to urge establishment of a VNL website "like the BBC Somali Service." In 2003, VNL began announcing an email address on broadcasts, resulting in a huge increase in audience correspondence. Website development finally began in April 2006 with the following Mission Statement: *Somalis across the world hearing, believing and trusting in Jesus Christ and becoming part of His Church.* This is given more detail in the Vision Statement: *Providing Somali-language written and audio resources that communicate the Gospel via the Internet, building relationships with website visitors with the intention of helping them understand the Gospel, come to faith in Jesus Christ and become part of a local church.* The name "The New Life" (*Nolosha Cusub*, henceforth "NL") was chosen to demonstrate the close connection with the VNL broadcast. The website was formally launched at a church worship service near Seattle, USA on Palm Sunday 2007.

In building the website attention was given to both written and audio-visual content. Several over-arching principles for content included a preference for maximizing Somali content, with as little English usage as possible. The main emphasis in content was an open, clear explanation of the Gospel, with minimal reference to the Quran and avoidance of polemics. In addition, photos of landscapes as well as pre-war rural and urban scenes were intentionally used to celebrate the natural and cultural beauty of Somalia. Unlike most Somali-language websites, images of politicians and commercial advertisements are conspicuously absent[27].

4.1 Literature resources

Careful thought was given for using the most appropriate VNL resources developed in the past 30+ years.

Bible available for reading, printing and downloading to cell phones

Providentially, the newly-revised edition of the original 1979 printing of the Somali Bible translation became available in 2008. By the end of that year it was available on the NL website for both reading and downloading to mobile telephones. In 2010, audio files were uploaded of a dramatized reading of the entire New Testament and embedded with each chapter[28]. Visitors can now read and listen simultaneously.

Other literature:

Somali church history: brief biographies of three deceased Somali Christians as well as the Somali translation of *Somalia's Judeo-Christian Heritage.*
Online Bible courses: *One God, One Way* (Emmaus) and *We Hear From the Prophets* (ICI).
Home Page blogs: "*God's Promises*" (redemptive history series from the Torah) and church calendar messages.
Poetry: five poems composed by gifted Somali Christians.
Short writings: Four tracts, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the testimony of Iranian martyr Mehdi Dibaj.

4.2 Audio resources from VNL; listened to on an embedded mp3 player and downloaded

Radio programs: 246 mp3 files in 9 series. Of these 9 series, 2 are short Gospel presentations, 1 is a lengthy chronological Bible storying series, 1 covers early Middle East/North Africa church history, 2 are applications of the Gospel to social concerns (*Khat* addiction, Marriage & Family issues) with the last 3 being expositions of Bible books (Genesis, Psalms and Hebrews).
Hymns: A variety of musical styles from traditional to contemporary are found in the 7 albums containing 81 hymns.

---

[26] www.noloshacusub.net

[27] Visit *Hiiraan Online*, the most popular Somali website to gain an impression of the typical format: http://www.hiiraan.com/

[28] Produced by Hosanna-Faith Comes by Hearing

4.3 Cartoons & Hymn "videos"

The 2 cartoon episodes are developed from Somali comic book translation of *Jungle Doctor* stories. The 6 hymns employ a "slide show" of photographic images that relate to the lyrics. These hymn "videos" are also posted on *Nolosha Cusub* YouTube and Facebook accounts.

4.4 Relationship between VNL broadcast and NL website

Since 2007, every VNL broadcast mentions the NL website. The VNL weekly broadcast schedule is available for website visitors.

4.5 Links to 17 other websites

Arabic Christian websites
Somali Christian websites
English language Bible websites featuring numerous translations
The Jesus Film in Somali and 4 other Horn of Africa languages
I against my brother a dramatized film of a Somali convert

5. Role of advertising

To rephrase another famous cinematic line, we can ask: "If you build a website…Will they come?" During the initial year of construction, the NL website received 23 emails from visitors who had discovered it via search engines without any advertising or publicity. However, it is poor stewardship of resources to avoid paid advertising.

5.1 Google AdWords

Three days prior to the 1 April 2007 dedication service for the NL website, a Google AdWords advertising campaign began. Several hundred keywords were submitted, and ads were developed[29]. The frequency with which an ad appears in "Sponsored Links" is related directly to how much money is spent. In the ensuing years, AdWords has become the cornerstone of efforts to attract visitors. Nearly 45% of all visits to the website are the result of AdWords.

The daily budget has been increased five times as additional funding became available. The last increase took place in June, 2012: by year's end, this doubling in daily expenditure resulted in an overall 35% increase in visits. Increasing the amount of money spent on AdWords is analogous to increasing the transmission power of a radio station.

5.2 Facebook

The NL website began a Facebook account in 2010 to attract attention to the main website by highlighting new website content[30], as well as posting comments about current events or celebrations of days in the church calendar. During the first half of 2011, we experimented with paid advertisements for the NL Facebook account. However, due to the sparse number of referrals, this advertising was discontinued.

5.3 Twitter

The @SomaliNewLife account began in November 2012, but there was little use until 2013[31]. More work is needed here to enhance effectiveness for publicizing the website.

5.4 Card distribution

Business cards in Somali, to advertise the NL website, have been printed and frequently given to colleagues for distribution in Canada, USA, UK, Netherlands, Denmark, Ethiopia and South Africa.

---

[29] For example, if one enters "Somalia" in a Google search, there is a chance one will see an ad referring to the website under "Sponsored Links".

[30] Facebook has generated 4,638 visits to the website, along with 829 via Facebook Apps.

[31] So far, only 23 visits to the website are referrals from Twitter.

6. Planting the seed: response from past 7 years

In terms of Gospel communication, website visits are the 1st level of blessing, as Somali-speakers are able to encounter a broad range of written, audio and audio-visual resources. Unlike radio broadcasts, it is possible to know with a great degree of precision the size of the "audience" a website develops[32].

6.1 152,195 visitors made 200,528 visits

Visitors live in 154 lands and 5,116 cities; the top 10 lands in decreasing order are: UK, USA, Sweden, Somalia, Kenya, (not set)[33], Norway, The Netherlands, Canada, and Djibouti. The top 10 cities in decreasing order are: (not set)[34], London, Nairobi, Djibouti, Muqdisho, Helsinki, Addis Abeba, Minneapolis, Oslo, and Hargeysa.

6.2 Visitor behavior

Pageviews totaled 475,855 with average visit duration being 2:51 minutes. The bounce rate[35] was 63%. Over the past six years, 24% of hits came from returning visitors and 76% from new visitors. Downloads of the Bible to mobile phones totaled 880. While all audio files are downloadable we are unable to monitor downloads of hymns and radio messages.

6.3 The top ten most popular pages:

Home page /default.aspx: 106,592
VNL *Marriage & Family* series /audio/messages/marriagefamily/default.aspx: 34,476
VNL *Chronological Bible storying* /audio/messages/wayofrighteousness/default.aspx: 25,082
I against my brother film /links/brotherfilm.aspx: 23,574
Somali Bible introductory page /bible/default.aspx: 14,006
Hymn albums & radio series pages /audio/Default.aspx: 10,425
Contact page for sending in email /Contact/Default.aspx: 9,636
Voices of Light hymn album /audio/music/ci1/default.aspx: 7,751
Testimony of Mehdi Dibaj /literature/tracts/mehdi.aspx: 7,480
Visitors leave site to view film *I against my brother*/outgoing/somalistoryfilm: 7,374

7. Watering the response: Relationships begin with a mouse click on the contact page

Correspondence is the 2nd level of blessing. While it is rewarding to know that over 150,000 Somalis at least encountered the Gospel briefly, it is even more encouraging to see a relationship begin via email.

7.1 Email contacts from visitors have been substantial

5,121 messages[36] were received from 1,650 individuals residing in 316 cities in 60 countries. Demographic breakdown shows 504 messages came from women (10%[37]) and 4,614 from men. Of messages received, 26 were sent by atheists (.5%), 3,612 by Muslims (70%), and 1,478 by Christians (29%).

---

[32] Unless otherwise noted, all data comes from Google Analytics (henceforth "Analytics") for the time period of 26 March 2007 until 30 June 2013. Unfortunately we do not have any Analytics data for the first year of the website's existence, prior to use of AdWords.

[33] A category used by Analytics to indicate an IP address is unknown. Most of these would be from within Somalia. A noticeable increase in visits from Somalia has occurred in the past years since the expulsion of *al-Shabaab* from Muqdisho in July 2011.

[34] A large number here would be from Muqdisho.

[35] The percent of visitors exiting a website after visiting only one page.

[36] Mainly emails, but also includes Facebook messages, with some chatting, texting and telephone calls.

[37] An order of magnitude greater than emails received from female listeners to VNL.

7.2 Content of emails varies greatly

68 were abusive (1%), 919 were negative (18%), 785 were neutral (15%), while 3,346 were positive (65%). Surprisingly, the initial email from some visitors shows that they consider the NL website to be Islamic, despite the total lack of Quranic content. Some correspondents shared very personal details of marital problems or addiction and asked for advice. Many visitors who correspond are consciously searching for information on the Christian faith. Among those professing faith in Jesus Christ, a significant number have no prior contact with fellow believers.

7.3 Intensity of correspondence

This has ranged from many single messages to one visitor who has sent 86 messages. Quite commonly, a hiatus of many months, or several years occurs and then contact is resumed. Over a period of years, many correspondents change location as they join in the Diaspora.

7.4 On-line Bible correspondence courses

308 were completed. The vast majority received a passing score of 60%.

8. The harvest: linking website visitors with local churches is the 3rd level of blessing

The purpose of the NL website is expressly *not* to be a "virtual" substitute for a visible church fellowship[38]. Connecting an individual with Christians in his or her proximity is the ultimate goal. Linkage to local churches only takes place with the express permission of a visitor. To date, 57 visitors in 16 countries have been connected, to some degree, with a member of a local Christian church. The countries where most visitors were introduced to local churches were: Kenya 12, The Netherlands 8, UK 7, Ethiopia 6, South Africa 6, and USA 6.

9. Evaluation of the NL website impact after seven years

9.1 Putting the numbers in perspective.

After presenting a plethora of statistics, it is essential to emphasize how exciting they are within the Somali context. If one assumes a 25% literacy rate among the world's estimated 12 million Somali-speakers, then the core target group for NL website is 3 million people. Since 152,195 people visited the site over the past six years and three months[39], this means 5% of all literate Somalis have had at least some contact with the Gospel message. In terms of what attracted visitors once they entered the site, it is remarkable that the introductory page for the Somali translation of the Bible consistently ranked at fifth place. When pageviews of Old and New Testament introductory pages, subsection pages, and individual Bible books are all combined, the total is 79,378; this is nearly 17% of all pageviews[40]. This shows the intrinsic appeal of the Word of God to a Muslim ethnic group who otherwise have had little chance to encounter the Scriptures in their heart language.

From these 152,195 visitors, 1% decided to initiate contact with the NL staff. The fact that 65% of their messages were positive is also remarkable. Regardless of whether Somalis are traditional Sufis or recent adherents of Salafism, the vast majority hold that to be a Somali is to be a Muslim. Just as Jessup noted for Yemenis[41], Somalis do not traditionally recognize *ehlul-kitaab* (People of the Book) as a category for Jews and Christians. All non-Muslims are considered *gaalo* (infidels). Therefore, the default setting for attitudes towards Christianity has been more hostile than in most other Muslim nations. Viewed within that perspective, the tone of correspondence shows a

---

[38] For a fascinating study of usage of Paltalk chatrooms by scattered Somali Christians in Norway (with global reach), see Frank O. Thoresen, In the midst of Umma on the Internet– Religious Profession and Witness in a Globalized Era, (In: *The Church Going Glocal, Mission and Globalisation.* Edited by Tormod Engelsviken, Erling Lundeby and Dagfinn Solheim, Proceedings of the Fjellhaug Symposium 2010, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, UK. Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series) p. 151-162.

[39] There is no data on visitation for the first year, but it is likely only a few hundred.

[40] Bearing in mind that the Bible did not become available until 19 months after Analytics data began recording.

[41] H.H. Jessup. *Kamil Abdul Messiah, A Syrian Convert from Islam to Christianity.* (1898, reprinted by Middle East Resources, South Holland, IL, USA, 2008), p. 29. Given that Islam spread from Yemen to Somalia, this perspective likely originated there.

remarkable opinion shift about Christianity. The initial confusion of many visitors as to NL's religious identity by misidentifying it as Muslim shows a profound lack of prior knowledge as to the actual content of the Christian faith.

9.2 Unintended encouragement from a Somali Muslim journalist

Two years ago, a Somali Christian colleague shared an article he read on a Somali news website[42]. It was entitled "*The Christians are using the Internet to attract Somalis.*" Translated into English, it reads: "While I was searching on Google, my eyes were drawn to an advertisement saying *Arrin Cajiib ah ayaa dhacay* (An amazing event happened), and again I've seen another one that says *Amiirka Nolosha Cusub waa kuma*? (Who is the Prince of the New Life?). All these advertisements are bringing you to a website named *Nolosha Cusub* which spreads the Christian religion. These men are trying to take advantage of technology so they may attract Somali Muslims by using eye-catching ads, and through social network sites such as Facebook and YouTube. However, the most surprising thing is that these ads for this site can even be seen on Somali news websites. It is unfortunate to spread another religion through websites owned by Muslims. This can take place because the Somali websites are using a Google advertising known as AdSense. But, they can still choose certain ads to be prohibited from appearing on their sites. It seems that Christians have had a great success using internet, and that is why you can find that *Nolosha Cusub* is the top-ranking Google selection when trying to search for the word *Nolosha* (The Life)."

9.3 After completing the 12 chapters in the online Bible course, a website visitor wrote an email explaining how he discovered the NL website"

"Today, I am truly happy to be… following the path of truth. In previous months, I lived in despair and hopelessness with a defeated personality… I continually had meaningless thoughts as I considered what I would do after completing secondary school... I tried to find something on the radio to settle my mind. One day I listened to one of the local FM stations here in Muqdisho. They broadcasted a program about people who had become Christians. Their intention was to spread negative propaganda and they featured interviews of various people who had left Islam. Personally, what grabbed my attention was the question posed by a boy who had left Islam and followed the religion of the Lord Jesus. He said: 'Muslims read the Quran in order to approach God. The Quran is written in Arabic. However, what prevents the Quran from being written in Somali or other languages like the Christians do?' That question really sent my mind spinning. I thought about how I might find the Christian websites that the reporter had referred to, despite the fact he had not specifically given their names… one day I decided to ask Google. I typed in 'Somali Christian', and then I found www.noloshacusub.net I rejoiced when I contacted you from the website and you replied. I completed the courses in the series *One God, One Way.* I discovered joy, I hope to live in that joy and in the love of God. Another joy was to find that the Bible can be accessed on the website."

9.4 Providential coordination of multiple factors.

Just as the *pax Romanica* facilitated the spread of the Gospel throughout the Mediterranean world during the apostolic age, so usage of the Internet via website and social media has a particular value for reaching Somalis in both their homeland and their Diaspora. Building upon linguistic unity, high cultural value for literature and oratory, radio became extremely popular over half a century ago. The decisive choice for a simple, practical orthography by an authoritarian regime resulted in a rapid spike in literacy. An unintended consequence (for that regime) was publication of the previously translated Bible, followed by other items of Christian literature. This in turn was widely used and disseminated by Christian shortwave radio. While the civil war has been extremely disruptive at the national, family and personal level, the simultaneous global development of the Internet and mobile telecommunication technology was quickly seized upon by Somalis. The dispersion of their nation across the globe only heightened the demand for rapid communication as family members resettled to scores of countries on five continents. Finally, more than 20 years of civil war, capped by the excesses of the lunatic fringe of jihadists, has corroded faith in Islam for

---

[42] Posted on: http://www.xogsheeg.com/?p=3219 Tuesday, February 8th, 2011 by *Midnimo* xogsheeg@hotmail.com

[43] 7 February 2012

many Somalis[44]. Taken together, these events have been used in God's sovereignty to provide an unprecedented open door for the good news of reconciliation in Jesus the Messiah.

10. Conclusion: Every radio broadcast deserves a website

As we compare the value of websites and social media usage versus shortwave radio broadcasting, they readily complement each other. While shortwave radio is receding in usage, it still reaches an audience in remote rural areas who need the Gospel as much as their urban relatives[45]. Assuming competent and committed IT assistance, a website provides a superb way to leverage audio and written resources already developed by a radio broadcast. Unlike radio, where the many hours of work culminate in a real-time event of a broadcast of 15 or 30 minutes to a portion of the globe, resources on the website are available at all times with little geographic restriction. To further emphasize the benefits for stewardship of time, energy and money, not only does the website allow media resources to be available 24/7, but the cost of operating a website is substantially less than paying for shortwave radio production and air time[46].

[44] This parallels the situation in Algeria, noted Bassam Madany in *Algerians Alienated from Islam Are Turning to Christ.* (Posted on Answering Islam, 2009: http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/madany/algerians.html).

[45] Private FM broadcasting has grown dramatically within Somalia in the last decade, but it is unrealistic to expect any station would allow Christian programming for the foreseeable future.

[46] By comparison, the project costs for the VNL broadcast were over $455,000 for the past seven years, while for the NL website the total was $84,000.

ISLAMIC JIHAD AND OLD TESTAMENT WARS: ARE THEY THE SAME?

BP[1]

Whenever the topic of Islamic violence is raised, a common response from Muslims (and others) is: "But what about the Bible? Isn't that full of violence?"

On the surface, all divinely-sanctioned violence might appear to be the same, whether ordered by Yahweh, as in the Old Testament (e.g. Deuteronomy.1:21), or Allah (e.g. Qur'an 9:5). Certainly there are some similarities. The followers of both religions sometimes killed whole populations of those they conquered, e.g. the Amalekites, who had a long history of attacking Israel (1.Samuel 15:1-9), and the males of the Jewish tribe of Bani Qurayza which had opposed the Muslims (Qur'an 17:16).[2] Both claimed that their deity was fighting on their behalf (Exodus14:14; Deuteronomy 1:30; 3:22; 20:4, and Qur'an 33:25). Just as all the wars described in the Bible were not divinely sanctioned (e.g. battles between the Israelite tribes), nor have all Islamic battles between Sunnis and Shias been accepted as jihad. However investigation reveals twelve significant differences between warfare in the Old Testament and the violence that was and is carried out in the name of Islamic jihad. This article identifies these areas of difference, drawing on the Old Testament, the Qur'an and early Muslim documents.

1. The purpose of the warfare: gaining a sanctuary for refugees, or ideologically-based expansionism to gain booty?

The earliest and most significant incidents of divinely-sanctioned violence in the Bible revolve around the campaigns by the Israelites to gain entry to the Promised Land. The people of Israel had been slaves in Egypt for nearly 400 years (Genesis 15:13; Acts 7:6). The Bible records that, as a result of their bondage, "they cried out to God and He heard them" (Exodus 2:23-25). Eventually under the leadership of Moses, they were able to escape into the desert. However they could not live there forever. They needed a place to settle, so the divine permission was given: "You may go in and take over the good land that the Lord promised on oath to your forefathers, thrusting out all your enemies before you" (Deuteronomy 6:18-19). The fighting against the Canaanites was a means of gaining sanctuary for the twelve tribes of Israel, a nation of refugees who had no place to live. The territory of Canaan was described by Yahweh as "the land I am giving to you *as a home*" (Numbers 15:1 – italics added). God loves the foreigners or refugees (Deuteronomy 10:18), and this land became a divine provision to a nation of wanderers. Consequently, the Israelites were also told to welcome and care for other refugees who came to their land: "When a foreigner lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The foreigner living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:13). Having gained a place of sanctuary for themselves, the Israelites were obligated to make it a place of refuge for others.

The Islamic wars which took place in the time of Muhammad and under the four 'rightly-guided' Caliphs were different. The Arabs had lived in their own land for centuries. The Arabian peninsula was generally ignored by other nations. Fred Donner speaks of the problems which prevented the two northern superpowers, Byzantium and the Sassanian Persians, presenting any significant military threat to the Arabs. These included "the exhaustion of the Byzantine and Sassanian Empires due to prolonged warfare, the confusion that reigned in the Sassanian ruling house, the disruption caused by recent enemy occupation in Syria and Iraq, the destruction wrought by immense floods in southern Iraq, [and] the disaffection of many of the subjects of the two empires

---

[1] BP has worked for many years in areas of Asia and the Middle East

[2] Ibn Ishaq *Sirat Rasul Allah* trans.as *The Life of Muhammad* (tr. A. Guillaume) (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 464.

for religious or other reasons."[3] The Islamic military expansion from 634 AD onwards, in which neighbouring nations were invaded, had an ideological basis. The Qur'an informed them that Allah "has sent His Apostle with Guidance and the Religion of Truth to prevail over all religion" (Qur'an 9:33; 48:28; 61:9). Jihad was the means devised to extend the political and military rule of Islam. This concept will be developed further throughout this study. Moreover an incentive for their attacks was taking plunder from those they invaded. This was very effective, for "Allah made the Prophet wealthy through conquests" (alBukhari 3:495[4]). The Qur'an records that Allah had made Muhammad (Qur'an 93:8) and his followers (Qur'an 9:74) rich– so do the hadith: "you were poor and Allah made you rich through me" (alBukhari 5:619). Economic gain was a clear purpose for the Islamic expansion. "Arab warriors were … entitled to four-fifths of all the booty they gathered in the form of movable goods and captives."[5] After Muhammad died, some of the Arabs claimed that they would remain Muslims and still worship Allah alone but would no longer pay the compulsory *zakat* to the Muslim treasury. Abu Bakr said, "By Allah! I will fight those who differentiate between the prayer and the *Zakat* as *Zakat* is the compulsory right to be taken from the property (according to Allah's orders). By Allah! If they refuse to pay me even a she-kid which they used to pay at the time of Allah's Apostle I would fight with them for withholding it" (alBukhari 2:483, 536). Clearly, performance of the rituals and economic contribution to the cause were inseparable in early Islam, and military means could be used to enforce this connection.

2. The impetus for warfare: self-defence, or self-proclaimed supremicism?

Israel's fighting sometimes took place in the context of self-defence. Sihon king of Heshbon attacked the Israelites when they asked for safe passage through his land (Deuteronomy 2:32). At other times the Israelites went into battle as a response to a previous attack.

> When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atharim, he attacked the Israelites and captured some of them. Then Israel made this vow to the Lord: "If you will deliver these people into our hands, we will totally destroy their cities." The Lord listened to Israel's plea and gave the Canaanites over to them. They completely destroyed them and their towns. (Numbers 21:1-3).

It is recorded that "the Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim" (Exodus 17:8). Joshua was attacked by the five kings of the Amorites– the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon (Joshua10:5). Not all the battles of the Old Testament were fought in self-defence, but some clearly were.

Even though the early Muslims were not under foreign attack nor had they been threatened by anyone, they unilaterally presented other nations with an ultimatum. Byzantines (al-Bukhari 1:6; 4:191), Persians (al-Bukhari 1:64; 4:190), and Bahrainis (al-Bukhari 1:64; 4:190) were all called to Islam and sometimes threatened by Muhammad. In a letter to Heraclius, the Byzantine king, Muhammad wrote: "If you accept Islam you will be safe; if you accept Islam God will give you a double reward; if you turn back the sin of the husbandmen will be upon you, i.e. the burden of it".[6] This was most likely a reference to Matthew 21:33ff, where the "husbandmen" refused the request of the king, and mistreated his envoys, so the king sent his army to destroy them. Muhammad was implying that he would do the same thing if his request was refused.

Likewise he communicated with the Omani leaders. According to Islamic tradition, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sent a letter to the two princes Abd and Jeifer in the year 630 A.D. He called upon them to accept Islam. The wording of the letter was as follows:

> In the name of God, the most gracious, the most Merciful. From Muhammad the Messenger of God to Jeifer and Abd, the sons of Al-Julandy… I call upon you to embrace Islam– accept and you will be saved, for I am the Messenger of God to all humanity. (I have come) to warn the living that affliction will befall unbelievers. If you accept Islam, as I hope you will, all will be well, but if you refuse to accept it, your

---

[3] Fred Donner *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton Univ Press, 1981) p. 251.

[4] This will be denotation for references from *Sahih al-Bukhari's Hadith collection* e.g. alBukhari 6:14 refers to the 6th volume of alBukhari (it has 9 volumes) and the 14th account in that volume.

[5] John B. Noss *Man's Religions* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1956) p. 711.

[6] Ibn Ishaq *Sirat Rasul Allah*, p. 654. Guillaume believes that "husbandmen" was a reference to Matthew 21:33ff.

> kingdom will vanish and my horses will trample your grounds and my religion will triumph over your Kingdom. [7]

This pattern was repeated when Muhammad commissioned his top general to conquer the Arabian Peninsula.

> Then the apostle sent Khalid b. al-Walid … to the B. al-Harith b. Ka'b in Najran, and ordered him to invite them to Islam three days before he attacked them. If they accepted then he was to accept it from them; and if they declined he was to fight them. So Khalid set out and came to them, and sent out riders in all directions inviting the people to Islam, saying, "If you accept Islam you will be safe", so the men accepted Islam as they were invited."[8]

3. The goal of warfare: a judgement on an unjust nation, or fighting against those who are compassionate and humble?

It is now commonplace to accept that individuals and nations which oppress and destroy others should face retribution for their acts. Nations which commit atrocities must be called to account. Today the International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court deal with crimes against humanity. The origin of such bodies arose in the modern era from the concept of universal human rights.[9] It is now accepted that nations can use military means to respond human rights abuses or unjust actions by other nations. Nations taking responsibility for other nations has not always been the case. In the Old Testament God himself sometimes used military means to deal with injustice.

The idea of universal human rights was expressed in the Bible from the time of Cain (Genesis 4:10-16) and continued through the prophetic stream (see Amos 1 & 2). In the Old Testament, whole communities bore the weight of their leaders' sins, just as modern nations do when subjected to internationally-imposed political constraints, economic sanctions or military operations. However there needs to be an unacceptable level of oppression before such actions are instigated. Such was the case in the Old Testament. When the people of Egypt had enslaved and ill-treated the Israelites for over 400 years, and benefited from their cheap labour (Genesis 15:13,14), God punished the Egyptians with the ten plagues (Exodus 7-12). This redemptive act was a judgement on Egypt (Exodus 6:6; 7:4) and its gods (Exodus 12:12). So when God promised Abraham that his descendants would return to Canaan, he indicated that the time of that return would be once the sins "of the Amorites had reached their full measure" (Gen 15:16). The actions of the Israelite armies were a retribution for widespread Canaanite practices such as child sacrifice (Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:9,10). Moreover these same conditions applied to the Israelites. They were warned:

> But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. (Leviticus 18:26-28)

Jesus informed the Jews of his day: "I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it" (Matthew 21:43 RSV). Remaining in the promised land, in the purposes of God, was conditional on behaving justly.

Islam did not see the expansion of Islam as a struggle against injustice. Muslims are told in the Qur'an to "fight against the people of the Book until they feel themselves subdued and pay *jizya*" (Qur'an 9:29). The reason is not because the people of the Book were unjust or oppressive. Rather Christians are described in the Qur'an as the best friends of Muslims; they are not proud, but are compassionate (Qur'an 5:82; 57:27). Christians, along with Muslims and Jews, have a law and a clear way to follow, attaining salvation, and they should judge themselves by the gospel (Qur'an 5:47; 2:62; 5:69). Although the Qur'an claims that all three religions worship the same God (Qur'an

---

[7] Ahmed Hamoud Al-Maamiry *Oman and Ibadhism* (Lancers Press, New Delhi, 1980) p. 23.

[8] Ibn Ishaq *Sirat Rasul Allah*, p. 645.

[9] Significantly only one country of the 58 nations making up the United Nations in 1945 refused to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That country was Saudi Arabia, the place where Islam originated.
John W. Wilson *Christianity Alongside Islam* (Melbourne: Acorn Press, 2010) p. 201.

29:46), Jews and Christians were designated as enemies by the Muslims. Before attacking a city, the highly-successful Muslim general Khalid bin al-Walīd gave the following ultimatum to its inhabitants:

> Submit to Islam and be safe. Or agree to the payment of the *Jizya* (protection tax), and you and your people will be under our protection, else you will have only yourself to blame for the consequences, for I bring the men who desire death as ardently as you desire life.[10]

Just as the Jewish nation had been warned they could be supplanted if they acted unjustly, the Muslims were also informed that they were not indispensable to Allah's military program. When some refused to take part in jihad, Muhammad, under divine inspiration, told them: "If you do not march forth, He will punish you with a painful torment and will replace you by another people" (Qur'an 9:39).

4. The scope of the warfare: the land of Canaan, or the whole world?

The people of Israel were told to limit their attacks to within the land of Canaan. "I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River" (Exodus 23:31). However victory would be contingent on their obedience to the revealed law:

> If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow– to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him– then the Lord will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. (Deuteronomy 11:22-24)

They were told that their military progress was not guaranteed: if they were disobedient, "then you may be sure that the Lord your God will not drive out these nations before you" (Joshua 23:13). The Israelites would have sovereignty, but only over a specific geographical area.

There were no such restrictions on the early Muslims. Muhammad felt that he had a universal mandate, and that all lands would eventually fall to Islamic conquest. Allah's Apostle said: "I have been ordered (by Allah) to fight against the people until they testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah's Apostle" (alBukhari 1:24). Muhammad was convinced that his realm would engulf the entire Persian kingdom and beyond. He sent two Persian envoys back with a message to their ruler Chosroes: "Tell him that my religion and my sovereignty will reach limits which the kingdom of Chosroes never attained."[11] He also proclaimed that "I have been made victorious with terror (cast in the hearts of the enemy), and while I was sleeping [i.e. in a dream], the keys of the treasures of the world were brought to me and put in my hand" (alBukhari 4:220; 9:127, 141, 378). The idea of ultimately defeating the two great world powers and appropriating their wealth for Islam was placed in the minds of the early Muslims by Muhammad. He said:

> Khosrau [or Chosroes] will be ruined, and there will be no Khosrau after him, and Caesar [the Roman leader] will surely be ruined and there will be no Caesar after him, and you will spend their treasures in Allah's cause. (alBukhari 4:267, 349, 350, 815, 816; 8:625, 626)

He assured his followers that this would take place soon and result in unimaginable prosperity for Muslims. He told a man:

> "If you should live long, the treasures of Khosrau will be opened (and taken as spoils)." I asked, "You mean Khosrau, son of Hurmuz?" He said, "Khosrau, son of Hurmuz; and if you should live long, you will see that one will carry a handful of gold or silver and go out looking for a person to accept it from him, but will find none to accept it from him". (alBukhari 4:793, 794)

Global domination and uncountable plunder were the birth-right of Islam, according to its Prophet. Early in his preaching ministry in Mecca, Muhammad was asked by his dying uncle Abu Talib to put the case for Islam to the Quraish. The Holy Prophet replied, "Dear uncle: I shall

---

[10] Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari *The History of al-Ṭabarī* (tr. Franz Rosenthal) (State University of New York Press, 1989) vol. 2, p. 554.

[11] Ibn Ishaq *Sirat Rasul Allah*, p. 658, 659.

request them to agree upon a thing which, if they accept, will enable them to conquer the whole of Arabia and subject the non-Arab world to their domination". [12]

5. The targets of the warfare: a limited number of specific ethnic groups, or every tribe on earth?

The Israelites were told that they could not attack certain ethnic groups. They were commanded that they should not fight the tribe of Esau (Deuteronomy 2:5); Moabites (Deuteronomy 2:9); Ammonites (Deuteronomy 2:19) or the land along the course of the Jabbok nor around the towns in the hills (Deuteronomy 2:37). At a later time, they were also told not to fight other Israelites (2.Chronicles 11:4; 2.Kings 12:24) or the Chaldeans (Jeremiah 32:5). Clearly the Israelites did not have the right to attack anyone or anywhere they wanted. At one time, they were ordered not to fight against the Amalekites and the Canaanites (Numbers 14:43)– Israel did so and was defeated (Deuteronomy 1:42).

The early Muslims were told that their conquest would be directed against all nations who did not acknowledge Islam, Allah's religion. "And fight them until there is no more disbelief and polytheism and the religion will all be for Allah Alone [in the whole of the world]" (Qur'an 8:39). No nation would be exempt. The claim to have been given "the keys of the treasures of the earth (or the keys of the world)" was repeated by Muhammad many times (alBukhari 4:795; 2:428; 5:411, 660; 8:434, 590; 9:160). The famous Muslim commentator Ibn Khaldun noted that

> "[i]n the Muslim community, the holy war [jihad] is a religious duty, because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force... The other religious groups did not have a universal mission, and the holy war was not a religious duty for them, save only for purposes of defense... They are merely required to establish their religion among their own people. That is why the Israelites after Moses and Joshua remained unconcerned with royal authority [e.g. a 'caliphate']. Their only concern was to establish their religion [not spread it to the nations]… But Islam is under obligation to gain power over other nations."[13]

6. Ecological restrictions: environmental limits or destruction?

Old Testament warfare proscribed the destruction of fruit trees. "When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees of the field people, that you should besiege them?" (Deuteronomy 20:19). The folly of making short-term gains which threatened long-term food security was recognised. The same principle allowed the taking eggs or young birds from nests, but required the mother bird be left free to breed again (Deuteronomy 22:6).

Islamic warfare following prophetic *sunna* (example) and the Qur'an's injunctions had no such constraints. Muhammad's earliest biography, the *Sira*, recounts when Jewish farmers fled from Muslim troops leaving their farmlands exposed, "the Jews [of Bani Nadir] took refuge in their forts and the apostle ordered that the palm-trees should be cut down and burnt, and they called out to him, 'Muhammad, you have prohibited wanton destruction and blamed those guilty of it. Why then are you cutting down and burning our palm-trees?' "[14] A divine permission for this harsh action was soon given in a revelation to Muhammad. "What you (O Muslims) cut down of the palm-tree (of the enemy), or you left it standing on it stem, it was by the Leave of Allah, in order that He might disgrace the *Fasiqun* (the rebellious, the disobedient to Allah)" (Qur'an 59:5). Clearly, teaching the recalcitrant Jews a lesson was more important than environmental preservation.

---

[12] Maududi's *Introduction to Sura 38* (from USC.MSA website).

[13] The *Muqudimmah*, vol. 1, p. 473, quoted in http://www.jihadwatch.org/archives/025249.php, cited 1 April, 2009.

[14] Ibn Ishaq *Sirat Rasul Allah*, p. 437.

7. Treatment of female prisoners: marriage, or rape and slavery?

The Old Testament required that a Jewish soldier who desired a female prisoner must marry her after allowing her a month to mourn the loss of her parents. He would then treat her as a legal wife, and could not later sell her as a slave. If he divorced her, she must be set free (Deuteronomy 21:10).

Muhammad had no such requirements for his followers. Muslim troops acquired women as plunder following the raid on Bani Mustaliq, and they wanted to resell them as slaves, for they said "we are interested in their prices" (al-Bukhari 3:432). However, the men also wanted to have sex with them, for they complained that "the long separation from our wives was pressing us" (al-Bukhari 3:718) and that "we desired women, and celibacy became hard on us" (al-Bukhari 5:459). They asked Muhammad about using *coitus interruptus* with the captive-women, for they "intended to have sexual relation with them without impregnating them", (al-Bukhari 8:600; 9:506) presumably because pregnancy would reduce their resale value. Although Muhammad had advised against it on theological grounds, saying: "It is better for you not to do so" (al-Bukhari 3:432), Jābir reported that *coitus interruptus* was practised by his men during the Prophet's lifetime (al-Bukhari 7.135, 136). Muhammad said to them: "Do you really do that?" repeating the question thrice. "There is no soul that is destined to exist but will come into existence, till the Day of Resurrection" (al-Bukhari 3:432, 718; 5:459; 7:137; 8:600; 9:506). Remarkably, the Prophet criticised his men for their lack of faith in the divine decrees, but not for the rape of their female prisoners. Muhammad's son-in-law indulged in this as well, for Buraida reported that "Ali had taken a bath (after a sexual act with a slave-girl from the *Khumus*)" (al-Bukhari 5:637).[15] The Qur'an refers to such prisoners and slaves as "those whom your right hand possesses" (Qur'an 4:3,24,25,36; 16:71; 23:6; 24:31,33,58; 30:28; 33:50,52,55; 70:30). Muslim men were permitted to have sex with them (Qur'an 4:3; 23:6; 33:50; 70:30), even if the women were already married (Qur'an 4:24), as long as the women were 'good' (s}ālih}{īn) (Qur'an 24:32) and 'believing' (Qur'an 4:25), i.e. Christian or Jewish.

8. The time limit of the warfare: for a specific period, or forever?

It was never mandated that the Israelites would be at war forever. Once the objective of securing a safe homeland had been achieved, it was expected that the fighting would stop. Indeed this happened in the time of Joshua, when "the land had rest from war" (Joshua 11:23; 14:15), periodically throughout the era of the judges "the land had peace" (Judges 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28) and at some other times (2.Chronicles 14:5,6). Even though fighting often took place with other nations at various times, the people of Israel always looked forward to a time when they would be able to "hammer their swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3). There is also the prophecy about the destruction of bloodied military equipment due to the coming of the "Prince of Peace" who would rule in justice and righteousness (Isaiah 9:5-7).

Many Muslims believe that they must continue to fight until Islam prevails universally. They draw on verses in the Qur'an such as: "Do not falter or sue for peace; you will be the upper ones" (Qur'an 47.35). Their struggle must continue "until there is no more disbelief and worship is for Allah" (Qur'an 2:193). Muslim jurists divided the world into two parts: (1) *dar al-Islam* ('the house of Islam') are the places where Islamic rule, law and dominance is established; (2) *dar al-harb* ('the house of war') is where these conditions do not exist, but need to be inculcated by military and political means. Bassam Tibi, Professor of International Relations, Gottingen University, has stated the following:

> At its core Islam is a religious mission to all humanity. Muslims are religiously obliged to disseminate the Islamic faith throughout the world… If non-Muslims submit to conversion or subjugation, this call (*dawa*) can be pursued peacefully. If they do not, Muslims are obliged to wage war against them. In Islam, peace requires that non-Muslims submit to the call of Islam, either by converting or by accepting the status of a religious minority (*dhimmi*) and paying the imposed tax, *jizya*. World peace, the final stage of the *dawa*, is reached only with the conversion or submission of all mankind to Islam."[16]

---

[15] *Khumus* was the one-fifth of all war-booty, including captives, reserved for Muhammad and his family.

[16] Bassam Tibi 'War and Peace in Islam' in Terry Nardin, ed., *The Ethics of War and Peace: Religious and Secular Perspectives* (Princeton University Press 1996) p. 130.

Involvement was compulsory: Muhammad said: "whenever you are called for Jihad, you should go immediately" (alBukhari 3:60).

9. The reciprocity of the warfare: Would God ever fight against His people, or would He always support them?

When Joshua was near Jericho, he saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua asked him, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come" (Joshua 5:13,14). God clearly was not the military mercenary of any nation, so the tribes of Israel could not take Yahweh's patronage and protection for granted. The people that they conquered were guilty of grave crimes against humanity, and the conquest of Canaan was God's judgement on their sins. All the nations were subject to the same treatment from Yahweh (Amos 9:1-10), and He would apply these same strict rules of justice against the Israelites. He warned them:

> Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt. Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless. (Exodus 22:21-24).

He threatened them: "I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath" (Jer.21:5). God was true to His promise: when Israel rebelled, "he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them" (Isa.63:10 also Lam.2:5), and God himself leads this army (Joel 2:11). Typically this divine opposition took the form of Israel's enemies, including Syria, the Arameans and the Philistines (Isa.8:13,14), Assyria (1.Chronicles 5:26), the Babylonians (2.Chronicles 36:17) and Gog (Ezek.38:16). God had stirred them up against Israel (Amos.6:14). Clearly, Israel, despite its special position in God's sight, would not be exempt from His judgement if they rebelled.

The Qur'an, by contrast, only presents Allah as fighting on behalf of his people, the Muslims, and against their enemies (Qur'an 3:13,160; 33:25; 33:26; 8:17; 59:2; 63:4; 110:1-3), although he may forsake them (Qur'an 3:160). The possibility of Allah giving the Muslims over to the power of their enemies is proposed (Qur'an 4:90), but in actuality He would always battle for them and protect them. He fought for them at Badr (Qur'an 3:123) and encouraged them by making their enemies seem few in number (Qur'an 8:44).

10. The personal result of fighting: earthly security or entry into paradise?

The Israelites never expected their fighting to have any repercussions beyond this life. In an attempt to motivate his people to face up to those who were threatening to attack them, Nehemiah declared: "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes" (Neh.4:14). The consequences of fighting were limited to earthly outcomes.

Jihad, by contrast, has eternal implications. According to the Qur'an, losing one's life for Allah ensured entry into gardens of delight (Qur'an 2:154; 3:157, 158; 3:169, 170; 3:195; 4:66, 67; 4:74; 4:100; 22:58; 47:4-6). The Hadith are very specific: death in battle guaranteed Paradise. "On the day of the battle of Uhud, a man came to the Prophet and said, 'Can you tell me where I will be if I should get martyred?' The Prophet replied, 'In Paradise.' The man threw away some dates he was carrying in his hand, and fought till he was martyred (alBukhari 5:388). To miss such an opportunity is to be defective. Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said, "If anyone meets Allah with no mark of jihad, he will meet Allah with a flaw in him" (Tirmidhi no. 3835). But for those who die fighting, the outcome is certain. Muhammad said: "Allah guarantees that He will admit the *mujahid* ('jihad fighter') in His cause into Paradise if he is killed" (alBukhari 4:46).

11. The motivation of fighting: to exercise spiritual choice or to forcefully propagate a religion?

When Moses approached Pharoah about taking the Israelites out of Egypt, he told him that they wanted to practice their religion in freedom. He made the request: "Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert" (Exodus 5:1). When they did eventually escape the Egyptians, the Israelites established worship around the Ark of the Covenant. On entry to the land of Canaan, they eventually established a tabernacle at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1), and later Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem (1.Kg.5,6). The expectation was that the nations would freely come to worship at this temple (Isa.60:3), not that the Israelites would go out to enforce their religion on other nations by military means.

Under Islam, however, force could be used for religious propagation. "A man came to the Prophet and asked, "O Allah's Apostle! What kind of fighting is in Allah's cause? … [Muhammad] said, "He who fights so that Allah's Word (Islam) should be superior, then he fights in Allah's cause" (alBukhari 1:125; 4:65, 355; 9:550). This was so important for the expanding of the religion that Muhammad gave such fighting the highest rank. When asked "What is the best deed?" Muhammad replied, "To believe in Allah and to fight for His cause" (alBukhari 3:694). At other times, fighting is given second (alBukhari 1:25) or third place (alBukhari 1:505). Osama bin Laden saw a clear connection between military means and religious growth. He said: "Praise be to Allah who revealed the verse of the Sword [Qur'an 9:5] to his servant and messenger [Muhammad] in order to establish truth and abolish falsehood"[17].

12. The continued relevance of fighting: Has it been superseded, or is fighting still required?

In the Old Testament, people did not expect that fighting would continue forever. The commands to fight were given to a specific nation, Israel (Deuteronomy 20:3), at a particular point of its history, to those who God "brought you up out of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 20:1). They were never intended for universal and repeated application. The prophets spoke of a day that God promised would come: "Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety" (Hosea 2:18). Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey in fulfilment of the ancient promise:

> Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zech.9:9,10)

Although peace does not yet rule over the earth, the reign of the Prince of Peace has begun in the hearts of those who serve Him. "Put away your sword!" he commanded his followers (John 18:11). Violence to establish God's kingdom is no longer valid. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place" (John 18:36). The apostle Paul expounded this theme: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). It is nearly 3000 years since the last battle endorsed by God took place. Those who claim that the fighting in the Bible is the same as Jihad today have a time-lag of three millennia to contend with. The Preacher of Ecclesiastes announced that "there is a time for war, and a time for peace" (Ecclesiastes 3:8). The time for war has been completed, and now is a time for peace. The Old Testament wars have had their day, and have passed into the dusty pages of history.

Jihad, by contrast, will continue. It is the one act which gains the greatest reward. "A man came to Allah's Apostle and said, 'Instruct me as to such a deed as equals Jihad (in reward).' He replied, 'I do not find such a deed.' "(alBukhari 4:44). The early events of Islamic history, such as the *Hijra* (migration) to Medina, were completed, so only fighting endured. Allah's Apostle said, "There is no hijra (i.e. migration) (from Mecca to Medina) after the conquest (of Mecca), but Jihad and good

---

[17] 'Bin Laden's speech on the Feast of the Sacrifice' Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Special Dispatch, 6 March 2003, cited in Robert Spencer *A Complete Infidel's Guide to the Koran* (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 2009), p. 6.

intention remain; and if you are called (by the Muslim ruler) for fighting, go forth immediately" (alBukhari 4:42). Dr. Ali Issa Othman, a Palestinian sociologist, made the following claim: "The spread of Islam is military. There is a tendency to apologize for this and we should not. It is one of the injunctions of the Koran that you must fight for the spreading of Islam"[18] The Ayatollah Khomeini was even more explicit:

> Islam says: The only good there is exists thanks to the sword and in the shadow of the sword! The sword is the key to paradise, which can be opened only for holy warriors! There are hundreds of other Quranic psalms and hadiths saying of the Prophet urging Muslims to value war and to fight. Does all that mean that Islam is a religion that prevents men from waging war? I spit upon those foolish souls who made such a claim."[19]

And let Muhammad have the last word: "Jihad will be performed continuously since the day Allah sent me as a prophet until the day the last member of my community will fight with the Dajjal (Antichrist)."[20]

13. Conclusion:

These twelve characteristics indicate that there are significant differences between the long-gone Old Testament wars and the all-too-current practice of jihad by some Muslims. It is disingenuous to simply equate the two phenomena, as if the past and discontinued practice of one somehow justifies the present and continued reality of the other. Over 20,000 fatal attacks worldwide have been carried out by Muslims in the name of Islam since the tragedy of September 11, 2001.[21] What is required is an open and honest discussion about the real motives behind this continued offensive. Seeking to smokescreen the issue by claiming parallels with events over 3000 years ago simply will not do. We must face up to the clear and current danger and results of jihadism.

A COMMENT ON OLD TESTAMENT WARS

"Even when they occurred they were pictured as a special occurrence, not a general rule; and because in the 'story arc' of the Bible, the death of Christ is the penultimate fulfillment of the same purpose as these wars. The satisfaction of the wrath of God, instantiated in these wars, is for the time being completed on Christ's cross (and finally completed at humanity's final judgment). Hence in Christian theology, there is no longer any warrant for any holy war anymore."
Dr Andrew Cameron

http://www.case.edu.au/images/uploads/Christianity_and_Terrorism.pdf

[18] quoted by Charis Waddy *The Muslim Mind* (London: Longmans, 1976).

[19] Ayatollah Khomeini 'Islam Is Not a Religion of Pacifists' 1942, http://home.comcast.net/~vincep312/islam.html, accessed 4 April 2013.

[20] Hadith Abu Dawud no.1051, narrated by Anas ibn Malik.

[21] www.religionofpeace.com, accessed 4 April 2013.

Rebecca Lewis and Kevin Higgins against the Ropes: Sounding the Death Nell of the Insider Movements and the Victory of Apostolic Faith

Abu Daoud[1]

Book review: Jeff Morton (2012) *Insider Movements: Biblically Incredible or Incredibly Brilliant?* (Wipf & Stock, 142 pages)

1. An Epiphany

Near the end of the book I came to something of an epiphany. It was while reading about how insider movement advocates interpret Acts in such a way that it supports their position.

Here is what I realized: if IM advocates are right, then Christianity *never should have become a religion in the first place*. I mean, IM advocates say that *we* (Christians) should not force *them* (Muslims) to become like us. Rather, they should remain as they are, but follow Jesus, within their *oikos* (house, a reference to Mt 5:15).

We are told, also, that this realization is nothing less than a complete and full understanding of the Gospel (oops, I mean *injiil*), which had been, it appears, lost (I'll have a little Joseph Smith on top of that serving of Muhammad, please).

Now let's put two and two together. The implication is that when the Christians in Antioch started to go by the name 'Christians' they had invented a new religion. Or maybe it was imposed on them. It doesn't really matter. But there in that cosmopolitan melting pot of cultures, they really broke this rule of IM, didn't they? According to IM, the Jewish believers who started to go by the title of 'Christian' were leaving their household (*oikos*), which, IM advocates appear to say, represents preferring religion over Jesus. Furthermore, when the non-Jewish believers (Gentiles) accepted the label 'Christian' they were doing something similar. They were leaving their *oikos* and joining a new *oikos*, like the MBB who joins a Christian church, and to some extent severs himself from his Muslim religious-cultural community.

Again: if IM advocates are right, then Christianity never should have existed in the first place, and that the Antioch Church (Saint Paul's sending church, incidentally) was a mistake. Think about it: had they understood the true meaning of the incarnation (the theological basis for IM), the Jews would have stayed Jews (just as believers), and the pagans would have stayed pagans. If IM is right, then Paul in his confrontation with Peter (Gal 2) was wrong. Peter was remaining within his *oikos* by observing *kashrut* (i.e., keeping kosher). Paul called him on this because the new emerging reality of the apostolic Church, which was neither Jewish nor Gentile but which represented a new humanity birthed in the New Human himself, demanded it.

But let's get to some of Morton's critiques of IM.

2. Don't be lazy: the rhetoric of IM advocates

I really like writing book reviews. Most of mine are pretty brief but every now and then I find a book that really gets me going (like my review of the biography of Abuna Zakaria Boutros[2]). Most of Morton's book was like that. I will admit that close to the end I got a bit tired, but the book is short enough that I powered through and by the time I got to the second appendix, I was revived in my energy.

Morton, who has written for *SFM* before,[3] is quite clear about his intention for the book. He has helped to edit a much more detailed book on the topic, *Chrislam*, but in this book his goal was to

---

[1] Abu Daoud is a contributing editor of *St Francis Magazine* and has been a missionary in the Arab world for going on a decade. His interests are relating the spirituality of the patristic era to Christian witness to Muslims. His heroes are Temple Gairdner and Ramon Llull. And no, Abu Daoud is not a fake name, and yes, he can preach sermons and give lectures in classical Arabic.

[2] Abu Daoud, 'Observations on Abuna Zakaria Botros (and a book review)' in *St Francis Magazine*, Vol 5:5, October 2009.

[3] Jeff Morton, 'The Lyrics of Carl Medearis: A Post-modern Croons– a Song of Cultural Imperialism' in *St Francis Magazine*, Vol 7:4, October 2011.

present a brief (if playful) refutation to IM advocates. He focuses on three areas: theology of religion, Scripture, and conversion. I felt that he spent much of his time in Scripture. But, since IM is an evangelical debate, and evangelicals all *say* that the Bible is the final authority on doctrinal questions, this was, I suppose, inevitable.

Throughout the book the author spends a significant amount of time repudiating two authors in particular: Rebecca Lewis and Kevin Higgins. He also takes issue at times with folks like Dudley Woodberry and Mazhar Mallouhi, but Lewis and Higgins are two of the key proponents of IM, and so it is appropriate that he takes them on. And if I may use a boxing analogy, he has them against the ropes.

It is easy to say that though. Why do I think this is true? Let's take a look.

IM advocates always have a ready response to any critique: but that's not what we're talking about at all! Morton gets that and, to his credit, he starts his book by laying out two of the most-quoted definitions of IM given by IM advocates. They are those of Rebecca Lewis and Kevin Higgins (p 4). But I'm sad to say he misses here, because he does not identify one of the main (and most sloppy) missteps of IM advocates: they define Biblical IM into existence. Look at Higgins' definition, wherein IM is defined as 'faithful disciples of Jesus' or Lewis when she 'describes' 'obedient faith in Christ…' As I tell my kids: *no cheating*.

The whole question, friends, is whether IM's could indeed be 'faithful' and 'obedient'. I expect this sort of rhetorical sloppiness from my local barber who defines Islam as 'the true religion that Allah revealed to his Prophet…' But we are in a place where scholars and practitioners of mission are trying to figure out *if* these are faithful and obedient. They may well be sincere, but that is not the question.

Lewis and Higgins have done us a great disservice. *They do not provide any empirical case studies or evidence showing that they have actually observed such movements. Nor do they reference case studies by other people. They assure us they exist– that is all. That is not sufficient for a debate that appears to cut to the heart of foundational questions about who Jesus was and what he desired.*

But Morton misses this opening.

He doesn't miss a classic staple of IM advocates, which is the straw man. On page 8 he clearly points out how Mazhar Mallouhi, an evangelical Christian who left Christianity for 'Jesusy' Sufi Islam, has set up a straw man. Morton also shows throughout the book how the claim of 'extractionism' is fake. No missionary ever intended from the outset to 'extract' a convert from his or her community! If IM advocates have evidence to the contrary, let us see it. Now, maybe Muslims drove them away by, you know, trying to kill them and stuff, but where is the fault there?

Morton also calls out IM advocates on their over-simplification regarding culture. What missionary, even a traditional one like myself, is trying to make Arabs or Iranians or Javanese into Americans today? I know there were some attempts at this in the past, but I don't know of anyone who is doing this now. Yet Morton cites IM advocates saying such things multiple times! Morton is right in concluding that the 'unspoken assumption is that missionaries who disagree with the IM paradigm are squeezing new converts from Islam into the Western mold of conversion that is Christianity' (page 12).

Another fallacy is pointed out on page 15. I called it the fallacy of the false middle (That is from me, not Morton). If I say, on the left are people who say that Jesus was never born, and on the right are people who say he is the Son of God, then the wise middle is to say something more modest, like Jesus was real, but he was simply a prophet. Sound familiar? It is a common fallacy, and evangelicals who rarely learn any logic are easily susceptible to it. So good for Morton, who points out such a fallacy, advanced by Kevin Higgins, in relation to Islam.

Beginning with Chapter 3 Morton starts to deal with Biblical material. Some of the passages discussed here are so poorly handled by my fellow evangelical (pro-IM) Christians that I am reminded why the only Christians who read evangelical scholars (excepting NT Wright, who isn't American) are other evangelicals. Here is one such example, for instance: IM is Biblical because of Melchizedek, proposes Higgins (page 19). Morton refutes these positions, suggesting that Melchizedek may have learned true monotheism (like that of Abraham), and that, in any case, the Genesis narrative does not contain enough specific details for the IM argument to succeed. Aside from what Morton says, the Melchizedek context is one wherein there are no 'religions' at all—there are only cults to one or more deities. Abraham and Melchizedek worship the same deity and so Abraham tithed to him.

In Chapter 4 we encounter the awkward claim that Naaman from 2 Kings 5 supports IM. Morton correctly points out that Naaman recognizes that entering the temple of Rimmon is awkward. He is not celebrating the insider-ness, rather he is asking if this awkward association with the temple of Rimmon can be forgiven, so that he can continue in his present job!

The Jonah passage is not worth summarizing. What is more interesting (and again, painful as a fellow evangelical) is the mishandling of the category 'Samaritan' in the literature of IM advocates who try to use John to defend their position. IM proponents (Lewis here) argue that as Jesus let the Samaritans continue to be Samaritans, we should let Muslims stay Muslims. The ineptitude here is breathtaking. Samaritans were, like Jews, an ethnic-religious category. The average American doesn't know anything along those lines these days. Where such linkages do exist today they are seen as oppressive, such as the idea that a true Arab is always a Muslim, or that a true Roman is always Catholic. Of course, Jesus didn't tell them to become Jewish. They had been Jews in the distant past whose heredity had been polluted with non-Jewish blood, and Jesus knew that full well.

This IM interpretation also misrepresents the historical context of what Jesus was about and how he interpreted his own mission from God. Jesus was ushering in an eschatological kingdom (the reign of God), which would transform the world (leaven, salt, light) while not being of the world. Indeed, the world would oppose it. The Kingdom had its specific and clear rites (Baptism as initiation, Communion as participation, memory and expectation) and it had specific leaders who had had specific powers and prerogatives. The Kingdom was neither ethnic nor territorial, but its visible marker was an assembly of its subjects (that is, gasp, the Church). Given this, it makes no sense to even think about Jesus asking a person to become a Jew.

Now if an IM advocate says I am making their point for them I disagree entirely. The assembling of the disciples was, by its very definition and essence, something that had to reach across boundaries. This is precisely why Paul (who knows he is an inferior disciple) in Galatians 2 will stand up publically and reprimand Peter! Peter is trying to remain within his *oikos* and Paul sees this compromises the visible unity of the church eating together. The visible unity in a meal trumps the *oikos* because the visible unity both derives from and points back to the unity of the one person, Jesus Christ (sorry, *Issa*, as all the IM folks love to call him, and as all the Arab MBB's I know don't call him).

The famous Jerusalem Council, so often invoked by IM folks, supports my point above. For the regulations given to the non-Jews were the minimum necessary so that they could all have table fellowship. (Are you noticing how important it is in the NT that believers from whatever background be able to fellowship together and share meals, including the Lord's Supper? Yet how often do you see IMers advocating one congregation for insiders and another for the 'Christians'?) IM advocates seem not to read the verses in their context. I recall learning that verses must be read in their larger context soon after I became a Christian in my teens.

Morton responds in different ways to various texts. I think his responses are generally adequate, but if anything there are some solid rebuttals he misses. In general though, his question on page 39 is penetrating: 'How can one build a case for an insider movement from the text unless the reader brings the idea to the text?'

The tortuous readings that IM advocates subject Scripture to make my heart sad. For instance, IM advocates often speak about Gentiles as a homogenous group, but as Morton points out, '…the notion of a socio-religious category describing Gentiles[…] is a modern day construct forced on the text' (p 48).

Their inability to interpret and apply Scripture adequately has led them to a number of unhelpful, false dichotomies. Either you are in favor of extraction, or you support IM so people can stay in their community! Either you demonize Islam and the Prophet and hurt the feelings of Muslims, or you always respect the Qur'an and Muhammad[4] and use the Qur'an to lead to Jesus! Either you support IM or you Christianize-Westernize the convert! These polarizing statements are ridiculous. There are pastoral, wise, shrewd manners of helping an enquirer or believer to remain in touch with her family. There are movements out there seeking to redefine identity so that society will be able to accept that Turks and Saudis really can be Christians while remaining loyal to their people (but not

[4] I have found there are some fruitful ways to critique the Prophet with Muslims, islamdom.blogspot.com/2013/05/missionary-secrets-5-how-to-fruitfully.html.

the Prophet or his book).[5] Morton realizes all of this and does a fine job of laying bare these simplistic and illogical false dichotomies in IM literature.

3. Insider Movements: do they actually exist? (and some stuff about Wikipedia)

If you journey over to Wikipedia and check out the Insider Movement entry, you will enter the personal fiefdom of one Dave Bogs. If you click on the 'view history' tab[6] you will find that anything he does not like is deleted (by him). His justification for this is invariably that a significant number of people have said that the article is balanced. If you click on the 'Talk' tab (next to the 'Article' tab) you will find that a bunch of people went to Wikipedia between March 13th and 17th of 2012 and left positive comments on the article. Is it possible that Dave or someone else was teaching a class on IM, and that the students were told to log in to Wikipedia and endorse the article as 'excellent, concise' and so on?

When someone tried to post a counter-position to balance out the article, from a fine *SFM* article by Bill Nikides, it was deleted by Dave Bogs.[7] He responded saying that

> Maintaining the purity of IM as a technical term is very important missiologically. The problem is that there are some who are trying to hijack the term to mean something which it does not, and which the missiologists who created the term (whom I know personally) do not mean it to be. That's unfair to these missiologists and from a scholarship point of view, unethical.[8]

Morton brings up this issue, though belatedly and without sufficient force. This is one of my main misgivings about his book. I am speaking about the reality of the insider movements. For instance, we are told (by Rebecca Lewis) that missiologists are reacting to new knowledge about insider movements, much like the apostles in Jerusalem were reacting to a new movement they had not foreseen. We are told that these IM's came into being apart from any missionary involvement, as a pure movement of the Holy Spirit!

That is very important– if it is true.

Bill Nikides, in his two excellent *SFM* articles on IM, has called into question this definition of IM. He reports that there are movements of people who identify themselves as believers in Jesus within Islam, but according to him *this is never be independent of missionary involvement.* In other words, Bill is calling into question this concept of 'purity' which Dave Bogs alleges, but cannot substantiate.

So where are these alleged movements? And do they even exist? I have been looking far and wide for them and have yet to find a single insider movement that was not founded by Western missionaries or people sponsored and trained by such missionaries. I have been pointed, for instance, to Rick Brown's 'Brother Jacob and Master Isaac: How one Insider movement Began.'[9] This is all of a two-page anecdote. It is no case study. For those who say that the movement in Indonesia under Sadrach was an IM, I tell them no, because while the movement respected the cultural context of the new believers, they clearly identified themselves as Christians.[10] David Greenlee and associates have made a fine contribution to the broader topic of Christianity and Islam.[11] Do we find there a good example of an insider movement? How about Lowell de Jong's work among the Fulbe?
Not an IM– they do not come from the same social network (required by Lewis) and they have not formed a church/fellowship, and they exist because of foreign mission. And John Kim's study of the people in Asian 'Anotoc'? Kim's study is interesting and engaging. But it is not at all clear that this was initiated by the Holy Spirit, independent of missionaries, and his 'in-betweeners' may well be

---

[5] cf. Duane Miller, ' "Your Swords do not Concern me at all": The Liberation Theology of Islamic Christianity' in *St Francis Magazine*, Vol 7:2, April 2011.

[6] en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Talk:Insider_movement&action=history, accessed 11 June 2013.

[7] Bill Nikides, 'The Emergence of Insider Movements' in *St Francis Magazine*, Vol 7:3, August 2011. As an editor of SFM I was particularly troubled by this development.

[8] en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Insider_movement, accessed 11 June 2013.

[9] In *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, Vol 24:1.

[10] J Henry Wolfe (2011) *Insider Movements: An Assessment of the Viability of Retaining Socio-religious Insider Identity in High Religious Contexts.* PhD Dissertation. Louisville, Kentucky: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

[11] David Greenlee, ed (2006) *From the Straight Path to the Narrow Way.* Waynesboro, Georgia: Authentic.

funded by mission or churches. To Greenlee's credit, though, at least de Jong and Kim lay their cards on the table and actually describe in some detail what is actually happening.

But let us repair to that mighty fortress of evangelicalism– *Christianity Today*. CT recently devoted an entire issue[12] to (sort of) IM. Gene Daniels (pen name, of course) interviews one Abu Jaz and tells us about 'what it's like to follow Christ in Muslim culture.'[13] Gene Daniels starts out with these words in his intro to the interview:

> Can people from other religious traditions genuinely follow Jesus without becoming "Christians"? The question is a point of much dispute within today's missions world. Those who follow Jesus yet don't formally express Christian faith are said to belong to insider movements. And no *insider movement* has received more attention than Muslims who embrace Christ yet stay within their Islamic community. "Insiders" are hard to access due to cultural, geographic, and linguistic barriers. As a result, many Christians have taken positions on insider movements without ever having met or spoken with someone who belongs to one. In the following exclusive interview, we hear from just such an insider.
>
> The following is the synthesis of two interviews conducted in 2011 with "Abu Jaz", a key leader in a movement that describes itself as the People of the Gospel. This group represents several thousand Muslims in eastern Africa who have converted to faith in Christ during the past decade, but who have remained in their Muslim communities. Abu Jaz is married and has three children. He started following *Isa al Masih* ("Jesus the Messiah") as the Savior 18 years ago.

You can read the interview if you like. What is more instructive, though, is to read the comment section. There, an ex-Muslim Christian (no insiders here), Hussein Wario, decides to ask questions.[14] *The first rule of Insider Movement Club is, you don't talk about the Insider Movements.* Why not? They don't exist. Or, they do exist as missionary-sponsored projects imported from the emerging-'Jesusy'-non-religion of the USA, but they don't exist as defined by the people who are against the ropes, cornered by Jeff Morton, Bill Nikides, Hussein Wario (and Abu Daoud, in this article, at least): Rebecca Lewis, Kevin Higgins, Dave Bogs and so on.

Wario, a Kenyan CMB, did the unforgiveable. He scrutinized the claims of IM reports. He did the work that the editorial sluggards at *Christianity Today* should have done. Here are Wario's redacted comments on the *CT* page:

> April 8th: Gene Daniels, I sent an email to Abu Jaz on Wednesday and cc'ed to you at your real email address at Fruitful Practices. I asked him the same questions you have evaded for the past three months and hope to get answers. I know that Abu Jaz is not keeping his identity a secret. He has been telling people in his native country he is your interviewee. He just disagrees with what you have written about him and I would like to know what parts of the article he disagrees with. I saw a comment you had made on Feb 23 in response to Salaam where you wrote, "Abu Jaz used a pseudonym because I suggested it." It is very clear Abu Jaz is not concerned about his real name becoming public. I know you have tried, albeit fruitlessly, to reassure those with concerns that *CT* did background checks on both of you, but I doubt it did any fact checking. *CT* is aware of my concerns. I'm interested in this interview because Abu has ties to a Muslim Idiom Translation, which Wycliffe's *The Seed Company* is funding.
>
> April 19th: Gene Daniels, You owe *CT* an apology. Contrary to what you have written and defended for the past three months, your interviewee, Abu Jaz, is not known as "Muslim" in his native country. A person who knows him writes, "In fact [redacted name] is known in [redacted country name] as a Muslim background evangelical Christian who has a burden for reaching Muslims. To my knowledge he received Christ as his saviour in [redacted] church and is still part of it. He is not at all known as a 'Muslim' among evangelical churches. He is part of the [redacted evangelical association name]. It is under [redacted evangelical association name], and under his leadership, that the Muslim friendly bible translation is initiated. It is in fact through him the funds were secured to translate the bible. If you come to visit [redacted his country], you could find him is in his office, at the [redacted evangelical association name] building." Wycliffe's *The Seed Company* is funding it.

Well, make of that what you like. But it does not seem like a real, genuine IM *at all* according to Lewis' and Higgins' definition.

---

[12] *Christianity Today*, January 2013.

[13] www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2013/january-february/insider-movement-islam-wheres-jesus.html, accessed 11 June 2013.

[14] Mr Wario's conversion narrative is available in book form: Hussein Wario (2009). *Cracks in the Crescent.* Grandville, Michigan: Hussein H Wario.

There is something very wrong here. We are *told* that insider movements are born spontaneously, that they are successful and, without really being able to learn about them, we are told that they are 'obedient' (Higgins) and 'faithful' (Lewis). We don't ever hear from the Muslims around them– do the Muslims think they are 'remaining within their *oikos'* or do they think they are being dishonest?

These questions are dealt with magnificently in what, to me, was the most fascinating part of the Morton book– the second appendix, titled 'Insider Movements in West Java, Indonesia: A Case Study' (pp 108-123), written by veteran missionary and scholar of mission, Roger Dixon. In sum, he shares about the early experience in West Java, how IM influence increased and was imported (from Bangladesh, it appears), how a number of missionaries actually went and officially converted to Islam at the mosque, and how IM advocates increasingly separated themselves from others, including the indigenous churches, and stopped communicating with other workers and Christians. Eventually, 'It became impossible either to validate or challenge their claims of success because they would not share information.' (117)

Dixon also points out that the Bangladesh study which Dudley Woodberry used in the 90s to promote IM-style method has been discredited. I would not know, because no one can get that study. But this is another weakness of IM– it does not deliver. Anywhere. Evangelicals run their churches like businesses. And I don't say that in a disparaging way; it is both a strength and a weakness. And when we hear about a business model that is working well somewhere (Bangladesh), it is logical to want to copy it elsewhere. We do this all the time. The problem is that the success in Bangladesh was smoke and mirrors. It was like the 'success' of Enron before it became apparent that much of its growth was not genuine or lasting. Dixon is not saying that Woodberry et al. intentionally were lying, but he is pointing out something important. IM does not deliver. It did not deliver in Bangladesh, and it didn't work in Indonesia either. Dixon mentions one experienced and charismatic man who managed to assemble a group of disciples. But that is, he says, the exception. "During the past twenty-five years, Frontiers has put teams in three cities, but none of them were successful in church planting other than the gathering of a few believers of mixed ethnic and religious backgrounds" (116).

So let us return to that stronghold of Insiderdom– Dave Bogs' Wikipedia page. The page asserts that the movements are real, that they come from the people and not from missionaries. Yet in Dixon's appendix we find that IM does not even work *as a strategy*. This needs to be made very clear. *There is a difference between IM as a description of an indigenous-initiated movement, and IM as a missionary strategy.* Go to Bogs' Wikipedia page and try to post something pointing this out, or pointing out what I listed above– that there *is no competent empirical evidence that insider movements even exist.* It will be cut out, undone or deleted *tout suite.*

When we ask for studies, we get a cute anecdote from Brown. Or we get a long interview in *CT* that just doesn't hold up to scrutiny (thank you Mr Wario). Or we get a creative, indigenous, contextual *Christian* mission (Sadrach) that actually doesn't match the definition of an insider movement, but it was successful so it is co-opted. Or you get allegations of research that is too secret to share and has been discredited anyway (Woodberry's study of Bangladesh). Or you are pointed to one evangelical Christian trained at Fuller who left evangelicalism for 'Jesusy'-Sufi-Islam (Mazhar Mallouhi, who I'm sure is a splendid guy).

When we call into question some of the Biblical and historical underpinnings of IM, we are accused of being extractionists who disvalue the incarnation. *Ya rabb!* This is certainly not a little quibble about words, is it?

Regarding the *totally unsubstantiated allegation that there exist insider movements that were not started by missionaries or coordinated by missions*, we ask for information. Not an anecdote (thank you Mr Brown), but a real case study that can be scrutinized (as Mr Wario did with that sad *CT* interview). And let it be a movement, as you claim it to be, and not a simple individual here or there.

Regarding *insider movements as a missionary strategy*, let there be a clear differentiation. The problem is that IM folks want to have their cake and eat it too. When people question the goodness of the IM paradigm, they are told that God is already doing this, and by their very definition (Higgins, Lewis) they are obedient and Biblical and faithful. Hard to disagree with something like that. We are told that the strategy is simply an affirmation of IM as an alleged non-Western reality. We ask for evidence that these exist and are told it is secret, or we are given anecdotes, or material that does not hold up under scrutiny.

4. Conclusion

Which leads me to Morton's conclusion… I appreciate that he brings things down to earth and lets the average mission-supporting Christian know how they can influence this debate. His advice is good. It works, too. I especially like his idea about asking missionaries you support if they have a pen name, because anything they write about IM is most likely published under that name. You may be surprised what you find! If you find in your conscience that you cannot support the way a person preaches the very basics of the Gospel, then you should not support their missionary work. I would say this cuts both ways: if you are strongly committed to IM-as-a-strategy and you have a worker who does not, maybe you should not support them. Your tithe is not your own money, of course; it is God's money that he has entrusted to you for wise use and investment for the Kingdom.

The recent victory of Biblical Missiology (Morton is a leader of that website) to halt the printing of Bibles that dispense with filial titles for Jesus is one example of this strategy working. In the end missionary agencies exist to assist the Church as she carries out her mission. It is entirely appropriate for local churches to be part of this conversation, as long as they are humble and understand the limits of their knowledge, and treat missionaries with respect.

Let me return to my original observation in this article. If Lewis, Higgins and Dave Bogs are right that IM is a recuperation of the real meaning of the incarnation, then, logically, there never should have been One Apostolic Church to begin with. The Jews should have stayed on as Jews who follow Jesus, and the pagans should have stayed in their various cults and philosophies, trying to be light and salt there. The mixed church of Antioch (where they, both Jew and Gentile, were first called Christians) was really a mistake—one that represented a failure to understand Jesus' Gospel and that to honor their God-given identities (Rebecca Lewis' phrase), the Gentiles and Jews should have stayed within their own social-religious communities, rather than embracing this brand new one– being Christians.

Further, the mixed churches in cities like Rome and Galatia were likewise errors. These believers, both Jews and non-Jews, had mistakenly supposed that they in some way had come into a new *oikos* and a new identity, and Paul, lacking wisdom as usual, taught them these things. Indeed, a triumph of IM hermeneutics and practice would have meant that Peter should have been victorious when Paul confronted him. Indeed, Paul, in violating *kashrut* was stepping needlessly outside of his *oikos*, while Peter himself was honoring his God-given identity as a Galilean Jew.

In the end though, it was the faith—the apostolic faith—that was victorious. A faith which understood that in Jesus a new community had come into being demanded allegiance above and beyond one's own community of birth. Or as one African pastor put it in those early centuries: you cannot have God for your Father without having the Church for your mother.

The claims of IM-advocates are not nuanced, educated or sophisticated. They are ill-defined, cloaked in secrecy, and indefensible on Biblical or, indeed, purely secular ethnographic grounds. That one, single, genuine IM exists anywhere has yet to be established to the scholarly community. Morton spends most of his time on Biblical exegesis, and in this he is for the most part successful. Moreover, this book brings new and important material to the conversation about IM (I did not think there was any new material), notably in the very valuable appendix by Roger Dixon. Finally, Morton is right that this is not a mere theological quibble, but an important church-wide discussion, one that mission committees and prayer group members can and should be involved in. This short volume has IM-proponents like Kevin Higgins and Rebecca Lewis up against the ropes. I am sure these are fine people: they are my brother and sister in Christ and I love them. But their hermeneutical sloppiness has been made clear. Their lack of rigor in logic and slippery rhetorical games have been laid bare.