

Christian radio broadcasts to the Arab World: **Eternal Love Winning Africa (ELWA)**

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1 Introduction

Radio ELWA ('Eternal Love Winning Africa') was the first organization that began a long-term broadcasting ministry of Arabic Christian radio programs.² It did so from 1956 until 1990, when its studios and transmitters in Liberia were taken over by rebels and destroyed. From its inception to 1975, ELWA was involved in the Christian witness through the production and broadcasting of radio programs but after 1975 it depended almost entirely on other producers. Therefore the focus of this paper will be ELWA's ministry from 1956 to 1975.³

ELWA was influential in stimulating other organizations to begin producing Arabic programs. One of those was Bassam Madany who began his lifelong Arabic ministry with the Back to God Hour (BTGH) at the request of ELWA. One of the organizations ELWA had great influence on was the Far East Broadcasting Association (FEBA). This paper describes in some detail why and how ELWA's studio in Beirut was handed over to FEBA.

ELWA's internal meetings and meetings with its external producers for discussing matters like what languages to use on radio, programming strategies, and matters related to contextualization in general, have been extensively treated in this paper. ELWA and its studio in Beirut (Leba-

¹ This paper is a moderately adapted chapter from the author's PhD thesis *Gospel in the Air* (Boekencentrum: Zoetermeer, 2008).

² 'EL' was the prefix for Liberia and the 'WA' was for West Africa. ELWA had a contest and let people suggest a name. A Liberian boy won with the words 'Eternal Love Winning Africa'. Merle Steely in an interview with Kimberly Smith (20 November 1984) in the Billy Graham Center Archives, Collection 290T1. See also Jane Reed and Jim Grant, *Voice under every Palm: the story of how Radio Station ELWA was brought into being to meet the challenge of Africa* (Grand Rapids, 1970, first edition 1968), pp. 25-28.

³ ELWA's files are located in the offices of Servants in Mission (SIM) in Fort Mill, South Carolina (USA). SIM was the owner of ELWA. These files were only accessible until 1975 during the writing of this study.

non) played a central role between 1966 and 1975 in the discussions about how to contextualize the Gospel in Arabic on radio.

2 History

2.1 Organizational history before Arabic broadcasts: 1948-1956

2.1.1 West Africa Broadcasting Association (WABA): 1948-1950

William A. Watkins graduated in 1948 from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois (USA). He had grown up as a *Mission Kid* in French West Africa but had been forced to leave via Liberia due to World War II. After graduation he stayed on at Wheaton College as the college electrician although he had a dream to start a missionary radio station in Liberia.⁴

Merle A. Steely came to study at Wheaton College, and lived in a mobile home in Watkins' backyard. According to Steely, 'for a year and a half, [Watkins] unburdened his heart to me about a radio station for Africa'. In February 1950, during a week of special revival meetings in Wheaton College, Steely felt compelled to speak to Watkins. 'I told him he had been talking about the radio station for Africa for a year and a half and now I felt we ought to do something about it. [...] I said we ought to meet one night a week in special prayer for the station.' That same night they prayed together. A third Wheaton student who participated was Ernest P. Howard who had also been a *Mission Kid* in Africa.⁵

Next day the three young men went to Raymond Edman, the president of Wheaton College, as they felt they needed advice for this overwhelming project. Edman suggested they should start a formal group, choose a name, apply for non-profit status, get a bank account and interest some 'big people' on campus with their plans. The three immediately began to do as suggested.⁶

In April 1950, the West African Broadcasting Association (WABA) was incorporated. Watkins became president, Steely its secretary, and Howard the treasurer. Some Wheaton College staff joined the board. On 14 August 1950, the constitution, the by-laws and the doctrinal statement

⁴ Rev. Merle A. Steely, 'The Founding of ELWA in 1950' (2003). This is an unpublished document that Steely sent to the author of this paper in 2003.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

were adopted. Abe Thiessen, the future president of the organization, was invited to join WABA later that month and he began in November of that same year.⁷

WABA understood that it needed all the help and advise it could get and in its start-up it tried to maximize cooperation. It obtained information from the State Department in Washington, the Federal Communications Commission, and from some African governments. It also discussed matters with Reuben Larson, a co-founder of HCJB ('Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings') who had his office in Wheaton. WABA shared office space with HCJB in Wheaton for a while. It sought counsel from different mission boards but none were interested in sponsoring radio in Africa. They were too occupied with the post-war expansion of their own ministries.⁸

⁷ Ibid. Bob Arnold (SIM Archivist from 2001-2005) in an email to the author of this thesis (9 September 2003). Abe Thiessen, 'The Beginnings of ELWA' (n.p., n.d.), p. 1, from ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, The Beginnings 1956-1969. In 'The Beginnings of ELWA', Thiessen gave the impression to have been involved in WABA from the beginning, even before its incorporation. He wrote: 'God gave the vision of radio for Africa to William Watkins. [...] Very shortly he shared this vision and burden with Abe Thiessen while both were students at Wheaton College. [...] Both of us were impressed with the immensity of the task in Africa. We thought of all the unreached people. We thought of the few missionaries, of the hour-glass of opportunity in Africa running out. [...] As we continued to pray, our vision and burden did not decrease, but rather increased. We were convinced that God would establish such a ministry for Africa. After much prayer we felt led to organize our own Mission, the West African Broadcasting Association, Inc'. Jane Reed, wife of one of the pioneers with ELWA in Liberia, wrote in 1968 that Watkins, Steely and Thiessen met with Edman of Wheaton College, and she also described Thiessen's role in the founding of WABA. See Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, pp. 23-24. In fact Thiessen was not personally present during those initial prayer meetings, he was not part of the group of men that initially met with Edman, and he was absent from the meetings where WABA was conceived and incorporated. He became involved after WABA had been set up. This is confirmed by the signatories of the WABA incorporation in April 1950 and also at the adoption of the by-laws in July 1950. Thiessen's absence is confirmed by Steely, who considered himself the 'historian' of WABA until he left it in April 1954. The signatures on the Articles of Incorporation (DuPage County, State of Illinois, on 19 April 1950) of WABA were Watkins, Howard, Steely, and Robert W. Bedard. These same four were shown as the Board of Directors. The by-laws of WABA, adopted 5 July 1950, contained eight names: Watkins, his wife Grace, Steely and his wife Vera Mae, Francis M. and Marion Wheeler, Bedard and Howard. It seems that the memory of Steely was better than that of Thiessen. Reed probably used Thiessen's 'Beginnings of ELWA' as a source for her book, hence her mistakes about Thiessen's role.

⁸ Thiessen, 'Beginnings of ELWA', p. 2. Steely, 'Founding of ELWA'.

While in Wheaton College, WABA tried to enlist ‘top-notch young people’ to join it.⁹ ‘We felt that God had raised us up as a nucleus to begin the radio station, but since we as students had no money, God must surely have men with money somewhere. We began to explore this avenue but did not find men with money interested in financing the project’, Thiessen remembered.¹⁰ The men were not discouraged though. Thiessen later recalled: ‘In simple faith we continued to pray and to plan and to work.’¹¹

Watkins and Howard had grown up in Africa and the American organizations that were consulted by the visionary young men must also have had at least some experience of mission in Africa. However, the decision to begin a radio station in Africa and the foundation of WABA seem to have been a matter of strategizing by North Americans only, without any consultation with African church leaders.

2.1.2 Christian radio based in Liberia: 1950-1951

The research that was done convinced WABA that Liberia in West Africa was the only country in Africa where they could build and operate their station.¹² Liberia was a logical choice as it was a stable Christian state under President William V.S. Tubman.¹³ The country was created in the 19th century by the USA, colonized with African-Americans, and then given independence. Liberia had never been a colony of the European powers and thus did not have laws where mainly only government ownership of radio stations was allowed. It had a strong relationship with the USA and followed American liberal media laws. The new masters would keep a strong grip on the country, and had a pro-American attitude.¹⁴

Thiessen wrote that the group of WABA began to pray for a way to approach the Liberian government for the necessary permits. To this end, they met with a former Lutheran missionary Norma Bloomquist who had become director of the Department of Literacy of the ministry of educa-

⁹ Thiessen, ‘Beginnings of ELWA’, p. 1.

⁹ Ibid. p. 2.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The Constitution of 1847 defined Liberia as a Christian state. Tubman was president from 1944 until his death in 1971.

¹⁴ ‘The Talking Book Gives Encouragement to ELWA Listeners’, in *The Christian Broadcaster* (Vol. V, No. 1, First Quarter 1957), p. 27.

tion in Liberia, when she came to Wheaton. 'She told us that she was a personal friend of President Tubman and that she would personally present our proposal to him.'¹⁵

Just before Christmas 1950, WABA received a telegram asking it to send a representative to Liberia for discussing the terms of the radio permit.¹⁶ Watkins went in January 1951, but when Tubman received him, Tubman seemed uninterested and asked Watkins to return 'next year'. Watkins decided to approach the postmaster-general, by going directly and unannounced to his home. That worked well, and the postmaster-general agreed to register the radio station. The call letters were to be ELWA and the franchise gave ELWA great freedom. There were no time limitations, no power limitations, nor any other restrictions as to the content of their broadcasts. The contract was signed in February 1951.¹⁷

Among those involved in WABA there was some dissatisfaction in 1951 with the way Watkins was doing things. During the second annual meeting, in August 1951, Thiessen became the President, Watkins was made vice-President and Steely remained secretary of WABA. Thiessen, because of the poor health of his wife Ellen, was not allowed by Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) to live in Africa, so he stayed in the USA to lead the work of ELWA there.¹⁸

¹⁵ Thiessen, 'Beginnings of ELWA', p. 2. Steely, 'Founding of ELWA'.

¹⁶ The telegram was from Tubman himself, and said: 'Send man. Discuss terms of franchise.' Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, p. 25.

¹⁷ Thiessen, 'Beginnings of ELWA', p. 2. Steely, 'Founding of ELWA'.

¹⁸ Steely, 'Founding of ELWA'. Orbra Bliss in an email to the author (1 May 2004). Bliss commented: 'In missions, there are often a lot of obstacles to overcome and therefore that often brings together strong-willed people. And there we have Watkins, Steely, Thiessen and some others. I have read some of their writings and though both Steely and Watkins were gone by the time I arrived, through the years I have worked and talked with a number of people who did work closely with them at that time and I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of their personalities. I am sure there were many "spirited discussions", therefore I would take their characterizations of others with "a grain of salt".' Lewis E. Entz commented likewise in an email to the author (20 May 2004): 'The Histories of ELWA are somewhat different if "according to Steely" or "according to Thiessen". I would guess the truth lies somewhere in between. Steely was there for a strictly spiritual ministry, not hardware. Thus was not fully appreciated at ELWA. He transferred to Nigeria and there carried on a fruitful and satisfying ministry.' Entz was an engineer with ELWA from 1959 to 1968.

In October 1951, Watkins went back to Liberia to buy land for the radio station.¹⁹ Hilmer Lindahl, a radio engineer with SIM, joined him.²⁰ Lindahl had spent the previous four years waiting for the chance to build a radio station for SIM in Ethiopia. During those years, SIM had bought airtime on Radio Addis Ababa and been involved in some limited Gospel broadcasts, but this had not been very satisfying and had ceased.²¹ SIM had therefore hoped to build its own station in Ethiopia and had some money in reserve for that but however, in 1951 SIM's request for a license was turned down.²² SIM therefore asked Lindahl, on his way back to the USA, to spend some time in Liberia to help WABA to find the right plot of land. SIM's field director for Nigeria, C. Gordon Beacham, who had been with SIM in Nigeria since 1916, joined them and together they found 180 acres of jungle southwest of Monrovia, bordering on the coast.²³

WABA's lack of money was made up for by their measure of faith. According to Thiessen, they 'prayed that God would move upon the Liberian government officials causing them to give us this property as a land grant. God answered prayer and this was exactly the action taken by the Liberian legislature'. They also received a duty-free concession from the Liberian government, making it possible to take radio equipment into the country without paying any duties.²⁴

¹⁹ Steely, 'Founding of ELWA'. Thiessen about this trip: 'We were able to send our first missionary'. He seemed to purposely downplay the role of Watkins. Thiessen, 'Beginnings of ELWA', p. 3.

²⁰ In 1982 SIM came to mean Society of International Ministries, and in 2000 it came to mean Servants in Mission. According to Bob Arnold in an email to the author (2 May 2003), in 1964 SIM had approximately 1300 missionaries in Africa and was the largest non-denominational mission society in the world. See also Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth, 1979, first edition 1964), p. 459.

²¹ Speech of a certain Mr. Pryor of SIM, held during a conference of Christian Action for the Radio in Africa (CARA) in Stellenbosch, South Africa (10-12 August 1962). See 'Radio ELWA in Africa: It's Message and Ministry', in *Pro Veritate* (Vol. 1 No. 5, 1962), p. 8.

²² Hansjörg Biener's *Christliche Rundfunksender Weltweit: Rundfunderarbeit im Klima der Konkurrenz* (Stuttgart, 1994), p. 153. Bliss in an email to the author (1 May 2004).

²³ Bliss in an email to the author (1 May 2004). Thiessen, 'Beginnings of ELWA', p. 3. Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, pp. 33-34.

²⁴ Thiessen, 'Beginnings of ELWA', p. 3.

2.1.3 Final preparations and first broadcasts: 1952-1955

In 1951 SIM had begun to take an interest in WABA and in January 1952, WABA and ELWA became part of SIM.²⁵ Those involved in ELWA who wanted to go to Liberia, were obliged to formally apply to SIM as missionaries.

Every few months, new personnel would arrive in Monrovia with new equipment for the construction of the radio station.²⁶ A decade after WABA began, Thiessen wrote that during those early days, he ‘began to understand that our decisions could not be dollar decisions. [...] Having determined the will of God, we must take the step of faith to begin the impossible and then watch God do the miracle. We began to learn that what God orders, He pays for’.²⁷

Steely went to Liberia in August 1952. Together with Watkins he supervised the clearing of the jungle. In order to repair some roads, Watkins convinced Liberian government-related construction workers to deliver the necessary materials. The deal was shady Steely remembered and ‘eventually we got caught out and fined about US\$800 and were threatened with being deported.’ As a result, during that year when Guy W. Playfair, SIM’s general-director, visited Liberia, Steely and some others discussed the issue with him. Playfair decided to send Beacham to take over the management of ELWA.²⁸

While construction was still going on, Edman visited the site in Monrovia. He wrote about that visit, two years after his students had shared their dream for missionary radio for Africa:

I have seen it with my own eyes. Last month I visited the ELWA missionaries who are pioneering for Christ in radio for West Africa. I was with them in their homes, I traveled over the road which they had cut through the jungle to the site of ELWA; I saw the completed generator building and the foundation for the control room as well as many other details of the program. While there I remember the day when ELWA was just a dream, rather a vision, and a burden shared by a few under-graduates on Wheaton campus, I remember the afternoon they came into my office for a conference and prayer on the subject. How impossible, even preposterous it seemed at that moment and already it is a reality!²⁹

²⁵ Ibid. Steely, ‘Founding of ELWA’.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Steely, ‘Founding of ELWA’.

²⁹ Thiessen, ‘Beginnings of ELWA’, p. 4.

On 18 January 1954, ELWA began broadcasting. The first program was in English and included an introduction to the Händel's *Hallelujah* chorus by Dick Reed, one of ELWA's founders.³⁰ There were some introductions by Bill Thompson, who would later be the director of ELWA. Scripture readings were done by Steely, a dedicatory prayer was said by Beacham, Watkins made some remarks, and finally, the program finished with the singing of *Great is Thy Faithfulness* by Reed. The dedication service of ELWA was on 6 May 1954. President Tubman was present at the ceremonies. Thiessen spoke and explained that ELWA had not come to Africa to bring another religion but to bring a Person, 'for Christianity is a Person'.³¹ In the dedication broadcast, Watkins gave an introduction, Beacham spoke some welcoming words, and Playfair spoke on the mission of ELWA.³² The American missionaries led the event. The Liberians present were spectators.

A few weeks later Steely was told that his services were not needed at ELWA. He had hoped to preach and teach on radio but according to Steely, ELWA only wanted 'local national speakers and some American well known preachers'.³³ The management of ELWA in Monrovia consisted of North Americans but the people responsible for the actual programs were mainly Africans. How seriously ELWA took its decision to produce indigenous programs can be assessed from a statement by Reginald Kennedy, a former journalist with Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG) in Addis Ababa and FEBA. In 1979 he wrote that ELWA had 'an indigenous sound not heard on other missionary stations'. At that time, ELWA broadcast in 46 languages and it had only two non-Africans amongst their program producers in Monrovia.³⁴

³⁰ Dick and Jane Reed had joined WABA when Watkins returned from Liberia with the permit for broadcasting. Reed had studied at Wheaton College after having served in the Philippines and Japan with the American Navy. See Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, p. 31.

³¹ Thiessen, 'Beginnings of ELWA', p. 4.

³² Jon Shea in an email to the author (10 June 2004). Shea worked with ELWA from 1964, initially in the broadcast engineering department and after 1982 in administration.

³³ Steely, 'Founding of ELWA'. Steely went to Nigeria where he taught Bible, Greek and Hebrew until he retired in 1977. According to Bliss 'missionaries often spoke on ELWA, [but] I don't recall any who had that as their primary assignment in English with the exception of Howard O. Jones, who as a black American, fit right into the Liberian culture.' Bliss in an email to the author (1 May 2004).

³⁴ Reginald Kennedy, 'The Word Senders: A Personal Assessment of the Work of the Major Protestant, Evangelical Missionary Radio Stations' (n.p, 1980), p. 32 of chapter 2. This

During its first year, ELWA aired the Gospel over a one kiloWatt (kW) medium wave (MW) transmitter during 3½ hours each day, to a limited listening audience in and around Monrovia. During the first six months, the only antenna used was a horizontal wire stretched between two aluminium towers. Radio Engineer Henry Hungerpillar arrived in Liberia in May 1954 and within a month, together with Watkins and Thompson, erected the first 240-foot antenna, which became operational on 18 November 1954.³⁵ In March 1955, a ten kW transmitter was installed for Shortwave (SW) broadcasts.³⁶

2.2 Arabic broadcasts: 1956-1990

2.2.1 Pioneering stage: 1956-1959

In 1954, when ELWA began to discuss installing a ten kW transmitter, Arabic became one of the target languages. For ELWA, the choice of broadcasting Arabic Gospel programs to North Africa was a logical one. SIM had adopted English, French and Arabic as primary languages, as those were the main languages in Africa. In the 1950s about 60 million Africans, comprising 25 percent of that continent, spoke Arabic. For SIM, mainly working in Sub-Saharan Africa, Arabic was also relevant because of the Islamic missionary influence of North Africa on Central Africa.³⁷

ELWA approached missionaries of SIM and other organizations to find Arabs for its broadcasts. Instead of trying to enlist missionaries, some of whom undoubtedly spoke Arabic rather fluently, the only speakers in the ELWA programs were native Arabs. Reed had written several letters to the Egypt General Mission (EGM) and the Nile Mission Press (NMP), both in Egypt. ‘Both of these groups are interested in helping us

unpublished reflection on the Christian broadcasters was found in the library of the World Alliance for Christian Communication (WACC), document A302.

³⁵ Henry Hungerpillar in an email to the author (18 May 2004). Hunderpillar spoke of 4½ hours of broadcasts each day during the first few months. Jane Reed wrote in 1968 that these were 3½ hours, from 11:00-12:00 AM and 6:00-9:30 PM. See Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, p. 63.

³⁶ Ray G. de la Haye, ‘A Report from ELWA Radio Village’ (2 October 1963), p. 1, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, The Beginnings 1956-1969. Bliss in an email to the author (1 May 2004).

³⁷ Transcript of Meetings (10 and 11 May 1966), p. 6. Untitled document from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972.

to find Arabic language broadcasts', Reed reported in February 1955.³⁸ During a Programming Meeting in April, 'Adfī Fam Fanūs and Ibrāhīm Sa'īd, both from Egypt, were mentioned as potential contacts for developing Arabic broadcasts.³⁹ Fam, a member of a Brethren Assembly in Cairo, was the principal of the English Mission College in Cairo, and would later work with Trans World Radio (TWR) in Beirut, Monte Carlo and the USA. Sa'īd was the first pastor of Egypt's largest Presbyterian church in downtown Cairo, called *Qaṣr al-Dubārah*.⁴⁰

The minutes of the Programming Meeting of February 1955 mentioned a SIM missionary in Aden who could become involved in producing programs. 'Jack Maxson of SIM, Aden, is ready to help us with his domestic recorder. We shall arrange for a supply of tapes to be sent to him. There is a Christian Arab there in Aden who will do the actual preaching'.⁴¹ This Christian Arab was Khafīl Ma'rūf. Fred 'Bud' Acord, another SIM missionary in the city, also became involved in the productions, as well as Muḥammad 'Alī, a convert from Aden.⁴² By the end of 1956, ELWA was receiving its first Arabic programs from Ma'rūf. He

³⁸ 'Programming Meeting' (21 February 1955), p. 3, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Department Minutes 1954-1962. EGM was forced to leave Egypt in 1956 due to the Suez War. See the unpublished MA thesis for All Nations Christian College of Phil Bourne, 'Creating the Right Impression: Western Christian Perceptions of Mission Structures with Reference to Middle East Christian Outreach' (n.p., 1995), pp. 13-14.

³⁹ 'Programming Meeting' (25 April 1955), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Department Minutes 1954-1962. The files of EGM in the United Kingdom did not contain any reference to contacts with ELWA about radio production. As EGM mission personnel were forced to leave Egypt in 1956 with one suitcase per person only, the files with correspondence of the organization in Egypt were most probably destroyed. EGM's leader, Aubrey Whitehouse, left for Lebanon where he became involved in radio production. Phil Bourne in emails to the author (25 October 2004 and 2 November 2004).

⁴⁰ Ibrāhīm Sa'īd began building that church in 1948, and was its only pastor until his death in 1970.

⁴¹ 'Programming Meeting' (21 February 1955), p. 3.

⁴² Abe Thiessen, 'Report on Recording Studio for Arabic in the Middle East' (4 May 1960), pp. 1-2, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972. Letter of Bud Acord to Dr. R.J. Davis (30 June 1969), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972. This Muḥammad was living in High Barnet (England) in 1969. Acord had worked with SIM in Sudan since 1951, where he did his language studies before moving to Aden.

produced the whole Arabic Talking Book, a complete audio version of the New Testament, in his home.⁴³

In 1956 ELWA began with some broadcasts in Arabic. The focus of these broadcasts was initially Sudan and Southern Arabia where SIM had its own missionaries. Soon ELWA began to also look towards North Africa and the Middle East even though SIM had no personnel there, and even though reception was very weak in those areas. In 1957 ELWA was broadcasting one hour of Arabic programs per day in the evening for a while through its ten kW SW transmitter. In 1958, mainly because of a lack of programs, broadcasts were reduced to four programs of half an hour each week to North Africa on the one hand, and the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula on the other hand.⁴⁴

ELWA urgently looked for potential program producers, and by doing so, the organization propelled Bassam Madany of BTGH into his lifelong ministry of radio preaching. After ELWA asked Madany in 1957 to supply it with programs, he was able in August 1958 to send them his first 13 programs of 15 minutes.⁴⁵ During that same period, ELWA was also able to convince North Africa Mission (NAM, now called Arab World Ministries or AWM) to begin program production.⁴⁶

During a certain period in 1958, ELWA was not able to broadcast more than 15 minutes of Arabic programs per week. These were Madany's programs.⁴⁷ Jane Reed, one of the pioneers in Monrovia, wrote that this weekly program was the beginning of ELWA's Arabic work.⁴⁸ That was incorrect, though it is fair to say that the first few years of ELWA's Arabic broadcasting were largely experimental. After this pe-

⁴³ From a document titled 'Statistics' (26 December 1956), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Department Minutes 1954-1962. This document also mentioned that ELWA received Arabic tapes from England, but it was not possible to find the source of those programs. Letter of Bud Acord to Mr. Ohman (24 July 1961), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, 1960-1968, Aden Studio. The Arabic Talking Book was reproduced by Madany for ELWA as the audio quality was too low.

⁴⁴ Untitled document (1957) from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Department Minutes 1954-1962..

⁴⁵ 'Program Department Meeting' (21 August 1958), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Department Minutes 1954-1962. 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'. De la Haye, 'Report from ELWA Radio Village', p. 1.

⁴⁶ See chapter 15 on Arab World Ministries (AWM).

⁴⁷ 'Program Department Meeting' (25 September 1958), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Department Minutes 1954-1962..

⁴⁸ See Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, p. 147.

riod of weekly broadcasts, the Arabic ministry began to stabilize and grow. During its first years, it was difficult for ELWA to have a consistent policy regarding broadcasting slots, as there were hardly any programs in Arabic available. Technical reasons like the weakness of the transmitters and the search for the best direction of the antennas also gave the initial broadcasts an experimental character.

2.2.2 New transmitters, antennas, and studios: 1960-1963

Due to bad reception in the Arab World, the broadcasts were transferred to a new SW 50 kW transmitter in November 1960.⁴⁹ ELWA also erected an antenna for better transmission to Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia and finished another antenna to service the Middle East and the Peninsula. These improved the reception of the programs.⁵⁰

Throughout the 1960s the broadcasts to the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula were one hour per day. In March 1961, the broadcasts to North Africa became daily.⁵¹ Throughout the early 1960s the North Af-

⁴⁹ 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'. De la Haye, 'Report from ELWA Radio Village', p. 1. According to Pryor this 50 kW transmitter was dedicated by Billy Graham when he visited ELWA in January 1960, see 'Radio ELWA in Africa: Its Message and Ministry', p. 8. Billy Graham indeed visited the ELWA compound, but he never dedicated the new transmitter. Before the dedication was to take place, some supporters of SIM felt they could not support Billy Graham. They threatened that if ELWA gave Billy Graham the honour of the big new transmitter dedication, they would no longer support SIM. As a result Billy Graham dedicated the house of his associate evangelist, Howard O. Jones, which was on the ELWA grounds. This was described by Entz in an email to the author (20 May 2004). Entz was present when Billy Graham visited ELWA. Initially ELWA had decided to buy a 20 kW transmitter, but when Bill Caldwell, a missionary with Gospel Recordings in Congo, heard in 1958 that a 50kW transmitter would be much better, he sold \$95,000 worth in stocks and bonds and donated it to ELWA. Email of Dick Reed to Mary Naff (9 February 2004).

⁵⁰ For reaching North Africa, a curtain antenna was built. For the Middle East ELWA installed a reversible rhombic antenna. 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'. De la Haye, 'Report from ELWA Radio Village', p. 1. Shea in an email to the author (10 June 2004). 'Technical Department Report' (December 1959), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, The Beginnings 1956-1969. Letter of Max Weber to unknown addressee (30 October 1960), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, The Beginnings 1956-1969. The rhombic antenna is basically a diamond-shaped wire curtain that is made of four wires, each several wavelengths long connected to form a diamond or rhombus shape.

⁵¹ 'Creating Radio Programs for Muslims: Presentation by Bassam Madany: Back to God Hour, U.S.A. Arabic Broadcast', in Raymond H. Joyce (ed), *Message to Islam. Report of Study Conference on Literature, Correspondence Courses & Broadcasting in the Arab*

rica transmissions were 30 minutes per day. The North Africa beam was directed toward Algiers but it could be received on either side of the main beam, and was often best received in Morocco. The Arabic broadcasts were called the *Voice of Forgiveness* (*Ṣawt al-Ghufrān*).⁵²

The weak audio quality of the initial productions from the SIM-studio in Aden, and the great need of ELWA to obtain more Arabic programs were the two reasons why ELWA stimulated its producers in Aden to work on a more adequate recording facility. While Acord was on furlough in the USA in 1961, Maxson and Ma'arūf asked for two rooms in the compound of SIM in Aden. Acord advised against that, as it would be a very noisy location. He suggested not accepting less than a 'full fledged, well organized set-up' rather than another temporary arrangement that would lead to the same problems that Ma'arūf had had with background noise.⁵³ However this was not possible and upon his return to Aden, he worked in the space allotted to him on the SIM compound:

I set up a small studio in a couple of our storage rooms and did what I could, which wasn't much because I didn't have the people to make the programs. Most of our people were Somalis and they didn't have the proper Arabic for the broadcasts.⁵⁴

However, ELWA's leaders in Monrovia were not convinced that a permanent studio was needed in Aden. That was perhaps because of the political tensions in Aden or because they had already decided to open a studio in Beirut.⁵⁵

In 1960 Thiessen traveled through the Horn of Africa and the Middle East to study the possibilities of developing an Arabic production studio. ELWA took the issue of its Arabic broadcasts seriously. Thiessen reported that Egypt was ruled out, probably due to the political course of its President Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir and that less than four years earlier, during the Suez War of 1956, most missionaries had been told to leave

World including Panel Discussions on Communicating the Gospel to the Muslim (Beirut, 1969), p. 54.

⁵² Shea in an email to the author (10 June 2004). Len Salisbury in an email to the author (14 May 2003). 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'.

⁵³ Letter of Acord to Ohman (24 July 1961).

⁵⁴ Bud Acord in an email to the author (27 May 2003).

⁵⁵ Letter of Ray G. de la Haye to Rev. Fred D. Acord (7 August 1961), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, 1960-1968, Aden Studio.

Egypt.⁵⁶ Thiessen also decided against Sudan, as he felt that the situation there was too unstable for building a studio. The Sudanese mail system for sending tapes to Liberia was also unreliable. His visit to Sudan showed Thiessen the need for good Arabic Gospel programs:

We were told and saw for ourselves that Khartoum, Omdurman, and their environs [...] are being flooded with radio sets. [These] people buy radio sets before they buy shoes. We drove through slum areas comprised of thousands of simple mud huts and most of them had radio antenna over them. We saw radios on the street corners with groups gathered around listening. [...] Certainly this affords a great new opportunity for evangelism.⁵⁷

In Eritrea, Somalia, and Jordan, Thiessen met people of SIM and others with a keen interest in Arabic Christian broadcasts. Thiessen's report gives the impression that in Aden he met with Acord and Ma'rūf, but Acord, when later asked about that visit, was adamant that Thiessen never visited Aden.⁵⁸ During his trip, everyone advised Thiessen that Beirut would be the ideal location for a studio.⁵⁹ He visited Beirut, where he was saw the wisdom of that advice.

All the Evangelicals who Thiessen met in Beirut, suggested that SIM should set up its own studio there. 'The liberal groups on the other hand were interested in having us cooperate with them', Thiessen reported. He probably referred to Harold A. Fisher of the Near East Christian Council (NECC), whom he met in Beirut and who was constructing a studio there. Thiessen commented that NECC was associated with the World Council of Churches (WCC). For SIM and its constituency this was *anathema*.⁶⁰

Thiessen met Keith Stevenson, an Australian missionary who worked with Gospel Recordings. He was impressed how Stevenson, with two tape recorders and a homemade mixer and a record player, 'has been doing a very fine piece of work under extremely trying circumstances'.⁶¹ Stevenson used his own response address for programs he was supplying

⁵⁶ Abe Thiessen, 'Report', p. 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 1-2. 'No, Abe Thiessen never came to Aden at any time', according to Bud Acord in an email to the author (27 May 2003).

⁵⁹ Thiessen, 'Report', p. 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Letter of A.G. Thiessen to R.G. de la Haye (4 May 1960), p. 3, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972.

to ELWA and he had developed his own Bible Correspondence Course (BCC). He was also personally involved in the follow-up of people from many Arab countries.⁶²

Stevenson told Thiessen that he was prepared to hand over the recording work in Arabic to SIM as he felt ELWA had the right emphasis. 'He went all out to offer us everything he could and I was sorry to be able to do no more than tell him we would take all of this under careful and prayerful consideration.'⁶³ Thiessen returned to the USA, and was enthusiastic about the opportunity to broadcast the Gospel to the Arab World. In his report he wrote:

The only Gospel that enters Arabia today is by way of ELWA. As you may know, radio is Nasser's most powerful weapon, and I am sure it is one of the weapons the Lord has given us in order to reach the Islamic peoples.⁶⁴

Thiessen recommended setting up a new recording studio in Beirut. That should be led by a 'seasoned SIM couple', Arabic speaking and thoroughly trained in recording and production techniques. This was deemed necessary as the location would be far removed from the other SIM fields. 'We would want this work to maintain its own strong SIM stance rather than become too much identified with some of the groups there.' Thiessen thought that the only suitable man he could think of for setting up a studio in Beirut was Bob Hellwege whom he had met in Khartoum where Hellwege had served with SIM since 1950.⁶⁵

2.2.3 Beirut studio under Hellwege: 1963-1966

In 1963 Hellwege moved to Beirut, initially assuming that he would use a production facility that TWR was developing. However, after they ar-

⁶² Douglas Anderson in an email to the author (30 May 2003) wrote that Stevenson had served in the Australian forces in the Middle East and returned to the Arabian Peninsula soon after the end of World War II. He became engaged in itinerant evangelism in Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. After he married a Canadian missionary they settled in Beirut, where Stevenson formed the Near East and Arabian Mission, which recruited a few missionaries for Lebanon. Stevenson had close links with the West German *Karmel Mission*, which produced Arabic literature that was aimed at Muslims.

⁶³ Letter of Thiessen to De la Haye (4 May 1960) p. 3. Thiessen wrote that Stevenson was 'a dear brother, and we had wonderful fellowship with him, and I am satisfied that he is doing a fine work which is truly blessed of God [but] he is extremely difficult to work with and it would be folly for us to be linked up with him in any way'.

⁶⁴ Thiessen, 'Report', p. 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

rived, Hellwege began his own studio on the top floor of a two-bedroom apartment in the Sabtīyah area of Beirut. Probably TWR did not have a functional studio yet. ELWA's studio was not far from the place where the Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs) had a large institute including a recording studio.⁶⁶ At that time, the Near East Baptist Mission (NEBM) of the Southern Baptist denomination from the USA also had a radio production facility in Beirut.

Peter and Pam Cousin later criticized the Christian studios in Beirut for, in some respects, behaving more as competitive businesses than as church or mission.⁶⁷ That criticism is not wholly warranted as 'church or mission' could hardly be used as examples of *better* cooperation. The studios in Beirut were extensions of denominations and mission organizations and behaved as their owners wanted. Besides that, there was a measure of formal and informal cooperation. One example of formal cooperation is that these studios together formed the Middle East Communication Fellowship (MECF), where ideas and program concepts were discussed. With the weight of MECF behind them, some participants were able to buy airtime from the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in the 1970s. In MECF, the Middle East Lutheran Mission (MELM), which was the producer of The Lutheran Hour (TLH), NECC and NEBM cooperated, while TWR, ELWA and FEBA were loosely aligned.⁶⁸

Salim Tannous moved from the ELWA studio in Liberia to Beirut in 1963 to participate in the work of the new studio. When in 1966 his newborn son died in hospital, he and his wife Virginia resigned and returned to the USA. Tannous continued to work as a program producer for ELWA. Hellwege also resigned in 1966 and was replaced by Acord.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ 'The director of Trans World Radio [...] offered their facilities to S.I.M. Our leaders feel we should go ahead with this. Bob Hellwege has moved to Beirut to use TWR studios.' See 'Program Department Minutes' (25 June 1963), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, ELWA Program Department Minutes 1963-1969. *Sabtīyah* means *belonging to Saturday*, i.e., owned by the SDAs, as they owned the area's hilltop where they had their buildings.

⁶⁷ Peter and Pam Cousins, *The Power of the Air: The Achievement and Future of Missionary Radio* (London, 1978), p. 135. Acord in an email to the author (27 May 2003). Fred D. Acord, 'The Current Status of Radio Broadcasting to Muslim Peoples', in Don M. McCurry (ed), *The Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium* (Monrovia, 1979), p. 382.

⁶⁸ For more on this, see chapter 16 on MECC.

⁶⁹ Dick Reed in a letter to the author (3 June 2004). According to Reed, Tannous came from Lebanon to the USA, where he attended Bible College in Colorado. Tannous made

2.2.4 Beirut studio under Acord: 1966-1969

In the summer of 1966, Acord moved to Beirut where he was in charge of the studio for four years.⁷⁰ His tenure was foundational for ELWA's approach in the years to come. He was available to relocate to Beirut as he had closed his studio in Aden in September 1965 due to the dangerous situation that had developed due to the war in Yemen:

We are closing down the studio – in fact the whole [mission post]. The political situation has gone from bad to worse until there is nothing but a reign of terror here. We are under dusk to dawn curfew and the British are holding on through brute force. A British patrol was shot at last night in front of our building and we're under the threat of a bombing. [...] I am sending all our radio correspondence plus files [...] to Hellwege and Tannous.⁷¹

ELWA considered its Beirut studio the continuation of the one that was originally located in Aden.⁷² One of the main co-workers of Acord was *shaykh* Nūr al-Dīn al-Shirākī. He was a converted Lebanese Muslim, whose father was a Muslim leader. Shirākī was trained to be a teacher of Islam at the Azhar University in Cairo. During his studies he became a Christian. Shirākī was considered staff by ELWA but he was also closely linked to Walter Wasserman's *Karmel Mission* (KM) from Stuttgart (West Germany).⁷³ Shirākī worked with Wasserman on BCCs and during the Lebanese civil war he accompanied him to KM's head quarters in Stuttgart. He worked there during part of the war but was murdered in his home in Beirut during the last stages of that war.⁷⁴

many Lebanese friends in Liberia. He wanted to be placed in Beirut as he felt he needed to live in the midst of Arab culture in order to produce good programs.

⁷⁰ Bob Arnold in an email to the author (2 May 2003). Acord in an email to the author (27 May 2003). 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'.

⁷¹ Letter of Bud Acord to Dick Reed and/or Ray de la Haye (22 September 1965), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, 1960-1968, Aden Studio.

⁷² 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'.

⁷³ It was not possible to get information about *Karmel Mission* from the organization itself as it preferred to maintain silence for the sake of its ongoing work in the Arab World.

⁷⁴ Len and Helen Salisbury, 'Our Memories'. Already in 1970, it was reported that 'Nura Din's [sic] life [was] in jeopardy every day'. As ELWA used a female Jordanian office manager in 1970, she and al-Shirākī had to be 'kept apart so that the Sheik does not appear to work under the direction of a woman'. 'Beirut Permanent File' (5 August 1970), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Department Head Meetings 1967-1972.

The programs produced in Beirut were sent to Monrovia by airmail where they were prepared for putting on air by Suhail Zarifa who did that work in Monrovia from 1966 onwards.⁷⁵ Zarifa was a Palestinian born in the Gaza Strip into a Greek- Orthodox family. He committed his life to Christ in 1959 in the Baptist Mission in Gaza. He became a regular listener of ELWA, in spite of the difficult reception of the broadcasts at that time. Zarifa earned a Bachelor's degree in Dental Medicine and Surgery in 1961 from the University of Alexandria in Egypt. In that city he participated in the evangelistic movement Salvation of Souls (*Khalāṣ al-Nufūs*). After finishing his study, he worked briefly with the United Nations in Gaza.⁷⁶ He applied to SIM and was accepted by ELWA after having studied at Vancouver Bible Institute in Canada. Zarifa worked with ELWA from 1966 to 1976.⁷⁷ He divided his time between the production of Arabic programs on culture and health as well as supporting the studio in Beirut in the mornings and working in a dental clinic in the afternoons.⁷⁸

After the June 1967 war in the Middle East, when Acord was evacuated from Lebanon, he advised closure of the work in Beirut altogether because of the political tension in Lebanon and in the Middle East in general. He wanted to move the whole operation to Monrovia. Acord believed that the country was walking 'a tight rope between Christianity and Muslims. If the Muslims ever take over [...] this type of work would be surely limited, if not completely cut off'.⁷⁹ Acord also mentioned the cost of the studio as a reason for closing down, as well as the fact that the studio had no legal registration.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Part of an unidentifiable document, from Archives ELWA/SIM, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Department Head Meetings 1967-1972. Salisbury in an email to the author (14 May 2003). 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'.

⁷⁶ 'Transcript of Meetings', p. 5.

⁷⁷ After 1976, Zarifa returned to Canada where he practiced dentistry until he retired in 2009.

⁷⁸ Arnold in an email to the author (2 May 2003). Suhail Zarifa in an email to the author (29 April 2004).

⁷⁹ Letter of Fred Acord to ELWA in Monrovia (6 November 1968) as quoted in a document titled 'Questions for Mr. Davis to Investigate in Beirut', which was sent to Davis by Perry L. Draper (24 March 1969), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972.

⁸⁰ Mentioned in a letter of Draper to Davis (24 March 1969). Draper wrote to Davis that 'tension is nothing new to the Middle East, [...] our financial statements do not indicate any undue expense in producing broadcasts, and [...] there is a great deal of local Christian talent that can and should be employed in the production of Gospel programs'. Draper at-

SIM was not open to Acord's ideas. Raymond J. Davis, the general director of SIM, wrote: 'Our people are living in conditions and circumstances of tension in a number of places and are not planning to evacuate.'⁸¹ Acord may have been more sensitive to the tensions in Lebanon than most others in those years as he had experienced a civil war in Aden and had been forced to leave that city under dangerous circumstances.

Toward the end of the 1960s, ELWA toyed with the possibility of a Lebanese Christian national becoming a member of SIM and operating the studio.⁸² Davis, who had been in Beirut, did not like the idea. 'What I learned through talking with local church leaders during my [...] visits would not lead me to think there were any churches who could do this.' The main concern mentioned was factionalism.⁸³ The Lebanese Christians working with ELWA were deemed 'very useful [and] entirely trustworthy but probably not yet sufficiently capable of running the studio on their own.'⁸⁴

In Monrovia, Zarifa spoke against the idea of phasing out the Beirut studio. Both for productions and for reception reports, Acord's presence in Beirut was deemed necessary. Zarifa, like Davis, felt that tension in the area was not a good reason to leave and besides which, there were not enough Lebanese co-workers available. 'The concept of the "full-time Christian worker" is almost non-existent in Lebanon', Zarifa concluded.⁸⁵

ELWA's inability to find personnel to whom it could entrust its studio after it had been working in Beirut for four years should be seen in the light of ELWA's organizational and financial structures. SIM missionaries had to raise their own support and the organization did not have large general funds to pay for local Arabic staff. If Arabs wanted to become SIM missionaries they were required to complete theological training in North America, find a supporting church and regularly go on furlough to raise their support. Zarifa had followed that route, but not many

tached a list of questions to study the situation in Lebanon, and asked Davis to visit Beirut to assess the situation. In early June 1969 Davis eventually visited Beirut.

⁸¹ Letter of R. J. Davis to Rev. Perry L. Draper (4 April 1969), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972.

⁸² Letter of Perry L. Draper to Dr. Ray J. Davis (14 May 1969), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972.

⁸³ Letter of Davis to Draper (4 April 1969).

⁸⁴ Letter of R. J. Davis to Rev. W. G. Crouch (14 June 1969) p. 3, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972..

⁸⁵ 'Report of Meeting to Discuss Beirut Situation' (16 March 1969) from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972.

Arabs could or would be prepared to do the same. This financial arrangement of SIM was detrimental to the Arabization of its staff and its management.⁸⁶

2.2.5 Beirut Studio under Salisbury: 1970-1975

Salisbury and his personnel

In August 1970 Len Salisbury from Australia took over the management of the studio from Acord. Salisbury had been in Beirut from 1965 to 1969 with the Lebanon Evangelical Mission (LEM). During those years he was loaned to TWR for six months to do the wiring of their new studio and he volunteered one Saturday each month servicing ELWA's studio. In 1969 he went back to Australia and married. In 1970 he returned to Beirut with his wife Helen and became the manager of the ELWA studio as they had become missionaries with SIM.⁸⁷ Helen later described some of the difficulties encountered in the job:

It was a daunting task set before us. Len had little training in producing programs and listener follow-up. There was one young Lebanese girl to do the main part of writing and voicing of programs, plus do listener follow-up. The only other person was shared between the Carmel Mission and us and was doing part time writing and speaking programs for us. Len was to do the entire recording and putting the programs together, plus direct and administer the whole ministry. We were expected to produce some 22-quarter hour programs a week to be broadcast from ELWA to North Africa and the Middle East, and limited to a very small budget and unreliable equipment. We could expect little direct help from ELWA due to distance and the slowness of communication. Our main method of communication was by typed letters, which had at least a six-week turn around.⁸⁸

During his first year Salisbury moved the studio. Salisbury's friendship with Dawūd Tafīl, the director of the Lebanese Evangelical Society (LES), which was the national partner of LEM, enabled ELWA to lease two apartments that Tafīl owned in the Ḥadath district of Beirut. The Salisbury's lived in one of these apartments while they built a more per-

⁸⁶ Len Salisbury in an email to the author (19 September 2005).

⁸⁷ Salisbury in an email to the author (14 May 2003). Salisbury, 'Our Memories'. Len Salisbury in an email to the author (19 September 2005).

⁸⁸ Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

manent studio on the roof. The other apartment was used as a temporary studio and office.⁸⁹ In 2003, they wrote about that period:

This meant a lot of work for Len who had to dismantle the Sabtiyyi [sic] studio and move everything to new premises and construct the temporary studio and build the new studio. We were working with very limited financial resources, which meant we had to personally do the majority of the work. But we were young and full of zeal for the Lord and the ministry in those days and it was not an insurmountable chore. Len did not have the expertise to build studios but he gathered as much information as he could and part of the structure was built. Due to the lack of cash and time, the studio was not finished until FEBA took over [in 1975] and finished it and it became a very good studio and was used until a rocket later in the civil war destroyed it.⁹⁰

In 1970, when Salisbury took over from Acord, he also took over the only two staff members. One of those was Tafīl, the other was a young woman whose father worked in the TWR studio.⁹¹ This woman provided the follow-up to listener letters and wrote and recorded some programs. She continued with ELWA until December 1970. Soon thereafter Salisbury hired new co-workers in Shadi and Salwa Habib.⁹²

Habib was a Palestinian, born in Haifa in 1943. His Protestant parents fled to Jordan when Israel occupied their hometown in 1948. They later settled in Damascus where Habib grew up. He graduated from Damascus University with a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Social Sciences.⁹³

From 1968 to 1970 Habib had been responsible for the Arabic BCC's of the Lighthouse (*Manārah*) Christian Book Store in Beirut. In 1970 he worked for six months with MELM as a scriptwriter. Since his voice was not deemed clear enough for radio, MELM did not offer him the salary he needed for maintaining a family.⁹⁴ That was important as Habib married Salwa in 1970 in Beirut. She was raised in an Orthodox Christian home in Damascus.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Interview with Derek Knell by the author (13 August 2003). Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

⁹² Salisbury, 'Our Memories'. The names Shadi and Salwa Habib are pseudonyms.

⁹³ Shadi Habib, 'Profile: Shadi & Selwa Habib, Arabic Broadcasting Service in Cooperation with HCJB world radio' (n.p., n.d.), given to the author by Shadi Habib (9 September 2003).

⁹⁴ Shadi Habib in an email to the author (13 September 2003).

⁹⁵ Habib, 'Profile: Shadi & Selwa Habib'.

In 1971, Habib began working part-time with KM as well as with ELWA. In KM, Habib produced small booklets with testimonies of Muslim converts. Within a year the work for ELWA became full time. Salwa was able to study Arabic literature at the University of Lebanon, which helped her in scriptwriting for radio.⁹⁶ They worked together as a team in program production and in audience follow-up:

Because of a speech defect Shadi was unable to speak on air, so in desperation, [Salisbury] asked if his wife, Salwa would be willing to try to voice some of the programs Shadi was writing. Her first programs were woeful and [Salisbury] began to despair, wondering if she would ever improve, but eventually, as she gained confidence, she became a most valued and competent producer. Although Shadi thought his lisp was too pronounced, he was later willing to try doing recording and we found the lisp was not noticeable. He has been going to air ever since! Both Salwa and Shadi became the main stays in the ministry and [Salisbury] trained Shadi in radio production and recording, and they were both involved in the follow-up of listeners.⁹⁷

Because of financial restraints, Salisbury was unable to pay more people to produce programs ‘so the Lord enabled us to do what people thought was impossible; to have people to come in on a voluntary basis to do programming. When FEBA was looking into taking over the ministry, it was commented that despite the studio being run on a shoestring budget, the work was very effective.’ One of the volunteers was Juwānnā Abū Raḥmah. She and her husband Maṣṣūr had worked with a business in Liberia and were friends with many of the ELWA personnel there. When they returned to Lebanon, Juwānnā worked one day each week in program production and follow-up.⁹⁸

One problem that the staff of ELWA in Beirut faced in the early 1970s was their association with MECF. According to Salisbury, TWR and ELWA found they needed to withdraw from participation in MECF because its chairman, Dennis Hilgendorf of MELM, was ‘misrepresenting’ their work in the *International Christian Broadcaster* (ICB) magazine. ‘As [MECF] was formed by the former SIM studio director, I had to consult with my superiors’, Salisbury remembered. Problematic too

⁹⁶ Ibid. Habib in an email to the author (13 September 2003).

⁹⁷ Salisbury, ‘Our Memories’. In this quote the names Salwa and Shadi have been inserted to replace their actual names.

⁹⁸ Salisbury, ‘Our Memories’.

was that Thiessen had begun ICB, and he was also the writer of the article that had created the trouble. The presence of NECC in MECF seems to have been the most sensitive issue for ELWA.⁹⁹

The matter was discussed in Monrovia during a Radio Division Meeting in September 1971, and the decision taken was that ‘Salisbury in Beirut should feel free to disassociate himself from the Fellowship if in his judgement the association is detrimental to the name and ministry of ELWA and the SIM’.¹⁰⁰ FEBA would later attend the meetings as an observer, without becoming a member. Habib remembered that after the studio of ELWA was taken over by FEBA, he and his wife, together with Derek Knell and Yola Patio did participate in some of the meetings.¹⁰¹

In 1970, ELWA hoped to enlist some Egyptian Christians for work in the studio in Beirut. Fu’ad Salwá of *Khalāṣ al-Nufūs* in Alexandria was invited to come and work in Beirut. The options were to either migrate to the USA or Canada and become formal SIM missionaries, or to be sent as missionaries by *Khalāṣ al-Nufūs* directly. Zarifa hoped for that last option to work, probably because of the need to have Salwá as quickly as possible in Beirut. ‘I told him that ELWA’s ultimate goal is to hand over the responsibility of the radio ministry to the societies, meaning that Khalas El Nofuos [sic] will provide the personnel for production of programs [...] there’, Zarifa reported in August 1970 to the Arabic Department Meeting in Monrovia.¹⁰² Zarifa probably used his personal network of relationships to enlist Salwá, as he had been part of the Alexandrian congregation of *Khalāṣ al-Nufūs*. The plans with Salwá did not work out, however.

Handover of the studio to FEBA

From 1971 to 1975, the Beirut Studio of ELWA not only produced programs for its own broadcasts, but it also delivered programs to FEBA for

⁹⁹ Salisbury in emails to the author (16 and 17 December 2003).

¹⁰⁰ ‘Radio Division Meeting’ (4 October 1971), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Department Head Meetings 1967-1972.

¹⁰¹ Habib in an email to the author (16 December 2003).

¹⁰² ‘Arabic Department Meeting’ (3 August 1970), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972. The name ‘Fouad Salwa’ occurs in these files, The name Salwa is an unlikely name for a man.

broadcasting from The Seychelles. FEBA was not producing its own Arabic programs at that stage.¹⁰³

FEBA had hoped to attract different organizations to buy airtime and broadcast their programs, but ELWA was the only organization interested to use the airtime FEBA had available. ELWA originally asked for a daily timeslot of 30 minutes, but eventually agreed to take full responsibility for one hour per day, which was the complete Arabic program on FEBA.¹⁰⁴ ELWA could not pay what FEBA hoped to receive for the airtime, but FEBA accepted that. Rolan Cornelius, the acting radio manager of ELWA, wrote to FEBA's program director Geoffrey Cook that he was 'greatly touched and encouraged by [Cook's] willingness to assist in financing these Arabic broadcasts. Yes, we are in the process of trying to get off the ground a program of sponsorship for [the] Arabic language broadcasts.'¹⁰⁵ The close cooperation was exemplified in Salisbury who became FEBA's Middle East coordinator, besides heading up the studio on behalf of ELWA.¹⁰⁶

In 1971, ELWA was broadcasting one hour each day to the Middle East and the Peninsula and two hours to North Africa from Monrovia. During that year, ELWA decided to de-emphasize the broadcasts to the Middle East and the Peninsula, and to concentrate more on North Africa.¹⁰⁷ The arrangement to produce the content for FEBA's broadcasts to the Middle East had this in mind from the beginning. 'The Seychelles agreement has been approved. [...] This will eventually replace the Middle East broadcast from ELWA' according to minutes of 18 October 1971 of the Radio Staff Meeting in Monrovia.¹⁰⁸ In December 1971, after the Arabic broadcasts on FEBA had begun, the heads of the Radio Division

¹⁰³ Arnold in an email to the author (2 May 2003). 'A letter from Beirut indicates that two hours daily is to be allotted to Gospel programming in Arabic over The Seychelles station. So far ELWA is the only organization indicating interest in filling these slots', in 'Radio Briefing Session' (4 November 1970), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Radio Briefing Session Minutes 1969-1971.

¹⁰⁴ 'Arabic Department Meeting' (3 August 1970). During that meeting, Acord wanted his opinion minuted, that ELWA should aim for five hours of programming each day, both over FEBA to the Middle East, and over ELWA Liberia to North Africa

¹⁰⁵ Letter of Rolan Cornelius to Geoffrey W. Cook (22 June 1971), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Schedules 1968-1972.

¹⁰⁶ Salisbury in an email to the author (14 May 2003). Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with an anonymous radio producer in the brochure *Lebanon on the Highway* (n.p., 1971), p. 55. This brochure was the second part of the Focus on LEM series.

¹⁰⁸ 'Radio Staff Meeting' (18 October 1971), p. 2, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Department Head Meetings 1967-1972.

Department in Monrovia discussed that the Middle East and Peninsula broadcasts of ELWA would continue at least three months, until it was sure that FEBA's broadcasting went well.¹⁰⁹

This decision to discontinue broadcasting to the Middle East and the Peninsula was affirmed by the bad reception of some test broadcasts that were conducted in 1972. For that reason, Madany decided to no longer broadcast his programs for the Middle East and the Peninsula on ELWA, but on FEBA only. For ELWA that must have come as an unpleasant shock. Madany had been producing programs for ELWA for 15 years and BTGH had always paid for its airtime. The daily broadcasts from Monrovia to the Middle East were finally discontinued in March 1973 due mainly to a lack of finances. At this time ELWA experienced difficulty in even maintaining its existent broadcasts, so investing in the much needed dramatic overhaul of its transmitters and antennas was not a possibility.¹¹⁰ ELWA however continued to supply FEBA with the programs it needed for its broadcasts to the Middle East.¹¹¹

From March 1973 ELWA broadcast three hours per day to North Africa, primarily in Arabic although French was used as well. These three hours were comprised of 90 minutes in the morning and these were repeated in the evening. Because of ELWA's financial predicament they also discussed decreasing the broadcast time to North Africa. Zarifa convinced ELWA not to cut the broadcasts to North Africa because of their unique situation in that part of the Arab World:

The Arabic ministry is probably the only one that is almost paying for itself. [...] I believe that His provision is a sign of approval on this ministry. Let us not apply the scissors equally on all languages. [...] This field is a needy one and I could venture to say that it is perhaps the neediest of all. And since the Lord is providing for the Arabic ministry financially, all I am asking is to keep it the way it is. [...] This is the only voice that brings salvation to thousands of our listeners so let us not cut back on this. [As] for North Africa ELWA is His witness to the people.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ 'Radio Division Department Heads Meeting' (7 December 1971), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Department Head Meetings 1967-1972.

¹¹⁰ Salisbury in an email to the author (19 September 2005).

¹¹¹ Memo of Suhail Zarifa to George Thomas and Bart Bliss (18 May 1973), from the SIM Archives, Suhail Zarifa Personal File.

¹¹² Ibid. 'ELWA Transmission Schedule (External Only)' (13 March 1972), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 24, Broadcasting Division, Audience Survey Statistical 1955-1972.

George W. Thomas, acting area director of SIM, together with Zarifa, visited the Beirut studio in December 1973, and concluded that ELWA had to decide to either close the studio, 'foregoing further investment and avoiding more embarrassing commitments' or ELWA should further invest in money, staff, program development and Arabic follow-up involvement. He advised at the same time not to eliminate the Arabic outreach, 'particularly to North Africa'.¹¹³ During that same visit, they also investigated whether a national church in Beirut could take over the studio, but to no avail.¹¹⁴

John Wheatley, field director of FEBA, wrote to Zarifa in January 1974 that the cost of broadcasting would have to be increased. FEBA was installing a new 100 kW SW transmitter, and therefore the cost per 15 minutes went up by almost 50 percent. FEBA wanted US\$7.50 per 15 minutes as from 1 December 1974.¹¹⁵ Bart Bliss, the external services director of ELWA at that time, responded in February 1974:

While I am sympathetic to what you feel are valid factors indicating a price rise, I have to inform you that an analysis of our Arabic broadcasting is in progress. We must be convinced anew whether we can or should continue such a major investment. [...] We have suddenly been hit from all sides with dramatic expense increases. [...] With a deficit budget for the past three years, we are operating outside of God's provision, which cannot continue.¹¹⁶

In spite of the changing emphasis in ELWA, there were some discussions in 1975 of broadcasting some programs to the Middle East with TWR through TWR's airtime on Radio Monte Carlo's Middle East (RMC-ME) MW transmitter in Cyprus. ELWA's interest in that was surprising as it was facing financial problems, and TWR charged much more per hour than FEBA did. The seriousness of the discussions is clear from the fact that TWR was reserving airtime for ELWA's programs in its schedule of May 1975. ELWA had mentioned that it might be inter-

¹¹³ Letter of George W. Thomas to R. J. Davis (28 December 1973), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, 1960-1988, Arabic Program Beirut, 1973-1976.

¹¹⁴ Transcript of 'Discussion' (20 February 1974), p. 15, from the Archives of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College, Collection 86, Box 27, Folder 28.

¹¹⁵ Letter of John Wheatley to Suhail Zarifa (24 January 1974), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Directors Correspondence 1966-1974.

¹¹⁶ Letter of Bart Bliss to Mr. L. John Wheatley (21 February 1974), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Directors Correspondence 1966-1974.

ested in broadcasting some Bible readings in a *Qur'ānic* style. William Mial, the TWR Field Director, wrote to Bliss that this would be 'slightly problematic' for TWR.¹¹⁷ TWR did not want to use that sort of approach in its broadcasting. The problem solved itself as ELWA changed its mind and decided not to broadcast over TWR.¹¹⁸

In April 1975, Thomas suggested a new 'Arabic Broadcast Strategy' to Davis. Thomas was now SIM's director for Liberia and Ivory Coast, and therefore responsible for ELWA including its studio in Beirut. His plan was based on a conference held during the first few days of April. Thomas thought ELWA should no longer be involved in producing programs for FEBA, and that it should not involve itself in any other broadcasts to the Middle East and the Peninsula either. A main argument for that was that TWR was broadcasting with a strong MW signal over RMC-ME, reaching the entire Middle East and most of the Arab Gulf.¹¹⁹ Thus, 'two criteria are satisfied: Mediumwave transmission, and a greater penetration – not by ELWA, but for the Kingdom', Thomas wrote. He added that 'there is less need and less justification for perpetuating The Seychelles transmission by Shortwave'. Thomas suggested to fully focusing on North Africa.¹²⁰ He also proposed to tell FEBA that as from 31 December 1975, it would no longer be the agent for creating the program content for the FEBA broadcasts, and that it would also no longer purchase any airtime on FEBA. However, it was stated that ELWA would encourage its program suppliers to directly contact FEBA and to continue broadcasting from The Seychelles. He also suggested that FEBA should be approached about the possibility of them acquiring the studio facilities in Beirut.¹²¹

Davis' response to the suggestions of Thomas was positive. 'I am in wholehearted agreement with your recommendations. It appears that the

¹¹⁷ Letter of William Mial to Barton Bliss (20 March 1975), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Directors Correspondence 1975-1991.

¹¹⁸ Internal ELWA Memo from B. Bliss, ordering to send a 'cable' to Mial of TWR (3 April 1975), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Directors Correspondence 1975-1991.

¹¹⁹ RMC-ME reached Northern Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria during the day. At night, when TWR used the station, Saudi Arabia and some Gulf States including Iraq were also reached. See Douglas A. Boyd, *Broadcasting in the Arab World: A Survey of the Electronic Media in the Middle East* (Ames, 1999, first edition 1993), p. 298.

¹²⁰ Letter of George W. Thomas to R. Davis (4 April 1975) p. 2, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, 1960-1988, Arabic Program Beirut, 1973-1976.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

responsibility which we have felt over the years to broadcast the Gospel into the Middle East area is now being met in a more efficient manner by Radio Monte Carlo and Trans World Radio'. He wondered whether the Beirut Studio could not be given up somewhat earlier 'in view of the financial problems' SIM and ELWA were facing.¹²²

In May 1975, ELWA announced to FEBA that it would not buy air-time after 30 November, and that the studio in Beirut would be available for FEBA.¹²³ This decision was not anticipated. FEBA's chairman Douglas Malton said that 'this new responsibility has been thrust unexpectedly upon [FEBA]'.¹²⁴ During the summer of 1975, SIM and FEBA negotiated a handover of the studio. On 13 August Malton wrote to Thomas that FEBA 'unanimously approved' in principle to take over the studio. Salisbury was asked to stay on until they would have someone in place to take over the studio. FEBA received the facilities at no cost on 1 October 1975.¹²⁵

The main reasons given by ELWA for the withdrawal from the studio in Beirut and the broadcasts from The Seychelles was their lack of personnel, money, and audience response.¹²⁶ Thomas mentioned another reason why ELWA opted out of the studio in Beirut:

[Programs] produced in the Middle East [were] becoming less acceptable for release in North Africa. [...] SIM should now address itself, with priority to the Arabs of North Africa [...] with no present or long term commitment to a Middle East broadcast service.¹²⁷

This shows that ELWA was well aware of the differences between the audiences in the Arab World. ELWA endeavoured to broadcast programs

¹²² Letter of R. J. Davis to George Thomas (2 May 1975) pp. 1-2, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, 1960-1988, Arabic Program Beirut, 1973-1976.

¹²³ Letter of Barton Bliss to William P. Mial (28 May 1975), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Directors Correspondence 1975-1991.

¹²⁴ Letter of Douglas Malton to George Thomas (13 August 1975), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, 1960-1988, Arabic Program Beirut, 1973-1976.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* Letter of George W. Thomas to ELWA Studio Staff Members (1 September 1975), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, 1960-1988, Arabic Program Beirut, 1973-1976.

¹²⁶ Letter of Thomas to Davis (4 April 1975), pp. 1-2.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

that were focused on a narrower target audience than the whole Arab World.

Salisbury believed that ELWA's decision to withdraw from Beirut was also influenced by communication problems. 'During those days, communication with ELWA was by airmail letter, which took at least six weeks from the time the letter was written and posted to when we gained a reply. Only for urgent matters were we able to send a telegraphic cable, but you were limited to a few lines.'¹²⁸ That slow speed of communication was aggravated by some intercultural misunderstandings between Salisbury as an Australian and the management from the USA in Liberia:

Being young, inexperienced, and the fact that our Australian English differed in meaning to American, we had a few misunderstandings with our American leadership in Liberia, especially as we had not met any of them until Len went to meet with them in Monrovia for a week and [...] Suhail Zarifa visited Beirut for a week in 1974. We found it a little frustrating needing to make decisions about different matters before receiving a reply from our superiors at ELWA, Liberia, and having had very little contact with Americans, we found ourselves having a quick few lessons in American culture and language via airmail correspondence. We think it was partly the lack of adequate communication and financial resources at ELWA that eventually caused [the organization] to consider handing the Beirut Arabic ministry over to FEBA.¹²⁹

On 1 September 1975 Thomas formally informed the Arabic staff of the Beirut studio of the handover. The workers addressed were the Habibs, Shirākī and Juwānnā. There was an assumption that all the staff would continue to work with the new studio owner, FEBA. Knell arrived shortly thereafter on behalf of FEBA, and Salisbury worked with him and with FEBA's David Mason until he left Beirut at the end of December 1975.¹³⁰ 'This time of Arabic broadcasts was probably the major highlight of our years of ministry. ELWA's ministry was a major reason that many in North Africa turned to the Lord', according to Salisbury. When

¹²⁸ Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

¹²⁹ Ibid. The disagreements between Salisbury and 'the Americans' in Liberia were about budgets. 'The Beirut Office should have a better idea of what costs will be than the Arabic section in Liberia', Salisbury had written to Zarifa in Liberia. 'I could not give you that privilege. [...] Suhail has not had the privilege of setting his budget either, nor has any other director in radio', Schult replied to Salisbury. Letter of David J. Schult to Zarifa and Salisbury (25 January 1973), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, 1960-1988, Arabic Program Beirut, 1973-1976.

¹³⁰ Salisbury in an email to the author (14 May 2003). Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

the Salisbury's left Lebanon, they came under fire from snipers on the way to the airport. The civil war (1975-1990) had begun.¹³¹

2.2.6 Full focus on North Africa: 1975-1990

Efforts of closer cooperation: 1975-1977

In April 1975, Thomas suggested that ELWA should increasingly move to MW broadcasts instead of SW broadcasts for North Africa.¹³² ELWA may have considered buying airtime on TWR for its broadcasts over Radio Monte Carlo in Monte Carlo (RMC-MC). On 1 December 1975 ELWA cancelled its evening broadcasts to North Africa while maintaining its block of 90 minutes in the morning. This decision was taken on the basis of positive test responses for the morning transmissions, which demonstrated an excellent signal. The evening broadcasts had been very hard to receive. Nevertheless during 1976 and 1977, ELWA continued to experiment with the evening broadcasts again.¹³³

ELWA used some old programs of Zarifa and Tannous after the closure of its studio in Beirut. When Zarifa returned to Canada in 1976, ELWA became even more dependent on other producers. Gospel Missionary Union (GMU) with its Malaga Media Center (MMC) in Malaga (Spain), NAM and its Radio School of the Bible (RSB) in Marseille (France), and BTGH would be the three most important program suppliers until 1990.

In April 1975, Thomas pointed ELWA to the increasing desire of MMC and RSB to produce programs with native North Africans and he mentioned that both organizations were investing money in the improvement of their studios. Thomas suggested working closely with them and even wanted to place some of ELWA's personnel in their offices to produce an improved block of programs for North Africa. As both MMC and RSB were broadcasting their programs with ELWA and with TWR over RMC-MC there was some discussion about possibly creating an 'independent agency' for the benefit of production and broad-

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Letter of Thomas to Davis (4 April 1975) pp. 1-2.

¹³³ Internal ELWA Memo from Bart Bliss to G. Thomas, S. Zarifa and others (27 November 1975), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 18, Broadcasting Division, North Africa Broadcasts, 1955-1997. Memo from David J. Schult to George Thomas (1 August 1977), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 18, Broadcasting Division, North Africa Broadcasts, 1955-1997.

casting to North Africa. Thomas called that agency the North Africa Christian Media Association.¹³⁴

The plan for an independent agency never materialized. ELWA did however enter into a strategic alliance with MMC and RSB. They used the name Media Association North Africa (MANA) for their cooperation.¹³⁵ This cooperation entailed that MMC and RSB pledged to fill a 30-minute block each day for ELWA at a reduced price. David J. Schult, acting director of broadcasting of ELWA, wrote in June 1975 to TWR about ELWA's strategic decisions:

[We] will be working closely with North Africa Mission and the Gospel Missionary Union in the outreach to North Africa. The multi-media outreach, which we have in mind, will include correspondence courses, literature and radio. Besides these mass media, I believe that there are missionaries and national Christians who can be contacted, for personal sorts of ministries in addition to these mass media. We are hoping to have 30 minutes per day in the colloquial Arabic, in addition to the programs in the CA now being broadcast. In addition, we hope to increase the amount of Berber which is broadcast from Monrovia.¹³⁶

The three parties began discussing this arrangement in May 1975. In March 1976 ELWA told RSB and MMC that it would be ready to begin broadcasting their programs on 1 June 1976.¹³⁷ In January 1977, Steven Vishanoff of RSB wrote to ELWA that RSB and MMC were still unclear about their production abilities and he said that no productions could be expected before September 1977. However, without further discussion with ELWA, MMC and RSB decided to broadcast the programs they had prepared over TWR-MC. MMC and RSB decided to make this *volte-face* probably because TWR was able to offer excellent airtime since 1977, and therefore a larger audience than ELWA.

ELWA's predicament showed the problem most broadcasters faced. They were financially dependent on selling their airtime. As customers, the producers were in a strong position because the number of potential customers for buying the airtime was limited. ELWA almost decided to

¹³⁴ Letter of Thomas to Davis (4 April 1975), pp. 2-3, 5.

¹³⁵ Letter of Bart Bliss to Hobe Dearborn (22 March 1976), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 18, Broadcasting Division, North Africa Broadcasts, 1955-1997.

¹³⁶ Letter of David J. Schult to William P. Mial (12 June 1975), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Directors Correspondence 1975-1991.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

stop its broadcasts to North Africa altogether after this decision of MMC and RSB. Bliss wrote to RSB and explained how this change of strategy created problems for ELWA:

I proceed to wonder out loud if God is trying to tell us something through this unexpected change? Radio ELWA's deficit the past eleven months has climbed to \$25,000. Part of this can be attributed to the extra North Africa transmission we added during 1977 with no offsetting income, but then we wanted to assist in the special Evangelistic campaign to Muslims. Radio ELWA cannot go further without cutting back on something. Is that something [...] our North Africa transmission? [...] Radio ELWA is evidently not in a strategic position to meet your objectives.¹³⁸

ELWA, however, continued broadcasting 90 minutes in the early morning to North Africa, and 30 minutes in the evening, both in Arabic and Amazigh. TWR was broadcasting over MW in the evening. There was coordination between ELWA and TWR regarding these broadcast times, just as ELWA coordinated with RVOG in Ethiopia for most African languages to avoid overlap in broadcast times.¹³⁹

Filling airtime: 1978-1990

ELWA's Arabic and Amazigh broadcasts in 1978 were 75 minutes in the morning and 65 minutes in the evening. These broadcasts reached Morocco, Tunis and Algeria, but not Libya. This was due to a combination of the direction of the antennas and the limited power of the 50 kW transmitter.¹⁴⁰ In order to be better received in Morocco, a new antenna for the 25-meter band was installed in the early 1980s.¹⁴¹ The broadcast times to North Africa did not change until 1990, when ELWA's broadcasts ended.¹⁴² It seems that some of ELWA's programs continued to be

¹³⁸ Letter of Bart Bliss to J. Maynard Yoder (October 1977), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 18, Broadcasting Division, North Africa Broadcasts, 1955-1997.

¹³⁹ Letter of George W. Thomas to Derek M. Knell (9 June 1977), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Directors Correspondence 1975-1991.

¹⁴⁰ Letter of George W. Thomas to Thomas Cosmades (22 March 1978), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, Directors Correspondence 1975-1991.

¹⁴¹ David Schult (ELWA's Broadcasting Director from 1979-1982) as quoted in an email of Shea to the author (10 June 2004).

¹⁴² According to one former missionary with ELWA who wrote to the author in 2004, but who wants to remain anonymous, the Libyan leader Mu'amar Qadhafi tried to stop the broadcast of ELWA in 1979. In that year, when the Organization of African Unity (OAU) met in Monrovia, Qadhafi reportedly spoke with President William R. Tolbert of Liberia

used in MW broadcasts from Cyprus to the Middle East by TWR and the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CBC).¹⁴³

Towards the end of the 1980s, RSB, MMC and Madany were the main program suppliers of ELWA.¹⁴⁴ The frustration that the cooperation did not go as anticipated in 1977 had obviously not been too damaging for the relationship between ELWA, AWM and MMC.

ELWA cooperated in the World by 2000 (Wb2000) movement that was initiated in 1985. That movement urged the Christian broadcasters to focus on all languages with over one million native speakers. ELWA had an *ad hoc* committee to decide which African languages it wanted to concentrate on. The committee selected 44 new languages, and in order to put those on air, they advised ELWA to stop broadcasting Amazigh programs to North Africa and leave that to other broadcasters such as TWR. ELWA felt it had to concentrate on other languages but the decision also reflected that SIM did not have missionaries to do follow-up in North Africa.¹⁴⁵

On 6 July 1990, ELWA was taken over by the rebel forces of Charles Taylor who occupied the station and started using it. The facilities were damaged by rockets of government forces targeting the area on 30 July. Towards the end of the year, the studio and transmitters were destroyed in the anarchy that engulfed Liberia. Programs in major West African languages were moved to facilities of TWR, which continues to broadcast them until today. The rebuilding of ELWA in Monrovia suffered a severe set back when in 1996 a newly arrived 50 kW SW transmitter was destroyed by factional fighting. The SIM management then decided on having only a small radio station to cover Liberia.¹⁴⁶

about discontinuing ELWA's broadcasts to North Africa. Qadhdhāfi was said to have indicated that the programs were misleading Muslim youth. Articles in Algerian newspapers appearing about that time alleged the same effect. President Tolbert was reported to have said that Liberia was founded on Christian principles and ELWA's broadcasts would continue.

¹⁴³ 'Religious Broadcasters in the Middle East' (n.d.). This document (ca. 1978-1980) was given to the author by NECC's producer Ya'qūb Ḥūrānī (13 July 2004).

¹⁴⁴ 'ELWA Expansion Project Proposal' (November 1989) p. 8, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 18, Broadcasting Division, World by 2000, 1986-1997.

¹⁴⁵ The minutes of the *ad hoc* meetings of December 1988 suggested continued broadcasts to North Africa in Classical Arabic, but the word *Classical* was deleted in pencil. See Howard Brant, 'ELWA WB2000 Ad Hoc Committee Report' (December 1988), p. 1, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 18, Broadcasting Division, World by 2000, 1986-1997.

¹⁴⁶ Biener, *Christliche Rundfunksender Weltweit*, p. 156. Shea in an email to the author (10 June 2004). In 2005, SIM was discussing with some donor agencies whether they

3 Statement of Faith

WABA, the legal owner of ELWA, published a ‘Minimum Doctrinal Standard’ in a brochure in 1951. The complete text of that was as follows:

1. We believe that the Scriptures in their entirety are the written word of God; that they are therefore inerrant in the original autographs; and that they are of final authority for faith and practice.
2. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe that Jesus Christ is true God and true man, that He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; that He rose from the dead; that He ascended into Heaven, where He is at present our High Priest and Advocate, and from whence we expect His personal return.
4. We believe that man was created in the image of God; that he sinned; and that all human beings inherit a sinful nature, and become sinners in thought, word, and deed.
5. We believe in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ; and that all who accept Him by faith are born again of the Holy Spirit, thus becoming the children of God, being justified on the ground of His shed blood.
6. We believe in the resurrection of the just and unjust; the saved to a state of eternal bliss and the unsaved to a state of eternal punishment.
7. We believe that holy Christian living through the enablement and guidance of the Holy Spirit is the necessary consequence of true regeneration and is the duty of every believer.¹⁴⁷

When WABA became part of SIM in 1951, it had to adopt the doctrinal statements of SIM. The then current doctrinal version, dated probably from 1947, was titled ‘Soundness in the Faith’. Candidates with SIM had to express their own convictions in writing about each of the following statements:

1. The divine authority and plenary inspiration of the whole canonical Scriptures as originally given.

would be willing to participate in further rebuilding the SW facilities of ELWA. Hansjörg Biener in an email to the author (2 April 2007).

¹⁴⁷ Brochure titled ‘West African Broadcasting Association Inc: Christ for Africa’s Lost through Radio’ (Wheaton, 1951), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, W.A.B.A. Correspondence.

2. The doctrine of the Trinity.
3. The fall of man and his consequent moral depravity and need of regeneration.
4. The atonement through the substitutionary death of Christ, His resurrection and ascension.
5. The doctrine of justification by faith.
6. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit.
7. The doctrine of sanctification.
8. The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.
9. The eternal blessedness of the saved and the everlasting punishment of the lost.
10. The separation of Christians from the world and the things of the world.¹⁴⁸

‘Soundness in the Faith’ also stated that candidates for SIM should be ‘catholic in their views, and able to have fellowship with all believers holding these fundamental truths, even if widely differing in their judgment as to points of Church government’. This places the organization in an interdenominational environment. The statement added that ‘of course no candidates are accepted who do not abstain from the use of tobacco or alcoholic drinks’.¹⁴⁹ In 1958, SIM adopted a ‘Doctrinal Statement’ that was only slightly differently worded. The statements about sanctification and separation from the world from the 1947 document were put into one short paragraph that said that SIM missionaries should believe in the ‘doctrine of sanctification; that is, personal dedication of self to God and practical separation of believers from the world and the things of the world’.¹⁵⁰

In 1967 SIM and ELWA adopted a totally rewritten statement of faith. No missionary could be accepted if he or she was not in agreement with the following doctrinal statement:

1. The Bible which is verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit in the canonical Scriptures as originally given and is the inerrant and authoritative Word of God.
2. The triune Godhead in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - a. The Father, Who is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in all His attributes.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Principles and Practice’ (Toronto, c.1947), p. 5, from the SIM Archives, Box MM-2

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 6

¹⁵⁰ ‘Principles and Practice’ (Toronto, 1958), p. 7, from the SIM Archives, Box MM-2.

- b. The Son, Jesus Christ: His deity, virgin birth, sinless life, atoning death, bodily resurrection, personal exaltation at God's right hand and personal return.
 - c. The Holy Spirit: Who is a Divine Person, equal with the Father and the Son and of the same nature.
3. The personality of Satan, who is called the devil.
 4. The fall and lost estate of man, whose total depravity makes necessary the new birth.
 5. Salvation by grace through faith in the shed blood and substitutionary death of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.
 6. The eternal blessedness of the saved and the everlasting punishment of the lost.
 7. The Church, the bride of Christ: in its universal aspect comprising the whole body of those who have been born of the Spirit; and in its local expression established for worship, mutual edification and witness.
 8. Christ's great commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, making disciples, baptizing and teaching.¹⁵¹

The wording of this new version was different from its precursor of 1947, but the content was substantially similar. The main differences were the inclusion of the term *inerrancy* regarding the Scriptures, and the demand of SIM that its missionaries should believe in the personality of Satan. In 1967 SIM probably felt it needed to reinforce its conservative Evangelical doctrines more than in the past. The inclusion of the need to preach, baptize and teach was probably to counterbalance the growing tendency among Evangelicals to also consider social and development work as proper expressions of mission. Although this last statement refers to mission, the Statement of Faith as a whole was not particularly missional or contextualized for usage in the Arab World. The statement was apologetic, and it did not refer to SIM's views on millennial issues.

The doctrinal statements of SIM and ELWA were products of a basically Western Evangelical theology where salvation was in the first place individual and mainly expressed in legal terms. These statements demanded compliance to what was deemed of utmost theological relevance by conservative Protestant churches in the tradition of Western Christianity, not necessarily by the historic churches in the countries that

¹⁵¹ 'Constitution', in *SIM Manual: 1967 version* (Toronto, 1970), p. 12, from the archives at SIM, Box MM-2.

needed to be reached by the missionaries of SIM.¹⁵² These creeds were therefore not a good criterion for selecting mission personnel who would be good at contextualizing the Gospel for broadcasts to the Arab World.

4 Target audiences and preferred languages

4.1 *Changing target audiences*

When ELWA began its first broadcasts in 1956, the focus was on Sudan and Southern Arabia, where SIM had its own missionaries.¹⁵³ During a certain period in 1957 ELWA broadcast one hour of Arabic programs each day in the evening to Morocco and Tunisia. That same program was also broadcast to the eastern parts of the Arab World.¹⁵⁴ To broadcast the same programs to both areas shows that initially ELWA did not pay much attention to the question whether these programs were appropriate for the different realms of the Arab World.

Between 1960 and 1973, the broadcasts from Monrovia targeted the whole Arab World, but in reality, the audience was largely defined by a combination of the strength of transmitters, the capabilities and the direction of the antennas, interference of other broadcasting stations and broadcast conditions related to the sunspot cycle. In 1969, ELWA's broadcasts from Liberia were best received in Morocco, hence Acord's statement in 1969: 'Morocco is our main target'.¹⁵⁵ That intention was wise, as it enabled ELWA to focus on a homogenous target audience. That this focus on Morocco was indeed related to the actual reception of the broadcasts in Morocco is shown by the shift in ELWA's target audience in the following years.

Only three years later, in 1972, ELWA spoke about Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon as its main tar-

¹⁵² The Protestant Churches of the Arab World often adhered to the same creeds as the missions that had played a role in founding them. That in itself does not make these creeds any less 'western'.

¹⁵³ 'Statistics' (26 December 1956). 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'. Bliss in an email to the author (1 May 2004).

¹⁵⁴ Untitled document (1957) from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Department Minutes 1954-1962.

¹⁵⁵ 'Arabic Department Meeting' (3 August 1970).

get.¹⁵⁶ That was when it broadcast from Liberia to North Africa and the Middle East, while the Middle East was also targeted with ELWA's programs through FEBA's transmitters on The Seychelles. The reason why these countries were especially mentioned is because most of the mail came from there. The result was that ELWA had a diverse target audience. To make programs that were contextually right for that widely diverse audience from Morocco to Syria was impossible. ELWA did not broadcast exactly the same programs to both North Africa as it did to the rest of the Arab World, but much of its programming was similar.

In 2003, Salisbury remembered that when he ran the studio from 1970-1975, Muslim students of 15 to 30 years old were considered the prime audience.¹⁵⁷ The choice to target that audience was wise. Gaston of RSB argued in 1966 that students should be ELWA's target audience as they were most responsive and receptive and because students were more flexible than others to listen to the programs of ELWA given the times of the broadcasts.¹⁵⁸ Whether ELWA succeeded in making programs that were suitable for students can only be assessed from the actual programs. It has not been possible to assess these in the context of this study. The focus on students partially mitigates the broadness of ELWA's diverse target audience in the Arab World, though they cannot be considered a homogenous target audience.

After 1973 ELWA's own broadcasts to the Middle East stopped, although it continued producing programs for FEBA's Middle East broadcasts until 1975. Since then, its sole broadcasts were to North Africa, which effectively meant Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. Thus, ELWA targeted a much more homogeneous audience than in the years before. At the same time however, it became fully dependent on what other organizations were producing, so its ability to broadcast the programs it wanted, decreased.

4.2 MSA, Colloquial Arabic, and Amazigh

In May 1966, ELWA organized a series of meetings in Monrovia concerning the differences between North Africa and the Middle East and

¹⁵⁶ 'ELWA Transmission Characteristics' (June 1972), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 24, Broadcasting Division, Audience Survey Statistical 1955-1972.

¹⁵⁷ Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

¹⁵⁸ 'Transcript of Meetings', p. 5.

their audiences. Beside representatives of ELWA, like Zarifa, there were people representing program producers like Warren Gaston and Don Harris of RSB, and Madany of BTGH.¹⁵⁹ Madany pointed to the cultural division between the two areas in the Arab World, but mentioned that the ‘tendency now is toward unity’.¹⁶⁰ During the meetings someone stated that the ‘Arabic language is not [the] sole property of Islam’.¹⁶¹ These comments about Arabic unity and its language give the impression that in the 1960s, the popularity of Pan-Arabic thinking affected ELWA and its program suppliers and suggested the usage of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

During an Arabic Department Meeting in August 1970, Zarifa commented that the Arabic language is ‘a possession, not a tool’, and that ‘it is the way a religious sermon is said which matters the most’. That was in defense of speaking MSA in religious programs. This did not deter the department from agreeing that in less formal programs, like dramas, Moroccan Arabic and even Amazigh programs could be used.¹⁶²

On 9 October 1972, ELWA held a conference in Shuwayt (Lebanon) about improving ELWA’s broadcasting and outreach to Morocco. Those present were Zarifa, Wasserman, Habib, and some Moroccan converts who were studying in Beirut.¹⁶³ Some of the Moroccans rejected using Moroccan Arabic, and suggested to stop the broadcasts in that dialect. According to them, Moroccan Muslims interpreted it as an insult to their intelligence and that it sounded like the program was making fun of the Bible. Moroccan national radio only used colloquial programs for illiterates, they argued.¹⁶⁴ ‘The young people are educated and they prefer the not-too-high classical. The trend is to less and less colloquial as they consider colloquial for old people’, one of the Moroccans offered.¹⁶⁵ The suggestion by these Moroccans to use only MSA was not implemented. ELWA broadcast to North Africa in a mixture of MSA, different collo-

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 3. ‘Arabic Department Meeting’ (3 August 1970).

¹⁶³ ‘Report of a conference held in Shwait, Lebanon’ (9 October 1972), p. 1, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

quial Arabic languages and Amazigh. For broadcasts to the Middle East, MSA was preponderant.

By the 1970s the popularity of Pan-Arabism had peaked with Nāṣir's death and no other Arab leader could move the masses with dreams of unity. In this context it was no coincidence that ELWA, after it decided in 1975 to focus on North Africa only, also decided that the language used in its programs should change. ELWA further gravitated to using the North African vernaculars and some Amazigh.¹⁶⁶ This was in line with the need to use languages that the North African audiences considered 'their own'. After 1975 ELWA had little influence on the languages used, as it did not produce programs any longer. They broadcast programs of Madany in MSA, RSB's programs in a mixture of MSA and colloquial Arabic, and MMC's programs which tended to be in the Moroccan vernacular and Amazigh.

5 Programming philosophies

5.1 Contest with Nasir

ELWA had a sense that a contest for the future of Africa was going on and that in that contest Nāṣir played a major role. The number of radio receivers in North Africa was estimated to be a million in 1960, while the Middle East was assumed to have about three million radios. ELWA felt it had to play a role in the struggle for the soul of Africa. Reed wrote in 1968 that radio had 'been stepped up to a dizzying pace under Nasser's rule. His dream of a Pan-Islamic political empire is more than an impractical vision'.¹⁶⁷

Egypt did indeed spread an anti-colonialist, Islamic message in Africa through its radio broadcasts, but Nāṣir's popularity was long past its crest when Reed wrote her book. It is not a sign of intimate knowledge of the Arab World among ELWA's leadership that there was any fear in the 1960s that Nāṣir might actually create a political Islamic empire. The feeling of being in a contest with Nāṣir was real, though. Related to an increase in transmission power, a representative of SIM said in 1970:

¹⁶⁶ Letter of George W. Thomas to Dr. R. Davis (4 April 1975), p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, p. 148.

‘We got onto equal terms with Radio Cairo.’¹⁶⁸ This was an exaggeration but it shows the importance of Nāṣir’s broadcasts for ELWA.

The concept of a contest with Nāṣir during the 1950s and 1960s could have been an incentive for ELWA to proclaim the Gospel and its implications for society. While the Egyptian leadership had its vision for developing Arab society, the Gospel should also have been used to address those issues. It will be seen that ELWA decided to circumvent any reference to politics and Islam by proclaiming an individualized Gospel with micro-ethical applications only.

5.2 Programming philosophy meetings: May 1966

During the May 1966 meetings in Monrovia, those present discussed that for programs aimed at Muslims, the mainly Western hymns used in the churches in Egypt and Lebanon were not useful. It was decided that the more oriental hymns used in those churches were better, but the attendants at the conference agreed that the meaning was hard to understand.¹⁶⁹ ELWA decided it would try to avoid the Western style Arabic hymns and choir music in its programs. Instead, the policy was to use oriental, Arabic music. This means that ELWA tried to use music that was congenial and understandable for the target audience. In general, broadcasting church services was also ruled out, as that would not communicate the Gospel in terms that were understandable for Muslims.¹⁷⁰

What music could be used? The *qānūn*, a zither-like instrument, was considered an acceptable instrument, and the recorder was ‘quite acceptable’. The *ūd*, a sort of lute, was considered ‘quite lovely’. The Spanish guitar was ‘decent’ for North Africa. Military Band music was rejected, as it was associated with Great Britain and France and was not Arabic. According to Madany, ELWA could not ‘expect to attract an audience by music similar to rock ‘n roll’.¹⁷¹ This decision that the music of the churches in the Arab World should not be used was problematic as during the 1960s and 1970s there was hardly any other type of Christian music. This meant ELWA resorted to using mainly instrumental music.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Radio ELWA in Africa: It’s Message and Ministry’, p. 8.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Transcript of Meetings’, p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ ‘Transcript of Meetings’, pp. 2-3.

There was general agreement that the focus should be on the spiritual understanding of the Trinity. Muslims assumed that Christians believed in ‘the physical relationship between God and Mary’ and in ‘three Gods’, and those misunderstandings had to be clarified. Madany said that neither the Bible nor the Trinity was the point of contact between Muslims and Christians. It was ‘the human predicament, we are all in the same boat. We are all sinners and we need a Saviour.’¹⁷²

The issue of whether or not to have news programs on ELWA, in order to use that as ‘bait’ for attracting a larger audience, elicited much discussion. Madany spoke out strongly against using news programs. ‘News is OUT! [sic] Too hot to handle.’¹⁷³ He argued that ‘we exist for the Gospel’, not for politics. ‘Many think missionaries are agents of CIA’. He was obviously worried that news broadcasts, in the Arab World always propaganda instruments of governments, would give the audience the impression that ELWA had political backing from the USA. ‘SIM is neutral, ELWA also’, according to Madany. Zarifa said that ‘Arabs know no neutrality’, and news would make ELWA suspect of being biased. Madany agreed. ‘Arabs can’t be objective, they see everything in a subjective light.’ Gaston supported Madany, and argued that as the ‘Arab is highly sensitive’, news broadcasts were ‘bound to offend many because of [the] nature of people.’¹⁷⁴

Madany also warned that upsetting Arab governments with news broadcasts could negatively affect the follow-up mail between the station and its audience. He received his mail in Khartoum. The only news ELWA could broadcast was news about sub-Saharan Africa that was relatively uninteresting to the Arab audience.¹⁷⁵ A minority in the meetings had a more holistic view of the implications of the Gospel. They argued that news should be part of the public service of radio to its audience and that a ‘radio station has responsibility to report the news, the truth.’¹⁷⁶

With the decision to not broadcast news in Arabic, ELWA made an exception to its general policy, as broadcasting news programs was an important part of ELWA’s programming and their view of their role as a Christian broadcaster.¹⁷⁷ The decision was regrettable. If Arabs were in-

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ See Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, pp. 95-96.

deed so politicized, news programs were what good Christian radio needed in order to be truly contextualized. As the Gospel does have a message for society and how it organizes its political life, news programs would have been an excellent tool to give the audience a Christian view of society. To purposely avoid the realm of news for the reasons given meant that ELWA decided to not let the Gospel play its prophetic role in society either.

During the 1970s, the Beirut studio seems to have reversed its opinion on the broadcasting of news programs. According to Salisbury, he wanted to broadcast news programs while he was in charge of the studio, but only 'by national Christians who had sufficient insight, understanding and wisdom to present news in an appropriate way'. The main reason why it was not possible for ELWA to create the team needed to do good news programs was financial.¹⁷⁸

Part of ELWA's programming strategy was to never make derogatory remarks about Islam. Gaston commented that instead of being 'negative' and 'trying to dispel darkness', it was better to be 'positive' and 'turn on the light'. If negative things had to be said about Islam, 'follow-up can be more specific', he argued.¹⁷⁹

For Arabic Christian broadcasts to not mention the religion of 95 percent of all Arabs and to ignore the news and politics of the area could only result in programs that sounded detached from the realities of the Arab World. Audience research in the Arab World has shown that news is the main reason why people listen to SW broadcasts. Graham Mytton, audience researcher of the BBC, concluded in 1993 that audiences of international broadcasters are 'relatively large in Arab countries because many people seek alternative sources of news'.¹⁸⁰ Serious audience research in the Arab World only began in the 1980s, but the Christian broadcasters in the 1960s were aware of the importance of news in SW broadcasting.

ELWA's avoidance of politics in its programs harmonized with the attitudes of the churches of the Arab World. During the second half of the 20th century, the churches in the Arab World carefully avoided criticizing their political leaders to create no offense, and most tried to confine the

¹⁷⁸ Salisbury in an email to the author (19 September 2005).

¹⁷⁹ Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, pp. 95-96.

¹⁸⁰ Graham Mytton and Mark Eggerman, 'International Radio as a Source of News', in Graham I. Mytton (ed), *Global Audiences: Research for Worldwide Broadcasting 1993* (London, 1993), p. 200.

Gospel and its implications to personal matters and church-life. Only in Lebanon, where Christians formed a majority of the population, churches displayed less hesitancy to play a critical role in the political discourse.

The implication of the different approaches among the national churches in the Arab World as regards relating to political life makes it difficult to generalize about ELWA's wisdom to not include politics in its programming. To not do so was in harmony with the attitudes of most Arab churches.

5.3 Acord's philosophies: 1966-1969

Shortly after these meetings where the programming policies were discussed, the Hellweges left the studio in Beirut and Acord took over its management. Acord diversified the programming of ELWA, steering it away from preaching programs only and he led ELWA further into contextualizing the Christian message for the Muslim audience. 'If there is no meaning to the listener because of our fears of the contextualization of our message into terms and ideas that they can grasp, then [...] few will listen, fewer still will understand.'¹⁸¹ Acord described the changes in programming policies that were introduced when he began his work:

Our target audience was the Muslims in North Africa and the [Middle East] The chap who was working there before me was programming mainly Christian programs to the Christians in Egypt. I changed the format to catch the ear of Muslims. They would not listen to simply the Word read to them, so I got a converted Muslim sheik to chant the Scriptures as they chanted the Koran. We started getting responses. Many letters asked where we were reading in the Koran? I got a Syrian 'Ud player who took stories from the Bible and sang them while playing the 'Ud. They loved them. We did not use Western hymns singing with the Western music. The Arabs love poetry so we used the Psalms, the Psalms of Nebi Daoud, and when we got requests for them we coupled the Psalms with a copy of the Gospel of Luke. As a result we started getting lots of mail, mainly from North Africa and a bit from the [Middle East].¹⁸²

Acord purposely used Islamic forms and practices for his programs. He defended his chanting method during meetings with other Christian

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 379.

¹⁸² Acord in an email to the author (27 May 2003).

broadcasters in Beirut in 1969. ‘Now most Christians abhor this type of thing, but when I was a missionary in Aden in South Arabia I used to do this from our mission compound on to the street and into our dispensary through a tape recorder with various speakers on it [and] people listened well.’¹⁸³

Not all Acord’s radio colleagues appreciated the method of using Islamic styles of delivery of the Christian message. William Bell of RSB spoke out against it, Ya‘qūb Ḥūrānī of NECC did not like it, Mūrīs Yahṣhān of MELM said he was against it. To read the Bible in a *Qur’ānic* manner would suggest that as in Islam, the beauty of the language of the Bible *per se* could impart blessings, or that the church was trying to mimic the mosque. It was also said that radio programs should impart content, not emotions.

Dick Olson of TWR was less negative; he mentioned the need to think of the different audiences that the programs tried to reach. Wasserman, whose co-worker Shirākī was the chanter of Acord’s programs, defended the style by saying that many Muslims ‘will not be able to read and to think and to understand in the way we are doing’, and therefore the emotional approach was also important.¹⁸⁴

In 1978, Acord spoke quite critically of the Arabic Christian broadcasters and program producers. He spoke of people spending ‘precious time and precious funds working toward a goal that is nebulous and ill-defined so that evaluation is well nigh impossible.’¹⁸⁵ He also said that most producers he had met told him that they did not know their audience and its needs. Maybe he referred to the missionaries working in radio productions, as it is unlikely that the Arab program producers would have denied knowing their audience. Acord advised to do on-the-ground research in North Africa and the Middle East to study the actual context of the audience, and to base broadcasting strategies on that.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ ‘Effective Methods in Reaching Muslims by Radio. Report by Fred Acord, ELWA, Beirut’, 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. 45.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Transcripts of responses to Effective Methods in Reaching Muslims by Radio. Report by Fred Acord, ELWA, Beirut’, 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. 48-53.

¹⁸⁵ Acord, ‘The Current Status of Radio Broadcasting to Muslim Peoples’, pp. 380-1.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

5.4 Salisbury's philosophies: 1970-1975

When Salisbury took over the management of the studio, he followed Acord's goals and approach. A contextualized approach was used in the programming to reach young Muslim students.¹⁸⁷ The Shuwayt Conference in October 1972 confirmed the opinions shared in May 1966 that more oriental Christian music was needed in the broadcasts.¹⁸⁸

The main programming policy in the 1970s was to start from 'what the listener wanted to hear', called 'bait' programs. That was a term often used in radio, but because of the negative connotations a better term should have been used. The daily hour of programming also included 'what the listener needed to hear', which meant preaching and Bible study in a Muslim context.¹⁸⁹ It is problematic that those programs that were supposedly more interesting for the audience were considered less important for communicating the Gospel. It seems that behind this lay the concept that Christian truth and content could only, or best, be communicated through preaching and Bible study.

In the early 1970s, a formal programming policy for the recording studio in Beirut was written. In line with earlier policies, ELWA decided it should use descriptions for Jesus like *Word of God*, *Son of Man*, *Savior*, but only use the term *Son of God* when properly explained. The Islamic name for Jesus was used to 'not cause the Muslim to turn off the radio':

We use the name '*Isa* which is the Muslim name for Jesus instead of the term *Yasua* which is Biblical Arabic. The reason being that for the most part, the Muslims do not know who *Yasua* is, but they do know who '*Isa* is; we try to endeavor to take them from the '*Isa* they know to the truth of the Christ of Scripture.¹⁹⁰

Salisbury wanted to follow Acord's vision of using the chanting of the scriptures, but he called it a Greek-Orthodox way, which according to Salisbury was 'very similar' to *Qur'ānic* chanting and Arabic music.¹⁹¹ He realized that it 'was frowned upon by the majority of national Christians. They felt we should use only the translated Western hymns with

¹⁸⁷ Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

¹⁸⁸ 'Report of a conference held in Shwait, Lebanon', pp. 3-4.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Salisbury in an email to the author (19 September 2005).

the Western music used in the churches at the time'.¹⁹² Salisbury's own words give the impression that what he perceived to be chanting 'in a Greek-Orthodox way', was seen by the Arab Protestants as an Islamic approach. This suggests that the Orthodox style of delivery of the Gospel is closer to Islam than the traditional Protestant methods. This idea warrants further study. Salisbury was convinced that this approach was effective:

We used to receive letters which said, that what they had heard on the radio 'spoke to their heart' and 'where in the Koran could they find the words spoken'. We also heard from another missionary that the chanting of scriptures had opened the hearts of many in the Middle East to the Gospel.¹⁹³

The churches in the Arab World rejected this approach of ELWA. This attitude was understandable in the light of the past 14 centuries in which the churches had continually lost ground to Islam. ELWA in its programming policy stated that this would not stop it from doing what it felt it should be doing:

We are not bound by the thoughts and concepts of various church groups, but believe that the Holy Spirit is leading us in the production of these programs so that the lost sons of Ishmael can hear with the understanding the truth as it is found in Jesus Christ, and in knowing HIM [sic] they will have life.¹⁹⁴

In its programs, ELWA portrayed church-life in a manner that the Arabic Churches did not like, and it used linguistic forms that were also rejected by the Arabic Churches. In order to be contextually relevant in the usage of linguistic and cultural forms and in its portrayal of Christ and the Church, ELWA conveyed an image of Church that was purposely distinct from any actual Church in the Arab World, both in the present and in the past. This is not a wise choice; contextualization should never be at the expense of a realistic portrayal of the Church.

This choice of ELWA and some Western missionaries meant that they chose to elevate their missiological views above sound ecclesiology with a focus on the primacy of the local church and the unity of the Church as a whole. That might not be an issue in Arabic countries without local

¹⁹² Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

churches, but most Middle Eastern countries did have national churches with their own linguistic and cultural traditions.¹⁹⁵

5.5 Dependence on program suppliers: 1975-1990

ELWA's programming philosophies for North Africa did not change between 1975 and 1990. ELWA did not produce programs of its own after the studio in Beirut was handed over to FEBA and Zarifa moved back to Canada in 1976.¹⁹⁶ ELWA continued to receive and broadcast programs from others and within the parameters of ELWA's policies, these suppliers were at liberty to decide what they wanted to broadcast.¹⁹⁷

6 Actual programs

6.1 Early years: 1956-1966

In ELWA's early years, Carl Agerstrand of MELM provided 45 minutes of programs per week from MELM's studio in Beirut. The airtime was provided free by ELWA.¹⁹⁸ MELM had been producing its TLH programs since 1950 for Lebanese national radio.¹⁹⁹ Tawfīq Khayyāṭ of the Lebanon Bible Institute (LBI) also produced programs for ELWA.²⁰⁰ Stevenson had a studio in Rās Beirut where he recorded various Arab speakers for broadcast by ELWA. When ELWA first contacted him, he was already making programs for his own prison ministry.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵ 'The fact is that the church and missions had more of an emphasis of reaching people from a Christian background and not much was done to reach those from a Muslim background. Therefore, little was understood in how to reach Muslims. [We] were breaking, for the most part, new ground', according to Salisbury in an email to the author (19 September 2005).

¹⁹⁶ Suhail Zarifa in an email to the author (12 June 2004).

¹⁹⁷ Shea in an email to the author (10 June 2004).

¹⁹⁸ Document with overview of 'Boards, Missionary in Charge & Address, Languages, Weekly hrs. Financial' (n.p., n.d.), p. 1, from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 14, Broadcasting Division, The Beginnings 1956-1969.

¹⁹⁹ 'Program Department Meeting' (25 September 1958).

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Letter of A. G. Thiessen to R.G. de la Haye (4 May 1960), p. 3.

In 1957 ELWA had propelled Madany into a broadcasting career. In November 1960, the daily broadcasts of Madany's programs began.²⁰² Soon Madany had two hours per week on ELWA. BTGH paid for the air-time of those programs.²⁰³

In 1960, NAM took its first steps to produce programs in Morocco for broadcasting by ELWA.²⁰⁴ NAM began with a studio in Immūzār (Morocco) and provided ELWA with 15 minutes per week in Moroccan Arabic from 1961 or 1962. Initially, NAM did not have to pay for the air-time for its programs.²⁰⁵

From 1962 or 1963 Aubrey Whitehouse of LEM was involved in producing a radio program for broadcasting by ELWA, RVOG and later also for TWR. This weekly program of 15 minutes entailed a discussion between five people who were either graduates from LBI or people closely associated with it.²⁰⁶ Whitehouse retired in June 1972, after which the radio work of LEM ended. He described the programs as follows:

[A] weekly Bible study discussion in which five people [...] discuss books of the Bible in a regular systematic way. [...] It is designed particularly with Muslims in mind and most Muslim difficulties have been dealt with at one time or another in the course of these discussions.²⁰⁷

Due to a lack of information about the actual programs produced during this period, it is not possible to draw anything but tentative conclusions. There is no evidence that the programs broadcast by ELWA during these early years were aimed at a concretely defined target audience. The programs were most likely of an individualist type. By doing so, the Gospel became inoffensive to socio-political life and it did not play the prophetic role it should play in public life.

²⁰² Reed and Grant, *Voice under Every Palm*, p. 147.

²⁰³ 'Boards, Missionary in Charge & Address, Languages, Weekly hrs. Financial', p. 1.

²⁰⁴ During their Program Department Meeting on 20 September 1960, the aim of NAM was discussed. 'Mr. Harris wants to broadcast on ELWA. [...] He will head up a recording studio. 'Program Department Meeting' (20 September 1960), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Department Minutes 1954-1962.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Interview with anonymous producer in *Lebanon on the Highway*, pp. 55-56. Bourne confirmed that this was Aubrey Whitehouse. Phil Bourne in an email to the author (2 November 2004). LEM was responsible for the LBI that had begun in the 1930s and was reopened in 1952, for the training of evangelists and pastors. In 1971 LBI was closed.

²⁰⁷ *Lebanon on the Highway*, p. 56.

The programming probably avoided referring directly to the Church, as was the habit of almost all producers and broadcasters in later periods. The content of these programs mainly reflected Arabic Protestant church life, for instance in how they spoke about Jesus Christ, and as far as contextualization was concerned, this was not done in a manner that was disliked by the Arabic Protestant churches. The programs were most likely in a Biblical and Evangelical jargon that was hard to understand for Muslims.

The languages used in the programs were MSA and Moroccan colloquial Arabic. It is unlikely that any other colloquial Arabic language was used. During the early 1960s, many Arabs may have considered MSA 'their own', and the usage of MSA can be defended in that context even though many people had difficulty understanding it. A radical choice for the colloquial languages might have been more impacting.

The fact that the programs were broadcast from Liberia and not from any Western country was probably positive in the sensitive political climate of the early 1960s. On the other hand, SW broadcasts coming from outside the Arab World must have given a 'foreign' element to the broadcasts, irrespective of the content of the programs. Further study on the general perception by the Arab audience of Arabic Christian SW broadcasts that come from outside the Arab World, is recommended.

6.2 Years of Acord and Salisbury: 1966-1975

In the late 1960s ELWA continued to receive these and other programs from its program suppliers, but the ELWA studio in Beirut was also responsible for producing an average of 22 programs of 15 minutes per week by itself. In 1969, Acord explained to radio colleagues the sort of programs that were produced in the ELWA studio:

1. Guidance for Youth. These were Bible readings for young people by Wasserman and Shirākī in which the Bible portion was chanted and then the exposition was done by Shirākī in the style of Islamic *shaykhs*.
2. Discussions on the Faith. These programs were written by Wasserman. Shirākī answered faith questions from the Islamic perspective while a pastor gave the Christian viewpoint.

3. Book of Proverbs. Shirākī read this Bible book in a *Qur'ānic* style.
4. Shirākī's Live Story in 45 parts, written by the *shaykh* himself.
5. My Life. The life story of an Iranian convert.
6. Bible Stories in Song. Jūrj Shadīd would come from Syria to Beirut to sing Gospel stories almost straight from the Bible.
7. Flowers from Every Garden. These were variety programs with jokes, some music, and good stories.
8. Oriental Bouquet. Programs quite similar to Flowers from every Garden.
9. Poetry programs with secular and Christian poetry.
10. Drama Programs. These were basically dialogues, mainly due to a lack of personnel.
11. Good News. Programs that contained preaching.
12. Arab History. Readings in secular Arab history.
13. What's New. This program contained selected Arabic prose from newspapers and books about novelties.
14. My Choice for You. This was a catch-all program.²⁰⁸

From Acord's description, it is clear that Wasserman and Shirākī played a major role in the programming of ELWA.²⁰⁹ Shirākī was an MBB co-worker of KM. This organization's co-operation with both ELWA and later FEBA supplied these broadcasters with six programs of 15 minutes per week for 15 years during the 1960s and 1970s.²¹⁰ These programs were likely more suitable for Muslims than most other programs. Research about KM and Shirākī would create a wealth of information on German mission work in the Arab World and is recommended. The programs they produced in the ELWA studio used Islamic jargon and forms to explain the Gospel.

The list of programs gives the impression that the ELWA studio produced a good diversity of programs, and that the organization tried hard to produce programs for Muslims and not for the churches of the Arab

²⁰⁸ 'Effective Methods in Reaching Muslims by Radio', pp. 45-46.

²⁰⁹ It was not possible to get information about *Karmel Mission* from the organization itself as it preferred to maintain silence for the sake of its ongoing work in the Arab World.

²¹⁰ Interview with Derek Knell by the author (13 August 2003). Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

World. Not all of ELWA's programs had the same approach as KM. Based on the vague descriptions above, it is more likely that most of these programs used the language of the historic Protestant churches of Lebanon, with an effort to be understandable for Muslims. However, compared to the early 1960s, there was a greater effort to use linguistic and cultural forms that was congenial to Muslims.

By the end of the 1960s, the studio produced only 40 percent of the Arabic ELWA programs so the majority of its programming was dependent on other organizations.²¹¹ This made it difficult for Acord and Salisbury to fully implement their programming strategies. The overall impression of the programs must have been more culturally Christian than Acord wished them to be. This potentially diminished the impact of programs like those of KM as these might have worked better if they were not enveloped in obviously Christian programming. So whereas it is unlikely that, in the context of the ELWA programming environment, these programs in an Islamic style would have attracted more Muslims to the broadcasts, they did however result in upsetting the Arab churches.

6.3 Years of dependency: 1975-1990

In 1975 ELWA became fully dependent on program suppliers, as it had stopped its own productions. ELWA continued to receive programs from BTGH, RSB and MMC and some other producers for broadcasts to North Africa. The programs of those producers are assessed elsewhere. Generally speaking, it can be said that none of these producers wanted to use Islamic linguistic and cultural forms.

The audience was only partially addressed in its actual context, as all programs avoided discussing the concrete socio-political implication of the Gospel for the Arab World. This means that no stand was taken against corporate sin. The programs of the main program suppliers also tried to avoid any reference to the actual churches of the Arab World and elsewhere in an effort to make the programs more contextualized for North Africa. Good contextualization should confirm the unity of the church of all cultures and not ignore the actual body of Christ.

²¹¹ 'Report of Meeting to Discuss Beirut Situation' (16 March 1969), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972.

7 Audience response

ELWA received only three letters from listeners in 1959 and 1960. When it began using a stronger SW transmitter with better antennas in 1960, the audience response immediately rose. Within a year, 473 letters were received from different parts of the Arab World, but mainly from Egypt.²¹²

The meager information extant about ELWA's audience response figures is summarized in *Figure 1*. These figures must be treated with caution, as they are deductions from audience response figures during some of the months in each of the given years.

In 1966 ELWA assumed that it had about 60,000 listeners in the Middle East each day in an area with an estimated three million radios. It seems that of the 270 letters received from the Middle East in 1966, most came from Christians, even though the target audience was Muslims.²¹³ The Christians that wrote were from all age groups and classes. The Muslims who responded were mostly students.²¹⁴ In 1967, over 80 percent of all 558 letters came from Egypt alone. Iraq followed in a distant second place.²¹⁵

By 1969, the situation had changed dramatically. Of the total response of 1,884 letters, about 40 percent came from respondents in Mo-

²¹² 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'. Ray G. de La Haye wrote to Reginald Townsend, the Liberian Director of the Liberian Information Service, about the countries where responses came from. He mentioned Aden, Saudi Arabia, Arabia [meaning those parts that later became the United Arab Emirates], Israel, and Syria. No Arabic countries in North Africa were mentioned as he generalized by saying that letters had come in from 'practically every country in Africa'. Letter of Ray G. de La Haye to Reginald Townsend (29 September 1960), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 24, Broadcasting Division, Audience Survey 1968. See also Reed and Grant, *Voice under every Palm*, p. 147.

²¹³ 'Transcript of Meetings', p. 3. Salisbury in an email to the author (14 May 2003).

²¹⁴ 'Transcript of Meetings', p. 3.

²¹⁵ Of those 45 letters received in 1966, 39 came from Egypt, from each of the countries Morocco, Algeria and Syria one letter was received, two came from Iraq, and one from Brazil. Of those 45 letter writers, three were Muslims. Of the 93 letters received in 1967, eight came from Muslims. From Egypt, 71 letters were received, and 11 from Iraq, 6 from Morocco. 'March 1967 ELWA statistics', from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 24, Broadcasting Division, Audience Survey Statistical 1955-1972. 'December 1966 ELWA Statistics', from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 24, Broadcasting Division, Audience Survey Statistical 1955-1972. 'February 1967 ELWA Statistics', from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 24, Broadcasting Division, Audience Survey Statistical 1955-1972.

rocco, 15 percent from Algeria, and 25 percent from Egypt.²¹⁶ 95 percent of responders were Muslims.²¹⁷ In 1970, and estimated 1,634 letters of first time respondees were received. Morocco and Algeria had become even more important in 1970, with barely any responses from Egypt.²¹⁸ According to Acord, this shift was the result of political circumstances in Egypt, and of his new programming policies:

Mail for security reasons is cut off from Egypt. We used to get a good response but it has stopped altogether. However we used to get ten to 15 letters a month mostly from Christians and within the four years of the Acord's tour of service in Beirut we now get more than ten times that number of letters per month and 99% of these come from Muslims. The Lord has enabled him to completely change the picture around although he has lived in an area where the Christian have a conviction that Moslems cannot be saved!²¹⁹

It is hard to measure the effect of the change in programming on the audience response as there were also other factors at play. The new antenna that ELWA had put to service in 1968 was beamed specifically to North Africa with a very good signal creating a whole new audience in North Africa.²²⁰ In 1969 ELWA was broadcasting one hour each day to

²¹⁶ This figure is based on the receipt of 157 letters in December 1969. See 'Beirut ELWA Recording Studio' (5 January 1970), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972.

²¹⁷ Acord, 'The Current Status of Radio Broadcasting to Muslim Peoples', p. 382.

²¹⁸ 'Beirut Report August 1970' (n.d.), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972. 'Beirut Report October 1970' (n.d.), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 17, Broadcasting Division, Arabic Programming, Beirut 1960-1972. For 1970, ELWA published that it received a total of 2,514 letters, of whom 35 percent had written to ELWA before.

²¹⁹ 'Beirut Permanent File' (5 August 1970).

²²⁰ Entz in an email to the author (20 May 2004). 'The loudest dog gets heard. Partly that is due to the fact that the mass produced receivers are of very poor quality. Some SW receivers will pick up little more than the loudest station in each band'. The power of the transmitter and the direction are also of major importance. This new antenna used a low angle take-off and thus was able to go over the desert, rather than trying to bounce off it. [...] Reflection off sand and rocks causes great attenuation.[...] However ELWA by sophisticated design can get a low take-off angle and hit the ionosphere (which is about 200 miles high), at about 1000 or 1200 miles distant. Then the reflected Wave will hit the ground at 2000 or 2400 miles - the target area. Now the surface in between is not relevant. Libya is too far away to reach in this manner. This explains in part the North Africa response and the Libyan lack of response'. 'Beirut Permanent File' (5 August 1970).

the Middle East in Arabic and initially also in Greek, but twice as many hours to North Africa in Arabic and French.²²¹

Salisbury reported that during the first half of the 1970s the letters ELWA received peaked at about 250 per month. Most of that mail came from male Muslim students aged between 15 and 30 years and mainly from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, but also from Egypt and Libya.²²² During these years ELWA's programs were also broadcast by FEBA. After the FEBA broadcasts were added in 1971, the response from Egypt increased with letters also coming from Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Iraq.²²³ As the number of letters from North Africa exceeded others, it is apparent that the broadcasts by ELWA's transmitters in Monrovia elicited more response from North Africa, than the broadcasts of FEBA from the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East.²²⁴

In 1975 the reception of the broadcasts to North Africa became so bad in the evenings that those evening broadcasts were cancelled. This must have meant that overall audience response decreased noticeably.²²⁵ 'Some days [reception in North Africa] was better than other days. Some months you were able to get through clearly and other months you were not getting through at all', recalled Zarifa. This means that deductions regarding annual audience response based on the scarce information available must be treated with caution. Zarifa also mentioned that 'powerful radio signals [came] out of Russia, Algeria and other countries that tried to jam and interfere with our broadcast'. As Zarifa realized that TWR had an excellent reception with its MW broadcasts from Monte Carlo and Cyprus, he decided that TWR was able to do what ELWA was not. Zarifa's decision to return to Canada in June 1976 was directly related to that assessment.²²⁶

Salisbury's enthusiasm for using radio in evangelizing the Arab World was related to the relevance of the medium in the 1970s:

²²¹ 'Transmission Schedule ELWA, Expiration Date 6 October 1968' (n.d.), from the ELWA Archives, Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Schedules 1968-1972. 'Transmission Schedule, Effective October 1969' (n.d.), from the ELWA Archives Liberia Box 16, Broadcasting Division, Program Schedules 1968-1972.

²²² Ibid. 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'.

²²³ Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

²²⁴ Suhail Zarifa in an email to the author (12 June 2004). The archives of SIM were accessible up until 1975. Information on audience response could possibly be found in later files by future researchers.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Zarifa in an email to the author (12 June 2004).

The Middle Eastern countries relied on Shortwave broadcasting to gain an unbiased assessment of world news and Christian Shortwave broadcasting was certainly a valuable tool in order to reach many people with the Gospel. All radio [...] stations in Arab countries were government owned and controlled. Therefore Arabs wanted to receive news from outside and often came across missionary radio transmissions ‘by chance’. In the mid 1970’s Mediumwave broadcasting was beginning to really take off with Radio Monte Carlo in Cyprus and other high power Mediumwave transmitting sites.²²⁷

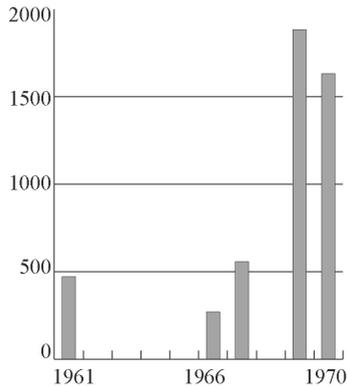


Figure 1- ELWA's Total Arabic Audience Response: 1961-1970

The fact that for his enthusiasm Salisbury pointed to the broadcasts of TWR through RMC-ME, and not to ELWA’s broadcasts, confirms that ELWA’s self-assessment was not very positive at the time when it stopped its Arabic broadcasts to the Middle East. Salisbury believed that RMC-ME in those years was avidly listened to, and that the effectiveness of radio in those years was related to the Arab-Israel war of 1967:

It would seem that one of the biggest factors for so many Muslims to become open to the Gospel was the 1967 Arab Israeli War. According to the propaganda, Muslims had to win. Yet the war was over in just six days. Certainly after the war many young Muslims were questioning whether Islam met their spiritual need and many found that need was met in Jesus Christ.²²⁸

²²⁷ Salisbury, ‘Our Memories’.

²²⁸ Ibid.

It is not possible to assess to what extent the increased audience response during those years was the direct result of the war of 1967 and subsequent interest in the Gospel. It may have been due to the fact that ELWA had filled more airtime.

Only a rough calculation of the effectiveness of the broadcasts to attract audience response is possible. The 1,884 letters that were received in 1969 were responses to the programs that ELWA produced, not to programs of program suppliers. Those attracted their own response. As ELWA produced 40 percent, or 72 minutes, of the three hours of programs it was broadcasting daily, this means that for every 14 minutes broadcast, it received one letter. This measure of the success of the broadcast was the yardstick ELWA itself used.

The Beirut studio was responsible for the follow-up of letters from listeners who responded to ELWA's programs. According to Acord, the programs ELWA produced were 'all with the aim of getting the listener to write to us so we could send back to them a copy of the Gospel and hopefully enroll them in correspondence courses'.²²⁹ This approach to the usage of radio was quite narrow and was not a stimulant for producing programs that propounded the Gospel in its holistic width. The reasons why ELWA defined its goals that narrowly was because its main goal was to lead individuals to Christ. It assumed that with that goal in mind it had to rely on literature, not on its own broadcasts.

During its Shuwayt Conference in 1972 one of the Moroccan MBBs studying in Lebanon, reported on research he had done about 'the effects of radio and literature outreach.' He interviewed people in Lebanon who had become Christians after having written to addresses given in Christian radio broadcasts. They would then be contacted by Christian organizations in Lebanon.²³⁰ 'However, it was found, that they were not saved through radio but rather through literature.'²³¹ Salisbury had a similar approach. 'It is thought that [our] programs were used of the Lord to open the doors for the Gospel in these areas for others to build on and we have heard of many who came to the Lord in those days.'²³²

²²⁹ Acord, 'The Current Status of Radio Broadcasting to Muslim Peoples', p. 389.

²³⁰ Salisbury, 'Our Memories'.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid. Salisbury refers, for instance, to the fact that Wasserman used the mailing lists of ELWA for contacting people and offering *Karmel Mission's* BCC's. 'We did not have the resources to do so'. Salisbury in an email to the author (19 September 2005).

ELWA could not financially afford to use ‘bait type materials’ like free cassette tapes for getting people to write to them, like some organizations used. According to Salisbury, most people wrote in ‘because they had a felt spiritual need.’²³³ Regarding literature follow-up, suggestions were made never to send more than a handful of letters to the same village at any single day, because of authorities trying to block Christian mail. Envelopes should also not be thick, as the censor or the post office might open those. One of the Moroccans at the Shuwayt conference said that the authorities in Morocco had always opened his mail.²³⁴

During the 1970s, the ELWA studio in Beirut mailed thin booklets to its audience. At that time, the Lebanese Bible Society in Beirut produced the New Testament in a dozen or so small booklets with small print. The smaller portion made it more likely that the recipient would actually receive it, and also read it. ELWA regularly changed the types of envelopes it used, and wrote return addresses by hand on the envelopes in order to stop the material being confiscated and in order to avoid problems for their respondees with authorities. Salisbury described the efforts to contact the audience:

Follow up was mainly by the writing of personal letters. Shadi [Habib] spent many hours pounding away at his Arabic typewriter (which was quite a feat to use). Our main emphasis was putting as much of the Bible into people’s hands as possible, but only a portion at a time (it became clear that the Lord was really using it). Booklets produced by Walter Wassermann’s group were used to answer many of the common questions Muslims asked. When a good link was established with a listener and it seemed they had come to the Lord, we had them to do a type of correspondence course using translated Navigator material. If they advanced beyond this, we would then introduce them to the North Africa Ministries folk during correspondence courses.²³⁵

Some program producers used their own addresses and did their own follow-up, like Madany. It is unknown what sort of response he and others received for their broadcasts on ELWA. ELWA used the Emmaus BCCs for the respondents from the Middle East.²³⁶ The studio took direct responsibility for answering letters from the Middle East and the

²³³ Salisbury, ‘Our Memories’.

²³⁴ ‘Report of a conference held in Shwait, Lebanon’, p. 4

²³⁵ Salisbury, ‘Our Memories’.

²³⁶ ‘ELWA Arabic Ministry’.

Peninsula but mail from North Africa was sent to RSB in Marseille for follow-up. This arrangement continued after FEBA took over the Beirut studio from ELWA for the broadcasts by FEBA. In 1977 MMC handled the audience response for ELWA in North Africa.²³⁷

ELWA decided in 1975 to focus on improvement of follow-up in North Africa, with more personal contact with the target audience. There was dissatisfaction with the follow-up that had been done in the Middle East. According to Thomas, the 'development of a follow-up system and the task of relating the ministry to the church has long been relatively minimal and undesirably ineffective'.²³⁸ In the context of ELWA's main aim of enrolling people in correspondence courses for follow-up, this conclusion of Thomas was highly self-critical.

8 Final observations

8.1 Indigenization

When the idea of a missionary radio station in Africa was conceived, and when WABA was founded in 1951, it was a purely North American venture. Two of its first leaders, Watkins and Howard, had grown up in Africa, and some of the American organizations that were consulted must also have had some experience of mission in Africa, but there was no consultation with native African church leaders. The opening of ELWA in Monrovia in 1954 was led by American missionaries. Liberians were merely present as spectators.

For its Arabic broadcasts, ELWA followed its general policy to only have indigenous speakers on radio. ELWA approached missionaries of SIM and other organizations to find Arabs for its broadcasts. Instead of trying to enlist missionaries, some of whom undoubtedly spoke Arabic rather fluently, the only speakers in the ELWA programs were native Arabs. ELWA had speakers from Palestine, Lebanon and Syria working in its studio in Beirut.

ELWA showed its serious commitment to managerial indigenization by having Zarifa manage all matters pertaining to the Arabic broadcasts in the central studio in Monrovia. However, in order for SIM to appoint

²³⁷ Salisbury, 'Our Memories'. 'ELWA Arabic Ministry'.

²³⁸ 'Report of a conference held in Shwait, Lebanon', pp. 2-3.

Zarifa to that position, he was obliged to do Bible college training in Canada, to find a Canadian church to support him as its missionary, and to become a Canadian citizen. This structural approach to its Arab missionaries, which was related to the financial support systems in SIM, was detrimental to true indigenization of the leadership in ELWA.

ELWA's Arabic studio in Beirut and its program production there was always managed by non-Arabs. During the late 1960s, ELWA considered the idea of a Lebanese Christian or a Lebanese church taking over the operational management of the studio. This was thought possible as during the civil war that began in 1975, many local Christian-managed studios and FM broadcasts had mushroomed. Lebanon abounded with able Christian leaders who had proved that they could run a studio. However, the conclusion of Davis, that there would not be any person 'sufficiently capable of running the studio on their own', was a reflection of ELWA's problem to find someone willing to apply with SIM, to go to North America, and to find a supporting church. Zarifa's comment that 'the concept of the "full-time Christian worker" [was] almost non-existent in Lebanon', should be seen in that light. RVOG was also able to have an excellent, locally managed studio.

In 1970, ELWA had decided it wanted to hand over the Beirut studio to the Egyptian *Khalāṣ al-Nufūs* societies. That was decided at a time when SIM had encountered problems in finding personnel to manage the studio, but it also underlines ELWA's target of Arabizing its studio. Since the option to hand over the facilities to Lebanese churches or individuals seemed small, it meant that at least some other Arabs would manage the studio. However, Zarifa's effort to convince Salwá of *Khalāṣ al-Nufūs* in Alexandria to work in Beirut did not succeed. Salwá was told that he should apply with SIM, or *Khalāṣ al-Nufūs* could finance him and send him to Beirut directly. Zarifa's hope that he would follow that second route, outside SIM, was because that would be the faster method for getting Salwá in Beirut. In either case, Salwá would have to arrange his own finances. The eventual handover of the studio to the European management of FEBA in 1975 was not ELWA's first choice and should be seen in the light of ELWA's urgent financial problems.

8.2. Contextualization

8.2.1 Homogenous target audience

ELWA was keenly aware of the differences between its Middle Eastern and the North African audiences, and tried to take that into account in its broadcasts, even though many of the programs that were made by Middle Easterners and with the Middle East in mind were also broadcast to North Africa.

Only briefly did ELWA endeavor to focus on a homogenous target audience, namely in the late 1950s, when its signal was aimed at Sudan and Yemen, and in the late 1960s, when its signal could best be received in Morocco. However, this targeting of a rather homogenous audience was a function of ELWA's technical abilities and not one based on a mis-logical choice. The organization tried, until 1975, to reach the whole Arab World with its broadcasts. The focus on the whole Arab World as a target area was mitigated somewhat by ELWA's focus on students.

8.2.2 Actual context of the target audience

Most programs of ELWA were aimed at individuals in their personal context. As topics like politics and Islam were purposely ignored, for instance by refusing to broadcast news programs, ELWA only spoke to a limited extent to its audience in its actual context. Given ELWA's initial broad focus on the whole Arab World, it would have been hard to implement this in any case. The effect of only speaking to its audience in a highly individualized manner means that ELWA did not take a stand against societal or political evil. Hence, it did not allow the Gospel to play the prophetic role it should play in public life.

The avoidance of political, Islamic and socio-economic topics was in accordance with the desires of the churches in most countries of the Arab World. Only Lebanese churches participated in the political arena, as in that country Christians formed a majority. However, even in Lebanon the small Protestant churches that formed ELWA's natural constituency, did not involve themselves in the political discourse. Therefore, ELWA's avoidance of political comments in its programs fulfilled the need to contextualize the Gospel in the community of the national churches.

8.2.3 Language

The programs ELWA produced were mostly in MSA. That made them difficult to understand for most Arabs as only a minority was able to use

that language. Many students all over the Arab World shared an appreciation for being addressed in MSA as the language of upward mobility and Pan-Arabism, irrespective of whether they understood the language very well. The term *Arab World* was a geo-political construct and not so much a cultural reality. It can be argued that those Muslims that adhered strongest to the concept of Pan-Arabism and the usage of one common language were also the most satisfied with the political regimes or the dominant Islamic culture. They would also be the least inclined to take a contrarian decision towards accepting a counter-cultural Christian worldview. It is arguable, therefore, that the purposeful usage of colloquial Arabic could have had a much larger impact than the usage of MSA. Colloquial Arabic was the heart language of students and as that would have drawn an audience of those that were dissatisfied with the prevalent philosophies, without them gravitating to Islam

ELWA agreed after 1975 that they had to concentrate on broadcasting in the spoken languages of North Africa. For their broadcasts they used North African colloquial Arabic and Amazigh. These programs were not produced by ELWA. However, it continued to also broadcast programs in MSA to North Africa. This was most likely due to economic reasons: ELWA was paid to broadcast those programs and needed the income.

8.2.4 Linguistic and cultural forms

Until the mid 1960s ELWA's programs used the sort of Christian language that the Protestant churches of the Arab World were used to. The programs were made with an effort to speak in a language that was also understandable for Muslims. The producers of programs in the early 1960s and after 1975 did not endeavor to present the Gospel in Islamic terms.

During the period of 1966 to 1975, ELWA continued producing programs as it did before, but it also produced some of its programs with Islamic Arabic linguistic and cultural forms. The churches in the Arab World were strongly against this. Given its lack of appreciation for the opinions of the majority of Christian Arabs regarding how to contextualize the Gospel, it seems ELWA's management tended to also absolutize its own missiological views.

8.2.5 Portrayal of Christ and the Church

Throughout its existence, ELWA broadcast programs in which Christ was portrayed in the traditional Christian manner. In the period of 1966 to

1975, ELWA also made programs with a different approach. In some of its programs, Christ was spoken of by using his Islamic name, 'Isá. This choice corresponded with ELWA's policy to use more Islamic terms and cultural forms during those years.

Although it is not clear how ELWA described the audience's need to participate in church-life, it is likely that the word *church* was avoided altogether. The need to proclaim the Gospel in an Ecumenical manner that portrays the unity of the Church, worldwide and historically, was therefore, obviously, not heeded in the programs.

The initial approach regarding the portrayal of Christ changed after 1975, when ELWA stopped producing its own programs and when it focused its transmission on North Africa. The producers that bought airtime did not agree with the idea to use Islamic terminology for Christ.

8.3 Christian witness

ELWA's focus on audience response and follow-up is understandable in the context of its goal to lead as many Muslims to Christ as possible, in the shortest possible period. Especially in areas where there was no visible national Church yet, as in the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa, this effort to use radio for getting in touch with potentially interested people, was understandable. In such circumstances, where churches were not allowed to work publicly, Christian radio could play an important role in creating the beginnings of church through its *kerygmatic* witness.

As ELWA itself made audience response and the enrollment of respondents in BCCs its highest target, it cannot have been satisfied with receiving one letter for every 14 minutes of airtime in 1969. The conclusion of Thomas in 1975 that ELWA's follow-up systems were 'highly ineffective' is a devastating conclusion, given ELWA's expressed goal.

The focus on eliciting individual audience response of people with an interest in the Gospel had the disadvantage that it did not lead to the type of programming that could give the audience a broad view of the whole Gospel and its implications. ELWA broadcast its Arabic programs during a period of severe political repression, wars, and upheavals in the Arab World. These issues ought to be mentioned in Christian radio that purports to proclaim the full counsel of God.

As regards the Christian witness, ELWA was strong on the side of the Christian *kerygma* regarding the death and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The programs did not reflect much of the Church's

koinonia, due to the stress on the need for individuals to accept the kerygma. The *diakonia* of the Church was also not reflected in the programs, as the role of the Church in society, socio-economic and political issues were not treated. The lack of these elements in the programs of ELWA negatively affected the value of the witness of the Christian *kerygma*.