Hespéris-Tamuda LV (2) (2020): 157-171

Missionary Encounters: Moroccan Engagement with the Western Other

Lawrence Rosen
Princeton University

Abstract: Missionaries from the U.S. and U.K. have operated in Morocco from the late 19th century to the present. While they have intermittently been expelled and their distribution of literature curtailed – and while the number of people they succeeded in converting was trivial – their impact on local Moroccan society cannot be wholly discounted. Working from original sources, visits to missionary headquarters and study of their archives and published accounts, as well as from numerous interviews with Moroccans who were in contact with them over the course of many decades, I will focus on the experience of missionary contact in the city of Sefrou (and to a more limited extent Fez) in an attempt to assess how these religious figures acted as agents of 'modernization,'? why they were so highly respected yet so ineffectual in their foundational goal, In what ways the experience of encountering Christian missionaries may have both facilitated and frustrated the agents of Islamic fundamentalism in more recent times?

Keywords: Christians, Missionaries, Sefrou, Morocco, Islam, Fez, Islam, Modernization.

Sefrou, Morocco. 1965

"No!" My denial was, perhaps, too strong. But when my Moroccan interlocutor asked if I was with the American Christian missionaries in town I was intent on stating unambiguously that I had nothing whatsoever to do with them. I think I even went so far as to describe them as people who "buy and sell God." To my surprise I was brought up short by the gentleman when he said: "They were very good people. They gave us medicines, helped with the children, and didn't bother anyone." Over the course of several decades I was to hear similarly positive remarks from quite a wide range of people.

Gospel Missionary Union, Smithville, Missouri, 1970

I had flown out to see the records of the Gospel Missionary Union who operated in Sefrou from the early 20th century until the mid-1960s. Greeted at the airport by its director – himself a former missionary in Morocco, speaking excellent colloquial Moroccan Arabic – I was taken to their headquarters and put up for the night in the retired missionaries home. They even prayed for my work at dinner. The next day, while looking through the organization's records, the director said to me: "I am convinced the Quran is the perfect

Journal Indexed in Emerging Sources Citation Index (Web of Science)
Covered in *Clarivate Analytics* products and services, ISSN: 0018-1005

instrument of the devil." "Oh," I said, "in what way?" "Well," he replied, "whenever I would mention Jesus they would say 'yes, he's right here in the Quran.' The same for anything I would bring up. Only the devil could have created a document that let people claim everything is already in it."

A Farmhouse on the Sais Plain, outside of Fez, 2008

We had been travelling all day, five of us accompanying a mutual friend involved in a complex divorce. Settled for the night at a relative's farm we talked and ate well past midnight. At one point we somehow got onto the subject of the missionaries who were known to one of our number when he was growing up in Sefrou. A born raconteur who had earlier regaled us with hilarious and insightful stories, he now jumped up on the banquette and began to sing in Arabic 'Jesus loves us every one.' When I asked what impact the missionaries had on him he said they never tried to make him convert, that they taught him many things, but that (as he put it) 'I was really there for the sweets!'[1]

Missions to Morocco

Christian missionaries are hardly newcomers to North Africa. The early Christian church flourished in North Africa, even though riven by the factionalism of Arians, Donatists, Pelagians, and Roman Catholics. In the 2nd and 3rd century North Africa was the home of martyrs such as Origen ("the greatest genius the church ever produced") and Cyprian (a Berber and master of Latin style), as well as Tertullian ("the founder of Western theology,") Augustine of Hippo, and Augustine's equally sainted Berber mother, Monica. Indeed, it remains something of a mystery how, after having been one of the new faith's most important communities, Christianity so thoroughly disappeared from the region.[2] Franciscan monks, seeking to reverse the Church's fortunes in the area, explored the religious terrain – and often suffered martyrdom – in the Middle Ages, as did the 14th century mathematician and polymath Ramon Llull, who, after becoming a lay associate of the Franciscan order, was stoned to death in Tunisia.[3]

---

1. "As a rule, before [Maud Cary, missionary in Sefrou] opened her Bible to speak to the women in their homes, she dug into her bag for a few sweet candies for the kids." Evelyn Stenbock, "*Miss Terri:*" *The Story of Maude Gary Pioneer GMU Missionary in Morocco* (Lincoln, NE: The Good News Broadcasting Association, 1970), 76. On the trip described, see Lawrence Rosen, *The Culture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 3-20.

2. See, Charles Javis Speel, II "The Disappearance of Christianity from North Africa in the Wake of the Rise of Islam," *Church History* 29, 4 (1960): 379-97.

3. See, John Tolan, " 'Saracen Philosophers Secretly Deride Islam,' " *Medieval Encounters* 8 (2-3) (2002): 200-5 and citations therein.

The modern era of Christian missionizing in Morocco really begins in the late 19th century It is true that, as early as 1834 – and intermittently from the 1840s to the1870s – Western missionaries worked in the country, but at that time they were almost exclusively seeking to convert the Jews.[4] It was in the 1890s that several British and American groups established missions in Morocco. Among them were the London-based North Africa Mission (NAM), the Scottish-based Southern Morocco Mission, and the Gospel Missionary Union (GMU) headquartered in Kansas, USA.[5] Like so many of their colleagues the missionaries tended to regard the most inhospitable places as potentially the most rewarding: In the words of a missionary to Sefrou, "While the Muslim world is considered among the most difficult to reach for Christ, we must continue to go to Muslims. As in the process of searching for rare jewels, God's finest rewards await those who search in the hardest of places."[6] Although only a handful in number, yet with extraordinary self-confidence, the proselytizers cried out (in the words uttered at his departure in 1894 by Henry Hammer of the GMU), "Lift up your eyes, Morocco, for a gleam of light is coming to you."[7] Whether that light remained forever dim or occasionally illuminating, it did play a small but perhaps not unimportant role in those parts of Morocco to which it was directed.

The focus of much of my own work in Morocco having been in the city of Sefrou and the tribal regions of the Middle Atlas Mountains to its south it is to the work of the NAM and GMU in that area that I will attend most closely. Indeed, missionaries were present in the Sefrou region from the 1890s until the 1960s.[8] Reading reports published in the NAM's journal

4. Jean-Louis Miège, "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)," *Hespéris* 42, 1-2 (1955): 154.

5. Further details of missions throughout North Africa may be found at "An Old Missionary," "Missions in North Africa," *The Muslim World* 25, 4 (1935): 391-95, and Miège, "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)." On the NAM see, Francis Rue Steele, *Not in Vain: The Story of the North Africa Mission* (Pasadena: William Carey Library Pub, 1981).

6. Ila Marie Davis, *A Gleam of Light: The Trials and Triumphs of a Century of Missionary Work in Morocco* (Kansas City, MO: Gospel Missionary Union, 1998), 168.

7. Davis, *A Gleam of Light*. The number of missionaries varied over the years: The NAM grew from 9 in 1886 to 37 at the end of the century while those from the Southern Morocco Mission remained at 19 during this period and those of the GMU grew to 13 in 1900 (Miège, "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)," 159). Including several small groups, the total in 1900 was 81, plus 17 aides, in 19 stations in the country (Miège, "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)," 190.

8. The first group of GMU missionaries arrived in Tangiers January 9, 1895, their leader calling Morocco "a land of filth, dirt, and pestilence, a land of 'Darkness, despair and death'," where (he fully expected) some of them would be martyred: George W. Collins, "Missionaries and Muslims: the Gospel Missionary Union in Morocco, 1895-1912," *Wichita State University Bulletin* 51, 3 (1975): 3. For more detail, see Dennis H. Phillips, "The American Missionary in Morocco." *The Muslim World* 65, 1 (1975): 6-8. The GMU mission in Sefrou was established in 1904; missionaries from the NAM, who entered Sefrou in the 1890s, only spent summers there for a few years. For the activities of both in Sefrou (including photos), see Davis, *A Gleam of Light*.

North Africa, the GMU's *The Gospel Message*, and having worked in the latter's unpublished archives, the moments of first contact at the turn of the 20th century come through quite vividly, particularly since the initial reception given the missionaries by the local Moroccans was quite mixed.[9] In fact, the two missionary groups did not always get along, the British at first being critical of their more aggressive American brethren whose open-air preaching and 'itinerating' in the rural areas, they feared, might make matters more difficult for everyone.[10] While the missionaries of the GMU certainly preached the gospel at every opportunity, theirs was, however, more the approach Max Weber characterized as exemplary prophecy, which "points out the path to salvation by exemplary living," rather than emissary prophecy, which "addresses its demands to the world in the name of a god."[11] Perhaps that is why, in those early days, the missionaries were largely successful in avoiding problems with the local population. This, in turn, opened the way for them to employ some medical aid and secular education as a vehicle for presenting a life they hoped Moroccans would wish to emulate.[12] Unlike missionary groups operating in many other parts of the world at the turn of the 20th c., the GMU in particular was not, it must be emphasized, oriented towards social reform or a 'civilizing mission.'[13]

---

9. "The children in the streets often reviled us and spat at us and threw stones. In the houses women frequently said they'd like to kill us or burn us alive if they dared" (Elizabeth Tryon, quoted in Collins, "Missionaries and Muslims," 8-9). By 1909, however, we read: "There is a very remarkable change in the attitude of the Fez people towards Europeans, and even we missionaries have never found them so friendly as now. The cursing and spitting in the streets, which used to be very common when a Christian passed, are now conspicuous by their absence" (*North Africa*, New Series August-September 1909, 126).

10. Writing about the GMU's activities in 1901, Stenbock, "*Miss Terri,*" 31-32) notes: "[T]he British missionaries who lived across the town [Fez] strongly disagreed with the open methods of witness used by the Americans. They differed so strongly that the excellent fellowship between the two groups was cut off completely." However, "The rift between the Americans and the British was quickly healed." (Stenbock, "*Miss Terri,*" 33). There was also a certain amount of denominational rivalry, especially between the evangelical Protestants and the French Catholic hierarchy, in the years following the establishment of the Protectorate. Moreover, theories about how to missionize among Muslims varied a good deal. See, e.g., Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 47-53. Many missionary groups advocated translating the Bible into the local languages as a key to gaining converts, but while portions were occasionally translated into Arabic and Berber to the best of my knowledge there was no complete translation into either language by these missionaries.

11. Max Weber, *From Max Weber*, eds. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 284-85.

12. Some of the NAM missionaries had medical training; none of those from the GMU did. See John Rutherfurd and Edward H. Glenny, *The Gospel in North Africa* (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1900), 198. Nevertheless, those without actual training dispensed medicines quite freely. On the missionaries' medical work, see also Miège, "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)," 175-76.

13. As one missionary later put it, the heathens "needed to be saved, not civilized; That the Missionary's business was to preach the Gospel, not to educate" (Collins, "Missionaries and Muslims, 11). That is not to say no educational work was done: In fact, the missionaries did at times separate preaching from secular education, mainly on matters of science. Initially, however, opposition in Fez led to the imprisonment of some parents who had allowed their children to attend such classes (*North Africa* 1894, 28).

Throughout their years in Morocco it is important to keep in mind, too, how few in number were the missionaries: The NAM had a total of thirty-seven in 1900, while the GMU went from a high of thirteen in 1898, to nine in 1905, and only six or seven in 1912, half of whom were always women. Spread out at different times in Fez, Meknes, Larache, El Ksar, Sefrou, and Boulmane, the Americans were stretched even thinner by illness and work in the rural areas. Reduced already by 1912 to just Meknes and Sefrou one could hardly expect them to have had a very dramatic impact on Moroccan society. And indeed, if the number of converts were the appropriate measure for any of the missionary groups their effects would approach the null point. But if impact is not to be measured in the number of converts other measures, however inexact, may be more suggestive.

Three issues thus arise when one considers the role of Christian missionaries from the English-speaking world in Morocco: First, were the missionaries valuable chroniclers of what was happening in Morocco, particularly from the late 19th c. through the early years of the Protectorate? If they were not themselves representatives of a nation seeking to colonize Morocco did this place them in a position to be more 'neutral' observers? Indeed, were their reports of use to their own governments and the colonizing forces? Second, were the missionaries in any significant sense agents of change: Were they important in most Moroccans' first contacts with Euro-Americans and were these contacts vital to the local population's introduction to Western medicine, technology, and women's roles? And thirdly, what does the current regime's approach to Christian missionaries tell us about the relation of the government to the religious parties in Morocco and to the monarchy's commitment to religious freedom? We will take up each of these considerations in turn.

Reliable Witnesses?

To what extent were the missionaries' reports accurate reflections of events and social patterns? Bias may, of course, creep in, however inadvertently, to the comments of any observer, so the question for the missionaries is whether their very objective – to promulgate the Gospel of a foreign religion – is enough to make us suspect their accounts. Perhaps surprisingly, as one reads through the missionaries' records, religious purpose and everyday observation are kept quite separate, as a result of which the missionaries appear as remarkably able and reliable witnesses for the historian and social scientist studying this period. In their letters home, in their personal diaries, and in the communications published by their organizations one can trace both their activities and the

information others would have garnered from their presence in places few if any others from the West had penetrated.[14] Historians can, therefore, mine the publications and archives of both the North Africa Mission and the Gospel Missionary Union to great advantage, especially for the period from the 1890s through the early years of the Protectorate. Consider, for example, the accounts of the events of 1894-1906 and 1911-12.

At first the information sent home by the British missionaries was rather sparse. Early in June 1894, soon after the death of the sultan Moulay el-Hassan I, the missionaries reported that it was "a time of great scarcity, almost amounting to famine, in Fez and the surrounding country," although the new crop was expected to be more abundant than usual.[15] Reports, like those of Miss Emma Herdman of the NAM, gradually began to contain details about the struggle for succession.[16] In a rare nod towards internal Moroccan politics, several of the American missionaries favored the succession of Moulay Abdelaziz, who they saw as more open to the West – which for them simply meant more open to allowing missionaries to preach the Gospel – than his father or brothers.[17] For the most part, though, at this point the missionaries were mainly concerned about finding places to live and Moroccan assistants (colporteurs) upon whom they could rely as intermediaries.[18] True, there were those who saw a connection between their presence and the great powers vying for control of Morocco, but there is no evidence that these missionaries ever served as direct agents of their respective home governments. Yet the information they conveyed was noted by Western representatives. In succeeding years the missionaries reported on very local matters others may have missed: They noted, for example, that smallpox was so prevalent that "as a result, children are scare in Moorish homes, and there are very few

14. The publications of the two main missionary groups are: *North Africa* a monthly from the North Africa Mission, originally called the Mission to the Kabyles and other Berber Races of North Africa, that first began publication in London in December 1884, and *The Gospel Message* which was published by the GMU beginning in 1892.

15. *North Africa*, Oct. (1894): 119.

16. Albert J. Issacs, *A Biographical Sketch of Emma Herdman* (London: S. W. Partridge, 1900), 62.

17. For background on Abdelaziz, see *The Gospel Message*, October 1902. On May 20, 1903 Mr. Welliver, commenting on the tribal rebellions in the country, writes from Larache: "As we believe a stable government to be a divinely appointed institution, we must needs pray God to send us such, and to reestablish the throne of Mulai Abd al Aziz, if he be God's chosen minister." *The Gospel Message* June (1903): 12. Abdelaziz remained sultan until 1908.

18. In the case of Sefrou, I actually met the Berber from the I'awen fraction of the Ait Youssi Hamou ou Jel, who served as colporteur for the GMU missionaries at the turn of the century. The relationship was mixed: At one point, Clinton Reed reports that while they were away Hamou sold their belongings and made off with the proceeds (*The Gospel Message* March 1909); at another, when his fellow villagers objected to the missionary's presence, Hamou dared anyone to attack his guest, saying "He hasn't taken your sheep or your wives: he just prays. So leave him be." Interview with retired missionary Don Petersen, GMU, Smithville, MO., November 17, 1970.

large families,"[19] or something of the tone of the times as in the story of the 'Moorish gentleman' in Sefrou who told them that one good man could get forty of his neighbors into heaven, "but I don't know a man good enough in Sefroo or Fez to be able to do it."[20] As the missionaries of both the NAM and GMU became more familiar with the country and more adept at the language their reports dealt increasingly with local political conditions.

The reports are especially good on the local circumstances in the Sefrou area during the turn of the 20th century when the pasha of the city and qaid of the Ait Youssi, Omar al-Youssi, was in power. Appreciating that Sefrou was "so situated as to be a 'strategic point'," the NAM correspondent detailed the tribal fights occurring throughout the region.[21] Similarly detailed information was given about the Zaian leader, Moha ou Hamou, tribal succession fights in the Middle Atlas in the years after Qaid Omar al-Youssi was killed in 1904, and the events in 1909 involving such key opponents of the sultan as Bouhamara and Muhammad al-Kittani.[22] Perhaps most striking are the accounts of 1911 and 1912 from Fez and the surrounding region.[23] Missionaries from the GMU were in both Sefrou and Fez at the time and reported on the rebellion of the sultan's troops, the activities of the region's tribes, and the attitudes towards the sultan in the run-up to the French Protectorate. The missionaries' reports are noteworthy for their focus on local events and the effects on Moroccans of various social backgrounds.

Several points, then, become clear from reading the missionaries' accounts. First, the missionaries are highly circumstantial in their description of local events. They are not simply enumerating the frequency of their preaching or the numbers of people to whom they have given medical aid, nor do they simply reaffirm their faith or repeat pious platitudes. It may be true that they expect the readers of their published letters to picture their daily life and to make financial contributions to the work accordingly, and certainly, too, the style of writing can feed into the readers' expectation of the heroic missionary in a distant land of unbelief. But these accounts are also available to another readership, namely the politicians and government officials who would have

19. *North Africa* Jan. (1898): 5-6, containing a letter from Miss Dennison dated Oct. 13, 1897.

20. *North Africa*, September (1893): 105-6

21. *North Africa*, October (1901): 114. See also reports by the American missionaries for this period, *The Gospel Message* April (1901): 2 and June 1901, 2.

22. On Moha ou Hamou, see *North Africa* January 1905 and March 1905; on the continuing chaos following the death of Qaid Omar al-Youssi, see *The Gospel Message* June 1907; on Bouhamara and al-Kittani, see *The Gospel Message*, May 1909; for an account claiming the chaos of the countryside in 1909 has been exaggerated, see *North Africa* August-September 1909.

23. See, especially, *The Gospel Message* for May through September 1911, and Mr. Reed's account from Fez in *The Gospel Message* June 1912.

found in them precisely the sort of local detail no other respondent was making available. Indeed, there are indications that, while not directly servicing the officials' needs for intelligence, the missionaries' reports were read and were important to those who had an interest in which European powers were going to control Morocco at this critical time. Thus, in the period 1890-1905, as Miège[24] claims, missionaries undoubtedly played something of a political role: "Their implantation in the heart of the country, their knowledge of the language and customs, their relations with important officials allowed them to be valued sources of information." Though Miège is careful to note that it is difficult to tell how important their information was, it does appear that at times diplomats found the missionaries' information highly useful even when, at other moments, they found their proselytizing ardor potentially disruptive to their own government's relations with the Moroccan state.[25] In a more measured assessment Collins[26] argues that while the GMU sought assistance in the enforcement of the Anglo-American treaty of 1856 granting foreigners the right to rent or lease housing the missionaries never pressed for American involvement in Morocco: "One may conclude…that while missionaries elsewhere may have been fundamental forces for American intervention and imperial expansion, that was not the case in Morocco."[27]

Whatever the uses made of their messages home, the missionaries were, then, remarkably unbiased in their reporting. Jeremiads aimed at Islam and its adherents' moral condition were almost always set apart from reporting about on-the-ground events. And because their only real political concerns related to their ability to conduct proselytizing activities they rarely expressed opinions affecting the interests of their home states. In sum, the missionaries' reports are accurate, contain a level of local color not found elsewhere, and are sufficiently separable from their remarks as proselytizers that a high degree of reliability inheres in the accounts they left behind.

Agents of Change?

For all the merits of their descriptions, the main concern of the missionaries, of course, was converting non-believers. While other missionary organizations made social reform programs integral to their calling, this was not true for the British and even less so for the Americans. As Collins notes

24. Miège, "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)," 182.

25. Ibid., 182; See also the incidents mentioned by Miège, ibid.,185-86.

26. Collins, "Missionaries and Muslims," 16.

27. For examples of the missionaries using the American consul to press for their right to housing, see also Phillips, "The American Missionary in Morocco," 11; Phillips, "The American Missionary in Morocco," 20 concludes: "American missionaries to Morocco conceived of themselves as servants of God, not offshoots of an American cultural tradition."

of the GMU, "in terms of field activities it had little interest in sociological considerations."[28] Although the Americans rejected operating primarily as a medical or educational mission they did have available Western medicines and techniques that were valuable to communities that were subject to both endemic and adventitious ailments. The numbers of those vaccinated and otherwise receiving medical attention from all the different missionary groups operating in Morocco in this period are, if accurate, truly astonishing: some 350,000 by 1900, not including home visits and hospitalizations.[29]

Impressive as such numbers are impact is not easily reduced to a single metric. If one were to assess the missionaries' effects one would have to consider three domains in particular: the demonstration of scientific accomplishment, the interpersonal effects of encounters with a Westerner (perhaps most notably that involving women), and the missionaries' limited but perhaps not wholly insignificant impact as suppliers of information about the economy of the country.

Many Moroccans learned about Western science and technology well in advance of the colonial period through their encounters with the missionaries. For example, the Muslims took readily to vaccination which "brings great crowds of them, as they are very anxious to have the small-pox 'taken out' of their children."[30] Astronomy appears to have been a subject some Moroccans found especially intriguing. Mission houses also demonstrated electricity as soon as it became available and their use of photography may have intrigued the Moroccans.

Of great significance was the encounter of Moroccan women with the female missionaries. It is noteworthy that nearly half of the missionaries of all groups were women, usually single (though a number did marry fellow missionaries in the field). "The women missionaries often dressed in native garb and gained access without difficulty into the feminine confines of Moroccan homes."[31] Thus, without having as their main purpose bringing Morocco into the new world of science and technology or creating programs for change in the position of women the missionaries did have the effect of demonstrating what another world might look like to many who were seeing its claims and products for the first time. Their presence, always problematic

28. Collins, "Missionaries and Muslims," 11.

29. Miège, "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)," 176.

30. *North Africa* June (1911): 88.

31. Phillips, "The American Missionary in Morocco," 14. Even after the French established local dispensaries, one NAM missionary writes, "The women generally prefer to come to the missionaries, though they are not qualified doctors, rather than to French officials, as they meet with more sympathy from them," *North Africa*, New Series May-June (1917): 37.

to Moroccan officials, was, however, to grow no less challenging in recent years even as their activities were diminishing.

Current Situation of Christian Missionaries

To a number of Moroccan Muslims the presence of any Christian missionaries has been a serious irritant while to the monarchy it has had to be balanced against Western opinion and aid. So long as the missionaries were relatively circumspect the government has let them remain in the country. At various times during even the most recent decade the Moroccan government, responding in part to the promptings of the religious parties, has, however, expelled missionaries, closed their charitable facilities, and intimidated some of the roughly 1500 Moroccans reported to have converted to Christianity.[32] Interdenominational problems have also resurfaced: A 2008 report (Pfeiffer 2008) noted:

> "Archbishop Vincent Landel told Reuters he would not baptize a Moroccan convert as it is against the law. He said U.S.-funded missionaries had made life harder for the Roman Catholic church in north Africa. "It upsets everything because all these evangelical converts lack restraint and discretion – they do any old thing," he said. "And to Muslims there's no difference between a Catholic, an evangelist or a Protestant, so in their minds the head of all the Christians must be the Catholic Archbishop." Islamic leaders say missionaries exploit people with a weak understanding of their religion, target the poor and the sick and try to win over north Africa's Berbers by telling them Islam was imposed on them by Arabs. "These are unethical methods," said Mohammed Yessef, general secretary of the Superior Council of Ulemas, Morocco's highest religious authority. "Islam is the religion of God. It is neither Arab nor Berber. When people respond positively (to missionaries), it is when they don't have their full freedom," said Yessef. "Once they recover their normal health and situation, they recover their ability to decide."

Other incidents occurred around the same time. In late March 2009 it was reported that Morocco "has expelled five Christian missionaries because they were 'illegally' trying to convert Muslims to Christianity," the four Spaniards and a German woman having been detained after meeting

32. For the number of Moroccan Christians, see Tom Pfeiffer, "Christian Missionaries Stir Unease in North Africa," *Reuters World News*, December 5, (2008): http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2008/12/15/christian-missionaries-stir-unease-in-north-africa/. Numbers, however, vary enormously and no exact count can be regarded as wholly reliable. Foreign missionaries had been ordered out of the country on earlier occasions: In 1967 they were given eight days to leave. See, e.g., Dave Jackson and Neta Jackson, *Risking the Forbidden Game* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2002), 151; Davis, *A Gleam of Light*, 126-28; and Stenbock, "*Miss Terri,*" 139-40.

with Moroccan converts in Casablanca.[33] One year later, as *The Economist* reported, a similar action was taken against "Christian missionaries who ran the "Village of Hope" home for children 80km (50 miles) south of Fez…The 16 aid-workers had cared for abandoned children for over a decade when, in March, the Moroccan authorities sent inspectors to the orphanage, then gave the workers a few days' notice to leave the country. Witnesses reported distraught farewells between the Moroccan children and the foreigners who had acted as foster parents."[34] The Arab Spring, which led to public protests and a new Moroccan constitution, added to the tensions, with debates over religious freedom unresolved and, in some instances, converts having been reportedly detained, beaten, and intimidated.[35]

In the early years of the present century the few remaining mission groups had also reduced their presence, operated clandestinely, or left Morocco altogether. In 2001 the GMU changed its name and overall orientation worldwide. Known now as Avant Ministries they seek to implant self-sustaining churches in various countries, Morocco not being among them.[36] Assistance from American administrations, who have not prioritized the rights of Christians in northern Africa, has not been forthcoming: The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, for example, does not monitor any of the North African countries.[37] Yet despite the tiny numbers of missionaries and their few converts Western missionization continues to be a

33. Worthy News Staff, "Morocco Expels Christian Missionaries," *Worthy News*, March 29, (2009): https://www.worthynews.com/5371-morocco-expels-christian-missionaries. The report continues: "The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) of Kentucky works in several Moroccan cities, often with refugees passing through the country from sub-Saharan Africa…. It is not clear if they are still in-country after recent expulsions."

34. *The Economist*, "Morocco's Evangelical Christians: Stop Preaching or Get Out," *The Economist*, July 29, (2010): https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2010/07/29/stop-preaching-or-get-out.

35. Graves 2015, who further notes: "Attempting to convert a Muslim to another religion – also called 'shaking the faith of a Muslim' – is a crime punishable with up to three years imprisonment and a substantial fine, though recently there has been discussion to delete the law." The few converts made at the end of the 19th c. were treated even worse: See the story of one such convert at Phillips, "The American Missionary in Morocco," 13. See also Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Morocco: The situation of individuals who abjure Islam (who apostatize), including their treatment by society and by the authorities; the repercussions of a fatwa of the High Council of Ulemas condemning apostates to death, including the reaction of the government (2016-April 2018)* (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2018) and Tony Assaf, "Maroc: La conversion de musulmans su christianisme soulève la colère dans le pays." *Aleteia*, March 30, (2015): https://fr.aleteia.org/2015/03/30/maroc-la-conversion-de-musulmans-au-christianisme-souleve-la-colere-dans-le-pays/.

36. See https://avantministries.org/about (accessed August 5, 2019).

37. https://www.uscirf.gov/all-countries. Indeed, it is unclear how serious the Trump administration is about pursuing the treatment of Christians and others within their broader foreign policy perspective. See, Mattathias Schwartz, "The 'Religious Freedom' Agenda," *The Atlantic*, July 16, (2019): https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/07/trump-administration-religious-freedom/594040/.

point of irritation to the more fundamentalist political parties and a convenient whipping boy in attempts to move the regime farther along their preferred path. As a result, it is very unlikely that, covert missionizing aside, there will be a resurgence of Christian missionizing in any part of North Africa in the foreseeable future.

The missionaries failed in their central goal – the conversion of Moroccans to Christianity. Exact numbers of converts are not available but clearly there was only a handful. In Sefrou itself I know of only two in nearly three-quarters of a century.[38] Self-doubt appears often in the missionaries' reports: Two missionaries who served for long periods in Morocco are said to have destroyed their diaries, so disappointed were they in the wasted efforts of a lifetime.[39] The pattern was set early on: In 1909 Clinton Reed wrote, "we cannot recall a single instance of true conversion, and not more than one of real awakening."[40] Many factors may have contributed to this overall failure: the lack of any clear plan by the missionaries, the security Moroccan Muslims had in their own identity, the people's long history of managing contacts with foreigners. And yet, the encounter of Middle Eastern Muslim and Middle Western Evangelical may be seen as a story of mutual toleration. The encounter may simply have helped to articulate and reinforce existing patterns rather than alter or undermine either. But even in that separate reassurance there was recognition that a portion of oneself was held – held even in trust –by others who were true to their faith. The final assessment offered by Miège is, therefore, a fair one:

> "les missionaires aient contribué largement à atténuer le préjugé xénophobe des marocains (…). Ils donnaient aussi des européens une autre image que celle fournie par les négociants uniquement voués à leurs intèrêts ou par les affairistes peu scrupuleux si nombreux dans les

38. This number was confirmed by one of the missionaries I interviewed at the GMU headquarters in 1970. The names are given in Stenbock, "*Miss Terri,*" 138, and Jackson and Jackson, *Risking the Forbidden Game*, 1; 150, where they become the subjects of a fictional story. See generally the assessment by Miège, "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)," 184-85. See Stenbock, "*Miss Terri,*" 56) where, for example, she says there were no converts in El Ksar ("city of disappointment') and her statement about converts at the beginning of her biography of Maud Cary: "No one knows their number. Some who were baptized were insincere. Some who were sincere were not baptized," in Stenbock, "*Miss Terri,*" 5.

39. Self-doubt was, however, a trope among missionaries and it is not easy to determine when the criticism of oneself and others was genuine or an expected style of personal assessment. See, e.g., *The Gospel Message*, September (1908): 2. See also, Stenbock, "*Miss Terri,*" 46. For an example involving Maude Cary ('Miss Terri'), who spent many years in Sefrou.

40. *The Gospel Message,* May (1909): 2. Victor Swanson also writes: "What I have accomplished since coming here may not seem very much, for no soul has been turned from darkness to light." *The Gospel Message*, November (1909): 2. George Reed, too, writes: "But, alas! We have no evidence that a single soul has received the sweet story," *The Gospel Message,* December (1908): 2.

port du pays (…). Dans l'ouverture du Maroc de la fin du xix siècle, dans la conquête pacifique de ses populations les missions ont joué un role non négligeable."[41]

On her first day in Morocco in July 1892 NAM missionary Emma Herdman tells of going down the street of Tangiers "watching for souls."[42] As the generation of those who had contact with western missionaries passes from the scene the image, to say nothing of the substance, of the proselytizers' gaze – and the reciprocal gaze of the ever-present Moroccan 'souls' – will simply fade away. For all their facility with the local languages and the perceptiveness of their reporting of local events, the missionaries, in their passing acquaintance, never really knew the Moroccans, nor did the latter quite know them. And yet each sensed the authenticity and basic civility of the other. The missionaries' role in the contact Morocco made with the west will, then, remain a source of interest for those who wish to fully understand the nation's history and some of the terms that were set by the encounter of Muslim and Christian, an impact that may continue to reverberate for a number of years after the missionaries themselves have departed.

Bibliography

"An Old Missionary." "Missions in North Africa." *The Muslim World* 25, 4 (1935): 391-95.

Assaf, Tony. "Maroc: La conversion de musulmans su christianisme soulève la colère dans le pays." *Aleteia*, March 30, (2015): https://fr.aleteia.org/2015/03/30/maroc-la-conversion-de-musulmans-au-christianisme-souleve-la-colere-dans-le-pays/

Collins, George W. "Missionaries and Muslims: The Gospel Missionary Union in Morocco, 1895-1912." *Wichita State University Bulletin* 51, 3 (1975): 3-17.

Davis, Ila Marie. *A Gleam of Light: The Trials and Triumphs of a Century of Missionary Work in Morocco*. Kansas City, MO: Gospel Missionary Union, 1998.

The *Economist*. "Morocco's Evangelical Christians: Stop Preaching or Get Out." *The Economist*, July 29, (2010): https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2010/07/ 29/stop-preaching-or-get-out.

Graves, Karen. "Christians in Morocco: A Crisis of Faith." *U.S. News*, September 30, (2015): https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/09/30/christians-in-morocco-a-crisis-of-faith.

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. *Morocco: The situation of individuals who abjure Islam (who apostatize), including their treatment by society and by the authorities; the repercussions of a fatwa of the High Council of Ulemas condemning apostates to death, including the reaction of the government (2016-April 2018)*. Canada: Canada https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=search&docid=5b2281dd4&skip=0&query=Morocco%20apostasy.

Issacs, Albert J. *A Biographical Sketch of Emma Herdman*. London: S. W. Partridge, 1900.

41. Miège, "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)," 186.
42. *North Africa*, July (1892): 77.

Jackson, Dave and Neta Jackson. *Risking the Forbidden Game*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2002.

Kidd, Thomas S. *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Miège, Jean-Louis. "Les missions protestantes au Maroc (1875-1905)." *Hespéris* 42, 1-2 (1955): 153-92.

Pfeiffer, Tom. "Christian Missionaries Stir Unease in North Africa." *Reuters World News*, December 5, 2008: http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2008/12/15/christian-missionaries- stir-unease-in-north-africa/.

Phillips, Dennis H. "The American Missionary in Morocco." *The Muslim World* 65, 1 (1975): 1-20.

Rosen, Lawrence. *The Culture of Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Rutherfurd, John and Edward H. Glenny. *The Gospel in North Africa*. London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1900.

Schwartz, Mattathias. "The 'Religious Freedom' Agenda." *The Atlantic*, July 16, 2019: https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/07/trump-administration-religious-freedom/594040/.

Speel, Charles Javis, II. "The Disappearance of Christianity from North Africa in the Wake of the Rise of Islam." *Church History* 29, 4 (1960): 379-97.

Steele, Francis Rue. *Not in Vain: The Story of the North Africa Mission*. Pasadena: William Carey Library Pub, 1981.

Stenbock, Evelyn. "*Miss Terri:*" *The Story of Maude Gary Pioneer GMU Missionary in Morocco*. Lincoln, NE: The Good News Broadcasting Association, 1970.

Tolan, John. " 'Saracen Philosophers Secretly Deride Islam.' " *Medieval Encounters* 8 2-3 (2002): 184-208.

Weber, Max. *From Max Weber*, eds. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946.

Worthy News Staff. "Morocco Expels Christian Missionaries." *Worthy News*, March 29, (2009): https://www.worthynews.com/5371-morocco-expels-christian-missionaries

لقاءات تبشيرية: التواصل المغربي مع الآخر الوافد من الغرب

ملخص: عمل مبشرون من الولايات المتحدة والمملكة المتحدة في المغرب منذ أواخر القرن التاسع عشر حتى الوقت الحاضر. لقد تم طردهم بشكل متقطع مع فرض الحصار على توزيعهم للأدبيات المسيحية، وبينما كان عدد الأشخاص الذين نجحوا في تغيير دينهم ضئيلًا، لا يمكن استبعاد تأثيرهم على المجتمع المغربي المحلي بالكامل. ومن خلال الاستناد في العمل على مصادر أصلية، وزيارات إلى المقرات التبشيرية ودراسة أرشيفها وتقاريرها المنشورة، وكذلك من خلال المقابلات العديدة مع المغاربة ممن كانوا على اتصال بهم على مدار عقود عديدة، سأركز على تجربة الاتصال التبشيري في مدينة صفرو (وإلى حد أكثر محدودية فاس) في محاولة للإجابة عن ثلاثة أسئلة: كيف تصرفت هذه الشخصيات الدينية كعوامل للإسهام في "التحديث؟" ولماذا كانوا محترمين للغاية، ومع ذلك غير فعالين في هدفهم التأسيسي، وبأي طريقة يمكن أن تكون تجربة اللقاء مع المبشرين المسيحيين قد سهّلت وأحبطت في الوقت ذاته محاولات دعاة الأصولية الإسلامية وجهودهم في الآونة الأخيرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مسيحيون، مبشرون، صفرو، المغرب، الإسلام، فاس، التحديث.

Rencontres missionnaires: L'engagement marocain avec l'autre occidental

Résumé: Des missionnaires des États-Unis et du Royaume-Uni ont opéré au Maroc de la fin du 19e siècle à nos jours. Bien qu'ils aient été expulsés par intermittence et que leur distribution de littérature ait été réduite – et même si le nombre de personnes qu'ils ont réussi à convertir était insignifiant – leur impact sur la société marocaine locale ne peut être totalement écarté. Travaillant à partir de sources originales, lors de visites au siège des missionnaires, et d'études de leurs archives, de comptes rendus publiés, ainsi que de nombreux entretiens avec des Marocains qui ont été en contact avec eux au cours de plusieurs décennies, je me concentrerai sur l'expérience du contact missionnaire dans la ville de Sefrou (et dans une mesure plus limitée Fès). Comment ces personnalités religieuses ont agi en tant qu'agents de "modernisation?" Pourquoi elles étaient si respectées mais si inefficaces dans l'atteinte de leur objectif fondamental? De quelle manière l'expérience de rencontrer des missionnaires chrétiens peut avoir à la fois facilité et frustré les agents du fondamentalisme islamique ces derniers temps?

Mots-clés: Chrétiens, missionnaires, Sefrou, Maroc, Islam, Fès, modernisation.