

of them have next to no idea of what Christians believe except for the little (and that distorted) that they have learnt in Qur'anic classes. Some girls even had no idea what religion I might be expected to follow as a European and a non-Muslim. And these are university students!

In my contacts with many students I let it be generally known that I am a committed Christian and am willing to talk about what I believe. However, I find that scarcely anyone admits to ever having seen the *Injil* or to having had any exposure whatsoever to Christian witness of any kind.

The very few exceptions are girls who are exceptional anyway. One friend, for instance, ordered a BCC course. But she is interested in everything and can hold forth on any subject. But because of being involved in so many things, she has never found time to actually do her Bible Correspondence course. Another girl who has had contact with the Radio School of the Bible also has very wide interests and does not live with her family.

Many are willing to talk about Islam and listen to what I have to say. However, because of the lack of previous exposure and the lack of experience generally in thinking about issues outside their small circle of vision, moving from there to talking about *my* faith is a slow process. Often girls who wear the *hijab* are the most open to talk. They seem to respect me for being a serious believer. One even prefers spending time with me rather than with other Muslims because she approves of my morals!

In my opinion, to reach girls and young women, more Christian women need to move into into situations where they have daily contact with Muslim young people. And we need to pray for young Moroccan Christian girls and women that they would have boldness for a discrete witness amongst those they study and work with.

MUSLIM WOMEN IN DIASPORA

by M.A.

[Although written several years ago, the following article illustrates well the conflict of cultures experienced by second-generation immigrants from Muslim lands to the western world. So many elements of the climate described still prevail among Muslim women in diaspora that we consider it worth printing. Ed.]

Only a very small number of Arabs have become integrated into French culture. The rest are painfully struggling to adhere to their traditional Muslim culture. Although having changed countries physically, they have not changed mentally, emotionally, culturally or socially. This results in unhappiness, frustration, segregation and complexes (inferiority OR superiority), all of which, sadly and perhaps permanently, affect the young people of the family, and especially the young women.

One of my young Algerian friends said, "I must constantly play the game of submission to my parents' strict Muslim code while I am European in my thinking and a rebel at heart. Some day I MUST leave to make my own life. But no matter what I am or do, I will

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always be an Arab! I have no desire to live loosely (as my parents think all European girls live), but only to have freedom to have friends, fellows and girls; freedom to decide as to my future; freedom to choose my husband."

That same young lady, along with a girlfriend, soon ran away from home as she said she would. The oppression became too much for them. They felt they were up against a wall and could never penetrate it while living at home. Both of these girls sent us poems they composed just before leaving home. The dominant theme of the poems is this: "If I stay at home I'll be stifled, never be myself, and never amount to anything; if I leave home I face an uncertain future, unhappiness, loneliness. Where to go? To whom to turn?"

Arabs seek to enforce the same social and moral code for females in France as in North Africa, but have to fight very hard to maintain the same restrictions. They tend to over-react as they feel the need to contend with the bad morals of the new land! The resulting rigidity and injustice drives many unhappy girls to leave home and seek refuge in boarding houses for just such young women. Here they are protected from their parents (if they are of age) and are given jobs and/or taught trades.

There are many young married women whose husbands reluctantly give them the freedom to come and go as they please, and sometimes to hold jobs. Others are kept in their homes and don't go out unless with their husbands; still another few are LOCKED in when the husbands are out!!

Another of my young friends, a pretty, intelligent and outgoing girl, turned from radiant to depressed overnight as, according to the traditional customs of her elderly parents, she was married to a man she had never met and spent her 'honeymoon' with him in the small apartment of his sister and husband whom she had never met either! She is educated and Europeanized, her new husband is fresh out of Algeria, has never had an education, and hardly knows French! It was heartbreaking to see this lovely girl so unhappy when she should have been radiant following her wedding! Happily, she has a Bible and I pray she will find an inner peace in Jesus.

BOOK REVIEW

by D. Smith

The Harem Within by Fatima Mernissi, U. K. published by Doubleday 1994, published by Bantam 1995, 254 pages. £5.99 (Bantam)

Fatima Mernissi delights the reader with fascinating tales of her childhood in Fez, Morocco in the 1940s, a period of political and social transition. Her grandmother had been one of nine wives, while her mother, the only wife, was kept enclosed in her husband's family home with his mother as her boss. The concept of the harem, which inspired her tales, is defined by Mernissi as the men's desire to seclude their wives and their wish to maintain an extended household rather than break into nuclear units.