

SEEDBED

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The main articles in this issue concentrate on **FAMILY IN THE ARAB WORLD**. The first outlines the **dynamics of relationships** in the Arab family, and especially the trauma of conversion, as experienced by an insider. The second considers the **effect of media** on the family today. The third, a study of childhood in Morocco, largely typifies childhood throughout the Arab world. The fourth article is a preview of a series of 26 parable/allegory stories to make the Gospel attractive to the family-oriented Arab-Muslim society.

As we mentioned in the first issue of Volume XI, 1996 has been a transitional year for *Seedbed*. As of the first issue of 1997 we will be introducing several changes to make the periodical more reader-friendly. We will, however, maintain our primary focus on field-related issues and needs.

We want to continue receiving input from your perspective. The general themes for 1997 will be: **1) Pre-Evangelism; 2) Evangelism; 3) Discipleship; 4) Church Planting**. We would be particularly interested in case studies and strategies or contextualisation methods being effectively used in any or all of those broad categories. Contributions can be sent by e-mail, fax, or snail-mail. Input from your corner of ministry will almost certainly be helpful to others in theirs.

The Structure and Effect of the Arab Muslim family on Ministry

by Abu Atallah

Introduction

Understanding the Arab family is essential for an effective ministry among Arab Muslims. Family dynamics greatly affect and influence our strategies of ministry.

Definition and Function

Arabs live in a strict patrilineal society. The Arab family is the most important institution, economically, politically and socially, in Arab society. Family groups stick together and try hard to assist each other in obtaining jobs and setting up businesses. Arabs tend to see themselves in relation to others, as members of groups, or in the context of their structural roles. They rarely think of themselves as individuals with unique potentials to develop or unique needs to satisfy. Most Arabs are still not conscious of an independent 'I', but live rooted in the 'we' of their clan. They have the spirit of fellowship in the extended family 'we' rather than the isolation of the Individual 'I'. All of village life is centered around the family. The strongest woman in an extended family may exert influence over hundreds of people. An Arabic proverb says "A Mother is like a school. If she is good she can educate and leave an impression on many generations. If she is not good she can destroy generations."

Honor (*sharaf*) and shame (*a'yb*) are perhaps the two most important controlling factors in Arab society. It is very important, therefore, to understand what these mean to the individual within this society. An Arab either honors his/her entire group by doing a good act or shames the entire group by bad behavior. The individual is responsible to the family, and the family to the tribe or community. If an individual commits wrong, the family and community will be held responsible, and if wrong is done to an individual his family and community automatically support him. (Among the Bedouin, if someone is killed and a truce is not quickly settled, a life will be taken to restore the family honor.) The father is responsible for his sons and especially his daughters. If a girl does something wrong with a man, the family honor is at stake. There are cases when the brother kills her and/or the man who wronged her. The law takes into consideration "*defense of life, property and honor*," and lenient sentence may be given for such crimes, e.g. three to seven years' imprisonment, rather than hanging.

The Family is an important institution, not only in the Arab world, but in all of the Islamic world. Mr. Khurshid Ahmad, chairman of the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, writing on *Family Life in Islam* says, "*It is the family that provides the most congenial climate for the development and fulfillment of human personality. Marriage and family in Islam should be studied. We refuse to accept the value-neutral approach that willy-nilly fashions the life and perspectives of man in the secular culture of the West today. We think the disintegration of the family in the West is, in part, a result of the confusion about the place and role of the family in society and about the purpose of life itself.*" In a 1979 article entitled **Precept and Practice of Human Rights in Islam**,

A.A. Said wrote, "*The West places more emphasis on rights, while Islam values obligations. The Western tradition posits freedom in order to avoid the outcome of a despotic system while Islam emphasizes virtue as a goal to perpetuate the traditions of society that often support a coercive system. The West emphasizes individual interests while Islam values collective good.*" Said 1979,77

The Arab Muslim family is an extended family, normally with three or four generations within its circle. Social life is based on ancient traditions and on the teachings of the Qur'an. A third of the legal injunctions in the Qur'an deal with family matters. It speaks about the relationship between parents and children: "Show kindness to parents ...lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness." (Q 17:23-24; also 29:8; 31:14,15; 46:15-18) It also deals with the network of rights and obligations that provide the basis for family life.

In modern times Arabic society is in transition. Movies, technology, political and economical upheaval, struggles between governments and fundamentalists (Islamists) and wars are creating irresistible change in their culture. Urban culture is replacing old traditions. Whole clans can no longer find enough space to live together since the apartments are only planned for families with two to four children. Social security is becoming necessary everywhere because the supporting capacity of the clan system is disintegrating. Half of the population in Arab societies are young people under the age of twenty years.

Case Studies

The following stories illustrate the impact of the family on the process of conversion. When a Muslim leaves his faith, not only does it bring great disgrace to his family, but it also often means severance from the "we" in which he was rooted and anchored. This rupture is deeper and broader than we can imagine.

1.This recent incident may be not related to the family, but it illustrates the pressure of society and using the importance of the family as a deterrent to conversion . The Islamic Egyptian scholar Nasr Abu Zaid wrote and taught about modernizing Islamic thought. As a consequence he was declared Kafir (infidel) and the religious authorities moved to annul his marriage because a Muslim woman must not be married to a non-Muslim. So he and his wife fled to Holland.

2.Just a few weeks ago a friend in the Middle East was threatened that his marriage would be annulled if he did not go back to Islam. He has three children. For an Arab this can be one of the most difficult decisions they have to make in a life time. It is easier to make a decision to follow Christ than a decision to abandon his family. This bond is the most sacred bond, closely related to that of honor.We need to bear in mind the collective good of the family of each Muslim-Background Believer (MBB). We need to pay attention to their felt needs as families. Many times we are so interested in baptizing people right away that we neglect their family and their spiritual maturity.

3. Z. Is a Shiite mother whose husband died many years ago. She raised her five children till they were adults. Now she is interested in marrying a Durzi man. Because of this her children abandoned her. She can't work since she is not educated. She has to choose between her children or her husband-to-be. This is not an easy choice for a mother. This

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is the kind of pressure that Arabs apply on each person who becomes a Christian or marries a non-Muslim. We need to think of ways by which mothers, daughters and sisters can stay within their family or prepare ahead of time how to deal with a situation like the above. Can or should we have different teams far apart from each other so we can relocate people from one area to the other? Should we find alternative jobs for MBBs to enable them to provide for their family? All of these legitimate questions need to be asked before the fact, not after it.

4.N. Is a young woman who became a Christian. When the family found out, they arranged a marriage to her Muslim cousin. From their point of view that took care of the problem. She eventually returned to Islam. This brings up the whole issue of Muslim single women and their relationship to their family, plus the whole issue of marriage. I have heard about a case which involved taking a woman out from North Africa and placing her in the West. She has no job, no support, and is forced to live on welfare.

5. When I became a Christian my mother told me that "what is in the heart is in the heart." The family asked me to continue to go to the mosque, so that people would stop talking and no problem would be caused. The important part of such a situation is that people not know. I was forced to abandon my education. This meant no vocation, no income and no financial stability. My relationship with my family was severed. Only now after twenty years am I renewing the relationship to witness to them. Maybe this does not set well with those who feel that one has immediately to confess his faith publicly. I suggest this as a temporary measure till the MBB stands on his/her feet, spirituality and economically, in order to be self-supportive and mature in the faith.

Lessons to be Learned

The question is, "What is the relevance of the family to our ministry among Muslims?" Understanding of the family has a great deal to contribute to our strategies of evangelism. We need to bear in mind the family dynamics as we witness to Arab friends. Many Arabs, including me, have been greatly influenced and nourished through the warmth and support of their family. What they miss the most is being close to the family. The feeling of belonging to the family and the clan is one of the most important factors in witnessing to Muslims. Many Arab Muslims who came to Christ have gone back because of the great loss of family support..

Gallantry and generosity is closely linked with hospitality. Many know the importance of eating as a family in the Middle East. Eating itself is a by-product of the fellowship and solidarity that people of the Middle East

There is an Arabic proverb that says "Eat whatever you like at home. But dress according to what people like outside." It is very important to know that the question Arabs ask is not what is right or wrong, but rather, "What will people say?" This may shape how we present the whole issue of sin in a shame rather than a guilt culture. It should also make us realize that many Muslims interested in Christianity would not share that interest in front of family members or other people.

Marriage and societal reconciliation also happen through family or friends. This should open a role for us to help out and witness about Christian marriage. I have done that on many occasions, especially in the context of marriage reconciliation.

We have to rethink our approach as far as the family is concerned. It is very important not to compromise the position of the individual within the family, at least initially. If it is at all possible, we should keep MBBs within their families. We need to consider the optimum timing for MBBs to publicly declare their new faith. I have seen too many people publicize their conversion prematurely. The resulting publicity forces the family to defend their honor before neighbors and community. If the conversion is not publicly known, the MBB may have an opportunity to stay and minister to his/her family. One MBB was asked not to tell some of his extended family that he had become a Christian. This situation created a dilemma for that person. But he respected their wishes. This opened an opportunity to get to know that person from the extended family and build a relationship. Sometimes it is wise not to say anything at all in terms of verbal profession of faith.

We need to think of the immediate family if the MBB is the breadwinner. I believe what happened with Robert Hussein in Kuwait will eventually have a toll on his family as it will also certainly affect him later on. I hope we learn a few lessons from that whole experience.

Our teaching and sharing should emphasize images of the church that have implications to the family. The body, the branches of the vine, the vineyard, the olive tree, the building, the bride, (see Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press 1960)

We have to provide for the MBB all the means to help feel part of the family of God (The Church). Discipleship and fellowship are very crucial after conversion. The whole issue of belonging and loneliness must be addressed.

We need to research who makes the decisions in the family. Who does the family listen to? Where does the major opposition come from? This person can influence the whole family. This person is often the defender of the honor of the family also, and it is on his shoulders to isolate and exterminate the cause of shame.

Living in a big city may lessen the effect of the family. But in urban settings there is also a greater need to belong to some kind of group or people to fill the gap of the family. The less family and neighbor pressure there is, the more Muslims will be able to listen and make individual choices.

We need to think doubly hard if the MBBs are women. We need to support them and understand the dilemma they face if divorced or forced to get married to a Muslim relative. Females are more vulnerable than males.

We need to help MBBs become better family members than they were before their conversion. This way they can be more credible with their family. It keeps the ways of

communication open, we need to work as teams with spouses and their children. In a whole family approach.

MEDIA AND THE FAMILY

by Donna Smith

We moved into the living room and settled ourselves comfortably on the carpets and sofas. Houda served the small glasses of tea and cakes to her father, older sister and myself. "Come, quickly, oh my mother," she called to the kitchen. "The story is ready to begin." Her mother threw off her apron, dried her hands and joined the rest of the family. The elder of the two sons turned on the small black and white television set, placed on the stand just below the magnificent coloured set. The boys and their father were able to follow the 'silent' football match while the drama of a serial love story filled the room. It was the weekly episode of the ongoing saga of a story set in South America with such a complicated plot of family intrigues that I never did grasp the whispered explanations.

Whenever my visit coincides with the showing of the latest soap opera serial story, I can be sure that all conversation will halt as eyes are glued to the screen. Television is not the only form of media which is changing family life. The impact of media can be found everywhere. As more and more people can read, newspapers, magazines and paperbacks are seen on train journeys. Radio programmes with advice on child-rearing, tips on economics, and suggestions for new recipes fill the hours of the women's day. Music cassettes entertain taxi-drivers and their passengers. Metropolitan video clubs are crowded with borrowers and even villages offer video players for rental. Major family events are videoed and an absent wedding guest will not lose out.

The media does change family life. Many more men are staying home in the evenings to watch television. Unless they are wealthy enough to have a large house with separate living rooms for men and women, the men sit with their families rather than going out to a local cafe to spend time in the public world of the men. Instead the men are spending more time in the home, which is considered the women's domain. This can lead to stronger relationships with their children. In the past, there was a great distance between the father and his children; he was respected and often feared. Now he and his family are interacting as they sit close together and comment on television programmes.

Governments are aware of the influence of television and use it to educate their people on health and social matters. Illustrations showing that one should not wash clothes by a well impress the rural viewer with methods of keeping clean water. If the leaders want to promote change in attitudes toward social issues, they illustrate the advantages of those changes through plays and documentaries. Small families (i.e. family planning) are encouraged by drama featuring happiness and material wealth when there are no more than four children. In the past, strongly Islamic teaching and custom promoted the birth of many children. It also permitted more than one wife; soap

operas with all the frustrations and heartbreak of a second wife certainly create an attitude discouraging that practice.

Various programmes change the status of the youth of the country. It may be a radio quiz show, or school news with secondary school participants, or a television competition featuring pupils from one school. Families then begin to identify with the community rather than keeping to themselves. School children form ties with their school and with their school friends; their world expands beyond the extended family to include other friendships. Fathers, who in the past would have kept their daughters shut away from the public eye, now see or hear them competing and being interviewed publicly. However, not all reactions have changed. One teenager fought with his older sister because she had not answered correctly and he felt shamed before his friends. The father's reaction was ambivalent; he was proud that his daughter had the poise and courage to be on national TV but he wasn't sure that he liked her being seen by the whole country.

Changes also appear in the thinking of individuals from their exposure to the media. They gain information on many subjects, including the world we live in. Young women are talking about their desire to visit India and sub-Saharan Africa such interest was unheard of in years gone by. Women then would only know the customs of their extended family and neighbourhood. Perhaps they would have considered travel to Europe, but now they are seeing more exotic places and wanting to learn more. Even illiterate women are using new vocabulary words that they have picked up from the media, so the colloquial language is changing.

Influence of the media is all-pervasive. Whether it is new fashions in clothing or new styles of music, the young people turn to the media for their examples. Subtly the roles of women are affected as people watch plays with working women as heroines or listen to debates and news programmes including educated women. Girls and women who left their homes only to visit family members and attend family functions are now going out to school and finding employment in what once was the public domain of the men. Family life is being affected by the employment of women outside the home. Husbands, who never before helped in the home, are giving an extra hand to their wives. Did the idea of outside employment come from watching an attractive Egyptian woman engineer solve problems at work and in her personal life in an exciting 13 episode series in the 1980s? Or from televised political speeches of national leaders who promoted female education? Or from books by challenging Arab women writers? Or from the desire to have the material advantages pictured on television?

How should we, as Christ's ministers, respond to the invasion of media in the Muslim world? As Christians we need to have access to and input in all types of media to present Biblical truths and to create an interest in Jesus Christ. Workers in each country of the Muslim world need to keep up-to-date on the specific influences of media in their areas. I would suggest research into types of television programmes for children, youth and adults. What are they watching and how is it changing their lives as individuals and as families? What effects are evident from the print media, from radio and from videos? How can we use what is already available? What materials can we

develop? What discussions, based on the preparation through the media, can we have with people? **Let's use these opportunities provided by the media in our outreach to Muslims and in our discipling of new believers.**

CHILDHOOD IN MOROCCO

by P.G.

This study will be looking at some general patterns and features of childhood in modern Moroccan society. We briefly mention two kinds of childhood which exist - one at each end of the spectrum. One is the traditional upbringing, representing the past, and the other is the way of life adopted by the bourgeoisie, which may represent the future. We then concentrate our attention on the majority of modern Moroccan families who are at present between these two extremes.

TRADITIONAL CHILDHOOD

This title is misleading, because in a traditional upbringing, there was no childhood. The baby was conceived and born, bringing honour on the family and especially the mother. The baby was weaned as soon as the next was born, was probably looked after by an older sister for a time, and was then expected to begin work. This way of life can still be seen in *the country* where boys and girls of five and upwards look after the sheep and goats (Wagner's study showed that 23% of rural boys and 31% of rural girls were working, p253); in the *old medinas* where the child is apprenticed to an artisan, pottery factory or leather tannery and is paid almost nothing for long hours of work; and in *family hanoots* (local shops) throughout the country. Sometimes boys were apprenticed to a *fqih*, or religious teacher, which would allow them in turn the chance to become a *fqih*. For girls, it is still common to find that they are sent to work as servants in a middle class household.

It was believed that the child would learn all he or she would need for adult life from working alongside adults, who would at the same time impose an often brutal discipline on the child. This was considered an important part of the whole deal. (Nowadays child labour has probably more to do with economic necessity - although pay is virtually non-existent, it does mean one less mouth to feed at home.)

Within this system there is no room for the child to experience what we know of as a childhood. In addition, adulthood began much earlier with younger marriages - especially for girls, who could be married as young as nine.

UPPER CLASS CHILDHOOD

This is the first class in which the idea of a childhood emerged. During colonial times wealthy families began to send their children to schools. The current upper classes have

gone further and adopted many western ideas of childhood, represented by books in French books, available in Moroccan bookshops, such as *Comment j'éleve mon enfant*.

NORMATIVE CHILDHOOD

The introduction of schooling has forced most to abandon the traditional system of apprenticeship and send their children to, at the very least, a primary school. School has opened up an avenue for the child to succeed and progress, and many parents want their children to stay in education for as long as possible. This prolonged period before paid work begins is what we can call a childhood.

There are clear differences between the ways in which Moroccan children are brought up and the up-bringing of western children, in spite of the superficial similarity imposed by the school system. This study hopes to identify some of these differences for the benefit of a western person trying to understand Moroccan people. It must be pointed out, of course, that 'western' upbringing varies between countries, and probably varies even more between classes within a country. Above all it is not necessarily better than any other way of upbringing.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF A MOROCCAN CHILD

PRE-BIRTH - The child's existence could be said to begin even before conception. For the married woman, her greatest desire is to bear a child, ideally a son. Being sterile is one of her greatest fears, so that to her the child represents her success as a wife. She is in a sense dependent on the child and so the foetus is very important. There is considered to be a particular danger from jinns, so that funerals and cemeteries are avoided, as are other things and people which could result in 'spiritual' damage to the child in the womb.

If producing a child is so important, failure to produce one can be grounds for a divorce, even if it is the man who is sterile. An example drawn from "The House of Si Abd Allah - The Oral History of a Moroccan Family" is revealing. One of the main informants divorced eight times and still had no children. As his niece said, it was obvious that he was sterile, but the wives took the blame. And talking about his brother's wife, he remarked: "but she had three miscarriages, so Ahmed divorced her." (p102)

It is also important to note the very different attitude towards a foetus conceived outside of marriage. Abortions are frequently carried out by doctors, traditional medicine or clumsy attempts to destroy the mark of dishonour that the foetus represents. And equally it is clear that a child has little value when it does not belong to the married couple. Three quotes from "The House of Si Abd Allah" illustrate this:

1) A cousin became pregnant, but the father could have been one of ten men. One was selected and the marriage arranged. The baby was born on the day of the marriage. "R. refused to give her breast to the baby ... and the baby starved to death within days" p.223

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2) The main informant recounted about one of his wives "The baby was born a month after the wedding. She gave it to some neighbours in the cobblestone quarter. I don't know what they did with it."

3) "If you ask many of the men in the family about birth control, they will tell you that it is murder and contrary to Islamic law. But if you ask what they think of killing a baby because it was conceived out of wedlock, most of them will say that this is God's will." p.223

It is interesting to note that Moroccans are very curious to know beforehand, using modern medical scans, whether the child will be a boy or girl. Perhaps this is because boys and girls are not of equal value. Sons are preferred because they will carry on the name of the family and will look after the parents in their old age, whereas a daughter will marry and look after her husband's parents. The views of the village faqir interviewed by Dwyer in S.Morocco show this:

"The son belongs to the outside as well as the inside; the daughter is just the inside. As for the daughter, you only benefit from her until the day she leaves."

"a girl is just a girl ... she's like nothing" (Dwyer, Moroccan Dialogues, p.63)

A child's value depends more on its origins than on its character. Two proverbs back up this idea:

"The one who's grandfather you know, you need not worry about his son."

"If you don't know a child's origins, watch his actions." (El Attar p.100)

In contrast, the current western view of a child is that all are born equal and should be respected as unique individuals with equal rights. Whilst modern psychology courses in Morocco are based on these western theories (i.e. that the child's character is almost totally dependent on his social environment and upbringing), for the majority of Moroccans, their value as a person has been determined even before they were born.

THE BABY- Seven days after birth, there is a celebration, according to the wealth of the family. Usually an animal is killed and the child is given it's name, although nowadays the name must be declared on the birth certificate when it is born.

From birth until the baby is weaned, mother and baby remain in almost constant physical contact. When they go out, the baby is carried on the mother's back, and is given the breast whenever it wants to feed. Moroccan mothers are also more tolerant to the child and the problems it causes, so that the baby is rarely badly treated. The mother is being judged by her success at looking after the baby and, as we have seen, the baby is vitally important to her status.

However, when this unity is broken, perhaps by the arrival of a sibling, psychologists have identified a traumatic break from the warmth of the mother's constant attention to the cold realities of being the least important person in an often large, hierarchical family. Some psychology courses in Morocco suggest that this is a cause of the introversion all Moroccans later exhibit. Others suggest that the extended family is actually a place of

warmth and attention as well (Enfances Maghrebins, p.52 and p.72-73). In either case, the break is very sudden, and will permanently affect the child's development.

For boys circumcision takes place at any time between about three and eight. It is a big celebration of which they are the centre of attraction. Female circumcision, practiced in certain Muslim countries, is not practiced in Morocco.

The oldest son has a particular place in the family and receives particular treatment throughout his up-bringing. He will probably be entitled to his own room, for example. This vast inequality is very much resented by other children in the family. Needless to say girls find themselves the least important among the children.

PRE-SCHOOL - Pre-schooling has existed for a long time in Morocco. Traditionally, teaching was the role of the fqih, whose only qualification was, and is, to have memorised the Qur'an. These qur'anic schools were for boys only. They still exist and are attended by a fairly high proportion of boys and girls (up to half of those going on to state schools in the late 80's). Nowadays they have become pre-schools, since at seven the child must go to the state school. Their role is to teach collective memorisation of the Qur'an and basic literacy in classical Arabic, which is carried out with all ages seated on mats on the floor. Hence a later ability in many adults to memorise quickly and a preference for reading aloud. Another function was to impose strict discipline. "If you have to kill him, I'll bury him," is an example of the old attitude. But the fqih is no longer feared, which must reflect a softening among parents in their attitude to discipline by someone outside the family.

Modern kindergartens, either private or state run, are staffed mainly by women, with classes graded by age. Spoken Arabic is used and much more visual stimulus is provided. Recitation and slate-boards still survive, as does teaching of the Qur'an, but the ethos is quite different.

PRIMARY SCHOOLING - Primary school begins at the age of seven and continues for five years, or more if the child has to repeat a year. The drop-out rate is much higher for girls because their education is not considered a priority if money is short, and because they are useful at home to look after the younger children or help the mother if she has a new baby. Most education now takes place in Arabic, but for some of the older generations before 1983 at least half the subjects were taught in French.

The final standardized 'shahada' test determines which pupils will be able to go on to secondary education. Currently up to half may fail and can either repeat the year one or sometimes two times. If not successful, or the parents cannot afford a bribe, they will have to drop out of school.

For those who drop out or fail, their childhood effectively ends, and they have to enter the hard world of apprentice work where they will probably be exploited and poorly paid. It will be a long time, however, before they are considered an adult, but maybe not as long as those who continue in education.

SECONDARY SCHOOLING - According to Bennani-Chraïbi, only 20% of children were going regularly to secondary school in 1982. Secondary schooling lasts for four years, finishing with a CEP (Certificate d'Etudes Secondaires). It is intriguing to consider how secondary schools compare with those we are familiar with, but sadly it is not easy to gain access. According to one friend from a poor area of town, drugs, knives, classrooms in uproar and disrespect to teachers were all common features of his schooling. Teachers no longer have a right to hit the children and they may not receive the support from parents that used to be expected. Teachers I spoke to said discipline depended very much on the teacher, indicating that there is not really an inherent respect. It has to be fought for (as in England and elsewhere!).

TERTIARY SCHOOLING - Those who have survived the end-of-year tests, who have not been forced to earn money for their families, who are able to keep paying for all their materials, and who aspire to university education, go on to study three years for the Baccalaureate ('Bacc').

UNIVERSITY - The Bacc entitles the holder to go to university, where he or she will find that patterns continue: an emphasis on rote-learning, memorisation, and end-of-year exams which filter out those who will not progress to the next year.

Those who follow this system of education emerge from it aged about 24 or more. In the current economic climate they find very few jobs waiting for them. Most students give the impression of being mature in their behaviour, but not necessarily in their thought processes which have suffered from over-emphasis on poor teaching and learning methods. They are no longer children, or even teenagers, but society does not really consider them adults until have a regular job and marry.

We conclude that childhood is not of fixed length and the development of young people is changing gradually. We will now turn to some aspects that play a part in the up-bringing of a Moroccan and in his or her development as a person. At times this will be contrasted with a western child's up-bringing in order to help us better to understand our friends and to relate to children and those with children.

ASPECTS OF UP-BRINGING

PLAY - The lack of toys in Moroccan homes is quite striking. It is suggested that this is due to the cost of toys in a poor country. But if this is so then it is more of an indication of priorities. Not all Moroccans are poor, and cheap plastic toys have been around for decades. Clearly they are not seen as important learning tools in the child's development. Educational toys are rare and this is not the main aim of the few toys that are used.

The feast of Ashura is the time when children are given toys. Drums are the traditional present and still serve to remind everyone that it is Ashura. Plastic toys like water pistols are now also popular.

Each traditional game has its season. For boys there are marbles, spinning tops and football, while for girls there is skipping, hopscotch and 'five-stones'. These are all simple games which can be played in the streets with friends. Boys in particular are expected to

be out of the house and to amuse themselves. Girls are more often needed indoors to help the mother, go shopping, or look after younger brothers and sisters. Play is definitely not considered something for adults.

Youth clubs and other cultural associations have been tried in Morocco, but without much success. Bennani-Chraïbi attributes this to suspicion of structured groups and activities, such as Scouts, which have a political link (to the Istiqlal party) and may be seen as trying to recruit youth. Sadly, Christian youth work in Morocco would probably suffer from the same suspicions, were it ever to be allowed.

Among the worst amusements Moroccan children seem to engage in is stone throwing. It seems that fighting by throwing stones is not considered particularly dangerous. One friend said it helped to get anger out of your system. He assured me that, as a general rule, if something gets broken the culprit is expected to pay. Glass, however is one notable exception. It is considered bad luck to try to make someone pay for broken glass.

Parents rarely play with their children. The mother is expected to be serious in her attitude. The father sees the children much less, since he is at work, then at the cafe, and in the evening the children may be busy with school work. Holidays by the seaside may be the only time when children get to play with their father. It is noticeable that other relatives, favourite uncles and so on, often do give the child special attention when they visit, much to the child's delight. No doubt foreigners could easily fit into this category and develop a special relationship with the children. Otherwise it is unusual for an adult to give a child much attention at all. This has implications for those who wish to work with children - they will be considered a bit strange, although very popular with the children. The question is how you can maintain respect at the same time. It is best to keep a bit of distance. If you don't the child will, because they are not used to relating as a friend to an adult. You also need to assume control of the relationship or the situation. If you don't, they will often take advantage.

LOVE AND AFFECTION - In Morocco, love and affection are not the goals or ideal of parenthood. In a modern western family the parents are supposed to show affection to their children, following the concept of the 'child-centered approach'. In a Moroccan family the onus is on the child to show respect for his parents. Other values, which do not come into western thinking, may be more important than affection, or may even be seen as indications of love as it is understood in Moroccan culture, such as respect, courage (nomads), hospitality, purity (for girls), honour and so on. These are the qualities to be displayed more prominently in the family than affection.

The father in particular will so act as to show the child that he is to be respected. This usually means that he has little physical contact with the child and maintains an emotional distance. Frequently he eats apart from the family and in some cases rarely talks with them, even after the children have become adults. Not all are like this, but many young men and women speak with great bitterness about their fathers. (This may also be due to a divorce.) When talking of God as our father, we need to be aware that images of love and affection may not be what is communicated, either as the ideal, or in practice. We should not be afraid to use the Bible to teach what a father should be like.

We should, however, bear in mind that we may forget respect for our Father if we think only of His love for us.

Is it possible to say that Moroccans suffer as a result of lack of love and affection? The answer must surely be 'yes', just as western youth suffer when it is absent. Perhaps it is those who go on to experience something different who become most aware of this. It is certainly very apparent in literature (Ben Jelloun and Choukri) and in an auto-biography entitled '*Mountains Forgotten by God*' by Oussaid. This book is a desperate cry for help, and the absence of love screams out in the extreme poverty described, which leads the boy to doubt the existence and relevance of God.

DISCIPLINE - Parents tend to reproduce the methods of discipline which were used on them. Traditionally the father represented the strong arm of discipline and what he said must ultimately be done. The mother, who is actually the one most in contact with the child, may often be tolerant of misbehaviour and can very often be seen shouting at the child time after time with absolutely no effect. Children also may climb all over the place in the presence of guests with the parent doing very little about it. There is a tolerance towards minor infringements, so these can become very frequent.

The idea of a gradual education process in setting limits for the child is uncommon. Instead, the child is left to push limits until it is perceived to be turning bad. Then he/she suddenly discovers what discipline means. It can be by hand, stick or belt, administered most often by the father. One friend almost had tears in his eyes as he described how he had "eaten the stick" (kleet l 'asaa). Thus the child is beaten or even broken into submission. (It is apparently against the law, but it is hard to see how a child in that situation could ever appeal against his father without even worse happening.) Physical punishment tends to cease after the age of ten to twelve. The child has by then learned to conform to the family will, shows little sign of rebellion and has begun to try to imitate adult behaviour. Beating could still occasionally be used if there are obvious infringements, such as smoking or drinking in front of the father, or bringing dishonour on the family name. The ultimate punishment is that the youth is thrown out of the house never to come back. This is usually a sufficient deterrent.

Outside of the home, discipline can be more difficult, especially for foreigners in contact with Moroccan children. In the old days, according to older folk at least (e.g. the faqir in '*Moroccan Dialogues*', p.58), any adult had the right to hit a child in the street if he did something bad. 'The faqir' claimed that this ended during the colonial period when fathers could threaten prosecution to someone who did this. He also complained that a child would do or say anything when the father is not around. The age hierarchy is still much in evidence, even if a stranger does not hit children. An adult or older brother can still ask almost any smaller child to go and do something for them and be obeyed, as long as they are respected.

For a westerner this is very hard to adjust to. We are not used to such authority, but expect to ask or negotiate with the child. So in our dealings with Moroccan children we probably come across as weak and not worthy of respect. We also tend to talk to younger children in a way that shows an interest in them as a person. While they like this unusual

attention, it is worth remembering that it may reduce your authority in their eyes. To counteract this, foreigners need to be very firm and learn to expect the child to do what they say. This is what the child will be expecting and reading in our manner.

RELIGION- It is as a child that Moroccans learn religious practices, whether from genuine belief or out of conformity to society. Many children attend qur'anic schools. Even those who do not are taught the Qur'an in kindergarten and in the state schools, as well as how to pray. Afternoon prayers may be said in school. The children also learn to copy prayer movements from those who pray at home, while learning not to walk in front of the pray-er nor disturb them. Ramadan is the most major social event and children enjoy trying to participate for a few days, even if they are generally considered exempt until puberty. Older youths all at least pretend to do Ramadan and, as a minimum, the Friday noon prayer. Observance of prayer times tends to increase during exam times, according to one survey. The zakat, or alms, is seen as the parents' responsibility, and the pilgrimage as something for later in life. For girls there is the possibility of wearing the Hijab. This now seems to be more a matter of her own choice than imposed by the family.

Some youth like to put themselves forward as champions of religious fervour, and try to admonish others in their family. The majority tend to believe in living while you are young and becoming religious later in life. Virtually none would ever express anti-religious sentiments in the family, even if they feel quite strongly against certain things. The idea of leaving Islam is as foreign, or even more so, as the idea of leaving the family. It is linked to so much of family life and thus tied in with the whole of society for that person.

GIRLS- Boys and girls play together until they reach ten or so years old. Already they have been treated differently, but after the age of ten or so these differences become even more marked. The key virtue is purity and the girl must be both protected from men and prevented from meeting them. This is an affair of the whole family, because the family's honour depends on it. Usually a brother will take it on himself to defend this honour by watching over his sister, whether to defend or to punish her. For behaviour which dishonours the family, death could be the punishment, although this is uncommon in Morocco. Banishment is more likely. Marriage, if possible, will solve the problem, because the girl then becomes the husband's responsibility. Otherwise the family may conspire to save their honour by sending the girl away to relatives, saying that her husband had died, which explains her pregnancy to the relatives. When she returns it is simple enough to say that she got married and bore the child while she was away. We have already seen that abortion is another option.

A girl who leaves Islam is also considered to have dishonoured the family name and may suffer the same consequences, depending on the family.

Girls spend most of their time with their mothers, so as to learn all the basic skills for being a wife. Those who marry young in this scheme, miss out on their adolescent years. But nowadays there is a new phenomenon of girls who do not marry young. They continue in their education and thus gain considerable independence from their families. Many

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still retain traditional ideas, but clearly there is no going back and society will change as a result.

Bennani-Chraïbi identified four groups of girls. The survivors, who invest their energies in study and work; the serious, who try to protect their reputation and thus hint that they would make a good wife; the mutants, who are searching for a life that has traditionally been denied them, involving boys and fashions; and the privileged rich, who have the fashions and western lifestyle and do not need to worry much about the traditions.

Davis and Davis have explored the world of semi-modern girls the most thoroughly. They looked at friendships and discovered that girls had fewer close friends than boys. (The average of just one close friend per person is a sad sign of just how little trust exists in any relationship in Morocco.) Their interviews also showed that about half of the girls would prefer to be boys, mainly due to the greater freedom the latter enjoy.

Tahar Ben Jelloun's book, *L'Enfant du Sable*, provides an amusing way of looking at this tragedy. A man who had seven daughters decides that the next child will be a son, regardless of the actual sex. His reasons for doing this should be clear from the section on Pre-birth above. Naturally, the child is a girl, but is brought up as a boy, totally separate from her sisters. The father had not thought too far ahead, for when the child reached adulthood (s)he shocked her father by declaring that (s)he wanted to marry a girl cousin. What had happened was that the girl had long since realised that she was not a boy, but had decided to keep up the pretense. She could see that her life as a boy was much better than as a girl and that to continue it as a man, she would have to have a wife ...

BOYS AND GIRLS - There is little room for friendships between boys and girls in much of Moroccan society. In contrast, however, most seem to find illicit sexual encounters relatively easy to arrange with glances and whispered rendez-vous'. But these could hardly be called healthy, balanced relationships. Universities seem to provide one of the few places where such relationships exist. The problem is that, having been restricted for so long, the new-found freedom can lead to flirtation on a big scale. Discos and night-clubs are even worse in this respect. This situation probably accounts for the inability of most adults to understand the opposite sex, something which most foreigners notice very quickly. It also makes choosing a marriage partner very difficult. The partner will rarely be the person with whom the secret meetings have taken place (la copine), but with someone who is considered to be a modest woman and who will make a good wife.

ADOLESCENCE - The period of adolescence is probably the period which shows the most marked difference between the western teenager and his counterpart in Morocco. Is there a "teenage" rebellion in Morocco?

A western teenager expects to have left home by the age of 19 or 20 and to live independently thereafter, whereas a Moroccan "teenager" (a term which does not exist in Arabic) traditionally expected to spend his life in the family home. - One can see this in the architecture of houses being built all over Morocco, with extra floors for when the son marries. In reality, many of the younger generation now seem to be less interested in

living with parents. One wonders when architecture will begin to reflect this. - This difference in expectation is fundamental because a worsening relationship between parents and a rebellious youth could not be tolerated in Morocco. Most realise that they will have to live in peace with their families when they are older and so any rebellion is fairly minor. As we have seen, if the adolescent does not appreciate this then the father may simply beat him into submission. If he does not submit then he will have to leave the family in disgrace with nothing, no status in society and few marriage prospects.

In western societies, a person becomes an adult when he receives the full rights of an adult at age 18 (in UK). Most of these 'rights' exist legally in Morocco, but a youth becomes an adult when his behaviour indicates that he is worthy of being called one. Many teenagers, especially in the traditional and nomadic context, go to great lengths to exhibit their maturity and stature. They want to demonstrate to the world that they are now worthy of being part of the older generation, whereas western adolescents want to demonstrate that they are definitely not of the older generation.

In Arabic, the word 'aql' implies responsibility and maturity. In its fullest form, this usually comes with marriage. In the meantime young men pass through an age of 'recklessness', which allows them to smoke, stare at women, experience pre-marital sex and so on. But this phase does not really compare to the adolescent problems in western societies.

One reason is the source of identity. A Moroccan youth will find his/her individual identity in the family hierarchy. The family remains the main social unit. The individual's place in the hierarchy will not change. This identity may not be worth much, especially for those at the younger end of the family, but at least it is assured and clear. Western teenagers, in contrast, try to find or create their identity and support in a group united by common interests or allegiance, rather than in the family. They often have great trouble asserting their identity and can cause great trouble as a result.

Moroccan youths also respect parents as a religious duty. They must submit their will to that of the family. This factor is largely absent in the west. Respect, as we have seen, does not mean closeness and it does not depend on whether the adolescent likes his parents. The father has always indicated to the family that he is not approachable. He is to be respected and often feared.

All of these factors, then, combine to prevent serious, overt rebellion against the family or society. However, copying western fashions, music and so on, is bringing out teenage rebellion. This is more apparent in Casablanca than anywhere else. It remains to be seen how long "the family" will be able to continue to hold society together. Meanwhile the generation brought up in France, which descends on Morocco every summer is considered badly brought up because it does not display the traditional qualities that are looked for.

"Generation gap" is also a problem, though not a new one since French colonial administration and education had the same effect. But modern compulsory schooling means that many children are better educated than their aged parents. When a girl of eight can read better than her father this will tend to upset the system. Many girls study very

hard to get to university and climb the social ladder or escape from their role or position in the family. The French language is also seen as a way of by-passing the parents. Certain subjects, like sex, may be talked about in French so that the older generation are excluded. The younger generation are much more likely to want a smaller, nuclear family and to bring their children up in a different way.

CONCLUSION

Changes in society always bring about tremors. Serious delinquency will probably be held at bay for some time, especially while the police remain so feared, but the conclusion of Radi (*Enfances Maghébines* p61) is that all tradition will virtually disappear under the pressure of the younger generation. If so, what will replace it? In Algeria, which had in many ways gone further along this path, radical Islam grabbed the hearts of the youth for a time. In France it is drugs and delinquency. If we want Christianity to take this place then we need to do a lot of sowing and praying now for the younger generation.

A new concept of the individual is emerging in Morocco, who is gradually detaching himself from the group and its pressures and traditions. If he or she can think for themselves and question things that have not been questioned for centuries, then there will surely be a greater openness to the gospel. But at the same time there will be an openness to a great many negative influences which have far greater financial and media resources than we as Christians do. It is easier for these to destroy and de-stabilize than for us to build something in its place. Bennani-Chraïbi makes a very interesting observation that in the seventies, Moroccans criticised the west and glorified their own hospitality and communal life. Now many criticise their own materialism and the attitude of "chacun pour soi" (everyone for himself) while noting the solidarity in aspects of western society. While we want to see the end of Islam, we should be careful not to destroy everything that goes with it. We need to concentrate on the positive contribution that the gospel makes to family life. There are enough influences destroying society. We need to be rebuilding it on solid foundations.

We will also need to show and teach what a Christian family should be like in this context, learning from the mistakes we have seen in our own societies. It would probably be a mistake to simply translate James Dobson into Arabic, BUT love, affection, real two-way communication, encouragement and mutual respect are all biblical attitudes that are lacking in many Moroccan homes. By living these out in our contact with children and young people, we can show them a way that is radically different. We can point to a father who loves and cares, who is approachable and consistent, while still being worthy of respect. The church too must be like a family and demonstrate these values.

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INTERVIEWS were conducted with several friends and language helpers - all male - which were always interesting, but not always very informative in term of analysis or understanding. Most people had never really considered issues of identity etc, and several only gave ideal answers to the questions when I knew that what they were saying was not true in reality.

THE MAN WHO WANTED CHILDREN

by Jim Mellis

Once there was a man named Sharif. He had been married for many years and still his wife, Nura, had borne him no children. He was a good man so he was kind to her. He knew she was even more disappointed than he was. All his brothers had children. One of them even had two sons and had taken the name Abu Hakim. Sharif wished he could someday change his name too. Why was he the only son denied the honor of being a father?

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He and his wife had each visited the tomb ('qobba') of the local saint who was famous for helping childless parents. They each had written vows and recited prayers. Surely they had done everything they could to receive the saint's blessing (baraka). But they remained childless.

Then one night Sharif had a dream. Before him stood a beautiful qobba, one he had never seen before. He felt the presence of power (baraka) stronger than any he had ever felt before. He fell to his knees with his face on the ground and began to recite the 'Fatiha'.

How long he remained in this position he did not know. But when he again dared to look up at the beautiful qobba, he saw a man standing by the door of the shrine. The man looked like an imam, dressed in a white robe (jelaba) with a white skull cap on his head. He was beckoning for Sharif to come and the door behind him stood open.

Sharif looked around. There was no one else present. So he got up and walked toward the man in white. The power (baraka) became more intense the closer he came to the qobba. He was afraid. He looked quickly at the man's feet to make sure they were not the feet of a jinn. He was relieved to see that the man's gold colored slippers (belgha) were pointing the right direction. When he reached the man he fell at his feet.

Sharif winced as the man's hand touched his shoulder. But suddenly he felt peace and his fear left him. The man helped him to his feet and then spoke his name: "Sharif," he said "you desire the honor of being a father, and you wish to have a son so you can build a house and be called 'Abu'. How can you wish to build your own house when God's house is not yet built?"

Sharif felt a new fear. This man was obviously a holy man, perhaps even one of the prophets, for he not only knew Sharif's name but his deepest desires as well. "Sir, it is true I wish these things," he replied. "I would build a mosque with my bare hands if God would give me a son."

"Does God need an earthly building to live in?" asked the man in white. "Is not heaven his throne and earth a footstool for him? I

No, listen again to the question: how can you wish to build your own house when God's house is not yet built?"

Sharif pondered this but finally said, "This riddle is a mystery to me; I don't know the answer. God knows."

"You have answered rightly," said the man in white. "Follow me inside." Then he turned and walked through the door of the qobba, disappearing into the darkness inside.

Sharif hesitated a moment, then slowly walked through the door. His heart was pounding. In the dim light inside, he saw a second doorway ahead of him leading to an inner chamber. It was covered by a heavy curtain. He saw no sign of the man in white, but next to the outer door he saw a box labeled: *My Vow*. He thought of the vows he had written at the other qobba, and he wondered what vow he would need to make here to become a father.

Sharif walked toward the second doorway and lifted the curtain. The baraka in the doorway was so powerful that he staggered and almost fell. He felt like he was walking through a large waterfall. Then he was blinded by an overpowering light. He had expected total darkness inside the inner room. Instead he found his eyes having to adjust to a light brighter than the noonday sun. And the fragrance! It was like a thousand perfumes perfectly blended.

Holding his right arm above his eyes, Sharif looked out on a room so large that he could not see any walls. The room was full of people dressed in white. They were seated in large family groupings like they were waiting for a feast to begin. He heard many strange languages being spoken. Women and children were seated with their menfolk, and each family was served by what looked like a shining angel.

Sharif had barely taken all this in when he again saw his guide beckoning to him. He was standing next to an open space among the many families gathered. In this space cushions had been prepared but no people were yet sitting there. Sharif noticed there were many such open spaces among the families already gathered and thought to himself, "not all the guests have arrived yet."

"How can you wish to build your own house when God's house is not yet built?" His guide was pointing to a white card in the center of the circle of unoccupied cushions. Sharif leaned over to look at it and noticed that it was written in his own language even in his own ancient script. It read: *Come, you who are blessed by the Father. All is ready. Take the inheritance prepared for you since the creation of the world.* 2

Sharif gasped when he saw that the card was signed with the word Abu Sharif. 'Sharif' was also the name of his whole clan.

Suddenly he became dizzy and started to fall. The large room with the families gathered for the feast vanished. Instead he was standing again in the small foyer of the qobba. The man in white was there with him and spoke to him: "Seek the good of God's house first and he will see to your house. Seek the honor of His name and he will give you a new name."

Sharif, still deeply puzzled by the vision and the man's strange words, cried out. "Just tell me what work I must do to get this new name and I will write out my vow."

"There is no vow you can write that will bring good to God's house. Do you not know why your father, Adam, and your mother, Eve, were banished from Paradise?" The man in white reached over to the vow box and opened it. "God does not wish to read your vow," he said. "But the Father wishes you to read His Vow." He handed Sharif a scroll wrapped in a blue cover.

Sharif's fingers tingled as they received and unrolled the scroll. In his own language he read: *"The Word became a human being and lived for a while among us. All who receive him are given power (baraka) to become children of God: not born of blood nor of human drives, but of the Spirit of God."* 3

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Again he felt dizzy but the man in white reached out his hand to steady him and said: "Today you have been given a glimpse of the Mystery of the Word and Spirit of God. Read God's Vow and you will know what to do next. But remember, no-one can change the Words of God and nothing is impossible with God. I, the Eldest Brother, assure you that these things are true."

All people are like grass;

All their glory like the flowers of the field.

The grass withers and the flowers fall,

God's Word alone stands forever. 4

Sharif awoke to find himself back in his own bed. As he pondered the dream in the first morning light, he noticed something on the table near his bed. It had not been there the night before. It was a small book covered in blue paper. He picked it up and read the title: *INJIL SHARIF*.

1. Acts 7:48-49. 2. Matthew 25:34. 3. John 1:14. 4. 11 Peter 1:24-25.

WHAT'S NEW

Arabic Scriptures On-line - The International Bible Society is providing Arabic Scriptures (Arabic and Farsi) on-line via the Bible Gateway. The format for this will be on-line viewing and complete access (may download the complete Old and New Testament in digital form). The Bible should be ready in mid-November. The version is the Living Bible "Kitab al-Hyat." The Bible Gateway URL is <http://www.gospelcom.net/bible>.

New Testament For Muslims - Missionaries are nearing completion of an English-language New Testament for Muslims. The volume, to be published by the International Bible Society, uses familiar spellings for biblical figures, such as Ibrahim for Abraham and Yakub for Jacob. It also will come with a culturally appropriate cover and illustrations. According to one missionary, the project, now 70 percent complete, will help reach educated, upper-class Muslims. An estimated 5 to 25 percent of Muslims worldwide speak English. **WORLD PULSE 6/9/96**

Parables For The Arab World - Jim Mellis, working with YWAM among Moroccans in Holland, has written a series of 26 stories set in the Arab World and stimulating serious thinking about the Gospel. The stories are being translated into Arabic and will hopefully soon be published in both languages.

I have just read *Church Planting For A Greater Harvest*, by C. Peter Wagner, published by Regal Books in 1990. Although the vast majority of the book is more applicable to the North American context than to ours, a few "gem" quotations are worth passing on:

The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches. p.11

Worldwide the Jesus film is the most powerful evangelistic tool currently in use. p. 23

The greatest barriers to church planting are in the mind. p. 27

Each generation must be evangelized on its own terms. ... God has no grandchildren. p. 28

If you fail to plan, you're planning to fail. (quoted from Dr. Robert Schuller) p. 43