

For Seniors
September 12, 1965

The Christian Witness Shirley Madany

In a previous article we tried to take you far away from your surroundings to the countries that form the Arab world. These countries are so many and varied that it is not easy to imagine their spiritual needs. We spoke mostly of the listeners to the Arabic broadcast of our church who live in completely Muslim countries, without any visible Christian church as a witness. These are the countries of North Africa and Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

A great many listeners, however, are in villages along the Nile River in Egypt. In this country it is estimated that there are about 1-1/2 million Christians, many belonging to the ancient Coptic Church. Wherever there are Christians who have not known a reformation, their witness is a stumbling block - especially among Muslims. Can you imagine why?

You are so privileged in your Christian environment. Do you realize that you yourself are a witness? You are being brought up in the "freedom of the Christian faith." You hardly realize the superstitions and bondage you would have known if the Reformation had not taken place.

And so it is that Muslims are puzzled when they see an Arab Christian worshiping in a church that has many statues and all kinds of liturgies in foreign languages (Latin, Aramaic, and so forth). They believe that there is only one God, and Mohammed is his prophet. They are devout in their faith and zealous in their daily devotions. Muslims do not need to be told to be missionary minded. They spread their belief automatically wherever they go.

The daily Arabic broadcast of The Back to God Hour is called "Saatu'l Islah" – The Hour of the Reformation. The largest number of listeners live in Egypt. As the program is heard daily at 8:30 in the evening, it often serves as an evening devotion for a family. The small merchants who have to keep their shops open long hours, write that they turn their radio up loud so that the people in the bazaar can hear the good news also. One man wrote that his neighbor deliberately brought his radio out to the balcony above where he and his family were eating, so that they could not help hearing the whole broadcast. Houses are built close together in the Middle East, with no yards or lawns such as we know. Windows are wide open most of the year because of the heat, and radios are usually blaring. Thus the good news is spread.

Some people write after discovering the various publications that have been sent to one of their friends upon request. The program on Sunday is very similar to our English Back to God Hour service, with music and sermon. During the week it is Bible study, which has covered the books of the New Testament. On Saturday the program has been varied with church history and catechism. These people have appreciated the church history very much, as it reminded them of the past days in their own lands. Many of the sermons have been published, the Bible studies on

Romans and Hebrews have been completed, and a book of daily devotions for every day of the year. This was a translation of twelve *Family Altar* booklets.

Here are some more statistics and facts. The broadcast began in 1958, and for two years there was a little response. Then in 1961 the letters began to come, until now the mailing lists are more than 3,400. Contact is kept as personal as possible, and each new listener receives all the Arabic publications available without making further requests for them. Too much mail is discouraged, as it is both expensive for the listener and makes for too much clerical work at the Chicago end.

Perhaps you can imagine now the joy and gratitude that is so warmly expressed as these people continue to see our concern for their spiritual welfare. Let us pray that we will never fail them in our own personal Christian witness, wherever we are!

(Mission item in a Sunday School paper)