

Pauper at His Feet...

By Will Harris

Because for me Christ is the Christ
I linger just beyond the corner and the open door
waiting for the good servant
who will share the scraps of wealth from her master's table
even with the lowest and infidels.
And she is faithful. She arrives,
pays her respects, takes her seat, and the lesson begins.
Sometimes there is speaking, and I pass by and look in,
see the *muhafez* lean back patiently while the young woman
strains forward in concentration. On these days I pass on,
afraid to turn back and be discovered.

But God is gracious even to the lowest.
And on those days of my redemption
I hear birds fluttering in the room,
chasing sung phrases of the Qur'an,
sweet seeds blossoming in air.
At midterm I sat in the next room, imagining
that I was grading, pen and empty paper before me,
while in spirit, I closed my eyes and feasted that day
on manna and coriander seed.

Someday I will learn the holy language
even children know and sing at Ramadan.
Until that day, their God and my God
is merciful, even to the lowest. He will let me
glean, and what I glean will satisfy.