

Charity Christian Missions



June 2003 Newsletter • Volume 7 / Number 3



It is our duty as God's people to pray that the salvation of Jesus Christ will transform those whose prayers are empty, hopeless, and deceived



Charity Christian Missions

“For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles...for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.” Malachi 1:11

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Islam

An Introduction to
History, Belief, and Lifestyle

by *Weston Leabee*

This is a two-part series on understanding Islam and Muslims. This first article introduces their history, beliefs and lifestyle. The second will focus more on reaching Muslims. For the purpose of this article, please allow me to translate the Arabic term Allah into the English term God as it is used in the Arabic translation of the Bible. We will discuss the issue "Is Allah God?" in the next article. —Brother Wes

The second largest and fastest growing religion in the world is Islam. One out of every five people on earth is a Muslim. In a day and age of wide-scale economic trade, travel, and knowledge, the Muslim scene is coming to the forefront. There is much misunderstanding, misinformation, and even political propaganda regarding the subject.

My desire is that we as God's people would focus on this critical issue. Several reasons demand our attention to the Muslim world.

1. The **sheer size** of it. Reports range between one and two billion people; a fairly conservative estimate is probably 1.4 billion. And that number is growing fast. Although high birth rates account for much of this growth, there is also a recent surge of converts, due in part to new oil wealth, which funds many Islamic "missions." At least forty-four countries now have Muslim-majority populations. It is estimated that by 2020, Islam will replace "Christianity" as the world's largest religion.
2. The Muslim world is by far the **largest block of unreached peoples** in the world. Take the country of Turkey, for instance, where

almost no one out of 66 million Muslims has ever heard the words of Christ. Years ago, tribal groups were the critical issue in modern missions. Although many tribal groups remain unreached today, the number of groups has greatly diminished due to missionary and translation efforts. On the contrary, the Muslim unreached population is much larger today than it was years ago.

3. And lastly, the reason that we as God's people need to look at Islam is because it is the **fastest growing religion in the U.S.** Most likely, there is a Muslim community very near to you.

May we cry with Paul, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (*II Cor. 5:14*). I plead with you



*"The world of Islam stands
in dire need of love."*

artwork by Lisa Weaver

to consider the Muslim people as our friends and not our enemies. There is long-standing strife and hatred between Christians and Muslims that dates back to the time of the Crusades. The Muslims are not responsible to reach out and break through those feelings of animosity—we are! We are the ones who have the “ministry of reconciliation.” Barring the sovereign intervention of God Himself, they absolutely cannot come to Christ unless we lay down our own rights, comforts, prejudices, and even our lives to go and win them.”

The world of Islam stands in dire need of love. Their religion knows nothing of love, while love is the very essence of our Christianity. Many Muslims were born into their religion and are not as sure of themselves as you may think. The Muslim world is reachable. We will deal with how to reach Muslims in the next issue. In this article, we will focus mainly on the history, beliefs, and lifestyles of the Muslim people.

History

In looking at the religion of Islam, the history is very important. It provides a backdrop against which the present state can be more clearly understood. So please join me for a quick history lesson.

In A.D. 570, a young boy was born in Arabia and given the name Mohammed. Born into an idol-worshipping culture, Mohammed was a very serious and earnest young man. He traveled with his merchant-uncle to many different places. During these travels he met with Christians and Jews. Unsatisfied with his own idol worship, he was drawn to their monotheism, or belief in only one God. However, his contact with so-called Christians was with the corrupted state church. It appears he was turned off by “Christianity” on two main points. One was their view of the Trinity, which he understood in a crassly polytheistic sense to be a Father God, a Mother God (Mary), and a baby God (Jesus). (See Qur’an 5:116.) The second issue was their greed and dishonesty in order to receive materialistic gain. This is evident by the warnings given in

the Qur’an of the business principles of the “people of the book.”

Mohammed was convinced there was a way to worship the one true God and to have a religion that affected the entire life and community as well. Back in Arabia, he began having spiritual dreams or visions. At first, they scared him, but his wife encouraged him to give himself to these revelations and to study. Mohammed received the Qur’an, or “final revelation of God,” by an angel whom he took to be Gabriel. He was told to warn the Arab people of the judgment of an angry God, and to bring them into obedience and submission to His laws.

Mohammed’s message met with fierce opposition in the idolatrous city of Mecca, and he was forced to flee to Medina. However, in the coming years, the Arab people accepted his religion known as Islam (*submission*). It was a great uniting force, bringing clans and tribes together under one God. Soon they began a conquest, supposing to claim the entire world for God and Islam. They spread quickly across North Africa to Spain, and also north to Turkey. They were opposed and held back by “Christian” armies in Europe.

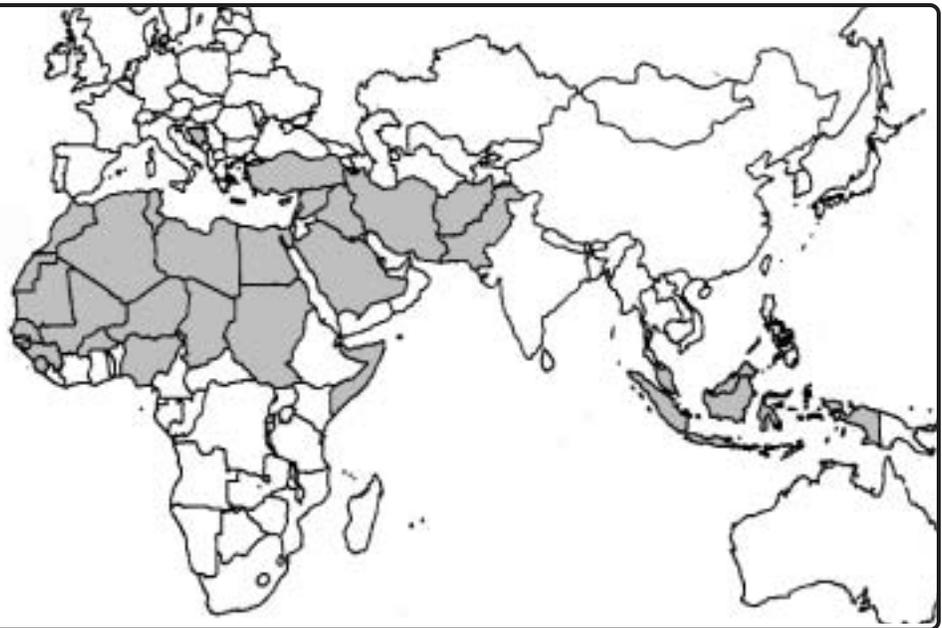
They occupied much of present-day Israel and Jerusalem, causing the corrupt church of Rome to send soldiers in “holy crusades” to drive them back to Arabia. Years of fighting and hatred ensued, which has not been forgotten by either side up to this day.

In more recent history, Islam has begun to spread again, this time mainly in Southeast Asia and also in Europe. Why?

Beliefs

In this writer’s opinion, two main points in Islam are extremely appealing to the natural man, and account for the large growth of the religion. One is the belief in “the only true God, Creator and Sustainer of all things,” as often quoted by Muslims. This appeals to all men, particularly those weary of worshipping many idols. The other is the righteousness of the law. To become a Muslim requires no repentance, no breaking of one’s pride and will. One simply has to submit to the laws of God as stated in the

The shaded area of the map to the right shows the countries where Islam constitutes a religious majority.



Qur'an. This appeals much to a man's intellect and desire to do something for his salvation.

The most well known practices of Islam are often summed up as "The Five Pillars." It should be noted, however, that these are only practices. They spring out of deep-rooted beliefs about God and His relationship to men. The Qur'an presents God as transcendent, or unknowable. He is "Wholly Other" and "There is nothing like unto Him" (Qur'an 42:11). He reveals His will, but not Himself. Man's separation from God is viewed as a fact rather than a problem. Reconciliation is not the issue, but rather submission and obedience are taught to put man into the correct slave/master relationship with God. No new nature is needed, only better works and obedience.

To better understand the foundational differences between Christian and Islamic theology, consider the chart of comparison on the next page about the fall of man, which I have borrowed from Sam Schlorff of Arab World Ministries.*

From these basic concepts of God and man flow the five practices or Pillars:

Confession, Prayers, Alms, Fasting, and Pilgrimage. It is hoped that obeying these five practices will invoke the mercy of God. The Qur'an teaches that although God is not loving, He is merciful and beneficent, granting favors and pardons rather like a wealthy philanthropist, *not* a loving Father.

It is believed that two angels are assigned to each person, one to sit on the left shoulder and record evil deeds, the other to on the right and record the good deeds. In the final judgment, the deeds will be weighed in the balances, and he who has "surrendered his purpose to God while doing good to men" will be allowed into paradise. It is interesting to note that congruent with Islam's teaching of God's transcendence and impersonal nature, God Himself is not in paradise. It is rather a place of the culmination of all earth's pleasures, somewhat of a luxurious retirement.

Following the foundational teaching of God's nature, the Qur'an refutes Christ's deity vehemently. Interestingly enough, Jesus (*Isa* in Arabic) is given a very high place of honor in the Qur'an, including titles of respect not given to Mohammed, such as "Messiah," "Illustrious in this world and the next," and "Word from God." However, His status remains that of a prophet and "slave of Allah" (Qur'an 19:30), a title given to mankind in general. His suffering and death as recorded in the Gospels are considered by Muslims to be the worst of perversions. This is based on a belief that death is the ultimate enemy, and therefore God would never allow one of His holy prophets to die an ignoble or cursed death. (They will even quote the Scripture, "*Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*"—Gal. 3:13b.)

CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Before Adam's disobedience	
As a being created in God's image, man enjoys unbroken fellowship in God's presence.	As a created being, man's relationship with God is that of a slave; he has no fellowship with God.
The immediate result	
Man is expelled from the Garden and from God's presence. He is plagued by death but is promised victory through "the seed of the woman."	Man must "go down" from the Garden, but he is forgiven and told he has nothing to fear if he will follow God's guidance.
Interpretation of the result	
Man's present state is abnormal. Separated from the life of God, man has fallen into a state of spiritual and moral corruption which brings him under God's wrath. He can enter heaven only if God intervenes.	Man's present state is normal. Created weak and inconstant, Adam simply forgot God's command and nothing changed. Man did not fall in the moral sense and hence he does not need salvation.
God's solution	
By accepting God's provision of salvation through Christ, man may now enjoy fellowship with God in measure, and after the resurrection perfect fellowship in God's presence in heaven.	If man will follow God's guidance and faithfully perform His prescriptions, he will again enjoy the Garden (heaven) at the resurrection.

*Arab World Ministries
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The resurrection is likewise nullified, and it is hinted that Christ simply ascended to paradise to end His life.

Muslims believe that Christ foretold the coming of Mohammed as the "seal of the prophets." To Mohammed was given the Qur'an, or the "final revelation." The Qur'an, therefore, while endorsing and quoting from the Law, Psalms, and the Gospels, supersedes and overrides all other holy books. To question the authority of the Qur'an is unthinkable to a Muslim, because he believes it was given directly by God Himself, word for word. When a Muslim finds that the Scriptures do not line up with Qur'anic teachings (as he would suppose they should, according to the Qur'an), he assumes the Scriptures have been

corrupted textually by translation. The Qur'an remains in the original unaltered language of Arabic, and so is considered inspired beyond question or criticism.

This is a very brief summary of Islam, and not comprehensive by any means. If you feel God stirring a burden in your heart for the Muslim people, I would encourage you towards further study. With prayer and solid Biblical backing, examine Islamic teachings, along with Qur'anic references. You will find Islam's carnally minded reasoning to be logical. Satan is not so ignorant as to invent a totally irrational counterfeit. I believe Islam is the greatest deception and counterfeit to Christianity ever invented. But the Spirit of Christ can and will prevail!

Lifestyle

To define Muslim lifestyle is difficult because it varies greatly from country to country. Most of us picture the Arab Middle East as synonymous with Muslim culture. But in fact, there are more Muslims in Indonesia and Bangladesh than in all the Arab countries put together! There are over twice as many Muslims in Nigeria as in Saudi Arabia.

In many cases in Southeast Asia, West Africa, and other parts of the world, large groups of people or even whole nations have become Muslim almost “overnight.” Obviously, many of the individuals involved are not necessarily personally devoted to Islam. They are community-oriented and have “become Muslims” as a uniting factor with their people, or perhaps even to achieve higher social status in their country.

There are two main trends in modern Islam:

1. **Secularization.** Western culture from America and Europe is making an impact on many countries through the oil trade and technology imports. Many countries that formerly staunchly opposed anything from outside the Muslim world are cracking their doors to commerce and tourism. Examples are Algeria, Turkey, and Qatar. Along with this openness comes the corruption and filth of Western television and media. Opposition to these influences brings the second main trend.
2. **Islamists, or radical Muslim groups.** Less than 10% of all Muslims are fundamental, strictly practicing their religion. However, this 10% is a very outspoken and zealous arm of Islam. Fundamentalists or conservatives often turn into Islamists, radical in their pursuit of an ideal Muslim society. They are particularly active among student groups and use radio broadcasts, literature, mosque building, and even terrorism to bring their countries under Islamic law.

There are approximately twenty-three Islamic states in the world today, countries that operate under Qur’anic law. An Islamic state is very restrictive of personal rights, the status of women, and any practice considered Western or modern. Christians, intellectuals, journalists, and freethinkers are often targeted as enemies of the Islamic state.

Most Muslims today find themselves caught between these two evils: the moral-less West and the terrifying Islamists.

Folk Islam

At the same time, many Muslims are on a search for a deeper reality than what they experience at the mosque. There is no personal encounter with God, no warm filling of His Spirit, no display of His power. Rather, there are only the endless repetitious prayers, and the singsong recitals of the Qur’an in a language many don’t understand—Arabic.

To answer their soul’s need of a divine touch, they turn to alternatives, often forms of worship practiced in their region before they became Muslims, such as ancestor worship, blood sacrifices, familiar spirits, divination, and fortune telling. Their hungry souls grasp at anything that seems to have meaning or power. Up to 70% of all Muslims practice folk religion at some level as a supplement to their faith in Islam.

Perhaps this gives us a clue to the spiritual lack that still exists in their lives. The Bible says that Christ is the “fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Oh, that these millions of Muslims might know God through His Son! Jesus told us in John 14:9, “*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.*”

The only hope for the Muslim world is contained and culminated in the glorious Person whom they know only as a prophet. May you and I be His ambassador to preach unto them Christ and Him crucified, who is “the hope of glory”! □

—to be continued—

Gospel Team Reflections



A team of young people spent the month of January 2003, in active Christian service in Ghana. They share here brief messages of what God wrought in their lives through that opportunity.

Joseph Kauffman

Seeing with my own eyes the hunger for God was a blessing, but thinking of the great potential that often lies unused in us Christians was heartbreaking. I had often wondered what my responsibility was in spreading the gospel, but now I realized what a dormant position that was. If I diligently seek out opportunities to share God's Word rather than waiting for those opportunities to find me; if I invest my treasure, be it money, time, or anything else, in the work of God; if I am willing to give until it costs me something; if I am truly willing, actually seeking, to make a difference for God, He will use me. The eyes of the Lord are looking over the whole earth to find someone through whom He can show Himself mighty.

Paul Waldner

I went to Africa with a distorted picture in my mind of what I would see there. The beauty of God's creation slowly restructured that picture. But the cry for souls kept ringing deep in my heart. I first got a glimpse of the unreached in the bush country where thousands of souls dwell. How selfishly we hold onto a gospel that could set people free!

God also taught me the importance of relationships. Mending relationships between team members strengthened my spiritual relationship with my blessed Lord Jesus. All of us pulling in the same direction made it difficult for Satan to grab a hold of the work we were doing for God.

Megan Mong

My experience in Africa was one of confirmation. God, my Father, took me around, showing me His world. "Do you see this? Do you see that? This is who I am. This is what I have created. This is why you are who you are." God is going to the unreached. I must follow Him.

Kate Rutler

After a couple days in Ghana, I had to face the fact that I was the same person there that I was in America. I saw that we have to come to the place where it doesn't matter what happens to us. Nor does it matter what we have to do. The only thing that matters in the entire world is that God would be able to squeeze every drop of glory and service out of our lives. For me, that meant feeling my own physical weakness when it was my turn to share in the schools. I learned that my job was to have faith that God would be there for me, and to go. I realized what a personal God He really is as He became, literally, my strength and sufficiency.

Rebecca Helmuth

We had many wonderful and thrilling opportunities while we were in Ghana. The first week we had the blessing of serving the meals at the missionary advance. It was a beautiful time to sit at the feet of the missionaries and learn many things from their daily lives. We saw these battle-weary soldiers refresh themselves, encourage one another, and share their dreams and visions of their individual stations. In this way I got a closer glimpse of what life on the front lines is all about. The most special time at the advance was the time of prayer with these dear laborers. I saw and heard their cries concerning the work, and their heartfelt prayers for more laborers to be sent to their aid.

After having seen and heard the needs and cries of the people who sit in darkness, God has shown me some practical ways I can be a part in spreading His Word:



Spreading the Gospel through song at a school in Ghana

1. Praying for those involved in the work
2. Being willing to sacrifice that I might be able to give more funds
3. Encouraging those on the front lines with letters

These are things the world does in wartime, and the Lord has shown me a much greater war.

Kevin Waldner

I was so blessed going to the schools and ministering to the students, knowing that lots of those students probably don't hear a good presentation of the gospel of our precious Lord Jesus, who paid for all their sins. God's Word will not return void, so I trust that God is still working on hearts even when we are gone. I was blessed to see God working in the villages and raising up churches for His honor. I was blessed by the very friendly, hospitable people who received us and brought us food. But most of all, I was blessed by their desire to do what is

“What Christian worker has not hoped that somehow the words which he speaks or the books which he distributes will prove a more effective witness than does his hurried and ineffective life? But here the missionary commits himself outright to showing Christianity as a way of life, and this keeps him in constant realization of his need for a closer walk with God.”

—Lyman MacCallum—



Their church—a few logs under a tree which they have prepared for God's teachers to come and teach them the words of God.

right in the sight of God. I was encouraged to see God changing hearts and transforming lives so that the love of Jesus shines forth.

Jacob Wagler

Daniel Kenaston took us back to a village that was about an hour and a half from their main road. When we arrived in the village, the people poured out of their mud huts to welcome us. It was in this village, which seemed almost to be Stone Age, that the people had a sitting place prepared for us so Daniel could preach God's Word to them. I will never forget the feeling of sitting in the black African night while the sound of their drums rolled out over the land. Their monotone voices rose and fell as they sang with the beat of the drums, their bodies swaying in dance. I was hit hardest by the

awareness that these people had never heard the gospel, and that they were rejoicing that finally we had come to tell them about God. I also had to think that I could have been born to a family in Africa. I could be one of those husky young boys sitting there who never had heard about Jesus. If I were one of those young men, I would beg you to come and tell me how I can be set free from the fear of juju and the bondages of sin. I would want to know how to worship the true God. It was late when the drumming and dancing stopped and all eyes turned to Daniel. I saw the intent look on their faces as they drank in the words Daniel spoke. I heard them say that they will get rid of their sacrifices and small gods.

Matthew Troyer

In that remote Konkomba village, I saw big, strong, husky men rejoicing in dance because the gospel had come. When the realization dawns upon you that this is just one village out of about two thousand, and its only one tribe out of many other tribes in Ghana, and Ghana is only one small country on the globe, it gives you a rather helpless feeling. Who will go and teach those people the way to truth?

While we were in Ghana preaching in schools and in the villages, there were times when it was my turn to speak that I really didn't feel super spiritual. But as I stepped forth in faith and said, "God, here I am. Use me as you see fit," He gave me the words to speak.

"How often do we attempt work for God to the limit of our incompetency rather than to the limit of God's omnipotency."

—J. Hudson Taylor—



Second-Mile People

by Isobel Kuhn

Books are written for many reasons. Some books are informative, some are designed to entertain, and others seem to exist merely to generate income for the writers and publishers. A truly valuable book is one that has a higher goal and a deeper motive. *Second-Mile People*, by the late China Inland missionary Isobel Kuhn, is one of those. It flows from the author's deep-seated desire to inspire the reader to a sacrificial life, a life poured out for the Lord Jesus Christ. This book is a collection of biographical snapshots of some of her missionary comrades, and is designed to change our perspective about our relationship and service to our worthy Lord. For Mrs. Kuhn, a "second-mile person" is one who is willing to live sacrificially, that Jesus Christ might get the glory.

"Christ made a difference between that first and second mile. He says plainly the first was compulsory, but He puts the second up to you and me as His way of doing it - in other words He suggests it as an offering that you and I may bring for the good and the peace of His kingdom. Today one finds a general apathy in the church, an unspoken feel-

ing that one mile for the Saviour is quite sufficient!"

Don't read this book to idle away an evening. Don't read it just to learn more about the history of the China Inland Mission. Don't read it as a spectator, marveling at those "second-mile people" found therein. Rather, read it with an open heart. Read it to allow God to stir up your love for Him. Read it, that "the things of earth may grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace". Let the author woo you into a greater awareness of the worthiness of Christ through the lives of these "second-mile" Christian-living illustrations of the sweetness of a life given to following and serving the Lamb of God, the altogether worthy One.

There is a sweetness that permeates these true stories, but also the stark reality of giving up those lesser things we value so highly. Weigh for yourself the loneliness of separation, the dangers of the way, the rejection of others, the hard-learned lessons of humility and dependence on

God, the sickness and even early death.

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit' (Jn. 12:24). What if the corn of wheat be young and lovely? ... What if it be a literal dying? ... 'Are you willing for this?'"

These "second-mile people" are anonymously pictured here, for the author's desire is to put the focus on their Lord and not on them. The message throughout the book is that this "second-mile" life is attainable. It is for us.

"Christ made a difference between that first and second mile. He says plainly the first was compulsory, but He puts the second up to you and me"

"Said Dr. Goulburn, 'The greatest saints who ever lived, whether under the Old or New Dispensation, are on a level which is quite within our reach. The same forces of the spiritual world which were at their command, and the exertion of which made them such spiritual heroes, are open to us also.' If one can be a great spiritual force, a great

channel of blessing to mankind, or a nobody, merely by one's choice, why not choose to get and give the most out of life? Especially as one has only one life to invest."

In keeping with her heart-felt desire to lure "first-mile Christians" into a deeper walk with and service to her Lord, Mrs. Kuhn has chosen some simple believers who loved Jesus supremely and served Him sacrificially. Were they successful missionaries? In her estimation, yes! But her estimation... well, that is what the book is all about.

Come meet "The Bachelor," an unlikely candidate for a Bible Conference speaker, whose deep devotion to Christ left a lasting fragrance on those who met him. As a teacher and field supervisor for CIM, he demonstrated a life of sacrifice to God and received the promised hundred-fold blessings in fruitfulness. Then he gave up his fruitful field to pioneer in a new area.

with this glimpse into the very human sweetness of this Christ-like girl. ...That walk gave Dorothy 'influence' over me when a 'sermon' would have created a permanent barrier. ...Oswald Chambers says, 'The people who influence us most are not those who buttonhole us and talk to us, but those who live their lives like the stars in heaven and the lilies in the field, perfectly simply and unaffectedly. Those are the lives that mould us.'...Being 'filled with the Spirit' (which is a first qualification of Second Mile People) is merely a refusing of self and a taking by faith of the life of Christ as wrought in us by His Holy Spirit."

Then there is "Bud, the indefatigable soul-winner," who "was bound that he was not going to 'lack power' because his flesh shrank from the sufferings of the Cross." Looking at how this young man 'burned out' to serve Jesus, the world would call it a shame. But the author calls us to a heavenly perspective. "Bud has taken the costly spikenard of his life and his

four months alone in a Chinese village to keep a new work when she understood very little of the local language. The offering of her life to the Lord bore much fruit in the following years as revival came to the "dead" churches in her area.

"Star" served with her husband high in the mountains in a remote location that could only be reached via a rope stretched across a chasm. She endured years of separation from her children and the lengthy separation from her husband who pioneered further into the mountains.

"It was not difficult to get Star to talk about her boys – she was full of stories of their young days at home in Lisuland, and once said quietly that when she came back without either of them, to this lonely Rock Dump, she did not know at first how she could stand it. She passed quickly on to some other matter and we did not dare ask her to linger, but we had caught a sense of a silent Companionship which had gently offered to fill the empty aching places. There is none but He can do so."

Their work among the Lisu people produced a great harvest for the kingdom of God.

Lastly there is the "Doctor, an unprofitable servant." Raised to be an agnostic intellectual, he fell in love with His Lord as a medical student and turned his medical skills into a continual opportunity to reach out for Christ. From that time forward he began "having prayer with his patients, and dealing with them about their souls! – sick people, you under-

"Being 'filled with the Spirit'

(which is a first qualification of Second Mile People) is merely a refusing of self and a taking by faith of the life of Christ as wrought in us by His Holy Spirit."

Read of "Dorothy" who didn't have much confidence that her life was making a difference for her Lord, but who, quite unconsciously, won others over in her love for Christ.

"When we parted, Dorothy felt she had been a failure, unconscious that the one she had hoped to help was going away enchanted

young manhood, and recklessly poured it out at Christ's feet. Dare you and I stand aside and call it 'waste'?"

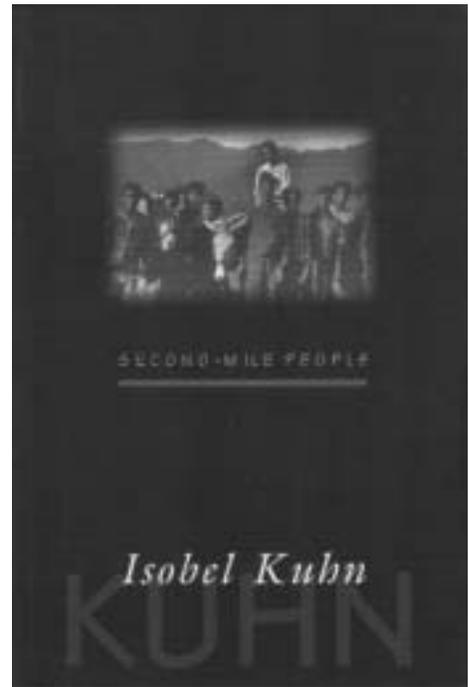
"Jenny" was a nobody in her family and in the eyes of the world, but she became a humble servant in God's work, a prayer warrior and soldier of Christ, who spent

stand; but some of them got saved.” On the mission field in China in later years he never saw more patients “than he had time to deal with concerning their salvation.”

Throughout this inspiring book the author seeks to encourage us regarding the goodness of God and the beauty of His ways and His plans for us. She points out that we often fear to fully yield to Him as He molds us for His service. *“And isn’t that the way with us? God suddenly lays His hand on the scruff of our necks and right-about-turns us, and immediately we look for punishment. Thus with stiffened legs we are ungracefully dragged up to*

what He has prepared for us – only to find it is a feast!” Isn’t God good? Isn’t He worthy? Are we in danger of giving Him too much? Will we wish that we had served Him less sacrificially?

What remains hanging in the air around me after soaking in this collection of “Second Mile” vignettes? It is a deep conviction of the utter reasonableness and necessity of giving all to Jesus Christ, the exalted Lord of the Universe. May God also pierce your heart with this revelation as you seek to know Him and to serve Him in a deeper way; and to go the second-mile. □



continued from page 15, Country Profile: Algeria

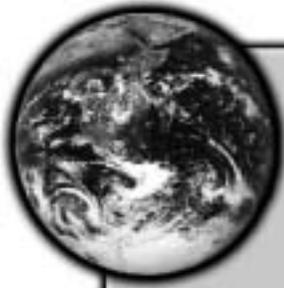
Recent earthquake hits Algeria

On May 22 of this year, an earthquake in northern Algeria left 2,261 dead and more than 10,000 injured. Thousands are still missing. The BBC reported: “Hundreds of factories and businesses

were totally or at least partially destroyed. Some villages have almost been erased from the map. An after shock also hit and an estimated 100,000 people are still too afraid to return to their homes.”

Pray that God will reveal Himself to the Algerian people through this tragedy. **Pray** especially for those who lost

loved ones, that God will open their hearts to see eternal things. And **pray for the message of salvation to break through to these Muslim people, that the light of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus may rescue many.** □



Country Profile

ALGERIA

Algeria is a land of stark contrasts. The mega-city of Algiers has been called one of the prettier cities of the world. Whitewashed European-style buildings sit on hillsides overlooking deep blue Mediterranean waters. Another sea covers the majority of Algeria—a sea of sand. The Sahara is a mixture of dunes, plateaus, and rocks, punctuated by bursts of green life. These oasis towns are surrounded by date palms. They eke out a living growing dates and citrus, conserving every drop of precious water.

The remaining camel caravans crossing the desert remind us of days gone by, while modern trucks roar along the “Road of African Unity,” one of the only paved roads to cross the vast Sahara.

Western and Islamic cultures attempt to co-exist, though not always peacefully. Women in traditional Muslim dress and veil, as well as in European-looking dress, are seen on the streets.

The world’s fifth largest natural gas reserves are carefully managed and exported by French-speaking wealthy Arabs, while the Shawiyas remain isolated in the Aures



Mountains, living as they have for centuries.

How did such diversity come to exist?

History

Algeria’s history is rich and animated. The Berbers are definitely the consistent theme through the otherwise complicated mosaic of occupants. The Berber people have probably been in Algeria since the time of Babel. They have traditionally been nomads, farmers, herdsman, and fiercely independent and loyal to their clans.

Christian influence was strong during the centuries of the Roman Empire, where Carthage was a major center of learning, home to the famous Bishop Augustine.

ALGERIA

Location

North Africa

Population

31 million

Capital

Algiers, population
4.5 million

Peoples

Arabic 77%
Berber 22%
Other 1% (mainly refugees)

Religion

Muslim 96.7%
Non-religious 3%
Christian 0.3%

Languages

18 (Arabic is official,
French widely used)

Languages with Scriptures

Entire Bible – 2
N.T. only – 2
Portions only – 5
Currently in progress – 2

Income per person

\$1,500 (5% of U.S. average)

Land Area

1,476,680 sq. miles

Climate

Northern Tell: pleasant
Mediterranean climate,
avg. temp. 70⁰F.

Sahara region: dry scorching
temp. up to 120⁰F.

By 700A.D., the Muslim Arab warriors arrived on their camel steeds. They were set to conquer North Africa, and the rest of the world if possible. The Berbers had to bow to the Arabs and their religion, but inwardly they despised the oppressive rule and rejected Islamic law.

From the early 1500s until 1830, Algeria became a piracy stronghold, raiding and looting ships in the Mediterranean.

Then came the French takeover and colonization. For 132 years, Algeria was a French colony. Much hatred and animosity existed between the French colons and the local people. By the end of a bloody decade-long war for independence, free Algeria was determined that they were through with "Christianity."

Present Realities

Algeria has stepped to the forefront among the third-world countries, making tremendous strides in development, health care, and transportation. However, the country remains basically poor and in a state of political instability.

The 1980s and 1990s were extremely violent; some estimate that 100,000 people died in terrorist activities, civil war, and Islamic radical movements. Many journalists, Westerners, and intellectuals were killed. The government tightened its hold on the people and the media through the military.

In the last several years, there has been a relative calm.

The doors of travel, trade, and tourism are cracking open. Whether this could be an opening for missions remains to be seen. The government is still very skeptical about Christianity and foreign groups in general.

Why don't you gather your family together this evening? Read this article together, get on your knees, and cry out to God for the people of Algeria. Pray that God's kingdom would overcome the violence and unrest. Pray that the sweet influence of the gospel would transform men's hearts and lives. Pray that the government would allow missionaries to enter. And pray for the small but brave church of Algeria.

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Revival Among the Berbers

It all started at a camping spot in the Kabyle Mountains. A few of the country's tiny group of believers from the capital city "happened" to pitch their tent in just the right spot one day in the early 1980s. They ended up sharing their faith with a group of local Berber young people. They prayed for one of the young Berbers who was sick, and God miraculously healed him. Thirty people turned to Christ that day. In spite of significant persecution, at least four of these new converts stood firm, and a new movement of the Spirit had begun.

Today, the national church in Algeria is made up almost entirely of Kabyle Berbers. It is very difficult to estimate their numbers. Reports vary from 5,000 to many more thousands. Their spirituality is a mix of vibrant worship and fearless evangelism. One church leader was asked what he felt was a major spiritual need in this movement. He replied earnestly, "Everyone in the Kabyle region is not saved yet."

There are a few mature, seasoned leaders among them. However, as a whole, there is a great need for discipleship and training.

One astonishing fact about the Kabyle revival is that during the last decade of violence and torture, no Kabyle Christians have been killed. The watchful eye of a loving Father is the only possible explanation for such a miracle.

People Focus - the Tuareg

A nomadic people of southern Algeria, the Tuareg number approx. 30,000. They have stiffly refused Islamic influence for centuries, leading lonely lives in the Sahara Desert. They are the outcast of Algeria; their freewheeling desert culture remains an oddity to the developing majority. The women dominate the family structure, while the men veil their faces. Female leadership stems from a legend that a Berber princess from Morocco journeyed across the desert with only her slave girl as a companion. For her courage, she was made leader—the first of a long line of female rulers.

As a result of border restrictions on camel caravans, many Tuaregs moved south into Niger and Mali. Large numbers died in the disastrous droughts of the 1970s.

There are only a possible handful of Tuareg believers. Pray for translation of the entire Scriptures into their language, and for strong missionaries who are willing to die to self to reach these people.

Pray For Harvest In Ghana

**"Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."
Psalm 2:8**



"The church through long centuries...showed...neglect...hostility and retaliation. Therefore are we bounden to go, not in superiority but in penitent love to the Muslim, to make what loving reparation is allowed us to the unforgiving Muslim world. And this duty lies upon us, inescapable, whatever are the opportunities of joyful service elsewhere."

- Constance Padwick -



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