

**40 YEARS OF MISSION IN ALGERIA**  
***A REVIEW OF MARSH'S 'THE CHALLENGE OF ISLAM'***  
***(LONDON: ARK, 1980)***

*By Duane Alexander Miller*<sup>1</sup>

Marsh, who served as a Brethren missionary in Algeria for about four decades, has a lot of experience. The purpose of this book is clear: to encourage young, devout Christians to engage in mission to Muslims, whether it be in Algeria itself or among the burgeoning Muslim immigrant population in the West (which was already quite large in 1980 when he wrote this book).

Strengths: He has an eye for anthropological details like gender relations, food handling and medical practices. Many of his descriptions of Berber life around the mid-20th Century are insightful and revealing. Near the end of his book he offers sensitive and sensible recommendations for how to engage in witness to Muslims living in the West. Finally, his willingness to stay in Algeria through thick and thin - a world war, a revolution - would be admirable to most anyone.

Weaknesses: His repeated appeal to scripture as a proof text whether things go right or wrong is a little tiring to a scholar, granted that is not the audience he is writing for... but still... Also, while he seems to genuinely appreciate aspects of Berber culture (hospitality, hard work) one feels that he sometimes lapses into some fairly artificial categories.

Of special interest to scholars and practitioners of mission today will be the issue of the Ramadan fast. In Marsh's day, for a Christian who used to be a Muslim to keep the fast was seen as a connection to 'works righteousness'. How things have changed in the passing decades!

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In conclusion, for anyone interested in learning about the prelude to the renaissance of the Algerian church which occurred in the 90's and is continuing today, this book (which may not be easy to find) is a must read.