

A Divine Visitation in Algeria

adopted from *Last of the Giants*, page 157, by George Otis

In the early 1980's, a truly remarkable incident took place in a North African village located some 125 miles east of the city of Algiers. According to testimony, in one unforgettable night in 1983—with no prior warning and for no immediately discernible reason—God sovereignly descended upon this coastal township in a divine visitation. Moving from house to house, and communicating through a combination of dreams, visions and angelic visitations, He did not rest until every member of this Muslim community was properly introduced to His only begotten Son, Jesus. As might be expected, come daybreak, nearly every villager had a story to tell.

As these villagers managed to piece together the magnitude of what had happened to them, a sense of spiritual awe settled over the entire village. In the weeks that followed, their conclusions led to a dramatic wholesale conversion involving some 400 – 450 Muslim villagers—a nearly eighteen fold increase in the size of the Algerian national church!

When mission workers [who were not involved in this incident], began to investigate possible reasons for this divine visitation, they came across a stunning piece of information: Over 600 years earlier, a Spanish missionary named Raymond Lull from Majorca, preached in an open market at this location. That was June 1315 AD—668 years before this great miraculous outpouring of God's spirit came. A frenzied mob of Muslims stoned the missionary to death. [Note: some historical records say he was stoned, but died later—either on his way home or after he got home.]

The blood of martyrs, it has often been said, is the seed of the Church. Missionary Lull, who is generally considered to be the first missionary to the Muslims, certainly believed this. In his book, *The Tree of Life*, he wrote that Islamic strongholds are best conquered by “love and prayers, and the pouring out of tears and blood.” In retrospect, it appears that is exactly what happened in the divine visitation in Algeria in 1983. Falling into the ground on that summer day in the fourteenth century, the seed of Raymond Lull's poured-out life was subsequently watered by the tears of generations of pious intercessors. Faithfully tending their cause, these saints waited patiently until, some time in the late twentieth century, the golden vials of heaven overflowed and God was released to summon forth fruit in its due season.

But there is even more to this story. This out-pouring of the Holy Spirit apparently triggered a book-of-Acts-style revival throughout other parts of Algeria---which continues to this day. During the summer of 1990, I had the privilege of meeting with several dozen former Muslims who had come to believe in Jesus Christ within the previous eighteen months. Nearly all reported some type of supernatural intervention. New churches are growing and spreading like wildfire, particularly among the Habyle Berber people living in and around the Atlas Mountains. One recent Arabic-speaking visitor told us about several thousand new believers meeting for Bible studies in homes and marathon prayer sessions on mountaintops.

Recently I spoke with a middle-aged missionary in Rochester, New York, who in the late 1960's led a team of young Americans in prayer on the very site of Raymond Lull's fourteenth century martyrdom in Algeria. Praying that God would redeem the seed of Raymond Lull's poured out life and send a move of His Spirit, the team helped to lay the groundwork for a sovereign outpouring of divine grace fewer than twenty years down the road.

More about Raymond Lull (1234-1315)

At the age of thirty-one Raymond Lull had a profound conversion experience through a vision of Christ on the cross. Soon after this he began to work out a plan for the evangelism of Muslims, and joined the Franciscan order as a layman. He spent the next twenty-two years preparing himself through the study of theology, Islam and Arabic language, and founded a training center where other Franciscans could prepare themselves for missionary work among Muslims.

Raymond Lull wrote more than 200 books on Christian apologetics for Muslims—most about the time he was 52 years old. Finally he decided to engage in direct missionary evangelism himself; and, at the age of sixty, he made trips to Tunis, Cyprus and Algeria. In each case he became involved in public controversy, and was arrested and expelled.

When he was 80 years old, he made a last missionary journey to Sicily and Tunis. This time, he was less confrontational and was allowed to engage in debate with Muslim leaders. He then moved to Bugia (the modern Bejaia) in Algeria, and began preaching openly in the market. He was stoned by the crowd and died either at sea or in his native Majorca.

Lull was in many ways ahead of his time. He recognized that the Crusades had been a terrible perversion of the spirit of Christ. Therefore he called on the whole church—including the Pope—to realize that the Muslim world could not be won to Christ by force.

He saw the need for Christians to study Islam carefully and that missionaries should be thoroughly trained. He also worked hard on developing an effective apologetic that would convince Muslims by ‘irrefutable logic’. Many Christians today are still challenged by the example of this

man who worked so hard to change traditional Christian responses to Islam and who gave his life for Muslims to come to faith in Christ.

His life is a tribute to the conviction that no Muslim is without the hope of knowing Christ as Lord and God. Raymond Lull dedicated his life, and ultimately gave his life, to the RACE!!!- (Reaching Algerians with Christ’s Embrace)

Please pray for those who are serving among Algerians that they may have the passion and discernment to see how best to reach Algerians for Christ and intercede for them.

The Algerian Arab Team therace@therace.ws

Printed by Brother James
Knoxville, Tennessee, U.S.A.