

## **OPERATION WORLD. 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY EDITION**

by P Johnstone and Jason Mandryk (eds.)

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Reviewed by Hendrik Bosman

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The first booklet, *Operation World*, was published in 1962 by Hans von Staden (the founder of The Dorothea Mission) and covered 30 countries with basic information and items for use in the Weeks of Prayer. This booklet has grown to become a book weighing almost 1 kilogram packed with information about countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe – these include states under occupation of other states such as Western Sahara (Marocco) and Kosovo (Yugoslavia).

The following assumptions influenced the compilation of this book:

- It is written for evangelical Christians, with enough sensitivity to invite wider usage.
- A central position is taken in more controversial issues that perplex Evangelicals (church government, baptism, work of the Holy Spirit, social involvement etc).
- The writers and editors are Western Christians that try their utmost to achieve a balanced and global perspective of the functioning of churches in a given country.
- All relevant events were covered up to April 2001 and the editors expect this edition to be of use well into die first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- There is an emphasis on the activities of the Church and the book has tried to steer clear from an over-emphasis of the work of missionaries and missionary agencies.
- The selection of agencies has a certain inevitable “bias” towards those agencies that have an interest for English-speaking readers.
- The book is intended as a tool for prayer “that the Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified, the Church mobilized and world evangelization furthered” (p xii).
- The data in the book has a dual purpose: to inform prayer and to mobilize witness (p xv).

Each country and region discussed in the book has two columns of statistical background information and a list of items for prayer and praise.

The statistical background covers the following:

- Geography – area in square kilometers, population, capitals and cities.
- Ethnic and linguistic diversity – this includes information about literacy and languages with Scriptures.
- Economy – the Human Development Index (life expectancy, infant mortality, income and health), public debt as a percentage of GNP and the income per person in US dollars.

- Politics – does not comprise a full assessment comprise of brief comments to aid prayer.
- Religion – comments are made about the levels of religious freedom by making use of a Persecution Index of 74 countries as compiled by Open Doors. Religions are listed in order of their percentage of the national population and the absolute number. The growth rate given is for the period 1995 – 2000.

This book is suited for the private use of Evangelical Christians who would like to systematically focus their prayers on the needs of churches in countries across the globe. Church bulletins and magazines can also benefit from the wealth of information contained in the book of almost 800 pages. The graphics and maps can also assist sermons and speeches to be both more informative and attractive.

Theological researchers can benefit from *Operation World* since it provides web links to hundreds of other databases covering the activities of denominations and missionary agencies. In this regard mention must also be made that a CD version is available with excellent search functions to allow quicker access to relevant data.

To end on a more critical note: when will the time come that non-Evangelical Christian activities be incorporated in a publication such as this? It is difficult to conceive any tool for prayer concerned with the activities of the body of Christ to exclude the Catholic and Orthodox Churches!