

Editorial Comment

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Whether it is about Islam or secularized public school books, getting the right things to the right people is very crucial.

Best Mission Book Yet

In the bulletin you hold in your hands we present one of the chapters of perhaps the best book introducing missions in the past few years. Every serious believer should own and digest this small, keen book written by Stan Guthrie, who recently joined the editorial staff of *Christianity Today*. Take a taste in this issue of *Mission Frontiers*! See pages 6-8.

Here also you will find a crucial analysis of the remaining task of missions, prepared by two of the editors of history's most detailed compilation of measurements of the expansion of the Christian cause. Maybe you did not notice it, but two huge (and expensive) Oxford Press volumes have appeared under the title *World Christian Encyclopedia, 2nd Edition*. However, the massive interpretation of those two appears in an equally large (and even more impressive) tome called *World Christian Trends*.

The condensed summary and analysis on pages 16-23 will give a key-hole view into these remarkable treasures.

When God is Allah!

In view of the massive amount of confusion in America these days about Muslims, we present David Johnston's powerfully sane summary of a key issue—the use of *Allah* for the God of the Bible. See pages 12-13. Fact is, millions of Christians were praying to *Allah* long before a pagan Teutonic word G O D was chosen (by near-savages in Northern Europe) to refer

to the supreme being of the Bible. Today 60 million Christians still have the word *Allah* in their Bibles for the One we, in English, call *God*. Today, 30 million Christians in Indonesia attract Muslims to a better understanding of the *Allah* in their Christian Bibles and New

Testaments and Gospel portions. *Where did Mohammed get the word "Allah"? From the Christians of his day!*

Christian Jihads?

However, a flood of letters pro and con came to us in response to Don McCurry's article on Christian Militarism. He is one of today's most widely respected experts on Islam, with many years of residence in an Islamic country. He was not asked to tell all the immense amount he knows about Islam, just to give us insight into the tendency to *jihad* in Christian history (*jihad* being an Arabic word for *crusade*).

It is SO HARD for Christians to avoid comparing the best of Christian history with the worst of Muslim history!

For example, dare I point out that John Calvin, early in his career, acted almost like a Taliban leader in Geneva (and got thrown out), even urging the execution of a scoffer who dared to question the doctrine of the Trinity?

Why All the Earnest Confusion?

The biggest single problem for us today as we look askance at Islam is the fact that Christianity before 1500 was to some great extent an underground or forest-savage religion while Islam had inherited and long promoted the intellectual and technological prowess of the Roman Empire, build-

ing for Islam a significantly magnificent history.

When the Muslims took over Egypt they ended a war between two kinds of Christians and declared toleration of religion.

When the Muslims took over Jerusalem they ruled the city with equanimity, assigning equal space inside the walled city for Jews, Christians and themselves. This lasted for 1300 years.

But, suddenly when Gutenberg unleashed the Bible to run strong in the societal bloodstream of these northern savages (but not within Islam), what happened?

One result was the sudden blooming of science, from astronomy to biology. Another was the industrial revolution building on the mass market newly created by Wesley's evangelism—namely, the unprecedented bond of trust between newly-honest people from city to city, without which mass production would have been useless. Also, there were advances in medicine, humanitarian breakthroughs, hospitals, general education, and finally high technology. All this fairly burst on the scene and massively boosted the West into a world prominence which is now the envy of much of the rest of the whole earth.

Other nationalities are just as smart—Chinese, Hindus, Africans—but in all cases are struggling to leave behind huge burdens of the past from which Biblical perspective alone can rescue them.

But when (in our stridently secularized society) will people understand the truth behind the Western global explosion? They won't. *Not as long as 90% of Evangelical young people feed merely and mainly on secular textbooks in both public and even Christian schools and Christian colleges.*

What Can We Do?

Here in Pasadena we have been busy. We have spent ten years rediscovering the Biblical backbone of the Western phenomenon, rewriting it all into a massive new curriculum that can function as an M.A degree, but also as

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the 3rd and 4th years of college, and now even as a first year of college. You may already know about this.

Okay, Buckle Your Seat Belts

However, a new twist on this constitutes the most daring vision in all our 25-year history, and involves a completely new strategy. Having spent ten years packaging all this as an amazing *integrated* whole for off-campus student use, we want now to repackage it once more for use in Sunday Schools to allow them to track week-by-week with what their kids are learning in secular schools during the whole week.

To do that, the hundreds of key insights which we already have garnered must now be reorganized into *booklets which will systematically and precisely supplement, chapter-by-chapter, the chapters in the main secular textbooks* which Sunday School kids are studying during the week.

Why do this? First, because churches in America must realize that after billions of investment in Christian schools and Christian colleges, 90% of Evangelical young people still are immersed for all their school years in secular schools. And the churches of this country must not go on ignoring what they are learning! The future of missions depends on a revolution in this context.

Who Was D. L. Moody?

At one outstanding Christian school the history teacher was asked how he went about adding information about D. L. Moody to the secular textbook they used. (Remember: the influence of Moody in his day probably even exceeded Billy Graham's today.) This Christian teacher replied, "Who was D. L. Moody?"

But, even when, for textbook publishers and teachers, the state of California developed detailed specifications that actually portray fairly accurately the tenets of Christianity as a

religion, those specifications do not get D. L. Moody into the story. That is, students get the bare theology of the faith but are offered no hint of the amazing power and historical impact of Christianity *as a movement*. How can young people become missionaries optimistic about major changes due to the Gospel they take to foreign countries if they are ignorant of its impact on their own country?

We can go on forever adding "band-aids" of information six months before or after kids hit something at school. Nothing can take the place of *adding fact and insight the same week the issue surfaces in their classroom*.

Thirty Hours vs. Thirty Minutes

If this catches on, churches can put up signs, "Drop your children off at our Sunday School and we'll help them get 'A's at school."

Otherwise what kids learn in 30 hours a week at school easily overshadows the 30 minutes in Sunday School. The best example I know of for the greater reality of what is learned in those 30 hours at school is a true story about a little boy who came running home from school and told his mother—with astonishment in his voice—"Mommy, I saw a map of

Palestine in school today." She was unimpressed. He said it again and again. When she refused to be surprised, he stopped, stunned, and said, "You mean there really is a Palestine?" His obvious perspective is that what he was learning at church was fairy tales.

Why in Sunday School are kids only exposed to the Bible? What about the 2000 years of the Bible's incredible impact on world history? If all they learn at school is what Christians are supposed to believe—the virgin birth, the resurrection, etc.—and they study physics without knowing that Kepler, Newton, Faraday, James Clerk Maxwell, Lord Kelvin etc. were devout believers—and *that this gave these pioneer scientists an all-important faith that nature is orderly and that laws of nature are discoverable*—their faith in the Bible is stunted.

What if our kids don't know that in the 1740s a great revival swept the Atlantic seaboard, producing an inter-colonial church government and laying the groundwork for the American Revolution and the Constitutional Convention? Well, their confidence in the power of the Gospel to change society is impoverished.

And they may give it up for that very reason.

We want to salute Rick Wood, our former Managing Editor, for the exciting new task to which he has been assigned. We seem often to be giving away some of our best people to other ministries which particularly need our people. This time it is a major research function for Luis Bush, who was the man in God's hands in the development of the amazing global "AD2000 Movement."

Rick's work for us for 14 years is thus suspended for a time, and we are dramatically confronted with the vast hole he and his good wife Lorena are leaving us to fill. This is one reason for the slight delay in this first issue of *Mission Frontiers* for 2002.

Do pray for us just in general. Staffing the many emerging opportunities coming our way as we work behind the scenes is exceedingly difficult, even though we are experiencing a slight upswing in mature people joining our team.