



The difficulty of the eradication of slavery has been one of the most complex issues in American history.

Ralph D. Winter

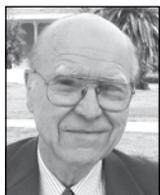


There seems to be a quickening pace of opposition to the Evangelical cause in America and the world today. The relatively sudden emergence of Evangelicals with not only college degrees but PhDs and membership in Congress and involvement at the White House, has brought a tremendous negative response from many people who are fearful that an “Evangelical Taliban” wants to take over the country.

This is a bright spot actually, because it means that the Evangelical movement is gaining momentum and influence and the negative responses can readily be read as a measure of that strength.

At the same time, beginning with *The DaVinci Code* by Dan Brown, a whole rash of very negative books have come out. One of the principal ones is by Richard Dawkins: *The God Delusion*. Another is by Victor J Stenger, *God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist*. Then, books by Sam Harris, first *The End of Faith*, and secondly a smaller book but with equally sharp teeth and totally destructive of the Christian faith, called *A Letter to a Christian Nation*.

These books cry out for response and one of the keenest and most delightful antidotes is a book, called *The New Atheism*, by David Marshall. It will be coming out from Harvest House Publishers very soon. There are also a lot of other articles that have, of course, helped to fight back against these outrageous types of attacks.



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In any case, no matter what we do, no matter how clever we respond, we really have to face basic problems in the Christian mission. This issue of *Mission Frontiers* about Global Slavery points out one of the dimensions of our problem. Evangelicals are very well known at the Billy Graham level for talking and explaining and communicating and giving out information about Jesus Christ. Even commanding people to obey Jesus Christ. But we are not so visible when it comes to actual planning, to a presence in meetings that are now being held around the world on the really urgent suffering that is going on outrageously in many places in many different ways.

I have recently been looking back over the period of American slavery and the huge war that resulted when slavery was being more and more attacked by Evangelicals who were responding to the gospel. One of the key books, probably one of the most detailed and scholarly, by David Brion, is entitled *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*. The difficulty of the eradication of slavery has been one of the most complex issues in American history and perhaps world history. The Civil War killed more people than all the wars in American History up through the Korean War. The number of human beings caught up in the war in the military in the North and the South, if a similar war were to take place today, would almost be the size of the population of California. We grossly misunderstand the tragedy of that war.

On the other hand, the rather rapid rejection of human slavery, first by the British and the French and then the Americans, has been one of the most significant “disruptions” in human history for which we have many reasons to be thankful.

The point is, we must not underestimate the cost of changing deeply ingrained Satanic cultural features that defy change and misrepresent God if they are attributed to Him, as do people like Dawkins.

There are, in fact, a whole rash of books that you can readily access through Amazon about human slavery, both past and present. The most upsetting feature of all of this, brilliantly displayed in one book I would recommend, entitled *Not for Sale* (see page 12 for one of its chapters), simply points out that there are more slaves in the world today than were bartered and bought during a 400 year period of North Atlantic slavery in the past. That is very hard to believe, but the statistics really back that up. The often quoted nearly 30 million slaves in the world today are a very unavoidable reality.

They are not a philosophical concept, they are not a theoretical perspective, they are a grinding reality that is a terrible smudge and open sore on the global body politic.

The reason I bring this up here, however, is that this is not simply a world problem to be prayed about. It's something that Evangelicals have got to do something about and in fact are doing something about, but perhaps not as prominently as they could be or should be. Global

slavery is again an incredibly complex problem, and it is bafflingly difficult to figure out what to do about it.

This brings me to my last point. I would point you to the “other editorial” (p. 34) in most of our issues written by the Director of the US Center for World Mission, Greg Parsons. His editorial in this issue is very insightful,

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speaking of "disruptive Missiology." He is not using the word "disruptive" in the negative sense. He is borrowing the term from American history in modern times quoting things like computers and email which have been "disruptive" technologies that have massively changed our society both for the good and for ill. There are some perspectives in mission today that, when they are fully understood or even before they are fully understood, will be very disruptive. Greg mentions one of them.

We have over the past years in both *Mission Frontiers* and in *The International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, been mentioning "disruptive" ideas swimming around in missions today, without using the term. Perhaps the

term itself is a little confusing because it seems negative. But in many cases in society and missions some of the newer and "disruptive" ideas are actually a phenomenal blessing. And here simply I would refer you to his article because he refers to something we have mentioned again and again in *Mission Frontiers*, the so-called "Insider's approach." If properly pursued, there could be 100 million Muslims who are followers of Christ in the next 10 years. If not properly pursued, that is absolutely a pipedream at the rate we are going. If we insist upon all Greeks becoming Jews, or all Muslims becoming "Christians" we are simply smoking a pipe filled with marijuana. The fact of the matter is that Evangelicals are no more likely to

convert millions of Roman Catholics or Orthodox or Muslims or Hindus or anybody else if we insist on them adopting the Evangelical western "Christian" cultural tradition with all of its different strengths and appalling weaknesses, such as high divorce rate, sexual licentiousness, pornography and other terrible things.

In one editorial we can't of course bring up a lot of "disruptive" missiologies, but this issue on the subject of what we might do about global slavery is clearly one "disruptive" issue. We have to stop and think and rearrange our schedules, our minds and our perspectives and do things differently if we are going to hit this global problem the way God would want us to do. 🌐



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