

Editorial Reflections

The End of the Spear

This is the title of both a thoroughly professional movie and an even more professionally written book, both the instigation of Steve Saint, who was just a boy when his father and four other missionaries were speared to death in the “Auca” territory of Ecuador’s Amazonian jungles. The book is 338 pp., ISBN 0-8423-6439-0, www.tyndale.com: SaltRiver, 2005.



The movie and the book are a revisitiation and the continued story of a world-famous event that took place 38 years earlier in an impenetrable jungle. In any movie where a person is to be depicted both as a youth and later as an adult, the story has to take a huge leap in time to allow a different person to depict the adult character. The book takes that same leap because

in fact there is a huge gap of time between the eerie days when Steve Saint went to live in the jungle tribe and when he went back to live among them again.

The story of both movie and book is horrifying and astounding. The movie does not really attempt to describe how the transformation took place from rampant homicide to civil behavior, but it manifestly confirms that amazing transformation.

It begins in the period of nearly constant killing, with a virtual blur on the screen of muscular killers racing through the jungle with their long spears. It ends with the very same people, killers all, living peacefully with each other and with the feared and hated outsiders. It is the quintessential missionary story.

The book explains a bit more of the reason for the transformation, and offers a mountain of other truly fascinating details which the movie cannot touch. If you had to choose, you would readily choose the book, not only because it goes into far greater detail, but simply because it is so very well written. No fictional novel could possibly rival the fascination and constant interest of this true story. Once again, truth is stranger than fiction.

But behind both the book and the movie lies an ongoing drama which has not yet come to its end. What is the end of these jungle tribal peoples? They are manifestly just as intelligent as any outsider. They quickly learn of the larger world outside their space in the forest. Their young people are now

going to high school, facing almost totally different circumstances from those of their parents’ youth.

Steve Saint is their main bridge to the outside world. He, for more than a quarter of a century, was absent from the scene, went to Wheaton College, became a successful businessman, then suddenly returned to live with his family in the tribal setting, becoming an incredibly important link for these people to the larger world. But what is the future of these dear people?

In any case, both the movie and the book, may continue the enormous impact of the original tragedy. One of the most eloquent scenes in the book is toward the end when the murderer of Steve’s father testified at a huge global level meeting in Amsterdam and the question is thrown out, “How many of you are in ministry today partially because of the example of the five missionaries killed in Ecuador?” Of the over 10,000 ministers and evangelists from all over the world, a clear majority stood up.

It occurs to me that this kind of movie (along with earlier ones like *The Mission*) can go far to rehabilitate the word *missionary*. So can the books reviewed here by Stark and Schmidt. Could it be that this sort of thing may be the best solution to the current discussions in some mission spheres about the need for “3D” communication? I refer to the question of how to talk about what missionaries are doing in such a way that what we say will be acceptable and intelligible to three different audiences: home church, secular press, and Islamic societies (for example).

What Stark and Schmidt have already done for Christianity is essential to the further step of telling the story of mission endeavors in such a way as to banish misconceptions and misunderstandings and truly rehabilitate the word *missionary*. If the story were really told it would be a powerful and marvelous account. But don’t get me started!

Even if this book had no mission interest at all, it is an incredible achievement of “you are there” writing, entertaining, very frequently uproarious. But it is also profoundly illuminating in regard to the purposes of God among man, the goals of missionaries in general, and the crucial and practical obstacles to that end.

Just imagine what is going on in the minds of these serial killers, transformed due to their exposure to the “carvings” (Bible text), now sitting in a Florida home watching a World War II movie displaying the morally impressive

“outsiders” dropping explosives on people they could not even see and who could not therefore be personal enemies.

It is a book that is both spellbinding and at the same time profoundly missiological.

Intelligent Design, Again

Pennsylvania Judge Jones wrote that he wasn't saying the intelligent design concept shouldn't be studied and discussed, rather its advocates “have bona fide and deeply held beliefs which drive their scholarly endeavors.”

But, he wrote, “our conclusion today is that it is unconstitutional to teach ID as an alternative to evolution in a public school science classroom.”

So says the news report. By now it is loud and clear that in many communities in America today, the majority of citizens are more afraid of religion than favor it.

But before we leave the actual text of the Judge, it is curious that he does explain that ID may be “studied” but not taught as “an alternative to evolution.” Whenever it is studied, that being apparently constitutional, it would seem likely that some of the students would take it to be “an alternative to evolution.”

Others could well imagine that ID is one way to explain evolution. However, we all know that when the Judge spoke of “evolution” he was referring to the type of evolution NOT involving any intelligent input.

Since the Bible plainly states in many places that an intelligent God created life, this legal ruling is therefore equally plain in denying the truth of the Bible.

I am surprised that we face a situation today that no longer views science as unable to pronounce on the presence or absence of religious truth, but considers itself perfectly capable of denying the very possibility of any other form of intelligence in the universe.

Similarities between 2006 automobiles don't require the thought that they evolved from a single source. They indicate that a variety of intelligent designers were influenced by trends of design and were employing the latest technology. Curiously, evolutionists interpret the similarities in DNA between different forms of animal life as the basis of concluding that these differing forms are intelligent enough, or intricate enough, to have morphed themselves into different species. A theist, on the other hand, could just as easily, or even more easily, take those similarities to imply the work of a common intelligence or various intelligences in consultation.

If scientists don't believe they are looking for order, symmetry, even ingenuity, before they even find it, they are not likely going to find it. If they feel they must rule out in advance any evidence of intelligence, what are these huge radio telescopes

focused out into the heavens doing in Florida? I can imagine they can say that in this or that instance they don't see intelligence. I cannot imagine that they would confidently predict that there can be no such thing. But they are saying that, or at least their political spokespersons are saying that they say that.

But the most painful thing about this collision of Evangelicalism with American dominant culture, is the fact that for ID people to prove unintentionally that God is the author of the violence and suffering in nature is no great gain. The Harvard professor responding to ID in the *TIME* cover story on evolution a few weeks ago was quoted as saying essentially that “if nature as it is comes from the hand of God, He must be a divine sadist who creates parasites that blind millions of people.” That is a perfectly logical conclusion when we insist in intelligent design in nature without any comment on the equally clear evidence of intelligent evil design in nature.

Purpose Driven 24/7

Our review in this issue of the book *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, relates to our long-standing interest in the mission frontier concerning the syndrome of an “after hours Christianity.” It also relates to the 38-page *TIME* January 2006 “Inside Business” supplement entitled “Getting Smart at Being Good,” as well as *TIME*'s Dec 26, 2005 “Persons of the Year” cover.

The book says there is a groundswell of concern in America today regarding the meaning of work and the connection, if any, to ethics and religion. The “Inside Business” supplement presents a large spectrum of actual businesses today which are using some of their profits to do good things in society and in the world. The *TIME* cover story, in a rare case, has three people (not just one) to grace their annual “Person of the Year” cover—Bill and Melinda Gates, and Bono, the apparently world famous rock star whose name I had never heard of before.

These three were chosen, *TIME* says:

For being shrewd about doing good, for rewiring politics and re-engineering justice, for making mercy smarter and hope strategic and then daring the rest of us to follow.

The Bill and Melinda Gates foundation has cut a highly unusual swath for some time. But far more significant than the work of a single, even huge, foundation, is the result of its example—the ripple of similar high-quality, high-strategy charity initiatives following the Gates' lead, and even more important, following an even wider and impressively pervasive trend throughout American society and other North Atlantic nations.

At issue is what is being called *Corporate Social Responsibility*, or CSR. To get a feel for the potential power of a broad

social trend, note the mix of activity portrayed in the TIME supplement, “Getting Smart at Being Good”:

- First, T. J. Rodgers, CEO of Cypress Semiconductor, *who does not think* corporations should use profits to “do good.”
 - The opposite, John Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods Market, is donating millions to good works and claims he is more profitable than Rodgers because of it.
 - WalMart is mentioned as having turned a corner and is now pledging millions for new good things.
 - Ford Motor Company’s \$84 million to a cancer fund.
 - Nike with a full time Corporate Social Responsibility director.
 - Crest started a national dental-health program for under-served kids.
- [Note that these activities may or may not contribute to the business giving the money.]
- A Nielson survey indicated that customers earning \$50,000 or more per year will pay up to 10% more for products that help fund corporate anti-AIDS initiatives.
 - Timberland (a New Hampshire shoe company) trains workers in China, provides microloans and health services to workers in Bangladesh, and is involved in a drive to raise awareness about genocide in Darfur, Sudan.
 - Victoria’s Secret alone mails one million catalogs per day, printed on non-recycled paper. VS, along with other catalog companies, rapes whole forests in sending a total of 50 million catalogs per day —with only an average 2.5% response. Vigorous opposition is rising.
 - Jeff Skoll (co-founder of eBay, and a billionaire), a year ago formed Participant Productions, a film company whose mission is “to change the world.” He seeks “to compel the media to get back to reporting in the public interest.”
 - Rink Dickenson founded Equal Exchange as a means of paying coffee farmers a better wage. Friends were sceptical. He mused, “The concept of having your values embedded in everything you did in business ... was not happening in any major way at all.” But that was 1980. Today, Equal Exchange “has helped create a new paradigm in an industry with a reputation for keeping suppliers poor.”
 - Non-profit charities are under increased scrutiny. Big salaries are increasingly in question. There are now 1.8 million charities in the USA, double from 25 years ago.
 - “Net Impact, a global network of M.B.A. students, graduates, and professionals who are trying to find business-based solutions to change the world has grown from 3,288 members in 2001 to 13,500 in 2005 ... we have a new generation of nonprofit leaders who want to combine mission with aggressive strategy ... many students, if they heard ‘nonprofit management’ would be thinking about running a museum, a hospital. That’s not what excites them. What excites them is finding innovative entrepreneurial solutions to social problems.”

Okay, that is enough to give you the drift. Let me be very clear. I don’t bring this up with the idea that this is replacing

the Kingdom of God. I don’t even believe that an individual’s free time is of much use (unless you are a rock star or a billionaire like the Gates). I don’t think that businesses will be very likely to be as wise in doing good as they are effective in their business. It is a very rare businessman who delves into the complexities as have the Gates.

I bring this up because I believe that we are seeing increasing evidence of what I call “intuitive theology,” which may in some ways be more cogent than our formal theology, which was hammered out in centuries where there was little free time to ponder social or microbiological evils.

The Annual Meeting of the Korea World Mission Association (Nov 16-18, 2005)

This meeting convened 244 executives and leaders, and met at one of the many “Prayer Mountain” locations in Korea, quite a ways from Seoul. Quite a modern retreat center.

In our next issue we will be reporting more about this meeting, since five of us from the staff of the IJFM and the International Society for Frontier Missiology were invited to participate (as the main inputs of the meeting). It was the time of the launching of the sister publication, the first issue of the *Korean Journal of Frontier Missions*.

Confusing Terminology

Here I will simply mention one item that surfaced: “What is the meaning of ‘mission frontiers’ as compared to ‘frontiers of mission.’”

At this point we need to apologize for the English language! Both the word *mission* and the word *frontier* have more than one meaning.

Both have a physical, literal meaning.

Mission can refer to a *mission agency*, an organization. Or it can refer to a concept, the concept of *purposeful action with a goal*.

Frontier can refer to a *border*, a *boundary* beyond which it is difficult or unusual to go. It also can refer to a concept, the concept of a challenge, a *problem to be solved*.

It may be useful to deal with the ambiguities inherent in the phrases *mission frontiers* and *frontiers of mission* by saying they are parallel to “clay jars” and “jars of clay,” which are the same thing.

That is, both “mission frontiers” and “frontiers of mission” usually refer to concepts, to those unresolved obstacles or difficulties *mission agencies*, or *organizations* need to face and overcome. They don’t refer to physical obstacles like geographical borders to cross.

Further to confuse things, there is a widespread tendency to refer to “missions agencies” instead of “mission agencies.” In the plural, *missions* almost always refers to mission agencies.

The phrase *Christian mission* usually refers to the concept, the cause of mission as in *missio dei*, but can also refer to “mission agencies that are Christian.”

This may not be of much help. It at least acknowledges the problem. Indeed, it could be said that the very complexity of missiological terminology constitutes a “mission frontier,” or, if you prefer, a “frontier of mission.”

Related to this particular matter is the fact that the very word *mission* is defined by different people in different ways. In English we speak of any activity, religious or not, being “on a mission” if a team of some sort sets out to accomplish a stated purpose.

In the world of Christian missions there is also a confusion. Years ago almost all mission outreach was in pioneer (unreached people) situations. Then, by the 1960s most “mission” work was among the resulting national churches, helping them set up training programs for pastors, Sunday

schools, literature production, clinics, youth programs, etc. This was no longer pioneer mission. Missionaries, the majority, were working with people who were already Christian.

For that reason at the U.S. Center for World Mission we began to distinguish between what we tried courteously to call “regular mission,” i.e., the work with overseas, already existing (and evangelizing) churches, and “frontier mission,” i.e., the activity where a viable, indigenous, evangelizing church movement did not yet exist. We would have preferred to speak simply of evangelism and mission, not even conceding the use of the word *mission* to overseas church work, reserving the word *mission* for pioneer work, frontier mission work. This is the significance of the chart here, which shows the difference between true pioneer mission and the resulting evangelism. **IJFM**

The Four Mechanisms of Missions and Evangelism

