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Contact: [ar.feedback\(at\)apologia.org](mailto:ar.feedback(at)apologia.org)

Post Office Box 63422
Colorado Springs, CO 80962

Phone/fax: (719) 277-0069

Editor: Rich Poll

Contributing Editor: Paul Carden

Associate Editor: Robert Velarde

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APOLOGETICS

Just Thinking,⁵ a publication of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, reprints an interview, "Defending Christianity in a Secular Culture" (18:1 - 2009, pp22-39), of Zacharias by *Enrichment Journal*, a pastor's magazine published by the Assemblies of God. In response to the question: "What is destroying the moral and spiritual foundation of today's society?" Zacharias discusses "three modes — secularization, pluralization, and privatization — [which have] brought about loss of shame, loss of reason, and loss of meaning."

Zacharias notes that "The Judeo-Christian worldview has become the pariah stepchild of worldviews and is being attacked while other worldviews are respected, revered, and recognized as part of history and the culture of other nations...."

"Religious pluralism is a belief system that sounds good, but does disservice to all religions. All religions are exclusive...."

"The question is not whether these are mutually exclusive. The question is which one of these will we deny as being reasonable and consistent? Which one of these will we be able to sustain by argument and by evidence?" ...

"Mahatma Gandhi ... stated that he wished some aspects of his own belief system could be permanently erased because so much of it was nonsense. Even Gandhian sages will tell you that. Much of what is in one of the early sacred Hindu writings, Veda, is irrational and unacceptable. We would consider some of the behaviors and practices of Mohammad in his own personal life reprehensible if someone practiced them within our culture today...."

"The denial of desire is the foundation of Buddhism, which is the only way that leads to the lack of suffering. Yet, the principal reason people give the Dalai Lama prominence is for the freedom of Tibet. I am for that. I agree that he needs to acquire political freedom, but why does he even desire political freedom if he is the quintessential representation of the ultimate Buddha? ..."

"Another example is karma. If every life is a rebirth, and every birth is a rebirth, and every birth is a rebirth of previous karmic

practices, what was being paid for in one's first birth? You cannot have an infinite series of rebirths or you would not be in this birth."

Secular-minded people are adopting "a spirituality that does not need to defend itself because it is purely a private thing that does not moralize or pontificate for anyone else. It becomes a feel-good, be-quiet, and get-a-better-state-of-mind-at-the-end-of-the-day religion. Moral absolutes? One revelation from God who has moral boundaries for us? No, that becomes untenable...."

"If a pastor says, 'All we need is the Bible,' what does he say to a man who says, 'All I need is the Quran'? It is a solipsistic method of arguing.

"The pastor is saying, 'All I need is my own point of reference and nothing more than that.' Even the gospel was verified by external references. The Bible is a book of history, a book of geography, not just a book of spiritual assertions." Zacharias concludes that what people need is "to know why the Bible is authoritative and can be trusted." <www.tinyurl.com/bnh6av>

Congratulations to RZIM, whose staff of "about 125 globally, based in nine countries" celebrates its 25th year in 2010.

EXORCISM

The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist, by Matt Baglio¹ — "Journalist Baglio follows a Catholic priest through the latter's training to become an exorcist in this incisive look at the church's rite of exorcism and its use in contemporary life. Baglio began delving into the topic after hearing about a course at a Vatican-affiliated university, where he met and befriended the Rev. Gary Thomas, a priest in the diocese of San Jose, Calif. Thomas took the exorcism course at the request of his bishop and subsequently apprenticed himself to a seasoned exorcist. Keenly aware of the misunderstanding that abounds about exorcism through film images, Baglio sets about dispelling misconceptions and does so skillfully, separating the real from the imaginary in the mysterious and unsettling (continued on next page)

EXORCISM (continued)

ting sphere of the demonic. Both Thomas and Baglio were changed by their exposure to the rite. Thomas grew spiritually during the process, which bolstered his desire to help his parishioners, and Baglio, previously a nominal Catholic, reconnected with his faith. For anyone seeking a serious and very human examination of this fascinating subject, one that surpasses the sensational, this is absorbing and enlightening reading.” *Publisher’s Weekly*, Feb 9 ‘09, pp46-47.⁶

ISLAM

“Jihad TV in Europe” by Mark Dubowitz and Roberta Bonazzi — subtitled: “It’s time to shut down Hezbollah and Hamas broadcasts to the Continent.” The journalists complain that the Arab satellite TV companies, al-Manar (Hezbollah) and al-Aqsa (Hamas) TV stations undermine European societies’ efforts to live peacefully with Islam.

The authors identify France as the greatest source of concern. “Eutelsat, France’s leading satellite operator and the world’s third-largest satellite company” broadcasts al-Aqsa, “enabling Hamas to incite, recruit and raise funds throughout Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

“Al-Aqsa TV is notorious for its uninterrupted speeches of Hamas leaders calling for suicide bombings, for its youth-oriented music videos that incite viewers to murder, and programs aimed at children which glorify suicide bombers....

“One haunting music video produced by al-Aqsa shows a mother preparing a bomb in her bedroom. Her young daughter naively asks whether she is bringing her a toy. Mama leaves home and explodes on her suicide mission. Her child says, ‘Instead of me, you carried bombs in your hand.... Only now I know what was more precious than me.’ The little girl continues, ‘My love for Muhammad will not be merely words. I am following mama in her steps.’” *Wall Street Journal*, Feb 18 ‘09. <www.tinyurl.com/dmellh>

ORIGINS

In America we seldom hear about creationists who live overseas. Stefaan Blancke changes this with his article, “Dutch, Belgian Creationist Groups Unite to Bring Anti-Evolution Message to Six Million,” in *Skeptical Inquirer* (Mar/Apr ‘09, p7).

A consortium of “twenty-eight creationist publishers and organizations from both the Netherlands and Belgium” intend to “distribute a brochure called ‘Evolution or Creation: What Do You Believe?’ to six million mailing addresses, but only if they can collect the necessary €400,000 (about \$500,000)....

“The spokesman for the project appears to be Kees van Helden, president of the Dutch creationist ‘Bible and Education’ organization....

“For more information, the curious reader is referred to a [Dutch] Web site, www.creatie.info” The photo of a full-size Noah’s ark replica is included. Its builder, Johan Huibers, uses it “as a traveling exhibit across the Netherlands.”⁷

SCIENCE

Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion, Ronald L. Numbers, ed.² — “Defining myth as just ‘a claim that is false,’ editor Numbers and 24 other scholars debunk 25 falsehoods about science and religion. The most familiar — that the church imprisoned and tortured Galileo, that medieval Islam was hostile to science, that medieval Christians thought the earth was flat, that the church fought against anesthesia — have long been discredited, yet the briefs on them so admirably distill their history that *Wikipedia* should swipe them. Others — that the church suppressed science, prohibited dissection, and martyred Giordano Bruno for his scientific work — still have their propagandists. Some remain quite lively, such as that Christianity birthed modern science (see Rodney Stark’s *For the Glory of God*³), that intelligent design challenges evolution scientifically, and that creationism is a strictly American phenomenon. Many are known primarily, perhaps, to specialists, and one or two may startle those who thought themselves in the know about such figures as Descartes and Newton.” *Booklist*, Feb 15 ‘09, p6.⁴

SOURCES: Monographs

1 - *The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist*, by Matt Baglio (Doubleday, 2009, hardcover, 304 pages) <www.tinyurl.com/cxj92>

2 - *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths about Science and Religion*, Ronald L. Numbers, ed. (Harvard Univ Prs, 2009, hardcover, 320 pages) <www.tinyurl.com/ctqp8e>

3 - *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery*, by Rodney Stark (Princeton Univ Prs, 2004, paperback, 504 pages) <www.tinyurl.com/cwxoyt>

SOURCES: Periodicals

4 - *Booklist*, <www.ala.org/booklist>

5 - *Just Thinking* (Ravi Zacharias International Ministries) <www.tinyurl.com/3fbwc3>

6 - *Publishers Weekly*, <www.publishersweekly.com>

7 - *Skeptical Inquirer* (anti-supernaturalist), <www.csicop.org/si>

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