

30-Days of Prayer for the Muslim World

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[1] Thank you for requesting the article entitled "WORLDVIEWS IN COLLISION".

Blessings as you read and pray into the issues, may these help to multiply a deeper move of prayer in our Father's Presence, in Jesus name.

The 30-Days Working Group

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WORLDVIEW IN COLLISION

by Bob Hitching

In Europe, Christianity has generally been very effective in responding to the big Ideas. However, we now live in an era in which ideas are not the principle issues affecting the church or culture. Rather, sociological forces, e.g. urbanisation leading to depersonalisation, are the most powerful influences.

It is important to remember that while worldviews and ideas have fixed points of reference, and can easily be defined and categorised, people are very different. We are ambiguous and full of contradictions. We swing on a pendulum of ambiguity. There is a big contrast between our beliefs and values and our actions. We are constantly in flux. Modernity, Post Modernity and Islam are colliding in this ambiguous situation.

Modernity is not just a series of ideas or an era. It is a labyrinth which could best be described as a process and consequence of sociological change, a result of sociological carriers. These sociological carriers include urbanisation, globalisation and the privatisation of faith. Modernity is the elevation of rational control of human destiny, of centralised bureaucracy. Modernity has implications; we are progressing, Man is redeemable, Science liberates from the superstitions of the past. It promises utopia.

Modernity is not dead. It has simply changed its form. Post-modernity is modernity having a nervous breakdown, modernity in overdrive, modernity running amok. Others disagree and we should read what they say (see book list).

Post-modernity has been born of a generation of people who look at Modernity and say that it has failed, that we are left empty but, by destroying Modernity, we will re-enchant the world. However, there is nothing offered as a replacement but only incoherence and unrelated fragmentation.

Modernity then is rational, Post-Modernity is the negative, destructive reaction. Meanwhile, Islam co-exists in this turbulence.

As we consider Islam, we must be careful to reject the stereotypical images and perceive the true picture. The Muslim community in Europe falls into two groups, the immigrants (mainly economic migrants of the last 50 years) and the indigenous communities, present for centuries (Western Turkey, Northern Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia, Poland and Russia all have historic Muslim communities). Meanwhile, worldwide, 48% of Muslims live in cities, 60% are under the age of 19 and are just as fashion conscious as other young people. They are more likely to get caught up in hedonism and paganism than Muslim spirituality.

In Europe, the presence of Muslims has brought turbulence with the rise of the far Right and then the counter-reaction of some Muslims. However, there are other forces at work which are far stronger.

An implicit pluralism is taking place. Our clothes and other possessions come from all over the world, our cities are full of restaurants, places of worship and groceries reflecting every culture, our children sit in multi-cultural classrooms. Europeans are absorbing pluralism. Meanwhile, explicit pluralisation is taking place in economics, driven by the all powerful force of greed. We are all committed to optimising production at the workplace or we suffer economically. Therefore, we leave our faith at home.

And so we homogenise. Yes, there is turbulence, there will be explosions but we should not just respond to the apparent but to the deeper process of homogenisation.

The Response of Christians

We need to respond to these processes. However, we should not necessarily follow the flow of sociological forces. If mega markets are replacing corner shops, it does not necessarily follow that the mega church is God's will rather than the small church.

- We do need to see a restoration of intimacy at the personal level.
- We must make more apparent the redemptive and life-changing message of the Gospel.
- We need repersonalisation at the collective level.
- We should allow our theology to be supply generated, rather than demand generated. (What does God want and how can we supply it, rather than what do people want? If surveys say they want anonymity and unaccountability, this is not what we should give).
- Innocence in the Christian message is more important than power.
- The purity of our ideology and theology is more important than pragmatism, even if that brings less successful results in our outreach efforts.
- The Sovereignty of God over our strategies is crucial.

Let us remember that it is not the Church that is pushing history to its conclusion but rather God which is pulling. We are autonomous entities within the flow of his historical paradigm. We are his tools to bring compassion, grace, mercy and the message of reconciliation of Man to God through the blood of Christ.

Pluralism will happen in Europe. What is God saying about how we should respond?

Book List: (See also www.domini.org/spear/mod.htm)

McDonalds, Minarets and Modernity - Bob Hitching

The Post Modern Condition - Jean-Fran(ois Lyotard

The condition of Post Modernity - David Harvey

A rumour of Angels - Peter Berger

The Homeless Mind - Peter Berger

The Intimations of Post Modernity - Zygmunt Bauman

Simulacra and Simulation - Jean Baudrillard

Modernity and Self-Identity -Anthony Giddens

The Art of the Motor - Paul Virilio

Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity - Alister McGrath

Bob Hitching's served Pioneers and is a missionary, thinker and public speaker on a wide variety of subjects. The author of "McDonalds, Minarets and Modernity", Hitching's expertise on post modernity and Islam have helped many. This paper is adapted from his address to the 1997 New Europe Forum (NEF) in Brussels, an annual event.

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30-Days – Calling all Christians to pray for all Muslims.