

An Ideal Platform To Present The Divine Message

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Isinga suggests the integration of religious themes in comics, animated films, and video games in this intriguing, contemporary book.

Patrick Samuel Beyeye Isinga's book offers beginning arguments for an integration of artistic media with biblical stories. *An Ideal Platform To Present The Divine Message* is an interesting, if overly tentative, presentation.

The first portion of Isinga's work is an explication of three media that the author wishes modern evangelists would make greater use of: comic strips, animated films, and video games, referred to throughout as the TriCom. Comic strips in particular have a long history in the communication of important information, Isinga insists, citing wall paintings and tapestries as early examples. Because they are so consumable, such art forms are "a very effective way of passing messages out," Isinga says, "including religious messages."

Once terminology has been dealt with, Isinga devotes the remainder of his work to exploring preexisting connections between TriCom and divine symbols, and to questioning whether those symbols might be more effectively and reverently integrated. Some connections are tenuously drawn. Isinga relies first on obscure prophetic works and apocryphal books: a line in Habakkuk is connected to characters from X-Men and Street Fighter, while a line in 2 Maccabees finds a parallel in a Japanese manga. The relevance of such similarities isn't fully fleshed out.

Following sections bemoan the improper integration of explicitly religious symbols, from angels to demons and devils. TriCom, Isinga says, have gotten too comfortable "honoring the enemies of the Light," and he pushes to end the romanticizing of figures that are merely evil in the Bible. Eastern religions have been referenced with more consideration, he says, and latter portions of the book suggest that Christianity should work its way in in a similar manner. Many of Isinga's complaints about the use of religious symbols are couched in terms of blasphemy and distortion, suggesting a particular, perhaps literalist, interpretative position, though this is never fully spelled out.

Isinga's ideal audience eludes precise identification, though they reside somewhere among those interested in evangelizing. Arguments for the use of TriCom in accomplishing evangelical tasks verge on clumsy. "Would a poverty stricken person, poorly dressed and ill-smelling easily enter a Church to pray with the others?" Isinga asks, and with the presumed "no" comes the reassurance that comic books could reach such groups instead. In advocating the forwarding of flashy media to present a religious message, Isinga seems oblivious of the perhaps more pressing needs of potentially unchurched "street children," and he leaves himself open to critiques regarding misplaced priorities.

In the end, the text does not move far beyond preliminary arguments. Isinga relates his own convictions that TriCom might be useful for communicating the gospel, but concrete plans and supporting data are excluded. Colorful section

headings and chapter breaks draw the eye, but they don't meaningfully connect to surrounding content. Too many loose ends impede final delivery.

An Ideal Platform To Present The Divine Message is a project with an interesting perspective, a resource that evangelists could use as a starting point before exploring the subject further.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (September 26, 2014)

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