

Textual Supremacy in *World History: Patterns of Interaction*

A Case Study in Islamic Apologetics in American Public Education

By

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“The more I consider the independence of the press in its principal consequences, the more am I convinced that in the modern world, it is the chief, and, so to speak, the constitutive element of liberty. A nation which is to remain free is therefore right in demanding, at any price, the exercise of this independence” (p.97)

--Alexis De Tocqueville, from *Democracy in America*

Who determines when a social studies textbook that has been produced by its publisher and adopted by public education systems is “independent” in the sense that Alexis De Tocqueville describes in the seminal work *Democracy in America*? In most public education systems today, such determination may well not be a consideration despite what we learned in ninth-grade civics: the First Amendment’s establishment clause which Thomas Jefferson and James Madison intended, in part, as a means to build a “wall of separation” between matters of religion and matters of state. The Supreme Court case *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947) reiterated that basic tenet of American life in the context of public education:

The 'establishment of religion' clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions or prefer one religion over another. Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion. No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa. In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect “a wall of separation between Church and State.” 330 U.S. 1, 15-16.

This case study analysis of a textbook that experienced a challenge in 2010 in a Florida school district indicates that greater determination is extended to matters diversity and cultural tolerance in the service of a religion that is given special preference in the text. The teaching of faith trumps the First Amendment. The religion in question, Islam, boasts one of the world's great historians, Ibn Khaldun, who in 1377 wrote that one of the reasons for Islam's decline was precisely that Islamic scholars had confused matters of philosophy and history with matters of faith. Given Khaldun's attribution of Islamic civilization's decline to an entanglement of faith with reason, one finds it strange that advocates for the teaching of Islamic history and culture would want to repeat such matters again in the year 2010.

Textbook companies have a commercial imperative to accommodate educational advocacy groups championing diversity, tolerance, and world religions as they influence the course of history. States maintain education legislation to that effect, so textbook publishers may argue that the content of their books supports state laws. But is it expediency and profit that compels textbook companies to overlook other legal imperatives such as providing students with content that is analytically sound and evenly depicted in a cross-cultural comparative sense? Do such companies sacrifice historical integrity despite the corpus of education case law which holds that "States have a pedagogical interest in establishing the curriculum and legal concerns with possible establishment clause violations" (*Webster v. New Lenox School District*, 1990)? Are textbook companies above constitutional law which holds that "... the state has no legitimate interest in protecting any or all religions from views distasteful to them" and that prohibit states from requiring "teaching and learning tailored to principles of a religious sect or dogma" (*Epperson v. Arkansas*, 1968)?

Introduction to Florida's Textbook Challenge

During the third week of April 2010, several stakeholders in the School District of Sarasota County approached me about the content of a textbook, *World History: Patterns of Interaction* (2005), which they had complained about to the school board. They had alleged that the textbook is biased, portraying Islam and its founder Muhammad in a favourable light and at the expense of the Judeo-Christian tradition and Western history. A parent in the group had commented, for example, that a lesson in the book compels students to "write a letter to Muhammad about his legacy." The parent noted that there are no parallel lessons for Judeo-Christian "prophets" identified in the textbook's presentation of the influence of world religions on society and civilization. However, one lesson is somewhat close: in another section students can write a letter to a Roman emperor about the legacy of Jesus.

I informed the stakeholders that I would acquire a copy of the textbook and conduct an independent review of the textbook.

Given the substance of the complaints about the textbook, I established some basic questions for my inquiry:

“Does the textbook privilege Islam and Islamic things?”

Or, in other words, *“Does the textbook’s historiography afford Islam a special status in its presentation of Islam, Islamic things, and as compared to other societies, civilizations, and religions represented in the book?”*

And, *“If so, how so?”*

I acquired the textbook on Tuesday, 27 April. In a twenty-four hour period, I gave the book a close reading, producing three ledger pads of notes about it. Late Wednesday afternoon, I conferred with a representative of the Sarasota County School Board about my observations and offered a few recommendations. By Friday of that same week, I was interviewed on a local radio program by one of the stakeholders concerned about the textbook. It is my opinion that Sarasota County Public Schools must not dismiss this matter as the product of cultural “intolerance” by a handful of political malcontents. My reading of the textbook suggests a possible violation of *establishment clause*, which forbids the establishment of religion in the conduct of public education. A violation of any one of the following as decided in the case *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971) should raise doubts in superintendent’s mind about the validity of *World History: Patterns of Interaction* (2005):

- Education must have a secular legislative purpose
- Education must not have the primary effect of either advancing or inhibiting a religion
- Education must not result in excessive government entanglement with respect to religion

These *Lemon* tests ensure that schools instruct in a fair, balanced manner about religious history and its doctrinal foundations but prevent them from assigning preference to one religion over others. If the school board adopts a defensive position and ignores the challenge, then the school board may open itself up to future litigation. It should take aggressive action to resolve the conflict thus upholding its compact with Florida to provide a quality education to students in Sarasota County.

My reading of *World History* supports stakeholder objections to the book. However, I find that problems with the textbook’s historical analysis and presentation are more severe than those stakeholders have so far suggested. Islam is afforded special status in the textbook. The book’s stated “legacy” of Muhammad crosses the line between simply teaching about his influence in world history and into the realm of pure faith. Indeed, in the textbook he is not regarded by Muslims as a “prophet” but is, according to numerous

in-text statements, a “Prophet.” That alone would invalidate the textbook legally under the *Lemon* test.

In addition, the textbook’s preferential treatment of Islam is achieved not merely through simple letter-writing activities to Muhammad, splendid pictorial displays of Islamic things, and unflattering presentations of Christian things. That special status also is achieved by surrounding contextual accounts of Western and non-Western history leading up to and following the birth of Muhammad and centuries of invasion by Islamic armies throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Moreover, in the process of privileging Islam, a few other “societies” and what writers of the textbook call repeatedly “ethical systems” also are privileged because they, too, were allegedly “tolerant” toward people with whom they, as the book’s subtitle suggests, “interacted.” To provide tenth-graders in Sarasota County with moral instruction about “peace” and “tolerance,” the writers of the book incriminate most major Western things (e.g., European feudalism, Christian conquest, British and French imperialism, European slavery) while omitting, minimizing, or distorting similar unpalatable truths about non-Western things (e.g., Asian feudalism, Islamic conquest, Non-Western imperialism, African and Islamic slave trading). Bat Ye’or (2004) refers to this practice in contemporary accounts of Islamic history as “historical negationism.”

So the book is not only what I define hereinafter as *Islamic apologetics* but also is an example of *anti-Western apologetics* that has been the foundation of cultural studies since 1978, when Edward Said’s work *Orientalism* became *d’rigeur* in area studies programs in higher education (Kramer, 2001). The textbook case study presented in these pages suggests that Edward Said’s indictment of the Western scholarship some thirty years ago has reached its full maturity in K-12 education.

Islamic Apologetics, the Why and How of Textual Supremacy

I was approached by the stakeholders because they were aware that my major line of inquiry is in the study of contemporary Islamic organizations with an eye toward why Muslims seek to influence public education systems. The short answer is that they regard Western-style, K-20 public education systems as territory for conquest. A school system is among the many places where the truest believers among Muslims in America hope to establish *sharia*, or Islamic law. School children are a captive audience in that respect, and so the best way to prepare the minds of students is through classroom education. The most efficient and instructionally consistent means to provide content for classroom education in American mass education is through textbooks.

In that respect, however, Muslims face a dilemma. In host nations where Muslims are minorities, many believing Muslim minorities are keenly aware that non-Muslim majorities might not accept the more inimical aspects of Muhammad’s biography,

Islamic sacred texts, and Islamic history. *In terms of managing non-Muslim perceptions, therefore, defenders of Islamic faith must tread carefully in how they introduce their religion to others and, in turn, lay claim to textual supremacy in American education.*

Their approach is not new to American education. Educators and civil rights advocates have long noted that Christian fundamentalist groups have made in-roads in pressuring textbook publishers to include content in textbooks that is palatable to the way they think the world ought to be. So have multiculturalists. Indeed, an overall reading of most textbooks used in American public education would show that multiculturalists are by far the most successful advocates today. Many multiculturalists also share hostile, de-Westernizing impulses that, on their surface, seem compatible with prevailing Islamic attitudes about the West.

Few people are aware of how the privileging of Islam in a K-12 textbook could be. Perhaps the best way to approach the subject, then, is by means of a crash course in *Islamic apologetics*. By *Islamic apologetics*, I mean a presentation of Islam in educational curricula that emphasizes the teaching of faith over the teaching of history, as is the purpose of any religious text from any religious tradition, and that negates, minimizes and distorts doctrinal and historical realities that readers might find distasteful, unpleasant, and unacceptable.

My research began in 2001. By 2004 I had begun writing, lecturing, and publishing about a social program known as the “Islamization of society and knowledge.” I did not invent this term. I encountered it in textbooks published by The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), headquartered in Herndon, Virginia. The IIIT is a transnational non-profit organization that is related to a range of other Islamic organizations that fall under the umbrella of The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).

In IIIT publications that I studied as part of my doctoral research, *Re-Islamization in Higher Education from Above and Below* (2008), I found that proponents of “Islamization of society and knowledge” want to establish *sharia* (Islamic law) in all countries where Muslims live. This social reform program is directed entirely at public and private education institutions in the West. Under *sharia* in public education systems, ostensibly, disputes in education would be resolved through an elite group of Muslim scholars who believe they know what God’s will is regarding those disputes. Its aim is to ensure that Islam enjoys a privileged space in Western institutions even if that space is held through tactics such as historical distortions, deceit, and accusations of racism directed against questioning non-Muslims. For liberal Muslims who question their own religion and religious history, the accusation is sometimes one of “Westoxication.” In addition, such Muslims are said to have been “corrupted” by centuries of Christian, Jewish, and Western incursions into the Islamic world.

If “Islamization of society and knowledge” signifies the grand strategy of Islamic apologists, then *Islamic apologetics* represents a set of tactics toward slow, subtle

implementation of Islamic law in America and the West. We may be thankful, however, that Islamic apologists are highly consistent with how they want their history to be portrayed in history books in countries where Muslims are minorities.

Key Tropes in Islamic Apologetics

Certain tropes, or leading themes, reappear in history books laced in Islamic apologetics. For example, Islamic history begins with the founding of the religion and the “unification” of the tribes of Arabia by Muhammad and his followers. Islamic apologetics may start at that point but we are not yet treading into the realm of fully fledged proselytizing. An Islamic apologist would continue on by defining the *Quran* as the final revelation of *Allah* (God) for humankind and proclaiming that Muhammad is the final messenger of that claim. As such, according to theological and doctrinal arguments, Muhammad’s message, alleged to have been delivered to him from God by an angel, surpasses the teachings of other prophets and other religious traditions, for example, Judaism and Christianity. Still, however, we are in the realm of transmitting knowledge about doctrine that arose in the Seventh Century.

Here, the apologist might admit that Muhammad was not only a spiritual leader but also a diplomat and a military leader; but he or she would not dare volunteer religious doctrine and tactical details from the *Quran*, the immutable word of God, about the latter two points. In addition, the reader might not be informed that in the Islamic “ethical system” there is no rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. In Islam, everything belongs to God, giving rise to the saying, “Islam encompasses everything.” That is why, for example, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia has no written constitution. It does not require one so long as it has clerics who can interpret the *Quran* and other sacred Islamic texts.

In a public K-12 education textbook there would be nothing wrong, per se, with offering that basic information about Islamic belief, provided that it is stated as “belief” and provided that the “beliefs” of other religions are presented in a balanced way in the same textbook. There would be no sense on the reader’s part that the writers were trying to portray the life of Muhammad and his revelations as part of religious history, as opposed to hagiography that denies or minimizes what we know of Muhammad through the *Quran* and other sources. *But, when compared to Islam and Islamic things, if other religious movements and governance systems in the same history book are subjected to harsher scrutiny and readers exposed to what might be ethically repugnant about those movements, then the textbook opens itself to challenges about its intellectual integrity and educational quality.*

Another classic trope of Islamic apologetics is to sensitize people of Jewish and Christian faiths that all three are “children of Abraham,” despite that Muhammad’s ancestry is through Ismail, the son of Abraham’s wife’s handmaiden, and not Isaac, the son of

Abraham's wife, Sarah. That difference between the Islamic and Judeo-Christian traditions which is why Muslims believe that descendants of Isaac are not the so-called "true" heirs to Jerusalem. And now we know the religious source of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the *Quran*, which lays claim to a different legitimacy regarding who possesses what so many pro-Palestinian activists call a "right to return."

Many Islamic apologists will not refer to "Israel" by its formal name. They call it instead "the Zionist entity," which they regard as the most supreme of all affronts to their belief in the supremacy of Islam to all so-called "man-made" institutions including nation-states and Western-style legal systems. Islamic apologists in the United States are hostile to the United States Constitution precisely because it is not what they believe is God's law. For most them, the *Quran* is their constitution. "The Quran is my Constitution" is even a famous slogan that appeared in the mid-Twentieth Century by the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, now an international organization that champions the establishment of Islamic law wherever Muslims live. *By subverting public education textbooks, arguably, apologists for Islam are preparing future generations in their host societies for the eventual application of Islamic law.*

Commensurate with the trope that Muslims, Christians, and Jews are all children of Abraham is another which holds that Islam is a religion of "tolerance" toward Jews and Christians. According to this claim, Jews and Christians lived peacefully with Muslims in lands conquered by invading Islamic armies under various empires (e.g., Abassid, Persian, Seljuk, and Ottoman) provided that they pay a tax, the *jizha*. History books awash in Islamic apologetics typically minimize a condition of second-class citizenship for people called *dhimmah* (*dhimmi*, singular) who were expected to live under servile conditions that arose through this centuries-long practice of "Islamic tolerance." There exists an entire corpus of scholarship on the subject, as identified by a neologism, *dhimmitude*, by the scholar Bat Ye'or (2004).

Islamic apologetics also minimizes slavery despite numerous passages in the *Quran* that render slavery as part of God's divine guidance for humankind. Islamic apologists are very sensitive about this subject because to them the Quran is the immutable message of a God that evidently condones human behaviour that that the modern world largely repudiates and has rendered illegal in national and international courts.

Likewise, *jihad*, if it is identified in Islamic apologetics, is defined as a "spiritual struggle." Apologists for Islam downplay its other definition, jihad by the sword, a violent, holy war against unbelievers, *infidels*. If the jihad must be discussed, then its foundations in Muhammad's alleged revelations in the *Quran* later codified in centuries of Islamic jurisprudence are cleverly side-stepped. Instead, Islamic conquest becomes an ethnic "Abassid conquest" or "Persian advance" or "Seljuk invasion" or "Ottoman rule." Nevertheless, the *Quran*, as handed to believers through Muhammad's self-stated revelations, not only institutionalizes jihad by the sword as a matter of law but also

offers guidance on methods and means (e.g., looting, pillaging, beheadings, poisonings, slave-taking, concubinage).

If challenged, apologists for Islam also claim that jihad by the sword has been a necessary reaction to incursions into the Muslim world such as the Crusades, colonialism, and imperialism undertaken by non-Muslims in Christian lands. In other words, the fault lies with what post-colonialist scholars fashionably call “the other,” but in this case “the other” is the West, America, Israel, and formerly the Soviet Union. In other words, fault always lies with someone else.

Lobbying, litigation, and coercion by death threats are the three major tactics used by apologists for Islam to distort the significance of practices such as holy war and slavery institutionalized in their religious doctrine still practiced throughout the Islamic world today. Apologists for Islam become highly defensive when questioned about the propriety of teaching matters of faith in public education as if it were history. Their counter-argument is that claimants are being “intolerant.”

Were we to understand that *sharia* covers relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, holding, according to Islamic etiquette, *adab*, that non-Muslims must not question Muslims or Muslim things, we might understand better the passion behind their defensive attitudes. Nevertheless, understanding the cultural underpinnings of their defense does not mean we should accept *adab*. For, to do so is to self-incriminate. *American public education must not render itself servile to Islamic law. Principles of intellectual integrity, establishment clause, and the First Amendment are territory American public education must hold.*

Islamic apologists are backed by considerable wealth emanating from oil-producing states and aggressive Muslim activism in North America. As such, less prosperous non-Muslim educators in K-20 education systems may find allure in great, private wealth. That is a temptation especially when funding of public education in America continues to decline. In fact, this process is one that I documented in an article I published in 2001, “Faith-based Doctrine in Social Education Reform,” except in 2001, my emphasis was on Christian faith-based advocacy groups responding to educational funding provisions in our nation’s revision of welfare codes in the 1990s.

Privileging Islam in *World History: Patterns of Interaction*

1. Soft-Selling “Muhammad’s Legacy”

In the conclusion of *World History’s* second unit about ancient, non-Western civilizations that had existed between 40,000 BC-AD 700, readers are offered a summation about lands in Unit Two repeatedly called “the Americas.” “The Americas” is a reference the writers apply to civilizations that had arisen and declined long before the conception of “American” as an identity.

Only after exploration by Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, and others in the early Sixteenth Century would a place referred to as “the New World” become “the Americas.” The anachronistic reference “The Americas” in Unit Two refers to people such as Mayans and Aztecs, who did not self-identify according to repeated in-text claims such as “earliest Americans,” “prehistoric Americans,” and “first Americans.”

Be that as it may, the summation for Unit Two states:

Unlike the lands you will read about in the next chapter--which were unified by the spread of Islam--the Americas would remain a patchwork of separate civilizations until the early 16th Century. (p.259)

The rationale for the unusual chronology for the second unit thus becomes more apparent, for by AD 700, the first Islamic jihad by Muhammad and his followers was on the march.

However, nowhere in Chapter 10, which is the opening chapter for Unit Three, “An Age of Exchange and Encounter,” spanning AD 500-1500, or in other chapters involving empires (e.g., Abassid, Seljuk, Ottoman) that justified armed conquest as “jihad” is Islamic conquest actually referred to as “jihad.” Indeed, Chapter 10 simply defines “jihad” as a “spiritual struggle,” in classic apologetic fashion. Such historical negationism is serious given what we know of Islamic conquest, with “Islamic jihad” representing the doctrinal equivalent of “Christian holy war.” The difference illustrates how through an uneven portrayal of similar religious justifications one religion, Islam, is given preferential treatment in an American public education textbook.

Of course, one might argue that tenth-graders in Florida’s general population of social studies students don’t really need to know about Islamic conquest as having a doctrinal basis rooted in religious justification in the *Quran*. Why should we care if *World History* omits that Islamic conquest was motivated by religious fervor? Dismissal of that point would be acceptable if it were not for the fact that *World History* devotes considerable attention in later chapters to the Crusades, which are amply defined as “holy war” and whose primary motivation is religious fervor.

But the writers do not stop there. They make another omission, which is to not state that the sense of urgency in rallying Christians to the cause was an acknowledgement that if Christendom did not respond to Islamic conquest, Christianity itself might have ceased to exist. Instead, readers are informed about the viciousness of Christian advance into the area known as the Levant, comparatively small when contrasted to the many maps in *World History* depicting lands where Islam had once triumphed.

As if control of the Levant did not begin much earlier, the textbook defines the Crusades as a movement that took “control of the Holy Lands of the Middle East that began in 1095” (p.308). This statement is presented as a matter of fact despite acknowledgment in other chapters that discuss, for example, Roman and Islamic rule in the same region

prior to 1095. Had not they taken control of those lands in earlier times? Thereafter, the text entreats readers to the base actions of authorities in Christendom who persecuted Jews and Muslims in a Spanish Inquisition and who sent young children into harm's way in an event called the "Children's Crusade." What the textbook titles in one sub-section "The Brutal Reality of Warfare"--something committed by Christians--is simply not discussed when Muslims are the aggressors. Worse still, according to this unbalanced portrayal of religious warfare, the Crusades "caused poor relations with Muslim leaders" (p.385). Moreover, "To Muslims, the intolerance and prejudices displayed by Christians in the Holy Land left behind a bitter legacy of bitterness and hatred" (p.385). The message readers are to take away, then, is that Muslims can do no wrong. When Islamic empires decline, attribution lies not with Muslims but with some other religious group or nation-state.

Contrast vilification of the short-lived Crusades with the book's portrayal of similar things related to centuries of Islamic jihad that began in the Seventh Century and have not stopped, albeit in reinvented forms, to this very year, 2010. The writers of *World History* want readers to know the following about Islamic jihad and Muhammad's legacy in Chapter 10:

- "tolerance of conquered peoples" (p.260)
- "unified the Arab people, both politically and through the religion of Islam" (p.263)
- "strong impact on the lives of millions today" (p.263)
- "impressive leadership skills" (p.263)
- Arabs and Jews "accepted" Muhammad's rule (p.264)
- "persecuted people under Christian and Zoroastrian rule welcomed Islamic invaders" (p.270)
- People "were attracted to the appeal of the message of Islam, which offered equality and hope in this world" (p.270)
- "They were attracted by the economic benefit for Muslims of not having to pay a poll tax" (p.270)

Readers are informed several times throughout the text that Islamic law mandates that Muslim leaders "extend religious tolerance to Christians and Jews" (p.270) without ever explaining what might happen to them should they decide not to pay "poll taxes" (*jizya*) in order to practice their own religion. The *Quran* and centuries of Islamic law applied under Islamic rule, however, are very clear about such consequences. Non-Muslims may not only be taxed but also can be--according to the *Quran* and other Islamic sacred law--poisoned, tortured, enslaved, and slain. Meanwhile, in other sections of the textbook, the

writers criticize other societies such as the ancient Assyrians whose leaders forced conquered people to pay tributes. If the purpose of high school history education is to impart ethical values, then the writers cannot be selective and expect to maintain historical credibility. Forcing people to pay tributes, which are synonymous with poll taxes in Islam, for having been subjugated through imperial conquest is either ethically wrong or it is not.

Finally, there is a major difference between “extending” tolerance and actually “granting” it. And even then “tolerance” only goes so far, for Islamic law grants ruling Muslims far more rights than it does for tax-paying Christians and Jews. An identity-based poll tax paid does not make a disadvantaged minority free. Readers need only look to Jim Crow laws for Black voters in the United States, which were finally abolished in the mid-Twentieth Century, to appreciate that.

In a comparative analytic sense, the aforementioned details depict Islamic apologetics through a highly uneven, distorted, biased accounting of religiously inspired conquest full of omissions and half-truths, *par excellence*. Islamic conquest, good; Christian conquest, bad.

2. Omitting and Minimizing Institutionalized Slavery and Servitude in non-Western Cultures

Depending on whether a culture is Chinese, Buddhist, African, Islamic, or Western will determine whether *World History* omits, minimizes, or thoroughly indicts the practices of slavery and servitude.

For example, the writers avoid the subject completely regarding the Zhou dynasty in ancient feudal China. Indeed, readers are informed in the early chapters of the textbook that peaceful, stable Zhou rulers can do no harm. They are repeatedly referred to as “lovers of order and harmony” (p.52). They have “respect for authority” unlike the “wicked kings” (p.51) they overthrew. However, if one wants the rest of the story about the virtuous Zhou, one won’t find it in *World History*. Ever the skeptic, I called a colleague who knows a thing or two about ancient China. He informed me that under the Zhou married aristocrats could take slaves and that the Zhou took slaves through military conquest justified as, of course, their own version of religious holy war. In deference to the writers of *World History*, they do mention the Zhou “Mandate of Heaven” but the notation is a mere moral device to show how virtuous they were, not unlike the writers’ similar sanitization of Islamic jihad. Likewise, Asian cultures that adopt Buddhism are above reproach, despite that the “ethical system” of Buddhism was practiced by Buddhists living in feudal societies where slavery and servitude are mainstays of feudal economies.

As for Islam, slavery and servitude are not mentioned at all until a very late in the textbook on page 425. Prior to that, I took notes, chapter by chapter, I continued to

write statements for my future reference, “No slavery mentioned regarding this Islamic conquest” or “Still not slavery mentioned.”

On page 425, readers are finally told, “Although Muslim traders had been enslaving East Africans and selling them since about the Ninth Century, the numbers remain small--- perhaps about 1000 a year” (p.425). However, later another the writers contradict themselves. Between 650 and 1600, Muslims traded “17 million Africans” to North Africa and Southwest Asia. No matter which figure is accurate, the textbook invariably makes excuses for Muslim slave trading in sub-Saharan Africa, claiming that the Europeans involved in the slave trade were far worse than were their Muslim counterparts.

To minimize the influence of Muhammad’s legacy as having institutionalized the practice slavery and servitude in a public education textbook reduces what should be history to hagiography, a sanitization of a religious leader’s legacy for the glorification and defense of a faith. This is an unconscionable act of historical analysis given that readers are informed at the outset of each unit and each chapter that things which happen in the past have relevance today. When it comes to Islam and slavery, current relevance is glaringly true, but a work of Islamic apologetics could never volunteer that. The *Quran* covers slavery at great length and all major schools of Islamic law accept slavery. The only time slavery was suppressed in Islamic lands was during British and French colonial rule.

3. Privileging Muhammad in the Upper Case

Perhaps the most overt example of Islamic apologetics in *World History* involves the writers having given Muhammad special status as being monotheism’s so-called “final prophet” among the 99 beginning with Abraham. Readers do not have to know anything about Islam and Muhammad’s legacy to spot this one. In the textbook’s intermittent discussion of what Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe, several legendary “prophets” receive limited discussion. Among them are Abraham and Ezekiel. Editorially speaking, they are treated as second-class prophets. Whereas Abraham and Ezekiel repeatedly are identified with a lower case “p” in phrases that read “The prophet Ezekiel” or “the prophet Abraham,” the writers sanctify Muhammad’s status with an upper case “P”:

- “In 630, the Prophet and 10,000 of his followers returned to Mecca” (p.264)
- “The Prophet entered the city in triumph.” (p.264)
- “Soon after the Prophet’s death, it was suggested that his revelation be put into a book.” (p.275)
- “Early Muslim poets sang the praises of the Prophet and of Islam and, later, of the caliph and other patrons.” (p.276)

The privileging of Muhammad's self-proclaimed prophethood is a matter of faith portrayed in-text as if it were a statement of fact. Contextualized with the other examples of Islamic apologetics described in this case study, we must consider whether the uneven portrayal of Muhammad as if he were indeed monotheism's last and final "Prophet" might cross the line into a constitutional violation of establishment clause that guarantees students in American public education the right to be educated and not proselytized.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Other flaws of anti-Western apologetics characterize the textbook *World History: Patterns of Interaction*; however, further discussion of them falls outside the scope of this paper about Islamic apologetics in American education. That the two co-exist in one textbook should come of no surprise to us, however, as the de-Westernizing impulses of Islamic apologetics and multiculturalism complement one another. A single image in the textbook may represent that merger of sacred and profane influences in public education: There is in the textbook's chapter on the on-going Arab-Israeli conflict a photograph of the late Edward Said, whose 1978 critique of Western interpretation of Islam and the East galvanized Western academics and Muslims to a new way of thinking about history that has since been discredited because of the excesses of politicization found in its major professional association, the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). The damage done especially to Middle East and Africa studies has been so profound that two years ago, an alternative association of academics was launched, The Association of Studies in the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA).

The question now for Sarasota and other school districts in the nation is "What can be done to correct the problems found in these pages about *World History: Patterns of Interaction* and other textbooks like it?" Solutions are not so easy at the publishing level given the processes for textbook adoption in America. Texas, California, and Illinois are test-market states for textbooks. Publishers know that if they can satisfy the demands of religious and multicultural advocacy groups in these states, then their products will most certainly meet the requirements for state adoption lists elsewhere in the country.

- Publishing companies, however, should be encouraged by other textbook adoption states and local school districts to hire independent consultants who know Islamic apologetics when they see it. *Those same states and school boards should emphasize to publishers that Islamic apologetics in their textbooks is a liability risk, given that the content apparently violates establishment clause doctrine in American education law.*
- Stakeholders in Sarasota have become aware that social studies textbooks on the state-approved list are due for review in the coming year. *Toward that end, the state and local school boards should hire independent consultants who can be*

trusted to know the difference between historiography and hagiography. American public education systems have a legal compact with taxpayers and captive student audiences to offer quality education that does not infringe upon their legal rights to a free and fair education.

- But consulting should not end with those who know the difference between a textbook that unevenly portrays history and one that does not. *When textbooks are considered for adoption, state education boards and local school district must strongly consider potential establishment clause violations.* Thereunto, school boards require consultants with an understanding of education law who may give textbooks a proper review for potential legal violations stemming from textbooks whose content infringes upon constitutional rights involving freedom of and freedom from religion that may affect the integrity of history education. *Moreover, that consideration, given that it is a protected constitutional right must surpass that of other considerations such as diversity, cultural tolerance, and peace education.*
- In addition, local school boards should establish a curriculum task force that can provide supplemental in-service training to educators who must use textbooks that are deemed instructionally deficient, which appears to be the case with *World History: Patterns of Interaction.*
- Parents and students must take more active roles in their children's education. They should be taught to know what Islamic apologetics in education looks like when they see it. They must be encouraged to challenge it and to resist accusations of intolerance by multiculturalists and Islamic activists who might label them "intolerant" or "racist."

Peace and tolerance are worthy values that do have a place in American education. However, their teaching and practice comes with some caveats. It is said quite often that most Americans know very little about Islam. That is true. But if they knew more, they could be certain of one thing: religious education in mosques in America does not include ethical lessons that teach young Muslims to self-incriminate about their beliefs or religious history. To the contrary in such private education, young Muslims are taught that their religion triumphs over all others. Their holy book is their Constitution.

So an American public education that teaches children to devalue their own heritage, to believe that their society, their religion, their culture, their ethnicity, their laws are inferior to Islam is to cede institutional territory to the forces of a religion that hopes to establish Islamic law in America. Islamic apologists will never succeed in this grand strategy, but they may cause trouble along the way. American public education must defend itself against religious apologists whose pernicious influence in public education adversely affects the teaching of history education.

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