



# GET SERIOUS with Comic Books

C.L. Cowan, of ROX35 Media ([www.rox35.org](http://www.rox35.org)), encourages Christian publishers to use comic books.

Comic books? Get serious." That is a common reaction from people in ministry, especially if they are from North America.

## Serious communication

The English-language term *comic book* is an unfortunate misnomer. In other countries comic books are called *manga*, *manhwa*, *bande dessinée* or *BD*, *komiks*, *bilderstreifen* or *bildergeschichter*, *tabeos*, *historietas*, *benzi desenate*, *quadrinhos*, *fumetti*, or other terms that do not carry the same connotations as the English term.

Perhaps a majority of the world's "comic" books are not humorous. Many commercial comic books seethe with violence, political agendas, religious concerns, moral crusades, and other issues.

Comic books often carry life and death messages with superb clarity. The United Nations

prints comic books showing how to avoid land mines. Military training manuals are often in comic book form. Brazil prints mil-

lions of comic books to combat AIDS. In China, the government prints millions of comic books to promote patriotism and to combat western influence. The World Bank has a superb series of comic books to explain international monetary instruments.

Are comic books beneath the dignity of the Gospel? The Danish Bible Society does not think so. It published a highly acclaimed hard cover graphic story of Jesus.

In England, the *Graphic Bible* featuring the artwork of Jeff Anderson is considered a masterpiece. Cook's *Picture Bible* has sold millions; portions have been translated into over 100 languages.

## Serious sales

Around the world,

comics are the medium of the masses. The best-selling American comic book now sells 4.5 million copies per year. In contrast, the leading comic

book in the Philippines sells that many copies in three months. Some 40 percent of Filipinos read a comic every day.

In the Middle East, *Pulse Magazine* reports "Muslim youth read little other than comic books outside of school."

In China, sales of Disney comics are up to 1.8 million copies per month.

An Associated Press story reports 40 percent of all the paper printed in Japan is used for comic books, and that two billion comic books are sold there each year. The leader among hundreds of comics titles, *Shonen Jumpu*, sells five million each week.

The 30-title *Asterix* series has sold 95 million books in France, 87 million in Germany, and over 280 million worldwide.

Comic books are material that people *actually read*. More people read comic book

style literature than any other print material on earth. It is time for Christian publishers to get serious about comics.v

