

BOOK REVIEWS

Wagner, Donald E. 1995. *Anxious for Armageddon*. Scottdale, Penn: Herald Press. ISBN 0836136519. 252 pages. Available from Amazon UK at £9.82.
Reviewed by David Greenlee.

Donald Wagner speaks for a segment of American evangelical Christianity too often not heard in the complex debate over Israel, the Palestinian refugees, "the land" and biblical eschatology. Although at times taking pains to express that he is not against the Jews, he is quite clearly at odds with those who treat Arabs, including Christians, as second-class while uncritically accepting the state of Israel, and what it does, as being of and blessed by God.

Although Wagner does not provide a detailed theological reasoning for his position, his arguments follow amillennial Reformed lines, and draw from the likes of Calvin, Berkhof, and Stott. The true Israel of today is not the state of Israel but "believers in the Messiah, even if they are Gentiles," he quotes Stott as saying. With this general position established, Wagner continues his analysis of Zionism and political events up to 1994 in the Middle East, making a passionate call for critical engagement with Israel and support for Christian Arabs too often misunderstood or ignored by Western evangelical Christians.

I found the book both helpful and troubling, the kind of book that won't let me just shelve it and forget it. Others have doubtless presented a history of the Zionist movement and Palestinian issue, but I have not found

one in such readable style. To gauge the accuracy of presentation, I would appreciate a review of his presentation from a Messianic Jew committed to reconciliation with the Arabs. Perhaps lacking in the presentation is the recognition that one historical root of anti-Semitism is his own adopted theological position, that is, that Israel has now been displaced by the Church.

Even before the founding of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, of which Wagner is a senior leader, he had developed many links with the Middle East Council of Churches. It is helpful to have MECC positions and issues presented in this book, but I fear that Wagner glosses over the vital doctrinal differences between the various MECC confessions and his evangelical readership, as well as his own Presbyterian roots. Granted, in one book he cannot cover all these issues, but I failed to find any hint of critical analysis of Orthodox, Maronite, or other doctrinal issues. Instead, if anything, there were the old critiques of evangelical proselytism which Fuller Seminary's Donald Robeck recently said, in response to MECC documents, is too often defined for, not with, evangelicals.

One of the key issues missing from the book is that of evangelism of Muslims. Granted, the historic churches had a witness, even while relegated to dhimmi status. But while condemning some approaches he perceives as insensitive, very little is said to suggest that the only hope for the region is in Jesus

Christ, which will entail active witness among Muslims. Overall, I believe Wagner has done a better job at engaging and understanding the MECC than understanding Western (and other) evangelicals engaged in missions to the Middle East.

Having raised these issues, why do I recommend this book? I do not agree with all of Wagner's arguments. But once in a while it is good to have my beliefs challenged! Missionaries serving among Arabs may have already shaken off any eschatological romanticism

regarding Israel. This book may give another shake to such convictions. Further, it provides insights into the MECC from an outsider who has been involved with them for many years. Finally, it may help in developing a greater appreciation for the struggles, challenges, and personal history of Arab Christians. All of this can help us, I believe, to better bridge the gap between the existing churches and Muslim background believers as they, too, becoming a growing presence in the Middle East.

Lowe, Chuck. *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation*. Published by Mentor/OMF, ISBN 1 857 92 399 5, paperback, 189 pages.

Reviewed by Basheer Abdulfadi (Western tentmaker working in the Peninsula).

I well remember the first time I came into contact with the practice of "warfare prayer". A friend who was praying would alternate between addressing God and addressing Satan and certain spirits. The terms of address were confrontative and provocative, as if the speaker was attempting to wound the Devil with words. It was very disconcerting, believing as I had been taught that prayer is addressed to God, and that nowhere in the Scriptures are we commanded to address Satan but with respect due to his great power and malice. Since then, the practice has grown dramatically, and it makes great claims to importance for the missionary enterprise. It is increas-

ingly contending for priority in funds and activities. Expensive, elaborate prayer walks for spiritual mapping of demonic territories, and a new kind of "praying" are promoted as the (latest) key to world evangelisation. Likely none of the readers of Seedbed will be ignorant of the phenomenon.

Chuck Lowe's book is an examination of the theory and practice of "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare" (SLSW). To a large extent, the book is an evaluation of the writings of Peter Wagner, although the literature actually covered is quite comprehensive. He carefully weighs the theory, practices, and claims of the movement in light of biblical studies, church history, anthropological and sociological considerations. His conclusions are compellingly against the practice as unsubstantiated by Holy Scripture and lacking in unambiguous empirical evidence, and he shows that the whole theory of