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## Review: Invading Secular Space

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twenty-first century, including: communication skills, mission trends, and paradigm shifts, different non-Christian religions of the world, and a projection of what lies ahead.

The text of *Introducing World Missions* flows smoothly even though it is interrupted occasionally by sidebars, maps, and case studies. The authors did it so well that the interruptions are always beneficial for understanding the material. Basically, sidebars provide in-depth information that comes with accompanying questions that will help discussion and reflection. Case studies encourage the student to do some thinking on his own. No case study presents a conclusion. It is left open because in many cases the conclusion is not limited just to one. The writers leave the reader with a dilemma for which one has to find solutions. However, after reading the text, the student will have at least some idea what kind of an ending would have been there, if the authors had provided it. This is a unique way how to engage the student in moving from theory to practical application. There are also direct quotes scattered on the pages of the book. They will excite the serious student to do further research into the lives of those who deserved to be quoted in this text.

Basing the book on their thorough research, the authors delineate four areas of challenges for missionaries in the twenty-first century. These are theological, geopolitical, challenges from emerging models of the church as well as challenges from emerging models of missions. True to their methodology, the writers merely identify them and subtly encourage the reader to continue thinking on his own. They conclude, however, with an affirmation that God transcends all difficulties and is capable of equipping His people to reach all the nations of the world, even in our time.

There is a benefit in adopting this book as a required text. If you notify Baker Academic of your adoption, you will receive free of charge a copy of an instructor's manual on CD-ROM. The materials include more case studies, important historical documents, a downloadable PowerPoint presentation for each chapter, and further readings from the *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. This is an exemplary modern textbook. It makes use of technology that is available in just about all areas of our lives. I recommend this book as an excellent tool in teaching missions. Choosing this book will improve your teaching and will prepare your students to go and make disciples of all nations.

JOSEF SOLC



*Invading Secular Space*, by Martin Robinson and Dwight Smith. Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2003. Pp. 221.

Martin Robinson, former Director for Mission and Theology at Bible Society (in the United Kingdom, presently serves as a Freelance Church Consultant. Dwight Smith, also from the United Kingdom), now lives in the United States and is President of Saturation Church Planting International.

*Invading Secular Space* consists of eleven chapters. Chapters 1 through 6 analyze the present condition of the church, and chapters 7 through 11 prescribe an action plan for change. The high points of the first half fall in chapter one on current world trends of church growth and chapter 5, "The Church and Its Mission." Chapter 1 provides the positive and

negative demographics outlining Christianity's growth or demise by continental groupings. The information is encouraging and discouraging, both of which need to be passed on to churches to build discontent with the status quo. Chapter 5 contains a fine section on the unique role of the church in God's redemptive plan and the importance of serving the lost world (often referred to as servanthood evangelism) in order to validate the gospel message.

Chapter 3, "Changing the Interaction," has some noteworthy perspectives on the transforming power of Christianity when Christians act as salt and light in the midst of social issues, i.e., slavery. Wilberforce's influence in English politics and the resultant societal moral change of perspective restore the "worth" of the church in culture. This section is timely due to the need for activities that will validate the truth of the gospel to a skeptical world.

Chapters 6 through 11 articulate the authors' plan for shifting the Christian worldview and thereby returning to its transforming role in society. This is the point in which the United Kingdom perspective disconnects with the reviewer. There is some interesting information, and the authors have their unique manner of expressing their ideas; however, much of the material is familiar to even a casual reader of works relating to church growth or leadership. If one wishes to review those themes and principles, this text does an excellent job of presenting the concepts.

The authors identify several convictions as foundational to the work, the two most noteworthy of which are: 1) "Despite its weakness and manifest failure the church continues to occupy a central position in the intention of God for his world," and 2) "It is possible for the church to be recast to meet the challenges of our age, and that even now signs of the future church can be detected by those with eyes to see" (15).

This reviewer must confess to having major problems with those convictions. While the general intention is good, the underlying attitude prompts concern. Though the authors would surely deny it, the first statement cheapens the church. As part of the bride of Christ, one should take care not to impugn her name as a "manifest failure." People have failed, but the church has not. It is not the church's failure when some ministers and local bodies refuse to follow biblical patterns and standards. The second statement conjures visions of Gnosticism. The future of the church rests in the hands of the enlightened, instead of Christ.

Robinson and Smith articulate many valid concerns for the church today. Their insights on the lack of missiological training and resultant dependence on marketing strategies and pragmatic methodologies need to be heard among church growth and church planting circles (24). The consequences of ministry becoming a "profession more than a passion" fits not only the state-supported church structure familiar to these British authors but also American pastors (22). The failure of the "come and see" approach, which the authors refer to as "the Collection and Amusement Impulse," occurs throughout the text and echoes many others on similar issues, as does the authors' promotion of church planting as an answer to declining church numbers in Western Europe and North America.

The text reads well and makes some solid contributions to the field. However, it struggles to overcome several major hindrances. The authors write from a Western European church state focus. As common in this genre of writing, all churches, liberal and conservative, theologically sound or not, receive equal treatment. The statement, "You can

not preach over twenty minutes because it is too boring and people will not listen," lumps all preaching together. Several great churches came to the reviewer's mind while he was reading this text. The pastors would not claim a "future church" vision, but they would affirm their dependence on faithfulness to biblical practices. This text also replicates another common failing of the genre: Secular leadership seminar gurus, i.e., Peter Drucker, do not hold the answers for Christ's church (149, 159). Is the text worth reading? Unfortunately, the answer is yes. The unfortunate aspect is the sad truth that in the fields of church planting and church growth, the weaknesses of this text are commonplace. With that in mind, Robinson and Smith do an above-average job with *Invoading Secular Space*.

### WILLIAM E. BROWN



*How Islam Plans to Change the World*, by William Wagner. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2004. Pp. 287.

William Wagner is a veteran missionary, having served with the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He earned doctorates in South Africa and the United States, and is currently E. Hermond Westmoreland Professor of Evangelism at Golden Gate Seminary. He also trains missionaries for ministry to Muslims in the Middle East and Europe.

In *How Islam Plans to Change the World*, Wagner sets out Islam's global growth strategy. This strategy is driven by a conviction "that it is Allah's will that the whole world accept Islam" (15). It may be no more than a "loose strategy," since "Many Muslims who are actively involved in the proclamation of Islam are not aware of how they fit into the overall plan" (12). It is nevertheless a global or megastrategy due to its scope and singleness of purpose. Islam knows nothing of the separation of church and state. As a result, Muslims use activities as diverse as international trade, studies at Western institutions and oil-driven economics, as well as intimidation and force, to spread their faith. "In Islam's strategy they have tried to combine all the different facets of life into one for the purpose of a global witness" (204).

Islam's strategy may be related to the amusing story of a camel's step-by-step invasion of his rider's tent, from nose to neck to body, until the camel is in and his erstwhile master is out. More soberly, Wagner suggests Islam is following a similar piecemeal approach, based on the key elements of *da'wah*, *jihad*, and mosques. *Da'wah* is the invitation to come to Islam, but it often takes place under the guise of cultural awareness programs, with (secular) educational institutions a particular target. Jihad means "striving" and is often applied to the struggle for personal righteousness. However, it can also mean righting a wrong by force (i.e., aggression), even if that wrong is merely living under a system other than Islam and its *shariah* law (65). Mosques also extend the presence of Islam, regardless of the number of worshippers (initially) available to use them. Moreover, most mosques worldwide are funded by Saudi Arabia, and the latter kingdom sees to it that communities gathering there are influenced by the fundamentalist Wahabi doctrines it espouses. It would seem the "camel" is indeed determined to take over the "tent."

Despite the reality of Islam's strategy, Wagner is no alarmist. Aims are not the same as accomplishments, and Islam has both successes and failures. Successes include many black converts (in Africa and the United States), with American prisons a particularly fruitful area for Muslim endeavor. Elsewhere, Muslim increases are largely the result of high birth rates and immigration, especially in Europe, and the latter continent has been somewhat influenced by extensive Islamic public relations efforts. Despite all this, Muslims have "failed to convince the world that they are a peaceful religion" (207). Atrocities committed in the name of Islam continue, and the goal of even one democratic Muslim country remains elusive. As for numbers, many new mosques sit empty, and growth claims are exaggerated. In addition, at the level of the heart, Islam offers no assurance of salvation and has no antidote to fear.

Wagner's treatment of fear in Islam is particularly helpful, as this does much to explain why followers of a religion *sans* Savior and no transforming encounter with the living God would devote so much energy to changing the world. Allah is demanding, his record keeps meticulous, and descriptions of hell vivid and awful. Since dying in a *jihad* (which supposedly provides a shortcut to paradise) is not an option for most Muslims, so the fear of eternal damnation remains (129). Turning from it all in unbelief constitutes the terrible sin of apostasy, which has carried a death penalty from the earliest times. Furthermore, fear of apostasy may be enhanced by contact with non-Muslims. The decadent yet powerful West, which produced the Crusades and more recent invasions, is feared as a gigantic threat to Islam (133). Muslims will thus "use the emotion of fear as a tool to keep their people within the fences of their faith and to mobilize people against a common enemy" (136).

Wagner seems correct in his conclusions that Islam will continue its concerted efforts to change the world and that we face a lengthy period of instability as a result (216). At the end though, the "victor in this process will not be the Christians but Jesus Christ" (217). He thus encourages Christians earnestly live out their faith and preach the gospel.

Wagner certainly advocates the correct approach. However, he could have enhanced the book by adding a chapter on strategies for evangelicals in their encounters with Islam. The Christ of the gospel, not various kinds of counterattack, is definitely what fearful Muslims need most. At the same time, while proclaiming the gospel, there are other things Christians might do, as long as we rely on the Lord and not ourselves in the process. For example, why not lobby for religious reciprocity in America's policy toward Saudi Arabia? Wagner asks why Muslims may "establish mosques and Islamic centers in the Western world when the same privilege is not granted to Christians in many Muslim countries" (72). This is an excellent question, and I would like to see American Christians pushing for fair and equal treatment in Saudi Arabia. If this is refused, the considerable privileges already given Saudis to influence religion in this country should be suspended.

In any event, Wagner has done a service in providing a guide to (and explanation of) organized, global, Islamic thinking. Despite some shortcomings (such as his rather limited use of the ahadith and other primary sources, several misspelled words and names, and inadequate identification of photographs), Wagner's work makes valuable reading for anyone seeking to understand this influential religion on our doorstep.

ANTHONY B. GREENHAM