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## Review: Church Next

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conflicts between missionaries and nationals during his own ministry with the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Lingenfelter is the primary author, but he names Meyers as coauthor due to his original research and help with the continual development of the model. The book's primary objective is "to share some of the conflicts and struggles we experienced and to explore their meanings for the larger issues of cross-cultural living, work, and ministry" (14).

However, for Lingenfelter, quite correctly, experiences have to be evaluated through Jesus Christ who is the only faithful example of divine love in interpersonal relationships and communication. He identifies Jesus as a 200-percent person: 100 percent God and 100 percent Jew. Using these percentages seems rather forced and not very helpful in the light of Christology throughout Christian history.

This method would make more sense by saying that in the world's eyes, a Christian is a 150-percent person because he can never completely discard his home culture, and he will never be completely acculturated into his host culture. The ratio is 75 percent of his home culture and 75 percent of his host culture, even though the numbers might not be applied in exactly the same way to every individual.

The model of basic values contains twelve elements, presented as six "pairs in tension": 1) time and event orientation; 2) dichotomistic and holistic thinking; 3) crisis and noncrisis orientation; 4) task and person orientation; 5) status and achievement focus; and 6) concealment of vulnerability and willingness to expose vulnerability.

These elements explain underlying priorities as we interact with people of other cultures. Six chapters describe the tension in these contrasting pairs. The titles are: "Tensions about Time," "Tensions regarding Judgment," "Tensions associated with Handling Crises," "Tensions over Goals," "Tensions about Self-Worth," and "Tensions regarding Vulnerability."

Lingenfelter follows a pattern of portraying each element from a missiological and biblical perspective. He then concludes with some implications for incarnational ministry. Lingenfelter illustrates this model predominately from the mission field of the Pacific Islands where he served among the Yapese people. Since he offers the model to all Christian workers, however, illustrations could have been presented from different continents as well in order to strengthen the application of this anthropological tool.

An interesting phrase occurs in the conclusion of the book. Lingenfelter claims that every culture is "a prison that holds people in bondage" (120). We prefer to belong only to that group of people who have similar standards and values within the same culture. We feel comfortable within it, not realizing that we are ourselves imprisoned by it. Missionaries, however, must be willing to enter the cultural prison of another culture and submit to it for the sake of an incarnational ministry.

*Ministering Cross-Culturally* will help many missionaries on the foreign mission fields to navigate through the tensions they face as they try to adapt to

a host culture. However, this book will also be beneficial for students of missions because it will prepare them for cross-cultural relationships.

There are only 128 pages in the book, but the material could enrich any class on missions if the teacher would supply additional illustrations from his personal experience or from other sources.

JOSEF SOLC



*Church Next*, by Aubrey Malphurs and Michael Malphurs. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2003. Pp. 156.

Well known in church-planting circles for his *Planting Growing Churches for the Twenty-First Century*, Dallas Theological Seminary professor Aubrey Malphurs collaborates with his son, Michael, on *Church Next*. Michael, Creative Director of Digital Dream Design, provides the computer and Internet expertise which, along with the senior Malphurs' theological background, enables the book to accomplish its stated task: "In part 1, we explore the problem of the decline of American Christianity. In part 2, we suggest a solution to the problem: reaching a new generation and an older generation for Christ. In part 3, we articulate a primary method for reaching the generations through e-Ministry" (9).

The section on the decline of American Christianity has little new information on the topic. However, it lays the foundation of the text by highlighting the desperate condition of the American church. Unless one understands the situation, one would probably not accept the authors' promotion of change.

Aubrey and Michael Malphurs do include several notable facts concerning American society. Though Christianity is declining, only eight percent of Americans express any "deep animosity against the church" (24). Americans can be described as apathetic toward church attendance. However, the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses have tripled their numbers over the last thirty years in contrast to mainline Christianity's denominational declines (25).

Naturally for a book promoting e-Ministry, one is not surprised for the authors to promote modern technology as an appropriate tool for evangelizing American culture. They recognize one of the larger obstacles facing churches is their tendency to resist change. The incongruity for churches to preach "relevant and timely messages" while refusing to engage new technology does not escape non-Christians.

The authors propose three actions for the American church to reverse the decline: "It must reach America's new, developing generations with the gospel," "develop a theology of change," and "understand how the new generations think" (44).

This reviewer found the section on generations interesting. They describe each generation using demographics, core values, characteristics, personalities, and how the generation relates to the church. A small distraction in the text was

the authors wrongly citing Colin Powell as a member of the Builder Generation, which they credit with having fought World War I, II, and Korea.

Chapter 4, "Developing a Theology of Change," provides a filtering matrix for one considering ecclesiastical changes. A common phenomenon in American Christianity today is a blurring or negation of the line between functions and forms, or as usually discussed, message and methods.

Malphurs states, "The functions of the church are timeless, unchanging, nonnegotiable precepts based on Scripture. They are the biblical mandates that determine what every church must pursue in order to accomplish its purpose" (62-63). The authors' use of "function" versus the highly popular "purpose" helps the text maintain an ecclesiological sound theology.

Chapter 5, "Understanding Postmodernism," is another chapter which gives a quick sketch of an issue filling whole shelves in Barnes and Noble. In defense of the authors, understanding "Postmodernism" is a key plank to their major intention of updating American Christianity's methodologies.

For the non-geek, the final section of the text and the appendices, "The Method: E-Ministry in the Twenty-First Century" are worth the purchase of the book. Michael Malphurs presents a compelling case for the local church to participate in e-Ministry, which he defines as "using the Internet and related technology to minister to lost and saved people" (129). The demographics concerning Internet usage and its ability to cross generational and cultural lines confirms this reviewer's experiences in several years of Internet sessions with students in evangelism practicum.

The Internet blurs or removes the old mission terms "restricted" or "closed." Christians can dialogue with individuals from a variety of cultural settings in one Internet session. In American society the Internet might provide a means of reaching teenagers, which according to some research less than ten percent are Christians, yet 97 percent are connected to the Internet (114). Malphurs provides interviews with website managers of effective e-Ministries and then provides lists of well-done sites and resources available to churches interested in launching their own sites.

As a person who alternates between the beliefs that computers are demon possessed and that they are merely glorified typewriters, this reviewer found Aubrey and Michael Malphurs's book to be informative, clearly presented, and well worth the reading.

As is the case with many neutral venues, the Internet can be used for good or evil. *Church Next* articulates why the twenty-first century church would be wise to use electronic media to expand the kingdom of God. A pastor considering launching a church e-Ministry would benefit from *Church Next* especially as a means of convincing a reluctant committee to approve the innovation.

WILLIAM E. BROWN

*Following Gandalf: Epic Battles and Moral Victory in The Lord of the Rings*, by Matthew Dickerson. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press (a Division of Baker Book House), 2003. Pp. 234.

With time beginning to pass since the release of the final Peter Jackson film *The Return of the King*, interest in J. R. R. Tolkien continues to run high. This comes as no surprise of course when we consider the fact that *The Lord of the Rings* topped at least three significant polls in Britain as to which book was the most important one of the twentieth century. In three of four polls of British readers in the 1990s, *The Lord of the Rings* came out first on the list. What was the book that beat Tolkien's work in the fourth poll? It was the Bible (see Tom Shippey, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000], xx-xxi). Matthew Dickerson's book on Tolkien's writings considers some of the universal themes that make Tolkien's work so important to so many people.

Matthew Dickerson is no stranger to fantasy writing in general and Tolkien's work in particular. A professor at Middlebury College in Vermont, he has taught courses on Tolkien, and as the director of the New England Young Writer's Conference at Breadloaf, teaches writing to talented young people. He is in his own right an author of fantasy, with *The Finnsburg Encounter* to his credit.

It is clear from this book on Tolkien's writing that Dickerson is thoroughly familiar with the fantasy genre and with Tolkien's great epic and its backgrounds. In addition to his main concentration in this book on *The Lord of the Rings*, Dickerson comments on the *Ainulindale* and *The Silmarillion*, essential background materials to a proper understanding of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Dickerson organizes the ten chapters of his book in three sections. He deals first with war and battle, addressing the moral and military conflicts in Tolkien's work. In the middle section, he turns to "the central theme of this book . . . the reality of human free will and the moral responsibility that goes with it" (17). In the concluding chapters of the book, Dickerson discusses the specifically Christian motifs and themes in Tolkien's works. Throughout, Dickerson argues that it is the spiritual battles, not the military, that are the most important in *The Lord of the Rings*, and that human free will and moral responsibility are essential to Tolkien's vision.

In chapter 1, "Epic Battles," Dickerson argues that Tolkien does not glorify war, but that he uses battle to highlight the spiritual and moral values that are at stake in human life. He reminds readers that the first book of Tolkien's trilogy is *The Fellowship of the Ring*, reflecting Tolkien's "commitment to . . . community" (46) in the novel. It is the nine members of the fellowship who form a common bond and sacrifice personally to defeat evil in the form of Sauron.

Chapters 2 and 3 address the wise people in Tolkien's works, all of whom value life, honor, and self-sacrifice, and the virtues of Aragorn and Faramir, who choose mercy and truth over expediency and power. While chapter 2 bogs down a bit in Dickerson's discussion of the Jackson films, specifically their sinister depiction of Elrond and Galadriel (62-66), these chapters do set forth the positive values in the novel.