

the Gaza Strip enable him to have the Palestinians come alive and help us explore the plight of the stateless Palestinian people more intimately. So does his use of the present tense throughout, which has the affect of reinforcing the connection between biblical characters and places of old with the current situation.

Some may question the shaky exegesis the case is built on to defend the thesis that God loves and favours Ishmael and not just Isaac, as in his treatment of Genesis 16:12 (pages 95 to 98) but we are still left with the fact that God does make certain promises to Ishmael and his offspring (from whom the Arab peoples come; the case for this claim is made in chapter 31), such as in Genesis 17:20.

One may also be disappointed that Jaap avoided looking at the eschatological implications of taking the stand that he has in his book.

Jaap is to be commended, though, for topically reflecting on a subject and land where angels fear to tread. He takes the sort of stance that Evangelicals around the world should be striving for, to model how to be a peacemaker and open to reason on this thorny, complex subject.

Reviewed by J. David Lundy

THE GREAT EMERGENCE: HOW CHRISTIANITY IS CHANGING AND WHY

by Phyllis Tickle

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With such a grandiose title, the expectation might be of an overblown and disappointing book. I would not have selected this book to read if it were not for the president of a denomination who recommended it to me as being a seminal treatment of cultural and church history trends in the Western world church. But I must say that this is a 'big idea' book that delivers the goods. In my view, Tickle succeeds in making the case that we are in the midst of a sea change in the church. One that comes along once every five hundred years, she contends, and which has the affect of rejuvenating the church.

One might ask why should a narrow niche mission agency working in a decidedly non-Western world context, for the most part, such as AWM, pay attention to the message of a book focusing on Western religious philosophy and future trends. Well, for two reasons. Inadvertently because it might have something to say about what kind of churches are planted and nurtured; our ethnocentrism surely affects such efforts. More importantly though, if such organizations are increasingly out of touch with the way churches are forming in the West, and with how Christians in these churches think about their faith and mission, they might become an anachronism, a dying mission agency, unable to recruit the next generation of those God wants to send to the unreached world.

The bi-millennial paradigm shifts in the church Tickle refers to are: movement in the sixth century from a structured and carefully-defined Apostolic church to an organized monasticism as the true keeper of the faith with Gregory the Great being considered as its patron saint; the Great Schism of 1054 in which Roman and Eastern expressions of Christianity parted company; and the Reformation of the 16th century, symbolized and treated as starting with the publication of Luther's 95 Theses, with its emphasis on sola scriptura instead of the church being the source of authority for the faith.

So, what is happening today in the church that is so earth shaking? To add context to her claims, Tickle argues that toward the end of each five hundred year cycle social, cultural, scientific and political changes move in parallel with religious changes, in turn influencing and being influenced by them. To wit, preceding and during the Reformation, to relate her theory to one epoch, laying the groundwork for the Reformation was the tension between peoples and powers of Italy and princes and powers of France. This shattered the assumption that religious power resided in one pope, not a far cry from asking whether such authority on ultimate questions should reside in any pope. Interreligious clashes of the late fourteen and fifteenth centuries, such as between the Ottoman Empire and Spain, resulted in a reconsideration of the role of church in society. Similarly, the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in 1440 gave rise to widespread literacy across Europe and made the dissemination of Luther's, Calvin's and Wycliffe's ideas possible and popular.

Tickle is at her best in chronicling and interpreting the massive changes in society of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She claims these societal changes have paved the way for accompanying upheavals amongst God's People about how they view Truth, understand authority and do church. She labels this mega-shift the Great Emergence. The use of this term alongside the labels we are becoming familiar with like *emergent* and *emerging* church is not coincidental.

She views the work of Darwin and Faraday in scientific theory as the tipping point in unsettling Protestantism, the fruit of the Reformation. Their thought/findings, in biology and physics respectively, brought into question the veracity and authority of Scripture and developed hardening lines between evangelicals (fundamentalists as they were called in the early twentieth century) and a more liberal wing of Protestantism. The theories of Freud, Jung and Campbell in social sciences had the affect of nibbling away at hitherto relatively uncontested Christian truth claims as to the exclusivity and particularity of Christ and the Bible. The advent of radio and television resulted in the rapid exchange and spread of information analogous to the printing press five hundred

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years earlier. Creating further foment in society was the invention of the car, the airplane, and the political theory of Karl Marx. The emergence of new sciences unheard of several generations ago, like anthropology, computer science, chaos math and network theory, and nanotechnology gave rise to the possibility of new realities like artificial intelligence and questions about what is human personality and where our authority is to be found.

From there, it is not a long leap for Tickle to realistically discern that the over-arching questions of the Great Emergence have to do with the relation that religions have to one another and the nature of human consciousness or the humanness of the person (p. 73).

On the religious front, the new searching for meaning could be seen in Albert Schweitzer's influential 1901 *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. A generation later, using literary deconstruction and form criticism, scholars sought to 'demythologize' the Scriptures just as Schweitzer had sought to do with Christ. Pentecostalism appeared on the scene a century ago, too. It found ultimate authority in the subjective experience of the Christian (more correctly, in the Holy Spirit). Tickle believes that the impact of Pentecostalism on conservative Christianity and Roman Catholicism has been vast.

Social changes like massive immigration, popularization of drugs and contraceptives, and revision of traditional gender and sexual roles, all undermined accepted views of where authority lay, such as with the Scriptures, especially where a literal interpretation was held. While the world was going flat, the church was losing its commitment to hierarchy as, for instance, found in denominational affiliations.

So, one might ask, though it is well and good to have this basic review of modern history in the West, what difference does it make to know these things? Well, if we are going to relate to Christians in the world we visit on Home Ministry Assignment, and if we are going to recruit a new generation of workers for the Arab world, we need to equip ourselves for quite a cross cultural experience.

According to Tickle, the emergent church world has a number of significant new characteristics:

- The inerrancy of Scripture is not considered worth fighting over as more important questions beg answering like 'are our good-living Hindu neighbours really lost if they do not put their faith in Christ?'
- Putting our energies into issues of social justice for those disempowered around the world, such as the Dalits in India, is the heart of mission.
- Evangelicals are becoming liturgical and Pentecostals organized. Mixing and matching does not allow for easy labels to be put on denominations and independent churches in foment.
- Conservative evangelicals are questioning some aspects of their fundamentalism such as in the abortion issue as to when human life really begins.

- Being in community and allowing the Spirit to teach in that context is as important in defining Truth as a subjectively-interpreted and humanly-transmitted Scripture.
- ‘Cherry-picking’ means that consumer Christians do not have loyalty to one church body but get their inspiration and fellowship from a variety of sources, and churches as a whole do the same thing too, with an increasing disregard for denominational loyalties and prescribed creeds.
- A building is not what defines a church. Rather, a church should be defined by what a body of believers is doing in its community, which may also affect where they meet for worship and fellowship, be that a pub, a school or a home.
- Just as the culture has become post-modern, post-institutional, post-rational, post-Enlightenment, post-literate and post-Christendom, so has the church.

Are there weaknesses to the book? Apart from the question of how flawed Tickle’s basic thesis might be (what happens if the question of authority gets resolved essentially across Protestantism in a return to inherited church instead of emergent church?), there is a tendency to generalize from the American experience. That being said, few would argue that the church is also in upheaval in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Canada and several parts of Latin America, Asia and Africa, as characterized above. I also found the diagramming of parts of her analysis, especially in the last two chapters, distracting more than helpful. Nevertheless, in a lucid and refreshingly original way, Tickle gives a breathtaking view of the state of the Western world church today and where it might be headed. We would be wise to pay attention.

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