

Green's commentary would make an important addition to the library of any pastor or teacher who is interested in preaching or teaching from Luke's Gospel. His work is well written, thorough, and coherent. However, due to some of the weaknesses associated with literary criticism, one should also supplement Green's commentary with a more detailed work like Bock's two-volume work (BECNT, 1994, 1996), which deals with the historical and synoptic issues not covered in Green.

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Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. 288 pp. Paper, \$16.99.

Aubrey Malphurs is president of Vision Ministries International, an organization that assists churches with training and consulting on issues such as leadership, vision, church planting, and church renewal. He is perhaps best known, however, for the books he has written on these same topics, which include such titles as *The Dynamics of Pastoral Leadership*, *Planting Growing Churches for the Twenty-first Century*, and *Values-Driven Leadership*. Malphurs's *Advanced Strategic Planning* is of the same genre as his earlier works.

Malphurs contends that the church in North America is like a ship without a rudder, being blown about by the winds of cultural upheaval and change. His purpose in writing *Advanced Strategic Planning* is to provide church leaders with a good strategic planning process so they can better "think through the core issues of ministry and then implement their conclusions" (9). For Malphurs, this strategic planning process is "the necessary rudder that will biblically and thoughtfully guide the church through these and future times of unprecedented, convoluted change" (10).

Malphurs divides *Advanced Strategic Planning* into two major sections. First, he provides a preplanning checklist for leaders who are serious about the strategic planning process. He also includes a one-chapter primer on organizational development in which he focuses on the concept of the "sigmoid" (S-shaped) curve. Essentially, the sigmoid curve is an S-shaped line graph that represents the life cycle of organisms, civilizations, and organizations—including, Malphurs would say—the church. This curve depicts how things begin, grow rapidly, plateau, decline, and then die. Instead of simply assuming that the church is doomed, however, Malphurs argues that the strategic planning process he proposes will enable the church to start new, successful S-curves and thus stave off death (46).

The remainder of the book (section 2) is composed of nine chapters in which Malphurs takes his readers through a nine-step strategic planning process. These nine steps (and the basic question to be asked at each step) are as follows: (1) ministry analysis (What kind of church are we?), (2) values discovery and development (Why do we do what we do?), (3) mission development (What are we supposed to be doing?), (4) environmental scan (What's going on out there?), (5) vision development (What kind of church would we like to be?), (6) strategy development (How will we get to where we want to be?), (7) strategy implementation (Where do we begin, when, and with whom?), (8) preparation for ministry contingencies (How will we handle surprises?), (9) ministry evaluation (How are we doing?).

Malphurs concludes with a series of appendices which contain sample vision,

strategy, and core values statements from various churches, a “Readiness for Change” inventory, sample evaluations, and a wealth of other practical material.

One of the greatest strengths of *Advanced Strategic Planning* is the clarity with which Malphurs writes. The book is organized much like a “how-to” manual, and Malphurs does not deviate from his task. He leads his readers on a detailed and systematic journey through the planning process, and, as a result, Malphurs is able to make “advanced” strategic planning seem less intimidating. His book is not simplistic, but it is so well organized that the information is manageable.

Helpful introductions and summaries are provided in each chapter, as well as clear definitions and relevant, easy-to-read graphics. The reader should also take careful note of the appendices which were designed to be easily reproducible and useful in the local setting.

At its fundamental level, the process Malphurs presents is essentially the same as that espoused by a number of contemporary business management experts. (A brief survey of his bibliography demonstrates this connection.) So, while Malphurs’s subtitle suggests that he is presenting “a new model,” this is not actually the case. While borrowing from the business world is not necessarily negative, Malphurs’s attempt to present his process as biblically based is tenuous at best. Malphurs did occasionally appeal to Scripture, but he tended to do so in order to confirm rather than form his model (see, for example, 12, 78-79, 81, 152, 201).

For example, as Malphurs argues for the importance of strategic planning, he twice cites the example of Moses, who led Israel “strategically through the wilderness as recorded in the Pentateuch” (12, see also 152). It is not an obscure biblical footnote that God was in fact the leader of the Israelites throughout their wilderness sojourn (Exod 3:8,17; 13:5,11,17), and the process God employed (a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night) was rather different than that proposed in *Advanced Strategic Planning*.

This misinterpretation of Moses’ role in leadership further illustrates the tendency of Malphurs to rely excessively upon the human rather than the divine. While Malphurs justifies this lack of emphasis on divine guidance and trust in God by saying he assumes the importance of both, it is unfortunate that something so critical (and so often ignored) is essentially dismissed with a short paragraph disclaimer (63). So, while Malphurs says leaders should “bathe the entire process in prayer” (63), it becomes apparent that Malphurs expects leaders to ask God to guide as they implement his (Malphurs’s) process.

Finally, one wonders if the strategic planning process is about finding God’s values and mission, or simply articulating our own. Malphurs repeatedly calls for leaders to tap into the soul of their church in order to discover its core values and its mission, but he never suggests in any substantive, concrete way what these values *should* be. Are core values something a church can arrive at by “story boarding” or polling members, as Malphurs suggests? Certainly, this would uncover their core values, but is there ever a time when these values must be challenged and changed? A discussion dealing with issues such as these would have added to the value of Malphurs’s work.

These weaknesses do not negate the importance of Malphurs’s contribution. When a mere 20 percent of America’s 367,000 congregations engage in active

strategic planning (9), Malphurs's call for more and better planning is clearly needed. Malphurs has also done more than simply appeal for change—he has also provided step-by-step instructions so that every church leader can strategically guide their congregation into the future. These leaders should, however, remain open to the mysterious workings of God, who may choose to lead his church through a process different from that proposed by Malphurs.

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Propp, William H. C. *Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, vol. 2. New York: Doubleday, 1999. xl + 680 pp. Hardcover, \$44.95.

The book under review is the first of a projected two-volume set. Since Propp considers the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1-21) as the midpoint of a bipartite work, the division between chapters 1-18 and 19-40 is purely a practical one based on the length of the material. The author writes lucidly and shows a masterful command of the scholarly literature. His style is well suited for the Anchor Bible series, which aims at reaching a wide, diverse audience, while maintaining high standards of biblical scholarship.

The work begins, after typical preliminary matters such as a table of contents, with a translation of the entire text. This is followed by "Introduction," "Bibliography," and "Analysis, Notes and Comments." The latter treats the book of Exodus by sections. Under each section there are Translation, Analysis, Notes, and Comments. Analysis includes textual notes, source analysis, and redaction analysis. Notes deal with matters of interpretation. Comments include extended discussions.

Propp categorizes the narrative as a "heroic adventure story or fairy tale" (32) based on the categories suggested by V. I. Propp. The author's basic approach is anthropological, which is evident in his desire to understand the social realities behind the text. For example, he interprets the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12:1-13:16) as "primarily a rite of riddance" (434). This festival originated together with the paschal meal, but the two institutions were separated in the late monarchic period (428). Central to the author's anthropological approach is the Documentary Hypothesis, albeit with the innovative twist that the author sees more E material than J material in Exodus (50). Since the discussion of the validity of the Documentary Hypothesis is planned for Appendix A in volume 2, it is best to await its publication before evaluating his source criticism.

My comments here will focus primarily on Propp's translation. His preference for the literal rather than idiomatic is certainly laudable. However, a translation must do more than simply give the Hebrew in English words, which would result in a superfluous work, since one would need to know Hebrew to make sense of the translation. A comparison of the author's treatment of two words will suffice to illustrate some of the problems with what he calls a "hyperliteral" translation.

The author's translation of almost all occurrences of נֶפֶשׁ "nefesh" as "soul" (1:5 (2x); 4:19; 12:4, 15, 16, 19; 16:16), though apparently consistent, obscures the