

Book Report by Christoph Lameter, FTS Box #466, June 2, 1994

Book Report on S.G. Lingenfelter & M.K. Mayers Ministering Cross culturally An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986

Lingenfelter is dealing with the problem of communicating cross culturally and discusses 6 areas where different cultures have different values. The concrete background of his book is his experience with the Yapese culture on an island in the Pacific. The kind of problems that are dealt with are not restricted to cross-cultural approaches but are also applicable to value variations within a culture.

I find myself in a kind of cross-cultural situation. Being from Germany and ministering to a WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) congregation is after all a cross-cultural situation. I did not think that way before I read Lingenfelter. I can relate to some problem he describes like thinking about tasks to do while socializing and feeling that socializing is boring and a waste of time. I think the Californian culture is more people oriented than my cultural background. The constant verbal insistence on their task orientation has apparently blinded my eyes. I noticed in small group sessions that I was pushing for a decision while people were not willing to do so. This is also conforming with their teaching of being "on time" meaning usually a quarter of an hour late not maxing out at 5 minutes. Task oriented people are people with social high esteem in the local culture but this is not what is wanted in personal relationships. There is a definite tension going on with task- versus people-orientation I think in almost every culture. The dualistic approach of the book is helpful to understand the issues but in reality these are appearing mixed together and depending on the social function that one attends.