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## Book Review: Franchising McChurch: Feeding Our Obsession with Easy Christianity by Thomas White and John M. Yeats

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**Kiesling: Book Review; Franchising McChurch: Feeding Our Obsession with Easy** close of the chapter helping readers to further define the current realities of their churches.

The authors do offer other options to closing a church. However, they never speak of the possibility of turning the church around. Perhaps they are speaking specifically to churches that have lost their ability to turn around. While that may be the case, even turnaround churches can be Legacy Churches in the making. While the book seems limited to a specific audience, it does address the issue of failing churches and what to do with them. Perhaps the book best addresses churches that have lost their hope for survival and are in the final stages of life. With the decline of churches in America, *Legacy Churches* is a strong resource that can help a church develop an intentional plan for furthering its ministry long after the doors close.

After growing up as a Nazarene pastor's kid, I know firsthand the value of Legacy Churches. Nearly half of the churches I grew up in are now closed. To my knowledge, while I am part of that legacy, no intentional plan was in place to pass on a purposeful legacy. The question with which all churches must wrestle is not if they will cease to exist, but what will happen when the lifecycles of their churches end. By then they should have intentional plans to last long after their brick and mortar fail.

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White, Thomas and John M. Yeats. *Franchising McChurch: Feeding Our Obsession with Easy Christianity*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishing, 2009. 238 pp. \$9.99.

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Consumerism drives today's American free-market system. Widespread selection of products offered at the lowest price characterizes this movement. From grocery stores to gas stations, one does not have to look far to see the effects of a consumerism mentality. While consumerism allows many American businesses to thrive, Thomas White and John M. Yeats believe consumerism can cause decay in local church settings. What effects does consumerism have on the local church? Should ministers seek to adopt this seemingly successful business model for the church? *Franchising McChurch* seeks to answer some of the questions surrounding this movement and gives much insight into these difficult issues.

Though both professors taught at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary during the writing of this book, Thomas White now serves as President of

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Cedarville University and John M. Yeats currently serves as dean of the college at  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The reviewer had the opportunity to sit  
under the teaching of both of the authors of this book while a student at  
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Having witnessed firsthand their  
passion for the Word of God and their precision in using it to draw ecclesiological  
conclusions, the reviewer believes that the readers of this book should take to heart  
every suggestion written within.

290 White and Yeats dedicate the first section of the book to explaining the  
principles of consumerism. Each of the first four chapters discusses a different  
aspect of consumerism and its infiltration into the church of America. They direct  
their critique of the consumer-driven approach at three components: 1) efficiency,  
2) predictability, and 3) calculability. The authors believe that though these three  
components build a great business model, they cannot and should not be used to  
build a church model. White and Yeats do not stop at giving information to the  
reader. Instead, each chapter gives a warning of the unforeseen ramifications of the  
consumer-driven approach on the local church. Both White and Yeats not only  
address what is happening presently in these churches, but also what will likely  
happen in the future of these churches if they choose to continue with this  
approach. The application of each chapter is well worth the price of this book and  
should be, at the very least, considered by every pastor who has adopted this model  
or is considering doing so in the future.

Church growth has become more about numerical statistics than spiritual  
development, and in order to accommodate the numbers, pastors must make  
logistical decisions regarding the structure of the church. In many cases, church  
planting has been replaced by multi-site churches (satellite churches) and/or multi-  
service churches. The second section of this book addresses some of the practical  
ramifications of this substitution and investigates whether or not it has biblical  
support.

White and Yeats offer several cautions to the pastor who is considering the  
multi-site or multi-service model. The authors state that this model may  
inadvertently teach congregants to go to church expecting to get instead of  
expecting to give. The consumer mentality teaches people to focus on self instead  
of focusing on God and others. Many megachurches attempt to draw in the  
crowds by offering a buffet of opportunities and ministries, hoping that once  
people come to the church, they will plug into all aspects of the church. The  
problem with this is that once the church stops feeding their obsession of self-  
satisfaction, typically they move on to another body that will continue to meet  
these perceived needs.

consider proper ecclesiological practices. This can happen by discouraging the fellowship among all believers. One of the core reasons for the church is the practice of gathering, and this model makes it almost impossible for such an event to take place. A church that offers multiple sites and/or multiple services creates a mirage of unity. Though unified under the same name, they share no commonality and offer little accountability. Another way ecclesiology (according to White and Yeats) is hindered in the adaptation of this model is in the area of local church autonomy. The multi-site church model has congregations that are spread around a city, state, country, or even worldwide. Though they look autonomous, they are under the control of the main campus, and leaders who may or may not be involved with a particular congregation make most decisions regarding the function of the church.

Finally, White and Yeats discuss the effects of the multi-site model on church planting. The New Testament teaches church planting as the preferred model of multiplication. The authors build a solid case for this and point out the fact that the multi-site and multi-service church is preventing church planting from happening in America. Bigger and seemingly better concepts draw consumers, and many church planters start small and slow. Therefore, the megachurches of America are drawing prospects in and losing them in the crowd when they could more effectively fold them into church plants.

Though White and Yeats give clear cautions to the possible negative effects of the multi-site church model, they intend to aid pastors in thinking through difficult issues and not simply to bash those who choose to adopt this model. (See the discussion of this issue on Thomas White's blog site, "Multiple Services and Franchising McChurch"; accessed November 13 2013, <http://thomaswhite.wordpress.com/2013/05/15/multiple-services-and-franchising-mcchurch/>.) The authors acknowledge that there are some that will move forward with it, and they give practical advice on how to adopt the multi-site model while not neglecting church planting. They state that if one does desire to utilize multiple sites, he should do so in such a fashion that if the campus desires to separate from the founding church, it may do so as easily as possible. Many multi-site churches are set up as permanent locations and never given the option to become fully autonomous. The one who chooses to go the multi-site route must take proper steps to allow each site the option of complete autonomy. In addition, White and Yeats suggest that if one proceeds with this model, for every satellite campus a church creates, the church should support one church plant as well. This practice will place proper focus on kingdom growth instead of single-church growth.

The waistband of the church in America grows larger every year. As obesity in the human body presents many physical health concerns, obesity in the church presents many spiritual concerns. If the church does not address these concerns in a timely manner, it may morph into something that our Lord Jesus Christ never intended. Since this issue is so prevalent in our society today, this book is a must-read for all who serve in the body of Christ. Thomas White and John M. Yeats have made a significant contribution to the field of ecclesiology that is academic in nature, scriptural in content, and relevant in time. *Franchising McChurch* gives a much-needed perspective on some difficult ecclesiological issues and will be an influential work for many years to come.