Understanding Your Critics: An Outsider's Analysis of a Core Criticism of the Church Growth Movement

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Introduction

I am honored to be invited to address this gathering of the American Society for Church Growth. I realize that since you provide no travel, lodging or meal expenses, your choice of speakers may be somewhat circumscribed, and thus my proximity to your Chicago meeting site may have played a determining role in the invitation. But I choose to feel honored nonetheless. I admire your desire to evaluate where you have been and where you are going, and I am pleased to be able to play a small part in that effort.

I stand before you as an outsider. I have never been a part of the Church Growth Movement; in fact, on occasion I have been among your friendly critics. But more often I have been simply an interested observer. From its inception I have watched your movement rather closely, and while I make no formal effort these days to keep up with developments within the movement or to stay abreast of your literature, it does matter to me what you folks say and do.

Why? Because your focus is the Church, an institution which is near and dear to my heart, and upon which you continue to exert a significant influence. It can be said of you that what you do matters—you have made a difference in the contemporary American church. Thus your work is of genuine interest to me; you have my attention.

But second, and more specifically, the principles which undergird your movement, and over which you continue to tangle with your critics, deal with the very issues to which I have given much of my professional attention, both as a scholar and as a practitioner.

I first began wrestling with these issues in an intellectual way while I was in seminary, and then later while I was pursuing a doctorate in the field of communication, and then still later while serving as a seminary professor, and then later still while pursuing a second doctorate in New Testament studies. My training in communication theory, combined with my biblical/theological orientation, prompted me to approach the issues from several sides, and has only served to whet my interest in the issues and to deepen my understanding of the stakes. Thus it is these very issues which have occupied the bulk of my scholarly attention over the years, culminating in the book I published last year (*St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation*, Cambridge University Press, 1994).

In addition, this intellectual and theoretical work has been fleshed out in practice during the decade I spent pastoring two different churches, the one a small rural church, the other a large suburban church. In these two churches I found a crucible in which to test my own understanding against both the theories of others and the reality of life in the local church. I have discovered that I needed this hands-on experience to round out my perspective.

It is not too much to say, then, that in one way or another the issues which lie at the heart of the debate between the Church Growth Movement and its critics are the very issues which have occupied much of my adult life. These are the issues I want to discuss with you this evening. My goal is to strike to the heart of these issues and see if we can pinpoint what it is that most worries the critics of the Church Growth Movement. The criticisms themselves may be "old hat" to you, but perhaps we can shed some useful light on the theoretical concerns which undergird them.

The Research

My assignment this evening, at least in part, is to address you as a scholar. So let me begin by sharing with you, albeit briefly, some of the results of my own scholarship. Then we will

turn to the implications of this work for understanding the typical criticisms of the Church Growth Movement.

The research I have in mind is the work I have done in that seminal passage in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, 1 Cor 1-4. This passage stands unique within Paul's writings in that it is the only place where the Apostle lays out his own *modus operandi* as a preacher and explains why, theologically, he had to operate the way he did.

To grasp Paul's argument in this crucial passage we must first come to grips with the challenge Paul was facing in Corinth. To be sure, that challenge was multi-faceted, but at its core lay criticisms of Paul's preaching. Paul simply did not measure up to the rhetorical standards the Corinthians had come to expect. They were used to the polished eloquence of the orators of the day, in comparison to which Paul's preaching was found lacking. He was, as he himself admitted in 2 Cor 1:6, only a "layman" when it came to public speaking.

It is important to see that the difficulty for the Corinthians here was not a theological one. They had embraced the Gospel Paul preached and were not, like the Galatians, in any apparent danger of abandoning it. Their problem was that due to their worldliness they were measuring Paul by the wrong yardstick. They wanted him to speak impressively, like the other speakers who regularly paraded before them. Instead, what they got was, not Greek eloquence, but the relatively homely, straightforward proclamation of the herald. In status-conscious Corinth Paul thus became an embarrassment to them, and they did not mind criticizing him for it.

What we discover in I Cor 1-4, then, is Paul's critique of the Corinthians' position, combined with a defense of his own. And in both cases Paul's argument is a theological one. He does not argue his case situationally or culturally, as if his *modus operandi* was somehow demanded by the particular setting in Corinth. On the contrary, he roots his *modus operandi* deeply into the soil of his theology and argues that the Corinthians should do the same.

What lies behind I Cor 1-4, then, is a contrast between the rhetorical approach so admired by the Corinthians and an alternate approach advocated by Paul. What was that contrast? Let us step back for a moment to examine the rhetorical approach.

Ancient Rhetoric

Training in Greco-Roman rhetoric constituted the crown of a liberal education in the ancient world and the orators it produced became the movie stars of their day. The people of the first century loved eloquence and lionized those who could produce it. Eloquence was perhaps their primary entertainment and it was ubiquitous throughout the Roman Empire. Audiences consisted of avid and sophisticated listeners who knew what they liked and what they disliked. But the orators were willing to risk their displeasure for the sake of gaining their approval, and the rewards that accompanied it.

The training of an orator was a marvelously complex thing. (For an indication of just how complex, see first-century Quintilian's twelve-volume *Institutes of Oratory* on the training of the orator from birth up.) But when everything else is pared away and we lay bare the essence of Greco-Roman rhetorical theory, we discover that ancient rhetorical education was designed to train an orator in the art of persuasion. At its best the study of rhetoric was not about how to compose purple prose, much less how to dishonestly manipulate an audience. It was about the discovery and delivery of ideas and arguments that would engender belief in the listeners. Given *this* audience, and *this* subject matter, how can I achieve the desired result'? This was the question the persuader was trained to ask and answer, and the measure of his skill was the degree to which he could do so successfully, in whatever rhetorical situation he might be facing.

The persuader was always working with what I have called the Grand Equation of Rhetoric. This equation encompassed three primary parts, the audience, the desired results, and the speaker's efforts. It can be laid out as follows:

The Audience + The Speakers Efforts + The Desired Results

The audience for the persuader was a **Given**. He could not change them; the point was to adapt to what he found there in order to achieve his goals. Which sends us to the opposite end of the equation: The Results. These constituted the **Independent Variable**, i.e., that which once set determines the remainder of the equation. What was it the persuader wanted to accomplish with his audience'? It was the answer to this question that determined the **Dependent Variable**, the speaker's efforts. The

persuader had to be able to adapt his efforts in whatever way possible to pull off *this* result with *this* audience, and all of his rhetorical education was designed to train him in how to do so. It was his skill in successfully adapting himself and his efforts to the particular rhetorical situation he faced that made the rhetorical equation work.

So for the persuader, the Grand Equation looked like this:

	The Audience	+	*The Speaker's Efforts*	=	*The Desired Results*
The Persuader	A Given		Dependent Variable		Independent Variable

Notice that the Persuader's Stance is both audience- and results-driven, and is methodologically uncommitted. Once set, the desired result governs the equation. That is why so much attention is paid in the ancient rhetorical literature to the mindset of the audience, to their belief systems, to their likes and dislikes, and to what it takes to win particular responses from them. To be successful in achieving his desired result the persuader was required to adapt himself to his audience. Indeed, the ability to adapt to one's audience is the genius of ancient rhetorical theory, for without it one cannot design an effective strategy for achieving the desired goal. With this ability, however, the persuader can strategize effectively to achieve his desired result. Since he is methodologically uncommitted, the persuader is free--within the bounds of honesty—to choose from his full repertory of methods whatever will most likely achieve his purposes. This ability to mold one's efforts to the demands of the given situation in order to achieve a particular result with an audience was what ancient rhetorical theory and training was designed to teach.

Paul's Contrast

But now, contrast this Persuader's Stance with the argument of Paul in I Cor 1-4. For Paul, the audience was also a **Given**; he could not dictate who would make up his audience. Like the persuader he had to work with what he received. But beyond that the remainder of the equation is a study in contrasts. Far from being an ever-malleable *dependent variable*, Paul's own efforts were a never-changing **Constant**: "I resolved to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified.'' And the re-

sults? Instead of an *independent variable*, set by the speaker, they turn out to be Paul's **Dependent Variable**. To his heralding of the gospel Paul discovers a variety of responses: to the Jew his message is a scandal; to the Greek his message is ridiculous; but to "those who are being saved," that is, to "the called ones," whether Jew or Greek, that same message turns out to be the wisdom and power of God. What determined the difference? Something outside the equation altogether—the work of the Holy Spirit. And this, of course, is just as Paul would have it. Paul was determined to depend upon the spiritual dynamic of the cross rather than the human dynamic of the persuader. While this might mean that his proclamation would be unimpressive to the world (and to the worldly Corinthians!), Paul considered his approach to be required by a fundamental insight into how God operates in the world. Says he,

> God chooses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chooses the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chooses the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

Paul may have been tempted at times to lapse into the Persuader's Stance, especially during his unhappy experience in Athens, but if so he resisted the impulse because he was so concerned about the possibility of obtaining false, human-centered results. As elsewhere, Paul focused his efforts in Corinth on the straightforward proclamation of the herald, so that the Corinthians' faith "might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."

Now one might be tempted at this point to raise an objection, citing 2 Cor 5:11 where Paul says, "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men." Didn't Paul himself practice "persuasion"? This is a much more complicated question than it might seem on the surface, and it would take us far afield—into the lexical work on the verb *peitho* and into theoretical definitions of persuasion—to answer it in full. But suffice it to say that this single non-technical use of the verb *peitho* by Paul serves only to prove the rule. In the literally dozens of places in Paul's writings where he refers to his own preaching, the Apostle scrupulously uses the language of the herald (*kerusso, parakaleo,*

martureo, evangelizesthai), language which plays no part in the rhetorical literature because it describes non-rhetorical behavior. 2 Cor 5:11 is the only instance where Paul uses a verb that could also be used by the rhetoricians, and the context there makes it plain that Paul is not introducing an exception. In fact, this entire section (2 Cor 4-5) is one of the locations in the Corinthian epistles which most strongly echoes the anti-rhetorical concerns of I Cor 1-4. Paul was extremely careful to consistently portray his ministry as that of a herald rather than a persuader, and his single use of the elastic term peitho in 2 Cor 5:11 constitutes no exception.

Thus for Paul the Grand Equation looks like this:

	The Audience	+	The Speaker's Efforts	=	*The Desired Results*
Paul	A Given		Constant		Dependent Variable

Notice how the Apostle has radically revised the Persuader's Stance. In contrast to the persuader, Paul enters the equation by asking, "What is it that God has called me to be and to do"? Then he sets out to be that and do that. His efforts are neither results-driven nor audience-driven; they are obedience-driven, and Paul is willing to let the results fall where they may. If this means that those who measure his efforts by the world's standards remain unimpressed, so be it; it is God's way to use what the world considers unimpressive to accomplish his purposes, so that no mortal can boast. If it means that Paul does not achieve the results he would like to see, so be it; in the end it is God who must determine the results. As for Paul, he realizes that he must obediently play a reduced role in the transaction, lest by stepping in and applying his own strategies he engender false results.

So far, we have been talking about Paul's preaching. But we should note that the Apostle is working here with a principle that has much wider application, a principle that he is merely applying to his ministry of preaching. What Paul is working out here is a principle so fundamental that it deserves to shape our entire philosophy of ministry. The results- and audience-driven approach Paul rejects is one we all understand and take for granted. It is quintessentially American and wonderfully useful and practical. Indeed, it is the most natural thing in the world.

But it is also an approach to ministry the Apostle was required by his own theology to reject, precisely because it is so "natural" (I Cor 2:14). It is the product of a merely anthropocentric way of thinking and doing and as such is out of concert with God's way of working. Moreover, it is fraught with the potential for obtaining false, merely "natural" results.

The Core Criticism

There are many positive things that even your worst critics are willing to commend about the Church Growth Movement. As a whole the movement is made up of people who are forward looking, open, teachable, and willing to work hard. You tend to be creative, unintimidated by the past, and unafraid to try new things. At its best the Church Growth Movement is fueled by a genuine desire to further the cause of Christ and it has undoubtedly helped many people, and many churches. Yet still your critics persist. Why? Let me put my answer as directly as I can: It is my view that, without necessarily having thought through all of the above, and certainly without couching their criticism in these terms, *your critics intuitively perceive the Church Growth Movement to have lost sight of the contrast which so alarmed the Apostle Paul. They perceive you often to be operating out of the very Persuader's Stance Paul disavowed.*

Having offered this rather pointed observation, let me immediately soften it with two qualifications. I say "often" because the Church Growth Movement has not shown itself completely oblivious to the dangers of the Persuader's Stance. There are times when the concerns Paul raises seem to be acknowledged in Church Growth materials. And second, the above issues need to be nuanced a notch or two more. Even the Apostle was sensitive to the need for a certain type of audience adaptation, as when he says in I Cor 9:22, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Paul is speaking here of adapting to ones audience far the sake of *communication* (as against *persuasion*), and much of what the Church Growth Movement promulgates legitimately falls into this innocent, indeed necessary, category.

And yet, having acknowledged these two caveats, I must also go on to say that in my estimation the Church Growth Movement remains vulnerable to accusations that it has largely embraced the Persuader's Stance. If one looks, not to what can

merely be found written somewhere within Church Growth literature, *but to the constant and distinctive emphases of the Church Growth Movement,* what one finds is a characteristically pragmatic, methodologically-neutral stress upon audience-driven, results-oriented strategies that "work." Despite the inevitable disclaimers, it is an approach which does seem to show the telltale signs of the Persuader's Stance.

Some Examples

At this stage, I suppose I am obligated to cite some examples of what I mean. I cannot document my observations in full, of course; that would require an entire volume. If I had more time I would walk us through some of the polling and market analysis work that seems so fascinating to Church Growth advocates; or the "nickels and noses" growth techniques espoused by some of the growth gurus in their popular seminars; or the "bigger is better" obsession manifested by the mega-church "wannabes" who flock to these seminars; or the outright distortions of New Testament teaching on the subject of preaching one sometimes finds in the writings of some Church Growth advocates. But since we do not have the time for that, let me illustrate directly the sort of material which prompts your critics to worry that you have embraced the Persuader's Stance. I could have drawn this material from a variety of sources but for brevity have limited myself to a few passages from some well-known and representative figures.

Here is a passage from a section entitled "Fierce Pragmatism" in Professor's Peter Wagner's book, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (Harper & Row, 1981):

> Since God's goal is clear, church growth people approach the task of accomplishing it in a fairly pragmatic way. The word "pragmatic", however, has drawn some criticism. Perhaps it is not the best word, but since it is being used, it should be explained. My dictionary defines pragmatic as "concerned with practical consequences or values." This is the way church growth understands the term.

Then Professor Wagner quotes Donald McGavran:

> Donald McGavran said, "We devise mission methods and policies in the light of what God has blessed - and what he has obviously not blessed." He expressed con-

cern about methodologies that are supposed to bring people to Christ and multiply churches, but don't. Or those that are designed to improve society, but don't. The best thing to do with such methods, he argued, was "throw them away, and get a method that works and brings glory to God." He then summed it up by saying, "As to methods, we are fiercely pragmatic."

Later, in a section entitled "Planning Strategy for Results," Professor Wagner declares,

Those who fear pragmatism are concerned lest the end be taken as justifying the means. However, a knee-jerk rejection of this concept may be too hasty. In Christian work it is axiomatic that immoral means are not to be used for any end. But while immoral means may not be used in God's work, on what basis does one choose between several equally moral or value-free methodological options for accomplishing a certain goal? The approach of consecrated pragmatism recommends the option which most effectively and efficiently accomplishes the goal. In that sense, but only in that sense, the end is the only thing that can possibly justify the means. A means that fails to accomplish the goal is not, by anyone's measurement, a justifiable means.

Let me see if I have this right, then: Church Growth advocates are fiercely pragmatic, a term which you define as being deeply concerned with practical consequences or results. You want methods that "work," that is, that achieve the desired results. If your efforts do not achieve the desired results, the only possible explanation must be that there is something wrong with your methods. Therefore these are to be discarded in favor of strategies that do achieve the desired results. To be sure, you do not want to use immoral methods, but that is the only criteria you need worry about—everything else is methodological fair game. In the end, you have no commitment to any particular method or strategy *per se*, and no concern beyond the possibility of something being immoral. In your fierce pragmatism you evaluate strategies only on the basis of their ability to generate results.

Have I overstated Professor Wagner's views? Apparently not. In his book, *Strategies for Church Growth* (Regal, 1987), Pro-

fessor Wagner addresses my point directly. He distinguishes between the three Ps of evangelizing: Presence Evangelism, Proclamation Evangelism, and Persuasion Evangelism. The approach Professor Wagner calls Proclamation Evangelism is essentially what the Apostle Paul identities as the approach required by his theology. But it is also this approach that Dr. Wagner finds insufficient. Proclamation Evangelism focuses on obedience to God's call as a herald and leaves the results in the hands of the Holy Spirit—but Professor Wagner argues that we must do more: We must have Persuasion Evangelism. "The bottom line," he says, "is how many disciples are made as the result of a given evangelistic effort." (122) To be sure, Professor Wagner wants to avoid "manipulation." Says he, "I want to distance myself as far from that as possible. I do not approve the use of unfair or fraudulent influence to make people Christians." (127) Yet Professor Wagner still insists upon a persuasion-oriented definition of evangelism, one which emphasizes strategizing to achieve desired results. "I am goal-oriented," he says, "and I like the 'so to . . . that,' [clauses in the definition] (130), i.e., the goal-oriented clauses that build the focus on results into the very fabric of evangelism.

A Response

If this is the stuff of the Church Growth Movement, is it any wonder that your critics perceive you to be operating out of the Persuader's Stance which so alarmed the Apostle'? Think for a moment about how out of step the above is with Paul's analysis of his own ministry. On the one hand, for Paul issues of method were not simply up for grabs; his understanding of his methods was derived from, and thus profoundly rooted in, his understanding of God and of God's own methods in the world. On the other hand, Paul did not disavow the Persuader's Stance because it was immoral; he rejected it because it was based upon *a purely human dynamic which produced human results*. Has the Church Growth Movement adequately come to grips with these two issues?

Many of your critics think not. They find your notion of "consecrated pragmatism" facile and inadequate, indebted more to American consumerism than to a biblical theology. Suppose, for example, we were to apply the "consecrated pragmatism" standard as defined above to Paul's method. Did Paul's method

"work"? In the vast majority of cases, apparently not. No one who had suffered with Paul from Philippi, to Thessalonica, to Berea, to Athens, to Corinth would have concluded that his method was "working." The only thing it seemed to be "effectively and efficiently" accomplishing was more suffering for the Apostle. In fact, until the Lord himself appeared to Paul in Corinth and instructed him not to stop speaking, Paul himself was ready to call it quits. Despite the fact that tiny struggling congregations were left behind in a few cities, the great majority of those who listened to Paul along the way rejected him outright, finding his message unimpressive, absurd or even scandalous.

Should we, then, construe this as an indictment of Paul's method? Should we conclude that Paul's method was somehow the wrong one, worthy only of the trash heap? Only if we were operating out of the Persuader's Stance would we conclude such a thing. The truth is, Paul had agonized over these issues and had arrived at his methods for profoundly theological reasons. Indeed, his methods were nothing less than *entailments* of his theology. Are we so thoroughly Americanized and so impoverished theologically that we cannot even conceive of such criteria playing a role in our methodological decisions? If the Apostle was so exercised about avoiding methods which engendered merely human results, why aren't we? How is it that we do not share Paul's reticence about wading into the realm of the Holy Spirit?

Paul's concern about our human potential for achieving merely human results appears to be lost on many Church Growth advocates. In their pragmatic rush to use whatever "works," they apparently assume that as long as they avoid the "immoral," the "unfair" or the "fraudulent" they are free to use any method to achieve their goals. But a concern to avoid the immoral, unfair, and fraudulent scarcely rises above the pagans; noble-minded rhetoricians of Paul's day such as Quintilian would have concurred entirely. As a standard for our methodological decision making in Christ's Church such concerns are necessary, but not sufficient. For a Christian there exists a crucial added dimension which the audience- and results-driven approach largely ignores. It is the concern for driving out the divine work of God by unduly crowding our human methods into the process.

Do you suppose that cannot happen? Paul knew better. In I

Cor 1:17 he says, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, *lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power*." Later (2:5) he reminds the Corinthians that he very carefully chose his methods lest he wind up with a situation where their faith rested on his own human ingenuity rather than the Spirit's work. Can we let Paul's warnings register with us here for a moment? The issue in these passages was not the *content* of the Gospel, which Paul affirms the Corinthians held fast; the issue was one of *methods*, methods which held the potential of either *displaying* or *displacing*, the power of the cross. Can there be any higher stakes?

With the stakes so high, one would think that discussions of the crucial issues would be widespread in Church Growth circles, and that Church Growth advocates would have become very sophisticated over the years in evaluating various methods, not merely on their moral quality but on their fit with our theology and their potential for engendering merely human results. Yet even summative works like Thom Rainer's *The Book of Church Growth* show little awareness that such issues even need to be addressed, much less finessed. Instead one finds an enthusiastic and headlong endorsement of seemingly any and all morally acceptable methods that appear to "work," regardless of their source and regardless of their presuppositions.

For example, while Paul was aghast at the thought of basing his approach to ministry on the pragmatic insights of classical rhetorical theory, the Church Growth Movement seems to harbor no such reservations. In fact, the movement often appears to be sold out to classical rhetoric's closest modern counterpart, the world of advertising and marketing, and leans upon it constantly for advice and strategy. Listen, for example, to George Barna, one of Church Growth's most commonly quoted sources:

> Most churches' inability to grow is not due to a lack of desire, or even a lack of resources. The truth is, we simply have not grasped the basic principles of marketing and applied them to the Church. The opportunities for successful church marketing are plentiful. All we as a community of believers need to do is gain a proper perspective on the Church and how it can be marketed effectively (40).

What are the "basic principles" of marketing theory from

which Mr. Barna will draw the insights for building Christ's Church?

> To successfully market your product, you have to identi-fy its prospective market. The key to market identifica-tion . . . is to be as specific as possible in selecting the au-dience to whom you will market the product. By match-ing the appeal of your product to the interests and needs of specific population segments, you can concentrate on getting your product to your best prospects without wasting resources on people who have no need or inter-est in your product (42). [And what, we are forced to ask, of our Lord's Parable of the Sower?]

Thus we need to be in the business of promotion, says Mr. Barna.

> Without effective promotion, your product does not stand a chance of succeeding, because your target audi-ence will either remain unaware of your product or will not have compelling reason to evaluate or try your product. Promotion is the way in which you persuade people that the product is available, worthy, a good val-ue, and the way you explain how to acquire it (43).

"Marketing, then," says Mr. Barna, "is a systematic series of active responses to existing conditions that is geared toward reaching specific goals" (44). Hence one's "marketing plan" must outline "not just the marketing team's goals and objectives, but also the strategies and specific tactics by which they will satisfy their goals" (45).

These emphases are as old as the ancient Greeks. They are little more than echoes in our modern world of the very princi-ples the Apostle repudiated as a basis for his approach to minis-try. Paul's concern was not that these principles were evil; they need be no such thing. At its best the art of persuasion can be a noble thing. In the hands of an honorable lawyer, politician or advertiser persuasive techniques can be entirely appropriate. Paul's difficulty was not that these principles were inherently immoral but that they *depended upon an essentially human dynamic*. They inserted the human agent into the process in an inappro-priate way, displacing the work of the Holy Spirit and generat-ing false, merely human results.

Conclusion

This, then, is the issue which I believe lies at the heart of much of the criticism of the Church Growth Movement. In one way or another, despite your obvious and heartfelt commitment to Christ and his Church, your critics perceive you to have committed a fundamental error of judgment. Like the Corinthians, you are seen to have unwittingly embraced the Persuader's Stance in ministry, without realizing that such a *modus operandi* is out of step with your own theology.

What can you do to blunt this criticism? Perhaps you do not care to. Perhaps your embracing of the Persuader's Stance is not unwitting, but rather is a quite conscious one, and you remain unconvinced there is anything inappropriate about it. If so, then my efforts here will have been futile.

But if you do not approve of the Persuader's Stance as a basis for your ministry, then you will have to be much more careful in how you talk about some of the methodological issues. Prove your critics wrong by repudiating with Paul the persuader's role. Show yourselves to be obedience-driven, not audience- or results-driven. By all means make plans and focus on goals, but resist stating your goals in terms of the *results* you want to achieve. Instead, state your goals in terms of *what God has called you to be and do*, and then state your plans in terms of how *you intend to be that and do that*, leaving the results up to the Lord. If you were to take this simple step, you would be able to keep your efforts properly focused and much of the criticism of the Church Growth Movement would simply fade away, leaving the good that you do to speak for itself.

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Thought. His most recent book, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation: I Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric,*" was published in 1993 by Cambridge University Press; the following year it received the Book of the Year Award from the Religious Speech Communications Association.