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Reformation & REVIVAL

*T*he church is not a yachting club but a fleet of fishing boats.

—ANONYMOUS

*P*rayer meetings are the throbbing machinery of the church.

—CHARLES H. SPURGEON

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHURCH GROWTH MOVEMENT*

Duane Litfin

*F*rom its inception I have watched the Church Growth Movement rather closely. While I have made no formal effort to keep up with the developments within this movement in recent years, I have sought to stay abreast of the literature it produces. It does matter to me very much what this group says and does.

Why? Because the focus of the Church Growth Movement is on the church, an institution which is near to my heart and upon which this movement exerts a significant, and at times enormous, influence. It can be said of this movement that what it does matters if for no other reason than it has made a real difference in the contemporary American church. Thus this movement has my attention as a Christian leader.

But more specifically, the principles which undergird this movement, and those which continue to tangle with its 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 began wrestling with these issues in an intellectual way while I was still in seminary. Later, while pursuing a

doctorate in the field of communications, and then still later while serving as a seminary professor, and even later still while pursuing a second doctorate in New Testament studies, I reflected upon this movement and its central theses. My training in communication theory, combined with my biblical/theological orientation, prompted me to approach the issues from several sides, and this 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 a book , *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation*,[1] published a few years ago.

My research is in that seminal passage in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapters 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.

In addition, this intellectual and theoretical work has been fleshed out in practice during the decade I spent pastoring two churches, one a small rural church, the other a large suburban one. In these two churches I found a cru-

cible 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, therefore, not an overstatement to say that in one way or another the issues which lie at the heart of this debate between the church growth advocates and its critics are the very issues which have occupied my entire adult life. The criticisms I offer may be "old hat" to church growth advocates, but perhaps I can shed useful light upon the theological concerns which undergird them.

THE RESEARCH

As one who has been engaged in biblical scholarship I am concerned, first, to bring the results of my own work to bear upon the questions. Then, and only then, will I turn to the implications of criticisms of the Church Growth Movement.

My research is in that seminal passage in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapters 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 multifaceted, 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 Corinthians 11:6, only a "layman" when it came to public speaking.

It is important to see that the difficulty for the Corinthi-

ans 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.

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.

What we discover in 1 Corinthians 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 in the soil of his theology and argues that the Corinthians should do the same.

What lies behind 1 Corinthians 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?

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 mea-

sure 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 Speaker's 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   A   Dependent   Independent
Persuader Given   Variable   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 were designed to teach.

PAUL'S CONTRAST

But now, contrast this persuader's stance with the argument of Paul in 1 Corinthians 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*: "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (2:2). And the results? 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,

> [B]ut God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God (1 Cor. 1:27–29).

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 "would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5).

Now one might be tempted at this point to raise an objection, citing 2 Corinthians 5:11 where Paul says, "Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we 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 nontechnical 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, marturer, euangelizesthai*), language which plays no part in the rhetorical literature because it describes non-rhetorical behavior. Second Corinthians 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 antirhetorical concerns of 1 Corinthians 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 Corinthians 5:11 constitutes no exception.

Thus for Paul the *grand equation* looks like this:

The Audience + The Speaker's Efforts → *The Desired Results*

The Persuader	A Given	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
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.

We should note that the apostle is working here with a principle that has much wider application than to preaching alone, 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" (1 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 the 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. They 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 criticism still persists. Why? It is my view that, without necessarily having thought through all of the above, and certainly without couching their criticism in these terms, critics intuitively perceive the Church Growth Movement to have lost sight of the contrast which so alarmed Paul. They perceive church

growth advocates often to be operating out of the very persuader's stance Paul disavowed.

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.

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, "I have

become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Paul is speaking here of adapting to one's audience for 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. I could have walked 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. I could have drawn this material from a variety of sources but have limited myself to a few passages from some well-known and representative figures.

Here is a passage from a section titled "Fierce Pragmatism" in Professor Peter Wagner's book, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate*:

> 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.[2]

Then 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 concern 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."[3]

Later, in a section titled "Planning Strategy for Results," 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 accom-

plishing 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.[4]

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?

Let's see if I have this right, then: Church growth advocates are fiercely pragmatic, a term which they define as being deeply concerned with practical consequences or results. They want methods that "work," that is, that achieve the desired results. If their efforts do not achieve the desired results, the only possible explanation must be that there is something wrong with their methods. Therefore these are to be discarded in favor of strategies that do achieve the desired results. To be sure, they do not want to use immoral methods, but that is the only criteria they need worry about—everything else is methodological fair

game. In the end, they have no commitment to any particular method or strategy *per se*, and no concern beyond the possibility of something being immoral. In their fierce pragmatism they evaluate strategies only on the basis of their ability to generate results.

Have I overstated Wagner's views? Apparently not. In his book, *Strategies for Church Growth*, Wagner addresses my point directly. He distinguishes between the three "Ps" of evangelizing: (1) Presence evangelism, (2) Proclamation evangelism, and (3) Persuasion evangelism.

The approach Wagner calls proclamation evangelism is essentially what Paul identifies as the approach required by his theology. But it is also this approach that 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 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."[5] To be sure, 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 Christian."[6] Yet 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],"[7] i.e., the goal-oriented clauses that build the focus on the results into the very fabric of evangelism.

A RESPONSE

If this is the stuff of the Church Growth Movement, is it any wonder that critics perceive church growth advocates to be operating out of the persuader's stance which so alarmed Paul? 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 critics think not. They find the 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 in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and 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 theo-

logically that we cannot even *conceive* of such criteria playing a role in our methodological decisions? If Paul 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. He said, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void" (1 Cor. 1:17). Later 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 (1 Cor. 2:5). 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?

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 reservation. 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.

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 Move-

ment seems to harbor no such reservation. 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. George Barna, one of church growth's most commonly quoted sources, states:

> 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.[8]

What are the basic principles of marketing theory from which Barna draws the insights for building Christ's church?

> To successfully market your product, you have to identify its prospective market. The key to market identification . . . is to be as specific as possible in selecting the audience to whom you will market the product. By matching 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 interest in your product.[9]

(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 Barna. Without effective promotion, your product does not stand a chance of succeeding, because your target audience 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 prod-

uct is available, worthy, a good value, and the way you explain how to acquire it.[10]

"Marketing, then," says Barna, "is a systematic series of active responses to existing conditions that is geared toward reaching specific goals." 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."[11]

These emphases are as old as the ancient Greeks. They are little more than echoes in our modern world of the very principles Paul repudiated as a basis for his approach to ministry. 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 inappropriate way, displacing the work of the Holy Spirit and generating 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 advocates. In one way or another, despite their obvious and heartfelt commitment to Christ and His church, critics perceive them to have committed a fundamental error of judgment. Like the Corinthians, they are seen to have unwittingly embraced the persuader's stance in ministry, without realizing that such a *modus operandi* is out of step with sound theology.

What can be done to blunt this criticism? Make plans and focus on goals, but resist stating goals in terms of the *results* desired. Instead, state goals in terms of *what God has*

called us to be and to do, and then state plans in terms of *how we intend to be that and do that,* leaving the results up to the Lord. If one were to take this simple step, he would be able to keep his efforts properly focused.

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Notes

1. Duane Litfin, *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

2. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 71.

3. Ibid., 71.

4. Peter Wagner, *Strategies for Church Growth* (Ventura, California: Regal, 1987), 74.

5. Ibid., 122.

6. Ibid., 127.

7. Ibid., 130.

8. George Barna, *Marketing the Church* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1988), 40.

9. Ibid., 42.

10. Ibid., 43.

11. Ibid., 44.

12. Ibid., 45.