

Rainer, Thom S. *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993. 349 pp. \$19.99.

The church-growth movement has taken its share of criticism from evangelical circles, but it can be thankful for defenders like Thom Rainer. In expounding the history and theology of the church-growth movement, Rainer has, for all practical purposes, written a polemic for it. "In the pages that follow," he writes, "I hope to 'clear the air,'" (19) which shows the apologetic nature of his work. As a practitioner of church-growth principles (his own church, Green Valley Baptist, has grown to over 1,700), Rainer writes from a practical and pastoral point of view.

The book is divided into three sections: I. "The History of the Church Growth Movement"; II. "A Theology of Church Growth"; III. "Principles of Church Growth." In the first section, on the history of the movement, Rainer spends what appears to be a disproportionate amount of time on the life of Donald McGavran, its founder. Perhaps this was necessary because of the large part McGavran played in the development of the movement. In any event, Rainer traces the history well. The second section was the weakest one. It was certainly comprehensive, but it read like a systematic theology, leaving the impression that the doctrine of spiritual gifts occupies a relatively minor place in church-growth theology. My experience with the church-growth movement suggests that the topic of spiritual gifts is pivotal, not peripheral, to the theology of the church-growth movement. Rainer could have devoted more space to investigating and explaining the theology of spiritual gifts. In his third section, he does an excellent job of harmonizing and crystallizing the principles of the church-growth movement.

Rainer's happy combination of simple language, short chapters, and concision makes a very readable church-growth textbook. While Rainer is clearly a church-growth advocate, his book is a relatively objective and much-needed reference work on this movement that has had such a profound impact on modern Christianity. Not only teachers of applied theology, but pastors as well, should own and read this book.

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Roozen, David A., and C. Kirk Hadaway, eds. *Church and Denominational Growth: What Does (and Does Not) Cause Growth or Decline*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993. 400 pp. \$21.95.

More often than not, research-data reports are about as exciting as a night spent reading the Yellow Pages. I found this book a refreshing exception. The authors infuse life into statistical studies. They take the scholar's tools and apply them to practical purposes. Intuitive insight brightens the chapters. Educated prognostications raise concern and hope.

Lyle Schaller's "hunches" on why churches grow are the hypothesis the book sets about to test (49). Research verifies that his hunches are on the right