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Review

Tengey, Samuel, *Obstetrics of Church Growth: Strategies, Systems & Resources for Church Growth*. GSR Media, Accra, 2019, ISBN: 9789988295875

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In his book *Obstetrics of Church Growth: Strategies, Systems & Resources for Church Growth*, Dr Samuel Tengey addresses key challenges in church growth, and provides strategies, systems, and resources for sustainability. Tengey is a prolific writer and consultant, who focuses mainly on resources to enhance the ministry and leadership of the church. He argues that, from a biblical viewpoint, the church is female, hence, it has the capacity to be pregnant, to give birth, and to nurture the growth of the baby. *Obstetrics of Church Growth* is about all that needs to be done for the church to ensure “its continued health, fertility, productivity, sustained reproductive capacity, and self-sustenance” (p xiv). The book is divided into three parts: re-evaluating the church growth discourse, capacity building, and church growth resources for leaders.

Tengey seeks to answer the question of whether numerical growth aligns with God’s will. He identifies two main schools of thought: one that prioritises spiritual growth over numerical growth, and the other that focuses solely on numerical growth. Tengey, however, proposes a third school of thought: *Qualito-quantitative* growth, which is a combination of both qualitative (spiritual) and quantitative (numerical) church growth. He argues that the church’s need for both qualitative and quantitative growth is modelled in Jesus’ patience and care when reaching out to the masses. Drawing from biblical stories of Moses and Jethro, Peter and his bumper fish harvest at Jesus’s word, and disputes in the early church, Tengey emphasises that no matter the level of spirituality in the church, numerical growth inevitably

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brings difficulties that must be dealt with tactfully and professionally with the right resources, training, and structures in place. He warns against clinging to outdated and informal structures, emphasising the need for church leadership to possess organisational and managerial skills, which he extensively addresses in his book *Critical Issues in Contemporary Church*.

Exploring the dimensions of spirituality and spiritual growth from theological perspectives, Tengey introduces *Spiritometrics*, a framework for measuring spiritual growth with indicators: behavioural metrics, character metrics, charismatic metrics, and, intimacy with God. These metrics focus on personal intimacy with God, discernment to the leading of the Holy Spirit, personal character in and outside of Christian communities, and relationships both in the church and the society at large. Though spirituality is sometimes difficult to measure, Tengey's indicators will enhance assessments of church activities and growth. Yet it would be beneficial if Tengey clarified the hierarchy of these dimensions. For example, he should have put intimacy with God first, as it produces the other fruits. That is the lesson of Jesus' story of the vine and branches in John 15. In this current digital age, fasting from devices and social media to enhance our spiritual focus should also be captured in Tengey's framework.

The book provides resources on capacity building for church growth, emphasising the urgency of the gospel and evangelism as the heartbeat of God, calling for a commitment to the Great Commission. It is worrying that most preachers seem to have left the actual message of remission of sin and repentance to focus on signs and wonders. Tengey writes about reaching and evangelising 'pagans'. The term 'pagan' is problematic: it is too restrictive. It does not include all people groups who need to be reached. A broader term like 'unbelievers' or non-Christians would be more inclusive. Since major religions are not usually categorised under paganism, one wonders where a religion like Islam would be positioned. In the theological context, a category for 'other religions' would be more appropriate. In providing practical strategies for outreach, prayer is notably missing from Tengey's lists, despite the crucial need for intercessory prayers for those we seek to evangelise. Tengey does, however, mention prayer in other sections.

Tengey further outlines methods of presenting the gospel, discipleship, and how to handle those who fail to accept Christ, highlighting the need for new converts to be assured of their salvation, understand who they are in Christ, and grow in their new faith. The acronym GROWTH represents the values and expectations of believers: Go to God daily in prayer; Read the Bible daily; Obey God in all things; Witness to Christ through life and words; Trust in God entirely; and Have the Holy Spirit dwell in you for daily victory. The book concludes with a proposed agenda for church growth and with strategies for church growth and discipleship. Tengey highlights the importance of developing believers as a foundation for church growth. His table that categorises community needs and tailor-make programs to attract non-believers merits attention.

While I find Tengey's book resourceful, a key omission is the relevance of culture in missions, especially in Africa and other parts of the world where traditional belief systems continue to shape daily life. Consideration of culture would lead Tengey to consider the relevance of contextualisation and inculturation, where the gospel is preached in a manner that critically addresses cultural issues. How do Christians navigate certain rituals and ceremonies that are embedded in their traditions and culture? Furthermore, understanding the dominant religion in a community is crucial to evangelism, but this is not captured as part of Tengey's strategies for growth, although it is mentioned elsewhere.

In the current digital era, there is also a dire need to consider relevant resources in the digital space, such as websites, social media platforms, software, hardware, and IT personnel, as relevant resources for church growth, but about these resources, Tengey is silent. He does not address disability, which reiterates the fact that disability is too-often an afterthought in the church. Additionally, Tengey's use of 'man' reflects a traditional patriarchal approach; adopting a more gender-inclusive term like 'humankind' would improve his text. Finally, the volume's structural consistency could be enhanced as some chapters have introductions and conclusions while others do not.

Despite these criticisms, Tengey's book *Obstetrics of Church Growth: Strategies, Systems & Resources for Church Growth* is a priceless asset, chiefly

for the African Church, which serves as its primary audience. The book portrays the church as a woman who needs care and nurturing to ensure both qualitative and quantitative growth. With the blend of academic and ministry insights, the book has the potential to serve as a textbook for seminaries, Bible colleges, and universities, and an invaluable resource for the church as a whole and its ministers.