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## Reply by John Ellas and Flavil Yeakley to David Wetzler's Response

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### Reply by Ellas and Yeakley

The Publisher's Response by David Wetzler does not provide any evidence that would cause us to change our original evaluation of *Natural Church Development* by Christian Schwarz. The burden of proof still rests with those who make a claim. We believe that it is legitimate for reviewers to base their evaluation of a book on what is in the book. We should not have to depend on what might be found in another language on a web-site or wait for a translation that might be available at the next ASCG meeting.

There is a responsible approach to reporting scientific evidence. The claims are being made now and the evidence to support those claims should be available somewhere along with the claims. A popular presentation for non-technical readers does not remove responsibility. In our opinion, Wetzler's response does not really address the specific points of criticism regarding the pseudo-scientific nature of this book.

We do not believe that we have done a disservice to the church when we insist that claims about church growth that are based on empirical data must conform to the most rigorous scientific standards. The cause of Christ demands the best that we are capable of offering.

If the evidence is eventually provided in support of these claims, we will be pleased to accept the claims as being true. However, even if that happens, we believe that we were correct to point out that the claims were presented without the necessary evidence and that is not the way scientific research is done.

One of the weaknesses of the Church Growth Movement (as Yeakley pointed out in his Presidential Address) has been the tendency to accept claims without a careful and critical examina-

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tion of the evidence. We should hold one another to a higher standard.