



FOREWORD BY DARRELL L. GUDER

Alan Hirsch
Tim Catchim

With Contributions by MIKE BREEN

the permanent revolution

Apostolic
Imagination
and Practice
for the 21st
Century
Church

A Leadership  Network Publication

More Praise for The Permanent Revolution

“*The Permanent Revolution* is an example of the kind of theological work that is urgently needed to ‘equip the saints for the work of ministry’ apostolically, prophetically, evangelistically, pastorally, and instructively.”

—From the Foreword by Darrell Guder, *Winters Luce*
Professor of Missional and Ecumenical Theology

“*The Permanent Revolution* by Hirsch and Catchim is a timely reminder that Jesus founded a dynamic missionary movement. This is a well-researched and thoroughly engaging study of the dynamic that Jesus planted at the heart of the church and now calls us to rediscover.”

—Steve Addison, Australian director, Church Resource Ministries;
author of *Movements That the Change the World*

“C. S. Lewis believed the ultimate compliment you could give a book was to reread it. As I read *The Permanent Revolution* for the first time, already I was anticipating the opportunity to reread it! How often does that happen? I knew it would be one of those few books that would become a reference point for my entire life and ministry from then forward. Outside the New Testament, in this one man’s humble opinion, *The Permanent Revolution* is the seminal work on apostolic ministry.”

—Rob Wegner, pastor, Life Mission Granger Community Church;
lead catalyst, EnterMission; experience director,
Future Travelers; author, *Missional Moves*

“A very PROVOCATIVE and INFORMATIVE book! Readers are invited to give careful consideration of reclaiming the Ephesians 4:11 gifting of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers (APEST) as the foundational framework for exercising and structuring Christian leadership. It is an argument worth serious consideration given the problems associated with the clergy/laity dichotomy that continues to exist in so many of our churches today.”

—Craig Van Gelder, professor of congregational mission, Luther Seminary

“Jesus has given the church everything it needs to get the job done.” This statement reverberates throughout this book. There is no greater job in the world, and belief in this statement with action reflecting it will no doubt reform the western church. This truly is the capstone to all of Hirsch’s work. Every church leader must consider this Permanent Revolution as Jesus intended.”

—Tammy Dunahoo, vice president of U.S. operations/general supervisor, The Foursquare Church

“Clearly, practically, and with much love for the church, Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim redress the imbalance brought about by the exiling of the apostle, prophet, and evangelist from the leadership of the local church. There is a challenge here that must be listened to. *The Permanent Revolution* is a must-read for every leader who seeks to recover the apostolic heartbeat that drives the church into God’s mission.”

—David Fitch, B. R. Lindner Chair of Evangelical Theology, Northern Seminary; author, *The End of Evangelicalism?*

“Hirsch and Catchim are architects of the future. Their goal is not to dismantle today’s church, but to help re-engineer its future by realigning around the five-fold gifts. Every other solution currently being offered is simply a façade. Cover to cover this is a truly worthy read.”

—Linda Bergquist, church strategist; coauthor *Church Turned Inside Out: A Guide for Designers, Refiners, and Re-Aligners*

“Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim have written a book that all church leaders should read as we consider the church’s mission and movement into the twenty-first century. There is a growing, and often confusing, dialogue concerning apostolic ministry in the church, and *The Permanent Revolution* offers both clarity and a compelling argument. If you have a heart for ‘sent’ ministry, read this book.”

—Ed Stetzer, president, Lifeway Research

“The crisis of the Western church cannot be adequately addressed merely by working harder or smarter. We need a fresh paradigm for the church in order to frame and direct our efforts. Hirsch and Catchim contend that Ephesians 4:1–16 provides just such a “back to the future” paradigm.

For too long the church has depended almost exclusively on the gifts of pastor and teacher, but now we must cultivate the full range of Christ's gifts to the body. The greatest need for our day, the authors believe, is to reactivate apostolic giftedness. At stake is the success of the missional movement and the renewal of the evangelical church. This is an important book that needs to be widely read and broadly debated. But watch your toes . . . they will be stepped on!"

—David G. Dunbar, president, Biblical Theological Seminary

"There is desperate need for what Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim have designed this book to be: ' . . . a single, comprehensive reference text promoting the ongoing role of the apostolic person in the life of the church.' It is a long overdue conversation of critical importance. The stakes are high, particularly in the West. A new generation of apostolic leaders is essential if the Church is to ever regain the initiative that we have lost by ignoring this essential biblical function."

—Sam Metcalf, president, Church Resource Ministries

"An exhaustive exploration of the dynamics of apostolic ministry, interweaving biblical, historical, and contemporary material, presenting a persuasive argument for the recovery, recognition, and release of this neglected ministry as a crucial component in the emergence of missional churches. The Christian movement in post-Christendom needs to reappropriate the ministries of apostles, prophets, and evangelists alongside pastors and teachers. This book offers a wealth of resources to help us."

—Stuart Murray, author, *Post-Christendom*
and *The Naked Anabaptist*

"In matters of mission—especially in the West—there are no simple solutions and no magic bullets. There are some key starting points and the debate about leadership is just such a point. Hirsch and Catchim have opened up the difficult issue of leadership, imagination, and gifting with no holds barred. This is a text that will inform the controversy around this issue for some time to come. If you care about leadership and mission you will want to grapple with this book."

—Martin Robinson, president, Springdale College;
National Director of Together in Mission

“This book, written by one of the foremost missional thinkers of our day, addresses what I believe to be *the* most necessary and neglected of subjects in the New Testament—the equipping gifts of Ephesians 4:11. Once again Alan Hirsch (now with the help of Tim Catchim) has opened the Pandora’s box of missional inquiry so the rest of us can try and get our minds around a subject of wide consequence that will not likely settle back down. This book will be the first of its kind, but I guarantee not the last.”

—Neil Cole, founder, Church Multiplication Associates; author, *Organic Church*, *Organic Leadership*, *Search & Rescue*, *Church 3.0*, and *Journeys to Significance*

“In *The Permanent Revolution* Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim gift us with a weighty tome that befits the epic adventure unfolding in these days of the collapse of Christendom. Church leaders are increasingly aware that the big shift for us is to move from managing an institution to leading a movement. Our learning curve is steep. We need help in reimagining and redesigning our leadership beliefs and practices. Nothing less than reconnecting with our apostolic roots will do. This volume helps us do exactly that.”

—Reggie McNeal, author, *The Present Future*, *Missional Renaissance*, and *Missional Communities*



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Apostolic Imagination and Practice
for the 21st Century Church

ALAN HIRSCH AND TIM CATCHIM

FOREWORD BY

DARRELL L. GUDER

WITH

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MIKE BREEN

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We thank you, our wonderful Lord Jesus. We humbly offer these words to you; we trust that you might sanctify them, cleanse them of sinful motivations, and witness the truth and/or falsity of what is being said, so that you might ultimately use them in the extension of your purposes in our lives and through your people.

To Jesus, Paul, Peter, St. Patrick, John Wesley, and the myriad apostles who have gone before us and trailblazed the ground on which all of us stand. We humbly and gratefully stand on your shoulders.

To Mike Breen, Neil Cole, Martin Robinson, Mike Frost, Felicity and Tony Dale, Tim Keller, Steve Addison, Dick Scoggins, Bob Roberts Jr., Dave Ferguson, Reggie McNeal, Chris Wienand, Milton Oliver, Rob Wegner, Caesar Kalinowski, Hugh Halter, Jeff Vanderstelt, and the many other contemporary practitioners who ably demonstrate what apostolic ministry is all about. What an honor it has been to be a part of your worlds.

To the seminal apostolic thinkers who have kept alive the tradition of apostolicity, especially Darrell Guder, and the late Leslie Newbigin and David Bosch.

Brave souls all.

This one is for you!

—Alan

To my wife, Tiffany, who was a constant source of encouragement during the process of carving out time to press forward through the challenges of writing. To my dear friend David Noles who provided spiritual counsel, and to Jason Gayton who provided key reflections at various stages of writing. To the 3DM crew who have been a beacon of light in the landscape of discipleship and mission. And to our local Christian community, Ikon, which provided the context, support, and patience for the implementation and refinement of this material.

—Tim

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FOREWORD

ONE OF THE MOST intriguing pieces of evidence that Western Christendom is over, or is rapidly disintegrating, is the emergence of a broad spectrum of initiatives to plant untraditional, postdenominational congregations in the Western cultures once self-defined as Christian. These initiatives are enormously diverse, although they all share a commitment to experiment with forms and styles of community life that are clearly not beholden to the received traditions of the Western churches. In terms of the practices and patterns of their gathered life, they are decidedly countercultural. Although no defined theological consensus guides them or serves as their common ground, many of these initiatives are generating a biblical and theological engagement that is challenging and encouraging. *Convergence* may be too strong a term for what is happening, but there is clearly a mutually constructive theological conversation emerging among theologians like Alan Hirsch, Michael Frost, Tim Catchim, and the participants in the missional church conversation. This book is an important resource for that discussion and a motor to advance it further.

The term *missional* came into broad use after a small group of missiologists published *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* in 1998.¹ The term immediately became a cliché that today means everything or nothing. Its original sense, focusing on the essential purpose and character of the church as the called and sent instrument of God's mission in the world, has been recognized and enriched by the work of such pioneer planters of post-Christendom Western indigenous churches (my term) as the authors of this book. Alan Hirsch neatly summarized the thrust of the missional church proposal when he wrote in his *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*:

A missional church is a church that defines itself, and organizes its life around its real purpose as an agent of God's mission to the

world. In other words, the church's true and authentic organizing principle is mission. Therefore when the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus.²

In *The Permanent Revolution*, Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim propose a revolutionary missional ecclesiology shaped by the New Testament account of the apostolic missionary strategy. From the outset, the Christian mission focused on the calling and forming of communities that would continue the witness to the person and work of Jesus Christ that had brought them into being. To reclaim that strategy, Hirsch and Catchim argue that the functions of Word ministry in Ephesians 4:11ff—apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching—are essential for the formation of authentic and faithful witnessing congregations. This emphasis is linked with a strong critique of Western Christendom's reduction of these essential functions to the last two: pastoral (or shepherd) and teaching. The problem of clericalism that results from that reduction is certainly one of the major and most daunting challenges that the Western Christian movement faces as it moves out of the protections of established Christendom. Especially crucial for the missional ecclesiology today is the recovery of the apostolic function in the church. It is this ministry that ensures that the church is always centered on its calling to be the agent and instrument of God's mission and that everything it is and does relates to and demonstrates that calling. I share this conviction and have argued that the Nicene marks of the church need to be interpreted in the reverse order—apostolic, catholic, holy, and one—so that apostolicity defines every aspect of the life and action of the church. Only when apostolicity functions in that way can God's mission be served obediently.

In the missional church discussion, this conviction has been linked with the critique of Western ecclesiologies that replace the central and decisive theme of mission with various theologies of institutional maintenance. This book's focus on apostolicity clearly converges with this insistence that mission defines the church, and the authors' exposition of the practice of apostolicity broadens and deepens the discussion in truly generative ways.

Hirsch and Catchim persuasively argue their proposal of a revolutionary ecclesiology from many perspectives, exegetical and theological

as well as organizational and sociological. To flesh out the practice of apostolicity, they turn to diverse insights from the world of organizational behavior and leadership in Western cultures. This approach can be understood as an exercise in contextualization. It expounds the way in which apostolic ministry ought to work in Western cultures by calling on the research and analysis of corporate organizational behavior, which constantly generates new theories and interpretations. This leads to their “interesting conclusion that underscores the purpose of this book: it seems that the degree to which a system is willing to acknowledge and legitimize apostolic ministry is directly proportional to the ability to be entrepreneurial and have higher levels of entrepreneurial intensity.”³ This claim will undoubtedly trigger a range of responses from critical to laudatory.

That may well be one of the primary merits of the bold proposal of this missional ecclesiology: it will generate questions that need to be debated passionately and thoroughly. And it should. The lasting value of this theological proposal will be measured by the quality of the debate that it evokes. It speaks to a number of issues that have dogged the missional church process since it started—for example:

- The character and role of leadership in the missional church
- How Jesus’s own formation of the disciples (described in the four gospels) and the apostles’ formation of their churches (continued in the epistles) define our formation today
- The dialectical tension between the church’s dependence on the empowering work of the Holy Spirit and the intentional actions of Christians in obedience to the biblical mandate
- The appropriate reception of the Christendom legacy with both critique and gratitude
- The faithful translation of the gospel and the formation of witnessing communities in diverse cultures, without being assimilated into those cultures and becoming ultimately their captives

It is significant that the theological process represented by this book (and its predecessors) is shaped by the hard challenges of secularized post-Christian cultures such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It is just as significant that some of the most intriguing examples of post-Christendom Western indigenous churches have emerged in the midst of the most advanced, even hostile, secularization. Health-giving theology should emerge from the crucible of such faithful,

radically obedient mission. *The Permanent Revolution* is an example of the kind of theological work that is urgently needed to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Ephesians 4:12) apostolically, prophetically, evangelistically, pastorally, and instructively.

Darrell L. Guder
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and Ecumenical Theology
Princeton Theological Seminary

PREFACE: A BRIEFING FOR THE JOURNEY

THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, and well before mass publishing, Ecclesiastes wryly commented that of the making of books, there is no end (Ecclesiastes 12:12). We cannot imagine what he'd say today. So what are we doing writing *one more book*?

Why We Wrote This Book

Given the fact that so little of substance has been written on the subject of Ephesians 4 (which speaks of the roles of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers—APEST) in general, and the apostolic ministry and person in particular, the sin in this case actually lies in the deficiency of thinking and reflection in these matters, not in their excess. This is a big statement, but we hope to show that it is entirely justifiable. Here are some of our guiding objectives and reasons.

To Change Some Minds and Strengthen Others

First, in relation to those unaware, the not yet convinced, or even those who harbor antipathy to the idea of the fivefold ministry in general and the apostolic in particular, our aim is nothing less than to change minds about the importance of these for the church today. We cannot shake the conviction that nothing less than the future viability of the Western church is involved in the revitalization of its ministry along more biblical lines. And so if we fail to somehow shift any readers' paradigm, even a little, then we consider that we will have failed at least in part. This is no small task: we fully recognize that we are going against the inherited grain of thinking in this matter. Nonetheless, we think that the Western church has been wrong on this, and it is high time for a thorough reassessment, along with some significant change, in this regard.

Second, for those who are already convinced of the need for a broader, apostolically focused ministry in the church—either because they come

from traditions where the typology of Ephesians 4 is accepted or have become more aware of the power of APEST because of their immersion in missional thinking and practice—we hope to strengthen your case, calibrate your thinking and practice, correct possible misperceptions, and equip you with a deeper and significantly sturdier justification of these particular aspects of the biblical ministry than has been given to date. Our hope is that this work will encourage and equip others in their ministry and help them better fulfill their calling as part of God’s people in his kingdom.

To Rectify the Poverty of Thinking in Relation to Ephesians 4 and Apostolic Ministry

From our research, it appears that most standard thinking actually delegitimizes the apostolic role by either replacing it with the canon of scripture (as in Protestantism) or by transferring apostolicity to the bishops and the institution of the church itself (as in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy). There seems to be no space between biblicism and institutionalism for any contemporary activation of the apostolic role. This seems utterly strange to us given the central role that apostolic ministry plays in the New Testament itself, as well as in every movement that has achieved significant missionary impact throughout history.

And although there are some good academic studies exploring the role of the original apostles in the New Testament church and in the first three centuries, most of these are scholarly and inaccessible to the average reader and have little to say to the concerns of contemporary apostolic mission and ministry.¹ In fact, when they do comment on the possibility of ongoing ministry, they tend to take the standard line that apostles (as well as prophets and, to a lesser degree, evangelists) have not featured in the church’s ministry mix since Constantine. As we shall see, this is not so.

The other school of thought and reflection on Ephesians 4 and the apostolic ministry tends to have a distinctly charismatic, pragmatist, and fundamentalist perspective. It also is loaded with the type of dominion theology that effectively equates the apostolic with a kind of superpastor—the hotshot CEO type in the organization. And while most quote the Bible a fair bit, they tend to lack any theological depth and end up being one-dimensional in approach and perspective. In many ways, these approaches provide the easy straw man that academics and clergy find all too easy to reject. At best, these writings are highly unlikely to convince the unconvinced, and at worst, they hinder the cause in the broader church.

Neither of these approaches—the scholarly New Testament studies theorists and the one-dimensional charismaniacs—is much help as we seek to rediscover our missional calling and purpose. And as far as we are aware, there is at this time no single, comprehensive reference text available promoting the ongoing role of the apostolic person in the ongoing life of the church. Consider this book at least the beginnings of a much-needed remedy.

To Change the Frameworks

As you will soon discover, *The Permanent Revolution* is mainly a work of theological (re)imagination and (re)construction. We have drawn deeply from biblical studies, theology, organizational theory, leadership studies, and the key social sciences to substantiate our claims about Ephesians 4 and the ongoing legitimacy of the apostolic role. All of this points to our fundamental claim: that insofar that it depends on human agency, the church's capacity to embody and extend the mission and purposes of Jesus in the world depends largely on a full-intention to provide robust theoretical foundations with which to relegitimize and restructure the ministry of the church as fivefold and to reembrace the revitalizing, intrinsically missional role of the apostolic person.

We are in fact attempting to rescript the very codes that shape our view of ministry—nothing less than a shift in our thinking. We have intentionally sought to construct a substantive text, not only because there is precious little positive material on the subject, but also because the holism of Ephesians 4:11 has effectively been discarded, marginalized, or deliberately ejected almost entirely from our thinking and practice.

Reframing paradigms is difficult work. It goes against the grain of acquired thinking and exposes many blind spots, and it is likely to meet with resistance from those deeply invested in the prevailing paradigm. Nonetheless, we feel constrained to submit this for reflection in the hope the Spirit will awaken ancient energies largely dormant within the Western church.

To make the truth of *The Permanent Revolution* unavoidable, we have deliberately used an interdisciplinary recipe of theology, sociology, leadership studies, psychology, and the organizational sciences because we believe that they all point us in the direction originally given in the New Testament itself. All truth is God's truth, and we believe that nowhere else is this more evident than in this area of New Testament ecclesiology. The church, rightly conceived as an organic movement, was well ahead of its time in relation to best thinking and best practices on organizations

and leadership. Everything in contemporary literature and research on these issues confirms the ingenious design built into the ecclesia that Jesus intended.

Our primary audience for this book remains the key leaders in the churches and other organizations that make up the heartland of biblical Christianity—from Conservative evangelical to Pentecostal, from missional to traditional, and anything in between. We are both evangelicals in the broad nonsectarian sense of the word.² Alan has roots within the Pentecostal tradition, has a Reformed theological training, and has worked with all the major evangelical churches for most of his time in ministry. Tim is a grassroots church planter with a restorationist heritage and training.

We both love, and are deeply committed to, the church, but some readers are going to be tempted to think of us as fervent anti-institutionalists. And although we offer a critique of institutionalism, we are not against structure and organization in any way. In fact, the reader will find a plethora of material that relates to organization and systems thinking laced throughout the book. And certainly we see ourselves as servants of God's people in all the forms in which they express themselves.

Furthermore, although we accept the role of tradition in guiding and sustaining the church in any age, we will admit that in our view, institutionalism and traditionalism almost invariably involve reliance on past formulas and thinking, tend to be reactionary, snuff out creative thinking and solutions, and are self-referential and bureaucratic. We ask questions in this book that go to the leadership paradigm, and when doing this, it is impossible to avoid the twin issues of traditionalism and institutionalism—both well represented in the Bible. From a prophetic concern with the corrupt and corruptible institutions of the king, judge, and priesthood; to Jesus's railing against the oppressive religious institutionalism of the scribes and pharisees of his day; to Paul's doctrine of the powers entrenched in human institutions and people: the Bible sustains a thorough and consistent critique of religious institutionalism. Without wanting to sound self-righteous, we really do feel that we are in good company here.

As uncomfortable as critical appraisals tend to make us feel, we do well to remind ourselves at this point that despite the towering effect that institutions have on us, they have to be seen for what they truly are: mere products of human activity. As human constructs, institutions cannot adequately reflect back to us our own intrinsic worth. Jesus's own rejection by the religious and political establishment of his day bears witness to the tendency of institutions to develop their own metrics and

categories for what should and should not be valued or deemed essential. It is in Jesus himself that we can find the higher authority—one that transcends the towering effect of the institutions—with which to speak the corrective word into our context.

*To Stimulate Apostolic Imagination,
Leading to Missional Action*

Because not much has been written on the subject of apostolic ministry and because it has not been a historic model, we did not have a lot of constructive material to work with. That is why in some parts of this book, we have had to exercise a fair bit of theological imagination mingled with ideas gleaned from the social sciences. We hope readers find our thinking stimulating, but we ask them to remember that at some points, we are engaging in educated guesswork and theological intuition and to give us some space to be playful. Engage these sections with an open mind, and do not assume we are being prescriptive. Rather, we are offering spiritual prods, or suggestive thought-experiments, aimed to stimulate thinking and action. Rest assured that we never make wild conjectures. Even our guesses are informed and weighted with a lot of reflection. And we will let you know when we are making intuitive leaps.

The book is intentionally loaded with challenging concepts and replete with fertile ideas that carry rich possibilities for new learning and action. We did not intend to produce a praxis-oriented work; we hope to leave that to a possible future workbook based on this book. Our aim is to empower the church as movement and not to simply add another book to a seminary curriculum and library. We hope it will help leaders become the leaders God intended them to be in the first place. Like any other good revolution, the aim is to liberate your minds as well as your vocations from the constraints currently imposed on them.³

Who Wrote What?

This book is a collaboration between the two of us. In addition, 3DM leader Mike Breen assisted in the construction of Part One, on Ephesians and APEST, contributing some key ideas and doing some editing and commenting. Mike is a long-term practitioner of Ephesians 4 ministry. He is a highly respected international leader, a genuinely seminal thinker and practitioner, and one of the most prolific Christian leaders to emerge from Great Britain in a decade or more. We are very grateful for Mike himself and what he represents to the missional movement of our day.

He is a genuine permanent revolutionary, and we are honored that he is willing to put his name on this material.

Most of the book is a work of our own collaboration. Tim has played the role of primary researcher and resident maven. He did his job all too well, because in order to get the book to a reasonable size and focus, we had to delete about half of what he researched and wrote. Alan's primary role has been to shape the material and direct the project and, of course, add his own writing along the way—his aim being to elaborate on previously written material as well as add new insights on the topic.

We write in the first person wherever it is appropriate and where personal biography is involved. But for the most part, we use the second person *we* and speak in common voice.

On issues of examples, we have certainly provided them where we could, but we have generally chosen to bolster the ideas with numerous figures. What we lack in stories we certainly make up for in illustrations. Partly this is a personality thing because we are conceptual thinkers and tend to think more in pictures and less in narrative, and partly it is because we believe that diagrams better convey the ideas we hope to communicate.

A Word to the Wise

It was the ancient philosopher Epictetus who stated that it is impossible for a man to learn what he thinks he already knows. And that could be true for all of us who think that we know what church and ministry is. Most of us have been raised in, trained in, and thoroughly coded by the prevailing paradigm.⁴ Therefore, initial responses to this material that come readily to mind generally arise directly out of the deep scripting we have assumed to be true. This is the very scripting that has led us inexorably to the decline of the church in the West.

Because of this, we ask that you allow yourself to reimagine ministry as we are presenting it, even if it does not square with the prevailing scripts and invites repentance and change. We suggest that you try to restrain any somewhat reflexive defenses for a while, so that you might look afresh at a core issue of ecclesiology. If we are right about this, changing the primary scripts will completely revolutionize the way we conceive of being and doing church in a very good way. To be able to learn anything new, we have to be willing to think differently about ourselves and approach ideas from a different angle, which will allow new possibilities to arise. Remember that Albert Einstein, the great paradigm buster, wisely said, "The only thing that interferes with my learning is my

education.” Please do not let your education interfere with your learning on this matter. Way too much is at stake.

Size Matters

This is an unusually large book because it explores a big and strategically critical issue. We fully realize that for various reasons, including issues of time and patience, weighty books might put off some readers. But we suggest that the importance of the subject and the critical situation of the church at this time require that we delve deep and do not shortchange the intellectual and spiritual engagement required to change the game now.

We encourage you to read this book carefully and, if you can, do this with others and discuss it as you go. If you are already convinced of the need for apostolic ministry in the church and are pressed for time, you can skip Chapter Six and the Appendix at the back of the book. That will reduce the text by about 15 percent.

A View from the Top

The only thing left to do in this Preface is to describe the logic and the flow of the book itself.

Part One, on Ephesians 4:1–16, provides the basis for a fuller understanding of biblical ministry, as well the context for an exploration of the apostolic ministry. This is where Mike Breen collaborates with us.

Part Two is about apostolic ministry. Chapter Five is a key chapter: it provides the basic definitions of apostolicity that we use throughout the book. Chapter Six suggests some largely unexplored, and we hope fruitful, ways in which to understand the nuances within the apostolic ministry itself. We contrast Pauline and Petrine apostolic ministry and their contributions to creating missional impact. And because of these distinctions, Chapter Seven looks beyond the purely pioneering function normally associated with the apostolic role to see how the apostolic ministry facilitates ongoing renewal in the life of the church.

Part Three focuses on apostolic leadership. Rather than ranging far and wide, we focus on leadership in relation to missional innovation and entrepreneurship. Elaborating on the pioneering functions, along with those of custodian, designer, and architect, we look at how apostolic leadership can provide new and missionally creative ways forward.

Part Four focuses on apostolic organization. Clearly, issues of how we structure and organize are critical to being translocal and movemental. Being ignorant about the issue of social structures generally hands

dynamic movements over to the human default of increasing institutionalism. This final part of the book examines the nature of organization as reframed through the lens of apostolic ministry and leadership, particularly that of being a movement. And then we look at essential characteristics of apostolic movements and how to restructure in a way that more consistently aligns with them.

The Appendix is in effect an essay that we feel is important enough to include in the book but not necessary to the flow of the book itself. We felt that the issues of how and why the apostles, prophets, and evangelists (the APE functions in APEST) were exiled warrant further understanding. They bring needed insights and provide clues to our own thinking in these matters.

We ask that you be patient with us as we seek to (re)construct a holistic understanding of an all-but-lost imagination. We address some of the more practical questions about organization in Part Four. And given that we do not have a rich heritage of thinking and acting on which to draw from, we beg readers' indulgence in using examples that are clear-cut illustrations of apostolic ministry. We love Patrick, John Wesley, William Booth, Aimee Semple McPherson, and others: they provide lights that we can all walk by, and so they become our primary models. This is not to say there are not countless others who express apostolic forms, only that they might lack the profile needed to substantiate this kind of work.

By emphasizing human agency and our responsibility to make the leadership decisions to shift the paradigm, it is not our intention to diminish the sovereignty of God in all affairs and that we live in and through his grace. The survival of the church is surely a testimony to the grace of God who has not forsaken us as much as we have forsaken him. It is sufficient to say that we submit this book to our readers in humble trust that the Holy Spirit will use it for the furtherance of the cause of our Lord Jesus in this broken world.

To God be the glory, and *Viva la revolución permanente!*

INTRODUCTION

THE CRISIS OF INFERTILITY AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

The illiterate of the future are not those that cannot read or write. They are those that cannot learn, unlearn, relearn.

Alvin Toffler

People in any organization are always attached to the obsolete—the things that should have worked but did not, the things that once were productive and no longer are.

Peter Drucker

He who cannot change the very fabric of his thought will never be able to change reality, and will never, therefore, make any progress.

Anwar el-Sadat

IN THE MOVIE *THE CHILDREN OF MEN*, there is a plague of infertility, and no one knows why. Diego Ricardo is the youngest person in the world: eighteen years, four months, twenty days, sixteen hours, and eight minutes old. He was the last human being to be born on earth, and since his birth, women everywhere have been unable to reproduce. When he suddenly dies, his demise is repeatedly broadcast and is viewed as a not-so-subtle reminder of the slowly creeping disaster that has undermined hope and created political disorder, social decay, radical doubt, and universal despair. The aging population is edging toward the end of the human race.

In the story, Great Britain is one of the only places in the world that has managed to maintain a limited sense of order, and people from everywhere have fled there, only to be rounded up as illegal refugees and transported to holding bins where they await deportation to the anarchy of Europe. Amid this chaos, Theo, a British citizen grown cynical and despairing in the surrounding hopelessness, is paid by a band of revolutionaries to escort Kee, a young woman, out of Britain and hand her over to an underground organization called the Human Project.

Theo soon discovers that his mission is much riskier than he had expected, and he faces, and courageously evades, all kinds of traps to guard her from danger. But Theo is not told why his charge is so controversial. Clearly she has become the focus of militant groups, and his association with her has made him a prime target for violent attacks. It is not until he gets halfway to their destination that he finds out exactly who this woman is and why she is so important: Kee is pregnant, and the revolutionaries want to use her as a tool, a symbol of hope, a powerful weapon in a high-stakes political game to incite a revolution that would overthrow the government.

Whatever sense of responsibility Theo felt toward his assignment in the beginning is now amplified as he realizes that the very future of humanity is in his custody. This is no ordinary assignment. He is to cross dangerous terrain, through uncharted territories, so that Kee can regenerate the human race. Theo is a custodian of life in a world of infertility.

The Children of Men provides a parabolic pointer to a similar fruitlessness in the church throughout the West. To explain it, some have said that the vinedresser is simply pruning his vine or that he is judging some supposed unfaithfulness on our part, and that it will pass and our fertility will return. However we may want to figure it, we have to acknowledge that after almost twenty centuries of Christianity in Western contexts, we have generally not seen the kind of transformation implied in the gospel. Neither have we often approximated the vibrancy of the gospel movements that somehow manage to structure their ecclesial life much closer to the kind of church that Jesus designed it to be in the first place: that of an apostolic people movement; the kind of dynamic, fluid, viral, ecclesiology we see in the pages of the New Testament and throughout history. The early church, various movements over the centuries, and the developing world now (especially India and China) have displayed this same vitality. These are all great expressions of apostolic movement.

Our situation today is not that dissimilar to the one described in *The Children of Men*. All of the statistical indicators show serious infertility in Western Christianity, and so we too are caught in a despairing spiral of trended numerical and spiritual decline in just about every context in the Western world.¹

A Permanent Revolution? Really?

In this situation, we are forced to ask ourselves what the church is all about. What are God's original purposes in and through his people? Is the gospel capable of renewing the world and transforming the hearts of all human beings? Did God really mean for the ecclesia to be the focal