



FOREWORD BY DARRELL L. GUDER

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With Contributions by MIKE BREEN

the permanent revolution

Apostolic
Imagination
and Practice
for the 21st
Century
Church

A Leadership  Network[®] Publication

CONTENTS

About the Jossey-Bass Leadership Network Series

Foreword

Preface: A Briefing for the Journey

Introduction: The Crisis of Infertility and What to Do About It

Part One: Ephesians 4:1-16: Frameworks for Ministry

Chapter 1: Activating the Theo-Genetic Codes of APEST Ministry

Almost a Silver Bullet

The Devil Made Me Do It

“Perfectly Designed”

A Missional Ministry for a Missional Church

The Order of Creation and the Order of Redemption

A Letter for Everyone

Language Matters

Getting into the Text (or, Allowing It to Get into Us)

Can We Mature with a Twofold Ministry?

To Each One of Us
The Ministry of Christ in and Through the
Body of Christ
Did We Miss Something?

Chapter 2: An Elegant Solution: *Distributed Intelligence in the Body* *of Christ*

Get Smart

Apostolic Intelligence: Custodian of the
DNA

Prophetic Intelligence: Guardian of
Faithfulness

Evangelistic Intelligence: Recruiting to the
Cause

Shepherd Intelligence: Creating Empathic
Community

Teacher Intelligence: Bringing Wisdom and
Understanding

The Genius of the Church

Chapter 3: Better Together: The *Synergy of Difference*

The Multifaceted Gospel

Prophetic Intelligence for Apostolic
Architecture

Ensuring Growth: Avoiding the Iron Law of
Involution

Culture Creators, Engagers, and Redeemers

The Spatial Profiles of APEST
Pioneers and Settlers
A Missional Dialectic

Chapter 4: Missional Ministry for a
Missional Church: A Church Where
Everyone Gets to Play

Between Differentiation and Integration
It's All in the Genes
Variety for Adaptivity
Embedding the Codes
Surfing the Edge of Chaos
The Importance of Apostolic Ministry

Part Two: Apostolic Ministry

Chapter 5: Custody of the Codes:
Mapping the Contours of Apostolic
Ministry

Little "a" and Big "A" Apostles?
Paul as Prototype
The Apostle and the Gospel
An Apostolic Job Description
Conclusion

Chapter 6: Come Back, Peter; Come
Back, Paul: The Relation Between
Nuance and Impact

Pauline and Petrine Apostolic Ministries
Pioneers, Miners, Networkers, and
Mobilizers
Functional Profiling

Chapter 7: Living from the Center: **Apostolic Ministry and the Renewal of** **Christianity**

Along the Life Cycle
APEST Leadership and Movement Ethos
A Journey to the Center of the Church
Home Is Where the Heart Is
The Mission Has a Church
Renewal with a Long Tail
Adventures in the Borderlands
Drawing Near to God, Taking It to the
Streets

Part Three: Apostolic **Leadership**

Chapter 8: The Enterprise of **Movement and the Movement of** **Enterprise**

Challenges of Pioneers
The Anatomy of a Pioneer
Entrepreneurial Intensity
Characteristics of Entrepreneurial People

A Typology of Entrepreneurship
The Permanent Revolutionary
The Pauline Entrepreneur
Navigating Risk

**Chapter 9: The Spirit of Innovation:
Creating New Futures for the Jesus
Movement**

The Age of the Unthinkable
The Strange New World of Innovation
Conclusion

**Part Four: Apostolic
Organization**

**Chapter 10: Movements R Us:
Thinking and Acting Like a Movement**

Mobilizing Bias
Organizing Movements
The Starfish and the Spider
Ending with the Beginning in Mind
Chaordic Ecclesiology
Covering the Bases

**Chapter 11: Apostolic Architecture:
The Anatomy of Missional
Organization**

Design Matters

Four-Self Dynamics
A Balance in the Force
To Organize or Not to Organize?

Conclusion

Afterword

Appendix: A Question of Legitimacy:
The Restoration of the Apostolic
Ministry

The Authors

Index

***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 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 re-appropriate 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

ABOUT THE JOSSEY-BASS LEADERSHIP NETWORK SERIES

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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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Foreword

1. D. Guder (ed.), *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998).
2. A. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2007), p. 238.
3. Ibid.