

Second Edition

THE FORGOTTEN WAYS

Reactivating Apostolic Movements

ALAN HIRSCH

Foreword by Ed Stetzer

Afterword by Jeff Vanderstelt



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Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*

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This book is dedicated to the loving memory
of my wonderful *Jewish Mama*, Elaine,
rescued by the Messiah in the fullness of time.
She lives on, not only in God,
but in the life of her grateful and adoring son.
Thanks, Mom!

So teach us to number our days,
that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.
Psalm 90:12 (KJV)

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Foreword

Ed Stetzer

This is not another book about how to do church. It's not a manual detailing the latest techniques to grow your ministry or a program designed to bring a struggling church back to life. Instead, my friend Alan Hirsch wants us to remember the essential mission of the church. He wants us to long for God's kingdom in the way that the early church did. In the first edition of this book, Alan borrowed from the famed writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry to explain what he was about: "If you want to build a ship, don't summon people to buy wood, prepare tools, distribute jobs, and organize the work, rather teach people the yearning for the wide, boundless ocean."

In *The Forgotten Ways*, Alan is calling us not to build churches but instead to yearn to be part of God's mission in the world. He asks us to consider questions like the following:

What did the early church see as its mission?

What did they believe Christ had birthed the church for?

How did they understand John 20:21, when Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"?

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In short, what did it mean for the early church to join Jesus on his mission?

The idea of mission being a defining focal point in the life of the church and the believer is certainly found in the practices of the New Testament church—and really within the totality of Scripture. Yet at times, as Alan reminds us, the church has lost sight of its mission and purpose, content to muddle along with no clear sense of purpose. Mission has become simply one of many tasks that a church *does* rather than what a church *is*. However, as Karl Barth famously argued at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932, mission isn't an attribute of the church or the individual Christian, but rather mission is an attribute of God himself—in which the church joined. God, in other words, is the first missionary. At the time this idea was not widely embraced, but later it would become the consensus view, not only in the mainline Protestant world but for evangelicals and Catholics as well.

It's not that Barth was right on everything—evangelicals like Alan and I would have some differences with Barth. Yet in many ways the Barthian idea of mission reminds us of the church's identity, purpose, and focus. Barth's insistence on recapturing the New Testament expressions of Christianity led to a new focus on the missional essence of the church. His ideas have spawned most of the missiological conversations of the past forty years. But it's not enough to want to embed the church's identity back into the missional identity of God; nor is it enough to say we need to restore the so-called missional glory of the early church in churches today. To be sure, these things are essential; however, the embedment of the church's identity into the missional nature of God and the desire for restoration is what leads to embodiment.

Recovering and reactivating the identity and purpose of the church allow for the rediscovery of the church's approaches and practices, which can be expressed in any cultural form. This leads to some of the following questions: What does the church do? How should believers live? What paths should we take? How do we faithfully live present lives in the cities and communities where churches have been planted? What are the implications for the church today in claiming Jesus is Lord, not Caesar? In short, recovering the identity of the church in the Triune God and his mission allows for the church to rediscover its forgotten ways—that it is a living, breathing, life-giving apostolic movement.

The Forgotten Ways has become a foundational text for exploring the missional nature of the church, challenging those wanting to understand both the missional conversation as well as what it means for the church to reactivate its forgotten ways. I'm honored that Alan asked me to write the foreword for his new edition, for both he and his work have blessed me over the years. Thus

I'm blessed to be a part, in some small way, of this book as Alan puts forth his ideas for a new generation longing to rediscover the church's missional nature and reactivate anew its forgotten ways. When I read Alan's words, I want to drop what I'm doing and focus my attention again on God's mission. After reading this book, I imagine you will as well.

Acknowledgments

I offer special thanks to the following.

To my beloved Deb, who continues to teach me more about God than anyone else.

To all those around the world who have resonated with the first edition of *The Forgotten Ways* and have applied the principles in new forms of practice. In so many ways this second edition is for you. God has called me to serve you. You are my heroes!

To all my cherished comrades in Forge, Future Travelers, 100 Movements, and Exponential. It has been a joy and privilege to work with you. Thank you for taking these ideas seriously enough to do something about them and for all the *communitas* along the way.

To my colleagues at Brazos for taking a chance on me in publishing the first edition and suggesting the necessity of this new one.

Lord, you grace humanity with knowledge
and teach mortals understanding,
Grace us with the knowledge, understanding,
and discernment that come from you.
Blessed are you, Lord,
who graciously grants knowledge.

Preface to the Second Edition

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

—William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

The composition of this book has been for the author a long struggle of escape, and so must reading of it be for most readers if the author's assault upon them is to be successful,—a struggle of escape from habitual modes of thought and expression. The ideas which are here expressed so laboriously are extremely simple and should be obvious. The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones, which ramify . . . into every corner of our minds.

—John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*

I can still remember the day when, after years of trying to grasp the dynamics of apostolic movements, I felt that it all came together in a singular “Eureka!” moment that I could only subsequently understand as a flash of revelatory insight. I make no claim for special authority when I say this, but I do feel that I received it from God and that it was a direct response to my ardent search for answers. So, in spite of how geekish and “academic” this book might feel at times, it really was much more the product of a “thought experiment” of

a reflective missional practitioner than it was clinical “lab” research done in libraries or through the scientific methodology of a PhD program. I do not claim that I had logically investigated my way to a viable theory of movement; rather, I felt the answer was actually graciously “given” to me and that I was simply called to be its custodian. Sure, I did my homework in my own way and to the best of my limited abilities, but I absolutely *knew* that I felt called, compelled even, to this very task of unlocking the codes of movement. So I pursued the task with all the vigor I could muster. I understood it as a spiritual quest in which my life’s purpose was somehow involved. It was years before the insight was given. My conclusion? Love something long enough and it will eventually reveal itself to you.

After the flash of insight, of synthesis, I scrambled to get the ideas down on paper. When I was finished I realized that what I had been given was in some way world changing. And again, I don’t want to be misunderstood about this: I have no grandiose sense of myself (in fact, I am genuinely surprised by God’s choices), and I don’t claim what I came to call “Apostolic Genius” (the term I invented to describe the system put forth in this book) as my own. Not at all! I see it as the heritage of all of God’s people, which I had the privilege in naming afresh for this generation and in our particular context—namely, that of Western Christianity at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

I believe Apostolic Genius does capture something of the mystery of the church in its most eloquent and most transformative form. Most feedback about this book that I have received expresses that people feel they “kinda remember the material,” or that it describes exactly what they have been thinking, I only gave words to it. This is wonderful to me, because it means that the answer is already there *latent* in God’s people, and that the Holy Spirit is once again brooding over the church, awakening us to our own purposes and potentials as God’s people. God’s purposes are already revealed in the very nature of discipleship and the church.

Our greatest truths are remembered; they are retrievals, not inventions. They are reclamations of a lost imagination whose newness is so old that it has been forgotten. This is particularly true regarding all the primordial truths of the faith, including, of course, the nature and purpose of the church.¹ I believe that the answer to the crisis of our time is found in our most primary and defining story of church—the New Testament church. In other words, I believe this material belongs to *you* as a believer, to *your* church or organization, and to all of God’s people everywhere. I am a mere custodian—and

1. I am drawing on some of the rich phraseology of Walter Brueggemann’s description of the task of the prophet being to call Israel to remembrance in *Prophetic Imagination*.

I hope a faithful one—of that which has been vouchsafed to me (Matt. 25:23). For my part I intend to deliver; this second edition is one of my attempts to be a better steward of what I feel called to pass on.

Just so that you understand how obsessed I am about Apostolic Genius: since publishing *The Forgotten Ways* in 2006, I have subsequently written about each of the elements of mDNA to further explain them.² Although they are all designed to be standalone books, they all point back to, and elaborate substantially, on the Apostolic Genius model suggested here.³ Furthermore, Apostolic Genius is part of the very genetics of the primary organizations with which I am directly involved: Forge Mission Training Network International, Future Travelers, and 100 Movements (100M) are all built squarely on the insights of *The Forgotten Ways*. Many other organizations and churches have likewise adopted the Apostolic Genius model as an operating system. All of these in their own ways are organized attempts to help the people of God “remember” the easily forgotten ways of the church-as-Jesus-movement.

But I have not limited my focus to my closest partners; I have also labored to awaken movement ethos in just about every major denominational system in North America, trained many of the primary church-planting agencies around the United States and Europe, lectured in many of the major seminaries and colleges, and coached many of the leading-edge missional churches. I remain committed now more than ever to the belief that movements are the way forward because they are in the deepest sense who we *are* and what we are called to be—that missional *movement is what Jesus actually intended*. It is our original and originating design. I believe that Jesus’s explicit example, his teaching on the in-breaking kingdom of God, his work in establishing the gospel, and his subsequent entrusting of these to the movement he initiated commits his people everywhere to being much more a permanent revolution than a civil religion that blindly defends tradition or conserves a prevailing status quo.

The civil religion concept to which most Western churches consciously or unconsciously adhere leads us back to where it originally came from: the missional bankruptcy of the historic European church. We have to get past the predominance of distinctly European modes of thinking about the church to recover the more primordial New Testament sensibilities in order to move forward. I believe now more than ever that the future health and viability of the Christian church is bound up with its retrieval of the more fluid, adaptive, and dynamic movement-based form of *ecclesia*.

2. See the back of this book (p. 345) for a chart of my other books related to this topic.

3. I explain the logic of my major writings in a blog post, at <http://goo.gl/W2Aw8u>.

Looking Forward Backward

There is no doubt—in my mind, at least—that movement thinking is an idea whose time has come; there is a sense of inevitability about it. There is no other viable way forward based on the inherited paradigm and thinking. The way forward must first take us backward, past our denominational histories, our historical trajectories, to the original phenomenon articulated in the pages of the New Testament and evidenced in the life of the church's Founder/founders—the original apostolic movement.⁴ We need refounding even more than we need reformation—and we can really do with a lot of reformation as well.

The basic ideas presented in this book, mainly concerning the individual elements of the mDNA (Jesus focused culture, discipleship, incarnational mission, innovation and risk, multiplication organizing, APEST, etc.), have seen significant adoption across the wide spectrum of Protestant denominations, agencies, and institutions. No one is more surprised about this than I am.

As far as the broader idea of missional church goes, I believe our very best thinkers have adopted it. Our best and brightest know that there is no going back to some idealized past or to some form of civil religion where the church is again somehow at the very center of culture and society. Those days are irretrievably gone. I personally think it is a good thing, because it forces us to think and act like our original founders and pioneers thought and acted—where one stands does determine what one sees and does. I believe that our most insightful leaders recognize there is no plan B for the church in the West; either we choose missional renaissance or face the specter of our ever-encroaching demise.

The problem is that while we can analyze the crisis confronting us, most Christians have yet to grasp the fullness of the possible solution in terms of a viable way forward. What we tend to lack is a theoretical framework, an integrative vision, that makes sense of the knotty crisis we face and gives us a viable way to reconceive and redesign the church going forward. We need a comprehensive mental model of movement that makes sense of New Testament ecclesiology as well as unlocks the logjam of thinking that has resulted from twenty centuries of Christianity in Western settings. What this book proposes is just that: a synthesized, integrated model that does justice to the primary codes of Jesus's church *and* provides us with a viable way forward.

Although the theory of apostolic movement proposed in this book is probably not the only one around, the truth is that I am not aware of many

4. For my thinking on the nature of renewal as radical traditionalism, see Hirsch and Catchim, *Permanent Revolution*, 148–49; and Hirsch and Frost, *ReJesus*, 77–83.

others.⁵ And the few books that describe movements tend to limit themselves to describing church-planting movements or disciple-making movements, offer flattened descriptions and lists of characteristics, and suggest plug-and-play prescriptions for application. Many of these types of books draw insight from movements in premodern societies, but as far as I am concerned, they largely fail to translate the core movemental dynamic into the hugely more complex world of twenty-first-century Western culture. So in effect they are saying, “Look at those amazing movements among the Dalit in India and the underground churches in China! This is what they do (they believe, they love the Word, trust in the Spirit, pray, etc.). All you need to do is copy them and you will be all right.” But the mistake here is to forget that these movements are taking place in largely premodern, pre-Christian societies. Little or no attempt is made at a missional translation of movemental phenomenology into a form that speaks to postmodern, post-Christian, post-Christendom, individualistic, middle-class, market-based, consumerist democracies. This is where I think this book is different. I have spent a lot of time trying to adapt movement thinking into complex, existing expressions of the Western church and culture. The result might be more complex and perplexing than the simple lists, but hopefully you will find that it resonates with your individual, and our collective, situation.

The good news is that in surveying the many advances in the ten years since the publication of the first edition of this book, I found much cause for real hope. There are numerous new incarnational expressions of church; church planting is now a strategic priority across the board; real signs of renewed commitments to the priority of discipleship are visible; a recovery of a Jesus-based, gospel-inspired spirituality is evident in many churches; acceptance and understanding of APEST (apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, shepherding, and teaching) dynamics are on the rise across the evangelical spectrum; and adventurous new agencies reach into many of the darker places of our culture. I have peppered references to many of these developments throughout the text to inform the reader about what has happened in the last decade and is continuing in the present. I am very hopeful here.

However, as inspiring as each of these pioneering efforts is, they almost all exhibit only one, two, or perhaps three (of the six) elements of mDNA in a significant and exemplary way. I celebrate that these projects are still on a learning journey toward the recovery of apostolic movement and look forward to what they will be when they mature. Signs are promising.

5. Neil Cole’s *Church 3.0* is a similar book that looks under the hood of movements and what makes them tick.

But if we look for full and mature expressions of the Apostolic Genius system—where all six elements of mDNA are cooking in the one total system—there are still very few exemplary models in the West. But I am extremely hopeful: the good news is that some *are* now established; they *are* maturing and *are* gaining momentum, influence, and strength as viable expressions of apostolic movements. And it takes only a few of these to validate the model for others to follow. For instance, only two churches (Willow Creek and Saddleback) in effect validated the seeker-sensitive model that subsequently became the standard expression of evangelical church throughout the West! It doesn't take many to change the paradigm and demonstrate validity. God willing, many more viable models of movement will be fully operating in the Apostolic Genius paradigm in ten years' time. These will in turn chart the maps that the others will follow.

This book is clearly not a how-to book, although the reader might well discern practical things within it. It is written to appeal to the imagination and to direct the church to embrace the more dynamic movement-based paradigm evidenced in the New Testament and in the various transformational movements in history.

I have taken this approach because we need to constantly remind ourselves at this point in history that if we fall in love with our system, whatever that is, we lose the capacity to change it. This means that the guardians of the old paradigm have lost the necessary objectivity by which to assess the church and their own role in it. They are system-insiders and have no vantage point outside the system to be able to get the necessary bearings on the critical nature of the situation. As Upton Sinclair reminded us, it remains an exceedingly difficult thing to get people to understand something when their salary depends on them not understanding it.⁶ Vested interests narrow our capacities to see clearly.

Although much has been gained in the past fifteen years, the paradigm war is by no means over. In fact, it might have just begun. The binary choice still remains: we choose either to live into the more dynamic missional movement paradigm or to continue to operate from within the more static monument paradigm that we have inherited. The irony is that although Christendom as a cultural force contained in a sacred society is now largely a matter of history, our ways of thinking, including our ways of conceiving of the church and its mission, are still largely dictated by outmoded Christendom imagination. Bishop Stephen Neil acknowledged this as early as 1959 when he announced that “All our ecclesiologies are inadequate and out of date. Nearly all of them have been constructed in the light of a static concept of the Church as

6. Sinclair, I, *Candidate for Governor*, 109.

something given, something which already exists. . . . As far as I know, no one has yet set to work to think out the theology of the Church in terms of the one thing for which it exists.”⁷

In his speech on the British Empire’s bureaucratic approach to managing a far-flung empire, Sugata Mitra said, “They engineered a system so robust, that it’s still with us today, continually producing identical people for a machine that no longer exists.”⁸ The same can be said for the dominance of Christendom thinking on our collective imagination. There is a mismatch with our inherited understanding of the church and the radical conditions we now find ourselves in. Our inherited maps are inadequate because they were formulated to suit an almost completely different cultural world than ours. It’s like trying to navigate London with a map of New York City.

In this situation, we don’t need more analysis; rather, we need a synthesis, a grand vision of who we are and what we can be. The key to the necessary system-wide change in the Western church is through the doorway of holy imagination. Alvin Toffler puts it this way: “Lacking a systematic framework for understanding the clash of forces in today’s world, we are like a ship’s crew, trapped in a storm and trying to navigate between dangerous reefs without compass or chart. In a culture of warring specialisms, drowned in fragmented data and fine-toothed analysis, synthesis is not merely useful—it is crucial.”⁹

To get things done, we need focus. However, to get the *right* things done, we simply have to consider the big picture. It is only by putting our habitual activities and thinking into the context of the big picture that we will be able to stay on target. Toffler says, “You’ve got to think about big things while you’re doing small things, so that all the small things go in the right direction.”¹⁰ New mental maps are vital if we are to chart our way forward.

And this is where leadership imagination comes in. As Max De Pree rightly noted, the leader effectively defines reality for those he or she leads.¹¹ The leader, for good or for ill, is the guardian of the organizational paradigm. He or she is the key to the organization’s future. Leaders in this situation have basically two roles to play; they are the keys that either open the doors or lock them up tight. They are either bottlenecks or bottle openers; they are either good or blind guides. Therefore, the custodianship of the church’s codes should never

7. Neill, *Creative Tension*, 81.

8. Quoted in Aaron Dignan, “The Operating Model That Is Eating the World,” <https://goo.gl/P1FP0C>.

9. Toffler, *Third Wave*, 4.

10. Quoted in Maxwell, *Thinking for a Change*, 67. In fact, Maxwell devotes a whole chapter to what he calls “big thinking.”

11. De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art*, 11.

be taken lightly, because leaders will be held to the strictest accountability regarding their role as keepers of the ecclesial and theological imagination.

This is both the burden as well as the amazing privilege of leadership. This responsibility ought to be especially felt at critical times when decisions made (or not) will directly impact the course of history. This battle for a viable paradigm is nothing new; the religious imagination has always been a battlefield for the hearts and lives of God's people, and one that our Founder had to deal with all the time. In Luke 11:52, Jesus criticizes the holders of Israel's codes-keys: "Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering." In the version in Matthew 23:13, Jesus judges the paradigm blindness, along with the associated imprisonment of the religious mind and heart of the leaders. His verdict is to remove the keys from these leaders and give them to others who will prove more faithful to the purposes and practices of the kingdom. If this was true for the leaders of God's people in Jesus's time, why would we think that it is any different for the people of God in ours?

And this is why repentance is important for God's people—especially for leaders as those who hold the keys to things. The very word for "repentance" in the New Testament (*metanoia*) requires a paradigm shift (and change of *nous*; lit., mind-set/rationality) and a reversal of direction. But repentance is not a dirty word; rather, it is a huge gift from God to his people, without which we would be irretrievably lost. It also brings with it the possibility of deep and godly change. And for every step that we take in repentance toward God, he takes a thousand toward us. But we have to submit ourselves to the checkup of whether our current paradigm is sufficient, and if it is not, to be willing to repent and experience paradigm shift. Don't defend the status quo simply because some patristic or medieval theologian said it ought to be so. Because of the dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit, we can and indeed must change.

It is my belief, and my experience, that precisely such a shift is going on in our time. There are more than enough openhearted leaders out there who know that the game is up for the prevailing forms of church, and that we face a huge challenge to cross the ever-widening chasm of culture and establish a viable beachhead for Jesus-centered Christianity in the twenty-first century. I think the deep awareness that many people feel—that we are at the end of one road and the beginning of another—is now almost universally shared by our best and brightest. What we tend to lack is the right Holy Spirit-inspired imagination needed to dream up new futures for the church. I believe it is the Jesus movement paradigm that provides us with the hope-filled key to the door of transformation—our own and that of our world.

Changes in Language and Structure

So much for issues of paradigms and of shifting the tracks of history. A few comments are needed about some important changes in terminology in the new edition and why I made them. One of the big decisions was to change the names of two of the mDNA. This is exceedingly tricky because the terminology used in the first edition is now tied in with the overall ideas of the book. I do this very carefully. Of the changes I made, one is straightforward and needs little explanation.

The most substantial change to the terminology of mDNA is that of the shift from the original “Apostolic Environment” to the term “APEST culture” to more adequately describe the ministry, functions, and leadership ethos of movements. I made this change mainly because the original “apostolic environment” is vaguer, needs explanation, and is specific to apostolic ministry, whereas the “APEST culture” needs less explanation and is much more comprehensive in scope. The term “culture” is carefully selected. Culture consists of a complex of manifold symbols, forms, ideas, languages, actions, and rituals, and is considered an intrinsic part of a given society or, on a lesser scale, the individual organization. And it is with this in mind that I deliberately use the term “APEST culture.” In using this phrase I mean to include not only the essential issue of personal vocation and calling but also all the various social functions associated with each aspect of APEST, as well as the language and symbols we use to communicate meaningfully about the ministry and mission of the church. In other words, APEST culture is the appropriately comprehensive category by which to assess, understand, develop, and evaluate the biblical ministry of the church (see chap. 8).¹²

In making the change I also wanted to shift the emphasis from the specific cultural impact created through the ministry of the apostolic person to the culture of all the APEST callings as a whole. When I originally highlighted the apostolic role, I never meant to diminish the importance of the whole APEST typology, which in my view is nothing less than the means of Jesus’s ministry *in* and *through* his body. Some have indeed taken me to mean that the apostolic is the most important. I do *not* think that and never

12. By the time this new edition of *The Forgotten Ways* comes out, I should have a test instrument available that measures the APEST functionality of a church or organization. This will be able to assess function and dysfunction in a system based on the levels of active fivefold functions. The name of the test has not yet been decided, but it will be accompanied by a weighty book based on fivefold marks and functions of the church. See www.alanhirsch.org for details on both.

intended to suggest so. I do believe, however, that the apostolic is catalytic and irreplaceable if we wish to reactivate and sustain *apostolic* movements in our time—there can be no way around this vital function/ministry. But an authentic apostolic movement must have *all five APEST functions and ministries* working together in the Christ-centered harmony of the body of Christ. Nothing less than fivefold will do. So while retaining reasons why the apostolic is catalytic, I have shifted a lot of weight onto the whole APEST aspect of the equation.

I kept much of the material related to Christlike leadership in this chapter because of its general significance to all leadership in the way of Jesus. But the right understanding of leadership is especially important to an invigorated APEST ministry, because with more diversity in the room, there is much more potential for conflict.¹³ Furthermore, with the rise of the highly controversial and profoundly authoritarian New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), it has become necessary to differentiate the missional understanding of APEST from the dominion/power/authority-obsessed paradigm of many NAR proponents.¹⁴ It is therefore doubly important to understand the nature of authority and legitimate leadership in the New Testament.

The other change in the mDNA nomenclature is the replacement of the original “*Communitas*, not Community” with simply “Liminality-*Communitas*.” The reason is straightforward: *communitas* is the direct result of engaging liminality; they are inseparable. Liminality (danger, risk, marginality, disorientation) is the precondition that precipitates *communitas* and therefore must be included.

Finally, I have changed the order of the original mDNA chapters to group elements that seem to more naturally belong together. For instance, it is clear that discipleship is directly related to the priority and preeminence of Jesus. In fact, discipleship is the *only* right response, a true appropriation of the fact that Jesus is my Lord and Savior. But discipleship is also developed as we follow Jesus as he leads us into the mission of God to redeem the world (incarnational mission). Furthermore, this involves risk and adventure and hence liminality-*communitas*. So with the appearance of one mDNA, all the others are brought into the equation. And while all mDNA are interconnected, some have a more obvious relationship than others.

13. See my colleague and friend Lance Ford’s excellent critique of the many un-Christlike models of Christian leadership, *Unleader*.

14. See the Wikipedia article for an overview of the movement at <https://goo.gl/zvygSA>. For a critical appraisal coming from within the Pentecostal-charismatic camp itself, see Gievett and Pivec, *New Apostolic Reformation?* I have to be honest and say that from what I know about it, I harbor similar concerns.

Issues of Style and Substance

As I mentioned, *The Forgotten Ways* is not a practical book—it never was. It’s a paradigm shifter and a book about becoming increasingly conscious of the largely unconscious operating systems that underlie all of our activities and understandings of church. This is often tricky work because we are largely trapped in an ecclesial paradigm that has been dominant for a very long time. I have certainly written books that apply the ideas here, for example, *The Forgotten Ways Handbook*, which is as practical as this book is theoretical and visionary. Even more so is *On the Verge*, in which movement leader Dave Ferguson and I painstakingly lay out a transformational process by which churches can become movements. For other practical ways forward, I would refer the reader to the various supplementary books I have written, since they are all elaborations of the ideas laid out in this book.

This book is unapologetically designed to address the reader’s imagination first and foremost. It presents an alternative paradigm, proposes a synthetic framework, and therefore suggests ways by which we might see the church and its purposes in light of our most primordial form—what I call missional (or apostolic, or Jesus, or transformational) movement. This book is meant to help us to see the system as a whole, to be able to observe its strategic strengths and flaws as well as point toward ways to redesign the system. I trust that it will continue to stimulate new ways of thinking and inspire innovative ways of doing.

A point worth making here is that while I have already said that in our time we desperately need a synthesis, a comprehensive vision of the church in mission, nonetheless we do still need some analysis to help us see the problem. If we don’t know what we don’t know, we must become aware of the problem first. So, true to the original book, I have largely done the missional analysis in section 1 and proposed the synthesis in section 2. New readers, please be patient in trying to get to the answers in section 2. For those who have read the first edition, section 1 will be a refresher. I have updated a lot of the material and you might wish to peruse it.

I admit that in trying to invite new thinking, the first edition was dense and verbose in places. As a more experienced writer, I hope that I have improved my ability to communicate complex and paradigmatic ideas. As much as I tried to break down the long sentences and eliminate redundancies without damaging the original flavor of the first edition, the book is *still* going to feel as if you are drinking from a fire hydrant. Readers familiar with my work know of my now infamous Hirschian terminology (neologisms), dense theological language, and tendency toward long chapters.

With this edition, I do my best to explain terms afresh (there is a glossary in the back to help), and I have tried, admittedly not always successfully, to shorten sentences and chapters.

Not to make an excuse, but I think that the overfull nature of the book is actually its strength. It is meant to be a veritable cornucopia of new paradigms, theology, and aphorisms. I have to be a bit overwhelming to circumvent the domesticated familiarity of all things churchly and to overthrow obsolete ideas that have over time attached themselves to our identity and praxis. Perhaps this is why the original edition had such an enduring impact in the church as well as in academic circles. In any case, I fully trust that the Spirit of God will give you the necessary wisdom and discernment to know what is appropriate for you. Also, I would highly recommend that you read the book a few times. I can assure you that if you read it only once, you will not fully understand it. It has taken me years to retrain my thinking in terms of Apostolic Genius, which I will sometimes call by the generic name “movement thinking.” It takes discipline and effort to change one’s inherited paradigm and to rescript a new rationality to suit. The viability of the church is at stake, and so leaders ought to ponder these things deeply and studiously.

I admit that there are a lot of footnotes, which does give the book a perhaps overly academic feel. This is not my intention. While I try very hard to offer substantial content, I am not an academic writing primarily for the academy. Rather, my intention is to strengthen the hand of my heroes—the pioneers, leaders, and practitioners on the front lines and in the missional trenches. I use footnotes simply to suggest further reading, to substantiate a claim, or to allow the reader to explore ideas that, while important, would interfere with the natural flow if they were presented in the text. Many readers have said that they got as much out of the footnotes as the text. With all these factors in mind, as I wrote the new edition and cut some material out of the main text, I simply could not bring myself to delete it because of its relevance to our quest, so it ended up in the footnotes. This is also why there are now four new appendixes at the back of the book. I think they are important but not essential. I hope you will read them and be enriched by them.

Believe it or not, I could have said much more than I have in this new edition, but I could not have done so without altering the feel of the first edition, which has had such resonance worldwide. Besides, as I have already admitted, the text is already chockablock with what should be key ideas and thinking. For further explorations of the key elements of this book, read some of my later writings.

Onward, Upward, Forward

If we are to unlock the vast potentials (of Apostolic Genius) that lie largely dormant in God's people, then the movemental paradigm suggested in this book must supplant the dominant institutional one and become the primary lens through which we perceive the phenomenon we call church. This is vital because the primary paradigm enables us to understand our world and negotiate our way successfully through it. And importantly, it is through the missional paradigm that we are set once again in a fruitful and significant relation with the enduring processes of the universe (see chap. 9, "Organic Systems"). And by revealing the possibilities of fulfillment that still lie open to us, it provides an overriding incentive to find new and better ways of being faithful in the world.

Jesus's people have always contained possibilities of which we are not always fully aware, possibilities arising from the presence of Jesus and the life of the Spirit. We can and must realize more and more of the potentials of the kingdom by constantly increasing our knowledge and love of, and for, God. This is the purpose of *The Forgotten Ways*. Enjoy the ride.

Introduction

The great Christian revolutions came not by the discovery of something that was not known before. They happen when someone takes radically something that was always there.

—H. Richard Niebuhr

After a time of decay comes the turning point. The powerful light that has been banished returns. There is movement, but it is not brought about by force. . . . The movement is natural, arising spontaneously. The old is discarded and the new is introduced. Both measures accord with the time; therefore no harm results.

—ancient Chinese saying

In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.

—Eric Hoffer, *Reflections in the Human Condition*

Imagine there is a power that lies hidden at the very heart of God’s people. Suppose this capacity was built into the originating “stem cell” of the church by the Holy Spirit but was somehow buried and lost through centuries of neglect and disuse. Imagine that if rediscovered, this hidden power could unleash remarkable energies that could propel Christianity well into the twenty-second century—a missional equivalent to unlocking the power of the atom. Is this not something that we who love God, his people, and his cause would give just about anything to recover? I now believe that the idea of latent, inbuilt

missional potencies is not a mere fantasy; in fact, I wholly believe that there are primal forces that lie latent in every Jesus community and in every true believer. Not only does such a phenomenon exist, but it is actively demonstrated in history's most remarkable Jesus movements. Perhaps the *most* remarkable expression of it is very much with us today.

The fact that you have started reading this book means that you are not only interested in the search for a more authentic expression of *ecclesia* (the New Testament word for *church*), but you are also in some sense aware of the seismic changes in worldview that have been taking place in general culture over the past fifty years or so. Whatever one may call it, this shift from the modern to the postmodern, or from solid modernity to liquid modernity, has generally been difficult for the church to accept. We find ourselves lost in a perplexing global jungle where our well-used cultural and theological maps don't seem to work anymore. We may feel as if we have woken up to find ourselves in contact with a strange and unexpected reality that seems to defy our usual ways of dealing with issues of the church and its mission. All of this amounts to a kind of ecclesial future shock, where we are left wandering in a world we can't recognize anymore. In the struggle to grasp our new reality, churches and church leaders have become painfully aware that our inherited concepts, our language, and indeed our whole way of thinking are inadequate to describe what is going on both in and around us. The problems raised in such a situation are not merely intellectual but together amount to an intense spiritual, emotional, and existential crisis.

The truth is that the twenty-first century is turning out to be a highly complex phenomenon where terrorism, disruptive technological innovation, environmental crisis, rampant consumerism, discontinuous change, and perilous ideologies confront us at every point. In the face of this upheaval, even the most confident among us would have to admit, in our more honest moments, that the church as we know it faces a very significant adaptive challenge. The overwhelming majority of church leaders today report that they feel it is getting much harder for their communities to negotiate the increasing complexities in which they find themselves. As a result, the church is on a massive, long-trended decline in the West. In this situation, we have to ask ourselves probing questions: Will more of the same do the trick? Do we have the inherited resources to deal with this situation? Can we simply rework the tried and true Christendom understanding of church that we so love and understand and finally, in some ultimate tweak of the system, come up with the long-sought winning formula?¹

1. For a definition of Christendom, see the glossary. The nature, history, and structure of Christendom are more fully explored in chap. 2.

I have to confess that I do not think that the inherited formulas will work anymore. I know I am not alone in this. There is a massive roaming of the mind going on in our day as the search for alternatives heats up. However, most of the new thinking as it relates to the future of Christianity in the West only highlights our dilemma and generally proposes solutions that are little more than revisions of past approaches and techniques. Even much of the thinking about the so-called emerging church, which, in spite of its theological divergences from orthodox streams, leaves the prevailing assumptions of church and mission intact and simply focuses on the issue of theology and spirituality in a postmodern setting. This amounts to a reworking of the theological “software” while ignoring the “hardware” as well as the “operating system” of the church. In my opinion, this will not be enough to get us through. As we anxiously gaze into the future and delve back into our history and traditions to retrieve missiological tools from the Christendom toolbox, many of us are left with the sinking feeling that this is simply not going to work. The tools and techniques that fit previous eras of Western history simply don’t seem to work any longer. What we need now is a new set of tools, and what we might call a new “paradigm”—a new vision of reality: a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions, and values, especially as they relate to our view of the church and mission.

It isn’t that reaching into our past is not part of the solution. It is. The issue is simply that we generally don’t go back far enough, or rather, that we don’t delve *deep* enough for our answers. Every now and again we do get glimpses of an answer, but because of the radical and disturbing nature of its remedy we retreat to the safety of the familiar and the controllable. The *real* answers, if we have the courage to search for and apply them, are usually more radical than we are normally given to think, and because of this they undermine our sense of place in the world. The Western church has generally preferred the inherited status quo and has very seldom ventured far from the entrenched ecclesial paradigm. But we are now living in a time when only a solution that goes to the very roots of what it means to be Jesus’s people will do.

The conditions facing us in the twenty-first century not only pose a threat to our existence; they also present us with an extraordinary opportunity to discover ourselves so that we are oriented to this complex challenge in ways that resonate with an ancient energy lying dormant at the heart of the church—what I will call Apostolic Genius throughout this work.

The book now in your hands is one that could be labeled under the somewhat technical and seemingly boring category of *missional ecclesiology*, or more specifically movemental ecclesiology. It is completely dedicated to identifying, engendering, and activating dynamic missional movements. It has

everything to do with being a church shaped by Jesus and his mission. So don't be fooled by the drab terminology—movemental/missional ecclesiology is dynamite, mainly because the church (the *ecclesia*), when true to its real calling, when it is about what God is about, is by far the most potent force for transformational change the world has ever seen. It has been that force before, is that now, and will be that again. This book is written in the hope that the church in the West can, by the power of the Holy Spirit, yet again arouse and activate that amazing power that lies within us.

The Question That Started a Quest

About four years prior to releasing the first edition I attended a seminar on missional church where in making a point the speaker asked a question: “How many Christians do you think there were in the year AD 100?” He then asked: “How many Christians do you think there were just before Constantine came on the scene, say, AD 310?”² Here are the somewhat surprising answers:

AD 100 as few as 25,000 Christians

AD 310 up to 20,000,000 Christians

He then asked the question that has haunted me to this day: “How do you think they did this? How did they grow from being a small movement to the most significant religious force in the Roman Empire in two centuries?” Now *that's* a question to initiate a journey! I felt in that moment that God was calling me to dedicate myself to finding the answer. It was as if my quest was to find the missiological holy grail, to identify the keys (if any) to understanding what it is that could produce such amazing growth and impact despite the odds. I also felt a profound obligation to try to interpret my findings for the church in any other time and place, including of course our own as we lunge, missiologically ill-prepared, into the vortex that is the twenty-first century. I totally dedicated myself to the task. This quest culminated in the formulation of what I call “Apostolic Genius” (the generative system that undergirds all genuine, highly transformative expressions of Jesus movement) and the various epiphenomena or elements that make it up, which I call *movement DNA*, or *mDNA* for short. And herein, I believe,

2. Rodney Stark is considered to be the authority on these issues, and in his book *The Rise of Christianity* he suggests an array of possible answers ranging from conservative to broad estimates. I have tried to average these estimates (according to Stark between 40 and 50 percent, exponentially per decade) and compare this with other sources. These are my findings. See Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 6–13.

lies the powerful mystery of the church of Jesus Christ in its most authentic as well as its most transformative form.

So let me ask *you* the same question: How do you think those early Christians did it? And before you respond, here are some qualifications you must factor into the equation:

- *They were members of an illegal religion throughout this period.* At best, they were tolerated; at the very worst they were very severely persecuted.
- *They didn't have church buildings as we know them.* While archaeologists have discovered “chapels” dating from this period, they were definitely exceptions to the rule, and they tended to be very small converted houses.
- *They didn't even have the Scriptures as we now have them.* They were putting the canon together during this period.
- *They didn't have a formal institution or the professional type of leadership normally associated with it.* At times of relative calm, prototypical elements of institution did appear, but by our standards of the institutional, these were at best pre-institutional.
- *They didn't have seeker-sensitive services, youth groups, worship bands, seminaries, commentaries, and so on,* all the things we assume that we need to lead a healthy church.
- *They actually made it hard to join the church.* By the late second century, aspiring converts had to undergo a significant initiation period to prove they were worthy of joining the community of the baptized.

In fact, these Christians had none of the things we would ordinarily employ to solve the problems of the church, yet they grew from as few as twenty-five thousand to upward of twenty million in just two hundred years! *So, how did the early church do it?* In answering that question, perhaps you too will discover the answers to the issues of the church and mission in our day and context.

Before you dismiss the example of the early Christian movement as being something of a freak of history, there is another, perhaps even more astounding manifestation of Apostolic Genius in our own time—namely, the underground church in China. Theirs is a truly remarkable story: about the time when Mao Tse-tung took power and initiated the systemic purge of religion from society, the church in China, which was well established and largely modeled on Western forms due to colonization, was estimated to number about two million adherents. As part of this systematic persecution, Mao banished all foreign missionaries and ministers, nationalized all church property, killed

most of the senior church leaders, either killed or imprisoned second- and third-level leaders, banned all public meetings of Christians with the threat of death or torture, and then proceeded to perpetrate one of the cruelest persecutions of Christians on historical record.

The explicit aim of the Cultural Revolution was to obliterate Christianity (and all religion) from China. At the end of Mao's regime in the late 1970s, and the subsequent lifting of the so-called Bamboo Curtain in the early 1980s, foreign missionaries and church officials were allowed back into the country, albeit under strict supervision. They expected to find the church decimated and the disciples a weak and battered people. On the contrary, they discovered that Christianity had flourished beyond all imagination. The estimates *then* were about 60 million Christians in China, and counting! And the number has grown significantly since then. David Aikman, former Beijing bureau chief for *Time* magazine, suggests in his book *Jesus in Beijing* (2006) that Christians may number as many as 80 million.³ The latest research estimates put the figure at around 120 million at the time of my writing the second edition.⁴ If anything, in the Chinese phenomenon we are likely witnessing the most significant transformational Christian movement in the history of the church. And remember, not unlike the early church, these people had very few Bibles, no professional clergy, no official leadership structures, no central organization, and no mass meetings, yet their numbers grew like mad. How is this possible? How did they do it? What can we learn from it?⁵

We can observe similar growth patterns in other historical movements. For instance, mission historian Steve Addison notes that by the end of John Wesley's lifetime one in thirty English men and women had become Methodists.⁶ In 1776 fewer than 2 percent of Americans were Methodists. By 1850, the movement claimed the allegiance of 34 percent of the population. How did these early Methodists do it? The twentieth century saw the rise of Pentecostalism as one of the most rapidly growing missionary movements in the history of the church. The movement has grown from humble beginnings in the early 1900s to an estimated half a billion people at the time of the centenary of the Azusa Street revivals in 2006. It is estimated that by 2050 Pentecostalism

3. Quoted in Yancey, "Discreet and Dynamic," 72.

4. See missiologist Paul Hattaway's summary of various estimates in his article "How Many Christians Are There in China?"

5. Another remarkable movement, one that changed the destiny of Europe and beyond, was the Celtic movement. While it is outside the scope of this book to explore the nature of the Irish mission to the West, it shares many similarities with the early church and the Chinese church.

6. Addison, "Movement Dynamics," 5.

will have one billion adherents worldwide.⁷ How did the Pentecostals do it? The stories of these transformative missional movements provide us with mirrors by which we can compare ourselves; we who, in spite of our years of history, accumulated wealth and resources, seem to have a much more diminished understanding and a significantly less potent expression of church. The exemplary movements of history thus witness to and call us to a more perfect expression of the transformative movement that Jesus intended us to be in the first place.

The central task of this book is to get under the hood of movements, to look for and to identify the discreet elements—the matrix of theology, ideas, and practices that must come together to both generate and sustain movements that change the world. As mentioned, the phenomenon that births and guides movements is what I call Apostolic Genius, and the elements that make it up I call mDNA; I will define these more fully later. The object of this book is to explore Apostolic Genius and to try to interpret it for our own missional context and situation in the West. These two key examples (the early church and the Chinese church) have been chosen not only because they are exemplary Jesus movements but also because one is ancient and the other contemporary, so we can observe Apostolic Genius in two radically different temporal and cultural contexts. I have also chosen them because both movements faced significant threats to their survival; in both cases this took the form of systematic persecution. This is significant because, as will be explained later, the church in the West faces its own form of adaptive challenge as we negotiate the complexities of the twenty-first century—one that threatens our very survival as well as our ability to influence the world through obedience to Jesus and his cause.

Persecution drove both the early Christian movement and the Chinese church to discover their truest nature as an apostolic people. Persecution forced them away from any possible reliance on any centralized religious institution and caused them to live closer to, and more consistently with, their primal message—namely, the gospel. We have to assume that if one is willing to die for being a follower of Jesus, then in all likelihood that person is a real believer. This persecution, under the sovereignty of God, acted as a means to keep these movements true to their faith and reliant on God—it purified them from the dross of nonessential churchly paraphernalia. It was by *being true* to the gospel that they unleashed the power of Apostolic Genius. And this is a huge lesson for us: as we face our own challenges, we

7. McClung, “Pentecostals”; see also Hollenwager, “From Azusa Street,” 3, quoted in Kärkkäinen, “Pentecostal Missiology in Ecumenical Perspective,” 207.

will need to be sure about the essentials of our faith, and in whom exactly it is that we trust. We live in a pivotal time, and decisions made now will determine the course or trajectory of the church in the twenty-first century. I urge the reader to ponder these things long, hard, and deep, because the destiny of the Jesus movement in the West hangs somewhat in the balance. Choices matter, and to do nothing is to choose to do nothing. Let's be clear about that.

In pursuit of the answer to the question of how these phenomenal Jesus movements actually did it, I have become convinced that the power manifesting itself in the dangerous stories of these exemplary movements is available to us as well. And the awakening of that dormant potential has something to do with the strange mixture of the work of the Holy Spirit, the disciple's passionate love of God, prayer, and incarnational practice. Add to this mix appropriate modes of leadership (as expressed in Eph. 4), the recovery of radical discipleship, relevant forms of organization and structures, and the appropriate conditions for these to catalyze. When these factors come together, the situation is ripe for something remarkable to take place.

The Forgotten Ways

As the name of the book suggests, I am convinced that we do have the answers to our crisis, but we have largely forgotten, misplaced, or suppressed them. Observing these movements that clearly lack our ample resources, we must simply conclude that Jesus has given his *ecclesia* (the church movement) everything it needs to get the job done. He has designed his *ecclesia* to be the people who transform the world in his name—a cursory reading of the New Testament indicates that the eternal purposes of God are to be worked out primarily through the agency of his people. Following the rebirth of the church in China, we can conclude that the seed of the future does indeed lie in the womb of the present, that every church claiming the name of Jesus has all the selfsame dormant potentials so evident in the New Testament *ecclesia*, the early church, the Chinese movement, and every other movement in between. All we need to do is to retrieve that seed, nurture the conditions for its healthy growth, very deliberately remove whatever hinders it, and let the Holy Spirit yet again connect us with our Messiah Jesus and empower us in his redemptive cause.

To perhaps nail down this rather elusive concept of dormant (or latent) potentials, recall the story of *The Wizard of Oz*. The central character in this well-loved story is Dorothy, who was transported in a big tornado from

Kansas to the magical Land of Oz. Wanting to return home, she gets guidance from Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, who advises her to walk to the Emerald City and there consult the Wizard. On the yellow brick road, she acquires three companions: the Scarecrow, who hopes the Wizard will be able to give him some brains; the Tin Man, who wants the Wizard to give him a heart; and the Cowardly Lion, who hopes to acquire some courage. After surviving some dangerous encounters with the Wicked Witch of the West and numerous other nasty creatures, Dorothy and her companions eventually make it to see the Wizard, only to discover that he is a hoax. They leave the Emerald City brokenhearted. But the Wicked Witch, perceiving the magic in Dorothy's ruby slippers, won't leave them alone. After a final encounter with the Wicked Witch and her minions, Dorothy and her friends overcome the source of evil and thereby liberate Oz. But through all their ordeals and in their final victory, they discover that they already have what they were looking for—in fact, they have had it all along. The Scarecrow is very clever, the Tin Man has real heart, and the Lion turns out to be very brave and courageous after all. They haven't needed the Wizard after all; what they have needed is a situation that forces them to discover (or to activate) that which is already in them. They have had what they all have been looking for, only they didn't realize it. To cap it off, Dorothy has had her answer to her wish to return home all along; she is wearing them—her ruby slippers. By clicking them together three times, she is transported back to her home in Kansas. The answers are always there; we just need to look beyond our standard answers, see past the veil of the familiar, and develop the resolve to do something about it.

This story highlights the central assumption in this book—namely, that all God's people carry within themselves the same potencies that energized the early Christian movement and that are currently manifest in the underground Chinese church. Apostolic Genius lies dormant in you, me, and every local church that seeks to follow Jesus faithfully in any time. We have quite simply forgotten how to access and trigger it. This book is written to help us identify its constituent elements and (re)activate it so that we might once again be a truly transformative Jesus movement in the West.

A Sneak Preview

A glossary of terms is provided at the back of the book to assist the reader with definitions and new terms used throughout the book; you may want to bookmark it for easy reference as you read. You will also find five appendixes

at the back, which contain important material about leadership, change, and organization that informs much of the present work. We can learn an astonishing amount about life, adaptation, and organization from the study of what is called living-systems theory; therefore I strongly suggest the reader tussle with it. But put on your helmets—it *is* a crash course, after all.

As will become clear throughout this book, I am committed to the idea of translating best practices in cross-cultural global missions into the church in the West. This has aptly been called the *missions-to-the-first-world* approach, and you will find that I ardently believe in it. Although this book is primarily about the mission of the whole people of God, mission is not limited to the corporate mission of the local church or denomination. Mission must take place in and through every aspect of life. And this is done by all Christians everywhere. Both forms of mission—the collective mission of the community and the individual expression of mission by God’s people—must be activated if we are to become a truly missional church.

I have long been a student of the nature of movements, both social and religious. I have tried to learn what exactly it is that makes movements tick and what makes them so effective in spreading their message (as opposed to the less-accessible message of a self-enclosed institution). I believe with all my heart that it is by recovering an authentic movement ethos that we can recover something of the dynamism that marks the significant Jesus movements in history. The reader will discern this fascination with movements all the way through the book. It’s the key paradigm—the main goal of our undertaking will be to reinterpret the Western church as movement.

Another feature of this work is the consistent critique of religious institutionalism. Because some readers could find this unsettling, a word of clarification is needed to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings later on. I am critical of institutionalism not because I think institutions are a bad idea; it’s just that through my study I have arrived at the rather unnerving conclusion that God’s people appear to be more potent by far when they have more flexible structures and operate with far less by way of rigid religious institution. The Chinese movement teaches us this very point: the Chinese church had to undergo forced “deinstitutionalization” before it could recover the missional potencies that were latent in the system. For clarity, therefore, there needs to be a clear distinction between necessary organizational structure and institutional-*ism*. As we shall see, structures *are* absolutely necessary for cooperative human action as well as for maintaining social cohesion. However, it seems that over time the increasingly impersonal and centralist structures of the institution assume the roles, responsibilities, and authority

that legitimately belong to the people of God.⁸ This is where things begin to go awry.⁹

The material itself is structured in two sections.

Section 1

Section 1 sets the scene by referring to my own narrative to assist the reader in tracking some of the seminal ideas and experiences that have guided my thinking and fired my imagination. By narrating some of the central themes in my own story, I hope to take the reader through what can be called a missional reading of the situation of the church in the West. This will be spread out over the first two chapters: Chapter 1 looks at the issue from the perspective of a local practitioner trying to guide a complex, inner-city church-planting movement through the massive changes that are going on around us. Chapter 2 explores the missional situation in which we find ourselves from the perspective of a strategic and translocal level. These two perspectives, one macro and one micro, are vital in coming to grips with the concepts of a missional church.

Section 2

Here is where the rubber hits the road. *This* is the heart of the book in that it is a description of and the constituent elements of mDNA, which together activate the Apostolic Genius latent in the system.¹⁰ Those who are impatient, time restricted, or feel they do not need to undertake a missional reading of the church's situation in our current context can jump to this section, because the real substance of the book is found in there. However, I believe that readers

8. See the brilliant analysis of this by Catholic sociologist of religion Thomas F. O'Dea in "Five Dilemmas."

9. We can observe from history that through the consolidation and centralization of power, church institutions begin to claim an authority that they were not originally given and have no theological right to claim. It is at this point that the structures of *ecclesia* become somewhat politicized and therefore repressive of any activities that threaten the status quo inherent in it. This is institutionalism, and historically it has almost always meant the effective expulsion of its more creative and disparate elements (e.g., Wesley and Booth). This is not to say that there does not appear to be some divine order (structure) given to the church. But it is to say that this order is almost always legitimized directly through the community's corporate affirmation of calling, personal character, charismatic empowerment, and spiritual authority. It always remains personal and never moves purely to the institutional. Our role model need be none less than our Founder. It seems that only he can wield significant ecclesial power without eventually misusing it.

10. When we begin to assess the presence of Apostolic Genius in our own churches, I will introduce the idea of *missional fitness* or *missional agility*. I have developed mPULSE, an online tool that will help churches assess for their own contexts. See the website www.theforgottenways.org for details.

will be amply rewarded by reading chapters 1 and 2, so I strongly encourage them to do so.

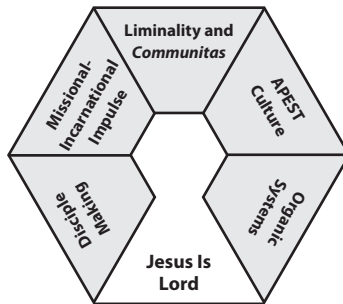
Albert Einstein said that when the solution is simple and elegant, God is speaking. Following this advice, I have tried to discern quintessential elements that combine to create Apostolic Genius and to simplify them to the absolutely irreducible components that are common to *every* Jesus movement that experienced exponential growth and had a transformative impact on society. It is important to note that what I am saying is that whenever we see a Jesus movement that has this form of growth and impact, all six elements are clearly present and observable.

Assuming the pervasive prior presence and work of the Holy Spirit, we can observe six simple but interrelating elements of mDNA, forming a complex and living structure. These present us with a powerful paradigm grid with which we can assess our current understandings and experiences of church and mission. They are the following:

- ***Jesus Is Lord***: At the center and circumference of every significant Jesus movement there exists a very simple confession. Though simple, it is one that fully vibrates with the primal energies of the scriptural faith—namely, that of the claim of the one God over every aspect of every life, and the response of his people to that claim (Deut. 6:4–6). The way that this was expressed in the New Testament and later movements was simply “Jesus Is Lord!” With this simple confession they changed the world.
- ***Disciple Making***: Essentially, this involves the irreplaceable and lifelong task of becoming like Jesus by embodying his message. This is perhaps where many of our efforts fail. Disciple making is an irreplaceable, core task of the church and needs to be structured into every church’s basic formula (chap. 5).
- ***Missional-Incarnational Impulse***: Chapter 6 explores the twin impulses of remarkable missional movements—namely, the dynamic outward thrust and the related deepening impulse—which together *seed* and *embed* the gospel into different cultures and people groups.
- ***Liminality and Communitas***: The most vigorous forms of community are those that come together in the context of a shared ordeal or those that define themselves as a group with a mission that lies beyond themselves, thus initiating a risky journey. Too much concern with safety and security, combined with comfort and convenience, has lulled us out of our true calling and purpose. We all love an adventure. Or do we? Chapter 7 aims at putting the adventure back into the venture.

- **APEST Culture:** Chapter 8 examines another element of authentic mDNA: the active presence of the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, shepherding, and teaching (APEST) functions-ministries listed in Ephesians 4 and evidenced throughout the book of Acts. Especially catalytic for missional movements is the apostolic person. This mDNA relates to the type of ministry and leadership required to sustain exponential growth and transformational impact.
- **Organic Systems:** Chapter 9 explores the next element in mDNA, the idea of appropriate structures for growth and movement—what in 100M we call “multiplication organizing.” Tending to low control but high accountability, transformative Jesus movements grow precisely because they do not have centralizing institutions that can block growth through control by elites. Here we will find that the exemplary Jesus movements have the feel of a movement and the structure of a network, and tend to spread like viruses.

So the structure of Apostolic Genius will look something like this:



Method in the Madness

As indicated above, the task of this book is to try to identify the irreducible elements that constitute Apostolic Genius.¹¹ To do this I will use both the early church and the twentieth-century Chinese church as my primary test cases.¹² Having discerned what appear to be the distinctive patterns, I then tried and tested the validity of my observations on other significant movements in the history of the church, and as far as my own expertise will allow, I have

11. For those who are interested, Apostolic Genius can be called a “phenomenology of missional movement.”

12. I refer to these variously as “missional movements,” “apostolic movements,” “exemplary movements,” or “Jesus movements.”

found them thoroughly consistent. As far as I can tell, *every transformative missional movement in history has all six elements of mDNA demonstrably present*. This is critical to the central thesis of the book, as will become clearer as we go forward.

Furthermore, this book is written not from the perspective of an academic but rather from the perspective of a missionary and a strategist trying to help the church formulate a missional paradigm equal to the significant challenges of the twenty-first-century world in which we are called to be faithful. It is therefore painted in broad strokes and not in fine detail; this is consistent with my own personality and approach to issues. This will irritate some who are impatient with concepts and want a ready-made model that they can simply plug and play. My goal is to address the ideas and thinking—the rationality—that embeds the existing paradigm and blinds us to our own innate potential as movements. Einstein once noted that the kind of thinking that will resolve the world's problems must be of a different order from the kind of thinking that created those problems in the first place. Following this logic, we need to think outside the box of our current paradigm to be able to resolve the problems of that paradigm. This is not easy because people become blinded to the very system in which they are deeply involved. We are trapped by a host of theological reductions derived from Christendom ecclesiology and must once again look at the system itself in order to reframe our understanding. This means that we have to explore the big ideas as well as the assumptions we bring to our current understandings.

Those who crave fine detail will also look in vain here, for my approach is to “see” the system as a whole, and to do that we must avoid focusing on the parts. I am distilling, essentializing, focusing on what I call the *meta-ideas* (the key ideas that control and unlock the others). While this means not everything is said that could be said, it does ensure that we get the *big* picture. And while in distilling things down to their irreducible essentials I do feel like the proverbial Viking raider who grabbed the gemstones while leaving behind their intricate and precious settings, I nonetheless believe that we need to see things in their simplest and yet most elegant forms. We are primarily in need of a new paradigm, not a mere reworking of the existing one. It is therefore the whole that counts and not just the individual parts. The book is thus more prescriptive than it is merely descriptive.

I have written largely with the missional leader/practitioner in mind. This book will appeal most to those who are leading existing churches that are leaning into the future. It will also appeal to those who are church planting and/or initiating new forms of sustainable Christian community for the twenty-first century (what I will call the emerging missional or apostolic movements) and

to those who are involved on the strategic level of ministry—namely, that of leading movements, parachurches, and denominations.

Suffice it to say here that in exploring these ideas I feel that I am peering into things that are very deep, things that, if recovered and applied, could have considerable ramifications for the future of Western Christianity. I say this as someone who is not claiming something as my own. If anything, like all who receive a grace from God, I feel that I am the humble recipient of a revelation, an unearthing of something primal that I am privileged to be able to observe and articulate. Einstein said that when he was peering into the mysteries of the atom he felt that he was peering over God's shoulder into things remarkable and wonderful. I must admit to feeling the same sense of awe as I peer into all things movemental.