

A missional church organizes its life around its real purpose as an agent of God's mission to the world. Western Christendom has reduced apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, and teaching functions to just the last 2: pastoral (or shepherd) and teaching--clericalism results. Especially crucial for missional ecclesiology is the recovery of the apostolic function in the church. This has been likened to the critique of Western ecclesiologies that replace the theme of mission with theologies of institutional maintenance.

Most standard thinking delegitimizes the apostolic role by either replacing it with the canon of scripture (as in Protestantism) or transferring it to the bishops and the institution of the church itself (as in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy). This seems utterly strange to us given the central role that apostolic ministry plays in the New Testament itself, as well as in every movement that has achieved significant missionary impact throughout history. Reframing paradigms is difficult work. We submit this book for reflection in the hope the Spirit will awaken ancient energies largely dormant within the Western church.

Institutions are products of human activity. They tend to develop their own metrics and categories for what should be valued or deemed essential. Being ignorant about the issue of social structures generally hands dynamic movements over to default of increasing institutionalism. We seek to (re)construct a holistic understanding of an all-but-lost imagination. The prevailing paradigm is largely a by-product of the 2-fold ministry structure of the shepherd and teacher. The other 3 roles—apostle, prophet, and evangelist—have been effectively exiled from the ministry of the church and therefore alter our conception of what the church is and can be.

“The illiterate of the future are not those that cannot read or write. They are those that cannot learn, unlearn, relearn” (Alvin Toffler). People in any organization are attached to the obsolete—the things that should have worked but did not, that once were productive and no longer are. All statistical indicators show serious infertility in Western Christianity.

Organizational doubt is first experienced as a problem of wineskins—where prevailing organizational systems and designs originally used to host and transmit the founding ideals no longer get the job done. If the problem of wineskins is not resolved through the renewal of structures, the community will proceed to the next stage of ever-increasing cynicism and unbelief. This life cycle eventually ends with absolute doubt, which precipitates closure; the death of the original movement. In the end this involves a failure to be the people God intended us to be: a radical hardcore, fully engaged, living movement of people loved and redeemed by Jesus, committed to his causes on earth.

The lack of growth, development, and adaptation is a call for repentance and change. We need to rescript by returning to the original script. We are designed to be world-transforming agents of the kingdom. We are meant to be a permanent revolution, not one that came and went, leaving a codified religion in its wake. That we only seldom realize this truth can be attributed to a bad case of recurring theological amnesia. It took

the death of the institutional forms of church in China for it to become a dynamic people movement again. But every now and again, we do it for the best possible reasons: out of our desire to be authentic and faithful to what the Lord of the church requires of us.

Although paradigms help us make sense of our world by giving us ways to interpret it, they also create what is called *paradigm blindness*: an incapacity to see things from outside that paradigm. When the context shifts significantly, **algorithms can become problematic and prevent an organization from readily seeing its way beyond them. The Bible calls this a stronghold—a mental or spiritual trap.**

“Black swan” events are events that the prevailing models could never have foreseen, let alone predict, and yet they account for nearly every major shift in human history. The 2008 financial crisis; the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01; the rise of the internet; the 2010 British Petroleum spill in the Gulf of Mexico. In the same way, our inherited algorithm of church, ministry, and leadership is now being challenged. Many of the problems we face today arise from applying outmoded 19th century thinking to 21st century problems. We live in a situation defined by an increasing frequency of black swan events.

The penalty for nonadaptive behavior is severe. Generally planning and good management do not determine success; rather, success comes from being able to respond well to forces out of our control that push us to innovate and adapt. For instance, if you are taking a leisurely stroll in a forest, everything seems fine until you get hopelessly lost. Then everything changes. When you are lost, the forest takes on a menacing aspect. The church in the West appears to be lost in the forest.

By changing our metaphors, or paradigms of church, we can change the game. In short, apostolic movement involves a radical community of disciples centered on the lordship of Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, built on a 5-fold ministry, organized around mission where all are empowered agents, and tends to be decentralized in organizational structure. Ecclesia is an apostolic movement not limited to a local church. **Our notion of the church must expand to biblical proportions.**

An authentic missional church should exist and express itself at all of the local, city, region and symbolic levels. **APEST (apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher) is the primary algorithm of the ministry of ecclesia.** Apostles are given to provide the catalytic, adaptive, movemental, translocal, pioneering, entrepreneurial, architectural, and custodial ministry needed to spark, mobilize, and sustain apostolic movements. Apostolic ministry is the appropriate form for missional movements. The church that Jesus designed has built-in capacities for the ongoing renewal of its theology and practice. Apostles are given to the ecclesia by Jesus to drive the permanent revolution that were meant to be. Theological and ethical doubt often follow operational doubt.

“It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it” (Upton Sinclair). The history of mission movements and renewal indicates that often as soon as we appear to be making significant progress, we bungle it and have to start all over again. We

should look to our own practices and see whether we conform to the original intention and design. To do otherwise commits us to the Sisyphean struggle of rolling the boulder of the church up the hill, only to have it roll down again.

To mess with the DNA of the church (that is, its original design and function) means to seriously damage our capacity to actually be ecclesia. The church's lack of adherence to the teachings of Ephesians 4 is a clear case of how we have altered the genetic code and paid the price. As with any other form of deception, truth telling always disarms the power of a lie and positions us for an embrace with reality.

Apostles in the generic sense are those sent to pioneer something new. Prophets tend to be visionaries and often have a keen interest in issues of justice, environmental responsibility, or the creative arts. Evangelists are gifted at enthusing others about what they stand for, selling the significance of their work. Pastors have a special concern for seeing and affirming what is human within structures. Teachers are effective trainers and inspirers of learning. They understand ideas and how they shape human life.

Viewing APEST sociologically allows us to demystify the language of the Bible. Any healthy leadership team in any context (corporate, nonprofit, or anything else) would benefit from such a complex of influences. It gives us insight into why having only 2 of the types in the mix lead to dysfunctions.

Ephesians is addressed to the regular people of God who inhabited the various house churches throughout the city of Ephesus. It is for the church about the church. Paul is talking about the ecclesia as God intended it to be. No other book in the Bible deals so specifically and authoritatively with the nature of ecclesia. APEST operates as the interpretative center for how we conceive of ministry. Imagine trying to act according to a constitution when more than half the leadership provided there were annulled or dismissed. **It would be like having to run government with no executive powers.**

Reinserting the very language of apostle, prophet, and evangelist into organizational discourse will revolutionize our conception of the church and its core tasks. If we persist in using the standard shepherd and teacher frameworks for church planting, we inevitably see that the primary purpose of the new plant will be to run worship services and Bible studies. Eph 4:1-6 describes 3 movements: unity (v 1-6), diversity/APEST (v 7-11), and maturity (v 12-16). Herein Paul ensures the theological integrity of the church, clarifying the boundaries of orthodoxy, yet packaging it in a reproducible form. By effectively exiling the apostolic, prophetic, and evangelistic ministries, we have meddled with the very mechanism Jesus intended for us to be a fully functioning ecclesia. We are perfectly designed to achieve what we are currently achieving.

To assert a set of assumptions and subsequently forcing everything to fit those assumptions, our narrative fallacy tends to construct stories around facts. This is called *reflective equilibrium*: the tendency to retrofit facts and evidence into preexisting categories in order to resolve apparent categorical tensions, forcing all other possible forms of ministry to conform to this 2-fold standard. Rather than assessing ministry in light of a 5-fold form, we have forced the New Testament to fit our assumptions.

Pastor/shepherd (poimein) is used once in the New Testament for people in ministry, although teacher is used 10 times.

Seeing APEST through the lens of ministry of all believers leads us to believe that **Ephesians 4 is not primarily a leadership text but rather a ministry text.** We suggest that **calling and ministry are different from leadership only by matter of degree and capacity.** There is a flow from gifting to ministry to leadership. APEST is a part of the DNA of all God's people, making it a universal feature of all communities in Christ. Jesus parses out the core elements of his ministry into 5 categories and plants them deep within the church, since they are rooted in the original ministry of Christ.

The list in 1 Corinthians seems to be mostly associated with the Christian gathering, and that in Romans 12 seems to be more concerned with practical activities done by members of the community. With APEST, instead of listing activities, Paul connects being with doing: task and person are the same. Ephesians 4:11 is the interpretative center, the organizing principle, around which the other gifts listed in scripture are organized. The gifts of Romans and 1 Corinthians can be viewed as a kind of tool belt from which we can draw.

"When the solution is simple, God is speaking" (Einstein). Each ministry is characterized by a type of intelligence: apostolic intelligence (AQ), prophetic intelligence (EQ), etc. The combination of these 5 APEST intelligences creates a synergistic, heightened intelligence in the people of God as a whole. Individually and collectively, this strengthens the church's capability to process and interpret information.

Apostolic movements refer to highly transformative, exponential people movements that shape the extension and mobilization of Christianity into new frontiers—for example, the underground Chinese church.

Prophets feel the sin and dysfunction in the world. In this way, they function like canaries in the coal mine that because of their sensitivity to toxic environments keel over long before anyone detects something has gone wrong. The prophet's eye is directed to the contemporary scene; the society and its conduct are the main theme of his speeches. Yet his ear is inclined to God. His greatness is his ability to hold God and man in a single thought.

People and the institutions they inhabit can find themselves held hostage by their own logic and systems of justification. In such situations, we need prophetic imagination to deconstruct and dismantle these systems that often conceal our fears and selfishness. Recognizing the prophet's distinct, focused role to awaken our imaginations partly explains why the prophetic person can often have an aversion, even disdain, for strategy and structure planning. Prophets are often discontent with the status quo. No wonder they tend to be killed, exiled, or simply marginalized. God's people have always struggled to hear and integrate prophetic messages, which is why so many prophets are rejected and isolated from the ministry of the church. But without them, it is hard to see how we can remain a faithful, covenantal people.

Organizational learning occurs when programs are subjected to questions. The role of the prophet is one who both criticizes and energizes. Genuine ministry will include both.

Martin Luther King was fond of saying that those whom you would change you must first love. Without the prophetic *voice*, we become overly pragmatic and mechanistic in our orientation towards effectiveness and success as a church. Without prophetic *imagination* we don't expect God to speak to us. Without prophetic *urgency*, we don't question status quo and are afraid to disturb social and traditional equilibrium. Without prophetic *modeling*, we lose our transformational and radical edge. Without prophetic *spirituality*, our spirituality becomes intellectual, predictable, and segmented. Without prophetic *longing*, we are content with God being a distant Savior and Creator but lose the sense of him as Lover, Friend, Judge, Comforter, etc. Spirituality becomes about right belief or even right practice—not right relationship.

Evangelists are always looking to create a positive encounter between people and the core messages of the church, especially the gospel. They are agents of conversion and great socializers, with an extraordinary knack for making friends and acquaintances. Jesus demonstrates a paradigm of conversion in the gospel of Mark where the 12 apostles undergo a gradual, incremental process of conversion where they arrive at the true identity of Jesus and its implications for discipleship only after a lengthy process of discovery.

The road to Emmaus involves *process*: walking with people through life, eating meals together, discussing Jesus and the meaning of scripture. The road to Damascus looks to provide an *event*. Recovering a process-based paradigm of conversion expands our view of both evangelism and the ministry profile of an evangelist. The evangelist finds great satisfaction in being strategically instrumental in helping someone move closer to Jesus, no matter what phase of the journey he or she is in. Evangelistic people specialize in recruiting, but they are not designed for retention. This function falls more to the shepherding function.

Shepherds operate primarily out of a communal impulse. They are invigorated by a sense of cohesion, inclusiveness, and stability—the ecclesial equivalent of an organization's human resource department.

The teacher is probably the most susceptible to being ideological. But we cannot teach what we do not know, and we cannot lead where we will not go. We may be educated way beyond our own capacity to obey.

When pastoral leadership monopolizes, the church will become risk averse, codependent and needy, and lack in healthy dissent and creativity. When teachers and theologians rule, the church will be ideological, controlling, moralistic, and somewhat uptight. A rationalistic, doctrine-obsessed, Christian Gnosticism (the idea that we are saved by what we know) may replace reliance on the Holy Spirit.

By exiling APEs, we are jettisoning Jesus from our midst and all the things that He was able to do in those ministries. To function primarily out of a constricted shepherd/teacher (ST) model ignores a vast surplus of spiritual and human capital contained within the apostolic/prophetic/evangelist (APE) ministries. If we reactivate the potential of APEST, it will position us for the permanent revolution that Jesus intended.

Prophets gravitate toward definitions of the gospel that focus on covenant faithfulness, justice, and restoration. Shep-

herds highlight forgiveness, healing, and communal aspects of the work of Christ. Teachers focus on the implications for worldview and ideological perspective. Evangelists, true to their calling to be recruiters, catalysts, and the bearers of good news, emphasize the call to trust in Jesus, be saved, and to give one's life to his cause. Apostles highlight the seminal nature of the gospel and how it informs and motivates the church.

Apostolic people naturally pursue opportunities, but prophets ensure that they take the right pathway to get there. Incarnational ministry requires prophetic patience and attentiveness to what God is already doing in neighborhoods and people's lives, and it honors the need for justice and shalom among peoples. The missional and incarnational are associated with apostles and prophets, respectively.

“Seeker-sensitive movements” of the 1980s and 1990s put evangelism at the center of the church's purpose in the world. When evangelism is thought to be synonymous with apostolic ministry, not only is apostolic ministry effectively co-opted to the evangelistic (which is more understood), but the possibility of much-needed apostolic impact is seriously diminished. Apostles and evangelists are therefore different in motivation and outcome. Apostles almost always catalyze movements primarily through mission and church planting, whereas evangelists create church growth by adding people to the movement through conversions. One of the clearest pointers of authentic apostolic ministry is church planting.

The evangelistic person tends to design an organization that will transfer the message en masse as well as well incorporate additional converts to the community. The apostolic person will likely design to mobilize converts into the ongoing mission and to extend the church's reach. One is centripetal and the other centrifugal; one is additional and the other exponential. The American megachurch is largely the result of evangelistic approaches and leadership. Multisite thinking and church planting movements resulted from more apostolic approaches to ministry. Evangelists, in order to maximize the impact of their ministry and calling, are unlikely to wander to far from home base; they are supralocal.

The church-state alliance in Europe and the associated church-culture alliance in the US have granted Christianity a privileged status. The problem is that the Western church now finds itself in an increasingly dechurched or unchurched society. Simply applying an evangelistic solution to a missionary problem will be a big category error. Shepherds must be very attentive to the local and the particular. They and teachers are integrative and operative. They optimize efficiency and resourcefulness. On the other hand, evangelists, prophets, and apostles are generative and adaptive.

It is indeed a paradox that **while the existence of conflict and opposition threatens a group's life, the absence of the same forces is a serious threat.** Emotionally, a group that does not provide room for the conflicting and ambivalent reactions evoked by group life is not a place where either individuals or the group as a whole can thrive. **We need to allow the tension to be creative, not destructive, by placing a high value on both the “pioneers” (APE) and the “developers” (ST), to strike the right balance between differentiation and integration.**

Without a way to recognize and affirm diversity, the operational needs of the organization determine the roles that people play. Charismatic leaders will become the primary point of reference. Either the organization or influential people end up defining the ministry culture of the community. In a healthy APEST the teacher will have direct access to all the other ministries. The purpose of being equipped by these ministries is to increase our ability to operate in our ministry. Not everyone is a teacher, but everyone is called to share what they know from the scriptures; not everyone is a shepherd, but we are all called to care; not everyone is an evangelist, but we are all called to share the good news; not everyone is a prophet, but we are all called to listen to God; not everyone is an apostle, but everyone is called to live a sent life.

We should recognize that just as maturity is an incremental, lifelong affair, it takes time for adequate exposure and training to take place around a particular APEST vocation. Each believer is in a real sense a seed of an ecclesia, and an ecclesia is the seed of a movement. The apostolic is the most generative and catalytic of them all and carries the most promise in helping to reverse the decline of the church.

“The great Christian revolutions came not by the discovery of something that was not known before, but when someone takes radically something that was always there” (Richard Niebuhr). As custodian of the DNA of Jesus’ people, the apostle is also the messenger and carrier of the DNA of Christianity. Without apostolic *multiplication*, we stop at evangelistic addition. Without apostolic *action*, we fail to experience the promised presence of Christ. Without apostolic *clarity*, our identity and purpose become murky. Without apostolic *modeling*, we miss out on a culture of releasing and empowering.

Most communities quickly develop an organizational culture with an internal resistance to change before mature mobilization process begins. The basic assumptions are captured in the controlling stories, metaphors, and paradigms that the organization lives and interprets its world by. The role of reawakening or remembering who we are is writ large throughout the Bible and is a vital part of the apostolic function.

Mission is the mother of good theology. The transformative potential of leaders lies in their ability to define shared social identities—to define reality. Without regular cycles of renewal and revitalization, what were once dynamic movements will degrade to the point of closure. The issue of systemic renewal highlights the ongoing role of the apostle in the life of the church.

Renewal must be conceived as a constant back-and-forth between our direct experience of God and the subsequent attempt to live consistently with that encounter in the arena of life. We want to know God and be known by him, and to live a life pleasing to him. The apostolic role within established churches and denominations requires reinterpreting the denomination’s foundational values in the light of the demands of its mission today. This needs to ensure the new generation is not “frozen out” by those who resist change. It is not so much that the church has a mission but that the mission has a church.

Every organization has an inner voice that constitutes its moral center. Articulation of the inner voice of an organization is often the first step toward revitalizing. The purpose of an

organization is a gift that lies at its heart and the recovery of the gift means a “return to the sources”—to be radical traditionalists. For example, the charismatic renewal of the 1980s was a radical reinterpretation of the Pentecostal movement. It is movements of mission that fuel movements of spiritual and theological renewal, and usually not the other way around. Protestant history is that new movements have generally been ejected from the host organization (Francis of Assisi, John Wesley, William Booth, and Pentecostalism were all initially rejected and persecuted).

Maintaining the core ideas and interpreting them again and again into ever-changing situations requires the enduring ministry of the apostle. A permanent revolution requires a permanent revolutionary. We must return to our deepest home, the movemental ecclesiology of the New Testament, and so rediscover the power of apostolic movement.

“Really to see God is never to have had one’s fill of desiring Him” (Gregory of Nyassa). Institutions, religious or otherwise, are designed to provide the safety of predictability. By providing regularity, recognizability, and ritual, they relieve us of having to incessantly develop new ways of doing things.

Paul throws himself into the difficult but crucial task of serving as a midwife to a conversion of worldview. *Their* culture (the world round us) and structure should determine *our* strategy and approach. Because the church is a sign, symbol, and foretaste of the kingdom of God, it is ever the agent of the kingdom that operates in and through it. Symbols and ideas that were once vibrant become bankrupt when they no longer convey the right meaning as a result of the changing environment and conditions. Once Christians had begun to think of the Church as a structure to be compared with and related to other structures in society, it became one of the very principalities and powers that the Gospel was supposed to withstand. All organization involves the mobilization of bias; it embeds a predisposition into the social life of the community, and is often at direct odds with the implicit motivations, as well as explicit purposes, of God.

Movements thrive on simplicity, reproducibility and scalability. Plant movements, not churches. Plant the gospel, not churches.

[Cycles of revival and backsliding will continue until all 5 of the Eph 4 gifts are restored to the church. **APEST (apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher) is the primary algorithm of the ministry of ecclesia. Without apostolic gifting present, it would be like having to run government with no executive powers. Ephesians 4 is not primarily a leadership text but rather a ministry text. Calling and ministry are different from leadership only by matter of degree and capacity. While the *existence* of conflict and opposition threatens a group’s life, the *absence* of the same forces is also a serious threat. We need to allow the tension to be creative, not destructive, by placing a high value on both the “pioneers” (APE) and the “developers” (ST), to strike the right balance between differentiation and integration. Mission is the mother of good theology.]**