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BOOK REVIEW AND COMMENTARY

Learn Alan Hirsch's definition of Church and whether or not it's worth believing.

***The Forgotten Ways — Reactivating the Missional Church* by Alan Hirsch. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2006.**

***The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* by Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2012.**

by Albert B. Collver III

NEARLY ANYONE FOLLOWING the missional church movement has heard of Alan Hirsch, who has been called one of the foremost missional thinkers of our day. Hirsch studied business and marketing in the university before matriculating to Australia where he studied seminary at the Australian College of Theology. After graduating, Hirsch became the pastor at the South Melbourne Church of Christ in 1989. For the next 15 years, Hirsch served as the pastor. He worked with the marginalized and poor in Melbourne. From this experience, Hirsch developed his missional theory. He has written “a library of missional books.”¹ However, two of his books in particular define his mission paradigm: *The Forgotten Ways*, first published in 2006, and *The Permanent Revolution*, published in 2012. Hirsch considers *The Forgotten Ways* to be his “magnum opus” and a “phenomenology of apostolic movement.”² Hirsch’s book *The Permanent Revolution* focuses “on the nature of ministry and leadership within (and for) apostolic movements ... but it does so within the broader context of fivefold gifting complex set out by Paul in his foundational work on ecclesiology ... Ephesians.”³ Hirsch describes *The Permanent Revolution* as correlating to the “mDNA of apostolic environment in *The Forgotten Ways*.”⁴ In slightly more “traditional” ecclesial vocabulary, if *The Forgotten Ways* is “church,” then *The Permanent*

Revolution is “ministry.” Since Hirsch ascribes the loss of the apostolic missional energy to the contemporary church’s loss or misunderstanding of the biblical view of Christ’s Church and of apostolic and Pauline ministry or leadership, these two books are significant and worth the time to consider his arguments.

In his book *The Forgotten Ways*, Hirsch develops and explains significant aspects of his missional theory. He believes that his book demonstrates a more authentic expression of *ecclesia* and that in light of the 21st century challenges that “the inherited formulas” will no longer work (pg. 16). Hirsch identifies his book as belonging to the category of “missional ecclesiology.” Hirsch’s primary thesis is that once the Church became institutionalized after Constantine and the legalization of Christianity, she departed from the Scriptural foundations of what it means to be church and missional. Hirsch seeks to discover how the Church grew from an estimated 25,000 people in 100

For Hirsch the irreducible minimal definition of the Church is “a covenanted community” and that it is “centered on Jesus.”

A.D. to 20,000,000 people by 310 A.D. He asks, “So, how *did* [sic] the early church do it? In answering the question, we can perhaps find the answer to the question for the church and mission in our day and in our context. For herein lies the powerful mystery of the church in its most authentic form” (pgs. 18–19).

Hirsch juxtaposes or compares the “Apostolic Genius” of the Early Church’s growth with the growth of the Christian Church (Three-Self Church) in China after the Communist revolution. Hirsch states, “In the Chinese phenomenon we are witnessing the most significant transformational Christian movement in the history

¹ See more at <http://www.theforgottenways.org/alan-hirsch.aspx>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

of the church” (pg. 19) He compares the growth of the Chinese church to the Early Church, “And remember, not unlike the early church, these people had very few Bibles (at times they shared only one page to a house church and then swapped that page with another house group). They had no professional clergy, no official leadership structure, no central organization, no mass meetings, and yet they grew like mad. How is this possible? How did they do it?” (pg. 19). He provides two other historical examples of Early Church like growth from recent history. He cites the growth of Methodism from less than 2 percent of the population in America in 1776 to more than 34 percent of the population by 1850. His other example is the growth of Pentecostalism, which grew from humble beginnings at the turn of the 20th century to more than 400 million by the end of the 20th century with projections of exceeding more than 1 billion by the mid-21st century. Hirsch asks, “How did they do it?” (pg. 19).

Hirsch calls these examples of rapid church growth “dangerous stories” because they challenge the established church. He states that the goal of his book is “to try and give a name to this phenomena and to try to identify the elements that constitutes it” (pg. 19). Hirsch calls the “phenomena” of rapid church growth “Apostolic Genius,” and the elements that constitute it “mDNA” (missional DNA). In both the growth of the Early Church and that of the Chinese church, Hirsch identifies persecution as key factor. “Persecution forced them away from any possible reliance on any form of centralized religious institution and caused them to live closer to, and more consistently with their primal message of the gospel It purified them from the dross and any unnecessary churchly paraphernalia. It was by *being true* to the gospel that they unleashed the power of Apostolic Genius” (pg. 20). Hirsch maintains that all of God’s people “carry within themselves the same potencies that energize the early Christian movement and that are currently manifest in the underground Chinese church. Apostolic Genius (the primal missional potencies of the gospel and of God’s people) lies dormant in you, me, and every local church that seeks to follow Jesus faithfully in any time. We have simply forgotten how to access

and trigger it” (pg. 21). Hirsch’s book claims to help the reader access this Apostolic Genius so that the Church can be revitalized once again.

Hirsch notes that his book provides a consistent critique of “religious institutionalism.” He wants to clarify that he does not think “institutionalism” is bad per se, but that simply in his analysis of the early Christian community and of the Chinese Christian community (and other growing churches) that “God’s people are more potent by far when they have little of what we would recognize as church institution in their life together” (pg. 23).

Hirsch recognizes that this critique will be challenging to most Western religious leaders because they are a product of religious institutionalism. Yet he encourages the reader to hear out his presentation. He divides his book into Section 1 and Section 2. Section 1 is narrative in style describing some of Hirsch’s experiences. Section 2 describes Apostolic Genius and the elements of mDNA.

Section 1 describes Hirsch’s experience at South Melbourne Church of Christ right after he completed his seminary training. Tracking with his critique of institutionalism, Hirsch begins by offering a critique of seminary education, “I have to say that nothing in my seminary training had

prepared me for the experience of those years. Everything in my education was geared toward maintaining the established, more institutional forms of the church. The vast majority of the subjects on offer were theoretical and were taught by theoreticians, not practitioners. So we had to learn on the run” (pg. 30). Later in the book, Hirsch states that “leadership, or the lack of it, is a significant key to either the renewal or the decline of the church” (pg. 120). Hirsch believes that this leadership malaise has been caused by “the agencies and people that have been responsible for the training and endorsing of leadership” (Ibid.). Hirsch calls for the reader to question how church leaders have been trained for the past few centuries. He believes that a significant problem of seminary education is that it removes a would-be leader from “the context of ordinary life and ministry in order to study in a somewhat cloistered environment” (pg. 120). Hirsch maintains that this is not how Jesus trained leaders and disciples. He also

Hirsch essentially claims for 1,700 years the Church has been following a less than or even unbiblical model. He wants to revitalize the Church by returning to and contextualizing the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” of the church for the present age.

states that Jesus was well aware of the Greek “academy” model but that Jesus did not use that model to teach.

In Hirsch’s *The Permanent Revolution* written in 2012, he further expands his critique of seminary education. He writes:

The denominational seminary is a classic case in point. If one organization is set apart to handle all the ideas and leadership training, then the local church no longer believes it has to do the hard work of these itself. As a result, it becomes lazy and dependent on the external organization. If we are not careful, creating external training and licensing bodies can be a death knell to a movement and cultivate a propensity toward institutionalism” (Kindle location: 6505).

Complaints about seminary education are nothing new and frequently circulate in various denominations. Hirsch identifies how seminary education is done as a hindrance to developing church leaders and an instrument that leads to the institutionalization of the Church. Hirsch seems to favor ministry and leadership training inside the local congregation over formal, academic seminary training. It is ironic to note that Hirsch wrote this about seminary education before he, himself, became part of the academy. As of 2015, Hirsch serves as a professor at Wheaton College in the Missional Church Movement program.

The heart of Hirsch’s book *The Forgotten Ways* centers on ecclesiology and church leadership (church and ministry, using Lutheran terminology). For Hirsch the irreducible minimal definition of the Church is “a covenanted community” and that it is “centered on Jesus.” Hirsch further states that a meaningful encounter with Jesus results in “worship, defined as offering our lives back to God through Jesus; Discipleship, defined as following Jesus and becoming increasingly like him; Mission, defined as extending the mission of God through the activities of his people” (pg. 40). Hirsch states, “Each informs the other to create a complex phenomenon called ‘church’” (Ibid.). Contrast Hirsch’s definition of the Church with that of the Augsburg Confession, Article VII: “Our churches teach that one holy Church is to remain forever. The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered.” Although the “Word” (and perhaps “Sacraments”) might be able to exist or be found

within Hirsch’s definition, they are not primary as in the Augsburg Confession. Hirsch defines “worship” as “offering our lives back to God,” in contrast to the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV, 33/154: “The woman came with the opinion that forgiveness of sins should be sought in Christ. **This worship is the highest worship of Christ.** She would think of nothing greater about Christ. To seek forgiveness of sins from Him was truly to acknowledge the Messiah.” Hirsch’s ecclesiology and definition of worship are significantly, if not fundamentally different, then what is confessed in the Lutheran Confessions. In fact, Hirsch’s view of ecclesiology is not compatible with the Lutheran Confessions. Hirsch even states, “People accustomed to ‘being fed’ are generally loath to move from passivity to activity” (pg. 47). Yet Lutheran theology focuses on Christ’s people being fed on Christ’s Word and Sacraments. Considering that Hirsch’s thesis is that a fundamental problem with the Church today is that it has departed from the New Testament conception of the Church and that his view of the Church does not agree with the Lutheran Confessions must cause Lutherans to question not only Hirsch’s thesis but also his proposed solution.

Hirsch’s fundamental thesis is that the Church existed in the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” between 32–313 A.D. From 313 A.D. until the

21st century, the Church has existed in what he calls the “Christendom Mode.” Hirsch’s “Christendom Mode” is similar in concept to what others refer to as the Constantinian Church, which is a church that has favor with the government and society in general. Finally, he describes the past decade or so as the “Emerging Missional Mode” (pg. 64). Hirsch argues that the “Christendom mode” church is not the original biblical church and should not mourned.⁵ According to Hirsch’s paradigm, the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” of church has more similarities with the “Emerging Missional mode” than it does with the “Christendom mode” which has dominated throughout most of the history of the Church. For instance, both the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” and “Emerging Missional mode” of church does not have dedicated

For Hirsch, the word “church” is linked to buildings, clergy and rituals.

⁵ “If you are feeling uncomfortable at this point, let me reiterate that Christendom in fact is not the original biblical mode of the early church, and so we do not need to feel too touchy about it. It’s all right ... God’s not going to strike us if we seek to find a better way to be faithful as well as missional. Progress is cool” (*The Forgotten Ways*, 64).

church buildings, whereas the “Christendom mode” supposedly holds that “buildings become central to the notion and experience of church” (pg. 64). The “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” and “Emerging Missional mode” of church has a five-fold ministry-leadership based on Ephesians 4 (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher), whereas the “Christendom mode” of church has “leadership by institutionally ordained clergy, thus creating a professional guild operating primarily in a pastor-teacher mode” (Ibid.). The five-fold minister-leadership model based on Ephesians 4 where ministry-leadership is expressed as APEPT (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) is a major component of Hirsch’s paradigm and will be discussed in more detail below. The “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” of church according to Hirsch celebrates communion as a sacramentalized community meal and Baptism done by all while the “Emerging Missional mode” resacramentalizes and ritualizes new symbols and events including the meal. For Hirsch this stands in contrast to the “Christendom mode” of the church, which has institutionalized grace through the Sacraments experienced only in church. The “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” and “Emerging Missional mode” according to Hirsch are both on the fringes of society, marginalized, and perhaps underground. In contrast the “Christendom mode” of the church is perceived as central to society and culture. In terms of mission, Hirsch sees the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” and “Emerging Missional mode” as an incarnational and sending church. In contrast, the “Christendom mode” of the church is what Hirsch calls “attractional,” which means that people gather to come and see rather than going out into the world or sending. Hirsch essentially claims for 1,700 years the Church has been following a less than or even unbiblical model. He wants to revitalize the Church by returning to and contextualizing the “Apostolic and Postapostolic mode” of the church for the present age.

Hirsch claims for the Church to be successful today we need to “invoke and access the power of Apostolic Genius.” (Pg. 65). He summarizes that “the truly liberating thing to realize is that Christendom was not the original mode of the church, and hopefully it will not be

the final one. It is high time for us to dethrone Constantine; as far as matters of church go, it seems he is still the emperor of our imaginations. The church now faces the challenge of discovering mission in a new paradigm while struggling to free itself from the Christendom mindset”

(Ibid.). In Section 2, Hirsch also developed a definition of a missional church. “So a working definition of missional church is a community of God’s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God’s mission to the world. In other words, the church’s true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church” (pg. 81). Hirsch develops a formula for engaging in mission for post-Christian culture: “Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology” (Ibid., 142). He calls this “missional ecclesiology.” Contrast

Although Hirsch offers some helpful critiques on Western culture in the twenty-first century, his solution to solving the decline of the Western church requires a reinterpretation both of the Church and of the ministry.

Hirsch’s definition of the true church with Augsburg Confession VII, which finds the Church gathered around the Word and the Sacraments.

In *The Forgotten Ways*, Hirsch discusses his minister-leader model APEPT (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher) based on Eph. 4:7–11 (pg. 158). However, it is the book he wrote six years later, *The Permanent Revolution*, where he develops the model more fully and replaces the term “pastor” with that of “shepherd.” In *The Permanent Revolution*, Hirsch calls Eph. 4:1–16 an almost silver bullet, “a simple, guaranteed solution for a difficult problem” (Kindle location: 992). Hirsch claims that applying the Ephesians 4 typology “will unleash enormous energies that will awaken now-dormant potentials in the church that Jesus built” (Ibid.). Hirsch states that Ephesians 4 typology — that is, the fivefold ministry he calls APEST: apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher — is a major component of Pauline ecclesiology. He notes that in the millions of books written about the church the APEST model has never been discussed.

Yet in the many millions of theological books that have ever been written, we cannot find serious explorations of the topic of fivefold ministry as a living and vital piece of the church’s genetic coding. In theological libraries, you will find hundreds of thousands of books that explore some

of the most obscure concepts conceivable ... not to mention countless contemporary books of theological bubblegum, and yet there is no open-minded and focused thinking on Ephesians 4 even though it contains a concentrated piece of deeply foundational Pauline ecclesiology (Kindle location: 1024).

Hirsch makes the bold claim that the reason the Church has ignored the Ephesians 4 typology for nearly 1,700 years is because “the Devil wanted to strike a blow against our capacity to be the church that Jesus intended us to be” (Ibid.). Hirsch argues that the foundational ministry of the Church, that is, the Ephesians 4 typology has been divided. This division or tearing apart of the Ephesians 4 typology has “completely delegitimize[d]” some areas of the ministry, while over legitimizing others “by institutionalizing them.” The result of this loss of the Ephesians 4 typology is that “the ministry of the church, along with its leadership, is thus rendered largely ineffective” (Kindle location: 1038). Hirsch says that the Church today needs a “missional ministry for a missional church.” The way to do this according to Hirsch is to follow the Ephesians 4 typology.

For Hirsch a missional ministry requires the restoration of the apostle, prophet and evangelist roles to the Church. Hirsch believes being missional depends upon this and recognizes that many will be challenged by his assertions. He writes:

But we fear that so many of these vital conversations are doomed to frustration because the people in them are unwilling or unable to reconfigure ministry to suit the missional context. Although many buy into the concept, they are unwilling to recalibrate the ecclesiology. Christendom church has been run largely shepherd-teacher model, and because it has had a privileged position in society, it has been inclined to dispense with the more missional or evangelistic ministry types (apostle, prophet, and evangelist). These inherited forms of the church are not equipped for the missional challenge because they refuse to recalibrate their ministry along the lines suggested in Ephesians 4 (Kindle location: 1054).

Hirsch’s Ephesians 4 typology holds that the ministry / leadership of the Church is based on what he calls APEST. APEST is his acronym for apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. He bases this paradigm on Eph. 4:11–12, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets,

the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” In Lutheran circles for the past few decades, the discussion on Eph. 4:11–12 has focused on if the one pastoral office (consisting of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers) is to equip the saints by doing the work of the ministry (preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments) or if the one pastoral office “equips the saints” to do ministry. Hirsch, of course, holds the view that the ministry of apostle, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers is to “equip the saints” to “do the work of the ministry.” But Hirsch’s interpretation is far more reaching in that it creates a fivefold ministry rather than one Office of the Ministry. Lutherans have typically understood Eph.s 4:11 as descriptive about the one pastoral office. Hirsch understands Eph. 4:11 as prescriptive. Where Hirsch takes St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians as defining the ministry, Lutherans have looked to the texts where Christ institutes institutes the Office of the Holy Ministry found in Matt. 28:18–20 and John 20:21–23. (See *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, pg. 162). Lutherans have found Eph. 4:11–12 as descriptive of the responsibilities of the office of the Holy Ministry. (See *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, pg. 163).

According to Hirsch, the Ephesians 4 typology requires a fivefold Office of Ministry. Hirsch’s fivefold office, although using similar language, is not the same as the Anglican or Roman threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon. Hirsch maintains that for the Church to be a missional church, it needs to have a missional ministry that is fivefold in nature and consists of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. He goes so far as to suggest that the APEST ministry is part of the order of creation. “APEST is reflected in the orders of creation (as part of the general human experience ... In other words, these apply in some ways to all people, not just Christians” (Kindle location: 1087). This means that when Eph. 4:11 says, “And he gave,” the “giving” of apostle, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers is not a “gift” specifically given to the Church but rather is given to all of humanity. Non-Christians in secular roles also fulfill the role of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers in the areas of politics, business and all other secular vocations. For instance, an “apostle” in a secular role is a pioneer who might turn around a failing school or a person who creates a movement or who starts entrepreneurial businesses. APEST is a part of being “made in the image of God” and not a special spiritual gift to the

church, specifically the gift of the office of the ministry to proclaim the Gospel. Presumably, the Church, being enlightened by the Holy Scriptures, would seek to recover and utilize the APEST given to all humans as part of the order of creation. As a result of APEST being based on the order of creation, that is, according to Hirsch, qualities endowed to the human condition, it is possible to test and identify the APEST in individuals. Hirsch offers tools to test which of the APEST gifts a person has so that he can enter into the proper form of ministry. An online test can help a person and a congregation find which person has what APEST gift. (See <http://www.theforgottenways.org/what-is-apest.aspx>). Consequently, since the Church for the past 1,700 years has only had shepherds and teachers (pastors and academics), the Church is no longer missional, nor is it capable of being missional in the 21st century unless the Church recovers the APEST ministry.

Hirsch provides definitions of each APEST ministry. “The *apostle* is tasked with the overall vigor, as well as extension of Christianity as a whole, primarily through direct mission and church planting.” (Kindle location: 1067). “The *prophet* is called to maintain faithfulness to God among the people of God” (Ibid.). “The *evangelist* is the recruiter to the cause, the naturally infectious person who is able to enlist people into the movement by transmitting the gospel” (Ibid.). “The *shepherd* (pastor) is called to nurture spiritual development, maintain communal health, and engender loving community among the people of God” (Ibid.). “The *teacher* mediates wisdom and understanding. This philosophical type brings comprehensive understanding of the revelation bequeathed to the church” (Ibid.). Hirsch maintains that all five of these forms of the ministry are needed for the Church to be “authentically missional.” Hirsch acknowledges that his approach to interpreting Ephesians 4 is sociological. He argues that the sociological approach “allows us to demystify the overly fraught language of the Bible and approach the meaning of Ephesians 4:11 without the polemics that have accompanied it in the past” (Kindle location: 1100). His sociological approach causes Hirsch to say that the shepherd (pastor) / teacher model employed by the Church has led to a leadership dysfunction.

Hirsch views Ephesians 4 as a “constitutional document” of the Church. He considers it to be authoritative for the “ecclesia as God intended it to be.” He identifies the apostle, prophet and evangelist as “generative forms of the ministry,” while the pastor and teacher modes maintain systems. Hirsch states that such a

view will revolutionize the Church. “Instead of seeing the church as an extension of the seminary (teacher) or as a place merely to get fed (shepherd), we can rightly conceive of the church within the broader framework of Christ’s ministry” (Kindle location: 1162). Hirsch’s problem with relying on the shepherd (pastor) and teacher models of ministry is that a church plant based on this model inevitably leads to “the primary purpose of the new plant will be to run worship services and Bible studies” (Kindle location: 1177). Hirsch argues that churches that operate with only a twofold ministry of shepherd (pastor) and teacher are incapable of maturing and are unable to “equip” the saints. Hirsch views the APEST ministry as Christological, because it is an extension of the original ministry of Christ. For Hirsch, Christ was an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a shepherd and a teacher. Since no one person possesses this fivefold office, individual people take on the role of one. Therefore, “A twofold ministry can never hope to reflect a complete and comprehensive ministry of Christ to the world, and neither can it ever hope to fulfill his purposes through the church. Anything less than a fivefold ministry is a misrepresentation of the ministry of Christ, and by consequence, that leads to a misrepresentation of Christ in the world” (Kindle location: 1391). For Hirsch, the absence of a fivefold APEST ministry in the church is a distortion of Christ, which causes a distortion or a dysfunctional church.

Hirsch spends significant time critiquing the church and the ministry of the past 1,700 years. He regards the shepherd (pastor) and teacher model of ministry as the cause for the institutionalization of the Church. He is not fond of the term “church planting” because of the cultural associations of the word “church” in the West. For Hirsch, the word “church” is linked to buildings, clergy and rituals. He also contends that the Scriptures do not command church planting.

One of the core tasks of apostolic ministry is to plant churches, but we are increasingly convinced that the term church planting itself is problematic. That is partly because we are never actually commanded to plant churches. In the Bible, that is always considered to be Jesus’s job; for our part, we are called to evangelize the world by making disciples ... To get to the real heart of the Great Commission, we suggest that it might be useful to drop the phrase “church planting”; instead we should begin to focus on the approach of “gospel planting.” This is actually very useful because it takes us to the core of what

missionary work is about in the first place: planting the message of Jesus and cultivating contextualized communities of faith that shape themselves around it” (Kindle location: 5962).

Hirsch believes that “apostolic doctrine supplanted apostolic practice.” In regard to doctrine, Hirsch writes:

We can no longer afford to delude ourselves into thinking that simply believing apostolic doctrine is going to be enough. If theological ideas were enough to create a mature church and usher in the kingdom, it would surely have happened by now. We have literally hundreds of millions of words of theology stored up in our libraries. For too long, we have allowed ourselves to be deceived into thinking that because we advocate apostolic doctrine that we are somehow going to automatically be an apostolic church. History has proven this to be patently false: having millions of theological books has not kept us from being profoundly heretical at times. God save us from thinking another volume of systematic theology is going to fix things up” (Kindle location: 7200).

Much more regarding Hirsch’s views could be written. Although Hirsch offers some helpful critiques on Western culture in the twenty-first century, his solution to solving the decline of the Western church requires a reinterpretation both of the Church and of the ministry. As Hirsch himself noted, the history of the Church has never conceived of a fivefold office consisting of APEST (apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, teacher). His understanding of the Church is not rooted in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments as confessed by Augustana VII. For Lutherans who believe in the Holy Scriptures and confess the Book of Concord, Hirsch’s definition of the church and of the ministry cannot be seen as compatible. It is important for us to understand Hirsch’s argument on both the Church and the ministry as his views have become incredibly popular in the missional crowd. Many missional works follow, assume, borrow or adapt ideas from Hirsch. When reading these works, we should keep in mind Hirsch’s framework so that those works can be understood within the context they were written.

The Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III is LCMS director of Church Relations and assistant to President Matthew C. Harrison.