

Review

5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ
Alan Hirsch

Reviewed by Justin White
Missionary #NoPlaceLeftRDU

Published in Global Missiology, www.globalmissiology.org. Oct. 2017

Introduction and Purpose

Alan Hirsch is the founder of Forge Mission Training Network, 100 Movements, and 5Q Collective. He is the author of numerous award-winning books on movements, organization, and leadership, and he spends much of his time teaching in North America, Europe, and Australia. Some of Hirsch's other books include *The Forgotten Ways* and *The Permanent Revolution*. Hirsch is a passionate, straight forward, opinionated, and provocative writer, and *5Q* is no exception.

In *5Q* Hirsch argues that, "After 1700 years of entrenched European formulations of church, we have to acknowledge that much of it simply no longer works; the maps don't fit the territories, and more importantly it does not fully square with the New Testament (xxiv)." He feels that the message of *5Q* is "An absolutely crucial key to lasting systemic change (xxiv)" in the church, and that it is "One of the surest ways to experience a renewed sense of symphony in our lives, ministries, and organizations (xxi)." In the Preface, Hirsch challenges the reader to read with "soft eyes," looking beyond what has become over familiar and habitual with regard to church and ministry (xxi). Hirsch's most basic definition of *5Q* is "The synergy of a holistic recombination of the apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, shepherding, and teaching (APEST) capacities referred to in Ephesians 4 (xxi)." The purpose of this book is to expound on this definition of *5Q*, establish its validity from God, the Bible and creation, and convince the reader that *5Q* must define and shape all that the church is (marks) and does (functions). The next section will examine the content of the book in order to help discern whether or not Hirsch accomplished his stated purpose.

Content

Section One: Mapping the Genome of the Body of Christ

Section One, which includes Chapters One through Six, lays out the theoretical framework of *5Q*. In Chapter One, Hirsch seeks to provide a basic orientation, and theological foundation, to a distinctly missional understanding of the Fivefold typology (xxxvi). This chapter is written as an APEST primer for those who are not as familiar with this terminology. *The Permanent Revolution* provides a more robust foundation and description of APEST. Hirsch notes that many interpreters of Ephesians 4:1-16 break apart the APEST functions, arguing that

only two (ST) are relevant for the church today. He argues that by doing this, “The church has damaged its God-given capacity to heal and perfect itself (14).” In this chapter, Hirsch makes a strong exegetical argument that APEST must come as a unit. Hirsch writes, “We cannot arbitrarily select two and edit the other three out without doing extreme violence to the grammar, as well as the intrinsic logic of the entire text. Neither the grammar nor the theology allows us to qualify the text to suit our less dynamic, more institutional, preferences (7).” Hirsch also believes that APEST is Jesus’ ministry in and through the local ecclesia. Without APEST the church will not grow in maturity and its missional capacity will be severely crippled.

In Chapter Two, Hirsch provides a basic orientation of what he means by *5Q*, and introduces the fundamental themes explored throughout the remainder of the book (xxxvi). Hirsch believes that, while APEST is not the only hermeneutical key for understanding Scripture, it is a very viable key which opens up the meaning of revelation in a new and fruitful way (28). He argues that APEST provides us with a holistic understanding of the ministry of God’s people and is the best biblical lens with which we can assess our participation in the ministry of Christ in the world (29). These are weighty claims that force the reader to critically engage with the following chapters.

In Chapters Three and Four, Hirsch argues for the divine origin of *5Q* (55). He believes that the Triune God of the Bible is the Source, or the original Archetype, of the *5Q* system. Hirsch suggests that we see God’s apostolic nature in his eternal purposes (Mission), his prophetic nature in his holy covenantal heart, his evangelistic nature in his saving mercy, his shepherding nature in his loving communal embrace, and his teaching nature in his infinite truth and wisdom (60). Therefore, since humanity was made in the image of God, APEST archetypes are evident throughout the entire Bible and throughout all of history.

Chapters Five and Six serve to highlight how APEST is the way in which Jesus’ presence is actively expressed in and through his Body. Hirsch believes that the “Fivefold APEST archetypes existing in fallen humanity are taken up in the very person of Christ and are thereby redeemed and reconfigured in and through his perfect life and his holy offering on the cross (68).” The Incarnate Christ embodied, possessed, and exhibited the Ephesians 4 gifts perfectly, and after his resurrection from the dead poured them out on his redeemed people, so that we might extend his purposes in the world (82). In Jesus we see the perfect Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, and Teacher.

In order to illustrate the danger of neglecting any of the APEST gifts in the church, Hirsch provides an interesting case study of John Wesley, and the Methodist movement (84). He believes Wesley was an effective apostle, prophet, evangelist, and teacher. While Wesley is only a pale reflection of the Fivefold template exemplified in Jesus, he was a super-gifted man who manifested very high *5Q*, and most Methodists would acknowledge this fact (85). Hirsch argues that the modern Methodist movement is in decline because the majority of them suppress the APE side of the Fivefold equation (85). It is surely safe to say that the Methodists are not the only denomination in decline and guilty of deleting the APE’s from the Ephesians 4 equation. Hirsch believes that, “Without full APEST expression, a church cannot expect to logically extend Jesus’ ministry in the world; neither can it attain to the fullness of Christ or achieve its purpose/mission - it will inevitably have dangerous gaps in its culture (88).”

Section Two: Living the Identities

Section Two is more practical as the ideas from Section One are applied to the local church, organization, and leadership. In Chapter Seven, Hirsch clearly defines the functions of APEST within the church. The goal here is to help individual believers gain a better sense of their calling within the Body of Christ. Included in this chapter are helpful and extensive charts that list examples of both APEST functions and callings. Hirsch continues to warn churches and leaders of the danger of neglecting certain APEST functions. He gives specific examples of ways relying too heavily on one or two functions can damage a church and its effectiveness. It is clear, however, that Hirsch feels the tendency in the Western church is to elevate teaching and shepherding by over relying on the sermon and Sunday service to the neglect of other vital functions of ecclesia such as evangelism, discipleship, mission, and covenant community (118).

Chapter Eight is a very interesting and thought provoking chapter on APEST and the marks of the church. Hirsch believes that many of the problems facing the Western Protestant church can be traced back to the faulty and insufficient marks of the church set forth by the Reformers. He believes that the right preaching of the Word and administration of the ordinances are a dangerous reduction of how the New Testament defines the church (130). Hirsch points out that these marks were created by reformers, who were strong shepherd/teachers, and that they have “Left us with an understanding of the church as ‘a place where certain things happen (131).’” He believes that these marks define the church without mission and extension, covenant obedience, and proclamation and good news, and that the decline of the church in Europe is a direct result of this shortsighted definition of church (132). Hirsch argues that “A community that does not have all five marks evident is a community on its way to being a true church, or on its way out (137).”

Chapter Nine is full of tools and methods that leaders can use to develop APEST capacities throughout the church. Chapter Ten is written by Rich Robinson. His goal in this chapter is to coach and encourage leaders and help them to put processes in place that will allow those that they are leading to discover, live out, and equip others based on their APEST strengths. His section admonishing leaders to see transformation as a journey, beginning with discipline, followed by habit, and resulting in a new lifestyle, is very helpful (168). Hirsch concludes the book with four interesting and helpful appendices addressing Cessationism, the Charismatic interpretation of APEST, the exiling of the APE’s in the Western church, and Threefold verses Fivefold pattern.

Evaluation

Strengths

First, Hirsch helps his case a great deal by grounding 5Q in the nature of God and his work in the world (21). Without this, though he also provides a convincing, though brief, exegesis of Ephesians 4:1-4, it would be tempting to charge him with proof-texting since this is the only place in the Bible APEST is found. By doing this Hirsch is able to make statements like, “It’s not a stretch, therefore, to say that the various APEST types are not simply functions and callings within the church; they are dimensions that are woven in and through all of life (33).” His goal in drawing our attention to this is to stimulate renewed missional imagination and practice across the domains of society (45). While Hirsch believes that balanced APEST

functions can bring success in various domains of society, his focus on Jesus and the church is to be commended.

Second, *5Q* is a very Christ-centered concept. Hirsch believes that Jesus is the perfected expression of the Fivefold. He points out that, “APEST is not merely five roles that Jesus plays, but also the five identities he assumes, recapitulates, and subsequently fulfills (22).” If this is true, then *5Q* must have massive implications for the church and its mission. Hirsch believes that *5Q* is a master key to understanding much of God’s purpose and design for life, ministry, and the church, and that it is a measure of Jesus’ active presence in a community (23).

Third, though often critical of the church, Hirsch’s love for and desire to see it reaching maturity and greater effectiveness is refreshing. It is evident that Hirsch attributes much of the dysfunction and ineffectiveness in the church to a disproportionate use of APEST. He rightly charges the church of elevating the ST functions, while exiling the APE functions. He is fair in his critique, warning against elevating the APE as well. Though this is not a stated purpose of his book, one can observe how important changing this in the church is for Hirsch, because of the emphasis he places on it throughout the entire book. His explanation of how, at least for the Protestant church, this imbalance was rooted in the Reformation was very helpful as well. His critique is fair, true, and prophetic thus making it a strength of *5Q*.

Fourth, *5Q* provides the most thorough and insightful definitions and functions of apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and teacher that this reviewer has been exposed to. The charts containing this information are invaluable to better understanding these gifts from Jesus to his church (50-54). This information, compiled together in this way, is valuable for those who read *5Q* and those who do not. For many members of the church, simply working through these definitions will activate and empower them to embrace and exercise their gifts and fulfill their calling without ever reading the rest of the book! Finally, the Appendices in *5Q* are excellent. They are relevant, thoughtful, and concise. They tackle some of the controversial questions pertaining to APEST and its legitimacy and value for the church.

Weaknesses

First, Hirsch is a passionate and opinionated author. While this serves him well most of the time, his dogmatic and condescending tone may cause him to lose some readers (especially church leaders who seem to be his target) who may actually agree with what he is saying. In the Preface and Introduction, he clearly establishes himself as the authoritative rabbi, guide, coach, and teacher, and the reader as his “Padawan” student (xxiii). For many readers this may not be an issue, but it may prevent others from actually hearing his message, despite his appeal to have “soft eyes.” Perhaps an overarching humble posture might serve him well, as well as an invitation to come and learn together. There is certainly room for pendulum swinging statements, but they might be more palatable if his general tone changed a bit.

Second, Hirsch is too dogmatic in his conclusion about the marks of the church. While most of Chapter Eight is very insightful and contains statements such as, “If we wanted to know if a congregation was actually an ecclesia, we would need to be able to observe whether or not it exhibits all the Fivefold functions in some discernable way” appear to be based much more on opinion rather than the Scriptures. While a balance of APEST in a church will certainly move the church towards maturity, Paul doesn’t seem to be arguing that a lack of all five functions means it ceases to be a church. It seems that the functions from Acts 2:36-47 seem much more Biblical and helpful when determining whether or not a group of believers is a church or not. Functions

from these verses include: repentance and faith, baptism, prayer, loving God and others, making disciples, worship, giving, the Lord's Supper, and a commitment to one another to identify as a church. At its most basic level, a church is a group of people pursuing these functions together. While APEST is vitally important, it seems to be a matter of well-being rather than being.

Third, the book can get extremely technical and complex at times, and the number of charts and tools is overwhelming. Perhaps Hirsch could have selected a few of the most useful ones and include the others in the Appendix. Fourth, an Appendix dealing with the other spiritual gifts, and how Ephesians 4 is similar and different from these lists would have been beneficial as well. What is their purpose and role, and are they less important than APEST?

Fifth, it would be wise to include some case studies where a full orbbed embrace of APEST caused a church to grow in maturity. Much of the book is extremely theoretical, and assumes *5Q* is a silver bullet guaranteeing success for the church. One case study (from my own experience) that would be helpful is a practical understanding of how a balanced APEST among church leaders translates into a Fivefold balance in the life and ministry of the church. Having each gift represented among the leaders of the church is no guarantee the church will mature.

Recommendation

Hirsch accomplished his purpose of defining *5Q* and establishing its validity from the nature of God, the Bible, and creation. He is convincing in his assertion that *5Q* is essential for the maturity and mission of the church. The strengths of this book far outweigh its weaknesses, therefore I would definitely recommend it to leaders and to those who have already read some of Hirsch's other works dealing with Ephesians 4 and APEST. The average reader, with no prior knowledge of these concepts, may struggle to make it through the book. In the end *5Q* encouraged me to take APEST more seriously in the life of the church, helped me to identify exactly how God has gifted me, and gave me invaluable insight into why the church in our day neglects the APE functions of Ephesians 4.