ALAN HIRSCH: MISSIONAL CHURCH

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Category: Church: UK

Alan Hirsch has posted an interesting article on the differences between *missional church* and *emerging church*. The post is part of a synchro-blog - I'm not sure what one of those is, but it sounds cool and I'd love to be part of one. My summary of what Hirsch is saying is that emerging/emergent is a particular stream of the church as it reacts to the end of modernity and the dawn of post-modernity. Missional is what the church (whatever stream it belongs to) should be - it is rooted in the character of the missionary redeeming God.

This quote from his book The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church illustrates the point he is making.

> *Missional church is a community of Godâ€™s people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of Godâ€™s mission to the world. In other words, the churchâ€™s true and authentic organizing principle is mission. When the church is in mission, it is the true church. The church itself is not only a product of that mission but is obligated and destined to extend it by whatever means possible. The mission of God flows directly through every believer and every community of faith that adheres to Jesus. To obstruct this is to block Godâ€™s purposes in and through his people.*

It is encouraging to read Hirsch saying " I personally do not feel the need to question the inherited theological tradition as many of its (ie emerging church) adherents do." Reading emerging church books can sometimes be an exercise in picking out the good ideas from amongst the litter of jetisoned orthodox theology.

Last word to Hirsch:

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> *To guard against a further degrading of the word, I want to suggest (as I did in The Forgotten Ways) that we combine the term â€˜missionalâ€™ with the associated term â€˜incarnationalâ€™ to come up with the term* ***missional-incarnational****. Its clunky I know, but the combination of these two words I believe captures far more completely a sense of the Churchâ€™s deepest theology and missionary calling in the world. It is laden with profound theological, and therefore missiological, meanings. If â€˜missionalâ€™ carries the sense of being â€™sentâ€™, then â€˜incarnationalâ€™ gives definition to the nature of that â€™sentness.â€™ If â€˜missionalâ€™ means being thrust into the world as witnesses to the redemption that is in Jesus, then â€˜incarnationalâ€™ shows us that we ought to engage the world in the same way that God did in and through the Incarnation of the Word in Jesus the Messiah. We must go into the world to reach people, but we ought to stay and abide in order to communicate the Gospel relationally and meaningfully in any given context.* ***Mission always sets our***

> ***Agenda and Incarnation must always describe our Way.***

I wish someone had said this to me before we went out to Kouya land.

Later addition:

I've just come across David Fitch's contribution to the same synchro-blog (Can a Mega-church be missional) . He lists all of the other people writing on the theme - most of whom don't come up on my blog feed reader, so that is a help. He also has this statment, which I think is very helpful.

> *For me, I use the word (missional) to describe a specific theology of the church. This theology specifically a.) sees the church as Trinitarian extension of the Missio Dei (mission is not a program of the church, it is the church) b.) Sees the church as the people of God driven to inhabit contexts incarnationally (as opposed to producing evangelistic strategies to get people to come into the church), and c.) Views salvation as a holistic reconciliation of the entire cosmos with God (as opposed to merely the penal satisfaction of God's justice, although this is certainly part of it!) -Christ's work recapitulates the undoing of all sin (personal, social, political, psychic etc.) until He comes.*