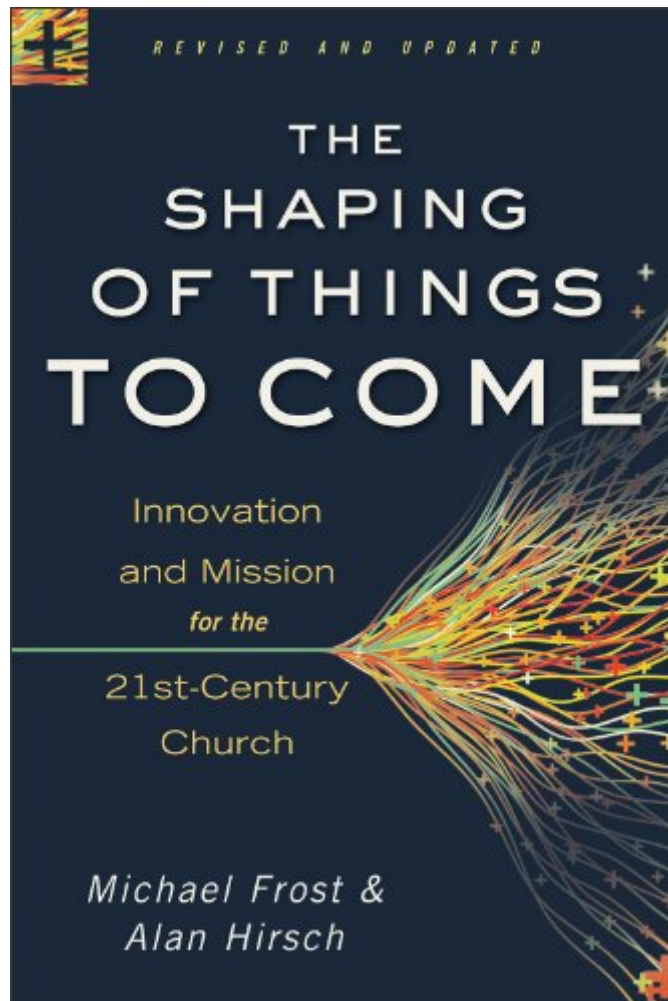


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# The Shaping Of Things To Come: Innovation And Mission For The 21st-Century Church



## Synopsis

In a time when the need for and the relevance of the Gospel has seldom been greater, the relevance of the church has seldom been less. *The Shaping of Things to Come* explores why the church needs to rebuild itself from the bottom up. Frost and Hirsch present a clear understanding of how the church can change to face the unique challenges of the twenty-first century. This missional classic has been thoroughly revised and updated.

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## Customer Reviews

It is true we are living in changing times. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch not only recognize this as a historical truth, but they offer a theological proposition for what the authors consider the impending irrelevance of the current church. Indeed quite an indictment, the theological judgment is coupled with an offer of a major shift in thinking for the Christian church of the West. This book is an Australian perspective on the current state of the Western church that both bites and instructs (or what many theologians mean by "informs"). Frost and Hirsch build their argument by declaring their

own orthodoxy, and yet the book is really written to promote "emerging missional communities" that are not particularly concerned with orthodoxy. Say Wha? The book is intended to give legitimacy to the emerging church and to justify its role in missiology by providing a vocabulary for the current praxis. The authors construct their line of reasoning by surveying what they call the Christendom church, the church as has existed from Constantine up to the present day, and then exposing the inherent weaknesses and growing irrelevance in that approach. After a quick overview of what the authors define as biblical Christianity, they promote an alternative post-Christendom church that is radically different from Constantine's baby. The authors unabashedly borrow terms from a wide variety of theological camps to support their proposition that Christendom-thinking has almost died, laying in the casket already and stinking. By identifying with the postmodern culture, the authors instead advocated a "wholesale change in the way Christians are doing and being the church" (ix).

Review of *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch (Hendrickson Publ., 2003)

*The Shaping of Things to Come* by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch has become a work of significant influence in evangelical circles. Frost and Hirsch are recognized scholars and practitioners, so their radical analyses and proposals are not dismissed lightly. Giving credibility to their proposals is the way they both have implemented experimentally many of the ideas they have proposed. The book is the result not only of scholarly analyses but of on-the-ground research across the Western world. What the authors find in common through the West is that the established church has lost its credibility and vitality. The fundamental critique is that the church has not mobilized the faith to transform the culture. The authors trace this weakness to the separation of the church from the world, the sacred from the profane, from the earliest days. "God is experienced as a church god and not the God of all life, including the church." (p. 158) Hirsch is a convert from Judaism, and several chapters draw on the Jewish heritage to provide a biblical basis for understanding the faith as a practice not just a belief, an orthopraxis not just an orthodoxy. Both individual Christians and congregations need to see their call to make a difference in the world, specifically in the community in which they are situated. Hirsch and Frost advocate that we move beyond the "Christendom model" of church centered around buildings and clergy and doctrine and membership rolls. The old "attractional model" of evangelism must give way to incarnational outreach into the community.

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