

“Key Passage Final Paper: Five-Fold Ministry”

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TH308 Gifts of the Spirit

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Edward Irving was the founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church and a major influence of the modern charismatic movement. Irving believed that it was by the power of the Holy Spirit, not by His divine nature, that Christ lived a sinless life and was empowered to perform miracles. In the 1830's, Irving's teachings on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and works of Christ were unconventional. In addition to his Christology, Irving also envisioned an apostolic order of church government; and the Catholic Apostolic Church functioned under this framework. He stated, "I have never ceased to believe that the spiritual gifts and the spiritual office-bearers...are not accidental and temporary occurrences of a miraculous kind, for certain special ends and occasions, but substantial and permanent forms of operation proper to the Holy Ghost..."<sup>1</sup> I agree with Irving's assertion of the permanency of the "spiritual office-bearers" or the Five-Fold Ministry Gifts. The Five-Fold Ministry Gifts are God's tools for perfectly operating the local church throughout the church era.

While I agree with Irving's belief that the Ministry Gifts are God-appointed leadership offices within the church that are still in operation today, I do not agree with some doctrines that these offices are hierarchal, governing positions. While order is essential within the church body, Scripture does not clearly define these ministry gifts as the framework for such. According to Ephesians 4:11-13 the ministry gifts are held by individuals that function in unity to mentor and disciple those within the church to do ministry work. Some would say that these individuals are themselves "the gifts God has given to the church"<sup>2</sup>. As it relates to the distribution of ministry gifts, God gives gifts to those who are His committed followers. Romans 12:6 says, "We have

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<sup>1</sup> Irving, E., & Dorries, D. W. (2011). *Edward Irving's Holy Spirit writings*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace.

<sup>2</sup> Linton, D. G. (2017, August 14). *The Fivefold Ministry*. Retrieved September 29, 2017, from <https://ministrymaker.com/the-fivefold-ministry/>

different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.” Although gifts are given to believers, not every believer is necessarily given a ministry gift.

Throughout the Scripture there are many examples of men and women who operated in ministry gifts. First, there are many who operated in the office of the prophet throughout the Old and New Testaments. According to “Gifts and Ministries of the Holy Spirit” by Lester Sumrall, “The Bible lists 78 prophets and prophetesses.”<sup>3</sup> Prophets speak direct messages from God to the people and Elijah was one of the most notable prophets of the Old Testament. Daniel was one of several prophets that foretold of the coming of the Messiah. And in Joel 2:28-29, the prophet Joel prophesied of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The book of Revelation is the result of John operating in the office of prophet. Each of these individuals occupied the ministry office of the prophet to encourage and comfort God’s people.

The New Testament reveals God’s plan for a perfectly functioning church through the operating of the ministry gifts. Like the Prophet, the Apostle is a vital ministry office that God has given to the church. Apostles are entrepreneurial, foundation builders of local churches. Paul and Peter are the most influential apostles of the Christian church as they were the builders of the original 1<sup>st</sup> century churches. The organization of the local churches that the apostles provided gave it sustainability. For there to have been a church to sustain, there had to have been those who were actively sharing the gospel. The book of Acts records several of Jesus’ disciples functioning in the office of Evangelist. Stephen L. Harris says, “Evangelists like Philip (and later Paul) go exactly where the Holy Spirit guides them, moving almost erratically from place to

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<sup>3</sup> Sumrall, Lester. *The Gifts and Ministries of the Holy Spirit*. New Kensington, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 2005.

place.”<sup>4</sup> Once converted and organized into a body, believers needed someone to care for and protect them. This is the role of the pastor. And finally, the office of teacher is held by those who are driven to learn, understand, and teach the Scripture. Both Timothy and Titus were trained in the office of pastor and teacher by Paul, the apostle. “These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority...” (Titus 2:15). The combined purpose of these gifts is for the benefit of the body and those who are gifted are chosen to equip for service and to edify the body.

There are controversies regarding the Ministry gifts in today’s Church. Many believe these gifts are no longer in operation. Matthew Barron states that the reason at least two of the Ministry gifts are claimed to be inactive today is because of control. Barron explains in his article “What Aspects of the Five-Fold Ministry Are Still Active?” that the roles of pastor, evangelist, and teacher can be controlled within Christian institutions. However, these institutions cannot control the office of apostle, which by definition is called and sent directly by Jesus. Therefore, it is excluded from operation, according to Barron. Likewise, prophets even since the Old Testament have always been considered God-ordained positions. So, many institutional churches have deemed the prophet inactive as well. Barron also explains that there are those who feel certain Ministry gifts are no longer needed in the church, namely prophesy. The claim is that because the Bible is available, prophesies are not necessary. So, it is not necessary to have a messenger who hears directly from God. Another reason that some do not believe some or all the Ministry Gifts are still in operation is based in fear, a fear of abuse and a fear of pride. Barron discusses how abuse is a legitimate concern. However, I do not believe it is

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<sup>4</sup> Harris, S. L. (2015). *The New Testament: a students introduction*. Dubuque: McGraw-Hill Education.

a legitimate reason to claim a gift inactive. Sumrall has a similar discussion about the fear of pride. While all individuals are susceptible to pride, Sumrall explains that a mature recognition of the source of all spiritual gifts will alleviate it. Despite these controversies, according to Ephesians 4:13, the building of the church will continue until three things are accomplished - the Body is united in faith; united in the knowledge of Jesus; and mature, attaining the fullness of Christ. The way God builds the church is through the ministry gifts.

The operation of the Ministry gifts throughout the New Testament is God's blueprint for how to have a perfectly functioning church today. The apostle is a "foundation layer, pioneer, or entrepreneur".<sup>5</sup> They are essential to the Church because there is still a need for new local churches to be established and for the sustaining of the organized church until Christ returns. For an established church to continue to function, there must be a flow of new converts continuing to join the fellowship. This is where the need for the office of evangelist comes in. Sharing the gospel is a primary role of an evangelist. They have a heart for soul winning and motivating others to as well. This office within the church keeps the church from losing its passion for reaching unbelievers. Like the disciples, the Body needs to be inspired to share the gospel. The evangelist is called "both to recruit people to the faith...and also to bolster the evangelistic skills of Christians"<sup>6</sup>. As new believers are drawn to the church, they need to be cared for by a representative of God on earth. They need a pastor. The Body also needs to hear pointed, timely messages directly from God. God made this possible with the office of the prophet. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped

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<sup>5</sup> Linton, D. G. (2017, August 14). The Fivefold Ministry. Retrieved September 29, 2017, from <https://ministrymaker.com/the-fivefold-ministry/>

<sup>6</sup> Clint, P. B. (2017, February 17). Preaching and the Five-Fold Gifts of Ephesians 4. Retrieved September 29, 2017, from <http://preachersforum.com/2017/01/26/preaching-and-the-five-fold-gifts-of-ephesians-4/>

for every good work.” Scripture needs to be studied and explained with clarity to the body. The office of teacher is designed to fulfill this need. God provided everything that the church needs for success within the framework of the five-fold ministry. With the operation of these gifts there will be perfectly functioning local churches until the day of Christ’s return.

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