

**That We Should No Longer Be Children” (Eph. 4:11-16): Mandate, Maturity and Mission  
in the Task of Five-Fold Ministry**

**Church Leadership Panel**

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**Abstract**

This paper seeks to furnish an exegesis of Ephesians 4:11-16 in light of the biblical vision and theological horizon for the ascension gift ministries of Christ. The particular hermeneutical strategy employed is garnered from the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, a method of constructing theology based on Scripture, Church tradition, experience and reason, the latter three constructs in submission to the canon of Scripture. The paper commences with a brief synopsis of Wesley’s theological method and its application to the exegetical process. Next, it moves to a verse by verse exegesis of the biblical text within the broader biblical vision (Scripture), historical-theological understandings (tradition) and the contemporary practice of Church leadership (experience). The paper will explore that with which the five-fold ministry is mandated (vv. 11-12), its subsequent functions in maturing the members of the body of Christ (vv. 13-15), all in service of the eschatological vision of fulfilled potentialities within God’s people (mission; v.16). The historical debate surrounding the nature of five-fold ministry will be engaged in the first part of the exegesis.

The end goal of this exercise is the formulation of a biblical theology that at once honours historical understandings yet proposes an enlarged theological horizon in the face of postmodern winds of doctrine. It is here that Wesley’s proposition of Spirit-inspired or ‘sanctified’ reason as a player in theological construction is best applied. Given the postmodern context, and the adversarial doctrinal winds that attend it, it behooves us to examine the purpose of the equipping ministries of Eph. 4:11-16 in context of contemporary leadership praxis, wherein plurality, diversity and equality are the new benchmarks. Indeed, it is no secret that that theologizing about Church leadership in this context often has this anthropological starting point. Yet the paper seeks to apply the exegesis to leadership praxis without compromising the Christological starting point (v. 11). This will require ‘sanctified’ reason, or the wisdom of the Spirit, given the new terrain before us as equipping communities of Christ.

The paper concludes with a closing exhortation that such ministries steward well their mandate to equip, mature, and guard the people of God in this new climate. This is in order that we might

grow up into Christ, who is the Head of the body, and with the help of the Spirit, fulfill the Father's eschatological vision and intention in the earth.

## **Introduction**

We live in an age where the benchmarks for constructing theology are changing. This is no less evident in Church leadership studies, the latter often inhering an anthropocentric starting point where plurality, diversity and equality are the dominating themes of the new conversation. But really such themes are not new, and are inhered in the blue print for Church leadership in the Scriptures. This paper seeks to mine nuggets of biblical truth concerning a particular subset of Christian leadership, the ascension gift ministries of Ephesians 4:11-16, in light of the broader biblical context, Christian tradition, leadership praxis and a 'sanctified' application to the postmodern vista, the latter attended by adversarial doctrinal winds. This exegesis inheres a Christological starting point wherein postmodern themes of plurality, diversity and equality in the practice of leadership will find their fullest meaning.

## **Methodology**

The Wesleyan theological construct is wonderfully suited to this exegetical task. Though given by Christ, the experiential nature of five-fold ministry necessitates Wesley's inclusion of Christian tradition, experience and reason in our biblical-theological construction.<sup>1</sup> Wesley's methodology makes room for voices of the past to instruct us, yet causes us to face forward through a Spirit directed, 'common sense' application of Eph. 4:11 to the terrain before us. We recall Wesley's insistence that the three realities -tradition, experience and reason- are in submission to Scripture, the latter our pre-eminent source for theologizing about Church leadership.<sup>2</sup> And herein lay the beauty of Wesley's theological methodology: the Christological starting point is preserved in a biblical theology of ministry, historical-theological implications for praxis are welcomed, given a hearing, tested and validated through Word. Stafford, a Wesleyan theologian, rightly enunciates that our theological methodology must start with a "biblical/confessional" orientation but eventually make room for a "natural/philosophical/social" orientation.<sup>3</sup> Such a two-fold approach is how I feel this paper is best constructed.

## **Old Testament Leadership: The Seedbed**

The Old Testament furnishes a plethora of leadership structures; it would be helpful that we are cognizant of these before unpacking the Pauline context of our biblical passage. We know that

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), pp. 14-20. See Grenz's descriptive and appropriation of the Wesleyan theological construct, particularly in light of other methodologies.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert W. Stafford, "Frontiers in Contemporary Theology", pp. 15-50, in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology: Biblical, Systematic and Practical*, Vol. 1, Gen. Ed. Charles W. Carter (Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corporation, 1983), pp. 37, 40

patriarchy was the dominant form of early Old Testament leadership (Gen. 15; 17; 18:1-15; 25; 27; 28). After Israel's exodus from Egypt (Ex. 12:31-51), the ministry of spokesman dominated Israel's leadership structures. Moses' pastoral ministry was then assisted by elders at the advice of Jethro (Ex. 18), the former appointed as heads over the people. The elders experienced the giving of the Spirit which had rested on their leader in order to share the pastoral and administrative load (Num. 11:16-17, 24-30). Here we see Old Testament plurality and democratization of leadership at its best. In fact we find the office of elder consistent throughout both Testaments (Matt. 21:23; 26:3; 26:47; 27:1). After Moses' and Joshua's leadership, judges arose that brought Yahweh's delivering act to the nation in times of backsliding, whilst the prophetic office, still functioning in this period of charismatic leadership (Deborah, Samuel), became a consultative role to that of monarchy once the latter was established (1 Sam. 8-10; 2 Sam. 12:1-15; Isa. 7, 37; Jer. 38:14-28). The captivity and post-exilic periods never witnessed a re-instatement to kingship, with the prophets playing an exhortative role in the call to recovery and rebuilding. This period witnessed the rise of synagogue and rabbinic leadership structures in the old covenant community (Mark 1:21, 39; 3:1; Luke 4:16), particularly in the time between the Testaments. Certainly one concludes that the Old Testament evidenced both officered and charismatic type leadership within its community.

### **Hellenistic-Jewish Leadership Tradition**

The Hellenistic Jewish synagogue served as the undergirding reality for New Testament injunctions on leadership. Within the synagogue there was the recognition of the Jewish elder *zagen* and as the community was Hellenized, the Greek equivalent *presbyteros* began to be used.<sup>4</sup> Another office was recognized, that of the *shaliach*, a term that is comparable to the Greek *apostolos*, the latter the derivative word for the English term 'apostle.'<sup>5</sup> Such categorizations of ministerial office were thus not unfamiliar in the Pauline context and in fact were constitutive of the government of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15).<sup>6</sup>

### **And He Gave Some (Eph. 4: 11-12): The Mandate of Five Fold Ministry**

We now move to the exegesis proper. In seeking to enunciate the nature of five-fold ministry one educes a Christological starting point, for these gifts have been given by Christ Himself:

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<sup>4</sup> James Tunstead Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 276.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 126-127. See Burtchaell's argument that the Church recognized only two ministerial offices in its formative stages.

<sup>6</sup> John Knox, "The Ministry in the Primitive Church", pp. 1-26, in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, Eds. H. Richard Niebuhr & Daniel D. Williams (San Francisco, USA: Harper & Row Publishers, 1983), p. 21.

**11** And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, **12** for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,<sup>7</sup>

The majority of sources garnered for this paper agree that these gifts were given by the ascended Christ and are thus not placed within the 1 Cor. 12:4-11 list of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Excepting Grudem<sup>8</sup> and Achtemier,<sup>9</sup> the exegetical work of those within the historic traditions of Christianity, including that of Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions, view these gifts as given by Christ to persons within the Church for its outfitting, edification and unity. Drawing upon 1 Cor. 12:27-31, Grudem categorizes the five-fold ministry as gifts of the Spirit, creating a bridge between Eph.4:11-16 and God's appointment of "first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues." in 1Cor. 12:28.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Achtemier draws a parallel between the ascension gifts of Christ and that of the Corinthian passage, categorizing these persons as gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> Such enmeshment however is not helpful considering that the Corinthian passage speaks of these gifts as God's appointments, unlike the manifestations of the Spirit in 12: 4-11. Enumerating the nuances of biblical-theological categorizations such as 'spiritual gifts', 'appointments', 'five-fold ministry' and 'residency' when creating a bridge between the Ephesian and Corinthian passages would have been beneficial.

Key Charismatic theologian J. Rodman-Williams argues the ascension gifts ministries are persons, making distinction between them and that of the gifts of the Spirit. Unlike Grudem, he views the appointments of God in 12:28 as persons given by Christ to the Church, and not manifestations of the Spirit.<sup>12</sup> The benefit of such a distinction is immediate: those that exercise spiritual gifts cannot necessarily educe an ascension gift ministry from Christ, for He alone gifts such individuals to the Church. However, the preceding verses, especially verse 8, where Paul quotes Ps. 68:18, makes clear it is Christ that gave gifts to men with some "to be" (v. 11). Of course, the question that arises from exploring these exegetical nuances now becomes obvious: are the ascension gift ministries Church leadership?

### **Office, Function or Translocal Ministry?**

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<sup>7</sup> All Scripture quotations are taken from *The Women of Destiny Bible: A Spirit-Life Bible NKJV* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), pp.1019-1020.

<sup>9</sup> Paul J. Achtemier, Joel B. Green & Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), p. 386.

<sup>10</sup> Grudem, pp. 1019-1020.

<sup>11</sup> Achtemier et al, p. 386.

<sup>12</sup> J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), pp.164-165.

We now explore the complexities of such a question by tracking historical-theological understandings of these gifts of Christ within the Church. Broadly speaking, three schools of thought exist, the research making clear that certain Christian traditions can hold to one or more of the above categorizations for ascension gift ministries.<sup>13</sup> Those scholars situated within the Protestant Reformation tradition hold to the cessationist viewpoint. These believe the foundation laying ministries of apostle and prophet ceased after the receiving of the complete canon of Scripture and the systematic structuring of community life through the appointment of the officers within her midst. The latter are the elders, deacons and bishops. Given the functional corollary between the pastor-teacher and the activity of elders and bishops, cessationists tend to embrace only pastors and teachers as valid for today. However, we must be careful to make distinction among the various threads of Protestantism, for some scholars hold the ascension gifts to be offices of ministry, whilst others do. What they do agree upon is that prophets and apostles are no longer needed in the church today, and given that the evangelists usually assisted the apostolic band (Acts 6:8; 8:4-5; 21:8), the latter are subsumed by the modern day pastor-teacher entrusted with the ministry of proclamation. All Reformation theologians recognize the first three ascension gifts as having had an itinerate nature among the churches. The specific sources for the above summary will now be referenced.

Calvin, preeminent among the Reformers, held a high view of these gifts, believing them to be offices of ministry and government stating that:

“Whoever, therefore, studies to abolish this kind of order and government of which we speak, or disparages it as of minor importance, plots the devastation, or rather the ruin and destruction, of the Church.”<sup>14</sup>

His view is that apostles, prophets and evangelists were not perpetuated in the Church for they were given only in its formative stages; only pastors and teachers, subsumed in the present day pastoral office, are needed. He does make concession, as do many within this tradition, that apostles and evangelists were raised up in the period subsequent to the early Church in order to call her back from error, but clearly he sees such persons in Church history as exceptions.<sup>15</sup> The early church document, *The Didache* or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, contained numerous instructions on testing apostles and prophets (itinerates) that were obviously still active

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<sup>13</sup> “Ascension-gift ministries” is an oft used term for five-fold ministry among the Reformation tradition within Christianity. It is probably a more accurate term given that many scholars believe pastor-teacher to be a single categorization and not two. Here, I have utilized terminology that is familiar within my own Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition: “five-fold ministry.”

<sup>14</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: Book IV*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p. 317

<sup>15</sup> Calvin, p.319.

and whom the Church recognized to be such in its day.<sup>16</sup> Discovered at Constantinople in 1875, it is a very early church document, dated mid to late first century with unknown authorship.<sup>17</sup> Indeed the Scripture is clear that apostolic bands existed beyond that of the original twelve (Acts 15). These comprised such persons as Matthias, Barnabas, Paul, James, Silas, Apollos, Andronicus, Epaphroditus, Junias, Timothy and the unnamed apostles of 2 Cor. 8:18, 22. Prophets were certainly active in local church life at the time of the writing of the New Testament (Acts 11:28, 13:1).

Berkhof also recognizes the ascension gift ministries as officers of the church. Like Calvin he makes distinction between the extraordinary officers (apostles, prophets and evangelists) and ordinary (pastors and teachers), the latter being left to govern once the Church was established. Teachers later became a separate class, being relieved of pastoral duties in order to focus on doctrinal instruction in the face of heresy.<sup>18</sup> We know that in the Greek only one article is used for pastors and teachers in verse 11, denoting the probability of one ascension gift. A more appropriate designation then would be that of the ‘fourfold ministry.’ Following the Reformation tradition, Erickson believes the offices of elder and bishop are implicit in 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11-12 and succeeded the office of apostles. The apostles of the New Testament appointed elders in the local churches (Acts 14:23); when the uniquely appointed emissaries of Christ, who had seen the Lord and were appointed by Him personally, died out and the biblical canon completed, the elder and pastor-teacher came to be recognized as the officer of the Church.<sup>19</sup>

Again, our conclusion is that the classical, biblical categorization of elder is the continuum throughout the Testaments. Erickson is a proponent of the congregational form of government wherein there is only one level of clergy, the titles of bishop, elder and pastor all subsumed in the one office. He believes this protects the priesthood of believers and the autonomy of the local church.<sup>20</sup> The Catholic and Eastern Orthodox notion of apostolic succession and the New Apostolic Reformation understandings of apostolic-prophetic continuation of office is nowhere to be found in Reformation theologies. But these will be referenced in detail later. Oden continues in the Reformation vein by declaring that the whole church has succeeded the apostles of Christ; they are the new “apostolate.”<sup>21</sup> He ascribes to the person of the Holy Spirit alone the task of recovering the Church’s “intrinsic oneness, holiness, universality and apostolicity.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Henry Bettenson & Chris Maunder, Eds. *Documents of the Christian Church: New Edition* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 71

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: New Combined Edition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), pp.585-586.

<sup>19</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology: Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1998), p.1084.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1096.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology: Life in the Spirit, Vol. 3* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), p. 355.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 349.

Evangelicals Richards and Hoeldtke surmise that the concept of headship in the New Testament, unlike that in the Old, is grounded in relationality and not position.<sup>23</sup> Thus it is one thing to claim that Christ gave gifts to the church for its equipping and edification, but another to state that the Eph. 4:11 ministries are extensions of Christ's headship ministry to the Church, particularly if one is referencing Church governance. The latter belief is held by leaders within the New Apostolic Reformation to varying degrees.<sup>24</sup> One can see the danger of adopting an officered model of all the ascension gift ministries in the Church today, particularly in view of men and women appropriating titles for themselves and of the practice of extreme shepherding.<sup>25</sup> Richards and Hoeldtke's model directly challenges the apostolic succession/continuation school of church leadership. We must remember, however, that Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and High Anglican understandings of apostolic succession were instituted for the very purpose of preserving the apostolic testimony and witness for the church. As Oden writes, the concern of such traditions is that "each generation of Christian memory might be only one generation from extinction."<sup>26</sup> We now turn to the biblical theology of the New Apostolic Reformation.

C. Peter Wagner, a key proponent of this movement, describes it as an "extraordinary work of God at the close of the twentieth century that is, to a significant extent, changing the shape of Protestant Christianity around the world."<sup>27</sup> A number of features mark such churches, that which holds relevance for this paper is their emphasis on the recovery and reclamation of the ascension gift ministries of apostle and prophet. These churches acknowledge that the speakings of contemporary apostles and prophets are not inscripturated and that they do not hold the unique position of the original apostles of the Lord, nor of those that saw Him and who were commissioned by Him personally. For this we are to be very thankful.

Critics of Wagner believe New Apostolic Reformation churches are simply pre-denominational movements. Synon's critique is that these churches have features that imbued successful Pentecostal churches long before them. In his view, they are not simply sub-sets of Pentecostal-

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<sup>23</sup> Lawrence O. Richards & Clyde Hoeldtke, *A Theology of Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), p.21.

<sup>24</sup> See the writings of Dr Bill Hamon, President and Founder of Christian International Network of Churches, in particular his book entitled *Apostles, Prophets and the Coming Moves of God: God's End Time Plans for His Church and Planet Earth* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1997), p. 25. See also the argument set forth by David Cartledge in *The Apostolic Revolution: The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Chester Hill, NSW: Paraclete Institute, 2000), especially Chapter 10 entitled "The Leadership Vacuum", pp.71-78. Here Dr Cartledge argues for the appointment of apostles as a valid New Testament authority structure of the Church over and above the old congregational models.

<sup>25</sup> See Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2002), for an overview of the benefits and dangers of the shepherding movement, wherein the pastoral teaching office was taken to extremes.

<sup>26</sup> Oden, p. 356.

<sup>27</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *The New Apostolic Churches: Rediscovering the New Testament Model of Leadership and Why It Is God's Desire for the Church Today* (California, USA: Regal Books, 1998), p. 18.

Charismatic movements.<sup>28</sup> But his most serious critique lay in the movement's appointment of territorial apostles and removal of lay and democratic involvement in church government.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, the movement's insistence that all five-fold ministers have eldership qualifications is good, for regardless of our theology, the fact that they inhere leadership influence requires a high level of integrity, humility and ecclesial endorsement. But the dark side is opening wide the door for persons to take titles of apostleship and prophethood to themselves. At the very least, these movements have returned us to a fresh examination of the nature and function of all ascension gift ministries.

In a move of wisdom, the Australian Christian Churches does recognize all of the ascension gifts today but will not bestow titles of apostle and prophet, being unsuited to Australian culture.<sup>30</sup> Given the rise of religious radicalization in Sydney and beyond, particularly as it inheres themes of prophethood, this is indeed a wise measure. Thus although five-fold ministry categorizations are essential to our understanding of the plurality of functions in Christian leadership, and I believe all to be valid for today, their full practical usage may not be appropriate or sanctified wisdom for our times. Truly, the average Australian understands the designation "pastor" and has so for decades. "Prophet" and "apostle", however, may provoke unwanted reactions in our culture.

Grey counsels us to retrieve New Testament models of women in leadership, particularly that of pastor-teacher as an overflow of the household manager role.<sup>31</sup> Of course many within the Reformation tradition will not use pastor-teacher categorizations for women in leadership. It must be said that Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions have allowed further appropriation of these categories for women, and the New Apostolic Reformation Churches, particularly that of Dr Bill Hamon, have no problem in designating contemporary apostleship to many of its women minus of course inscripturated authority.<sup>32</sup> In regard to the appointment of women to leadership functions in the Church, the New Apostolic Reformation Churches may be may be well ahead of their time.

However necessary the preceding discussion and the benefit of a plurality of viewpoints on the nature of these ministries, it is clear that these persons have been given for the equipping, or

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<sup>28</sup> Vinson Synan, "Apostolic Practice", pp. 12-25, in *He Gave Apostles: Apostolic Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. Edgar R. Lee (Springfield, Missouri: AGTS, 2005), p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Cartledge, p. 395.

<sup>31</sup> Jacqueline Grey, "Models of Women's Leadership" in the Bible, pp. 71-88, in *Raising Women Leaders: Perspectives on Liberating Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Contexts*, ed. Shane Clifton and Jacqueline Grey (Sydney, Australia: APS, 2009), pp. 85-88.

<sup>32</sup> Christian International Network of Churches, founded by Dr Bill Hamon, will ordain both women and men to contemporary apostleship. See such the use of such designations on their website <http://www.christianinternational.com>.

Accessed June 19 2015.



perfecting (καταρτισμὸν)<sup>33</sup> of the saints, the holy ones, for the work of the ministry. Other comparable phrases are the “adjustment”, “adaptation” and “furnishing” of God’s people for the work of the ministry<sup>34</sup> for the edifying (οἰκοδομῆν) or “building up” of the body of Christ. The verb also has a connotation of repairing something (Matt. 4:21) and “perfecting” particularly in regard to what is lacking in the faith of believers (1 Thess. 3:10; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10).<sup>35</sup> Foulkes statement that Paul did not perceive these gifts as offices but functions within a translocal vision of the Church seems a best fit application of meaning for vv. 11-12.<sup>36</sup> Thus we see verses 11-12 do not fixate on their positional status in the church but their function in the outfitting and up-building of the body of Christ, both organically and numerically (through new converts). Nowhere to be seen is the Catholic conception of the infallibility of the teaching office, for example.<sup>37</sup> Rather, in the New Testament world, Christian teachers reflected their earlier Jewish educational motifs, taking responsibility to transmit Christian beliefs in the face of the hostility of pluralistic worldviews (James 3: 1).<sup>38</sup> With regard to the pastor-teacher, it can be said these are more staid ministries, best presented in the localized setting, but this cannot be deduced directly from these verses. All ascension gift ministries function translocally, it would appear.

### **Till We All Come (Eph. 4: 13-15): Maturity**

**13** till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; **14** that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, **15** but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ-

The task of these gifts in the Church is to facilitate maturity in its members. Verses 13-15 enunciate the various aspects of that maturity. The first of these is that the many-membered Church, through the outfitting and up-building work of the ascension gifts, comes to a unity of the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ, to a perfect or “full grown” (τέλειον) man, the latter measured according to the stature and fullness of Christ. The implication is that of a maturity that

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<sup>33</sup> All Greek text is taken from Interlinear Bible. <http://biblehub.com/interlinear/ephesians/4-12.htm>. Accessed June 22 2015.

<sup>34</sup> H. C. G. Moule, *Ephesian Studies: Lessons in Faith and Walk* (London, England: Pickering and Inglis, no publishing date given), p. 191.

<sup>35</sup> Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 120

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 117.

<sup>37</sup> Hans Kung, *Infallible: An Enquiry* (London, England: William Collins Sons & Co., 1971). See especially Kung’s discussion in Chapter One entitled “Infallible Teaching Office?” and his conclusions against such a proposition on p.52.

<sup>38</sup> Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 141.

is comparable to Christ in both height and fullness. We recall the Pauline declaration that we are seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6) and the apostle John's declaration concerning Christ: "Of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). Thus the body of Christ, by virtue of its relation to its head, through the maturation process facilitated by the equipping ministries, is to occupy that which Christ occupies. This immediately connotes that the ascension gift ministries are there to outfit the Church for works of service in every sphere and stratum of society. Indeed, because the Church stands as a prophetic testimony to the principalities and powers (Col. 2:15), the equipping ministries must have in view the maturation of God's people as they occupy and proclaim the Gospel within societal structures.

The purpose of such measured and effective growth is that we should no longer be children (νήπιοι) or "infants" being tossed by "waves" (κλυδωνιζόμενοι- see also Luke 8:24 and James 1:6).<sup>39</sup> The picture here is of a maturity in the face of adversarial doctrinal winds due to the trickery or "sleight" (κυνεία) of men. The imagery inheres a rolling of the dice by those whose aim is to plot against the maturity and unity of the Church.<sup>40</sup> The aim of such maturation is spiritual stability out of which is borne truth spoken in love and growth in all things pertaining to the Christian life. This is made possible only by our connection to the head- Jesus Christ.

How remarkable the controversies regarding the nature and status of the fivefold ministry! Perhaps the human propensity for status and position has elongated the debate. One educes the necessity of such sifting and testing given their weighty mandate. All five ascension gifts carry a leadership capacity through which they equip, mature and facilitate the body's immunities in the face of what for us are postmodern winds of adversity. The latter are usually averse to the Christological starting point in the practice of Christian leadership, preferring the anthropocentric starting point.

Thus the very thing which five-fold ministry must imbue is humility, for they have been given by Christ to the Church; theirs is not a self-appointed ministry. Secondly, they are to evidence a commitment to the truth of the Scriptures and the proclamation of the doctrine of Christ as experiential reality and practice (Heb. 6:1-2). These are senior tradesmen and women on the ground with the apprentices, to use an Australian metaphor, not high and lofty clerics removed from the centre of the construction site, the body of Christ, the living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). Reflecting on Scalise's exploration of the two main models for Christian ministry as shepherd and CEO,<sup>41</sup> I feel the latter is not best fit to describe the function of these ascension gifts. Their groundedness in the experiential and practical is to be at the forefront of our thinking regardless of where our tradition is situated regarding their nature. Jones and Armstrong's three dimensional vision of Christian leadership, that of calling, profession or office furnishes us with

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<sup>39</sup> Foulkes, p. 122.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 131.

<sup>41</sup> Charles J. Scalise, "Defining the Reality of Your Role: Historical Contexts and Theological Models of Christian Leadership", pp. 24-45, in *The Three Tasks of Leadership: Worldly Wisdom for Pastoral Leaders*, ed. Eric O. Jacobsen (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), pp. 43-45.

models in which to understand the different viewpoints regarding the nature of these ministries<sup>42</sup> but the pre-eminent thing in Pauline thought is their experiential, practical and “ground zero” participation in the up-building of the body of Christ.

### **For the Edifying of Itself in Love (Eph. 4:16): Mission**

**16**...from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Banks and Ledbetter’s survey of Pauline metaphors for leadership are useful to us; they state that “the metaphor of the body (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:1-16), especially the reference to the unifying and structuring role of the ligaments reveals something of the central role of key people in the church whose primary responsibility is to help maintain unity and engender growth.”<sup>43</sup> Herein lies the beauty of the Pauline metaphor, one that resists our coercing the text into an artificial separation of the ascension gifts from the members of the body. They are both facilitators and recipients of the fruit of their work: edification and love. The passage resists the drawing of artificial lines by presenting us with a unified “body” metaphor in which both equipper and member are interdependent and mutually edified as each does their part. It is from Christ that every equipper and member receives sustenance, “being joined together and being held together” (συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβασζόμενον) in mutual interdependence unto the missional end goal of edification and love.

As Schillebeeckx notes, in the Ephesian context such a task was the responsibility of the whole Christian community; leadership ministry was not detached from it or set above it.<sup>44</sup> It is as these beautiful processes are effected, initiated and sustained by Christ, facilitated by the five-fold ministry, that our gaze is returned upon He who is source and supply. In this sense those understandings of the fivefold ministry which fixate on titles are bereft of the theme which inheres this metaphor: mutual interdependence that has its source in Christ, the head of the body. The five ascension gifts are never the starting point or the finishing point. Our union with Christ is that which causes growth.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to construct a rudimentary theology of five-fold ministry in light of the biblical conception, historical-theological understandings, praxis and the wisdom of present

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<sup>42</sup> L. Gregory Jones and Kevin R. Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence: Shaping Faithful Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), pp. 80-87.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), p. 37.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), p. 83.

application. Wesley's theological construction has proved useful in exploring Pauline thought regarding these marvelous gifts of Christ to the Church. The intention of the paper was not to impose the understanding of any particular school of theology, but simply to reiterate the biblical vision and metaphor in light of the postmodern context. The paper has avoided coercing the text into the vision of any particular Christian tradition yet recognized the very experiential, 'on the ground' nature of these gifts. Through simple exegesis, it has attempted to alert us against any line of demarcation between the ascension gift ministries and the members of the Church that leads to a conflated, fixated and dominating view of these leaders. Yet it has magnified and contextualized their distinctive role in equipping and maturing the Church for its missional mandate in the world. When seeking to give ecclesial endorsement to these ministries, let us not look to lofty and exalted status-seeking categorizations, for these men and women will only be found on the building site of the household of God with their hands will deep in 'rubble', applying the 'spirit-level' of the Word, building according to pattern; outfitting the apprentices for their work to the end goal of edification and love in Christ.

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