

THE GIFT MINISTRIES
OF THE
ASCENDED CHRIST

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FOREWORD

In 1944 James Mullan was called by the Holy Spirit to break new ground for God's Church. Together with Nicholas Bhengu he saw in the Scriptures a pattern for the foundation and care of local churches, from which institutionalized Christianity had long since departed.

Like Paul these two men were sent out by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel, with power and signs following, to the mass of unchurched humanity. The results of their obedience to God, often in the face of misunderstanding and opposition even from Godly men, can be seen in the Assemblies of God in South Africa and Rhodesia which today number over 1 000 in the African work alone.

Many Christians do not like to use the term "apostle" in relation to any 20th century Christian and no doubt it is often abused yet there is no other word which can better describe the ministry of these two great men of God. They were used as the instruments of the Lord to found and care for Assemblies, and many thousands of souls have come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, and then gone on to maturity, through their sound scriptural teaching.

Today James Mullan lives in Cape Town, together with his wife and faithful co-worker Mary, and is still actively engaged in God's work.

With the great move of the Holy Spirit throughout the world at the present time, the teachings in this booklet will be of inestimable value to Christians everywhere, and especially to those who, having enjoyed the charismatic experience, are actively seeking a new direction and purpose.

THE MESSAGE

During 1970, when overseas, my wife and I had the pleasure of attending the Conference of a large Pentecostal group in Britain. We were greatly impressed by the very fine standard of ministry, as well as by the speakers who were men of calibre.

We were privileged too, to be permitted to attend as observers, the ministerial business sessions. There we were thrilled with the orderly manner in which the business was conducted. One matter which arose and which was considered to be of paramount importance by the Conference, was of great interest to us. It concerned how to implement the decision taken by the previous Conference, and recorded in the minutes, that God had spoken to them through the Word, and confirmed it by prophecy, that they were to get back to the pattern of Church order and government as revealed in the New Testament.

The brethren had been asked to submit their written suggestions as to how this was to be brought about, and a number had done so. However, to the great disappointment of these and many other, it was decided to postpone the matter for at least another year. One of those who had written told me of his extreme disappointment, and asked me to read what he had written. I was pleased to find that it approached very close to what we believe and practice in the section of the Work falling under my care in South Africa. I was invited to visit the assembly where this brother ministered, and was requested to tell the assembly of our manner of working in South Africa. When I had finished doing so, many, including the minister, expressed themselves as delighted, and stated that this was what they wanted. We can only pray that the Lord will enable them to put the Scriptural patten into practice.

On our return to South Africa we learned with concern that our beloved Bro. Bhengu was seriously ill, in fact night unto death. However, an amazing thing took place as he lay in this dying condition, in hospital in Durban. He told me what transpired, and I trust I can repeat it accurately.

As he lay in a sort of coma, he was groping in his mind for some verse in the Psalms to comfort him, when a figure appeared at the foot of his bed, and moved round to his side. There is no reason to doubt that it was the Lord, for He said to Bro. Bhengu - "You are not going to die at this time, as I have work for you to do. You are to go back to put right all that is wrong and unscriptural which has crept into the Work, since the day I showed you the pattern."

Bro. Bhengu rose from his sick bed, and has never looked back. In fact he has been going up and down the land as a flame of fire, bringing everything into line with the teaching which we both saw from God's Word when we started out together in Port Elizabeth in 1945, to found assemblies on the Scriptural Pattern.

During the passage of the years, various things had crept in, constituting a departure from the Scriptural Pattern, and obviously the preservation of the pattern was of sufficient importance for the Lord, to rise Bro. Bhengu up from his death-bed to see to these matters, and also of such importance as to cause Him to speak to the ministers of the afore-mentioned Overseas Assemblies in a similar manner. According to numerous reports, God also spoke to many of his servants throughout the World at this time.

I propose now to bring to your attention the teaching with which Bro. Bhengu and I started out in Port Elizabeth, in 1945, and which we believed, and still believe, is the manner of working which God ordained for the foundation and care of His Assemblies.

GOD'S PRIESTHOOD

First of all, I want to show you briefly from the Scriptures, what is God's priesthood for this dispensation. It will be remembered that in the previous dispensation, there was the High Priesthood, which was after the order of Aaron, the first High Priest. Then there were the priests who served under him. These priests had different ministries and were divided into various courses. (Luke 1:5, 8 & 9)

In this dispensation, the priesthood has changed (Heb 7:12). The High Priest is no longer after the order of Aaron, but now He is a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. The priests do not constitute a special priesthood distinct from what is called "the laity", for the Lord has indicated that He hates such a distinction. We see this from Rev 2:6 and 15, concerning the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitanes. The word "Nicolaitanes" has a symbolic meaning, as there is no evidence of such a sect. The derivation of the word from "nicao - to conquer" and laos - the people or "Laity" shows what God intended by the symbol, for it can only mean a distinction between clergy and laity, with the former ruling over the latter. God says in effect that He hates this distinction.

EVERY BELIEVER A PRIEST

He ordained that every believer should be a priest, as we see clearly from a variety of Scriptures, such as for instance, 1 Peter 2:5 and 9

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, HOLY PRIESTHOOD, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.
"Ye are a chosen generation, a ROYAL PRIESTHOOD."

Here, from the context, we observe that even the youngest believer, just born into God's family, is included with mature believers, as the priests of the Lord Jesus, each believer-priest having his own particular function.

The work of their priesthood is clearly stated in verse five i.e. - "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" - the HIGH PRIEST. It should be obvious to all, that for the believer priests to minister, and to function properly, they must be given opportunity to do so.

THE CORRECT FUNCTIONING OF BELIEVER PRIESTS

The Scripture indicates when this opportunity occurs, and gives directions for their correct functioning. At least three chapters of 1st Corinthians are devoted to these matters - chapters twelve, thirteen and fourteen.

Chapter twelve indicates that the manner of their functioning follows the analogy of the human body, and shows that all believers have become members of the Body of Christ at the moment of believing. It states that "By one Spirit (the Holy Spirit) are we all baptized into the one Body" (the Body of Christ) - 1 Cor 12:13. Each local "ecclesia" is to be considered as a manifestation of this Body, although it should be understood that the Holy Spirit does not baptize the believers into a local assembly, BUT INTO CHRIST HIMSELF, so that we become members of His Body by the New Birth.

"For if any man be in Christ he is a new creature." (2 Cor 5:17)

It should be noted too, in this connection, that Paul, though not a member of the Corinthian Assembly, includes himself as being baptized into the Body of Christ when he writes . . . "By one Spirit are WE all baptized into one body." The epistle itself is addressed, not only to the Corinthian assembly, but . . . "to ALL that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ."

It is to be understood, nevertheless, that each local assembly (ecclesia) presents a picture of the working of the Body of Christ, under its living Head, Who has all true members under His Headship and control.

It must be recognized though, that in the local assembly there can be those who "creep in unawares", who are unsaved, and who, consequently, not being members of the body, are not subject to Christ, neither indeed can be.

It is the Lord's intention that all believer-priests function in some way or another in the Body, as per the illustration concerning the working of the human body, in which each member is intended to perform its function.

Now, just as God has placed the various members in the natural body, so He has also set the members in that Body of Christ, as it has pleased Him. We know and understand that God did not set members in the natural body, and then remove some particular function at a later date. In the same way, even as the Scripture states . . .

"God has SET some in the church, first APOSTLES secondarily PROPHETS,
thirdly TEACHER, after that MIRACLES . . . etc."

(1 Cor 12:28)

All are not Apostles, all are not Prophets, all are not Teachers etc., but to each is given his or her allotted place and function in the Body - which is the General Assembly and Church of the First Born, which are written in Heaven. (Heb 12:23)

THE MINISTRIES

We must now consider the above-mentioned ministries which function in the great "ecclesia" which is His Body, and the manner of their functioning.

As mention has been made already of Apostles and Prophets, we will turn to Ephesians chapter 4, to see what is said about them there, and concerning also the other

ministries of the ascended Christ, We must read the passage carefully, otherwise we may not observe correctly what is God's order for His Church THROUGHOUT THIS DISPENSATION.

In Ephesians 4:8 and Psalm 68:18, we read that when CHRIST ASCENDED ON HIGH he gave gifts unto men. Note carefully the words, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH" He gave Gifts unto men . . . and He gave some APOSTLES, and some PROPHETS, and some EVANGELISTS, and some PASTORS AND TEACHER. These gifts, or gifted men, are not just introduced to the Church and then removed, but we see that it is God's intention that they should be in the church.

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith . . .
unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the
stature of the fullness of Christ."

(Eph 4:13)

It is obvious that as we have not as yet arrived at this state of perfection of the fullness of Christ, these gifts should still be in operation, or else we are being hindered in our growth.

In this connection, the literal translation of Eph 4:12 is of great interest. It reads that these ministry gifts are given "with a view to the training of the saints, for the work of ministering".

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

While making mention of these gifts and particularly of apostles and prophets, we must be careful to distinguish between the TWELVE APOSTLES given during Christ's earthly ministry, and these other apostles given AFTER Christ ascended on high.

To the twelve apostles and to the first prophets, the Lord committed the teachings and revelations as to the formation of the Church and its functioning.

"Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the
mystery of Christ which in other ages was not made known
unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy APOSTLES and
PROPHETS by the Spirit."

(Eph 3:4-5)

It is for this reason that the Scripture states . . .

"And are built upon the foundation of the APSOTLES and PROPHETS,
Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone."

It should be obvious from these Scriptures that we are not built on the persons or personalities of the Apostles and Prophets, nor yet on their offices of Apostles and Prophets, even though with regard to this, someone has said that they (the Apostles and Prophets) cannot be in the foundation as well as higher up in the building. While this is true, nevertheless, it should be remembered that Christ is also in the foundation, so it is

therefore unwise to push this argument to an extreme. As already stated the twelve were given while Christ was upon earth, and are specially designated "THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE LAMB". (Rev 21:14)

That they cannot be repeated becomes obvious when we consider their qualifications as outlined by Peter, when he stated that it was necessary for one to be chosen to take the place of Judas. Such a one, said Peter, had to have "compained with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection". (Acts 1:21-22)

Matthias was the one chosen, and this was done by casting lots, and the scripture (Acts 1:26) says . . . "that he was numbered with the eleven". The expression "numbered with the eleven", shows that his choice was acceptable to the Holy Spirit, for the term "numbered with us" is used in verse 17 concerning Judas . . . "for he was numbered with us and had obtained part of this ministry".

As there was no doubt about Judas' apostleship, the wording "was numbered with the eleven" cannot be taken to mean that Matthias was not truly accepted. His acceptance by the Holy Spirit to this office as replacing Judas, is clearly evidenced by other Scriptures such as Acts 6:2, where it is no longer "the eleven", but it is "the twelve" who are mentioned.

Then too, we have the testimony of Paul as recorded in 1 Cor 15:5 which states.

"He was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve."

Verse seven says . . .

"He was seen of ALL THE APOSTLES, and last of all He was seen by me also."

This statement by Paul disposes of the contention that a mistake was made in choosing Matthias, and that the Lord intended Paul to be the twelfth. Even without Paul's statement, the Holy Ghost had already signified that "the twelve" were complete in that He causes the term "the twelve" to be recorded, and not as formerly after Judas' fall as "the eleven".

APOSTLES OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST

Concerning the Apostles of the ascended Christ, Paul was undoubtedly one of these, even as claimed by him. We should recognize too, that while he was an apostle of the ascended Christ, his was also a SPECIAL APOSTLESHIP, he being the Apostle to the Gentiles, just as Peter of "the twelve" was the special Apostle to the Jews. (Gal 2:7-8)

Other apostles of the ascended Christ are also mentioned besides Paul, for in Acts 14 verses 4 and 14 we find mention of Paul's fellow-apostle, Barnabas. Then James, the Lord's brother, though not one of the twelve, is called an Apostle (Gal 1:19).

Apollos is also indicated as an apostle by Paul – compare verse 6 and 9 of 1 Corinthians Chapter 4.

Then in Romans 16:7 we find mention of Andronicus and Junias as being of note among the apostles.

It is especially interesting to note that Paul also refers to Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy as Apostles, for the first Epistle to the Thessalonians begins "Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the Church of the Thessalonians". Then in Chapter 2:2 it says of these three that "we were shamefully entreated at Phillipi" and then verse 6 reads "nor of men sought we glory, neither of you nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST, but we were gently among you . . . etc".

No doubt Paul here recognizes the potential in Silas and Timothy for Apostleship and so he names them "Apostles". Timothy was sent by Paul to do the work of an Apostle in establishing assemblies with elders. He had all the qualifications of an Apostle, in that he was given the task of setting assemblies in order. He taught the believers (2 Tim 4:1-5) and he also exhorted, all of which is the work of an Apostle, who must combine in himself the work of an evangelist, teacher and prophet. Timothy was told by Paul to do the work of an evangelist, teacher and prophet. Timothy was told by Paul to do the work of an evangelist, even though he was not an evangelist.

Paul saw in Silas these qualifications also, hence the reference to him as an Apostle. The same can be said of Titus who was instructed by Paul to perform the same tasks as Timothy. In these men Paul saw the potential of Apostleship, hence the reference to them as Apostles.

HOW APOSTLES WERE RECOGNISED

This brings up the question, as to how those having the ministry of an Apostle of the Ascended Christ were recognized. Undoubtedly the Holy Spirit guided Luke, the writer of the Acts, to refer to Paul and Barnabas as Apostles (Acts 14:4 and 14) when he observed the work they were called to do – work which was similar to the work performed by the Twelve. This work was that OF FOUNDING ASSEMBLIES, by preaching the Gospel, teaching and baptizing the converts, and eventually establishing assemblies by the appointment of Elders.

When considering this work, it is necessary for us to get the correct picture, and to realize that apostles of the ascended Christ were MISSIONARIES in the true sense of the word. We all believe in missionaries and mission work, yet Eph 4:11 is the only scripture for "missionaries". The word "missionary" as derived from the Latin, is the equivalent of "apostle" as derived from Greek.

Unfortunately, as was pointed out by Oswald Smith years ago, many are sent out as missionaries, who instead of founding assemblies AS TRUE MISSIONARIES, remain only as local pastors, a work that could better be done by the believers to whom they were sent at such great expense. Others calling themselves missionaries perform innumerable other duties, other than that of founding assemblies which work though necessary does not entitle them to be called "missionaries" in the true sense of the word.

Now, because of the possibility of being confused with certain false cults using the word "apostle", and calling themselves "The Twelve Apostles Church" etc., it will be found more acceptable to use the word "missionary". The important thing, after all, is the performance of the work of an apostle by the one so gifted.

We can be sure that the Lord will not fault us whichever term we use, be it "missionary", "founder of assemblies", or "Apostle". All indicate one and the same thing, so the word to be used can be decided by those using it, according to what is most convenient, and least likely to be misunderstood.

THE MINISTRY OF A PROPHET

The ministry of a Prophet is best understood by taking the example from the Scripture, where it states in Acts 15:32, that

"Judas and Silas, BEING PROPHETS, exhorted the people with many words and confirmed them."

The importance of the ministry is emphasized in verse 22, where Judas and Silas are mentioned as being chief men among the brethren. In Acts 11:27-30, we have the example of Agabus, who was a prophet, and who also happened to exercise the Gift of the Word of Knowledge.

THE MINISTRY OF AN EVANGELIST

This ministry is indicated by the ministry of Phillip (Acts 8:5-13). The evangelist preaches the gospel, baptizes the converts, and passes on. In the case of Phillip, the word was confirmed with mighty signs and wonders. He is referred to as an evangelist in Acts 21:8.

THE MINISTRY OF PASTORS AND TEACHERS

The ministry of Pastor, by common usage has come to be gravely misunderstood, most people teaching that a Pastor is one who has charge of a local assembly, as distinct from, and over, the Elders.

Actually elders (plural) are intended to be the true "pastors", and are the ascended Christ's appointment as SHEPHERDS of the local flock.

Their work may be seen clearly in Acts 20:17-31. Elders are to be faithful men who have the necessary qualification laid down in 1 Timothy 3, and Titus 1.

From these and other scriptures, it is very evident that Elders are indeed the Pastors of the local flock, also the "overseers" or "bishops".

The use of this word "bishop" in the Authorised Version, brings to mind the first real departure from what commentators have termed "the primitive order".

The primitive order in the Church, was of course what has been outlined above, where an assembly when "set in order" had elders installed.

Those Elders were termed "bishops" i.e. "overseers", and were always in the PLURAL in each local assembly. The departure from the primitive order, WHICH WAS GOD'S ORDER, took place during the time of one of the so-called "early fathers" named Ignatius. According to the testimony of Ignatius, who claimed he was speaking under an unction of the Holy Spirit, he "cried out as with the voice of God - take heed to our elders with their Bishop". He thus differentiated for the first time the office of Bishop from that of Elder.

This departure brought in its train all the further deviations in the ensuing aggrandisement of the ministry of clergy over laity. This culminated, as it did, in the amazing and unscriptural structure of Roman Catholicism termed in Revelation 17 "The mother of harlots" and followed closely in her practices by her harlot daughters.

This should serve as a solemn warning to God's people of this end time that it is incumbent on us to be very sure that what we believe and practice is based on the Holy Scripture alone.

THE MINISTRY OF TEACHER

The ministry of Teacher is mentioned in conjunction with that of "pastor" i.e. Elder, in Eph 4:11, because as with apostles elders must have an aptitude to teach the Word. However, according to 1 Cor 12:28 there is also the important ministry of "teacher", as well as that manifested by Apostles and Elders.

All of these ministries are found in association with the ministry of an apostle, as they are used to supplement his own ministry. It would appear from various scriptures that recognition of these various ministries, devolved on an Apostle bearing in mind what we have noted of the recognition of Timothy and Silas as potential apostles, by Paul. We also remember Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus for the recognition and establishment of elders in the local assemblies.

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN APOSTLES

One important thing to note concerning the ministry of apostles, is the fact that the scripture reveals a considerable degree of co-operation between them, even to the extent of a united oversight of assemblies as the occasion required.

This is manifested in such scriptures as Acts 8, where the apostles at Jerusalem sent Peter and John to pray for the Samaritan converts that they might be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Then too, in 1 Corinthians, chapter one to three, mention is made of Peter, Paul and Apollos being jointly concerned over the welfare of the Corinthian assembly, though, as Paul points out, the ultimate responsibility rests on him as the founder of the assembly.

It will be recognized also, then even in the foundation and care of assemblies thus founded, the Holy Spirit indicated that Paul and Barnabas were to operate in this joint manner. It is regrettable that in their case, a difference of opinion crept in, which brought about a separation, even though there is every evidence that at a later date the breach was healed.

We note that Paul couples Barnabas with himself in his plea concerning the admissibility of Apostles working to support themselves or to refrain from working as the exigencies of the ministry demanded. (1 Cor 9:1-6)

Other instances of joint working might be cited such as Paul, Silas and Timotheus, as well as the fact of John taking care of the assemblies in Asia, founded by Paul, after their revolt against the latter (2 Tim 1:15) Love for the Work of God, and for one another, enables this joint participation to function smoothly even as the Lord desires.

TALKING THEIR PLACE WITH THE ELDERS

It should be pointed out that apostles, as well as those of the other ministries, were to take their place as Elders in a local assembly, during their period of their ministry in that place. However, it should be recognized even then, that an Apostle had a position of authority over the Elders, as the founder of the assembly.

Peter, in his epistle (1 Peter 5:1-4) writes to elders that he is also an elder, and John styles himself in his epistles . . . "John the Elder". Nevertheless, with regard to John, while he was regarded as the personification of love, he does not hesitate to use sharpness concerning Diotrephes, who was possibly an Elder, and who exalted himself and assumed unwarranted powers.

John states that when he comes to visit them, he will deal with the said Diotrephes. While condemning Diotrephes, he in the same epistle (3.John) approves of Gaius and Demetrius, who presumably were elders, together with Diotrephes.

MINISTRIES WERE TO CONTINUE

It is necessary to revert again to the consideration of the ministry of apostle, and to point out once more that this key ministry, together with the other ministries of the Ascended Christ, were to continue.

"till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the
Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the
Fullness of Christ." Eph 4:13

In other words, they were intended to continue till Jesus comes. That apostles were functioning in the church in what is termed sub-apostolic times, cannot be denied. The

Didache, which is believed to have been written at some time during the 2nd century contains instructions concerning the treatment of apostles.

The Scripture itself, gives a hint concerning the testing of apostles, for there was always the danger of false apostles arising as mentioned by Paul in 2 Cor 11:13-15. It would seem from Rev 2:2 that it finally devolved on local assemblies to try those claiming to be apostles, presumably when such came to visit the assembly. The method of trying them seems apparent . . .

1. They must ensure that they have been recognized as apostles by an existing approved apostle.
2. That they have in fact, proved their apostleship by establishing assemblies.

Where these two qualifications are not met, then the local assembly has the right to reject their claims.

In doing this, however, care must be taken by the said local assembly, lest they be found guilty of rejecting one who is a true apostle, as happened to John through Diotrephes, and, in fact happened to Paul who had to write sorrowfully.

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name there
am I in the midst." (Matt 18:20)

To each local assembly gathered in His Name, He gave the powers of "binding and losing" and of the "remission and retention of sins" which means they are empowered to take disciplinary action.

A local assembly must also conduct its own affairs with regard to the business matters of the assembly, under the oversight of its Elders.

SOVEREIGNTY OF LOCAL ASSEMBLIES

Having said all this, it should be noted that terms used concerning a local assembly, such as "sovereign" "autonomous" etc., tend to be misleading. The Scripture nowhere indicates that an assembly has power to call and dismiss those who, other than Elders, are ministers of the Ascended Christ.

Scripturally, an assembly comes under the oversight, not only of Elders, but of the founder or apostle of the assembly together with those associated with him in the ministry. This fact can be illustrated by pointing to such established assemblies as Corinth and Ephesus, to which Paul sends Timothy and others, to regulate matter in these assemblies, and to bring to their remembrance Paul's teaching. (1 Cor 4:16-17 and 1 Tim 1:3 etc.)

No one was to despise Timothy's youth, and it was to be understood that he came with the full apostolic powers to deal with matters.

If we remember that Elders are also ministers of the Ascended Christ and that they, the shepherds of the local assembly, work in close association and harmony with the Founder or Apostle of their Assembly together with the other ministers associated with him. We will have the true picture. Any thought of being divided into two camps with the Elders and the Assembly, over which they have oversight, being in one camp, carefully guarding the Assembly, from inroads of other ministers of the Ascended Christ, as being in the opposite camp, savours of Diotrephes.

This is to be strongly condemned and dealt with by the Apostle who founded that Assembly, for no such thing is manifest, or even hinted at in the Scriptures.

The true perspective is as indicated in Ephesians 4:14-16, where we see all these ministries of the ascended Christ, including Elders given. (Eph 4:14 R.V.)

“in order that we might attain the objective that we henceforth be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in craftiness, after the wiles of error, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him Which is the Head, even Christ, from Whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love”