

News Watch Article: DF400

FIVEFOLD MINISTRY MAKES A COMEBACK

This article first appeared in the News Watch column of the *Christian Research Journal*, volume 22, number 1 (1999). For further information or to subscribe to the *Christian Research Journal* go to: <http://www.equip.org>

The two cassette tapes are eerie. One speaker, Bill Hamon, urges the congregation to invite “war angels” into the sanctuary and uses sound effects — “Whish!” — as he suggests the angels are arriving. Another speaker, Cindy Jacobs, foresees revival coming to the Latter-day Saints Temple in Salt Lake City and to Freemasons within the Southern Baptist Convention. She speaks of God giving instant sex-change operations to transvestites on New Orleans’s debauched Bourbon Street. She notes that the anointing of the Holy Spirit now resides in her left arm, having moved from her right arm.

Yet another speaker, working his way to a crescendo of sobs, says Christians must “drop the stones of intolerance and judgment” toward President Bill Clinton (the nation was emerging slowly from the year-long scandal and impeachment of President Clinton). Amid many of these messages, a contemporary combo plays haunting, jazzy background music.

In a transcript from the same gathering, the group refers to a possible war against the United States by a Chinese-Islamic alliance — unless Christians pray diligently enough to prevent it. Individuals predicted more terrorist attacks in the United States, some possibly involving attacks on school buses.

Prophets and Apostles among Us? The tapes and transcript document a January 29 session at a conference called the National School of Prophets, which took place at the nondenominational New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Ted Haggard, the pastor of New Life Church, is the author of the books *Primary Purpose* and *The Life-Giving Church*.

The doctrines of fivefold ministry date at least as far back as the Latter Rain movement, which emerged in 1948. In his book *The New Charismatics* (Zondervan, 1992), Michael G. Moriarty identifies the following seven points as the Latter Rain movement’s “doctrinal contributions to neo-Pentecostalism”:

- **Restorationism** — The belief that God has progressively restored truths to the church since the Reformation, including justification by faith, water baptism by immersion, holiness, divine healing, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and, finally, the fivefold ministry.
- **Fivefold ministry** — The view that “the church cannot be fully effective without all five offices... functioning in the body of Christ.”
- **Spiritual disciplines** — Including deliverance, fasting, and the laying on of hands.
- **Prophecy** — “Prophecy would no longer be restricted to general words of exhortation, but would include personal detailed revelations for guidance and instruction.”
- **Recovery of true worship** — “The belief that God’s manifested presence is dependent upon a certain order of worship involving singing in tongues, clapping, shouting, singing prophecies, and a new order of praise dancing.”
- **Immortalization of the saints** — “The belief that only those believers moving in the truth of the Latter Rain restoration, not necessarily all in the church, will attain an immortal state before Christ returns.”

- **Unity of the faith** — “The doctrine that the church will attain unity of the faith before Christ returns.”

Adherents of fivefold ministry say the church will better fulfill its mission and hasten the second coming of Jesus if it will accept the five offices of church government, as mentioned in the apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 4:11-13): evangelists, pastors, teachers, apostles, and prophets.

Virtually no Christian has any argument with the continuing importance of evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Yet advocates of fivefold ministry and their critics disagree on whether the offices of apostles and prophets continued beyond the early church. Roman Catholic and Anglican bishops have long believed in “apostolic succession,” the concept that they can trace their ordination lineage back to Jesus’ apostles. Critics of fivefold ministry are concerned that the movement makes claims for present-day apostles that go beyond the assertions of apostolic succession.

Hank Hanegraaff, president of the Christian Research Institute, expressed concern in a CRI Perspective radio spot: “If by ‘apostles’ and ‘prophets’ one means Christian leaders of the same kind as the twelve apostles or the apostle Paul, they are clearly mistaken. There are no church leaders today whose authority cannot be questioned, or through whom new doctrinal revelations are given to the church, or whose teachings must be accepted by all Christians.”

Some advocates of fivefold ministry, such as Pastor David Cannistraci of Evangel Christian Fellowship in San Jose, California, agree that apostles in the 1990s cannot claim the same mantle of authority as Jesus’ apostles.

“It is evident that the twelve apostles hold a unique and authoritative position in the Kingdom,” Cannistraci writes in his book *Apostles and the Emerging Apostolic Movement* (Renew Books, 1996). “The confusion between the twelve apostles (who are unique and whose function is complete) and the other apostles in the New Testament (whose function is assumed by some to be complete, but is not) has fueled the error of believing that the office has ceased.”

The core issue in the debate is whether apostles and prophets continue in any form beyond the early church.

One side — sometimes called “cessationists” — asserts that apostles and prophets laid the foundation of the Christian faith (Eph. 2:20) and that the foundation need never be rebuilt.

Moriarty critiques fivefold ministry from this position in *The New Charismatics*, where he writes:

Unlike modern miracle workers, the apostles never dishonored the Lord by failing to perform a miracle in Jesus’ name. Whomever they prayed for to get healed received their healing. There were no failings. Through these mighty works God was glorified and Christ’s message was validated. The New Testament has been confirmed and the foundation has been laid. Therefore, modern apostles with special powers are no longer needed. We do not need new apostles to lay new foundations in the twentieth-century church any more than we need another incarnation of Christ to establish a new cornerstone.

In contrast, Cannistraci states:

The Bible teaches that [apostles] will function perennially. This is, of course, the most compelling argument for validating a present-day apostolic function. Paul states that apostles (as well as prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) will continue to perform in the plan of God until “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” (Eph. 4:13). That word “until” is important. Clearly the Church has not yet arrived at that place of perfection and maturity. The apostle must remain an enduring function, office and call as an essential part of the Body of Christ until that objective is accomplished.

Critics of fivefold ministry raise concerns about vesting too much authority in modern-day apostles. “The pattern of organizational authority outlined in the New Testament is oversight by a plurality of elders,”

Moriarty writes. "A consistent example of 'elder rule' existed among the churches established by the apostles. Nowhere in Scripture do we find a local assembly ruled by a fivefold ministry, apostles, or prophets, or by one pastor. At both the beginning and the end of Paul's ministry, he appointed a plurality of elders to care for the churches he planted."

C. Peter Wagner endorses the concept of contemporary apostles in Cannistraci's book, *Churchquake!* (Regal Books, 1999). As Wagner describes the role of apostle, it could apply just as much to Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel as to Bill Hamon, the bishop, president, and founder of Christian International in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida.

"A consistent theme among new apostolic leaders is that they are not there to control," Wagner writes in *Churchquake!* "Some live up to this ideal better than others. Chuck Smith is a role model for how it can be done well. The other apostles in the Calvary Chapel movement, namely, the megachurch pastors, have liberty that some networks would not allow. These liberties include implementing their own foreign missions programs, educating their own pastors and planting daughter churches that do not necessarily affiliate with the Calvary Chapel movement."

Thus Says the Lord? If the office of *apostle* raises questions about how to understand Ephesians and how much authority is appropriate in one leader, the office of *prophet* invites even more difficult questions. Must contemporary prophets be as perfectly accurate as Isaiah, Jeremiah, or John the Baptist, who would have been stoned to death under the Law if their prophecies were false? (Deut. 18:20–22).

How easy is it to equate random thoughts with the word of the Lord? Is supernatural insight necessary to know that Christians watch too much TV or watch morally dubious videos? How can the church test prophets if their words are not bound by specifics such as dates or predicting literal events?

The National School of Prophets. Cindy Jacobs of Generals of Intercession in Colorado Springs dominates much of the service documented by the two tapes from January 29. Jacobs paints on a broad canvas — from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas to New Orleans to Washington, D.C.

"The Lord says, 'I have waited for so long,'" declares Jacobs. "And the Lord says, 'Surely I will cleanse the land of the sexual sin that came with Brigman [sic] Young, and I will bring a purity to the youth of Salt Lake City that will astound.'" Jacobs's voice increases in intensity with each new sentence. "'Utah will be mine. It will be a jewel in my crown,' and [shouting now] the Lord says 'revival will come to the least likely place.'"

Jacobs later says electricity will go out for six days in Las Vegas, possibly after a lightning strike, but she qualifies this by saying she isn't sure if this is a literal or a metaphorical event. Still later, Jacobs hears the words "Mardi Gras" as someone is speaking in tongues during the National School of Prophets.

"The Lord is showing me this about why we can't break the Mardi Gras spirit," says Jacobs, "Oh, I see it so clearly. He said 'the Mardi Gras spirit is a spirit of entertainment. Because of the hours that you worship and you give yourself to that temple, the hours that you mindlessly give yourself over to the river of filth and the videos you see, my body is so polluted, you have no power to judge Bourbon Street.'"

"You — you — have given yourself to idols," she continues. "'You have worshipped at a temple, a temple made of the god of entertainment.'"

Eventually, though, she speaks a word of hope for New Orleans: "Bourbon Street will have new wine. And the Lord says, 'I'm going to send my young people, my young Elijahs, to these streets — and they're gonna heal transvestites, and they're gonna have sex-change operations just like that. I'm gonna give them what they need. I'm gonna be their lover.'"

Jacobs refers to Masonic influence in the design of Washington, D.C., and sees God ripping the Washington Monument out of the ground — but again qualifies her prophecy by saying she does not know if this will be a literal event.

Bill Hamon's messages at the National School of Prophets told of his past mystical visions and invited those present to have similar experiences.

Hamon even described meeting the archangel Michael:

I was walking up towards the throne of God and I saw Jesus there and this gigantic, big angel and I walked up, and as I walked up it seemed like I moved over here and I listened and I heard the Lord say "Michael, this is General Hamon. General Hamon, this is General Michael." And I watched as we strategized and God says "From this day forward I give you authority. When you call for Michael, he will bring a legion of angels and they will fight and war and I give you comradeship and I give you cooperation, and I'm anointing you to join angelic hosts and the army of the Lord of the saints to win my battle."

Now, everybody that's willing to be a warrior, raise your hand, because angels are coming for assignments to co-labor with us. You've had your guardian angels. This is a new angel. This is a war angel. I say this is a war angel.

Jesus, Commander in Chief, I call for General Michael and the host of war angels; come and appoint yourself companions — now, now, now! Whish! Yeah! Yeah, here they come! Here they come! Yeah! Accept them! Accept them! Woo, woo, woo, woo, woo, woo, woo! Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Angels! I see angels all over! Big, warring angels! Warring angels! War angels! Yes! Yes! Whish! Whish! Come on! Sing in the Spirit. Say, "Here I am! I join with God's angelic host. I join with the army of the Lord."

After words from other speakers, Hamon turned his attention to threatening the devil:

I want you to double up your fist, and put it right in the face of the devil and say these words with me. I've crossed over Jordan. [The congregation began repeating his sentences.] I've put on my warrior armor. I'm going to possess my promised Canaan land. That's spiritually, ministerially, family, and the land of America.

We are your enemy, devil. We're against you. We're not gonna stop till you reach your destiny, the lake of fire. We're against you. We have no part with you. We're out to kill you. We're devil destroyers! For this purpose, the son of God came and paid the price and gave us his power. Your days are numbered. You're coming down. We're not gonna stop until God's kingdom is established.

A. A. MacRae writes in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* that prophecy ceased when the Bible was complete. "The end of this period, when new divine revelations would no longer be given, was not immediately apparent. As in the case of the [Old Testament], they simply ceased. The entire Bible was written. Thereafter men in the Church were called prophets only in the extended sense of presenting God's people truths received, not by direct revelation, but from careful study of the completed and infallible Word of God."

"A leader's authority does not extend beyond the Word of God," Moriarty writes in *The New Charismatics*. In addition, he says:

Paul stressed that our allegiance should be to God's objective Word, not to a would-be prophet (1 Cor. 14:37). Regardless of personal spiritual status, a leader is only to point us to the Word of God and encourage us to obey its principles and submit to its truth. Setting up a fivefold ministry to indoctrinate vulnerable sheep with the ideas and practices of "anointed shepherds" aborts God's intended pattern for leadership and grieves the working of God's Spirit in individuals' lives.

Christians need to be given the freedom to search the Scriptures for themselves without pressure from despotic shepherds trying to coerce them with their new thoughts and ideas. While the knowledge and insights gifted leaders derive from the Scriptures can be truly refreshing and uplifting to hungry laypeople, these laypeople's spiritual development will be stunted unless they are given the freedom to develop their own convictions based on their personal study in the Word. Spiritual leaders are guides, not gurus. Charismatics who enforce fivefold ministry teaching may be sincere, but the unbiblical, authoritarian nature of the fivefold ministry may prove to be

counterproductive. Instead of bringing restoration and unity to the church, it may lead to deterioration and division.

“There is no better check to keep us under Christ’s authority than Scripture,” Elliot Miller wrote in *Forward* (the previous name of CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL) in the summer of 1985.

Groups that absolutize their spiritual experiences and make them normative for their Christianity invariably drift away from biblical doctrine and practice.

This is especially the case when prophetic utterances, rising out of our experiences, are viewed as a source of new revelation. One particular group, believing that their prophecies were “living words” for today, more relevant even than the Bible, began to print up, circulate, and read their prophecies in the place of Scripture. They have long since succumbed to rank heresy, and intensive involvement in the occult. This is not surprising. Idolatrous beliefs (such as the potential deification of man, which this particular group fell into) and trafficking with demons come so easily to man that they appear virtually wherever his fallen nature is given opportunity to express itself in a religious mode. The objective, divine authority resident in the Bible offers us the only sure safeguard against our being overtaken by the human heart’s insidious bent toward idolatry and self-deception (Jer. 17:9).

– Doug LeBlanc and the research staff of Christian Research Institute