

# The application of Ephesians 4:11 in the recent missional debate with reference to Scripture



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The church is prominent in the letter to the Ephesians in the sense that the absence of the local church is highlighted with all the attention focused on the headship of Jesus Christ over everything, and therefore also over the church. The textual reference to Ephesians 4:11 refers to a range of gifts which require interpretation, especially in light of the recent appeal to the church to be a missional church as a contemporary direction for the present-day church.

## Introduction

This article reflects on certain aspects of the recent missional debate with special reference to Ephesians 4:11. The letter to the Ephesians has an interesting view on the church, and subsequently focuses attention on the so-called offices mentioned as a matter of importance. A further question in the prolongation of the initial argument is whether different offices are meant as a direction to the church during the events under discussion, during early catholicism and even in recent times; or whether the author is only trying to give a broader definition and thereby underlying the importance of certain gifts (Eph 4:7) which he considered beneficial to the church. The article also pays attention to Ephesians 4:11 from an exegetical hermeneutical viewpoint.

## The recent missional debate

It is significant that in the recent missional debate specific reference is made to Ephesians 4:11 which is referred to as APEST (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers) (cf. Hirsch & Catchim 2012). The term *missional* came into broad use since 1998 and refers to a church that defines herself and organises her life around her real purpose as an agent of God's mission to the world (Hirsch & Catchim 2012:392). According to Flemming's (2015:177) viewpoint, it is simply as an adjective denoting something having to do with or participating in the mission of God. In addition, the importance of Ephesians 4 in the missional debate is also emphasised by calling it a solution to a difficult problem (Flemming 2015:177):

In presenting Ephesians 4:1–16, we are tempted to say that it is one of those rare things – a silver bullet: a simple, guaranteed solution for a difficult problem. ... The rediscovery and reapplication of this one piece of Pauline ecclesiology has massive consequences in our time and place. (p. 1002)

The letter to the Ephesians is seen as a representation with something of the default settings coded in by God on a primordial level—something of the constitutional document of the church (Hirsch 2017:851, 868). Hirsch calls APEST a key that unlocks the powerful 5Q system coded into the core of the church's being. It is, according to him, the key ... to a fivefold thinking based on Ephesians 4:1–16 (Hirsch 2017:835).

The importance of Ephesians 4 is also voiced by Gorman (2015) in his following viewpoint:

Christ our peace, who in his death is the ultimate gift-giver, offering himself in love, continues to give to the church, now in the form of gifts (4:7–16). The role of gifts is, in part, to edify the church as the peaceable community to ensure that its life – and therefore its ministry and public witness – embodies the gospel of peace and unity (4:12, 16). These gifts need to be exercised, as Paul says also in 1 Corinthians 12–14, in love, which is the church's *modus operandi* for the use of its various gifts (4:15–16). It is love, moreover, that must govern the exercise of the tongue as well, such that the virtuous and appropriate practice of truth-telling within the church does not become an exercise in disunity and disharmony (4:15). (pp. 196–197)

Hirsch and Catchim (2012:1018) pointed out that Ephesians 4 is a major piece of Pauline ecclesiology. The opinion is voiced that there is no substantial published book solely dedicated to this theme which may be the reason why 'APEST ministry is not embraced as widely as it ought to be in the broader church: they have instead provided the straw man that the others so easily reject'.

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The impact of this absence, according to Hirsch and Catchim (2012), has the following result in the modern church:

It is a classic divide-and-conquer strategy: divide the foundational ministry of the church, completely delegitimize some of the players, and over legitimize the others by institutionalizing them, and the ministry of the church, along with its leadership, is thus rendered largely ineffective. (p. 1018)

The decline in the number of members of the modern church worldwide, also in South Africa, leads to questions regarding the future of the church and what the reason for this decline can be. Worldwide, for the last 20 years and more, churches have been declining and losing influence in their communities (cf. Ungerer & Nel 2011:1; Van der Merwe 2014:3).

In light of the recent decline of churches worldwide, reference is made to the fact that in AD 100 Christians were as few as 25 000, but in AD 310 they already numbered 20 000 000. Furthermore, when Mao Tse-tung took power there were only 2 000 000 Christians in China, but at the end of his doubtful reign they numbered about 60 million, with some estimates even as high as 80 million (Hirsch 2013:17–18; cf. Dreyer 2016:1237). This leads to the critical question how it was possible.

The recent decline of churches is not only a matter of taking certain precautionary measures, but also to have a clear view in mind of what the main purpose of the church is or should be. Furthermore, it is important to make sure what the hope of the church is, and by doing so, be aware of what the church has in hand in view of the future. Hirsch and Catchim (2012) said the following about the position of the church and its future:

In other words, if we take our Lord and the scriptures themselves at face value, then we already have everything we need to get the job done. The ecclesia is perfectly designed to achieve its distinctive mission, but to do so means that we must build according to code. We must work with Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to be the church that makes the difference that only we were designed to make. Only this idea of inherent design can explain why dynamic apostolic movements in history can have massive impact and growth with apparently very few of the resources we in the West think we need to get the job done. We are designed for world transformation; impact is built into the idea of ecclesia itself. (p. 1042)

In connection with the worldwide concern about the modern-day church of reformed origin, emphasis is placed on the words *mission* and *missional church* which Frost and Hirsch (2013) see as a church that:

abandoned the old Christendom assumptions and understands its role as an underground movement, subversive, celebratory, passionate, and communal. Mission is not merely an activity of the church. It is the very heartbeat and work of God. (p. 34)

Since 1932, but more specifically at the 1952 Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council (IMC), a major paradigm shift took place in which the influence of Karl Barth (1886–1968) was crucial (cf. Flett 2010:11–17, 78; Küng 1987:229). The term *missio Dei* surfaced clearly as a

mission derived from the very nature of God. This means that mission was not seen as an ecclesiological or soteriological driven action of the church. It is rather defined in the context of the Trinity as a mission of the entire church to the world. It is the mission of the Father, the Son and the Spirit that includes the church (Bosch 2005:390). The *missio Dei* is God's concern for the total world in which the church is privileged to be participants (cf. Van der Merwe 2011:3; 2014:4). Peterson (2013) says:

the *missio Dei* paradigm puts the focus on God's action both in creating and gathering the church through word and sacrament, as well as sending it, ... The church is created by and as a part of this movement of the Spirit outward. It is in this *missio Dei* that the church finds its identity and purpose. (p. 94)

The question is therefore what a missional church is. Bosch (2005) states:

In the emerging ecclesiology, the church is seen as essentially missionary. ... Here the church is not the sender but the one sent. ... the church exists in being sent and in building up itself for the sake of its mission. (p. 372)

Barth (1969b) mentions the

*opus proprium* of the community, namely, its commission to preach the Gospel to the world. It is in this wider, deeper and more material sense that it is a missionary community (p. 506)<sup>1</sup>

because the 'community is as such a missionary community or it is not the Christian community'<sup>2</sup> (cf. also Nel 2011:4).

In connection with the future of the church and its ecclesiology, it can be said that it is a maximum-minimum for the church to bear in mind that the future of the church lies between Ephesians 1:14 and Ephesians 1:22, 23 (cf. Van Wyk 2017). In other words, the church has a great future under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people and the fact that God put all things before Christ's feet and appointed him as supreme Lord over the whole cosmos and therefore also over the church. The church is his body, the completion of him who completes all things everywhere. The question of who the church is can be answered as being in the form of a Spirit-breathed people who learnt to forgive sins; a *koinonia* of sharing and healing sent out in the world to share God's forgiveness and *koinonia* (Peterson 2013:147).

The missional debate is widespread in the modern-day church resulting from the deepening crisis of the church (cf. Dreyer 2015; Van Wyk 2014). The question is whether the church is willing to adhere completely to the image of a missional church with a missional ecclesiology. This is probably a result of the fact that the shepherd-flock model, among others, was misunderstood in the past. In practice it also led to the perception that the minister had the privilege to

<sup>1</sup>:das *opus proprium* der christlichen Gemeinde: ihr Aufgabe, der Welt das Evangelium zu verkündigen. Das ist ja der weitere, der tiefere, der substantielle Sinn, in welchem sie auch Missionsgemeinde ist' (Barth 1969a:579).

<sup>2</sup>:Die Gemeinde ist als solche auch Missionsgemeinde oder sie ist nicht christliche Gemeinde' (Barth 1969a:578).

perform and the members of the congregation became, in fact, the unofficially appointed critics of his ministry (cf. Dreyer 2016:2660). The shepherd-flock model is not an indication of an uncommitted flock such as passengers in a modern aircraft where members of the congregation were degraded to being hardly anything more than critical spectators or passengers. The traditional church became so at ease with inherited patterns that they were unable to give new answers to old problems (cf. Dreyer 2016:2757). This is called institutionalisation, a process of stagnation which, specifically since the Second World War, has caused a decline in membership and trust in the church (Heitink 2007:20; cf. Niemand 2007:38). Frost and Hirsch (2013) state the following:

The missional church recognizes that it does not hold a place of honour in its host community and that its missional imperative compels it to move out from itself into that host community as salt and light. (p. 35)

It is critically important that the existing church realise what it is and make changes to be a genuinely missional church, with 'a missional ministry to go with it, and that means putting this issue of the apostle, prophet, and evangelist roles back on the table' (Hirsch & Catchim 2012:1063). The five offices mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 are defined as roles and are considered necessary if a church wants to be a missional church as intended by Jesus Christ. Being aware of what the church is, the build-in life force and the guiding mechanism of God's people is called Apostolic Genius (the built-in life force and guiding mechanism of God's people), or missional DNA (mDNA) (living components or elements that make it up) (Hirsch 2013:18).

The connection is made between language and organisational activity. Hirsch and Catchim (2012:1130) refer to William Ocasio (2005:103) who points out that it is 'not that language determines what can be thought, but that language influences what routinely does get thought'. As an example, it becomes clear that by speaking of rear view mirrors, a so-called blind spot is created. It is therefore more applicable to talk about side-view mirrors, because by, doing so the problem of a blind spot is solved.

When this is applied to the modern-day church or any other organisation for the sake of the argument, it is crucial to notice that the nature of the internal debate is important. This is because an unsuited debate might lead to a situation where people in a certain organisation fail to see new possibilities for old problems. Ocasio (quoted in Hirsch & Catchim 2012)

calls this phenomenon of organizational blindness the 'vocabulary of organizing' ... which serves to provide the organizational categories which designates what constitutes a problem or issue to be attended to as well as what type of solutions and initiatives are to be considered. (p. 1155)

The way the church proclaims the Word of God and the debates about the church are important, because language is an expression of faith (cf. Dreyer 2016:3460). When applying these ideas to the modern-day church, it is obvious that, by omitting the apostle, prophet and evangelist, it means that at

least these three possibilities were edited out of the church's organisational vocabulary.

It is the meaning of Hirsch and Catchim (2012) that:

APEST supplies the church with the essential linguistic categories to form a complete vocabulary of organizing, reinserting the very language of apostle, prophet, and evangelist into the organizational discourse that will revolutionize our conception of the church and its core tasks. (p. 1159)

Hirsch and Catchim (2012:1088) applies certain roles to the offices mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. For them '[a]postles in the generic sense are those sent to pioneer something new ...'; '[p]rophets tend to be visionaries, but in a very different sense'; '[e]vangelists are particularly gifted at enthusing others about what they stand for, ...'; '[p]astors are those with a special concern for seeing and affirming what is human within structures'; and '[t]eachers are those who are effective trainers and inspirers of learning'.

A preliminary conclusion boils down to the assumption that Ephesians 4:11 does not ask for a reinstallation of the five previously mentioned offices in an institutionalised manner, but rather to translate the specific roles attached to them in a modern or missional way. This is only possible if it is kept in mind that verse eleven is qualified by verse seven, and as more directly stated in verse eleven: *Christ gave* gifts to the church.

In recent Reformed churches the offices of pastors, elders and deacons are common practise. This points to the difference between Ephesians 4:11 and the practice which became the norm in churches in the Reformed tradition. If it was an omission of the church in the Reformed tradition, it can be argued that the problem can be traced to John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvin (1989) said the following about Ephesians 4:11:

Those who preside over the government of the Church, according to the institution of Christ, are named by Paul, first, *Apostles*; secondly, *Prophets*; thirdly, *Evangelists*; fourthly, *Pastors*; and, lastly, *Teachers* (Eph iv.11). Of these, only the two last have an ordinary office in the Church. The Lord raised up the other three at the beginning of his kingdom, and still occasionally raises them up when the necessity of the times requires. (p. 318)

In light of Scripture and considering the application of Ephesians 4:11 in the recent missional debate, the question is raised whether the church needs to follow a new direction, at least insofar as to adhere to the expectations of a so-called missional church. As Calvin said, the question is whether we are living in times that necessitate a fresh look and a different implementation of Ephesians 4:11.

According to Hirsch (2017:966), the fivefold ministry is the way by which Jesus is present in his church. They are not to be separated or sundered apart as has happened in the past, because they mutually enrich each other. He sees the fivefold ministry as part of the church's very constitution, and being divinely originated, can never be made defunct or

transcended. There is a direct correlation between the extent to which we embrace and operate in all five APEST functions and the fruit and realisation of these purposes (Hirsch 2017:984–1005).

A typical reaction of churches in the reformed tradition, also present as a hermeneutical key in the present article, is to address Scripture first as a means of getting a biblical answer, emerging from the typical reformed axiom, *sola scriptura*. Serious and continuous biblical research always amounts to the realisation that one can never be under the impression that a decision of a synod somewhere taken along the line of time, is everlasting and final.

## Ephesians 4:1–16 in the letter to the Ephesians

According to certain interpretations of Ephesians, chapter four marks the beginning of the second part of the letter (Barth 2011:453; Lincoln 1990:xxxvi; MacDonald 2008:285, 295; Schlier 1971:177). The letter follows the same characteristic pattern of Pauline letters such as the letter to the Romans which is divided in two sections, with the second as the paraenetic section, introduced by the verb *παρακαλέω* (Eph 4:1; cf. Rm 12:1; 1 Th 4:1, 10). Lincoln (1990:227) pointed out that the use of *παρακαλέω* in Ephesians differs from the typical Pauline use, because here it does not contain the vocative *ἀδελφοί* (cf. Rm 12:1) and secondly, contains the phrase *ἐν Κυρίῳ*, ‘where it underlines the apostolic authority behind the exhortation’.

Ephesians 4:1–16 forms a pericope subdivided by minor subdivisions. Verses 1–3 is an ethical instruction, followed by verses 4–6 which could be interpreted as a confessional statement celebrating unity in poetic terms, followed ‘by what is essentially an explanation of the origins of this unity in 4:7–16: it is the result of Christ’s giving gifts to believers’. The explanation involves an ‘intriguing midrash on Ps 68:18 (vv. 8–10) and a description of the work of various ministers (vv. 11–13)’ (MacDonald 2004:132; 2008:295).

It is therefore typical of Paul’s letters to find a second part which is more of an exhortation, as seen in the letter to the Romans, as a good example (Malina & Pilch 2006:276). Although the authorship of the letter to the Ephesians is much debated (a matter not within the scope of this article), it is evident that the above-mentioned division, typical of Paul’s letters, is also applicable to the letter to the Ephesians.

Schlier (1971:16) points out that in the second part of the letter the readers are called upon to be what they became in ‘*einem neuen Leben bewahren und bewahren mögen*’. They are called in the first instance to ‘*demütigen Bewahrung der durch den Geist geschaffenen und erhaltenen Einheit des Leibes Christi aufruft*’ and secondly, ‘*dass die von Christus in verschiedenem Masse begnadeten Träger des Gnadenamtes alle und ein jeder in seiner Weise dem Aufbau des einen Leibes dienen, 4,1–16*’.

It should be noted that Ephesians 4:11 occurs in the second section of the letter beginning from chapter four which further forms part of a smaller section: Ephesians 4:1–16. Barth (2011) makes the following statement about the broader pericope (Eph 4:1–16) in which Ephesians 4:11 occurs:

Though the word church is not used in Eph 4:1–16, this whole passage deals with its life, order, and purpose. In the form of imperatives and of confessional and, exegetical, narrative, eschatological, and polemical statements, the constitution of the church is described under diverse aspects. (p. 451)

Ephesians 4 therefore begins with an ethical instruction (Eph 4:1–3) which is the result of the serious calling of the author in the beginning of the chapter. The call for the readers is *to walk* (*περιπατήσαι*) according to their calling (*τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε*). Lincoln (1990) proclaims:

As v 1 indicates, its ethical exhortation is based on the first half’s thanksgiving for and reminder of the readers’ calling, a calling which has at its heart membership of the one body of Christ, the Church. (p. 264)

The verb *to walk* (literally) in this sense refers to someone’s behaviour which is publicly visible and distinguishes between the behaviour of those who believe and the others. ‘Being called or chosen by God implies an appropriate way of life.’ The virtues found in verse 2 are also found in Colossians 3:12–13, but Ephesians added *in love* (*ἐν ἀγάπῃ*) (MacDonald 2008:286). The imperative meaning included in the participle *σπουδάζοντες* [being eager] is grammatically dependent on the verb to walk and ‘excludes passivity, quietism, a wait and see attitude, or a diligence tempered by all deliberate speed’ (Barth 2011:428). It calls for immediate action. It is important to maintain a relationship with the Spirit by the bond of peace as a way in which the unity with the Spirit is maintained. The special reference to the Spirit is typical of Ephesians in comparison with the letter to the Colossians, particularly when Ephesians 1:14 is kept in mind where the Spirit is seen as the guarantee (*ἀρραβόν*) of believers’ inheritance.

Lincoln (1990) argues that the unity with the Spirit mentioned in the first three verses:

is now asserted through a series of seven acclamations of oneness. These fall into two groups of three, plus a concluding acclamation of the one God with its own fourfold repetition of the word ‘all’. (p. 237)

For the author of the letter there is a clear link between the unity of the church and the various acclamations of oneness in verses 4–6. The call to the unity with the Spirit goes hand in hand with peace between each other. That is how the unity of the Spirit is maintained (MacDonald 2008:287). It is therefore no surprise to hear that the unity in the church and the Spirit is motivated by seven acclamations of oneness

ἐν σῶμα καὶ ἐν Πνεῦμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν 5 εἰς Κύριος, μία πίστις, ἐν βάπτισμα 6 εἰς Θεὸς καὶ Πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν [There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which



God has called you. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is one God and Father of all, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all] (Eph 4:4–6).

This sequence of thought moved from the church to the church's Lord and eventually to God himself. It is obvious in the repetition of πάντων [of all]. The mentioning of the Trinity in verses 4–6 is of value, because reference to the Spirit, to the Lord and to God the Father 'serve to articulate the identity of the church as a unified whole that ultimately draws its origins from divine oneness' (MacDonald 2008:296).

The second section of the passage, verses 7–16, indicates how the 'diversity of Christ's giving of grace, and particularly his gifts of various ministers of the Word, is meant to contribute to the unity and maturity of the Church' (Lincoln 1990:265).

## An exegetical hermeneutical interpretation of Ephesians 4:11

The author of the letter to the Ephesians points out that '[e]ach one of us has received a special gift in proportion to what Christ has given' (Eph 4:7) (Ἐνὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ - see box 1). The thought is picked up in verse 11 again by explaining what was previously meant. The αὐτός in verse 11 (καὶ αὐτός ἔδωκεν) picks up the αὐτός of verse 10, making clear that it is the exalted Christ 'of whom the psalm said "He gave gifts to men"' who fills the universe (Lincoln 1990:248). It is important to notice that the gifts mentioned in verse 11 are God-given and it which forms a strong motivation for modern-day officials to act according to their calling. Christ gave the gifts so that his work after his ascension could be brought to completion. Christ is head over the total cosmos and consequently over the church. Ministers, as gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'is clearly meant to enhance their significance in the eyes of the readers' (Lincoln 1990:249).

Lincoln (1990:249; cf. Schnakenburg 1982:183) challenges the translation of the article τοὺς as *some* and judges the more definite translation *the* as more correct, because the writer's main concern is with listing the nouns themselves. Hoehner (2013:10965), however, said 'each gifted person listed (e.g. τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους) is a predicate accusative and could be translated either "some apostles" (AV), "some as apostles" (NASB), or "some to be apostles"'. The preferable translation, as proposed by Lincoln (1990:249), is: 'it was he who gave, on the one hand, the apostles, on the other, the prophets' which is different from the usual translation of 'some to be apostles, some to be prophets'. Apostles and prophets are already listed in Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5 where apostles were accepted as divinely commissioned missionaries and planters of

### BOX 1: An exegetical hermeneutical interpretation of Ephesians 4:11.

It was He who 'gave gifts'; He appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers.<sup>3</sup>

καὶ αὐτός ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους

3.All translations from: *Good News Bible, today's English version*, Bible Society of South Africa, 2011.

churches and prophets as specialists in mediating divine revelation and seen as norms from the past. The meaning is that at least apostles and prophets were viewed as norms from the past.

Lincoln (1990:252) raises the question whether functions or offices are involved in the list mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, and his answer is: neither. The question arises whether these people were appointed to these offices because they performed certain functions, or because they occupied some clearly defined positions within their communities. Are we dealing therefore with officials in the institutional sense, or rather with ordinary duties like charisma or institution with ministry as event or ministry as office? The possibility may be that a question is raised regarding the text without sufficient knowledge of the church organisation during the time in question. Lincoln (1990), however, gives the following possible answer: 'there is no hint in Ephesians of ordination to office or of the sort of legitimation of office by the church which is reflected in the Pastorals'. A second possibility could be that 'evangelists, pastors, and teachers were called thus because they regularly exercised their ministries' and were recognised and accepted by the congregations in which they worked. Therefore, if the:

regular nature of a ministry and its recognition by a local church makes it an office, then the ministers in 4:11 who are active in the writer's own day are officers. (p. 252)

MacDonald (2008) holds the opinion that the grammatical construction of the author just implies a straightforward list:

What is implied is that the gifts the ascended Christ gives to believers for service to the church have led to the creation of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. (p. 291)

It is important to realise that the gifts are Christologically grounded as gifts from Christ and therefore nothing more than a *ministerium*: a humble service.

The question arises what the author means by the gifts mentioned (Ef 4:7) and identified explicitly in Ephesians 4:11. Does he have different offices in mind or is he only using the different offices which functioned and were well-known in the Early Church as a paradigm for the church then and thereafter, to act as role models in the more recent church of Christ. Does it mean that the church at any time must have these five different offices to be a true church of the Lord?

MacDonald (2008:299) says that scholarly attempts to distinguish between the various ministers listed in verse 11 have only been marginally successful. An amount of overlap is obvious when compared to other texts in the New Testament, because all are engaged in teaching and preaching in one form or another. It is important for the readers of the letter to acknowledge that the offices mentioned in verse 11 are gifts that Christ himself gave to the congregation. This is vitally important, especially for ministers in the modern church and the congregation. Verse 12 explains why these gifts are given to the congregation, namely to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service to build up the body of Christ.

MacDonald (2008) points out that Ephesians 4:1–16 opens a window into the transitional period between the early times of the church when Paul conducted his ministry and later periods.

Taken together, the references in 2:20; 3:5; and 4:11 suggest that the apostles and prophets are viewed as laying a foundation for the type of ministry practised at the time of Ephesians ... it is likely that ... the author of Ephesians seeks to bolster the authority of the evangelists, pastors, and teachers. (p. 299)

Thielman (2013) has the following views on Ephesians 4:11:

Although the syntax of the list of gifted groups is complex and disputed, the most plausible understanding of the text places the emphasis less on the positions that certain people hold in the church and more on the activities that Christ has equipped certain people to perform. Paul lists five groups of these people. (p. 7266)

Hoehner (2013:10987) sees the verse as a commentary on Ephesians 4:8b, a further explanation of the verb ἔδωκεν [he gave]. He is convinced that Ephesians 4:11 is not a list of offices, but of gifts. He is also of the opinion that 'the term "office" is never used in the NT in connection with the gifts'. In discussion of the different gifts as mentioned in verse 11, Hoehner (2013:11031) mentions that three kinds of apostles are found in the New Testament, namely apostles chosen by Jesus and who had been with Jesus in his ministry and had witnessed his resurrection (Ac 1:21–22); Paul, who was born out of season (1 Cor 15:8–9); and those who received the gift of apostleship (cf. Barnabas: Ac 14:4, 14; 1 Cor 9:5–7; James the Lord's brother: 1 Cor 15:7; Gl 1:19; Apollos: 1 Cor 4:6, 9; Titus: 2 Cor 8:23; Epaphroditus: Phlp 2:25). In connection with prophets, mentioned in the present context as second on the list, Hoehner (2013) argues that

the prophet is a NT prophet because he is listed after the apostles, as in 2:20 and 3:5. The NT prophet most likely corresponds with the OT prophet when revelation and authority are concerned. In the present verse the prophet is listed among the foundational gifted persons who prepare saints for ministry and build up this new body, the church, revealed from the mystery. (p. 11057)

According to Hoehner (2013:11051) the apostle had the specific task of proclaiming the gospel as a divine commission and as communicator of a divine revelation. The word used for *evangelist* (τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς) occurs only three times in the New Testament (Ac 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5). In each case its function seems to bring the message to new territories like modern-day missionaries do. Hoehner (2013) came to the following conclusion about the first three gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11:

the evangelists would win converts to the faith, the apostles would establish churches, and the prophets would fill in needed revelation for the perfection of the saints. Some of these functions seem to have overlapped. (p. 11073)

The fact that gifts, pastoring and teaching are linked to one article (τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους), forms part of the academic discussion which lead to the question whether the use of one article in connection with two nouns expresses a

substantial change of meaning, for example two different gifted persons, or one person with a combination of two gifts. With reference to Wallace, Hoehner (2013; cf. Arnold 2016:6870):

suggests that the first is the subset of the second and thus 'all pastors are to be teachers, though not all teachers are to be pastors'. Hence, while there is a distinction between the two, the distinction is not total. (p. 11073)

It is perhaps superfluous, but Hoehner (2013) summarised the argument as follows:

In conclusion, it seems that these two gifts, pastoring and teaching, are distinct although it could be said that all pastors should be teachers but not all teachers are pastors. Certainly, Jesus recognised that he was both shepherd and teacher and as such was and is a model for all others with like gifts. Shepherding includes instruction but probably is mostly concerned with administration and various ministries to the flock. Teaching includes instruction in doctrine and its application to daily life but the teacher may not have all the administrative and shepherding responsibilities of the pastor. (p. 11098)

It is not clear why the definite article is missing in front of διδασκάλους. MacDonald (2008:292) argues that it means that the two gifts are closely related. Barth's (2011:438) opinion is that both are identical. O'Brien (1999:299) also thinks in terms of a close association of functions between two kinds of ministers. He concludes that the terms describe overlapping functions.

Arnold (2016) summarises Ephesians 4:7–16 as follows:

The Christian community is essential for growth to maturity because Christ has sovereignly endowed every individual with special abilities to minister to all the other members. It is the responsibility of the divinely gifted leaders to equip the members for a life of mutual service. The goal of ministry is to help all believers grow in a knowledge of Christ and of the core doctrines of the faith, to mature to a greater Christlikeness, and to manifest love for one another in the life of the community. (p. 6474)

Ephesians 4 flows out of the prayer (Eph 3:14–21) for the church in the previous chapter which is followed by an appeal to live 'consistently with who God is and what He has done in Jesus ... "to live a life worthy of the calling we have received" (4:1)' (Hirsch 2017:890). The strong appeal of verses 1–16 is that we are not to separate what God has put together. Seeing that verses 1–6 is organically connected to 7–11 'we are not to break APEST up either' (Hirsch 2017:912). It is God-given, formulated in the indicative tense (Eph 4:1, 7, 11), pointing to an event that possesses authentic and permanent meaning for faith and demonstrates that APEST has 'once for all, been bequeathed to the Body of Christ. It happened; it cannot and will not be revoked.' It is important to realise that APEST is given to the church and is either accepted as a unit or not at all. 'Neither the grammar nor the theology allows us to qualify the text to suit our less dynamic, more institutional, preferences' (Hirsch 2017:947). It is always an intrinsic part of the body of Christ.

## Conclusion

Heitink (2007:19) remarked that not all is going well with the modern-day church, whereby the church of reformed origin is meant, and even more specifically the mainstream churches in South Africa can be included. The church is even compared to a bridge to nowhere (Niemandt 2007:11). Statistics add on to the pessimistic future of the church and some even imply that the church belongs to the past. It is logic to accept that the ongoing decline of the church will eventually result in a church that is confined to the past and is non-existent. According to Roberts (2016), a possible contributing factor is that:

the story of God doing his work through each one of us became confused by a competing story that emphasizes called, trained, and authorized priests, pastors and preachers. The ministry of all of God's people became replaced by ministry of the clergy, the professionals. (p. 140)

It is quite interesting that the argument concerning the recent church is not filled with the end or measures to close the doors of the church, so to speak. It is also meaningful that the discussion about the church is not without reference to Scripture, as indicated by well-known scholars (cf. Bosch 2005:15–178; Newbigin 1995). 'Our primary, authoritative text – the Bible, chiefly through the lens of the New Testament – will help us to realign, reassess, and redirect our efforts' (Hirsch 2017:547). Hirsch therefore calls Jesus the quintessential embodiment of APEST, a J-APEST. 'Christianity is Christ-focused, Christ-defined, and Christ-led, or it is not Christ-ianity' (Hirsch 2017:1257). That is why he calls it a meta-idea: it was evidently 'there' but it needed to be named and explored, because it is like God's creation, grounded and sourced from the Creator-God himself (Hirsch 2017:1241).

Bosch (cited by Flemming 2015) observed, however, that many sincere Christians turned to the Bible to mine 'missionary texts' which resulted in favourite texts (Mt 28:19; Ac 1:8; Rm 10:14) being preached again and again. 'The goal was to win converts and plant churches among unevangelised peoples' (Flemming 2015:142). This kind of approach does not do justice to the connection between the Bible and mission. Mission is not limited to a few texts, but 'seeks to engage in an intentional, self-involved, *missional* reading of Scripture as a whole'. Mission is anchored in the comprehensive mission of God. A theological interpretation brings Scripture and theology into conversation, 'with the goal of shaping Christian communities in their love for God and others' (Flemming 2015:153).

It is clear when Newbigin (1995) says:

Mission, seen from this angle, is faith in action. It is the acting out by proclamation and by endurance, through all the events of history, of the faith that the kingdom of God has drawn near. It is the acting out of the central prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to use: 'Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as in heaven'. (p. 533)

It seems obvious that the church must rediscover what it was meant to be and what is necessary to be church. What the church is meant to be is evidently difficult to comprehend, because the answer is a biblical answer which is, at the same time, the only way to be a church with a bright future. It is mentioned in this article that the future of the church lies between Jesus as Head of the church (Eph 1:22, 23) and the Spirit as guarantor of our inheritance (Eph 1:14). Thinking of this, it is obvious that mission is not part of the church in the world, but the action of God in which the church is privileged to partake. That is the reason why it is said that the church should be missionary, or the church is no church at all. The one and only way the church can fulfil this is to bear in mind that the church has nothing to say but only to proclaim God's gospel to the world.

It is critically important to realise that the negative debate about the future has no place in the church, because, by a negative debate, the impression is formed that the church is nearing its end. It is also important to be aware of the possibility that the church could find itself locked up in institutionalism without realising that the institution is just a means which can be changed according to different circumstances. Being a church of the Word and of reformed origin means that nothing is ever final, and everything should continuously be measured according to Scripture.

Internal debate in the church is vital. What is the quality of the preached Word?; What does the church say about itself?; How does the church see its future? Being a church of the Lord under guidance of the Spirit is a miracle, because people form part of the church being the multitude destined to hear the gospel. It is even more unbelievable that God calls people as ministers of the Word to administer his message in all its forms to all the people in the world (cf. Witherington 2007:291). This is possibly the reason why Ephesians 4:11 is important as a guide according to which all the facets of a missional church must adhere to. 'Yet even here the words seem to denote functions rather than offices and are not yet established titles' (Dunn 2010:122). They are gifts to the church and the church should verify each one of the mentioned five to capture the inherent value applicable in the missional church. *God gave* them to the church.

Albert Einstein said that when the solution is simple, it is God speaking. He did not mean to say simplistic or one-dimensional, 'but a solution that unlocks the mystery of complex problems – something ingenious. His  $E = MC^2$  is a classic example of simplicity unlocking complexity.' Ephesians 4, especially verse 11, is a rare blessing, an elegant solution. Looking at APEST from this viewpoint Hirsch and Catchim (2012) argue that:

each particular ministry brings a unique vocational bias, a certain sensibility, and a heightened receptivity to issues that others cannot see. Above all, each brings an enhanced capacity to the multidimensional tasks of the church. (p. 1567–1591)



Ephesians 4:11 is therefore instrumental to creating a new debate in the church, crucial for the rediscovery of being part of the church with a bright future – a future in the name of the Lord.

The reason is given: 'He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, to build up the body of Christ' (Eph 4:12). The heart of it all is: Jesus is Lord, this is part of the missional DNA (mDNA) of the church, a simple solution for a complex problem (Hirsch 2013:23).

The 5Q contribution of Hirsch (2017) is of extraordinary significance to the missional debate. His viewpoint is based on Scripture, on the Bible - Christologically as a J-APEST. The fivefold, mentioned in Ephesians 4:11, should not be regarded as five offices in modern-day institutional sense as indicated by New Testament scholars in this article. It needs to be interpreted and rediscovered as a primordial but substantial insight in recent ecclesiology. It is time to translate the classical *munus triplex* - the threefold offices of Christ as King, Prophet and Priest into the life and ministry of the church. Not only officials such as ministers, elders or deacons, but also believers are meant to find themselves somewhere in the threefold typology of ministry as prophets, priests and kings (Hirsch 2017:4775). The emphasis in Ephesians 4:1–16, with special reference to verse 11, 'is not on the distinctions between roles, but rather on what they share in common. They are all gifts from Christ to the church' (Roberts 2016:134).

A radically new way of thinking in the church is needed. This is not a discovery or invention of new insights, but a rediscovery of the treasury embedded in the Word of God. This does not mean that the well-known officials must be set aside, but the threefold must realise what they have in hand and an awakening of believers must come about. Ministry in the church is not the obligation of a few, but rather the responsibility of every believer. 'The distinction between the clergy and laity is a human creation. This is due primarily to a confusion between gift and office' (Hoehner 2013:11784). Hirsch (2017) puts it as follows:

I believe that the best way for us to grasp the multiple dimensions of Jesus' ministry is to broaden the typology from the somewhat reductionist threefold characteristics to that of the perfect embodiment of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, and Teacher. (p. 4775)

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