

CESSATION OF APOSTOLIC AND PROPHETIC MINISTRIES

Two of the most influential offsprings of the Charismatic Movement, which ultimately led to the formation of the Third Wave Movement, are the “Prophets, Prophecy, and the Prophetic Movement” and the “Twentieth Century Apostolic Ministry”. Hamon prophesied,

The Prophets are Coming – Prepare! I believe that this is an age in which God is raising up a multitude of prophets who are anointed and appointed – honest, true, trained, and experientially mature... Jesus is thrilled at the thought that His prophets will soon be fully recognized and accepted by His Church. When this happens it will escalate the approach of the consummation of the ages. It will accelerate the ‘making ready a people for the Lord’ so that He can return. It is the prophesying of the prophets that brings the Church from a disorganized Valley of dry bones to a unified coming together with growth and maturity until the Church arises as an exceeding great and mighty army of the Lord (Eze 37:1-14).¹

In his declaration, Hamon claims that modern prophets, like himself, will prepare the way for the Second Coming of Christ! In his own words, Hamon, who is reputed to be one of the most widely recognized prophetic ministers in the Charismatic Movement, declared that he has functioned in the office of prophet for over 36 years and has personally prophesied to more than 20,000 believers and hundreds of prominent leaders.²

Hamon declares that a new age is coming whereby God will commission “His Spirit to bring enlightenment on the Scriptures and revelation knowledge concerning the reality and application of that truth.”³

These Charismatics claim that modern prophets are indispensable to the modern church. The new Charismatics believe that these prophets will, with incisive clarity of vision, cut through the clutter, to search out the motives and intentions of the members of the church like a probing laser beam!⁴ Like biblical Jeremiah who burst the balloon of false trust in religious ritualism, the modern prophets will bring to the church revelation and clarity concerning God’s purpose for their time. “The modern prophets will cause leaders to re-examine their church’s activities in light of the new truths the prophets bring. They will execute prophetic surgery on many churches to awaken them to God’s present truth. Without the vision and fresh revelation of modern prophets, the church has no hope of ever being restored.”⁵

The vision and purpose of Hamon’s School of the Prophets is fourfold: (1) defining and determining 20th Century prophets within the church; (2) teaching and portraying different levels of the prophetic ministry – spirit of prophecy, gift of prophecy, office of the prophet, laying on of the hands and prophecy of the presbytery; (3) the blessings and dangers of personal prophecy

¹ Bill Hamon, *Prophets and Personal Prophecy: God’s Prophetic Voice Today*, (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 1987), 15, 28.

² Hamon, *Prophets and the Prophetic Movement*, 76.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Terry Virgo, *Restoration of the Church*, (Columbia: Cityhill Publishing, 1985), 106.

⁵ Moriarty, 97.

– wise and experientially proved criteria and guidelines; and (4) determining the true and mature prophet by evaluating the man, his manners, his message, and his ministry.⁶

The apostolic ministry is just as vital as that of the prophets. The new Charismatics believe they have found the secret of church building and advancing God's kingdom. It is the restoration of the apostolic ministry. The modern apostle, and in some cases, a company of apostles will be based in a local church. Their ministry is to establish new churches or to oversee the rebuilding and ongoing development of existing churches. God has, as it were, re-activated them to fulfill His great plan of establishing His kingdom on earth for Jesus' return.

The ministry of the modern-day apostle is to travel from church to church to assess the church's situation and rectify any problem immediately. He has no qualms about bringing in hard-hitting messages from the Lord to the local congregation who do not see their own faults. This he does with fierce prophetic insights. He corrects spiritual coldness, doctrinal instability, faulty practices, etc. and any problems that can unobtrusively become part of a church's life. He believes that his duty is to safeguard the churches under his care. He protects them from impending dangers of legalism, false doctrines, and many other problems of the present day church.

Restoration "apostle" Terry Virgo, who is in charge of an apostolic team overseeing 60 churches in Great Britain, India, South Africa, Switzerland, Holland, and Mexico, has this to say concerning the need for the apostolic ministry,

The elders often feel trapped within the framework and long for an outside voice to authoritatively proclaim the way forward. Indeed, it is very often the elders who feel the need for the apostolic ministry. ...Traditional churches are feeling the pressures of new life. Charismatic gifts are emerging; a desire for freer worship is being expressed. How are leaders to proceed? Many are facing such issues and do not know which way to turn. Conferences for like-minded pastors will not provide the full answer, nor will charismatic organizations. God's way is to give apostles and prophets. He has simply appointed men with different gifts to do different jobs.⁷

They claim that it is up to the churches today if they wish to grow or die a slow death. Churches that accept these modern apostles will mature into bastions of God's power and glory. Those who resist will fall by the wayside. The new Charismatics believe that, "just as the ministry of the apostle and prophet founded the Church, so shall the ministry of the apostle and prophet put the finishing touches on the Church."⁸

Are these claims of God? If they are, then every local church must restore into their leadership the offices of prophets and apostles or else they would be charged with disobeying the Word of God. However, if these claims are false, then they must be rejected and exposed as false in order not to deceive and be deceived.

⁶ Taken from Bill Hamon, "*Brochure for the School of the Holy Spirit and Prophets Seminar*," Christian International Ministries, nd.

⁷ *The Apostle Is No Optional Extra*," People of Destiny Magazine (January/February 1984):11.

⁸ Hamon, *The Eternal Church*, 347.

MEANING OF TERMS

A “Prophet” is defined as a person who foretells and forth-tells. To foretell means to reveal future events from God. To forth-tell means to preach against sin, and to preach what the Lord lays in the prophet’s heart. The example in the Bible that succinctly defines the ministry of the prophet is in 1Samuel 3:18, “And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.” The catch phrase of every prophet is “Thus saith the LORD.”

In the general sense, when a pastor or a believer preaches God’s Word, he is forth-telling; when he preaches future events, like those taught in the book of Revelation, he is foretelling. In the general usage of the word “prophet”, he can be called a prophet of God. However, in the strict sense of the word as used in the Bible, the prophetic ministries have ceased. These were the prophets whom God had chosen to write the Scriptures. There were others who did not write the Scriptures but they performed miracles, like Elijah and Elisha.

There will be false prophets today, as there were false prophets in the past. For example, in Jeremiah 28:1-4, “And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.” False prophets imitate genuine prophets by using similar terminologies.

The term “Apostle” simply means “one who is sent.” In the general usage of the word, it includes anyone who has been sent. For example, in Acts 14:14, “Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,” Barnabas was also called an apostle as the church in Jerusalem sent both of them. In the case of the Apostles of Christ like Peter and Paul, Christ sent them; in the case of Barnabas the church sent him. Therefore, in the general usage of the word, our church’s missionaries can be called apostles as they are sent by the church. However, this is not how the Charismatics use the term “apostle” to be restored in their churches.

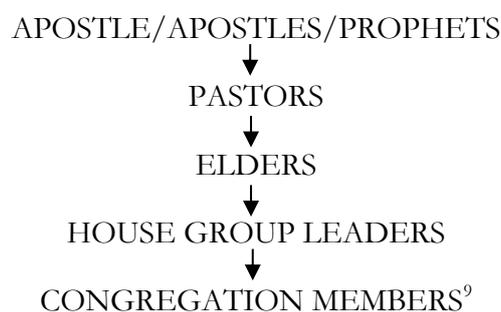
The Apostles, like Peter and Paul, must fulfill the requirements described by Peter in Acts 1:15-23, “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be

desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take. Wherefore of these men which have companied 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. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.”

The capital “A” Apostles were called by Jesus Christ personally for the writing of the NT Scriptures, just as the capital “P” Prophets were used by God to write the OT Scriptures. Upon the completion of the Bible, their offices ceased. The Bible attests to this truth in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, “Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” The word “perfect” used here refers to the Bible, and not the Second Coming of Christ.

DEFINING A POWERFUL CHURCH TODAY

The Charismatic View of a present day power-filled church: The principal leaders and originators of the movement came out of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. They are: Bob Mumford, Charles Simpson, Derek Prince, Don Basham and Ern Baxter. To achieve their goal of complete and total discipleship, they teach a pyramid form of church government. Different levels will shepherd one another for the purpose of discipleship.



The proof text used to support the restoration theology is Acts 3:19-21, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

The Charismatics interpret the phrase, “until the times of the restitution of all things” as the Restoration Movement. They believe that for the Second Coming of Christ to become a reality, the restoration must occur. To them, the restoration refers to the bringing back of the apostolic and prophetic ministries into the local churches.

⁹ The congregation makes up the base of the pyramid. Above them on the pyramid are the house group leaders whose job is to oversee the church members to ensure that each is discipled properly. Next in line, above the house group leaders are the elders who hold the house group leaders accountable for their own lives and the lives of those under their authority. This is followed by the pastors who hold the elders accountable. Finally, on the top of the pyramid are the apostles who are accountable to one another.

The critique of this view:

Firstly, there is no mention of the restoration of the ministries of the prophets and apostles at all in this context. The apostles were still alive when this message was preached by the Apostle Peter at the Temple precinct in Jerusalem (Acts 10-11). Secondly, the “restitution” will not be done by man. It will be the work of God. God Himself will restore all things, not some things, before the return of Christ. This restoration refers to the Rapture and the First Resurrection and the Millennial kingdom period (Rom 8).

CONCLUSION

The apostolic and prophetic ministries in the New and Old Testaments were very special ministries. God raised the Apostles just as He raised the Prophets of the Old Testament for a specific purpose. They were the people whom God used, not only to preach His Word but also to write them in order that future generations might know who God is and what He has done. The Bible says in Hebrews 1:1-2, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” 1 Thessalonians 2:13 adds, “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” 2 Timothy 2:2 confirms, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

Furthermore, a revival of the prophetic and apostolic ministries dilutes the Word of God over and above what the many modernistic translations have already done. The authority of the Word of God is being diminished by the minute. Today, it is not uncommon to find many Charismatic pastors preaching Sunday after Sunday from their pulpits “a word from God”, which they claim to have been given to them by God in the morning or the night before.¹⁰ The shocking thing is that there are thousands of people who readily accept what these pastors proclaim to be the Word of God week after week. The lack of discernment in these churches is overwhelming. Even the well-educated and well-informed would attend these meetings and lap up everything that comes forth from these pastors’ mouths, like a hart that pants after a cool water brook! This is truly a spiritual warfare, in which a person’s IQ has absolutely no influence.

Sadly, this phenomenon is growing all over the world. The readiness to replace God’s Word with man’s word has bred a generation of professing Christians whose foundation is experiences and the words of sinful men. The restoration of the prophetic and apostolic ministries sounds nice and biblical, but it is just another ploy by the evil one to deceive the naïve and gullible. Believing a lie to be the truth is a very potent deception. The greatest sadness is that this deception has an eternal consequence -- to be rejected by Jesus Christ on the day of Judgement and be cast into the Lake of Fire. Amen.

¹⁰ In the past ten years of ministry, I have listened to more than 300 messages of Charismatic preachers. They carry the Bible in their hands but hardly read it. Those who do, often take the Bible out of its context. They would make the Bible say what they want the Bible to say. More often than not, these pastors would not turn to a single page of the Bible, but begin their message by saying, “This morning the LORD asked me to tell you...”. With these words they would preach boldly, as if it was the voice of God the people were hearing.

