

The Bethel Apostles and Prophets Governing Churches

We embrace the biblical government of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

—Bethel Redding Website¹

When the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher flow together and create a healthy governmental covering over the saints, this covering forms a kind of celestial vortex that creates strategic alliances with our heavenly allies. The implication of the word [the Lord gave me] was that the Lord was establishing the fivefold ministry in His Church, and that the outcome would be increased angelic activity manifested by extraordinary miracles rarely witnessed in the history of the planet.

—The prophet Kris Vallotton of Bethel Church²

1. Bethel Redding, “Our Mission.”
2. Vallotton, *Heavy Rain*, ch. 5.

BILL JOHNSON WOULD HAVE us believe that bringing heaven to earth is what the church's mission is all about.³ This apparently means that no sin or sickness or disease or depression or poverty, or anything else that can't be found in heaven, will be found on earth. But this mission can't be realized without the dramatic occurrence of miracles. (As we'll show in chapter 7, these must be miracles of unprecedented magnitude.) And that's the problem. Miracle-working power has been largely absent from the church—for at least a millennium and likely for nearly two millennia.

But why has the Christian church labored, for the most part, without the ministry of miracles? Why are miracles so infrequent? Should they not be both pervasive and impressive?

Johnson answers that miracles have been in abeyance because apostles and prophets have gone missing. These leaders hold the keys—the divine revelations—needed to equip Christians with miraculous powers to “pull” heaven to earth.⁴ There must be a restoration of authoritative apostles—working together with prophets—to formal offices in church government.⁵ Johnson believes that this restoration is now underway, as shown by increasing miraculous power at work in the church today. He writes:

One of the evidences of this [restoration of apostles] is the rising “water level” for the miraculous in the church. This is just a byproduct of the restoration of that [apostolic] gift. Years ago, [the prophet] Bob Jones said, “I am waiting for the full release of the apostolic gift. I won't be able to work in the fullness of the miracle realm that God has called me to until the apostle is in his place.” This was a man who experienced the supernatural in an astounding way. And yet, he said that there was an element

3. We explain Johnson's understanding of the church's mission in greater detail in chapter 6.

4. Johnson writes frequently about Christians' ability to “pull” or “release” heaven (or God's kingdom) into this world. See, e.g., Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*.

5. Later in this chapter, we will show how Johnson views apostles as holding formal church offices. We note that some apostles, such as Randy Clark, believe that the office of apostle never ceased, and that those in the office who succeeded the original apostles were called “bishops.” He also believes that other individuals through church history were “apostolic” in function, including Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther and well-known missionaries such as Hudson Taylor and William Carey. So he says he does not believe (as C. Peter Wagner taught and as Bill Johnson seems to believe) that the office of apostle only recently has been restored to the church. (See Clark, “A Response,” introduction.) Regardless, the fact remains that the office of apostle, in both name and function, has only recently gained growing acceptance in Protestant churches, and Clark does promote the present-day office and thus is NAR.

missing. He felt that, until the apostolic was restored, there was a level of the miraculous that was not going to be released into the world. New wine cannot be poured into an old wineskin. The infrastructure of heaven needs to be in place to sustain a full outpouring of God's presence.⁶

That “infrastructure of heaven” spotlights the essential, God-ordained roles of apostles and prophets.

But this bold suggestion is controversial. Bethel leaders acknowledge the reluctance among Christians to accept apostles and prophets who must play a leading role in fulfilling the church's mission. Johnson states: “Apostle is a term that much of the Church rejects as they don't believe the office still exists today.” Kris Vallotton, the senior associate leader at Bethel, recognizes this, too: “There's many people in the global church today that don't believe that apostles and prophets are for today.”⁷ In a series of messages given at Bethel Church in February 2020, he noted with concern a rising “surge or a siege” against apostles and prophets in the past twenty-five years. For a time they were becoming accepted, but now “maybe a third of the questions I get on my own social pages has to do with the validity of apostles and prophets.”⁸

Johnson and Vallotton explain this reluctance with the suggestion that some past individuals who claimed to be apostles and prophets had

6. Johnson, in the foreword to Ahn, *Modern-Day Apostles*.

7. Vallotton claims to have received several private visitations during which God called him as a prophet to the nations. (“The Power of the Five-Fold Ministry,” February 9, 2020 [30:00].) These visitations are important because, according to many NAR leaders, prophets (as well as apostles) must receive a call from God during a private encounter with him, in addition to receiving a public commission by church leaders. Vallotton applies this requirement to prophets in another message also titled “The Power of the Five-Fold Ministry” (“The Power of the Five-Fold Ministry,” February 23, 2020 [20:00].) In his book *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, ch. 18, Sam Storms argues that one requirement for being a present-day apostle includes “having received a personal call from Christ or commission to the office (be it face-to-face, as with the original Twelve, or by revelation, or by some other subjective means).” We do not know whether Storms would consider himself to be a part of the New Apostolic Reformation, but he does acknowledge its existence and the controversy surrounding it. He may wish to distance himself from this movement, but he quite openly teaches that present-day apostles have an “office or position of authority to which one is called by Christ Jesus himself.” He also refers to apostleship as an “ecclesiastical position” (*Understanding Spiritual Gifts*, ch. 17). Since the central feature of NAR teaching is that present-day apostles must hold governing offices in the church, he is certainly in close alignment with the NAR movement.

8. Vallotton, “The Power of the Five-Fold Ministry,” February 9, 2020 (00:00).