

## Evaluating the Bethel Apostles and Prophets Giving New Revelation

When prophecy fails, evangelicals go ballistic!

—Holy Koolaid’s YouTube Channel  
(238,000 Subscribers)<sup>1</sup>

IN THE LAST CHAPTER, we showed that Bethel’s apostles and prophets—similar to other apostles and prophets in NAR—claim to deliver divine revelation for individuals, local churches, the broader church, and nations. In this chapter, we evaluate those claims on the bases of Scripture and careful reasoning.

### Revelation for Individuals and Local Churches

First, in Bethel teaching, *all* believers can *learn* to prophesy by taking part in “prophetic activation exercises,” as illustrated in their use of the Prophetic Uno game we described in chapter 1. Scripture does not teach that miraculous gifts, such as prophesying, are latent powers that can be activated by individuals at will. They are distributed directly by the

1. Holy Koolaid, “Evangelicals Freak Out.”

Holy Spirit to individuals as he alone decides (1 Cor 12:11). And these gifts are not apportioned equally to all. They are variously distributed in accordance with God's will. The idea that people can learn to prophesy through the type of classroom training offered in BSSM has been challenged by Pentecostal and charismatic leaders, including the Pentecostal-charismatic historian Vinson Synan.<sup>2</sup>

Second, Bethel leaders teach that making “declarations” about individuals is a type of prophesying. We explain declarations more fully in chapter 6; in short, they are words, spoken in faith, that are believed to create reality. So when someone with the gift of prophecy offers a prophetic word about the future to someone, according to Bethel leaders, this is not always a matter of merely “telling the future,” in the way that predictive prophecy is usually understood. Often, they are “causing the future.”<sup>3</sup> That is, speaking the words aloud actually sets their fulfillment in motion. Later in this chapter, we share an example where Kris Vallotton claims to have prophesied in just this way. But the idea that prophetic words do not merely reveal information about the future, but actually bring it to pass, is a new NAR view of prophecy.

Third, Bethel leaders emphasize that, whenever a person with the gift of prophecy gives a prophetic word to someone (especially if that word comes from a person who does not hold the formal office of prophet) that word should always be “positive” and “life-giving” for the recipient.<sup>4</sup> These prophecies should be about “finding the gold” in people's lives—to

2. See Synan, “2000 Years of Prophecy,” 55. In NAR teaching, there are two main ways that individuals can begin “operating” with a miraculous gift: through “activation” of a latent gift or “impartation” of a new gift. According to the *Apostolic and Prophetic Dictionary*, impartation “refers to the act of transferring anointing, [miraculous] gifts or grace from one person to another. While activation is done within a believer, impartation is deposited from one believer to another.” An impartation is often done through the “laying on of hands” (i.e., “the act of a believer physically putting hands on someone as a point of contact in order to release faith for something to happen to or for that person”). See Rajah, *Apostolic and Prophetic Dictionary*.

3. Vallotton and Farrelly, “Episode 5” (12:00). Vallotton refers to causing the future as “forthtelling.” This reflects a NAR redefinition of “forthtelling,” which, outside of NAR, has referred to divine revelation about something from the past or the present (as opposed to revelation about the future, i.e., “foretelling”). The way they “cause” the future is by angels hearing the spoken declarations and carrying them out. (See chapter 6.) For more on how Johnson believes prophecy can cause the future, see Johnson, “How Your Miracle.”

4. Pivec, “The Problem.”

use a common Bethel catchphrase.<sup>5</sup> “The gift of prophecy convicts [people] of the greatness, the goodness, God has placed in every person” and reveals their “divine destiny,” according to Vallotton.<sup>6</sup> So its role is not to expose sin in people’s lives or to pronounce judgment. But while Scripture teaches that prophesying “speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation,” it does not set the parameters that Bethel leaders have. And since prophecy is a gift given by the Holy Spirit, Bethel leaders, in effect, have placed parameters on God (or “put God in a box,” to use a popular NAR expression of disapproval when they believe others have placed undue constraints on God’s power).

Furthermore, surely a person may be edified and encouraged by a prophetic word that convicts them of their sin, if that word leads them to repentance and restoration in their relationship with God and stops destruction in their life. One Assemblies of God pastor reports that he has seen prophecy work effectively in this way, when one of his close friends was privately given a prophetic word that exposed hidden sin in his life. His friend confessed his sin, which resulted in his going to jail as punishment for his sinful acts. But the course of his life was changed for the better.

We also note that there is a big difference between those Pentecostals and charismatics who merely claim to have the spiritual gift of prophecy and those NAR apostles and prophets who claim to hold formal, governing offices invested with extraordinary authority.<sup>7</sup> Thus, when Bethel leaders prophesy to individuals or local churches, their words are seen as having divine authority. Unlike those who have a *gift* of prophecy, prophetic *office*-holders may pronounce judgment or expose sin in another’s life, as the unnamed Bethel prophet did with the politician (an incident we described in chapter 4).

Because prophets in the office possess divine authority, there is a danger that the people or churches to whom they prophesy will view their words as the very words of God. How can someone resist a prophet’s injunction to buy, to sell, to go, to stay, to change the very course of their life, despite warnings and pleadings from friends and family? To disobey the prophet, who speaks for God, is to disobey God.<sup>8</sup>

5. Vallotton and Farrelly, “Episode 5” (51:00).

6. Vallotton and Farrelly, “Episode 5” (54:00).

7. We have argued, in chapter 3, that there is no scriptural basis for present-day governing apostles and prophets.

8. The “Prophetic Standards” statement, released in April 2021, states: “We reject any threatening words from prophets today, warning their followers that judgment

Further, they face serious consequences if the prophets are wrong. Many people have shared stories with us of NAR prophets advising them, or people they know, to invest in specific publicly traded stocks (that later tanked), to undertake risky businesses endeavors (that didn't succeed), and to go on mission trips (that required the individuals to accrue more debt, which they later regretted). And prophecies by Bethel leaders that the church and the surrounding city of Redding would become a cancer-free zone have prompted cancer patients to travel to Bethel in expectation of being healed; yet even Bethel leaders admit that many are not.<sup>9</sup> Who can calculate the harm the sick and infirm have experienced after entrusting themselves to Bethel's apostles and prophets? Traveling, sometimes very long distances to a remote city, often calls for families to make financial and other sacrifices. In addition is the painful emotional toll for those whose ill-grounded hopes are shattered because they have not been healed as expected.

The consequences for local churches may be even greater than for individuals. The negative consequences of an erroneous prophecy delivered to a single individual are mostly confined to that individual, but the toxic effects are magnified when a false prophecy is issued to an entire congregation. Consider, for example, the prophecy Vallotton gave to that pastor in the Bethel Leaders Network—the prophecy that his church would experience “a tangible increase in miracles.” (We mentioned this prophecy in the last chapter.) The pastor claims that the prophecy was fulfilled and that every sick person he has prayed for since that time has been miraculously healed.<sup>10</sup> It is striking that, in NAR delivering this type

---

will fall on them if they fail to obey the prophet's words. We see this as a dangerous form of spiritual manipulation.” (“Prophetic Standards.”) Despite this statement, there is no escaping the fact that prophets, in NAR, are seen as having special divine authority and their followers naturally do feel compelled to take their words very seriously. And why shouldn't they if they believe they have a sure word from a genuine prophet? Signatories to the “Prophetic Standards” statement are here telling recipients of such prophecy not to heed the warnings of their prophets. By what authority do these signatories override the words of a prophet who is thought to be speaking for God? Do the signatories simply know that any prophet who issues warnings of judgment upon the disobedient is issuing a false prophecy? What is the basis for this stricture? What authority does it have?

9. Flinchbaugh, “Ignite the Fire”; Yoars, “The Radical Revivalists.”

10. Bethel Leaders Network, “What Leaders” (1:00). The type of prayer Vallotton gave during that Zoom call is called a “declaration” (described in chapter 6). We explain, in this chapter, that declarations are viewed as a form of prophecy by many NAR leaders, including Vallotton.

of prophecy is a prerogative reserved for prophets and apostles, and it is evidence of the “extraordinary authority” we associate with their conception of apostles and prophets. It is a kind of authority that is extraordinary in the sense of what it entitles them to do. But if this is a truthful account of the effect of Vallotton’s prophecy, what possible harm could come from such a prophecy?

The content of Vallotton’s prophecy contains implicit direction for the church. For example, it purports that miracles ought to be a major focus of this church. What does that mean? And would such a focus be healthy and biblical? Do we see anything like this set forth as desirable in the New Testament?

Vallotton’s prophecy has significant doctrinal and practical implications. It implies that miraculous healings are normative and that such healings are a sign of God’s favor on a church. But what if churchgoers determine that genuine healings are not occurring normatively there? What then? Will they become disheartened, wonder where they’ve gone wrong, and look for another church where miracles *are* happening? Will leaders in the church double down on their efforts to develop miraculous powers—adding classes in healing and prophesying, and inviting more Bethel apostles and prophets to the church to impart miraculous powers, until they finally see their efforts bear the miraculous fruit that Vallotton’s prophecy has led them to expect?

At the very least, we see that, despite the claim that Bethel’s apostles and prophets do not interfere with the affairs of local churches, their prophecies do set priorities and establish direction for those churches.<sup>11</sup>

When considering how conspicuously mistaken Vallotton and other NAR leaders have been about their revelations for nations—about US President Trump’s reelection, for example—we wonder why anyone would trust their revelation for individuals or local churches. Why should the pastor of a church trust Vallotton’s words about God’s plan for his church when Vallotton’s confident words about God’s plan for the United States cannot be trusted?

11. See chapter 3, where we discuss Bethel leaders’ claims that they do not interfere in the decision-making of local churches.