

# “The Pentecostal Movement”

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## Introduction.

*For most Christians the present determines the future; they believe they will reap what they sow. But for most Pentecostals the future determines the present, their view of eschatology governs their view of current events. Their interpretation of prophecy has had a very significant effect on their perception of world historical events and on their political and social response to those events. On a smaller scale their eschatological views have affected their own history by stimulating evangelistic and missionary endeavors (Wilson 1988, p. 264).*

Significant sectors of Christianity for much of church history have demonstrated little interest in developing an elaborate millennial eschatology. The passage of years, including the passage of 1000 years, is simply an indicator of Christianity’s historical age. As with many other newer religious movements, the term *millennium* has a special significance for Pentecostals, who have developed a set of theological categories which are both distinctive and controversial. Most of their forefathers and foremothers, deriving their doctrine from a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible, declared themselves to be *premillennialists* who expected a second advent of Christ to occur prior to the establishment of a one-thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ described in Revelations 20:1-7. For many Pentecostals, this premillennial belief could be further described as *pretribulation* (rather than mid- or post-tribulation). Adherence to a pretribulation

posture assures believers that the “rapture” (sudden removal of Christians from the earth before the great Armageddon) will spare them of the terror and destruction destined to fill the earth before the promised thousand-year reign of Christ. In contrast to some premillenianists who view the fulfillment of biblical prophecies as gradually unfolding within the long history of the church, most Pentecostal (and fundamentalist) premillenianists are *futurists* who expect the major fulfillment of biblical prophecy to occur in the imminent future. This detailed millennial eschatology was especially significant for early Pentecostals who focused on the second coming of Christ rather than creature comforts and this-worldly gain, using their limited resources to spread the Gospel in this “last hour” of human history as it is now known.

Early Pentecostals, notes Pentecostal historian Edith Blumhoffer, “intentionally ignored historical tradition, opting rather for biblical terminology and precedent.” Their leaders worked during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to mobilize resources “for a brief and intense spurt of activity they thought would usher Christ’s return” (Blumhoffer 1993, p. 4). Although Pentecostals shared their restorationist worldview with other fundamentalists, they differed in their belief that the birth of Pentecostalism with the fresh outpouring of the Spirit was “itself a fulfillment of end-time prophecy” (Wilson 1988, p. 264). As did the Apostle Peter (Acts of the Apostles 2:16-21) nearly two thousand years earlier on the Jewish feast of Pentecost, Christian Pentecostals have continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century to proclaim the words of the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-32) are now being fulfilled:

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In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (NIV).

An appreciation of the meanings attached to and functioning of prophecy is an important key to understanding Pentecostalism at the onset of this third millennium.

Although glossolalia, the often self-identified factor said to distinguish this rapidly growing world-wide movement from other approaches to Christianity, has been the subject of more scholarly studies, prophecy has always been an integral part of Pentecostalism's beliefs and practices. It is true that different groups have emphasized different outward signs of the Spirit-baptism sought by Pentecostal believers, but these diverse Pentecostal sects and denominations are agreed that such baptism will be accompanied by paranormal experiences, including glossolalia (speaking in tongues), healing, demonic deliverance, miracles and prophecy. As the present millennium draws to a close, it appears that the prophetic is increasing in importance bringing about notable differences as theological nuances about prophecy continue to proliferate within the many streams of the Pentecostal movement.

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*I am using the term Pentecostal to refer to an increasingly diverse movement which includes classical Pentecostals (whose sects and denominations originated mostly in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century); neo-Pentecostals (more commonly referred to as charismatics) of the 1960s and 1970s which are represented in the Catholic Church as well as in most streams of Protestantism as well as in newer independent or "non-denominational" churches and church networks; Third Wave adherents of the 1980s and other faces of the renewal/revival movements currently sweeping the globe. Admittedly all these distinctions are somewhat arbitrary heuristic labels. As Hunt, Hamilton and Walter (1997:2) concluded after attempting to identify the*

Through extensive missionary activity (fueled in part by its eschatology), Pentecostalism has spread throughout the United States as well as to other continents during the 20th century (DeArteaga 1992; Hyatt 1996; 1997; Hunt, Hamilton, and Walter 1997). Itself a distinct stream in the river of Christianity, the Pentecostal worldview has infiltrated world-wide Catholicism as well as the other major Protestant tributaries. Some classical Pentecostal sects are now larger than some historic denominations, while some of the countless independent and non-denominational charismatic churches have become players in the “reinvention of Protestantism” (Miller 1997). The Pentecostal movement (including the more recent charismatic and “third wave” streams) is now said to represent one in four Christians worldwide, crossing denominational as well as geographical boundaries (Barrett 1982; Cox 1995). It is estimated that some 12% of all Americans are Spirit-baptized, with believers crossing denominational lines and found in classical Pentecostal churches, newer independent Charismatic sects, Roman Catholicism and all Protestant denominations (Green, et al. 1997).

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“distinguishing characteristics” of Pentecostalism, the “. . . movement is evolving so rapidly that it is not entirely clear whether these distinctive hallmarks still hold.”

*In North America the term “Pentecostal” usually refers to persons in denominations born out of the Azusa Street and Zion City Revivals, while “charismatic” applies to those in mainline and newer churches which embraced a Pentecostal worldview in the mid-twentieth century or later. In the U.S. some 23 percent of all evangelical Protestants, 9 percent of mainline Protestants, 13 percent of Roman Catholics, and 36 percent of Black Protestants claim to be “Spirit-filled,” another appellation for those persons embracing the P-C worldview (Green, et al.1997:228). Americans who claim to be Spirit-filled tend to self-identify as Pentecostal (4.7 percent) or Charismatic (6.6 percent), but much less frequently as “both Charismatic and Pentecostal” (.8 percent), reflecting differences that do exist in different streams of this growing movement.*

Although identifying common characteristics of all its constituents is not a simple task, the Pentecostal movement is more about a distinctive Christian worldview than a particular denomination, a set of doctrine, or precisely defined ritual practices. This worldview is a curious blend of premodern miracles, modern technology, and postmodern mysticism in which the natural merges with the supernatural (Poloma 1982; 1989; 1998; 1999). In the words of the late John Wimber founder of the Association of Vineyard Churches, a newly emerging denomination contributing to the reinvention of American Protestantism, Christianity is supernaturally natural (Wimber and Springer 1987; Miller 1997). Signs and wonders analogous to those described in the bible are to be expected as normal occurrences in the lives of believers.

The legacy of Pentecostalism is a worldview that not only makes room for the prophetic but one in which the prophetic is a central component. According to Roger Stronstad (in his 1994 address to the Society for Pentecostal Studies), it offers a different paradigm for describing the people of God. This paradigm supplies a narrative theology found in the biblical writings of the Evangelist Luke. Stronstad (1994, p.145) notes:

This paradigm is Luke's portrait of the people of God of the new age, who, by virtue of having the Holy Spirit poured forth upon them, have become the eschatological community of prophets upon whom Jesus, himself the eschatological prophet, has poured forth the Spirit of prophecy-- both for their own generation, for their children's generation, and for each succeeding generation.

In summary, underlying the Pentecostal understanding of prophecy is a biblical hermeneutic which acknowledges the release of the prophetic during the end-times. While some Pentecostals join their evangelical and fundamentalist cousins who focus on

interpreting the prophetic elements found in the book of Revelations, many more downplay the details of premillennial eschatology that has been foundational to much of Pentecostalism. These believers prefer a more practical, utilitarian and personal experience of the prophetic that is birthed through common experiences of the prophetic and nurtured by prophetic myths.

The major forms of prophecy found in contemporary Pentecostalism are two-fold: (1) a democratized *charism* available to all Spirit-baptized persons and (2) an ecclesiastical *office* that is being restored to Christianity. The first part of this discussion will focus on prophecy as a charism and on its relationship to religious experience, particularly to common religious experiences reported during prayer. Paradoxically, the democratization of the charism of prophecy appears to be foundational for its use in restructuring Pentecostal leadership. The second part of the discussion will explore the restoration of the five-fold ministry and corresponding attempt to restore the office of prophet to the church. The restoration of the offices of prophet and apostle has been strengthened by the renewal/revival/refreshing movement that has been sweeping through global Pentecostalism as the second millennium draws to a close. The discussion will conclude with an exploration of the role that prophecy has recently played in the revitalization of the Pentecostal movement.

### **Exploring the Charism of the Prophecy**

The term *prophecy* has several meanings in contemporary Pentecostal usage, most of them unrelated to the common understanding of prophecy as a prediction of the future. As Robeck (1988:728) explains:

The commonly held understanding of prophecy as a predictive word of future events, and therefore as foreknowledge, has ancient precedence but it does not provide an adequate basis for understanding this gift. Prophecy more commonly includes a component of forthtelling, or the conveyance of a message with or without the predictive element.

This observation is an important one in light of Pentecostalism's affinity with fundamentalism (despite the reluctance of most fundamentalists to accept Pentecostalism into its fold). Some Pentecostals, as we shall see, are still fascinated with premillennial eschatology and the imminence of the end-times. For most believers, however, prophecy casts a much wider net than the doomsday predictions that may be found on many Internet sites when the search engine is pointed toward prophecy.

Prophecy, although commonly regarded as involving foretelling or prediction, thus must be understood in a broader context. Those involved in the Pentecostal-Charismatic subculture are likely to profess that prophecy, first and foremost, is an action of the Holy Spirit using a human vehicle to speak a divine word. Prophetic revelations may come through visions, dreams, impressions, divine coincidences or verbal proclamations (c.f. Ryle 1993, 1995; Dupont 1997; Cooke 1994; Jacobs 1995a; Joyner 1996). They are recognized as functioning to edify, encourage and comfort; to provide correction and warning; for direction and as an agenda for prayer. In a social-psychological sense, whatever else it may be, prophecy is a religious experience. It is within this context and through the use of a theoretical taxonomy developed by sociologist Rodney Stark that the prophetic charism will be explored.

### **Prophecy, Prayer and Religious Experience**

Despite the important role religious experience in the creation and maintenance of religious behavior and structure, social scientists have been reluctant to pay serious scholarly attention to this important topic (Hood 1995; Stark 1999). When religious experiences are studied, methodological atheism on the part of investigators has advanced the assumption that such experiences are impossible (Hood 1985; Stark 1999). While it is impossible to demonstrate that the divine does in fact communicate directly to humans using the methodological tools of social science, it is equally impossible to prove that the divine does not do so. What is possible to demonstrate using a social scientific perspective is that many people believe that they are in dialogue and interaction with God and that their definition of the situation has real social consequences.

Research polls conducted in the United States have repeatedly shown that nearly 90 percent of Americans claim to pray. Of these pray-ers, the vast majority have reported different religious experiences during personal prayer. For example, 88 percent claimed they had (at least on occasion) experienced a deep sense of peace and well-being, 79 percent had felt the strong presence of God, 73 percent had received a definite answer to a specific prayer request, and 57 percent had felt divinely inspired or led by God to perform some specific action (Poloma and Gallup 1991:47). It is of further interest that evangelical or born-again pray-ers, a category of which Pentecostals are a subset, were more than twice as likely to have such experiences as were non-evangelicals. Prophecy may be regarded as an extension of these simple prayer experiences reported as common by the American public, experiences that are more



common for Evangelicals (and may be even more intense for Pentecostals) than they are for non-evangelicals.

### **Stages of Spiritual Encounters**

Religious experiences may be described as perceived encounters between God and humans encounters that may be regarded as involving a sense of intimacy with the divine. Stark (1965:99) suggests that religious experience may be conceptualized as a dyadic form of interaction the divinity and the individual as a pair of actors involved in a social encounter. He identifies four possible configurations for such an encounter, the first three of which can be regarded as a prelude to the prophetic with the fourth providing a category for furthering the discussion of prophetic experiences. Stark's four categorical stages are:

1. The human actor simply notes (feels, senses, etc.) the existence or presence of the divine actor.
2. Mutual presence is acknowledged; the divine actor is perceived as noting the presence of the human actor.
3. The awareness of mutual presence is replaced by an affective relationship akin to love or friendship.
4. The human actor perceives himself or herself as confidant of and/or a fellow participant in action with the divine actor.

Sensing a deep peace and well-being in personal prayer may be an important first step toward the actualization of the prophetic charism. Nearly a third (32%) of those who pray claim to have this experience regularly, with only 12 percent saying they never have this experience. Most pray-ers move to the next step asserting they have felt the

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*It is important to note that the figures used in the Poloma and Gallup study cited here are based on a random sample of 1000 Americans, the overwhelming majority claiming Christian affiliation. Minority religions in America are not well enough represented in a sample of this size to permit comparative analysis of Christian and non-Christian pray-ers.*

strong presence of God during times of personal prayer, with 26 percent claiming this is a regular occurrence. Approximately one in four pray-ers (26%) say they have never had that experience. Clearly the overwhelming majority of pray-ers (at least on occasion) do experience the first stage of Stark's typology in noting the existence or presence of the divine actor.

Most continue on the spiritual journey to experience the second stage, indicating that the pray-er believes the divine actor has taken cognizance of him or her. Only 27 percent said they never received what they would regard as a definite answer to a specific prayer request and 39 percent that they had never received what they regarded to be a deeper insight into a spiritual or biblical truth during times of personal prayer. Most pray-ers (at least on occasion but many regularly) indicate that they do meet God in prayer and that the meeting is an interactive one.

The pray-er is now positioned to embark on a deeper spiritual journey characterized by intimacy and friendship with the divine. It is in this stage that simple forms of prophecy begin to emerge. Born of the practice that Poloma and Gallup (1991) have termed meditative prayer, the pray-er has learned to be still and know that God is God, a prayer form that is highly correlated with having prayer experiences.

The British prophet Graham Cooke, who offers conferences teaching Pentecostals to learn how to receive their prophetic charism, makes the following statement relevant to this discussion in teaching readers to unlock their prophetic potential:

In terms of preparation, prayer is absolutely vital to us. It is so important for everything but in particular with regard to the prophetic. Prayer and

prophecy are inextricably linked in terms of their communication process; both involve listening before talking (Cooke 1994:50).

What I am suggesting is that prophecy is a particular type of religious experience that can be regarded as an extension of prayer experiences familiar to most pray-ers. One of the first encounters with the prophetic appears to be God offering guidance and personal direction. Although praying for guidance in decision making appears to be a nearly universal request (with 92% of pray-ers asking for such guidance), only 9 percent of pray-ers in the Poloma-Gallup research claimed receiving regular divine inspiration or leading to perform some specific action. Many others (48%) have this experience of divine guidance at least on occasion, with 43 percent of the praying respondents acknowledging that they never have such experiences (Poloma and Gallup 1991:56-58). Graham Cooke, in introducing the prophetic to believers, described his personal experience with prayer and the early recognition of his own prophetic gifting:

Before the Lord called me into my current ministry, I was the business development manager for a large training and recruitment company. My life was a hectic round of business deals, management problems, employment, research, involvement with Government projects, taking training sessions, organising events and overseeing the ongoing business strategy for the company. There were times in those busy days when I would indicate to my reception staff that I was taking ten minutes out and did not want to be disturbed. I would retreat into my office, close the door and sit quietly, thanking God and listening, praying, wanting his perspectives. Many right decisions came out of these short bursts of time out in prayer. I can't honestly say I always heard God specifically speak in those moments (though sometimes I did!). However

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*Little mention has been made of prophecy in social scientific discussions of religious experience. It is significant that in the 599 pages of text it took to present 24 scholarly articles in the Handbook of Religious Experience (Hood 1995) only three passing references were made to prophecy. Two of them were in the article submitted by the present author.*

my track record at the company, together with continuous promotion amongst the staff, probably means that the Lord influenced me far more than I actually knew. Just as important was the fact that these short bursts of prayer kept my heart free from ungodly pressure. Prayer keeps the channel of communication open (Cooke 1994:51).

Religious experiences, often within the context of personal prayer, appear to open the pray-er to another way of knowing. It often an experience, as suggested by the above quotation, in which a belief in the supernatural and natural ebb and flow together to produce and maintain an alternative worldview. The Poloma and Gallup study suggests that Stark's fourth stage of religious experience in which persons perceive themselves as co-actors with the divine, often receiving messages of leading and guidance, is not as rare as scholarly skeptics might assume. Pentecostals have taken this stage of religious experience and further developed it to provide a subculture in which hearing the voice of God is normal spirituality. The Pentecostal movement is not only part of a revealed religion, but it is a movement that professes a belief that revelation is ongoing.

### **The Prophet and Stark's Theory of Revelations**

Although belief in the prophetic is integral to the Pentecostal worldview, there are major differences in the intensity and nature of its practice. For many Pentecostals it has been somewhat routinized and limited to confirming existing religious reality with perhaps only an occasional experience of prophecy as foretelling. As Rodney Stark (1991:241-242) has proposed in his model of normal revelations, Many common, ordinary, even mundane mental phenomena can be experienced as contact with the supernatural.

Dreams, mental visions, impressions, and serendipitous occurrences are all regarded as common potential media for receiving prophecy. While prophecy has continuously played a role in the nearly 100 years of Pentecostal history, there has always been a corresponding need to control this explosive and institutionally disruptive experience.

What Stark (1991:242) goes on to describe about mystical experiences applies well to an analysis of prophetic expressions in the Pentecostal movement: Most episodes involving contact with the supernatural will merely confirm the conventional religious culture, even when the contact includes a specific communication, or revelation. The prophetic can readily become heretical, as the founders of the Pentecostal movement soon learned. For many Pentecostals the prophetic is a personal experience, often confirming some understanding of a biblical truth or some personal insight developed during prayer. As Stark (1991:244) has also astutely noted, however, genius often enters in the form of creative individuals (who) will sometimes create profound revelations and will externalize the source of this new culture. These persons are most likely to be of deep religious concerns who perceive the shortcomings of conventional faith(s). This process has occurred within each new Pentecostal wave, including The Latter Rain, the Charismatic Movement, the Third Wave, and the current Renewal/Refreshing/Revival in process in the Pentecostal movement around the globe.

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*By the 1940s many of the unique Pentecostal expressions had become somewhat routinized. A fresh restorationist movement developed known as The Latter Rain (Darrand and Shupe 1983; Synan 1984; Riss 1987) tried to revive Pentecostalism but was soon condemned by the leaders of the stronger Pentecostal sects. The Latter Rain did impact the Charismatic Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, reviving the prophetic during this new wave of Pentecostal activity. McGuire (1982) offers an excellent discussion of the routinization of prophecy among Catholic neo-Pentecostals that could be applied to other Pentecostal groups as well.*

The prophetic once again is aroused, refashioned, and expanded by an increasingly vocal minority within the larger movement.

As the century draws to a close, there is not only an increasing interest in the prophetic (broadly understood) but also an attempt to restore the office of the prophet to the Christian Church. A number of propositions found in Stark's (1999) latest article on a theory of revelations can assist in an understanding how prophecy continues to play a central role in the Pentecostal movement, most recently by those persons who are regarded as prophets in this new restoration. Stark (1999:289) introduces his model with a discussion of the context of revelations, noting the sociological contexts most likely to sustain revelatory activity. He hypothesizes: Revelations will tend to occur when (a) there exists a supportive cultural tradition of communication with the divine and (b) the recipient of the revelation(s) has direct contact with a role model, with someone who has had such communications. The Pentecostal subculture provides both of these requisites. There has been a proliferation of materials on prophecy during the 1990s, with the rise of new prophetic ministries to both model and teach on the prophetic. Leaders of these ministries are often referred to as having received the call to the office of prophet, serving as both teachers and role models who stimulate prophetic activities.

The theology underlying this emphasis on prophecy is similar to the one that generated the restorationist theology described briefly at the beginning of this article. For those on the prophetic cutting edge, the earth is on the brink of the end-times. One of the tasks to be accomplished before the final harvest of conversions preceding the

coming of Christ is the restoration of the five-fold ministries listed in Ephesians 4:12-13.. Three of the ministries those of evangelist, pastor and teacher have already been restored to the Church. As this millennium draws to a close the remaining two prophet and apostle are in the process of restoration. In the words of Bill Hamon, whose teachings on the five-fold ministries have influenced many present-day Pentecostal leaders:

The whole world will be affected when the apostles and prophets are fully restored. Their supernatural prophetic and apostolic words will signal the rise and fall of many nations and people. They will be instrumental in determining goat and sheep nations so that when Jesus Christ comes He can put the sheep nations on His right and the goat nations on His left. It will not be long until Christians realize the tremendous ways the restoration of the prophets and apostles will affect them and the corporate Church (Hamon 1997:2).

Hamon (1997:278) believes the ministry of prophet and apostle will take the Church through the next 30-40 transitional years during which there will be significant increases in Pentecostal signs and wonders. He notes: These final moves of God will close out the Age of the mortal Church. The end result will be the beginning of the Resurrected-Translated Immortal Church and the restoration and establishment of King Jesus and His queen Church in dominion over all the earth (Rev. 5:10).

Cindy Jacobs (1995a:28), herself an acknowledged prophet, describes Hamon (who has been involved in the prophetic movement for over 40 years) as a pioneer of personal prophecy (who) had his first affirmation of the call to the ministry through a prophetic word. She reports how while as a young man attending Bible school in Portland, Oregon, five faculty members spoke the same prophetic message over him. The message included the line, Yea, and thy mouth shall be quick to speak the word of

the Lord, and even as thou shalt speak shall the prophetic utterance come forth.

During the four decades following that prophetic experience, notes Jacobs, Hamon had personally prophesied over many thousands of people.

The gift of prophecy and the role of prophet are woven into the fabric of the early Judeo-Christian tradition. Thus, in one sense, the restoration of the prophetic into the Christian Church is more confirmatory than revelatory. This attempt by some leaders of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement reflects another of Stark's propositions: Most episodes involving contact with the divine will merely confirm the conventional religious culture, even when the contact includes a specific communication, or revelation (p. 292). I would suggest, however, that the widespread resurgence of prophecy within a segment of Christianity is more innovative than simply a reflection of the larger Christian culture. It seeks to restore the status of prophet believed to be present and operant in an earlier epoch but long absent in the historic church.

### **From Prophecy to Prophet**

Although prophecy is undisputedly a factor in the revitalization of the Pentecostal movement, it has also undeniably proved to be one of the more problematic charisms. What is to be done about the person who disrupts religious drama and institutions in the name of being a spokesperson for the divine? How can the damage that private prophecy may pose for the undiscerning believer be controlled by those more aware of its dysfunctional uses? What about its use to promote a position of power and prestige by leaders who are at best naïve and at worst, unscrupulous?



Sufficient to say, most leaders are able to successfully control the damage that could be done by one every-prophet to another every-prophet. Rules have been spelled out carefully by teachers on the prophetic to warn people about dangers inherent in accepting prophetic counsel and prognoses from novices. New Testament prophecy, it is often said, is different from that of the Old Testament in its limited role of edification and encouragement. Those who receive prophetic words or visions with a negative spin are commonly encouraged to use such words of knowledge for prayer rather than conveying them as prophecies. These widespread teachings serve to control the dangers of one person giving another prophecies that are potentially harmful to individuals and disruptive to communities. Warnings about the dangers of inappropriate private prophecies are generally sprinkled throughout conferences and teachings offered to believers seeking to learn the art of prophecy. Such teachings do minimize the potential danger that a half-crazed or misguided prophet could wrack upon a community.

Potential problems stemming from emerging prophetic leaders, however, are less likely to be controlled through warnings and teachings. Those who intentionally or unintentionally aspire to the office of prophet must continually demonstrate their powers in order to retain a following. As I discussed in my earlier work on the Charismatic movement, prophecy was often used in intentional communities by leaders to provide norms for the community and to control the behavior of individual members (Poloma 1982; see also McGuire 1982). At present, possibly because of a widespread awareness of the problems that prophecy caused in an earlier era of the movement, present-day leaders are less likely to attempt to control individual behavior through prophetic words.

In some ways, the stakes are higher as those with prophetic ministries emerge supported by a biblically-derived doctrine of the restoration of the fivefold ministry for the entire church. Just as priests of old are believed to be replaced by pastors, teachers and evangelists, a new level of authority appears to be emerging to replace that of bishop in historic traditions with that of prophets and apostles.

This move toward routinization of the prophetic charism is a path familiar to historians of the early church. Robeck (1988, p. 735-37) has described how the early church was no stranger to prophetic activity, with room being made within the church structure for prophets to work on both the itinerant and local levels. By the Middle Ages, prophetic activity was more likely to be confined to operation within the bounds of the official church structure. Prophecy as charism became routinized within ecclesiastical office. The Protestant Reformation opened the door for a resurgence of prophecy in some independent sectors, but prophetic activity was more likely to be limited to God speaking through the preacher. With Pentecostalism came the restoration of prophecy as practiced by the early Church. The problem, as Robeck (1988, p. 238) points out is two fold: There is the question of (1) how to distinguish genuine oracles from false ones and (2) what authority contemporary oracles have in light of a closed canon of Scripture.

It would appear that as Pentecostal history has unfolded, the difficulty of resolving the first problem has led to silencing many would-be-prophets and to creating a wariness about prophetic manifestations. Many Pentecostal groups have taken a *de facto* cessationist position that relegates prophecy to a pastor's Sunday sermon. While

prophecy may be given lip service in these gatherings, in fact it often is no more likely to find expression here than it is in historic churches. Despite the seemingly unstoppable lure of routinization, however, the spirit of prophecy cannot be easily suppressed in a movement as amorphous as Pentecostalism. It regularly resurfaces to present afresh the problems of discernment and regulation.

A new prophetic movement quietly began in the 1980s during a plateau following the mainstreaming of Pentecostalism into mainline Protestant and Catholic churches. It gathered momentum in the so-called Third Wave sector where the Pentecostal worldview could be found in independent and newly emerging churches and parachurch ministries. It helped to launch and spread the current revitalization of Pentecostalism a movement that has been referred to as Renewal (Canadian and American), Refreshing (British) or Revival (Classical Pentecostal). Despite differences in nomenclature and attempts to distinguish one Pentecostal happening from another, the Pentecostal/Charismatic/Third Wave revivals found in different geographic locations share more commonalities than differences (c.f. Poloma, 1998). Whatever else they are, Toronto, Pensacola and countless other places that have experienced a time in the river (to use a popular renewal metaphor) which has served to revitalize a Pentecostalism struggling against the forces of routinization.

### **Prophecy and Pentecostal Revitalization**

Prophets and prophecy have played a vital role in first foretelling and confirming then in admonishing and redirecting this latest wave of the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. Prophecies given publicly prior to the Toronto Blessing and the Pensacola

Revival were matched with the events, creating a postmodern narrative that fed the prophecy enterprises already set in motion. Complementing the more sensational predictive prophetic words, prophecies (often from unknown local prophets) appeared regularly on renewal listserves and later on scores of Websites devoted to revival news. Given the significant role that prophecy played in birthing and spreading the 1990s renewal, it should not be surprising that prophetic voices continue to direct and redirect the remnants of the latest Pentecostal fire by attempting to breathe new fire into the cooling coals. Nor should it be surprising to observe an emphasis on the emerging role of the prophet at a time the movement itself is struggling to maintain its charismatic edge. The next few pages will illustrate the role prophecy has played in foretelling, confirming, critiquing and (re)directing the renewal and presenting its major themes.

It is important to note that much of this section focuses on the more organized prophetic ministries and the words of better-known prophets. While anyone is free to prophecy (especially over the many Internet sites), some prophets are more likely to be heard than others. A four-level typology has been offered by Mike Bickle and Jim Goll (1997), both noted for their prophetic ministries, to describe the major differences. These levels (in ascending order) are (1) simple prophecy, (2) prophetic gifting, (3) prophetic ministry, and (4) prophetic office. *Simple prophecy* most resembles a phenomenon described earlier in this paper as the democratization of the Spirit. It is an extension of prayer experiences commonly found among Christian pray-ers, including thoughts that God brings to mind and (less frequently) visions, pictures, or prophetic dreams, and functions to strengthen, encourage and comfort. The second level of *prophetic gifting*

has the same function as simple prophecy with an intensification of prophetic experiences (including clearer visions, words, pictures, and dreams). It is only with the third level of *prophetic ministry* that prophets are encouraged to give direction and correction to others. Bickle and Goll (1997, p. 33) describe such experiences as regularly receiving words, dreams and visions, having open visions (angelic visitations, audible voices, etc.), and as often including detailed information, such as names, faces, dates, future events. The fourth level that of *the prophet* is the most powerful but has less authority than those who wrote the scriptures. They function to provide direction and correction to those in church government, and often leaders in the secular world as well. Prophets allegedly have a constant flow of divine revelation, with many open visions. Increasingly they are the ones who produce the long prophecies that may be found on the Internet and even book-length prophetic manuscripts available at conferences and Christian bookstores (c.f. Joyner 1996).

### **Prophetic Predictions of the Revivals**

. . . many of the moves of God we are seeing in the 1990s were prophesied in the 1980s. I remember two gatherings of prayer leaders held in 1986 one in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the other in Pasadena, California in which almost identical prophecies were given about a sweeping revival that would begin in Canada. As I write, sparks of revival are already leaping into the United States from Toronto (Jacobs 1995, p. 16).

When a public prophecy comes to pass as it did at the small Toronto Airport Vineyard in January, 1994, it becomes both a hope and a model for increased prophetic activity. In May of 1992 almost two years before the Toronto Blessing began Mark Dupont of Mantle of Praise Ministries reported a vision of water falling over and onto an

extremely large rock. The amount of water was similar to Niagra Falls. Part of Dupont's lengthy prophecy read:

Toronto shall be a place where the much living water will be flowing with great power, even though at the present time both the church and the city are like big rocks cold and hard against God's love and His Spirit. The waterfall shall be so powerful that it will break the big rocks up into small stones that can be used in building the kingdom ([www.tacf.org/prophecy](http://www.tacf.org/prophecy)).

Dupont was not the only prophet to predict that something was about to happen in Canada that would impact the larger Christian world. Although his was the first public prophetic proclamation to single out Toronto as the chosen city, famed pastor and prophet David Yonggi Cho of Korea prophesied nearly five years earlier (April 24, 1987) that the last great move of the Spirit will originate in Canada, and . . . will be brought to the 210 nations of the Earth before Jesus returns (Riss 1987). Four years later in 1991 Cho gave a prophecy in Seattle to seemingly predict the famous Pensacola Revival that began in June, 1994. John Kilpatrick, pastor of Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, reported the event as part of a television interview as follows:

In 1991, David Yonggi Cho gave a prophecy in Seattle. He was praying, and said, Lord, you have segregated America for Judgment? Or are you going to pour our your Spirit? . . . And in his motel room, the Holy Spirit spoke to him and said, Take a world atlas. And he took out his atlas, and the Holy Spirit told him to point. And his finger went right to Pensacola, Florida. When he did that, the Lord spoke to him and said, I will start revival in America, in this seaside city. It will burn like a match, head first. It will burn hot first. Then it will spread to Mobile Alabama. Then it will go all the way over to the Mississippi River. It will fan up the East Coast. It will come back down through the North and Midwest. Down in the Southwest and up through the Northwest. And all of America will be ablaze with the glory of God . ([new-wine@grmi.org](mailto:new-wine@grmi.org); June 27, 1996)

Although men with ministries like Dupont and Cho (who pastors what is often referred to as the world's largest church in Seoul, Korea) are more likely to receive a

hearing, others apparently were also receiving words about the forthcoming revival.

Renee DeLorica (1997, p. 16) wrote about her prophecy which led her to relocate from the Seattle area to Pensacola in 1989:

All around me in that airport in Wichita, Kansas, people were looking at me strangely, but I knew the force backing me into that wall was the power of God. I had been walking down the corridor, minding my own business, when an incredible force pushed me backward like a feather being swept by a strong wind. I had to obey. . . .As I was pushed farther and farther to the floor, God spoke to my spirit in an almost audible voice, clearly saying, Azusa Street: Pensacola, Florida. Azusa Street: Pensacola, Florida. That day in January, 1989, I knew that God was going to send revival to Pensacola, Florida. I realized even then that this revival would somehow touch the world just as the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles had changed the course of Church history in the early 1900s.

Although DeLorica moved to Pensacola a few months after receiving the prophetic word, it was not until seven years later that she walked into the revival at Brownsville Assembly of God for the first time.

Accounts of prophetic words being linked with subsequent outbreak of renewal/revival are not uncommon. Some, like Renee DeLorica, instruct people to move or to remain in a particular location. More recently (September 14, 1999), Australian evangelist and pastor Jeff Beacham ([firepowerministries@ibm.net](mailto:firepowerministries@ibm.net)) reported divine instruction he received to remain on the East Coast of the U.S.:

Not long after we arrived here in the USA from Australia, we received a prophecy that God would not release us from this area for a certain season. That has proved to be the case because in the last five months, I have gone from getting onto jumbo jets leaving for global destinations, to driving up and down the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway.

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*For a detailed account of the role prophecy played in the birth, development and growth of Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, California, see Poloma (1998). HRC, born out of the Toronto Blessing in 1994, exemplifies the role the prophetic can play in the birth and development of a religious institution as well as the interface of the prophetic and apostolic ministries.*

Within the past several months, reports have appeared on the Internet with some regularity about the revival that is coming to the East Coast.

Predictive prophecy that announces a fresh outpouring of the Spirit on particular locations comprises only a small part of prophetic utterances. What makes them especially significant is the role they play in the myths that tell the story of the charismatic moment. Judging from observation of Internet postings and hearing prophecies at local churches and conferences, it is safe to assume that countless prophecies have been given throughout the world about imminent revivals that have never come to pass. The accounts of those predictions that came true continue to nurture the belief that more of the same is ahead.

### **Prophetic Direction in Institutional Context**

While it is not appropriate to debate whether there is any causal relationship between the predictive prophecies proclaiming religious revitalization and the actual events, it is within the realm of social science to note the perceived relationship between prophetic words and what has been called revival, renewal or refreshing. To paraphrase the famous psychologist W. I. Thomas's definition of the situation, if people define the prophetic words as being of divine origin, these prophecies can have real institutional consequences. When the renewal was in its charismatic moment, all believers were instructed in simple prophecy. They were frequently encouraged to use this charism, although most teachings limited their public performance to levels 1 and 2 described

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*It is noteworthy that in the earliest days of the Toronto Blessing in January 1994 through 1995, public prophecies were minimal. Occasionally one would appear on the early listserves developed to serve the renewal. As time went on, a special listserve was developed by New-Wine (a leading promoter of the renewal) to share prophetic words.*



earlier. With increased organizational development, the label of prophet or prophetess began to be applied to select persons, usually male leaders who assumed prophetic mantels. The nameless-faceless characteristic of the earliest days of the renewal (where the leaders were neither widely known nor promoted) soon gave way to the masses flocking to conferences (including prophetic conferences) to be ministered to (and to receive prophecies from) the men of God. Some of the recognized prophets were those who predicted and pioneered the rise of the prophetic in the 1980s, with the new renewal movement providing a fresh platform for these relatively unknown ministries. Other prophets emerged out of the renewal/revival movement of the 1990s, often establishing ministries in which they itinerated to promote the prophetic. The stage was set for prophetic ministries and those elevated to the role of prophet to provide direction to the movement.

When the larger movement began to develop some form out of its earlier amorphous state, prophecy became an important mechanism for proposing direction. By 1996 words were being regularly given about the inadequacy of the old religious forms and the emergence of a new thing. They also seemed to be offering an apology for a movement that seemed to have hit a plateau while offering hope of more to come. Mark Dupont who had received a predictive prophecy about the Toronto Blessing and had been bestowed a prophetic mantel by its followers, prophetically proclaimed on May 31, 1996:

Behold I am doing a new thing. The former things have come to pass. I am sending a tidal wave of my Spirit. There is a wave of My Spirit coming upon this world that the world has never seen yet before. . .Much of my church has been in an arrogance of their own understanding. They have been

standing before My people and saying, God does this, God does this, and God doesn't do that. I have not been speaking to them. . . .But I say to you, the winds of My Spirit are blowing against the church and I will destroy, I will destroy the apathy. . . .And I am going to break the complacency and apathy towards Me. There is a false spirit. There is a false spirit that has been working amongst much of the church. It is the spirit of the anti-christ. It is the spirit of religion. (www.tacf.org/proph96)

Another Dupont prophecy that was widely circulated through the Internet similarly promised more, including a rise in the prophetic, that would follow the party that those who experienced the renewal had been enjoying:

I have told you that I would do a new thing in your time. Not a new thing from what you have known in the past, but a new things that you have not seen before. I have told you that when My Spirit is poured out on all of mankind that your young men and women would prophesy, that your old ones would dream dreams, and that your young men would see visions. I say to you that I save the best for last. The last days outpouring of my Spirit began with a party of My disciples becoming intoxicated with My presence. So has this installment of the last days outpouring of My Spirit. It has begun with a party. A party in which all have been invited to but few have chosen to respond to, because they prefer the old wine to the new. ([www.revivalnow.com/proph](http://www.revivalnow.com/proph)).

In many ways 1996 seemed to be a watershed for the movement that began in Toronto. It had reached a plateau after having had its impact confined largely to non-denominational and select Pentecostal communities. A prophesy given on April 6, 1987 by Dave Minor titled "Two Winds" was widely used to benchmark what a noticeable change in the movement. The first wind had blown powerfully, but yet another wind was promised:

Be not dismayed. For after this, My wind shall blow again. Have you not read how my breath blew on this valley of dry bones? So it shall breathe on you. This wind will come in equal force as the first wind. This wind will too have a name. It shall be called, "The Kingdom of God." It shall bring My government and My order. Along with that, it shall bring My power ([New-wine@grmi.org](mailto:New-wine@grmi.org), July 16, 1996).

With the promise of another wave or wind came also more predictions of being in the last-days, although still relatively little attention was paid to the past time of some Fundamentalist writers and preachers of exegeting the book of Revelations or in developing an eschatological timetable. Instead the emphasis was on increased signs and wonders that will bring in a last harvest.

### **Prophecy, Contemporary Pentecostals and End-Times**

Our discussion of the Pentecostal movement and Christian millenarianism has come full circle from noting the role of eschatology and prophecy at the beginning of the movement in the early 1900s to observing the increase in prophetic activity in Pentecostal revitalization nearly a century later. Although one might surmise there would be a doomsday emphasis in the prophecies found in Pentecostalism at the close of this millennium, there is relatively little such talk by leaders in revival circles. J. Lee Grady (1999), editor of the popular *Charisma* magazine spoke for many in the movement with his recent editorial on Silly Rumors, Crazy Fears :

Preachers and publishers are fueling doomsday hysteria with videos and books that make outlandish claims about when and how the book of Revelation will be fulfilled or how the Y2K computer bug will trigger the Great Tribulation. It's all nonsense, and most of these prophecy experts will have egg on their faces in six months. Don't be gullible enough to believe them (Grady 1999, p. 6).

There is little end-time frenzy and fear among Pentecostals as the second millennium draws to a close, although verbal profession that we are in the last days is common among the prophets. Without setting dates or inspiring fear, most public prophetic messages emphasize divine promises, a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit

and a call to prayerful response. Cutting Edge Ministries ([www.the-cutting-edge.org](http://www.the-cutting-edge.org)) provides good illustrations of the temper of public prophetic messages. In the March 1999 issue of its magazine, leading revivalist and prophet Tommy Tenney (p. 2) wrote the following about a prophetic round table discussion held in Colorado Springs:

One of the words that kept coming is that we are facing increasing natural calamities. Not to be a doomsayer, but there is an increasing feeling rippling throughout the body that the days of easy Christianity, may be coming to a close. The church may be going through a time of persecution, whether it be literal or verbal (societal opinions). It may vary according to whether you are in a western nation or a third-world country. . .

.Furthermore, we feel as though in the midst of all this, probably one of the greatest times of revival will come upon the church. We are greatly encouraged by a rising sense of expectancy for God to break forth upon the earth.

Amidst the verbal expressions about a soon second coming of Christ (although few would hazard predicting when or where) is the promise of an even more intense revival than that experienced in the 1990s. This revival will usher in a great harvest of souls followed by the Second Coming. The prophet Bob Jones expressed it as follows:

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*Tenney lists the names of others at this round table, several of whom provided illustrative materials for this article. They included Peter Wagner, Mike and Cindy Jacobs, Rick Joyner, Mike Bickle, Paul Cain, James and Belinda Ryle, Barbara Wentroble, John and Paul Sanford, Kindsey Fletcher, Jim Lafoon, Chuck Pierce, Dutch Sheets and Bill Hamon.*

So you are the remnant seed because you came out of nine years of judgment. God gave us new life at different times so we would live that long. He gave us Toronto bringing back the joy. He gave us Brownsville bringing back the repentance as he did several other things up here to keep you alive to bring you to this point. And now he is after the harvest and everyone of you is called to harvest and harvest begins with prayer ([www.revivalnet.net/prophecy/jones](http://www.revivalnet.net/prophecy/jones) ).

Rick Joyner, another well-regarded renewal prophet, made a similar statement:

The church has been in a period of renewal. Multitudes have been healed and restored. Vision and faith have been rising steadily over the last few years. This has been a wonderful time, but it is merely a preparation for what is coming. We are now about to cross the bridge from renewal to revival. I am defining renewal as that which works to heal and awaken the church, and revival as that which results in the salvation of the lost and the empowering of believers to challenge the spiritual darkness of our times ([www.Revivalnet/prophecy/joyner](http://www.Revivalnet/prophecy/joyner)).

The statements made by contemporary prophets are quite similar to those made by the founders of what is now the worldwide Pentecostal movement nearly 100 years ago. They reflect an eschatology, as noted in the opening quotation of this article, that has a very significant effect on their [Pentecostal] perception of world historical events and on their political and social response to these events. Perhaps even more importantly, this eschatology continues to stimulate evangelistic and missionary endeavors as it has with earlier generations of Pentecostal believers. The Pentecostal worldview has always been nurtured through personal experiences with the prophetic and increasingly the proclamation of prophets whose rise is regarded as another sign of the times. Whether the lengthy proclamations of institutionalized prophets will have the same impact as personal religious experiences of prophecy in the irrigation of a

movement constantly in need of the refreshing waters of religious experience remains to be seen.

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