

. . . It is . . . important to appreciate that the church in its foundational period of the apostles and prophets did not possess a sufficient Scripture. This was especially so with reference to the momentous implications of the salvation just revealed in Christ for the church's practice and lifestyle At the time, say, Paul wrote I Corinthians his readers did not have access, for example, to all four Gospels with the rich, synoptically interacting perspectives they provide on Jesus' ministry and Christian discipleship, nor to the instructive outlook on the church's history in Acts, nor to Romans with its masterful statement of the gospel, nor to the prison epistles, or Hebrews, or Revelation. . . .

At any rate, for prophecy, correctly conceived of, to continue on into subsequent generations of the church, beyond its foundational period, would necessarily create tensions with the closed, finished character of the canon. In fact, such a continuation would exclude a completed canon in the strict sense. At the most, there would be room for a unit, complete in the sense of having its own relative integrity, but constantly supplemented by new, additional revelations, a notion, we have tried to show, that conflicts with the covenantal nature of all revelation, taught in Scripture.

Dennis and Rita Bennett, in *The Holy Spirit and You* (pp. 103-110) write:

At Ephesus, when Paul laid hands on the twelve men and they received their "Pentecost", they "spoke with tongues and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). The Scripture tells us that ever since the day of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, any yielded child of God may be moved by the Spirit to prophesy. Paul at Corinth, after urging them all to seek to prophesy, even refers to all those used this way as prophets: Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other (Greek -- others) judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets (I Cor. 14:29-32). . . .

We have been talking about the gift of prophecy for all members of the Body, but now we need to talk about those who have a ministry in prophecy. Just as the Apostolic Age has not ended, and the ministry of the apostle is still going on today, so there are still those with the ministry of the prophet today. Because the Old Testament prophets often spoke out against social and political abuses, and against priestcraft and the hierarchy of that day -- the "establishment"! -- an erroneous idea has sprung up that every protester and militant campaigner for social justice is a "prophet", and that "prophecy" mainly consists in denouncing human evil. As we have seen however, it isn't what a man says in the natural realm that makes him a prophet; it is the fact that he is moved by the Spirit of God to speak the words God gives him.