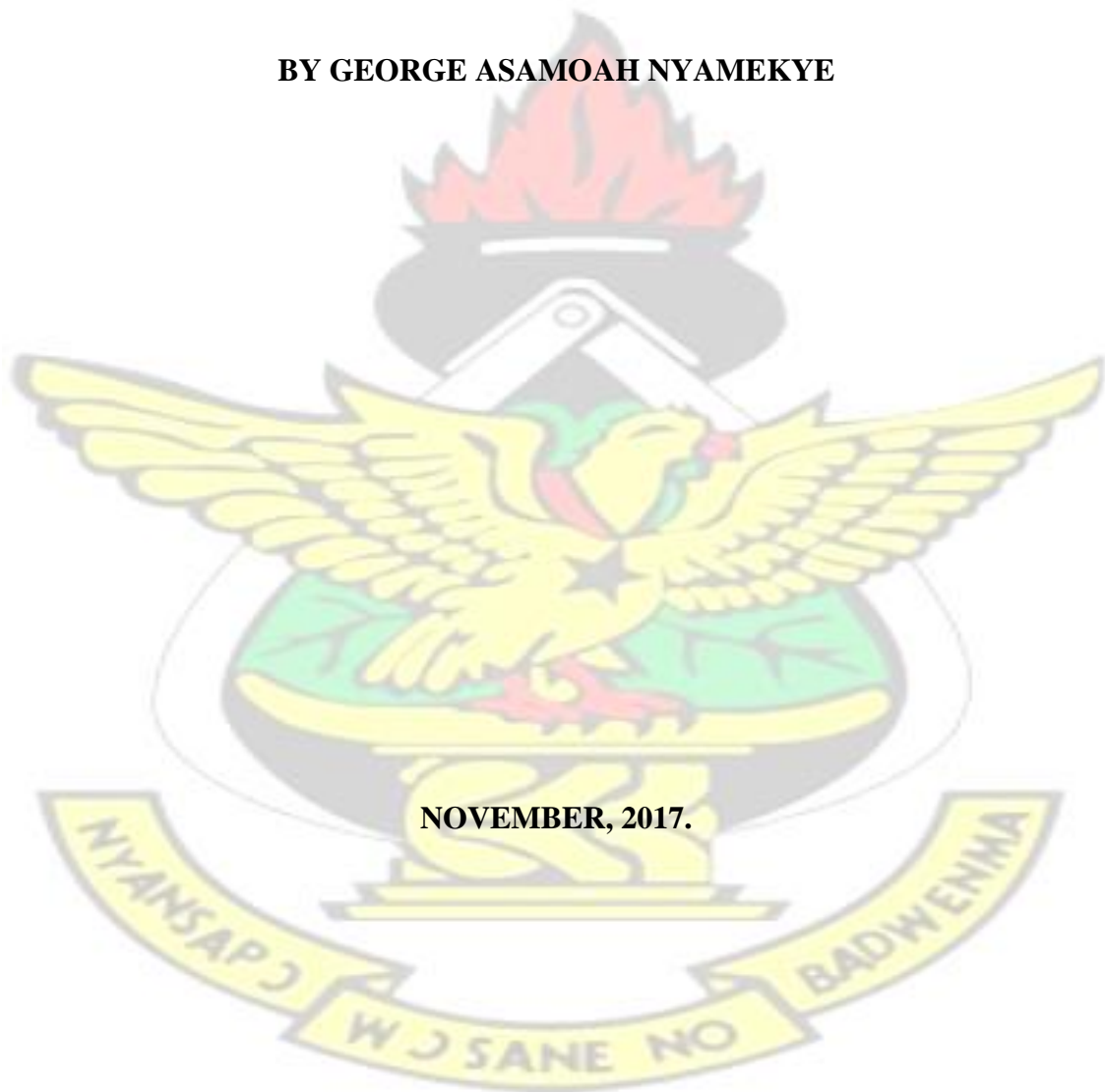


**IMPLICATIONS OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY FOR CONTEMPORARY
NEOPROPHETIC MINISTRY IN GHANA**

KNUST

BY GEORGE ASAMOAH NYAMEKYE



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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES,
KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES.**

NOVEMBER, 2017.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the M.Phil degree and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person or material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the university, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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Dr. Victor Selorme Gedzi

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Head of Dept's Name

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Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my wife, Mrs. Dorcas Asamoah Nyamekye, who has solidly stood behind me in my entire life since we got married. Her unflinching physical and spiritual support for me is not quantifiable.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS



AICs	-	African Independent Churches
ATR	-	African Traditional Religion
BC	-	Before Christ
CAC	-	Christ Apostolic Church
CCF	-	Campus Christian Fellowship
CCG	-	Christian Council of Ghana
CF	-	Compare
COP	-	Church of Pentecost
GPCC	-	Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches
GIB	-	Gideon International Bible
KJV	-	King James Version
KNUST	-	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
KTI	-	Kumasi Technical Institute
MDCC	-	Musama Disco Christo Church
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NIV	-	New International Version
NKJV	-	New King James Version
NOP	-	Northern Outreach Programme

- SDA - Seventh Day Adventist
TUC - Trade Union Conference

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ABSTRACT

Neo-prophetic ministries have gained currency in the Ghanaian society. This thesis examines the activities of present-day Ghanaian prophetic ministries in the light of biblical prophecy. The researcher visited many churches of different denominations in the Kumasi metropolis to familiarize himself with their activities. It was found out that the *akwankyerε* i.e directions given by the prophets differed from church to church. The use of anointing oil is widespread among the prophetic ministries. Some people believe that after the anointing oil has been blessed by a prophet it assumes a supernatural power and in consequence its application induces miracles. Some abuses have been observed in the operation of some of the prophets. Consequently, it has been recommended that the activities of neo-prophetic ministries should be regulated.

Various church organizations with umbrella bodies like the C.C.G., the G.P.C.C., the Ghana Catholic Bishop Conference etc. can combine forces and come out with modalities to regulate the exercise of prophecy in the country.

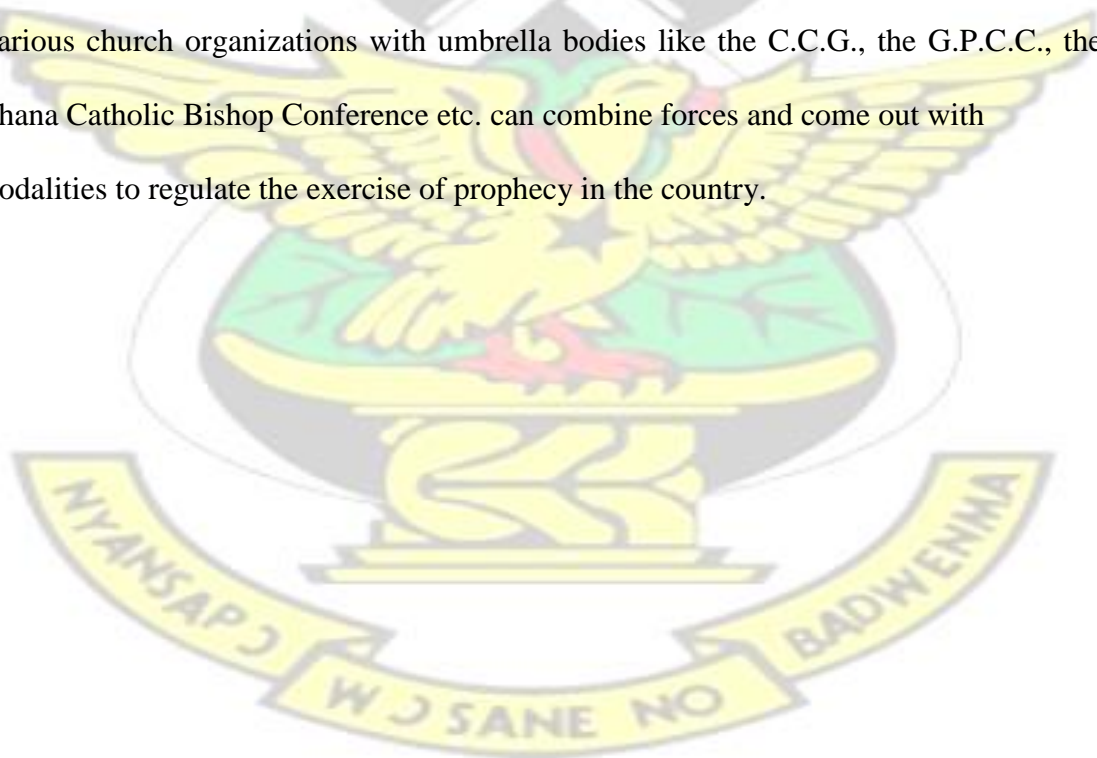


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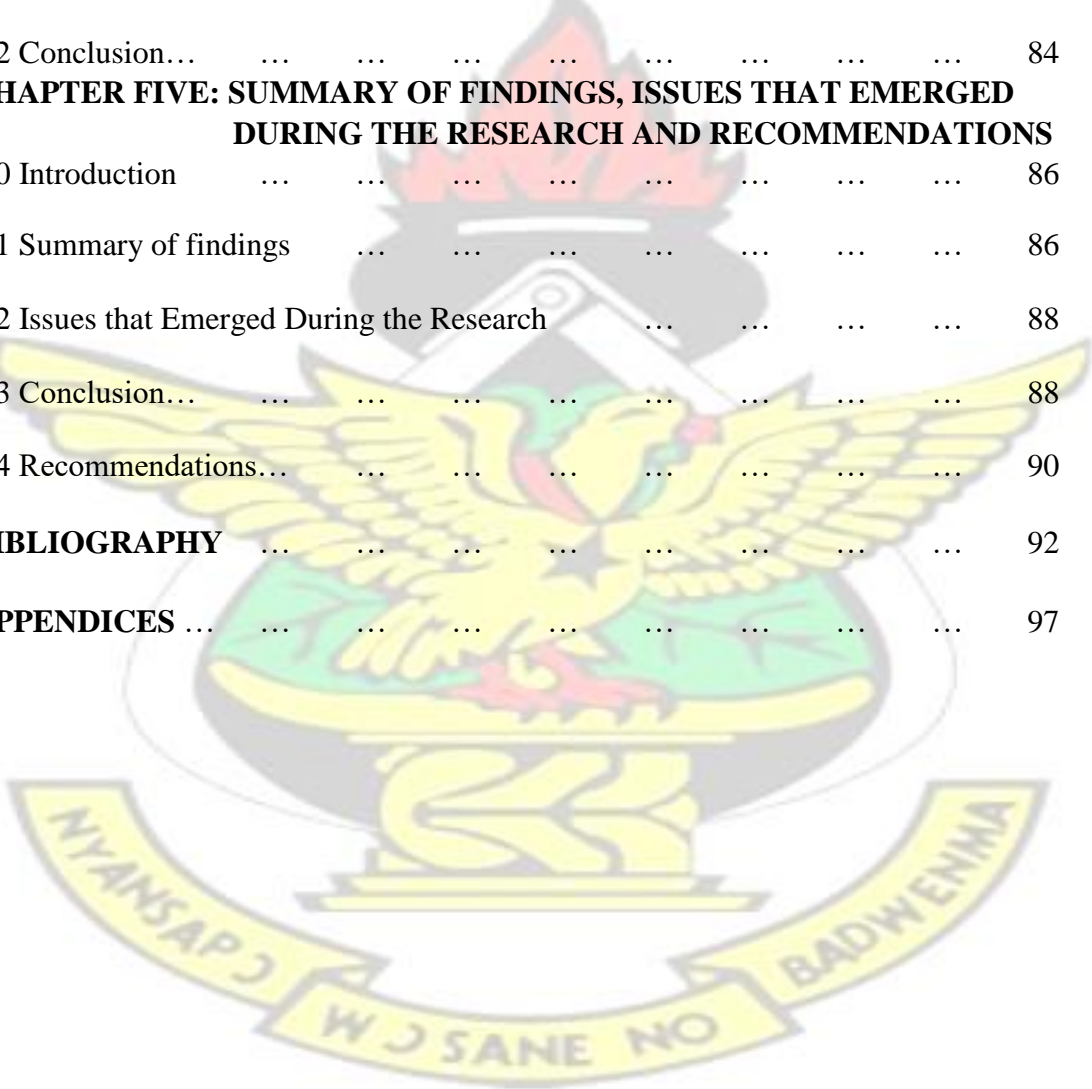
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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction and Background to the Study

This chapter covers the general introduction to the research. It discusses the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, methodology, and significance of the study, limitations to the study, literature review, and organization of the study.

The emergence of neo-prophetic ministries in Ghana has immensely contributed to the growth of the church.¹ However, there seems to be a public outcry which centres on concerns which many people have raised concerning prophecy especially in the area of providing directions popularly called *akwankyere* i.e. directions.² The directions are meant to provide solutions to both physical and spiritual problems.

This study seeks to assess Ghanaian neo-prophetic ministries in the light of biblical prophecy. One will not be far from right to infer that there has been a proliferation of men of God in the country in recent times. It is also noteworthy that the number of prophets in the country has tremendously increased in recent times. Most of them claim to have discerning power, thus revealing what has happened, is happening and will happen. These prophets pray for those who go to them to seek solutions to their problems and give them “prophetic directions”. In most cases the prophets sell “anointing” oil and other things to people at exorbitant prices. Also they normally attribute the problems of people who go to them to witches and wizards and go to the extent of mentioning names

¹ Robert Wyllie, *Spiritism in Ghana* (Ann Arbor, M.I: Edwards Brothers, 1980), p. 21.

² Cephas Narh Omenyo and Abamfo O. Atiemo “Claiming Religious Space: The Case of Neo-Propheticism in Ghana”. *Ghana Bulletin of Theology New Series*. Vol.1, No.1, July, 2006.

of witches and wizards to them. For this reason, some people physically attack some of their relatives and others whom they believe wield witchcraft power.

It has been observed that these prophets are predominantly illiterates or semi literates. They go to various airwaves to preach and prophesy with the view to advertising themselves.³ In most cases, their *modus operandi* testifies that they are not real men of God. It seems that some even have carnal knowledge of women who are not their wives. It should also be noted that some of these quack people of God are women.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There seems to be a widespread abuse of the gift of prophecy in its use to overcome and live a victorious Christian life. This apparent abuse has escalated to an unprecedented altitude.⁴

The problem confronting us is that, in consequence of this apparent abuse of the gift of prophecy, there is a mad rush for prophets or prophetesses in the country. This development has diverted people's attention from God's word to signs and wonders. Ironically, people receive salvation in Christ when they accept and live by God's word.

What is happening is that many people neglect God's word and go to the so-called prophets or prophetesses to be prayed for.

According to Asante, "systematically and gradually, African Traditional Religion is replacing true biblical directives from God and His word."⁵

³ Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi: A Socio-Cultural and Theological Assessment. *An unpublished article submitted to the Dept of Religious studies – Faculty of Social Science of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)*

⁴ Yaw Asante made this remarks at a *Church Leaders' Seminar* of the Ministers' Fellowship in Kumasi, at Pope John Paul Reformation Centre-Ofoase Kokoben, Feb 6 – 10, 2012.

⁵ Yaw Asante, *Church Leaders' Seminar* of the Ministers' Fellowship in Kumasi, at Pope John Paul Reformation Centre-Ofoase Kokoben, Feb 6 – 10, 2012.

An analysis of the situation reveals that many people have put their trust in men instead of God.

The worst part of these controversial “prophetic directions” is that they are militating against the very foundations of the Christian faith and practice. Contemporary prophetic ministry must indeed reflect and bear resemblance to biblical prophecy as exemplified by Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah etc.

Through this research it is hoped that a profound assessment would be made so as to provide biblical guidelines in the operation of the gift of prophecy as stated in the Bible.

1.2 Research Questions

The following questions engender the research:

- What is biblical prophecy?
- What are the implications of biblical prophecy for the neo-prophetic ministry in Ghana?
- How has biblical prophecy impacted on the neo-prophetic ministry in Ghana?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the research is to examine the implications of biblical prophecy for the neo-prophetic ministry in Ghana.

- It was meant to analyze prophecy from the biblical perspective and to ascertain the impact of biblical prophecy on the neo-prophetic ministry in Ghana.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because the consideration of the neo-prophetic ministry in the light of biblical prophecy will help throw more light on the contemporary debate on the role of prophetism in church growth. It will also help provide an understanding and

appreciation of neo-prophetism and its place in today's Christian theological discourse. A clear understanding of the formation process of prophets would increase people's knowledge of the impact of the phenomenon of neo-prophetism. The study serves as a source of reference and a study material for Christian leaders especially, and for all who want to know more about neo-prophetism. The research is also beneficial to academia as it will contribute to the existing store of knowledge and information in the area under research.

1.5 Methodology

This study employed the use of field visits, interviews, observation and analysis of the activities that are going on in Ghanaian neo-prophetic ministry. The qualitative method of research was employed. People's opinions were sought via data collection techniques. Both the primary and secondary sources of collecting data were also employed. Regarding the primary source, the researcher went to the field with questionnaires and also interviewed respondents. With this, a cross-section of people, thus pastors, prophets, elders, deacons, deaconesses and ordinary church members were interviewed. These target groups of people from different denominations were given questionnaires to answer. Secondary data from books, articles in general and the internet were used to broaden the horizon of the researcher on the topic under consideration.

The historical approach which by definition is, the systematic and objective observation, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and make inferences about past events was also employed. In effect, the background of prophecy was traced and delved into. Historical research aims at searching for solutions to contemporary problems or challenges in the light of previous historical events.

Both the purposive and random sampling methods were resorted to. This was to permit the researcher to recruit knowledgeable people.⁶ It made room for the researcher to conduct exclusive interviews with identifiable persons relevant to the study. One questionnaire was distributed to hundred (100) respondents as follows: ten (10) heads of Christian religious bodies, ten (10) Christian theologians and heads of Christian theological institutions and training centres, thirty (30) pastors, prophets, evangelists, fifty (50) church members.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research is committed to a comprehensive assessment of Ghanaian neo-prophetic ministries in the light of biblical prophecy. The researcher studied what goes on in these neo-prophetic ministries and then compared and contrasted them with biblical prophetic activities.

The homilies, choral activities, offerings, and how prophecy is exercised as a spiritual gift in these ministries were studied before any meaningful comparison was made. The lifestyles of these prophets were also looked at.

However, because these ministries are scattered all over the country, it was a herculean task for the researcher to study them region by region. The study was, therefore limited to some selected neo-prophetic ministries in the Kumasi metropolis.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Reluctance on the part of some members and prophets of these ministries to open up for interview was witnessed since they might want to conceal certain things pertaining to their cultic practices.

⁶ Babbie Earl, *The Practice of Social Research* 6th ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), p. 23.

Moreover, the study was limited to some churches in the Kumasi metropolis. Consequently, the outcome of the study cannot be described as nationally representative.

1.8 Literature Review

The most utilized Hebrew noun for prophet, *nāḇī*, remains uncertain in etymology but seems to come from the root meaning “to announce.”⁷ Biblical usage confirms the concept of the prophet as an announcer: for example, when God sent Moses to Egypt He explained, “See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet: thou shalt speak all that I command, thee, and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh.” (Exodus 7:1-2 KJV). To this, then, corresponds the basic meaning of the Greek word *profētēs*, one who speaks forth on behalf of another; in classic culture, one who interprets the will of some deity.⁸ The Apostle Peter thus insists, “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).⁹ A prophet may therefore be defined as a spokesman of God’s special revelation; and prophecy, in its broadest sense, as simply the message of a prophet.

The Old Testament has two other major terms for prophet: *hōzē* and *rō’ē*, both meaning “one who sees,” a “seer” (1 Samuel 9:9). As contrasted with the divine proclamation to men that is connoted by *nāḇī*, these latter nouns emphasize God’s mode of revelation to the prophet. They underline, furthermore, the pictorial nature of much of prophetic revelation, whether given by dreams, or by visions, which constitute God’s more normal mode of revelation to His prophets (Ezekiel 7:26; cf. Isaiah 1:1 and contrast Jeremiah

⁷ J. Payne Barton, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (US: Baker Books, 1996), p. 3.

⁸ Barton, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, p. 4.

⁹The Gideon International Bible (GIB)

23:27, 32 NIV).⁹ Both the Old Testament and New Testament underscore the fact that God gives messages to a prophet who in turn relays the messages to people as directed by God. However, the divine mode of revelation differs. The prophet, therefore, is God's emissary.

According to Emmanuel Asante, evidence from the Ancient Near East indicates that the prophet of the Ancient Near East used the messenger formula and spoke in the first person in respect of the god whose message they communicated under inspiration.¹⁰ Asante seems to indicate that a prophet in ancient times was a spokesperson who only communicated what he was given by a deity. This is very important as we recognize the prophet as a vessel or channel of information and also as we examine biblical prophecy and its implications for contemporary prophecy.

For the Old Testament prophets were both forthtellers and foretellers. Again and again they did predict the future, both the immediate future that should arise out of the conditions of their own times, and the more distant future on the far horizons of time. I would not eliminate the predictive element in prophecy; on the other hand I would not let it crowd out the other elements.¹¹

Like the Old Testament prophecy, prophecy in the Ancient Near East may contain a warning and a promise of divine protection.¹³

Even though prophetism involves prediction of future occurrence or fore-telling, prophetism by and large, has to do with forth-telling. So the prophet is, generally speaking, a preacher or a proclaimer of God's inspired word. It is not the biblical view

⁹ Barton, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, p. 6.

¹⁰ Asante, *The Prophetic and Apocalyptic Phenomena in Israel: A Theological Introduction*, p. 106.

¹¹ H. H. Rowley, *Prophecy and Religion in Ancient Christ and Israel* (London: The Athlone Press, 1956), p. 3. ¹³ Asante, *The Prophetic and Apocalyptic Phenomena in Israel: A Theological Introduction*, p. 3.

to suppose that prophecy is to be limited to the disclosure of the future. That which is given by the Spirit to the prophet can refer to the past, present, as well as the future.¹²

This information helped the researcher to compare and contrast biblical prophecy with contemporary prophecy.

The prophets themselves were inspired preachers. To their contemporaries they were, in a real sense, the moral and ethical preachers of spiritual religion. Hence Amos declares God's word of rebuke to those Israelites who had come to believe that mere outward conformity to sacrificial ritual and ceremony could atone for their sins (Amos 5:21-24, NIV). The prophets boldly rebuked vice, denounced political corruption, oppression, idolatry and moral degeneracy. They were preachers of righteousness, reformers, and revivalists of spiritual religion, as well as prophets of future judgment or blessing.¹³ This is relevant to the research since the writer points out the biblical prophets' mode of prophesying.

Writing about, "what kind of men were the prophets?" Glovis G. Chappell says the prophets, as a rule, were not popular. They were generally heartily hated. It is not difficult to see why this was the case. They were too far ahead of their fellows. They were also men who dared rebuke the popular sins of their day whether those sins were practised by prince or pauper. Being hated, they were persecuted.¹⁴

Again, Chappell says the biblical prophets had vivid religious experiences. They were all men who had met God. They were men who knew how to pray. They prayed in the finest sense, not simply by asking God for something, but also by listening to God. They were

¹² Hobert E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 14.

¹³ Derek Prince, *Prophetic Guide to the End Times: Facing the Future Without Fear* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2008), p. 11.

¹⁴ Glovis G. Chappell, *And the Prophets* (New York: Abingdon Press, 19), p. 15.

men to whom God could make known His will. They lived constantly in His fellowship. They were men who were girded and made strong by a compelling sense of mission.¹⁵ A different situation is being envisaged today. The ways most of those contemporary prophets go about performing their prophetic duties raise doubt about their calling. The way they pray and the rituals they perform leave much to be desired.

In examining the issue of prophecy, Derek Prince observes that, if we believe God alone can reveal the future, it follows that we must gain a right appreciation of His sovereignty, majesty and justice. In his view God is infallible and everything He does is right.¹⁶ He points out that, prophecy involves God's revelation of the future in accordance with His divine will. Thus, He does what He wills and is always right in His dealings and being sovereign, no one can change what He wants to do. This is important for the study as we examine prophecy as God's voice for humankind.

According to John Sandfort not all prophets are called to – or are capable of – moving in all the possibilities of the office. He continues to say that in fact he knows of none who is and that God calls each prophet into his own unique portfolio.¹⁷ He touches on the twelve major functions of a prophet. The functions are:

Blessing; (pronounce blessing and enable God's blessing), Healing, Pronounce judgment, Warn of impending judgment or tragedy, Protect or rescue, Give direction, guidance, or confirmation, Rebuke, reprove or correct, Edify, teach, and interpret dreams

¹⁵ Chappell, *And the Prophets*, p. 15.

¹⁶ Derrick, *Prophetic Guide to the End Times: Facing the Future without Fear*, p. 11.

¹⁷ John and Paula Sandfort, *Prophets, Healers and the Emerging Church* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, 2003), pp. 143-144.

and visions, Equip the saints for ministry, Work for unity, Call for intercession and repentance and Express and model God's love in Christ.¹⁸

On the distinction between true and false prophets, Edward J. Young has this to say: That which distinguished the true from the false prophet lay in the fact that the true had received a message from Jehovah, whereas the false had not. Jehovah, the God of Israel, had spoken His word to the true prophet. Any view of prophecy which does not come to grips with the question of revelation and the existence of God has failed at the outset.¹⁹

The false prophets, on the other hand, had not received messages from God. They prophesied, but the message which they uttered was of human origination, and not of Divine revelations. The visions which they experienced were not imposed upon them in a special supernatural manner, as was the case of the true prophets, but were visions which came from the human heart alone.²⁰

If a prophet spoke in the name of any god other than Jehovah, he was not to be obeyed. If he should speak in the name of Jehovah and his message did not come to pass, he would be shown to be false as was the case of Hananiah, who predicted the return from captivity within two full years.²¹

Again, Young says in ancient Israel the true "Church of God" would know the voice of God speaking in the true prophets and would turn from the words of false prophets, not recognizing in them God's words. Those who walked in humble obedience to the Law

¹⁸ John and Paula Sandfort, *Prophets, Healers and the Emerging Church* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, 2003), pp. 143-144.

¹⁹ Edward J. Young, *My Servants the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: WMB Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), pp. 148-152.

²⁰ Young, *My Servants the Prophets*, pp. 148-152.

²¹ Young, *My Servants the Prophets*, pp. 148-152.

of God, who loved Him with all the heart and who looked for the consolation of Israel and the coming of the Desire of nations, would recognize their Father's voice, just as the humble Christian believer of the present day, untutored and uneducated though he may be, yet knows the Word of God and can detect it from those messages which are not in harmony with the voice of God.²²

Emmanuel Adu Ampong takes a closer look at deliverance in Ghanaian Neo-Pentecostal Ministries, its theological ramifications, the way it is carried out and the influence on its establishment and upsurge in Charismatic deliverance ministries in the early 1970s. Ampong observes that deliverance has become so pronounced in the charismatic movement in Ghana that it poses a challenge to evangelical Christianity.²³

He continues to say that, "The issue of deliverance whether for good or for bad, has become an entrenched reality in Ghanaian Christianity. Evangelical non-Pentecostal / Charismatic Christians cannot deny the fact that the principle of deliverance has been alluded to in Scripture. As to whether it is rightly or wrongly interpreted in charismatic deliverance ministries is yet to be ascertained."²⁴

Of course Jesus delivered a lot of people in His earthly ministry and commissioned the Apostles to do the same as part of the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God. The charismatic ministries have taken steps in operating in this area of ministry but not without many theologically questionable practices and allusions.

Johnathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor asserts that the prophetic phenomenon is not something limited to the Kumasi metropolis but is engulfing the whole

²² Young, *My Servants the Prophets*, pp. 148-152.

²³ Emmanuel Adu Ampong, *Deliverance in Ghanaian Neo-Pentecostal Ministries: A Critical Assessment from an Evangelical Perspective*, M.Th thesis, Stellenbosch University, South Africa, 2004.

²⁴ Adu Ampong, *Deliverance in Ghanaian Neo-Pentecostal Ministries*.

country.²⁵ Kuwornu-Adjaottor notes further that, the major reason for its ascension in Kumasi is the socio-economic challenges the people face every day. The city's cosmopolitan nature creates frustrating and difficult situations in the lives of the people which is seen as been addressed by the various prophets in the area.

Kuwornu-Adjaottor agrees to the fact that contemporary prophets are meeting some needs of their followers but was quick to add that prophets in the metropolis, to some extent, are becoming what he calls "mechanistic theologians". These prophets in his view put their adherents in a state of anxiety. The response of the people to this is their total dependence on the prophets and their instructions at the expense of the word of God.²⁶ Per the scope of our study, we will use Kuwornu-Adjaottor's views as a basis for our assessment of the impact of prophetism on Christianity, especially the Kumasi metropolis which was also the study area of the author. In addition, this study will examine the impact of these neo-prophetic institutions on the existing Pentecostal churches.

Cephas Narh Omenyo and Abamfo O. Atiemo articulate that the inability of the Mainline churches in the past to speak directly into the lives of their African converts largely accounted for the insurgence of the Prophetic Movements in the country. ²⁷They explain that the mainline churches failed to recognize the need to take into consideration the possible meeting between Christianity and the worldview of the indigenes. This oversight made the form of Christianity presented by the missionaries as something foreign or external. Fortunately, it may appear that the prophetic movements have had headway in this area as their ethos and teachings largely present a form of continuity and

²⁵ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi, pp. 62-68.

²⁶ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, *Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi*, pp. 62-68.

²⁷ Cephas Narh Omenyo and Abamfo O. Atiemo "Claiming Religious Space: The Case of NeoProphetism in Ghana". *Ghana Bulletin of Theology New Series*. Vol.1, No.1, July, 2006.

discontinuity between traditional world view and the gospel. Our scope is however different from the above authors in the sense that it seeks to find out how contemporary prophetism has impacted Christianity with their ability to reconcile the African world view with Christian gospel without compromising on the Biblical standards.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study was carried out under five chapters. The first chapter discussed the general introduction and dealt with the background of the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives, research questions, methodology, scope, significance, limitations, literature review and organization of the study. The second chapter was devoted to prophecy from biblical perspective; Old and New Testaments' prophecies were delved into. The third chapter considered the contemporary prophetic ministry in Ghana, the emergence of prophetism in Ghana and also neo-prophetic movement was considered. The fourth chapter considered Ghanaian neo-prophetic ministries in the light of biblical prophetic ministries. The fifth chapter dealt with summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations.

1.10 Conclusion

In Ghana, neo-prophetic ministries have come to stay. These ministries are engaged in many church activities. They are an integral part of the Christian community. A lot (both good and bad) is said about these ministries. One will, therefore, not be far from right to conclude that, the activities that go on in Ghanaian neo-prophetic ministries need to be looked into.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND TO BIBLICAL PROPHECY

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter took a look at the general introduction to the research. This chapter dilates on the prophetic phenomenon from the biblical viewpoint. This calls for a survey of the prophetic phenomenon from both the Old and New Testaments' perspectives.

2.1 Prophecy from Biblical Perspective

The ministry of the prophet runs through the entire Bible (Acts 3:21).²⁸ There are prophets in scripture who go back before the time of Abraham, such as Enoch, whom God mentioned as prophesying (Jude 14-15). According to Genesis 20:7, Abraham is also described as a prophet.

Therefore, while the ministry of the apostle, for example, emerges only from the early period of the church in the book of Acts, that of the prophet extends through all the dispensations of God's dealings with His people on earth. Far from being some strange or New Age phenomenon, the ministry of the prophet is foundational in God's interactions with man.²⁹

According to Barton Payne, scripture recognizes prophecy as a "medium of divine communication."³⁰ In biblical thought prophetism defines God's activeness in history through his concern, purpose and participation in human affairs. Prophetism, therefore, gives meaning to history. Israel's prophets were seen as Yahweh's messengers or spokesmen whose language was often characterized by "Thus says the Lord."

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²⁹ Prince, *Rediscovering God's Church* (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 2006), p. 249.

³⁰ J. Payne Barton, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (Michigan: Baker Books, 1996), p. 3.

Prophets, like the priests, were God's servants, and sometimes separated from the religious institutions in their activities. They represented God to the people. These are people who stood in the counsel of God and as such spoke when God gave them a message for the people.³¹

God, the sovereign majesty of heaven, had control over earth which was a belief held in Canaan. It is God who initiates the call of people to become prophets, then commissions and gives them a message for his people. But this role as messengers of God was only half their duty. People came to them to act for them towards God, to approach God on their behalf. They asked the prophet to ascertain God's will for them. And even more, they asked the prophet to pray for their relief or healing. 'He is *navi*,' one text says, 'and if *he* prays for you, you will live' (Gen. 20:7)³².

Prophets were thought to act for God not only by speaking words, but also by doing dramatic actions in imitation of the foreshadowed event. The words themselves were considered power-filled, dealing hammer-blows (Jer.23:29), and, effective as the rains (Isa. 55:10-11). But the dramatic actions also were considered to be potent expressions of God's will, launching his work. When the Prophet Elisha asked the king to shoot an arrow through the window, it was the Lord's arrow, initiating victory (II Kings 13:15-17).³³

³¹ Harry, L. Jackson, Christ Foundation Ministries, <http://christfoundationchurch.com/files/prophecy%20in%20the%20New%20Testament%20Answers.pdf>. Accessed 15th March, 2016, CSUC- E Library.

³² New International Version (NIV)

³³ NIV

When we consider prophecy in its fundamentals, we can allow that the Hebrew people had always had some form of it. But when we focus on a particular kind of Hebrew prophecy, we see it flourishing only in some specific period of the people's history.

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It is valuable to begin, by seeing the roots, ways and many of the practitioners of Hebrew prophecy as part of a shared Near-Eastern culture.³⁴

Prophecy and the prophetic movement in Israel appear to be different from what other nations surrounding Israel practised. From the perspective of the Old Testament writers, prophets were personalities who were totally devoted to God. Their words and acts were most of the time prompted by God. They were passionate people who appealed to their audience with such uncontaminated zeal and unbroken focus. They represented God as the active sovereign whose purpose and plan was being carried out in time in spite of the presence of evil. Therefore, the word of God in the mouths of the prophets brought clarity to the people and dealt with everything that had to be conformed to his will and plan.³⁵

The prophets revealed hidden secrets and exposed things done in secret by the people. This ensured that the people walked in moral purity before the Lord their God. Sometimes, God would reveal events that were yet to happen. When the prophets told their audience it became predictive based on the conditionalities that God would attach to the fulfillment of such events. It was through such experience that guidance was sought from God to determine how the future would turn out to be and the corresponding way of life expected of the people; whether they had to turn away from some wicked deeds or they had to continue with a life of humility and righteousness.³⁸

It is clear from the biblical narrative that the Canaanites had other practitioners who used certain means to obtain spiritual information, which God had warned the Israelites against

³⁴ John Eaton, *Mysterious Messengers: A Course on Hebrew Prophecy from Amos Onwards* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1998), pp. 1-5.

³⁵ Wyllie, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 6.

³⁸Wyllie, p. 8.
When Prophecy Failed,

through Moses. Witchcraft, divination, enchantment, charms and other means were in use and the other nations are reported as using them to achieve their ends.

The interpretation of biblical prophecy is a very complex matter involving the analysis of multiplex traditions and the multiple factors that gave rise to and maintained those traditions. Such traditions and factors reveal prophecy to have been a network rich in utterances and interpretative reflections constructed over many centuries of ancient Israelite history. There is a direct relation between the predictive element and the other elements of prophecy for the part must always be understood in terms of the whole.³⁶

The larger prophetic movement which emerged in Israel during the Philistine crisis (1 Sam. 1-7, NIV), had regularly surfaced during crises associated with the monarchies of Israel and Judah (cf. I Sam. 15, 16; I Kings 11:26-40; 17ff, NIV) and its history may be seen as a manifold response to various political and religious crises. Of a piece with this summary observation is the fact that prophecy faded out of public notice during the relative stability of the Persian period. They addressed communities guilty of failing to live by the laws of the land in a time of grave crisis (to a certain extent Amos anticipated this crisis) and accused them of being intent on their own destruction.

The importance of this particular feature demonstrates how God, through the prophets, intervened in national and community life with a word to bring them to the right paths. This factor of response to crisis not only constructed their preaching but also contributed significantly to the subsequent treatment of their oracles. The prophets responded to various internal (personal) and external (social) stimuli and pressures.

³⁶ Wyllie, pp.9-10.
When Prophecy Failed,

Crises tend to produce immediate reactions and often such reactions involve short-term resolutions designed to meet the exigencies of the moment.³⁷

A distinctive belief of the prophets was their conviction that they had been called and commissioned as prophets (Isa. 6:1-8; Jer. 1:1-10; Ezek. 1:3; Amos 7:14, 15, NIV). As Lasor observes³⁸, “The prophets claimed to be considered as authoritative messengers from Yahweh bringing forth a divine proclamation.” The certainty of being sent by God is everywhere a characteristic element in the self-consciousness of men and women who belong to the prophetic type. Their perception of their own preaching was that it was inspired by Yahweh and that, therefore, no distinction could be made between the word of the prophet and the word of Yahweh. That this was the case is clearly established in the oracles and statements throughout the traditions, but it was to pose some fearful problems for the later stages of Judean prophecy. If men may claim to be inspired by God and therefore equate what they say with words of God, then there will be no protection against any number of so inspired persons proclaiming any number of discrete, and even incompatible, messages in society. The question posed to prophecy is not a modern one but an ancient one given classical form by Zedekiah ben Chenaanah ‘how did the Spirit of Yahweh go from me to speak to you?’ (I Kings 22:24).³⁹ Attempts to answer that question became more hysterical as the state of Judah neared its political end (cf. Jer. 23:9-40; 27-29; Ezek. 13:1-14.11; Lam. 2:14).⁴⁰

³⁷ Wyllie, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 10.

³⁸ William Sanford Lasor, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. Co., 1996), p. 221.

³⁹ NIV

⁴⁰ Wyllie, *When Prophecy Failed*, p. 14.

In popular usage, a “prophet” is someone who can foretell the future, and “prophecy” means predictions of things to come. Although containing elements of truth, these popular definitions are by no means adequate for the biblical terms. The most common

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term for the person and office is “prophet” from Greek *prophētês*. It means, basically, “one who speaks for a god and interprets his will to man.”⁴¹ The word is composed of two elements, the second of which means “to speak.” The first can mean “for, forth” and “beforehand, so the word can mean either “to speak for, proclaim,” or “to speak beforehand, foretell.” A prophet, then, is a “*forthteller*” as well as a “*foreteller*”; ‘both meanings are implicit, and both usages are found in the Bible.’⁴²

In general, there are two simplistic approaches to prophecy, one stressing the predictive element, the other featuring the message as applied to the contemporary situation. In biblical prophecy, both elements are present.

Prophets’ messages demonstrate how they participated in the life of their nations and societies. Their messages addressed all in society. When God gives His word to the prophets to disclose to the people, it was an indication of the fact that God was concerned about the wholistic life of his people and as such everything they did wrong in any sphere of life affected their relationship with him. Therefore, God speaks through the prophets to motivate them to cling to the good, equity and justice.

God is depicted in the Old Testament prophetic books as the Sovereign One who has a cosmic plan which is being rolled out. Through the witnesses God sends, he draws the attention of His people to his intents and purposes. Such nudging of the Almighty is comforting and protective with his mission as undergirding.

On exceptional occasions, he gives rather precise details about what he is going to do. Yet even in “Predictive prophecy,” the prediction is almost always attached to the presence of

⁴¹ Sanford Lasor, *Old Testament Survey*, p. 221.

⁴² Sanford Lasor, *Old Testament Survey*, pp. 221-222.

a situation and interpretation of the prophetic oracle was part of the work of the prophet so that the intended message is not lost to the hearers.⁴³

From the perspective of the Hebrew prophets, God used prophecy to disclose his divine work. These were either intricate, complex or simple and involved individuals, cities or nations. After such prophetic messages came the people were not left in doubt as to what to do. Whether the people had the readiness to do what the message required was left to the proclivities of their hearts and minds. Nevertheless, for those who received the messages and were willing to do what was required of them, they had grace to do so.⁴⁴

The Hebrew canon of the Old Testament contains fifteen prophetic writings. Literary prophecy shows itself to be part of a very much more comprehensive movement. To apply the terms 'prophet' and "prophecy" (which comes from the Greek *prophētēs*) to people named in the Old Testament involves certain difficulties for historical investigation. For the content of these words is associated with the notion of a spokesman clearly authorized by God (or even with the author of a biblical book) who left to his own resources, is duty bound to his conscience and no one else – preaches the law of God, harshly condemns violations of it, and prophesies future events which God is going to bring about for the salvation of men and women, or for their doom. For Jews and Christians alike, Moses counts as being the prototype of a prophet. Yet this very Moses, who belongs to the beginnings of Yahwistic religion, is never described in the early narratives by any one of the terms we have named (except perhaps 'man of God'). Theological tradition is largely accustomed to equate 'prophet' with '*navi*', the most

⁴³ Sanford Lasor, *Old Testament Survey*, p. 225.

⁴⁴ Sanford Lasor, *Old Testament Survey*, pp. 227-230.

widespread of the descriptions we have mentioned in Hebrew. ‘*Navi*’, which probably means literally entrusted with a message.’⁴⁵

In prophecy, there seems to be a struggle for freedom for the people of God. This is because faith is accompanied by a vision of the breakthrough of a new and more righteous world and of the conversion of nations (cf. Isa. 2:2-5, Micah 4:1-5, NIV), for which the prophet turns to both individuals and communities, calling on them to be converted.⁴⁶

2.1.1 Prophecy in the Old Testament

At this juncture, a consideration of the picture of the prophetic ministry in the Old Testament is essential before examining the ministry of the prophet in the New Testament.

One of the great Old Testament prophets, Elijah, is considered as a transitional prophet.

The Bible does not tell us anything about his background, but he suddenly appeared in a very dramatic and powerful way. From 1 Kings 17:1 (The Gideon’s Int.), we see the courage of Elijah. In effect he was saying, “From now on, the fall of rain and dew are under my control, and I am going to decide whether or not they will come.” The words by which Elijah introduced himself to Ahab contain the central thought of the prophet.

He said, “As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand ...” (The Gideon’s Int.)

The key phrase is “before whom I stand.” A prophet is one who stands before God.

According to Derek Prince, God’s methods are useless if He does not have the men who can follow them. Derek goes on say that Elijah typified certain things about God by his boldness, his reluctance to compromise, and his refusal to show any kind of respect for a

⁴⁵ Klaus Koch, *The Prophets: Volume One, The Assyrian Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), pp.1516.

⁴⁶ Alberto J. Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament: From its Origins to the Closing of the Alexandrian Canon* (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1982), pp. 211, 219.

wicked king. He refused to bow to Ahab. He had a message from God, and he was determined to deliver it. This is the true spirit of the biblical prophet. Biblical prophets were concerned primarily with delivering the pure message from God without adding to it or taking from it. They were both fearless and confrontational.⁴⁷

Another characteristic feature of Old Testament prophecy is that there were many false prophets in those days. In fact one of the interesting and important themes of the Prophet Jeremiah was the false prophets of his day. The false prophets far exceeded the true prophets, as they did in the time of Ahab. Jeremiah 23 presents the contrast between the true and false prophets: “Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall; for from the prophets of Jerusalem profaneness has gone out into all the land (Jeremiah 23:15) (The Gideon’s Int.).⁴⁸

In the book of Jeremiah, the Lord of hosts draws the attention of his people to the works of false prophets. He says, “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. They continually say to those who despise Me, ‘The Lord has said, “You should have peace,” and to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, “No evil shall come upon you.”⁴⁹ The Lord goes on to indicate that He has not sent these prophets, yet they ran to proclaim His words to His people.⁵³ This confirms the idea that false prophets existed during the Old Testament. God continues to say that if they had stood in His counsel, and had caused His people to hear His words, then they

⁴⁷ Prince, *Rediscovering God’s Church*, pp. 250-253.

⁴⁸ Prince, *Rediscovering God’s Church*, p. 253.

⁴⁹ Jeremiah 23:16-17, NIV.

⁵³ Jeremiah 23:21-23.

would have turned them from their evil way. It must be noticed that the mark of the true prophet is that he stands in the counsel of God.

Had these prophets stood in God's counsel, heard His words, and caused His people to hear His words, there would have been repentance and a returning to God. So, the prophets, in a certain sense, were responsible for the condition of the nation.

Jeremiah 23:26-32 and other passages indicate that far more responsibility is laid at the doorstep of the prophets of a nation for the condition of that nation than most of us realize. The true prophet who stands in the counsel of God and delivers His word will bring people to God. Where there is not such a prophet, the nation is deceived and led astray by false prophets.

The prophet "digests" God's message (Jeremiah 15:15-16). God spoke something similar to Ezekiel when He handed him a scroll containing lamentation, mourning, and woe, written on both sides, and said, "Eat what I give you" (Ezekiel 2:8). When Ezekiel had eaten it, he was able to deliver the message (Ezekiel 2-3).⁵⁰

Again, according to Derek Prince, the prophet cannot be divorced from his message. The man and the message become identified with one another. The message the prophet brings goes deep into his own spirit and becomes a part of him before he can deliver it. This is true of almost all the great Old Testament prophets. In some sense or another, they had to digest or assimilate the message they had to deliver.⁵⁵

Those who do not feed and live on the Lord's word cannot be qualified to take His message. Every prophet in scripture indicated by his language and references that he was

⁵⁰ Prince, *Rediscovering God's Church*, pp. 256-257.

⁵⁵ Prince, *Rediscovering God's Church*, p. 257.

intimately acquainted with the revelation of God's word as it existed in his day. Any person not deeply identified with the Word of God is not eligible for the prophetic ministry.

Prophetism is what provides the Old Testament religion with its divine urgency and social interpretations. This means it is the writings and actions of the Old Testament prophets which provide the basis for understanding God's righteous standards for his covenant people, Israel. Through the prophets, Yahweh made his will and demands known to Israel as His covenant people. Israel became the people of Yahweh at Mt. Sinai when Yahweh 'cut' a covenant with them. In that covenant Israel as the subject was required to adhere to the terms that Yahweh, her suzerain, dictated. When Israel failed to be loyal to the terms of the covenant Yahweh raised prophets to bring the people back into his kind of relationship, a relationship of socio-religious and political implications.

Anderson notes: "... the prophet speaking under the influence of Yahweh's Spirit was able to interpret the meaning of events and to proclaim the will of God in concrete terms".⁵¹ Thus, these prophets challenged the people to right living by demanding from them a religion that translated into the socio-political and economic dimensions of life. It was a normal practice of Old Testament prophets to consult God often to hear from or speak for him in the trying situations of the people. But due to their unique position in God's relationship with his people, a culture of consultation with the prophet emerged for the purposes of knowing God's mind and will. The importance of the prophet in Israel's life is brought to the fore when we consider that God delivered his people from Egypt through a prophet, Moses, (Hosea 12:13; Psalm 105:26; Numbers 33:1, 2).⁵²

⁵¹ B.W. Anderson, *"Understanding the Old Testament"* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall inc, 1975), p. 231.

⁵² GIB

Moses enjoyed a special place among God's prophets because God spoke with him face to face (Ex. 33:11, The Gideon's Int.). This Moses admonished Israel that God would raise for them a prophet like himself, a prophecy which is

acknowledged to be messianic in purpose (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22-26).⁵³

However, some of the prophecies in the Old Testament were seen as been fulfilled in the New Testament. Examples can be made of the prophecies of Ezekiel and Joel. The latter spoke specifically of the distant future when God's Spirit would be poured upon all people. Consequently, there would be bestowal of gifts of prophecy, dreams and visions to usher in the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:28ff). It is with this understanding that Luke interprets the phenomenon in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when he quotes Peter's message and links it to the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit. As Onyinah insists, "That Pentecost marks the beginning of the new covenant has not been a problem for biblical scholars, but what has been a problem is the quintessence of the outpouring and its significance for the New Testament saint."⁵⁴

The meaning of the term *navi* in Hebrew thus seems to have been 'the one who is called', that is, the one who has received a divine vocation for a particular mission, with a particular task. In this case it is to announce to the people the word of God, usually through preaching, and sometimes also by means of symbolic actions. It is interesting to note that, although the term tends increasingly to indicate a particular category of person, an ancient Jewish tradition has been preserved according to which anyone could and indeed should prophesy when inspired by the Spirit.

⁵³ GIB

⁵⁴ O. Onyinah, *James Mckeown Memorial Lectures: 50 years of Sustainable Growth of the Church of Pentecost* (Accra: Pentecost Press, 2016), p.10.

It is no exaggeration to affirm that with the category of ‘true prophets’ Israel created a quite unique category of prophets in the sphere of the history of religions. But that is not to say that very similar phenomena were not to be found in the Semitic world. In the first place, we have what has rightly been called prophecy in the milieu of the

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Western Mesopotamian city-state of Mari between the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries BC.⁵⁵⁵⁶

There is a distinction to be recognized between prophets earlier than the eighth century and prophets from the eighth century onwards. In the first category are people like Samuel, Nathan, Elijah and Elisha, and also other figures down to the time of Josiah; we should also include Jonah. The interest of the narrator is concentrated in this case predominantly on what the prophets in question did, and much less on what they said.

In the second category we have the prophets whose names we find in books of the Bible. In their works the redactors sought to present entire discourses or extracts and summaries; they limited their narratives to what was considered essential for putting material in the setting of the prophets' lives. The collections have been made either on chronological and biographical lines or in terms of content, or on other patterns which appear to us to be less logical. We know that Samuel, Nathan, Elijah and Elisha were also profoundly interested in politics, and we know of the personal commitment of the second and third figures to the solution of moral problems; all were critical of the predominant form of worship in Israel.⁵⁷

One aspect of the Jewish society in which we see the prophets active from the beginning is that of politics, both domestic and foreign. Samuel and Nathan are advisers, the former to Saul and the latter to David and then, for a brief period, to Solomon; Ahijah of Shiloh promises Jeroboam that he will reign over the ten northern tribes (I Kings 11:31ff); Elijah plots and Elisha organizes a revolution which overthrows the dynasty of Omri in Israel, putting in the place of its last king a general, Jehu (II Kings 9.); and one of the first acts

⁵⁵ B.W. Anderson, *“Understanding the Old Testament”* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall inc, 1975), p.

⁵⁶ .

⁵⁷ Soggin, pp. 212 – 237.

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of the new sovereign was the extermination not only of the survivors of the despotic dynasty but also of those who were faithful to

Baal (II Kings 10:18 ff.).⁵⁸

Amos and Micah do not take up any position in the political field, unless we want to put the attack against the person of the king in Amos 7:10 ff. or some oracles against the nations in this category. Hosea attacks the politicians of the north and especially the monarchy; cf. Hos. 5:13, where there is criticism of attempts at an alliance with Assyria.

Nathan in II Sam. 12 did not hesitate to speak out publicly against David on the occasion of the death of Uriah the Hittite, for which the king was directly responsible. The character of the story, which is full of elements from popular legend, does not disguise the fact that the *voxpopuli* considered it obvious that even when confronted with the great David a prophet should speak out and publicly accuse the king of an unforgivable crime. We find behaviour of this kind throughout the history of the prophets, even if not in the dramatic form which can be found in this passage. The fact that the king was forced to yield to the prophetic claim shows that contacts between the monarchy and the populace were still real, that public opinion had an importance which not even the king could ignore. In other words, this was still an essentially healthy society. The episode of Naboth's vineyard is similar, but much more complex because of the differences of social structure which underlie it (I Kings 21, NIV). Here Elijah accuses Ahab of the assassination, on a pseudo-legal pretext, of a tenant of ancient tribal land, because he refused to yield his land to the crown, despite a more than generous offer. But whereas in the episode of Nathan, Uriah and David, public opinion expressed in the assembly was

⁵⁸ Soggin, pp. 212 – 216.
Introduction to the Old Testament, 31

decisively Marshalled against David and David was forced to give way, here the tribunal, made up of the elders of the village, who should have joined forces to a man behind their comrade Naboth against the unjust order of the queen, rejecting evidence which they knew to be false, joins in the game and condemns the defendant to death. Thus, while the two episodes are similar in form, there is a basic shift between them, a change in public opinion. In the second instance public opinion does not intervene or is prevented from intervening effectively.⁵⁹

To judge from the social invective of the prophets from the eighth century b.c. to the exile, the situation in the social sphere had deteriorated rapidly. We no longer find isolated cases of corruption or suppression which had only to be unmasked for public opinion to take the part of the victim on the contrary, we must speak of a system so corrupt and repressive that Alberto could compare it effectively with that of early capitalism, whereas Fohrer spoke of the transition from a closed economy to a commercial economy, underlining at the same time that the prophets did not reject economic progress *per se*, but the distorted situations to which it led in the economic and social spheres.⁶⁰

Two instances are particularly useful for an evaluation of the problem. The first is that of Micaiah be Imlah towards the middle of the ninth century BC (I Kings 22:6, 16-23, The Gideon's Int.). Here the prophet announces that God himself has put a lying spirit in the mouths of the other prophets so that they do *not* tell the truth. They are therefore objectively 'false' prophets, whereas subjectively they are not, since they proclaim what they have received from the spirit! The second case, which is more complicated, is that

⁵⁹ Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 216 – 210.

⁶⁰ Soggin, p. 218.

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of the encounter between Jeremiah and Hananiah. In the same year, the fourth year of Zedekiah', that is, in 594 BC, cf. *BHS*). Hananiah prophesies the inviolability of Zion, one of the themes of the message of Isaiah which was, however, put in doubt by Micah 3:12, though there are some who consider the latter passage to be of doubtful

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authenticity. Yet nothing could seem more correct and orthodox, and the message would therefore have had the marks of ‘true’ prophecy, to such a degree that Jeremiah himself, not knowing what to say after having announced the opposite, preferred to retreat (28:11b). Soon afterwards, however, having received an explanation from Yahweh, he returned to his charge, pronouncing at the same time a stern indictment against Hananiah, who was guilty of having presented a false message, and against the people who had listened to him. The two cases are a typical illustration of the complexity of the problem and the impossibility of finding a solution to it on the objective level.⁶¹

2.1.2 Prophecy in the New Testament

In the New Testament the prophetic ministry continued to operate. According to Acts 11:27-29,⁶² the church of Antioch accepted Agabus’ prophetic revelation as authoritative and acted upon it. For instance, Agabus predicted a famine in the near future that indeed took place in the days of the Emperor Claudius. He could not have known this impending famine except by a specific, personal revelation from God.

Furthermore, in Acts 21:10-11, NIV, we find another example of a supernatural revelation that was given to Agabus. Again he knew more than just a preacher or teacher would. He had a specific revelation of what was to happen to Paul in Jerusalem, and a specific commission from the Holy Spirit to tell him what to expect. Agabus delivered his message in a dramatic way by binding his own hands and feet with Paul’s belt. God often required the prophet to do more than simply give forth an utterance. In one way or another, they had to give some picture or demonstration of their message.⁶³In Acts 13:1

⁶¹ Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 212 – 237.

⁶² GIB

⁶³ Prince, *Rediscovering God’s Church*, pp. 264-265.

and 15:32, Barnabas, Simon, Lucius, Manaen, Saul, Judas and Silas have been mentioned as prophets.⁶⁴

In the New Testament era prophecy was evident in the ministry of John the Baptist (Mark 1:6-8). It must be noted that John was more than just a preacher. He could have preached on sin and its consequences, called people to repentance, and baptized them. But he had a specific revelation with a time factor. “Immediately after me, another is coming who is greater than I am, and He’s going to be the one to baptize with the Holy Spirit,” said John. He could not have known this without a specific, individual revelation from God. That revelation lifted him out of the rank of preacher or teacher and into the rank of prophet.⁶⁹

Another important aspect about prophecy and the ministry of the prophet in the New Testament is that it is normally intended for believers. In the first part of 1 Corinthians 14:22, NIV, Paul was not addressing the use of tongues for self-edification but as a supernatural sign intended for unbelievers. This is what happened on the day of Pentecost. The people on whom the Holy Spirit fell spoke in languages that they did not understand, but the unbelievers understood these languages, and this became a sign to them. This was not the normal use of tongues; again, it was a sign to reach unbelievers. When a believer, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, speaks a language that he does not understand but is understood by an unbeliever who is present, it brings tremendous conviction to the unbeliever. However, in the latter part of 1 Corinthians 14:22, NIV, we see that prophesying is intended for believers, which makes it somewhat different from prophesying under the old covenant.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Prince, *Rediscovering God’s Church*, pp. 262-263.

⁶⁹ Prince, *Rediscovering God’s Church*, p. 263.

⁶⁵ Prince, *Rediscovering God’s Church*, pp. 264-265.

Again, in Acts 20:22ff, we read of the Apostle Paul telling the Ephesian elders, in a farewell message, of issues that could be described as prophecy. He told them of the suffering that awaited him as he headed for Jerusalem.

It is clear from the New Testament evidences of prophetism that, prophecy involved the prediction of impending events and also telling about the situations of individuals, groups of people or nations. In all these, prophecy sought to bring out the mind of God and His purposes for humans in particular times in history.

There is a distinct line of continuation in the work of the prophets and prophecy in both the Old and New Testaments. John the Baptist stands as a prophet to bring the nation of Israel back to God. He addresses individuals and certain professions. Jesus Christ appears teaching throughout all of Israel and is seen as a great prophet. The miracles accompanying his teaching ministry draw crowds after him. In the mindset of the people, He is compared to great prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Elijah. This and other incidents in the gospels are a pointer to the fact that prophecy continued. When the parents of Jesus brought him to the temple, a holy man and woman, Simeon and Anna, prophesied about his life and ministry. Throughout the early church, we see prophets working with the Apostles and teachers, exhorting, confirming, comforting and encouraging the believers.

The Old Testament prophetic line did not end with Malachi, but with John the Baptist, as our Lord expressly declares (Mt. 11:13, NIV). Prophetic utterances of John's father, Zechariah, and of Anna, Simeon and Mary at the beginning of Luke's Gospel all bear witness to the continuance of prophetic inspiration (Lk. 1:46-55, 67-79; 2:26-38, NIV). The customary division into two 'Testaments' unfortunately obscures this marvellous

unity of God's programme of revelation, but the line is continuous from Moses to John- and indeed beyond him, as we shall see.⁶⁶

Furthermore, the New Testament stands in a relation of fulfillment to the actual message of the Old Testament prophets. Time and again this is the burden of the New Testament: what God said of old he has now brought to pass.

Christ promised his disciples that after his ascension he would send them his Holy Spirit who would empower them to bear witness to him in the world, and would bear witness with them (Lk. 24:48-49; Jn. 14:26; 15:26-27; Acts 1:8, The Gideons Int.). That this includes prophetic inspiration is clear from Mt. 10:19-20; Jn. 16:12-15⁶⁷.

Hence it is no surprise that when the Holy Spirit is poured out at Pentecost, the immediate result includes manifestations in speech (Acts 2:1-12), and Peter's explanation cites Joel 2:28-32, The Gideon's Int. where a major result of the effusion of the Spirit on all flesh is that 'they shall prophesy', for the spirit given generally to the church for its testimony to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (1 Cor. 14:31; Rev. 19:10). Therefore Paul tells the Corinthian Christians, 'Earnestly desire the spiritual gifts especially that you may prophesy' (1 Cor. 14:1).⁶⁸

Jesus predicted that people would prophesy in his name (Mt. 7:22; NIV) though attention should be paid to his warning against reliance on this or any other work for one's spiritual standing, so prophecy is repeatedly mentioned as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit with which Christ equips his members to function as his body in each place (Rom. 12:4-7; 1 Cor. 12:10-13; 1 Thess. 5:19-20; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). When Christians

⁶⁶ I.H. Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary* (Leister: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), pp. 972-974.

⁶⁷ GIB

⁶⁸ Marshall,

initially received the power of the Holy Spirit, the commonest manifestation resulting at the time seemed to have been speaking in another language (of praise and prayer) and prophesying (Acts 2:4, 17-18: 10:44-46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 1:5-7).

Prophetic utterances are an intelligible word of revelation from God to the hearts and minds of those present, 'for their outbuilding and encouragement and consolation' (1 Cor. 14:3-5, 26, 30-31NIV). The reaction of the unbeliever to this prophetic ministry (vv. 24-25) shows that it could proclaim the whole message, of sin and judgment, as well as of grace and salvation.

The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets (v. 32), so that prophecy is neither to be abused by people succumbing to any supposedly uncontrollable ecstatic frenzy, nor to be exercised without the check of other members of the body, notably the elders and prophets weighing or discerning the accuracy and reliability of utterances purporting to issue from the Holy Spirit (vv. 29-33). It was doubtless just such abuses which led the apostle to write to another young church, 'Do not quench the spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good' a similar balance to that shown by him towards tongues in 1 Cor. 14:39-40.⁶⁹

Testing or weighing prophetic utterances is all the more necessary in view of the warnings of the New Testament (following the Old Testament) against false prophets and prophecy, by which Satan seeks to lead the unwary astray (Mt. 7:15; 24:11, 24; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 4:1ff. The Gideons Int.), and an example of which appears in Bar-Jesus at Paphos (Acts 13:5ff, The Gideons Int.). In the latter case occult sources are specified, although in other cases selfish human desires are blamed; but in either case the devil's anti-Christian cause is being served, as the symbolic figure of the false prophet serving

⁶⁹ Marshall,

the dragon in Rev. 13:11 and 19:20 makes plain. The testing of any prophetic utterance will be in accordance with our Lord's warning. 'You will know them by their fruits'

(Mt. 7:20 *in loc.*), and will include these criteria: their conformity to the teachings of Scripture, of Christ and of his apostles in both content and character.⁷⁰

All the evidence from the examples of prophetic ministry in the New Testament shows that it was entirely of a piece with Old Testament prophecy in its character and form. The ministries of John the Baptist, Agabus and the John who wrote the Apocalypse alike comprise the classic unity of prediction and proclamation, of foretelling and forthtelling, and the same is true of Zechariah, Simeon and others. Similarly they combined prediction of wrath to come or trouble in store and of coming grace (Lk. 3:7, 16ff; Jn. 1:29ff. Acts 11:28; Rev. 19-21, NIV). Equally we find prophecy and revelation by vision and occasionally by dream, as well as by the word of the Lord (Lk. 3:2; Rev. 1:10, 12, *etc.*; Acts 10:9-16; Mt. 1:20, NIV). The use of parables and symbols are well attested, including the acted oracle (Acts 21:11). It should be noted that in the lastnamed instance, Agabus' word was accepted by Paul as descriptively accurate, but not personally directive (vv. 12-14), although it agreed with the words he had received in other cities (Acts 20:23, NIV). However, both here and in 1 Tim. 4:14 and Acts 13:9ff. We see the power of the prophetic word still fully able to effect and convey that of which it speaks (*cf.* also Rev. 11:6, NIV).⁷¹

Peter, referring to prophecy, said: "Moved by the Holy Spirit, saints of God spoke."

While biblical statements about the holiness of the prophets are rare, it is generally accepted that God would only use holy people as his prophets. One might argue that

⁷⁰ Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 972-974.

⁷¹ Marshall,

God saw fit to use those whose moral behaviour was not always above reproach in other offices, such as Moses the lawgiver, Aaron the high priest, or David the king.⁷²

2.2 The Holy Spirit and the Church

The Holy Spirit is the divine person who eternally co-exists with the Father and the Son. The Spirit was present and active in creation, is seen throughout the Old Testament, and is revealed more explicitly in the New Testament. Life in the Spirit was reflected most clearly in the earthly life of Jesus. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came from God to continue the work of the ascended Christ, as Jesus had promised His followers. The Holy Spirit cannot be overlooked in this research work since His duties, among others, include the administering of the Ministry and Supernatural gifts of which we have Prophecy, Word of Knowledge, Wisdom and the ministry of the Prophet (1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and Ephesians 4:4-16, NIV). All manifestations and exercise of True Prophecy and Prophetic Ministry should of course be normal out-workings of the Holy Spirit in His Servants or Church.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, the redeemed community. His Word and will are authoritative in the Church. The church consists of all those who trust Jesus as Saviour and follow Him as Lord. One becomes part of God's family, loving the Lord Jesus and learning to love and care for one another. It is a covenant community vowing before God and fellow members to live a holy life, to remain loyal to the church, and to foster oneness within the body of Christ. The understanding of this covenant is expressed in a commitment to the local congregation, where the integrity of our discipleship is lived; to the denomination, where relationship with a wider fellowship of God's people are realized; and to the body of Christ throughout the world, by which we fulfil the prayer

⁷² Sanford Lasor, *Old Testament Survey*, pp. 223.

of Jesus that we all may be one. The essential functions of the church are worship, fellowship, discipleship, and mission. In worship, we bring our wholehearted devotion to the Lord God. In fellowship, we live out our deep commitment to love one another. In discipleship, we follow the call of the Lord Jesus to obey and to teach all things commanded by Him. In mission, we proclaim the gospel to all people and minister to human need as Jesus did. As a covenant community we practise mutual accountability among our members. The Church accepts the steps outlined by Jesus: first going privately to the one who sins against us; then, if necessary, returning with one or more witnesses; and finally, if needed, involving the congregation. When the church deals with sin, we seek to respond with compassion and concern. The objective of church discipline is to restore the erring church member and to maintain the integrity and purity of the church's fellowship and witness.⁷³

In early Judaism, at the time of Jesus, God was tending to be thought of as more and more distant from man, the transcendent holy God, high and lifted up, dwelling in unapproachable glory. Hence the hesitation even to speak the divine name and the increasing talk of intermediary figures, the name, angels, the glory, wisdom, etc. all these being ways of speaking about God's activity in the world without compromising his transcendence. In early days 'the Spirit' had been one of the chief ways of speaking about the presence of God (note, *e.g.* the implication of 1 Sa. 16:13f. and 18:12, and of Isa. 63:11f.NIV, that the Spirit of the Lord is the presence of the Lord). But now that consciousness of divine presence was lacking too (with the exception of Qumran) the spirit, understood principally as the Spirit of prophecy, had been active in the past and would be poured out in the new age. But in the present, talk of the Spirit had become

⁷³ "The Holy Spirit and The Church" <http://www.Canadianbic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/The-HolySpirit-and-the-Church.pdf>. Accessed April 30 2016, CSUC E-Library.

wholly subordinate to Wisdom and Logos and Torah, and in particular with the rabbis, Torah was becoming more and more the exclusive focus of religious life and authority.⁷⁴

In this context John the Baptist created considerable excitement. Not that he himself claimed to have the Spirit, but he was widely recognized to be a prophet (Mt. 11:9f.; Mk.11:32, NIV) and so to be inspired by the Spirit of prophecy (*cf.* Lk. 1:15, 17, NIV). More striking was his message, for he proclaimed that the outpouring of the Spirit was imminent-the one who was coming would baptize in Spirit and fire (Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16; Mk. 1:8 and Jn. 1:33, omit the 'and fire').⁷⁵ This vigorous metaphor was probably drawn partly from the 'liquid' metaphor for the spirit familiar in the Old Testament.⁷⁶

Jesus created an even bigger stir, for he claimed that the new age, the kingdom of God, was not merely imminent but was already effective through his ministry (Mt. 12:41f.; 13:16f.; Lk. 17:20ff). The presupposition of this was clearly that the eschatological Spirit, the power of the End, was already working through him in unique measure, as evidenced by his exorcisms and successful deliverance of Satan's victims (Mt. 12:24-32; Mk. 3:22-29)⁷⁷, and by his proclamation of good news to the poor.⁷⁸

In Acts the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is the time when the disciples first experienced 'the last days' for themselves (the free dispensing of the eschatological Spirit being the hallmark of the new age), the time when their 'full Christian' faith began (Acts 11:17). So in Acts 2:38ff., the promise of the gospel to the first enquirers centres on the

⁷⁴ Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 972-974.

⁷⁵ NIV

⁷⁶ Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 972-974.

⁷⁷ NIV

⁷⁸ 972-974.

Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, pp.

Spirit, and in other evangelistic situations, it is the reception of the Spirit which is evidently seen as the crucial factor manifesting the respondents' acceptance by God (8:14-17; 9:17; 10:44ff.; 11:15-17; 18:25; 19:2).

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Similarly, according to Paul the gift of the Spirit is the beginning of Christian experience (Gal. 3:2ff.), another way of describing the new relation of justification (1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 3:14; Tit. 3:7). Alternatively expressed, one cannot belong to Christ unless one has the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9), one cannot be united with Christ except through the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), one cannot share Christ's sonship without sharing his Spirit (Rom. 8:14-17; Gl. 4:6f), one cannot be a member of the body of Christ except by being baptized in the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).⁷⁹

Likewise in John the Spirit from above is the power effecting new birth (Jn. 3:3-8; 1 Jn. 3:9, NIV), for the Spirit is the life-giver (Jn. 6:63), like a river of living water flowing from the Christ bringing life to him who comes and believes (7:37-39; 4:10, 14, NIV). In 20:22 the language deliberately echoes Gn. 2:7; the spirit is the breath of life of the new creation. And in 1 Jn. 3:24 and 4:13, NIV, the presence of the Spirit is one of the 'tests of life'.⁸⁵

It is important to realize that for the first Christians, the Spirit was thought of in terms of divine power clearly manifested by its effects on the life of the recipient; the impact of the Spirit did not leave an individual or onlooker in much doubt that a significant change had taken place in him by divine agency. Paul refers his readers back to their initial experience of his Spirit again and again. For some, it had been an overwhelming experience of God's love (Rom. 5:5, NIV); for others of joy (1 Thes. 1:6, NIV); for others of illumination (2 Cor. 3:14-17, NIV), or of liberation (Rom. 8:2; 2 Cor. 3:17, NIV), or of moral transformation (1 Cor. 6:9-11, NIV), or of various spiritual gifts (1

⁷⁹ Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 972-974. ⁸⁵
972-974.
Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, pp.

Cor. 1:4-7; Gal. 3:5, NIV). In Acts, the most regularly mentioned manifestation of the Spirit is inspired speech, speaking in tongues, prophecy and praise, and bold utterance of the word of God (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 10:46; 13:9-11; 19:6, NIV). This is why possession of the Spirit as such can be singled out as the defining characteristic of the Christian (Rom. 8:9; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13, NIV), and why the question of Acts 19:2 could expect a straightforward answer (*cf.* Gal. 3:2, NIV). The Spirit as such might be invisible but his presence was readily detectable (Jn. 3:8). So far as Luke is concerned, Pentecost was not a second experience of the Spirit for the disciples, but their baptism in Spirit into the new age (Acts 1:5, NIV), the birth of the church and its mission.⁸⁰

According to Paul, the gift of the Spirit is also a beginning that looks to final fulfillment (Gal. 3:3; Phil. 1:6, NIV), the beginning and first installment of a life-long process of transformation into the image of Christ which only achieves its end in the resurrection of the body (2 Cor. 1:22; 3:18; 4:16-5:5, NIV).⁸¹

2.3 Conclusion

Prophetism has been part of the call of God's people. This appeared in various phases of their everyday experiences with God. The meaning of prophecy and prophets and their calling, the work and the need for their services as well as the determinants of true and false prophets were therefore considered from the biblical perspective. The study reveals that, biblical prophets were mainly called to speak to their generation to remain committed to God's commandments. As messengers of God, much of what they wrote are also relevant to our time.

CHAPTER THREE

⁸⁰ Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, pp. 972-974

⁸¹ 1125-1128.

CONTEMPORARY PROPHETIC MINISTRIES IN GHANA

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the background of the Prophetic Movement from biblical perspective, a look at the Old and New Testaments' Prophets/Prophecy, the History of the Charismatic and Neo-Prophetic Movement in Ghana and the work of the Holy Spirit in the church. This chapter seeks to examine current issues that characterize Ghanaian prophetism. These include: Christianity and Prophetism, the nature of Ghanaian Prophetic Ministry and public views about contemporary prophetic ministries in Ghana.

3.1 Christianity and Prophetism

In Ghana, ripples of prophetism have characterized Christianity since the turn of the twentieth century. In fact, it has been part of African Christianity ever since the faith was reintroduced into the continent by Western missionaries.⁸²⁸³ Today, prophetic ministries have become more or less a 'normal' religious phenomenon. We find 'prophets' in both Classical Pentecostal churches, such as the Church of Pentecost (COP), and neo-Pentecostal/prophetic churches. Yet prophetism still remains an 'unfamiliar' field that calls for serious scholarly investigation.

Prophetism seems to pose a challenge and yet offers hope to Christianity due to its seeming ability to respond to soteriological and pastoral needs amidst its 'unexplained' nature and 'unconventional' operations. Indeed, as Cairns argue, many people have problems with the ethos and theology of contemporary Ghanaian prophets.⁸⁴ Prophets

⁸² Earle Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Zondrean Publishing House, 1967), p. 83.

⁸⁴ Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, p.28.
Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, pp.

are often accused of being monetary-motivated in their cause. Yet despite the criticisms which include media reports, the phenomenon is becoming more and more appealing to many Ghanaians, Christians and non-Christians alike. One thing is clear; we do not have to pretend to be unconcerned about issues concerning prophetism. Neither should we think we can eradicate it simply because we have problems with it. As Opoku Onyinah indicated, “The early Christian missionaries failed when they attempted to erase prophetism in both its traditional and ‘Christian’ versions from their converts.”⁸⁵

There is enough evidence to show that the OT and NT, as well as Ghanaian prophets, sought or seek to provide solutions to the problems of their people in various situations and periods of history. To better appreciate what really goes on in Ghanaian prophetic circles, one needs to analyze the group and individual psychology of both clients and prophets. Therefore, a study of Ghanaian contemporary prophetism demands an examination of its discernible trends which would lead to the analysis and evaluation of the Ghanaian conception and practice of prophetism.

Moreover, Ghanaian neo-prophetic Christians understand the fulfilled or successful life as a comprehensive package: salvation should bring transformation and empowerment, prosperity, healing and deliverance. So regularly at neo-prophetic prayer sessions, members are encouraged to prophesy into their lives by confessing among other things good health, business success and fruitful marriages. The prophet may prophesy ‘good’ things into the lives of his members, usually supporting the prophecy with scripture and often including the statement, ‘God says I should tell you it shall be well with you...’

⁸⁵ Onyinah Opoku, Back to Prophetism: An Examination into the Assimilation of An Aspect of African “Spirituality” To West African Pentecostalism Accessed CSUC E LIBRARY, May 4, 2016, <http://www.Familyma.Com/ICPT%2004%20Johannesburg/ICPT%20papers/ICPT%20O-Onyinah.Htm>,

This is appropriated with loud shouts of ‘Amen’ or ‘Halleluiah’, ‘Yes’ or ‘I receive it’. Deuteronomy 28, John 10:10 and 3 John 2 are among the passages of choice for the Ghanaian neo-prophetic Christian. Jabez’s prayer in 1 Chronicles 4:9 – 10 becomes a model for them. Their hermeneutics seems to show that Jesus brings success and prosperity to the Christian and that seems to form the basis of their preaching and prophecies.

3.2 History of the Charismatic – Neo Prophetic Movement in Ghana

Two scholars, Asamoah-Gyadu⁸⁶ and Larbi,⁸⁷⁸⁸ identify more prophets as the forerunners of Ghanaian Pentecostalism. The two scholars agree that these prophets were characterized by the charisma they received from God in their encounter with the Holy Spirit. Similarly, Torvestad⁸⁹ asserts that the charismatic powers of such leaders were transmitted to sub-leaders who had healing and prophesying abilities themselves. These leaders proclaimed an all-powerful Christ to the people. Thus through their activities the then Gold Coast witnessed a strong and powerful prophetic and spiritual revival. These prophetic ministries though had some form of foreign influence operated in a purely indigenous way. Two things come out clearly in Ghanaian independent church history. Either the founders of the movement were rejected and/or branded as imposters by their mainline churches or felt compelled to leave them to initiate a new work. Thus Baeta claims that Joseph Egyanka Appiah was forced to abandon the Methodist Church as a teacher catechist to initiate his own church, the Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC),

⁸⁶ K. Asamoah-Gyadu, *Renewal within African Christianity: A study of some Current Historical and Theological developments Within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana*. A PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham. Accessed April 30, CSUC E-Library, 2000.

⁸⁷ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra:CPCS, 2001), p. 88.

⁸⁹ V. Torvestad, *The Organization of Spiritual Churches, in the Rise of Independent Churches in Ghana* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1990), p.76.

and built his 'holy city', Musano, as a city for the faithful.⁹⁰ Three out of the numerous prophets and prophetesses who pioneered and/or maintained AICs in Ghana were Prophets William Wade Harris, John Swatson and Sampson Oppong. These have enjoyed some amount of scholarly research into their ministries in recent times. Larbi's⁹¹ study of *Pentecostalism: the Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* has discussed them extensively. Apart from these Baeta's work, *Prophetism in Ghana* also covered the ministries of such prophets as Jehu Appiah and Kwame Nkansah among others. As Larbi posits Ghanaian religious quest for meaning in this life gave rise to the "activities of the Holy Spirit" characterized by the emergence of the AICs. These churches were founded by natives who had personal pneumatic experiences and who went about preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The prophetic ministries of some of them activated missionary activities in the country.

However, not all of them enjoyed the goodwill of their own church fellowships. This reaction from their church fellowships resulted in the prophet's alienation, rejection or induced secession. With the rise of these prophetic ministries in the country, as it were, God was announcing to his church of the inauguration of a new era of spiritual renewal. Though the resultant churches from the activities of some of these prophets are now becoming peripheral in the country's Christianity, today's spiritual renewal owes much to these prophets' obedience and surrender to the Holy Spirit. Again, the ministry of a prophet like Appiah offers a religio-political paradigm for charting a meaningful prophetic ministry in Ghanaian Pentecostal Christianity. Today's prophetism in

⁹⁰ C.G. Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A study of Some Spiritual Churches* (London: SCM), p. 6.

⁹¹ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, pp. 57-68.

Ghanaian Christianity is indeed traceable to the AICs, the forerunners of modern Pentecostalism, the latter continuing and perhaps improving on the former's activities.

According to Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, Joseph Quayesi and Samuel B. Adubofour, there are five phases of Ghanaian Pentecostal Prophetism.⁹⁶ A phase is used here to denote a particular stage of prophetic manifestations in Ghanaian Christianity. The assertion here is that the current stages of prophetic manifestations in the country may well be described as the fifth phase of that phenomenon.

The first phase of Christian Prophetism in Ghana occurred in the era of the AICs. The AICs were characterized by a strong prophetic ministry. Founders/leaders in these churches prophesied, saw visions and offered spiritual directions to their clients who came to them in search of spiritual relief from diseases, sicknesses, etc. This first phase was followed by the emergence of classical Pentecostalism of which Apostle Peter Anim is credited with its origination. Pentecostalism was characterized by its own brand of prophetism especially in the 1950s. Notable among the prophets were Brother Lawson and Prophet John Mensah. Both used to be in Mckeown's organization until they seceded to form their respective churches. Brother Lawson's prophet/healing group came to be known as the Divine Healer's Church while John Mensah formed the Church of Christ (Spiritual Movement). This prophetism is identifiably the second phase of Christian prophetism in Ghana.

In his PhD thesis *Evangelical Para-Church Movement in Ghanaian Christianity: (1950 to Early 1990s)* Adubofour discusses the Inter-Hall Christian Fellowship of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. In this work he shows how Pentecostal Prophetism gained prominence in the Inter-Hall Christian Fellowship in the 1970s. One of the forerunners, Kwabena Adu Baah, is reported to have stated that

⁹⁶Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*. Accra: 68 – 89 CPCS, Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, “Ghana’s New Prophetism: Antecedents and some Characteristic Features” Samuel B. Adubofour, “Evangelical Para-Church Movement in Ghanaian Christianity: (1950 to Early 1990’s)” an unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Edinburgh (1994), pp. 183 – 187. <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/journals/aps/ossie-15/4-ghana-new-prophetism-antecedents-and-somechara/and>

“prophecy was the excitement of the day.” Because of the extremities of campus prophetism of the then University of Science and Technology, Adubofour alleges the Inter-Hall Christian Fellowship “attracted reactions which range from derogatory remarks to outright condemnation.”⁹⁷ This phase of prophetism, though basically at the tertiary level, may be deemed to be the third phase of Christian Prophetism in the land.

The fourth phase of prophetism is traceable to the denominational prayer centres/camps in the Church of Pentecost, among others, which became quite more phenomenal in the early 1980s. Paul Gifford maintains they filled the gaps in the faith gospel of the Charismatic Ministries (CMs) and asserts they have since 1985 subsided significantly, with the soteriological shift being now tilted towards the prophetic ministries of the Charismatic Ministries.⁹⁸ A problem with Gifford’s claim is that he failed to see these centres as Onyinah has shown, as places that basically catered for the Church of Pentecost rather than Charismatic members’ existential needs. They were actually spiritual insulators against the members’ ‘straying’ into the AICs healing gardens. Among the Charismatic Ministries, it may be said that the emergent deliverance ministries provided the supernatural explanations for failings of the faith gospel claims. Moreover, leaders of these centres actually qualify as prophets though their approach may differ from the prophets of the prophetic ministries in neo-Pentecostalism. These Prayer Camps/Centres offer alternative soteriological resource for a great majority of troubled and perplexed Ghanaians who resort to them for a special time of prayers in the expectation of receiving

answers from God to their numerous existential needs and problems. Both Larbi and Onyinah see the prayer camps/centres as places where people

⁹⁷Samuel B. Adubofour, “Evangelical Para-Church Movement in Ghanaian Christianity: (1950 to Early 1990’s)” an unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Edinburgh (1994), pp. 183 – 187. <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/journals/aps/ossie-15/4-ghana-new-prophetism-antecedents-and-somechara/and>

⁹⁸Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalization in a Globalizing African Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University press 2004).

resort to with various needs for supernatural succour via prayer and fasting. Also both agree that the activities at these centres gravitate around a key personality who is a prophet, prophetess or evangelist. Though their initial existence dates back to the 1940s it was not until the 1980s that the prayer centres became prominent in the religious life of many Ghanaians. Onyinah therefore sees them as “revised prayer camp(s)” in the Church of Pentecost. Again he associates their activities with those of the Deliverance Teams, Prayer Warriors and Prayer Towers set up by Para-church groups and other churches to cater for the ‘urgent’ needs of their followers. The fifth phase of prophetism we identify began with the emergence of independent prophetic figures in the early 1990s. This was when a new crop of young Pentecostals arrived on the ecclesiastical scene. Among these were prophets Elisha Salifu Amoako and OwusuBempah.⁹²⁹³

Significantly, it was just when the prayer centres in COP numbered eight (by October 1993), and had begun assuming a nationwide popularity that the prophetic ministries in neo-Pentecostalism were also beginning to emerge on a large scale.⁹⁴ The prophets/prophetesses of these prayer centres share a lot in common with the prophets within neo-Pentecostal Christianity.

⁹² Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*(Accra:CPCS, 2001), pp.

⁹³ -68.

⁹⁴ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, p. 59.

Today, it is not uncommon to hear of ‘prophet such and such’ organizing a ‘prophetic’ service or to hear a ‘prophet’ speak on the airwaves. A significant feature of these prophetic services is the prophets’ belief in the omniscience of God and their own role in the supernatural delivery.

3.3 The Nature of Ghanaian Prophetic Ministry

3.3.1 African Independent Church (AIC) Tradition – Church Of Hosanna

Stephen Obeng Mensah is the founder and leader of Church of Hosanna, an African Independent Church (AIC) situated at Kromaose-New site, Kumasi. He started it as a prayer, healing and deliverance centre where all kinds of people afflicted with various sicknesses and ailments used to go until the Lord gave him the prophetic mantle or gift. With the prophetic mantle and prophecies, Stephen Obeng Mensah carefully elaborated its operations and manifestations in his ministry as follows: Although the prophecies come from human beings, he believes it is through the Spirit’s guidance. He claims his congregation sometimes encourages him to prophesy. Some members sometimes shout during the service, *odiyifoɔ hyɛ nkɔm* (Prophet, do prophesy.). In such situations, he only confesses what the scriptures have said about the children of God.

Spiritual consultation is another aspect of his prophetic encounters with people – this happens every Wednesday (7am to 7 pm). During such consultations, he employs laying on of hands, anointing oil, *nhyira nsuo* (blessed or consecrated water), and candles in ministering healing, deliverance and prophetic directives or *akwankyere* to members/clients.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Interview with Prophet Stephen Obeng Mensah, Founder and Leader of Church of Hosanna, Kromaose New Site on May 30, 2016 at his Residence.

According to Stephen Obeng Mensah, his sermons are concerned with responding to contemporary challenges, the work of evil spirits especially witches and wizards in such situations and the interpretation of dreams and visions. There is a huge emphasis on the fact that Spirit as power is made manifest in healing and deliverance.

While participating in one of their services, it was observed that, the members cherish their leaders more than even the scriptures. The leader is the church and the church is the leader. They believe in the prosperity messages preached to them that every Christian must prosper at all cost. A member had this to say, “Every child of God must prosper, because prosperity comes from God.” You realize that members strive for prosperity; to them, poverty is alien to any child of God. They search for a kind of wellbeing which involves both the spiritual and physical. They have the belief that, only those who are not children of God suffer in life.

They believe in the existence of earthly suffering but not for the children of God. For that reason, the prophets are there to counter any suffering that the devil plans to bring on the child of God. To them, eternal suffering is for those who do not accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour while on earth. The liturgy of the AIC’s is similar to that of many other Christian denominations with the exception of a slight difference in their combination of African styles in their worship: an example is the usage of crucifixes, holy water (blessed and consecrated), local songs, playing tambourines and many others.

3.3.2 African Independent Church Tradition – True Faith Church of Ghana

John Owusu Akyaw is the General Overseer of True Faith Church of Ghana, otherwise called *Gyidi Kɔkɔɔ*. The church was founded by Opanin Samuel Brako, David Krofa and Sampson Krofa in 1914. It is considered as a “spiritual” church. There are branches of the church throughout the country and beyond. Members enter their chapels bare-

footed.

They believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. They also believe in the operation of the Holy Spirit through humans; as such 1 Corinthians 12 is their favourite quotation.

John Owusu Akyaw doubles as a prophet. According to him, a prophet in times past, was called a seer ie. *ɔdehunufɔɔ*. When going to war the people of God consulted the seer to find out the outcome of the war. A prophet also anointed people to become kings under the directions of God. For example in 2 Kings 9:3.

A prophet should have the gift of discernment of spirits and all the other gifts as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. He is also of the opinion that a prophet works under a pastor.

On the issue of the current state of prophetic activities in the country, he says today, because of money, many people have established their own churches. John Owusu Akyaw claims most of these prophets who are making noise have not been called by God and that they have little or no education. They have arrogated titles to themselves. He remarks that when these prophets are operating and they claim that they have entered the spirit world, it is rather deep sea that they have entered. Again, he says the directions they give to people are not from God. In the True Faith Church of Ghana they use oil prepared as prescribed by God (Exodus 30:22-33).

The General Overseer of True Faith Church of Ghana is of the opinion that prophecy has had serious repercussions on the lives of Ghanaians. He says prophecy has negatively impacted Ghanaians. First and foremost, these prophets have carnal knowledge of women some of whom are married. After that they warn the women that they will die if they

disclose the sexual affair. They have been bathing women; all these practices are unscriptural. Secondly, these prophets organize counselling sessions.

People consult them with various problems after paying exorbitant consultation fees. Anointing oil is also sold to people at very high prices; this is exploitation. Thirdly, false prophecies characterize their operations and also they normally do not preach salvation messages. Fourthly, they teach / or force people to speak in tongues. The General Overseer has also observed that some of these prophets go to the extent of declaring themselves as Christ.

He has, however, admitted that because some of the prophets have been called by God and are on the right path, some positive prophetic impact has been registered on the country. He says through prophetic activities the Holy Spirit convicts people and also reveals things about them to correct them. Again, deliverance, including healing, has been and is being achieved.

Finally, John Owusu Akyaw suggests that church leaders should advise their members not to follow miracles for all that glitters is not gold. Rather they should ensure their going to heaven.

3.3.2.1 Charismatic Tradition – Revival Outreach Church International (ROC – Intl.)

The Revival Outreach Church International is an International Charismatic Church headquartered at Odorkor, Accra. The vision of the church includes character building, evangelism and church planting and its mission statement involves “Taking the Gospel of Christ everywhere in the World, establishing local as well as international churches and building Christlike character in people – Matthew 24:14.”⁹⁶ The church began as a fellowship in 1989 and through the direction of the Holy Spirit became a Church in

⁹⁶ Revival Outreach Church International, Constitution, 1992, p.3.

1992. Robertson Aboagye-Darko is the Spiritual Leader and Chairman of the Executive Council (Highest Ruling Body) of the Church. From their constitution, their belief is centred on the Apostles Creed.⁹⁷

There is an official recognition of the five – fold ministry centred on the Pastor, Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist and Teacher used by the Ministers of this Church. The work of the Prophet (including prophecy) is highly acknowledged as seen in their various programmes like Conventions, Church services, Retreats and their special quarterly Holy Ghost Revival Campaigns. Both personal and corporate prophecies are used in the liturgy. As observed by the researcher in one of their Regional Easter Conventions at Atwima Techiman from 17th– 20th April, 2016 one prophet named Frank Asare Nyamekye ministered to individuals and gave prophetic directions to the entire church as an organization. One noticeable attitude in this Church is the subjection of prophecies to Pastoral counsel and Biblical checks. Members have been educated in such a way that any complex or strange prophecies are brought to the Pastoral leadership for the Word of God, discernment and wisdom to be used to bring sanity, reinterpretation or rejection of the prophecies. According to Robert Oppong Yeboah, there is great awareness in the church of how prophecies can go wrong or be abused hence utmost precautions from both the Prophets and members being ministered to, go hand in hand.⁹⁸

Despite these checks and balances in the church, the Spiritual Leader and Chairman of the Executive Council, Apostle Robertson Aboagye Darko, observed that there have been reported cases of unbiblical prophecies and *akwankyerε* dished out to church members. One typical example was when one member was asked to go to the cemetery at midnight

⁹⁷ Revival Outreach Church International, Constitution, 1992, p.3.

⁹⁸ Interview with Prophet Robert Oppong Yeboah, Assistant to the General Overseer / Chairman of the Executive Council – ROC INTL. on 6th February, 2016 during their National Ministers Retreat in Kumasi – Adom Fie Retreat Centre (Apire).

to wash his son who had attacks of epilepsy with various concoctions (olive oil, some herbs, stream water, some coins and the back of a tortoise). Another woman was made to sell her piece of land because it was a centre for the meeting of wizards and witches from the member's hometown. This woman was told that her burial was imminent anytime or day she decides to do something on the land.

On the other hand, Darko also indicated that true deliverance, healing, and guidance had come to several members from such prophetic phenomenon, encounters and experiences.⁹⁹

3.3.2.2 Great Anointing Worship Centre

Great Anointing Worship Centre was founded in 1997 by Joshua Oheneba Amofa. The church is situated at Atwima Techiman, Kumasi.

In the opinion of Oheneba Amofa, a prophet is a seer. He says things God reveals to him. He sees hidden things. He also speaks about the past, present and future. He is God's linguist and has an office. This prophet says without the words of wisdom, knowledge and discernment of spirits one cannot be a prophet.

According to Oheneba Amofa, prophecy is what God says through somebody. He continues to say that one may have the gift of prophecy without necessarily being a prophet.

On the current state of prophecy in the country, he says only about 25% of those who profess to be prophets have been called and anointed by God while the remaining are being used by the devil.

⁹⁹ Interview with Prophet Robert Oppong Yeboah, Assistant to the General Overseer / Chairman of the Executive Council – ROC INTL. on 6th February, 2016 during their National Ministers Retreat in Kumasi – Adom Fie Retreat Centre (Apire).

This prophet is of the opinion that false prophets impart their spirits to their members thereby preventing them from receiving God's Spirit. By so doing, false prophets in the country are leading their members to hell.

Finally, Oheneba Amofa suggests that genuine Christians should pray for those who have been led astray so that God will open their eyes to the truth.

3.3.2.3 Pentecostal Tradition – The Church of Pentecost (COP)

The Church of Pentecost has assumed an international dimension. It is headquartered in Accra, Ghana. Its focus is not profit-making but rather to bring all people everywhere to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the good news, church planting and the equipping of believers for every God-glorifying service. It demonstrates the love of God through the provision of social services in partnership with governments, communities and N.G.Os.¹⁰⁰ According to Giffiths, while New Testament teaching tends to indicate that all Christians may engage in prophesying, there are people who seem to be recognized to occupy the definitive office of a prophet.¹⁰¹ This submission of Griffiths then provokes an examination of the whole idea of a prophet in a church like the COP. It is not easy to define who the prophet is in COP. However one may identify three types of prophets in it.

3.3.2.3.1 The Prophet

The prophet is the most common type of prophets in the COP. Prophets are commonly known as *nkɔmhyefoɔ* (those who prophesy). A prophet is a person who exhibits the gift of prophecy to edify, encourage, and exhort the church.

¹⁰⁰ The Constitution of the Church of Pentecost. Accessed CSUC- E Library, May 29, 2015. <http://www.thechurchofpentecost.org/history.html>

¹⁰¹ M. Griffiths, *Serving Grace: Gifts Without* (MARC Europe; OMF Books, 1986), 43.

In the COP, prophesiers may be members of the laity or ordained ministers. Indeed, this is true of other Pentecostal churches in Ghana.

Ntumy similarly narrates how a prophecy was given at his send-off service to Liberia as a missionary about the dangers that awaited him in that country.¹⁰² But the prophecy also talked about the subsequent honour God promised to give him eventually. This prophecy was fulfilled partially when he and his family got caught up in the Liberian civil war. Eventually, he became the youngest chairman of the COP. He sees all these as a demonstration of God's unfailing love and covenant with his own.

Ntumy further narrates how his home church was assured through a prophecy that he and his family would be delivered from danger in the Liberian crisis. He points out that it was this time that the song *Nyame ne yen wo ho nnenso...* (Translated, God is with us today ...) was received prophetically by the Church. According to him the song's primary aim was to assure the church that God would see him and his family through that difficult time.

Prophesiers in the COP, therefore, are people who bring forth an 'inspired message' during times of corporate worship or prayer service. The content of the message may sometimes be personal, yet their message is acknowledged to possess the basic elements of edification, exhortation, and comfort. Normally, they prefix their messages with, "My children, My children, I, the Lord, Am in your midst ..." and end it thus: "It is I the Lord that speak to you."¹⁰³

¹⁰² K. A. Wiafe, (Producer), *A Servant of God [Motion Picture]*. Pentmedia/TV3 (Accra: Sunday April 23 2006), 5:30 – 6:00am.

¹⁰³ Interview with Elder Gyabah Philip at Pentecost International Worship Centre (PIWC) – Kurofrom on May, 24, 2016.

It is normal to hear someone leading a prayer meeting or corporate worship request the congregation at the end of the session to wait quietly to hear from the Lord. And the congregation understands this to mean waiting to receive a prophecy or a revelation through anybody present, but more especially through those noted to prophesy often. The COP believes that 1 Corinthians 14: 29 limits such spontaneities to not more than three prophecies.

It ought to be noted also that it is possible for prophesiers to receive a message before going to church. This seems to be the order in both the Old and New Testaments.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately some Pentecostal prophesiers fail to present such a message in a normal conversational form but rather make it assume spontaneity. This may be due to the Ghanaian crave to sound ‘spiritual’ in both religious and irreligious domains.

3.3.2.3.2 The Singing Prophet

The COP is a church, which since its earliest beginnings has benefited a lot from ‘inspired songs’. These are songs which are received spontaneously during prayer or worship services and are believed to come from the Holy Spirit. Like the gift of prophecy they are meant for the church’s edification, exhortation, and comfort. As such they qualify to be part of prophecy that operates in certain individuals who possess the spirit of prophecy.

The COP takes credit for many of such ‘Pentecostal spirituals’ in Ghanaian religious life. Unfortunately, for a long time the church did not consider it expedient to document them electronically or in writing. Hence, most of these songs were hijacked by people who were not very conversant with their origins and contents, and who have done much

¹⁰⁴ M. Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts, Then and Now* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Partnerster Press, 1998), p.

mutilation to many of them. Those who receive these songs in the COP are designated 'singing prophets' or 'Pentecostal psalmists.'¹⁰⁵¹⁰⁶¹

These Pentecostal songs are normally received during corporate worship services or prayer meetings of the church, especially during conventions or when the individual prophet is alone serving the Lord through worship or prayers. They become more pronounced especially during times of fasting and prayers. At times too they are received during crises or joyful moments in the prophet's life. They are not restricted to only one sex; both men and women operate in it. Sometimes the prophet may also receive new songs through the study and meditation of scripture. This may underscore why these songs have strong theological content. The reception of these songs can occur at any place but most especially when the Pentecostal psalmist listens to sermons preached, he/she at times hears a new song ring in his/her spirit or feels a new song bubble up within him/her. This signals a new song from the Lord to His church. He /she would then rise up to sing.¹⁰⁷ Though the church believes in the divine origin of these songs, it nonetheless holds that as a gift of prophecy they are subject to the judgment of the Church leadership. Consequently, some spiritual songs have had to undergo amendment of some sort.

3.3.2.3.3 Grassroots Prophets

These are those Onyinah designates as lay prophets/prophetesses and links their prominence in the COP to the emergence of 'witchcraft demonology.'¹⁰⁸ He argues that

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¹⁰⁶ Interview with Elder Gyabah Philip at Pentecost International Worship centre (PIWC) – Kurofrom on Sunday May, 24, 2015.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Elder Gyabah Philip at Pentecostal International Worship (PIWC) – Kurofoum on May, 24, 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Opoku Onyinah, "*Akan witchcraft and the Concept of Exorcism in the Church of Pentecost*" (An unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham, UK, 2002), p. 25.

this current phenomenon in the COP is a reinvigoration of what emerged in the 1950s but which eventually resulted in secessions of the prophets/healers from the church. These are perhaps the type of prophets whose identity is most controversial within that church. This is because there is much ambiguity on how to define them. How they are defined officially differs from ordinary church members' definition.

The secessions of the prophets in the 1950s were underpinned by a number of factors. According to Onyinah, the prophets wanted the authorities to provide them with accommodation and food as the pastors enjoyed. They also felt cheated that the pastors left them to handle the healing and deliverance sessions during conventions.

Furthermore, they claimed healing and deliverance sessions were not long enough and so many sick people went away unhealed. Finally, failure of the church to define their position in the church conditioned their secession from it. But the church authorities on their part felt these prophets/healers promoted a lot of 'unscriptural practices' such as blessing of water, blessing of handkerchiefs, using of Florida water etc.

Perhaps, the prophets' agitation for recognition should be appreciated because even today it is to the prophets, but not the pastors, that the suffering masses mostly turn in their search for spiritual solace. These prophets who operate prayer centres in the church have as their major focus deliverance from demonic oppressions and manipulations; hence their activities and operations give vent to witchcraft demonology which Classical Pentecostals do not encourage.

The COP, officially, is careful not to designate the title 'prophet' to everyone who exhibits some revelatory gifts. Such gifts include, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discerning of spirits, prophecy, speaking in diverse tongues and interpretation of tongues. Generally, Pentecostals equate the combined effects of the last two with prophecy. In its

Ministers' Handbook The COP states “No one is specially trained or referred to as a prophet/prophetess or allowed to begin a new centre.”¹⁰⁹ This does not actually imply a prohibition on the establishment of new prayer centres. The clarification is brought to the fore in the following statement, “No new prayer centres are opened without the prior approval of the Executive Council.”¹¹⁰

The COP's restriction on the use of the title 'prophet' may stem from its experiences from the past. Onyinah intimates that due to the rise of 'unscriptural practices' of the prophets/prophetesses, Mckeown personally outlawed the use of the title 'prophet' by lay healers/exorcists in the church.¹¹¹ It was when Prophet M. K Yeboah became the head of the church that there was a reactivation of the activities of the prayer camps/centres. Prophet M. K. Yeboah perceived them as 'gifts' to the church.

Clearly, those that ordinary church members may recognize as prophets are not officially recognized as such. These prophets are termed 'grassroots prophets' because they deal with the ordinary mundane affairs of the masses who go to them with all sorts of headaches anticipating that God, through their ministries, would hear their cry.

These prophets are able to reveal to clients/seekers things that are hidden from the ordinary person through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The attitude of the masses towards grassroots prophets is similar to that of the Samaritan woman in her encounter with Jesus at Jacob's Well (John 4: 1-29). They become overwhelmed with the telepathic and therapeutic gifts in the prophets and so stick to them

¹⁰⁹ *Ministers' Handbook*, Church of Pentecost (2008) pg. 125, paragraph 3.

¹¹⁰ *Ministers' Handbook*, Church of Pentecost (2008) pg. 125, paragraph 1.

¹¹¹ Onyinah “*Akan witchcraft and the Concept of Exorcism in the Church of Pentecost*”, p. 26.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Elder Gyabah Philip at Pentecost International Worship centre (PIWC) – Kurofuom on Sunday May, 24 2016.

no matter the consequences. Majority of these seekers and clients are women and men in search of successful marriages, businesses, foreign travel, good health and fruitfulness in marriages. The desire to have good and successful marriages, succeed in businesses, undertake foreign journeys, enjoy good health and fruitfulness in marriage mostly came up during my interviews with both leaders and seekers. These grassroots prophets tend to offer hope to the suffering masses as they are seen to bring solution to the latter.¹¹⁷

3.3.2.3.4 Assemblies of God, Ghana.

Samuel Kwadwo Adogbla is the Associate Pastor of the Grace Chapel Assemblies of God Church at Kwadaso Nsuom, Kumasi. The church was started at Beposo School at Kwadaso in 1981. However, they moved to their current location on 1st January, 2000. The church has a population of one thousand seven hundred with an average attendance of between eight hundred and nine hundred members.

According to Adogbla, a prophet is someone called by God to whom God reveals things which have happened, are happening and will happen. He says during the Old Testament times one prophet spoke for a whole nation but today more than one prophet operate simultaneously in the country.

Adogbla thinks a prophet should have the gift of the word of knowledge before the gifts of the word of wisdom, and discernment of spirit. He continues to say that a prophet should, besides the gifts of revelation, have power gifts ie, faith, the working of miracles and healing. The prophetic office has not been created in the Assemblies of God Church, unlike other Pentecostal churches, but the functions of a prophet are accepted.

Adogbla opines, “What God reveals about an individual, a group or a nation to a prophet to be delivered by the prophet constitutes prophecy. Prophecy rebukes, corrects and

encourages”. All said and done he has realized that prophecy has had much impact, both positive and negative, on Ghanaians. He thinks over 60% of prophecies delivered by prophets in the country do not emanate from God. Consequently, some relationships have been strained to the extent that some people have become vindictive after hearing some prophecies. Again, some prophetic directions are ridiculous.

Conversely, he admits that through some prophecies, some calamities have been warded off. Again, some physical and spiritual ailments have been healed. Finally, some prophecies have helped to shape some lives.

On the question of how to inject sanity into neo-prophetic ministries, Adogbla says it is not easy to interfere in the affairs of neo-prophetic ministries because Ghanaians enjoy freedom of worship. However, he suggests that seminars should be conducted for prophets so that they are educated.

3.3.2.3.5 The Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) International

Samuel Amponsah Frimpong is the pastor in charge of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) International, T.U.C Assembly, Kumasi. He defines a prophet as a person ordained and assisted by the Holy Spirit to speak on God’s behalf. He goes on to say that a prophet is somebody who speaks the mind of God concerning things yet to happen. He foretells things to happen which fall in line with the mind of God. He is somebody God consults when He wants to speak to people. In effect a prophet is a spokesman for God. Amponsah Frimpong says Jeremiah and Isaiah are examples of biblical prophets. He has also remarked that some of the biblical prophets spoke to humanity in general while others spoke specifically to individuals or a group of people.

According to this pastor, the functions of prophets are:

1. They are agents of God.
2. They stand in the gap between God and His people, ie, they are intercessors. For example, Samuel interceded for Saul.
3. They are teachers of the Law. For example Jeremiah taught God's word and so did Samuel and Isaiah.
4. Some were judges; they pronounced judgment on God's people in accordance with God's Laws and promptings of the Holy Spirit. Samuel, for instance, was a judge for over forty years.
5. They use their prophetic ministry to console and also direct God's people.
6. They rebuke God's people on behalf of God.
7. They are performers of miracles. For example, Elijah prayed and God answered him by causing fire to fall from heaven.
8. Specifically passing God's judgment in response to certain behaviours that are deemed anti-God.

He is of the opinion that to operate or function as a prophet, one must have power gifts (ie. The gifts of faith, working of miracles and healing), discernment of spirits and utterance. A prophet must also have zeal for the performance of God's will and finally he says prophets are daring.

Amponsah Frimpong claims that at first there was emphasis on the teaching ministry, however, there is a resurgence of the prophetic ministry about two decades ago. There has been a growing interest in the prophetic ministry these days and manifests itself more in antics than the biblical principles. Most of the prophecies, these days, are questionable. He goes on to say that some of today's prophets confuse sound biblical teachings with African Traditional Religion (A.T.R); some practise necromancy which falls under

A.T.R. and this is syncretic. Some also claim to be able to turn into wild animals which is unchristian. Many neo-prophetic ministers are associated with immorality. Some are homosexuals while others have inordinate love of money; they charge for their services and this is unbiblical. Others also want to achieve fame so they mount billboards to advertise themselves but not God or the church.

Moreover, he claims there have been instances where some traditional priests openly challenge some neo-prophetic ministers regarding their source of power. There have also been instances where some of these prophets blame each other for engaging in occultism. For some of them, their own utterances, deeds, and what others say about them make their source of power questionable. Some of their practices are untypical of biblical prophetism, eg, bathing women, conjuring etc.

He, however, admits that some neo-prophetic ministers are real men of God who are strong advocates of holiness and generally uphold godly standard.

Amponsah Frimpong enumerates some negative impact of neo-prophetism as follows:

1. Some neo-prophetic ministers have tarnished the image of Christianity to the extent that Christianity looks despicable in people's eyes.
2. There has been an introduction of money-grabbing techniques into their circles and this impoverishes their members. This practice is tantamount to extortion.
3. The flamboyant lifestyles of some of them are inimical to the modest image of the church.
4. The mention of names of witches to their followers causes confusion among families.
5. There is misuse of titles in their circles. This state of affair misleads people. Some claim to be Professors, Doctors, Bishops, Apostles etc.while they are not.

He also admits that at the same time neo-prophetic ministries have registered some positive impact on the society. He enumerates some as follows:

1. In general the church has been revitalized. People are praying more than never before in Ghana.
2. Some are truly preaching God's word thereby helping to fight against social vices and immorality.
3. Some have used their prophetic offices to settle problems among families.
4. Some have established schools and orphanages thereby improving upon the socio-economic lives of the citizenry.
5. Some have also established counselling and rehabilitation centres to cater for the needs of deviants etc.

Finally, Amponsah Frimpong has made some suggestions as to how to curb the activities of neo-prophetic ministries in the country. In the first place he says those ministries should be encouraged to form umbrella organizations with strong leadership structures and clothed with strong persuasive powers to ward off waywardness.

Secondly, there should be governmental interventions to prevent the abuse of fundamental human rights where practices are inimical to the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and public decency or national security concerns.

Thirdly, the general public should be educated to know their rights.

Fourthly, there should be strong governmental role to empower people economically. Social policy interventions such as health insurance etc will go a long way to cushion people, especially the vulnerable in the society. It must be noted that unempowered people normally fall prey to charlatans.

Finally, the government should support Bible Training Institutions where potential prophets may go for training. In the institutions good administrative practices should be taught. Again lawyers should be made to teach fundamental human rights in the institutions.

3.4 Neo-Prophetic Ministry Tradition – Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre

In the Ashanti Region of Ghana, one prophet who has come to the scene in contemporary times is Ebenezer Opambour Adarkwa Yiadom popularly known as

“Prophet One” or “Ashanti Moses”. He is the Leader and Founder of the Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre located at Ahenema Kokoben, a suburb of Kumasi. Ebenezer Opambour Adarkwa Yiadom was born in the early 1960s to a very poor family which hails from Juaso Pramso in the Ashanti Region. Kwame Adarkwa Yiadom as he was formerly called, lived with a guardian at Alabar, a zongo community in Kumasi. He had his basic education at St. Peters Educational Centre at Kwadaso, Kumasi, and later continued at the Kumasi Technical Institute (KTI), where he pursued a course in plumbing. In his early days at school, Kwame was admired by most of his friends because of his melodious voice, even though he was always in tattered school uniforms. His melodious voice eventually made him a composer and singer.¹¹²

During a typical Sunday Service, the choir leads Opambour Adarkwa, the Associate Pastors and their wives with songs into the chapel as is done in the mainline churches. After that an opening prayer is said before praises and worshipers embarked on for about 45 minutes. Then the various singing groups in the church, led mostly by the pastors’ wives minister in songs for about 30 minutes. Offertory follows; members are encouraged to give to God. Boxes are placed at vantage points in front and members are asked to

¹¹² Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, *contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi: A Socio-Cultural and Theological Assessment*. An unpublished article submitted to the Dept of Religious studies – Faculty of Social Science of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST)

move from their seats to put their offerings into the boxes. The congregation prays over the offertory. This takes about 15 minutes. Then comes a time of singing and dancing in preparation for the sermon. This is normally delivered by the prophet or any of the associate pastors assigned by him. The preaching which is normally based on a short scripture lasts for about 20 minutes. An important aspect of the Sunday service is healing and deliverance. This follows the sermon and is done by the Prophet himself. He mounts the pulpit amidst rigorous shouts, claps and cheers from the congregation with a standing ovation.

He is introduced with titles such as “Dr. Opambour,” “the history maker,” “the legend,” “Ashanti Moses,” “prophet one.” During this time, a kind of ineffable ecstasy fills the church auditorium. He starts the ministration session with songs, most of which are his own compositions. He moves to and fro the congregation, followed by two or three of the associate Pastors. He calls people at random and begins to “prophesy” into their lives as and when supposedly is moved by the Holy Spirit. As part of his prophetic activities he reveals the past, tells the present and the future of people. He reveals the plans of the devil about people. He attributes the forces behind people’s problems to witchcraft, water spirits, ancestral spirits and other demons. He reveals the causes of sicknesses and prays for people. He delegates some of the prayers to his associate Pastors. He claims to hear the voice of God telling him of the sins people commit secretly that lead to their sufferings. While ministering, some members of the congregation shout, *Odifo nono* meaning “that is the prophet,” *Onyame wo tumioo* with the response being *ena woreka*

no sei literally meaning, “God has power” and the response is “It’s exactly what you have said.”¹¹³

3.5 General Views about Contemporary Prophetic Ministries in Ghana

3.5.1 Orthodox Church Tradition – The Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Samuel Adu Gyamfi is the second Minister in charge of the Peyer Memorial Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Bantama, Kumasi. Adu Gyamfi has been functioning as a Minister of the Bantama branch of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana since September, 2012.

According to him, the church was established by the Youth Fellowship of the Ramseyer Memorial Presbyterian Church, Adum, Kumasi, in November, 1957. Members started worshipping at the Bantama Presbyterian School. He continued to say that in March, 1978, the church was elevated to the status of a pastoral district with locals such as Suame, Kwadaso, Asuoyeboah, Tanoso, Maakro, Bohyen, Akropong, Mankranso etc. under it.

However, the current district comprises Peyer (Bantama), South Suntreso, Adoato, Danyame, Kokoso, Kwadaso Estate, N.O.P (Northern Outreach Programme) Frafra and Kassena.

Currently, the population of the district church stands at 5,894 (Adult and Children) while that of Peyer stands at 3,805 (Adults and Children).

Adu Gyamfi opines that in a nutshell, a prophet is God’s spokesperson who speaks on behalf of God either by revelation or discernment. Revelation is more of graphics but discernment is more of intuition e.g. Peter, Ananias and his wife (Acts 5:1-11) and Elisha

¹¹³ Interview with Evangelist Rexford Boateng and Participant Observation at Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre on Sunday 17 May 2016.

and Gehazi (2 Kings 5:19ff). Again, a prophet is a person who holds the prophetic office. He claims that in the New Testament prophetic activities are not as prominent as in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament times the prophet normally called for social justice for there was so much injustice in the society. A prophet does his work on consistent basis. A prophet should be above reproach. According to Isaiah 20 he should be obedient. All prophets should have the gift of prophecy but not all who prophesy are prophets. Besides the gift of prophecy a prophet should have at least the gifts of the word of wisdom, knowledge, discernment and faith.

Prophecy, according to Adu Gyamfi, is one of the spiritual gifts whereby God uses either a prophet or a non-prophet as a conduit to speak to His people. For example God once used a donkey to speak to His people (Num. 22:21-44). In his view prophecy should be in line with the Bible. True prophecy should come to pass.

Adu Gyamfi's view about the current state of prophecy in Ghana is that some prophets project themselves and relegate God to the background. These prophets are characterized by the use of the personal pronouns, I and me, as if they can do without God. Some of their messages are not in line with God's word. They do more of foretelling but not forthtelling; they hardly warn people. He thinks these prophets hardly preach about salvation and the parousia. People give a lot of bad comments about these prophets because their way of life leaves much to be desired. Some have only the gift of prophecy but have assumed to have the office of a prophet. According to him those prophets are into monetary gain.

Adu Gyamfi thinks prophecy has impacted on the Ghanaian society. First and foremost, he says, the number of churches, especially independent churches and for that matter the number of church goers, has increased. He admits that controlling these independent

churches, unlike the mainline churches, is not easy. This new development has also led to the development of personality cult. “Prostitution” (moving from church to church) is practised on daily basis. The leaders of those churches have arrogated such titles as Dr. Bishop, Archbishop, Apostle, Professor etc unto themselves. He concludes by saying, “Christianity in Ghana is ten centimetres wide but only one centimetre deep.”

On the question of what can be done to redress the situation, Adu Gyamfi thinks leaders of the neo-prophetic ministries should be given formal education. Again those ministries should be regulated through Christian umbrella bodies like the Christian Council of Ghana. Moreover, he thinks the government should find a way to regulate churches in general. Furthermore, he suggests that Ghanaians should be taught their fundamental human rights. Finally, he is of the opinion that punitive measures must be taken to deal with deviants.

3.5.2 Catholic Tradition – Roman Catholic Church

Peter Osei Amoateng is the Parish Priest of St. Mary’s Catholic Church at South Suntreso in Kumasi. The church was established by Paulesan, a Dutch, in 1954. In 1958, the church assumed a parish status. Currently, it is a one-station parish with a total population of approximately three thousand.

According to Osei Amoateng, a prophet is a spokesperson of God; somebody who knows the intent and desire of God for which he has been called by God to reveal to His people. He is a divine linguist of Yahweh. In his view, a prophet has a divine commission from God to either warn, caution, direct or encourage the people of God with the aim of soliciting a desired response from the people. A prophet may minister to non-Christians. A prophet has a particular mission to execute. We don’t have a stereotyped work for all

prophets. The prophet, Jeremiah, for instance had a mission of ministering to God's people in exile with the aim of comforting them.

He is of the opinion that certain qualities mark a true prophet. In the first place a prophet has been called by God (a divine vocation) for a particular mission. Secondly, a prophet has the Spirit of God's power in him; he has been anointed by God. Thirdly, a prophet should be obedient to God and holy. Fourthly, a prophet should have the zeal and commitment to the task entrusted to him. Fifthly, a prophet should be a man of integrity and honesty. Sixthly, a prophet should be a man of divine insight and foresight.

Seventhly, a prophet should be courageous and bold. Again, a prophet should be a man of compassion and passion. He says a prophet is a teacher, a reconciler and also devoted to prayer. Generally, a prophet may perform priestly functions. Some are counsellors to kings, political figures etc.

According to him prophecy is the act of interpreting God's intentions. He says a prophet is not given a prophetic office but is recognized in the Catholic Church. He says the trend of prophecy now is an interesting phenomenon but it has to be monitored and properly scrutinized in order to gain the full benefit of this ministry.

Osei Amoateng sees prophecy as having impacted the country both positively and negatively. Positively in the sense that the genuine prophets help us to know God's intentions, create a cordial relationship between God and His people and enable God's people to be in tune with God. The society has been negatively impacted by prophecy because there has been social, religious and economic exploitation and misleading of people. Some prophets have done a great disservice to people. As a result religion has lost its essence in the life of ordinary Ghanaians. He claims that people concentrate more on the negative impact to the detriment of the goodness aspect of Christianity.

This revered Catholic Priest thinks all is not lost and that collective efforts of all people who matter can curb the negative trend of prophetism. This call for political, religious and social will.

3.6 Sabbath Day Tradition – Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church

Samuel Essien is in charge of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church at Suame North, Kumasi. The church has a population of forty (twenty-five females and fifteen males).

This Suame North Assembly of the church was established ten years ago under Bantama district.

According to Samuel Essien, the word prophet is derived from the Hebrew word “*navi*” which means a mediator between God and man. When God wants to convey a message to man, it passes through a prophet. He is also of the opinion that a prophet is also called a seer. During the time of Samuel, when the people wanted to inquire of God they went to a seer (I Samuel 9:9, KJV). In times of war, for instance, they would consult a seer to find out the outcome of the war. He says a prophet denounced sins committed by people including people who occupied high positions (I king 21:17-20, KJV). Secondly, a prophet led people to God through preaching. Thirdly, a prophet was a watchman (Ezekiel 3:17, KJV). Finally, a prophet foretold the future.

Touching on the relevance of prophecy today, Samuel Essien says prophets used to exist but today we do not have prophets. For this reason the S.D.A Church does not have any prophet. He says all that God wants us to know is in the Bible. However, he says once a while, God can raise up and use a prophet briefly these days. The S.D.A Church does not believe in the work of a prophet as witnessed today. Members of the Church think current “prophetic” activities do not come from God. He says the church has an office for a pastor who may double as a teacher or an evangelist.

He continues to say that current prophetic activities have negatively impacted on the society. First and foremost, he argues that some prophets are guilty of exploitation; they take unfair advantage of “ignorant” people by demanding and collecting huge sums of money from them for services rendered to them. Secondly these prophets accuse people of witchery thereby causing confusion and enmity among families.

According to him, there have been cases whereby these prophets ask people to leave their houses for them (the prophets) to occupy and purify the houses and end up possessing the houses. He has the opinion that these current prophetic activities have had no positive impact on the society. Finally, he says it is a challenge to pastors to rise up and get God’s message across to foil the plans of these prophets.

3.7 Conclusion

There is no doubt that contemporary prophets are meeting some needs of their followers. However, this study is observing widespread cases and instances of abuse, excesses and the creation of fear/panic in their hearers through “death prophecies”. The dependency on the prophet and his instructions rather than the Word of God also indicates our shortcoming as churches, fellowships etc in making the Word of God the basis of our faith and practice. The use of prophetic ministry/gifts to extort money from the society raises an important question of how our prophets are trained and equipped for ministry. Improper motives and motivations for ministry is another issue to look at with our emerging prophets. The magnitude of abuse is now stupendous so urgent steps need to be taken to contain this canker.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FIELD DATA

4.0 Introduction

In Chapter One, we established the fact that “neo-prophetism” in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity is a recent development. Prophets were considered part of the mainstream Christianity in the country and were not treated in isolation. However, our discussions in chapter three point to some changing trends in the Ghanaian Christianity. Today, the idea of “prophetism” has taken a different dimension with it developing into a new strand of Christianity in the country. This chapter presents, analyzes and discusses the issues that came out of the enquiry into people’s ideas about neoprophetism in Ghana today.

4.1 Presentation, Analysis and Discussions of Field Data

4.1.1 The Lifestyle of the Neo-Prophetic Minister

Among the causes of the proliferation of churches in Ghana, pecuniary interest, according to some respondents, features predominantly. In recent times, churches have sprung up especially in the metropolitan and other urban areas of the country. Most of these churches have been founded by Pentecostal and charismatic churches.

Some of the respondents say, considering the way of life of some neo-prophetic ministers, one may conclude that some of the neo-prophetic ministers have neither been called nor anointed by God. Some also have little or no formal education.

Notwithstanding that some of the prophets have arrogated such titles as Professor, Doctor, Apostle, Bishop etc. to themselves to deceive people.

Samuel Adu Gyamfi¹¹⁴, has observed that some neo-prophetic ministers project themselves and relegate God to the background as if they can do without God. These

¹¹⁴ Samuel Adu Gyamfi, 2nd Minister at the Peyer Memorial Presbyterian Church, Bantama, Kumasi. Interviewed on 15th January, 2017.

prophets are characterized by the use of the personal pronouns I and me. Consequently, their followers tend to worship them in contravention to biblical teaching.

Most of these prophets live ostentatious lives. This has led to an unhealthy competition among them. Again, some have been accused of having carnal knowledge of women some of whom are married; these are observations made by John Owusu Akyaw¹¹⁵, the General Overseer of True Faith Church of Ghana, otherwise known as *Gyidi Kɔkɔ*. People see some of these prophets as being licentious.

According to Gyabah Philip¹¹⁶, these prophets are rude and so daring that they make utterances to elders and people in authority irrespective of the aftermath. Flogging and being insolent to church members during church services also characterize some neoprophetic ministers. Some of them attack each other verbally.

Dominic Boakye¹¹⁷ has observed that, some neo-prophetic ministers use luxurious cars and also push themselves into the limelight by preaching on the radio or television. They have bodyguards who accompany them wherever they go. Some of them feel superior to pastors; they claim they can enter the spirit world and tell what is happening in the spirit while pastors do not have such a gift.

4.1.2 Ministration of the Neo-Prophetic Minister

A close look at the liturgy of the neo-prophetic ministry shows that more attention is devoted to prophecy. After or during preaching, the prophet prophesies. He claims to have entered the spirit world implying that the gift of discernment of spirits is in operation. He normally calls an individual and starts revealing things about him/her.

¹¹⁵ Owusu Akyaw, General Overseer of the True Faith Church of Ghana. Interviewed on 13th November, 2016.

¹¹⁶ Gyabah Philip an elder at in the Church of Pentecost International Worship at Asokwa. Interviewed on 24th May, 2016.

¹¹⁷ Dominic Boakye, a mechanic at “Magazine” and a member of Christ Apostolic Church International, Anomanye Nkwanta, Suame. 27th May, 2016.

Some can call as many as hundred or more people in a single church service and prophesy about them one after the other. These are observations made by Michael Asante of Grace Evangelistic Ministry.

According to Stephen Kwakye¹¹⁸, a 2nd year student of Valley View University, some of the respondents say the prophets do more foretelling than forthtelling. More often than not they do only foretelling and confront their followers with scary revelations. They then give prophetic directions, *akwankyerε*, which are supposed to provide antidotes to problems to members of the church.

Stephen Kwakye continued to say that some neo-prophetic ministers pour anointing oil on people; the oil can be poured on any part of the body. Others may be asked to drink oil. The oil may be taken home and used to smear one's body after bathing; this is supposed to ward off evil spirits. Others too, are asked to sprinkle the oil at their workplaces /or homes so that progress will be realized. Some of them sell the oil to people at a very high price.

Mary Ofori¹¹⁹, a petty trader at the Kumasi Central Market, also remarked that the prophet prays for the congregation. He may pray for them one after the other normally with his prayer team. When he claims that someone is indwelt by an evil spirit, he, together with his prayer team, prays for the person with a view to exorcising the evil spirit. For example, they pray for witches and wizards so that they will be delivered by God. Some of these prophets claim they are able to resurrect dead people.

¹¹⁸ Stephen Kwakye, 2ndYear student at Valley View University, Accra and a member of the Presbyterian Church Ghana. Interviewed on 23rd January, 2017.

¹¹⁹ Mary Ofori, a petty trader at the Kumasi Central Market and a member of Assemblies of God Church, Kwadaso. Interviewed on 10th November, 2016.

Mary Ofori continued to say that, sometimes some neo-prophetic ministers use water in their ministration. He blesses water for people to drink so that they will be healed. Some days have been earmarked on which people consult the prophet for prayers and directions. This form of consultation is popularly called “counselling.” A consultation fee, determined by the prophet, is paid before “counselling” takes place. People rush to join a queue for the “counselling.” During the consultation, the prophet claims to know the past, present and future of people when he enters the spirit world.

The counselling sessions have been criticized by some respondents. On this issue, John Owusu Akyaw remarked, “When they say they have entered the spirit world, it is rather deep sea that they have entered.”

4.1.3 Prophetic Direction (*Akwankyerε*) and Christianity

Samuel Adu Gyamfi, sharing his view on the issue of *akwankyerε* and Christianity in modern Ghana notes, “A disturbing trend with the prophetic phenomenon in today’s Christianity is the issue of *akwankyerε*”. He notes further that, this phenomenon of *akwankyerε* its new dimensions of significance and relevance to contemporary prophetism in Ghana has resulted in nominalism and laziness. Most Christians today prefer *akwankyerε* to the Word of God and quite a number are prepared to pay money (huge or little) for such *akwankyerε*. Some of these neoprophetic ministers ask people to go to the necropolis with some concoctions prepared by the ministers to bath on tombs between 1:00am and 2:00am. The researcher finds no direct biblical backing, principle or teaching behind most of such *akwankyerε* Even though, we do have glimpses of some prophetic directions in both the New and Old testaments, its usage now has become ritualistic and monotonous void of the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Several people are given the same prescription for action in solving their problems. How do we truly

confirm the authenticity of such *akwankyerε*, when several people are ministered to with the same ‘dosage’ unlike in biblical times where specific instruction goes to specific individual?

Sharing the view of Gyamfi, Rebecca Osei¹²⁰ posits that modern day *akwankyerε* is becoming another shortcut antidote to acquiring blessings (spiritual and physical) including good jobs, marital blessing, financial prosperity, deliverance from all forms of demonic oppression, travelling mercies and many others. This is gradually replacing scriptural teachings like “the just living by faith, seeking first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all other things shall be added unto us, the principles of sacrifice and service, Christian suffering, taking up our cross and following the Master Jesus.” Christianity due to *akwankyerε* is being reduced to a ‘give me or come and get’ party, whereas our first century predecessors only desired the recommendations of the Father saying ‘well done, thou good and faithful servant’.

Pastoral care and counselling are intended to bring spiritual growth and members involved in ministry unto the Lord, but contemporary *akwankyerε* is so different that it appears to be making ‘messiahs or thin gods’ of our so called prophets, instead of bringing spiritual growth and getting members in ministry work.

It is manipulation or inducing fear and panic by another, when death is often spoken of. Death is magnified and used as a tool in extorting monetary benefits from clients in today’s prophetic meeting. With some of the *akwankyerε*, one would not hesitate to ask whether it is divination or African Traditional Religion (ATR) being re - introduced into

¹²⁰ Rebecca Osei, a prophetess at Christ Apostolic Church International, Kronum-Chiase. Interviewed on 18th June, 2016.

Christianity. Such directions seem to be unbiblical, scripturally unsubstantiated, heretic, mystical, and superstitious.

4.1.4 Prophecy and Church Unity and Cohesion

According to Isaac Owusu Ansah¹²¹, Jesus' prayer in John chapter 17 verse 21¹²⁸, is that 'we would be one' and oneness is seen as a principal characteristic of the Christian family. To a large extent *akwankyere* seems to have done little to promote oneness, unity and cohesion. There are a number of testimonies to that effect whereby some of the *akwankyere* are contrary to the scriptures. Some prophets also believe that, they carry a superior anointing as compared to pastors who oversee the various church families without exercising discernment of spirit and prophecy. Where pastors would advise the patient manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit and Christ-like character, the prophet would prophesy the 'overtaking anointing', the 'return to sender anointing', the 'sharp sharp *akwankyere*', etc. Such mentalities on the part of some prophets, have eventually led to various kinds of divisions, disunity and discord in the church family.

Some of the prophets claim to be more spiritual, powerful and experienced than others. No wonder a prophet calls himself "Prophet one", "Ashanti Moses" etc; this presupposes that he is unrivalled. Others also claim their centres are "last stops". This also presupposes that there are no other places like theirs. The unhealthy competition among the neo-prophetic ministers spiritually undermines the unity of the church.

4.1.5 The Prophetic Ministry and Church Growth

According to Ephesians 4: 11 -13, KJV, and 1 Corinthians 14: 3-5, KJV, the prophetic ministry is intended for the edification of the church. Churches are built up in Christ

¹²¹ Isaac Owusu Ansah a footballer based in Sunyani and a member of All Grace Evangelistic Ministry. Interviewed on 18th June, 2016. ¹²⁸ King James Version

through the ministry of the prophet and the exercise of all the prophetic giftings. However, there are instances of concerns regarding the prophetic ministry in Ghana today. The researcher has observed three categories of operators of the prophetic ministry:

- i. Genuine and true prophets whose activities are scripturally based, and fulfilling what Apostle Paul in scripture mandated prophets and prophecies to do, that is, edifying the church. Few are these prophets. These are the true remnants of Biblical prophets who are paying the price in bringing order and sanctity to the Church. The church today can still pride herself with true prophets ministering according to New Testament patterns.
- ii. Another category is a group of prophets who have the Word of God and other additions of which the source could be man –made, demonic or African Traditional Religion (ATR). The category of prophets here have managed to combine biblical precedence with all kinds of unscriptural ethos to their trade. This group of prophets are the ones who dish out what is popularly referred to as *akwankyerε* synonymous with the divinations we have in ATR. Even though, they preach the Word of God, the prophetic directions that are given are mostly unscriptural and the faith of teeming followers is now been grounded on such vain and unprofitable *akwankyerε*. The weapons of our warfare that we know of recorded in the scriptures are the name of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, the Spoken Word, faith, holiness, and prayer. Apart from these weapons physical things like salt, porridge, cutlasses, lemons, pure water etc, are used to engage demonic spirits, strongholds and curses. This practice appears to be a stereotype. However, it must be noted that when Christ was on earth, He didn't give

directions in a stereotyped way. Since we observe multitudes flocking to such prophetic gatherings, services, and ministries, there is the need to investigate such growth.

- iii. Finally the researcher has observed a group of false prophets who prophesy lies, mischief, and all kinds of abominations. These ones are predominantly in business, manipulating their followers for their selfish ends. Their sole motivation in ministry is their 'stomach' and not the saving of souls. These prophets have sold their souls and consciences to the devil and his schemes. They are engaged in deception, divisions, and exploitations.

All the above-stated groups of prophets by and large have followers and multitudes at their gatherings. It is another question whether these are true disciples of Jesus or people who are interested only in getting solutions to their problems. Have newly converted souls been added to the Church as a result of the activities of such prophets? The researcher believes little has been done in the area of evangelism and discipleship by the prophetic ministry, even though it can boast of large gatherings and followers.

This is because little has been done in pointing the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His Word to people to build new believers.

4.1.6 The Impact of Prophecy on Ghanaian Christianity

Respondents are of the opinion that prophecy has positively impacted the country. Adu Gyamfi has remarked, "The number of churches, especially independent churches, and for that matter the number of church members, has increased."

Samuel Adogbla¹²² of Assemblies of God, Kwadaso Nsuom, admits that through some prophecies, some calamities have been averted. He goes on to say that some physical and

¹²² Samuel Adogbla, Associate Minister of Assemblies of God, Kwadaso Nsuom. Interviewed on 27th September, 2016.

spiritual ailments have been healed and finally, some prophecies have helped to shape some lives.

Owusu Akyaw has also admitted that because some of the contemporary Ghanaian prophets have been called by God and are also on the right path, some positive prophetic impact has been registered on the country. He says through prophetic activities, the Holy Spirit reveals things about people to correct them. He goes on to say that deliverance from the powers of darkness including healing has been and is still being achieved. Finally, he says through prophetic activities, the fear of God has come upon people.

Peter Osei Amoateng¹²³ also sees prophecy as having positively impacted the country in the sense that the genuine prophets help us to know God's intentions, create a cordial relationship between God and His people and enable God's people to be in tune with God.

Conversely, respondents are also of the opinion that there is a negative side of prophecy. People claim that some contemporary Ghanaian prophets have resorted to some unscriptural practices.

Mention is made of the commission of fornication and adultery on the part of some of these prophets. These prophets have also been accused of exploitation; they make people pay exorbitant consultation fees and also offer pricey anointing oil to people.

Again, people claim that false prophecies characterize the operations of some of the prophets and that they also don't preach salvation messages.

¹²³ Peter Osei Amoateng, Parish Priest at Immaculate Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church, South Suntreso. Interviewed on 14th December, 2016.

Moreover, some of these prophets teach / or force people to speak in tongues. It must be noted that speaking in tongues is not learnt like natural languages.

Furthermore, false prophets impart their spirits to their members thereby preventing them from receiving God's Spirit. By so doing false prophets in the country are leading their members to hell. This is an observation made by Oheneba Amofa, the founder of Great Anointing Worship Centre, Atwima Techiman, Kumasi.

Samuel Adogbla notes, "Over 60% of prophecies delivered by prophets in the country don't emanate from God. Consequently, some relationships have been strained to the extent that some people have become vindictive after hearing some prophecies". Some couples, families, friends, business partners, and churches have been adversely affected by false prophecies.

Augustina Opoku Danso¹²⁴, a fifty-three-year old teacher at Buokrom M/A School admits that she has had encounters with prophets and that the end results have been both negative and positive. One prophet after a series of revival meetings at her Church specifically spoke to her by way of prophecy that for her to see an end to her financial woes, she needed to repent and pay tithes. She claims to see some financial liberty when tithing becomes part of her service to God.

¹²⁴ Augustina Opoku Danso, a fifty-three year old teacher at Buokrom M/A School and a member of Church of Pentecost, Suame Area. Interviewed on 27th September, 2016.

Another episode with another prophet that occurred in August, 2013 at her hometown which she sees as negative and confusing was when she was told by this prophet that the cause of two strange deaths and marital unhappiness in her family was spiritual marriage so every night, at 2am, she must wake up and pray with some scriptural quotations and holy water and that God would reveal things to her. Truly, she dreamt but a dead relative who revealed herself as the cause of those things made her wonder what was happening.

Isaac Owusu Ansah, and Michael Asante¹²⁵, a twenty-one-year old barber of the All Grace Evangelistic Ministry narrated their counselling encounters with one Kwesi Kwarteng. Together with their 70-year-old mother, they went to this prophet for protection, prosperity, health and a better life. The directions were: giving of an offering to the prophet, buying of anointing oil to smear oneself and to bath with water. They questioned why oil should be bought and money given before one is ministered unto. What annoys them was that, there was no result and the purpose of going there never came to fruition.

Philomena Achiaa, aged forty-six, an unemployed housewife at New Tafo, Kumasi, narrated her funny story when she visited a prophet at Kenyasi, Kumasi, concerning her husband's job and children's education. After first taking free will offering, this prophet told her about some spiritual attacks in the "spirit world" upon the family and the necessity to perform certain purification rites to ward off that spirit. The prophet finally gave her a list of household provisions to be bought for the purification rites. According to this woman the list of household consumables was as if a new provisions shop was to be opened. Madam Achiaa never saw this prophet again.

¹²⁵ Michael Asante, a twenty-one-year old barber and a member of the All Grace Evangelistic Ministry. 18th June, 2016.

Interviewed on

Oheneba George, a twenty-four-year old second year student at KNUST, was full of excitement and veneration for the prophetic ministry because all the prophets he had personally encountered and those invited to their Campus Christian Fellowship (CCF) had manifested the true spirit of prophecy. Their prophetic anointing and clear cut instructions resulted in deliverance; even sicknesses and diseases were healed. A special mention was made of one Atsu Manasseh whose program with them at school last year was well patronized by students and some lecturers of KNUST.

Dominic Boakye¹²⁶, aged thirty-seven, the Director of an Aluminium Fabrication Shop near Sepe-Dote in Kumasi exonerated the activities of true prophets in an interview with him. A prophet was invited to their church (Bethel Methodist Church at Buorkrom) during their Easter Harvest in April, 2015. In one of the nights, the prophet called him forward and started prophesying to him about the “mantle of oil” and the calling of God upon his life and asked him to pray with Psalm 37. Dominic confirmed the prophecy to be a true reflection of what was happening in his life; he was in the process of being groomed as a Methodist Minister. He again admonished Christians to be discerning and practising prophets also to seek for relevant knowledge (Hosea 4:6) in order to communicate God’s directions to His people effectively.

Rita Tornyie and Ernest Kussi¹²⁷ all of Church of Christ seem to share similar sentiments that there are no prophets right now since prophetism ended with John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. They say anyone claiming to be a prophet is a huge liar interested in making and extorting money from innocent people. They claim, all the prophecies we have now

¹²⁶ Dominic Boakye, Director of an Aluminum Fabrication Shop near Sepe-Dote in Kumasi and a member of the Bethel Methodist Church at Buokrom. Interviewed on 9th August, 2016.

¹²⁷ Rita Tornyie is a twenty- eight- year old self-employed (Hairdresser) at Sofoline and Ernest Kussi is a taxi driver at Star Junction (Odeneho Kwadaso). Both are members of Church of Christ at Bumso. 9th August, 2016.
Interviewed on

is the Bible which contains God's Word. Both added that the only *akwankyere* is the Bible and that Christians need to be like the Christians of Berea (Acts. 17:10-13). Rita testified that in the house where she lives, the directions of bringing salt, pure water, koko, shea butter, lemon, orange, apple, the back of a tortoise, snail shell, old dresses, pictures, candles etc to prophetic services results in marital problems and confusion among friends and families. Kussi even said out of curiosity he went to one prophet to test how true his prophecies are, and lo and behold, his suspicion was confirmed; all are false prophets. He concluded that the Bible is already sealed and no one should add to or subtract from it.

Ambrose Donkor¹²⁸, also a thirty-five-year old taxi driver in the Assemblies of God Church at Nkawkaw, shared his story of a miraculous breakthrough of a new job when he lost his previous job as a filling station assistant. Consultation, counselling and prophetic directions from a prophet at Nkawkaw led to this new job as a taxi driver and his advice is, "Yes, there are false prophets and those who follow them are selling their souls to the devil. Those followers of false prophets should engage the services of their various Pastors for divine intervention. He gave some clues to identify a true prophet which includes, one who would lead you to salvation, encourage you to develop your own relationship with God and thoroughly teach you God's Word.

On the whole some of these prophets have done a great disservice to the country by introducing a proliferation of strange spirits and doctrines into the nation. It must be noted that people look more at the negative side of prophecy than the positive side.

¹²⁸ Ambrose Donkor, a taxi driver and a member of the Assemblies of God Church at Nkawkaw. 23rd August, 2016.

Interviewed on

4.2 Conclusion

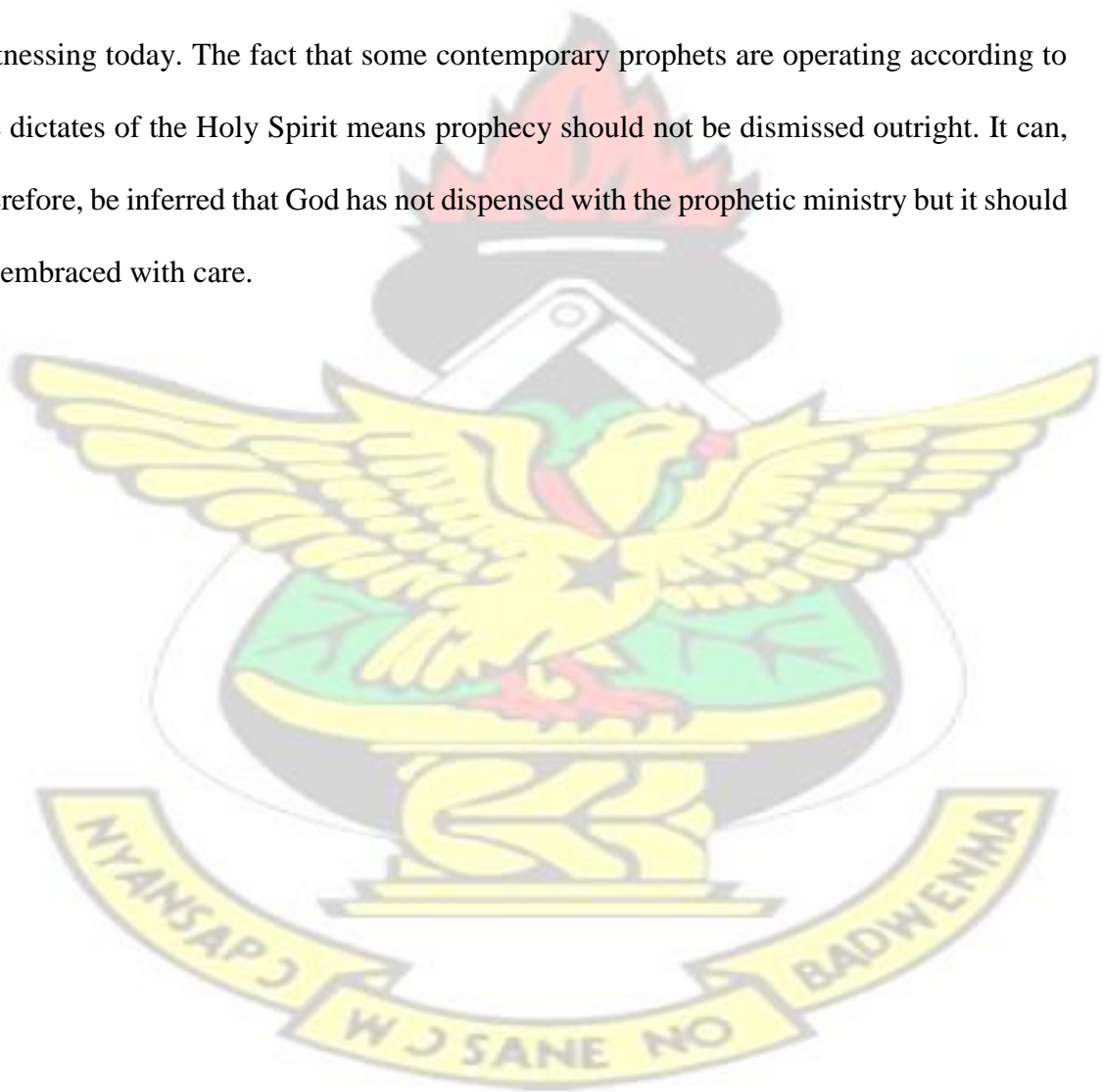
The impact of prophetism in Ghana is both of joy and sadness. Joy because it seems to bring jubilation, excitement and solutions to some problems. On the other hand, we

KNUST



Interviewed on

seem to have quite a number of deviations in practice and in doctrine. Examples are spiritual manipulations, fear and panic, breakdown of marriages, divisions of families due to mistrust as a result of prophetic directions, taking advantage of clients by exploiting them financially and worst of all is the monetary and wrong motivations for ministry. From time immemorial the ministry of the prophet has been an integral part of the Christian ministry in its entirety. The Bible tells us that false prophets existed in times past and goes on to warn us that they will abound in the latter days. This is what we are witnessing today. The fact that some contemporary prophets are operating according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit means prophecy should not be dismissed outright. It can, therefore, be inferred that God has not dispensed with the prophetic ministry but it should be embraced with care.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, ISSUES THAT EMERGED DURING THE RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The findings from the research field were analyzed and discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter attention has been focused on the discussion of the summary, findings, issues emerging out of the research and recommendations.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The researcher compared and contrasted contemporary prophetism with biblical prophecy with a view to helping set the records straight regarding prophetic matters. The activities of contemporary prophetic ministries were looked at in the light of biblical prophetic activities. The consensus among the many personalities consulted was that a prophet is a spokesperson for God; a person assisted by the Holy Spirit to speak on God's behalf concerning things which have happened, are happening and are yet to happen. In effect, a prophet forthtells and foretells. Again the general view is held that a prophet must, of necessity, have the gifts of revelation. In fact people believe in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit gifts or power through a prophet.

It was also found out that among the churches consulted there is a general acceptance of the five-fold ministries, i.e., the offices of a pastor, an evangelist, an apostle, a teacher, and a prophet as mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. They believe all the five-fold ministries have functioned and are still functioning in the church.

The prophets, pastors and other church members interviewed testified to the fact that true deliverance, healing, and guidance have been ministered to many people through

prophetic activities.

Again a cross-section of the residents of Kumasi thinks contemporary prophetic ministries have had both positive and negative impact on the society. They cite how people have been praying more than never before, the establishment of schools, orphanages, counselling and rehabilitation centres, healing, the prevention of calamities, helping us to know God's intentions, and various forms of deliverance as some of the registered positive impact. According to them the development of personality cults, social, religious and economic exploitation, unhealthy competition and the arrogation of titles which mislead people are some negative impact. Almost all the respondents are of the view that injecting sanity into contemporary prophetic ministries is difficult. They say because of freedom of worship enshrined in Ghana's constitution it is not easy to interfere in the affairs of contemporary prophetic ministries.

All said and done some of the respondents have made some suggestions to help curb the negative trend of contemporary prophetism. Some of them think if church leaders come out with modalities to regulate the exercise of prophecy it will help. Others also think the government should find a way to regulate churches in general while making sure that Ghanaians are taught their fundamental human rights. The use of anointing oil is widespread among neo-prophetic ministries. People believe that anointing oil, after it has been blessed by a prophet, is efficacious in delivering the afflicted.

5.2 Issues that Emerged During the Research

Are some neo-prophetic ministries not pushing themselves into the limelight and relegating God to the background and for that matter characterized by the use of I and me?

Some of the respondents have observed that some neo-prophetic ministers live ostentatious lives and that this has led to an unhealthy competition among them. Again they claim that it has come to light that some neo-prophetic ministers have been accused of having carnal knowledge of women some of whom are married. Do these not constitute an affront to Christianity?

There have been instances where some traditional priests have challenged some neo-prophetic ministers regarding their source of power and also some of these ministers blaming each other for engaging in occultism. Also the utterances and deeds of some of these prophets make their source of power questionable. Some of the respondents say some of their practices are untypical of biblical prophetism, for example, bathing women. In the light of all these is it an error to infer that there are false prophets operating in the country today?

Almost all the neo-prophetic ministries organize counselling sessions which are dominated by unravelling events in the spirit world. Some people think this is tantamount to consulting a traditional priest in order to know about one's destiny. In Akan this is called "Abisa".

5.3 Conclusion

The fact that prophecies abound in Ghana these days cannot be gainsaid. While this is biblical, the Bible has also admonished us that false prophets will abound in the latter days hence we are not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits, whether they are of God.¹²⁹ In view of that this research has endeavored to consider contemporary prophetic ministries in Ghana in the light of biblical prophecy so as to help people cleave to sound, unadulterated prophecies. I Corinthians 14:4, says, "...but he who prophesies edifies the

¹²⁹ I John 4:1 (New King James Version)

church.” Sight must not be lost of the fact that besides positive there is negative, besides right there is wrong and besides male there is female.

The researcher sees eye to eye with almost all the respondents that some of the contemporary Ghanaian prophetic ministries, undoubtedly, have edified the church in its entirety. Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in diverse ways have been witnessed by the church. Some neo-prophetic ministers have succeeded to meet some physical and spiritual needs of many people especially in the areas of health, business and, marriage. Some predicaments which cannot be overcome physically have been surmounted through some of these ministries. Deliverance from spiritual bondage for example, has been achieved. Through their activities much attention has been drawn to activities in the spirit world. This constantly reminds people that “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”¹³⁰

Again through the mass media many lives have been touched by some of these ministries. Some of the prophetic ministries which were visited use some radio and television stations for church services including all-night prayers and miracle and anointing services. Some of these ministries have gone to the extent of owning radio and television stations to facilitate their work.

However, as already stated, besides good there is evil; some of the contemporary prophetic ministers have done more harm than good. Through their misdeeds a slur has been cast on the image of Christianity. Some of the ministers have been accused of fornication / or adultery. People have also criticized their counselling sessions because they charge high consultation fees and also give some revelations which induce

¹³⁰ Ephesians 6:12 (New King James Version)

confusion or feud among couples, friends, families etc. Some make utterances such as, “I have delivered you” presupposing that they have power on their own thereby relegating God to the background. This is unchristian. I agree with Peter Osei Amoateng, the Parish Priest of St. Mary’s Catholic Church at South Suntreso in Kumasi, that some people concentrate more on the negative impact of contemporary prophecies at the detriment of the goodness aspect of Christianity.

I also agree with Ntumy, a former Chairman of the Church of Pentecost, when he made a submission at their “1st National Prophetic leadership Conference” on June 6, 2006 in Accra that “The prophetic gift is a gift from God to the church. Yet, like any other gift, it can be used or abused.”

Prophecy should not be thrown overboard for God has not dispensed with the prophetic ministry hence it is not anachronistic. Biblical as prophecy is, care must be exercised in its acceptance.

5.4 Recommendations

Neo-prophetic ministers should be encouraged to form umbrella organizations with strong leadership structures to help bring sanity into their activities.

Where some practices trample on fundamental human rights there should be governmental interventions to prevent such abuses. Such moves from the government can restore human decency in the society.

Again the government would have to consider supporting Bible Training Institutions where potential prophets may go for training. In the institutions good administrative practices and fundamental human rights should be taught.

Anointing oil is extensively used in most of the prophetic ministries in Kumasi. It appears people have put credit into the efficacy of anointing oil to induce various forms of deliverance. A close look at the situation reveals that the exotic olive oil which is used as anointing oil has been taken undue advantage of; some prophets have taken advantage of people's belief in its efficacy to sell it at an exorbitant price. The commercial advantage of the oil speaks volumes about the church of Christ. If the church comes out with a theology to explain the use of oil to heal the sick as stated in James 5:14-15, for people to understand that indigenous oil such as shea butter, coconut oil, and palm-kernel oil are alternatives it will save the country foreign exchange which is used to import olive oil. Consequently, our over-dependence on foreign goods and the commercialization of anointing oil will be reduced.

If pastors, teachers and evangelists will rise to the occasion by intensifying their teaching and evangelistic activities the Holy Spirit will help people to grasp the truth to help them to discern which way to go.

Various church organizations, especially the ones which already have umbrella bodies like the Christian Council of Ghana (C.C.G), the G.P.C.C., the Ghana Catholic Bishop Conference etc. would have to combine forces with a view to curbing false prophecy; they can come out with modalities to regulate the exercise of prophecy. This needs political backing.

Punitive measures could also be taken to deal with recalcitrant church leaders to serve as deterrents to other church leaders.

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is biblical prophecy?
2. How is God using prophets today?
3. How biblical are the prophecies of Neo-Prophetic Ministers?
4. What is your opinion about prophetic directions being used by Neo-Prophetic Ministers?
5. How effective are prophetic directions in your church?
6. How do people receive and apply prophetic directions in your church?
7. How does God manifest Himself through prophecy in your church?
8. Have you identified some abuses in the use of prophecy in your church?
9. If yes what are some of the abuses?
10. What are some of the measures that your church has put in place to ensure that the gift of prophecy is properly used?

APPENDIX II

PERSONALITIES INTERVIEWED

NAME	ORGANIZATION	POSITION	DATE
Gyabaa Philip	Pentecost Int'l Worship Centre (PIWC)	Elder	24 th May, 2016
Rexford Boateng	Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre	Evangelist	17 th May, 2016
Robert Oppong Yeboah	Revival Outreach Church Int'l	Prophet	6 th February, 2016
Stephen Obeng Mensah	Church Of Hosanna	Founder And Leader	30 th May, 2016
Samuel Adu Gyafi	Peyer Memorial Presbyterian Church	2 nd Minister	15 th January, 2017
Owusu Akyaw	True Faith Church	General Overseer	13 th November, 2016.
Dominic Boakye	Christ Apostolic Church International	Member	27 th May, 2016.
Stephen Kwakye	Presbyterian Church of Ghana	Member	23 rd January, 2016.
Isaac Owusu Ansah	All Grace Evangelistic	Member	18 th June, 2016.
	Ministry		
Dominic Boakye	Bethel Methodist Church	Member	9 th August, 2016.
Ambrose Donkor	Assemblies Of God	Member	23 rd August, 2016.
Rita Tornye	Church of Christ	Member	9 th August, 2016.
Ernest Kusi	Church of Christ	Member	9 th August, 2016.