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The Ghanaian Church and Prophetic Ministry: Navigating the complexities

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ABSTRACT

Following Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden and the consequent divine judgment, humanity lost its ideal, stress-free existence and has since sought solutions to life's existential challenges. In anticipation of this reality, God, in His foreknowledge, endowed humankind with diverse spiritual gifts—including healing, apostleship, teaching, prophecy, preaching, service, singing, counseling, and miracle-working—to meet human needs and enhance communal well-being, with God as their ultimate source. Although all gifts have equal value before God, prophecy occupies a particularly prominent place within the Ghanaian religious landscape, where it is rare for a newly established church to thrive without its visible manifestation, a phenomenon arguably shaped by African Traditional Religious heritage in which consultation was central to religious life. However, recent unethical practices by some prophets in Ghana's public sphere have sparked national debate over whether prophecy has been a blessing or a curse. Therefore, this study critically examines the complexities of prophetic ministry within the Ghanaian church, identifies both its biblical foundations and contemporary distortions, and proposes ways to reorient the practice toward its divinely intended role. Adopting a qualitative research approach, it reviews the scholarly literature on the origins of prophetism, the traditions of the Old and New Testament, and historical developments of prophecy in Ghanaian Christianity, tracing the institution from its roots in the ancient Near East through biblical eras to modern expressions in Ghana, to provide a framework for reclaiming prophetic ministry as a source of spiritual guidance, communal edification, and ethical integrity.

Keywords: Ghanaian, Prophecy, Spiritual Gifts, Christianity, Forth-telling, Foretelling.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of spiritual gifts is prevalent throughout the Bible, particularly in the New Testament, where Paul's letters to the Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians, as well as 1 Peter, offer extensive discussions on the subject. Among the gifts identified in these epistles are the word of wisdom, miracles, teaching, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, leadership, prophecy, administration, faith, and discernment of spirits. These gifts are divinely and strategically bestowed upon individuals so that, when exercised collectively, they function analogously to the parts of the human body—each distinct yet

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working in harmony to accomplish a shared purpose. Consequently, believers are obliged to use their gifts for the benefit of others while, in turn, receiving the benefits of the gifts of others.

Within the Ghanaian religious context, prophecy—along with its traditional counterparts of divination and soothsaying—has gained considerable prominence in recent decades. Although biblically recognized as one of the spiritual gifts, the practice of contemporary prophecy in Ghana has elicited skepticism from both believers and non-believers. This skepticism is often linked to the nature of the "directions" prophets provide to adherents, allegations of immoral lifestyles, a perceived one-sidedness in prophetic messages (emphasizing blessings while neglecting to confront sin), the proliferation of "doom prophecies" targeting public figures, ostentatious displays of wealth, and poor biblical exegesis. Many of these prophets either own media outlets or secure significant airtime on local and national television, using these platforms to promote their ministries, outline weekly activities, and instruct congregants on purchasing specific items—often from the prophet himself—for use in "special directions" intended to avert misfortune.

The unconventional and, at times, ethically questionable practices of certain prophets have prompted public appeals to the Christian Council of Ghana to intervene. This is particularly pressing given that the ecumenical nature of the Christian faith creates a perception of interconnectedness among churches; thus, the misconduct of one prophet risks tarnishing the reputation of the Church universal in the eyes of non-believers. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the Ghanaian prophetic movement, situating it within its ancient Near Eastern and biblical foundations, which serve as the benchmark for evaluating and shaping its contemporary expression.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative-historical research approach to explore the prophetic ministry within the Ghanaian church. The methodology is structured around the following components:

- **Literature Review**: A critical examination of scholarly works—including theses, dissertations, journal articles, and books—on the origins of prophetism, Old and New Testament prophetic traditions, and the historical development of prophecy in Ghanaian Christianity.
- **Historical Tracing**: Analysis of the prophetic institution from its roots in the ancient Near East, through biblical eras, to its contemporary expressions in Ghana.
- **Contextual Analysis**: Evaluation of how African traditional religious heritage has shaped the prominence of prophecy in Ghanaian Christianity.
- **Critical Reflection**: Identification of distortions and unethical practices within modern prophetic ministry, alongside proposals for reorientation toward biblical foundations.

DISCUSSION

Etymology, Definition, and Purpose of Prophecy

The term "prophet" is derived from the Greek *prophētēs*, combining *pro* ("before" or "for") and *phēmi* ("to speak"). A prophet, therefore, is understood either as one who proclaims or as one who speaks on behalf of God.[1] The Old Testament employs four distinct Hebrew terms to denote a prophet: *ro'eh*, *hozeh*, *'ish 'elohim* (or *'ish ha-'elohim*), and *nabi*. The term *ro'eh*, the earliest of these designations and a participial form of *ra'ah*, is rendered "seer" or "diviner" (1 Sam. 9:9).[2] Again the term *hozeh*, translated as "seer," is derived from the root *hazah*, meaning "to see" (2 Sam. 24:11).[3] Petersen further adds that the term, *'ish 'elohim* ("a man of God") or *'ish ha-'elohim* ("the man of God"), designates a holy person

[1] Jonathan E T Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi: A Socio-Cultural and Theological Assessment," *Herald Journal of Education and General Studies*, Vol. 2 No.1 (2013): 65

[2] David L Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).6.

[3] Isaac Boaheng, "Contemporary Prophetism in Ghana in the Light of Old Testament Precedents," *Journal of Contemporary Ministry*, no. 5 (2021): 33.

recognized across numerous religious traditions.[4] The term *"nabi" (plural: "nebhiim" or "nebiim")* originates from the Akkadian loanword *"nabu,"* which means "to call," "to speak," "to proclaim," or "to name."[5] S.I. Akponorie intimates that the etymology of *nabhi* indicates a person who delivers utterances loudly and frenetically, often with deep breaths, producing seemingly incoherent cries.[6] Although the four words initially probably carried distinct meanings, with time, they came to be used interchangeably. This finds accord in Gad being called a *ḥōzeh* and Nathan a *nābhî'* despite having similar functions, or Amos being addressed as a *ḥōzeh* but denying that he is a *nābhî'*. A prophet may thus be understood as one who communicates the will of a deity, discerned through dreams, visions, or divinatory practices such as casting lots, and at times expressed within a liturgical context.

Prophecy is fundamentally a divine message that conveys God's will to the audience rather than a prediction of future events.[7] Kim Maas, in her book titled *Prophetic Community*, defines prophecy as the process by which God imparts revelatory truths into the human heart, which are then spoken to convey His divine message to humanity.[8] The essence of prophecy is echoed by Charmain Jarrett, who posits that, beyond the Bible, prophetic messages serve as the principal medium through which God communicates with humanity.[9] Prophecy serves as the foundation of faith in God by disclosing His will to past, present, and future generations. Prophets serve as mediators between the supernatural and the natural realms, and when they deliver divine utterances, these two worlds converge, often generating opposing perspectives. Revelation is what God discloses to his prophets, and this according to Mass, can "come as an impression, a tongue or language, a prophetic utterance, a vision, a symbol, a sensation in the body, a dream, or even a riddle."[10] It should be noted, however, that receiving a divine message does not necessarily make one a prophet, as exemplified by figures such as Abimelech, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar.[11]

The purpose of prophecy is multifaceted, as no single individual perceives all its dimensions, as evidenced by Amos receiving visions distinct from Isaiah's and Jeremiah prophesying differently from Ezekiel or Micah.[12] The core of prophecy is to testify to Jesus (Rev. 19:10), with every prophetic message intended to draw people back to God's heart. Another purpose of prophecy is to strengthen believers in their faith journey by imparting knowledge and understanding while offering encouragement and comfort in times of weakness.[13] Jeremiah 29:11 illustrates this when God, through the prophet Jeremiah, assured his people of hope and comfort after declaring their seventy-year exile.

Jason Bembry further emphasizes that prophecy also serves to confront those in power with God's truth, urging them toward righteousness and holiness, as demonstrated in Elijah's confrontation with King Ahab and the false prophets.[14] Sharing a parallel thought, Mark Rutland posits that prophets demonstrated remarkable courage by delivering their messages to powerful kings whose absolute authority included the power to order their immediate execution.[15] As spokespersons for God, certain prophets functioned to speak truth to power, expose hypocrisy, recall Israel's historical covenantal obligations, advocate for the marginalized, and demand justice for all.[16] Rulers often resist prophetic messages that conflict with their interests; nevertheless, the prophet's vocation is to restore balance and moral order within governance by proclaiming truth and ethical responsibility.

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[4] Petersen, **The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction,6.**

[5] Petersen, **The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction,6.**

[6] Simeon Iruo-Oghene Akponorie, "Prophets and Social Challenges in Ancient Israel: Message to Christian Religious Leaders in Contemporary Nigeria," *Trinitarian: International Journal Of Arts And Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2021): 3.

[7] Steven L McKenzie, *How to Read the Bible: History, Prophecy, Literature--Why Modern Readers Need to Know the Difference and What It Means for Faith Today* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 68.

[8] Kim M Maas, *Prophetic Community: God's Call for All to Minister in His Gifts* (Chosen Books, 2019), 82.

[9] Charmain M Jarrett, "Prophetic Theology: The Essence of Prophecy," (Doctorate of Ministry Thesis: Liberty University, 2014), 24.

[10] Maas, Prophetic Community, 84.

[11] Louis. Berkhof, "Systematic Theology. " (Pennsylvania: The Bath Press, 2000), 358.

[12] Jarrett, *Prophetic Theology: The Essence of Prophecy,*26.

[13] Maas, Prophetic Community, 83.

[14] Jason A Bembry, *Walking in the Prophetic Tradition: Models of Speaking Truth and Acting in Love for Everyday People* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018).2.

[15] Mark Rutland, *Of Kings and Prophets: Understanding Your Role in Natural Authority and Spiritual Power* (Charisma Media, 2021).12.

[16] Bembry, *Walking in the Prophetic Tradition: Models of Speaking Truth and Acting in Love for Everyday People*, 5.

Ancient Roots of Prophecy and its Biblical Expression

Many practices recorded in the Bible are frequently associated with the customs of other nations in the ancient Near East (ANE).[17] As a result, scholars generally trace the origins of Israelite prophetism to broader Ancient Near Eastern traditions, citing evidence such as the Mari letters, which mention a priest (*muhhu*) delivering oracles of the god Hadad to King Zimri-Lim, alongside ecstatic and oracular practices documented in the Ugaritic cult.[18] From its Ancient East background, Victor Umaru posits that the prophet is variously perceived as a social critic, a foreteller of future events, or a charismatically commissioned messenger of the divine.[19] Some scholars further affirm that Israelite prophetic ecstaticism was likely borrowed from the mature Canaanite prophetic tradition, which the Israelites encountered upon settling in Canaan.[20] In ancient Egypt, the reliance on divine will under various circumstances made charismatic prophecy a prevalent feature of the society.[21] The place of prophecy in Egyptian religio-cultural tradition is noted as follows: At various periods of prosperity and hardship, Egyptians sought predictions and divinations to preserve the ontological harmony between humanity and the divine, as reflected in prophetic utterances preserved in the Mantis texts, papyri, and the eloquent peasant traditions.[22] Contrary to the widespread position, Nyoyoko and Essien argue that while some scholars have attempted to trace the origin of Israelite prophecy to the Canaanite aborigines, this view is unlikely, as the Hebrew Scriptures locate the inception of the prophetic institution within Israel itself.[23]

The foundation of prophecy is traced to the Garden of Eden, where God first declared that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15), a promise later echoed through the Old Testament patriarchs who, although not designated prophets, bore significant prophetic messages that progressively unfolded in the history of the Jewish people. Although prophecy is rooted in Scripture, it remains a living reality within the present Church of Jesus Christ. The significance of prophecy is underscored by the fact that a word count of the term "prophet" reveals that it appears more than 300 times in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, Abraham is among the first individuals explicitly designated as a prophet (Gen. 20:7), followed by numerous others who are also identified as prophets. Scripture records prophets, such as Enoch, whom God had been noted to have prophesied about in Jude 14–15, who predate Abraham In Deuteronomy 18:5, Moses is depicted as the prophet (Nabi) with God's promise, "I will raise up a prophet like you from among you." Some scholars, however, regard Samuel as the foundation of Israelite prophetism, arguing that in his time the prophetic office assumed a more public theocratic role and, with the rise of group prophecy, expanded in number.[24] Biblical prophecy is commonly delineated by scholars into two primary categories: forthtelling and foretelling. In the Exodus narrative (Exod. 3–Josh. 6), Moses is not portrayed as a visionary or a foreteller of future events, but as the prophet who interpreted Yahweh's law for Israel and served as the covenant mediator between God and the people.

Forthtelling is understood as the proclamation of divine truth, that is, the faithful declaration of God's word as revealed in Scripture.[25] However, foretelling refers to the proclamation of divine truth concerning realities not yet disclosed, that is, the prediction of God's word or future events before their occurrence.[26] In a complementary submission, foretelling refers to predicting future events, while

[17] Alvaro F Rodríguez, ""Mari Letters and Biblical Prophetism: Similarities and Differences—Part I," *Theologika* 34, no. 1 (2019): 33.
[18] Vincent G Nyoyoko and Stella P Essien, "A Re-Examination of the Origin and Cycle of Prophetic Movement in Israel," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 6, no. 1 (2022): 209–17.
[19] Victor Umaru, "Historical Overview of the Old Testament Prophecy and Prophetism: Its Application to the 21st Century Church," *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2023.
[20] Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1969),742.
[21] Vincent G Nyoyoko and Stella P Essien, "A Re-Examination of the Origin and Cycle of Prophetic Movement in Israel," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 6, no. 1 (2022): 211.
[22] Nyoyoko and Essien, "A Re-examination of the Origin and Cycle of Prophetic Movement in Israel," 211.
[23] Nyoyoko and Essien, "A Re-examination of the Origin and Cycle of Prophetic Movement in Israel," 211.
[24] Willem A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1990).34.
[25] Reinaldo Garcia, "Prophets and Prophecies-A Question of Forthtelling and Foretelling," accessed August 17, 2025, https://www.anchorpointlife.com/blog/god-and-luck/prophets-and-prophecies-a-question-of-forthtelling-and-foretelling/.
[26] Garcia, "Prophets and prophecies-A Question of Forthtelling and Foretelling."

forthtelling denotes the proclamation of a message directed to the present circumstances of the audience. The prophets of ancient Israel primarily engaged in forthtelling, addressing socio-religious concerns such as corrupt leadership, idolatry, false prophecy, priestly abuses, unjust economic practices, and judicial corruption, while simultaneously warning of divine judgment and offering comfort and hope through assurances of future deliverance and the restoration of a faithful remnant.[27] They also offered comfort and hope to God's people by assuring them of future deliverance and the restoration of a faithful remnant (cf. Amos 9:13–14). It is correct to state that predictive vision, or foreseeing future events, represents only one dimension of the prophetic role in Israel. Within the framework of functions assigned to all Old Testament prophets lies a central role of instructing the people concerning the coming of the Messiah.

To further explicate the forthtelling dimension of prophecy, the book of Lamentations, for instance, engages the socio-religious challenges confronting the community of faith in Jeremiah's time, exemplified in his exhortation to self-examination, repentance, and renewed devotion to God as expressed in Lamentations 3:40–42. Jeremiah rebukes authorities of social evils in a formulaic prophetic manner, exhorting the people to flee from the impending wrath of the Lord (Jer. 51:45). In Jeremiah 51:51–52, the prophet recalls Babylon's offenses against Israel, the community of faith, framing his message as both a warning and a promise of divine vindication. Emmanuel Twumasi-Ankrah and Bismark Kwaku Adorkovi agree and assert that every prophet's primary concern lies in the contemporary social and political context, where they denounce social injustices, religious idolatry, moral corruption, and the abuse of power by the elite.[28] One clearly sees from the above that the nature and function of Hebrew prophecy are explicit, as it exposes and condemns actions that undermine communal well-being or perpetrate injustice against others, thereby obstructing the realization of the divinely anticipated future.

The prophetic ministry persisted into the New Testament era. However, it is characterized by three fundamental distinctions from its Old Testament counterpart. In this light, Bandy and Merkle comment that, in the New Testament, prophecies appear not as entire books but as distinct passages interwoven throughout the text, with the majority finding fulfillment in the advent of Jesus.[29] Figures such as John the Baptist, Jesus, the Apostle Paul, Agabus, and John exercised prophetic ministry in the New Testament, demonstrating that prophecy did not cease with the Old Testament prophets but continued throughout the New Testament period and into the early Church era. Prophecy in the New Testament both fulfilled many Old Testament predictions and anticipated future apocalyptic events, ultimately becoming incarnate and dwelling among humanity. For instance, Agabus foretold a famine that subsequently occurred during the reign of Emperor Claudius, a prediction possible only through a specific and direct revelation from God (Acts 11:28).

In the Old Testament, the offices of prophet, priest, and king, embodied by three pivotal figures, served as a prefiguration of Jesus. His prophetic office is exemplified in Moses, through whom the Lord declared, "I will raise up for them a Prophet from among their brethren, like you [Moses]" (Deut. 18:18-AKJV). Jesus' prophetic role was supreme, continuing the prophetic tradition exemplified by Moses, who conferred his authority on Joshua through the laying on of hands. He embodied both the forthtelling and foretelling aspects of prophecy by summoning people to repentance and proclaiming the eschatological realities that humanity would encounter at His second coming. In Luke 4, Jesus identifies Himself with the prophetic tradition, declaring that "no prophet is welcome in his hometown," and later, on his journey to Jerusalem for crucifixion, affirms this identity by stating that "it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside Jerusalem," thereby presenting Himself as the fulfillment of the Deuteronomic promise of a prophet greater than Moses. His encounter with the Samaritan woman,

[27] William S. Lasor, David A. Hubbard, and Frederick W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 229.

[28] Emmanuel Twumasi-Ankrah and Bismark Kwaku Adorkovi, "An Exploration of the Prophet and Prophecy in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity in Light of Old Testament Theology," *Pentecostalism, Charismaticism and Neo-Prophetic Movements Journal*, Vol.6 No.1 (2025): 4.

[29] Alan S Bandy and Benjamin L Merkle, *Understanding Prophecy: A Biblical-Theological Approach* (Kregel Publications, a division of Kregel, Incorporated, 2015), 48-49.

Nathanael, and prophecy about Peter's denial are just a microcosm of his prophetic encounters. The apostles, after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, followed in his footsteps, calling people to repentance and foretelling the future. New Testament evidence demonstrates that prophecy encompassed both the prediction of future events and the revelation of circumstances concerning individuals, groups, or nations, all aimed at disclosing God's will and purposes for humanity within specific historical contexts.

Functions of Prophets

While the prophet's primary responsibility was to communicate God's message to his people, Umaru submits that their role often extended to mediating between God and humanity, as exemplified in their intercessory prayers and acts of healing.[30] In ancient Israel and Judah, prophetic foretelling was primarily confined to the eschatological expectation of the Messiah, while other forms represented reinterpretations or reapplications of earlier prophetic proclamations, making it misleading to regard biblical prophecy as chiefly concerned with predicting the future.[31]

A lot of scholars, including David L. Petersen and John F. A. Sawyer see two main purposes (roles) for the emergence of prophetic institutions and prophetic literature. With the first role Boaheng makes a critical submission, as he constructs that prophetic ministry emerged in response to challenges against the worship of Yahweh, exemplified by the promotion of Baal worship under King Ahab (869–850 BCE) and Queen Jezebel, who actively suppressed Yahwism (1 Kgs. 18:4).[32] God raised prophets to counter the danger of Israelite kings ruling in ways that reflected Ancient Near Eastern models of kingship.[33]

Second, following Israel and Judah's settlement in the Promised Land, emerging economic and social developments produced a stratified society in which the elite exploited the common people.[34] They achieved the second role by condemning the acts of violence inflicted upon the poor and marginalized by those in positions of power. In this sense, the prophets had a crucial role in representing the marginalized and downtrodden in society to maintain social order.

Biblical prophets functioned within various associations—such as those linked to Samuel (1 Sam. 19:18–24), Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:1–18), and Elisha (2 Kgs. 4)—while others were attached to the temple cult (cf. 1 Sam. 3) or served as court prophets who provided the king with spiritual counsel on matters of policy.

The Call and Training of the Prophets

Israel's prophets were uniquely distinguished by a dramatic "call experience" through which God specially commissioned them for a particular divine assignment. In a different vein, the foundation of ancient Israelite prophetic ministry lies in divine calling, understood as God's invitation for individuals to participate in and partake of the blessings of his redemptive purposes. Better still, God alone determines who will serve as his spokesperson, so no one can legitimately claim to be a prophet without first receiving His divine call.

Many have argued that the prophet, having been divinely called and entrusted with God's word, did not require formal prophetic instruction. However, it is plausible that some, if not all, of Israel's prophets received some form of education. The temple or cult prophets, like priests and other prominent temple officials, likely underwent formal training in major cult centers such as the Jerusalem temple to equip them for their duties.[35] The training of members within the prophetic guilds or societies (*benē hannebî'îm*) appears to have been distinctive, likely structured around an apprenticeship or discipleship model in which each member was formed under the guidance of a more senior prophetic figure.

[30] Umaru, "Historical Overview of the Old Testament Prophecy and Prophetism: Its Application to the 21st Century Church," 71.
[31] Victor. Washington, E. Y. Attah, and A. K. Woode, "The Role of Neo-Prophetic/Charismatic Churches in the Socio-Economic Development of Ghana," *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, March 2023, https://doi.org/10.7176/JPCR/56-03.
[32] Boaheng, "Contemporary Prophetism in Ghana in the light of Old Testament Precedents," 34.
[33] Michael Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 78.
[34] Boaheng, "Contemporary Prophetism in Ghana in the light of Old Testament Precedents," 34.
[35] Umaru, "Historical Overview of the Old Testament Prophecy and Prophetism," 70.

According to 2 Kings 4:38, the sons of the prophets sat at Elisha's feet, an expression Baumgartner interprets as denoting the status of being a disciple or learner under his instruction.[36] Leading figures such as Samuel (1 Sam. 9:18–24), Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:1–18), and Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:1–7, 38–41; 6:1–7) are identified as leaders of prophetic communities, a role that undoubtedly included the instruction of their followers.

Beyond the implicit evidence that prophets undergo some form of training, it is reasonable to conclude that the writing prophets were educated, as reflected in their mastery of characteristic prophetic rhetoric, their familiarity with prophetic traditions and Israel's history (cf. Jer. 28:8–9), and their informed awareness of the geopolitical realities of their time. What remains unclear is whether their training was done formally or informally, with formal education being the most likely case.

True and False Prophets

The Bible contains numerous accounts of true and false prophets, distinguished by the fact that true prophets faithfully delivered Yahweh's message, whereas false prophets spoke from their own imagination, leading to frequent opposition between the two. In 1 Kings 22:11-12 and 17-18, when King Ahab consulted four hundred prophets regarding his campaign against Ramoth-gilead at the urging of King Jehoshaphat, Micaiah son of Imlah and Zedekiah son of Chenaanah and all three hundred and ninety-nine (399) prophets stood in opposition before the king, one side foretelling defeat and the other side assuring victory, each invoking the authority of the Lord. Despite the loud assurances of Zedekiah and his fellow prophets and the unpopularity of Micaiah, God's true word was fulfilled when King Ahab was slain, as recorded in 1 Kings 22:34–35, 37, and his body was brought to Samaria.

Another example of the conflict between true and false prophecy appears in Jeremiah 28:2–3, where Hananiah, son of Azzur, a prophet from Gibeon, foretold a two-year exile, directly contradicting Jeremiah's prophecy in 25:11–12 that the Babylonian captivity would last seventy years. In Ezra 1:1–4, the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy is affirmed as King Cyrus, at the end of the seventy years, issued a decree permitting the people's return to Jerusalem.

Commenting on the authenticity of prophets and their messages, Jarrett makes a striking assertion that a false prophet may sometimes deliver a true prophecy and a true prophet a false one, yet false prophets, lacking divine authorization—whether driven by zeal or by presumption of a calling they never received—cannot legitimately speak for God.[37] For instance, Balaam, though a false prophet engaged in divination, nevertheless proclaimed the truth concerning Israel after being hired by King Balak of Moab to curse the nation (Num. 22:6), in which the Lord forbade him, declaring that Israel was already blessed (Num. 22:12). True prophets, also out of fear of incurring the wrath of those they prophesied about, could twist the message to appear quite pleasing to the receiver.

False prophets may be classified into two main types: those who prophesy through a spirit of divination not connected to God and those who, though genuinely called to prophetic ministry either from birth or after receiving Christ, later fall away from God yet persist in prophesying apart from His counsel.[38] The prophets attached to Israel's kings—particularly those rulers who deviated from the ways of Yahweh—were frequently not his true messengers, for they relied on divination rather than divine revelation, and though they could at times predict future events and perform signs and wonders, the source of their prophecy was demonic.

Deuteronomy 13:1–5 provides a guideline for testing the validity of prophecy, asserting that a prophet must be deemed false and rejected if his message advocates the worship of other gods, even when his predictions come to pass. This means that the fact that someone's prediction of a future event comes to pass does not necessarily make them a true prophet of God. The episode of the slave girl in Acts 16:16–18, whose fortune-telling and proclamation of Paul and Silas as servants of God prompted Paul to expel the evil spirit from her, serves as confirmation of this point. Jeremiah 23:10–14 portrays false prophets as marked by immorality, and in 23:30–32 he further denounces them as bearers of

[36] Umaru, "Historical Overview of the Old Testament Prophecy and Prophetism,"71.
[37] Jarrett, *Prophetic Theology*, 50.
[38] Jarrett, *Prophetic Theology*, 51.

borrowed testimony, counterfeit authority, and self-appointed ministry in contrast to the true prophet who stands in Yahweh's counsel, hears His voice, and is sent by him (vv. 18, 21–22, 28, 32). Jeremiah's and Micaiah's actions implicitly teach that a true prophet of Yahweh receives an oracle from him and delivers it faithfully, without alteration. In summary, the authenticity of a prophecy is discerned by its coherence with Scripture, the moral integrity of the prophet, its capacity to foster unity and love, and the demonstrated consistency of the prophet over time.

Missionary Conversion Methodology and Worship Style

The missionaries, upon arriving on the shores of Ghana, had a plan to execute in order to win the indigenous souls for God. Coming from a Western background, their message was, in a way, clothed in European culture, which had some consequences on their audience. Western missionaries significantly advanced the social and economic development of Ghanaians but failed to make a lasting religious impact, primarily because they neglected to engage with the traditional worldview rooted in the belief in spirits.[39] In corroboration, Ogbu Kalu intimates that the Western missionaries engaged the Ghanaian traditional worldview and religion from the standpoint of a Christianity shaped by Enlightenment thought.[40] The missionaries approached Ghana with a sense of superiority, construing the indigenous worldview and culture as pagan and equating Christian conversion with the repudiation of one's cultural identity in favor of adopting Western norms.[41] White further affirms that this approach required converts to adopt the behavior, dress, and lifestyle of the missionaries, resulting in many young Ghanaian Christians living with divided allegiances that the missionaries often interpreted as hypocrisy.[42]

Commenting on what he perceived to be a failure of the missionaries, Bernard Appiah constructs that the main shortcoming of the missionaries' work among the Akans lay in their reluctance and inability to contextualize the Christian message.[43] Kofi Abrefa Busia's assessment of the missionary approach has been echoed by Appiah as he observes that those entrusted with propagating the Christian gospel across different lands and cultures often failed to recognize the necessity of engaging the cosmology of local peoples alongside European cultural and religious traditions.[44] Rather than engaging positively with the indigenous cosmology familiar to many, the missionaries treated it with suspicion or rejection, thereby fostering a dual allegiance in which converts attended church services while still consulting traditional religious practices, a situation later condemned as syncretism.[45]

To be able to segregate their converts from their families, the missionaries established *salems*—exclusive Christian communities designed to separate converts from their broader societies—the missionaries fostered the perception among locals that Christianity was a "white man's religion" intrinsically linked to a supposedly superior culture.[46] In *A Contextual Theology of Atonement for the Akan Community of Ghana*, Boaheng posits that the missionaries' rigid stance toward African traditional life ultimately gave rise to protest movements opposing white hegemony and missionary imperialism.[47]

With respect to worship style, White writes that church worship and services were conducted in forms that resonated more with European than with African sensibilities.[48] In the Gold Coast, the prohibition of traditional attire in worship, the use of Latin prayers incomprehensible to the people, and the ban on drumming and dancing integral to African spirituality led many Ghanaians to label Christianity as "the white man's religion."[49]

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[39] Peter White, "Decolonising Western Missionaries' Mission Theology and Practice in Ghanaian Church History: A Pentecostal Approach," *In Die Skriflig* 51, no. 1 (2017): 1–7.
[40] Ogbu Kalu, *African Christianity: An African Story* (Dept. of Church History, University of Pretoria, 2013), 228.
[41] White, "Decolonising Western Missionaries' Mission Theology and Practice in Ghanaian Church History: A Pentecostal Approach," 1.
[42] White, "Decolonizing Western Missionaries' Mission Theology and Practice in Ghanaian Church History," 1.
[43] Bernard Appiah, "Christianity's Encounter with Ghanaian Indigenous Religious Cosmologies," *Missio Africanus* 3, no. 1 (2017): 14.
[44] Appiah, "Christianity's Encounter with Ghanaian Indigenous Religious Cosmologies*,"*14.
[45] Appiah, "Christianity's Encounter with Ghanaian Indigenous Religious Cosmologies*,"*14.
[46] Appiah, "Christianity's Encounter with Ghanaian Indigenous Religious Cosmologies*,"*14.
[47] Boaheng, *A Contextual Theology of Atonement for the Akan Community of Ghana* (Doctoral Thesis: University of the Free State, 2021),213.
[48] White, "Decolonising Western Missionaries' Mission Theology and Practice in Ghanaian Church History," 3.
[49] White, "Decolonising Western Missionaries' Mission Theology and Practice in Ghanaian Church History," 3.

With the unsatisfactory nature of the missionary worship style in addressing the existential needs of the Ghanaian converts, the pursuit of a church that integrated Christianity with African culture soon emerged, leading to efforts toward the indigenization of African Christianity through the training of local missionaries, the development of African languages, and the translation of scriptures into mother tongues.[50]

Origins of Prophetism in Ghanaian Christianity

The prophetic ministry constitutes one of the most distinctive features in the history of Christianity in Ghana. Contemporary prophecy in Ghana is often regarded to originate in Kumasi before extending to other regions of the country.[51] Although not inherited directly from the missionaries' church worship tradition, it has gained significant currency in the religious landscape in Ghana, partly due to its resemblance to consultation in the African traditional religion worship style. For instance, any discussion of the church's growth must acknowledge the significant roles various prophets played.[52] The emergence of the Prophetic Ministry in Ghana in the early twentieth century is widely regarded as having provided the foundation for the establishment of independent churches in the country.[53]

After years of missionary Christianity, clothed in European culture, that did not address the existential challenges of Africans, God, through His mysterious ways, raised African prophets to further the kingdom's business. The calling of these early Indigenous prophets is often marked by compelling visions, recurring dreams, and, at times, illness, all of which ultimately lead to the individual's complete surrender to the work of God.[54] Ayikwei further elaborates that these independent churches, led by prophets and prophetesses, emerged in response to the inability of orthodox Christianity to acknowledge indigenous cultural identity fully and to accommodate the exercise of spiritual gifts for the edification of the community.[55]

Ghanaian Christians' earliest encounter with prophetism is traced to the ministry of William Wadé Harris, a Grebo from Liberia. Harris's evangelistic activities along the western coast of the Gold Coast catalyzed the emergence of one of the earliest African Independent Churches (AICs) in the country, the Church of the Twelve Apostles, established by two of his disciples, John Nackabah and Grace Tani, a former fetish priestess.[56] The name Twelve Apostles originated from Harris' tradition of appointing 'Twelve Apostles' to shepherd the flock in each of the villages where he made converts.[57] The story behind Harris' call to the prophetic ministry is observed by Quayesi-Amakye, who notes that while imprisoned in Liberia in 1911 for protesting the repressive policies of the Americo-Liberian government against indigenous Liberians, he is said to have encountered the angel Gabriel, who commissioned him as a prophet of the Most High in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets.[58] Tradition further has it that William Wadé Harris journeyed through the Nzema area of present-day Ghana's Western Region carrying a wooden cross and a cup of water for baptizing converts, and through his evangelistic mission, the historic churches gained more adherents there than ever before.[59]

Unlike Harris, Prophet Samson Oppong was a native of Akontanim in the Bono Region of Ghana who manifested God's power among his own people. Born into a family that subscribed to the African

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[50] Boaheng, *A Contextual Theology of Atonement for the Akan Community of Ghana,*213.
[51] Kuwornu – Adjaottor," Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi: A Socio-Cultural and Theological Assessment,"61.
[52] Charles Amarkwei, "The Church, Prophetism and Ministry of the Prophets in Ghana," *Pentecostalism, Charismaticism and Neo-Prophetic Movements Journal* 4, no. 1 (2023): 1, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.38159/pecanep.2023411.
[53] Awulley Ayikwei, "Prophetic Ministry and Practices in Contemporary Ghana," *All Nations University Journal of Applied Thought* 6, no. 1 (2017): 225.
[54] Kuwornu – Adjaottor," Contemporary Prophetism in Kumasi: A Socio-Cultural and Theological Assessment," 65.
[55] Ayikwei, "Prophetic Ministry and Practices in Contemporary Ghana," 225-226.
[56] Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, "Let the Prophet Speak: A Study on Trends in Pentecostal. Prophetism with Particular Reference to the Church of Pentecost and Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Ghana" (University of Cape Coast, 2009), 31.
[57] Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak: A Study on Trends in Pentecostal Prophetism with Particular Reference to the Church of Pentecost and Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Ghana*, 31.
[58] Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak: A Study on Trends in Pentecostal Prophetism with Particular Reference to the Church of Pentecost and Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Ghana,*32.
[59] Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak: A Study on Trends in Pentecostal Prophetism with Particular Reference to the Church of Pentecost and Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Ghana,* 33.

Traditional Religion, Oppong automatically became a powerful traditionalist, using black power to his advantage by disgracing men who competed with him over a woman or inflicting incurable diseases on women who rejected his love proposal.[60] His conversion to Christianity took place at Nkronso when, after being contracted by a young man to use his black power to kill his uncle for inheritance, he entered the forest to gather items for the task but instead heard a voice calling his name, fell into a trance, and was taken by angels to heaven where he was shown his evil deeds and the fate awaiting him if he failed to repent.[61] He later recognized God's power as surpassing his magic, burned all his charms and amulets, and devoted himself to the Lord who had repeatedly called him to serve.[62] From this background, it is not surprising that Oppong's ministry was marked by visions and prophecies that warned of the destiny awaiting unrepentant sinners.

Another indigenous Ghanaian pioneer prophet is Joseph William Egyanka Appiah, later known as Jemisemiham Jehu-Appiah, Akaboha I, who was born in 1893 to Methodist parents at Abura Edumfa in present-day Ghana's Central Region.[63] Prophet Appiah gained recognition for performing numerous healings and miracles through fasting and prayer. He was concerned not only with the spiritual liberation of sinners from the torments of hell but also with human rights. He actively participated in the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, a nationalist movement on the Gold Coast, and offered spiritual support for Kwame Nkrumah's political career.[64] Appiah's ministry aligns him with the Zionist figures of South Africa, whose vision of Africa's liberation extended beyond individual spiritual salvation to encompass socio-political and cultural freedoms.

Gleaning from the above, prophetism in early Ghanaian Christianity combined foretelling**,** through visions and prophecies that warned of future judgment and called for repentance, with forth-telling by addressing immediate social, political, and cultural concerns, thereby functioning as both a spiritual and sociopolitical force for transformation. The works of these prophets became the seeds that were sown to give birth to the African Independent/Initiated Churches, which took prophecy to the next level.

Contemporary Prophetic Practices in Ghana

Ghana has recently experienced an unprecedented uptick in Christian prophetism, whose profound impact on the Christian community is affirmed by numerous testimonies from believers. Prophetic ministry in Ghana predominantly adopts a problem-solving approach, through which its followers derive numerous spiritual and practical benefits. A good number of these prophets owntelevision or radio stations where they advertise their weekly activities and things that people who plan to attend their services should bring, or at times buy from the church premises upon their arrival for spiritual directions. Some of these prophets claim to cure all manner of sickness, and some claim to have even raised the dead before. On this subject, Paul Komi Adzigbli observes that in contemporary Ghana, prophetism has evolved to emphasize predictions about political events, such as election outcomes, major sporting contests, and the destinies of political figures and celebrities.[65]

A close observation of such prophets online reveals that their preaching often departs from sound exegetical principles, resembling motivational speeches with loosely applied life lessons, frequently punctuated by predictive utterances about congregants in line with the foretelling dimension of their calling; moreover, whether addressed to individuals, congregations, or the nation, these prophecies are

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[60] Isaac Boaheng, *From Sebewie to Sebetutu: A Theological and Missiological Analysis of the Life and Ministry of Prophet Sampson Kwame Oppong*, (Accra: Noyam Publishers, 2022), 45.

[61] Boaheng, *From Sebewie to Sebetutu: A Theological and Missiological Analysis of the Life and Ministry of Prophet Sampson Kwame Oppong,* 55-56.

[62] Boaheng, *From Sebewie to Sebetutu: A Theological and Missiological Analysis of the Life and Ministry of Prophet Sampson Kwame Oppong,* 57.

[63] Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak: A Study on Trends in Pentecostal Prophetism with Particular Reference to the Church of Pentecost and Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Ghana,*35.

[64] Quayesi-Amakye, *Let the Prophet Speak: A Study on Trends in Pentecostal Prophetism with Particular Reference to the Church of Pentecost and Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Ghana,*36.

[65] Paul Komi Adzigbli, "Political Prophecies: To Regulate or Not to Regulate?" (The Church of Pentecost, n.d.). https://thecophq.org/political-prophecies-to-regulate-or-not-to-regulate/ **as accessed on 28th August,2025.**

typically disclosed publicly before the entire assembly and extended audience on social media. In their ministrations, they deliberately employ Akan cultural narratives, idioms, and proverbs with strong persuasive appeal to captivate their patrons, while their prophetic discourse—often framed through fear—functions as a rhetorical strategy to compel audience compliance.[66]

These prophets, through their activities, render them as "Commercial Prophets." In the Ghanaian socio-religious context, the term "Commercial Prophet" designates audacious prophetic figures who commodify self-produced religious items and market spiritual services to consumers.[67] The commercial dimension of the prophetic enterprise largely revolves around fundraising through offerings, appeals for funds, and the sale of purportedly fortifying items, with religious products encompassing items such as anointing oil, apples, perfumes, car stickers, wristbands, handkerchiefs, eggs, well water, bottled water, porridge, creams, soaps, and powders. In his study of the Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre led by Prophet Ebenezer Adarkwa Yiadom, George Anderson Jnr observes that the prophet reinforces this practice by invoking divine blessings upon those who purchase such items before inviting them to present their monetary contributions.[68] He further explicates that During the sale of the religious item *Ɔpata ko agye ko abɔ wo bo* ("Separator and Collector of Fights"), associate pastors collect payments on behalf of the prophet, deposit the money into offertory boxes, and distribute color-coded cards or coupons—red for GH₵2000 (US$500), blue for GH₵1000 (US$250), and green for GH₵500 (US$125)—to congregants according to the amount contributed.[69] Following the sale of the *Ɔpata ko agye ko abɔwobo* ("Separator and Collector of Fights") religious items, the prophet proceeds to sell the *Dadie bi twa dadie* ("Iron Cuts Iron") anointing oil, packaged in small bottles and cellophanes, for which congregants who contribute GH₵200 (US$50), GH₵100 (US$25), or GH₵50 (US$12.5) likewise receive corresponding cards or coupons.[70] In the purchase of both items, those who get coupons have a chance to meet the minister after service, while those who did not get coupons because they paid less money are denied access to the prophet.

In Ɔdiyifo Acquah's Church of Bethesda, congregants line up to offer money to the prophet in exchange for items such as soap, perfume, or Florida water, along with ritual acts like washing of the hands and feet or sprinkling of the head with a water–Florida mixture.[71] Similarly, in the House of Prayer Ministries and the House of Prayer for All Nations, worshippers purchase small bottles of anointing oil and receive spiritual guidance (*akwankyerɛ*).[72]

It is also observed that some self-proclaimed prophets manipulate cultural beliefs in curses and spiritual retribution to dominate their followers, thereby cultivating an atmosphere in which fear rather than faith dictates both spiritual and social life.[73] By issuing public threats of curses and divine punishment, they cultivate a loyal following that dares not question them, while simultaneously seeking influence over politicians and public figures by positioning themselves as spiritual gatekeepers whose blessings or curses are believed to shape the destiny of the nation. By manipulating fear and intimidation to secure loyalty, these prophets depart from the principles of the New Testament, elevating their status through human coercion rather than the authority of divine truth.

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[66] Isaac Forson Adjei, Thomas Oduro-Kwarteng, and Victoria Nana Poku Frimpong, "The Rhetoric of Commercial Prophets in Ghana: A Case Study of Bishop Daniel Obinim and Reverend Obofour," *E-Journal of Religious AndTheological Studies* 5, no. 3 (2019): 94–105.

[67] Adjei, Oduro-kwarteng and Frimpong, "The Rhetoric of Commercial Prophets in Ghana: A Case Study of Bishop Daniel Obinim and Reverend Obofour Isaac Forson Adjei, Thomas Oduro-Kwarteng*,"* 96.

[68] George Jnr. Anderson, "God Has Instructed Me to Sell': Questioning the Practice of Commercialization of Religion in Neo-Prophetic and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches Ghana.," *All Nations University Journal of Applied Thought* 6, no. 2 (2019): 172–88.

[69] Anderson Jnr, "God Has Instructed Me to Sell": Questioning the Practice of Commercialization of Religion in Neo-Prophetic and Pentecostal/ Charismatic Churches in Ghana," 178.

[70] Anderson Jnr, "God Has Instructed Me to Sell": Questioning the Practice of Commercialization of Religion in Neo-Prophetic and Pentecostal/ Charismatic Churches in Ghana," 179.

[71] Anderson Jnr, "God Has Instructed Me to Sell": Questioning the Practice of Commercialization of Religion in Neo-Prophetic and Pentecostal/ Charismatic Churches in Ghana,"179.

[72] Anderson Jnr, "God Has Instructed Me to Sell": Questioning the Practice of Commercialization of Religion in Neo-Prophetic and Pentecostal/ Charismatic Churches in Ghana," 179.

[73] Stephen Gyesaw, "The Power of Fear: How Ghana's False Prophets Manipulate Believers." (Modern Ghana. , 2025). https://www.modernghana.com/news/1357876/the-power-of-fear-how-ghanas-false-prophets.html/ as accessed on August 21, 2025.

It is evident from the practices of certain contemporary Ghanaian Christians that they have deviated from the biblical tradition of prophecy, which historically encompassed both *forth-telling* and *foretelling* by addressing existential concerns of human life while warning of the consequences of disobedience to God's will. Instead, some prophets now deliver messages whose authenticity is questionable—for instance, claiming to appear in congregants' dreams to provide lottery numbers for personal enrichment, despite scriptural prohibitions against such practices (Prov. 13:11).

Others align their prophecies with partisan politics, proclaiming blessings for one political party and doom for another, thereby fostering public suspicion of their motives. To this end, Adzigbli affirms that, in Ghana, the prophets Isaac Owusu Bempah and Nigel Gaisie have been perceived as closely associated with the two dominant political parties of the nation, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC), respectively[74]. Questionable directives to followers further undermine their credibility, as they neglect their prophetic responsibility to denounce societal evil and serve as God's mouthpiece on behalf of the marginalized. Moreover, they distort divine blessings by suggesting they can be accessed even amidst moral decadence, provided one purchases their religious commodities—such as stickers, *Sobolo*, *Yesu mogya* (Jesus' blood), *Nkuto* (shea butter), *Kosua kodiawuo* (egg for destruction), customized water, and powders—thereby pursuing personal gain.

Despite Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 14:32 that "the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets," many make reckless pronouncements regarding national elections, football tournaments, beauty pageants, and athletics, claiming divine inspiration while engaging in self-serving spectacle. The troubling phenomenon arises when prophets, all claiming inspiration from the same Spirit, deliver contradictory prophecies regarding electoral outcomes, thereby portraying God as inconsistent or double-mouthed. Given the aforementioned practices of some Ghanaian prophets, it is imperative to institute measures that regulate their activities to restore the integrity of Christianity, which has been marred by such unethical conduct; the subsequent section outlines recommendations toward this end.

Contribution of Biblical Prophets in Nation Building

Prophets, beyond serving as God's mouthpiece in the religious sphere, also engage in socio-political issues, acting as agents of positive change and societal transformation through their being sociopolitical activists. That is to say, the prophet embodies multiple roles, serving not only as a prophet but also as a poet, preacher, patriot, statesman, social critic, and moralist. Prophetic figures such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Amos, and Jeremiah actively engaged in the socio-political spheres of their time, with their prophetic ministries gaining prominence through interactions with the political and religious authorities of their era.[75] They sought to shape the socio-political landscape of their era through predictive prophecies, effectively challenging kings and religious authorities to restore the true worship of Yahweh. According to Kraeling, the prophets were public figures deeply engaged with the political and social issues of their time, passionately advocating for social justice and religious orthodoxy while condemning corruption in positions of authority and the administration of justice.[76] Their emphasis on righteousness, justice, and communal responsibility demonstrates how prophecy functioned as a force for nation-building, influencing governance, social ethics, and communal cohesion.

They exercised discernment in delivering their messages, distinguishing clearly individual, congregational, and national prophecies: individual prophecy addressed the circumstances of a specific person, congregational prophecy pertained to a particular community or assembly, and national prophecy concerned matters of broader significance affecting the entire nation.

In the case of Jonah, God commissioned him to proclaim judgment on sinful Nineveh (national prophecy). Despite the harshness of the message, Jonah delivered it faithfully, leading to the genuine repentance of all the inhabitants of the city and demonstrating that the prophetic proclamation alone was sufficient to restore the city. The story highlights that national restoration is not solely dependent on political or military interventions but can be achieved through spiritual and moral renewal initiated by

[74] **Adzigbli,**"Political Prophecies: To Regulate or Not to Regulate?"
[75] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).3.
[76] G. E. Kraaling, *The Prophets* (New York: Rand McNally and Company, 1969).40.

prophetic leadership. On the other hand, when King Ahab failed to listen to the words of the true prophet Micaiah, he ended up dying during the war, bringing grief and possible instability in the political system of Israel. Just as adherence to the voice of a true prophet can lead to the building and restoration of a nation, so can the rejection of messages from a true prophet lead to the collapse or destruction of the nation.

Nathan delivered his individual prophetic message to King David with strategic wisdom and rhetorical skill, privately exposing David's adultery and murder (2 Sam. 12:1–15) in a manner that elicited genuine repentance and mitigated the severity of the forthcoming punishment, demonstrating the effectiveness of a discreet, knowledgeable prophetic intervention. Once David, as the monarch and head of the kingdom, was restored through prophetic intervention, the restoration extended to the nation as a whole. Similarly, the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, told King Hezekiah that his illness would result in death and that he should align himself with God's will (2 Kings 20:1–11). Notably, Isaiah delivered this message privately to the ailing king rather than publicly (knowing that it was an individual prophecy and not a congregational or national prophecy), reflecting the discreet manner in which Nathan approached and admonished David.

Abraham is recognized as the first prophet recorded in Scripture. He exemplifies the prophetic role in national intercession when he perceived God's intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:22–33) and persistently pleaded on behalf of the city, negotiating for the wicked to be spared. This narrative highlights a central contribution of prophets to nation-building: serving as intercessors who mediate between God and humanity to restore broken relationships and promote divine justice within society.

The Way Forward

In the wake of recurring national tragedies—such as the incessant road accidents on the Accra–Kumasi highway, including the devastating crash on July 28, 2025, at Juaso, which claimed the lives of fifteen children from the Obogu Saviour Church Youth Ministry; and the helicopter disaster on August 6, 2025, which resulted in the deaths of eight government officials on national assignment, among them two cabinet ministers, the late Dr. Edward Omane Boamah and Alhaji Dr. Ibrahim Murtala Muhammed, en route to Obuasi to inaugurate responsible cooperative mining—the nation continues to grapple with profound grief and loss. In a press statement dated August 10, 2025, as part of the steps taken to forestall future calamities, the Office of the Presidential Envoy for Interfaith and Ecumenical Relations reported that the president, while recognizing the vital role of religious communities in shaping the moral fabric of society for national unity and development, urged prophets to submit prophecies—particularly those concerning political leaders, governance, national security, or public stability—to the Envoy's office for urgent review and appropriate escalation. The government's decision stated above was preceded by several viral videos on the social media platforms, with one standout video in which a prophet, named Samuel Henry (Prophet Roja), was seen foretelling a misfortune that was about to hit the then defense minister, and so called on him through the same media space to reach out to him before something went wrong. Prophets who claim to have predicted the incidence include but are not limited to Apostle Isaac Owusu Bempah, Prophet Nigel Gaisie, Prophet Eric Boah-Uche, Prophet Nana Kwame, and Prophet Maxwell Acheampong.

This announcement from the presidency was received with mixed reactions, with some, including men of God, criticizing the move by the government, largely due to the unethical approach of some of these men of God in the discharge of their prophetic duties. Contrary to this position, others in support applaud the government for the timely intervention by giving the prophets the 'chance' to communicate the message of God concerning the common good of the nation. The above highlights the central role of the prophets in times of crises and the need to sanitize the prophetic space to restore their lost glory for people to take them seriously once again.

It must be recognized that the existence of counterfeit prophets presupposes the presence of genuine ones; thus, while false prophets may be widespread and vocally prominent, authentic prophets, though often less conspicuous, should not be dismissed as though divine revelation were absent in the nation. Just as Elijah mistakenly believed himself to be the only faithful prophet in Israel until God

revealed that seven thousand had not bowed to Baal (1 Kgs. 19:10, 18), so too should it not be assumed that genuine prophecy is extinct in a country where more than seventy-one percent of the population identify as Christians. Consequently, the criteria for discerning prophetic authenticity, as outlined above, may serve as a valuable framework for seasoned ministers within the Interfaith and Ecumenical Relations board to evaluate the multitude of prophetic claims emerging nationwide.

The susceptibility of many Ghanaian Christians to the manipulation of false prophets is largely attributable to their shallow knowledge of Scripture, which arises from personal neglect of Bible study or from insufficient doctrinal instruction within their churches—an inadequacy that opportunistic prophets readily exploit to advance their own agendas. In particular, a significant number of Christians who belong to mainline denominations and attend Sunday services also flock to prophetic prayer gatherings during the week, reflecting a gap in their spiritual formation. This suggests that mainline churches should, at times, contextualize their preaching by moving beyond prescribed themes from their headquarters and instead prioritize teachings on prayer, fasting, Bible study, and spiritual gifts that address their existential needs. Such intentional instruction would foster deeper biblical literacy and spiritual maturity, thereby reducing congregants' vulnerability to uncritical acceptance of the pronouncements and directives of self-proclaimed prophets.

Regulatory religious bodies such as the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG), the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC), the Ghana Charismatic Bishops' Conference, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ghana, the Office of the National Chief Imam, the Ghana Muslim Mission, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, and the Ghana National Association of Traditional Healers ought to intensify their efforts by periodically organizing seminars to guide their members against unethical practices exhibited in the public sphere. The sale of customized items by prophets to enrich themselves should be discouraged since the intent of God in giving the spiritual gift is for the benefit of others and not for personal aggrandizement. These bodies should consistently remind their members that publicizing personal prophecies for the sake of notoriety is unethical, since such revelations, in keeping with biblical tradition, should be communicated privately to the individuals concerned. In the same vein, just as biblical prophets interceded for those about whom they received visions, contemporary religious leaders should be encouraged to offer fervent intercessory prayers concerning both congregational and national prophecies. For those who do not belong to any regulatory body, corrective measures may be pursued by the broader ecumenical community in a spirit of love, as Paul advocates in Ephesians 4:2, rather than in a manner that suggests hostility between mainline churches and individual prophets. Furthermore, appropriate disciplinary sanctions should be applied to prophets who, after due caution, persist in violating the ethical standards of their prophetic ministry.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that some genuine prophets operate out of ignorance due to a lack of formal training. To address this, the government could support private institutions that offer theological education, allowing individuals who sense a divine calling to acquire the requisite training before commencing ministry, much like Paul's formative period of preparation in Arabia before embarking on his apostolic mission. Public institutions providing theological training could also subsidize their tuition fees to make such education more accessible and affordable. Ministry, in this sense, should be regarded as a professional vocation comparable to medicine, teaching, engineering, or nursing, where no individual is allowed to practice without appropriate certification. Similarly, those who feel called to prophetic or ministerial roles should undergo basic theological and pastoral training leading to certification, thereby contributing to the sanitization and professionalization of the religious landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To realise the above objectives, several recommendations are necessary. First, theological institutions committed to the formation of individuals for ministry must demonstrate dynamism by continually revising their curricula to meet the evolving demands of ministry in contemporary society. Their training programs should be deliberately structured to provide holistic formation, equipping students not only with academic knowledge but also with practical ministerial competence. In the current technological era, these institutions would do well to capitalize on digital platforms, incorporating virtual modes of

delivery as a core component of their pedagogy while retaining periodic face-to-face engagements. This approach would make theological education more accessible to a wider audience that can pursue studies from the comfort of their homes. In addition, courses that do not significantly contribute to ministerial formation should be revised or eliminated to create space to address pressing contemporary issues.

In addition, rigorous academic standards must be maintained. Assessments should be conducted with integrity, ensuring that students are graded according to merit rather than favoritism. Examinations should be invigilated with seriousness, and acts of misconduct must attract appropriate sanctions. Such measures will ensure that graduates are not merely certificate holders but carriers of substantive knowledge and capable ministers who can demonstrate competence in their fields of service.

The church—particularly segments of the charismatic movement that downplay the necessity of theological education—should also recognize the value of formal training. Jesus' informal three-year mentorship of His disciples and Paul's rigorous theological instruction under Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) together illustrate that both mentorship and formal education are vital in ministerial preparation. To argue that mentorship alone is sufficient is misguided, for while Jesus Himself embodied the entire curriculum, contemporary mentors, being human, possess only a limited share of divine unction. Churches, therefore, should demonstrate commitment by creating financial support systems for members who willingly seek theological education, thereby empowering them to impact society positively, an essential mandate of the church.

For those unable to enroll in formal institutions, churches and theological educators can extend their reach through digital platforms such as TikTok Live, Facebook Live, and Twitter. These platforms can host discourses on biblical foundations—including the responsible use of spiritual gifts—with interactive question-and-answer sessions that allow believers to clarify misconceptions. Facilitators of such initiatives must be well-grounded in Scripture to competently fulfill this apologetic role, thereby deepening the theological literacy of the Christian community.

CONCLUSION

This paper has traced the roots of prophecy from its ancient and biblical foundations to its contemporary expression within the Ghanaian context, emphasizing the proper use of the prophetic gift for the collective well-being of society. It has also proposed a range of recommendations to address the selfish and unethical practices of certain prophets, incorporating both proactive and reactive strategies. If these measures are implemented, they have the potential to contribute significantly to the realization of the president's vision of harnessing the nation's spiritual resources for the common good. Because of the unquestionable loyalty some followers have toward their prophets, they wholeheartedly obey every directive, a situation comparable to entrusting passengers to an unqualified driver, thereby exposing innocent Ghanaians to prophets who may be either inauthentic or incompetent. Against this backdrop, the paper serves as a timely document for stakeholders to act swiftly to salvage the situation.

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