

Mission Financing: The Case of Contemporary Prophetic Ministry in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the ways in which “newly called prophets” begin and sustain ministry activities. It argues that among the various ways “newly called prophets” use to raise the needed funds to begin ministry is a bare-foot ministry in public places. It also posits that charging consultation fees as a requirement to receiving the services of a prophet, selling “anointing oil”, relics, and prophylactics to aid miracles for seekers, and as means of mobilizing funds to sustain ministry activities in the media lack effective biblical support. Even though money is a critical resource in mission and church life, the means that are used to mobilize funds from the congregants must not be oppressive. The study employed a narrative historical analytical approach towards the discussion of issues. It is recommended that contemporary prophets must adapt good biblical principles and fundraising strategies that do not overburden congregants/donors.

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Publication History

Received 27th July 2020,
Accepted 2nd September 2020,
Published online 17th September 2020.

Keywords: Mission financing, prophetic ministry, money, charisma.

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INTRODUCTION

Mission financing of the Historic Mission Churches (HMCs) in Ghana has always been the duty of the mission agency in Euro-America that founded them. The mission agencies mobilize funds in their home countries to start the HMCs, and sustain ministry activities in Ghana.² However, when the missionary agencies began to hand over the leadership of the HMCs to indigenous Ghanaians in 1923,³ the responsibility of mobilizing financial resources to run the Church was largely transferred to the indigenous leaders to raise funds in Ghana. Hence, the indigenous leaders would have to devise various means such as “annual harvest”, “fundraising programmes”, “levy”, “monthly welfare funds contributions”, etc. to raise the needed funds for church administration. Although they had the challenge of raising funds to start branches of the HMCs in some parts of Ghana, they nonetheless have significantly benefited from the initial investment from the Euro-American mission agencies.

The Churches founded by indigenous Ghanaians did not receive direct financial support from mission agencies from the Euro-Americas. There is no evidence to show that the African Initiated Churches (AICs), the Charismatic Churches, and the contemporary prophetic Churches (Newer Charismatic Churches) all founded by indigenous persons have received financial support from any mission agency to help them establish and expand their Churches. Many members of the contemporary prophetic Churches have complained concerning how their leaders (prophets) use all available means including the sale of items to raise funds. This study seeks to answer the following questions: How does the contemporary prophetic ministry/Church mobilize funds to start and sustain ministry activities? Are the means used by the contemporary prophetic ministry to raise funds sustainable? What are the biblical modes of raising funds for mission?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative method that is mainly focused on the library, archival research, and interviews. A narrative historical analytical approach was used in the discussion of issues. Narrative historical methods can be

² Kofi Agbeti, *West African Church History: Christian Missions and Church Foundations: 1482-1919* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 3.

³ Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum Publishing House, 2002), 63.

considered “‘real world measures’ that are appropriate when ‘real life problems’ are investigated.”⁴ The method relies on narratives concerning individuals and groups for research. The objective is to gain an understanding of issues based on written documents and interviews. Hence, it encourages reference to published materials and interviews concerning a subject matter. That notwithstanding, “one of the weaknesses of the narrative method from a qualitative perspective is that the text being interpreted is subjective; hence, it affects the objectiveness of the research work.”⁵ However, it is significant to state that the assumption should confirm that the research which has been documented/written is factual and accurate due to critical peer reviews.⁶

In this study, “contemporary prophetic ministry” refers to the neo-prophetic ministry which became popular in Ghana by the year 2000 and remains so till date.⁷ P. Gifford observed that by the year 2000, virtually all Christian programmes in Ghana were themed “prophetic”. This is partly as a result of congregations forcing their pastors to prophesy. A powerful pastor is the one who prophesies to the congregants.⁸ J. Quayesi-Amakye held that presently in Ghana, prophetism has become a routine phenomenon in Pentecostal Christianity.⁹ The Author refers to this as the prophetization of Ghana’s Christianity. The activities of this period of neo-prophetism, especially their theology and mode of worship, have attracted scholarly attention. However, an issue that has not deeply engaged the attention of scholars is how these contemporary prophetic ministries raise funds to start a ministry and fund their ministerial activities because these ministries do not receive any funding from missionary societies locally or internationally. It is imperative to investigate their sources of funding.

The Author used “Church” or “Churches” to refer to individual Christian denomination and “church” to refer to the universal church. In order to achieve the goal of this research work, the Author discussed literature on mission financing; examined the features of contemporary prophetic ministries; analyzed how contemporary prophets raise funds to begin ministry and sustain ministry activities; discussed the biblical and theological ways of raising funds for ministry, and then drew a conclusion. Narrative historical analysis is engaged in the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Mission Financing

This research identified two ways by which newly called pastors who want to establish a new Church of their own could mobilize financial resources for its establishment:

- i. The Pastor/Minister must belong to ecumenical clergy organizations or well established Church that is willing to give financial support to persons who want to start new Church denominations;
- ii. The Pastor must engage in bare-foot mission to proclaim the gospel in public places while expecting God’s divine provision through gifts from the audience.

Belonging to Ecumenical Clergy Organizations or a Local Church

Ott and Wilson asserted that financial resources are an indispensable commodity in establishing and planting Churches. Presenting the argument on ministry financing and mobilization, they argue that during the apostolic era, issues of rent and salaries for ministers were being born by local believers as the need arose.”The Biblical pattern is that God’s people support God’s work with their sacrificial gifts and offerings.”¹⁰As the ministry expanded members of the local congregation were expected to increase their level of financial support. Ott and Wilson discuss the following avenues to be used to raise funds for the church and its members:

- a. Launching of Funds for a particular project such as construction of a building project, buying of cars, rent for missionaries etc. It is often an ad hoc fund that will be discontinued after the funds needed for the project is realized.
- b. Lengthening Funds is the opposite of Launching Funds, in the sense that it is not an ad hoc fund. It is a long term project fund.
- c. Leveraging Funds is investing in ministries that bring growth to other ministries. It is investing in leadership training, building training centres for the youth among others.

⁴ <https://atlasti.com/qualitative-research-methods/>. Accessed September 14,2019.

⁵ Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, “The Relationship Between Christianity and Entrepreneurship: A Curriculum for Leadership Training for Pastors in Africa,” in *Understanding the Relationship Between Religion and Entrepreneurship* edited by Khaled Tamzini and Anis Ben Salem. Pages 25-50. (Hershey PA, IGI Global, 2020).

⁶ H. Jansen, “Research, Narrative, and Representation: A Post narrative Approach,” *History and Theory*, 58(1), 67–88. doi:10.1111/hith.12100

⁷ Daniel NiiAboagyeAryeh, “Socio-Rhetorical Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 for an Understanding of προφητης in Pauline Corpus and its Implications for Contemporary Prophetic Ministry in Ghana” A Master of Theology Thesis submitted to *Trinity Theological Seminary*, Legon Ghana (May 2015), 1.

⁸ Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), 90.

⁹ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, “Prophetic Practices in Contemporary Pentecostalism in Ghana” *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* 6,(2015): 44, 43-69.

¹⁰ Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011), 284, 388-393

- d. Linking Fund as the name implies is a fund for participating or organizing workshops, conferences and seminars in order to be networked with other ministries and persons.
- e. Loving Fund is the fund for community support activities where the Church provides a critical need for the community in which it is located.
- f. Lending Fund is a revolving fund where members of the Church could be assisted by borrowing money to them for small businesses or industries.
- g. Lingering Fund is a fund given to local or newly planted Church as and when the need arises. This fund makes the receptor Church rely heavily on the sending Church.

Scott agrees with Ott and Wilson on the Lingering Fund. She posits that money is one of the elements used by God in sending out His servants to propagate the gospel. She explained that God used the economic resources of the West to send missionaries to Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries.¹¹ Therefore, the growth of the church in the global south is the result of economic investment by the West. However, some Churches see the reception of money from the West as a means to control the African Church by dictating how the money donated should be used. Nonetheless, money cannot be given without directing its usage and accountability. Scott suggests that the Christian mission should be considered as a business so that value for money is pursued because the economic cost of the mission is astronomically high. Therefore qualified Christian economist should be employed "...to rigorously analyze economic systems according to biblical criteria; to challenge governments, financial institutions and economists in line with a strong prophetic tradition of concern for social and economic justice; to think afresh of missionary lifestyle; and to encourage mission agencies to re-examine what genuine financial partnership will mean."¹²

The views of Ott and Wilson apply to a well-established Church seeking to expand its horizon to other territories and seeking the welfare of its members. Hence, the funds are not for pastors or prophets who want to fulfill their personal goals outside an established Church. The Lingering Fund is meant to establish the branches of the main Church, not other Churches. Hence, it cannot be given to persons who do not share in the vision of the mother-Church. It is also not available for people who want to break away to establish their own Churches.

God's Divine Provision through bare-foot Itinerant Ministry

Plueddemann holds that mission can be undertaken without necessarily demanding and receiving money from wealthy nations, missionary societies, or mother-Churches. He cited the examples of Ethiopian missionaries who were sent by the Church on bare-foot to neighboring cities; Nigerian missionaries who were sent on bare-foot to reach neighboring Muslims; and how House Churches in China sent out missionaries as traders to Silk Road. All these adventures were however successful. He concluded that many indigenous Asian Churches have resolved not to be financially reliant on Western donors because it could be used for Western imperialism.¹³ This view makes the pastor or prophet independent; nonetheless, it does not indicate how money should be appealed for and received during a bare-foot itinerant mission.

The ethos of Contemporary Prophetic Ministry

Contemporary prophetic ministry is a stream of Pentecostalism in Ghana. Many of them were founded by indigenous Ghanaians who were mostly ex-members of the Traditional Western Mission Churches (TWMC) – The Roman Catholic Church; The Anglican Church; Presbyterian Church of Ghana; The Methodist Church, Ghana; Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana and the Classical Pentecostal Churches (CPC) such as The Church of Pentecost, Assemblies of God, Apostolic Church of Ghana among others. Many of them left their mother-Churches to establish their "own Churches" due to unfavorable conditions in their mother-Churches that do not allow them to minister because they were not ordained ministers. Contemporary prophetic ministries include Prophet Elisha Salifu Amoako's Alive Chapel International (ACI) located at Tesano, Accra; Prophet Isaac Anto's Conquerors Chapel International (CCI) located at Dansoman, Accra; Prophet Isaac Owusu Bempah's Glorious Way Chapel (GWC) located at Odorkor, Accra; Prophet Eric Nana Kwasi Amponsah's Hope Generation Chapel International (HGMI) located at Weija, Accra; and Prophet Atsu Manasseh's Watered Garden (WG) located at Dansoman, Accra, just to mention a few.

Contemporary prophetic ministry is becoming popular due to its appeal and compatibility with religious world views and its pragmatic outlook that resonates with the Ghanaian phenomenon of religion.¹⁴ They are unique in the

¹¹ Lindy Scott, "Money" in John Corrie (Ed.) *Dictionary of Mission Theology Evangelical Foundation* (Nottingham and Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 244-46.

¹² Ibid., 246.

¹³ James E. Plueddemann, "Theological Implications of Globalizing Missions," in Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Eds.) *Globalizing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in an Era of World Christianity* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 257.

¹⁴ Cephas N. Omenyo and Wonderful Adjei Arthur, "The Bible Says! Neo-Prophetic Hermeneutics in Africa" *Studies in World Christianity* Vol. 19, No.1 (2013): 50-70.

following areas:

- (i) the use of vernacular language;
- (ii) emphasis on charisma;
- (iii) the use of the media;
- (iv) urban centeredness.

The Use of Vernacular

Many prophets of contemporary prophetic ministries use local Ghanaian languages particularly the *Akan* language as the *lingua franca* in Church activities. The English language is used in official communications such as writing letters, posters, and hand-flyers. *Akan* is used in preaching and voice overs for adverts in the media. Where English is used, there is interpretation into *Akan*. The bilingual nature of contemporary prophetic ministry confirms the 2010 Population and Housing Census which states that 45.8% of Ghanaians speak both English and a local language.¹⁵ Ghana has between 45 and 50 languages, comprising of *Kwa* group made-up of *Akan*, *Ewe* and *Ga* languages; and the *Gur* group consisting of *Dagbani*, *Dagaare*, *Gurusi* among others. The *Akan* language has many dialects including *Asante*, *Fante*, *Akyem*, and *Akwapim* which are commonly referred to as *Twi*.¹⁶ “*Akan* is spoken by 42% as the first language, and by a good percentage as their second language; *Dagbani* is spoken by 16% as first language and *Ewe* by 12% [of Ghanaians]”.¹⁷ This indicates that as much as many Ghanaians are fluent in the English language, they are also committed to showing their identity by being fluent in the local languages.

The use of *Akan* by contemporary prophets suggests that they use a language that is understood by many Ghanaians, therefore their ministries are likely to attract people who cherish indigenous Christian worship. However, it is significant to mention that many contemporary prophets are not fluent in the English language and it may probably be the main factor why they use the *Akan* language, and it is not a missional strategy to minister the gospel to indigenous Ghanaians. Using local languages in Church activities deepens the efforts by some Ghanaian scholars such as J. D. K. Ekem¹⁸ and others who are strongly advocating for mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics.

Emphasis on Charisma

Contemporary prophetic ministries emphasize prophecy to diagnose and prescribe solutions to existential needs. Prophecy is used to reveal what happened in a person’s life, what is happening and what will happen, and then prescribe solutions to problems or give *sunsumakwankyere* (spiritual direction) for the present as well as prospects. By their charisma (particularly prophecy) they present themselves as “people ‘with eyes to see’ into the invisible spiritual realm and who bring communication from the spiritual realm into the human or physical realm. These are the prophets. In a sense, they are “charismatic figures who function as the Christian equivalents of traditional priests and diviners.”¹⁹ The ability of traditional priests or priestesses to see into the spiritual realm is very paramount in their training, therefore graduating priests or priestesses were made to swallow a dog’s eye to enhance their seeing ability because it is believed that dogs have such features.²⁰ Just as an adherent of *Akan* Traditional Religion would go to a religious intermediary for *ebisa* (literally to inquire or ask) into the present or future happenings, contemporary prophets have positioned themselves to be agents of *ebisa* in Ghanaian Christianity.²¹ Their ability to reveal secrets has won them the sobriquet “ditto-ditto” (detail, detail). “These prophets [and prophetesses] present themselves as offerers of spiritual panacea to the Ghanaian lack, and exploit the traditional desire to probe into the unknown cannot be ignored.”²² To the extent that some Christians flock to their services, they have succeeded in presenting themselves as a ‘last stop’ for life challenges.²³ Prophet Amoako calls out members of the Church at random to diagnose a particular problem and prescribe solutions.²⁴ In many cases, there is a spiritual causality to the problems that confront a member or seeker. The problem is believed to have been caused spiritually by a close relative or associate. “It is always the ‘other’, the evil person who does not want

¹⁵ 2010 Population and Housing Census, Summary Report of Final Results, Statistical Service of Ghana (May 2012), 6.

¹⁶ Kwesi Yankah, *Education, Literacy and Governance: A Linguistic Inquiry into Ghana’s Burgeoning Democracy* (Accra: Combert Impressions, March 2006), 12-13.

¹⁷ Ibid, 13.

¹⁸ John David Kwamena Ekem, “Professorial Chair Inaugural Address” *Journal of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics* 1, no. 1 (May 2015): 158-73.

¹⁹ Joseph Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs and Signs of the Spirit: Ghanaian Perspective on Pentecostalism and Renewal in Africa* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2015), 85-86.

²⁰ Joseph Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Spirit and Spirits in African Religious Traditions,” Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Ed.) *Interdisciplinary and Religio-Cultural Discourses on a Spirit-Filled World: Loosing the Spirits* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 48, 41-54.

²¹ Omenyo and Arthur. “The Bible Says!” 57.

²² Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, *Prophetism in Ghana Today: A Study of Trends in Ghanaian Pentecostal Prophetism* (2013), 122.

²³ Daniel NiiAboagyeAryeh, “A Study of *Prophetism* in the Gospels and Ga South Municipal Area: A Way Forward for Prophetic Ministry in Ghana’s Christianity,” *All Nations University Journal of Applied Thought* 4, No. 1 (2015): 196-221.

²⁴ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity*, 97.

one's prosperity and success who is behind it all,"²⁵ thereby making the victim irresponsible for happenings in his or her life.

Contemporary prophets take undue advantage of the traditional Ghanaian religio-cultural world views to project their charisma. Although they aim at replicating and perpetuating prophetism as expressed in the book of Acts and the Early Church, they also "strike a responsive cord with the primal religious idiom of African societies like that of Ghana."²⁶ Analyzing the charisma of prophets as captured in the translation of the Bible in some African languages and how it resonates with African religio-cultural and political world views, it can be observed that "for the Gbeapo people of Liberia the word for a prophet of the Bible is 'God's town-crier,' who is the official mouthpiece of the chief. As such he [or she] is more readily accepted as God's spokesperson."²⁷

The Use of the Media

Contemporary prophets extensively engage the media in advertising their charisma and programs. The intention of many contemporary prophets is to get his or her programmes aired on television or radio or both. For that matter, one could find a young ministry which does not have a permanent place of worship but has managed to pay for airtime. One may think that their priority is not right; however, it can be argued that getting on-air draws members or seekers, and financial sponsorship. Getting on air enables them to appeal to wider listenership, a kind of affirmation of John Wesley that 'the world is my parish.' The use of the media acts as 'a tool of expansion' and 'a reflection of globalizing aspirations.'²⁸ They also use the media to show how powerful they are in prophesying and working of miracles so that they may attract more fortunes.²⁹ In addition, they use the media to respond to issues raised against them by rival prophets and also national issues that directly affect them: Prophet Ebenezer Opambour Adarkwa-Yiadom of Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre located at Kumasi was reported to have challenged Prophet T. B. Joshua of the Synagogue Church of All Nations located at Nigeria concerning his prophecy to Michael Ayittey Okine (popularly known as Ayittey powers) that he will win the fight against Brimah Kamoco (popularly known as Bukom Banku).³⁰ Prophet Adarkwa-Yiadom counter prophesied that Kamoco will win the bout which eventually came to pass. Prophet Nicholas Osei (popularly known as *Kumchacha*) of Heaven's Gate International Ministries in Accra, once lamented that the energy crisis that pertained during that period, had dwindled offering and tithe payments in the Church because many members no longer came to Church as businesses, were also folding up.³¹ Besides, contemporary prophets are attracted to the media for some wrongdoings. For example, former President Jerry John Rawlings referred to some contemporary prophets as false due to their various tactics used in convincing and collecting money from their members or seekers.³² Bishop Daniel Kwame Kissi Bonegas of Great Fire Pentecostal International Ministry located at Tuba in Accra was once reported to have engaged the guard services of Lance Corporal Benjamin Akyea Mensah without authority.³³ Currently, not a single month passes without reports of the wrongdoing of a prophet in the media. Nevertheless, other contemporary prophets genuinely use the media for the propagation of the gospel.

Urban Centeredness

Unlike their predecessors, African Indigenous Churches (AICs) who were mostly located in rural areas, contemporary prophetic ministries are mostly centred in urban areas such as Accra, Tema, Kumasi, and Takoradi. "Pentecostal [prophetic] Churches/fellowship can be found every 100 meters in Ghanaian cities [and] towns."³⁴ Their billboards and posters are visible in Ghana's urban cities. This signifies that their services are patronized in urban areas due to the urban way of life which is dominated by the struggle to succeed in business. Cities have a centripetal magnet that draws many and interesting activities to it: "where power dominates, there is the city as a magnet, to pull it to itself."³⁵ This infers that it is the cities that find them useful and therefore draw and keep them. It can be argued that urbanization is on the increase and many people are increasingly trooping to urban areas resulting in a population decline in rural areas. Since the Christian mission is about people rather than special area, it is prudent for contemporary prophets to establish

²⁵ Quayesi-Amakye, *Prophetism in Ghana Today*, 130.

²⁶ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Pentecostalism and the Missiological Significance of Religious Experience in Africa Today: The Case of Ghana 'Church of Pentecost,'" *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* XII, no. 1&2 (July/December 2002): 30-57.

²⁷ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 235.

²⁸ Cited in J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *African Charismatics: Current Development Within Independent Indigenous Pentecostalism in Ghana* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 99.

²⁹ Peter White and Cornelius J. P. Niemandt, "Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches' Mission Approaches" *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24 (2015): 241-269.

³⁰ "Prophet 'One' Challenges T. B. Joshua over Banku and Ayittey Powers bout" *The New Places & People* (April 7-9, 2014), 3.

³¹ "Dumsor' has Reduced Offertory and Tithe - Kumchacha" *The Al-Hajj* (April 30, 2015), 9.

³² "Rawlings Jabs Obinim, Kumchacha: Calls them False Prophets" *Daily Guide* (November 12, 2014), 1, 3.

³³ "Bishop Bonegas in Trouble: Police investigate him for unlawful Use of Cop" *Daily Graphic* (June 30, 2015), 1,3.

³⁴ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, "Prophetic Practices in Contemporary Pentecostalism in Ghana" *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* 6 (2015), 46, 43-69.

³⁵ Harvie M. Conn & Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City & the People of God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Academic, 2001), 192-93.

themselves in the urban areas.

The proliferation and activities of contemporary prophetic ministries in urban areas in Ghana are not directed at the urban mission to drug addicts, commercial sex workers, child delinquents and other social injustices³⁶ among others. It is also not directed at using infrastructures in urban areas to win non-Christians to the faith just as Apostle Paul used the Pax Romana in the Roman world to propagate the gospel and convert non-Christians. They engage in 'flock-stealing' from the well-established older Churches³⁷ by enticing them with charisma. In this regard, Gifford was reluctant to refer to them as evangelicals³⁸ because they scarcely give an opportunity for non-Christians to receive Christ. Their ministry is focused on attracting Christians who want to be healed, travel, marry, or expecting some business breakthrough which indirectly benefits the prophet financially by collecting consultation fees.

Ways of Raising Funds by Contemporary Prophets

After being convinced that one is called to ministry and there is the evidence of the manifestation of some charisma, many contemporary prophets leave their mother-Churches to form their "own Churches" due to what they refer to as unpleasant conditions for their ministries. Prophet Atsu Manasseh left the Miracles Assemblies of God at Jasikan to start Watered Garden at Dansoman;³⁹ Prophet Isaac Anto left United Pentecostal Church (UPC) at Asoredanho in Dansoman to start Conquerors Chapel International at Dansoman;⁴⁰ Prophet Bernard Opoku Nsiah left the Assemblies of God to begin Christian Redemption International Ministry (CRIM) at Koforidua;⁴¹ Prophet Dr. Eric Nana Kwasi Amponsah left the Church of Pentecost to start Hope Generation Ministry International at Weija;⁴² just to mention a few. Those who leave the TWMC complain of a lack of attention for the works of the Spirit in the Church.⁴³ Others who leave the CPC said they were called out to start their "own Churches".

Again those who leave Charismatic Churches (and other prophetic oriented Churches) complain of overwhelming power and control of financial resources of the Church by the founder or General Overseer.⁴⁴ It is obvious that the mother-Churches of these prophets would hardly allow them to minister freely as they would want because charismatically gifted persons find it difficult to submit to others. Many of them struggle to get a place for worship. The Author identifies three ways contemporary prophets use to start ministry:

- (i) Seize a branch or break away with some members of the mother-Church;
- (ii) conduct mission in urban public places (bare-foot ministry); and
- (iii) borrow money from family relatives.

Seize a Branch or Break Away with some Members of the Mother-Church

Some contemporary prophets seize a branch or break away with some members from their mother-Churches to start their "own Churches". Resident pastors or pastor in-charge of a branch may seize that particular branch and change its name. Others who were not resident pastors often break away with some members who would serve as founding members of the "new Church". They follow them due to their charisma. These members either contribute money to pay for rent or give out their houses to be used as an initial worship places. Examples include the pastor in charge of the branch of CRIM at Anyaa in Accra, who seized the branch and changed the name to True Word Foundation Chapel, which became his "own Church"; the resident pastor of a branch of Kingdom Power Family International at Kasoa in the Central Region also seized the branch and changed the name to Overcomers Praise Assembly International. They often succeed in taking over the branch because, in many instances, the founding prophets or general overseers seldom visit the branches. Thus, the pastor in charge of the branch is the only clergy mainly known to the members of the branch more than the founding prophet or general overseer. Prophet Nanasei Opoku Sarkodie left Global Revival Ministry in Accra with some members to start the World Prayer Centre. This suggests that some contemporary prophets are not able to start a ministry on their own account, they would have to take either a Church building or members of a mother-Church to start their "own Churches".

Mission in Urban Public places (bare-foot)

Many urban public places in Ghana are open to religious activities, especially proclamations. The market places are not

³⁶ David N. A. Kpobi, "Unless the Lord Watches over the City...Urbanization and Christian Witness in Ghana" *Journal of African Christian Thought* 14, no. 2 (December 2011), 17-27.

³⁷ Omenyo and Arthur. "The Bible Says!" 56.

³⁸ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 110.

³⁹ Quayesi-Amakye, *Prophetism in Ghana Today*, 92.

⁴⁰ Isaac Anto, *The Office of the Prophet* (Accra: Nobles Multimedia, 2011), 110-11.

⁴¹ An Interview conducted by the author at the Church Office, Koforidua (September 2015).

⁴² Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, "A Socio-Rhetorical Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:26-40" 94.

⁴³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Sighs, and Signs*, 7.

⁴⁴ Aryeh, "A Study of Prophetism", 208.

left out in this enterprise; they also serve as a place to nurture, organize, and mobilize funds to begin full-time ministry. In February 2014, it was discovered that many of the preachers in the markets refer to themselves as prophets and their aim in market ministry included directing people to particular football pitches in the evening for prayer meeting sessions where they nurtured their gift and gradually mobilized funds from the people to pay for a place for worship.⁴⁵ It was also realized that some of the prophets were able to buy musical instruments from the meagre offering they receive from persons who do business in the markets. Some individuals who have benefited from the preaching and prayer of these prophets provide for their daily needs and sponsor their ministry activities.⁴⁶ On a good day, “many preachers [prophets] in the market places ... realize between Gh¢ 130.00 and Gh¢ 170.00 (Approximately \$ 37.14 and 48.57) as offering each day.”⁴⁷ Even though the amount is small, some of them can save for the payment of rent for a place of worship. However, the ministry of contemporary prophets in public places has been threatened by managers of the public places due to the excessive noise they make during the proclamation. The Sunyani Municipal Assembly in the Brong Ahafo Region has banned activities of contemporary prophets in public places in the municipal area.⁴⁸

Borrowing Money from Family Relatives

Some contemporary prophets borrow money from family relatives and the wealthy in society in order to pay rent for worship place. According to Prophet Bernard Opoku Nsiah, he borrowed money from some individuals to begin ministry, he was not able to pay back the money as scheduled and it led to his arrest by the Police and was later bailed.⁴⁹ The delay in payment was due to the fact that he was expecting that people who came and benefited from his ministry would give offerings and tithes so that he could pay for the money borrowed. Unfortunately, his expectation did not yield fruit because the members or seekers level of giving was very low.

Deducing from the above discussion on the ways and means contemporary prophets utilize to raise funds to pay for rent for a place of worship, it is obvious that these means are not sustainable. To seize a branch of a Church is a violent act that should be condemned and breaking away with members of a mother-Church is generally referred to as “flock stealing” which suggests harvesting where one did not sow. Since one cannot be sure of the amount of money to be realized in offerings and tithes, it is very risky to borrow money to pay for rent for a place for worship.

Ways of Raising Funds by Contemporary Prophets to Sustain Ministry Activities

After they have eventually succeeded in mobilizing some funds to pay for rent for a place of worship, the task that follows is how to maintain their ministries, especially in the media. One of the activities of contemporary prophets who need financial injection is organizing media programmes. In this regard, they engage various means to raise the needed amount to pay for airtime. The continued demand for money seems to be at the root of contemporary prophetic ministry in Ghana. One can hardly find a prophet who does not take money in one way or the other before ministering to seekers or members during public worship service or counseling sessions. This has compelled some Ghanaians to describe them as false prophets who just want to use Church for personal business by asking seekers or members to “make ... offering which is heavy and pleasing to God.”⁵⁰ Often it is the big offerings that are pleasing to God not the heart of the giver. However, there are genuine prophets who use genuine ways to raise funds for ministry activities.

One of the major ways of raising funds is the sale of prophylactics of the prophets. Prophet Dr. Amponsah explained that the reason for taking a fee for “emergency” was to have additional income for newer Churches whose expenditure is always rising as a result of missionary activities.⁵¹ “Emergency” refers to meeting a prophet during “one to one” counselling and the counselee will be required to buy a relic or prophylactic of the prophet, which is expected to produce miracles within a set period by the prophet. In HGMI, an amount ranging between Gh¢ 200.00 to 500.00 (approximately \$57.14 to 142.86) depending on one’s need, is taken as offering before one receives the services of a prophet urgently that will yield expected results within seven (7) days. A research conducted in 2013 indicated that 63.60% of Ghanaians in Ga South Municipal Area paid money or bought relics/substances from prophets at exorbitant prices before they were allowed to receive the services of a prophet.⁵² The phenomenon of setting monetary prerequisites before receiving God’s blessings is not peculiar to contemporary prophets in Ghana. Prophet Bill Hamon posited that some prophets in the United State of America (USA) usually begin to prophesy as: “Thus saith the Lord, God is saying if you will support His servant with a one-time gift of \$ 1,000 He will surely bless you. Thousands of gullible Christians

⁴⁵ Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, *Urban Public Space Evangelism: Evangelism in Some Market Places in Ghana* (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2015), 39-58.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 77-84.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 80.

⁴⁸ “Street Preachers Banned in Sunyani” *Weekend Finder* (August 1 – August 7, 2014), 3.

⁴⁹ Prophet Bernard Opoku Nsiah, Interviewed by the author at the Church Office, Koforidua (September 2015).

⁵⁰ “Churches, Business of Today” *The Mirror* (26th June, 1999), 2.

⁵¹ Prophet Dr. Eric Amponsah, interview by the author at the Church Premises, Weija Oblogo Accra (22/10/2014).

⁵² Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, “A Study of ‘Prophetism’ in the Gospels and Ga South Municipal Area: A Way Forward for Prophetic Ministry in Ghana’s Christianity” *Journal of Applied Thought (A Multidisciplinary Approach)* Vol. 4, No, 1 (, 2015), 196-21.

will send their money, thinking the man is speaking for God. In the end, however, these false prophets will be exposed as charlatans and judged for making merchandise of the gift of God.”⁵³ It does not imply that all prophets, who demand financial supports from the congregants, are charlatans.

“The demand for monetary support from the vulnerable in exchange for blessings runs counter to the essence of all religions, especially, when it is obvious that the financial support and other services end up increasing the prestige and socio-economic status of the religious leaders.”⁵⁴ In some instances, 500ml olive oil is normally bought at Gh₵ 24.00 (approximately \$6) on the open market. However, a colour of the choice of the prophet and some herbs or tree roots traditionally believed to possess some divine power to aid human success is grounded into powder and poured on the olive oil. The oil now assumes a divine significance and is thereby referred to as “anointing oil” which is refilled into 30ml bottles with the label of the prophet stuck on the bottle and is sold between Gh₵ 200.00 to 500.00 (approximately \$34.4 to 86.20) per bottle to seekers or members. The congregants are often told that the oil was imported from Israel⁵⁵ probably to identify it with the Holy Land where the concept of anointing with oil seems to be popular.

Kwabena Boasiako Omani-Antwi, Dean of Pentecost University College Graduate School (PUCGS) suggests that even though olive oil is taxed at the point of entering the country, when it is being sold beyond the approved market price, the additional tax should be imposed on the additional amount which is above the market price.⁵⁶ Emmanuel Asante, former Presiding Bishop of The Methodist Church, Ghana confirmed the assertion of Omani-Antwi that overpriced olive oil by prophets should be taxed.⁵⁷ It is not certain that taxation will deter contemporary prophets from over selling olive oil at exorbitant prices to seekers or members. It is possible that if a tax is imposed, the prophets may transfer the tax element on the product to the seekers or members. For the purpose of equity, seeking to tax “anointing oil” means that seekers who are also being charged or substances sold to them at exorbitant prices at any shrine should also be liable to tax. In other words, sheep, goat, cow, etc. taken to traditional priests or shrines must be taxed. Churches who also sell 500ml sachet of water that is sold at Gh₵0.20 (approximately \$0.04) in the open market at Gh₵ 1,000.00 (approximately \$ 172.41) during annual harvest programmes must also be liable to tax.

Prophet Dr. Amponsah, condemned the taking of some fixed rate as prerequisites for personal use by prophets, he added that monies taken at HGMI were used to support media programmes because there is the need to advertize their programmes, because many seekers or members get to hear of their ministries through television and radio. He elaborated that some of the monies collected are used in building a permanent place for worship.⁵⁸ Amponsah further intimated that in view of the spiritual services that prophets provide for seekers or members, no financial remuneration could adequately pay for their services. However, there is a phenomenon where a particular offering is allocated to prophets, this does not mean that it is satisfactory but it must be noted and appreciated. “Altar offering” or “altar seed” is a weekly dropping of money on the altar with the belief that when one is weak during the week, and could not pray, the altar will intercede for him or her. Prophet Amoako explained that an altar is an exalted place for sacrificing pleasant animals unto God. Hence, anyone who brings an “altar offering” or “altar seed” must make sure that it is big. “Altar offering” or “altar seed” is largely patronized in ACI than the usual church offering.⁵⁹ Since the monies are dropped openly, seekers or members drop big denominations ranging between Gh₵ 50.00 and 5.00 (approximately \$ 8.62 to 0.86).

There is also a special offering for media programmes. During a Sunday service witnessed by the Author, there was no prophecy issued out to any member after preaching. When the time of “sowing seed” for media and other special programmes approached, Prophet Amoako got enthused at the response of seekers or members and he began to anoint their palm with olive oil and prophesied unto those who give Gh₵ 100.00⁶⁰(approximately \$ 17.24). The more he prophesied the more seekers or members came forward to give. After collection of media and special “seed offering”, Prophet Mafred Acheampong, general overseer of Fruit of Christ International Church (FCIC) located at Kwashiman in Accra, made a passing statement that in subsequent services special seats will be provided for seekers or members who often give to support his ministry.⁶¹ The phenomenon of giving special attention to seekers or members who give more money whilst referring to them as partners in ministry is likely to cause other church workers like singers, ushers, security men or women, cameramen or women, and even some associate pastors to appear irrelevant and therefore not appreciated. However, this serves as a pointer to how contemporary prophets often struggle to raise funds to support

⁵³ Bill Hamon, *Prophets, and the Prophetic Movement: God's Prophetic Move Today* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 1990), 138.

⁵⁴ Pashington Obeng, “Abibisom (Indigenous Religion) by Another Name: A Critical Look at Deliverance Ministry in Ghana,” *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, Vol. 18, No 2 (2014), 27-40.

⁵⁵ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2013), 132.

⁵⁶ “Churches must Pay Tax on Sale of Anointing Oil” *The Ghanaian Times*, (26th January, 2015), 1,4.

⁵⁷ “Methodist Bishop Supports Tax on Anointing Oil” *The Ghanaian Times*, (9th February, 2015), 15.

⁵⁸ Prophet Dr. Eric Amponsah, interview by the author at the Church Premises, Weija Oblogo in Accra (22/10/2014).

⁵⁹ Participant Observation by author 8/3/2015 and 15/3/2015

⁶⁰ Participant Observation by author 8/3/2015.

⁶¹ Participant Observation by author 22/3/2015.

ministry activities in the media.

At Prophetess Selina Boachie Marfo's Faithway International Chapel (FIC) located at Alajo, in Accra, upon calling the telephone number designated for counseling arrangements, one is told that an amount ranging between Gh₵ 20.00 and 500.00 (approximately \$ 3.44 and 86.20) would have to be paid by counselees in support for media programmes before one could see the Prophetess. The higher the amount one pays, the earlier one could meet "the woman of God".⁶² Priority is given to those who pay big amounts over those who pay little. One's placement in the counseling queue is determined by the amount he or she pays.

It can be deduced from the above discussion that the cost of featuring and maintaining oneself on air is very expensive and contemporary prophets have a critical challenge as to how to raise the needed funds to support their media programmes whilst building a permanent place for worship. However, it is significant to mention that Christian giving is without compulsion and the promise of accomplishing the desires of a giver by every spiritual means can hardly find Scriptural precedent and support. The actions of these Preachers suggests that the poor in society cannot be blessed by God. Meanwhile, Christianity appeals to both the poor and the rich in society. The issue of charging fees or selling "anointing oil" and relics/substances to seekers could be equally tantamount to remunerating the prophet for his or her service.

Although it is good to take advantage of the proliferation of media houses to preach the gospel and advertize the charisma of prophets, members or seeker should not be overstretched to give an offering. However, prior to these periods, older Churches were doing well either without or partially with the media. The finances of seekers or members must not be drained unnecessarily. Asking a troubled person to pay fees before being attended to by a prophet does not depict the loving character of God. The media certainly draws people to the services of some contemporary prophetic ministries but the people do not remain in the Church. Asamoah-Gyadu refers to them as "floating...members...who moved from prophet to prophet looking for God's intervention for their lives."⁶³

In the Pentecostals and CMs, media content comprises 85% time for teaching the Bible, about 10% for healing and about 5% time for singing by the choir.⁶⁴ The emphasis is on the teaching of the word of God (the Bible). Contrarily, the media programme of contemporary prophetic ministries is largely dependent on oral theology which does not allow for effective preaching to convert non-Christians. A 30 minutes television programme is usually divided into four parts:

- (i) 5 minutes for preaching;
- (ii) 10 minutes for miracles and prophecies;
- (iii) 10 minutes for testimonies
- (iv) 5 minutes for advertising "anointing oil," "miracle water" and other prophylactics of the prophet.

In a typical public worship service, no room is made for "altar call" for non-Christian seekers to receive Jesus and be converted. At the apex of the service is prophesying, performing miracles which finally culminates into taking money for various known and unknown reasons. Their theological emphasis is largely "worldly" which agrees with the African world view of salvation that emphasizes the provision of existential needs. This does not suggest that provision of existential needs is not important in evangelical Christianity but that the salvation of seekers or members should equally be paramount to contemporary prophets. The media programmes and the structure of public worship services do not facilitate the avenue for one to belong to the Church but rather encourages them to window 'shop' for solutions for their problems.

Some Biblical and Theological Ways for Raising Funds for Ministry

Some Old Testament prophets do not have the privilege of taking some parts of items meant for a sacrifice unto Yahweh for personal use. Indeed cult, temple, and classical prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel who had some priestly functions in the temple⁶⁵ and sought to preach against an emerging religious syncretism as a result of the statehood of Israel benefited from daily sacrifices just like priests. However, shamanistic itinerant prophets like Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah depended on Yahweh's supernatural provision and gifts received from beneficiaries of their services (1 Kgs. 19:5-8; 17:9, 11; 18:4; 2 Kgs. 4:42-43). The services of Old Testament prophets could be solicited voluntarily. That is, besides Yahweh sending prophets to deliver a message to an individual or a community, individuals could also solicit the services of a prophet for insight and foresight into existential issues. It is traditionally accepted that when one goes to inquire from Yahweh through a prophet she or he willingly pays a fee in the form of food items or cloths for personal use by the prophet and his team (See 1 Sam.9:7-8; 2 Kgs. 5). In the case of monetary payment, an amount equivalent

⁶² The author paid Gh₵ 200.00 (approximately \$ 57.14) before he was allowed to see the prophetess 1/2/2015

⁶³ Asamoah-Gyadu, "Pentecostalism and the Missiological", 42.

⁶⁴ Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity*, 30.

⁶⁵ Asante, *The Prophetic and Apocalyptic*, 44; Aryeh, "A Study of 'Prophetism,'" 14.

to “a fourth of a shekel approximately one-tenth of an ounce”⁶⁶ was appropriate for even the poor to give. A gold shekel weighs 252 grains and in monetary terms is equivalent to USD \$10.00.⁶⁷ The fourth part of USD \$10.00 is USD \$2.50, USD \$2.50 will be Gh¢ 14.50 which could cater for a modest breakfast in an urban area in Ghana or a lunch at a canteen. It is significant to state that the fee given to prophets is in appreciation of their services; it was never a fixed rate neither was it a requirement before one could access a prophet’s service. It was a gift of appreciation to the prophet.

One can find a similar phenomenon in the itinerant ministry of Jesus. Judas was reported to have the bag that contained the money that persons who benefit from the ministry of Jesus give in support (Jn.12:1-8). This bag can better be described as a box⁶⁸ which did not contain only money but any gift given to Jesus and His team. Judas might have had expertise in finances, which is why he was assigned the bag and was tempted by money which he was familiar with.⁶⁹ Be as it may, the underlining factor is that Jesus received financial support from His audience willingly. “Greco-Roman culture was accustomed to traveling philosophers and teachers who would be paid a fee for their efforts or given hospitality and other benefits by wealthy patrons.”⁷⁰ It is not clear the amount of money given or degree of hospitality or any other benefit given but it is absolutely clear that itinerant ministers or philosophers were remunerated by their hosts or audience in first-century Palestine. Apostle Paul received financial support from his congregation and sometimes rejected it (2 Cor. 8). The principles underlining Paul’s philosophy of receiving or rejecting financial support are: “When money is being used to further the preaching of the gospel or to express the unity of all Christians in the gospel, Paul does not hesitate to take money. But if the receiving of money meant that the gospel might be abused, Paul is willing to refuse the money and readjust his life for the sake of the gospel.”⁷¹

The motivation for contemporary prophets taking money from seekers or members ought to be for the sake of the preaching of the gospel in non-Christian communities, Christian unity, and welfare in the church. Contemporary prophets who are yet to begin ministry could raise funds through itinerant bare-foot ministry from the community to community and benefit from free-will offering by persons who may benefit from their ministries. However, receiving financial support from the audience or patrons must not be the objective of a bare-foot ministry. If the receiving of particular money will hinder the advancement of the gospel in the community, it must not be received. The scriptural ways of raising funds to sustain the activities of the church are through the appeal for members to give money in support of a particular task the church has embarked upon (Acts 4:5-11; 2 Cor. 9).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the burgeoning findings and discussion, the following recommendations are made:

- Other avenues for spreading the message and gift of a prophet could be explored to lessen the financial demand on seekers or members.
- The distribution of hand flyers could be used to advertise the gifts and miracles that a prophet performs to entice others to the ministry.
- Seekers or Members could be trained to be ambassadors of the ministry, to propagate the gift of the prophet in order to attract others to the ministry.
- In terms of building a place for worship service and payment of rent advances, seekers or members should be made aware of the amount involved and funds could be raised periodically during public worship service to support such enterprises. In so doing, seeing a prophet would not attract any fee or mandatory purchase of any “anointing oil” or relics/substances of a prophet at exorbitant prices.

CONCLUSION

There have been studies in the area of the overwhelming authority of the founders or general overseers over the finances of ministry; on many occasions, they are the sole signatories to the bank accounts of the ministry. The means that prophetic ministries in Ghana use to mobilize financial resources to begin ministry have not been seriously explored. This article has attempted a discussion on mission financing by contemporary prophetic ministries in Ghana. Prophets of contemporary prophetic ministries engage various ways including the sale of prophylactics, borrow money from family relatives, engage in bare-foot ministry to raise money to start the ministry. This has proved not to be sustainable, and limits access to prophets by the poor. Contemporary prophets in Ghana are autonomous and independent. Therefore, they have the challenge of raising the needed funds to begin their ministries and sustain their activities.

⁶⁶ Samuel A. Meier, *Themes and Transformations in Old Testament Prophecy* (Downers Grove, Illinois Inter Varsity Press, 2009), 185.

⁶⁷ H. Porter, “Shekel” in James Orr Ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume IV* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), 2758.

⁶⁸ R. V. G. Tasker, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids, WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 146.

⁶⁹ William Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John Vol. 2* (Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 2009), 130.

⁷⁰ Paul W. Barrett, “Tentmaking” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 926. See also Janet Meyer Evert, “Financial Support,” in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid (Eds.) *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, Illinois and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 295.

⁷¹ Evert, “Financial Support”, 299.

Furthermore, others may seize a branch of a Church or break away with some members of the mother-Church to start their “own Church.” After they eventually succeed in starting a ministry, they sell prophylactics to seekers or members so that they can pay for airtime on radio and television to advertise their charisma and activities to the public. In addition, many Ghanaians who patronize the services of contemporary prophets, opinion leaders, and some persons in academia often complain of the sale of prophylactics of prophets at exorbitant prices that have the tendency to limit access to prophetic services. It is encouraged that giving to the welfare of a prophet should be out of the free will of the giver.

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