

The Church, Prophetism and Ministry of the Prophets in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to demonstrate that Christian prophetism is vital in fulfilling the mandate of the Great Commission. It employs both hermeneutical, descriptive, and analytical methods of doing constructive theology. It points out that prophetism is a creative work of God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, accompanying the creative and redemptive acts of prophetism is the tendency for it to attract or degenerate into such things as conflict, abuse, and unethical actions. The paper shows that both elements of creativity and degeneration could be traced to Ghanaian prophetism. Moreover, it advocates that proper theological education and law enforcement among others regarding prophetism could minimize the degeneration of prophetism for the rapid growth and expansion of Christian mission in Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

The prophetic ministry in the history of Christianity in Ghana is one of the remarkable features. The growth of the church cannot be discussed without appreciating the roles that different prophets played. Therefore, in tandem with the early church's growth, prophetism ought to be affirmed. However, like in the early church, contemporary prophetism has its problems such as the abuse of the gift.

In this discussion, there shall be a critical examination of contemporary Ghanaian prophetism, and in order to deal with the topic, the sense in which Jesus situates prophetism is captured. One could reach the sense in which Jesus situates prophetism if it is understood in the context in which the apostles embraced and utilized prophecies. The discussion would also examine the challenges associated with the proliferation of prophecies and how they were managed. Ghanaian prophetism would then be examined in the light of apostolic prophetism in order to draw inferences for the benefit of the church and society. Particularly, the abuse of prophetism in Ghana that distorts the Christian message is exposed. The education of pastors and prophets in the area of prophetism is suggested alongside the prevention of crime and strict enforcement of laws.

An Apostolic Contextual Reference of Prophetism

The Christian experience of prophecies was placed in a Christian traditional perspective on Pentecost day. The day the Holy Spirit was poured out and filled the disciples and other believers in a special way was the occasion that Peter put the whole phenomenon in perspective. In fact, Peter's answer to

the people who were wondering and speculating about the phenomenon of speaking in tongues as though they were drunk was situated on the prophetic ministry. Acts 2:17-24 states:

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

So, one may not be far from right by stating that the Christian ministry is prophetic. This assertion is a bulwark in Protestantism in general and fairly developed in Reformed theology¹ Principally Christian ministry is a prophetic ministry. Today, prophetic ministry is the bedrock of African Christianity, and it is consciously engaged and developed by the Church of Pentecost in Ghana. Opoku Onyinah is one notable person in this field.² The church was birthed and introduced to the world through a prophetic phenomenon and an exposition on the prophetic ministry of the church by Peter. Peter's reference to the Prophet Joel in Joel 2: 28-32, as cited in Acts 2:17-24 to explain the move of the Holy Spirit on the church uncovers the nature of apostolic Prophetism.

The exposition of Peter in Joel 2: 28-32 calls attention to the transition from an old era into a new era. It was a radical change brought about as the result of God's divine plan concretized in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.³ Undeniably, it has to happen as the manifestation of God's power to reconcile the world to himself. Now, Jesus Christ is risen and has been exalted at the right hand of God, and in His role as the Mediator, Jesus receives the Holy Spirit of the Father and pours it on the believers (Acts 2:33).⁴ Peter in this very sense is bringing to memory, the words of Jesus' promise of sending them the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:8, the disciples are told to wait until the Holy Spirit comes upon them, then they *could testify of him*. Again, Peter brings to memory Jesus' teaching in John 14:16-17, 26 which emphasizes the *teaching and reminding roles* of the promised Holy Spirit. Moreover, John 16:6-15 may have captivated the mind and imaginations of Peter at the time he spoke to the inquirers regarding the promised Holy Spirit. Jesus had stated as follows:

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, *he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer, and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you." (NIV)

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Library of Christian Classics Volume 2. 2vols. Edited by John T. McNeil. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 2.15.1- 2.15.2; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. Translated by Geoffrey William Bromiley. Edited by Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas Forsyth Torrance. Volume 1. 4 vols. (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1956), IV.1, §13.58.4; James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making* Volume 1. 3vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), §15.6-§15.8.

² Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2012); Opoku Onyinah, *Apostles and Prophets: The Ministry of Apostles and Prophets throughout the Generations* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2022).

³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.15.1-2.15.2; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, §13.58.4.

⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.15.1-2.15.2; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, §13.58.4.

Therefore, the prophetic ministry of the Holy Spirit as Peter may have understood it rested on the fact that the Holy Spirit will promote the:

- a. preaching and teaching to show the world that they are wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment.
- b. acquisition and display of special knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and memory.
- c. prophetic ministry as a trinitarian ministry.
- d. foretelling and forth telling.⁵

For Peter, the Pentecost experience regarding the believers was the fulfilment of the promised Holy Spirit which would be poured on all flesh in “the last days.” The mention of the phrase “last days” is indicative of a transition from the “earlier days” to the “last days”. To Peter, there was a transition from the Old to the New, and it was a prophetic transition whereby there is a change from an old prophetic dispensation into a new prophetic dispensation.

The Jews at the time of Jesus knew about the historical ministry of the Patriarchs and particularly the ministry of Moses who delivered their ancestors from Egypt to the promised land. They knew that prophets were rare and only a couple of them were called into such positions. In other words, the whole prophetic ministry was an extremely limited ministry.⁶ In fact, Moses desired a day when all the people of Israel could prophesy when some people were accused of prophesying without authorization (Num. 11:29). At that time, prophesying was not decentralized. Even at the time of Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, there existed organizations and institutions of prophets. Therefore, in the new dispensation, prophesying was no longer limited but rather open to all people of different races, classes, gender, and age.⁷ It was decentralized to fulfill the prophecy of Moses (Deu.18:14-22). Hence, Peter declares to the inquirers in Acts 2:38-39:

Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call. (NRSV)

Surely, this decentralization of the prophetic work of the Holy Spirit to all who are called by the Lord Jesus Christ symbolized the ministry of the triune God to reconcile all creation to Himself. Therefore, it was paramount and indeed strategic for the mission of God the Father whose only begotten Son died to reconcile the world to Himself. The manifestation is crucial as the testimony of what God has done through Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.⁸ This is also a transition from the old prophetic witness to a nation into the new prophetic witness to the whole cosmos. The prophetic ministry of God has moved into a new phase from a unidimensional to a multidimensional scale and there was the need to make available commensurate resources to finish the task. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the manifestation of the speaking in tongues was indeed the testimony of what God has done, what he is doing and what he will be doing.⁹ And it is fundamentally a prophetic ministry of God on a cosmological scale.

In this regard, it could be said that Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles was a direct manifestation of Jesus’ prophetic ministry as the *oikonomia* of the triune God in history. The ministry should involve powerful witnessing that would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. It should also involve a powerful engagement of knowledge, understanding and memory. It would also involve elements of foretelling and forth telling. Paul himself admonishes the Corinthian church to desire the gift of prophecy (1 Cori 14:1). The gift of prophecy is not profitable to unbelievers when they are

⁵ Cf. Onyinah, *Apostles and Prophets*, 49-116.

⁶ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, §15.6; 665-60.

⁷ Onyinah, *Apostles and Prophets*, 117-131.

⁸ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 40-41, 516-17.

⁹ Kirsteen Kim, “From/To the Ends of the Earth: Mission in the Spirit” in *African Pentecostalism and World Christianity: Essays in Honor of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu*. Edited by Nimi Wariboko and Adeshina Afolayan, 45-56 (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2020), 46-52.

looking for a sign. However, it is profitable to both believers and unbelievers alike (1 Cori 14: 22-26) where the prophecy is going to convict the world and edify the believer. So, preaching or teaching to edify and convict in the power of the Holy Spirit is a work of prophecy, and this understanding is common with both Peter and Paul as they all were prophets (Acts 2:7-15; 1 Cor 14: 37-39; 1 Thess 2:2). Peter and Paul both had encounters that made them use forth telling as means of putting evil at bay. Peter's proclamation of Ananias and Saphira is a typical example of it (Acts 5:1-11). Also, Paul's proclamation of blindness on Eymas (Acts 13:1-12).¹⁰ The whole ministry of the church was prophetic through and through as things to be done now and what would happen in the future happened through prophetic proclamations.

The prophetic ministry was crucial not only to mark a transition from the old to the new but also to take the message into the world as indicated earlier. What is crucial here however is the fact that at the time of proclaiming the Good News to the world, special knowledge of God's word must be transmitted to make the needed impact on those who were steeped in philosophy and all kinds of religious doctrines (Deu 18:14-22). The weapon of prophecy was the power of the church in releasing superior knowledge to both Jews and Gentiles. No human knowledge could perhaps overpower the knowledge available that ranged from the physical sciences to the social sciences and other creative sciences and not forgetting the abstract sciences such as the mathematical sciences. People had thoughts and they had a lot of facts on issues.¹¹ So that the only way the gospel could make an impact was a supernatural release of a knowledge that was so powerful and so sharp and piercing and cutting through generations and rendering any worldly sense of sin, righteousness and judgment wanting. Indeed, Peter himself demonstrated this superior knowledge when he preached on the day of Pentecost such that his inquirers had their Jewish and Gentile foundations shaken to their core and gave way for the foundation of Christ to be laid in their hearts and minds.

Again, the mode of transmitting the message ought to be a very dynamic mode of proclamation. It needs to have behind it a supernatural power that can persuade people in a very passionate manner and effectively. That is why having supernatural revelation is crucial in the proclamation of God's word. There is a need to be studios in the delivery of the Word of God because prophetically the Holy Spirit has to bring what is known to memory. This means that the proclamation should be inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit and presented as the truth with all conviction. A prophetic message, therefore, is an overcoming message. It is God's word aimed at exposing all falsehood and relevant secrets. It is a 'mesmerizing' and 'prevailing' power of God. In this context, it may be concluded that John the apostle and Stephen were very powerful Prophets as were Peter and Paul.

Difficulties Associated with Prophets and Prophecy in the Old and New Testaments

It is amazing to observe that although there is a transition from the Old Testament prophecy to the New Testament prophecy with regard to the scope and levels of heavenly resources deployed, the dangers remain constant. The dangers associated with the deployment remain constant because the earth realm in which it is to be deployed is constantly estranged.¹² The ambiguous manner by which the world reacts to prophecy will remain the same until Christ comes to renew the world at the end of history.¹³

Therefore, some of the challenges Moses faced tend to be very much as the same Paul faced in the Corinthian and the Thessalonian churches. Firstly, opposition to the word of prophecy and the office of the prophet by people who are a family is seen. Miriam and Aaron, the siblings of Moses opposed him. Jesus did not mince words when he stated that a prophet is not accepted by his people (Num 12:1-16; Matt 13:57; Luke 4: 24). The people who know the vehicle of prophecy from the

¹⁰ Onyinah, *Apostles and Prophets*, 109-16.

¹¹ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*. Edited by Carl E. Braaten (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968), 1-16.

¹² Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*. Volumes 1 and 2. 3vols. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), I:65-66; II: 51-55.

¹³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III:362-423.

beginning are the worst impediment. They cast aspersions and odium against their own. At their meetings, they discuss the prophetic moves of the prophet and demur and denigrate the prophet and his gifting. They may say about Moses as follows, 'You say you are a prophet and yet of all women of Israel you married a Midianite Black woman'. It is the very reason why the gifts of prophecy were not used properly and orderly in the Corinthian church. Like the siblings of Moses, some members of the Corinthian church felt that perhaps by age they were more qualified than others. Moreover, the elements of competition and the show-offish manners that characterized the manifestation of the gift might have produced the chaos Paul sought to address.

Another group of persons Korah, Dathan, and Abiram attacked Moses by declaring that everyone was holy (Num 16:1-25). In effect Moses was accused of not just being an exploiter; he was also accused of usurping powers which did not belong to him in the name of religion. These people challenged the prophetic office of Moses because of their socio-economic and political motives. They wanted to create an insurrection and overthrow Moses; after all, they also had the power to do the work which Moses did. They were prophets and priests in their own right and would not need the help of Moses. This power struggle existed in the Corinthian church as it did in the congregation of Moses (1 Cori. 14). Those who spoke in tongues felt more important and so were those who prophesied. Paul showed that all the gifts had their place in the church. Therefore, whether it was teaching and preaching to edify the church while witnessing to the world, the gift of prophecy remained crucial.

Moreover, it is essential to note that in the long run, the challenges are not important as the office of the prophet itself. Mission, evangelism and nurture and pastoral care rest chiefly on the prophetic ministry,¹⁴ and that is why all pastors and administrators of churches cannot ignore it. It was an especially important ministry that led thousands to Christ in the first and second centuries. It is the same that holds the church and grows the church over the ages to date. Jesus started that ministry and bequeathed it to the Apostles. The ministry has been transmitted to Ghanaian Christians today and there is a need to discern its relevance in the Ghanaian context today.

A Ga Religious and Cultural Background of Prophetism in Ghana

Traditionally, African societies have depended on consulting mediums and oracles for all major ventures. There are numerous activities that include necromancy and divination.¹⁵ There are also elements of prophecy in traditional religions. For example, in the Ga *kpele* religious institution, there are the *wɔyei* and *wɔhii* (females and males' mediums respectively) who get possessed by the deities and tend to make certain prophetic statements.¹⁶ These functionaries become the medium through which vital information for the present and the future are proclaimed. When possessed, the *wɔyei* and *wɔhii* proclaim the vital information which are interpreted by the court presided over by the *Wulɔmɔ*.¹⁷ Messages in this nature border on the whole community in which the deity in question resides. Once the messages are received the *Wulɔmɔ* carries out the necessary actions contained in or implied in the proclamation.¹⁸ Therefore religio-culturally, the Gas like most Africans are conditioned for the prophetic ministry of the church like in the case of the early church. There are the *tsofatsemei* (healers, medicine makers and prescribers/ 'doctors' and 'pharmacists') *wɔntsemei* (traditional priests in private practice) and *asamanukpatsemei* (providers of intelligence and revealers of secrets) and *nkunyaayelɔi* (diviners, sorcerers, and necromancers).¹⁹ These people make use of the spiritual powers of deities, dwarf spirits and extraordinary knowledge and skill to influence their communities. They virtually

¹⁴ Calvin, *Institute*, 2.15.1-2.15.2; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, §13.58.4.

¹⁵ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heineman, 1969), 171-8.

¹⁶ Carl Christian Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*. Third Edition (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 2007), 106; Margret J. Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 6-9; Marion Kilson, *Kpele Lala: Ga Religious Songs and Symbols* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), 18-30.

¹⁷ Kilson. *Kpele Lala*, 26; Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, 8-9.

¹⁸ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, 8.

¹⁹ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, 127-130.

control the minds of the people in whose community they reside. In the face of genuine traditional priests, there exists exploitation of adherents of the traditional religion. And the same has been fraught with chicanery.²⁰ All of these consultations are done with the motive of gaining wealth and control of society for both practitioners and adherents. Rivalry and proliferation of the practising mediums grew and were a subject of concern for the colonial government at a point in the history of Ghana. Most of these elements were declared by the colonial government as illegal entities. They went underground as the church also tried to take their place.

Prophetism in Ghana: Past and Present

It has to be acknowledged that it is within the African religious and cultural background that an impetus was given to the Christian mission driven by the African indigenous prophets.²¹ Here, in the Accra region of Ghana, the impact of Paulo Mohenu (1806-1886)²² and Reverend C. S. T. Owuo (the 1950s)²³ cannot be discounted. Their impact on the mission in Abokobi, Teshi, and Tema cannot be overemphasized. Mohenu ventured into the so-called difficult terrains and challenged the traditionalists and quacks. His mission in the Dangme regions of Ghana cannot be glossed over. The efforts of Theophilus Opoku (1842-1913) who deployed his prophetic gift to confront all the traditionalists, exposing all their chicanery, their empty rituals, and specious threats cannot be forgotten.²⁴ Harris Wade (1860-1929) of the Twelve Apostles Churches in Ghana must also be mentioned. Sampson Opong (1884-1965) and other prophets whose prophetic contribution opened the doors for a bumper harvest of souls also need to be acknowledged. It is estimated that tens of thousands of souls were won by the Twelve Apostles Church into the Methodist Church, Ghana. Sampson Opong's contribution to winning souls in the hinterlands for the Methodists is also well documented.²⁵ All these people overcame and uncovered the forces and powers that held the people in bondage and not only legitimized the mission of the Church but also made sure the church took over entire territories.

Christian G. Baëta tends to show that these prophets were motivated by both internal and external issues. Internal issues revolved around the salvation of souls, holiness, and service to God. On external issues, the focus was on the "intolerable social, political, or religious conditions, or a combination of these; by any threats to the continuing existence of the prophet's society or its culture, through the seemingly irresistible encroachments of a stronger alien group or culture."²⁶ The prophetic call entailed a holistic approach that not only dealt with the political, social, economic, psychological, and cultural issues but also spiritual or religious issues which was the core.²⁷ Baëta further describes the nature of Prophetism in Ghana by looking at the African Initiated Churches in Ghana as follows:

Prophetism is a perennial rise and a basic element in it is "personal in character": Whether in relation to or independently of events or developments in society the individual is endowed with a striking personality and ability to impose his own will on others, believing himself, and believed by others to be a special agent of some supernatural being or force will emerge from

²⁰ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Ga People*, 133.

²¹ Charles Amarkwei, *Introducing Theology in Africa and the Kpelelogical Foundations of Christian Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2021), 189-91, 216-233; Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, 'Prophetism in Ghana's New Churches' *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 35.2 (October 2015), 164.

²² Edward Martinus Lartey Odjidja, *Paulo Mohenu: The Converted Fetish-Priest* (Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1965).

²³ Opoku Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism: Witchcraft and Demonology in Ghana* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2012), 156-7.

²⁴ Martin Knispel and Abraham Nana Opore Kwakye, *Pioneers of the Faith: Biographical Studies from Ghanaian Church History*, (Akropong, Akuapem: Akuapem Presbytery Press, 2006); Maureen O. Iheanacho, *Christianizing the Heathen: Theophilus Opoku's Mission and Ministry in Nineteenth-Century Gold Coast* (Abokobi, Accra: AmaraZaane Consulting Services Limited, 2013).

²⁵ Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism: A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Zoetermeer: Boenkencentrum Publishing House, 2006), 67-73.

²⁶ C. G. Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana: A Study of Some 'Spiritual' Churches* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 3.

²⁷ Baëta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 3.

time to time and secure a following. Powers traditionally credited to such persons, of healing, of revealing hidden things, predicting the future, cursing, and blessing effectively etc., will be attributed to him whether he claims them or not. Some will make a move successful showing them other. Such things as the above-mentioned endowment, inward illumination, a sense of divine vocation, and spontaneous enthusiasm (in the original sense of being in God experiencing ardent religious zeal) are facts of life and have their effects in African society.²⁸

These characteristics continue to abound in contemporary prophetic ministry in Ghana. There is a proliferation of the prophetic ministry to the extent that many pastors or Christian workers see themselves as prophets in one way or the other.²⁹ Right in the traditional media as well as the social media, there are various adverts of these prophets inviting people to their programs and their churches. They promise a better life to people.³⁰ These people usually focus on the area of predicting their future and telling them some realities about their followers. They tend to attract a significant followers because most Ghanaians want to know things about their future and be affirmed with good things.³¹ Analysis of the mix of their ministry reveals a foretelling and forth telling in the individual sense and a corporate sense. These prophets serve people regarding their spiritual needs and other issues bordering on success and danger.³² In the same way, prophetic declarations are also made to groups such as churches, religions, towns and cities, political parties, businesses and the nations of the world including Ghana.

It could be observed in these prophets of present times a manifestation of God's power regarding the enormity of the Christian mission in Ghana and Africa as a whole. The proliferation of prophetic ministries suggests that most Christians have gifts of prophecies or desire to have the gifts of prophecies. It is also an indication that the prophetic ministry of the Holy Spirit does not go away. It is an evergreen ministry of God engendered by the work of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also decentralized in the Ghanaian context because many young people as well as older people, rich and poor, women and men, and people of all races, nations and varying ethnicities all have access to the prophetic ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the transition from the Old Testament into the New Testament in which there is a shift from a unilateral redemption to a multilateral redemption relates to the Ghanaian prophetic context. The scale of mission demands the prophetic ministry as an efficient tool in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. The proliferation of prophets and the prophetic ministry thus is an encouraging development in African Christianity. It is a sign of God's grace, favor, and power at work to bring life in fullness to Ghana and the African continent. It would be an unthinkable reality for Christianity in Ghana and Africa to experience a drought of prophetic ministry. Perhaps it would have brought about a hopeless situation. And since the prophetic ministry engages a Christian ministry of hope in an increasingly hopeless world, the church needs to embrace the prophetic ministry in the context of advancing the *missio dei*.

The postcolonial times of Ghana and Africa require drastic measures that would bring renewal and healing. This spans all the issues of culture, religion, sociology, psychology, economy, politics and ethics and beyond. The prophetic ministry necessarily is fashioned to expose the ambiguities in all of these areas of human life mentioned above and to present Jesus Christ as the solution.³³ The prophetic ministry therefore cannot be limited to the pulpit but in addition, must be brought up to the public square. It needs to be brought to every arena of African existence challenging the status quo of

²⁸ Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana*, 6-7.

²⁹ Daniel Nii Aboagyey Aryeh, *Biblical, Traditional, and Theological Framework for Understanding Prophetism in Ghana Today* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 73-78.

³⁰ Joseph Quayesi-Amakye, 'Ghana's New Prophetism: Antecedents and Some Characteristic Features'. *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*, no. -- (January 31, 2013). Accessed August 30, 2022. <https://aps-journal.com/index.php/APS/article/view/125>.

³¹ Quayesi-Amakye, 'Prophetism in Ghana's New Prophetic Churches,' 164-165; Aryeh, *Prophetism in Ghana Today*, 73-78.

³² Aryeh, *Prophetism in Ghana Today*, 79.

³³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III:362-423; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, §13.58.4.

destruction and failure. The prophetic ministry is there to raise all the issues and also be involved in bringing lasting solutions to the problems that Africans encounter daily. It is moving beyond the prophetic ministry of Peter and Paul through the prophetic ministries of Martin Luther and John Calvin. It is moving beyond the prophetic ministry of Harris Wade and Samson Oppong through the prophetic ministries of Samuel Otu and Paulo Mohenu. The prophetic ministry must work within the church to stimulate growth. It must move outside the church with fire as was the case of Martin Luther King Junior in mobilizing communities and nations for the fullness of life. The prophetic ministry does not only challenge injustice but also moves on with a great deal of wisdom, knowledge and understanding to make the burden of the people simple enough for them to be freed from it. It is engendering the impetus for a change for life in fullness. It is pointing to Jesus and the meaning of his death and resurrection and the Father's purpose for all humanity in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a ministry targeted at taking the quacks and charlatans out of business and freeing the people of God. It is making religion simple and free for all through faith in Jesus Christ and the work that he has accomplished.

Current Challenges of Prophetism in Ghana

In Ghana, prominent prophets are those in the media³⁴ who tend to make predictions about the presidency. The woe of the Christian proclamation is seriously deepened whenever there are opposing prophecies and a chance is not given for others to discern its meaning.³⁵ Are there different Christ with different messages or there is one and only one Christ and his one message? Consistently, these prophets have displayed the challenge that confronted Moses as well as Apostle Paul. And the ensuing chaos has serious repercussions for Christian missions in Ghana.

For some prophets to be recognized and acknowledged publicly, they find ways of ensuring that they are constantly projected into the limelight. Unfortunately, as they do this, they do not project Christ and the gospel that is supposed to confront society with the truth. Such people are not able to present the truth because they are very careful to preserve their personalities. There is a distortion of the prophetic ministry itself as it has now been reduced to the level of traditional religious spirituality. Christian prophetic ministry is supposed to expose these things.

Another challenge associated with today's prophetic ministry of the church in Ghana is the use of unreasonable means as well as chicanery. For easy reference, the Ghana police service was able to apprehend some pastors and bishops for fraudulent activities. Again, some pastors and bishops solicit church members for material gain. It is some kind of "strategic ambush" of potential church members for exploitation. It is becoming clear that some prophetic soliciting or scheming goes with prophetic threats aimed at putting fear in potential victims.³⁶ In the name of prophetic ministry, unreasonable

³⁴ Quayesi-Amakye, "Ghana's New Prophetism: Antecedents and Some Characteristic Features,"

³⁵ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1998), 85-87; Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2004), 161-190; MyNewsGH, "2021 Prophecies: Mahama will be President Again! - Nigel Gaisie Insists," *MyNewsGh.com* (January 2, 2021) accessed September 29, 2021. <https://www.mynewsgh.com/2021-prophecies-mahama-will-be-president-again-nigel-gaisie-insists/>; Ghanaweb, "Mahama Can Never be President Again – Owusu Bempah Reiterates," *Ghanaweb.com* (November 11, 2020) accessed September 29, 2021.

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Mahama-can-never-be-president-again-Owusu-Bempah-reiterates-1105939>; Myjoyonline, "God has Chosen Akuffo Addo for Ghana; Stop Wasting your Time in Court – Owusu Bempah," *Myjoyonline.com* (January 1, 2021) accessed October 1, 2021. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/god-has-chosen-akufo-addo-for-ghana-stop-wasting-your-time-in-court-owusu-bempah-tells-mahama/>.

³⁶ Ghana News Agency, "Fake Pastor Jailed 10 Years for Fraud," *Ghanaweb* (July 26, 2019) accessed September 29, 2021. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Fake-pastor-jailed-10-years-for-fraud-766728>; News Ghana, "Prophet Arrested over Fake Miracles," *News Ghana* (August 12, 2013) accessed September 29, 2021. <https://newsghana.com.gh/prophet-arrested-over-fake-miracles/>; Quayesi-Amakye, "Prophetism in Ghana's New Prophetic Churches:" Simon Kouessan Degbe, "Sumsum Akwankyere: Emerging Modes of Mediation and Appropriation of Power in Sections of Ghanaian Christianity," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 24. 2 (2015) 270-289 accessed September 29, 2021, doi: 10.1163/17455251-02402011; Julius Yao Petetsi, "Ghana: Parliament bares Teeth at ["One Man Churches,"]" *Ghanaian Times* (May 31, 2021) accessed September 29, 2021. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201905310356.html>.

and unethical demands are made on adherents. Gullible as these adherents are to the quackery of these prophets they become physically abused. For example, pregnant women made to lay on the floor and stepped upon in the name of prophetic revelation are abused.³⁷

It is critical to note that the problems associated with the current trend are not to be associated with prophecy as a gift to the church. Rather, it is to be associated with the ends for which the prophecies are deployed. From the beginning, prophecies have been used as a medium for transmitting the Christian message. However, it becomes a problem when the force of prophecies is not deployed to present Jesus Christ to the nation or the community. Therefore, if prophecies are not used to edify the church or convict the world of sin, one wonders if it is serving their purpose well. The prophetic ministry is a fundamental tool for mission and evangelism. It is a fundamental tool for nurturing people when all the prophetic gifts are deployed. It is not there to necessarily make people feel comfortable all the time. The prophetic stands over and above the world and pronounces judgment on its actions. It is there to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. It is there to present superior knowledge to the world and overthrow existing wisdom and knowledge that hold people in bondage. It is to show that Jesus is Lord and has power and control over every life, city and nation.

In this very sense of demonstrating God's control and power over a nation, it is possible to have revelations that may divulge the future of the Ghanaian nation. Therefore, there should not be qualms with prophetic declarations that expose the mind of God for a nation in a particular context. As it happened in the past through the prophets of old, so it would be right when prophets of today make declarations. In another vein, if prophecies are not used to propagate God's vision for the world God's word is no longer proclaimed and there is falsehood. For Christianity in Africa, the gift of prophecy allows the church to show that Jesus is concerned with and is involved in the Ghanaian life. There is nothing wrong with providing good intelligence through a prophetic word that could avert genocide or hunger in Ghana. Something that would edify the church and promote God's mission in the world must be welcome indeed.

Approaches in Dealing with the Challenges Associated with Prophetism in Ghana

What then should be the way forward? Many people continue to give suggestions and solutions regarding the way forward for the current dispensation of prophetism. The first group suggests that there should be a regulation initiated by the parliament to a law. They hope that such a law would have a policy framework that will regulate the activities of Christians. They usually cite the example of Rwanda and how Paul Kagame has effectively controlled the proliferation of prophecies. Pastors are now controlled and not everyone could preach without a license and the requisite certificate.³⁸ The challenge however with this particular system is that it assumes that every regime is the same. There is a tendency that such a law could be abused to suppress and oppress Christians. Again, such systems prevent the creative work of the Holy Spirit who needs to work in people freely. This creative power in Ghana has resulted in the renewal of the churches and the growth of Christianity positively. If the para-church organizations as well as fellowships and churches meeting in schools and classrooms had been gotten rid of, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and AICs making a lot of contributions today will not be in existence.

³⁷ Chris-Vincent Agyapong, "Bishop Obinim Steps on the Stomach of a Pregnant Woman" *GhanaCelebrities.com* (April 12, 2014) accessed September 29, 2021. <https://www.ghanacelebrities.com/2014/12/04/video-bishop-obinim-steps-stomach-pregnant-woman-arrested/>.

³⁸ Kylie Kiunguyu, "Pres Kagame cracks down on churches and mosques to regulate religious sector," *This is Africa* (April 26, 2018) accessed September 5, 2022. <https://thisisafrika.me/politics-and-society/kagame-close-churches-mosques/> Marian Ansah, "['Let self-regulate and check abuse' - Christian Council]," *Citi Newsroom* (August 9, 2018) accessed September 5, 2022, <https://citinewsroom.com/2018/08/lets-self-regulate-to-check-abuse-christian-council/>

The second group advocates for the training of prophetism where issues of Christian prophetism are well expounded as attested in scripture.³⁹ Proper pastoral care lacking in the system also must be introduced to these prophets.⁴⁰ Therefore, strategic programs must be organized for these prominent and less prominent prophets regularly to ensure that mistakes are not repeated, and new ones are prevented.

To add to the above, mission and evangelism must be integrated into African Christian spirituality to guide all pastors and church workers. The role of theology is to find the problems associated with all Christian proclamations including prophecy and practices and to proffer correctives. Apologetic ministry cannot be ignored, and its relevance cannot be overemphasized in light of the distortions associated with Christian prophets and prophecies. Apologetic ministry as Paul and all the other apostles engaged in is the true, time-tested, and traditional way of resolving aberrations in the church. And the church in Africa can do no less today.

Moreover, there is a need to accept the crucial role of prophetism. Thus, it includes advocacy for a proper appreciation and embraces prophetism as it is one of the strongest tools of the church for growth. Churches must end bickering and competition around prophetism. They must make it a phenomenon for study in theology, mission and evangelism, pastoral care, counselling and biblical studies. Denying the role of prophecy and playing the ostrich is certainly not the way forward. There is a need to look at prophetism in a systematic and theological sense to pave way for its proper use in the church.

Again, the second position must advocate for all the laws of the country to be enforced wherever there is fraud, abuse, or any unreasonable use of religion such as in prophecy to cause harm and loss of property to people. The police should take their time to get evidence for crime from churches and wherever the prophetic ministry is engaged. Paul says prophecy must be orderly, intelligible, and reasonable. Therefore, the police should be bold in investigating and arresting offenders.

CONCLUSION

Prophetism of the Lord Jesus Christ is actively engaging Ghanaian Christianity. The Christian community must embrace it knowing that it will always have accompanied issues of abuse and distortion. Therefore, as prophetism is embraced measures of new interests, and frontiers of prophetism must include locating it in its proper place and avoiding the pitfalls. The pitfalls could be avoided through proper study and proper education in prophetism and sanitizing the ministry of the prophets, the church could partner with the police and all other law enforcement agencies to weed out exploitation and abuse for the betterment of both church and society.

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³⁹ Onyinah, *Pentecostal Exorcism*, 157-60; Newsfile, "[‘Religion and Ghana Law: It’s Like Christianity has become a Nuisance’ - J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu]" *JoyNews* (October 30, 2021), accessed September 6, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3dl6z1ZWUE>

⁴⁰ Asamoah-Gyadu, "Religion and Ghana Law."

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