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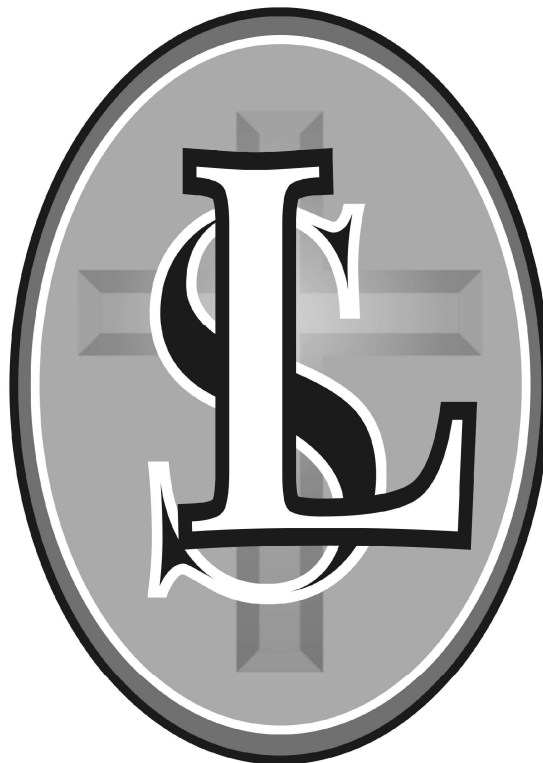
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"AND TO SOME, HIS GIFT WAS THAT THEY SHOULD BE PROPHETS"

(EPH. 4:11)

At face value, the geometric progression in the numbers of 'prophets' in the society seems somewhat normal. In fact, some consider it as a 'revitalization' or a new outlook of Christianity in the world. But at a closer look and examination there is more than meets the eye.

The climaxing of this phenomenon as the hallmark of every successful 'man of God' makes it even more complex. Man, always wants to know about the future; what lies ahead of him. Prophecy has become the medium through which the 'future is told' and 'hidden things are brought to light' as if it was some kind of soothsaying. Christians are becoming more and more wrapped in this web as it seems enticing to faith.

Searchlight, in this issue, addresses the problem of the glorification of so-called prophecies over the genuine Word of God. With this, it seeks to present the rightful understanding of prophets and prophecies and what place they occupy in the Christian World and our society.

Most often, the so-called prophets lean on certain scriptural passages to justify their claims such as Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 14:1-32. These two passages highlight the profound meaning of prophecy as taught by the Church today. First and foremost, when Paul talks about prophecy to the Church in Corinth, he presumes that it



is available to everyone (v. 1) unlike that of tongues which was meant for specific persons. Secondly, he sees it as that which edifies, consoles and encourages (vv. 3-5). Most importantly, it seems roughly equivalent to instructions (vv. 19, 31). The mention of prophecy to the Church in Ephesus in 4:11, is a continuation of 4:7 where Paul says that each has been given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift, and he goes on to enlist five of the gifts of which prophecy is one of them. For some Fathers of the Church like St. Ambrose of Milan (c. 339) the gift of prophecy was that of interpreting the *fidei* and an attractiveness in speech (cf. Rev 19:10) so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily and family life" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 35).

Flowing from this, the Church states that "[the role of teaching] is one of the principal duties of bishops. Fortified by the spirit they should call on men to believe ... They should expound to them the whole mystery of Christ [so that through it they will] give glory to God and thus attain eternal beatitude" (*Christus Dominus*, n. 12). Consequently, bishops as

successors of the apostles, are charged with the task of interpreting and preaching the Gospel as Christ commanded his apostles (cf. Mtt 28:19-20). Likewise, the Council Fathers instruct that as co-workers of the bishops, priests have as their first task to preach the Gospel of God to all men (cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 4).

Thus, the consideration of prophecy as foretelling the future or the uncovering of what is hidden does not come from the Church's teaching. The Church has that prophetic role which is exercised by all her members to evangelise the world. God has provided, in his Holy Word, all that there is to live a holy and good life. Everything necessary for our salvation has been revealed through Christ and for Him. In him the entire revelation of the Most High is summed up (*Dei Verbum*, n. 7).

The articles *Searchlight* has treated in this issue, are meant to be an eye-opener to Christians who see these so-called 'prophets' and 'prophecies' as the yardstick for authentic 'men of God' and as a sign of progress in the spiritual life. We hope that these articles will go a long way to redirect Christians on the right path and strengthen their faith as they witness to Christ in their daily lives through the illumination of scripture which builds in them that sense of faith (*sensus fidei*). Stay blessed as you journey with us in this edition.

**Rev. Jessy
NKAMTCHOU**
(Editor-in-Chief)

NOTICE! NOTICE! NOTICE!

Information for the attention of Ex-seminarians and Priests alumni of Saint Thomas Aquinas' Major Seminary (STAMS *Theologicum*), Bambui.

If you wish to collect documents from the secretariat of the *Theologicum*, kindly make your request via the email address provided below:

bambuiseminary@yahoo.co.uk

Indicate clearly what kind of documents you wish to be prepared for your collection and leave a contact phone number by which you can be conveniently reached when the documents are ready for collection. Your appointment to collect documents should be on working days, that is, from Monday to Friday, during working hours, that is, from 9:00AM until Midday. Thank you for your understanding and collaboration.

Sister Secretary

NOTICE! NOTICE!

Dear brothers and sisters, we would like to remind all those who visit the Seminary, that whenever they come, they should dress decently.

NOTICE! NOTICE!

Dear Readers, we would like to inform you that **Subscription Forms** for the *Searchlight* Magazine are now available. To get the form, kindly get to any seminarian from STAMS Bambui and Subscribe for a year or more. Thanks.

A PLEA FOR MASS INTENTIONS

We use this opportunity to thank you who have been sending Mass Intentions to our Seminary.

We appeal for more intentions. Our Seminary has eleven resident Priests, and ten intentions could be exonerated everyday. Mass Intentions to STAMS could be sent through any Bishop's House or through any member of the STAMS family-Priest or Seminarian. Once the Mass is celebrated, the Mass Offering is used for the upkeep of the Seminary as a whole. Thus, when you send these intentions, besides reaping the assured Spiritual Benefits, you contribute to the upkeep of the Seminary materially. May God continue to bless and reward you for all your kindness towards our House of Formation for future Priests.

Rev. Ignatius WAINDIM
(Rector)

A PLEA FROM STAMS LIBRARY

We plead with Priests and Christians to send copies of Sunday Newsletters, Wedding cards, Funeral booklets, Wedding booklets, Invitation cards, Thank You cards, Souvenirs of Religious Professions, Papers, Magazines and any other souvenir cards for preservation in the *archive section* of the Seminary library. We also use this opportunity to acknowledge, with profound gratitude, having received a good number of these items. However, we remain open to receive even more. You could hand any of these to any member of the STAMS family (priest or seminarian) or, if possible, bring them yourself to the Seminary.

Rev. Fr. Charles BERINYUY SENGKA
(Father Librarian)

STAMS GOLDEN JUBILEE

In view of the Golden Jubilee of STAMS in 2023, we plead with the alumni of STAMS – Bambui who have any *photographs depicting the various stages of infrastructural development of the seminary* [e.g. the chapel (3 stages); the library (3/4 stages) etc] to kindly send them to the seminary, either in hard copy or in digital form. This can be done through any of the members of the STAMS family or via stamslibrary@gmail.com. We count on your usual collaboration and support.

Fr Henri PEETERS (MHM)

INTRODUCTION

Divine Revelation is God's self-disclosure to humanity. God speaks from the treasury of his own understanding, communicating to men truths which otherwise would be attainable by them only with difficulty or not at all (Cfr. W. BULST, *Revelation*, Sheed and Ward, New York 1965). In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a Son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, (Heb. 1:1-2). This divine self-revelation is seen in the person of the Incarnate Word, Jesus. In his goodness and wisdom, God chose to reveal himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of his will, which through Christ, the Word made flesh, people have access to the Father in the Holy Spirit and come to share in the divine nature. Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of his love speaks to his people as friends and lives among them, so that he may invite them into fellowship with Himself (*Dei Verbum*, n. 2). God wants us to know His love for us. God does not just reveal in Word how best we should live, but God reveals himself as well. In fact, For Ratzinger, Revelation is Christ himself. He is the *logos*, the all-embracing Word in which God declares himself (J. RATZINGER, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 82).

1. JESUS, GOD'S INCARNATE

The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is one of the two central doctrines which set out



BRISLEY IVO NGOB
THEOLOGY II



TITUSEYONG
THEOLOGY II

Out of pure love for mankind, God has made himself known to us in the most direct and comprehensible way possible, by coming among us as one of us, and sharing our life, its heights and depths, its joys and sorrows.

the unique features of Christian faith in God. Christianity shares with many other religions, belief in an infinite and transcendent God, the source of the world's being and of all its values. It recognises that every part of the world tradition and religious belief have made it possible for men and women to enjoy the blessedness of spiritual life and of the knowledge and love of God. But the doctrine of the Incarnation expresses the conviction of Christians that this God has made himself known more fully, more specifically and more personally, by taking human nature, by coming among us as a particular man, without in any way ceasing to be the eternal and infinite God. Out of pure love for mankind, God has made himself known to us in the most direct and comprehensible way possible, by coming among us as one of us, and sharing our life, its heights and depths, its joys and sorrows. God does not overwhelm us in his self-revelation, instead he invites and wins our personal response. This presence and action of God, here in our midst, cannot be thought of as a repeatable affair. If God is one, only one man can be God incarnate (B. HEBBLETHWAITE, *The Incarnation*, 21-23). The incarnation inaugurates a new approach towards the divine likeness. The Word who had made man in his own image, comes to repair his work now disfigured by sin. With the gift of Jesus, all humanity now passes from the law of slavery into the law of freedom (R. LATOURELLE, *Theology of Revelation*, 102).

2. THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Word (Cfr. Jn. 1:1-14) and co-substantial with God the Father, he became man by assuming our human nature but still maintained his divine nature. (CCC, n. 479) He is True God and True Man. He is consubstantial with the Father. Jesus is the final and ultimate revelation of God. He is the one who leads us to God and brings God to us. Saint Paul highlights in his Letter to the Galatians: "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). Christ enables us to live in him all that he himself lived, and he lives it in us. By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man. (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22). We are called only to become one with him, for he enables us as the members of his Body to share in what he lived for us in his flesh as our model.

3. JESUS THE CLIMAX OF REVELATION

Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover, He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal (*Dei Verbum*, n. 4). Thus Jesus is not merely a revelation of God but is the full revelation of God. Salvation belongs inseparably to this revealing activity of the universally present Son (*Logos*). The Resurrection opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God's grace. So that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). It brings about filial adoption so that men become Christ's brethren (CCC, n. 654).

Jesus's Resurrection was not just about some deceased individual coming back to life at a certain point, but that an ontological leap occurred, one that touches being as such, opening up a dimension that affects us all, creating for all of us a new space of life, a new space of being in union with God (J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth* Vol II, 155).

4. NO FURTHER REVELATION

Revelation is completed in Jesus, but God is present in our lives as Christians and continuous to speak to us through his word. God is met in many dimensions of life, in the good and the bad, in the joy and in the suffering. True faith requires a response to

stop and think

~~Be not ashamed to confess that you have been in the wrong. It is but owing what you need not be ashamed of that you now have no sense than you had before, to see you are not; no humility to acknowledge it, no grace to correct it.~~

Seed

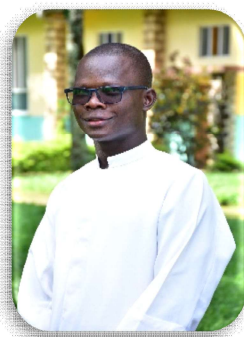
Divine Revelation. But the Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Dei Verbum*, n. 4) Throughout the ages, there have been so-called private revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. It is the duty of the Magisterium of the Church to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church (CCC, n. 67).

CONCLUSION

God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, superabundant answer to the questions that man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life. God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant forever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him. Thus, Jesus was not simply a great messenger from God; he was not simply a very important word about God; he was the Word of God incarnate, the uniquely full and final mediator of God's revelation to human beings (1 Tim. 2: 5) (G. O'COLLINS, *Revelation*, 72.).



EUGENE MOKI
THEOLOGY III



PONTIANUS TITA
THEOLOGY III

INTRODUCTION

Humankind is not unfamiliar with the familiar trend of the proliferation of inauthentic pastors; otherwise called fake Prophets. These so-called prophets arrogate to themselves the tittle of a prophet but radically deviate from the authenticity demanded from a prophet. Their motivation is based on money, fame, power, and influence. To keep their egoistic preferences afloat, they can go to any length. Moses, and the other authentic prophets of old, received the word of God directly and delivered it to their audience undiluted. It is not so with the Fake Prophets who use some manipulative techniques to keep the people under control (Jer. 1:4) It is important to equally highlight here that the true Mosaic prophet neither added to nor subtracted from the message received (Jer. 1:7) The authentic prophets of old functioned within the context of the covenant, interpreting the covenantal law (Hos. 10) (Cfr. *New Dictionary of Theology*, 809). Today, the scenario is completely different. Fake prophets have made their way into many hearts and control the psychic power of the gullible masses.

1. EFFECTS OF FAKE PROPHETS IN OUR SOCIETY

Fake Prophets especially in modern times are those whose intentions are self-centered or evil. This group of persons have existed since biblical times (Mtt. 7: 15-20; Acts 13: 6-12). While a genuine prophet takes a

longer time in training and discernment like Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1-11) and has a proven relationship with God, his conduct does not contradict the Word of God (1 Jn. 4:1-3). Their predictions come to pass and often lead to good outcomes in society, particularly in the interests of the poor and marginalized (Deut 18:20-22; Matt 24:35). Most often than not fake prophets lack real training and a considerable period of discernment. This lack affects their conducts as it is sometimes a direct contradiction to the Word of God. With this baseless foundation, therefore, their predications are aimed at playing over the psychology of the masses and hardly come to pass. Fake pastors as we have them today in our world are concentrated mostly on the rich and wealthy of the society. In the face of the evils in the society, real prophets challenge evil among leaders in the wider society (Nathan in 2 Sam 12:1-12 and John the Baptist in Matt 14: 1-12).

1.1. THE GUIDES TO DAMNATION

Fake prophets lead people through the wide gate and on spacious way to damnation. They preach themselves, not Christ. They arrogantly boast of what they

own. Some celebrate billions in their accounts, houses, businesses, jets etc.. Fake prophets have no in-depth knowledge of the message of Christ and demands of the heralds of that Gospel. They preach a prosperity kind of gospel devoid of difficulties and challenges. Scriptures say my people indeed perish because of lack of knowledge.

1.2. *Wolves in sheep clothing*

Today, like in the Old Testament, fake Prophets are those who say to people what they want to hear. As intimated above, these fake prophets are motivated by self-interest (1 Kgs. 22 and Ezek. 13). Prophets are a vital force of the society. They are the visionaries of their time. When all others are blind, prophets are the ones granted to see the handwriting on the wall, to interpret the signs of the times, and to see the light beyond the tunnel. Fake prophets, on the other hand, are the exact parallel as they deviate radically from all virtuous practices. True prophets analyse the situation on the ground in the light of the common good and of the true goal of the human person and the society. Fake prophets in contrast are ravenous wolves who feed on the sheep, sell others to the abyss of misery and confusion; precipitated by their ardent desire to amass wealth here on earth. Real prophets as we had from of old, challenged the status-quo of their time, to move away from selfishness, hatred and violence. They constantly pointed the direction the society is supposed to take – the path of love, peace, and prosperity. Fake prophets do not bother much about the welfare of the people and the society. They think of themselves and nothing more. This explains why

fake prophets dine and wine with the rich and despotic leaders all in a bid to harvest some coins.

1.3. SOME DESPICABLE REALITIES OF FAKE PROPHETS OF OUR TIME

Recently in South Africa, victims of alleged sexual abuse narrated their experiences to BBC and criticized the fact that the so-called men of God form that protected class of the society who use their positions to cover up abuse. A severe backlash against church leaders prompted the South African President to urge South Africans to unite in curbing the menace of

false pastors. This was followed by a three-day public protest, led by Solomon Izang Ashoms, founder of the Movement against Abuse in Churches. That this had to be a protest involving politicians and civil activists rather than the church, suggests the church is not playing its role as the light set on a hill or as salt of the earth. Also a Nigerian pastor by name Jeffery Ihievu was arrested in Edo State for applying “anointing oil” on a pregnant woman’s private part and breast. Yet in an era of social media, their claims make them even more popular as poor and desperate people look for help wherever they can. A famous self-proclaimed prophet from Zimbabwe and another from Malawi both announced they had found cures for HIV/AIDS, preventing patients from seeking medical help. A South African preacher encouraged his followers to eat grass and drink petrol, while another sprayed insecticide on congregants to exercise deliverance from evil (Mbuleo Mtshilibe, ‘Fake Pastors and false Prophets rock South African faith’ in *BBC News*:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/worldafrica.>)

There are those who make claims that border on blasphemy. At one point, a Kenyan prophet claimed to have the powers of Moses and Elijah, and to have toured heaven and held discussions with God. In 2017, police in Oyo State, Nigeria, paraded a pastor who allegedly

A genuine prophet takes a longer time in training and discernment like Samuel, and has a proven relationship with God, his conduct does not contradict the Word of God. His predictions come to pass and often lead to good outcomes in society, particularly in the interests of the poor and marginalized

possessed a human head and ritual paraphernalia. Elsewhere, allegations of sexual abuse and swindling people of money and property often leak out on social media. False prophets have cunningly learnt to parrot what impoverished or troubled followers are desperate to hear. Despite awareness of the abuses, self-proclaimed prophets retain thousands of followers who fund their activities. Today, many of the self-nominated prophets are disconnected from the essential requirements. Instead, prophetic words have been used as subjective tools to express dissatisfaction by creating fear; visions are promulgated that advance personal agendas. Also, false prophets and their prophecies are apathetic about the peace of the city and its citizens (Jer. 29:7-10). Instead, their predictions agitate and foster social unrest. Such agitating prophecies have been observed in recent political prophecies in the United States, Latin America, Africa and other places in Europe. False prophets represent their own ministry and personalities. As they utter confusing predictions, they publicly tarnish the reputation of

the Holy Spirit, and make a mockery of sacred spiritual gifts that have renewed the church and advanced evangelism in the 21st century (Von Rad (1973), *Old Testament Theology, vol. II: The Theology of Israel’s Prophetic Traditions*).

1.4. HOW TO COMBAT THE ONSLAUGHT OF FAKE PROPHETS

Since most of the fake prophets work on the psychology of the vulnerable masses, and in some situations go as far as using diabolical powers to impress their captors, it is important to highlight some techniques to avoid their antics. It is important to note that any man of God who avoids preaching Christ and uses the slightest opportunity to preach about his wealth, his powers, his achievements in life etc. is a fake prophet. They care less about the souls they shepherd, as all they are interested in is how to increase their income in the banks. St. Augustine would say: ‘Our hearts are restless until they rest in God’. Fake prophets do not border about the eschatological dimension of man. They are interested about the moment. In fact their hearts are restless until they satisfy their ungodly quest for wealth and fame. It is only by denouncing their cross-less Christianity and embracing Christ, who is the way the truth and the life that their victims may be saved.

To a world plunging down the broad road of perdition, our Lord seemed to be crying out in anguish: “implore pardon... do what you preach!”

Alexandrina da Casta

INTRODUCTION

A false prophet is a person who spreads false messages and teachings claiming to speak God's words or messages. The false prophets claim to have powers which they do not. They equally attempt to justify these powers with false visions and baseless forms of divinations. Sometimes, they prophesy in the name of another god. Neither did God send them nor did he command nor speak to them (Cfr. Brand CHAD *et al*, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 554). In almost every age and every land, there are inspired people who are believed to be endowed with spiritual strength not given to other men or who claim to have access to occult sources of knowledge (Cfr. Abraham J. HESCHEL, *The Prophets*, 447). This article has as focus false prophets in Scriptures. With this, criteria can be gotten to access fake prophets in our present society.

1. FALSE PROPHETS IN THE SCRIPTURES

In both the Old and the New Testaments, there are examples of men and women who fit the description of false prophets. In his time, the Prophet Jeremiah talks of some prophets who gave prophecy contrary to his; for instance, Jeremiah prophesied that by the sword, by famine and by pestilence shall Yahweh consume the people for their iniquity. On the contrary, the false prophets said to them that they would see neither the sword nor famine, but that they shall have peace. As Jeremiah complained to Yahweh, in response, God did not only make it abundantly clear that he did not send them (false prophets) but reiterated the punishment on the people including the false

prophets (cf. Jeremiah 14:1-16). It is in the nature of the false prophets to prophesy what the people would want to hear not the mind of God.

Still in the Old Testament, there were struggles between the prophets who were zealous for Yahweh and those of the cults of Baal. The cycle of Elijah and Elisha legends grew up around these battles. Presumably, Baal's prophets prophesied because they thought the pagan god inspired them (Cfr. 1 Kings 19:25-29).

Often enough, Jeremiah made it abundantly clear that the prophet must warn and challenge the nation to return to the covenant teaching. But the false prophets lacked any sincerity about their work. They used their position and influence to aid evil doers, living a personal example of debauchery and helping others to act worse. Jeremiah describes them as prophets of "Lies" (Cfr. Jer. 14:14). The message of a true prophet ought to come from the divine counsel and is recognized by its challenge to wickedness and sin (Cfr. Lawrence BOADT, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 182-188).

In the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles, time and again drew attention to false prophets. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught about the marks of a false prophet and the consequences of being one (Cfr. Mtt. 7:15-23). He also cautioned His followers to beware of false prophets who would arise at the time of tribulations in the end times and deceive many people (Cfr. Mtt.



JOHN OTANG
THEOLOGY III



KENNETH CHIBUDE
THEOLOGY III

24:11,24; Mk. 13:22). From the words of Jesus, it is evident that a prophet who is false could be popular (Cfr. Lk. 6:26). The apostles cautioned believers to be diligent in faith and understanding of Christian teachings in order to discern the false prophets when they arise (2 Peter 1:10; 1: 19-2).

2. CRITERIA TO DISTINGUISH FALSE PROPHETS FROM TRUE PROPHETS

The issue of false prophets is as old as the history of man. A false prophet assumes the office without a call from God, or puts forward his own thoughts as if they had Divine sanction (Cfr. *The Biblical Illustrator*). It is not always easy to detect which are the true prophets, and which are the false prophets. Even though difficult some criteria could help in distinguishing a false prophet from an authentic prophet.

2.1 THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECY

Scriptures affirms that "when a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh and the thing does not happen and the word is not fulfilled, then it has not been said by Yahweh.

The prophet has been presumptuous. You have nothing to fear from him” (Deut. 18:22). In this connection, false prophets have no basis, so in order for them to be worthy, they fill their hearers with vain hope (vanity, emptiness, falsity and futility) which can never become real or come to fulfilment (Cfr. Jer. 2:16).

2.2 REGULAR PERFORMANCE OF MIRACLES

Many people, even of old, mistakenly judged as true prophet one who performs miraculous signs not knowing that miracles alone cannot be the test of truth. Worthy of note is that miracles happen in many religions. Satan can use false religions and false prophets to deceive the world (Cf r. 2Cor. 11:13-15). The scriptures assure us that many false prophets will arise and perform many miracles (Cfr. Mtt. 24:24). However, the test of a true prophet is the verification of his predictions, as well as his fidelity to the Lord (Cfr. Jer. 23:9-40). Given that their messages are not from God, they tell lots of lies to win the approval of men. Most of their messages stem from lying spirits as attested by the scriptures (Cfr. 1Kg. 22: 22-23).

2.3. AUTHENTICITY OF LIFE AND TEACHING

One who has the Divine Spirit proceeding from above is meek, peaceable, humble and refrains from all iniquity and the vain desires of this world. This is not always the case with false prophets. Similarly, the false prophet propagates false teaching (heresies) and they always deceive many people who become their followers. Besides, they are exploitative and live a life of immorality (Cfr. 2 Pet. 2:1-3).

2.4. THEY ARE VERY JEALOUS AND PROUD

A true prophet is always happy and even encourages his companions to even excel more than him. Elisha was able to excel more than his master Elijah (Cfr. R. L. COHN, “2 Kings,” in D. W. COTTER *et al* (eds.), *Berit Olam*, 13-16). A false prophet on his part becomes very jealous with the success of a fellow prophet and sometimes he even plots the killing of true prophets (Cfr. Jer. 11:18-23; 18:18, 28). Worthy of note also is the fact that humility is very far

False reports are imprudent and opposed to charity. They cause enmities, hatred and loss of friends. God does not forgive the person who is guilty of spreading false report. In order to obtain God's pardon, the person must repair the harm done and reconcile with the persons who were involved.

Thomas a Kempis

fm the false prophets. As a result, they become very aggressive and even reject true prophecies which are pronounced by authentic prophets (Cfr. Jer. 28; 2Kg 22: 23).

2.5. THEY GIVE PROPHECIES IN THEIR OWN FAVOUR

As seen already, the agenda of a false prophet is not aimed at man's salvation but at his own personal benefits or achievements. Their prophecy besides being oriented to please their clients, it has underneath the motive to increase some financial or material benefits to keep their office running (Cfr. Commentary on Micah 3:5 in *New African Bible*). Also, all their prophecies come when people make recourse to them or consult them especially in times of challenges in life.

A true prophet on his part gives his prophecies even if he is hated by the people or even when his prophecy may put his life into danger, he still stands firm. He is courageous to refute evil and confident in his message (since it comes from God) and have full trust in God and he equally refuses any form of bribe or manipulation (Cfr. 1Kg 22: 6-13, 27-29).

3. MYSTERIES REVEALED IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURE

In addition, an important point not considered here is the fact that the mysteries revealed in Sacred Scripture are coherent and in the final analysis constitute one whole, the false prophet breaks this coherency and introduces a teaching which does not agree with other mysteries as revealed in the Sacred Scriptures. Of course, this also has to relate to the fact that Sacred Scriptures interpret itself.

3.1. LINK BETWEEN REVEALED MYSTERIES

Dei Filius invites us to appreciate the link between the revealed “mysteries with one another” and with our “ultimate end”. The first of these procedures amounts to systematically looking for coherence. What coherent patterns of meaning show up when we examine the connection between various truths of revelation? By bringing into relationship with each other the revealed mysteries about the Trinity, Christ, the church and the human condition, we can organize into some kind of coherent whole the “content” of revelation. This is to ask how particular revealed

“mysteries” fit in with other “mysteries” in a pattern that is satisfying, attractive and even beautiful. We are helped to understand and accept these divine “mysteries” when we find them relating beautifully in a whole pattern of meaning. Beyond doubt, views differ on whether and to what extent something which is “shapely” and beautiful points to what is true and good. St. Augustine, Hans Urs Von Balthasar and many theologians have little difficulty in recognizing how we grasp truth, including divine truth, in and through beauty. By calling on us to relate the revealed “mysteries with one another”, *Dei Filius* encourages us to detect coherent patterns of meaning. By so doing we will be led to contemplate and marvel at the shape and beauty manifested in the whole revelation. This harmony between the revealed mysteries is not maintained or sustained in the declarations of ‘false prophet’.

3.2. LINKING THE MYSTERIES TO OUR ULTIMATE END

In twentieth century terms, this is to respect and struggle with the essentially eschatological force of God’s revelation and redemption. What has been communicated to us through the history of Israel, Christ’ incarnation, life, death and resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit constitutes the inauguration of the end of time. But the full, future revelation and salvation is not yet here (Rom. 8:18-23; 1 cor. 15:20-1 Jn. 3:2). An eschatological outlook, which recognizes the partial and provisional nature of God’s self-revelation in Christ, should characterize all theological thinking, acting and praying. The attitude of waiting in hope is at the heart of all authentic theology. This guideline points to the order of redemption and its final consummation. For example,

before completing the document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II included a whole chapter on “the pilgrim church” (cfr. LG 48-51). This is a clear reminder that in grappling with the revealed mystery of the Church, we should not ignore her eschatological nature or that “ultimate end” which essentially characterizes her nature and function. Analogies taken from the created order must be qualified by our hope for the Church’s final goal, when God will complete the work of redemption and make all things new (Rev. 21:1-22:5). This perspective of our ultimate end is not respected by the false prophets. In anxiety they prophesy an immediate end of the world and many other such fantasies.

3..3. GOD’S REVEALING AND SAVING ACTIVITY RECORDED AND INTERPRETED IN THE BIBLE

Under the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the story of God’s revealing and saving activity has been recorded and interpreted in the Bible. No other theological sources, not even infallibly true statements of the magisterium, can claim to be written under the special guidance of the Spirit which gives the scriptures their specifically normative character as “the word of God” (cfr. *Dei Verbum*, nn. 9, 21), books that not only have human authors but also have “God as their author” (cfr. *Ibid*, n. 11). Hence, the bible “should be the soul, as it were, of all theology” (cfr. *Optatam Totius*, n. 16, see also DV, n. 24). *Dei Verbum* emphasizes the impact of sacred scriptures in three ways: they provide a “permanent foundation” which “most firmly strengthens” and “constantly rejuvenates” theology (cfr. DV, n. 24). In the final analysis, scriptures should not only be the norm but also the primary inspiration of all theology.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it can be said that apart from the points cited above, there are many other ways by which scripture writers identified these charlatans and demagogues who paraded themselves as prophets of God. J. R. Lundbom identifies some six distinguishing marks of good prophets, which sets them apart from other biblical types and figures: 1) The Divine Call; 2) The Divine Word; 3) The Divine Vision; 4) Mighty Works; 5) The Divine Spirit; and 6) Prayer (Cfr. J. R. LUNDBOM, *The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction*, 9-31). It seems very difficult to identify them in some instances; however, St. Matthew on his part warns us to be on guard against them since they come in sheep’s clothing but underneath, they are ravenous wolves revealed by their fruits (Mtt. 7:15-16). Also, St. John cautions about the existence of many spirits and false prophets and that we should test and see which one is of God, that the one which do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the son of God is not of God (Cfr. 1 Jn. 4:1-3). However, our present-day society is not free from them. The watch word is that we should be on our guard and we should take note that not all that glitters is gold.

stop and think

**TO FEEL MUCH FOR
OTHERS AND LITTLE FOR
OURSELVES TO RESTRAIN
OUR SELFISH AND
EXERCISE OUR
BENEVOLENT AFFECTIONS
CONSTITUTES THE
PERFECTION OF HUMAN
NATURE.**

Adam Smith



FR. JOSEPH TATA
THEOLOGY IV



JUDE NGONG
THEOLOGY III

INTRODUCTION

The common mind knows the end time simply as the end of the world. In Christianity, Eschatology is that branch of theology that studies the ideas and beliefs concerning the end of the present world and the afterlife. Given that what lies at the other end of life has been kept secret from the men of this age, today as in the time of Jesus, men remain perplexed when mention is made of the end time. The questions about when will this end time come, how will it look like, what will be the signs that will be associated with it, what will become of men, etc., continue to trouble the minds of men in every age be they Christians or not. Generally, the thought or mention of the end time evokes very frightful and terrifying images in the minds of men. In religious circles, especially Christianity, the mention of the end time, is always associated with warnings about the impending dangers that will befall those who have not accepted the message of repentance preached by Christ. Our focus will be to explore the relationship between prophecy and the end time.

1. PROPHECY AND THE END TIME IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Considering what the prophets wrote, it is debatable if we can say that they prophesied about the end time as we know it today. This debate has resulted in two senses in which we can understand eschatology or the end time in the prophets: the narrow and broad senses.

1.1. THE NARROW SENSE OF ESCHATOLOGY

In its narrowest sense, eschatology means the doctrine of the things which concerns the end of the world. This is the end time as we know it today. Eschatology by this sense refers to all that lies on the other side of history, beginning with death. R. E. Clements concludes that, in this sense, there is no eschatology in the pre-exilic prophets of the Old Testament (R. E. CLEMENTS, *Prophecy and Covenant*, 104). It seems that the prophets prior to the exile did not talk of the end of the cosmos and the cessation of history. Their primary concern was to foretell the coming judgement of Yahweh upon Israel. With the disasters of 721 and 587 BC when the chosen people were taken to exile by the Assyrians and the Babylonians respectively, these prophecies of the coming judgment were fulfilled. Ideas of the end time as the cessation of history seem to appear quite later in Israel's religious development.

1.2. THE BROAD SENSE OF ESCHATOLOGY

The second and broad sense of eschatology is the one more suitable to describe the biblical ideas of God's purpose. This is eschatology as the study of ideas and beliefs concerning the end of the present world order, and the establishment of a new order. In this sense, the end time is not the coming to an end of this present world, but even more the transformation of this present order, and belief in the new and creative work of God which will take place in the arena of history (in time). At the close of the Babylonian captivity, the prophet Isaiah (Deutero- Isaiah) arose to assure the remnant Israel that the time of judgment was over, and a new age had dawned (Is 40:1f). However, the actual circumstances of the return from Babylon did not match the glory which Deutero-Isaiah had anticipated. In the disappointment of the difficult times, when the handful of the returned Jews endeavoured to recommence a normal life in Jerusalem, the eschatological hope became a problem. Why had it not been fulfilled?

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah took up afresh the theme of Yahweh's near arrival. They spoke of a new coming of Yahweh in grace to restore his people and to change their fortunes (Cfr. Hag. 1:8; 2:6-9; Zech. 1:14ff). In the prophecies of Malachi, we have a reawakening of the censure upon Israel for its sins (Mal. 1:6f) A new purging of Israel must take place before Yahweh could fulfil his promise of coming and the nation's glory. When the Old Testament prophecies came to an end, there was still the awareness of unfulfilled promises. Still the prophets looked forward to the creation of the New Israel, with a new covenant and a new dwelling of God within Israel's midst. The common designation of the end time among the prophets is the *Day of Yahweh*, or *the Day of the Lord*.

2. THE DAY OF YAHWEH

The Day of Yahweh or the Day of the Lord is a characteristics theme in the Old Testament prophets. It could be interpreted in two senses, one positive and the other negative. It could mean the day when God will restore his people and give them peace in their own land, settle them happily; or it could mean the day of salvation. For example, Zephaniah 3:11 reads: *When that Day comes, you will never again be ashamed of the deeds with which you once rebelled against me.* It foretells the coming of Yahweh to judge the nations, and to establish his righteous rule upon earth. The people looked forward to it as the day when Yahweh would carry to completion his purposes for his people. In another sense, and this is the most prominent of the two, the Day of the Lord is the day of disaster, of judgement, of doom, etc. For example, Amos 5:18-20 talks about disaster on the Day of Yahweh: *woe to you who desire the day of Yahweh... it is darkness, and not light.* These two senses are very much present in our minds when we talk about the end time even today. For those who have been faithful to God, it will be the day of salvation, of joy, of eternal happiness; but those who have not been faithful to him, it shall be the day of judgment, of doom, of

disaster. But the difference is that, when the prophets spoke about the Day of the Lord or the end time, whether as the Day of salvation or judgement, they imagined its fulfilment in this present age. However, for the people of the New Law, it will be established on the other side of history.

3. MODERN DAY 'PROPHETS' AND THE END TIME

Given the curiosity about the end time, men are often fascinated when someone begins to talk about the end time. Towards the dawn of the year 2000, many people looked forward to strange things. Some so-called *men of God* prophesied the end of the world, and others looked forward to experiencing something strange, but these signs were never seen, neither did the world come to an end. Some have prophesied the end of wars and pandemics, the overthrow of political systems and governments giving precise dates on which these will happen, and people have looked forward to see such prophecies come to pass on those dates, only to have hope, curiosity and anxiety dashed. But the irony remains: despite this, the fact is people are always available to be fooled again even when the same *man of God* revises his prophecy or gives a different one. This only points to the great anxiety about the end time.

The end time is not the coming to an end of this present world, but even more the transformation of this present order, and belief in the new and creative work of God which will take place in the arena of history.

4. NEW TESTAMENT ON THE END TIME: JESUS AND SAINT PAUL

In his preaching, Jesus had to face the question about the end time. The eschatological discourse in Matthew 24, provoked by the curiosity and anxiety of his disciples about the end time, recounts frightful events. In this discourse, the announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem is combined with the end of the world; it will be the Day of the Son of Man. Jesus warned his disciples to keep calm about the end time when they asked him: 'Tell us, when is this going to happen, and what sign will there be of your coming, and of the end of the world?' Instead, he told them, *"take care that no one deceives you, because many will come using my name and say to you: I am the Christ, and they will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars...many false prophets will arise; they will deceive many...this good news*

will be proclaimed to the whole world... and then the end will come” (Mt. 24:4-14). “But as for the day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, no one but the Father. Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come” (Mk 13:32-33).

It seems that the anxiety of the end time had overtaken the Christians of Thessalonica, reason why St. Paul in his second letter had to warn them against this anxiety. (2 Thess. 2:1ff). It will be a false understanding to think that the dramatic descriptions of what we hear are prophecies or a history of what will actually happen at the end of the world. The date and the details of these events are known to God alone, and any speculations about them are at best nonsense and at worst malicious.

CONCLUSION

R. E. Clements notes that the eschatology of the Old Testament prophets is primarily concerned with the future of Israel as the covenant people of Yahweh (Prophecy and Covenant, 118). The prophets before the exile foretold that Israel will be judged and the covenant brought to an end. Yet, after this judgement, there will be a new beginning where Israel will be reborn, and will become once again the people of the covenant. However, after the return from exile, when the promises were not immediately fulfilled, disappointment gave way to a more patient anticipation of the coming of Yahweh. Thus, an eschatological hope became a prominent feature of the post-exilic Judaism. The last of the canonical prophets still points towards the expectation of Yahweh’s triumphant coming to his people.

PROPHECY AND PROLIFERATION OF SECTS



**LAWRENCE
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**SYLVANUS
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THEOLOGY II

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of numerous sects in recent times confronts the Church and the world at large with problems that are becoming increasingly serious. Growing at an alarming and unprecedented rate in most urban centres, they have gradually usurped all sorts of available space; shops, warehouses, hotels, sitting rooms, uncompleted buildings, private and public school premises, to mention a few. The claim to prophesy and the desire for ecstasy, among others, have become major pull-factors for

many who find in these sects the solution to all life’s puzzles, spiritual and emotional problems amongst others. In this article, we shall look at the notion of prophecy and the proliferation of sects which has become a major concern today.

1. WHAT IS A SECT?

The word sect is derived from the Latin verb *sequi*, which means “to follow.” In religious jargon, it refers to a religious denomination that has broken away from an established mainline Church, with a distinctive world view of its own derived from, but not identical with the teachings of the parent Church (Cfr. Tatah H. Mbuy, *Sects, Cults and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Cameroon*, 64). Founders of such movements, in contemporary world, often refer to themselves as “prophets,” with varied motives which in many cases tend out to be for personal and economic interests.

2. THE NOTION OF PROPHECY IN THE DOMAIN OF SECTS

The term prophecy has a vast range of meanings. Generally, it is understood as

knowledge of the free future; that is, of how God will act in future, how man will use his free will in future, and the resulting events from both. Knowledge of this free future is possessed only by God and those he chooses to reveal it (Cfr. Edward Connor, *Prophecy for Today*, 1). Conversely, what most sects and new religious movements classify as “prophecies” are private inspirations supposedly gotten from alleged divine encounters and visions, which are not binding upon the faithful to believe.

3. PROPHECY AND THE PROLIFERATION OF SECTS

Due to the apparent miracles, signs and wonders associated with such prophecies as mentioned above, many Christians are led to believe these as visible signs of the presence of the power of God, though the real source of such prophecies and healings remain doubtful. These self-acclaimed prophets and prophetesses invite people to come to them for consultation, prayers and healing. Most of them have TV stations through which they entice people and reach out to multitudes (Cfr. George

Nkeze, *Prophets or Diviners?*, A Catholic Perspective on the Proliferation of Prophets Today, 2). Despite the organized structures, well-articulated doctrines and

professional administrative skills of the mainline Churches they still continue to lose members to these sects. This is probably due of the search for prophecies, miracles, instant healing, among others.

3.1. THE DISTORTION OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY

The biblical understanding of a prophet stems from the Hebrew word *Navi* which means to speak for someone else. A prophet speaks on behalf of God, and has

God as source and initiator (Cfr. Hag. 1:13). The prophet does not find God in his own mind but rather finds himself as an object in the mind of God. This is not what we see today. Television prophets we have today are rather fortunes tellers who give calculated oracles and foresee political happenings. They often do so in their own names, and not in the name of God. This is a distortion of biblical prophecy. They announce what they see, thereby inviting people to come to them for their fortunes to be revealed. This shows them to be diviners, and not prophets as expressed in the bible (Cfr. George Nkeze, *Prophets or Diviners?*, 4). Accordingly, the Bible condemns such in Deut. 18:10-15. A true prophet cries out on behalf of God for the marginalized and poor masses, and not in fortune telling. Even the devil too has power to make some predictions.

3.2. PROLIFERATION OF SECTS AND FALSE PROPHETS

We find in scriptures many kings who were surrounded by false prophets. These false prophets uttered visions of their own minds, and not according to divine injunction. They prophesied peace when they had something to

A prophet speaks on behalf of God, and has God as source and initiator. He does not find God in his own mind but rather finds himself as an object in the mind of God.

eat, and war against he who put nothing in their mouths to eat; yet claimed that if the lord was for them, who could be against them? (Cfr. Micah 3:5, 11).

Due to the proliferation of sects, we have many such prophets today, who even charge believers for money as seed sowing that will bring break-throughs in life and cause God to act. The selling of so-called ‘anointing water’ by such prophets proves the point. Many of such prophets have made categorical forecasts concerning the end of the Corona Pandemic and about American politics which never came to pass. Material prosperity in particular is seen as a proof of the indwelling of God, and remains the subject of their prophetic predictions, to the exclusion

of all suffering, pain and the cross of Christ. Many true prophets including Hosea (Cfr. 4:5, 8-10), Isaiah (Cfr. 28:7-8) and Jeremiah (Cfr. 23:13-16) raised their voices against these fake prophets.

3.1.3. Modern Prophets and Healing

Looking at the healings of Jesus, we realize that he often instructed the healed to tell no one. He wanted people to believe in him as the Messiah because of what he said and did, and not because of the visible signs and wonders he performed. Even the devil tried to get miracles out of Jesus in the wilderness when he was tempted (Cfr. Mtt. 4). Our so-called prophets publish their miraculous deeds on TV and other media, for all to come, see, receive and go, without concern for the nurturing of faith. This is contrary to the Christian message which is not all about miracles but the struggle against sin and death (Cf. George Nkeze, *Prophets or Diviners?*, 4). Through instant miracles, and prophecies of fortune, they continue to attract many people who are in search of meaning, mystical experiences, financial prosperity amongst others.

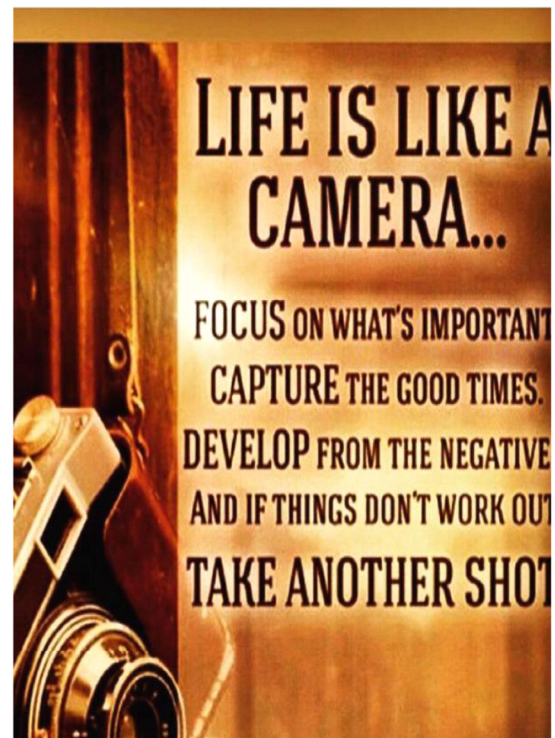
4. EFFECTS OF THE PROLIFERATION OF SECTS

The effects of proliferation of sects on the individual and society are enormous. Despite the spiritual zeal and enthusiasm that the members portray, there are several negative effects. Many sects reject the world as evil, and see anything associated with the body as evil. Members thus withdraw themselves totally, even from friends and family in order to protect their purity and foster holiness. Members of sects don't give room for religious discussions with others. Either it is their way, as taught in their churches, and as they presume to be in the bible or nothing. Even when glaring facts prove them wrong, they would often insist on what their leader told them. They are convinced that they alone have the truth, and that the rest of the people need help. It has led to aggression, social tensions and political unrest. Many families and homes have been destroyed in this regard. In some cases, it has even resulted to

occult killings, and heathen practices (Cfr. Tatah H. Mbuy, *Sects, Cults and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Cameroon*, 92-99).

CONCLUSION

It is worth noting at the bottom that despite the instant solution of healing, deliverance, and miracles associated with the proliferation of sects, research reveals that "the wild fire springing up of churches...is not as a result of yielding to the commission given by God to human kind to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations but lack of job, love of money, power and position..." (Ogunbade Adewale Olusegun, *Proliferation of Churches in Nigeria: Causes, Impacts and Likely Solutions*, 14 December, 2016). Many pastors simulate these prophecies, causing the uncontrollable springing up of churches. Christians are called upon to seek God alone, and know the living God. They should have the true knowledge of God and his ways and always put him above all their problems. This way, they will not fall into the hands of fake miracle-working pastors.



PROPHECY IN PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY



ROBERTO TUME
THEOLOGY I



THADDEUS ESOPÉ
THEOLOGY I

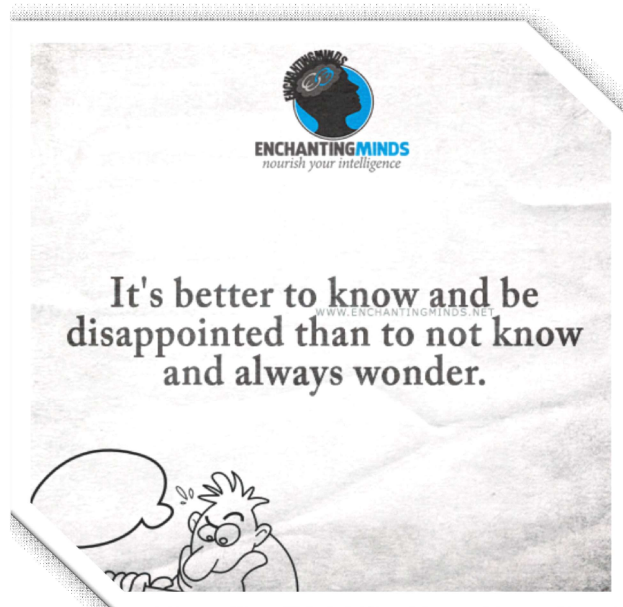
INTRODUCTION

According to the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Pentecostalism is a form of Christianity centered on the emotional, mystical, and supernatural: miracles, signs, wonders, and “the gifts of the Spirit” (charismata), especially “speaking in tongues” (glossolalia), faith healing, and “casting out demons” (exorcism). Supreme importance is attached to the **subjective** religious experience of being filled with or possessed by the Holy Spirit. There are basically two main types of Pentecostalism; Classical Pentecostalism, which constitutes all those Pentecostal groups that emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit in the Church, manifested through prophecy accompanied by healing, exorcism, and most especially speaking in tongues. e.g. Assemblies of God, the Apostolic Faith Mission, and the Full Gospel Church of God, (Cfr. *Ibid*) just to name a few. Neo-Pentecostalism, or charismatic movement on the other hand, is a type of Pentecostalism that emerged in nearly all the Protestant denominations, the Roman Catholic Church, and in Eastern Orthodox communions. e.g.

Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement. Classical Pentecostalism is what is also referred to as Liberal Pentecostalism and it is against this backdrop that we intend in this article, to bring out an understanding of prophecy and then show how this notion of prophecy differs from the Catholic understanding of prophecy.

1. LIBERAL PENTECOSTAL UNDERSTANDING OF PROPHECY

Prophecy in Liberal Pentecostalism is looked upon as one of the Pauline charisms as listed out in 1 Cor 12: 10; “...to another prophecy...” It is also the principal function of the office of prophets, as listed out in Ephesians 4:11-13 as one of fivefold ministries, “...he appointed some to be apostles, others to be *prophets*, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers...” It is considered the highest charism specifically by Liberal Pentecostals.



For them all other gifts of the Holy Spirit center around tongues and prophecy.

In Liberal Pentecostalism, there is what is referred to as ‘Theology of Peripheral Prophetism,’ which is more of spiritual-liberation from socio-economic and political problems. Peripheral prophets do not enjoy immediate acceptance from their respective Church systems. Notwithstanding, they continue to enjoy lots of patronage. To meet the socio-economic plight of the majority, peripheral prophets propose a spiritual liberation via prophetic direction which is a word or counsel a ‘prophet’ gives his or her clients to show how to deal with a problem (Cfr. J. QUAYESI-AMAKYE, “Prosperity and Prophecy in African Pentecostalism” in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 20 (2011), 294). According to Liberal Pentecostal theology, God’s answer is revealed in a prophetic word through a man or woman of God called a prophet. (Cfr. *Ibid*, 295). Having seen how Liberal Pentecostals understand prophecy, we shall now go ahead to expose the place of prophecy in Pentecostal worship.

2. PROPHECY IN LIBERAL PENTECOSTAL WORSHIP

Stop and Laugh

John’s mother had ordered him to bed. John had demanded to know why he had to retire so early, and she had told him. John turned to his father:

“Dad,” he complained, “women are unreasonable.”

His father watched his mother out of the corner of his eye, and inquired:

“Why son?”

“Well,” explained John, “tonight Mom says, ‘John, you are too young to stay up,’ In the morning, she’ll say, ‘Get up, John, you’re too big to stay in bed!’ You can’t win.”

For Classical Pentecostals, Prophecy is at the core of their worship. In the early years of the Pentecostal movement, nearly every worship was marked by prophesying accompanied by speaking in tongues, healings, exorcisms, hand-clapping, uncoordinated praying aloud, running, jumping, falling, dancing ‘in the Spirit,’ crying, and shouting with great exuberance (Cfr. *Ibid*, 298). One significant prophetic instrument in resolving the existential tensions of humanity in Pentecostalism is the use of music and singing (Cfr. *Ibid*, 296). In peripheral prophetic services spiritual songs not only serve as an assurance of divine benevolence but also as a supernatural weapon that destroys the enemies of believers. In prophetic circles of Liberal Pentecostalism, sermons are interrupted with reciprocating catchy interjections like “Prophecy to me,” “Papa, go deeper,” “You have seen correctly,” or “A Daniel is in the house” and so on (Cfr. *Ibid*).

3. PROPHECIC RITUALS IN LIBERAL PENTECOSTALISM

This constitutes an important aspect of the Liberal Pentecostal practice of prophecy. In Liberal Pentecostal worship, prophecy involves rituals which are individualized and personalized to suit believers’ unique needs and situations. These prophetic rituals are meant not only to neutralize satanic powers but also to mediate and channel divine favour and assistance into clients’ lives. They are believed to put a stop to the nonsense of wicked forces. These prophetic rituals are carried out for spiritual protection, promotion, success and security against enemies. They thrive on the understanding that freedom and victory in Christ are primarily spiritual (Cfr. J. QUAYESI-AMAKYE, “Prophetic Practices in Contemporary Pentecostalism in Ghana”, in

Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity 6 (2015) 48-49). Thus one's success or victory depends on adherence to the prophetic word or direction.

Moreover, these rituals may also involve the pouring of 'anointing oil' on objects such as clients' bathrooms, toilets, garbage cans, floors and entrances to homes, handkerchiefs, door keys and car keys, etc. Such "anointing" is meant to mark out clients and their property beyond the interference of enemies (Cfr. J. QUAYESI-AMAKYE, *Christology and Evil in Ghana: Towards a Pentecostal Public Theology, Currents of Encounter: Studies on the Contact between Christianity and Other Religions, Beliefs and Cultures*, vol. 49 (2013), 91). These rituals could also be the channels of miracles of personal improvement and wealth creation... thus in these churches the manifestation and transmission of divine power and miracles of financial wellbeing is through a prophet's usual intervention (Cfr. DAVID O. OGUNGBILE - AKINTUDE E. AKINADE (eds.), *Creativity and Change in Nigerian Christianity*, Malthouse Press Ltd, Lagos 2010, 339).

4. HOW THE LIBERAL PENTECOSTAL UNDERSTANDING OF PROPHECY DIFFERS FROM THE CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING

Having seen what Liberal Pentecostals understand by prophecy, we shall proceed to show how their understanding of prophecy differs from the Catholic understanding. While Liberal Pentecostal understanding of prophecy is derived mainly from the New Testament events and writings, the Catholics go as far as the Old Testament. From the Old Testament, the Catholic Church considers Prophets and prophecies as one of the mediators of the ultimate Revelation (Cfr. CCC, n. 64), that is, Jesus Christ, the absolute climax of God's saving and revealing self-

communication. The Catholic Church teaches that Jesus is the fulfilment of all prophecies and as such, there is no room for any other prophecy after Christ for it will point to nothing. Unlike the Liberal Pentecostals, the Catholic Church does not consider prophecy as the focal point of the worship, rather Christ is at the center of the Catholic worship. The Catholic Church regards prophecy in the New Testament as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and as such should be for the good of the Church and the edification of Her members.

From the Old Testament, the Catholic Church considers Prophets and prophecies as one of the mediators of the ultimate Revelation of God (Cfr. CCC 64), that is, Jesus Christ. From the New Testament, prophecy is regarded as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church and as such should be for the good of the Church and the edification of Her members.

CONCLUSION

After presenting what Liberal Pentecostals understand as prophecy and seeing how it differs from the Catholic understanding of prophecy, it is our ardent desire that this article serves to clarify the thoughts of most Christians who due to no fault of theirs, have been led astray because of lack of adequate knowledge on what makes a difference between the Church's teaching on prophecy and the Pentecostal understanding of prophecy.

SAINT OF THE ISSUE

STAMS IN PICTURES

VOX POP

VOX POP

PROPHECY IN THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

INTRODUCTION

The history of our salvation is among other things, the story of God's interaction with humanity throughout its journey. It is about the Divine initiative and the human response, from creation to the present time. One central component in the economy of our salvation was prophecy. Prophecy and its fulfilment provide a crucial link of the two Testaments in the bible, among other things. It is the manner in which God willed to manifest himself to men down the ages. In this article, we will discuss the nature and the evolution of prophecy in salvation history.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF PROPHECY

Prophecy is an expression of the will of God or a revelation of the divine will and not just a conjecture of future events, which are very obvious or at times unreal and impossible. Understood in its strict sense, Prophecy means the foreknowledge of future events, though it may sometimes apply to past events of which there is no memory, and to present hidden things which cannot be known by the natural light of reason. Human beings cannot know the divine will of God if He does not reveal it to them (Cfr. CCC, 51-52). No one can simply claim to know what the will of God is, without this knowledge coming from God. Therefore, a prophet was more a messenger of God, a bearer of God's message to his people.

Prophecy consists in knowledge and in the manifestation of what is known. The knowledge must be supernatural and infused by God because it concerns things beyond the natural power of created intelligence; and the knowledge must be manifested either by words or signs, because the gift of prophecy is given primarily for the good of others, and hence needs to be manifested. It is a Divine light by which God reveals things concerning the unknown future and by which these things are in some way represented to the mind of the prophet, whose duty it is to manifest them to others. *"Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting covenant intended for all, to be written in their hearts. The prophets proclaim a radical redemption of the people of God,*



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THEOLOGY IV



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WAINDIM**
THEOLOGY II

purification from all their infidelities, a salvation which includes all nations..." (CCC, 64).

The office of prophet was not given by any human authority; its exercise was always extraordinary and depended on the immediate call of God. That explains why each time they proclaimed the message of God to his people, in all instances, they used phrases at the beginning or at the end of the message to show that it was God speaking through them and not them. ("The Lord says...", Jer. 12:1; "...I, the Lord have spoken." Amos 2:11, just to highlight a few). The prophetic light, according to St. Thomas, is in the soul of the prophet not as a permanent form or habit, but after the manner of a passion or passing impression (*Summa Theologiae* II-II. q.171, a.2). St. Paul, speaking in 1 Cor. 14, says that prophecy does not confine its meaning to predictions of future events, but includes under it Divine inspirations concerning what is secret, whether future or not. As, however, the manifestation of hidden present mysteries or past events comes under revelation, we have here to understand by prophecy what it is, in its strict and proper sense, namely, the revelation of future events.

2. PROPHECY AS CENTRAL IN THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

Having seen already that prophecy is solely the bearing of the message of God to his people, it is thus evident that one cannot talk of prophecy if the message is not from God. This shows that prophecy is not supposed to be one's private initiative or just a mere prediction of an event that

may happen because one thinks so. Going back to the life of the prophets in the Scriptures, we would notice from the messages that God gave them significant themes. The message was either a prophecy of denunciation, of foreknowledge, and of predestination. It was for denunciation (public condemnation) when the God reveals future events according to the order of secondary causes, which may be hindered from taking effect by other causes. It required a miraculous power to prevent, and these may or may not happen, though the prophets do not express it

but seem to speak absolutely. Isaiah spoke thus when he said to Hezekiah: 'Yahweh says this, "put your house affairs in order for you are going to die, you will not live."' (Isaiah 38:1). It is only God himself that can effect this miraculous change. The second, that of foreknowledge, takes place when God reveals future events

which depend upon created free will and which he sees present from eternity. The third kind, the prophecy of predestination, takes place when God reveals what He alone will do, and what he sees present in eternity and in His absolute decree. This includes not only the secret of predestination to grace and to glory, but also those things which God has absolutely decreed to do by His own supreme power, and which will infallibly come to pass.

3. THE EVOLUTION OF THE PROPHETIC INSTITUTION IN ISRAEL

The Jewish religion could be said to hinge on three pillars: the law, the priesthood and the Prophets. When compared to the first two institutions, the prophetic institution seems to have appeared later on. While the kings and priests could be chosen by the people, prophets did not originate from human agencies. Although Ancient Near East texts show that the phenomenon of prophecy existed in its religions, Prophecy in Ancient Biblical Israel was unique and unlike everything else before or around it. Prophecy in Israel was covenantal. As mediators, their main message was the interpretation of the covenant and the communication of Yahweh's Divine will. The *Catechism* mentions that: *The prophets summoned the people to conversion of heart and,*

while zealously seeking the face of God, like Elijah, they interceded for the people (C.C.C n. 2595).

The origins and early development of Hebrew prophecy could be seen in the appearance of groups called "the sons of the prophets" shortly before the establishment of the early monarchy (cf. 1 Sam 10: 5-12). However, Samuel is the first whose vocation as a prophet is clearly discernible (as narrated in 1 Sam 3:1ff). Elijah and Elisha also

Prophecy is not supposed to be one's private initiative or just a mere prediction of an event that may happen because one thinks so.

mark the prophetic landscape in a decisive way. In the time of the monarchy, there is an intriguing involvement of the prophets in the internal/external politics of Israel and powers that be. Samuel is key in the deposition of Saul. Gad and Nathan were associated with David, with Nathan involved in David's succession of the throne and his coronation. At other times, there

was a growing opposition between prophecy and the monarchy (Cfr. J. McKenzie, "Prophets, Prophecy," in *Dictionary of the Bible*, ATC, Bangalore 2002, 696).

The martyrdom of the prophets could be seen as the crowning point of all their prophesies. In Matt 23, Jesus lamented: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets..." From history, a mass murder of prophets took place under Ahab (1 Kg 18: 4-13), probably under Manasseh (2 Kg 21:16) and certainly under Jehoiakim (Jr 26: 20-23). Thus, the Servant of Yahweh, while interceding for sinners, will deliver them by His death (Is 53:5ff).

4. THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Early Christians related ancient prophecy and other scriptures to their convictions about Jesus Christ and their own experience. The NT is a conscious fulfilment of the prophecies of the OT. The book of Isaiah which is in itself a summation of prophetic utterances, and especially the Servant Songs within it, appear to be an indispensable link between these two Testaments (cf. "Prophet," in X. Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, The Word Among Us, Maryland 1988, 472). John the Baptist, "Prophet of the Most High," surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is

the last. He is the Lord's immediate precursor. He completes the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah and proclaims the imminence of the consolation of Israel (C.C.C. n. 522; 719). The evangelists stress those events in Jesus' life which fulfil the Scriptures. Each of the prophets, it could be said, did anticipate an aspect of the Mystery of Christ. This becomes even clearer in Jesus' own utterances such as "...these words (of the prophet Isaiah) are being fulfilled today at your hearing." On his way to Emmaus, the Risen Lord explains His death and resurrection by opening up "all the scriptures to them from Moses and all the prophets." The whole NT, thus, is the fulfilment of the OT. In the early Christian communities, prophecy existed as a charism, a special gift for the benefit of the

community. This comes out clearly in the Pauline Epistles.

CONCLUSION

We have so far examined prophecy in the economy of salvation. The centrality of prophecy as a phenomenon and an institution is undoubted. The prophet's prediction of future events reinforced the central message of repentance. Prophecies, therefore, were part of God's providence, for God alone possesses knowledge of the contingent future and the expression of God's providential control of time and space (S. Hahn, "Prophet," in *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, 734). God announced the coming of his Son "through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel" (C.C.C. n. 522).

REVELATION IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH



VINDICATUS FON
THEOLOGY I



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THEOLOGY I

INTRODUCTION

Although the idea of revelation does not appear formally within the Bible, it is a dominant theme in the life of the Church. The word Revelation is derived from the Latin *revelare* which means "to remove the veil". In the history of Christian theology, Revelation has often been understood as an inner illumination or as a divine teaching and instruction. However, it is now fundamentally understood as God's self-revelation. Revelation is not primarily the uncovering of hidden truths otherwise inaccessible to reason and ordinary experience. Instead, it means God's self-unveiling and self-gift. Paul Tillich avers that revelation is

the unfolding of a relationship. It influences the world at every phase of its coming to be and not just within the confines of the Biblical world alone. In this sense, it has a general character and it is even constitutive of all things (Cfr. J. HAUGHT, *A New Dictionary of Theology*). The aim of this article is to show the value of revelation in the life of the Church.

1. SOURCES AND TRANSMISSION OF REVELATION

In the Catholic Church, there are three main sources of the idea of God's self-gift to humanity; these are Tradition, Scripture and the Magisterium. Scripture is the word of God as written down by the inspired authors. Tradition on the other hand is the word which under the instrumentality of the apostles has been orally handed down to the Church through apostolic succession. The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* teaches that Christ who is the summit of this self-gift of God commanded the apostles to preach the gospel. This gospel was to be the source of all saving truths and moral discipline. The apostles faithfully did this by the spoken words of their preaching, by the example they gave and by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received - whether from the lips

of Christ, from His way of life or His works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit; It was also done by those apostles and other men associated with them, who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing (Cfr. *Dei Verbum*, n. 7). The Church therefore draws her certainty about all revealed truths not from scripture alone but also from tradition as handed down by the apostles. However, the task of authentic interpretation of this word whether in its written form or in the form of tradition is entrusted to the Magisterium of the Church only which is the teaching authority of the Church. These three sources are so connected that one of them cannot stand without the other. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

However, Christians are not obliged to hold that revelation in every detail is disclosed solely by these sources since a close reading of these sources does not suggest such a restriction. If God is truly a hidden God, then there is no reason why aspects of God, which remain hidden from us in our experience of specifically Christian history cannot become genuinely transparent to others in their own religious experience and to us in our association with other Religions and traditions (Cfr. J. HAUGHT, in *A New Dictionary of Theology*). Let us now look at public and private revelation in the Church.

2. PUBLIC REVELATION

Public revelation refers to God's self-communication to mankind in history, which reached its completion in Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate as the definitive and fullness of divine revelation, lived, taught and handed to the Church by the apostles as a rule of faith. This revelation was manifested in the sayings and works which revealed the identity, nature and mission of Christ as Divine. In his book *Foundation of Christian Faith*, Karl Rahner describes this as a particular and official point of revelation within the universal history of revelation whereby in Jesus

Christ God himself is expressed and communicated through the human reality of Christ's life. The title "public" is uniquely essential as it does not only mean it is open to and announced to everyone but more so it imposes as well, obligation of belief on all. The fact of this divine message being addressed directly to the Church understood as the community in which it is conceived and meant for, makes it ecclesial.

Public revelation ended with the death of the last apostle, as the apostles themselves were messengers of their own testimonies being direct witnesses, indicating the absolute supreme character of the events of Christ, being the paschal mystery, which remains to produce new fruits of the Spirit in the Church, that is; repentance and conversion. This made it impossible for any expectation of further public revelation, though not implying that God has ceased relating to his Church and individuals which leads us to the concept of private revelation.

3. PRIVATE REVELATION

This is genuine revelation addressed not to the Church directly, but to individuals and does not impose any obligation of belief on everyone though relevant

The Church is called to preserve the abiding presence of Christ's truth through actualizing and unfolding it in every period of history.

to the Church, a case in point are the Marian apparitions like the apparition of Our Lady of Fatima, in which the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children namely; Lucia, Francis and Jacinta in 1917 which was approved by Pope Pius XII to be a private revelation on May 13, 1946. Private revelations, as seen from scripture and the Church, always involve a combination of the life and behaviour of the receiver, fused with the grace given the person in the depth of his existence. Though private revelations are genuinely possible, the magisterium which is the living teaching office of the Church ensures that it stays within the framework of the general revelation given to the Church by acting as an examination organ, as the relevance of private revelation is at times restricted to particular places, times and groups in the church. There are still others recognized like that of Joan of Arc, Margaret Mary Alacoque, just to name a few. Private revelations are of

ecclesial character in that they can be prophetic directives and imperatives to the Church in a particular situation, thus, making some more important than others.

4. THE VALUE OF REVELATION IN THE CHURCH

Revelation in Christ is present explicitly and in a socially constituted form in the Church and thus, the Church receives and announces this Truth. By virtue of this Truth being really abiding in Christ, the Church is infallible in her confession of this truth, for the content of God's self-giving in Christ is present in her proclamation to which the Church has absolute commitment. Michael Schmaus in his book *Dogma on God in Revelation* tells us that the Church by its nature is oriented towards the whole of mankind and the entire world, as in her the mystery of God's will prevails, as by its existence and activity it asserts the truth of the salvific will of God. Thus, it is the

truths of revelation that make known the identity and mission of the Church. The Church is called to preserve the abiding presence of Christ's truth through actualizing and unfolding it in every period of history. Her infallibility in her teachings on faith and morals comes from this body of revealed truths as contained in Sacred Scriptures, Tradition

and interpreted by the Magisterium which are the sources of the Church's teaching in that one deposit of faith.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article has been to bring out the value of revelation in the life of the Church. We have seen what revelation is and the sources of revelation in the Church. We have also looked at private and public revelation. All these have provided the grounds for

us to conclude at the end of this article that the communication of the will of God has as aim the salvation of souls which is achieved by a conscious execution of the will of God which comes to us through the instrumentality of prophecy.

Stop and think!

The Bible is a widow in this prison world through which we may look into eternity

Timothy Dwight

THE PLACE OF PROPHECY IN THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

In our society today, the term prophecy is ambiguously used to mean miracle-working and fortune telling. Yet, prophecy in the light of the New Covenant goes beyond these, for it is the revealing of the mysteries of God, to exhort, console and build up the people of God in faith. Also, Prophecy is an inseparable aspect of Christ's Faithful as witnesses of the Gospel. They are called to live the faith received and proclaim it to the ends of the earth. The Scripture says: "Do not keep the prophecies of this book secret, because the



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appointed time is near" (Rev. 22:10). We can therefore say that all Christ's faithful participate in the gift of prophecy. In this article we shall look at the origin of prophecy in the Church; prophecy as a Charism, the Discernment of the gift of prophecy, and prophecy as the ministration of the Gospel in the Church.

1. ORIGIN OF PROPHECY IN THE CHURCH

After Christ's ascension into heaven, the Holy Spirit descended on His disciples on Pentecost Sunday and bestowed on them, among other gifts, the grace of prophesying the message of the New Covenant of God (Cfr. Acts 2:17). The out pouring of the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the

sons of the Church was a renewal of the Old Testament prophecy of Moses: “If only all Yahweh’s people were prophets, and Yahweh had given them his spirit!” (Num. 11:29). In the new Covenant God conferred this favour on his sons more generously. Yet, one may argue whether prophetic charism still exist in the Church today.

1.1. PROPHECY: A CHARISM IN THE CHURCH

Prophecy is recognized as one of the most important charisms in the Church. It is a gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit which a validly baptized receives at Baptism. The anointing with the oil of chrism at baptism makes the newly baptized: priest, prophet and king (CCC. 1241). All the baptized are incorporated into the body of Christ and receive the gift of prophecy. The Church teaches that: “The holy People of God share also in Christ’s prophetic office” (CCC, 785).

Christ is the prophet par excellence, from whom true prophecy is derived. He proclaimed the Love of God through his earthly life both in word and deed; and asked his disciple to do the same. Thus, we find in the early Church the exercise of prophetic charism by all kinds of men and women (Cfr. Acts 11:27-28; 21:10). Pope John Paul II asserts that: “Even in our own times there is no lack of a fruitful manifestation of various charisms among the faithful, men and women” (*Christifideles Laici*, n. 24). Yet, the role placed by these prophets are doubtlessly distinct from the prophetic function of the Apostles as custodians and foundation stones of the Church. Thus, the ordained ministers have these charisms as a special mandate to serve the people of God.

1.2. THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFT OF PROPHECY IN THE CHURCH

There is a distinction between the gift of prophecy in the common priesthood and the Prophetic Charism. On the one hand, the gift of prophecy in the common priesthood is derived from the sacrament of baptism by which all Christians participate in the prophetic mission of Christ: “it is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians” (CCC, n. 1547).

Through this gift, the faithful appreciate and make visible the Church’s supernatural gift of faith that cannot err in matters of faith and sharers in the grace of God’s word. John Paul II avers that: “Through their participation in the *prophetic mission* of Christ... the lay faithful are given the ability and responsibility to accept the Gospel in faith and to proclaim it in word and deed, without hesitating to bravely identify and denounce evil” (*Christifideles Laici*, n. 14).

Christ is the prophet par excellence, from whom true prophecy is derived. He proclaimed the Love of God through his earthly life both in word and deed; and asked his disciple to do the same.

On the other hand, Prophetic Charism is one of the special gifts the Holy Spirit allots to each one of the faithful, as he wills, for the exercise of their apostolate and thereby building up Christ’s body in charity (Cfr. *Ibid*, 24). Prophetic Charism is a gift of complementarity among the diversity of gifts given to each one of the faithful. Thus, Prophetic Charism, as mentioned in the writings of St. Paul, is God’s special favour granted to some members of the faithful for a common good and for the building of the ecclesial community. Because of its importance to the building of the community, all Christians can desire the gift of prophecy (1Cor 12:7; 14:1-5). The true gift of prophecy is built on faith (Rm 12:7). It is the communication of the faith of the Church in Christ, the Word of God.

A true prophecy must not necessarily come from one who undergoes a trance or visionary experiences, or a violent emotion: rather, it has a fervent dialogue towards the world around for conversion to God. As Donald Gelpi notes: prophecy is “Firstly... a word that is itself deeply felt. Secondly, it is a word that seeks to engage its auditors totally, affectionately, intellectually and decisively in order to orient them totally to God” (*Charisms and Sacraments*, 1977, pg. 81). Thus, the prophetic message is drawn from the Scripture; so that, he or she prophesies out of the plentitude of an intimate spirit-inspired understanding of that Word (Cfr. *Ibid*, 82). True prophecy is a proclamation of the Word of God spoken to Israel and accomplished in the mission of His Son, Jesus Christ. As we find in the Gospel of John “The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you” (Jn 14:26).

Today, Prophecy manifests itself in the life of the Faithful, especially in the sacred ministers of the Church and in liturgical celebration, in which the mysteries of God are proclaimed and celebrated. Since love is the core of the New Law, its prophetic message is based on love of God and love of neighbour.

2. DISCERNMENT OF THE GIFT OF PROPHECY

Considering the fact that the human mind is weak and can err, it is but proper that the gift of prophecy be discerned such that the one who receives the gift should prophesy in accord with the truth of the Gospel. As such, the one who has the gift of prophecy must listen to God's will and be submissive to the authority of the Church for proper discernment. Scripture affirms that, prophecy should always be discerned and tested by the body of believers (Cfr. 1Jn 4: 1-2). Besides, the Church teaches that the whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the Holy Spirit cannot err in matters of Faith (Cfr. LG par.12; 1 Jn 2:20, 27).

2.1. MAGISTERIUM: THE PRINCIPAL AGENT OF DISCERNMENT

The magisterium is understood to be the teaching authority of the Church and to her has been given the task of providing an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, either in her writings, Tradition, or through her prophetic messages. Mindful of Christ's words to his Apostles: "He who hears you, hears me." (Lk. 10:16), the Church exercises her authority in the name of Christ. This means the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the Bishops in Communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. (Cfr CCC, n. 85). They are directly assisted by the Priests. Note should be taken here that the Magisterium is not Superior to the Word of God but through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit, remains a Servant in genuine discernment. (Cfr. CCC, n. 86).

3. PROPHECY AS THE MINISTERING OF THE GOSPEL IN THE CHURCH

In the New Testament, the meaning of Prophecy took a new dimension to refer to the ability to bear witness in preaching the gospel. John the Baptist is known as the last and greatest of prophets through the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. His message was "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand" (Mtt 3:2). Jesus himself was considered a Prophet by the People and did not reject the title. It was necessary for others to see Jesus as a prophet, for he spoke the Word of God with authority and used prophetic modes of speech (Cfr. SCOTT HAHN, *Catholic Bible Dictionary*, Doubleday, New York 2009, p. 736-737).

Again, Jesus was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King (CCC. 1241) and all the members of the Church share in these functions. The second Vatican Council teaches that the faithful participate in Christ's prophetic office by bearing witness with their lives and, to the degree that they have the competence, by evangelization, for "the true Apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers to draw them towards the faith, or to the faithful to instruct, strengthen and incite them to a more fervent life" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* par. 6). Thus, Prophecy as we learn from the New Testament is expressed in a living witness to Jesus Christ through faith, love and our sacrifice of praise to God. (Cfr. Heb 13:15).

CONCLUSION

The Prophetic Charism enables us to know and serve God in a more devoted way. The essence of the gift is both for personal sanctification and for the common good of the community, the Church. The love of God is the core of the gift of prophecy, for without the love of God, the gift is useless. Thus, the gift of prophecy is essential in the Church for her to incite love for one another and gather the children of God into the body of Christ as Christians.

STOP AND LAUGH

Not True

Teacher: "The sentence 'My father had money,' is in the past tense. Now Jack, what tense would you be speaking in, if you said, "My father has money?"

Jack: "Pretense."

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

INTRODUCTION

“To be a prophet” said Abraham Heschel, “is both a distinction and an affliction” (cfr. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, 17-18). And we dare to add that writing about them is hardly otherwise. Prophecy is deeply intertwined into the fabric of the Old Testament. The word prophet (nâbî in Hebrew), appears 300 times in the Old Testament. There was no standard requisite for being a prophet in the Old Testament; the prophetic career depended on Yahweh’s call. In the Old Testament, a prophet referred to one who received a message from God and proclaimed it in speech, action, or writing. Given that the prophets were called and commissioned to address particular issues during various periods, it would be necessary to make an inquiry into the various groupings of the prophets, their relationship with the culture of the time and the basic structure of their message.

1. CLASSIFICATION OF THE PROPHETS

Prophets can basically be classified into various groups: Oral and Writing, Former and Latter, Major and Minor.

1.1. THE ORAL/NON-LITERARY/NON-WRITING AND WRITING/LITERARY PROPHETS

They can equally be classified into writing/literary prophets such as Jonah, Hosea just to name a few; while the oral/non-literary/non-writing prophets are Nathan, Elijah and Elisha

1.2. FORMER AND LATTER PROPHETS

Another group of classification of Prophets of the Old Testament are Former (*Rushonim*) and Latter (*Aharonim*) Prophets. The Former Prophets in the Hebrew Bible refer to the historical books that is Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings because in them we have prophecies; while the latter prophets refer to the prophetic books of the Old Testament namely: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Jonah, Amos, Micah.

1.3. MAJOR AND MINOR PROPHETS

The Latter Prophets are further classified based on size, and not on content or quality of



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THEOLOGY II

inspiration into Major and Minor Prophets. The Major prophets are so called based on the wide volume of their writings not on content nor on importance. They include: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. On the other hand, due to the small volume of their writings, the rest of the latter prophets are referred to as minor prophets namely: Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Nahum, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi (Cfr. Marvin SWEENEY, *Reading Prophetic Books*, p.21). Latter prophets can also be seen from the point of view of pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic period.

2. PROPHETS AND THE VARIOUS ERAS

The historical continuum of Israel’s history from the eighth to the fifth centuries, can be sketched, even if roughly, in the latter prophets. That is, the prophets bring to focus three historical eras and they can be understood around these three historical eras: Neo-Assyrian era, Neo-Babylonian era and Persian era.

2.1. THE NEO-ASSYRIAN PERIOD

Here, attention falls on the events leading up to and the conditions following the fall of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) in 722 B.C. The prophets who assessed the moral and theological climate that led to Israel’s captivity in Assyria include: Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, who in variable and sympathetic ways, saw the end of Israel and its implications for Judah.

2.2. THE NEO-BABYLONIAN PERIOD

In this epoch, focus is on the circumstances and succeeding conditions of the fall of the Southern Kingdom (Judah) in 586 B.C

into the clutches of Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian emperor. Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Nahum, Ezekiel, and Obadiah contributed their distinctive insights to their contemporaries and delivered their message from the Lord to Judah who did not learn from the errors of their sister nation, Israel.

2.3. THE PERSIAN PERIOD

This era comes after the Babylonian exile. The prophets in this era built upon the hope of a return from exile. They set forth Yahweh's new order as Babylonian austerity passed into Persian indulgence. With a new landlord, Judah's fortunes, partly smothered in the long exile but kept alive by religious enthusiasts, took a turn for the better. The decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C., which permitted Israel to return home and reconstruct the temple, marked the beginning of that era. The first faint outbreak of hope might even be traced to the release of Jehoiachin from prison after the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 B.C. Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi, in their respective ways, articulated the hope and implicated the changing conditions of the first hundred years of the postexilic life of Judah.

3. THE PROPHETS AND THEIR CULTURE

Although the legitimacy and valid credentials of the prophet came from the call of Yahweh, the prophets were not "heaven-sent".

They were part of a culture which they were called to shape and which in turn shaped them. Prophets were not political, or cultural reformers but they were moved by their theological convictions by which they addressed the ills of the people. Four cultural factors greatly shaped the prophets.

3.1. HISTORICAL EVENTS

In his journey with Israel, Yahweh entered into the historical process in order to protect his vital interests in the world. Israel was at once the end and means of His actions and the prophets were the witnesses of his vital concerns. Being the messengers of Yahweh, the prophets were intimately involved in the historical events of their time. The prophets sought to stabilize the national destiny which came as a result of the covenant with God. Symbolic actions were the signs of the fact that the prophets evolved in the historical process

of the people (Cfr. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, 42).

3.2. MONARCHY

The prophets handled the issue of Monarchy which was the strongest power structure to be dealt with. Monarchy in Israel began with Saul (1020- 1000BC), succeeded by David (1000-960BC), then Solomon (960-930BC) after which the kingdom was divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) c. 930-922BC. It has been proposed that the prophets after the division of the kingdom, at least down to the 8th century, were proponents of national reunion, but their interests were broader than that. Although politically inclined, they were religiously motivated (Cfr. Edward Robertson, *The Role of the Early Hebrew Prophet*, 412-431).

3.3. IDOLATRY

The books of Kings and the majority opinion of the literary prophets are in agreement that the fall of the Judean state was a result of idolatry in its various forms. After Hezekiah's courageous reforms that turned Judah in a divergent direction from the recently fallen Israelite state,

his son Manasseh's reversal of the reforms greatly determined the fate of the nation (2 Kings 21:10-16; 23:26-27; 24:3-4). The prophetic opposition was strongest against the form of idolatry

known as Baalism, a fertility cult that the Israelites found deeply rooted in the native culture of Canaan at the time of settlement (Cfr. Hassell Bullock, *Old Testament Prophetic Book*, 22).

3.4. SOCIAL OPPRESSION

The Israelite settlement in Canaan and the gradual assimilation of Canaanite civilization, created a social problem for Israel, that of a new class. As the tribal organization and the collective solidarity that went with it began to dissolve, the individual and his interests became more evident. The right to hold private property and the practice of amassing wealth were both recognized and practised by the Hebrews in Canaan. Thus, we have the basis for class distinction between the rich and the poor. As a third party, the prophets stepped forth as messengers of Yahweh and by their own sense of justice, interceded for those who had no

The prophets were not "heaven-sent", they were part of a culture which they were called to shape and which in turn shaped them. Prophets were not political, or cultural reformers but they were moved by their theological convictions by which they addressed the ills of the people.

intercessor. In the opinion of Abraham Heschel, justice was important to the prophets because it was God's stake in human life (Cfr. Abraham I. Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. 1, 198).

4. MAJOR PROPHETIC THEMES OF THE OT

4.1. THE DAY OF THE LORD (*Yom Adonai-Hebrew*)

"The Day of the Lord" is a special expression used by most of the Old Testament prophets to designate God's solemn intervention in the course of history. Sometimes the expression is shortened to "the Day" or "that Day." For the prophets, the day of the Lord signifies either judgment or blessings. With respect to judgment, the Day of the Lord is clearly characterized by a pouring out of divine wrath on God's enemies (Joel 2:1-2, Amos 5:18-20, Zech 1:14-15). With regard to blessing, the Day of the Lord is also characterized by a pouring of divine blessing upon God's people (Is 4:2-6, Hos 2:18-23, Joel 3:9-21, Amos 9:11-15, Mic 4:6-8, Zeph 2:7). The purpose of the day of the Lord is a call to repentance from idolatry (Is 2:18-20), turning to Yahweh with their whole heart (Joel 2:12-14). The Day of the Lord is both imminent and eschatological, but the emphasis is on the essence not on the timing, it constitutes repeated events that will find eschatological fulfilment in the future (cfr. X. Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 86).

4.2. THE SACRED TRADITIONS

The prophets had their roots in the basic sacred traditions of the early period, and this greatly influenced their message. There are great differences in the way in which the individual prophets draw upon the old traditions. While Hosea for example takes his stand on the Old Israel-covenant tradition, Isaiah seems not to have had knowledge of this, he appeals exclusively to Zion-David tradition.

4.3. HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Another characteristic of the prophetic message is the intensive view into the future. For in the complexities of world history, especially in the appearance of the Neo-Assyrians, the Neo-Babylonians and the Persians, on the horizons of Palestine, they see in the near future. Israel and Judah encountering a completely new action of Yahweh in history. The greatest future hope of the prophets was the coming of the "Messiah" (Mt. 11:3) (Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 11-12).

CONCLUSION

The deep satisfaction of studying the words of some of history's most profound spokesmen is indescribable. But more so is the deep anguish of the message they delivered to their ancient audience with its application for the modern world. Their call to righteousness, their summons to fasten social structures to the character of an ethical God were emphatic precepts that the prophets through words and deeds, reiterated to their world, precepts that are still relevant today.



Stop and Laugh!



NOAH AND THE THREE CAMELS

Noah was checking off the pairs of animals when he saw three camels trying to get on board.

"wait a minute!" said Noah. "Two each is the limit. One of you will have to stay behind."

"it won't be me," said the first camel. "I'm the camel whose back is broken by the last straw."

"I'm the one people swallow while staining at a gnat," said the second.

"I," said the third, "am the one that shall pass through the eye of the needle sooner than a rich man shall enter Heaven."

"Come on in," said Noah, "the world is going to need all of you."

JESUS CHRIST AS THE FULFILMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES

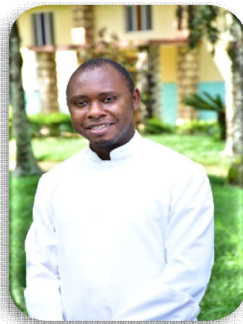
INTRODUCTION

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen in his book, *Life of Christ*, maintains that several people have existed in history claiming to come from God and to be messiahs. According to Blessed Sheen, *history and reason* are the two criteria to ascertain the validity of their claims (Cfr. F. J. SHEEN, *Life of Christ*, 11). In the sphere of reason, it is normal and in line with human thought that anything of great worth be often announced before or advertised, for example, the publication of a movie, the date for an important event, the production of a new phone just to name a few. In this regard, God had to make known to us where Christ would be born, where He would live, the doctrine He would teach and the manner of His death. To do this, God follows His all holy will in the history of salvation revealing himself through his holy will progressively in history through the prophets.

The prophets foretold all these and Jesus fulfilled all these in the circumstances surrounding His birth, His person, His deeds and His death. To ascertain therefore that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament would require us to revisit some of the Old Testament texts of prophetic value and their fulfilment in the New Testament and above all to see in the Gospels what Christ had to say of himself when asked, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (Jn 10:24).

1. THE PROPHETS FORETOLD THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH AFTER THE FALL

Jesus Christ was foretold in history by the various prophecies concerning his birth. The prophet Micah foretold that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The prophet Isaiah foretold that: He would be born of a virgin and be called Emmanuel (Is 7:14); He would be



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worshiped by peoples coming from afar (Is 60:3-9) as fulfilled by the Maggi's visit (Mt 2:11); and he would be called a Nazarene (Is11:1). The prophet Jeremiah foretold that Christ's birth place would suffer the massacre of Infants (Jer 31:15) as fulfilled in the killing of the young innocent ones

orchestrated by Herod (Mt 2:16-:23). Zechariah (9:9) prophesied that our king would make a triumphal entry into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey which is mentioned by all the four gospel writers (Mt 21:1-11, Mk 11:1-11, Lk 19:29-44, Jn 12:12-15). The prophet Isaiah foretold Christ's suffering in his Servant Songs (Is 42, 49, 50 and 52 :13 – 53:12) whose fulfilment we read in Mt 26: 31, 37, 67, 27: 26, Mk 15:27, Lk 22:37.

The veracity and authenticity of Jesus Christ being the fulfilment of the Old Testament Prophecies can be authenticated by the theory of multiple attestation. This theory holds that matters are most likely to be accepted as historically accurate if they are attested by more than one source (M. ALLAN, *Jesus as a Figure in History*, 46). We realise that the various prophetic completely independent of the other in time and source foretold several aspects of Jesus' life. Based on this theory, the various prophecies we have cited about Christ came to be fulfilled in his life as expounded and attested by the various Gospel writers. Hence, we can safely conclude from the multiple attestation of the various prophetic scriptural texts and their various fulfilment in the New Testament that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies.

2. THE NAMES GIVEN TO JESUS, THEIR SIGNIFICANCE AND FULFILMENT

Jesus had several titles and significant names. They include: Son of the Most High, Son

of David, The Christ and He was given two names, Jesus and Emmanuel. We shall look at the significance and fulfilment of one name – Jesus and one title – Son of David.

2.1. THE MEANING OF THE NAME JESUS

The name “Jesus” was a common name amongst the Jews, known originally in Hebrew as *Yeshua* (Joshua), meaning “Yahweh is salvation” or “The Lord saves” (B. GREEN, *The Gospel According to Mathew*, in *The New Claredon Bible*, 55). The name Jesus brought back the memory of the Israelite leader Joshua, who brought them to the promised land. According to scriptural evidence, the Messiah had to save his people (Is 61:1, Ps 130:8). The salvation promised by the name “Jesus” was not a social one, it was a greater one, that of spiritual poverty and sin (Mt 1: 21). This expectation is fulfilled when the angel tells

Joseph that Mary shall bear a son, whom they shall call “Jesus”, who will save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21). On some occasions even in our culture, the name of a child is to be left at the discretion of the parents but for Jesus Christ, He had a special destiny that had to be expressed in his name and it had to be pre-announced like Samson’s. The name “Jesus” was not given to him when he had wrought salvation but at the very moment he was conceived implying the foundation of his salvation was from eternity (as already prophesied by the prophets) not acquired by a given salvific act. Hence, we could say the name “Jesus” had its prophetic origin and was fulfilled at His birth though the saving act which the name connotes occurred during his life time.

2.2. THE MEANING OF THE TITTLE SON OF DAVID

At the moment of Jesus’ birth, the Israelites expected the messiah to restore the kingdom of Israel, for he (the Messiah) was to be a descendant of the House of David whose kingdom will have no end (2 Sam 7:12, Is 16:5). The first use of this

tittle “son of David” is at the beginning of Mathew’s gospel (the genealogy) and it appears nine times in his Gospel. David was the greatest King of Israel and the title pointed out to one who would destroy the enemies of Israel and restore its capital Jerusalem (L. MORRIS, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 20). This explains why the disciples asked, “Lord would you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

The expectation of this tittle is fulfilled by Jesus himself with evidence in the New

Testament, where we see Jesus being referred to as the “Son of David” (Mt 12:23, 15:22, 20:23). A messianic tittle which He did not deny, bespeaking of His awareness and confirmation of the prophesy of the messianic title “Son of David”. This is evident in the scene with Bartimaeus the blind man and his cry for help, “Jesus son of David.” (Mk 10: 46-52). This implies that truly He was the messiah – “The Son of David”.

2.3. THE UNIQUE SALVIFIC MISSION OF CHRIST

We could affirm that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy of salvation in the sense that he came with one mission on earth to die and set his people free, one of the main benchmarks of the Messiah. We have evidence of this from the Old Testament that the Messiah would be scourged and spat upon (Is 50:6), counted amongst sinners (Is 53:12) would suffer the piercing of his hands and his feet (Zech 12: 10) and above all, He would bear the sins of Many (Is 53:11). These scriptural texts point out clearly Christ’s salvific mission as Messiah.

In Mark 10:45, Christ says, “The son of Man gave his life as a ransom for many”. John the Baptist corroborates this salvific character of the expectation of Christ and his fulfilment when he says in Jn 1:29 “Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World.” This declaration of John the Baptist reveals the person of Christ as the fulfilment of the messiah who will bear the sins of the world and reconcile the world to God (F. MOLONEY, “John”, in *The Paulist Biblical*

We can safely conclude from the multiple attestation of the various prophetic scriptural texts and their various fulfilment in the New Testament that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Commentary, 1120). We cannot but affirm that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament expectation and of the prophecy of the Messiah who will set his people free from their sins.

3. WHAT DOES JESUS SAY ABOUT HIMSELF?

The Jews and Christ's disciples had a lot of expectations about the Messiah which were met as Christ progressively revealed the mysteries about the kingdom of God. Amidst all these, Christ said much about Himself, by so doing providing us with hallmarks of Him being the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies. In His inaugural speech after reading the passage from the prophet Isaiah (61:1-2) he said, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). Later, when John the Baptist sent some of his disciples to inquire if he was "the one that was to come" (Lk 7:19), Jesus said "Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them" (Lk 7:22, Mt 11:5). His statement identifies Him as one who came to fulfil the Scriptures. The Sermon on the Mount gives us another evidence where Christ refers to Himself as one who came to fulfil the Scriptures when He said, "do not think I have come to abolish

the Law or the Prophets, I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Mt 5:17). Again, after His resurrection, Christ on the road to Emmaus told His disciples, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared. Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory? Then beginning from Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures (Lk 24:25-27). In Luke 24:44-45, He said to his disciples, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the Prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." These scriptural passages stand as enough evidence for us to safely conclude that Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have gone through some prophetic texts of the Old Testament and their fulfilment in the New Testament. In like manner, we have enumerated some instances where Christ spoke of himself as the fulfilment of the prophecies. It is our wish that this should go a long way to strengthen our faith in Christ as the Son of God and redeemer of the world who was foretold by the prophets.

Stop and Laugh!

The Judge And The Witness

Judge: "Did you see the shot that was fired?"

Witness: "No, I only heard it."

Judge: "That is not sufficient evidence."

The Witness left the stand and while his back was turned to the judge he laughed out. The Judge recalled him for contempt of court.

Witness: "Did you see me laugh?"

Judge: "No, but I heard you."

Witness: "Insufficient evidence, Judge."



THE PROPHETIC ROLE OF MUSIC



INTRODUCTION

Sebastian Bach, one of the greatest musicians ever lived, once said: "Music has power to create a universe or to destroy a civilisation." By this, he stressed the importance of the Prophetic role of music. Prophetic music is the power to instruct, comfort, encourage, envision, rebuke, convict, challenge, stir and stimulate those who hear it. To prophesy or being prophetic is a gift from God to the Church. It has a divine role to play in the restoration of the Lord's purposes in the earth. Among many other things prophets are also poets, songwriters, singers, musicians, visual and creative artists. Many times in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, the power of music played a great role. In 1 Chronicles 25:1, musicians were separated to prophesy on instruments. Jehoshaphat's musicians played "one sound" in 2 Chronicles 20:21, singing just two lines of one song. It released something in the Spirit that destroyed enemies and subdued nation. 1 Samuel reads *"And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying."* The Church should be the greatest and most powerful exponent of that which is prophetic.

1. CAN LITURGICAL MUSIC BE A LEGITIMATE PROPHETIC VOICE?

The ministry of the prophets that existed in Israel saw that music was often an integral part of prophecy. We first of all have to realize that the psalms which are sung during the liturgy are prophetic in nature. Music is prophetic simply by telling the truth. If we ensure that the songs we sing speak the truth about ourselves, and our sin, God, and life, in a way that instructs, encourages, stirs and stimulates the worshipers towards the mysteries celebrated, then this is prophetic. Nathan Corbitt says that prophetic music must be meditative in leading us to higher things of God, our lives and relationship with God. It should equally inspire and instil in us the vision of the Kingdom of God. By doing this, it enables us to vision the freedom from earthly oppression which we long for.

Prophetic music is the power to instruct, comfort, encourage, envision, rebuke, convict, challenge, stir and

2. APPLICATION OF PROPHETIC MUSIC WITHIN LITURGICAL WORSHIP

Nathan Corbitt says, it is clearly possible for the "word of prophecy" to come through liturgical song. The challenge is to music composers to meditate on words before composing. There seem to be a feeling that modern religious compositions too often lack authenticity; they don't touch the situations we live in. If the faith is to make any difference in people's lives, it has to get in touch with the cold hard reality and with a person's real self, to one's sin. Contemporary liturgical Composers in our province can model the compositions of Fr. Thierry Ndime, Fr. Elvis Nsaikila, and Aloysius Fonkeng. Their compositions are often fruits of well reflected lyrics and music. In this way God's message of comfort, edification, exhortation, or even rebuke calls the people to deeper expressions of worship, to prayer for specific needs and situations, or to repentance.

3. THE OVERTURN OF PROPHETIC MUSIC

Music has great "ruling and governing" influence in fashioning our world and predicting and presenting how it will be. The secular world is transmitting its agenda through music. Most youths in our societies have been ravaged by the ideologies of Contemporary secular music. These promote youths into scamming, drugs and worst of all sexual promiscuity in all its forms. These musicians are actually "prophets of sound." They never set out saying, "I will be prophetic and touch and change the world." They use their giftedness of music compositions to be "prophetically evil."

CONCLUSION

Music heightens the power of any message which it carries. Worldly music most times turns to be more captivating and appealing than sacred music. I challenge composers of sacred music with this quote from William Booth: "Why should the devil have the best music?"

SINGING DEPARTMENT

THE BAPTIZED: PRIEST, PROPHET
AND KING

INTRODUCTION

By Baptism a person is incorporated into the Church of Christ, with the duties and the rights which in accordance with each one's status are proper to Christians, in so far as they are in ecclesiastical communion and unless a lawfully issued sanction intervenes. The baptized share in the priesthood of Christ, in his prophetic and royal mission. The faithful exercise their Baptismal role in the Church through their participation, each according to his/her own vocation, in Christ's mission as Priest, Prophet and King.

1. STATUS OF THE BAPTIZED

Baptism gives a share of the common priesthood of all believers to the recipient. The church teaches that: "Having become a member of the Church, the person baptized belongs no longer to himself, but to him who died and rose for us...reborn as sons of God, the baptized must profess before men the faith they have received from God through the Church and participate in the apostolic and missionary activity of the people of God" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1269-1270). God the Father anointed Christ with the Holy Spirit and established him as Priest, Prophet and King. The whole people of God participate in this *tria munera* of Christ and bear the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them.

The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ. While being ordered one to another, they differ essentially. In what sense? While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace - a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit, the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. The ministerial priesthood is a *means* by which Christ



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THEOLOGY III



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THEOLOGY II

unceasingly builds up and leads his Church. For this reason, it is transmitted by its own sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1547).

The Holy People of God share also in Christ's Prophetic office, above all, in the supernatural sense of faith that belongs to the whole people. Lay and clergy, when it unfailingly adheres to this faith...once for all delivered to the saints. And when it deepens its understanding and becomes Christ's witness in the midst of this world. This is our focus in this article.

2. *SENSUS FIDEI* AS FOUNDATION OF THE PROPHETIC MISSION OF THE FAITHFUL

The second Vatican council asserts the prophetic mission of the Church when it says: "The whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the holy one cannot err in matters of belief. It shows this characteristic through the entire people's supernatural sense of the faith when from the Bishop to the last of the faithful they manifest a universal consensus in matters of faith and Morals" (*Lumen Gentium* n. 12). This *sensus fidei* given to each believer in baptism can be understood as the capacity of individual believers to understand God's revelation addressed to them in love. It is this capacity that allows a believer, almost intuitively to sense what is of God and what is not. It can be seen also as an actual perception or imaginative grasp of Divine

Revelation (cfr. R. R. GAILLARDETZ, *By What Authority*, 109).

Christians encounter God's divine revelation in the context of a community of faith. They hear the Scriptures preached to them and celebrate the liturgy as a community. Yet, each one of the faithful uniquely encounters that one revelation and gives testimony based on personal encounter with God's revelation. The development of the Church's tradition owes its credit to the contributions of the spiritual insight of the faithful (cfr. R. R. GAILLARDETZ, *By What Authority*, 110). "This comes about through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts; from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience, and from the preaching of those who, on succeeding to the Office of Bishop, have received the sure charism of truth" (*Dei Verbum*, n. 8).

Flowing from this *Sense of faith* of the Christian community, the baptized participate in the prophetic mission of the Church by bearing witness to the mystery of Christ by their way of life in society. This participation by the baptized in the prophetic role of Christ draws its strength and mandate from the Eucharist, the Holy Mass. Here, the whole body of the faithful is united with Jesus Christ in praise and thanksgiving, are nourished by the Word and by the Body and Blood of Christ. And at the end, the faithful is challenged to *Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord*.

3. THE EXERCISE OF THE PROPHETIC ROLE BY THE FAITHFUL

It is upon the Church that there lies the Divine Mandate, the duty of Going out into the World and preaching the Gospel to every creature (cfr. *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 13, Mt. 28:18-20). The whole Church is missionary and the work of

evangelizing is a basic duty of the People of God (*Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 35). The Christian has the duty of hearing God's Word and then proclaiming it with faith; first to hear and secondly to proclaim. Everyone in the Church thus has the duty flowing from the command given to the Apostles to proclaim the Gospel. They share in this mission according to each person's vocation; either as Ordained ministers or lay faithful.

3.1. THE ORDAINED MINISTERS

The Bishops (the Pope is the *Primus inter pares*) and the Priests hold preeminent place in prophetic Evangelization. Pope St. Leo the Great describes him as the one who has merited the primacy of the apostolate. Vatican II says in this regard that Christ's mandate of preaching the Gospel to every creature primarily and immediately concerns the Bishop. (AG n.38). The Bishop has indispensable prophetic responsibility within the Church and outside because the entire world is the field of prophetic Evangelization. He should

speak for his flock in season and out of season. In the same light Priests, who share in the Office of the Bishop have the duty intrinsically linked to their vocation. The Priest and Prophet are not opposed, just as Christ is both Prophet and Priest. Through his ordination the priest acts *In Persona Christi*. He is commissioned to teach, sanctify and govern the community of believers.

3.2. THE LAY PEOPLE

Christ fulfils his prophetic office not only through the hierarchy which taught in his name and with his authority, but also through the laity. For this very purpose, he made them witnesses and gave them understanding of the faith and the grace of speech...so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth daily in their social and family life. The laity (from the word *Laos* meaning people, thus, "People of God") go forth as powerful heralds of a faith in things to be hoped for...provided they steadfastly join to their profession of faith. This evangelization takes on

Flowing from this *Sense of faith* of the Christian community, the baptized participate in the prophetic mission of the Church by bearing witness to the mystery of Christ by their way of life in society.

a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world (*Lumen Gentium*, n.35).

The Character of Baptism makes each member of Christ's faithful share a responsibility for the Church's mission. The prophetic ministry of the laity is essentially to the secular world. The baptized is sent to continue the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which concerns the salvation of mankind and also involves the renewal of the whole temporal order. They don't just find themselves there but God calls them from there to be prophets there.

Pope John Paul II says "the lay faithful's position in the Church is fundamentally defined by their newness in Christian life and distinguished by their secular character." It is thus a mistake to think that the most active lay apostles in the parish are those lay people who read at Mass or do other apostolates in Church. Rather those who actively bring the Gospel to the secular spheres of their lives are more prophetic. This

role is exercised in various ways including: assisting in catechesis, active participation in Small Christian Communities, working for the alleviation of poverty, offering assistance to the

needy, demanding accountability from leaders, working for the common good, and shunning societal ills including bribery and corruption, tribalism, nepotism, cheating, fornication, adultery, contraceptive mentality, abortion, and euthanasia.

STOP AND LAUGH!

Judge: "Your age, madam?"

Lady witness: "Thirty years."

Judge: "You may have a hard time proving that."

Lady witness: "You'll have a difficult time proving the contrary. The church that had the record of my birth burned down in 1895."

CONCLUSION

Until his glory is fully revealed at the end of time, Christ fulfils his prophetic Office through all the Christian faithful; whether in a direct sense through the hierarchy who, by exercising their *munus docendi*, teach in the name of, and with the authority of Christ, or in an indirect sense through their witness, the laity, whom he provides with the appreciation of the faith (*Sensum Fidelium*) and the grace of the word (cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 35).

Avoidance of False Prophets

...a false prophet ruins the minds of the servants of God... it is the doubters, not the faithful, that he ruins. The doubters then go to him as to a soothsayer, and inquire of him what will happen to them; and he, the false prophet, not having the power of a Divine Spirit in him, answers them according to their inquiries, and according to their wicked desires, and fills their souls with expectations, according to their own wishes. For being himself empty, he gives empty answers to empty inquiries; for every answer is made to the emptiness of man. Some true words he occasionally utters; for the devil fills him with his own spirit, in the hope that he may be able to overcome some of the righteous...

Shepherd of Hermas (the eleventh precept)

THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK (CCC 1526-1532)

“Is any among you sick? Let him call for the presbyters of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (Jas 5:14-15).

The Sacrament of Anointing of the sick has as its purpose the conferral of a special grace on the Christian experiencing difficulties inherent in the condition of grave illness or old age.

The proper time for receiving this holy anointing has certainly arrived when the believer begins to be in danger of death because of illness or old age.

Each time a Christian falls seriously ill, he may receive the Anointing of the Sick, and also when, after he has received it, the illness worsens.

Only priests (presbyters and bishops) can give the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, using oil blessed by the bishop, or

if necessary by the celebrating presbyter himself.

The celebration of the Anointing of the sick consist essentially in the anointing of the forehead and hands of the sick person (in the Roman Rite) or of other parts of the body (in the Eastern Rite), the anointing being accompanied by the liturgical prayer of the celebrant asking for the special grace of this sacrament.

The special grace of the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick has as its effects:

- ✓ The uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church;
- ✓ The strengthening, peace and courage to endure in a Christian manner the suffering of illness or old age;
- ✓ The forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance;
- ✓ The restoration of health, if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul;
- ✓ The preparation for passing over to eternal life.

New! New! New!

About the Author



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A HANDBOOK ON MARRIAGE TRIBUNAL PROCESSES



Fr. Joseph Clifford Nformi Ndi
(JCL/STD)

"A Handbook on Marriage Tribunal Processes" is a document that enlightens us on the purpose, the organization and the operation of the Ecclesiastical Marriage Tribunal of the Ecclesiastical Province of Bamenda. It is meant to serve as a guide to all of Christ's faithful; pastors, consecrated persons and lay persons, on what they need to know and to do when faced with a potential marriage nullity case. It is also meant to help those preparing for marriage to know the pitfalls to be avoided, in