VOL. 09 NO. 6,
AUGUST, 2025
E-ISSN 3027-1401
P-ISSN 3026-9148

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of Arts and Sociological Research (JASR)

Biblical Prophetsm: God's Vehicle for Social and Political Change

Lucky O Ikechiamaka; & Dorcas Peter Kuchacks
Department of Christian Religious Studies, Federal University of Education, Zaria
Corresponding Author: ikechiamakalucky5@gmail.com
DOI: **https://doi.org/10.70382/ajasr.v9i6.058**

Abstract

The purpose of prophetic ministry is **to bring revelation, direction, correction, and encouragement to individuals, churches, and even entire nations**. Prophetic ministry has a long history in the Christian faith, with numerous examples found throughout the Old and New Testament. Prophets are human beings with divine call and message for a specific audience. The call of the prophet should therefore be a basic and fundamental experience in his life. This experience gives legitimacy to his office, authority to his message and urgency to his preaching. In ancient Israel the prophets speak on behalf of Yahweh, on political, religious and social issues of their time. The institution of prophecy is founded on the basic premise that God does not abandon humans to their own devices, but provides them with divine guidance. Each of the prophets knew the burden that God had given them over a particular situation and to the particular people or person. Therefore prophetic ministry is seen in the Old Testament, as God raising up prophets to encourage and rebuke the nation of Israel in times of trouble or rebellion. It became obvious that the prophets in ancient Israel served as a medium in bringing the people back to God, turning away from their evil ways and so instituting Social Change and reform in the society. This paper investigates using the *historical and theological interpretative approach* Biblical prophetism its implication on Nigerian political and social atmosphere. *The paper reasons that there is a wide disparity between prophets in ancient Israel and the ones in Nigeria.* The Nigerian prophets are off the Biblical provisions for prophetic ministry hence lacking the forceful voice to effect any change politically and socially at the national level. This paper suggests a- going back to the bible as test book for the prophets of our time in Nigeria. *The paper concludes that there is the need for the prophets in Nigeria to be bold, true to their calling and discharge their duty without fear or favour.*

Keywords*:* Prophets, Agents, Social Change, Ancient Israel, Nigeria

Introduction

Prophet is that individual who communicates the divine will to the people. This immediately points to the prophet's role as a messenger of God. The noun Nabi (Hebrew word for prophet) is from the causative stem of the verb, "to cause to speak". This therefore means that the prophet not only is a speaker, but is one whom God causes to speak. He cannot be quiet (Amos 3:8). Prophets in this paper are Ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ called and commissioned with a definite message for humanity. The prophet is believed by his audience to have received a "prophetic call", an encounter with the supernatural or the divine and serves as an intermediary between the divine and humanity. On the other hand the prophets saw themselves as being "Sent". They had received Yahweh's commission, "Go and say to my people". Thus says Yahweh" begins the prophet's message; the authority lay not in themselves, in their religious experience or in their opinions but in the One who sent them. Their message rang with authority which could Shake nations. "Thus says the Lord"

It is necessary to stress on this call experience of the prophet or minister. This is so because the essential character and ministry of a prophet or minister is revealed in his call experience. Their later ministry is always influenced by the original impression they had in their first encounter with the call to service (Clyde T. Franciso 1977)

The Old Testament prophets played an important role in shaping the course and context of Israelite history and religion. This was evident by the involvement of prophets in social, political, religious and even economic life of the nation of Israel. Yahweh used the prophets as channels through which He communicated or disclosed His intention to the people in politics, business and inter personal relationship (Akintola 2008).

The prophets stand as watchmen for their nation because they could enter into the realm of the spirit to stand in the gap between the nation and God. This gave them the privilege to sharpen the religious, economic and social life of the people and as such they called for reform and transformation in the land (Grinff in 1997). As an appointed messenger, the prophet must translate his revelatory experience into the Idiom of his people. For though the prophet is overwhelmed by the divine word and becomes "word possessed", he does not lose his identity nor does he suffer any effacement of personality. The divine constraint however does not exclude the prophet's personal freedom, his individuality is maintained, and the divine message is accented by his own tones.

The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a mediator, offer covenantal mediation, who delivers the word of God to the people in order to shape their future by reforming their present. He is not the ultimate source of the message nor its final addressee; he is the middle man who has the over powering experience of hearing the divine word, and who must perform the onerous task of bearing it to a usually

indifferent if not hostile audience.

The thrust of this paper is to investigate how prophets of ancient Israel served as agents of Social and Political Change with the view of establishing its relevance in Nigerian prophets' ministry. Attempt will be made at highlighting the prophetic call of ancient Israel, since the essential aspects of a prophet's character and ministry are revealed in his call experience a necessary ingredient for contemporary Ministry with particular focus on the Nigerian experience of prophetic Ministry.

The Call Experience of Ancient Prophets of Israel – Basic to their Life and Ministry

The call of the prophet was a basic and fundamental experience in his life. This experience gave legitimacy to his office, authority to his message and urgency to his preaching. This divine compulsion to preach the word of Yahweh is well described by Jeremiah: "If I say, I will not mention him or speak any more in his name" there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary of holding it in.

Indeed, (Jer. 20:9) what actually distinguished the true prophet from the false was the validity of his call. In Jeremiah where false prophets oppose the divinely appointed messenger of God, it is stated several times that they were not commissioned by Yahweh and that their words were not from Him (eg Jer. 14:14; 23 :21-22; 28:15). The call of the prophet was the valid expression of God's will in his life, the certain assurance that God had reached down to take hold of him and make him aware of his mission.

This was not a mystical experience but a convulsion moment which changed the prophet's life. By this divine intervention, the prophet was set apart from other people and brought into special relationship with God. The purpose of this setting apart is for the prophet to serve as a medium of the divine word to the nation. The divine call implied the consecration of the person to God and his service. most particularly we hear about the mouth or the lips or the ear of the prophet being specially anointed or cleansed or opened to receive the word of Yahweh (Exo 29:20). The Devotional Study Bible (the Bible league) explains the above verse: "As part of their purification, the priests (prophets) daubed blood on their ears (which hear God's laws), and their hands (which do his will), and their toes (which were prepared to follow in his steps).

The prophets responded to Yahweh's call in different ways. For example, Jeremiah, like Moses of old was reluctant to the divine commission because he was a mere lad and did not know how to speak (Jer. 1:6). On the other hand, Isaiah accepted his vocation with alacrity as the glory of Yahweh overwhelmed him (Is. 6:6).

Isaiah as an Example of a Prophetic Call

The essential aspects of Isaiah's Character and Ministry as revealed in his experience of God's call, as recorded in chapter 6. This is characteristically true of all true prophets of ancient Israel. Their later ministry would be an unfolding of the original impressions that came in the first encounter with the call to service Barry Webb aptly summarizes the above chapter this way: Chapter 6 towers like a majestic peak over the surrounding terrain and is clearly of central importance for the message of the book. It was in this encounter with the Lord that Isaiah's

understanding of both God and his own Mission was crystallized. It stands centrally within chapters 1-12 and is intimately related to both what precedes and what follows (Barry Webb (1997).

The present chapter moves from the vision of God (1-4), to confession of sin (5), to cleansing (6-7), and finally to commissioning (8-13). That is the part by which Isaiah enters into his servant hood, and it is the part Israel must take also.

The long and fruitful ministry of Isaiah was the lengthened shadow of his remarkable call experience. In this scene we find the prophet responding to God's call to service with the complete dedication of himself. There is no word of rebellion or reluctance in his "Here am I, send me". There is only the willingness to be of any service possible to the glorious God who had pardoned his Sins. According to Clyde T Francisco (1997), this complete surrender of will to God made possible God's use of Isaiah in a more comprehensive way than any other prophet. Of all the prophets of Israel, Isaiah understood most completely the mind of God and His plan for the ages. This was made possible by his receptive spirit. The understanding of God is not merely an intellectual exercise. It must be a personal experience. This is the ingredient that fired the ancient prophets of Israel.

Another aspect of the call experience of Isaiah that was conspicuous was the overpowering impression of God's holiness that sent Isaiah reeling away from His awful splendor. Isaiah had to cry over his own sinfulness as well as that of his people. Israel had not come to realize the awful consequence of their unrighteousness. So it would be the task of Isaiah to proclaim to the people the holiness that he had seen. Barry Webb (1997) paints the mood of Isaiah correctly as he was privileged to see the heavenly seraphs worship the Lord Almighty.

Isaiah is not proud at being admitted to the inner circle. He is aware only of being unclean, like his fellows. "Unclean" is a general term in the Old Testament for all that is, for whatever reason, unfit to be in God's presence …. Isaiah cannot praise and serve God as the Seraphs do because, in the depths of his being, he is unclean just as his compatriots are. It is remarkable to see the prophet identity himself so completely with those whose sins he has been denouncing in the previous chapters. But in the presence of God degrees of sin become irrelevant. It is the holiness of God which reveals to us our true condition, not comparison with others (Barry Webb 1997).

In Amos 7:4-15 we see the simplicity set in Amos dramatic call. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel has just ordered Amos out of the country because of his words against Israel. Amos, not worried by this attack, tells Amaziah that "the Lord took me from following the flock and … said to me, go, prophesy to my people Israel". For Amos he has received a message for Israel and no human agent can prevent him from proclaiming it: the lion has roared, who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy (Amos 3:8).

In the case of Hosea, he receives his call in quite different way. His was from a bitter experience of a shattered home and a faithless wife whom he loves. From this Hosea comes to understand God's deep love for faithless Israel. As God forgives Israel and woos he back to the relationship of wilderness days to marry her again in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy (Hos 2:19), Hosea forgives Gomer his wife and takes her back to

himself (Hos. Chapters 1-3). From this experience which we may regard as his call, Hosea learns the deeper meaning of love and forgiveness which is the heart of his message. Emmanuel (2011) in one of his treatise is of the view that some of the prophets in Nigeria do not have evidence of divine call. Prophets in this category were called by self, greed and inordinate ambition to acquire wealth overnight.

These examples and others show that the divine call was one of the most characteristic features of the prophetic consciousness. This unique experience was an impelling force in the life of the prophets of ancient Israel, giving urgency to their message and confident assurance in the face of hostile opposition. This, the Nigerian ministers, prophets, priests, pastors etc must endeavour to emulate and cherish as part of the "cross" in the ministry if we must be relevant in the landscape we have been called to serve as the watchman and God's messenger.

The Prophets as Agents of Social and Political transformation

Prophets greatly influenced the political destiny of ancient Israel. The ancient prophets also lived in societies during their life time. Their role would best be understood by the societal perception of them. The socio-religious role of ancient prophets of Israel cannot be over emphasized. As mentioned earlier a prophet is one who receives an Oracle and delivers same to his audience. In ancient Israel a prophet was a messenger sent to communicate the word of Yahweh to the people. Their message rang with authority which could shake nations: "Thus says the Lord". The authority lay not in themselves, in their religious experience or in their opinion but in the One who sent them. As whybray (1993), aptly puts it. 'An ancient Israelite prophet was a man or a woman believed to be recipient of divine messages through audition, vision or dream, and they passed on such messages to others by means of speech or symbolic Action'. Their messages were addressed to individuals, particular groups of Israelites, the whole nation or even foreign powers. A prophecy is a message received.

So Whybray, explains further:

> In other words, Prophecy is a pronouncement or an announcement of God's mind by a divinely selected vessel. Prophecy is a divine message from God transmitted to man through his appointed human agent to aid the human person in their search of the reality of God.

Awojobi (2018) explicitly puts it thus: "Prophecy is forth telling and fore telling. Forth telling deals with preaching, teaching and encouraging while fore telling deals with predictions of the future. By this definition of prophecy, every preacher of the gospel "Ministry" is a Prophet.

Ancient Prophets of Israel; Agents of Social Change

In ancient Israel, prophets were considered as agents of social change. The prophets were part of the landscape and as such lived with the people. They did not shy away from the challenges that faced the society; rather they were part of the solution. The prophets addressed issues such as injustice, oppression of the poor by the rich, moral decadence, idolatry and other social vices. Oracles were constantly delivered by the prophets on such matters. These ancient great

prophets unfolded God's moral purpose for Israel and for the world. When Israel did not reflect God's character in her internal life because of evil in the land, her way could not prosper. In the teachings of the prophets the only foundation for man's well-being lies in obedience to the will of God. If God were indifferent to their well-being He would not be a God of love. The prophets therefore demanded repentance from the people concerned. They were thus, the advocates of the poor. According to Sampey J R (1977), Amos "Snorted every time he saw a Palace". He demanded justice for the poor and oppressed. The prophets were by "this" considered by the Kings as the advocates of the poor. Prophets in ancient Israel were Social critics. They considered moral behaviour within a given society and the world of large central in complying with the dictates of Yahweh. From the ancient prophet of Israel's view, the social evil that marked the life of Israel were symptoms of its deceased spirit. Until spiritual health was renewed by obedience to God's will, disease would continue to afflict its life. This is clearly taught in the book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 28:15ff). This doctrine was pursued by the book of Judges and the prophets in particular. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, prophetic teachings are considered as attempt to denounce the injustices practiced against the weak and the powerless (Sheppards & Herbrech Tsmeier, 1993). The prophets condemned Israel for exploiting the poor and oppressing the weak. The prophets also championed the campaign for the restoration of morality in the nation. In the view of these prophets, Israel was guilty of denying justice to those who have been victimized and tolerating incest. The nation has given itself over to luxury, oppression, perversion of justice, cruelty, profanity and eye-service" (Digangi 1984)

Amos, an Example of a Prophet of Social Justice

One could cite Amos as one of those ancient prophets of Israel that spoke against injustice. His case rested solely on the conviction that although Israel seemed healthy outwardly, inwardly she was diseased with a spreading cancer. Israel was not merely guilty of social crimes; she stood accused of unfaithfulness to her calling as the people of Yahweh. He pointed out the social injustice of his day- with such severity that Amaziah regarded his message as high treason and insisted that "the land is not able to bear all his words" (Amos 7:10). Wealthy merchants lusting for economic power were ruthlessly trampling on the heads of the poor and defenseless. Public leaders, reveling in luxury and corrupted by indulgence, were lying on beds of ease – unconcerned over "the ruins of Joseph" (Amos 6:1-7). The sophisticated ladies, whom Amos-in the rough language of a herdsman – compares to the fat, sleek cows of Bashan, were selfishly urging their husbands on. Law courts were used to serve the vested interests of the commercial class. This is an indication that the judges, after being bribed by the wealthy in the societies deliver judgment against the innocent and poor people who have nothing to bribe the judges with. Religion had no word of protest against the inhumanities that were being perpetrated in the very shadow of the temples in Bethel, Glial, Dan and Samaria. Clyde T. Francisco (1977) has therefore suggested that Amos had no practical program for social betterment other than changed men who would change society. Good social programs and forms of worship led by ungodly men are like a spring that is stopped up or a dry river bed

(Amos 5:24). It is therefore as clear as crystal that this incessant and insatiable greed for gain is one of the recurring themes of prophetic protest in ancient Israel.

Accordingly Amos' message on the issue of social justice can be seen under three categories: the nature of God; the role of the individual and the role of social system. The book of Amos revealed the importance God attached to Justice. God is the author of justice. Prophet Amos summed it up when he declared:

> Thus says the Lord… I will not turn away their punishment they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. They pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek. A man and his father will go into the same maid to profane my holy name. They laid themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drank wine of the condemned in the house of their gods (Amos 26-8).

The prophet cried against the extravagance of the rich who have mansions, summer houses and winter houses, but who were insensitive to the needs of the homeless and the destitute among them. They preached against self-indulgence of intemperate women, whose insatiable appetites push their husband to earn more – even if it means oppressing the poor and crushing the needy.

The ancient Israelite prophets spoke against the perversion of justice through bribery and intimidation, aggravating the plight of the widows and the orphans. The nation was accused of complacency in Zion and indulging themselves in extravagant life style while others suffer hunger and thirst on the edge of society. They condemned the advancement of business by force and fraud, using false weights and measures, cheating the commoners, all for their selfish struggle to amass wealth. According to Digangi (1984) The prophets called the nations to an ideal moral order so as to escape God's judgment.

Ancient Prophets of Israel as Agents of Political Change: The Nature of Politics in the Old Testament

Politics according to Stott.J (1995) broadly speaking denotes the life of the city (polis) and the responsibilities of the citizen (Polities). It is concerned therefore with the whole of our life in human society. Politics is an art of living together in a community. According to its narrow definition, however, politics is the Science of government. It is concerned with the development and adoption of specific politics with a view to their being enshrined in legislation. It is about gaining power for social change.

Cletus T. Gotan (2004) agrees with John Stott in the wide range of definition but goes on to define politics as the activity that has to do with power and influence in a democratic society. It has to do with the allocation and distribution of resources. It determines who gets what, when and how. In Old Testament the nature of politics was theocratic and to a large extent, Monarchical. Neusner et al (2000) observes that:

> The political theory of Judaism emerges in the Hebrew Scriptures of ancient Israel as these writings are interpreted by the rabbis of the first six centuries C.E. in the Talmud of Babylonia and related documents. The Pentateuch portrays Israel as "a Kingdom of Priests and holy people" and further takes for granted that this Kingdom" or People" forms a Political entity

They further stress that Scripture understands Israel not merely as a church or a voluntary community but an empowered society, with a government, Law and institutions. Scripture's portrait of the type of government varies in many ways. The Pentateuch takes for granted that Israel is governed by God through the prophet Moses (Neusner et al 1069-1070)[76] from this summation, one can see that though the political nature in the Pentateuch was theocratic yet God used few individuals to serve as leaders and involved in same level of governing as seen in the above statement.

Prophets and Politics in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, particularly in the Pentateuch, since the nature of politics was theocratic, one of the remarkable places in the Scripture that one note the tussle for power or leadership is that of Miriam and Aaron who opposed Moses' leadership as given in Numbers 12.

Many prophets and priests were involved in politics in Old Testament time for example, Nathan, the prophet, influences the selection of David's successor (1King 1:11-40). McCain asserts that Nathan urged Bathsheba to have Solomon anointed before Adonijah was anointed King. David agreed and Solomon was anointed (Danny McCain 2002). This indicates Nathan's involvement in the Political affairs of his day. In Amos, there was a Priest who was deep in politics that he did not allow prophet Amos to prophecy in Israel. Amos 7:10-11 records this incidence and its consequences.

One outstanding issue in the Old Testament times regarding prophets is that no prophet craved Kingship. For instance, during the time of Samuel, there was no King, he had the opportunity to make himself ruler over the people but he did not do so. He appointed Priests in all the town-Samuel remind focused on his role and responsibility and kept his integrity between God and the people (Danny McCain, 2009).

In Old Testament, prophets who indulged and messed up themselves in the politics of their day were termed false prophets. Jack Wellman (2018) asserts that, most politicians are a little like the Old Testament false prophets of old, only telling people what they want to hear. An example is seen in Amos 7:10 – 12:13. The Priest in this episode was deep in politics of his day to the extent that he tried to stop Amos from prophesying. This was because they were full of lies and empty promises.

On the other hand, some prophets got involved in politics but remained focused. Franca S. Jando (2014) asserts that the Old Testament Prophets realized their spiritual and political

responsibilities to their people. That was why many of them delivered punchy oracles against Kings who abdicated the responsibilities to the people of Israel. For instance, Prophets Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and so on kept many Kings on their feet and never kept quiet when the Kings reneged on their responsibilities.

Through the ancient prophets the divine word of judgment was communicated to the ruler, usually in a face – to-face encounter. The dramatic confrontation of Nathan and David (II Sam. 12:1-15a) and Elisha and Ahab (I King 17:1; 18:17-19) and Ahijah's condemnation of the sins of Solomon (I King 11:31-31) belong to this phase of Old Testament prophecy. To be sure prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem encountered King Ahaz "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool" and gave him a sign from the Lord (Isa. 7:3-17). The main concern of these classical prophets was that the chosen people of God who had sinned against God were under divine judgment until repentance (Isa. 1:4, Mich 1:5, Jer. 7:2, Ezk 3:4-7).

The Nigerian Experience of Prophetic Ministry

It is necessary to stress here that the situation in ancient Israel in the days of the prophets is similar to the Nigerian Society. This makes the message of the Old Testament relevant for the contemporary Nigerian Society. For example, Israel in 8th Century BC experienced a wonderful economic development but it entered a state of unpleasant and complicated economic situation which led to gross abuses, oppression and exploitation of the poor, the people of the land. This resulted into a state of injustice and oppression in the land. In the same way there was a time Nigeria experienced a high degree of oil boom. It was even rumored among the elites of the then Society that Nigeria had so much money that she did not know how to use the wealth of the day. What we see today in Nigerian Society is corruption, tribalism, nepotism and selfish and in experienced, half baked, men and women at the helm of affairs in governance.

This climaxed to Nigeria being graded as one of the "densely" corrupt nations of the world which has resulted to exploitation of the poor ignorant masses and the under privileged in Nigerian Society. Poor economic management has brought about all forms of social injustice. Unemployment rate has gone up astronomically. Many Nigerians are deprived of good education, housing, good road, potable water and electricity. The exploitative class that has grown in Nigeria is immoral, greedy, selfish, covetous and corrupt. The gap between the rich and the poor is appalling and social injustice is anything but good. There is exploitation and economic oppression in the contemporary Nigerian Society – as it was in Israel. There is a wide disparity between the rich and the poor. This is therefore one of the main reason the nation is being thrown into its current economic, political and social mess. It does appear therefore that the contemporary Nigerian prophets (Ministers of religion) lack the moral courage, energy and boldness. Some religious leaders in Nigeria are in the ministry because of what they will eat, since unemployment and the inability of our educational system to produce functional education, thus producing many graduates and technical men and women who cannot be employed even if there were opportunities. The "holy orders" thus becomes the escape route. These ministers of religion have become acquiesced to the system and dine

with the rich government officials. Like Amaziah, they have become part of the corrupt system and have been integrated into the cult of the rich, the powerful and political leaders and have lost the courage to confront the corrupt political leaders in Nigeria (Adebo 2018).

The essential character and ministry of the prophets of ancient Israel are revealed in their call experience. Their later ministry is always influenced by the original impression they had in their first encounter with the call to service. Isaiah's concept of God's holiness, for example is symbolized in the attitude of the Seraphim in the King's presence. For Isaiah, Yahweh's holiness is a fundamental aspect of worship (Clyde T. Francisco, 1979).

According to Folarin (1994) some persons come to the prophetic ministry in Nigeria due to unemployment and a craze for supernatural and political power. At times some individuals become prophets through hereditary conferment of prophetic powers. Some of the prophets in Nigeria do not have the evidence of divine call. Prophets in this category were called by self, greed, and in ordinate ambition to acquire wealth overnight. This has led to competition, unhealthy rivalry and corruption of all sorts in Christian Service. According to Ejizu (2008), these types of prophets deliver Oracles without divine message; they are materialistic, craze for title and engage in unethical activities.

In Nigeria today, many people claim to have been called to the prophetic ministry. All the time in Nigeria, there are billboards, posters and hand bills advertising prophets and their programmes, it does appear that the average pastor in Nigeria today is a Prophet. According to Ejikenkeonye (2007), the proliferation of prophets in Nigeria today does not translate into godly living. This assertion was corroborated by Oluwawunsi et al (2014) when they say that the prophets in Nigeria are very corrupt. They maintained that their corrupt practices include miracle for sale; prophecy for sale; collection of unscriptural offerings; prayer contractors; diversion of church funds into personal accounts; sale of religious titles and offices; sexual immorality; deception of people in the name of God; use of Satanic power to do miracles, etc. In Nigeria today, prophecy has been privatized, commercialized, highly merchandized as well as politicized. It is well known that in Nigeria some prophets have acquired private jets, helicopters, mansions while their members are living in abject poverty. Most of these prophets are prosperity conscious rather than holiness conscious. Sopuru, (2008) observes that the comportment and character of these prophets encourage criminality and gangsterism. Ukpong (2013) supports this assertion when he declares that fraud, embezzlement and misappropriation of funds characterize some prophets. Taiye (2013) is of the view that flattery stories and deceptions are the characteristics of the Nigerian prophets. Similarly, Uzukwu (1996) claimed that Nigerian prophets exercise tyrannical authority over their followers. Spiritual gifts are now used for self-aggrandizement by some of these prophets. However, it is important to note that there are prophets in Nigeria that are genuinely called, sincere, and maintaining a high standard of Christian life.

The prophetic ministry of the church in Nigeria has complicated the issue. A teaching ministry in Nigeria is lacking or rather not given much attention like it is given in terms of prophetic ministry. As mentioned earlier, prophecy is forth telling and fore telling. Forth telling is preaching, exhortation and counseling while fore-telling is prediction of the future. According

to Dada the understanding of many Nigerian Christians and non-Christians of prophecy is in relation to prediction of future event. It is therefore a common practice in Nigeria to see people consulting prophets to know what the future holds for them; even political leaders are interested in predictive prophecy. The popularity of predictive prophecy in Nigerian Society can be based on the fact that Africans are often eager to find out what the future holds for them.

It also must be noted that prophetic Oracles have the capacity of regulating and controlling human behaviour. Many a time those involved in such vices have turned a new leaf to avert calamities or God's wrath. It is a known reality that robbers, murderers, thieves and other known vices from notorious individuals have changed from their wicked ways as a result of specific predictions or preaching's from genuine prophetic ministry in Nigeria. These prophecies whether fore telling or forth telling serve as a way of controlling and regulating human behaviour.

There is no doubt that Nigeria has many array of ministers, pastors, priests, prophets and apostles as these ministers of religion prefer to call themselves, and as they claim to speak on behalf of God. It is also true that many Nigerians would have loved to see these church leaders speak boldly against the current situation of injustice in Nigeria, ethnic superiority and domination; acting on issues that affect all with impunity regardless of democratic principles and mediocrity at the helm of affairs etc. instead, the reverse is the case.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, prophets in ancient Israel like Amos, Jeremiah, Elijah, Micah and a host of others championed fight against corruption, injustice and even against some despotic rulers of Israel. Here in Nigeria, it is difficult to see prophets raise their force against corrupt leaders in our society. Instead of rebuking corrupt leaders, some even praise them in the public. Some Nigerian prophets in their ministry are fearful while others have been bought over by the powers that be. In the attempt to please those in authority some gave prophecies that never came to pass. For example in the build up to the 2015 presidential elections different prophets predicted the outcome of the elections. Popular among them was Prophet, Primate Elijah Ayodele of the INRI Evangelical Spiritual Church, who predicted that the incumbent President, Goodluck Jonathan would continue to rule till 2019. This did not come to pass; instead, it was Muhammadu Buhari that won the election. Before the Nigerian election of 2019, some prophets predicted that President Buhari will not return to power. Prominent among them was Prophet Moses Olagunju who predicted that Muhammadu Buhari will be dethrone in 2019 by Atiku Abubakar because he has failed to alleviate the sufferings of Nigerians. It turned out that it was President Buhari who won the election and not Atiku (www.naija.ng/16080300-prophet-atiku-defeat-pmo-2019).[77]

Conclusion

It is clear from our study that prophets in ancient, Israel were agents of social and political change. This is seen in the way they fight corrupt leaders and political system. Without

equivocation, they boldly address the issues of injustice in the society in which they are part and parcel. The audience regarded them as Yahweh's mouth piece and because of this their oracle were accorded respect, even when they spoke against a sovereign. Even though there were false prophets in their time, but in many cases, the people were able to distinguish between true and false prophets.

In the case of Nigeria, the social economic, political and religious condition of the country is bedeviled by lots of social vices like, corruption in both public and private places, poverty both in the middle class and the people of the land. This has brought class differences in the society, manipulation, distortion and perversion of justice in favour of the wealthy and the privileged. The slogan of "if you cannot beat them, join them" is familiar among the middle class. The less privileged continue to lament that their destiny has been taken away by the ruling class. Worse still, the prophets who were supposed to serve as example of morality and so comfort the down trodden do not champion the course of social justice. Rather they engage in worldly pursuit of wealth. They indulge in all sorts of corruption, ritual practices, and occult practices to get hidden and mysterious powers to control their ignorant masses and all forms of social injustice. The tendency therefore is for the poor masses to look upon prophets in Nigeria in the same vein as they see the oppressive ruling class. Nigerian preachers must borrow a leaf from the ancient prophets of Israel. They must condemn in clear terms evil and the unjust social and political structure. The elements that are responsible for our unpleasant economic and political situation must never be over looked.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There should be a governing body to regulate prophecies and identify and discipline fake prophets to restore integrity to the Christian community.

The government should put up by law a council to checkmate all religious institutions to close down erring churches.

The corporate affairs commission should make it more stringent to register some of these commercial houses in the name of churches.

The media houses will help to take note of prophecies and de-market them whenever such prophecies didn't come to pass

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) should rise up to their responsibility of de-registering and disassociating from both Pastors and Prophets whose operations and lifestyles are contrary to Biblical Christianity

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adagbada, C.O (2018) "*The Rule of Prophets as Promoters of Social Change in Nigeria"* in Prophecy, Politics and Power in Ancient Israel and the Nigerian Context. A Feshschrift in honour of the Most Rev. Dr. G.I. Lasebikan. Ed. By Dada et al.

Adebo, A.O. (2018) *Prophecy and Social Justice in Ancient Israel*: Lesson for Nigeria in Prophecy, Politics and Power in Ancient Israel on the Nigerian Context.

Akintola, Godwin O. (2008) *Prophecy and Social Change in the O.T. Ilorin*: Amazing Grace Prints Media.

Awojobi P.O.;(2015) *Prophetic Ministry in Ancient Israel*: Kingdom Power Communications.

Berkhof, I.(2000) *Systematic Theology Pennsylvania*: The BathPress.

Cletus Tanimu Gotan;(2008) Plateau: *Towards a Peaceful, Politicking and Elections*". Humanity: Jos Journal of General Studies 4:3:163-174.

Clyde T. Francisco; (1977) *Introducing the Old Testament* (Revised) Broadman-press.

Dada, A.O;(2018) *"Predictive Prophecy as a Medium of Social Control in Ancient Israel & Nigeria Context*" Edited by Dada et al.

Digangi, M. (1984) "The Twelve Prophetic Voices"- Ontario: Victor Books Publishing),

Ejinkeneonye, Ugochukwu; (2007) *Corruption and Proliferation of Churches in Nigeria.* The Guardian, June 14.

Ejizu, C.I.(2008)"Between Religion and Morality: Their Interconnection and Significance in Public Life" (Inaugural Lectures Series 59) Port-Harcourt, University of Port Harcourt,

Folarin, George O.(2004); *Studies in Old Testament prophecy*. Bukuru: African Christian Text Books, 2004.

Griffin N.P.; (1997)"*The God of the Prophets*", an Analysis of Divine Action. Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

J. Neusner, J. Neusner, A.J. Avery-Peck, W.S Green and Museum of Jewish Heritage, 1069-1070.

John Stott (1995) "*Authentic Christianity*", Inter varsity Press England

John R. Sampey (1977) "*Prophecy in Ancient Israel*", Briad man Press.

Oluwawunsi, O.A; *Bongotons, O.T & Ajiboye, S.K. Corrupt Practices in Christian Community*: Oyo Journal of Counseling and Behavioural Studies 4, 267-279.

Sheppards G.T. & W.E. Herbrech Tsmeie; (1993) *Prophecy: An Overview* Ed. By Aliade New York. imond Schuster Mac Millan.

Sopuru, D.E;(2008) "*Modern Theology Versus Biblical Theology*" Ma-kurdi: Napo-Amazing Grace Enterprise.

Taiye, A.; (2010) "Main Trend in Church Growth in Nigeria. Retrieved on July 20, 2025 from www.proliferation of church.

Ukpong. D.P.; (2013) "*The Presence and the Impact of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, Challenges and Prospects*. Port Harcourt: CIWA Press.

Whybray, R. N.(1993); "*Prophets*" The Oxford Companion to the Bible Ed. Bruce M. Mezzer & Michael D. Coogan Oxford: Oxford University Press.