

The Politics of Prophets and Profits in African Christianity

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine and evaluate the role played by prophets within the context of African Christianity. Prophets and prophecy plays a big role in the religious life of Africa. In so doing this paper will highlight the expected roles of prophets by both the hearers of the word of GOD and those in a cultural setting of animism in Africa. This paper will explore and evaluate how prophets have shaped and influenced African Christianity and society at large.

Keywords: key words, Prophets, Prophecy

1. Introduction

People generally want to hear from God. The same applies to those who claim to speak on behalf of God. Generally, the 21st century African theology and ministry at large is searching for the voice of God. Africans enjoy prophecy. Any voice that confirms their misery or good fortunes is respected. This has seen Prophets modestly and gradually contextualizing the gospel to meet the needs of the African hearers. African people have been socialized into African traditional beliefs which tend to encourage the spirit of leaving 'everything to the supernatural'. The word prophecy or prophet is loose in African traditional religion. Consultation through foretelling or forth telling through spirit mediums is generally accepted as prophecy. The church in Africa however is failing to differentiate between true prophets and false prophets. It places much emphasis on the spoken word without evaluating the source.

This challenge has been further complicated by denominationalism. Denominationalism developed during the course of church history. Denominationalism in Africa has caused the church to fail to view the world from a biblical view. This has left the church divided over the subject of prophecy and prophets. No meaningful or open discussion has been made so far concerning the subject of prophecy within African context. Most of church history is influenced by the struggle between two spiritual viewpoints.

There are true and false prophets. Both sides claim to be of God. Each generation assigns different titles to these "theological positions". Denominations have polarized around these two sides of prophets, hence embracing them in and within "Christian Orthodoxy". Here we mean the difference between the prophetic ministry (God's prophets) and the soothsayers.

The 21st Century African theology is going through spiritual evolution never seen since the inception of the gospel in the continent. African Theology is black theology, from the perspective of the African cultural context. Although there are very old Christian traditions on the continent, in the last centuries Christianity in Africa has been determined to a large extent by western forms of Christianity. This also means that the theology in Africa was strongly influenced by Western theology. Evers, Georg (1999).

The term "African Theology" has been under debate for many years to date. Research spanning back to the sixties shows that African theology had three major developments namely; the adaption, incarnation and cultural setting phase. The philosophy of cultural setting was developed in the early eighties.

2. Adaptation phase

The major concern of those writing and directing the course of African theology in the first phase was "adaptation". The thrust of this movement was to make Christianity adapt to its African environment. This was conceived in terms of such practices as wearing African clothes, using indigenous African music in liturgy, and the indigenization of the clergy. The work of evangelism and pastoral care was also shifted to Africans. The weakness with the adaption phase was that it focused on the physical environment of the African. The phase overlooked the role played by ethics and values in the day to day life of a given society.

Ethic is primarily a set of principles that people use to decide what is right and what is wrong, or what beliefs affect the way that people behave. In the propagation of the word of God and the overall Christian duties in communities, failure to understand people's ethics will always lead to a clash of perceptions. Ethics determine how people behave. An ethic influences behaviour and establishes people's values. Such beliefs do have implications for Christians when they lead such communities. Dilemmas faced by African theology in view of the subject under discussion, clearly shows that the church is facing an ethical problem.

2.1. Incarnation phase

The next phase of African theology sought Christianity which was more deeply and authentically rooted in African soil. One of the ways this task was undertaken was to research on the traditional African religions of various ethnic groups from which the African theologians arose. Since many of them were second or third generation Christians by this time, it necessitated a considerable adjustment process and the pursuit of research methodologies more familiar to anthropologists than to theologians. On the other hand, African theologians had the advantage of knowledge of the indigenous languages, their mother tongues.

This phase however lost direction down the road as the traditional African religion went through metamorphosis. The result was the rise of sects and Zionist churches. This was a direct break away from the influences of western Christianity and Christian thought at large. These off shoots from traditional churches wanted to serve God from an African platform. This meant embracing and accommodating most of the rituals practiced by Africans in the pursuit for God.

2.2. Cultural setting phase

By the early 1980s it was apparent to some African scholars that out of the process of revaluation of African traditional religion (ATR) a certain tension emerged. Some began to voice concern that much of the work was being done in a vacuum, for it did not fit the every-day context in which most Africans live or experience in ministry. The modern African reality is one in which many traditions and customs have died out to the extent that they cannot now be properly recovered, while "modern" and western ways have not been fully established. In this context which is neither wholly modern nor wholly ancient, a majority of Africans live in economic misery and a daily reality of grinding poverty. In this context, many a people are seeking for answers or to hear what God has for their bleak future. In addition, Africa is now much more urbanized and educated than it was in the 1960s.

The theological literature written by African scholars today is usually not in the highly refined modes of discourse one finds in the academic theology of the European university. They are writing to a more general audience whose primary concerns are often very different from those of Europeans and Americans. Many books today for the African Christian are on church management, spiritual enlightenment and devotion. Little attention has been given to Africans in search of Christianity.

This paper seeks to investigate the role of a prophet and the dilemmas of African theology within the context of African religion. There are many voices claiming to be from God in the African church. Advocates of these many voices are prophets. The various modes of African communication to and from God has been imported into African theology. Soothsaying, divination, sorcerers, fortune telling and spirit guides have been accepted and embraced in African theology under the banner of prophecy and faith healing.

Do Africans understand the meaning of salvation through Jesus Christ? If so why is there rampant spiritual tourism in the African church as members seek for divine intervention from prophets? Why do we have repeated deliverances on those claiming to have received Christ as Lord and savior? This paper also seeks to uncover the missing link in the concept of the much sought after deliverance. It seems the above mentioned three phases the African theology has undergone so far have failed to meet the expectations and faith of Africans in God.

2.3. The voice of God and old testament prophets within the context of ministry:

In the Old Testament, a prophet (or seer) was one inspired by God through the Holy Spirit to deliver a message for a specific purpose. God's calling as a prophet is not to elevate an individual for their own glory, but for the glory of God and to turn people to him.

Some would limit that role and exclude those who receive a personal message not intended for the body of believers but in the Bible, on a number of occasions, according to the bible, prophets were called to deliver personal messages. The reception of a message is termed revelation and the delivery of the message is termed prophecy.

Old Testament prophets were not interpreters of God's will; they uttered the actual words which God gave them. The major two aspects of their work covered forth telling and foretelling. The Compact Bible Dictionary,(1967).

The Old Testament Prophets gave direction to the nation of Israel. Their role was not only limited to matters affecting the congregation or individuals.

To a great extent, the prophets suffered for the truth (Jer 20:1-3). The national agenda was set by prophets in the event people lost direction (2 Chron 12:5). Besides providing people with direction, prophets also acted as encouragers, preachers, predictors or rebuked and corrected people when necessary (Judg 6:7-9).

History shows us that Prophets originally were made to be representatives of God. Then the Lord said to Moses; "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country

(Ex 7:1-2).

This does not mean that prophets are small gods. They are literally meant to be faithful representatives of God (Num 12:6-7). At one point prophets became mediators between the congregation and God due to the fear of God which people had. Deut 18:17-18.

2.4. The voice of God and biblical prophecy within the context of ministry:

The need for guidance calls for an analysis in view of prophets and prophecy. Lack of direction drives people to seek for guidance through other means. The context in which this study is based is that of people who want to hear the voice of God due to social, economic or political day to day challenges.

Before the existence of prophets, God has been providing with guidance to humanity. The book of Psalm teaches that it is God who instructs and teach people His ways.

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" Psalm 32:8.

For those who put their trust and faith in God, He guides them. This has nothing to do with the location of the hearer of the word. When people are saved through Christ Jesus, they are weaned from guidance by traditional belief systems. Isaiah 48: 17-18 claries on the wisdom of God in regard of this matter.

"I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go".

Above all, the role of prophets in the church should not replace the role of God to His people. No other new teaching should exceed that which God does to His followers. Gods' teaching is a standard for Christian faith and anything less or more becomes heresy or manipulation.

Depending on human guidance by a society is a sign of idolatry. The source of guidance is important in the life of Christians in any given community. The sources of guidance tend to influence the belief systems of any society. Under this discussion, it appears as if the new approach to African Christianity is facing a dilemma on matters of guidance. Guidance is not the major word we should really focus on in this study. The focus will be on who should be guiding Christianity and how? Many societies in Africa under the banner of Christianity have been misled because they have failed to answer the above mentioned question.

2.5. Misleading prophets

When a different way of worshipping God replaces the word of God, the hearers tend to be misled. Prophets in Africa have introduced different ways of worship associated with animism. The bible attests to this truth.

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer (Deut 13:1-3).

That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way the Lord your God commanded you to follow. (Deut 13:5).

In this respect, we find out that Prophets are prone to speak on behalf of other gods and not God the creator.

A prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. (Deut 18:20).

At times prophets spoke presumptuously (Deut 18:21-22).

Also to take note of is the role which was played by priests in the Old Testament dispensation. For the atonement of sins, various animals were slaughtered by the priests on behalf of those in need. This practice fulfilled the old covenant which God had with His people pertaining deliverance.

However Jesus came and fulfilled the same law in the New Covenant so that people no longer depend on sacrifices (Hib 10:4-10). Bringing new covenant Christians to sacrifices and rituals, removes the purpose of Jesus in a Christians' life. This was the problem with the Galatians. It appears the prophetic ministries in Africa are just doing the same as in the Old Testament. Introduction of sacrifices or rituals in an African context has been well received because it brings people closer to traditional religion. All this has been done in the name of deliverance. In some portions of the bible, we read of needy people offering gratuity to prophets, as was the case of Elisha.

Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant." The prophet answered, "As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing."

And even though Naaman urged him, he refused (2 Kings 5:15-16). This passage shows that true prophets of God never attached any commercial value to their service to the people. God cannot trade His services with the subject of His creation. The other school of thought justifies the concept of business prophets by quoting the story of king Benhad who sent a gift to Elisha in exchange with healing (2 Kings 8:8). We are

not told of the results.

The same Elisha who had refused Naaman's gifts could not have accepted Benhadad's gift. The moment the gift of God is sold that means the ability of the prophet would have been traded too. This results into a cult. People will end up looking to the person and not God. The story of Saul looking for the lost donkeys further clarifies on this analogy.

Saul said to his servant,

"If we go, what can we give the man? The food in our sacks is gone. We have no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?" The servant answered him again. "Look," he said, "I have a quarter of a shekel of silver. I will give it to the man of God so that he will tell us what way to take." (1 Sam 9:7-8).

An examination of prophets and the development of African Christianity points to a concept of offering gifts to prophets as a form of appreciation of the service rendered.

This has resulted in siphoning of unsuspecting masses of their resources. Livestock sacrifices are made for trans-generational curses. (Sharon Kavhu, 2015). The case of Saul and Samuel shows that Samuel did not exchange his gift with a shekel of silver.

Samuel said to the cook,

"Bring the piece of meat I gave you, the one I told you to lay aside."

So the cook took up the leg with what was on it and set it in front of Saul. Samuel said, "Here is what has been kept for you. Eat, because it was set aside for you for this occasion, from the time I said, 'I have invited guests.'" And Saul dined with Samuel that day (1 Sam 9:23-24).

Saul had a shekel of silver to give to Samuel and reading further the same passage, we note that Samuel had reserved meat for Saul and his servant because God had directed him to do so. Prophets who ignored the will of God perished (1 Kings 13:23-24).

In other instances it was the followers who persuaded prophets to speak what people wanted to hear about. This resulted in prophets lying in order to meet peoples' needs.

These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction.

They say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets, "Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions (Isa 30:9-10).

When people chose not to listen to God's instruction, they began to manipulate prophets.

The vicious circle resulted in further exploitation of people by the prophets as proved by the following passages; A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land:

The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end? (Jer 5:30-31).

When wrong was supported by followers, it became difficult for outsiders to differentiate between true and false prophets.

When these people, or a prophet or a priest, ask you, 'What is the oracle of the Lord?' say to them, 'What oracle? I will forsake you, declares the Lord. If a prophet or a priest or anyone else claims, 'This is the oracle of the Lord,' I will punish that man and his household. (Jer 23:33-35).

"I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!' How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship. (Jer 23:25-27, 32. (27:10,15).

Continuous abuse of people by false prophets tend to drift the hearers of the word away from God into idolatry. God called for such false prophets to be reprimanded.

The word of the Lord came to me: 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are now prophesying. Say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: 'Hear the word of the Lord! (Ezek 13:1-2,17).

The Old Testament prophets of God were meant to be the mouth piece of God. However counterfeit prophets were there so as to mislead the children of God. God's prophets performed miracles so as to bring people closer to God and not to man (1 Kings 18:36-39). Focus was on God and not selfish ends (Ezek 34:1-3).

Jeremiah best summarized the abuse of power by of Old Testament false prophets. They [prophets] follow an evil course and use their power unjustly.

"Both prophet and priest are godless; even in my temple I find their wickedness, declares the Lord. Therefore their path will become slippery; (Jer 23:10-12).

The Old Testament shows that true prophets preached repentance and directed people to obey the laws of God and not mankind ordinances.

"I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me". (Jer 35:15).

Failure to observe or to be consistent with the dictates of the word is one of the signs of false prophets. African prophets seem to be embracing and importing more of their cultural norms in their discharge of duty, without considering biblical backing. (Isa 8:20).

The economic condition of the continent has immensely contributed towards the evolution of African Christianity within the context of prophets and their subjects. In Africa this false –theology has created a new breed of selfish Christians, prophets and pastors, a tribe which operates within the unholy trinity: me, myself and I. (Solomon Izang Asholms, 2015). Their message and theology has been shaped around their quest for social and economic emancipation.

Each time people seek divine intervention in their social and economic lives, they tend to be vulnerable to abuse and bribes.

The leaders will judge for a bribe, the priests teach for a price and the prophets tell fortunes for money. People are given hope where there is no hope. (Micah 3:11).

Another motivation of false prophets is wealth.

There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. (Ezek 22:25).

Prophecy has many connotations in the African context. The thin line between prophets in African religion and African Christianity has further raised questions in orthodox Christianity.

Can Christians in Africa understand prophecy from a biblical point without any attachment to traditional religion?

The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end? (Jer 5:31).

The fact that people encourage divination and sorcery practiced by prophets, shows that there is a struggle between Christian faith and traditional values. False prophets do give true predictions and outcomes of prophecies they give. Their prophecies do not always fail and this has and is the key to the growth of the prophetic churches mostly in Africa. (Deut 13:1-2). This point therefore raises questions on the thin line between true and false prophets.

3. A thin line between true and false prophets

In the Old Testament we see the thin line between two prophets, Jeremiah and Hananiah. Society considered both to be prophets of God. The Lord told Jeremiah that Judah would suffer for 70 years under the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and that the whole land would be desolation. Jeremiah delivered this message to Israel as God commanded.

On the other hand another prophet by the name of Hananiah didn't see things that way. He spoke a comforting contradictory message that generally said Nebuchadnezzar's power would be broken within two years and that his yoke would be removed from the neck of Judah and all nations. The Bible says that Hananiah uttered these words before all the people. In response, God spoke these words through Jeremiah:

"Hear now, Hananiah; the LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the Earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month". (Jeremiah 28:15-17)

Jeremiah wasn't the only one to deal with false prophets. The prophet Ezekiel also had to contend with the "foolish prophets" that "prophesy out of their own hearts".

"Son of man prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the LORD GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!" (Ezekiel 13:2-3).

And again...

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God. Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace..."(Ezekiel 13:8-10).

The thin line between false and true prophets will remain present in the history of the church. This also reflects that the title (prophet) is not that which counts but the kingdom which the title represents. The African church seems to have an identity crisis with regard to prophecy and prophets.

3.1 Divination and prophets

In African Christianity, with and the growth of the prophetic churches, people are failing to define the thin line between biblical prophecy and divination. Divination is a common practice in African traditions. The word

divination comes from the Latin *divinare*, meaning “to foresee” or “to be inspired by a god.”

To practice divination is to uncover hidden knowledge by supernatural means. It is associated with the occult and involves fortune-telling or soothsaying, as it used to be called. From ancient times, people have used divination to gain knowledge of the future or as a way of making money. African Christianity has celebrated the uncovering of hidden information by supernatural means and has not bothered to investigate the source of the information. Identification of sources of the problems has become the norm in African churches. Some diviners charge for their service.

This is now a common feature in African Christianity. This evil practice dates back in the Old Testament.

The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said. Spend the night here, Balaam said to them, and I will bring you back the answer the Lord gives me." So the Moabite princes stayed with him. Num 22:7-8.

Divination can be seen as a systematic method with which to organize what appear to be disjointed, random facets of existence such that they provide insight into a problem at hand. If a distinction is to be made between divination and fortune-telling, it will be seen that divination has a more formal or ritualistic element and often contains a more social character, usually in a religious context, as seen in African traditions.

The Bible is clear on matters concerning divination. God hates divination, fortune tellers or those who interpret omens. He compares divination with the spirit of rebellion. Divination is practiced by human exploiters. We get a good example from the book of Acts. As Luke traveled with Paul and Silas in the city of Philippi, he recorded an encounter with a diviner:

“We were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling” The girl’s ability to penetrate mysteries was due to a demon that controlled her. Her masters received “much gain” from their slave. Paul eventually exorcised the demon. (Acts 16:16-19).

Diviners work for a gain as they exploit their unsuspecting hearers at any particular point.

African Christianity is failing to justify the biblical basis of some prophetic practices common in their worship. Divination has become prevalent and accepted in their worship.

“The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the Lord your God has not permitted you to do so. The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him” Deut 18:14-16.

The bible here points out that divination is used in prophecy. In African religion, divination is also a common practice done through witchdoctors. The transition of divination from African religion or animism to African Christianity is a marked by a thin line.

This development has been motivated by the need to know the source of problems by those who have moved to Christianity. African Christianity has not enquired the source of prophecy during the discourse of worship. This deficiency has led to divination being embraced in African Christianity. The focus here as already mentioned, is not the source but information unveiled, in view of presenting problems.

The case of Laban is a good example of how animistic philosophy uses divination for enquiry. Laban said to Jacob;

"If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you." He added, "Name your wages, and I will pay them." Gen 30:27-28.

This case study shows that animism uses divination for spiritual direction and social deficiencies.

They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, provoking him to anger. 2 Kings 17:17.

Prophets working under the influence of divination are spiritists as shown by sacrifices their members are subjected to in all their church services.

They sacrificed their own sons in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists. They did much evil in the eyes of the Lord, provoking him to anger (2 Kings 21:6). (2 Ch 33:6).

As already mentioned under this discussion, Prophets practicing divination tend to bondage people. Ezek 13:23. History proves that after a certain season, false prophets cease to function due to a number of economic, social and political reasons. Their operations are motivated by social need of a particular time.

“Therefore night will come over you, without visions, and darkness, without divination. The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them. The seers will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced. They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God." Mic 3:6-7.

3.2 Sorcery, prophecy and idolatry (Deut 27:15).

One of the major trademarks of Prophets and African Christianity is the high usage of a combination of sorcery and fortune telling or soothsaying. The major trade marks in deliverance services include the following: Chronomancy; This is determination of lucky and unlucky days by the prophet. Chairvoyance : This is spiritual vision or inner sight of a person’s life. Objects ranging from anointed water to anointed clothes are used.

Lithomancy: This is usage of stones or gems for protection and luck. Necromancy: This entails contacting the dead, or channeling through familiar spirits or souls of the dead. Numerology : This applies to usage of numbers to speak into a person's life. Onomancy: This is identifying problems through names. Anointed towels, anointed bangles, anointed grass, anointed rings, anointed portraits of the prophets, talismans, oils and all forms of objects has become a common feature in prophets and African Christianity.

Biblically, usage of objects by Prophets also falls under sorcerers. Soothsaying is also common during sorcery. Enticing words of comfort and instilling fear are common with soothsayers as they dispense healing products. The term soothsayer, comes from an ancient word that means, "to soothe" or comfort. It is associated with occult. God refers to the practice as "divination", which is condemned by the Bible.

Yet, soothsaying also applies to those in the church that speak a false message on behalf of God. One can view soothsaying as the spiritual counterfeit of real prophecy. It's a counterfeit because it "sounds" like a message from God. The soothsayer proclaims a false message (usually from their own mind and philosophy) that puts people at ease.

The biblical basis of usage of objects by Prophets for demonstration of power or as idols falls under works of sorcerers. A good example of this case is found in the book of Exodus when Pharaoh summoned his wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians to confront Moses. They used their secret arts. Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs. Ex 7:12-13.

This passage shows that sorcery, prophecy and idolatry can be used under the banner of prophet. However, ancient products which were used in traditional rituals have been modernized by prophets to meet needs of the context. Objects such as talismans, charms and amulets have a modern appeal. From the historic age, the early men wore certain bones, wood, gem stones and skeletons as protective symbols, to ward off evil forces or even to attract success.

This belief for protection also applies to plants. Certain plant parts, seeds or flowers are also worn or kept in strategic areas. The belief is that these objects would protect and also attract good influence.

Sometimes the object is worn as a symbol of power or to get power. Indeed, some objects are naturally or even scientifically proven to possess some magical powers.

Some gemstones are used to power wrist watches. Some plants repels or attracts evil or harmful animals like snakes and wildcats. Some plants and special wood are used for healing and for making incense and oil, which purify the atmosphere. Usage of all these are common in African traditional religion.

Those who practice yoga at times do meditate in a Lotus position on deerskin in the wilderness. This keeps them safe from certain wild cat such as Leopards and Tigers since the smell of a dead deer repels the cats.

In medieval time the occultists and mystics have done a thorough research on magnetizing certain objects to carry some spiritual virtues as in great books of the world. This is done under a kind of ceremonial rites to imbue the object with Spirit, planetary and elemental powers. The symbol will then attract spirits (regarded as angels) to carry out specific desires of an individual. The misconception of this practice was taken from Exodus 12.

"The Blood on the door post will be a sign to mark the houses in which you live. When I see the blood I will pass over you and will not harm you when I punish the Egyptians" Ex 12:13

This scripture is misquoted and used to support the doctrine of object usage. This has led to African theology shift from usage of skins and bones to modern objects such as gold, silver, copper, steel, stones and plants. The modern generation needs objects which are modest and not antique in appearance.

It is however good to note that some metals are known to be better conductor of electricity as well as conductors of spiritual forces.

The above metals are listed according to their degree of conductivity of forces, but do remember that some objects even though not metal are naturally endowed with spiritual potency. For this reason God denounces use of metals for spiritual purposes.

"Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the Lord your God. Lev 19:4

Spirits can dwell in or be transferred through Idols, gods or images. It is in this light that God hates idol worship.

"Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the Lord your God. Lev 26:1. NI

The spiritual effects of serving idols are mentioned up to verse 19 of the same book. Laban was disappointed when his cast idol was stolen. He had to pursue Jacob in a bid to recover his idol. Genesis 31: 30. Exodus 34:17. Idols open up doors to curses.

"Cursed is the man who carves an image or casts an idol — a thing detestable to the Lord, the work of the craftsman's hands — and sets it up in secret." Deut 27:15. NIV.

Prophets in the African church have become the vehicle for heresy too. Ezekiel 13:1-20. This paper has already shown that the gift of God cannot be exchanged with any reward. It is a blasphemy to do so. Acts 8:18-21. People who exchange the gift of God with money have no place in the ministry.

3.3. Holy oils, perfumes, powders and holy waters.

Holy oil or Mystic oil has been in use from time antiquity to attract favorable results for needy communities. Holy men, Bishops, Clergy, Pastors, and Spiritual Masters are reputed to carry these oils in their pouches.

When confronted by the suffering masses, they would bring out the appropriate oil and anoint the person wishing him or her good luck and blessings. It is often used for baptism, initiation, anointments, exorcism, house blessings, consecration, healing, massages, prophecy and general ritual magic. These oils are now made public through distributing agencies with offices all over the world.

Most oils are prepared in the innermost temple of the world of darkness according to the highest formulas of the Great Books of the world. The oils are alleged to work according to the name designated to them. (www.jaffaagency.com). Ironically, various products have been produced for the church to meet all sorts of problems faced by Christians in the prophetic churches in Africa. This creates a direct challenge and competition against what the world is offering. The result is confusion in the church.

Common among prophetic ministries are mystic seals, talismans, Charms magic necklaces, bangles, wristwatches anointed pens, money saving purses, energy belts, power rings, colored candles, magic mirrors, incenses; rings for success, good luck oils.

Other products used are highly perfumed mystical oils and powders for every spiritual purpose. Incenses, true Love oils, life protection oils, good fortune sandals, exam success oils, attraction oils, good luck oils, money drawing oils, holy waters, beauty powders, Florida water, witch expellers and bath mixtures are also availed for those desperate for supernatural intervention. (www.jaffaagency.com). All the above mentioned products are common in prophetic ministries in Africa. 1 John 5 : 21.

The real objective in fortune-telling is the disclosure of future events. Quite often, though, to inspire confidence, the fortune-teller will communicate bits of information about a person's past that would be naturally unknown to anyone else. This helps in furthering manipulation of the congregants. Utterance of hidden things concerning peoples' lives does not justify, let alone make one a genuine prophet (Dan 2:1-2). The major mark of false prophets is that they do not speak the will of God.

"So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums or your sorcerers who tell you, 'You will not serve the king of Babylon.'" Jer 27:9. In the process of sorcery the desperate followers tend to be defrauded.

"So I will come near you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the Lord Almighty. Mal 3:5.

We also learn that sorcery is an attempt to bypass God's wisdom and power. It gives glory to Satan instead. God has no tolerance for sorcery. In the book of Deuteronomy, sorcery is listed among the sinful practices of the nations surrounding Israel. God calls it an abomination:

"There shall not be found among you . . . anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you."

3.4. Bible prophecy

Biblical prophecy has to look into three major areas of the Christian life. The prophecy must be focused on edification, exhortation and comfort (1 Cor 14:3). If the user of the gift matures, one gets into the office of ministry. This means that usage of the gift of prophecy does not make one a prophet until a stage of maturity has been reached. The gift of prophecy involves speaking forth an inspiring message from God. There is a difference between a prophet and the gift of prophecy.

The office or position of a prophet is the gift of a man to the church, whereas the gift of prophecy may be exercised by anyone. All may prophesy but only some are prophets (1 Cor 12:10). (T.A.Osiowy, 1987).

Prophecy operates under the gift of knowledge. Under this gift we have *Audible voice* (1 Samuel 3: 11-14). A good example is when God spoke directly to Samuel. Under the gift of knowledge, we have also *dreams or visions* (Gen 41: 25-36). This is the same gift which Joseph had when he dreamt of the future. Daniel also gave an insight of dreams (Daniel 2:19). The book of Joel also captures the same (Joel 2:28-29). Thirdly we have the gift of *prophecy*. This gift *reveals the secrets of men's hearts* (1 Cor 14:24-25; 1 Samuel 9: 19 ; John 4:7-30; John 2:24-25 and 11 Kings 5:20-26). The gift can also function to *encourage God's people* (1 Kings 19: 14-18). Prophecy also can *detect evil* (Exodus 32:7-8, 26-28. Acts 5:1-11). Prophecy can *warn of judgment or impending danger* (Amos 3:7-8. Genesis 18:17-18. Acts 11: 27-28).

3.5. Prophets as advocates of syncretism

When people mix two or more religious belief systems this is called syncretism. Prophets and the development

of African Christianity seem to have promoted a new culture of syncretism. The African constituencies of the church do have a non-Christian background. This alone has a bearing on the epistemology of religion.

In this case, the temptation to add Christianity to the former traditional religious system is high. At the end, the new believer is forced to mix the two belief systems. The reasons why Africans practice syncretism are not hard to understand. Culture renewal in Africa has caused many people to try to rediscover their past. Since culture and religion are closely related in Africa, this has led to a return to traditional religious practices. (Wilbur O' Donovan Jr, 2006).

Challenges of modernization coupled with globalization of culture have also contributed to the development of African Christianity. Prophets of this new dispensation, faced by the African church, substitutes the primitive methods African religion used to contact the spirit world.

Prophets have adopted and ushered into the church a new approach which appeals to the modern context of African religion.

Globalization of primitive traditions and culture has brought new challenges to the old practices of consulting traditional mediums. Mediators play a big role in African tradition. Prophets fill this gap very well. The current wave of syncretism is yet to be fully researched by African theology scholars. The new culture of mediation by prophets as seen in the development of African Christianity, has also been driven by the economic miasma faced by the continent.

In African religion, mediators on spiritual matters are compensated with animals or anything equivalent to livestock. However, prophets as mediators have placed monetary value or modern items on their services.

Syncretism has become a phenomenally successful global religious movement throughout post colonial Africa "*this approach creates modern consumers through a ritual of prayer...*" The atonement for our sins which leads to our reconciliation with God is interpreted to include the alleviation of sickness (including incurable diseases such as AIDS and cancer), poverty, misfortunes and other challenges in life which are viewed as curses to be broken by faith. This is said to be achieved through visualization and positive confession, and is often taught in mechanical and contractual terms. (Meyer, B (1998). These rituals have shifted from the traditional norms of witchdoctors, hence creating direct competition with the former within African society.

4 Syncretism or contextualization of the gospel

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him. Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" Colossians 2:6-8.

Besides syncretism, African Christianity is also reflecting a rise of traditional theology in Africa. All this is done in an attempt to contextualize the gospel. Is African tradition being fused into Christianity under disguise of new revelations? Writing to the Colossians, Paul sites four major imminent threats to the church. The first one is *human philosophy*, the second one is *vain deceit*, the third is *tradition* of man and the fourth are the *ways of this world*. The church is struggling to remain original in its message just as it was during the days of the disciples.

In an attempt to please the changing cultures and dynamism brought about by the changing world, the church has lost its strategy for contextualizing the gospel. Human philosophy, vain deceit, traditions and ways of the world have found their way in the church in Africa in the name of modernization and contextualizing the gospel.

Besides the African context, generally all human cultures do have some elements which do not agree or work in harmony with the word of God. In most indigenous communities, the gospel is always viewed as a threat to other cultures. Converting people to Christ is always treated with suspicion, let alone seen as culture colonization.

The resultant hostility by some cultures has led them to accepting Jesus as one of the saviors among other cultural gods known by particular communities. Salvation for such communities is driven by rewards or economic benefits promised by the preachers. This philosophy might be the driving force behind the new prophetic voice trying to shape African Christianity. Taking into account the economic background of the continent, the preached messages have always been "*come and receive rather than come and believe*". This message has been well received by the context in which it is preached.

If proper principles are applied the church should be viable, relevant, prophetic force in its culture. Contextualization, thus embraces the dynamics of social change processes within cultures. Contextualization has to do with how we assess the peculiarity of world contexts.

Thus it takes into account the process of secularity, technology and the struggle for human justice which characterize the historical moment of nations. (www.tiuniversity.com, BH505, Apostolic Expansion,) It is therefore the dynamics of social change which is bringing the prophetic force steeped in traditional theology which is now at play in the struggle for the development of African Christianity.

Contextualization of the gospel is one of the key problems leading to the confusion currently faced by African Christian. The philosophy of contextualizing the gospel has not been well understood by the hearers of the word. This has led to the ongoing struggle faced by those seeking a better understanding of African Christianity. Furthermore, contextualization includes not only the cultural form of the past, but also the political, sociological and acculturation realities of the present day. Contextualization also seeks to fit the message to the receptor culture in a meaningful and acceptable way.

The risk here is that if contextualization is not aligned or made to meet the standard of the word of God, it loses its purpose. The result will be human traditions designing human theology. Human culture and needs are ever changing, so contextualization of the gospel must remain unchanged because the word of God remains the same yesterday, today and forever. We need to understand that culture is ever changing due to a number of factors and many influences. This however does not guarantee Christian faith and traditions to change as well because the word of God is based on principle and not fact. The word of God is the truth and never changes. To compare contextualization with the word of God or the truth opens the door for abuse of the hearers of the word by the preacher. Contextualization becomes relevant when it fits in the will of God and not vice-versa.

The quest for African Christian development is also affected by new revelations propagated by prophets. They claim their new insights supersede the biblical revelation. This point of departure from the bible leads to heresy. When a thin line is created between truth and false, it becomes difficult for the hearer to adjust their understanding of presenting situations within a given context.

Another area of challenge faced by African Christianity is that of identity crisis. African Christianity is a direct descendant of Western Christianity. To overcome this crisis, the church in Africa needs to de-westernize Christianity so that they approach it from an "*Our Father who art in Heaven*" context rather than from a missionary perspective. This will help the church disengage from approaching God with western bias. Since Christianity is a lifestyle, it cannot be fully lived through the lens of another culture.

Trying to live it through the lens of western culture or another culture has created a scenario of Western Christians during the day and African Christians at night. This breeds a ground of pretence.

De-westernization of Christianity will help Africans shape their basic concepts of Christian faith. If Jesus Christ is properly developed and understood in a life of an individual, all other theological questions will be answered and settled.

4.1. Deliverance challenges in African Christianity

Do those purporting to be Christians in Africa understand what they mean by saying Jesus delivered them. The Deliverance agenda began after the fall of mankind in Genesis chapter three. However, the term deliverance has been limited to mean casting out of demons only. When a person shifts from the kingdom of darkness to that of light, that person is said to be delivered too. The question the church in Africa should be searching for answers is, "how often should African Christians be delivered from demons?" Daily deliverance vigils by prophets have become good marketing ground for prophetic merchandise. The products lose power if certain spiritual rules are broken. The same products increase in value each time there is a new challenge which calls for deliverance.

The question of deliverance has seen a culture of spiritual tourism developing in the African church. People naturally face problems in life but their understanding of Christ as the savior is shallow, taking into account how they seek prophets for solutions. Economic problems have also contributed to the dilemma faced by the African church. This has seen the entry of miracle moneys and other unorthodox practices which are said to empower the unsuspecting followers reeling under economic pressure.

4.2. The Old Testament picture of deliverance

The priest was the focus of the atonement of peoples' sins (see books of Leviticus, Deuteronomy). On the other hand, false prophets rose, abusing people. Prophet Ezekiel also warned the prophets of the day who used objects and abused people. Ezekiel 13:1-7,10,20-21.

4.3. The historical lessons

Towards the end of the 2nd century Montanous movement proclaimed that the office of the Prophet was the most important in the life of the church as they claimed to be in the era of the Spirit. Deliverance and the restoration of gifts was the order of the day. Most Christian movements of this period enriched themselves by exploiting the unsuspecting masses. Cardinal Newman a Catholic, questioned how things were done in the course of deliverance. "Miracles must confirm Christian faith", he said. The 6th and 7th century saw the use of consecrated oil, amulets and incantations on the sick. (A. C. Gaebelein, 1925).

4.4. Authority over the bible.

Most prophets are authors of sources, which, according to them, have more authority than the Bible. The Bible is to be understood through these sources. Some prophets claim that their sources are the direct word of God and

should not be questioned.

When a prophecy is made and turns out to be false, it is explained away by saying that “new light” which amends the previous prophecy has in the meanwhile been received. New products will then be produced and distributed for sale to congregants.

4.5. A different way to salvation.

The idea of salvation is taken from the Christian faith, but is changed. New conditions for salvation are given, such as purchase of anointed products, allegiance, the use of certain sacraments and commitment to the organization. Members are thus obliged to fulfil these claims before they can be sure of salvation.

5. Devaluation of Jesus Christ.

This new crop of prophets devalue Jesus Christ and His role in salvation. Firstly, the person of Jesus Christ is degraded. They hardly point people to Jesus (Matt 11:28) as the savior. All glory and credit is given to the prophet. Secondly, the work of Jesus is devaluated. According to the new prophetic ministries, the atonement sacrifice of Christ is necessary for salvation. Complete atonement comes only when members of the church pay what the prophets could have instructed. The “Jesus” of these prophets is always someone less than the Bible’s eternal God who became flesh, lived here on earth, died for our sins, and arose from the dead.

5.1. Closed community

The emerging African church has developed a closed community. Members are not permitted to have friends, associate with other Christians or even excommunicate with family. They are encouraged to talk only to “outsiders” when the outsiders are potential members. This leads to isolation from the world, but also insulation as a group. They claim they are the only ones with the truth. However, the Bible teaches that Christ is all sufficient to make every person complete (Col 2:1-10).

It is only the scriptures which equip and enable (2 Tim 3:16-17) Christians to do every good works without enslaving them to rituals. In the prophetic church any reference to the word of God is not made but to the prophet. They believe that the Bible must be supplemented with new revelations that they make.

5.2. Uncritical thinking

The new crop of the prophets in Africa calls for uncritical thinking among its followers, coupled with brain washing techniques meant to control the members; Control of life and the environment: This is the purposeful limitation of all forms of communication with the outside world (newspapers, radio, books, television) Only the materials produced by the prophet are to be used by the members. Members are manipulated. The potential convert is convinced of the higher purpose within the special group and is shown his individual responsibility in the attainment of that goal.

Failure to meet prescribed goals might lead to one opening up doors for spiritual attacks. Staying within given parameters will, on the other hand cover the members from spiritual attacks. This manipulation strategy has instilled fear in the followers and kept them under control.

The prophets demand moral perfection from their followers as prescribed by them and not according to the word of God. This perfection is determined by the Prophet’s view of goodness as per revelation.

The new developing African theology, through these Prophet teaches that their doctrine always takes precedence over everything a person has learned in life and it becomes the new reality in which to function. People live according to the leaders’ strict standards, telling them when they can sleep or eat, and whom they can date or marry. The values of an individual member are insignificant compared to the value of the group, its work and its beliefs. They have gone further to demonstrate their powers by making people sleep during church services, turn snakes into chocolates, foretell people’s cell phone numbers, blowing people, oils and water for specific exorcism. The list is endless.

Interestingly, the new dispensation ushered in by African Prophets into the church seems to be a sharp contradiction of what the Orthodox Church in Africa had rejected. The next question therefore is; if members of the Orthodox Church are moving to prophetic ministries for recycling and later return to Orthodox Church after being tired of the recycling, what then is the missing link in African theology? To answer the above questions we must first answer the questions below.

5.3. Who delivers?

The African Prophet has given an impression that he holds the keys for humanity to be saved. The message preached and the programs designed for the followers point to none other than the man of God. People are hardly pointed to or grounded in Jesus. The Bible is clear on the issue of deliverance. It is the use of the name of Jesus which delivers and restores the lost relationship between mankind and God. Jesus is the one who delivers (John 1:12). Prophets focus on the individual as the deliverer. Failure to understand, let alone accept the biblical basis

of deliverance has led to those who claim to have Jesus move from one church to another, seeking deliverance. This challenge means African theology has left an opening for traditional religion to co-exist with Christianity. The new theology developing in the African church seems to be welcome by the hearers because it specializes in prophecy and deliverance; two of the driving forces of African religion (1 John 4:1-2). This has caused people to fall under a cycle of deliverance time and again, hence opening up to a host of demonic forces. This alone reveals the absence of the knowledge of Christology in the new developing theology of the continent. Another question which needs to be answered under this paper is that of anointing.

5.4. Who is anointed?

Anointing is power or the presence of God in a Christian's life (Eph 3:20). The African church is struggling to understand the definition of anointing. Prophets have monopolized the anointing. Who is anointed in the body of Christ? A wrong conception has been developed by prophets (2 Cor 1:21-24). All who have received Jesus as lord and Saviour of their lives automatically receive anointing from God (Eph 3:20). Ignorance of this truth exposes people to manipulation.

If Christians develop their faith in God, they cease to put their trust in human beings. If the church in Africa develops the right knowledge base for its followers, confusion which the church might find itself in future might be minimized.

5.5. What should happen with deliverance?

The future of African theology must ensure that people understand the work of Jesus Christ and full Christology. This will minimize spiritual tourism by those seeking deliverance. The following biblical steps have to be followed in order to develop biblically based Christians.

6. Accept Jesus.

This obviously involves repentance and coming to a place where one totally belongs to the Lord. Therefore one must decide to change their ways, be sorry enough to quit the old way of life. (Col 1:13-14). We are to be delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God.

At this point we have the right to call ourselves the children of God (John 1:12). When we have done this then we can affirm our faith in the Lord Jesus. The current position of the church developments in Africa reveals a deficiency of Jesus in its so called followers, as indicated by the prophecy euphoria. If Jesus is ingrained in people's hearts, the conscience of who to follow becomes automatic. The knowledge to discern right and wrong tends to prevail.

6.1. Confess (1 John 1:9).

In confession a major requirement is honesty and willingness to admit that the problem exists. It is not a confession to the prophet or man of God. It is that personal conviction and individual agreement with God. It is also important to call our sin by its name, it will not shock God. With confession there must be repentance of all sin (Prov 28:13).

We must learn to hate all sin as God does. This stage helps develop solid foundations based on God and not on denominational doctrine.

6.2. Power of forgiving (Matt 18:34-35).

This is an act of the will and not an emotion. It is a decision of the will expressed with the lips. It is going beyond self centeredness and choosing not to hold anything against anymore. It is releasing, not necessarily forgetting. This stage helps one break from past experiences and curses (John 20:21-23). Going for prophetic deliverance without having fully worked on forgiveness is like building a house on sand.

6.3. Renounce.

It must be understood that on most occasions the door into one's life for demonic oppression is opened through the act of one's will, by choosing to be involved in some sinful activity. Now by the act of the will, the door must be closed. Failure to renounce the past has caused and many to be abused by prophets. Past sins not renounced open doors to evil spirits. This cycle has seen people seeking deliverance regularly in a bid to break from a cycle of curses.

6.4. Personal initiative leads to release from curses

Prepare to be released from every curse over your life. Curses are like dark shadows over our lives; these prevent us from experiencing deliverance from evil spirits and physical healing.

Some indications of curse are:- mental and emotional breakdown; repeated or chronic sickness (especially if hereditary), barrenness, a tendency to miscarry or related female problems, breakdown of marriage

and family alienation; continuous financial insufficiency, being “accident prone” and family history of suicides or unnatural, untimely deaths. Total surrender to Christ breaks the power of the curse.

6.5. God delivers and not prophets

Ask God to deliver. This requires simple prayer (Joel 2:32). Take your stand with God, then expel or cast out the demons. After this stage, walk by faith in the new life in Christ Jesus. This is very important, possibly more so than everything else that has been covered. (James 4:7-10). It is the individual’s responsibility to resist the devil. This important phase in a Christian’s life seems to have been hijacked by prophets. Again a major requirement in God’s kingdom is to humble oneself under God’s hand, that is, come under God’s realm of authority and protection. From there one can resist the devil. All this will remove dependence on human beings Christians will depend on God. To avoid a life of seeking deliverance from people, the church must teach the followers of Jesus to resist the devil.

Christians must deliberately yield every area of their lives to Jesus. Submission to His Lordship (Matt 12:43-45) will bring the necessary protection. If the house is not filled with God’s presence, demons will return. People must not be central but Jesus has to be kept central in believer’s lives. Nothing new must be used as substitution for the name of Jesus.

The church must submit to the work of the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18). This must be a continual process. The Holy Spirit will expose and force demons out. He will guide the church in all the endeavors. The living waters must be allowed to flow out of every believer’s life (John 7:37). This will also enhance growth of the believer.

7. Developing the right character

The Christian must develop fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). These are very powerful attributes in the Christian’s life and can counteract attacks of the devil for example Love versus Hate, Joy versus Depression, Peace versus Anxiety. This will help to keep our spirits intact (Prov 16:32; 25:28; 1 Cor 9:27). With the wrong reaction, we lose our protection. Thus we must learn to develop the right kind of character. The Fruit of the Spirit protects us from unlawful attitudes and action.

7.1. Sound doctrine is found in the word

There is need to stay in the word (Matt 4:4). Christians are supposed to live according to the word. The new church which is developing in Africa is discouraging people to read and understand the word on their own. This has enabled prophets to manipulate their followers. Most of the abused are those who live by feeling, tradition or what people say.

People must live on truth. The correct order of things should be FACT, FAITH, FEELING. Being spiritual does not mean the absence of reason. Many people put their feelings first, thus they are unstable in their faith and convictions pertaining to God.

7.2. Conclusion

Put on the whole armour of God. (Eph 6:10-18). It is important to keep it on. Many Christians ignore this principle. The end result is seeking human protection through amulets and other objects, as prescribed by prophets. This is where the major spiritual battle takes place (Phil 4:8). The mindset must change if Jesus is to reign in Christians’ lives. We must continually renew our minds and cast our anchor into our future hope (Heb 6:17-20). This is our helmet which protects our minds (1 Pet 4:1-2). Any other forms of protection outside Jesus, as mentioned in the bible, are human philosophy.

The African church must teach Christians to develop right fellowship, relationships and ministry. Life consists of relationships. We must develop positive attitudes and stop living in unbelief. Leaders must learn to empower people to minister to others. In so doing they allow the life of God to flow through the body of Christ and beyond. Jesus continually taught on relationships as enshrined by the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7). We are encouraged to seek love, unity and humility (Phil 2:3-4).

It is interesting to note that the evil works of the flesh such as lust, fornication, adultery, anger hatred, jealousy, envy and bitterness are all a reflection of relationships (with God) gone wrong. Members of the body of Christ must go through water baptism. This is symbolized by the nation of Israel passing from God’s judgment through the red sea.

The nation of Israel had two phases of deliverance, first in Egypt. They were saved from God’s judgment by putting faith in the blood of the Passover Lamb which was a type of Christ. Secondly they were delivered from Egypt by passing through the Red Sea. Baptism further empowers Christians to live a victorious life under protection of God.

In conclusion, prophets have played a big role in shaping and developing African Christianity of modern times. The usage of objects, manipulation and commercialization of the gospel has left more questions

than answers for the world.

The future church of Africa lies in grounding people in Christ through sound doctrine. At the end of the race Jesus will be looking for those who prepared for eternal life and not those who helped or who were helped. The church for now is an embassy for heaven and not a lunar park for circus. True prophets and prophecy do exist based on biblical basis. However this paper's focus was on examining the general understanding of the word prophet in an African context. Christians must develop a solid Christian foundation based on the above mentioned principles. This will help people to depend on God and not on prophets.

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