



Ecstatic Prophets in Israel and its relevance to the African Indigenous Churches in Nigeria

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Abstract

Prophecy, prophet(s) and prophesying were usual religious and spiritual phenomena in ancient Israel which do pose challenges for the contemporary church. Sending of divine messages or revelation to the covenant people through the chosen spokespersons were part of deity and human transactions. The violent and crazy act of the prophet in the course of relating the messages of the divine has posed certain apprehensions and was often a source of fear in the people. Such manner of display by prophets is often done as a way to authenticate and make their oracles look as though they are original. The methodology employed in this brief study is an exegetical word study of key concepts and words as used in biblical texts and its applicability in African Initiated Churches. The researcher additionally employed a comparative approach on Ancient Israel and African Initiated Churches. The study discovered that in biblical times, ecstatic prophecy at times involved violence, crazy displays and emotional outbursts. Similarly, among the African Initiated Churches such practices are still employed with all the privileges and dangers attached to them. In the process of receiving or/and delivering divine messages, a state of ecstasy might be expressed by the recipients of the messages.

Keywords: Africa, church, ecstatic, Israel, prophecy, prophet.

Introduction

Many Christians and interested spectators find it intriguing and amazing at the ways prophetic messages are usually delivered among the African Initiated churches. The outcomes of such experiences could be either positive or negative. The aim of this study is geared towards unravelling the complexities involved in the spiritual and psychological expressions of delivering messages from the metaphysical realm. In the context of African Initiated Churches, prophets, spiritualists or messengers often follow or claim to be following the pattern of ecstatic prophets in the Ancient Israel instead of a calm emotional disposition in their message delivery. Non-ecstatic perspective includes fearless yet less emotional disposition.

In Ancient Israel, religious experience, inspiration and revelation are closely bound up with prophecy. The word 'prophet' comes from the Greek "προφήτης," meaning (one who speaks out) (proclaims). The Hebrew for prophet is "נָבִיא" "nabi" in plural form is "נְבִיאִים" "nabiim" which is



derived from Akkadian root *nabu* meaning “to call, to speak, to name.” that is to say the one called by the deity, the one called as a spokesman for God, declaring the oracles in given divine words. A prophet was understood to be a medium who proclaimed words coming from God. There are various definitions and terms used for the word prophecy and title designated to the one occupying such an office and there are various kinds of prophets. Herbert Bess (1959:7) disclosed:

Modern students of the O.T. seek to categorize the various kinds of prophets by coining such terms as "frenzied" or "ecstatic" prophets, "canonical" or "writing" prophets, "cultic" prophets, "false" or "professional" prophets, the "prophetic guild," and the like. But the Bible itself uses the term prophet to refer to all of these, and others.

Meanwhile the same term is used for false prophets. It is in prophetic scenes that ecstasy takes place and Leon Wood (1968: 125) has declared that:

Men have sought communication from their god by various means. One is by ecstatic frenzy. In ecstatic frenzy the subject seeks to withdraw his mind from conscious participation in the world so that it may be open to the reception of the divine word. To achieve this ecstatic state, poisonous gas may be employed, a rhythmic dance, or even narcotics. The desire is to lose all rational contact with the world and so make possible a rapport with the spirit realm.

Similarly, the phenomena of intense prayer sessions, songs that could arouse people's emotions and penetration into spiritual or metaphysical realm by gifted individuals are common features found in African Initiated Churches.

History of Ancient Prophecy

Prophecy does not originate from Israel's religion but prior to the founding of it as a nation. Prophecy arose in the Ancient near eastern culture in the region of Mari. It is inevitable that, in this or almost any other discussion of Ancient Near Eastern prophecy, Mari is generally thought of as being the chief contributor. That is why Rogerson and Davies (2007:167) suggested that:

Among the types of prophet at Mari (eighteenth century BCE) were muhhu ecstatic whose trances, probably induced, were often accompanied by violent behaviour and would produce oracles. Muhhu (plural muhhum) were found both at regional cult-centres and around the royal court. The Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal also employed such persons. Another type of prophet at Mari, known as apilu, delivered oracles, often in standard stereotyped language, including 'messenger' language. However, these were apparently not influential with the monarch or in the royal cult. Yet another group, the assinnu, belonged to the cult of Ishtar. Their activities are unclear, but may have included female impersonation. In addition to all these, there were various individuals who uttered oracles, usually derived from dreams. But the most influential 'prophetic' representative was clearly the baru, an expert in divination and omens ... Organised into guilds, they formed a major part of the religious and political establishment, and their practices were dictated by tradition and convention.

In view of the above, McKay added that “the several dozen texts that have so far come to light represent a kind of film-freeze of prophetic activity in the region during a period of between ten and twenty years in the mid-eighteenth century BC” (1993:54). At Mari, the contents of auditory



and visionary experiences by certain individuals, often in a cultic setting, were written down for communication to their intended beneficiary, normally the king of Mari, and so they have been preserved in the city's royal archives. The other second millennium Syrian site that has yielded valuable information on ancient Near Eastern prophecy is Emar. These Emar texts date from the thirteenth century BCE. Among the recently published texts from this centre are several notably a kissu festival ritual, offering lists including a list of recipients of food allocations which contain terms that appear to be cognate with the Hebrew נְבִיא that is 'prophet'. Gordon states that

'Shaman', 'medium', 'witch', 'sorcerer', 'intermediary', and 'prophet' are all terms for different kinds of intermediating person or office. Intermediation between the society and its gods can occur through possession, in which the god takes over the intermediary, or through 'soul migration' or 'soul-loss' where the intermediary's soul or spirit temporarily leaves the body (1995:76).

Gordon's opinion reflects on Mari the ancient Babylonian caravan city-state located near the west bank of the Euphrates River in Northern Mesopotamia during the Early Bronze Age and the Middle Bronze Age and has the significant account of a man's idea of the god Dagon. When seized by the deity, the man could relate messages to their king. The king along with the people believed his messages to be authentic since the god Dagon had sent him. All other Mesopotamian regions texts refer to baru priests, and in them are several omens. Lindblom (1962:85) and Johnson (1944:12) states "Studying such omens as the configurations in animal entrails, patterns in the bird flights, or designs created by oil on water to secure messages." This is clear in the eleventh century papyrus from Egypt when Wen-Amon who was an Egyptian official was sent to stay in the Phoenician port-city of Byblos. During his stay a boy from Dor town was possessed by the god and in the course thereof did not utter any oracle, meaning that one could be seized by god in the course and demonstrate cataleptic actions. Such frenzied behaviours of the prophets are recorded in I Kings 18:19 and also Jeremiah 2:1 when referring to the gods Ba'al and Asherah. Pederson and Rowley (1946: 127) have noted that:

Arab tribal religion uses such persons, who appear to be counterparts to those found in pre-Islamic ancient Near Eastern and biblical sources. Seers or kahins gives divinations obtained through trances, dreams, and ecstatic experiences at times the oracles are spoken in rhythmic prose. Dervishes, experiencing religious ecstasy induced by convulsive dancing or drugs or music or special exercises or some combination of these, are able to interpret dreams, disclose the future, and "see" events occurring in distance places.

The Islamic/Arab information of what is probably a seventeenth century document which is thus to an extent fairly recent, connotes how parallel these practices are to the Old Testament period events and the extent to which people in region have kept their ancient cultural heritage intact to this day.

The Nature of Hebrew Prophecy and Prophet

During the eighth century, utterances of a class of men known as "prophets" were recorded in Israel and Judah. Martin Noth (1949-50:194) wrote that "The Hebrew prophetic movement appears to have begun during the early years of the occupancy of Canaan and may owe something to the Canaanites and other people, among whom were "inspired" persons engaged in activities similar to those recorded as done by the Hebrew prophets." The Hebrews as a nation, may have had their indigenous inspiration before coming to Canaan but at their entry into Canaan,



their prophetic movement might have undergone significant changes and several adoptions of their neighbour's cultural practices may have been included in their approach. Generally, Israel's prophets were seers and were very captivating people. Some tended to prophesy in a trance state, and this was usually brought about by the use of music and sometimes dancing. Many prophets got together in guilds and were referred to as "the sons of the prophets" and some foretold the future. What they uttered was often personally risky and they were believed, but they represented God and said what He told them to say. The guilds were based on the notion of having master to disciple relationship so that the prophecies could be perpetuated (Reddy & Nicolaidis, 2022).

In the 9thC BCE, prophets demanded the removal of even minimal participation in idolatrous worship, and called for improvement in life and an end to the many social injustices being perpetrated against the poor and unlanded classes. They called for all to live a moral and ethical life.

The predictive element was a frequent part of the content of the prophet's message. But this is not the only element which is why Merrill Unger opined that "prophecy was ever religious and spiritual, announcing the will of God to men calling for complete obedience. Prophecy was not mere foretelling to appeal to idle curiosity or even to maintain the integrity of the prophet" (1988:1038). The religious life of Israel was and is crucial to them, no wonder E. Walter discovered that "another feature of prophecy is that it is closely associated with divination, both are means for determining the future or the unknown or for ascertaining the will of God on particular occasions. However, the methods used for divination differs from those used in prophecy" (1996:1768).

Israel's prophets stood-alone apart from the rest of the society, but might have been part of a particular school or guild. This is showcased when it was recorded that Samuel headed the group of prophets, and Elisha also had disciples and there was a school of prophets (I Samuel 19:20; Isaiah 8:16, II Kings2). Meanwhile, it is also possible that Israel's prophets were influenced by the surrounding nations and their practices. Prophecy had a strong social dimension and three categories existed.

Israel's Prophets and Ecstasy

There are three types or categories of prophecy in the Old Testament and they are classified by their modes of delivery. They are:

1. Ecstatic prophets
2. Cult prophets
3. Free prophets

The contention here is on the ecstatic prophets. Ecstatic prophets whether biblical or not presupposes that the prophet either possessed or has a personal supernatural power. The external behavioural manifestations of their possession could be exhibited in great variety of ways. The prophetic forum termed "ecstasy" prophecy appears to have existed in Canaan before the arrival of the Israelites in the 13th Century BCE. Meek (1950:155) opined that "This manner of seeking divine communication was prevalent in Asia Minor in the second millennium, B.C., and, during the last half of that time, moved from there into Greece on the west and Syria on the east and South." It is believed that the Canaanites thus came to know and adopt the practice and make it a part to their religious service. Knight (1947: 80-81) then saw that "many scholars believe



further that Israel in turn learned it from the Canaanites and made it a part to their service also. Those who do believe accordingly that Israel's early prophets (*nebhi'im*) were typical ecstasies of the day, seeking revelational contact with their God quite as those of Canaan and Asia Minor." To this Porteous and Wheeler (1938:228) added that "These persons are pictured as moving through the land in rather wild bands, chanting in loud voices, and making ecstatic inquiry for people upon request. The people are thought to have accepted them as holy because they did conduct themselves in this manner, considering their ability to achieve the ecstatic state a badge of their authority." This implies that the art of moving around of the band of prophets and delivering the people's request upon connection they make with the celestial being, and by all means is paramount to ecstatic prophets. In addition, Larue (1997:78) discovered that:

Three biblical terms designate a prophet: ro'eh, hozeh and nabi. The earliest is ro'eh or "seer." Samuel is called a ro'eh (I Sam. 9:9), and an editorial note explains that the ro'eh was later called a "prophet," or nabi. Samuel's role in this particular account is that of a clairvoyant, but Samuel performed also as a priest and participated in Hebrew politics. The term ro'eh is used of Zadok, a priest in David's time (II Sam. 15: 27), and it is possible that some priests were clairvoyant. The word ro'eh contains no hint of ecstatic behavior but suggests that divine disclosure came through some form of trance. If as some have suggested, signs and omens were employed, then the ro'eh is best understood as a counterpart of Babylonian baru.

Terms like "seer", "*Nabi*" or "*nabihim*", "*hozeh*," "*ro'eh*" and so on as deduced from Gerald are used in some of the biblical terms. Whosoever is occupying this office is called a prophet. The aforementioned names, but to be precise, "*nabi*" connotes the ecstatic nature of the prophet. Ecstasy is the nature of the person believed to have been possessed by one spirit or the other, either by the evil or God's Spirit. They are seen as professionals that serve in the king's court, society and in the religious aspects of life. They depended on ecstasy while disseminating their oracles. Many scholars have spoken of the prophets as haven't received their messages in ecstasy. To some, the fundamental experience of all types of prophecy is ecstasy, also ecstasy is the essence of prophecy for many. This means that every prophetic oracle arose out of an ecstatic experience; in it the prophets were transposed into some sort of trance, in which they received their revelations to impart to the people who had to atone. Samuel and the prophets resided at *bemah* as the name of the high place in Hebrew which is the connotation of prophets' locality. The practice at *bemah* or high place originated from the Canaanites since when the Israelites occupied the land they found it in their practice in "Nahariyah and En-Gedi" but some referred to it as a local "cultic sanctuary" that was similar to the Jerusalem temple. The initial appearance on the high place is connected with Samuel as a political and social base where a band of prophets resides. (I Samuel 9:10-25, 1 Samuel 10 and 1 Samuel 19: 18ff, I Samuel 19:18-24.

An important proponent of this idea was the Old Testament scholar Volz (1932) who said that the prophets sought a return to Mosaic religion which was cult-less. The rise of cultic activity in Israel was as a result of Canaanite influence, and this constituted a decline from its Mosaic height. Volz argues this in spite of the fact that in the Pentateuch the cultic rites receive a great deal of attention all of this was merely the product of priestly ideas from the time of the captivity. Similar ideas were promoted by Vannoy (2015) who also felt that "Israel took their cult over entirely from the heathen peoples they encountered. For this reason, the prophets opposed it. They did not propose a purified system in its place, but the practice of social justice. This means that the ecstasy frenzy was borrowed from the cultic observances of the Canaanites and executed as a connection with their gods. This is clear in their request for a king since in the ancient near east kings have court prophets that revealed the mind of their gods to them and which guided their actions.



The prophets were often a religious role-model in the king's entourage. Most of them were engrossed in the life of the royal court but also able to reprimand their ruler/s by means of pertinent parables. The prophets considered themselves to be holy servants of God, and were thus His vehicles through whom God himself spoke to people who were straying from His word. They considered the content of their message to be divinely crafted and viewed themselves as holding a divinely appointed important place in society. They were for the most part tasked with correcting illegal beliefs and practices and they fully understood what they were preaching as being divinely inspired and ordered (Reddy & Nicolaidis, 2022).

The nation of Israel has court prophets that are referred to as *nabi* and not seers, meanwhile they became corrupt in the attempt to please the king and satisfy him rather than deliver Yahweh's oracle/s without been biased. In the process they polished and coloured their delivery so as to procure the favour and blessing of the king. This resulted in another dimension of Israel's individual prophets like Amos, Hosea and others who refused to be addressed as *nabi* or seer since they did not wish to be associated want to be in the company of corrupt prophets. The nation of Israel had a unique religion and Torah which was expected to be adhered to and their culture needed to be followed. As a result, the prophets diversified and proclaimed Yahweh's intentions in their writings and in their many pronouncements, and they refused to be identified as court prophets but as a man of God with the people of God in focus. They were always prepared to criticize and challenge the nation of Israel to know and obey the word of God.

The meaning of the Hebrew word "*hithnabbe*" is to "prophesy" or "to rave" or "to act violently", it does not mean to act ecstatically. "*Meshugga*" is another word that means a mad fellow that makes himself a prophet. In II Kings. 9:1-2 we find a young prophet sent by Elisha to anoint Jehu as king of Israel designated a mad fellow (*meshugga*) by the attendants of Jehu; secondly, Jeremiah 29:26, Jeremiah quotes a certain Shemaiah, then a captive in Babylon, as having been mad.

The prophet in Israel is sometimes called a seer. When comparing Israel's prophets and the Babylonian type we discover that the Babylonian official '*baru*' is derived from the verb 'to see'. But the Babylonian '*baru*' was a seer in a different sense, because of the technique by which he got his visions. He was one who saw by divination. In the course of discovering the function of the Babylonian official, Herbert (1959:10) said "there were different means by which he practiced divination: there was the observance of oil and water in a divining cup; or the omen might be received by observing the entrails and markings of the liver of a sacrificed sheep; or he watched the flight of birds or the movements of heavenly bodies, and such like."

Reddy and Nicolaidis (2022) explain that for example "Jeremiah's prophecies are unambiguous and pessimistic and aimed at rebuking people who had become idolatrous and debauched. Yahweh appointed Jeremiah to proclaim the destruction and building of a nation that would ultimately lead to His Kingdom. He thus also offers his people hope and his prophetic warnings are also promises that returning to Yahweh will lead the people to divine blessings...". The prophets were often disliked but they were not fundamental social reformers neither were they great religious intellectuals. God was the reformer and His wishes were uttered. The nature of his reforms and his religious demands was contained already in the law (Reddy & Nicolaidis, 2022).

The comparison of the Hebrew prophets with Babylonian diviners and ravers is a very extreme position, which doubtless is repulsive to us who accept the Biblical position that the prophets of the Old Testament proclaimed an objective revelation which was communicated to them by the



living God. The comparison, however, does serve one useful function. It shows us to what depths some self-styled prophets in Israel had sunk, for we know that some of them indeed had adopted the methods of the pagan diviners no wonder Micah declared that lithe seers shall be put to shame and the diviners confounded. Nonetheless, “Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel brought to culmination the literary development of prophecy. These three great prophets composed poetry and prose that rank among the most beautiful achievements of Hebrew literature. The profundity, beauty, and lengths of the prophecies attributed to them rendered these men major figures in the eyes of later tradition. As Judaism developed, the books of the prophets shaped many other aspects of the tradition, most especially the concept of the messianic era, which was rooted in the world of the prophets” (Schiffman, n.d.).

History and Characteristics of African Initiated Churches

There is need to examine those African churches which embrace and practised ecstasy in their prophetic deliveries. Their origin and beliefs will be considered. The large growth of Christianity in Africa and especially in West Africa has given birth to what we now term the prophetic churches or Pentecostals in Nigeria. Ayegboyin and Ishola (2013:1), noted that this movement began in the “nineteenth century to the present”. In addition to this, Lasebikan (1983:72), documented that “the history of prophetic movements started in Ijebu-Ode sometime around 1981 ...a prayer band variously called Egbe Okuta Iyebiye, Diamond Society or Precious stone society.” These movements can be described in their mode of delivery and practices. Many of them preferred to be termed ‘*ijo emi*’ that is the Spirit filled Church, prophetic healing church, praying church, Pentecostal and so on. They are significant due to their avowed activities.

There are quite number of churches falling under this category of places of worship which are: The Native Baptist Church, the United Native African Church, the African Church, United African Methodist Church, Faith Tabernacle Church, Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, The Church of the Lord (Aladura), Celestial Church of Christ, and so on (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013:23). Some of the major characteristics of these indigenous churches are prayer, divine healing, supernatural experience, spiritual possession, women involvement, free forms of worship, evangelism and revival, short administrative structure, and so on.

Contemporary Churches’ Mode of Prophecy

The aforementioned churches’ mode of prophetic delivery involves ecstasy as they try to portray the Biblical mode of the Deuteronomistic history prophets of ancient Israel. Worship in these churches is characterized by music and dancing, hence the congregants believe this will transport or spur the prophet or the servant to be used in the spiritual realm where they tap the sought heavenly information and deliver it in an ecstatic mode of glossolalia. The delivery of a divinely inspired message or messages demands the shuddering of the body in an epileptic manner. This practice is support from the experience of Saul who along with other prophets, froze and raved as he prophesied. Having said this, it must be noted that “Significantly, in the submergence of these prophetic portraits (of Saul), one of the hidden aims of the narrator of Samuel is clearly achieved because he has successfully transformed a prophetic tradition that originally appears to attribute prophetic feats to the first Israelite king and creatively turned the same tradition against itself by amusingly portraying the same character as the practitioner of witchcraft, hence further de-legitimising Saul's dynasty in its prophetic claims to the throne of ancient Israel”(Michael, 2013).



A 'SWOT' Analysis of the Contemporary Churches Prophecy

The word 'swot' in this context is the acronym in which 's' stands for strength, 'w' stands for weakness, 'o' stands for opportunity and 't' stands for threat.

S for strength- some of the strengths of the prophetic churches are intense prayer sessions, often praise and worship rendered to the God of hosts, thunderous music and movement that can relieve the individual participants of stress, in-depth thoughts of problem and difficult situations. The same praise was rendered in the book of Joshua 6:1-25 and the wall of Jericho fell, the Israelites band of prophets at the high place '*bemah*' in 1 Samuel 10 were rendering praise when Saul at his arrival joined them to praise Yahweh. Prophetic ministry is another important office which they embrace and are always ready to disseminate the mind of God to the congregation. They always 'come into the presence of God' with prayer, music and praise in order to tap divine blessing, breakthrough, a direction, an utterance, and personal growth. These they demonstrate as they are in an ecstatic state whenever they are 'possessed by the Spirit'.

W for Weakness- It is hard to discover anything negative and yet the weaknesses of the 'Aladura' churches/ prophetic churches ought to be unveiled in order to suggest solutions to the problems posed. The act of the senior prophets cautioning or subjecting the influencing of the Holy Spirit is a crucial area. If God has chosen to speak through many people at the same time, why should the senior prophet silence them? Does it mean that the senior prophet is the custodian of the Holy Spirit? Another area of weakness is the ecstatic frenzy of the possessed fellow. Can't the message of God be delivered without one been frenzied? This has made some to have pretended to prophesy as they frenzy and deliver already cooked-up messages to the congregation when they are not connected to the Spirit. The prophet is the sole administrator while the members are always passive but then become active under the disguise of prophecy. Ayandele (1966:388-389) wrote that "...a heart and soul participant in the service and not passive members who allow only the clergy and the key officials to be dramatic personae" in a situation whereby everyone is inspired and delivered a message is questionable. Because everyone wants to be recognized and convince others to have been possessed by the Spirit even when it is untrue.

O for Opportunity- The 'Aladura' churches have greater opportunities compared to the Orthodox churches. One of the opportunities they have is the religious contextualization. African nature cannot be diverged from African religion. The missionaries reached African with the gospel and enculturated Africans as they enforced their quiet and still mode of worship on Africans. They condemned African musical expressions and to a very large extent also condemned Africa's cultures. But in contrast, these indigenous churches are resuscitating real African worship that makes Africans free to express their ultimate emotion in worship and to encounter God in their real being. These churches have served as an eye opener in letting individuals discover his or her gifts. We see this in the life of Ayo Babalola on how he answered his call and his ministry of healing then liberated many from their bondages. They have the chance of winning souls as they minister to people in their various turbulent situations, healing is one of the crucial needs of an African man who is ill and desperate to be healed.

T for threat- Wehmeir (1997:1541) defined threat as "a statement in which you tell somebody that you will punish or harm them, especially if they do not do what you want..." This is visible in the administration of the prophetic ministries and ministers of some of the founders of these indigenous churches. Based the researcher's interaction with some of the congregants of these churches, some of them are power mongers and they speak authoritatively to the extent of terrifying people by pronouncing curses on them if they fail to adhere to their instructions. And at



times, if the people are adamant they don't mind to frustrate or terminate their lives. Some of them have gone to the extent of using diabolic means to prophesy so that their prophecy will be fulfilled. Because of this phenomenon, Ayegboyin and Ishola (2013: 53) tried to differentiate those African indigenous churches from one another when they wrote that "unlike some Aladura groups, they do not engage in rituals (either with OT or traditional African background)." From Ayegboyin and Ishola's statement one could establish or deduce that there are ritualistic founders or prophets among the Aladuras. This is not the only reason for using diabolic means, some of them are doing so in order to steal members from the existing churches and populate their church, others are doing so to enrich their livelihood and gather wealth, while some are doing so to gain popularity and make connections that could add value to them.

Another aspect of threat is in the area of rituals performed by some of them whereby one is asked to birth in the middle of the night at a T- junction, to visit some river sides to perform some prayers, to place some food items or materials at some locations during a particular time of the day or night, to walk without wearing shoes and so on. Many of these practices are more aligned to African Traditional Religion.

Recommendations

From the study above the following have been put forward as recommendations:

- a. Ecstasy is a psychological disposition which could be considered *spiritual* through manipulations, manoeuvring or true metaphysical experience. African indigenous churches should be cautious and objective in embracing prophecies even with ecstatic colourations and disguise.
- b. African Initiated Churches should embrace the warning of 1John 4:1 that we should subject every spirit to test in order ascertain their genuineness and veracity.
- c. Prophecy is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and God gives this to Christians based on His discretion. Adherents of AICs should not be too desperate for prophecy.
- d. Orderliness and decorum should be maintained in African Initiated Churches (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Conclusion

Providing truly engaging and meaningful worship experiences can also help keep congregants focused and spiritually involved through dynamic sermons, inspiring music, and interactive elements that capture attention. There are clearly some believers that appreciate the intense spiritual atmosphere of ecstatic and prophetic services, as this makes them feel a closer connection to God. Personal revelations and prophetic messages, which can be deeply meaningful for attendees seeking guidance or affirmation in their faith journey can also be destructive at times.

The act of prophesying which means praise is one of the apex acts of worship that the contemporary Pentecostal churches like the Apostolic, Cherubim and Seraphim, Celestial and co of some churches have embraced. The act of praising God is one of the key acts of worship which God honours and appreciates, praise opens windows of heavens for the outpouring of blessing and God yearns for the praise of men. Some other beliefs include: "prayer and fasting, patterns of worship, thanksgiving, revelation, sacred objects, spiritual exercises, healing technique, removal of sandals, holding the annual festival of taborar, polygamy" (Ayegboyin & Ishola, 2013: 88-89) and so on, are in essence some of the Ancient Near East and Jewish practices.



Meanwhile the act of ecstasy as a result of music that supposedly results in prophecy is what could be argued to have been part of Israel's prophetic Canaanite influence, but this could be seen as part of what those churches have in fact borrowed from the Canaanite practices. Meanwhile some might have induced themselves prior to the worship period, or over-exercised which can lead to loss of self-control and then demonstrate ecstasy as they deliver all manner of crooked or uncontrolled messages. In another sense God can choose to reveal Himself in an ideal peaceful environment, while a rowdy one may only produce abnormal demonstrations. The characteristic of the prophets is not foreknowledge of the future alone, but insight into the present paths of God. It need hardly be added that free prophets reject ecstatic and mystic interpretations of prophecy completely. This is glaring in the free or individual prophets like Amos, Hosea and the rest of the former and latter prophets. They were committed to conveying God's grief or anger to the nation and not necessarily by venturing into an ecstatic nature. Some denominations view ecstatic and prophetic practices with skepticism, and they question the authenticity of the experiences they have and at times the intensity and unpredictability of ecstatic services can be uncomfortable or unsettling for some worshippers. Ecstatic worship also tends at times to lack order and can lead to chaos, detracting from a structured and contemplative worship experiences that people desire. There are of course also often concerns about the potential for manipulation, where leaders may use prophetic declarations to exert control over congregants or to further a personal agenda. If they were inspired to deliver God's message or to prophecy without the use of music that may induce them to act in a certain manner. The same can be deployed by the Aladura churches in Nigeria as they convey the message/s of God to the people without inducement and frenzy. Generally, the feeling about ecstatic and prophetic nature of some church services is diverse and multifaceted, and it is reflective of a wider range of theological, cultural, and especially personal factors.

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