

ARE THERE PROPHETS TODAY?

by

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Prophets have always held a unique position in God's program for His children. They spoke for God, declaring His divine will to man. Today many preachers are claiming themselves and others to be prophets. It will be the purpose and intent of this author to study the etymology and usage of the word, "prophet," in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, as well as the nature of the prophetic function in order to determine if present-day preachers qualify as prophets.

Etymologically, a study of *προφήτης* and related terms gives no conclusive evidence as to its original meaning. In fact, several differing theological positions are based upon differing studies based upon etymology. The general meaning is that a prophet is one who is called by God or has a vocation from God, as well as one subject to either true or false spiritual influences. A study of *προφήτης* and related terms clearly shows the prophet to be one who speaks in the name of a god, declaring the divine will to man.

The usage of "prophet" in the Old Testament shows a primary usage as a "spokesman for God," with a secondary usage as one who spoke in, or as a result of, ecstasy. New Testament usage shows the element of revelation to be integral to the prophet. Studies of historical and contemporary opinion show a divergence of thought.

Ecstasy, prediction, proclamation, revelation, and time, five elements of a study of the nature of the prophetic function, are examined as they shed light on a preacher's eligibility to be a prophet today. Each study denies such a possibility.

It is the conclusion of this writer that no preacher qualifies as a prophet today. The basic meaning, the usage of "prophet," and the nature of the prophet's function proclaim, "There are no prophets today."

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree
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Advisor

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INTRODUCTION

"Are there prophets today?" I first entertained this question after a national evangelist was declared a prophet in my church several years ago. I dismissed the question after he departed hastily, having shown his disgust because there had been no revival. However, I faced the same question just recently from a member of my discipleship group. He had noted a prominent author's assertion that there are prophets today.¹ Traditionally, such teaching has been limited to Pentecostals and Charismatics,² but a group of non-Pentecostal conservative Bible scholars is now supporting such doctrine. Stitzinger points out writers such as C. Peter Wagner of Fuller Seminary, Kenneth O. Gangel of Miami Christian College, and Rick Yohn, a Dallas Seminary graduate, as prominent spokesmen of the new position.³ The other end of the spectrum is indicated by a recent Yale Divinity School class that believed there are prophets today: Daniel Berrigan, James Pike, Martin Luther King,

¹David L. Hocking, The World's Greatest Church (Long Beach: Sounds of Grace Ministries, 1976), p. 166.

²Jack W. MacGorman, The Gifts of the Spirit (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974), p. 40.

³James F. Stitzinger, "Crucial Issues in Understanding Spiritual Gifts" (unpublished Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, May, 1977), p. 60.

Bob Dylan, the Beatles, Senator McCarthy, Billy Graham, and Jeanne Dixon, for example!¹

So began a study of the etymology and usage of the word, "prophet," in both Old Testament and New Testament; the various texts dealing with the prophet and its related gift, "prophecy;" and the major theological views regarding the office of prophet. Such study has shown the element of divine revelation to be a major key in understanding the prophet and the possibility of his existence today. Such study has shown that no preacher today may legitimately be called "prophet."

¹W. Sibley Towner, "On Calling People 'Prophets' in 1970," Interpretation, 24:4, October, 1970, pp. 493-94.

CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF "PROPHET," ACCORDING TO ETYMOLOGY

A Study of προφήτης and Related Terms

προφήτης

Προφήτης is a combination of the verbal stem φημί "to say, to speak" and the prefix, προ-. Etymological studies are helpful, but inconclusive, as the earliest explications of this word do not occur until the fifth century A.D. For all practical purposes, the original meaning is lost.

The prefix προ- is the difficult variable in this case. Dana and Mantey show its meaning in the root and in composition to be "before,"¹ as do Arndt and Gingrich.²

Dana and Mantey show one variant meaning in John 10:8 in which it could be translated "in the room of, in the name of." Gessner Harrison is quoted there that this gave birth to "the idea of occupying the place of another, or becoming his substitute."³

¹H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1957), p. 109.

²William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds., A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 708.

³Dana and Mantey, p. 109.

In light of a study of *προ-* , in combination with other early attested verbs of saying or speaking, an etymological meaning of *προφήτης* can be given as "one who declares openly, who makes known publicly, who proclaims, etc."¹ Chambers, from studies in profane Greek, notes the primary significance of *προφήτης* as, "one who speaks for a god and interprets his will to man." It is defined by Thayer as "one who speaks forth by divine inspiration."² This is due to *προφήτης* always being associated with religious usage.

προφήτις

Being the feminine of *προφήτης* , this word refers to prophetesses of which there are only two usages in the New Testament, one being Anna (Luke 2:36) and the other being Jezebel, the self-proclaimed prophetess (Rev. 2-20).

προφητεύω

Most comprehensively it can mean "to proclaim the revelation, the message of God, imparted to the prophet."³

¹Helmut Kramer, "*προφήτης* ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VI, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 783-84.

²Talbot W. Chambers, "The Function of the Prophet," The Presbyterian and Reformed Review, 5 (Jan., 1894), p. 49.

³Gerhard Friedrich, ed., "*προφήτης* ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VI, trans and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 829.

προφητεία

This abstract of *προφητεύω* occurs in non-Jewish Greek literature only from the second century A.D. and designated an "ability to declare (the divine will), i.e., to give an oracle," or "proclamation (of the divine will)."¹

προφητικός

This adjective of relation, "belonging to the *προφήτης*," is also non-Jewish and was commonly related to the divine garments for the oracle.²

ψευδοπροφήτης

This noun can be translated as either a "prophet of lies," or a "false prophet," in definite contrast to a true prophet.

Summary

The best summary is given by Kramer:

Προφήτης κτλ. is a group which is marked both by solemnity and also by lack of content; it simply expresses the formal function of declaring, proclaiming, making known . . . in the light of the formation and the Homeric *ὑποφήτης* there can be no doubt but that *προφήτης* belongs to the religious sphere, where it denotes the one who speaks in the name of a god, declaring the divine will and counsel in the oracle. Historical seers and prophets not connected with an oracle are never called *προφήτης* but *χρησμάτοιοι* or the like . . .³

¹Kramer, p. 784.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

A Study of נָבִי' and Related Terms

In the Old Testament there are three terms used for prophets: נָבִי , נָחַד , and נִזְנִי ; נָבִי by far being the most predominant term. The verbal form נִבֵּן occurs 114 times and is always used in either the nifal (נִבֵּן) or the hithpael (נִבְנָה) forms. It is a denominative verb from נָבִי' , which occurs 312 times.¹ Both words are used to represent the genuine prophet of Yahweh as well as false and heathen prophets in the Old Testament text.

נָבִי'

The Hebrew equivalent of *προφήτης* is almost always נָבִי' . There are several camps of philology, each with its own proponents, all inconclusive on the basis of etymology alone. Lovelady names Bess, Young, Lindblam, Rowley, and Meek as in agreement as to the difficulty of arriving at its meaning from etymology.² Rowley best describes the division:

By Gesenius the lost primary stem of the verbal root from which nabhi comes was connected with the Hebrew nabha, "bubble forth," and this view still has its advocates. At best it is a doubtful hypothesis, itself deduced from the assumed original meaning of nibba, hithnabbe. More usually the lost root is connected with

¹ Benjamin Davidson, A Concordance of the Hebrew and Chaldee Scriptures (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1876), p. 502.

² Edgar J. Lovelady, "Old Testament Prophetic Institution and the Doctrine of Revelation," Seminar on Old Testament Theology, Vol. 13 (Fall, 1967), p. 4.

the Accadian nabu, "call, announce," and Arabic naba'a, "announce." By Albright the word nabhi is then taken in a passive sense, "one who is called (by God)," while Koenig takes it in an active sense, "an announcer," and Guillaume finds the form to indicate that the prophet is the passive recipient of something manifested in his condition as well as in his speech, "one who is in the state of announcing a message which has been given to him."¹

Heschel openly gives an inclusive literal definition to the נבִי: one who is called (by God), one who has a vocation (from God), as well as one who is subject to the influences of a demon or a false god, and who retains the condition imposed upon him by that call or influence.²

נבִי

This verb shows the progression of prophetic function. Davidson says it was used for the "singing of holy songs." Rendtorff explains an ecstatic influence in the prophet is shown in the hithpael form which was used in the older texts. Then the nifal appeared to denote prophetic speech, while the use of the hithpael decreased. The late usage of the verb no longer denoted ecstatic behavior.³ Based upon both an active and passive meaning of the basic

¹H. H. Rowley, "The Nature of Prophecy in the Light of Recent Study," Harvard Theological Review, 38:1 (Jan., 1945), p. 7.

²Abraham J. Heschel, The Prophets, The Jewish Publication Society of America (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1962), p. 405.

³Rolf Rendtorff, "Προφήτης," Theological Dictionary, p. 799.

word, Tan describes the $\chi\dot{\lambda}\dot{\lambda}$ as "a man to whom the will of God has been revealed under inspiration in order that it might in time be communicated to the people."¹

$\eta\chi\dot{\gamma}$

Unger defines the "seer" as a person gifted in perceptivity, "one who perceives that which does not live in the realm of natural sight." He expands this to define the seer as "one who is in the state of announcing a message which has been given to him by God."² Young presented the seer as one who, through his own visual and auditory senses, "saw" the revelation of God.³ He felt that there was little difference between the $\chi\dot{\lambda}\dot{\lambda}$ and the $\eta\chi\dot{\gamma}$, both being used commonly for the same person (1 Sam. 9), $\eta\chi\dot{\gamma}$ simply being the older term which was superceded by another word, $\chi\dot{\lambda}\dot{\lambda}$.⁴

$\eta\dot{\zeta}\dot{\eta}$

Tan describes this prophet as "he who sees with both the natural and spiritual eyes" the revelation of God.⁵

¹Paul Lee Tan, The Interpretation of Prophecy (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, Inc., 1974), p. 75.

²Merrill F. Unger, "The Character of Old Testament Prophecy," Bibliotheca Sacra, 108:430 (April-June, 1951), p. 167.

³Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), p. 64.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Tan, p. 75.

Young writes,

The prophet was also upon occasion designated by the word, *נִזְנֵן*. As may be seen from Isaiah 30:9, 10, the *נִזְנֵן* and the *נִזְנֵן* performed similar functions, and the two words were practically synonyms. Like the *נִזְנֵן*, the *נִזְנֵן* also was to declare the message of God. Amos is called a *נִזְנֵן*, and this is a context where he has been declaring the word of God. Like *נִזְנֵן*, however, this term stresses the reception rather than the declaration of the prophetic message.¹

¹Young, p. 65.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MEANING OF "PROPHET" ACCORDING TO USAGE

Old Testament Usage

Primary Usage--A Spokesman for God

Historically, the word "prophet" in the Old Testament is associated with ecstasy, prediction, proclamation, knowledge, revelation; all to be studied further. However, the primary idea of the Old Testament prophet is best seen in Exodus 7:1-2, as one who speaks for God:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharoah, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharoah"

This concept is also clearly seen in Exodus 4:15-16:

. . . I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth . . . he shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be as God to him.

Also seen in Haggai 1:13 ("the messenger of Jehovah"), the usage of "prophet" indicates his chief task was that of

God's spokesman, proclaiming the message of God to man through him.¹

As will be seen in the study of the secondary usage of "prophet" in the Old Testament, there are similarities between true and false prophets. Bess points to two distinctions, the first being a sense of divine compulsion to prophesy, as seen by the writings of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and Hosea; and the second being the content of the message.² Concerning the first distinction, Deuteronomy 18:18 shows the very provision and origin of prophecy to be instituted by God Himself: "I will raise up a prophet . . . like you, and I will put words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all I command him." Also, see Numbers 11:17, 25 for further evidence of the Spirit of God compelling men to prophesy. Concerning the second distinction, Rendtorff describes this decisive feature of content in Old Testament

¹S. Herbert Bess, "The Office of the Prophet in Old Testament Times," Grace Journal, Vol. 1 (Spring, 1960), p. 8; W. E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1966), p. 222; Lovelady, pp. 4, 20, 25; Joseph G. Buckley, "Was Saul A Prophet?" Seminar on Old Testament Theology, Vol. 32, Part 1 (Fall, 1976), p. 5; Talbot W. Chambers, "The Function of the Prophet," The Presbyterian and Reformed Review, 5 (Jan., 1894), p. 49; Richard T. McIntosh, "The Old Testament Prophet," Seminar on Old Testament Theology, Vol. 19, Part 1 (Fall, 1970), p. 7; Eugene H. Merrill, "Who Are Today's True Prophets?" Christianity Today, 15:12 (March 12, 1971), p. 9; McIntosh, pp. 4-5; Rendtorff, "Προφήτας," Theological Dictionary, p. 810.

²Bess, p. 11.

texts use the hithpael form extensively. According to Guillaume, the hithpael expresses the making, showing, conducting, oneself in the mode which the verb predicates, and so it lays greater stress on the outward manifestation of the behavior expected of prophets;¹ hence, the thought that there is a manner or behavior one could do to "act like a prophet." Smith points out that many times the prophet who was speaking under the influence of inspiration spoke in an unusual manner.² This unusual manner, evidenced by unusual behavior and/or unusual speech, is attributed to their seizure by divine power.

The divine power, which comes over a human being and compels him to see or hear things which otherwise would be hidden from him, is called by various terms expressive of inspiration. It is said that the Spirit of God has come over someone (Nu. 24:2); or has fallen upon him (Ezk. 11:5); or that the hand of Jeh. has come over him and laid hold on him (2 K. 3:15; Ezk. 1:3; 3:14, 22, and often); or that the Holy Spirit has been put on him as a garment, i.e. has been incorporated in him (1 Ch. 12:18; 2 Ch. 24:20); or that the Spirit of revelation has permanently descended upon him (Nu. 11:25f; 2 K 2:15; Isa. 11:2; 61:1); or that God has given this Spirit of His (Nu. 11:29; Isa. 42:1); or pours Him out upon man (Joel 2:28f). . . .³

¹Alfred Guillaume, Prophecy and Divination (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1938), p. 113.

²Charles Russel Smith, "Biblical Conclusions Concerning Tongues" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, IN: May, 1970).

³C. Von Orelli, "Prophecy, Prophets," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. IV (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939), p. 2460.

This secondary, older usage for "prophet" explains the question of the "prophet schools" in 1 Samuel 10:5 and the question as to whether Saul was a prophet, motivated by his stripping off his clothes and laying down naked all day and all night (1 Sam. 19:24). Earlier, Saul's behavior evidently caused him to be described as "another man" when he prophesied (1 Sam. 10:6).

Apparently, schools of prophets especially exhibited ecstatic behavior and speech.

These associations probably originated in this way, that an experienced prophet attracted to himself bands of youths, who sought to receive a measure of his spirit . . . among these pupils is found to a much greater extent than among the teachers a certain ecstatic feature. They arouse their feelings through music and induce a frantic condition which also affects others in the same way, in which state they "prophesy" and, throwing off their garments, fall to the ground. In later times, too, we find traces of such ecstatic phenomena.¹

Summary

In light of both the secondary and primary usages of the word, "prophet," it is obvious that the word, in a general sense, could designate "either one who spoke in an unusual manner due to what was considered to be supernatural inspiration, or one who spoke normally, or at least nearly so, as a result of previous divine influence or inspiration."²

¹Orelli, p. 2462.

²Smith, p. 216.

LXX Usage

Old Testament ~~X'77~~ is always translated and there is no essential difference in the nature or function of the Old Testament and New Testament prophets.¹

New Testament Usage

That there were New Testament prophets and prophecies is easily seen in such various lists as in Romans 12:3-9, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 12:28-30, and Ephesians 4:7-11. It is this author's opinion that all New Testament instances of prophet and prophecy refer to the concept of the giving of divine revelation. There are only a few possible exceptions and, although some specific instances might include one or all the elements of ecstasy, prediction, proclamation, knowledge, or teaching, in all instances, divine revelation is integral to the prophet. From his study of the nature of the prophetic function, Boyer agrees. He claims that there are four elements that make up the work of the prophet:

- 1) predictive--foretells the future
- 2) hortatory--forthtells--He speaks for God
- 3) possession of supernatural knowledge (Jn. 4:19; Lk. 7:39; Mt. 26:68)
- 4) power to perform miracles and wonders (Lk. 7:16; Lk. 9:78; Jn. 9:17)²

¹Merril, p. 9.

²James L. Boyer, "The Office of the Prophet in New Testament Times," Grace Journal, Vol. I (Spring, 1960), pp. 15-16.

All four of these elements necessitate divine revelation for their source.

John Stott specifically focused his attention on the preacher's message and authority and gave his categorical first conclusion that the Christian preacher is not a prophet.¹ Likewise, Vine believed the message of the prophet was a direct revelation of the mind of God.²

Early Church Usage

First Three Centuries

According to Boyer's study, the spiritual gifts, including the prophet and prophecy, served a special confirmatory or authenticating purpose in the New Testament Church during the formation of the New Testament and ceased when that purpose was accomplished.³ The canon having been completed by the end of the first century, one would expect that the function of the prophet would have ceased by then. However, that is not the case, as there appears to be much record in the writings of the Early Church Fathers as to the presence of the gift into the third century. The Didache (10:7-13:7) lays down explicit rules of respect,

¹John R. W. Stott, p. 11.

²Vine, p. 221.

³Boyer, pp. 13-20.

hospitality, and discernment for prophets.¹ It is interesting to note the association of ecstatic utterances with the prophet (11:7), as well as a possible evidence of the beginning of paid leadership in local churches (13:1).² Polycarp was supposedly known as a prophetic teacher³ and Ignatius was known as "Theophorus," "God-inspired," in his letters to the Ephesians and the Magnesians,⁴ and believed he spoke as a prophet with "God's voice."⁵ Irenaeus alludes to prophecy and its link to revelation.⁶

Ash shows testimony that Melete of Sardis prophesied, as well as Ignatius; and, although not claiming to be a prophet, the second century apologist, Justin Martyr, claims "the prophetical gifts remain with us, even to the

¹Cyril C. Richardson, trans. and ed., Early Christian Fathers, Vol. I, The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 176-78.

²Ibid., pp. 176-77.

³Ibid., p. 77.

⁴Ibid., pp. 87, 94.

⁵Ibid., p. 110.

⁶St. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," Proof of the Apostolic Preaching, Joseph P. Smith, trans. and ed., Vol. 16 of Ancient Christian Writers, Johannes Quasten and Joseph C. Plumpe, eds. (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1952), pp. 29, 125, 141.

present time."¹ Salmond and Lindsay believe prophecy existed even longer.²

Termination with Montanism

The records cited above are scanty, but other records feature prophecy in Montanism in the second and third centuries (cf. Eusebius, HE5, 16, 3-17; 5, 19, 2; Epiphanius, Haer, 48, 49; Hippol., Haer 8, 19, 1-3; Tertulian, De Anima 9).³ Montanus, a self-proclaimed prophet, and his attendant "prophetesses," Priscilla and Maximilla, were discredited by false, unfulfilled predictive prophecies and other abuses. Friedrich says that prophecy came to an end in the Church with the repudiation of Montanism. He asserts, "The dogma that there are Christian prophets survived longer than prophecy itself."⁴

¹James L. Ash, Jr., "The Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy in the Early Church," Theological Studies, June, 1976, 37:2:235-6.

²S. D. F. Salmond, "The Epistle to the Ephesians," The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. III (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), p. 300; Thomas M. Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1902), p. 66.

³Colin Brown, "Prophet," Part II, The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. III (Paternoster Press, 1978), p. 89.

⁴Friedrich, "Προφητας," p. 860.

Termination with Apostolic Age

The writings of the Early Fathers upon which the belief that prophecy continued past the Apostolic Age are based are not only very limited in regard to prophecy, but, at best, can be termed very general, if not vague. The author gratefully appreciates Warfield's close scrutiny of these writings, as seen in Miracles: Yesterday and Today (pp. 9-17). He asserts that, in all probability, prophets and prophecies did stop at the end of the Apostolic Age, but that the Church Fathers continued to write in reference to prophets and to second-hand witness accounts. He believes that, in light of their ministries and leadership positions, as compared to the glamorous ministries of the original apostles and prophets, they did this in order to save face in admitting that all such activity had ceased.¹

Contemporary Usage

Catholics

Today, Catholics believe in the Scriptures, plus tradition, plus revelation from the Pope, a supposed link in a supposed chain of church leaders, all tied to each other by continual apostolic succession. For them there are prophets today.

¹Benjamin B. Warfield, Miracles: Yesterday and Today (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. 10.

Charismatics

Charismatics believe that God is still giving revelation through prophets and prophecies today. Widely-acknowledged in Pentecostal groups throughout this century, this movement is now leaving its imprint all over once-traditional non-charismatic denominations. In a paper on Biblical Inspiration and Authority given at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Seattle, 1979, this disagreeing statement concerning inspiration of the Bible was inserted:

We are not yet agreed on whether inspiration is a finished or continuing process. Some of us believe that God's Spirit inspires new prophetic witness in the community of believers in every age, in continuity with the biblical witness. Others of us believe that the work of the Spirit in guiding the biblical writers was unique and now completed, and that the present role of the Spirit is entirely one of illuminating what the Bible says.¹

Semanticists

A third group, non-Catholic, non-Charismatic evangelicals, have performed linguistic surgery on a commonly-taught dual meaning of prophecy being predictive, "to foretell," and declaratory, "to forthtell." This is fundamentally taught all across America through the well-known and

¹ "What Do Brethren Believe About the Bible?" Messenger, 128:10:13-14 (paper on Biblical Inspiration and Authority given at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Seattle, 1979).

used Scofield Reference Bible.¹ They believe there are prophets today in the form of preachers. The prophet is "basically a public speaker who proclaims God's truth . . . identified as 'preachers.'"² Manahan cites Davis, Freeman, Merrill, and Payne as some prominent scholars represented in this camp as well.³

The author is compelled to focus the reader's attention on contemporary usage of the terms "prophet" and "prophetic." Use such as "Carter's remarks were prophetic," or "That was a very prophetic statement" is legitimate, but should not be compared with the office or the gift. A preacher is a "prophet" in such loose use, but not a prophet in the Biblical sense of office or gift.

Traditionalists

The author finds himself in agreement with many who hold to the full Biblical meaning of the prophet as one who receives divine revelation from God and declares that message to man. Therefore, we must either agree with Catholics and Charismatics or with those who believe that prophets and

¹C. I. Scofield, ed., The Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 1223, note #1 on 1 Cor. 12:10.

²David L. Hocking, The World's Greatest Church (Long Beach: Sounds of Grace Ministries, 1976), p. 166.

³Ronald E. Manahan, "Old Testament Prophetic Office in Historical Perspective" (unpublished Th.M. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, IN, May 1977), pp. 84-87.

prophecy are in "hibernation" until the time of the millen-
nium when Joel's prophecy will find its completion.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF THE PROPHETIC FUNCTION

The Element of Ecstasy

Primary View

Based upon Gesenius' belief that נָבֵא came from נָבַח , "to bubble forth," and the ecstatic behavior that did accompany some of the Old Testament prophets (1 Sam. 19:18ff, Jer. 29:26), many have considered ecstasy to be an integral part of prophecy. Smith says that the Hebrew words for "prophet" and "prophecy" were broadly used to indicate any type of utterance supposed to be of divine or supernatural origin. He believes the emphasis is upon the fact that it was "inspired" and thus not normal speech.

In view of the fact that the priests of Baal "prophesied" thus indicating that the term "prophesying" was in some cases used to indicate ecstatic behavior rather than merely for declaring a divine revelation, and the fact that prophesying is several times compared with madness, it is not unlikely to conclude that "prophesying" may sometimes have included unintelligible glosso-lalic utterances. In this regard it is interesting to consider the fact that it was during a session of "prophesying" that Saul attempted to kill David with his spear!

And it came to pass on the morrow, that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he prophesied (margin, "raved") in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as he did day by day. And Saul had his spear in his hand; and Saul cast the spear; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall (1 Sam. 18:10-22, ASV).

The Targum, the Syriac, the Arabic, the Vulgate, and the great majority of English commentators give to the word "prophesied" here the sense of "raved." Gesenius lists, "to act as if made," or "raving," as possible translations for the Hebrew word naba. Erdmann suggests the expression "raved supernaturally" as a possible translation of the word. Again the fact that the spirit "came mightily upon Saul" is evidence of unusual expression.

It may be safely concluded that the Old Testament usages of the word naba definitely allow for the possibility or even the probability that incoherent expressions were sometimes involved.¹

There is much to be appreciated in this argument; however, the author is reminded of Rendtorff's study showing the association of ecstasy to be limited to the early hithpael usage of נָבֵא , and not the later nifal usage.² In the passage cited above, the term נָבֵא^{\prime} is in the hithpael. Therefore, this harmonizes with other associations with ecstasy, but does not demand that a true meaning of prophecy include ecstasy.

Also, in support of the view that ecstasy was associated with early uses of prophecy but not later is the Septuagint translation. If ecstasy were predominate, one would expect נָבֵא to occasionally be translated as *εκστασις*; however, that is not the case. It is always translated *προφητης*.³ Bess also argues for ecstasy being secondary: "When the verb 'to prophesy' is used to indicate strange behavior, this idea is secondary to the primary connotation

¹Charles R. Smith, pp. 11-13.

²Rendtorff, p. 799.

³Ibid., p. 810.

of speaking in the name of the Lord."¹ However, he must resort to the secondary meaning to explain the raving madmen who were prophesying and their need to be locked up (Jer. 29:26)!

An Optional View

That ecstasy could be a part of prophecy is undeniable; for prophecy to be characterized totally by ecstasy is not possible, apart from a very general definition of ecstasy and of prophecy. The author believes such a definition has been well-presented by Charles Smith, who defines a prophet as "one who speaks either under the influence of special inspiration, that is, who speaks as though inspired, or one who speaks as a result of such special inspiration."² Here is Smith's essential argument:

2. Ecstatic Manner

This definition leads to a second important consideration, that is that the prophet who was speaking under the influence of inspiration spoke in an unusual manner. According to Oepke, the Hebrew word for "prophet," nabi, seems to have the original sense of "to speak with frenzy." Prophets are repeatedly described as mad (2 K. 9:11; Jer. 29:26; Hos. 9:7), and though this comes from opponents we cannot fail to see the connection.

Also "the Pythia who is stirred to mantic frenzy . . . is called prophetis throughout antiquity." The word designates her as the "voice or speaking-tube of the god which inspires her." With reference to the Old Testament prophets, Orelli remarks that prophetic

¹Bess, p. 8.

²Smith, p. 214.

inspiration was evidenced

In accordance with the natural peculiarity of the prophet and with the contents of the message, the psychological condition of the recipient may be that of intense excitement or of calmness. As a rule the inspiration that takes possession of the prophets is evidenced also by an exalted and poetical language, which assumes a certain rhythmical character. . . .

That the Old Testament prophets frequently exhibited unusual behavior as well as unusual speech is evidenced by the typical statements relative to their seizure by the divine power.

The divine power, which comes over a human being and compels him to see or hear things which otherwise would be hidden from him, is called by various terms expressive of inspiration. It is said that the Spirit of God has come over someone (Nu. 24:2); or has fallen upon him (Ezk. 11:5); or that the hand of Jeh. has come over him and laid hold on him (2 K. 3:14; Ezk. 1:3; 3:14, 22, and often); or that the Holy Spirit has been put on him as a garment, i.e. has been incorporated in him (1 Ch. 12:18; 2 Ch. 24:20); or that the Spirit of revelation has permanently descended upon him (Nu. 11:25f; 2 K. 2:15; Isa. 11:2; 61:1); or that God has given this Spirit of His (Nu. 11:29; Isa. 42:1); or pours Him out upon man (Joel 2:28f). . . .

The schools of prophets or "sons of prophets" especially exhibited ecstatic behavior and speech.

These associations probably originated in this way, that an experienced prophet attracted to himself bands of youths, who sought to receive a measure of his spirit. . . . among these pupils is found to a much greater extent than among the teachers a certain ecstatic feature. They arouse their feelings through music and induce a frantic condition which also affects others in the same way, in which state they "prophecy" and, throwing off their garments, fall to the ground. In later times too we find traces of such ecstatic phenomena.

The familiar case of Saul's unusual behavior when he joined the band of prophets is illustrative. The Spirit came upon him so mightily that he was "turned into another man" (1 Sam. 10:6).

It is obvious, then, that the word "prophet," could designate, either one who spoke in an unusual manner due to what was considered to be a supernatural inspiration, or one who spoke normally, or at least nearly so, as a result of previous divine influence or inspiration. There are very few indications of ecstasy in the latter

prophets, though their "utterances as a rule exhibited an elevated form of language and are more or less poetical."

It is interesting that Schenk concluded that "women like Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Jgs. 4:4) and Huldah (2 K. 22:14) were not credited with the seer's insight into the future, but were called 'prophetesses' because of the poetical inspiration of their speech." It is possible that all the Old Testament "prophetesses" were designated as such because of the nature of their speaking under "inspiration."¹

Though the author is influenced by Smith's view, nevertheless he holds to the primary view that ecstasy is not of major import in prophecy. However, both views are relevant in answering the question of this thesis, for both views eliminate the possibility that preachers today qualify as prophets.

The Element of Prediction

That foretelling future events was an element of Old Testament prophecy is undeniable, as over one-third of prophetic declarations were predictive. Also, Agabus obviously was predicting a future famine (Acts 11:27ff) and Paul's incarceration (Acts 21:10ff). However, the element of prediction was not always present in either Old or New Testament prophets. What always was present was the prophet's claim that he spoke the word of God.²

¹Smith, pp. 214-17.

²R. Laird Harris, Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 163.

The Element of Proclamation

From the study of the various terms for prophet, proclamation or declaration of a message was a true characteristic of all prophets. However, proclamation was not limited to prophets. Also, Smith points out, "There is no place in all of Scripture where the words 'prophet,' 'prophecy,' or 'prophecy,' designate an ordinary preacher, ordinary preaching, or an ordinary sermon."¹ As for the relationship of proclamation as found in prophecy relative to preaching today, Boyer says this:

There are no revealers of new divine truths today. God has said all He has to say in this book. This book is all the prophet and all the prophecy there is today. There are those who edify the church by expounding the prophecies of this book, but they are not prophets.²

The Element of Revelation

The Primary Feature

Revelation appears to be the overall primary feature of the prophetic function. Both Old and New Testament usage of "prophet" and "prophecy" has shown the centrality of revelation to prophecy. To summarize the Old Testament prophetic function, Heschel wrote, "Generation after generation, it was as if God had opened a door: in the prophets His word was revealed."³ Boyer indicated the preeminence of

¹Smith, p. 213.

²Boyer, p. 20.

³Heschel, p. 193.

revelation in New Testament prophecy when he referred to prophecy as a supernatural gift whereby the prophet was able to reveal to his listeners new truth from God.

Thus, the gift of prophecy especially was related to revelation and inspiration, and the exercise of the gift in the early church served to place the stamp of divine authority on the Christian message during the period when that message was being crystallized into the inspired New Testament.¹

The author best appreciates Tan's definition of a prophet:

"A person to whom the will of God has been revealed under inspiration in order that it might in turn be communicated to man."²

1 Corinthians 14:29-30

"And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent."

As will be mentioned in this section and the next, there are some difficulties with the view that prophecy is always revelation. However, the author believes the strength of this position overpowers the difficulties at the present time, although allowance is made that further study could influence this position.

All prophecy rests on revelation, 1 Corinthians 14:30. The prophet does not declare what he has taken from tradition or what he has thought up himself. He declares what has been revealed to him. The *ἀποκάλυψις* of 1 Corinthians 14:26 is the revelation which is

¹Boyer, p. 18.

²Tan, p. 368.

imparted to the prophet and which is to become prophetic proclamation in the congregation, 1 Corinthians 14:26-30. Thus prophecy is very closely related to revelation, 1 Corinthians 14:6, 30; Ephesians 3:5; 1 Peter 1:10-12. . . .¹

2 Peter 1:20-21

Speaking of the gift of prophecy and its union with revelation, Smith wrote,

The gift of prophecy was the gift of "inspired utterance" in an understandable language. As such it was employed by God for the giving of revelation. The message of a true prophet was not of his own origination, "for not by will of man was prophecy borne, but being borne by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). The gift of prophecy in its highest form was simply God giving revelation directly through the agent, the prophet.²

Problems

False Prophets

In the same epistle in which he declared the authority of the prophets to be seated in God Himself, Peter also clarified that he was speaking only of true prophecies of Scripture (2 Pet. 1:20), as there were also false prophets giving false messages based upon false authorities of their own selves. Therefore, it is obvious that true prophecy, based upon revelation, nevertheless had to be discerned from false prophecy, based upon self. This is the next problem.

¹Friedrich, "*Προφήτης* ," p. 853.

²Smith, p. 404.

"But false prophets also arose . . . , just as there will also be false teachers . . ." 2 Peter 2:1 seems to indicate that there will be no false prophets past the apostolic age, their passing being simultaneous with the passing of true prophets. Rather, their office will be replaced by false teachers.

Judging

The threat of false prophets and prophecies was real enough that the Apostle Paul gave instruction that "the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets," (1 Cor. 14:32), and as a prophet was speaking in the assembly, the others were to "pass judgment" (1 Cor. 14:29). That discernment (or "distinguishing of spirits," Rom. 12:10 NASV), another spiritual gift, is necessary to understand prophecies of God apart from false prophecies from any other source, is not a problem. However, the problem arises out of the source of the false prophecy; whether such false prophecies only come from those in the assembly desiring to mislead or gain authority and leadership by their importance or from sincere believers who were "inspired" by a false or misleading source, such as Satan himself.

"Temporary Value" Revelation

There are some who, in light of very little record of the messages of the New Testament prophets, believe that only the prophecies of the apostles were revelation of such

degree as to be inspired Scripture. The prophecies of the New Testament prophets were revelations, but only for temporary value, not to be inspired Scripture.¹ Some have questioned whether God would give revelation which He did not intend to be inscripturated. Knowing that only a few of the acts and miracles of Jesus were ever recorded in Scripture (Jn. 21:25), and realizing that God has recorded some of the prophecies in the New Testament (Acts 11:27ff; 21:10ff), the author sees no problem with God's selectivity for inscripturation. The last problem cited is indeed unique and would merit a major study on its own.

Prophetesses

Acts 21:9 says that Philip the evangelist "had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses." Although Paul seemed to recognize that women enjoyed the gift of prophecy, he never allowed them under any circumstances either to speak in tongues or to prophesy, nor ever to speak in church (1 Cor. 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:12)! Even in his teaching concerning wearing a veil when praying or prophesying (1 Cor. 11:3-16), he never indicates approval of public "praying and prophesying" on the part of women!² The question is, how could these women have the gift of prophecy, thus receiving

¹Robert L. Saucy, The Church in God's Program (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), pp. 138-39.

²Smith, p. 228.

a divine revelation for proclamation, and not be allowed to proclaim it?

Nowhere was a woman in the church given by New Testament writers the title of *προφήτις* , "prophetess." Luke appears to have deliberately avoided designating Philip's daughters as "prophetesses," but rather said Philip had four daughters, virgins, *προφητεύω* , "prophesying"! Although most writers either accept the role of women as prophets or gloss over the problem, not offering a solution, as is the intent of this writer, the general view of ecstasy, as presented by Smith, merits consideration:

Paul employed the word (*προφήτης*) only in the masculine gender yet he acknowledged that women prophesy and have the gift of prophecy. It is clear that he used the verb forms to designate ecstatic religious speech in the vernacular, and he used only those verb forms when speaking of the "prophesying" of women. He avoided any reference to them as "prophets." While "prophesying" was a genuine charisma, that is, caused by the Spirit, it did not necessarily imply that God was employing the state to give direct revelation. This is evidenced by the clear statements that women were not to speak in tongues, prophesy, or teach, in the assemblies of believers. This can be sustained by examining every reference to women "prophesying." Anna, a prophetess before Pentecost, is the only pious woman to be designated in the New Testament as a prophetis. It has been suggested that the title was deserved because of the ecstatic character of her worship (Lk. 2:37), the "poetical inspiration" of her speech, or perhaps because of the predictive nature of her message (v. 38). The only other use of the word has reference to a false teacher at Thyatira, a "jezebel," who was merely "calling herself a prophetess" (Rev. 2:20).¹

¹Smith, p. 228.

The Element of Time

Foundational

Typical of many scholars, Saucy represents the view that the gifts of prophet and prophecy were foundational and no longer in use:

They therefore held an important place in the church, being foundational along with the apostles (Eph. 2: 20) Primarily through the order of prophets, the Spirit guided the church during the time when revelation was incomplete and the knowledge of the faith was yet very imperfect among the new converts. The ministry of the prophet as speaking inspired utterances from God gradually died out after the end of the apostolic age and the completion of the canon. Their place of exhortation was taken by the regular local ministry of pastor-teachers.¹

Friedrich,² Pache,³ and Stitzinger⁴ notably support this view.

Historical

Many will agree that prophecy appears to have ceased near the time of the completion of the Canon (A.D. 96). This is based largely upon historical observation. Warfield gives strong argument, as cited earlier, that there are no certain and clear allusions to the exercise of the charismatic gifts by the Apostolic Fathers, contemporaneous with

¹Saucy, p. 139.

²Friedrich, "*Προφήτας* ," p. 850.

³Rene Pache, The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), p. 190.

⁴Stitzinger, pp. 93, 94, 111.

themselves.¹ Gromacki's study of the testimony of later ages gives assent to prophecy's cessation.² McRae teaches that there are only three major periods of prophecy: the time of Moses, the time of Elijah and Elisha, and the time of Christ and the Apostles.³ Walvoord concludes that prophecy has ceased, believing that no one today is given truth not already contained in Scripture.⁴ And Tan explains the work of the Holy Spirit to be illuminating the church regarding the completed canon.⁵ Historical observation is very strong as to prophecy's cessation.

We must consider that apart from the reinstatement of prophecy as recorded in Revelation 11:3ff, the need for divine revelation, the chief characteristic of the prophetic function, was eliminated with the completion of the canon. Boyer has said that today, men are shut up to the inspired written Word of God as their only source of revelation.⁶

¹Warfield, p. 10.

²Robert Glenn Gromacki, "A Scriptural Evaluation of the Modern Tongues Movement" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, IN, June, 1966), pp. 18-19.

³William J. McRae, The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), pp. 90-98.

⁴John F. Walvoord, The Holy Spirit at Work Today (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), p. 319.

⁵Tan, p. 115.

⁶Boyer, p. 26.

Along the same thought, Warfield signed his agreement to the cessation of prophet and prophecy with the completion of Scriptures:

When this historic process of organic revelation had reached its completeness, and when the whole knowledge of God designed for the saving health of the world that had been incorporated into the living body of the world's thought--there remained, of course, no further revelation to be made, and there has been accordingly no further revelation made.¹

God will speak again, in the Tribulation (Rev. 11:3ff), and in the Millenium (Joel 2:28), but not until then.

Biblical Basis

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 is the major battleground for the temporary-terminal versus permanent-continuing debates. The scope of the thesis prevents adequate discussion of these positions, but the author will attempt to summarize three major views as to the time of cessation of prophecy.

The Rapture

Sometimes held by adherents of the Second Coming or even the millennial age, this view believes prophecy will continue right through the Church Age. "The perfect" (v. 10), is understood as an event which follows the Church Age and precedes the millennial age. Smith gives two refutations to this view:

1) The term "that which is perfect" cannot refer to the Lord Himself at His coming because the article translated

¹Warfield, p. 26.

"that which" is neuter, not masculine in gender. Paul really said, "When the perfect thing arrives," or "When that (thing) which is perfect arrives, that which is partial will be rendered inoperative."

2) Not only does the neuter gender prohibit the understanding of a personal reference to Christ, but Northrup has pointed out that the gender also shows that the phrase "cannot refer to the coming of Christ . . . for all the terms used of His coming are feminine in the original" (p. 8). The words he has in mind are such words as revelation (apokalupsis), coming (parousia), and appearing (epiphaneia).¹

The Canon

In the author's limited exposure to biblical teaching, this has been the view most widely held and, in the author's opinion, due much consideration. This view is that "the perfect" refers to the completion of the New Testament canon when John finished the Book of Revelation in A.D. 96. Recently, the author has become persuaded as to the merit of the eternal state view. The arguments presented here are condensations of Charles R. Smith's views, as given in Tongues in Biblical Perspective, revised edition, pages 74-87. The author would encourage readers to study his work in its fuller form. He, having once held the canon view himself, agrees to its merit but points out three distinctive interpretations necessary if this view is to be accepted:

1) Adherents of this interpretation argue that the translation of the Greek word teleios as "perfect" is misleading. According to Moulton and Milligan (p. 629) the word has the literal meaning, "having reached its

¹Charles R. Smith, Tongues in Biblical Perspective (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1973), pp. 74-75.

end (telos). " It is argued that the primary meaning has reference to the completion of a process. Abbott-Smith suggested the meaning "finished, mature, complete . . . full grown" (p. 442). . . . Based upon this definition it may be argued that the purpose of Paul's statement was to predict that that which was partial, the gifts of prophecy and knowledge, would be rendered inoperative, made unnecessary, when the mature or complete thing arrived. In this case the rendering inoperative of the partial would really be the result of the completion or maturation of the partial. This would mean that when God's revelation for this age was mature, or completed, these partial gifts were not needed for the remainder of the age. . . . The view under consideration asserts that "that which is complete" should logically be of the same kind as "that which is partial" and is therefore most naturally understood as a reference to the completion of revelation for the Church Age. This was accomplished in A.D. 96 when the Apostle John wrote the last apostolic epistle. (It should be apparent that either of the other interpretations of "that which is perfect" could also accept the definition of telios as referring to the completion or maturation of revelation by means of these gifts--without dating this at the completion of the canon. The "eternal state" view, however, could also accept telios as designating the perfect age or state. The "canon" view cannot allow this possibility.)

2) If "that which is perfect" designates the completion of the canon, for the sake of consistency in logic, the interpreter must understand verse 12 as referring to a different time. "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully even as also I have been fully known." While a few commentators have attempted to explain this verse as also referring to the completion of the Scriptures, such an interpretation certainly offers an inadequate explanation of the phrase "face to face." Even with the completed Word or in the completed Word believers do not see God and spiritual realities "face to face," but "in a mirror dimly," as Paul implies again in 2 Corinthians 3:18. Also, even today with the completed Scriptures, even the most devout believer does not "know fully" just as also he "was fully known."

3) One more distinction must be noted before this view can be properly understood. This concerns the meaning of the verb katargeo. This verb occurs four times in verses 8-11 and is translated differently each time in the Authorized Version: "shall fail," "shall vanish away," "shall be done away," and "put away." The basic

meaning of the word is to express the idea, "to make inoperative." Representative meanings listed by Delling include, to make "unemployed" or "unused," "to render inactive," "to condemn to inactivity," "to put out of use," "to set aside," "to put out of action," "to take from the sphere of operation" (Kittel, I, 452-54).

It has been suggested that katargeo received its meaning by association with darkness or night, "when no man can work" (Moulton and Milligan, p. 331). In modern Greek arga means "late." Katargeo is an appropriate word for describing the laying aside at darkness of a work which will be resumed the following day. The Biblical word is a combination of three elements: kata, "down," a, the negative; and ergon, "work." The resultant meanings, "to make inoperative" or "to lay aside," while they do not require a later reactivation, clearly allow for such. Only when katargeo is used in the perfect tense, as in verse 11, does it, in itself, require that the "laying aside" be permanent. In this case it is not the verbal idea itself but the special significance of the Greek perfect tense, emphasizing the continuing results of an action, which suggests permanence for the "laying aside." In the other tenses the word simply designates a laying aside without any indication as to its duration. Only the context can be determinative as to the presence or absence of a later reactivation.

It should be apparent that this view, understanding "that which is perfect" as the completion of the New Testament, must require that katargeo was employed in verses 8 and 10 for the specific reason that it may allow for a later reactivation. Since the gift of prophecy will be given during the tribulation (Rev. 11: 3-13) and millennium (Joel 2:28), if one asserts that it was "laid aside" by the completion of the canon he obviously must understand that laying aside as temporary.¹

The Eternal State

Smith gives two major considerations for this view:

(1) Probably the strongest factor in favor of understanding "that which is perfect" as referring to the eternal state is that it is the easiest and simplest interpretation. It requires no tenuous exegesis for it merely states that when the eternal state arrives the gifts of prophecy and knowledge will no longer be

¹ Smith, Tongues, pp. 75-80.

needed. This simplicity would seem to fit Paul's purpose quite adequately. The context suggests that his purpose was to assert the fact of their future cessation, the fact that they are temporal and not eternal, rather than to give a date for their cessation.

(2) Also favoring this interpretation are the textual indications that verse 10 and verse 12 are referring to the same time. The phrase, "that which is perfect" (v. 10) is paralleled with "I shall know fully just as also I was fully known" (and indirectly with "face to face," v. 12) by the fact that both are contrasted with that which is "partial." (The Greek term ek merous occurs three times in verses 9 and 10 and once in verse 12.) Since "full knowledge" is said to replace partial knowledge (v. 12), and "that which is perfect" is said to replace partial knowledge (v. 10), it is logical and natural to conclude that "that which is perfect" and "full knowledge" (with its parallel "face to face") must refer to the same thing and time.

It has been demonstrated earlier that the other two interpretations of "that which is perfect" cannot fit with this seemingly simple and logical identification. The "Rapture" view, while properly identifying "that which is perfect" with "face to face" and "full knowledge," commits logical suicide by identifying this event with the rapture, which will not terminate the partial gifts. The "canon" view must deny the identification of "that which is perfect" with "face to face" and "full knowledge" because it is obvious that the completion of the canon did not initiate a "face to face" relationship and "full knowledge."¹

Smith (and this author) still agrees that prophecy has ceased until after the end of the Church Age:

Though "that which is perfect" is accepted as designating the eternal state, the passage does not require that even the gifts of prophecy and knowledge must continue in operation throughout the Church Age. Ephesians 2:20 specifically states that the apostles and prophets belong to the foundational stage of the church. Since an apostle was one who had been personally commissioned by the risen Lord this foundational stage is clearly limited to the generation of those individuals. And since Ephesians 2:20 so closely links the apostles and prophets one may readily affirm that as far as the

¹Smith, Tongues, pp. 80-81.

Church Age is concerned the gift of prophecy was limited to the foundational stage. This does not deny its later appearance after the Church Age and prior to the inauguration of the eternal state.¹

This view is not without its weaknesses, but still seems to be the most natural interpretation. One noteworthy challenge is given by David F. Miller, in which he disagrees with equating prophecy in the future with prophecy that was given as a spiritual gift by Christ to the Church.² However, in supporting the canon view, Miller resorted to much academic gymnastics. This author prefers the simpler interpretation.

¹Smith, Tongues, p. 84.

²David F. Miller, "Concerning Spiritual Gifts" (unpublished Doctor of Theology dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, IN, May, 1977, pp. 135-38.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

Based upon this study of the etymology of the words for "prophet," the historical usage of "prophet," and the characteristic of the "prophet" and prophetic function, the author is of the conclusion that there are no prophets or prophecies today. All such persons and functions were rendered inoperative with the passing of the foundational apostles and prophets, not to be made operative again until the time of the millennial kingdom in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.

There has been much confusion created by the use of the words "prophet" and "prophetic" in a loose sense. Whereas such usage is legitimate in such a loose sense, it should not be compared with the office of prophet or the gift of prophecy. A preacher is a "prophet" in a loose sense of the word, but not a prophet in the Biblical sense of the office or gift.

Those who proclaim men to be prophets today upon the basis of their ability as speakers need to uphold the honor of the words "preacher" and "teacher," which most adequately describe the above gifted men. Also, the doctrine of illumination seems to be neglected as possible explanation of

the unique ability of some men in their capacities as pastor-teachers.

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