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Contemporary prophetism in Kumasi: a socio-cultural and theological assessment

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The Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre is one of the largest and growing neo-prophetic movements in Kumasi. Using it as a paradigm for a new strand of Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana which is attracting a considerable number of following because of the prophetic unction on their leaders, the author contends that responding to the call to become a prophet goes with certain demands which make deep inroads into one's inward and outward life; as such, contemporary prophets should take advantage of the ministerial formation facilities available in Ghana, to consolidate their prophetic gifts and the discipleship training they receive from their mentors, and they will make greater impacts.

Keywords: Prophetism, neo-prophetism, prophecy, prophet, prophetic training, Ghanaian Christianity.

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that contemporary prophecy in Ghana started in Kumasi and spread to other parts of Ghana. Omenyo and Atiemo (2006:59) describe contemporary prophecy as neo-prophetism and say it is another type of Pentecostal Christianity which ethos, style and emphases are supposedly Pentecostal yet depart markedly from mainstream Pentecostal traditions and as such deserves to be discussed in its own right. Ansah (2011) did a study on some neo-prophetic churches in Kumasi with a focus on the use of anointing oil in these churches.

It has been generally accepted that the precursor of neo-prophetism in Ghana was the late Prophet Francis Akwesi Amoako (Gifford, 2004:91). Prophet Amoako surfaced on the Ghanaian religious scene in the early 1980s. Amoako whose early life was shrouded in fear – a terror in the society - was believed to have had an independent conversion at Santase, Kumasi after which he participated in the Santase Methodist Church's renewal meetings as well as the local Assemblies of God Church and the Scripture Union Fellowship (Adubofour, 1994:363). Prophet Amoako used to have solitary retreats in the bush after his conversion experience. He claimed that at one of these retreats God called him and promised to use him to preach and bring healing and deliverance to many throughout the world (Ahlijah, 1989:12). As a result he started an independent itinerant evangelistic ministry which culminated in a group

named Bethlehem Evangelistic Ministry (BELAM) around 1977. As the ministry grew he made use of assistants – eight of them, who only had basic education – who helped him, expand the group and renamed it the Resurrection Power Evangelistic Ministry (REPEM) (Adubofour, 1994:364). Amoako's preaching which was mainly in Twi was described as plain and bold; he boldly attacked the then Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) government verbally for its anti-Christian tendencies, a practice which earned him the nickname "John the Baptist of Ghana" (Adubofour, 1994:359). A major significant characteristic about Amoako's ministry however, was his demonstration of the power of Jesus to heal and deliver people who were believed to be in bondage to the devil. His ministry was said to have attracted over 20,000 people by the early 1990s, through the testimonies of people who benefited from his healing and deliverance activities. In Kumasi alone, there were 36 local branches of REPEM. Takoradi had four, Accra had ten. On the international scene Amoako's itinerant preaching tours resulted in the establishment of branches of REPEM among Ghanaian immigrants in London, Holland, Belgium and Germany (Omenyo and Atiemo, 2006:60).

Elisha Salifu Amankoa is another contemporary prophet who began his prophetic ministry in Kumasi. Born in 1966 and raised in Kumasi by a Muslim family

who could not afford to send him to school during his infancy, Prophet Elisha Salifu Amoako went to school at a rather mature age. He suffered embarrassment as a result, and abandoned schooling after one year and became wayward – he took to smoking, drinking and robbery. Salifu Amankoa was led to the Christian faith by a man called Awuah who also introduced him to the local Assemblies of God Church at Bantama, Kumasi. He left the Assemblies of God Church because of its constant usage of the English Language he did not quite understand. He joined Evangelist Amoako's Resurrection Power Evangelistic Ministry at Santasi which used Twi as the medium of communication. He committed himself to serve at the church by doing all kinds of menial jobs in the church as well as the house chores for Prophet Amoako who later invited him to live with him in his house. Amoako thus became his mentor hence the addition of his mentor's name 'Amoako' to his original name (Gifford, 2004:91). Salifu Amoako who claimed to have had a spectacular experience a week before his mentor, Evangelist Amoako died has been recorded as saying that, he was sleeping in Evangelist Amoako's car when the late evangelist laid hands on him and prophesied that the anointing on him would be transferred onto Salifu Amoako and God would use him worldwide. According to Salifu when he heard of the news of the death of his mentor, Prophet Amoako, he was so devastated that he withdrew into a room and began to pray. In the course of the prayer, God spoke to him, confirming what his mentor had prophesied that he would have a worldwide ministry (Omenyo and Atiemo, 2006:61). Prophet Salifu Amankoa whose ministry emphasizes the ministry of angels to humans – because of his belief that angels are vehicles for spectacular and supernatural occurrences in the lives of human beings, and also that they have eschatological relevance and that God shall use angels as the main instrument for the accomplishment of his end-time prophets – began his ministry by forming a small fellowship in Kumasi. He later established the "Jesus is Alive Ministry" which metamorphosed into a church, "Alive Chapel International" which was inaugurated on 10th January, 1998 in Accra.

Another prophet who has come to the scene in Kumasi in contemporary times is Prophet Ebenezer Opambour Adarkwa. The study, like those carried out by earlier writers on founders of some New Religious Movements (NRM), sought to do preliminary investigations about Prophet Ebenezer Opambour Adarkwa and his ministry, and in addition, compare his ministry to that of the eighth century prophets in the Old Testament era. Martin (1985:11) defines a NRM as "any religious group which differs significantly in one or more respects as to belief or practice from those religious groups which are regarded as normative expressions of religion in our total culture." The comparison between the ministry of Prophet Ebenezer Opambour Adarkwa and

that of the prophets of the Old Testament has become necessary because, in Christianity when it come to matters of faith and practice, the Bible is the standard, even though some practices in the Bible can be contextualized "to make the word of God speak relevantly to African realities" (Adeyemo, 2006:x).

METHODOLOGY

The study used the structured questionnaire and participant observation, and inculturation hermeneutics approaches. The inculturation hermeneutics approach seeks to make the African context the subject of interpretation (Ukpong, 1995). According to Gold (1969:18), in participant observation-field research, the participant is not known to those whom he observes. He interacts with them as naturally as possible in whatever areas of their living interest him and are acceptable to him in situations in which he can play or learn to play requisite day-to-day roles successfully. Rubin and Babbie (1993:363-4) adds that field researchers need not always participate in what they are studying, though they usually will study it directly at the scene of the action.

Data collection procedure

Three final year undergraduate students of the New Religious Movement class 2009/2010 academic year, from the Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology were sent out to visit and participate in at least two of the programmes of the Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre at Ahenema Kokoben, a suburb of Kumasi to get first hand information about the founder and his ministry, through participation, observation and interviews, as a paradigm for contemporary prophetic ministries in Kumasi. The students were from the Mainline Churches – two were Catholic and one a Methodist – so that they would not be bias in their reportage. They visited the church between February and April, 2010. The researcher have also personally listened to Prophet Opambour Adarkwa's preaching on New Mercury FM on several occasions.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis was the Bible and inculturation hermeneutics, a methodology which arose as a response to pay attention to the African socio-cultural context and the questions that arise from it. Proposed by the Nigerian biblical scholar Justin Ukpong, inculturation hermeneutics "designates an approach to biblical [theological] interpretation which seeks to make the African...context the subject of interpretation" (Ukpong,1995:5). Thus, the Bible, Ministry, African world - view, culture and life

experiences of people in the context were taken into consideration.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre is located at Ahenema Kokobenn, a suburb of Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It was founded and owned by Rev. Ebenezer Opambour Adarkwa Yiadom, popularly known as “Prophet One” or “Asante Moses.”

Biographical sketch of the founder

Ebenezer Opambour Adarkwa Yiadom was born in the early 1960s to a very poor family who hailed from Juaso Pramso in the Ashanti Region. Kwame Adarkwa Yiadom as he was formerly called, lived with a guardian at Alaba, a zongo community in Kumasi. He had his basic education at St. Peters Educational Centre at Kwadaso and later continued at the Kumasi Technical Institute (KTI), where he pursued a course in plumbing. In his early days at school, Kwame was admired by most of his friends because of his melodious voice, even though he was always in tattered school uniform. His melodious voice eventually made him a composer and singer. He is currently married to Mame Mavis and they have five children.

His call into Ministry

Kwame was born into the Methodist Church. He was very active in church activities even though he was surrounded by Muslims at Alaba, Zongo. At the age of 13 he had a dream in which he was instructed by somebody to pray over oil and use. He was told to point the oil to the sky or heaven before praying over it. He was told that anything he raises up and prays over would be sanctified, and anything he touches with his hands would be blessed by God. Thus, anything blessed by him shall be a blessing to the user. He has the gift of prophecy. He remained in the Methodist Church and drew closer to some of the leaders and ministers. He prophesied and received revelations about some church members, and counseled them on what to do. He was fond of joining the church leaders and pastors to visit the homes of sick members and whenever he was allowed to pray for the sick, there was manifestation of healing. Opambour had some slight misunderstanding with the elders of the Methodist Church. Some of his views on issues conflicted with that of Methodist doctrine. So the leaders did not take them, and that made Opambour to leave the Methodist Church, to establish his own church.

The beginning of the church

The church started as a prayer fellowship with Opambour’s peers in the early 1990s at Osei Kyeretwie Secondary School (OKESS) at Tafo, a suburb of Kumasi. The group flourished and attracted many people. This was because those who attended the prayer fellowship felt spiritually fulfilled and so invited others to the meetings. Thus, men, women, young and old started attending the prayer meetings. As membership grew, there was the need to change the venue to a bigger place. Opambour moved the meeting place to Kofrom, a suburb of Kumasi. It was at this point that he added Ebenezer to his name and became Ebenezer Kwame Adarkwa Yiadom. He also gained the name “electric” from members and people around that area because anytime he touched somebody the person experienced a kind of shock that made him or her fall. His spiritual gifts drew crowds to the church. At Kofrom membership grew so much that he converted the prayer fellowship to a church and named it “Ebenezer Miracle Centre.” From Kofrom he moved the church to his house at Abrepo Junction, a suburb of Kumasi, and then to a place called “Friends Garden.” He was compelled to buy a land at Ahenema Kokoben to build a church auditorium because of increase membership and also complaints from his neighbours as the activities of the church disturbed their peace in the residential area. He was the first to settle at Ohenema Kokobem where he put up the church auditorium, his residence and residence for people who participate in his programmes but come from far places. He named the place “Island City.” The church which currently has over twenty thousand members has branches in Accra, Cape-Coast, and Sunyani. There is a branch also in Germany, and according one of the pastors, one will soon be started in Canada.

Vision and Mission

The church exists to preach the gospel to the perishing and win them for God; and also to set the captives (people who have problems) free from generational or ancestral curses, to liberate demon-possessed people from the hands of the devil through healing and deliverance (exorcism). The assumption is that no one is in charge of his or her own life. There are spirits that either make or mar one’s life, hence the need for a supernatural power to overcome such evil spirits.

Leadership structure of the church

Prophet Ebenezer Opambour Adarkwa Yiadom is the overall head of the church. He has associate pastors he works with. The next in command is Rev. E. Y. Ankuma. The hierarchy of the associate pastors is determined by

the number of years one has been with the prophet. Opambuor trains the pastors himself. The training comprises watching him preach, giving them chance to preach and exercising their spiritual gifts in healing and deliverance. He also allows the pastors to attend any Bible School they wish.

Tenets of the church

Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre does not have any laid down belief system. The church believes in everything the Bible teaches. It believes in:

- (a) God as the Creator of the universe.
- (b) The death, resurrection and ascension and the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- (c) The use of the anointing oil.
- (d) The sacredness of *buramu nsuo* – the well water – and anything blessed by Prophet Ebenezer Opambuor Adarkwa.
- (e) Baptism by immersion as a sign of repentance. But emphasis is not so much placed on baptism since most of the people who go to the centre are not actually interested in membership of the church but to find solutions to their problems.
- (f) Baptism by the Holy Spirit.
- (g) It accepts the belief systems of other denominations. Thus, pictures of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Jesus himself can be found in the church auditorium.

Programmes

A week at Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre starts with a Divine Service on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. There is All-night prayer session on Monday, from 9.00 p.m. to 5.00 a.m. the following day. On Tuesday 6.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. there is Counseling session. Wednesday 6.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. is scheduled for a special miracle service. On Thursdays, there are no activities at the main branch in Kumasi; however, Prophet Opambuor visits the other branches in the country. Friday 6.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. is used for deliverance (exorcism), what Prophet Opambuor calls *abayisem*. There are no church activities on Saturdays.

A typical Sunday service

On a typical Sunday Service the choir leads Prophet Opambuor Adarkwa, the Associate Pastors and their wives with songs into the chapel as done in the Mainline churches. This is followed by opening prayer, praises and worship for about 45 minutes. Then there is songs ministrations by the various singing groups in the church, led mostly by the wives of the pastors, for about 30

minutes. Offertory follows. Members are encouraged to give to God. Boxes are placed at vantage points in front and members are asked to move from their seats and put their offerings into the boxes. The congregation prays over the offertory. This takes about 15 minutes. Then, comes a time of singing and dancing, in preparation for the sermon. This is normally delivered by any of the Associate Pastors assigned by Prophet Opambuor to do so. The preaching which is normally based on a short scripture lasts for about 20 minutes.

An important aspect of the Sunday service is healing and deliverance. This follows the sermon and is done by the Prophet himself. He mounts the pulpit amidst rigorous shouts, claps and cheers from the congregation with a standing ovation; he is introduced with titles such as “Dr. Opambuor,” “the history maker,” “the legend,” “Asante Moses,” “prophet one.” During this time, a kind of ineffable ecstasy fills the church auditorium. He starts the ministration session with songs, most of which are his own compositions. He moves through and fro the congregation, followed by two or three of the Associate Pastors. He calls people at random and begins to “prophesy” into their lives as and when supposedly moved by the Holy Spirit. As part of the prophecy, he reveals the past, tells the present and the future of people present. He reveals the plans of the devil on people. He attributes the forces hindering the progress of people as witchcraft, water spirits, demonic forces and ancestral spirits. He reveals the causes of sicknesses and prays for people. He delegates some of the prayer to his Associate Pastors. He claims to hear the voice of God telling him of the sins people commit secretly that lead to their sufferings. Why ministering, some members of the congregation shout, *Odiuo nono* meaning “that is the prophet,” *Onyame wô tumi oo* with the response being *Ena wo ka nu seii* literally meaning, “God has power” and the response is “And what do you say about that?” The service continues with special offertory in exchange of anointing oil, ranging from Fifty Ghana Cedis to One Ghana Cedis (GHC 50.00 to GHC 1.00). At this juncture, Prophet Opambuor himself receives the moneys from the people and put into the box and the other pastors distribute the anointing oil. An offertory of Fifty Ghana Cedis attracts a personal meeting with the prophet in his house in addition to two small bottles full of oil blessed by him. He gives instruction regarding its usage. A Thirty and Twenty Ghana Cedis offertory also attract two bottles of blessed oil by the prophet but without any special meeting with him; but he gives guidelines on how to use it in order to receive solutions to one’s problems. An amount less than Ten Ghana Cedis attracts oil tied in a polythene bag that is to be used according to one’s own desire. The service ends with a prayer and benediction by the prophet. The choir does not recess.

DISCUSSION

The Prophetic phenomenon

Prophecy, the communication-based intermediation between the divine world and human society (Wilson, 1980: 27-28; Petersen, 2000: 37-38), is a phenomenon that has gained significant attention by scholars in the twenty-first century. The importance of prophecy is evidenced by the occurrence of the word “prophet” over 300 times in the Old Testament.

Even though these occurrences have made prophecy an important phenomenon in the Old Testament, studies have shown that it was not restricted to ancient Israel alone. Blenkinsopp (1984: 54) has demonstrated that Israel’s neighbours also had their own oracular speakers. Apart from the Old Testament references to non-Yahwistic prophets, a number of Ancient Near East texts found in places such as Emar on the Middle Euphrates River, Aram, Ammon, Phoenicia, Anatolia and Mesopotamia confirm this assertion. Thus, prophecy is both a socio-cultural and theological phenomenon. In that sense we can have prophets in human communities such as Kumasi.

The term “prophet” comes from the Greek *prophētēs*, from *pro* “before” or “for” and *phēmi* “to speak”. The prophet is thus the one who speaks before in the sense of proclaim, or the one who speaks for, that is, in the name of God. In the Old Testament three terms are used for the prophet: *rō’eh*, *nābî*, and *hōzeh*. The first and the last terms are distinguished by nuances bearing on the habitual or temporal character of the vision. According to Lamorte and Hawthorne (2007), *nābî*, the one who witnesses or testifies – best characterizes the prophetic mission. The originality of biblical prophecy derives from the phenomenon of inspiration whereby God speaks to the *nābî*, who has to transmit exactly what he receives. It is God who invites, summons, and impels the prophet to speak. Yet inspiration does not suppress individuality (Jer. 20:7-9).

Going by the definition of Wilson and Petersen on one hand and the insight from the Greek and Hebrew terms for “prophet” on the other hand one can say that intermediation between the spiritual world and the world of humans is the main function of the prophet. He must hear from deity (God or gods) and transmit same to humans. In that sense we can say that the traditional priests, priestesses and diviners can be called “prophets.” But unlike the biblical prophets, the source of their message is not the Almighty God. The deity who calls a person into his/her service determines the activities and methods of that person. If it is the Almighty God of the Bible who calls a person like He did to the prophets in the Bible, then he or she must of a necessity use Bible and follow biblical standards in his or her operations. If it is a deity other than the Almighty God who calls a person, he or she is bound to follow its dictates.

The call into ministry

The biblical idea of God’s calling is that God summons men and women by his Word and lays hold on them by his power to play a part in and enjoy the benefits of his gracious redemptive purposes (Parker, 2001). In that sense all who people are devotees of God Almighty have been called. This is a “general calling.” Specifically he calls people who want to be Christians through their belief in Jesus Christ. This is an “effectual calling.”

There is another dimension of God’s call – the call into ministry. This happens after the “effectual calling,” when God sets people apart for the work of ministry. Berkhof (1958/2003:587) distinguishes between two types of call into ministry. First, there is the “internal calling” which consists of “the consciousness of [one] being impelled to some special task in the Kingdom of God, by love to God and His cause; the conviction that one is at least in a measure intellectually and spiritually qualified for the office sought; and the experience that God is clearly paving the way to the goal.” Following the “internal calling is the “external calling,” which comes through the instrumentality of the church, where both officers and the ordinary members of the church has a part in it. (See Acts 1:15-26; 6:2-6; 14:23). The point being made here is that, one does not wake up and decides to be a “Man of Woman of God.” One must have some inner convictions backed by spiritual and intellectual qualifications, and pragmatic experiences that God is clearly preparing one to minister in his vineyard. These potentials and experiences are recognized by the church who then “initiates” such a person into ministry.

Nkomhyɛ (prophecy) and *adiyie nsem* (revelation) is a widespread and pronounced phenomenon in the contemporary prophetic churches in Kumasi today. There is no doubt that their leaders have been called, looking at the efforts they make, to meet some felt needs of Ghanaian Christians, and to present them with effective African alternatives to the purely traditional beliefs and practices of non-Christian compatriots. But the question is, “who called them?” As mentioned earlier, the deity who called a person into its service determines the way a person’s ministry will go.

Generally, the contemporary prophets are believed to have been called by God as their forebearers in Ghana – John Swatson, Sampson Oppong, William Wade Harris – and in ways dramatic and similar to the calling of prophets in the Old Testament. The calling is characterized by compelling visions, repeated dreams and sometimes, illness that finally lead to the total surrender of the person to do the work of God. Like John the Baptist in the New Testament they begin their ministry by calling people to repentance and to abandon traditional practices like sorcery, witchcraft and sacrificing to ancestors. They engage in healing and exorcism (deliverance).

It has been alleged however that, most of the contemporary prophets in Kumasi have not been called by God. A case in point is a news paper report by the *Graphic Nsempa*, a Kumasi based newspaper (October 12-18, 2009) which carried the headline, "Ebenezer Adarkwa Yiadom, Controversial? Why does he curse so much?" Rev. Yiadom who also goes with the accolade "Prophet [number] one," was captured in the print and electronic media when he challenged Kweku Bonsam, a traditional priest to a showdown. It was reported that he had been in the news lately over fracas between him and another "Man of God," Bishop Obinim, the Head of the International God's Way Church. The *Daily Graphic* on 30 November 2009 also reported of a drama at the Suame Police Station in Kumasi that Pastor Frank Annor of Faith Power Ministry also in Kumasi, invoked the Asante river deity Antoa to strike-dead Bishop Obinim because he had not only failed to pay him, but had also denied that he had once sent him (Annor) to perform some rituals (bury human bones, a dead snake and candles) at Rev. Adarkwa Yiadom's Miracle Worship Centre at Ahenema Kokoben, at a cost of Four Thousand Ghana Cedis (GHC 4,000). Consequently, the two popular "Men of God" in Kumasi had engaged each other in a war of words on radio and television over which of them was the more powerful and who was the truer man of God. The question then is, how can "Men of God" act in such an unusual way?

The training of the contemporary prophets

After receiving the prophetic call, like any other call, one is supposed to go through training. The question is, "where are the contemporary prophets trained and who trains them?" Prophet Akoa Nazareth of Israel King of the Jews Church said on *Ghana Television* on October 20, 2009 that,

Those who spend their time in schools to study Theology, Anthropology, Philosophy, Hebrew and Greek in order to interpret Scripture correctly are Pharisees. All theologians are Pharisees. They learn theology to challenge God's anointed men as they challenged Jesus....They have nothing good to offer. If you follow their teachings you will go to hell. All they want are big titles like Bishop, Right Reverend, Philosopher, and nothing else....It is God who trains His men for the task not human beings.

Other prophets like Prophet Amoateng of Come to Jesus Prophetic Ministries at Abesewa in the Ashanti Region (interviewed on phone on May 8, 2009) said a similar thing. "It is the Omniscience God who has called me into this ministry. He is able and all knowing, and therefore I will never allow my faith to be destroyed by human ideologies. They should take their books; we shall practise our faith. They should rely on scholars; we shall rely on the Holy Spirit."

The main point of Prophets Akoa and Amoateng's statements is that it is God who trains the contemporary prophets and not men. They see theological education as "evil" and thus, no serious Christian who feels called by God should offer himself or herself for such training since such institutions are human. Perhaps they are afraid that their would-be prophets will be taught the beliefs of other churches. But the whole issue about theological education is "faith seeking understanding." You have faith in a deity and you study to understand the deity better, to deepen your faith in that deity. Nobody engages in theological education to get converted.

There are many avenues for theological or ministerial formation – seminaries, bible schools and colleges, universities and Theological Education by Extension (TEE). However the basic process of training for the contemporary prophets is that of mentorship or discipleship, which gives opportunity for trainees to become like their trainers. Jesus used this method to train the twelve disciples (Mk.3:13-15). African traditional priests and priestesses are trained with this method. In African communities when a deity identifies a potential priest or priestess through spirit possession, he or she is said to be "married" to that deity. The novice is then sent to a senior and experienced priest for training. As part of the training, the novice stays in the house of the trainer and observes whatever he or she does and does the same thing. The novice watches how the senior priest or priestess receives visitors, diagnose problems, prescribe medication, dances, interprets dreams and visions. Sometimes the priest or priestess delegates some duties to the mentee, and watches closely how he or she does it, and makes inputs. This goes on for a period between three and seven years, depending on how well behaved and fast the trainee learns before he or she graduates (See Owusu, 2010). Prophet Ebenezer Opambuor Adarkwa Yiadom has a host of associate pastors who assist him in ministry. He trains them himself through mentoring.

But there are training institutions in Ghana which trains contemporary prophets, which perhaps most prophets are not aware of. One of them is the Good News Theological College and Seminary at Oyibi near Accra, which was established in 1971 to provide biblical, theological and pastoral training for leaders of the African Indigenous Churches (AICs) (College Brochure, 1998). Another one is the Apostolic and Prophetic Training School in Koforidua, which exists to prepare people who sense God's call on their lives to gain an understanding of church life, church leadership, prophetism and the prophetic ministry. Teachers at this school include some of the most dynamic prophets at the forefront of the prophetic movement in Ghana (Admission Brochure, 2008).

Prophetism in Kumasi

Prophetism in Kumasi is not in isolation. It is a phenomenon that is spreading throughout Ghana. Omenyo (2002:4) asserts that the Ghanaian religious scene has witnessed the emergence and steady growth of what may be appropriately described as neo-prophetism. Baah (2000:6) raises the question as to why there is a sudden resurgence and proliferation of prophets, prophetic ministries and programmes in this country. Atiemo (1993:47) says that this development addresses fear of the African. Lartey (2001:13) has indicated that a pastoral examination of the perspective of the membership of contemporary prophetic movements revealed “a basic fear of malevolent forces, a dependence on the [prophet’s] ‘anointing’ and a belief that the protection and blessing of God will remain upon them so long that they remain faithful (to God and the church).”

Atiemo and Lartey’s assertions reveal that, “fear” is the reason for the upsurge of contemporary prophets in Ghana in general and Kumasi in particular. People live in fear of spirit powers who are believed to be the causes of misfortunes. And since in Africa religion must work if it is good, people have become prophets - to dream and see visions about people, to interpret dreams, to pray for people - in order to satisfy that felt need (See Goll, 2004).

Rev. Elijah Boakye, the Senior Pastor of Christ Mediation Ministry International at Dote, a suburb of Kumasi (interviewed March 19, 2010) however interprets the prophetic phenomenon in Kumasi as a fulfillment of prophecy – Joel 2:28 where God says, “And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour my Spirit upon all fresh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.” According to Rev. Boakye what we are experiencing is just the tip of the iceberg since it is a prophecy which has been predicted some years ago and must be fulfilled. He said, “There are more prophets to come whom we must expect.”

The socio-economic situation in Kumasi may also be a cause to the increase of prophets in the city. Kumasi is a cosmopolitan city with people from different cultures. It is the most populous urban area in the Ashanti Region, with a population of 1,70,270 according to the year 2000 population census. Its population has tripled over the past two decades. This accounts for the high rate of unemployment and underemployment, contributing to an increase in social and economic problems in Kumasi. There are therefore frustrating difficulties in every endeavour which the contemporary prophets seem to be addressing.

CONCLUSION

Prophecy is both a socio-cultural and theological phenomenon. There is no doubt that contemporary

prophets are meeting some needs of their followers. However, they are becoming mechanistic theologians whose activities create fear in their hearers, and a dependency on the prophet and his instructions rather than the Word of God. Some contemporary prophets use their gifts not only to help the vulnerable in society, but also to extort money from them. Being a prophet is a calling which makes certain demands on one’s inward and outward life. Those who sense God’s call on their lives to become prophets should take advantage of the ministerial formation facilities available to consolidate their prophetic gifts and the discipleship training they will receive from their mentors, and they will make greater impacts.

RECOMMENDATION

The social impact of the Contemporary Prophetic Movements in Ghana.

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