

PROPHETS OF YAHWEH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ELISHA AND
PROPHETS OF CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM CHURCH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study, Prophets of Yahweh: A Comparative Study of Elisha and Prophets of Cherubim and Seraphim Church Nigeria investigated and compared how Elisha was called and prepared for his prophetic ministry, his beliefs, and his prophetic practices, with what is obtainable among selected Prophets in C&S Churches in Nigeria. Empirical research using descriptive survey design was carried out to determine how compliant to the biblical pattern is their experience of conversion, call to prophetic office, mode of preparation for the prophetic ministry, intermediation and other prophetic activities. Out of 150 questionnaires that were issued, 112 were returned and analyzed. The study revealed that some of the C&S Prophets demonstrated genuine salvation experience and evidences of divine call before they enter into the prophetic ministry. Moreover, it was also discovered that some of them were now trained for the prophetic ministry in C&S Theological Institute and other Seminaries while a few of them were prepared by apprenticeship, either organized by the local Church or the individual intending Prophet. However, the study showed that ordination into prophetic office among the C&S has been largely politicized. This study further revealed that most C&S Prophets usually proclaim salvation message to people that come to consult them, pray for and guide them through revelations, and proclaim God's message to the entire Nation without fear or favour. Although, the study's outcome largely favoured discontinuation of the use of certain symbols such as candle lighting, incense, names of holy angels, and prayer books in their worship, the use of hospital and medicine for healing, consecrated water and oil, as well as going to mountains for prayers was upheld. Therefore, in order to achieve contextualization of the Gospel that is free from every iota of syncretism, efforts must be made to divest C&S Church of every prophetic activity that is a carryover from African Traditional Religion acts of divination. While they provide solutions to Africans' existential problems through prophetic ministry, the consistency of their prophetic utterances must be determined based on the Bible and other ministry offices discovered in the New Testament must be correctly demonstrated in C&S Church.

5.2 CONCLUSION

This research work reveals striking similarities and obvious differences between the life and prophetic ministry of Elisha and that of contemporary C&S prophets. Similarities exist in the aspect of significance of a call into prophetic ministry, mode of preparation, the use of symbols and some matters of C&S faith and practices. Like Elisha, some C&S prophets demonstrate understanding of divine call into prophetic office. However, it is clear that quite a significant number of them have not experienced salvation and lacked Christian virtues.

Also, some C&S prophets were trained by apprenticeship. Recently, a few of them were privileged to undergo training in school of prophets or similar theological institution/colleges. Every minister will hold allegiance to whoever called them. Prophetess Dorcas Obagbemi, in an interview, submits that some C&S prophets are called by God; some by men and others by self. She explained that their call backdrop will determine whether they will be loyal to God, to men or their belly-lord respectively who became aware of her prophetic calling through divine revelations, and was trained by apprenticeship and theological education, explains, This is what.

Furthermore, the experience of ecstasy and use of symbols are noticed in the ministry of Elisha. He intermediated for both 'the high and mighty', as well as for 'the low and masses', but he was not motivated by monetary and material gains. However, among some contemporary C&S prophets, the abuse of symbols and prayer elements is one major factor that gives birth to syncretism. Prophetess Obagbemi laments the spiritual blindness that hinders today's C&S prophets from being 'the eyes of God' unto the society in private and public/national matters like Elisha.

The bane of contextualization of the Gospel in C&S Church, Nigeria include lack of salvation experience of some of her prophets, interest in multiple marriages,

lack of integrity of some prophets regarding sex, money and occult powers, and emphases on charisma that is devoid of Christ-like character.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to contextualize Christianity in African world view appropriately, this researcher hereby recommends Bible-based prophetic ministry that is free from every form of syncretism for the C&S Church Nigeria. Therefore:

1. C&S Church should prioritize and emphasis salvation experience for their Prophets. Moreover, members should not take the office of a Prophet unto themselves; they must ascertain they are divinely called into the prophetic office. In addition, ordination of people into prophetic office should be devoid of political manipulations.

2. C&S Church and prophets should embrace biblical pattern of prophetism as exemplified by Prophet Elisha and avoid the abuse of symbols. Cross, Pulpit, water etc are vital symbols to Christian faith. Other world religions have their own significant symbols too. Generally, symbols in religion give vivid meaning to religious ideas (Adejare 81). Also, Elisha experienced ecstasy and at times used symbols but the abuse, such as interest in monetary gain, exploitation, deception, idolatrous tendency etc, noticed with some of the C&S prophets, must be discouraged. Furthermore, every prophecy must be judged with the word of God, rightly interpreted. Any prophecy or prophetic practice that is not consistent with God's word must be shunned.

3. Theological education is germane to correct interpretation of the scriptures. Therefore, theological education should become a criterion for ordaining people into prophetic office in C&S Church. More theological schools should be established by the C&S groups and existing ones should be strengthen. Also, such

training schools should be adequately equipped with Christian biblical scholars and their curriculum should be rich in biblical interpretation, management and delivery of revelations/visions, church administration etc. This will enhance the unity and administrative structure of C&S Church.

4. Mainline Churches should embrace prophetic ministry and give allowance for its operation as much as they do other ministry offices. Charismatic gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to the Church so that she can demonstrate the power of Christ over powers of darkness and principalities in high places, thereby establishing and expanding the kingdom of Christ. This must not be left only for AICS; it must be a joint responsibility of the entire body of Christ.

5. Moreover, C&S Church Nigeria should also embrace the correct operation of other ministry offices in Eph. 4:11. They must emphasize the significance of divine call into these ministry offices. For instance, members must be called by God to be an apostle, evangelist, pastor and teacher, not chosen, promoted hierarchically or ordained by any other criteria. And all these ministers should be theologically trained on 'the how' of their perceived areas of ministry.

6. In order to minimize or attempt to eradicate several 'mushroom' or 'road-side' isolated C&S Prophets, major C&S Church groups should further encourage sound biblical teaching, through the ministries of teachers and pastors, so as to educate her entire membership on the biblical approach to Christian ministries.

7. Any house that divides against itself cannot stand, therefore, the unification efforts among the C&S groups should be heightened and directed on the Word of God as the center. Each C&S Church group should emphasize bible-based doctrines and practices as unifying factors so as to foster unity and healthy relationship among different groups.