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A Study of Factors Related to Becoming a Prophet as Set Forth in the New Testament

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A STUDY OF FACTORS RELATED TO BECOMING A PROPHET
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AS SET FORTH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
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A Thesis
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Thesis Approved:

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Bob Riley
Benny Chapel

by
Clyde W. Coleman

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A STUDY OF FACTORS RELATED TO BECOMING A PROPHET
AS SET FORTH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The New Testament reveals that the cause of Christ was served by many individuals during the first century A.D. The kind of work they did varied (Acts 6:1-4; I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28; Ephesians 4:11). Their personalities and abilities varied. They served in different localities and under different conditions. One kind of work which many of them did that appeared to be more significant than the other kinds of work done was that of the prophet, the preacher or proclaimer. Christians who served in this capacity appeared to have been compelled or motivated to such service by a compelling influence which they claimed was not of themselves. This compelling influence has been recognized by many as being of divine origin.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

What factors have been considered when an individual accepted or assumed the role of a prophet? Did such an individual choose to become such a prophet, or was he chosen to become one? What were the subjective responses of such an individual? What considerations were given to the ability of an individual to become such a prophet? How was the

individual formally or informally recognized or approved to function as a prophet? This study was an investigation of these factors as they were related to this role and its acceptance as set forth in the New Testament.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The decision to become a prophet has been made in several different patterns by individuals who have assumed the role. This decision has been made by some on the basis of a personal desire. Others have been influenced by the counsel of interested individuals. Still others have made the decision because they believed it to be the will of God that they function as prophets. Usually, more than one of such bases or influences have been considered.

Many organized religious institutions require that those of their number who function as prophets be formally approved by a recognized ecclesiastical authority before they are authorized to discharge the responsibilities of a prophet. The factors considered in determining a candidate's qualifications vary as to the order of their recognized importance from one religious institution to another. Some institutions require no more than that the individual declare that he is called of God and that he demonstrate a reasonable Christian conduct. Other institutions require

extensive and formal training, and a declaration or a call from God to be a prophet may or may not be required.

The social order has experienced extensive and sometimes drastic changes in its economic, social, and religious structure in this century. This has been particularly true during the past two decades. These changes, though in some instances and in some ways good, have often created such feelings as doubt, fear, uncertainty, and perplexity in the lives of many. Those who have committed themselves to the role of a prophet, and those who come to consider such a commitment, have not entirely escaped such subjective feelings. Some who committed themselves to being a prophet relinquished the role, and others are reluctant to accept it.

The conviction of the writer is that those who attempt to fill the role of a prophet will function with a lesser impact on others if they cannot conquer doubt, fear, uncertainty, and perplexity. Effective communication of the message of God to mankind demands that the prophet be able to demonstrate its peaceful and stabilizing influence in his life. The prophet of God must be able to exercise such a ministry with a tranquil assurance that it is his life challenge. Individuals who assumed the role of a prophet had strong inner convictions that such was their calling. The

Apostle Paul was a man frequently involved in conflict because he was a prophet. Yet Paul was able to demonstrate the peaceful and stabilizing influences of the Gospel in his own life. His testimony and his life bear evidence of this. In one of his letters to Timothy he said, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."¹ On the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, Peter was able to stand and courageously, positively, and effectively address the critics of the day.² These men had a strong conviction that they had been called of God to function as prophets. A part of Paul's defense before a crowd in Jerusalem on one occasion was that the Lord had chosen him to "be his witness unto all men" of what he had seen and heard.³ In one of his letters to the Corinthian Church he stated, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."⁴ Peter and John on one occasion were threatened by the Jewish rulers and commanded not to preach the message of Christ, but Peter's reply was, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and

¹I Timothy 4:14.

¹II Timothy 1:12. ²Acts 2. ³Acts 22:15.

⁴I Corinthians 9:16.

¹I Corinthians 12:31.

Heard."⁵son of the hands of the presbytery."¹⁰ James, Cephas,

A prophet must also be properly equipped if he is to be an effective communicator of the Gospel. His equipment may vary as to number and nature or character. But in keeping with the limitations of the study of the question under consideration, only one item has been considered in this study. This is what is herein referred to as "prophetic gifts." The Apostle Paul ascribed his abundant labors to be the result of God's gift of grace that was with him.⁶ He admonished Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee."⁷ He told the Corinthian Church that there are "differences of administrations."⁸ The members of the Corinthian Church were admonished to "covet earnestly the best gifts."⁹

The formal recognition or approval of an individual's assumption of the role of a prophet also has a meaningful relationship to the prophet's function as a prophet. The method of approval may be formal in a service especially planned for that purpose, or it may be rather informal. The bestowal of Timothy's gift was in connection with the

participation in, the ministry of such a prophet. A better

understand⁵Acts 4:17-20. ⁶I Corinthians 15:10. on the subject

could be ⁷I Timothy 4:14. churches and to administer for such a

⁸I Corinthians 12:4. (In this verse "administrations" is charismaton, "of gifts.") Galatians 2:9.

⁹I Corinthians 12:31.

"laying on of the hands of the presbytery."¹⁰ James, Cephas, and John made an informal recognition of the call of God to Paul and Barnabas to be prophets to the heathen.¹¹

The significance of this study lies in the need for understanding and clarifying these factors. Adequate understanding might remove the perplexity and frustration in the lives of those who commit themselves to the ministry of preaching the Gospel of Christ. More important than this, a more positive and influential ministry on the part of those committed to the challenge would result. Churches served by such prophets could profit by a better understanding and a better clarification of the factors under consideration. A church whose members have an adequate understanding of the significance of the prophetic call and the prophetic gifts which accompany the call could better appreciate and more confidently honor such a prophet who served them. A church that could confidently and intelligently recognize and approve a man to function as a prophet could have a greater sense of responsibility to, and participation in, the ministry of such a prophet. A better understanding of the New Testament viewpoint on the subject could be helpful to churches and to candidates for such a

¹⁰I Timothy 4:14. ¹¹Galatians 2:9. First,

ministry. passages of scripture in the New Testament form the basis for the study. The selected passages are Acts

DEFINITION OF TERMS

9:1-19; 13:1-4; 14:23; Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:11; I

Prophet. This term is used to designate an individual who assumes the obligations of a prophet of God in functioning primarily as a messenger or herald of God.

Prophetic call. This term is used to designate what is considered the communicated will or desire of God to a particular individual to assume the prophetic role.

Prophetic gifts. This term is used to designate the abilities and skills which aid a prophet in the discharge of the responsibilities of his ministry. Such abilities may in some instances and to some degree be inherent in the individual, and may become more effectively energized by the grace and power of God.

SOURCES AND TREATMENT OF DATA

Ecclesiastical approval. This term is used to designate the formal recognition and approval of a candidate to the prophetic ministry by a local church or some other recognized ecclesiastical body or authority. The nature of the approving body or authority may differ from one religious group to another.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has been limited in two ways. First,

selected passages of scripture in the New Testament form the basis for the study. The selected passages are Acts 9:1-19; 13:1-4; 14:23; Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:11; I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6; and Titus 1:5. Second, three factors related to the prophetic role have been isolated for consideration. The first factor is the subjective impressions of individuals who claimed to have experienced or received a prophetic call. The impressions which such individuals claimed to have experienced, and their interpretations of those impressions, were investigated. The second factor is the evaluation of the candidate's gifts that helped him to function as a prophet. The third factor is the formal approval of the candidate in connection with his assumption of the duties of his role as a prophet.

SOURCES AND TREATMENT OF DATA

The New Testament has been the primary source for this study. Selected passages in the New Testament were given particular attention. Secondary sources consisted of lexicons, church histories, commentaries, periodicals, and a limited number of books by various authors. Most of the secondary source material consulted was found in Riley Library on the campus of Ouachita Baptist University. The library of Central Baptist College in Conway, Arkansas was

also used. Part of the source material used was from the writer's personal library.

Chapter two is a presentation of the results of the investigation of the background for the prophetic ministry of the New Testament. The prophetic ministry of the Old Testament was used as the background for this study.

Chapter three is a presentation of the results of the study of the selected passages in the New Testament. These passages were studied for the purpose of seeking a better understanding of the nature, function, and importance of the factors involved in the prophetic role as set forth in the limitations of this study.

Chapter four is a presentation of the conclusions of this study. The suggestions and recommendations in this chapter were drawn from the conclusions reached in the study of the problem under consideration.

A bibliography is included at the end of this report.

OLD TESTAMENT TERMS

Three major terms are used in the Old Testament which refer to a prophet or the function of a prophet. These terms are nabi (spelled differently by different writers), ro'eh, and hoseh. In the King James Version these terms are usually rendered by the English words

CHAPTER II

THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

A serious study of the prophetic role in the New Testament required a consideration of this role in the Old Testament. Though differences of opinion may exist as to the precise relationship of the two, a student of the scriptures would affirm a significant relationship.

The things to which attention was given in this chapter were limited to those aspects of the prophetic role in the Old Testament that were directly related.

Terms relating to the prophet and the prophetic role were considered. Consideration has been given to the specific factors in this study which relate to the prophet's assumption of the prophetic role. The chapter ends with some conclusions drawn from the study of the two aspects of the prophetic role as set forth above.

OLD TESTAMENT TERMS

Three major terms are used in the Old Testament which refer to a prophet or the function of a prophet. These terms are nabi (spelled differently by different writers), ro'eh, and hozeh. In the King James Version these terms are usually rendered by the English words

"prophet" and "seer." The term nabi is used more than three hundred times. The other two, ro'eh and hozeh, are used less than twenty-five times each. These terms served a twofold purpose. They were used to identify those who were recognized as prophets, and to indicate what the function of a prophet was.

Only one of the terms has been appropriately translated by the word "prophet." Napier says,

The Hebrew term for "prophet," the only term appropriately so translated is נְבִיאִים. I Sam. 9:9 (itself of disputed date) recalls the fact that "he who is now called a prophet [נְבִיאִים] was formerly called a seer [רוֹאֵה]."¹ The LXX apparently presupposing a slightly different text, conveys the sense that the term "seer" was in the past simply a common popular name for "prophet." The fact remains that one term is normative in the OT, and only one; and further, unfortunately, that all arguments of meaning etymologically derived are inconclusive. We simply cannot now determine the original meaning of the word.¹

Young says that the term nabhi was the technical term for a prophet, but that he was commonly referred to by the people as ro'eh.²

The terms ro'eh and hozeh mean "seer," and a "seer"

¹B. D. Napier, "Prophet, Prophetism," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. III (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 896.

²Edward J. Young, My Servants the Prophets (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 63.

is "a diviner who sees what is invisible to the ordinary eye by some kind of clairvoyance or organized divination."³

Albright says that the navi was

one who had been specially called by God for a purpose, one who had a call or vocation from God. The word was limited to non-political and non-administrative use, and designated a charismatic religious figure, a person without hereditary right or political appointment who was authorized to speak or act for Yahweh.⁴

Young concludes that the word ro'eh means essentially the same thing as nabhi, and that ro'eh was used in the days of Saul, while nabhi came to take the place of ro'eh in later times.⁵ He summarized the meaning of the two terms as follows:

The primary connotation of nabhi, as far as the context [Deuteronomy 18:9-22] shows, was that of speaking the word of God. On the other hand, the etymology of ro'eh is clear, and that etymology casts light upon the word. The expression ro'eh is a participial form of the root ra'ah, which means simply to see. Hence the ro'eh was one who saw the revelation which God granted to him. Whether this act of supernatural insight or understanding and thus a metaphorical use of the word is involved or whether it lay in a particular mode of "seeing" the revelation of God, is not our immediate concern. What is important for us now is to stress the fact that the word has primary reference to the prophet's relation to God. Herein lies the difference. The word nabhi

³William F. Albright, "Samuel and the Beginnings of the Prophetic Movement," The Library of Biblical Studies: Interpreting the Prophetic Tradition, Harry M. Orlinsky, editor (Cincinnati: The Hebrew Union College Press, 1969), p. 153.

⁴Ibid., p. 154. ⁵Young, op. cit., p. 62.

stressed the active work of the prophet, in speaking forth the message from God. The word ro'eh, on the other hand brings to the fore the experience by means of which the prophet was made to "see" that message. One word lays emphasis upon the prophet's relation to the people; the other upon his relation to God. Both however, may refer to the same individual, and the function of that individual, whether it be designated by one word or by the other, was to declare the message which God had given him.⁶

The terms ro'eh and hozeh were practically synonymous, of which Isaiah 30:9-10 is an example. Albright further says,

Like the ro'eh, the hozeh also was to declare the message of God. Amos is called a hozeh, and this in a context where he has been declaring the word of God. Like ro'eh, however, this term stresses the reception, rather than the declaration of the prophetic message.⁷

With regard to the meaning and use of the words ro'eh and hozeh, Scott says,

In Deut. 13:1 a "dreamer of dreams" is almost another name for a prophet, and Jer. 23:32 speaks of those who "prophesy lying dreams."

The title given to such men in the early period was "seer." . . .

The visions of the Seer came not only in dreams during sleep, but also in the "second sight" of the ecstatic trance. . . . This abnormal mental state was attributed to possession by the deity. . . . Perhaps the distinction between the dreamer and the ecstatic explains the two different words translated "seer": "ro'eh," used of Samuel and (apparently) of Zadok the priest; and "hozeh," used of "the prophet of Gad, David's seer,"

⁶Ibid., pp. 64-65.

⁷Ibid., p. 65.

and (contemptuously) of Amos [I Sam. 9:9; II Sam. 15:27; 24:11; Am. 7:12].⁸

The word "prophet" is the English word most frequently used to distinguish those men who were recognized as spokesmen for God from those who were not so recognized. The word "prophet" is from the Greek word prophētēs. Thayer says that the term designated "one who speaks forth."⁹ Lindblom says that the prefix "pro- in the Greek term prophētēs does not mean 'before' but 'forth'."¹⁰ In view of this he says that "the Greek term indicates that the prophet is a preacher, a forthteller rather than a fore-teller."¹¹ Staack says essentially the same thing.

The Greek noun prophētēs comes from a verb which means literally "to speak before." Here, "before" (pro-) means, not "in advance of" or "prior to," but "in front of" other people. To prophesy, then originally meant "to proclaim before others, to announce in public."¹²

⁸R. B. Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), pp. 44-45.

⁹Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Company, 1886), p. 553.

¹⁰J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 1.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Hagen Staack, Prophetic Voices in the Bible (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1968), p. 2.

The comments of Heschel are significant.

It is common to characterize the prophet as a messenger of God, thus to differentiate him from the tellers of fortune, givers of oracles, seers, and ecstasies. Such characterization expresses only one aspect of his consciousness. The prophet claims to be far more than a messenger. He is a person who stands in the presence of God (Jer. 15:19), who stands "in the council of the Lord" (Jer. 23:18), who is a participant, as it were, in the council of God, not a bearer of dispatches whose function is limited to being sent on errands. He is a counselor as well as a messenger.¹³

FACTORS RELATED TO THE ROLE OF A PROPHET

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The first of the three factors considered is the subjective responses of men in their belief that God willed their acting in the role of a prophet. Two things were considered in the treatment of this factor. The matter of subjective response connotes a previous stimulus. This stimulus was recognized as the call or command of God to a particular individual to assume the role of a prophet. This call or command of God was an act of God communicating His will to a particular individual to become a prophet. The Old Testament affirms that God took the initiative in the matter of men becoming prophets of His. God informed Moses that his brother Aaron would be his prophet.¹⁴

¹³Abraham J. Heschel, The Prophets (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 21.

¹⁴Exodus 7:1.

Deuteronomy 18:15 states, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee." Judges 6:8 states that "the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel." God sent the prophet Nathan to David.¹⁵

The Old Testament prophets claimed that God wanted them to function as prophets. Jeremiah viewed his role as a prophet as being the result of God's choice, even before he was born.¹⁶ Amos stated that God raised up sons of Israel to be prophets.¹⁷

The responses of men whom God commanded to be His prophets varied. Jeremiah's first response to God's command was that he could not function as a prophet. He said, "Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child."¹⁸

Though Jeremiah's first response was negative, it did not remain so. His later response was that he could not refrain from it. His later testimony was,

I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forebearing, and I could not stay.¹⁹

The response of Isaiah was one of readiness and willingness.

His response was, "Here am I; send me."²⁰ Ezekiel stated

¹⁵II Samuel 12:24-24. ¹⁶Jeremiah 1:5.

¹⁷Amos 2:11. ¹⁸Jeremiah 1:6. ¹⁹Jeremiah 20:9.

²⁰Isaiah 6:6.

that he experienced a stimulus from God, but he did not explain the manner by which he had the experience other than by saying that "the hand of the Lord was there upon him."²¹

These references indicate that claims of divine compulsion and subjective responses go together in the matter of an individual's assumption of the role of a prophet.

Here were the early understandings in the Old Testament, and they were projected into the New Testament.

The fact of God's communication of His will to a particular man to become a prophet, as well as the communication of the message to the man, was easier to verify than the manner of communication. Lindblom says,

[The prophet's] conviction of being called is often based on a particular experience in the life of the prophet, combined with a theophany in the form of an ecstatic vision or audition.²²

The question could be asked, "How does the individual come to experience such a 'conviction' of being called?" According to Heschel, the nature of the prophet's subjective response to God with regard to the prophetic role is sympathetic. It is what he calls a

sympathy with the divine pathos, a communion with the divine consciousness which comes about through the

²¹Ibid., p. 26. ²⁴Ibid. ²⁵Ibid.

²¹Ezekiel 1:3.

²²Ibid., p. 231. ²⁷Ibid., p. 26.

²²Lindblom, op. cit., p. 192.

prophet's reflection of, or participation in, the divine pathos.²³

He says that "the typical state of mind is one of being taken up into the heart of the divine pathos,"²⁴ and that "sympathy is the prophet's answer to inspiration, the correlative to revelation."²⁵ His summary definition of what he calls "the divine pathos" is thus:

. . . [It is] the unity of the eternal and the temporal, of meaning and mystery, of the metaphysical and the historical. It is the real basis of the relation between God and man, of the correlation of Creator and creation, of the dialogue between the Holy One of Israel and His people. The characteristic of the prophet is not foreknowledge of the future, but insight into the present pathos of God.²⁶

Lindblom defines "prophetic sympathy" as follows:

Prophetic sympathy is a response to transcendent sensibility. It is not, like love, an attraction to the divine Being, but the assimilation of the prophet's emotional life to the divine, an assimilation of function, not of being. The emotional experience of the prophet becomes the focal point for the prophet's understanding of God. He lives not only his personal life, but also the life of God. The prophet hears God's voice and feels his heart. He tries to impart the pathos of the message together with its logos. As an imparter his soul overflows, speaking as he does out of the fullness of his sympathy.²⁷

The individual's response was a complement to the command of God. Lindblom acknowledges the prophet's

²³Ibid., p. 26. ²⁴Ibid. ²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 231. ²⁷Ibid., p. 26.

conviction that he had been called of God. Heschel affirms a "divine pathos," a responsive quality of God which can be complemented with the sympathy of the prophet, or the emotional capacity of the prophet. Conviction and response involved the whole personality of the prophet.

Lindblom affirms that conviction is related to an ecstatic vision or audition. Questions can be raised relative to the matter of ecstasy in the experiences of the prophet. What is ecstasy? Was ecstasy a part of the prophet's experience with God? These questions are not easily answered, and the opinions of men differ on the answers.

Lindblom defines ecstasy as follows:

I prefer to define ecstasy as an abnormal state of consciousness in which one is so intensely absorbed by one single idea or one single feeling, or by a group of ideas or feelings, that the normal stream of psychical life is more or less arrested. The bodily senses cease to function; one becomes impervious to impressions from without; consciousness is exalted above the ordinary level of daily experience; unconscious impressions and ideas come to the surface in the form of visions and audition.²⁸

He also says that "when inspiration strongly intensifies it turns to ecstasy,"²⁹ and that "in religious ecstasy, consciousness is entirely filled with the presence of God, with ideas and feelings belonging to the divine sphere."³⁰

²⁸Ibid., pp. 4-5. ²⁹Ibid., p. 4. ³⁰Ibid., p. 5.

Heschel's definition of ecstasy is similar to that of Lindblom's:

The Greeks, who coined the word "ecstasy" (ekstasis), understood by it quite literally a state or trance in which the soul was no longer in its place, but had departed from the body, or a state in which the soul, escaping from the body, had entered into a relationship with invisible beings or became united with a deity. It was a way of ascending to a higher form of living, or at least a way which rendered possible the receiving of supernatural endowments.³¹

He defines ecstasy from a psychological standpoint as follows:

... ecstasy is a "withdrawal of consciousness from circumference to center"; a state in which the absorption of the mind in one idea, in one desire, is so profound that everything else is blotted out. A person in ecstasy is impervious to messages from without; awareness of time and space, consciousness of one's own self, disappear.³²

Ecstasy can be divided into two fundamental types according to Heschel. He says, "The wild and fervid type ... is a state of frenzy arising from overstimulation and emotional tension."³³ The other is what he calls

... the sober or contemplative type, which is a rapture of the soul in a state of complete calmness, enabling a person to rise beyond the confines of consciousness.³⁴

Scholars are not agreed on the matter of ecstasy in the prophet's experience with God. Lindblom says that

³¹Heschel, op. cit., p. 234. ³²Ibid., p. 325.

³³Ibid. ³⁴Ibid. Men Speak From God: Studies in the Hebrew Prophets (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), p. 15.

"ecstatic prophets appear for the first time, in the reliable records of Israel, in connection with the election of Saul as king over Israel."³⁵ Robinson says,

There were the genuine Yahweh enthusiasts. Some, like the Seer and the Ecstatic, owed their peculiar characteristics to the Canaanite religion. But though in outward behavior the Ecstatic of Yahweh might be indistinguishable from the Ecstatic of Baal, he did stand for his God, and in his wild passion would brook no rival.³⁶

He says that the social and moral life of ecstatics was generally low;³⁷ that "ecstasy is not characteristic of Israel in the nomadic period."³⁸ He acknowledges Balaam to have been an ecstatic, but not an Israelite.³⁹

The ecstatic prophets should not be identified with the major prophetic tradition according to Ellison. He says, "The wild men had degenerated into professional prophets, with their ecstasies and dreams (Jer. 23:25), and are condemned again and again as false prophets."⁴⁰ He presents Amos as one who indignantly refuses to be called a prophet, if it involves his being classed with them. "I am no prophet,

³⁵Ibid., p. 47.

³⁶Theodore H. Robinson, Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, LTD., 1960), p. 23.

³⁷Ibid., p. 32. ³⁸Ibid., p. 34. ³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰H. L. Ellison, Men Speak From God: Studies in the Hebrew Prophets (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), p. 15.

neither am I one of the sons of the prophets" (Amos 7:14, R.V. mg.).⁴¹

Richardson places some value on the ecstatic quality of the prophets. He says,

The distinctive mark of the prophet, at least in the early days of the movement in Israel, was certainly the ecstatic state into which he fell and in which he was able to declare the will of God. The prophet therefore is subject to a particular kind of inspiration.⁴²

Napier denies that the prophets of Israel were characterized by extreme ecstatic experiences. However, he did say,

Let us admit of the ecstatic element in the OT prophet only and specifically in the sense of a profound concentration resulting in the suspension of normal consciousness and the total, if brief, interruption of normal sense perception.⁴³

Scott says that "the Prophet spoke directly out of an immediate ecstatic consciousness of divine possession."⁴⁴ According to Lindblom, "the special gift of a prophet is his ability to experience the divine in an original way and to receive revelations from the divine world."⁴⁵ He says that "the prophet is compelled by the spirit; and he knows no

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Alan Richardson, A Theological Word Book of the Bible (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952), p. 181.

⁴³Napier, op. cit., p. 899. ⁴⁴Scott, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴⁵Lindblom, op. cit., p. 1.

other rules than the force and guidance of the divine impulse."⁴⁶ Staack says,

The word "ecstasy" stems from the Greek term meaning "to stand beside oneself." Often this is what we mean by "prophet"--a man beside himself, caught up wholly in someone or something bigger than himself.⁴⁷

When considering prophetism in the broadest sense, the ecstatic phenomenon must be acknowledged. Evidence appears to support the conclusion that ecstasy as a source of motivation prevailed to a degree in Israel, and that it was a characteristic of the ro'eh and the hozeh rather than the nabi. There appears to be insufficient evidence to establish with any degree of certainty that ecstasy was the norm in the experiences of the prophets of Israel.

According to Hebrews 1:1 God did speak to the fathers by the prophets "in divers manners." Whatever the manner was, the prophet was overwhelmed to some degree by the divine word that came to him, but it appeared that he was conscious of the overwhelming stimulus, conscious of receptivity, and conscious of his ability to respond to the stimulus. These appeared to be outstanding features of his experience.

The second of the three factors considered was the

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 2. ⁴⁷Staack, op. cit., p. 2.

evaluation of the candidate's gifts that helped him to function as a prophet. What was needed on the part of an individual to function in the role of a prophet? The prophet had to be able to receive the message of God. This he did by "seeing" and "hearing." Amos introduced his message by saying, "The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah," ⁴⁸ Such "seeing" may have been by dreams or visions. In some instances such perception or reception may have been experienced ecstatically to some degree. Lindblom says, "By 'vision' and 'audition' we understand visual and auditory perceptions received in trance or ecstasy, or in a mental state approximating thereto." ⁴⁹ Young says that the term ro'eh is indicative of the experience by "which the prophet was made to 'see' that message." ⁵⁰ Not only was it necessary that the prophet be able to "see" or "hear" the message of God, he must be able to communicate that message to people. Young says that this is the primary connotation of the term nabhi. ⁵¹

⁴⁸Amos 1:1. ⁴⁹Lindblom, op. cit., p. 2.

⁵⁰Young, op. cit., p. 65. ⁵¹Ibid.

Another characteristic of the prophet's function as such was his insight into the nature and significance of the social and religious conditions which prevailed. This is reflected in the writings of the prophets.

As to the matter of evaluating the prophet's gifts, at times prophets of God were not recognized by the people as such, or as proclaiming a valid message of God. The reasons for such could have been either ignorance or rebellion against God, or both, on the part of the people. Jeremiah was accused by a rebellious people⁵² of proclaiming an unacceptable message.⁵³ On the other hand, false prophets were almost always accepted by the people.⁵⁴

The evaluations which were placed on a prophet's gifts, or with regard to one who was supposed to be a prophet, were not always valid evaluations. However, the evaluation of a prophet's ability was to a large degree determined by the observable characteristics of a prophet's ecstatic experience. Robinson describes such observable characteristics as follows:

It [ecstasy] consisted of a fit or attack which affected the whole body. Sometimes the limbs were stimulated to violent action, and wild leaping and contortions resulted. These might be more or less rhythmical, and the

⁵²Jeremiah 5:23. ⁵³Jeremiah 26:8-11.

⁵⁴Jeremiah 5:31. ⁵⁷Isaiah 30:9-10.

phenomenon would present the appearance of a wild and frantic dance. . . . The vocal organs were sometimes involved, noises and sounds were poured out which might be unrecognizable as human speech.⁵⁵

A prophet's gifts were evaluated in part by whether or not the prophet proclaimed a message which the people wanted to hear. The people at times repudiated the message of Jeremiah because it was a message of judgment.⁵⁶ Isaiah charged the rebellious people of wanting to hear "smooth" things.⁵⁷

No formal evaluation and pronouncement was necessary for an individual to function as a prophet. Since the prophet was called and qualified by God, it was not necessary that he depend on anyone else in order to function as a prophet. But those who listened to a prophet must have been able by some means to determine whether or not the prophet was a prophet of God, and if his message was a valid message.

The last of the three factors considered is the formal approval of the candidate in connection with his assumption of the duties of his role as a prophet.

The writer has found no evidence that a formal, ecclesiastical approval or recognition of an individual as

⁵⁵Ibid. ⁵⁶Lindblow, op. cit., p. 69.

⁵⁵Robinson, op. cit., p. 65.

⁵⁶Jeremiah 26:8-11. ⁵⁷Isaiah 30:9-10.

a prophet was required by God, or that it was practiced by God's people. Young says that "the prophets of Israel were not looked upon as a group of initiates who possessed secret or mysterious knowledge."⁵⁸ He cites the baru priests of Mesopotamia as examples of such initiates,⁵⁹ but he went on to say, "We must insist that nothing like this is found in the Old Testament with respect to the prophets."⁶⁰

Lindblom acknowledges the close association of those "normally united in association or guilds,"⁶¹ that they had a leader with some authority,⁶² but that the associations were quite often rather loosely formed.⁶³

Prophets were informally approved. This was not in order that they might officially function as prophets, but in order that they could be accepted as true prophets. A prophet could be duly accepted as such in the eyes of the people whenever his message or prediction was fulfilled. If the message of one who claimed to be a prophet failed to materialize, that one could be rejected on the ground that he was a false prophet.⁶⁴ A prophet was sometimes approved

⁵⁸Young, op. cit., p. 106. ⁵⁹Ibid., p. 107.

⁶⁰Ibid. ⁶¹Lindblom, op. cit., p. 69.

⁶²Ibid. ⁶³Ibid. ⁶⁴Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

by God in the working of a miracle. The prophet Elijah was approved when God consumed his sacrifice and the altar on which it was presented by means of fire.⁶⁵ An unnamed man of God and his message were vindicated when God paralyzed the hand of King Jereboam who sought to lay his hand on the man of God.⁶⁶

CONCLUSIONS

The Old Testament prophets announced themselves as prophets of Jehovah. They affirmed that the messages which they proclaimed were messages of God. Jeremiah insisted that if those to whom many of the people looked as being prophets were true prophets, let them prove such by making intercession to the Lord of hosts.⁶⁷ Another characteristic of a prophet of God was that the prophet's counsel would be in harmony with the already established word and counsel of God.⁶⁸ According to Deuteronomy 18:15-18 a prophet of God would exemplify characteristics of Moses in faithfully proclaiming the message of God. The messages of God appealed to both the faithful prophet and the conscientious listener. Nathan and David are examples of this.⁶⁹

⁶⁵I Kings 13:38. ⁶⁶I Kings 13:1-4. ⁷¹

⁶⁷Jeremiah 27:18. ⁶⁸Jeremiah 23:21-22.

⁶⁹II Samuel 12:1-13. p. 6.

⁷¹Jeremiah 27:14-16; 28:15.

When all of these characteristics were considered in their proper perspectives and relationships, it enabled the people to determine if an individual was a true prophet of God.

CONCLUSIONS

The ministry of prophets in the Old Testament was accompanied by claims of the prophets that they functioned as such, not by their own personal choice, but by the will of God Himself. Concerning the revelation of God's will to a particular individual to function as a prophet, Lindblom says,

The call has the character of a supernatural experience. It exceeds all human reason. It is often accompanied by physical and psychical phenomena. The call is frequently met with fear and trembling; but it is always regarded as an act of divine grace.⁷⁰

Those men who functioned as prophets of God affirmed that they did so because God had communicated His will to them that they function as prophets. Furthermore, God repudiated the ministry of some on the basis that He had not chosen them to be His prophets, or that He had not sent them as such. Jeremiah records examples of this.⁷¹

⁷⁰Lindblom, op. cit., p. 6.

⁷¹Jeremiah 27:14-16; 28:15.

Prophets of God in Old Testament times demonstrated some characteristics which can best be explained on the basis of God's control in the matter. Young sets forth three basic characteristics. First, prophets of God had a conviction that they spoke a message of God when they addressed their audiences. Second, continuity in the prophetic movement centered in the prophets' speaking for the same God--Yahweh. Third, a discernable theological trend existed in the prophetic movement. All of the prophets, though to different degrees and in different ways, looked toward a consummation of the work of God. Here was the eschatological element in their messages.⁷²

A prophet was one who acted as a spokesman for God. Aaron was a picture of this in functioning as a spokesman for Moses in Exodus 7:1f. A prophet is one who apprehends that which is not normally accessible, and then proclaims what he has apprehended. The word "nabi" means "speaker" or "spokesman." The opinion of Young is, "The man who bears the designation nabi is a man who speaks forth a message."⁷³

The origin of the prophetic role has its roots in the Old Testament. The prophets claimed that God was the one who could not determine of themselves when God would have as

⁷²Young, op. cit., pp. 161-162.

⁷³Ibid., p. 60.

originator of the movement. It was separate from the Canaanite institutions, and was in opposition to the tenets and practices which they espoused. It does not owe its rise and existence to any national religious consciousness of the people. The messages proclaimed by the prophets of God were quite often in conflict with the ideas and feelings of their people and their leaders. The prophets and their ministries are best explained in the light of divine origin and guidance.

The prophets had messages to proclaim that grew out of changing situations among the people of God and among their neighboring nations, or out of particular events. These men were, in a sense, to interpret the meaning of history to God's people as it was happening, or as it was about to happen. They were chosen of God to interpret the meaning of history. The nature of their ministry necessitated their being under the command and guidance of God.

God called whom He would to function as prophets. He called men from different walks of life. The evidence indicated that no discernable patterns were followed in calling men of any particular kind of personality. For this reason, men could not determine of themselves whom God would have as prophets. Though evidence is insufficient to ascertain just

how God made His call known, the prophets had a conviction that they were chosen of God to function as prophets.

The Old Testament prophets constituted a distinct class of servants performing a ministry unlike any other. By virtue of the nature of their ministry they had a very intimate relationship with God, and a vital ministry to perform in behalf of God's people.

The prophetic ministry did not end with the Old Testament era. It was projected into the New Testament era. The nature and character of the prophetic role in the Old Testament and in the New Testament shared some basic and distinct similarities.

The analysis of each passage was not exhaustive by any means. Analysis was made only to the extent to which they related to the problem under consideration.

ACTS 9:1-19

This passage of scripture is an account of Paul's conversion experience and his call into the prophetic ministry. The relevant factors in the account were the subjective responses of Paul and a kind of informal approval of Paul's assumption of the prophetic role. In this instance the approval was not an ecclesiastical or a congregational approval. It was approval by one man, a man who

claimed to be guided by Christ personally. In this account
 CHAPTER III
 no indication was made as to an evaluation of Paul's abil-

ities. ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES follows:

Paul (still called Saul at this point in the Acts narrative) had secured from the Sanhedrin Court letters of scripture in the New Testament are presented in five divisions. The divisions were made on the basis of the different passages of scripture. In the last three divisions later occasions.¹ While on his way to the city, just before he reached his destination, a sudden appearance of light surrounded him. He fell to the earth and heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (verse 4). Paul's reply was a question: "Who art thou, Lord?" (verse 5). After Jesus identified Himself as the voice, any means. Analysis was made only to the extent to which they related to the problem under consideration.

The analysis of each passage was not exhaustive by any means. Analysis was made only to the extent to which they related to the problem under consideration. Paul, trembling and astonished said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (verse 6). Paul was then told to arise and go into the city and he ACTS 9:1-19 -ther instructed. He was three days without sight, during which time he took no food or water. He prayed instead (verse 11).

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¹Acts 22:5; 26:12.

claimed to be guided by Christ personally. In this account no indication was made as to an evaluation of Paul's abilities. The passage can be briefly summarized as follows:

Paul (still called Saul at this point in the Acts narrative) had secured from the Sanhedrin Court letters authorizing him to arrest any disciples of Christ that he might find in Damascus (verse 2). Paul verified this on later occasions.¹ While on his way to the city, just before he reached his destination, a sudden appearance of light surrounded him. He fell to the earth and heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (verse 4). Paul's reply was a question: "Who art thou, Lord?" (verse 5). After Jesus identified Himself as the voice, Paul, trembling and astonished said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (verse 6). Paul was then told to arise and go into the city and he would be further instructed. He was three days without sight, during which time he took no food or water. He prayed instead (verse 11).

Ananias was instructed to make his way to Paul. At first he objected. His hesitation was temporary, and he obeyed (verses 10-17). The Lord said to Ananias concerning Paul, ". . . he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name

¹Acts 22:5; 26:12.

before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (verse 15). The word "vessel" conveys the meaning that Paul was to be an instrument in the hand of God for a specific purpose, which purpose was to be fulfilled through his functioning as a prophet. The word "chosen" means "selection" or "election." The same Greek word is translated "election" in Romans 9:11 and I Thessalonians 1:4. Paul was "elected" by God to function as a prophet.

The Lord then used Ananias to restore Paul's sight. Paul was then admonished to be filled with the Holy Spirit (verse 17). After having received his sight, he was baptized. Such are some of the most obvious facts of the case in question.

This passage presents two facts regarding Paul's experience. The first fact was his salvation experience. Second, an account is given of his call or appointment "to bear my name before the Gentiles" (verse 15). These two aspects of Paul's experience were very closely related as to time and association. Perhaps none would question the statement that this was Paul's conversion experience. At the same time it was his call to become a prophet of the Lord. Selby makes the following comment with regard to this aspect of Paul's experience:

Ibid., pp. 167-168. Acts 22:12-15.

It is significant of Paul's own understanding of his experience that, in his most explicit reference to it [Galatians 1:11-17; I Corinthians 15:8-10; Philippians 3:5-16], he regards it as a prophetic call like that of Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah.²

He went on to say, "The effect of that experience was to reverse the thinking which provided Paul's reasons for opposing Christianity."³ Though the account in Acts 9:1-19 does not specifically state that Paul was informed of such a call, yet he later on did say that he was then so informed.⁴

Paul did receive a call from God to assume a prophetic role. He experienced some definite responses in connection with his salvation experience, and with the call to become a prophet. Second, though the circumstances which surrounded Paul's salvation experience and his prophetic call were somewhat unusual according to our thinking, yet his impressions and responses to the divine imperative in the case are not necessarily unusual. They conform to a pattern in so far as a pattern of such experiences was discernable. In the Old Testament God provided the stimulus (a revelation of His will for an individual to assume the role of a prophet), and the individual responded. God's stimulus and the individual's response are recorded in the Old Testament, and the individual responded. God's stimulus and the individual's response are recorded in the New Testament, and the individual responded. (Ibid., ed. Robert H. Gundry, 11 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957-1965), p. 166.

²Donald Joseph Selby, Toward the Understanding of St. Paul (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 166.

³Ibid., pp. 167-168. ⁴Acts 22:12-15.

individual's response complemented each other. Such was the pattern in Paul's experience.

Paul had some definite impressions, which fact can be ascertained by an analysis of the passage of scripture in question. Previous to his experience of salvation and the prophetic call, Paul had displayed such emotions as hatred and resentment (verse 1). He experienced bewilderment and astonishment in the initial confrontation which he had with Christ (verses 5-6). Barnes says, "He [Jesus] arrested his [Paul's] attention; he filled him with alarm and guilt; and then he presented the truth respecting himself."⁵ Barnes went on to say,

The expression "to kick against the pricks" is derived from the actions of a stubborn and unyielding ox kicking against the goad. And as the ox would injure no one by it but himself; as he would gain nothing, it comes to denote an obstinate and refractory disposition and course of conduct, resisting the authority of him who has a right to command, and opposing the leadings of Providence, to the injury of him who makes the resistance.⁶

The initial impressions of bewilderment and astonishment gave way to the act of deep meditation and prayer

⁵Albert Barnes, Acts (Vol. III of Notes on the New Testament, ed. Robert Frew. 11 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957-1965), p. 156.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Thomas Walker, The Acts of the Apostles (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 209.

(verses 9 and 11). Apparently Paul was searching for the meaning of his experience. Walker says,

We are reminded of Jonah and his prayer of penitence (Jonah i. 17; ii. 1-10). We are told that Saul fasted (v. 9) and prayed (v. 11); and we cannot be far wrong in supposing that those three days witnessed his deep contrition, true repentance, and genuine consecration (Jer. xxxi. 19). It is men whose conversion is deep and thorough that make strong Christians and earnest workers.⁷

Paul's response could be characterized by submission to the revealed will of God and acceptance of the call of God to become a prophet.

Paul claimed to be called of the Lord to be a prophet, or a preacher of the gospel. In connection with this call he had some definite impressions and responses. God's call was an imperative, and Paul's impressions were a part of, as well as a factor in, his response to the divine imperative. They go together. Beginning at a point previous to Paul's experience under consideration and continuing to the point where he received his sight; where he was filled with the Holy Spirit and was baptized, he had demonstrated the emotions and responses of rebellion, hatred, and resentment. These gave way to bewilderment and amazement, which in turn gave way to surrender and submission.

⁷Thomas Walker, The Acts of the Apostles (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 209.

At this point in Paul's life no record of an evaluation of his prophetic gifts was given. No indication was made of any formal approval aside from the fact that Ananias was an instrument in the hand of God to reveal and confirm the fact that God had chosen Paul to fill the role of a prophet in proclaiming the Gospel to the world.

With regard to the fact of Ananias laying his hands on Paul, Walker says,

The action here was alike a sign of healing and a token of the impartation of the Holy Spirit (viii. 17), as the context shews [shows]. It is noteworthy that the hands laid on Saul were not those of an apostle but those of a private Christian.⁸

Morgan says,

Carefully observe that these were not the hands of an apostle, not the hands of a deacon, but the hands of a disciple. Christ sent a disciple, he laid his hands upon the chosen vessel, who was to bear Christ's name before kings and Gentiles. In simple address, with nothing in it that was official, with all brotherliness, and in simple obedience he put his hands upon him, "Saul, brother, the Lord, even Jesus . . . hath sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit"; and immediately he received the fullness of the Spirit.⁹

ACTS 13:1-4

The death of Stephen was the beginning of a wave of

⁸Walker, op. cit., p. 212.

⁹G. Campbell Morgan, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924), pp. 233-234.

persecution against the Christians in Jerusalem.¹⁰ The persecuted Christians were scattered in various parts of the Mediterranean world, preaching wherever they went.¹¹ A company of disciples came to exist in Antioch of Syria. The Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas to Antioch to investigate the work there.¹² Barnabas secured the services of Paul, and the two worked with the disciples in that city for a year.¹³ Such is the background for the passage of scripture under consideration. The passage is an account of these two men being chosen by the Holy Spirit for a specified mission.

Five men are named in the text: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul (Paul). These are identified as "prophets and teachers" (verse 1). Each one was already endowed with his respective gift (prophecy or teaching, or both). Robertson, however, identifies Barnabas as a prophet and Paul as a teacher. He says,

All prophets were teachers, but not all teachers were prophets who were for-speakers of God, sometimes fore-speakers like Agabus in 11:28. The double use of te here makes three prophets (Barnabas, Symeon, Lucius)

¹⁰Acts 8:1. ¹¹Acts 8:4; 11:19-20.

¹²Acts 11:22. ¹³Acts 11:25-26.

¹⁵Selby, op. cit., p. 186.

and two teachers (Manaen and Saul).¹⁴ However, Paul and Barnabas are both referred to as teachers in Acts 11:26. Acts 15:22, 32 and Galatians 2:7 indicate that Paul was a prophet in the sense that he was a pro-claimer of the word of God.

Paul and Barnabas claim to have been chosen by the Holy Spirit. The church in Antioch commissioned them for the purpose of evangelizing the Mediterranean world. The execution of this purpose is unfolded in Acts 13ff. Selby defines their mission thus:

In one of the decisive moments in the history of Christianity--indeed, of the world--the church in Antioch, impelled by a deep sense of the leadership of the Holy Spirit, solemnly consecrated Barnabas and Paul . . . for a definite program of invading the Graeco-Roman world with the gospel.¹⁵

In view of the problem under investigation, what factors are involved in the actions of Paul and Barnabas? What part did the Holy Spirit and the church have in the matter?

Paul and Barnabas were not chosen to become prophets at the time they were commissioned by the church for the

¹⁴Archibald Thomas Robertson, Acts (Vol. III of Word Studies in the New Testament. 6 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1930-1933), p. 177.

¹⁵Selby, op. cit., p. 186.

task specified in Acts 13:1-4. With regard to Paul, he had been chosen for such work previously (Acts 9:1-19). No indication was given as to when Barnabas had been chosen or called. Barnabas had already functioned as an apostle (one sent with a commission) of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:22-26).

The actions of the Holy Spirit and the church in Acts 13:1-4 were to designate the specific task of these two men for which they had already been qualified by their proper gifts. In verse two the Holy Spirit is presented as saying, in some manner not clear, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." This call to a specific task or work by the Spirit was in keeping with their previous call to the prophetic ministry. The phrase "I have called" is a verb in the perfect tense which indicates that the calling in question was previous to the particular time of that occasion, but was a continuing call. The statement in verse two is not the call, but the revealing of the call to the church, or at least to certain ones in the church. Morgan says that the Holy Spirit

made known His will to these people, so that they had neither doubt nor uncertainty in their minds. . . . The choice was not left to the church. The choice was based upon a prior fact in the activity of the Spirit: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto

IX of *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, 12 vols., New York: Abingdon Press, 1952-1957), p. 165.

I have called them."¹⁶ How the Holy Spirit revealed His will concerning the call is not indicated. Neither is it clear what the impressions were on the part of Paul and Barnabas.

What was the significance of the laying on of hands in this instance? Calvin says that it "was a kind of consecration."¹⁷ He says that "the apostles retained the ceremony which was used amongst the Jews, according to the old custom of the law."¹⁸ He further says,

In sum, this is the end why they laid their hands upon Barnabas and Paul, that the Church might offer them to God, and that they might with their consent declare that this office was enjoined them by God; for the calling was properly God's alone, but the eternal ordaining did belong to the Church, and that according to the heavenly oracle.¹⁹

Macgregor says, "Barnabas and Paul are simply being set apart formally by the laying on of hands to be the church's representatives in the larger work that lay before them."²⁰ Ironside says that the act of the laying on of hands was not

¹⁶Morgan, op. cit., p. 305.

¹⁷John Calvin, Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles, Vol. I (ed. Henry Beaveridge, 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 503.

¹⁸Ibid. ¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰G. H. C. Macgregor, The Acts of the Apostles (Vol. IX of The Interpreter's Bible, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, 12 vols.; New York: Abingdon Press, 1952-1957), p. 165.

an ordination because the two men had already been preaching for many years.²¹ He says that the laying on of hands "was an expression of the fellowship of the Antiochian Church with these men as they started the work of world evangelization."²² Gill says that Christ had "personally appeared to him Paul, and made and ordained him his minister and Apostle."²³ Paul was chosen or appointed by Christ.

The Antiochian Church did not choose Paul and Barnabas for their specified task. No indication is given of the church evaluating their gifts. They had been exercising them for some time. The church, strictly speaking, did not send the men on their mission. Verse three in the King James Version says, ". . . they sent them away." However, the word "sent" is not the best word for the Greek term apelusan. A better word would be "dismissed" or "released." In verse two the command of the Spirit is "separate me Barnabas and Saul." The church recognized and

²¹Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

²¹H. A. Ironside, Lectures on the Book of Acts (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Bible Truth Depot, 1943), p. 307.

²²Ibid.

²³John Gill, An Exposition of the New Testament, Vol. I (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1954 edition), p. 894.

obeyed the will of the Spirit by separating and releasing the men to do a work to which they had been called. The Spirit sent them (verse 4). Morgan paraphrases and amplifies verse three as follows:

"Separate me Barnabas and Saul," that is, give them freedom and give them authority. Send them forth under the authority of that call recognized by the will of the assembly in Antioch. The activity of the church was to be that of submission to the Holy Spirit, not an independent activity.²⁴

Parker says, "It is the function of the Holy Spirit to elect his own ministers."²⁵

How was the will of the Holy Spirit communicated to the church and to the two men involved? Ironside says that we cannot be certain whether a deep impression was made on the hearts of Saul and Barnabas, or on the members of the church.²⁶ Gill says that the Spirit spoke "either with an articulate voice or by an internal impulse, upon the minds of three of the prophets."²⁷ Macgregor says that the communication by the Spirit was "presumably through the

²⁴Morgan, op. cit., p. 307.

²⁵Joseph Parker, Apostolic Life, As Revealed in the Acts of the Apostles, Vol. II (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, Publishers, 1884), p. 7.

²⁶Ironside, op. cit., p. 304.

²⁷Gill, op. cit., p. 893.

inspired utterances of one of the prophets."²⁸ It is affirmed that a communication was made, but the manner of it was not explained.

is designated by both terms--dōrea and charisma. Together these two terms appear to indicate the substance of the gift and the activating power, the grace

ROMANS 12:6 AND EPHESIANS 4:11

The book of Romans was addressed to those in Rome recognized as saints, according to the writer's statement in 1:7. His stated purpose was, "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established."²⁹ In 12:6 Paul recognized that followers of Christ already had what he called charismata-- grace gifts. In verses six through eight he named seven kinds of services that could be performed. The abilities which enabled the individuals to perform the services were made synonymous with charismata.

In Ephesians 4:1-3 Paul admonished his readers to so conduct themselves that they would reflect the honor of their vocation as disciples of Christ. In order to do this, each one had received grace that would enable him to perform the designated service. In verses seven through eight the word for "gift" is dōrea. In verse eleven the specified

²⁸Macgregor, op. cit., p. 167. In Romans 12:6 and dōrea in Ephesians 4:11.

²⁹Romans 1:11.

abilities (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers) were made synonymous with domata in verse eight. The gift of prophecy is designated by both terms--dōrea and charisma. Together these two terms appear to indicate the substance of the gift and the activating power, the grace of God. The two verses of scripture under consideration establish the fact that the ability to function as a prophet on the part of some individuals was recognized by Christians in the first century A.D. Romans 12:6 reads, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." Ephesians 4:11 reads, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Attention is directed to some of the obvious facts in these two verses. "Prophecy" is one of the "gifts."³⁰ It was one of several gifts of different functions. It was "according to the grace that is given to us" (Romans 12:6). The gift of prophecy was to be exercised "according to the proportion of faith." (Ephesians 4:8).

³⁰Ibid.

³⁰The Greek term is charismata in Romans 12:6 and domata in Ephesians 4:8. Bible. 17 vols.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953-1959), p. 173.

³⁵Thayer, op. cit., p. 666.

With regard to the charismata Thayer says, 7 as fol-

In the technical Pauline sense . . . they denote extraordinary powers distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit.³¹

Barnes states that Paul regarded all the endowments which Christians had as gifts, including both natural endowments as well as "favors of grace."³² He says that in Romans 12: 6-8 charismata ". . . refers doubtless to the distinctions conferred on Christians in the Churches."³³ Barclay says, "In the New Testament a charisma is something given to a man by God which the man himself could not have acquired or attained."³⁴

The word "grace" deserves attention. Thayer defines the Greek word for "grace" (charis) by saying that

[it] is used of the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of Christian virtues.³⁵

³¹Thayer, op. cit., p. 667.

³²Albert Barnes, Romans (Vol. IV of Notes on the New Testament, ed. Robert Frew. 11 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957-1965), p. 275.

³³Ibid.

³⁴William Barclay, The Letter to the Romans (Vol. VIII of The Daily Study Bible. 17 vols.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953-1959), p. 173.

³⁵Thayer, op. cit., p. 666.

Wuest comments on the word "grace" in Ephesians 4:7 as follows:

This grace which is in the form of enabling and empowering of the Holy Spirit, is given the saint "according to the measure of the gift of Christ . . ." We must be careful to note that this grace has to do with the exercise of special gifts for service [of which prophecy is one in verse 11], not the grace for daily living. The former is limited, and is adjusted to the kind of gift and extent to which the Holy Spirit desires to use that gift in the believer's service.³⁶

The word "prophecy" must be considered. Wuest says that the prominent idea in the word in the New Testament is the same as it is in the Old Testament, ". . . the inspired delivery of warning, exhortation, instruction, judging, and making manifest the secrets of the heart."³⁷ Barnes says that the word has the idea of prediction, but that it means more than this. He says that it means

to declare the divine will; to interpret the purposes of God; or to make known in any way the truth of God, which is designed to influence man. . . . The name in the New Testament is commonly connected with teachers.³⁸

Hodge makes distinctions in prophets and apostles in the New Testament in that the inspiration of prophets was

³⁶Kenneth S. Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), pp. 97-98.

³⁷Ibid., p. 211.

³⁸Barnes, loc. cit.

occasional, and their authority as teachers was subordinate to the apostles.³⁹ He further states that "as the gift of infallibility was essential to the apostolic, so the gift of occasional inspiration was essential to the prophetic office."⁴⁰ A prophet in the New Testament ". . . is defined in I Corinthians as one who 'speaketh unto men to edification, to exhortation and comfort'. Beyond this illuminating declaration no explanation is needed," according to Chafer.⁴¹ This would be the chief evidence that one had the gift of prophecy.

With regard to the phrase, "the proportion of faith" in Romans 12:6, Barnes says the word "proportion" "means the ratio of proportion which results from comparison of one number or magnitude with another."⁴² One's exercise of the prophetic gift would be in proportion to his faith.

³⁹Charles Hodge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 223.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, The Ephesian Letter Doctrinally Considered (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Bible Truth Depot, 1935) pp. 130-131.

⁴²Barnes, op. cit., p. 276.

Hackett regards "faith" in this phrase "as subjective, not the equivalent to personal confidence in God or trust in Christ."⁴³

The spiritual entities grace (charis) and gifts (charismata) cannot be objectively evaluated. The fact of their bestowal may be affirmed or even revealed, as was the case in Acts 13:1-4. The evidence of them is discernable only in the results they accomplish, or, as in the case of prophecy, in the content of the message delivered.

I TIMOTHY 4:14 AND II TIMOTHY 1:6

The two verses under consideration in this section are from epistles addressed to Timothy, who had been left at Ephesus with some specific instructions concerning the work there.⁴⁴ In these verses Paul recognized that Timothy possessed at least one charisma that would enable him to perform the task which had been given him.

These two verses of scripture reveal the fact that Timothy was in need of being encouraged to give more attention to the gift (charisma) that was in him. In I

⁴³Horatio B. Hackett, Acts of the Apostles (Vol. IV of An American Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Alvah Hovey. 7 vols.; Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1881-1890), p. 267.

⁴⁴I Timothy 1:3ff.

Timothy 4:14 Paul was encouraging Timothy, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." Then in II Timothy 1:6 he was admonishing Timothy, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." The fact that Timothy was encouraged to "neglect not the gift" and to "stir up the gift" seems to indicate that he had not given the matter as serious consideration as he should have. Had he not had a vivid enough experience as he should have had in his "call"? Had his impressions not been of sufficient depth to make him as conscious of, and attentive to, the command of God as he should have been? The apostle Paul had experienced a strong inner compulsion to preach the Gospel,⁴⁵ but it appears that Timothy had not, at least up to the time that Paul wrote to him, experienced such a strong inner compulsion. Evidently a difference existed in the subjective impressions, at least in degree, of these two individuals. Perhaps the questions relative to Timothy's case cannot be answered without some degree of uncertainty. A comparison of the facts in case of Paul and Timothy indicated that it was difficult to try

⁴⁵I Corinthians 9:16. *edition of the New Testament, Vol. II (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1954 edition), p. 5-7.*

to establish a pattern with regard to the subjective impressions and responses of different individuals who asserted that they had been called to assume the prophetic role.

Timothy had been the recipient of a charismatic gift. The gift was said to be in him. It was not the command to assume the prophetic role, but a special endowment by which he could function in that role. The gift is said to have been conferred "by prophecy," and "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

Timothy's gift was a special endowment--it was a charisma. It was a specific gift, and evidently so recognized by Paul. He referred to the gift as the gift, not a gift. How many others so recognized the gift we cannot know. It appears, however, that someone other than Paul was aware of Timothy's possession of the gift. The gift must have been evaluated by the fact that Timothy was encouraged to "stir it up."

Gill makes the assertion that it is such a gift that qualifies men for the ministry. It is what he calls a gift of "interpreting the scriptures, and of dispensing the mysteries of grace to the edification of others."⁴⁶

⁴⁶John Gill, An Exposition of the New Testament, Vol. II (London: William Hill Collingridge, 1954 edition), p. 6-9.

Fairbairn says that charisma

always means an endowment or gift of grace, bestowed by the Holy Spirit for some special ministration or official service. Timothy had in tender youth been destined to peculiar evangelistic work under the direction and oversight of St. Paul, and he had received from above a measure of grace proportioned to his calling and responsibilities.⁴⁷

Timothy was said to have received the gift "by prophecy." The Greek proposition dia, used with the genitive case, means through or by means of. Rolston says that "it seems that this gift was predicted in prophetic utterances."⁴⁸ Gill says that the gift

was prophesied of before-hand by some of the prophets in the Church, that a very extraordinary gift should be bestowed upon this young man which would make him a very useful person in the Church of God.⁴⁹

Wuest says that "prophetic intimations were given to Paul as to the selection of Timothy for the ministerial office."⁵⁰ Hendriksen says that "in all probability this

⁴⁷Patrick Fairbairn, Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956 edition), p. 188.

⁴⁸Holmes Rolston, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon (Vol. XXIII of The Layman's Bible Commentary, ed. Balmer H. Kelly. 25 vols.; Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959-1964), p. 85.

⁴⁹Gill, loc. cit.

⁵⁰Kenneth Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1942-1954), p. 75.

refers to what had happened at Lystra on Paul's second missionary journey"⁵¹ and that Timothy had been made aware of the character of his task "through . . . prophetic utterance of inspired bystanders."⁵² Fairbairn says that "this qualifying grace had somehow been indicated through the spirit of prophecy as a gift destined for him,"⁵³ and that it was "authoritatively certified to be awaiting him-- therefore in a sense conferred through that."⁵⁴

Timothy's gift was said to have been given "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" in I Timothy 4:14, and "by the putting on of my hands" in II Timothy 1:6. The Greek preposition in the first instance is meta, and in the second instance it is dia. Rolston says that the laying on of hands was a part of what appears to have been a service in which a public recognition of Timothy's gift was made.⁵⁵ Wuest says that it was a "ceremony of ordination"⁵⁶ and that the laying on of hands "speaks of identification."⁵⁷ He says that "it was the outward act

⁵¹William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary. Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), p. 159.

⁵²Ibid. ⁵³Fairbairn, op. cit., p. 189.

⁵⁴Ibid. ⁵⁵Rolston, loc. cit.

⁵⁶Wuest, loc. cit. ⁵⁷Ibid.

and ceremony symbolizing the fact that Timothy was to be identified with the elders . . . in the ministry of the word."⁵⁸ Hendriksen says that the "imposition of hands symbolizes the transfer of a gift from the Giver to the recipient."⁵⁹ Fairbairn says,

Prophecy and imposition of hands by the presbytery are represented as the concurrent means through which the gift in question came to Timothy: prophecy the first and highest--hence having the preposition of the instrument coupled with it; imposition of hands by the presbytery, the secondary, or subordinate--hence presented as an accompaniment of the other.⁶⁰

He states further,

The prophecy, therefore, is to be viewed as the distinct enunciation of God's will, in respect to Timothy's qualifications--his spiritual as well as natural qualifications for the evangelistic office; and the formal designation of him by the presbytery was the church's response to the declared mind of God, and appropriate action to carry it into effect.⁶¹

ACTS 14:23 AND TITUS 1:5

He adds, however, that in Acts 14:23 it does not

involve. In Acts 14 the work of Paul and Barnabas in certain cities in Asia Minor is recorded. Churches had been established by these men. Before they took their leave of the churches they saw to it that the churches had duly appointed

⁵⁸Ibid. ⁵⁹Hendriksen, op. cit., p. 160.

⁶⁰Fairbairn, op. cit., p. 188.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 189.

elders to serve them. In Paul's epistle to Titus he had instructed Titus to "set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city."⁶²

These two verses of scripture have to do with the matter of "ordaining" elders in the churches to which reference is made in the context. Acts 14:23 reads, "And when they had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." Titus 1:5 reads, "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

The key word in these two verses, insomuch as it pertains to the study of the problem under consideration, is "ordain." The word is from the Greek term cheiroteneō which Thayer says means "to vote by stretching out the hand."⁶² He adds, however, that in Acts 14:23 it does not involve the stretching out of the hand, but only "to elect, appoint, create."⁶³ Arndt and Gingrich state that the action involved in this case was limited to the two apostles involved; that it did not involve a choice by the whole

⁶²Albert Barnes, Acts (Vol. III of Notes on the New Testament, ed. Robert Frew. 11 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Co., 1955). ⁶³Thayer, op. cit., p. 668.

⁶⁴Ibid.

group present.⁶⁵ Moody says that "only Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 throw any light on the ordination of elders."⁶⁶ He points out that the Greek term is a compound of cheir (meaning "hand") and teinō (meaning "to stretch"). From this "the technical term for ordination, cheirotonia, later developed."⁶⁷

Barnes gives essentially the same definition and says that in Acts 14:23 it "refers simply to an election or appointment of the elders."⁶⁸ His opinion is that all that Paul and Barnabas did in the matter was "that they presided in the assembly when the choice was made."⁶⁹

Walker is of the opinion that the term cheirotoneō may have the meaning "to appoint" as in Acts 10:41, as well

⁶⁵William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 889.

⁶⁶Dale Moody, "Charismatic and Official Ministries, a Study of the New Testament Concept," Interpretation, a Journal of Bible and Theology, XIX, No. 2 (April, 1965), p. 177.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Albert Barnes, Acts (Vol. III of Notes on the New Testament, ed. Robert Frew. 11 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957-1965), p. 275.

⁶⁹Ibid.

as "to elect" as in II Corinthians 8:19.⁷⁰ He adds,

But, as the verb came to mean simply "to appoint" (by whatsoever method), this elective sense cannot be certainly insisted on. In any case, a real call by the Holy Spirit was considered essential (xx. 28; xiii. 2).⁷¹

He points out that prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands "seems to have been the chief features of primitive 'ordination'."⁷²

Barnes⁷³ and Harvey⁷⁴ are both of the opinion that the word "ordain" has acquired a technical meaning that it does not have in the New Testament. It appears that the word did not mean investing one with function or sacerdotal powers, but rather simply to elect or appoint one to function in a stated capacity. Evidence does not support the conclusion that there was a definite method of procedure in such matters.

⁷⁰Walker, op. cit., pp. 317-318.

⁷¹Ibid. ⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Albert Barnes, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon (Vol. VIII of Notes on the New Testament, ed. Robert Frew. 11 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957-1965), p. 267.

⁷⁴H. H. Harvey, The Epistle to Titus (Vol. VI of An American Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Alvah Hovey. 7 vols.; Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1881-1890), p. 129.

to have been a part of CHAPTER IV heritage of the Semitic race."¹ Heschel says that no trace of ecstasy is found in

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

the experiences of Moses, Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.² On

This chapter is presented in two parts. The first part is a summary of the opinions and conclusions of the authors whose works were consulted in the study of the problem under consideration. The opinions and conclusions are not exhaustive, but effort has been made to make them representative.

The second part is the writer's own conclusions and recommendations which were reached by a study of the problem under consideration.

A SUMMARY OF OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The first item of consideration is the individual's subjective impressions and responses to God's command to assume the prophetic role.

The prophets' responses to the compulsion of God upon their personalities varied. They performed their ministry with a conviction that they were doing such by the command and direction of God. They did not describe the manner by which God communicated His will and word to them. Some writers emphasize the ecstatic element more strongly than do others. Robinson says that "ecstasy does not seem

to have been a part of the common heritage of the Semitic race."¹ Heschel says that no trace of ecstasy is found in the experiences of Moses, Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.² On the other hand Robinson affirms:

It is . . . probable that Isaiah, Amos, and Jeremiah were subject to the ecstasy, and the visions of Ezekiel and Zechariah may best be explained in the same way. It does not follow of necessity that all their utterances originated thus, yet it is at least possible.³

Scott qualifies the ecstatic element by saying that "the Prophet spoke directly out of an immediate ecstatic consciousness of divine possession."⁴ "In religious ecstasy," comments Lindblom, "consciousness is entirely filled with the presence of God, with ideas and feelings belonging to the divine sphere."⁵ Heschel says,

It is true that the prophet is overwhelmed by the divine word that comes to him; but it is the consciousness of being overwhelmed, the consciousness of receptivity; and the ability to respond to the word that are outstanding features of his experience.⁶

He also says that "ecstasy is its own fulfillment; prophecy

¹Robinson, op. cit., p. 34.

²Heschel, op. cit., p. 352.

³Robinson, op. cit., p. 43.

⁴Scott, op. cit., p. 45.

⁵Lindblom, op. cit., p. 5.

⁶Heschel, loc. cit.

⁷Ibid., p. 361. ⁸Ibid., p. 362.

points beyond itself,"⁷ and that "the state of ecstasy is its own end; the prophetic act is a means to an end."⁸

Generally speaking, the authors consulted recognized that the individual viewed his assuming the role of a prophet as the work of the Holy Spirit. As far as the subjective impressions and responses of the individual are discernable, they have identified several: inclination or inner compulsion; a love for the work and a desire to preach; conviction of the call and of the need; awareness and assurance of the possession of the necessary physical and mental qualifications; a strong faith and a warm compassion. They generally agree that there is no particular pattern by which God deals with all individuals alike. Each must make his own search for God's will.

The second item of consideration was the matter of the charismata. It was generally recognized by the authors consulted that those individuals who functioned in the prophetic role were supernaturally endowed with the necessary gifts for that purpose. Schaff believes that such gifts of the Holy Spirit are complementary to the individual's natural virtues. He says that such gifts

are certain special energies and manifestations of the Holy Spirit in believers. . . . They are supernatural,

⁷Ibid., p. 361. ⁸Ibid., p. 362.

therefore, in their origin; but they correspond to natural virtues, and in operation they follow all the mental and moral faculties of man, raising them to higher activity, and consecrating them to the service of Christ. They all rest on faith, that 'gift of gifts'.⁹

Very little was gleaned from the various works consulted with regard to the matter of evaluating the gifts. The practice was more in the act of recognizing the individuals who possessed certain gifts rather than in evaluating the gifts.

The third item of consideration at this point was the matter of approval of an individual to function in the role of a prophet. In this area, changes have been made with regard to the three factors considered in this study.

Schaff says that those who functioned as pastors and teachers

were usually chosen from the first converts, and appointed by the apostles or their delegates, with the approval of the congregation, or by the congregation itself. . . . They were solemnly introduced into their office by the apostles or by their fellow presbyters through prayers and the laying on of hands.¹⁰

Hodgman uses the phrase "acquisition of ministerial function" to describe approval of ordination, and he cites or

⁹Charles A. Hodgman, "Ordination," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, Everett F. Harrison, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 387.

⁹Philip Schaff, *Apostolic Christianity* (Vol. I of *The Christian Church*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 436.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 495-496.

describes three methods. First, he cites the Twelve who received their appointment from Jesus without any ceremony. Second, he suggests that the lists of spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12 and Romans 12 seem to indicate that there was spontaneous assumption of certain functions without any distinct call or ceremony. Last, he cites the instance of the Seven in Acts 6, and of Timothy in I Timothy 4:14 and II Timothy 1:6 by which the individuals involved were admitted to their functions by a public ceremony of which prayer and the laying on of hands were the chief features.¹¹

Lindsay affirms that there has been a departure from the procedure in the New Testament in ordaining men to function in the role of a prophet. He says,

This 'ministry of the Word' was the creative agency in the primitive church, and it may almost be said to have had the same function throughout the centuries since. It was overthrown or thrust aside and placed under subjection to an official ministry springing out of the congregation, and it has never regained the recognized position it had in the first century and a half.¹²

He further says,

¹¹Charles A. Hodgman, "Ordain, Ordination," Baker's Dictionary of Theology, Everett F. Harrison, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 387.

¹²Thomas M. Lindsay, The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), p. 71.

Those so endowed were in no sense office-bearers in any one Christian community; they were not elected to an office; they were not set apart by any ecclesiastical ceremony; the Word of God came to them, and they spoke the message that had been sent them.¹³

He says that "the local church could only test them when they appeared, and could receive or reject their ministrations."¹⁴ Accordingly, he says that "every prophet required the permission or authorization of the congregation in order to exercise his 'gift' among them,"¹⁵ and that the matter of the spiritual discernment or discrimination was left to the people spoken to.¹⁶ Thus, according to Lindsay, prophets at large were not formally approved by any ceremony. They were either approved or disapproved by the people to whom they spoke at the time they spoke. Some who possessed the prophetic gift did function as pastors. But even in such cases "ordination" appeared to be more of an appointment, or an election, and even then it was not permanent. Armitage says that a pastor's ordination consisted in his appointment to the pastoral office, and it could be with or without the laying on of hands.¹⁷

¹³Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁷Thomas Armitage, A History of the Baptists (New York: Bryan, Taylor, and Company, 1887), p. 123.

He affirms that "election and ordination are spoken of as the same."¹⁸

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WRITER

An individual became a prophet of God because God chose him to become one. Such individuals claimed that they were convinced that God had chosen them to be prophets. God used His wisdom and power as well as providence to guide men into the prophetic role. Such men as Jonah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Paul are examples of this.

God initiated the process by which men were convinced that God had chosen them to become prophets. They could not explain how God did it; they only affirmed it. The men referred to in Acts 13:1-4 were called to a specific work; they were gifted men--prophets and teachers. They claimed to have been called to this work by the Holy Spirit. No indication was given that the church made any formal evaluation of the gifts of the men. The actions of the church did constitute an approval or recognition of these facts. The church released the men for the work which they were to do. No formal ordination is indicated. No indication was given as to what kind of impressions were made on the men, or how

¹⁸Ibid.

they were made. However, they evidently responded with willingness and readiness. The impressions of such men were not always the same. The impressions made were sometimes perplexity, uncertainty, amazement, doubt, or a combination of such. The initial impressions were followed by various responses. Sometimes there was a reluctance on the part of the individual to accept God's will to become a prophet. Others responded with desire and readiness. Jonah for awhile refused. Jeremiah hesitated because he was young.

One response appears to have been characteristic of dedicated prophets. They had a sympathetic heart and mind. Moses was an example of this. When the people complained and rebelled against God, Moses was able to experience God's sorrow and God's love. At the same time, when God would have executed His wrath upon the rebellious people, Moses' sympathy for the people made him an intercessor in their behalf.

Whenever God made His will known to an individual to become a prophet, He qualified that individual to function as a prophet. God appropriated the natural endowments of the individual. God invested a charisma in the individual. By this the recipient of the prophetic gift was able to receive God's message and then communicate that message to the

people. The ecstatic element sometimes prevailed. Peter¹² and Paul¹³ The individual ascertained that God had called him to assume the prophetic role in one or more different ways. An inner conviction of such appeared to be common to all prophets. When they spoke, they spoke with a conviction that they spoke for God and that they spoke God's message. The desire to proclaim God's message was an influence. The opinions of others sometimes helped the individual to ascertain God's will. This factor apparently influenced Timothy. God's prophets have demonstrated a passion for the work of God. They have demonstrated ability to interpret God's will and God's word.¹¹

The people who were expected to give attention to the preaching of the prophets were not required to accept the prophet or his message without any means of validation. When both the prophet and the people to whom he spoke had a receptive attitude toward the things of God, they experienced a mutually sympathetic attraction to each other. A prophet of God affirmed that he spoke for God. His utterances were in harmony with previously established truths about or from God. His character was morally acceptable. This apparently was not generally true of false prophets. and in Acts 22:17. The moral quality of the prophet's message could help to establish him as a prophet.¹⁰ Mark 2:12 is an example.

The ecstatic element sometimes prevailed. Peter¹⁹ and Paul¹⁹ both affirmed that they had been subjected to ecstatic experiences. The word which they used to describe their subjective experiences is used elsewhere, however, to describe the experience of amazement or astonishment.²⁰

The ecstatic experiences of the prophets appeared not to be of such character that caused them to act like one who was insane or had epilepsy. They did affirm that they had come under the power of the Spirit of God.

The matter of ordination has been misunderstood and abused. Some erroneous conclusions have been drawn, and some unscriptural customs prevail.

In the New Testament, the action referred to by the word "ordination" in the King James Version was an appointment or an election of an individual to function in a specific role. A prophet was ordained by God by virtue of the fact that God appointed him to function as a prophet. No ecclesiastical ordination was required. Individuals who served in the local church in an administrative capacity were ordained (appointed or elected) by the church or by

¹⁹The Greek word ekstasis is so used in Acts 11:5 and in Acts 22:17.

²⁰Mark 2:12 is an example.

representatives of the church. Such ordination was often accompanied by prayer, fasting, and laying on of hands, but no evidence was found that such was required. Evidence supports the conclusion that such procedures applied only to administrative workers in the local church; that they did not apply to those who functioned as prophets.

The prophetic role is sometimes associated with the pastoral office. A pastor does not have to be a prophet, and a prophet does not have to be a pastor. However, a prophet may function as a pastor if a church and the prophet in question should agree to such an arrangement. Both the prophet and the church should seek the will of God in the matter, however. The function of a prophet and the function of a pastor are different in nature. A prophet is primarily a preacher, whereas, a pastor is primarily an administrator. A prophet's ordination is by God; a pastor's ordination is by the church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Two recommendations are submitted. The first recommendation is that followers of the Lord recognize that the source of an individual's privilege and responsibility to function in the role of a prophet is God. A prophet's authority as such is altogether in his ordination or appointment by God. No human agency in the matter is necessary.

or required by the New Testament.

The second recommendation is that followers of the Lord not require any prophet of God to declare his affiliation with, or limit his affiliation to, any particular denomination or ecclesiastical organization before he be recognized as a prophet of God. One of the characteristics of God's prophets was their independency of ecclesiastical imperatives.

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I. THE PROBLEM

A STUDY OF FACTORS RELATED TO BECOMING A PROPHET AS SET FORTH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Opinions and practices in the ranks of Christianity vary with regard to the matter of who may function in the role of a prophet, what the individual's qualifications should be, and how the individual may be properly recognized or approved to function as a prophet. What factors were considered in New Testament times when an individual accepted or assumed the role of a prophet?

An Abstract of a Thesis

Three factors were isolated for this study. First, what were the subjective impressions of individuals who

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Ouachita Baptist University

accepted or assumed the role of a prophet? Second, how and to what extent were the prophetic gifts of such individuals evaluated? Third, how were such individuals recognized or approved to function as prophets? These three questions constitute the problem which was investigated in this study.

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

II. THE PROCEDURE

Master of Arts

The basic limitation to the study was a consideration of the three factors identified in the statement of the problem. These three factors are the subjective impressions of the individuals, the evaluation of their gifts, and the approval to function as prophets.

by

Clyde W. Coleman

May, 1970

I. THE PROBLEM

Selected passages of the New Testament were chosen as a basis for the study. The selected passages are Acts 19:1-19; 13:1-4; 14:21; Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:11; I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6; and Titus 1:5. Opinions and practices in the ranks of Christianity vary with regard to the matter of who may function in the role of a prophet, what the individual's qualifications should be, and how the individual may be properly recognized as the preliminary part of the study. The factors in question were considered as they related to the role of a prophet in the Old Testament. The purpose in this was to discover what relationship existed between these factors in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. What factors were considered in New Testament times when an individual accepted or assumed the role of a prophet?

Three factors were isolated for this study. First, what were the subjective impressions of individuals who accepted or assumed the role of a prophet? Second, how and to what extent were the prophetic gifts of such individuals evaluated? Third, how were such individuals recognized or approved to function as prophets? These three questions constitute the problem which was investigated in this study. A limited number of general works on the subject were consulted to ascertain the findings and opinions of others on the problem under consideration. Included in the secondary sources were church histories, commentaries, lexicons, and periodicals.

II. THE PROCEDURE

The basic limitation to the study was a consideration of the three factors identified in the statement of the problem. These three factors are the subjective impressions of the individuals, the evaluation of their gifts, and the approval of them to function as prophets. The subjective impressions of the prophets of God

Selected passages of scripture in the New Testament were chosen as a basis for the study. The selected passages are Acts 19:1-19; 13:1-4; 14:23; Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:11; I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6; and Titus 1:5.

The prophetic role in the Old Testament was investigated as the preliminary part of the study. The factors in question were considered as they related to the role of a prophet in the Old Testament. The purpose in this was to discover what relationship existed between these factors in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

The selected passages of the New Testament were studied to ascertain the facts relative to the factors in question as they existed or prevailed in the New Testament.

A limited number of general works on the subject were consulted to ascertain the findings and opinions of others on the problem under consideration. Included in the secondary sources were church histories, commentaries, lexicons, and periodicals. Most of the secondary sources consulted were found in Riley Library on the campus of Ouachta Baptist University.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The subjective impressions of the prophets of God

were the result of God's initiation of the process by which they were convinced that God had chosen them to function as prophets. Their impressions were not always clearly understood, and less clearly explained. Their responses varied. Some were ready and willing, while others were more reluctant to function as prophets.

Their gifts were not so much evaluated as they were recognized. Whenever an individual became accepted by his listeners as a prophet called of God, it was generally assumed by them that he had the necessary gifts.

No conclusive evidence was found that prophets were formally and permanently approved or ordained by any ecclesiastical body to function as prophets. As a rule, approval or disapproval was made by the people whom the prophets addressed at the time they addressed them.