

# **PROPHECY IN PAULINE COMMUNITY: AN UNDERSTANDING OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14:29-33**

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## **Abstract**

The influence of prophecy cannot be berated in the ancient world as it was a very important part of the make up in the ancient community. The act of prophecy is not limited to the Israelites but rather, it is traceable to the other communities of the Ancient Near East although could be classified as a form of divination. As such this paper examines the flow of the practice of prophecy and majorly it focuses on the Pauline community which appears to be the early part of the advent of Christianity whereby, the practice in the early Christian community would be a template for the contemporary church in rightly doing prophetic activities and achieving the purpose it was meant to serve.

**Key Words:** Prophecy, Women, Pauline, Corinthians

## **Introduction**

Prophecy is a very wide concept to deal with in Christianity and it is more specifically when it comes to the early part of Christianity when the apostles were still alive to witness the turnout of events as it relates to accepting the real stand of the usage of the word and in action.

The spiritual gift of prophecy is listed among the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:10 and Romans 12:6. The Greek word translated “prophesying” or “prophecy” in both passages properly means to “speak forth” or 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 people. Many people misunderstand the gift of prophecy to be the ability to predict the future. While knowing something about the future may sometimes have been an aspect of the gift of prophecy, it was primarily a gift of proclamation (“forth-telling”), and not only limited to prediction (“fore-telling”).<sup>1</sup>

This paper therefore deals with prophetic acts as stated in the Pauline epistles and also addresses the use of it in the early church, including the relationship to women in acting in the capacity of the act which should also serve as an example for the contemporary churches.

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<sup>1</sup>Archie Hui, *The Spirit of Prophecy and Pauline Pneumatology* <https://www.gotquestions.org/gift-of-prophecy.html> (Accessed on September 20, 2017)

## Prophecy as a Concept

In order to know more about prophecy, it is essential to firstly define who a prophet is. Thus, a prophet is someone that is inspired to foresee what would happen before time and relates it to the people. A prophet is someone that predicts future events. This idea is not from the context of predicting the occurrence of weather like the weather forecasters. In clarifying this thought, Adeyanju puts the right statement in describing a prophet by saying that, the oldest Hebrew term for inspired individuals who mediate divine messages to men is “Seer”<sup>2</sup> which explains that, God is the source of the inspiration of the prophet.

Prophecy is not a New Testament Phenomena, but rather, it is something that had being in existence since the Old testament Period. This could be traceable to the section where the Old Testament has its classification for the prophet referred to as the “Prophetic books”. The Old Testament use of prophecy is very important as it serve as a tool in the hands of God to correct the people. Paul Enns stated that, the prophetic office was significant among the Hebrews because, it played an important role in calling back their conscience to their covenant relationship with God and in declaring their future kingdom blessings regarding the promise given to Abraham.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the issue surrounding prophet is theologically a welcome idea as when it comes to Biblical Hermeneutics, the phenomena is seen in the interpretation of Types and Anti-Types. Where the Old Testament is the Type and the New Testament is the Anti-type. This could also be interpreted as Old Testament has the Prophecy while the New Testament is the fulfilment of the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, many direct prophecies were made in the Old Testament which eventually came to fulfilment in the New Testament one of which is the Birth of Jesus and many others.

The New Testament refers to prophecy as one of the spiritual gifts given by the indwelling Holy Spirit. From this, many Christians believe that the gift of prophecy is the supernatural ability to receive and convey a message from God. The purpose of the message may be to "edify, exhort and comfort" the members of the Church. In this context, not all prophecies contain predictions about the future. The Apostle Paul teaches in first Corinthians that prophecy is for the benefit of the whole Church and not just of the individual exercising the gift.

A prophecy is a message inspired by God, a divine revelation. The Bible says that prophets “spoke from God as they were moved by Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20, 21) So a prophet is one who receives God’s message and transmits it to others.—Acts 3:18. A

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<sup>2</sup>J. O. Adeyanju, *Introduction to Biblical Prophecy, Prophesying and Prophets: Isaiah-Daniel* (Ilorin: Amazing Grace Print-Media, 2014), 13.

<sup>3</sup>P. Enns, *Theology of the Prophetic Era* in *Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 65.

prophet is the one that stands as the carrier of the message of God and relating it to the people.

The spiritual gift of prophecy, in the sense of receiving *new* revelations from God to be proclaimed to others, ceased with the completion of the Bible. During the time that prophecy was a revelatory gift, it was to be used for the edification, exhortation, and comfort of men (1 Corinthians 14:3). The modern gift of prophecy, which is really more wired to teaching, still declares the truth of God. What has changed is that the truth of God today has already been fully revealed in His Word, while, in the early church, it had not yet been fully revealed.<sup>4</sup>

This statement poses another line of theological issue about the cessation of prophecy but this would not be dealt with as this paper is not focused on handling if prophecy had been ceased or not. The most important teaching from the statement is that whether prophecy is still real or not, the contemporary church already has the word of God in form of the Bible which is an advantage over the early community of Christians who does not have the compiled scriptures.

Prophecy could therefore be seen to be the Word of God spoken to man through Human vessel. And as far as this paper is concern, the prophetic movement in the early Christian church where the Apostles happened to be members of is to be discussed and it would serve as a basis for the contemporary church.

## **Prophecy in Early Christianity**

### **Its significance**

Paul says in 1 Cor. 14:37-38, "If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized." The implication here is plain, and what it refers to is just the emphasis that the teaching of the apostle has final authority.

A very important thing to note about this statement by Apostle Paul could be traced to the fact that there was some clue of people trying to confuse the people all in the name of prophecy. And since this statement had been made, it is very important to note that the early church believed in the availability of prophecy but only that it should not be used for personal/selfish gain. Just as it is being stated that, a prophecy is given in order to meet one or more needs within the Christian community.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Archie Hui, *The Spirit of Prophecy and Pauline Pneumatology* <https://www.gotquestions.org/gift-of-prophecy.html> (Accessed on September 20, 2017)

<sup>5</sup>C.A Evans "Prophecy" in Gerald Hawthorne, *et al Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 755.

Prophecy<sup>6</sup> is very significant in the Pauline community and this could be evidently traced to the arrangement in the first Epistle to the Corinthians where a Prophet is placed second to the apostles, that is to say after counting the prophets hierarchically, the prophet is the next to talk about. This reveals that prophets are not being looked down upon in the early church as even prophecy is very much required in the church both in the ancient days and in the contemporary church.

Prophecy was used in the Pauline community to communicate the mind of God to people, this is to hold that God had not through Jesus Christ only established a church and left it to run its course on its own but rather, the presence of God is still felt in the church even after the earthly absence of Jesus in His physical body. The prophecy shows that God is very much interested in the affairs and growth of the church and this could still be traced to it enabling the spread of Christianity. In choosing Paul to minister to the gentiles in the book of Acts 13:2,47 where Paul and Barnabas were both chosen for the Mission God hath called them and this mission was evident to be to the Gentiles in verse 47 of the same chapter.

### **Its Use and Paul's Guidelines for Prophesying**

Prophecy was used in the early church as a very important part of their day to day activities especially in worship. Paul was very much theoretical about the issue of Prophecy and prophesying in the early church but when it comes to being practical about it, only but very few people are into it as Paul himself did not even refer the act of Prophesying into being an office. The Dictionary of Paul further stated that,

The Language Paul Adopts when he refers to Prophets and prophesying is occasionally ambiguous. As a consequence, some scholars have concluded that while Paul maintained in theory that all Christians had the potential to prophesy, a goal toward which Paul seemingly exhorted all the Corinthians... only a few individuals ever did so, and these few occupied the office of prophet. Paul himself never uses the term office to describe the position of the prophet, but seems rather easily to alternate between using the noun "Prophet" and a substantiative participle, "the one who prophesies"<sup>7</sup>

Prophecy in the early community of the Christians and its usage comprise of the idea that the Holy Spirit is manifesting rather than being in regards to the talk on speaking in tongue. This is affirmed in Hawthorne edited book where it states that, The Charism

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<sup>6</sup>Prophecy is traceable to be a form of divination in the ANE. And it is basically classified under the type of divination known as "Intuitive Divination" which shows that it is not limited to being practiced among the Israelites known as the people of God, but also their neighbours also practice the act.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 757.

of prophecy, then becomes much more beneficial as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit within the community than does the ability to speak in tongues.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Paul viewed prophecy in the Christian community as a revelation or establishment that God is abiding with his church. The church which is known for the various gifts that she has, also includes prophecy as one of her gifts (charismata) which in this regards, God reveals His mind to the church about a particular incident that is to take place or when something is to come to pass in the church.

Prophecy in the early church was to serve as edification. This is evident from the emphasis of Paul in various passages of the Pauline corpus and even in the Acts of Apostles. 1 Corinthians 14:26 presents Paul talking about what could profit the church generally and among the items he listed, prophecy was one of them. He negated the public use of tongues because, that is more of personal benefit than the general edification especially in a case where there is no interpreter.

Also, Prophecy was to be used in love and this tends to be a important practice in the early Christian community. Paul in one of his epistles (1 Cor. 14:1), advised that prophecy should be sought in love and not to intimidate others. At this juncture, it is very important for this paper to point that the Gifts given to the church by the Holy Spirit is not to cause competition in the church or to cause those that have a particular one to intimidate those that do not have, but instead, all should work in harmony and in love for the greatness of the church. Since the church is seen as one body and nobody can possess all the gifts all together. Thus, just as the body being one of the metaphorical expressions given to the church by the Bible, the body cannot be well when a particular part is not well but instead the leg takes the body around the hands carry out its own assignment, the head reasons along and so on. Also the church needs to come together in love and to work in unity without the prophets discriminating themselves from those who have not the gift of prophecy.

More also, prophecy in the early church is very welcome. But it has to be verified and tested in order to realise its genuineness. This is basically because some people might claim to prophecy in order to impose their own bias idea to the church or someone might use that medium to seek a pending revenge over another fellow who had once offended him. Thus, according to 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22, all prophecies must be tested and the truth should be followed.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 758.

Paul gave certain guidelines which some had been earlier made mentioned of in this work but for the reason of clarity, the guidelines would be stated in agreement with what the book prefaced by Joseph Tkach, where it states that;

Paul recommends the gift of prophecy as a far more helpful gift, but he gives similar guidelines for those speakers, too:<sup>9</sup>

- 1) Only two or three should speak (1 Cor. 14:29). If someone else has something to say, the first speaker should be quiet.
- 2) They should speak one at a time (v. 31).
- 3) People should “weigh carefully what is said” (v. 29; cf. 1 Thess. 5:21).

The community recognises that the gift of the spirit is majorly for the general use of the church and it is not obtained by merit but by the grace (Charis) of God.

### **Women and Prophecy in the Pauline Community**

When it comes to issues surrounding women in the early church, prophecy and speaking in the church is a very important part. This section of the paper is majorly on exploring the Pauline statement of Women talking in the church as 1 Corinthians 11:5 supports while chapter 14:34-45 was totally and emphatically against it.

Many individuals and various scholars had given interpretation to these passages while some hold to the idea that 11:5 was to make women have a fair say in the church and should be held highly than 14:34-35 which was only contextual others hold to the fact that Paul only condemned women prophesying and praying without veiling their head in chapter 11 which was probably due to an immediate sanction or caution but delayed his total condemnation of forbidding women to speak in the church till chapter 14.

This is a very confusing point to deal with if to be taken literally for what it meant as it would be very confusing to see that both statements occurred in the same book and the same epistle to the same people and it seemingly contradict each other. What should be followed?

Can one hold to the fact that women should be silent in the church as Paul stated it emphatically without even putting any condition as a criterion or should women only prophecy when they have their head covered in the church? Another question to deal with is that, was there no woman who prophesied in the early church from the biblical

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<sup>9</sup>D.A. Carson, “Women Should Remain Silent” <https://www.gci.org/church/ministry/women9> - A Study of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35” (Accessed on September 23, 2017).

record? And if there is, what is the special thing about them that made them to be excluded from the sanction? All these would be judiciously addressed in this section of the paper.

As in the case in all other Christian churches, let your women keep silence in the public assemblies. The fact that in no Christian church was public speaking permitted to women was itself a strong proof that it was unchristian, i.e. contrary to the spirit of Christianity. Paul, however, adds to the prohibition the weight of apostolic authority, and not of that only but also the authority of reason and of scripture. It is not permitted to them to speak. The speaking intended is public speaking, and especially in the church.<sup>10</sup>

John Gill by his own approach to the passage held to the fact that, women not speaking in the church are traceable to the Jewish culture as some other scholars also agreed. But his view was that women are only not to prophesy in public places and in the church but not to the idea that they should not have the right to speak at all. He stated that,

....in public assemblies, in the church of God, they might not speak with tongues, nor prophesy, or preach, or teach the word. All speaking is not prohibited; they might speak their experiences to the church, or give an account of the work of God upon their souls; they might speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; or speak as an evidence in any case at a church meeting; but not in such sort, as carried in it direction, instruction, government, and authority. It was not allowed by God that they should speak in any authoritative manner in the church; nor was it suffered in the churches of Christ; nor was it admitted of in the Jewish synagogue; there, we are told he men came to teach, and the women, "to hear": and one of their canons runs thus, ``a woman may not read (that is, in the law), "in the congregation", or church, because of the honour of the congregation;<sup>11</sup>

A statement from the Bible Research team also reveals with inference from other passages that women ought not to speak in the church. And also Charles Hodge in his write up about the 1 Corinthians also explained that;

In the Old Testament it had been predicted that your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; a prediction which the apostle Peter quotes as verified on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:17; and in Acts 21:9 mention is made of four daughters of Philip who prophesied. The apostle himself seems to take for granted, in 11:5, that women

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<sup>10</sup>James Greenbury, "1 Corinthians 14:34-35: Evaluation of Prophecy Revisited," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (December 2008). 721–31.

<sup>11</sup>John Gill, *John Gills Exposition of the Bible* (Studylight.org, Accessed on September 23, 2017).

might receive and exercise the gift of prophecy. It is therefore only the public exercise of the gift that is prohibited.<sup>12</sup>

This logically holds that prophecy ought to be done by women by following the right procedure of prophesying.

Clarke, in interpreting and commenting on the passage examined the text critically in the light of the Jewish practice where women are not to refute words of their men publicly as it is a disgrace and this could lead to pride for the woman (women) in question. He noted that All that the apostle opposes here is their questioning, finding fault, disputing, etc., in the Christian Church, as the Jewish men were permitted to do in their synagogues; together with the attempts to usurp any authority over the man, by setting up their judgment in opposition to them; for the apostle has in view, especially, acts of disobedience, arrogance, etc., of which no woman would be guilty who was under the influence of the Spirit of God.<sup>13</sup> This poses that the woman who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit cannot commit the “vices” that is foreseen as a result of women speaking publicly. But Clarke did not try to deal with the fact of these women later coming to think much of them-selves after the Holy Spirit of God had “come down”. It would only take more grace of God for a woman not to think much of herself especially over the husband when she starts prophesying.

After considering these statements, this paper is submitting to the hypothesis that, the apostolic authority should not be hampered and the statement of Paul in chapter 14 meant that there was actually a very important reason for him to have said so. This reason is best known to him, probably due to the reason that women are emotional being and they could get carried away by being a prophetess and besides the gift of prophecy might be used by some women to intimidate their husbands and that is why Paul imperatively said that they should inquire of their husband what they want to know which this paper also sees as they can send their prophecy to the church through their husband as that would keep them in check and make them to keep being submissive to their husbands.

This hypothesis presented by this paper is as a result of the fact that the Old Testament book, Joel stated that daughters would prophesy and not Wives/women and following the reality of this on the day of Pentecost. In addition, the daughters of Philip who happened to be an Evangelist were also stated to be into prophesying. In both cases women were not mentioned to be the one to prophesy in the early church. And for the passages that prohibit women from speaking in the church, it is only centred on

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<sup>12</sup>Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Carter, 1857), 305.

<sup>13</sup>Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh Publishers, nd) np



women (married women so to say) and not ladies that are still spinsters. For these reasons, this paper is holding to the idea that Paul stated that option in order to curb the issue of pride and lack of submission to Husbands.

### **Ecstatic Prophecy**

The word "ecstasy"—from the Greek *ekstasis*, literally meaning "displaced"—has etymological roots in such a setting. In ecstatic frenzy the subject seeks to withdraw his mind from conscious participation in the world so that it may be open to the reception of the divine word. Often the ecstatic nature of an oracular utterance was emphasized by abnormal behavior—wild dancing, unintelligible speech, even frenzied fits. Such behavior was apparently common enough to the prophet that "false" or charlatan prophets, whose ecstasy was not genuine, had to feign ecstasy in order to appear authoritative.<sup>14</sup>

It is clear that Hebrew prophecy, although centuries older, partook of this same world view, as is illustrated in the words of the prophet Samuel to the young Saul: "you will meet a band of prophets. . . . Then the spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon you, and you shall prophesy with them and be turned into another man. Now when these signs meet you, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you." In spite of the noble efforts of pious scholars to protect the later Hebrew prophets from modern psychology, it is clear that this element of ecstasy always remained a part of the Hebrew prophetic tradition. Indeed, the line between prophet and madman sometimes disappears even in the so-called "classical" prophets of the Old Testament.

Not all prophets, whether Hebrew or Greek, were wild and frenzied in their ecstasies. But inasmuch as they were oracles, i.e., mouthpieces of the gods, their characteristic rhetoric, especially the use of the first person singular to refer to the god, clearly implies an ecstatic state, i.e., a state in which a human spirit is "displaced" because of an "infilling by a higher power."

The prophecy of primitive Christianity included the element of ecstasy, a fact demonstrated by the language ascribed to the prophet Agabus, who began his prophetic word to Paul with the phrase "Thus says the Holy Spirit. . . ." Regrettably, the New Testament gives little direct information about the behaviour of Christian prophets. It was apparently clear to the observer when a prophet was speaking "in" or "through the Spirit," a judgment which probably included some kind of behaviour criterion. The ecstatic nature of early Christian prophecy is further illustrated by the pagan rhetoric used in connection with it.

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<sup>14</sup>James I. Ash, Jr. "The Decline of Ecstatic Prophecy In The Early Church"  
<http://cdn.theologicalstudies.net/37/37.2/37.2.2.pdf> (Accessed on November 4, 2017)

The question of how common place ecstatic prophecy was in the earliest Churches is difficult to answer, since so little data exists in extant sources. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles that the two early urban centres of Christianity, Jerusalem and Antioch, included influential, practicing prophets. Caesarea and its environs had a prophet and four prophetesses. Since Paul counted prophets among the highest Church officials, second only to apostles, it is not surprising that among the Pauline Churches prophets were certainly present at Corinth and perhaps at Thessalonica as well. One of the pastorals mentions a "prophetic utterance" at an ordination ceremony. The Apocalypse of John claims to be a "prophecy" uttered "in the Spirit," repeatedly admonishing readers to "hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches" and venerating "the spirit of prophecy" as "the testimony of Jesus." These texts suggest that in at least some of the earliest Christian communities the prophet held a recognized and respected office and the phenomenon of prophecy was known and venerated. Such a conclusion is further supported by the growing number of New Testament scholars who, following Bultmann, ascribe some of the sayings of Jesus in the Synoptic tradition to Christian prophets.

## **Background Analysis of 1 Corinthians**

### **Authorship**

It is of no doubt that Paul had been identified to be the author of the epistle to the Corinthians and this is evident from the opening verse of 1 Corinthians. Paul first preached the gospel in Corinth during his second missionary journey<sup>15</sup> which made it obvious that his first encounter with the people had been on a missionary journey and not that he wrote to them as a result of only hear say.

### **Date**

The letter is dated to ca. 55AD which was almost around the expiration of the three year period that Paul lived in Ephesus despite being roughly treated by the Jews on that land, he still stayed in another person's house after he was sent out of the synagogue by the Jews. The one he stayed with was Titius Justus. Thus it is generally agreed that AD 55 was when the book was written.

### **Context**

The Corinthians were the recipient of the letter precisely the church at Corinth. They are people who lived in Corinth. Corinth was a large metropolis which a large number of them were slaves (due to their high commercial activities where slave trade is also part of). It is located on a narrow isthmus between the Aegan Sea and the Adriatic Sea

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<sup>15</sup>Michael D. Olajide, *Introduction to Pauline Literature* (Ibadan: Feyisetan Press, 2017), 31.

that connected the Peloponnesus with Northern Greece.<sup>16</sup> The city contains a lot of social decadence as they are well known for their immoral activities and some inhumane acts. The land being located at a central spot of the Greco-Roman Empire made it a very good city for commercial activities.

At the inception of religion in the Corinthian city, they happen to be religious and also they have the notion that they have the Holy Spirit in them even when they do not. And that was why Paul wrote extensively to them the need for the Holy Spirit in them and also stated the reason for the presence of the gift of the spirit in them as it is not personal gain but for the general use and advantage of the church.

Paul's guiding principle for church fellowship is that the freedom of individual believers, but also their commensurate corporate responsibility, is based not on law, but on love. The health and growth of the whole church supersedes any personal preference or privilege (12:7).

### **Exegetical Analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:29-33**

More of the emphasis as it relates to prophecy in the Pauline community had been centred on the book of 1 Corinthians and this is the reason for the exegesis of this golden passage that talk about prophecy in the Pauline corpus.

1 Corinthians 14:29

προφηται δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλείτωσαν, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν·

Translation: The two or three Prophets speak, and the others should discern.

A very important point to discover in this passage is the fact that what do the passage mean by "Discern". The word used there is διακρινέτωσαν, which mean "Let discern". The usage of the word as traceable to διακρινω which means "To separate" could mean judge, discern, doubt, waver<sup>17</sup> etc. This is to say that a vivid thought must be examined before the church would take the word for what it meant. The word used there have an implication of doubt or opposition, but in this sense, Paul was only telling them to examine the prophecy and if it is true they can then justify the prophecy after judging it while if it is not true, the prophecy should be opposed.

This statement happened to be an action word which falls under the present active imperative statement which simply connotes its application to all church at all times.

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<sup>16</sup>J. Hampton Keathley, *The Pauline Epistles* [www.pauline/epistles/bible.org](http://www.pauline/epistles/bible.org) (Accessed September 29, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> James Strong, "διακρινω" in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Hendrickson Publishers, nd), 22.

## 1 Corinthians 14:30

ἐὰν δὲ ἄλλω ἀποκαλυφθῆ καθήμενῳ, ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω.

Translation: If but to another, sitting by, a revelation be made, let the first be silent.

This implies that those teaching usually sit together as Clarke puts it that “Probably those who were teachers sat on a particular seat, or place, from which they might most readily address the people; and this may be the meaning of sitting by.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the one speaking is expected to be silent for the new revelation being revealed as it might be very necessary for the moment. “Sigato” which means “Keep Silence”<sup>19</sup> among other related meaning holds that one have to be quite. The word could also one “keeping Secret” but it is not likely that this passage is asking the first speaker to keep the secret what he has received but only to keep calm for the new speaker to pass his message for the audience to listen to him, which afterwards, he can then continue.

## 1 Corinthians 14:31

δύνασθε γὰρ καθ' ἓνα πάντες προφητεύειν, ἵνα πάντες μανθάνωσιν καὶ πάντες παρακαλῶνται.

Translation: You are all able to prophecy one by one, that all might learn and be exhorted.

This verse holds the importance of Prophecy where the word ‘παρακαλῶνται’ could signify exhortation, edification or comfort.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the gifts which God grants are given for the purpose of edification; but there can be no edification where there is confusion; therefore let them speak one by one.

## 1 Corinthians 14:32

καὶ πνεύματα προφητῶν προφήταις ὑποτάσσεται·

Translation: And spirit of the prophet to prophet are subordinate.

It had been commonly known in various versions that subject is always the right word to use for the statement, “ὑποτάσσεται” as made by apostle Paul in this passage. But

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<sup>18</sup>Adam Clarke, *The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh Publishers, nd) np

<sup>19</sup>Walter Radi ‘σιγάω’ in Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. 3*(Grand Rapids: Eerdsman Publishing Company, 1982), 242.

<sup>20</sup>J. Thomas ‘παρακαλῶ’ in Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. 3*(Grand Rapids: Eerdsman Publishing Company, 1982), 23.

this paper is seeing the usage of the word as not necessarily subject in the sense of being inferior and that is the reason of translating it as subordinate which connotes that the spirit of the prophet are to augment one another without any one claiming superiority or inferiority.

The ICC Bible Commentary interpreted the verse as an expression to support the preceding verse 30 where the first speaking prophets are to exercise patience for the new speaker to speak. The commentary stated that, a preacher without self-control is no true prophet: and uncontrolled religious feeling is sure to lead to evil. This therefore is a second justification of ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω: he can hold his peace, for prophets always have their own spirits under the control of their understanding and their will. <sup>21</sup>

This signifies that the spirit driving the prophet should not be beyond the control of the prophet. And that is why the statement is not proposing that, “it should be subjected” but instead “are subjected” to the prophets.

1 Corinthians 14:33

οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ Θεὸς ἀλλὰ εἰρήνης, Ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων,

Translation: He is not God of disorder but of Peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

Following the same trend of discussing the significance of prophecy in the church, this verse emphasises the fact that God, being an orderly God would not cause anything that would be a reason of confusion in all churches of the saints. The churches here are referring to different gathering of believers.

Thus, prophecy is with the purpose of causing progress in the church and not to cause chaos in the gathering of believers and since God is one, then He would not cause two or more people to start contradicting themselves in the name of prophesy. And for this reason, Paul admonishes that every prophecy should be διακρινέτωσαν (discerned) in order to certify for which is true.

### **Conclusion**

Prophecy has to be very much verified and that is the reason the church needs people with discerning spirit in order to test all spirit to know which is true and which is false.

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<sup>21</sup>Graham Stanton, (ed.) *et al*, International Critical Commentary, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, n.d), n.p.

The basic and central focus of the discussion by apostle Paul in this passage (1 Cor. 14:29-33) is for people to be careful not to be tricked by some prophetic utterance which might not really be true and that is the reason he made inference of various sought to the extent to stating that God is not a God of confusion that He would confuse the church on what to do.

Prophecy, as it had been said earlier is a gift of God for the edification of the church and the use of it in the contemporary churches is not really something positive to write home about as many make use of it to extort people which is not supposed to be and which is against the purpose. As a matter of fact, there are many fake prophets around the corner today who trick people with the so called prophecy and which is not true. But many people fall into this trap because, in the church today, the gift of discernment is lacking and those having it are not really putting it to use. It is therefore important that the church today, follow the path of the Pauline community use of the gift of prophecy as the guidelines are applicable to every church.

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