

“EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF MERCHANDIZING MINISTRY ON SOME TELEVISION STATIONS IN 21ST CENTURY: A STUDY OF PROPHETIC MINISTRY IN GHANA”

ABSTRACT

In contemporary day's doom-trapped spirituality where illusory through exploitative means by façade prophets in Ghana is on ascendancy with its outrageous consequences, there is urgent need to evaluate the effects and the awareness of the Church, the academy and the general public through insightful, informative, and educative avenues which is grounded in the Word of God to expose Satan's manipulative agenda for desperate clients through merchandizing prophetic ministry in Ghana. This article evaluates the effects of merchandizing ministry in the context of prophetic ministry in Ghana. It explains ministry as a whole and prophetic ministry in the context of Christian theology, and further draws a clear dichotomy between false prophetic ministry that leads to slavery in satanic kingdom and true prophetic ministry that leads to emancipation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Few factors like cultural worldview of African spirituality and illiteracy rate of the Ghanaian populace that contribute to merchandizing ministry are discussed. Again, this research compares ministry as set forth in the Bible with that of the 21st century and concludes that a great number of contemporary prophetic ministry is slavery and not emancipatory. To buttress biblical truth, this paper unfolds some of the extreme biblical praxis of these merchandizing ministry and their frustrated patrons on few selected television stations in Ghana. Finally, there are biblical recommendations which serve as “a wake-up call” to the 21st century Christian Church to teach and preach sound biblical doctrine in the power of the Holy Spirit to emancipate such tyrannical exploiters as well as their distressed clients from the mud of slavery into the Kingdom of God through faith in the Prophet, Priest and King Jesus the Christ.

Key words/terms: Merchandizing ministry, television stations, Ghana, prophetic ministry.

INTRODUCTION

The drastic shift of focus from Jesus Christ and the divine apostolic mandate to the Church by tyrannical exploiters who profess to be divinely called, chosen and commissioned into the prophetic ministry is a crafty gateway for their desperate clients who are always hungry for superfluous miracles and finally plunge them into the mire of slavery. The Church is sometimes labelled as object of scorn because of the abominable praxis of merchandizing ministry on some television stations in Ghana. Though there are few genuine prophets who are called by God to reveal divine counsel to the church and the world, there are also “false prophets, who come to you [believers and non-believers in Christ] in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15, NKJV).

The 21st century prophetic ministry is full of deceitful intent that culminates with diverse kinds of magical powers on the Ghanaian television channels. Consumed with pride, lust of the flesh and excruciating love for money, such merchandizing ministers ensnare their distressed clients with sugar-coated words and counterfeit miracles (2 Thess. 2:9). Obsessed with naivety in Godly living these oppressive exploiters have amalgamated from the divine precepts and perpetually lure their depressed counselees to slavery instead of emancipating them from satanic snares that lead to constant depravity. Unapologetically, the prophetic ministry in the 21st century is persistently placard with anti-Biblical praxis like fetishism, idolatry and occultism among other abhorring religious fanaticisms on many television stations in Ghana. This alarming rate of influx of despotic exploiters and their merchandizing ministries pose a serious threat to the Church, the academy, the Ghanaian community, and the global world. Such merchandizing ministry seduce their desperate patrons to vain hopes and dreams, hostility to family members, strange financial depletion, broken homes, joblessness, insecurity, spiritual laziness, and hopelessness in life among myriads of unproductive lifestyle.

Merchandizing ministry is an aggressive demonic platform that opposes God and His Word.

Hence, there is a paramount need to expose the wicked devices and schemes of Satan by creating the awareness of the church, other religious organizations, the academy, the government and the people of Ghana as well as the global world through insightful, informative, educative, implementable and rigorous research work.

In this research, I discovered that no rigorous research work has been done in details as mine. Thus, pinpointing specific prophetic ministry, false prophets, products, the pit of misery and the hopeless destiny they plunge themselves in until they repent and accept Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23; I John 5:11).

MINISTRY IN CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Ministry in the broader sense is translated from the word “diakonia” which means “service.” It applied to domestic as well as religious and spiritual duties.¹ Roger Pascoe sums up ministry in a two-point perspective. He says that ministry is “(1) to bring people to saving faith in Christ and then assist them to grow in Christ-likeness; and (2) to bring every believer into a vital, authentic relationship with God through the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, such that every believer glorifies God in thought, word, and deed both in the church and in the world with the ultimate goal of presenting everyone complete in Christ.”² This also suggests that ministry derives from God and is purposed to lead people to Him.

¹ W. E. Vine, M. F. Unger and W. White, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*, p. 411

² Roger Pascoe, “What is Church Ministry?” www.bible.org/what-church-ministry. Published December 30, 2010, accessed on January 19, 2017

The aforementioned views reflect the position of the early apostles who were the forbearers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us (I Cor. 5:18-20, NIV) Since ambassadors represent other entities but not themselves, as God's ambassadors Christians only represent God and therefore do not have ministries of their own. Emmanuel Asante attests this biblical truth by saying; "the Church cannot seek its own ministry as to do so will be tantamount to a denial of Christ's ministry, which forms the basis of the Church's ministry."³

Hence, the prophetic ministry derives from God; "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11, NIV). Furthermore, when Christ showed His intention to grant the apostles the opportunity to partake in His ministry of reconciliation, Matthew reports that He sent them and said "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying, give without pay" (Matt. 10:8, RSV). These words mean that the ministry is a gift from God and for that matter it cannot be merchandized. However, demons initiated practices in merchandizing ministry on some television stations in Ghana is slavery and not emancipatory.

MERCHANDIZING MINISTRY

Merchandizing means "sales promotion as a comprehensive function...development of new products, coordination of manufacture and

³ Emmanuel Asante, *The Call to Serve: A Theological Reflection on Ministry* (Methodist Book Depot, Accra, 2002), p. 47

marketing, and effective advertising and selling.”⁴ In this context a minister who develops a product (e.g., soap, oil, cloth, talisman, ring, banner, sand packed in bottles, and other similar objects) backed by superficial powers and magical display is engaged in merchandizing ministry. The idea behind such pretence is absolute denial of the existence, power and authority of God—a subtle avenue to exploit seekers of fake miracles in the name of God. Though Satan also performs counterfeit miracles (2 Thess. 2:9) “Jesus performed [still performs] a vast array of miraculous signs that demonstrated [demonstrates] him to be God incarnate and confirmed [confirms] his authority over every realm of creation.”⁵ Ministry is God ordained (II Cor. 5:18), the Holy Spirit anoints and empowers believers in Christ for effective witness of the Lord, and accompanied miracles are wrought by Jesus (Mark 16:20). Hence, demonstration of powers with the focus on items and objects are demon-initiated, human-centred, and a premise to exploit the masses. This is not ministry of reconciliation, but merchandizing ministry.

SOME FACTORS BEHIND MERCHANDIZING MINISTRY

Though there are many factors which make merchandizing prophetic ministry widespread in Ghana, few of them are discussed in this research. They are cultural worldview of African spirituality, desperation of clients, and, ignorance or abuse of spiritual authority, and the rate of illiteracy in Ghana.

Cultural worldview of African spirituality

Long before the introduction of Christianity on the African continent, the people had their own spiritual activities they performed. The African traditional religion is filled with beliefs in the activities of unseen spirits controlling the affairs of the physical world. Mediators between the spirits and the people are called “Akɔmfoɔ” (Fetish Priests). The general practice of these priests is that

⁴ Merriam Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: Eleventh Edition* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster's Incorporated, 2005), 776.

⁵ N. Geisler and P. Zukeran *The Apologetics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 2009), 33

these traditionalists charge people who consult them for help (e.g., security, favor with others, expansion of business, procreation, excellence in education, visa to travel to North America or Europe, diverse healing from ailments, and long life among other miracles. Fetish priests collect items such as sheep, cow, fowl, cloth, or cash from their clients (depending on the magnitude of a client's case or demand).

When Africans embraced Christianity, many stopped consulting these priests. Discovering few similarities between the prophetic ministry and fetishism specifically in relation to the speaking of mysteries and healing, some people have taken the advantage to set prophetic ministries and project themselves as prophets of God. They charge consultation fees for their services and promote their products to amass wealth. Amalgamated from biblical truth, these false prophets do interpret the Bible based on the cultural worldview of African spirituality—a fusion of traditional beliefs and Christianity.

Desperation of clients

The desperate clients of these oppressive exploiters are people who want to get particular problems solved by these merchandizers for any amount of money or personal effects. Some of these anxious seekers of success fall into a dungeon with irreparable damage to their health, marital life, family ties, academics, business, finances, and morals among other depraved lifestyle. Other hyper depressed clients are those who want to travel outside Africa to seek greener pastures. Such clients easily become prey to these cruel and self-acclaimed servants of God. After draining their clients financially, some (clients) even end up their lives. Another group of troubled patrons are those (women or men) who need biological children. In Ghana, those who do not have biological children are mocked at. Such people spend a lot in merchandizing ministry for superficial miracle of procreation.

Illiteracy rate

Ghana had an adult illiterate population of 28.5% as at 2010.⁶ This figure translates to over seven million adults of a total population of about twenty-five million who cannot read and write. In addition to this group, there are a lot of literate Christians who do not study the Bible for themselves and for this reason are ignorant of the scriptures and the wicked schemes of their slave masters.

Abuse of spiritual authority and power

Balaam had spiritual authority but abused it for material gain. God spoke to Balaam not to heed to the plea of Balak the king of Moab to curse the Israelites (Num. 22:7-12). Notwithstanding, Balaam ignored the instruction of God and did as Balak wanted. Peter warns believers in Christ not to follow “the way of Balaam (the son of Bosor), who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Pet. 2:15, KJV). Like Balaam who flouted the counsel of God, false prophets in Ghana are obsessed with the lust of greed that comes out of irreverence to spiritual authority and power.

“Woe unto them! [tyrannical exploiters] For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward....” (Jude 1:11, KJV).

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF FALSE PROPHETS

The Christian Holy Bible talks more about “false prophetic ministry” as well as “false prophets”. Under this subtopic, I will use the two terms interchangeably. “If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:22, NIV). “They [false prophets] commit adultery and walk in lies; they encourage and

⁶ Ghana Statistical Service, *2010 Population and Housing Census Summary Report of Final Results* (Ghana Statistical Service, May 2012) p. 7

strengthen the hands of evil doers....” (Jer. 23:14, AMP). “They teach you vanity (emptiness, falsity, and futility) and fill you with vain hopes; they speak visions of their own minds and not from the mouth of the Lord” (Jer. 23:16, AMP). “Their [false prophets] visions are false and their divinations a lie. They say ‘The LORD declares,’ when the LORD has not sent them....” (Ezek. 13:6, NIV). Apart from the lies they speak, they also conspire with others to deceive and defraud people (Ezek. 22:25), they are treacherous and do not spare their prey (Zeph. 3:4), and their profanity and wickedness are exhibited even in the house of God (Jer. 23:11).

The Lord Jesus Christ cautioned His disciples not to be ignorant about false prophetic ministry and false prophets. “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:15-16, RSV).

The slave girl who Paul and Silas encountered in Philippi had a merchandizing ministry. This girl made money for her owners through fortune-telling (Acts 16:16).

Paula Price gives a very elaborative interpretation of False Prophet;

A prophet who is not a member of the new creation priesthood of Jesus Christ, one who prophesies and performs prophetic functions on behalf of the devil, even if in the flesh. According to the Bible, false prophets speak in the name of another god. They prophesy from their own resource, namely their own hearts, and ordinarily are motivated by private aim and selfish ambition. They are of the Balaam order of prophetics where money for prophesying, a diviner’s fee, is the only way they will give the word of the Lord. The magnitude of the word is in direct proportion to the amount of money a hearer [client] presents. They require gifts in advance of their words to assure the word does not

predict a more valuable return to the hearer than the gift is worth. Most false prophets today are recognized as messengers who never teach from the Bible, bring words that are decidedly occultic and New Age, and have no balanced scriptural substantiation for the things they say.⁷

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF TRUE PROPHETS

The Prophet par excellence is Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:57). Moses said; “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren, Him you shall hear” (Deut. 18:15, NKJV). This prophecy was fulfilled when Apostle Philip testified about Jesus to Nathaniel, he said; “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also in the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (Jn. 1:45, NKJV).

During the time of Israel’s apostasy, God raised them with the specific purpose of directing the hearts of the people back to Him. “...he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD....” (2 Chr. 24:19, KJV). The prophet was to speak to the people the mind of God concerning their situation, rebuked and counselled them to come out of their waywardness and continuously reminded them of the covenant between God and Israel. God’s prophets were honest, compassionate, uncompromising and even some risked their lives for the message they delivered to the people (e.g., I Sam. 15:1; 2 Sam. 12:1-14; 1 Kings 14:1-16; 1 Kings 21:17-24; Jer. 20:1-6). When He ascended to Heaven, “He Himself [Christ Jesus] gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12, NKJV). Paul also says; “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men [brethren]” (I Cor. 14:3, NKJV). The four daughters of Philip, and Agabus were true prophets of God

⁷ Price A. Paula, *The Prophet’s Dictionary: The Ultimate Guide to Supernatural Wisdom* (Whitaker: New Kensington, PA, 2006), p. 208-209.

(Acts. 21:9-11). None of them was mentioned to have exploited others or received money in exchange for performing their divinely assigned duties, neither did they sell to people any item in their ministry. Undoubtedly, true prophets of God are emancipators.

MERCHANDIZING PROPHETIC MINISTRY ON SOME TV STATIONS

Though television channels in Ghana are prevalent with many and strange prophetic praxis under the disguise of emancipating their clients from satanic domain, 9 (nine) of them are captured in this article.

Prophetic ministry on Phillico TV

Prophet Philip Acquah is the founder and leader of the Church of Bethesda, and the owner of Phillico TV. The under listed are products on sale at Phillico TV by Prophet Philip Acquah.

Black soap – sells at Ghc 40.00 This black soap is used to combat and prevail over satanic forces.

Rose soap – Ghc 40.00. This soap presumably glues people (couple, family members, friends, work associates, people of influence, etc) together. Thus, it diminishes hatred and disfavor.

Rope Soap – Ghc 120.00. As its name depicts, this three in one box soap is tied with a rope. According to the prophet, this soap is antidote to retentive memory. Accountants, students, scientist and other professionals patronize this product.

Healing (ayaresa) soap – Ghc 40.00. This soap heals all kinds of ailments.

Other soap products sold by Prophet Acquah – Ghc 40.00 each
Sulphur soap, Pacholi scented soap, Rue Cyclerine soap, Sandara soap, money soap (jackpot), Florida water soap and Jabon soap.

Money spray (jackpot) – Ghc 100.00. This spray is said to trigger financial breakthrough.

Kananja water – Ghc 100.00. This water does myriads of miracles.

In a brief interview with the Marketing Manager of Phillico store at Esreso (one of the dozens of Phillico stores in Ghana), the daily sales of the aforementioned products is between Ghc 6,000.00 to Ghc 8,000.00

Prophetic ministry on Sweet TV

Prophet Obofour is the founder and leader of the Anointed Palace Chapel at Fawade near Kumasi. One of the products he sells is the popular “Blood of Jesus” (Yesu mogya). The prophet charges Ghc 100 and above for a drink. Unfortunately, financially handicapped clients of the prophet are given few drops of the product for insignificant breakthrough.

Merchandizing ministry on Prophet 1 TV

Prophet Ebenezer Adarkwaa Yiadom sells two products to his clients. They are; “Well water” (aburamu nsuo) and “Red Egg” (kosua kokoo). The prophet communicates marvellous works through the use of his products. He has code-named them “Stronger metal cuts strong metal” (dadie bi twa dadiemu). The cost is Ghc 500.00 and “Intervening and taking over all battles of his clients” (patako agyeko abowobo) also sells at Ghc 1000.00. Clients of the prophets pay consultation fee of Ghc 200.00 for “special” counseling.

Merchandizing ministry on Fire TV

Prophet Kyiri abosom collects Ghc 300.00 as consultation fee from patrons who need personal counselling from him (the prophet). He sells many kinds of “breakthrough oil” at Ghc 200.00 each.

Merchandizing ministry on Zion TV

Bishop Lawrence Agyapong also known as “Dito Dito” is the founder and General Overseer of Zion Home Chapel International. He is also the owner of Zion TV. He requires all clients to offer Ghc 200.00 as consultation fee. He sells Myrrh Breakthrough water and Myrrh Spiritual Healing Blood at a

minimum of Ghc 2,000.00. According to the prophet, these products cure HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B, Diabetes, Fibroid and all kinds of curses.

Merchandizing ministry on TV

Prophet Odijoe Joseph “Major 1” is the head of Grace Redemption Church. He sells oil at prices ranging from Ghc 1.00 to Ghc 100.00. The prophet offers special prayer to desperate clients in exchange of fees based each case.

Merchandizing ministry on Power TV

Prophet Agya Nkuto is the founder and leader of Power Cathedral International. He offers for sale oil he has terms as “back-to-sender” at Ghc 200.00

Merchandizing ministry on Amen TV

Prophet Kwarteng charges between Ghc 100 to Ghc 500 as consultation fee. In addition to this, he directs them to buy certain items which he uses to perform miracles for them.

Merchandizing ministry on OB TV

This is operated by Prophet Daniel Obinim. He charges consultation fees ranging from Ghc 200 to Ghc 500. He also sells miracle soap/oil/water/egg/banner/cloth, etc. Prophet Obinim professes to be elevated by Jesus to the status of archangel. According to the prophet he normally visit his desperate clients in their dreams in diverse forms, (e.g., a lunatic, dog, etc.).

CONCLUSION

From the evaluation of the outrageous praxis and the effects of merchandizing ministry on some television stations in Ghana in the 21st century, it is absolutely clear in the light of God and His Word that such prophets and their

prophetic ministry are a grievous arena of thieves. A dungeon of oppressive exploiters and slave masters who manipulate their desperate clients by putting on sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves (Matt. 7:15). Through manipulative approach they plunge their clients into myriads of depraved living.

Blindfolded by the prince of this age (2 Cor. 4:4), they have amalgamated from the biblical truth. Like their clients they are aggressive agents of the devil, they promote the agenda of their master—"the liar and the father of it" (John 8:44, NKJV). The motive and passion of such prophets are not to emancipate their oppressed customers. Rather they are inclined to drain them in all spheres to accumulate wealth. Such merchandizers, their ministries as well as their patrons are unproductive to the development of their respective families, the government and people of Ghana, the academy, and the global world. As a result of these extreme biblical and ecclesiological praxis on some television stations in Ghana, the church is sometimes mocked—with the flimsy reason that they are part of the church. This research has unfolded adequate evidence that authenticates that the effects of prophetic ministry in the 21st century in Ghana is catastrophic—emotional, psychological and physical torture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Looking at these occurrences it is obvious that there is lack of knowledge on the part of some people professing the Christian faith. These manipulators would not have this opportunity to rip them off the way they are doing if the followers had knowledge about God and ministry. It is therefore recommended that churches must intensify their teachings on these issues to help expose the devil and his scheme and further correct these abnormalities and insolence.
2. In the past, Basic schools in Ghana were taught Bible Knowledge as a subject on the schools' curriculum. This gave students some basic

knowledge about God and the Bible. The re-introduction of this in all Basic schools in the country will reduce the level of ignorance of people who fall prey to these false prophets.

3. All the identifiable Christian organizations in the country such as the Christian Council and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council should openly denounce these ministers and their exploitative ministries. Such an action will create awareness about their nefarious deeds.
4. Bible Colleges, Theological Seminaries and Department of Theology in Universities must structure their curriculum Christocentrically.
5. The academy must encourage vigorous contemporary research work in the area under discussion.
6. The Government of Ghana must assist the Church with resources to create the awareness of the public about false prophets and their ministries, and their deadly effects of their praxis upon, individuals, families, the nation and the global world.

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