

ECSTATICISM IN ISRAEL PROPHETIC TRADITION AND AFRICAN  
PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT  
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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of ecstasy is an interesting subject to the psychologists and anthropologist. Herschel notes that

Of all the forms of religious experience, none has been as fascinating to both the psychologist and the historian as ecstaticism. It has often been regarded as a universal phenomenon, the elucidation of which ecstasy would solve the riddle of how religions have come into being (342).

Ecstasy is part of the prophetic tradition of the religion in the Ancient Near East and this is confirmed from the Mari and Ugaritic text (Bright 69). Archeological discovery shows that the prophets at this primitive stage were ecstatic. Some scholars believed that the idea of prophetic ecstaticism was borrowed from the Canaanites prophetic tradition which had grown up to maturity by the time the Israelites occupied the land of Canaan and it was likely that the Israelites copied this form of prophetic disposition from the Canaanites who were their neighbor (Harrison 742). Buller says “in the early primitive tradition ecstaticism is a social reality and a norm for prophetic acceptance” (663).

During the time of Samuel ecstatic prophecy had become a common charismatic phenomenon among the prophets of Yahweh. There was the possibility of tension between the prophets of Dagon the gods of Ekron and the prophets of Yahweh. The Canaanites prophets prophesied by soothsaying and fortune telling and moved around in company or group to conjure magic and perform “miracles” which attracted the attention of the people in Canaan. Yahweh had earlier warned the Israelites to beware of these practices because it is an abomination to Him (Deut. 18:9ff).

The prophetic traditions in Israel were unique and different from that of the Canaanites. At this period of history the prophetic ministry in Israel was more of vision and ecstaticism. The *ruach* of Yahweh was so vivid that upon whom it rested manifest

unusual prophetic grace and action. This kind of prophetic movement was prominent in the days of Samuel and also today some people claimed to manifest unusual prophetic action to confirm the hand of Yahweh upon their life and ministry just as it happened during the primitive era of prophetic movement.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship that exists between the prophetic movement that existed during the time of Samuel and the claim by the African independent church movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The burden of this paper is to objectively trace the nature and origin of ecstaticism in Israel prophetic tradition using 1 Samuel 19:18-24 as a case study and the African Church Movement. The scope of this paper is limited to the nature and origin of ecstatic prophetism in Israel focusing on 1 Samuel 19:18-24 and African Indigenous/independent church movement.

#### Methodology

The method adopted is eclectic. It is a combination of phenomenological and participatory observation with exegetical analysis of the passage in focus. The writer visited some churches that are indigenous as observer and interview some of the leaders. The churches visited were six in numbers; four in Akure, one at Ibadan and one in Ogbomosho. The writer also used dictionaries, books, internet sources, journals, periodicals and encyclopedias that discussed issue of ecstaticism in prophetic traditions.

#### THE MEANING OF ECSTATICISM

The word ecstasy comes from the Greek word *ekstasis* meaning to be “beside oneself” or “to get out of one’s mind.” Therefore, ecstasy means the seizure of one’s body by a spirit and the seizure of human’s mind by a divinity (Sharma 2677). Lattke coming from Greek world view defined ecstasy as a state of being outside oneself (421). Herschel saw ecstasy as a state of trance in which the soul was no longer in its place but had departed from the body and had entered into a relationship with the invisible beings or became united with a deity (324). He further explained that ecstasy was a way of ascending to higher form of living or at least a way which rendered possible the receiving of supernatural endowment (324). Therefore, ecstasy in this paper is described as a state of frenzy, whereby the senses are suspended and the person seized becomes unconscious of what is going on around him.

Most Psychologists rightly explains the term “ecstasy” in a wider sense. Scholars like Weidel, Hauer, Leuba and Evelyn Underhill who have thoroughly studied ecstatic experience have come out with a wider and all-embracing meaning of ecstasy which Lindblom summarized below:

Ecstasy is an abnormal state of consciousness in which one is so intensely absorbed by one single idea or one single feeling or by group of ideas or feeling; that the normal stream of psychical life is more or less arrested. The bodily senses ceased to function, one becomes impervious to impression from without; consciousness is exalted above the ordinary level of daily experience, unconscious mental impression and idea come to the surface in the form of visions or auditions (5)

The above definition makes any person who concentrates upon one’s idea or feeling easily passes into a state of trance no matter how trivial the idea may be, which gains possession of his consciousness. Therefore, ecstasy in this sense merely indicates the presence of certain abnormal psycho-physical conditions, an alteration of the normal equilibrium, a shifting of the threshold of consciousness and a withdrawal of consciousness from circumference to the center, a state in which the absorption of the mind in one desire is so profound that everything else is blotted out (Hershel 326). A person in ecstasy is impervious to messages from without and the consciousness of his person disappears.

In religious ecstasy, consciousness is entirely filled with the presence of God, with ideas and feelings belonging to the divine sphere. The soul is lifted up into the exalted region of divine exaltation and the lower world with its sensations momentarily disappears (Lindblom 5). Such a condition is brought about by preparation and the means used to induce it vary from narcotics to alcohol or music and dance. Ecstasy can also be induced by techniques of contemplation and complete spiritual concentration as well as prayer and fasting (Herschel 342).

From the study of the Israel prophets, Hyatt observes that some prophets that prophesied before Amos were ecstatic in the sense that they lost normal volition and thought and came under the influence of suggestion from without, therefore he concludes that these prophets were ecstatic (16). However, Smith describes ecstasy as the loss of

consciousness to the external world which equals insanity citing the scene in 1 Samuel. 19: 18-24; and Jeremiah 29:26 as examples. In an effort not to equate Israelite prophets with the frenzy prophets of the Ancient Near East, Smith prefers the word mystics instead (5, 7). It is a known fact that the practice of ecstasy is a common phenomenon among the people of the ancient world and this practice is reflected in the ministry of the prophet in ancient Israel. For example

In I Sam. 10:5

Samuel said to Saul, "...As you approach the town you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute and lyre being played before them and they will be prophesying and the spirit of Yahweh will come upon you in power and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed to a new person (vs. 6 paraphrased)

This verse demonstrates the nature of prophetic ecstasy at the time of Samuel. The writer observes four things here:

The state of prophesying is induced or activated by means of harp, tambourine, flute and lyre. The state of prophesying is sustained by a group phenomenon. The ecstatic phenomenon is spread by contagion that is, it can be caught. The Spirit of Yahweh is the motivator, it is His *ruah* that motivates the prophets and empowers them to prophesy.

Relative terms common to ecstasy among scholars include "divine seizure" or "spirit possession" or what Hershel called "sacred madness" where the supernatural take possession of a person either permanently or temporarily for good or bad.

Herschel notes that:

Ecstasy is part of the belief maintained by primitive people all over the world; it is a temporary separation of the soul from the body during sleep, illness or trance. To the modern man this phenomenon reduces biblical prophecy as well as other associated phenomena in the history of religion to a common anthropological denominator and this classifies the prophets as primitive or archaic (325).

## MEANING OF PROPHETISM

According to Easton Dictionary the word "Prophet" comes from the Hebrew word *nabi* meaning "to bubble forth," or "to utter." This Hebrew word is the first and the most

generally used for a prophet (Easton). By the time of Samuel another word *ro'ēh* (seer) began to be used in I Sam 9:9. This word occurs seven times in Samuel. Afterwards another word *hōzeh* (seer) in 2 Sam 11:24 was employed. In Chr. 29:29 all these three words are used as follows, Samuel the *seer*, Nathan the *prophet* and Gad the *hozeh* (seer). In Josuah. 13:22 Balaam is called a *kosem* a diviner a word used for false prophets (Easton).

In defining prophetism, there are two opposing camps that have to be considered. The liberals and the conservatives. The liberals are critical about the claim that the Biblical prophetism is divine in origin. They totally objected to the traditional view of prophetism as divine in its origin. They argued that prophetism is a borrowed tradition from the Mesopotamia/Canaanite tradition. In their pursuit for acceptable definition of prophetism, they started by defining prophetism from the angle of ecstasy using the drama in I Sam 10:11; 19:24 and I Kings 18:17-40 as a platform for their definition, therefore they concluded that Hebrew prophetism is ecstatic and the prophets are endowed with power (Noth 225).

The conservatives on the other hand tenaciously uphold the divine origin of prophetism and see the prophets as men of God. They were God's mouthpiece and representatives. They explain Prophetism as a process of communicating God's mind to God's people (Laney 314). Albright succinctly describes נָבִיא as an individual who has been favored with a special call from God... a charismatic religious figure, a person without hereditary right or political appointment who was authorized to speak and act on behalf of God (303). Looking at Albright's definition the writer observes that the word "charismatic figure" is not necessary because not all prophets of God are charismatic. However, a prophet is "a man authorized to speak and act on behalf of God" this statement is near the etymological meaning of *nabi*. The two verb forms that are frequently use is (*pi'el* and *hitpa'el*) , unquestionably derived from the noun, but they simply mean "to play the *nabi'* role"; that is, "to act the *nabi'* part" (Napier). The word *nabi* has a cognate word from the Akkadian words *nabu* meaning "to call" hence "the one called" and from the Arabian word *nabaa* which means "to announce," hence a "proclaimer," and the Ethiopian word *nab aba* meaning "to speak" hence "a speaker"

(Schildenberger 716). The underlying meaning of the Hebrew noun might be, then, "an announcer," or "the one who announces" the purpose and activity of God.

Odumuyiwa sees *nabi* as a member of a group given to corporate and infectious ecstasy, whereas the  $\text{רוֹאֵה}$  (*ro'eh*) is solitary and altogether a more important and impressive person who stand to declare God's mind to the people (33). The writer aligns himself with the definition of Albright which says:

Prophetism is a process whereby a person favored with a special call from God is authorized to speak and act on behalf of God. And also a man called and commissioned by God to warn the people of the peril of sin and to preach reform and revival of true religion and morality to God's people.

This definition from Albright is adopted as a working definition in this paper.

## AFRICAN PENTECOSTALS

Pentecostals connected to the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles in 1906-1909, the charismatic renewal movement in the mainline Churches beginning in the 1960s and the Neo-Charismatic "catch-all category" that comprises 18,810 independent indigenous, post denominational groups that cannot be classified as either Pentecostal or charismatic but which shares a common emphasis on the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, Pentecostal-like experiences, speaking in tongues, signs and wonders and power encounters most of the Nigerian charismatic churches fall into this category. In today's world, the mainline churches are turning fast to becoming charismatic in their worship experience. They also fall into this third group. Most of the traits of the Pentecostals are found in them. In African continent the largest groups of the Pentecostals are found in Nigeria and Ghana, and they are distinct from the Mainline churches which are missionary churches that were established in Africa especially in Nigeria over a century ago by the foreign missionaries. Examples of these mainline churches are Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, ECWA, There are different church categories in contemporary Nigeria. For example, See Allan Anderson, "The Newer Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches: The Shape of Future of Christianity in Africa?" *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2002: 167. See also Asonzeh Ukah, "Mobilities, Migration and Multiplication: The Expansion of the Religious Field of the Redeemed Christian Church of God

(RCCG), Nigeria”, in *Afe Adogame & Cordula Weissköppel* (eds), “Religion in the Context of African Migration Studies,” *African Studies Series* (Bayreuth: Bayreuth 2005), 317-341. Ayegboyin, Ischie, Azonkeh have classified these churches into groups, such as Independent/indigenous Pentecostals and Newer Pentecostal Churches. There is also African Initiated church movement. These are churches that do not have any foreign affiliation the founder saw the light and move out by faith to establish his church based on the revelation he had seen. See Matthews Ojo “Of Saint and Sinners Pentecostalism and the Paradox of Social Transformation” *Inaugural Lecture* held on June 8 at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, 2010.

#### ORIGIN OF HEBREW PROPHETISM

The origin of Hebrew prophetism can be traced to Moses. Although Abraham was the first to be called a prophet נָבִיא (*nabi*) in the Bible (Gen 20:7; Ps 105:15). Baker asserts that Old Testament prophecy receives its normative form in the life and person of Moses who constituted a standard of comparison for all future prophets (975). He posits that every feature which characterized the true prophet of Yahweh in the classical tradition of Old Testament prophecy was found in Moses (975). Therefore in the life of Moses, the following characterization was found and this serves as a standard for the future prophets.

Firstly, Moses was called and specifically assigned an office to function. The making of a prophet comes from Yahweh and the initiative to be a prophet rest with Yahweh which was all fulfilled in Moses life and ministry.

Secondly, the ethical and social concerns of the Israelites were owed to Moses. Before his call he was already concerned with the social welfare of his people and later in history as a prophetic lawgiver, he outlined the most humane and philanthropic code of the ancient world.

Thirdly, the combination of proclamation and prediction which was found in the prophets was first found in Moses. Also the use of symbols in delivering messages from Yahweh that was common with the prophet was also found in Moses. The lifting of hand and the making of bronze serpent the intercessory and mediatorial aspect of Moses

ministry was another unique feature that makes some scholars to trace the origin of prophetism in Israel to Moses. (Vos 199)

However, not all scholars traced the origin of prophetism to Moses. There are those who saw Samuel as the foundation of prophetism in Israel. They posit that during his time the office of a prophet had more public theocratic background and with the beginning of group prophetism the prophet increased numerically (Vangemerer 34). During the time of Samuel and other Monarchical prophets there was close affinity between the prophets and the royal court. The prophet serves as adviser to the king and yet the prophetic ministry did not lose its authority and independence.

The critical school notes that there are some similarities in the prophetic tradition of the Israelites and the Canaanites and therefore concludes that the Hebrew prophets might have borrowed heavily from the Egyptian-Canaanites-Mesopotamia prophecy (Folarin). The liberal school asserts that by the time prophecy began in Israel, the Canaanites already had a developed prophetic tradition which probably might have influenced Israelites prophetic system. The argument for foreign origin of prophetism in Israel was propagated by the liberal scholars who gave several reasons for their position<sup>i</sup> these positions to the writer cannot stand the test of time because there was no strong evidence to support their claims. The writer disagrees with this supposition because first of all, the prophetic system of the Canaanites is devoted to Baalism which is cultic in nature. Although there may be some resemblance or similarities in the nature of both prophecies<sup>ii</sup> hence the differences are clear.

Frederick observes the differences between the two prophetic traditions and concludes that prophecy in Israel is mainly on forth telling and it is usually centered on the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his covenant people (see Micah 6:1-8). Also divination, soothsaying and fortune telling was not an acceptable method of prophetic communication to Yahweh this is reflected in God's covenant on Mount Ebal to the nation of Israel in Deuteronomy 18:9ff (47). The Israel prophetic ministry unlike their neighbor did not focus on preserving and supporting cultic and royal institution but was directed on God's Holiness, justice, fairness and equity which is the main criteria for measuring a true prophecy (Smith 992).

## The Seer

In 1 Sam. 9: 9 the bible reads “formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God he would say, “Come, let us go to the seer, because the prophet of today used to be called seer” (NIV). There are two cognate words in Hebrew that is used for Seer; these are רֹאֵה or חֹזֶה. Both terms are parallel in function with the prophet. Napier observes that Outside Chronicles which is relatively late and where, in any case, no significant occurrence of the terms appears, the term חֹזֶה appears six times and רֹאֵה seven. Napier explains further that the occurrence of חֹזֶה with the single exception of Mic. 3:7, appears in all intents and purposes, indistinguishable. Baker and Harrison agree with Napier that the two word רֹאֵה and חֹזֶה are the same. Both are used for the prophet in Israel. Baker expatiated further, that the verb חָזָה (*haza*) can be paralleled in the verb רָאָה, (*ra'ah*) both are used in connection with divination Zc. 10: 2; Ezk. 21:21), a connection which they share also with the נָבִיא (*nabi*) Mi. 3:11 both are used for perception of the meaning of events Ps 46:8; Is. 5:12) and of assessment of character Ps. 11:4, 7: 1 Sam 16;1): both are used of the vision of God and of prophetic activity. In some instances רֹאֵה and נָבִיא are parallel in Amos 7:12ff. Amaziah addresses Amos as חֹזֶה urging him to prophesy in Judah and not in Bethel and Amos replied that he was not a *nabi*. From the stand point of our understanding of who a prophet is these three words qualified a prophet to be a prophet. That is a prophet is a seer and a speaker on behalf of God. Napier recall again the statement of I Sam. 9:9 that "he who is now called a prophet *was* formerly called a seer " he concludes that prophet and seer were understood as exercising in common the function of *seeing* - i.e., apprehending that which is not in the normal course accessible -- and *speaking* forth, proclaiming, that which is thus seen and apprehended (Napier). The designation of Samuel as seer in the old narrative of I Sam. 9 and the parenthetical statement in I Sam. 9:9 inserted later into the account “that the seer becomes in time the prophet” make it clear that the office of seer existed among the Israelites before that of prophet (Kaiser). The biblical evidence we have just surveyed points to a period of coexistence of seer and prophet and a popular tendency to equate the two offices. Israelite prophetism, which began to emerge as an institution in the tenth century, is indebted to the office of seer, but also, as we are about to see, to the very different phenomenon of

ancient Canaanite prophetism, long current in the land when Israel entered and settled there. Napier concluded that

Mature Israelite prophetism was an appropriation, then, transacted on the ground of Canaan over a period of several centuries. Its unique character, however, was shaped neither by seer nor by Canaanite prophet, but by the nature of Yahwism and the Yahweh faith. This is to affirm that, while the institution of Israelite prophetism developed relatively slowly and attained maturity relatively late, the essence of the prophetic was present from the Mosaic era, inherent in the faith of ancient Israel from her formation as a people out of Egyptian slavery (Napier)

Old Testament prophetism in its development from the tenth to the sixth centuries represents a striking refinement and transformation of both the office of seer and the institution (Napier)

### The Prophetic Guild

It is generally believed that Israelite prophetism is related to and influenced by the seer, which developed into group prophetism which flourishes effectively at the time of Samuel and Saul (Blunt 20, 22). This prophetism apart from the scene in the wilderness where seventy elders prophesied in the presence of Moses first appears in the Old Testament in the old narrative of I Sam. 9:1-10:16 (Hyatt 15)

From the text, Saul was looking for his father's lost asses, and they (Saul and his servant) consulted the seer, Samuel, who has not only reassured them on the score of the animals but has also anointed Saul "to be prince over his people Israel" (10:1) As sign and token of the validity of Samuel's act Saul is informed in advance of what is to take place, and it happens precisely as Samuel has said it would:

When they came to Gibeah, behold, a band of prophets met him; and the spirit of God came mightily upon him, and he prophesied among them. And when all who knew him before saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" . . . Therefore it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (10:10-12.)

In I Sam. 19:18-24 the proverb was repeated in a more dramatic way, with marked emphasis upon the highly contagious nature of the seizure and an elaboration of

its manifestation. Saul, in pursuit of the now outlawed David, who has taken refuge with Samuel, sends a company of men to capture David. "And when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied." (19:20.) Two subsequent companies are dispatched, and both remain, seized by the same contagion. Now Saul comes: "And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel, and lay naked all that day and all that night. Hence it is said, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'" (19:23-24.) Napier observes that "the relationship between the narrative of I Sam. 10 and that of chapter 19 is uncertain. Source critics have commonly seen the second as a duplicate account, a later and therefore allegedly unauthentic explanation of the proverb" (Napier).

Group prophetism was probably the first stage in the history of prophetic tradition in Israel (J. Smith 2). There was no doubt that Samuel had some connection with the prophetic guild and possibly he was their leader (I Sam. 19:20-24). Group prophetism became more prominent during the time of Samuel and Saul. If we are to stay with the Samuel account group prophetism began in his days and it seems he was the founder and head of the team. Eugene H. Merrill posits that before Samuel there was no wide spread prophecy or revelation I Sam 3:1ff but when Samuel became a prophet he trained others in the prophetic ministry. Samuel did not train these people how to prophesy, but how to carry out some prophetic functions and arts (258). However this form of prophetism<sup>iii</sup> is said to be the first stage in the history of prophetism among the Jews (Smith 2). The prophetic guild was described by Lindblom as follows:

The early prophets were normally in associations or guilds. They lived together in common enclave term coenobie and had their meals together 2 kings 4:38ff. The members of the prophetic guild were called sons of the prophet and their head was a leader who functioned as a sort of pater familias. He could have a special servant as Elisha had Gehazi, but would still enjoy great authority over others. He trained the members of the guild in ecstatic exercises and practice and also instructed them in matters belonging to true Yahweh religion and cult. The sons of the prophet used to sit

before the leader while the leader would stand before them as their conductor I Samuel 19:20, 24 (69, 70)

From the passage above the following suppositions are noted. First is the reference to the sons of the prophet which was equated with the prophetic guild. Second is the reference to the training of the prophetic guild in ecstatic exercises and practice. Lindblom observes that sons of the prophets are not genealogical but a relational submission and willing attachment in which prophetic bands lived with great individual leaders. These groups of prophet were also known in the Canaanites tradition the description of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel in I Kings 18 gives further impetus to the phenomenon of contagious, ecstatic prophecy.

In I Kings 18: 20-30 (paraphrased)The contest between the prophets of Baal and the prophet of Yahweh (Elijah) is under way, and Baal's prophets have induced the seizure and are sustaining it in an effort to evoke a tangible response from their deity. Crying "O Baal, answer us!" they perform a kind of limping dance, and as Elijah taunts them, their wild performance reaches its emotionally uncontrolled peak when they "cut themselves *after their custom* with swords and lances until the blood gushed out upon them" (I Kings 18:28) Noon, Baal's best and strongest hour, passes, but the prophets of Baal -- note the language of the text -- 'continue to prophesy" (vs. 29) The R.S.V. is forced to interpret: "they raved on." "The verb [from the same root as *nabi*', "prophet"] can only be paraphrased in Christian language, which confines 'prophecy' to the higher levels of revelation." (Montgomery 303) Napier noted that "If this is a far remove from the content of "seer" and "seeing," it is at least an equally far remove from the prophet and the prophetism exemplified even in Ezekiel, to say nothing of Isaiah! Whatever may be the ultimate judgment with respect to the factor of "ecstasy" in the great prophets of Israel, it cannot legitimately be argued that their prophetism is in continuum with and perpetuates this phenomenon of Canaanite prophecy." Where is any significant biblical evidence that classical Israelite prophetism was predominantly manifested in a temporary and artificially induced state; that it was productive of a totally transformed personality; that it was a group-created-and-sustained state of emotion and, as such, a highly contagious condition induced by violent seizure and involving the absolute suspension of rationality? Napier went further to cite Holscher and argued that "The interpretation of

Old Testament prophetism as an essentially ecstatic phenomenon differing not at all in this respect from the ecstatic prophecy characteristic of the ancient Near and Middle East continues to be advocated, especially by those who are persuaded of prevailing ancient Eastern institutional uniformity (Napier 1994)

### The Cultic Prophet

Some scholars like Ackroyd, Kaiser and Napier believed that Yahwistic prophetism remained in close rapport with the cultus. The relationship, indeed, was one of mutual indebtedness. It is obvious that the prophets were familiar with the ritual and meaning of the cultus, that they sometimes spoke in language borrowed from it, that they even quoted directly from its prayers and liturgies, and that the role and meaning of the cultus was itself in turn influenced by prophetic interpretation. (Napier)The cultic prophet were regarded as expert in prayer as Yahweh spokesman, they usually communicated divine answer to particular petition (Aworinde, Lecture Note) This is not to say that the great prophet was a "cult" or "guild" prophet, a member of an "association" of cult prophets officially and professionally related to the cultic institution in manner and degree comparable to the priest. It is to insist, however, that prophet and priest were not so positively, consistently, and inimically opposed as has sometimes been assumed. The two figures most highly ranked in the traditions of Judaism, Moses and Elijah, are remembered and recorded in the dual role of prophet-priest (Moses is a Levite (Exod. 2:1); Elijah conducts sacrifice [I Kings 18:32 ff.]) At the lower end of the chronological scale, to mention only the most prominent possibilities in the classification of dual functionaries, one thinks of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, both of whom come out of priestly backgrounds (Jer. 1:1; Ezek. 1:3) and exhibit a prophetism patently extending, in some significant regards, the ancient dual form (Montgomery 303). As a rule, the representatives of Yahwistic prophetism saw themselves allied to the priesthood as colleagues in a fundamentally common task, a fact which further defines and underscores the relationship of concern of the prophet to the cultus. Napier asserts that "form-critical studies confirm the prophets' cultic orientation. Several shorter prophetic writings (among them Habakkuk, Nahum, and Joel) are now interpreted as having been produced out of cultic influence, in the liturgical style of the cult ritual. Elsewhere throughout the

recorded prophetic utterances there appear strong suggestions of conscious or unconscious adaptation of cultic ritual. But this relationship between prophet and cultus can best be illustrated in the form-critical example which follows (Napier).

#### ECSTATICISM IN I SAMUEL 19:18-24

##### Background to the text

Chapter 18 of 1 Samuel serves as an interlude to the preceding and subsequent chapter. This chapter tells us of the friendship covenant between David and Jonathan where both of them exchanging their garment and armor. Soon Saul promoted David to a high rank in the army. It was not long that the romance between Saul and David went sore. The King became Jealous of this young hero because of his fame and popularity and he sought to eliminate him at all cost (Porter 368). The following day Saul's evil spirit came while David was playing the harp. Saul twice aimed his spear against David to pin him to the wall but David escaped. Saul still needed David but could not endure him in the palace, so he drafted him to the front to command a garrison a post of honor and also of danger (Smith 169). David became the toast of all. Saul promised David his daughter but with a condition for her bride price that if he could bring him hundred foreskin of the Philistine he would give him Michal her daughter thinking that in the process David would be killed in battle. Contrary to Saul's expectation David succeeded because Yahweh was with him so Saul became more jealous of David and was perturbed because of the favor and blessing David enjoyed among the people so Saul put price on his head he wanted David dead at all cost.

##### 3.2. Immediate Context

After David had defeated Goliath, Saul the King became jealous of him and sought to assassinate him. Saul was angry with David because of the favor he enjoyed and because he had become popular among the citizen so he wanted him dead. Saul perceived that if David was not exterminated he would probably become the King of Israel.

In verses 1-7 Saul counseled his household the reason why David should be exterminated but Jonathan refused to corporate with his father because he did not see anything wrong in what David had done rather David had rendered valuable service to

the King and to the people. Jonathan succeeded in persuading the king and the king admitted his persuasion and withdrew his decision and David return to the court.

From verses 8-17 David escaped assassination attempt on his life two times in this verses. One from the philistine and second from the murderer sent to kill him by Saul. A nocturnal attempt on David was foiled by Michal Saul's daughter who facilitated his escape through a window, when Saul had about the role played by Michal he was very displeased and asked her "Why did you send my enemy away?" But she lied that David wanted to kill her that was why she let him go. David then escaped to Samuel in Ramah where he narrated his ordeal with Saul to him.

### 3.3. Literal /Contextual Analysis of 1 Samuel 19: 18-24.

**18** וְדָוִד בָּרַח וַיִּמְלֹט וַיָּבֹא אֶל-שְׁמוּאֵל הַקָּמֵתָה וַיִּגְדֵּלֵוּ אֵת

כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה-לּוֹ שָׁאוּל וַיִּלְךָ הוּא וְשְׁמוּאֵל וַיֵּשְׁבוּ (בְּנוֹיֹת) [בְּנוֹיֹת]:

Now David fled and escaped, and he came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt at Naioth.

**20** וַיִּשְׁלַח שָׁאוּל מַלְאָכִים לְקַחַת אֶת-דָּוִד וַיֵּרָא אֶת-לִהְקֵת

הַנְּבִיאִים נִבְאִים וְשְׁמוּאֵל עֹמֵד נֹצֵב עֲלֵיהֶם וַתְּהִי עַל-מַלְאָכָיו שָׁאוּל רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּתְּנָבְאוּ בַּסֵּהֲמָה:

Then Saul sent messengers to take David; and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.

**20** וַיִּגְדּוּ לְשָׁאוּל וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֲחֵרִים וַיִּתְּנָבְאוּ בַּסֵּהֲמָה וַיִּסָּף

שָׁאוּל וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים שְׁלִשִׁים וַיִּתְּנָבְאוּ בַּסֵּהֲמָה:

When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied.

**21** וַיִּלְךָ גַם-הוּא הַקָּמֵתָה וַיָּבֹא עַד-בּוֹר הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר בְּשֶׁכוֹ וַיִּשְׁאַל

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵיפֹה שְׁמוּאֵל וְדָוִד וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה (בְּנוֹיֹת) [בְּנוֹיֹת] בְּרָמָה:

Then he himself went to Ramah, and came to the great well that is in Secu; and he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" And one said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah."

**23** וַיִּלְךָ שָׁם אֶל-נוֹיֹת (נוֹיֹת) בְּרָמָה וַתְּהִי עָלָיו גַּם-הוּא רִיחַ

אֱלֹהִים וַיִּלְךָ הַלּוֹךְ וַיִּתְּנָבְאָ עַד-בָּאוּ (בְּנוֹיֹת) [בְּנוֹיֹת] בְּרָמָה:

And he went from there to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

24 וַיִּפְשֹׁט גַּם־הוּא בְּנֶזְרָיו וַיִּתְנַבֵּא גַּם־הוּא לְפָנַי שְׁמוּאֵל וַיִּפֹּל עָרֹם

כָּל־הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְכָל־הַלַּיְלָה עַל־כֵּן יֹאמְרוּ הַגַּם שְׂאוּל בְּנָבִיאִים: פ

And he also stripped off his clothes, and also prophesied before Samuel, and lay naked all that day and all that night. Hence it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

If one starts reading the narrative of I Samuel from Chapter 19 verse 1, one discovers that there is a literary flow from the beginning to the end there is no break or discrepancies. In vs. 18, David fled and escaped to Ramah. The writer sees Ramah as a city of the prophets. This is where the prophetic guild congregated and Samuel was their leader. One assumes that his job would be to coordinate and give direction to the company and not to teach them how to prophesy because prophetic gift is a free gift from Yahweh. He gives it to as many as he called to that office. Mauchline asserts that Samuel free himself from responsibilities of national leadership to exercise in this community of the prophet (143)

The location of the school of the prophet is at Naioth a town within Ramah very close to Secu. When Saul heard that David had fled to Ramah he summoned his army to go and fish him out from Ramah and killed him. The intention of the army was to kill David. This was an evil intension. But when the army garrison got to Naioth they met a group of prophets prophesying with Samuel standing over them וַשְׁמוּאֵל עֹמֵד נֹצֵב עֲלֵיהֶם as their leader. They were seized by the power of the Spirit of Yahweh and fell in to a state of ecstasy and all of them began to prophesy (probably they join to praise God). Two more times Saul sent another set of army to Naioth the same thing happened to them and finally he himself went down to meet them. When he got there he was seized by the Spirit of Yahweh and began to prophesy. This scene could be likened to what happened on the day of pentecost in Act 2:1-4. Hebrew word used is verse 20 is נְבָאִים a niph'al participle masculine plural from [נָבֵא] meaning to prophesy hence they were prophesying in a religious ecstasy (BDB 612). The presence of Niph'al participle indicates prophesying under the influence of divine spirit in an ecstatic manner which may be induced with song and music. (BDB 612)

In verses 23 and 24 וַיִּתְנַבֵּא waw conjunction prefix to hithpa'el imperfect 3<sup>rd</sup> m.s from נָבֵא meaning to prophesy hence he himself prophesied in the presence of all. אֵלֵיהֶם is the instrument of prophetic ecstasy. Under its influence a man can be changed into

another man I Sam 10:5-6. Lindblom says “when only predictions and proclamations of one kind or another are in question the word *dabar* plays a role analogous to that of רוח *ruach* in ecstatic experiences” (57) The רוח came upon these people and caused them to go into a prophetic frenzy. When Saul came under the influence of רוח he also prophesied and lay naked all day long. When the people saw him they said “Is Saul also among the prophet?” By this time Saul had been rejected by God and actuated by an evil spirit even though he was among the prophet (Matthew Henry)

The action of these three groups of people here indicates that they were in a frenzy state, the word נא (also) is very important in verse 24. It indicates what happened to Saul happened to all. Evans observes that “the stripping naked was sometimes part of the ritual for ecstatic prophets. In the case of Saul stripping off his royal robes could be seen as a further symbol that it was Saul’s own action that was causing royalty to be stripped from him” (118). This is quite different from the frenzy disposition of the Baal prophets in 1 Kings 18:20ff. The prophets of Baal were orgiastic in their action. They cut themselves with knives and lancets and shouted all day long to invoke Baal but all their ecstatic display did not bear fruit.

## ECSTATICISM IN AFRICAN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

The quest for freedom and self expression necessitated the emergence of indigenous churches in Africa (Ayegboyin and Ishola 24). Apart from this, the desire to find a mode of religious expression which is satisfying is quite a factor and also freedom to exercise one’s spiritual gifts such as prophecy and speaking with tongues. Most of the churches that thrive in Nigeria today broke away from the mainline churches<sup>iv</sup> which were believed to be unspiritual, cold and lukewarm and who have been dominated by western culture and world view. Africans generally are emotional in disposition and any religion that will suppress or deny them of their emotional outbursts will be resisted.

In African Pentecostal Churches<sup>v</sup> it is a common practice to see worshippers clapping their hand, shaking their heads vigorously, drumming and playing instruments and dancing round in order to gain ascendancy to the realm of the spirit. In most cases some people in these churches worked themselves up into a state of frenzy before they prophesy to the congregation. Pastor S. O.Ajao of C.A.C Outreach Oke-Ijebu Akure

opines that clapping of hand and dancing vigorously enhances prophetic outburst, he said, “that’s why prophesy is common their church” (Interview).

Prophetess Adejoke Olorunfemi of Power of God revival Center Rab, Felele, Ibadan said they believed so much in the Old Testament prophets and their prophetic disposition and to get to their level of receiving from God they have to put in place some instrument of music such as tambourine, bell, drums and trumpet, supporting her argument from the scripture, she pointed to Elisha who needed to prophesy to his people but prophesy did not come until a musician was brought to play and as soon as the musician started playing the prophet went into prophetic frenzy, she said in the church they used to prophesy and see vision especially when the right music is being played (Interview).

Elder Akinpelu of Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Oba- Ile Akure said prophesy do come to the congregation when the spirit led the prophet into fasting and prayer. He may be fasting for 21 or 30 or 100 days and lay bear on the floor to receive from God. At the end of the fast the prophet will start seeing people and telling them what the Lord wants them to do. This kind of ecstatic prophesy that is being practiced by some Aladura churches is primitive and negate the spirit of the New Testament that sees all believers as prophets (I Pet. 2:9-11). The New Testament sees all believers as proclaimers of God’s word, so contextually these churches have deviated from the New Testament principle.

The writer visited six churches, four in Akure, one in Ogbomosho and one at Ibadan. The churches visited were:

1. Church of the Lord Aladura Ogbomosho
2. Cherubim and Seraphim Church, Oba Ile, Akure
3. C. A. C Outreach Oke Ijebu Akure
4. C. A. C. glory center FUTA Junction Akure
5. Power of God Revival Center, Rab, Felele Layout Ibadan
6. VERA Church, Akure

The writer attended their prayer services which they called revival services as an observer and interview some of the leaders as reported above.

During one of the prayer services the writer attended there was much noise in the church. There were shouting, dancing, clapping, rolling and shaken of head vigorously with the drummer increasing the tempo of the dance all of a sudden there was a stop in

the process and a woman was caught in frenzy, she was out of her mind and she began to prophesy, she grabbed a man and started beating him and telling him to change when the woman wants to stripped herself naked the people around grabbed her and the pastor came forward to say be calm in Jesus name (3ce). There and then she became calm and sat down on the floor. This is a type of what the primitive prophet experience and some churches still worked themselves in that realm of ecstasy to demonstrate prophetic gift to the church.

The writer's assessment is that there are similarities in the prophetic operation in ancient Israel and African Pentecostal churches. The phenomenon of ecstasy is similar in every aspect. They both claimed to speak for God and they were both custodian of Yahweh's policy. They were jealous of Him and stood for whatever that pleased him. The difference today, is that some African Pentecostal churches has bastardized the prophetic office by using the instrument of prophetic gift to make merchandize of the masses. The quest for money and materialism are factor. It has eaten deep into the fabric of some of these churches, therefore the prophets are blurred in vision. They do not see again in to the heart of God, every one is doing what pleases him or her. In an effort to prophesy some went as far as using diabolic means to see into the supernatural. This was not the case with the Old Testament prophet. They were passionate for God; they were ready to die for Yahweh. They stood against wickedness in the land not minding the consequence of their actions. Today, the number of the so called prophets is on the increase but the society is not change. In fact the evil perpetuated by some of these prophets is great and the number of the people misled is much to be desired. The prophet of old told people what Yahweh wanted but the present day prophet only tell people what they want them to hear and not actually speaking on behalf of God.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined ecstaticism from Israel prophetic tradition and has concluded that ecstaticism in Israel is a primitive practice which began in the day of Samuel and it is claimed to be of divine origin. It was neither borrowed nor copied from the nation around them. The prophet of Israel speaks in the name of Yahweh and they

stand for Justice, Holiness and Righteousness which was not the case with the prophets of Baal their neighbor.

Also it has been established that ecstatic prophet were more prominent at the early stage of Israel existence but as the nation developed the ecstasy faded away to give room to more mature way of receiving from the spirit of God. The spirit of God took a major role in Israel prophetic tradition which was missing in other religion that surrounds them. The Spirit of God is the instrument that induced ecstatic prophecy and when God moves who can stop him? We see the case in 1 Sam 19:18-24. It is like a resemblance of what happened on the day of Pentecost Act 2:1-4 and in most African Pentecostal Churches.

The writer concludes that no matter the nature of prophecy what concern Yahweh is obedience to his word, holiness, justice and equity.

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<sup>i</sup> Some of the reasons they gave was that the etymology of נְבִיא cannot be traced in Hebrew. And since the root has been traced in other languages the name and idea it conveys must therefore have been borrowed. This has been discussed above. They also posit that the weird appearance of the prophetic movement is similar to the character of the Canaanites nature worship. This does not mean that the Israel's prophetic tradition was borrowed from the Canaanites. These are two distinct tribes living side by side. They observe that prophetism in Israel start when they began to have close contact and conflict with the Canaanites. The conclusion by Folarin on this matter is timely. He said "the similarities in religious expression between the two distinct religions are not necessary the proof of dependency of one religion upon the other or a proof that the expression was borrowed one from the other. Citing Idowu, Rowley and Robinson warned against this conclusion of borrowship and foreign origin of prophetism in Israel. He therefore concluded that the origin of prophetic tradition in Israel is divine in origin.

<sup>ii</sup> G. Smith observes these similarities in the sense that both claimed to be God's messenger. They both speak to the socio-political milieu of their days. They both predict doom and prosperity and they were both referred to as Seer.

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<sup>iii</sup> Hebrew Prophetism did not spring forth full grown with the emergence of the people, it evolved, underwent change, attained maturity, declined and was metamorphosed in the end into something else. The story of I Sam. 9 presupposes that prophets already existed in Israel in Saul's time (Krealing 17)

<sup>iv</sup> Mainline churches are missionary churches that were established in Nigeria over centuries ago by the foreign missionaries from Europe and America. Examples of this mainline churches are Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Evangelical Church of West Africa See Deji Ayegboyin and Ademola Ishola in *African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspectives* Ikeja, Lagos: Greater Height Publishers, 1992), 24ff

<sup>v</sup> The writer means the Aladura type churches like the C and S church, Church of the Lord, C. A. C church and other emotional praying churches like Agbala Daniel, Celestial Church of Christ, Eternal Sacred Order of C&S, etc

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