



## Prophetic Conflict in Ancient Israel and its Reflections in the Christian Community in Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This study argued that the activities of the prophetic groups in ancient Israel brought prophetic ministry into disrepute. As a corollary, the study explored the parallel between prophetic groups in ancient Israel and different Christian groups and denominations in Nigeria. The study was premised on Historical and African Biblical Hermeneutics. It was discovered that there existed parallel between prophetic groups in ancient Israel and the Christian Community in Nigeria. Study revealed that despite the Prophets' and the Church leaders' claims to have been divinely called and commissioned the duo were defending and protecting their group, identity, doctrines and interest at the detriment of their divine call as the mouthpiece of God. This action brought the ministries in both contexts into disrepute and decline, for their audience no longer take their oracles and ministries seriously. Their audience see them more of representatives of their prophetic group or church affiliation than of God. The study concludes that church leaders and members of the Christian community in Nigeria should intentionally build a good interpersonal and interdenominational relationship that will cut across group and denominational boundaries in order to foster unity and peaceful coexistence among Christians and non-Christians in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Prophetic Conflict, Ancient Israel, Christian Community, Church leaders and Nigeria.

### 1. Introduction

Conflict is a phenomenal struggle produced by a clash of values, interest, or opinions between two or more parties. Conflict is said to have occurred when one party perceives the action of another party as blocking the opportunity for the attainment of a goal (Ezeodun, 2007: 277-294). One of the respected personalities in the Old Testament were the prophets. The prophets were important figures in ancient Israel. They were deeply involved in the religious, social, ethical,

political and economic lives of their nation. Prophets were believed to be representatives of Yahweh, with a deep sense of divine call. A careful study of the life and ministry of the prophets in the Old Testament revealed that there were conflicts among them. This is evident by the remarks they made about their fellow prophets. Some made derogatory comments that were capable of running down another prophet. Studies in the Old Testament prophetic literature show that prophet in ancient Israel belonged to different groups.

This study examines the factors responsible for prophetic conflicts in ancient Israel with the view of establishing its reflections in the Christian community in Nigeria. The study is premised on Historical and African Biblical Hermeneutics which makes the Bible relevant in any culture and dispensation. This methodology is also contextual. In this study, the Christian community are the Church leaders, different church groups and Denominations in Nigeria.

### 2. Prophetic Ministry in Ancient Israel

Prophetic ministry was very popular in ancient Israel because people believe that Prophets are messengers of Yahweh who helped in shaping the history and the religion of the Israelites and also played crucial roles in the political, economic and social lives of the nation (Akao, 2005: 1). The Prophets served as mediators between Yahweh and the People. Prophets were seen as intermediaries between human and the divine worlds (Wilson, 1998). They were carriers of divine authority. Prophets were believed to have supernatural powers (Sawyer, 1993: 1). A prophet is the one who speaks for God, He foretells future events (All Nation Dictionary, 1992: 542). They were great leaders whose influences were felt in every facet of the lives of their audience. Prophets were individuals who received messages from Yahweh and passed it to concerned audience (Di Gangi, 1984: 4). In other words, Prophets were Yahweh's ministers (VanGemeren, 1990: 16). It is widely held that, at the reception of oracles, the

Prophets entered into the world of the supernatural and as such they were surrounded by an aura of mystery (Wilson, 1998).

In ancient Israel, the Prophets declared the counsel of Yahweh to His people. To this end, they were considered as men and women inspired by the spirit and compelled to declare oracles, while in the spirit. In other words, the Prophets were humans empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak God's word in space and time. By divine empowerment, the Prophets proclaimed and wrote down the revelations they received for posterity. As mouthpiece for Yahweh, the Prophets warned, encouraged, and rebuked their audience. They spoke of judgment by urging the people to repent, and envisioned a transformed humanity and a new world order (Von Rad, 1962: 12). The Prophets were not only concern for future events, but also for contemporary affairs (Lindblom, 1963: 1). In most cases, the Prophets, predict based on their observations of the present events (Hills, 1983). They saw beyond the coming judgement and with unwavering faith in Yahweh expressed hope (1983: 15).

In biblical literature, there are four words used for the Prophet. They are: *nabhi*, *ro'eh*, *hozeh* and the Greek word *prophetes*. However, the most commonly used of them is *nabi* which occurred almost three hundred times in the Old Testament. (Folarin, 2004: 10). The word *nabi* does not originate from the Hebrew Language, it came from the Akkadian word *nabitu* or *nabu* meaning "diviner." (Schitt, 1992: 112). He further claimed that Israel shared the prophetic ideas was greatly influenced by that of their neighbours in the course of interaction (Schitt, 1992: 112).

According to Akaabian and some biblical scholars, the origin of *nabi* is unknown but the word means 'ecstatic.' Others translated *nabi* as "messenger" from the root "to speak" or simply by Akkadian root which translates "to call" or "speak aloud." (1999: 43) Wood opined that *nabi* means, 'bubble up' and stressed that this concept agrees with the ecstatic influence on the part of such prophets in which their emotional fervour bubbles up within them (1984: 59). He argues further that others have seen a relationship to the Arabic word *naba'a* which means, 'to announce' or to the Assyrian god *Nebo* who is then thought of as 'speaker' or even the Hebrew root *bu* meaning "to come" or "to enter in" (Wood, 1984).

*ro'eh* and *hozeh* are other terms used for prophet in the Old Testament. The former is used only twelve times, while the latter is used eighteen times. Both terms are participles and come from the verbs which are

practically synonymous (Folarin, 1984: 11). Wood, however, maintains that the *roeh* came from *ra'ah* and *hozeh* from *hazah* both of which mean "to see." In other words, they mean "the one who sees" or as commonly translated in the Old Testament, "seer" (1984: 58) This is because the prophet is expected to see God in a vision, hear from him and deliver what he saw to the people (I Samuel 9:9) or the capacity to discern beyond ordinary people and events (Akaabian, 1999: 43).

Another Hebrew word used for a prophet is *ishelohim*, which means "man of God." This term describes how a prophet is perceived by his audience. Wilson opines that this was intended to express the differences of character between the prophet and other men (Wilson, 1984: 40). A good example of this is the Shunammite woman who said: "I perceive this is a holy man of God" (2 Kings 4:9). This assertion simply refers to the prophet as one who has been chosen and sent or commissioned by God (Eiselen, 1907: 23). That is why Archer emphasized that the prophet must be a man who belongs first and foremost to God. He is fully devoted to God and enjoys his fellowship. He is a transmitter of God's word because he speaks only as directed and guided by God. The task of the prophet in the Old Testament, therefore, is basically of receiving a message from God through revelation and delivering it raw to the people. In other words, it is the divine responsibility of the prophet to receive an oracle from God and deliver it to the people without editing (Awojobi, 2015: 63).

From the aforementioned, it is clear that a prophet in the Old Testament is an individual who is called by God to perform a task or a group of tasks for him among his people. God can call people of different backgrounds, different personalities in different situations to perform different functions for him. On this Eiselen declares:

... the prophet was looked upon as a man who spoke for or in the name of the deity. In other words, the Hebrew prophet was an ambassador sent to make known all and purpose of Jehovah to the chosen people. As such, he spoke for God and was therefore more a forth teller than a foreteller (1907: 23).

The Greek word for prophet is *prophetes*. It is believed by scholars to have come from the verbal stem *phe* "to say" or "to speak" with the prefix *pro*, which is difficult to determine. The verb actually sheds light on the meaning of *prophetes*. However, scholars are agreed that the English word prophet is a simple translation of the Greek *prophetes* and it means the one who speaks for a god, and so interprets the will and purpose of the god to man. According to Milne, a

prophet is one who speaks for another (Ex. 7:1-2). His office presupposes people's ignorance and blindness with respect to the things of God (2000).

It should be noted that prophetic institution was very much pronounced in ancient Israel. As a matter of fact, prophetic ministry had a beginning as well as a period of decline. According to Eiselen, the Hebrew prophecy has a history. He opined that there were periods of obscure beginnings, a period of growth and lofty achievement and a period of decline and expiration when other agencies took the place of living prophecy. To him Samuel was the first person to be called a prophet (1907:18). Lindblom as quoted by Wood asserts that Abraham, Moses, Miriam and Deborah can be called prophets only in a "loose sense," referring to a supernatural endowment (Anderson, 1999: 229). In other words, these people were only endowed by God to perform one duty or the other but they were not really called into the prophetic office.

However, it must be pointed out that the Bible called these people prophets. For instance, Abraham was called a prophet in Genesis 20:2. At this time, the nation of Israel was not yet formed, thus he could not be totally named as one of the prophets of Israel. Moses was the first Hebrew prophet. Though many scholars called him the law giver and author. But his chief glory is rather in that he was the first prophet of the Old Testament dispensation. Moses identified himself as a prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15. More so, at the time of his death, the statement was made that "... and there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses..." Dt. 34:10. Therefore, one can conclude that the institution of the prophets started with Moses, the law giver. He was the first in the history of Israel and an example for all other prophets.

So, this prophetic institution continued from this period to that of the Judges, and the monarchy to the period of the exile and shortly after the exile. Eiselen opined that the golden cage of Hebrew prophecy was from Amos to Jeremiah while with Ezekiel began the era of decline which continued until living prophecy gave way to other agencies of instruction (1907: 20).

From the above statements, it is very clear that the meaning of the word prophet is deeper and more meaningful than the current meaning ascribed to it. The prophet speaks out what is put in his mouth. In other words, the prophet speaks as he is moved by the Spirit (Beattie & Middleton, 1969: xxiii-xix).

### 3. Prophetic Groups in Ancient Israel

Prophets were called by Yahweh at different times and used in different ways to achieve divine purpose. The diversity of callings and ministry among the prophets was a vehicle for conflict among them. The under listed are the main prophetic groups identified in ancient Israel.

#### Shamanistic Prophets

These prophets were closely associated with the holy places and religious rituals (I Sam. 7:17; 9:11-14; 10:5). They were known to combine the roles of the priest with that of the prophet. Samuel, Elijah and Elisha are good examples of prophets who exhibited this function (I Sam 2:18-20; 3:1, 19-20). They were itinerants who moved about with some freedom and living on the gifts and offerings of those they served. Sometimes, they were called holy men, the sage, the miracle workers and the seer (cf I Sam 9; I Kgs 1:2-17, 8-10; 13:14-21; 20:1-11). They formed prophetic guilds and their leader was called "father" who presided over the guild while other members are called "sons" of the prophets (I Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1; Amos 7:14). These prophets prophesied in groups. Samuel and Elijah presided over such prophetic associations (I Sam 10:5; 19:20; I Kgs 18:17-29; 22:5-10; 2 Kgs 4:38; 6:22). They often wore a hair sheep skin or goat skin mantle and a leather loin cloth (2 Kgs 1:8; Zech 13:4). It appears they practiced a form of prophetic succession (2 Kgs 2:9-15; Deut 18:15-18).

### 4. The Cult and Temple Prophets

In the pre-exilic era there existed a formal relationship between some prophets and the temple cult in Jerusalem. Some prophets were members of temple staff and under the direct supervision of the priests (Aune, 1990: 88). During this time the priests considered the prophets as bearers of divine oracles and as such listened to them (Jer. 5:30-31; 27:16). The oracular activities of the Shamanistic prophets, such as religious rituals and holy places, were practiced. Like Samuel, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were associated with priesthood (Ezekiel 1:1; Jer. 1:1).

Priests and prophets were often mentioned together as if they shared a common sphere of activity. This is common especially in Judah and in the city of Jerusalem since the priests were primarily attached to sanctuaries and to the temple in Jerusalem. For instance, Amos, though a native of Judah, travelled to the Israelite sanctuary in Bethel to prophesy (Amos 7:10-13). In the same vein, Isaiah's inaugural vision took place in the Jerusalem temple (Isa. 6:1-13).

Jeremiah frequently delivered oracles to the priests and the people in the temple at Jerusalem (Jer. 26:2, 7; 27:16-22; 28:1, 5). Prophets Haggai and Zechariah worked with Zerubbabel and the priest Joshua Jozadak in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem under the direct authority of the high priest (Jer. 29:26-27). It is worth noting that many psalms which were part of the temple rituals seemed to have prophetic origin (Ps. 20; 21; 50; 60; 72; 82; 85:8-13; 89:13-37; 108; 110; 132:11-18). Furthermore, some of the classical prophets like Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah appeared to have used a liturgical form as a literary vehicle for their prophecies. From the foregoing, the temple provided a natural center for prophets not formally associated with the cult to exercise their prophetic gifts (E.g. Jeremiah) (Aune, 1990:87).

The picture is complicated by the Chronicles which regarded the Levitical singers in the pre-exilic temple as the descendants of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun, all of whom were prophets or seers (I Chr. 25:2, 3, 5; 2 Chr. 35:15; 29:30). It appears that the chronicler equated singing with prophesying (I Chr. 25:1, 3, 6). It is widely held that the singers in the pre-exilic temple were the successors of the prophetic guilds in the pre-exilic temple.

Peripheral or Free Prophets

The mid-eight century B. C was crucial in the history of Israel as the major Near Eastern powers struggled to control the political and the economic sector of the region. The location of Israel made it a pawn of these great powers. The nation of Israel witnessed a number of changes in her life and culture. One of the institutions which reflected three changes was prophecy (Aune, 1990: 85).

In contrast to the already established temple and court prophecy, the phenomenon of free or peripheral prophecy dramatically developed with Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah. The groups of prophets were not remunerated like the temple or court prophets. The function of the temple prophets was to maintain and preserve the traditional social and religious customs of Israel (Aune, 1990: 85). On the other hand, the free or peripheral prophets stood on the institutional periphery of Israelite society where they attempted to provoke religious and social change. These groups of prophets considered themselves as reformers. They were acting independently of the existing authority structures. They claimed to have received divine mandate to call Israel back to Yahweh (VanGemeren, 1990: 42-43). The peripheral or free prophets maintained that they understood what the will of Yahweh is than the priests or the kings. They were motivated by the theocratic ideal of the pre-

monarchical era. Jeremiah is believed to be a member of this sect.

### 5. Court Prophets

There are many references to Israelite prophets who conveyed divine messages from Yahweh to the reigning monarchs (or kings). There are numerous examples in the Mari letters that attest to the fact that this practise was very common in the ancient Near East. Particularly in times of war or before impending battle prophets are reported to have delivered unsolicited oracles to Israelite kings, although some kings sought for prophets to inquire of the Lord through them (VanGemeren, 1990: 47). Many prophets of Baal were employed as permanent consultants by Ahab and Jezebel (I Kgs. 18:19; cf 2 Kgs. 3:13). Some prophets were kept as permanent court counselors. Gad is designated as "the king's seer" (2 Sam. 24:11; I Chr. 21:9; 2 Chr. 29:25). The chronicles name Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun as seers of King David (I Chr. 25:5; 2 Chr. 35:15). Nathan also seemed to have functioned as a court prophet for David (2 Sam. 7:4-17; 12:1-17; I Kgs 1:8, 10, 22-37).

### 6. Prophetic Conflict in Ancient Israel

As noted above, prophets in Ancient were in different groups with different ideology. Israel. A careful study of the prophetic ministry in ancient Israel revealed that there were conflicts among the prophets and among their audience. There were instances in the Old Testament where one prophet claimed that his authority was genuine and the other is fake. Sometimes they attacked one another publicly. They made derogatory statements that were capable of running another prophet down while delivering oracles.

Prophetic conflict in ancient Israel can be defined as bad relationships between the prophets (Awojobi, 2015: 28). In other words, it is the strained relationship that exists between a prophet and his audience. It is a situation where a prophet disagrees with others on the basis of his personal conviction of a matter. Prophetic conflict may occur as a result of social location or ideological differences.

As observed earlier, prophets were God's messengers sent with a message to a specific audience. It should be noted that the Old Testament prophets did not have it easy with their audience and their contemporaries. One of the factors responsible for this was that most of them did not have any formal training. Their authenticity depended on how effectively they succeeded in persuading their audience of the

genuineness of their ministry, the support they received from Yahweh and from their support group or guild. To face these challenges a prophet must be sure of his call by God. This is because his audience believed that no prophet should come out to deliver an oracle unless and until he had received a divine call. When the people acknowledged the prophet's claim to divine authority by the way they reacted to his oracles, then he was on his way to an effective and successful ministry (Akao, 2005: 110).

It is important at this juncture to note that from the era of monarchy, prophets in Israel were in guilds or groups (I Sam. 10:5, 10). The temple Prophets and the court Prophets in most cases aligned with the policies of the political and religious authorities of the land. There was no evidence that free Prophets were in conflict with other free Prophets (VanGemeren, 1990: 28). The real conflict was not between free Prophets and the temple Prophets but between the free Prophets and the King. This was because the monarchical institution had re-interpreted Israel's tradition in the land. These formations were in conflict with the theocratic position of the free Prophets and the ancient traditions (Aune, 1990: 87). Since the temple Prophets were consultants to the Kings, the free Prophets saw them as their opponents.

Furthermore, a careful study of biblical Prophets revealed that the free Prophets called the temple Prophets "false" Prophets. For instance, Jeremiah opined that the free Prophets whose messages were predominantly negative were true Prophets while the temple Prophets who were always prophesying peace and salvation were "false" Prophets. (Jer. 28: 7-8).

At this point, it is crucial to note that the Old Testament gave some hints on how to identify a prophet of Yahweh. For instance, Deuteronomy suggested two tests: One is the prophet's theology (13:1-5) and the other is whether or not the prophecy was fulfilled (18:21ff).

Furthermore, a prophecy from God cannot be deduced by logic. In most cases, Yahweh's messages may not be clearly understood by the people. He uses his messengers as he pleases. Yahweh does not also compel man to do his will. He has given us freedom to make choices and he respects that freedom (Hunter, 154).

However, what is at stake here between both prophets is not theological principle but honour. As readers and interpreters of the Bible in the twenty-first century, we live in a social, political, religious and cultural context significantly different from the world of the Bible. In

order to find out what a text meant in its original context, we need to have some familiarity with the social and cultural world of the Bible (Awojobi, 2015: 34).

## 7. Christian Community in Nigeria

Nigeria is commonly called 'the Giant of Africa' by reason of her population that was estimated at 133, 88,700 in 2003 (Nigeria in Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, 2004). The two major religious in Nigeria are Christianity and Islam. Historically, it was the contacts with the western and Arabic Worlds that gave birth to Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. Although Christianity had been in Africa as early as the first century and had great centers in earliest times in ancient places like Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, etc (Sundkler, Steed, 2000: 7, 34; & Brandt, 1981). The Portuguese traders and missionaries in the fifteenth and sixteenth century were the first to introduce Christianity in Nigeria but they failed (Falola & Adeniran, 83, Ryder 1969; Olayiwola, 1984: 34). However, in eighteenth and nineteenth, Europeans and American missionaries of the evangelical societies successfully planted Christianity in the soil of Nigeria (Falola & Adeniran, 83, Ryder 1969; Beathan, 1967). Since that time attempts have been made by Nigerian Christians to remodel and refine Christianity to have an African face. Currently, the Christian community in Nigeria is made up of different denominations. The prominent among them are:

**Mainline/Mission Established Churches:** These are churches that were started by the white missionaries or expatriates on the soil of Nigeria many years ago. Examples are the Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, UMCA, ECWA, Presbyterian and so on. These group of churches are also known as Orthodox and Evangelicals. Their main emphasis is salvation of soul. These group of churches are the pioneer of the Christian faith in Nigeria (Awojobi, 2013: 8).

**The Aladura Churches:** These group of churches are also known as African Instituted Churches (AIC) or African Indigenous Churches. They all came out from the Mission Established Churches. The word *Aladura* is a Yoruba word meaning "the owner of prayer". This is because their main emphasis is prayer. They engage the Bible on all forms of prayer. Grouped under the typology of prophet-healing movements, they emerged out of informal prayer groups during the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918 (Peel, 1968; Omoyajowo, 1982, Oshun, 1983). The prayer groups were a response to the urgent need for healing at the height of the influenza epidemic. One of the notable

prayer groups at this time was the one lead by Joseph B. Shadare and Sophia Odunlami at St. Saviour's Anglican Church, Ijebu-Ode. This group devoted themselves for praying for the victims of the epidemic using sanctified holy water (Komolafe,2013: 113. This group was formally inaugurated in July 1920 as *Egbe Okuta Iyebiye* (Precious Stone or Diamond Society). It should be noted that the important aspect of their ecclesiology is the retention of traditional African culture as the hermeneutical bridge for transmitting and deepening the Christian faith. This interface is most noticeable in the adoption of African symbols and ritual in matters of faith and worship (Komolafe, 2013: 103). Examples of these group of churches are: Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), The Apostolic Church (TAC), Cherubim & Seraphim Church (C&S), Church of the Lord Aladura, Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) and so on. They claimed that the Christianity brought by Europeans and Americans do not have the African touch.

**Pentecostal Churches:** These churches in this group are off-shoot of the African Instituted Churches or *Aladura* Churches and the Mainline or Mission Established Churches. For instance, the CAC, & TAC, though part of the *Aladura* group of Churches are still the fathers of Pentecostalism in Nigeria. The main emphasis of the churches is being filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. They also teach prosperity and this as attracted millions of Nigerians to them, especially in this time of economic recession in the country. They include: Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S), Deeper Life Bible Church, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Winners' Chapel, Christ Embassy, Mountain of Fire and Miracles, etc (Ojo,2006, Kalu, 2008). Study revealed that most of the founders of these brands of Christians belong to the Mission Established Churches at one time or the other. Some were forced to leave while others left voluntarily by reason of doctrinal differences (Ojo, 2006. Kalu, 2008). Members and leaders of these group of churches claimed that the Mission Established churches are "dead". They claim that their churches are living and that serious minded Christians should come out of the "dead" churches to join the "living" ones. They believe that their own perspective to Christianity is better than the Mission Established Churches (Ojo, 2006, Kalu, 2008). It should be understood that most of the founders or leaders of the Pentecostal Churches are University graduates. Some were Presidents of Christian Fellowship groups on Campuses. Upon graduation if they felt led or call to full-time Christian Ministry, their colleagues on Campuses easily join them. Most of them started as interdenominational groups before metamorphosing

into denominations today. By reason of their high level of education they are able to attract educated Youths and elites in the society to their Churches (Awojobi, 2020: 4)

## 8. Prophetic Conflict in ancient Israel and the Christian Community in Nigeria

As mentioned above, there existed different prophetic groups in ancient Israel. It is also clear from our study that the Christian community in Nigeria is made up of different church groups and denominations. The prophetic groups in ancient Israel were always at loggerheads with one another. There were instances in the Old Testament where one Prophet claimed that his authority was genuine and the other is fake. The same is applicable to leaders and members of different church groups in Nigeria. To facilitate understanding, this part of the study will be examined under the following subheadings:

### 8.1 Different Prophetic and Religious Affiliations

There were differences in prophetic affiliations in ancient Israel. As mentioned above, the ancient Israelite prophets belonged to different groups. It must be noted that the mid-eight century B. C. has been identified for changes in Israelite life and culture. Prophecy was one of the institutions that reflected those changes. It was during this period that prophets were identified by their group. The temple prophets were clearly distinguished from the free or peripheral intermediaries. They were considered as preservers of the traditional, social and religious customs and values of Israel. Prophets from one group saw those of the other group as opponents. They attacked one another in the discharge of the duties of their offices (Awojobi, 2015: 34-35).

In the same way, the Christian community in Nigeria is made up of different Church groups and Denominations. The *Aladura* group came out of the Missions Established Churches. To the *Aladura*, the Mission Established churches have not contextualized Christianity. In others words, they have not come to terms with African realities or worldview in their worship services. They call them by different derogatory names such as: "dead churches", "lukewarm churches", "orthodox churches" and so on. There were insinuations from the *Aladura* that the for a person to be considered as a serious minded Christian he or she must quit membership of the Missions Established churches and join them.

## 8.2 Economic Factors

Economy was a factor for disunity and conflict among the prophetic groups in ancient Israel. The peripheral prophets were not paid allowances by members of the royal court like their counterparts that were referred to as the court or temple prophets (Hunter, 2006). They stood on the institutional periphery of Israelite society, where they attempted to provoke both social and religious change. Acting independently of the existing authority structure and claiming divine authority, they claimed to call Israel back to the ancient covenant traditions as they understood and interpreted them. Dzurgba (2006: 3) asserts that economic resources constitute a major source of conflict in human societies. It was believed in some quarters that Jeremiah was very active in the reign of Josiah. He lamented the death of King Josiah (2 Chron 35:25). He called on his contemporaries not to weep for Josiah but for themselves (Jer. 22:10). This is indicative that he was close to the corridor of power in the reign of Josiah and perhaps an adviser to him (VanGemeren, 1990: 305-306). This may have attracted some financial benefits.

In the same fashion, church leaders that are close to in the corridor of power in Nigeria are richer than those who are not. This has generated conflicts among the leaders. There are Pastors that are on the payroll of some wealthy persons in Nigeria. Some church leaders and pastors have received gifts in cash and kind from wealthy persons in the community. This gesture has generated conflict among the leaders and led to name calling. Some of the church leaders that are close to those in power are called, backsliders, compromisers, liars and those without eternity in view. There are claims by some Nigerian, that one of the reasons for proliferation of churches today is money. Because of economic hardship in the nation some unemployed persons have established churches in order to make money (Ademiluka, 2007: 2). Ademiluka further assert that when somebody loses his job, is frustrated or is looking for money, he just goes to the Bible or theological College and thereafter starts a church. If he is unable to get members, he goes to native doctors to acquire power to perform magic (2007: 3).

## 8.3 Theological Perception

Theological perception was a factor for division and conflict among the Prophets in ancient Israel. A careful examination of prophets in ancient Israel reveals that the temple and court prophets aligned themselves with the policies of the political and religious leaders of their time. According to the peripheral prophets, the monarchy had pragmatically

reinterpreted Israelites traditions in the light of changing conditions, which they believed to be in conflict with the theocratic ideals in the Talmud (Aune, 1990: 89). In other words, the real conflict was between the peripheral intermediaries and the kings. But since the temple prophets had aligned themselves with the ancient monarchs in Israel, it became theirs by extension. For instance, Jeremiah's ministry was based on the old covenant traditions which Yahweh established with Israel at Sinai (Bracke, 2000: 219-220). Jeremiah was profoundly touched by what he perceived to be Judah's lack of obedience to the demands of the covenant. On the other hand, was Hananiah, who believed and proclaimed the inviolability of Jerusalem, maintained strongly that God would not allow the Babylonians to destroy the people of Judah (Bracke, 2000: 220). These conflicting theological traditions became the reason for the confrontation between the two prophets.

In the same way, the Christian community in Nigeria is divided along doctrinal lines. The doctrinal differences have been the reason for many denominations in Nigeria. Some Christians from a particular denomination find it very difficult to relate with those of other denominations.

## 8.4 Human or Personality Factor

Human nature was a critical factor in prophetic conflict in ancient Israel. Since the prophets were human beings, their personalities reflected in the delivery of oracles. There was the likelihood of human elements in what they did. There were diverse view points within the groups, which suggest that prophetic inspiration was greatly affected by personal factors (Crenshaw, 1971). Furthermore, prophetic conflict was enhanced by the belief that Yahweh made use of men against their will or knowledge to accomplish his intentions. In essence, human limitation and divine sovereignty combined to create tension within prophetic circles.

In Nigeria today, we noticed different types of behaviour and conduct among church leaders. Different temperaments have come to play in church leadership in contemporary Nigerian context. Leadership's disposition to church and societal issues are the reason for the conflict in some churches.

## 8.5 Attitude of Support Group or Members

The attitude of the support group was a factor in prophetic conflict among the ancient Israelites. Each prophet had a support group. For instance, Hananiah trusted in the common understanding of Salvation,

whereas Jeremiah pronounced an oracle of judgment. Hananiah enjoyed the popular support of the political, religious and social structures, whereas Jeremiah stood alone (VanGemeran, 2011). Judean society recognized Hananiah as “the prophet” (28:1, 15), who spoke in the name of the Lord (28:2). He enjoyed popular support because he represented the theological perspective of his contemporaries. Jeremiah’s support group were not as vibrant economically and politically. Describing the support group of Jeremiah, R. R. Wilson asserts:

They lack political and social power and have little social status. Furthermore, they recognize that they are on the periphery. They feel repressed and deprived of something which they might reasonably expect to possess. The feelings of deprivation that these people experienced may come from a number of different sources. At a basic level, these peripheral individuals may lack food, clothing, useful work, or adequate housing. At a more abstract level, they may be politically powerless and socially ostracized. They may feel that they no longer have a voice in the way in which the society or the government is run (Wilson, 1984: 77).

The Nigerian situation is very similar to that of the ancient Israel. This group of people determine what happens in the church. If the support group of a prophet is vibrant economically and there is conflict between that prophet and the church, his supporters will withdraw their financial commitment to the church. This will make the income of the church to be low and as such it is unable to meet her financial obligations. Some leaders and members of a church group or denomination are ready to die for the doctrines of their church affiliations. They make derogatory remarks about other denomination.

## 9. Conclusion

It is clear from the study that Prophets are the mouthpiece for Yahweh. They are expected to receive oracles from God and deliver it to the concerned audience. Study revealed that the Prophets in ancient Israel belong to different groups that influenced their ministry. They were more conscious of their prophetic group than divine oracles. The Prophets operated their ministries in accordance with the ideology of the group they belonged. They attack Prophets from other group by making damaging remarks about them and this action brought the prophetic ministry into disrepute and as such it declined. In the same way, the Christian community in Nigeria operated in groups like those in ancient Israel. In attempt to defend their group ideology, they attack one another and this has affected interpersonal relationship within the Christian

community and Nigeria at large. As it stands today, conflicts within the Christian community in Nigeria as made the Church to be a laughing stock among non-Christian and thus making the great commission difficult to achieve.

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