

REVIEWS

Apostles & Prophets: The Ministry of Apostles and Prophets throughout the Generations. By Opoku Onyinah. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022. 387 pp.

Opoku Onyinah's book, *Apostles & Prophets*, is an excellent compendium of the biblical, theological, and historical treatment of two charismatic ministerial portfolios relevant to the Spirit-empowered Movement—apostles and prophets. It presents significant insight into their unique callings, gifts, functions, spiritual formations, flaws, differences, similarities, and manifestations. The apotheosis of the book's discourse resides in the author's apparent response to the unending debate on whether the apostolic and prophetic gifts still exist today or ceased with the closing of the New Testament canon. Onyinah, a former global chairman of a vibrant Pentecostal church in Ghana and co-chair of Empowered21 Scholars Consultation, interacts with a mosaic of rich biblical references, practical narratives, and historical accounts. These add a powerful voice to the debate and affirm the continuity of the two ministerial gifts in contemporary Christianity. Onyinah's central argument is that God has immanently communicated with humanity in each generation principally through prophets and apostles. God has never put their gifts out of operation.

Apostles & Prophets is a stimulating resource with nine parts straddling over thirty-one chapters. Eleven chapters from Part One through Part Four exegete the ministerial forays of Old Testament and New Testament prophets, how God chooses, transforms, and communicates with them, and what gifts constitute the prophetic office. The next ten chapters overlaying Part Five and Part Six, illustrate the biblical and theological nature and the manifestation of the apostolic ministry throughout the generations, from the time of Moses to the New Testament apostles. However, the conversation shifts to five other chapters that orient readers on the factors underlying the historical transition of church governance from the era of apostolic leadership to bishopric leadership. Onyinah follows that with two illuminating chapters that educate the reader on the intricacies any believer can go through to receive revelations from God. Finally, the last three chapters discuss the possible ministerial flaws and limitations apostles and prophets may be entangled in, followed by an appendix, bibliography, subject index, and scripture index.

The author begins and ends the book with the same essential argument: that the God of the universe who has been with humanity from the beginning of time has not ceased speaking with each generation. Nonetheless, whereas the prophet was God's

chosen mouthpiece to communicate his precepts in the Old Testament, the apostle became his primary messenger in the New Testament. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ marked a segue between the Old and New Testaments, during which he manifested both the apostolic and prophetic paradigms in bodily form. Generally, three significant arguments emanate from the book to advance the author's thoughts about apostles and prophets and their dalliance with God and his people.

First, although God used some apostolic figures in the Old Testament, such as Joseph, Moses, and Nehemiah, his leading spokespersons were the prophets he raised and called. As gifts to God's people, the prophets were transcendent. Beyond merely prophesying, God imbued them with several gifts such as prophecy, word of knowledge, the discerning of spirits, teaching, exhortation, and sometimes the gift of music. Unlike the Old Testament paradigm, where only a few people were chosen and endowed to prophesy, all New Testament believers are gifted with the Holy Spirit and granted the potential to prophesy. Nonetheless, the death and resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament brought forth an epochal moment where apostles assumed the role of God's primary messengers for the church in place of the prophets. As gifts, apostles are also called and authenticated with unique skills and graces such as leadership, administration, governance, signs and wonders, miracles, faith, and healing to govern the church.

The author's second argument is that the ministry of Jesus Christ encompassed both the prophetic and apostolic—his apostolic credential emanating ontologically from his being as God's preeminent Word. Thus, aside from being the only potentate to serve as king, prophet, and priest, Jesus also moved prophecy from the era of the spoken word to the age of the living Word. In Jesus, the Word came first and resided in human personality; but in the human apostles, the flesh existed first, followed by a revelation of the Word. Therefore, whereas a prophet would say, "thus says the Lord," Jesus did not need to say so because he was the Word.

Finally, God's communication through apostles and prophets has never been truncated at any point in human history. Even the early Church Fathers, who were called bishops following the shift in church governance from the apostolic to bishopric era, operated mainly under the apostles' authority. Thus, apostolic and prophetic offices have never ceased. The apostolic office is not restricted solely to those who saw Jesus physically, such as Peter and John, but also to those who encountered him by revelation, such as Paul and James. Therefore, the primary qualification of an apostle is a revelational "seeing" of Christ, not a physical one. For this reason, the apostolic office of Jesus Christ has been transferred to other apostles today—human personalities who embody the revelation of God's word and lead the church.

In *Apostles & Prophets*, Opoku Onyinah has deftly produced an éclat, valuable for academic and practical purposes. The book's strength resides in its detailed, engaging,

and exceptional fluidity with knowledge and insight on the topic under discussion. It offers sound theological and biblical understanding for emic Pentecostal theologians, church leaders, and etic observers of the tradition. Onyinah educates, excites, stimulates, and elevates the curiosity of his readers on the issue of apostles and prophets as God's messengers for the past, present, and future. The author's tendency to summarize each chapter and restate his argument is an effective way for the reader to follow and understand the conversation well.

The lengthy nature of the book may disinterest some readers from following all the author's arguments. Additionally, some readers may need help understanding and practicing the part on how to receive revelation. Notwithstanding, I unequivocally recommend *Apostles & Prophets* to all scholars, Bible students, church leaders, and Christians who seek a single resource rich with insight and clarity for understanding the call, formation, functions, and manifestations of apostles and prophets.

David Osei-Nimoh is a PhD student in Contextual Theology at Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.