

# CONTENT & REVIEW

## PROPHECY AND REVOLUTION

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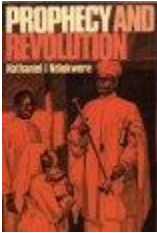
#### The Role of Prophets in the Independent African Churches and in Biblical Tradition

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First published in London 1981, re-printed 1995

To order copies contact the author



The emergence of autonomous (Pentecostal) Religious Movements all over the Christian world, including Africa, which took a new turn in the early seventies of this century, has attracted the attention of many world Christian religious leaders, as well as of teachers and students of theology and religion. The movements today, usually referred to as New Religious Movements (NMRs) offer interesting materials for studies and research to both students and scholars in religion, theology, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, psychology, ethnology, liturgy and so on.

Their beliefs, protests, religious and political longings are easily detectable from their sermons, hymns and Catechism, as they draw their inspiration from biblical accounts and figures of the Old and New Testaments. The movements have been stimulated by the same factors which have been responsible for numerous movements (religious, political, cultural, social etc) for reform and theological renewal throughout history. These factors include particularly the insensitivity of the Mainline or Established Christian Churches to calls for reforms in liturgy (inculturation).

The adherents of the New Religious Movements have successfully brought about meaningful changes in the liturgical worship, Church administration and laws, thus adapting reasonably to the changing situations and cultures, areas where the mainline Christian Churches have been too timid to step in. And combining their new-found faith in Jesus Christ with response to man's yearning for security and good health, they have attracted millions of followers, who abandon the Catholic and Protestant Churches in great numbers for the NMRs, where Faith Healing is given prominent place it deserves in man's quest for security and wholeness.

Religious movements, as massive as these, can no more be ignored, as it seems that we have arrived at a period of re-examination of concepts and attitudes. Many departments of theology, sociology, political science and religious studies in universities and colleges all over the world have at last included the New Religious Movements in their course of studies, and it will not be too late to recognize what the Pentecostal Churches represent today and in fact what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.

A British theologian reviewing Prophecy and Revolution in the TABLET had this to say:

"Prophecy and Revolution is the first successful attempt by an African Catholic clergyman to undertake a detailed study of the Pentecostal Religious Movements in the Black Continent". It is a book, therefore, to wrestle with for more exciting analysis of the Independent Religious Movements that are giving stiff challenge to Mainline Christian Churches all over the Christian world.

Prophecy and Revolution also compares the Religious Movements with the Old Testament biblical prophetic movements in the light of modern critical research. This part is of special interest to students taking courses in Prophetic Books of the Old Testament or the Prophets and Prophetic institution in the biblical tradition.

The book offers a lot of interesting research materials and information to missionaries, scholars and students of Black Studies and Culture. It is also a book for ordinary Christians of every religious affiliation, including the New Age Movement, and of course all those interested in Pentecostal and healing movements. The second re-print of the book testifies to its relevance TO the discussions concerning the Church of Christ in the modern world.

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## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **PROPHECY AND REVOLUTION**

**The "Tablet" - The International Catholic Weekly, London 7th Nov. 1981  
Price: 8.5 British pounds  
Reviewer: Adrian Hastings**

**This is an interesting book by a Catholic priest concerned with an aspect of contemporary Church life in Africa. It deserves a warm welcome.**

**The title of Fr. Ndiokwere's study of the prophets of modern Africa in comparison with those of Old Testament is, perhaps, misleadingly named: there is not much about 'revolution' here. His study of African prophetism is based on wide reading in recent literature and it is, I think the first attempt by an African Catholic to look at this important subject as a whole.**

**His book may well, as a consequence, be placed beside and compared with those of Sundkler, Barrett and others, and it has of course the advantage over them in being able to draw some of the more recent studies unpublished when**

their seminal works were written. Unfortunately it is hardly possible to do justice to such a vast topic in a single volume, in this case a Roman doctoral thesis.

The author is a Nigerian and is best when treating of the West African material, where he includes some valuable first-hand information about the "Holy Chapel of Israel Church" founded by his uncle, John Agbagboro, in the Orlu area of Eastern Nigeria. These pages may well prove the most permanently useful part of the book.

The survey of prophetism elsewhere is a little weak in places, and it is hardly possible to make helpful sense out of a comparison between these many movements and the ancient Israelite prophetic tradition, but much of what he says is stimulating and thoughtful.

The Independent Churches of modern Africa, especially in such countries as Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, present a challenge to the older Churches which cannot simply be dismissed in a negative way. Why are they so lively and why do they spread so fast, capturing so many thousands of adherents of the mission Churches?

There is much to be learnt from them, not least in regard to the small size of their congregations and the flexibility of their ministries. Father Ndiokwere quotes approvingly an Aladura leader who wrote in the Sunday Times of Lagos to "appeal to the Catholic authorities in Nigeria to re-examine the ministerial priesthood.

Adrian Hastings



