

Christian Prophets Today

Deriving parameters to evaluate contemporary Christian prophets from John's prophetic commission in Revelation 10 and a comparison with Emma Stark and Matthew Helland

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1. INTRODUCTION

January 2024, prophet Emma Stark¹ came to the Netherlands to reveal God's plan for the Netherlands for 2024 during a prophetic conference.² This is something that I am not familiar with from the Reformed tradition I grew up in. Is it biblical that Christian prophets claim to share God's plan over nations?

In the New Testament, we read of a few Christian prophets in the Book of Acts and Paul gives general instructions about them in only two of his epistles. From all these, only Agabus' appearance in Acts 11 could support that Christian prophets share God's plan over nations – but this account gives too little insight to use as a criterion. On the other hand, John's prophetic commission in Revelation 10³ is more elaborate and includes clear instructions to prophesy over nations. Therefore, John's experience in Revelation 10 could help to evaluate contemporary prophets like Stark and their claim to share God's plan over nations.

1.1. Problem statement

Next to prophetic conferences mentioned (like the one mentioned above), there are several prophetic schools and ministries in The Netherlands,⁴ like the RUAH School van profetie by Matthew Helland.⁵ Also, New Wine (an annual summer conference that is visited by many Reformed and Protestant Christians)⁶ facilitates prophetic seminars, workshops and appointments.⁷ It seems that prophets (and prophecy) are a popular phenomenon these days,

¹ 'Emma Stark – Global Prophetic Alliance', accessed 10 February 2024, <https://www.propheticscots.com/about/emma-stark/>.

² See among others, *Gods Plan Voor Nederland in 2024 #3 – Zaterdagavond – Prophetic Conference 2024*, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUnKUwafUww>.

³ See among others, P.H.R. van Houwelingen, 'Perspectief voor Jeruzalem', in *Apostelen: dragers van een spraakmakend Evangelie*, ed. P.H.R. van Houwelingen, CNT (Kampen: Kok, 2010), 143.

⁴ 'Cursussen', Profetie.nl, accessed 15 January 2024, <https://www.profetie.nl/category/cursussen/>.

⁵ 'RUAH School van Profetie', accessed 10 February 2024, <https://www.prophesyandheal.com/over-ons/school-van-profetie>.

⁶ Hilbert Meijer, 'Wit, hoogopgeleid en protestant: dit zijn de bezoekers van New Wine. "Ze snakken naar geestelijke impuls"', 22 July 2024, <https://www.nd.nl/geloof/geloof/1232131/wit-hoogopgeleid-en-protestant-dit-zijn-de-bezoekers-van-new-wine>.

⁷ Laura Dijkhuizen, 'Hoe doe je dat? Profeteren voor wildvreemden? Op New Wine oefenen ze ermee: "Je bent geliefd"', 22 July 2024, <https://www.nd.nl/geloof/geloof/1232944/hoe-doe-je-dat-profeteren-voor-wildvreemden-op-new-wine-oefen>.

while a prophetic task did not seem to be popular in the Bible.⁸ This raises the question of whether such Christian prophets are in line with Scripture – the authoritative Word of God in the Protestant tradition⁹ in which I stand.

For the sake of the scope of this thesis, the focus is on prophetic ministry, although prophecy is closely related to it because “Christian prophecy ‘is best represented as an eschatological power of the Holy Spirit ... [and] it is primarily identified with certain leaders who exercise it as a ministry.’”¹⁰

The question of whether Christian prophets today are in line with Scripture involves a two-dimensional problem. The first is about what we can learn from the New Testament about Christian prophets and their possible authority to prophesy over nations. The second is about how this could be embodied in a society that is spatially and temporally distant from the New Testament.

1.2. Research question and sub-questions

From the above, the following is derived as the research question of this thesis:

What can we learn from a comparison of Christian prophecy in the Bible, especially John’s prophetic commission in Revelation 10, with publications of Christian prophets Emma Stark and Matthew Helland for developing biblical parameters to evaluate contemporary Christian prophets, who claim the authority to share direct messages from God?

To answer this question, the following sub-questions will be answered:

- What characterises early Christian prophecy in the New Testament?
- What can we learn from Revelation 10 about Christian prophets today?
- How is prophetic ministry defined by contemporary prophets Stark and Helland?
- What can we learn from the comparison between biblical parameters and the prophets Stark and Helland?

⁸ Dick Schinkelshoek, ‘Wil je een profeet worden? Pas op wat je wenst. In de Bijbel waren ze vaak nogal onaangenaam’, 24 July 2024, <https://www.nd.nl/opinie/commentaar/1233220/wil-je-een-profeet-worden-pas-op-wat-je-wenst-in-de-bijbel-wa>.

⁹ This tradition is among others characterised by agreeing with *Sola Scriptura* (although I am aware that there are differences of its understanding and application).

¹⁰ Moisés Silva, ed., ‘Προφήτης’, in *NIDNTE* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 172.

1.3. Research objective

Before the methodology is discussed, I will clarify what the aim of this thesis is. The intended audience of this thesis is primarily theologians and pastors in the West, especially in The Netherlands, who have somehow been confronted with prophetic ministries, which makes them wonder how to biblically evaluate such a phenomenon. Therefore, this research aims to find biblical parameters to evaluate contemporary prophets who claim to have the authority to prophesy over others, peoples, nations and other situations.

For clarity, the aim of my research is not to evaluate the issue of cessationism, the idea that miracles, including charismatic and other spiritual experiences, ceased sometime after the Apostolic period because the Bible “came to function as the norming norm.”¹¹ Although there is a special authoritative role ascribed to Scripture in my Protestant tradition, a more balanced view seems more appropriate. Hans Burger’s discussion of *Sola Scriptura* is helpful in this matter because he refers to Herman Bavinck and Jacob van Bruggen who respectively state that “we find in Christ everything we need for our salvation, we find in the scriptures everything we need for that purpose” and that “scripture has the primacy, and that we want to think from scripture, does not imply that we find everything in scripture we would like to know.”¹² In short, this could leave room for less authoritative prophetic words directly from God that help us to know what we cannot find in Scripture and is not necessary for our salvation.

Although the objective of this research is clear, two things need to be addressed while conducting this research. First, I have studied Revelation for myself in the last years and, for now, I am convinced that it is closely related to prophecy. Second, I am convinced that I am called to be a prophet and will minister in this way after my studies and, naturally, have ideas about what this will look like. Therefore, I should keep the aim of this thesis in mind and not be distracted by my convictions.

1.4. Methodology

The above objective is achieved when the research question of this thesis is answered, which is done in several steps. First, Christian prophets in the New Testament are explored. This leads

¹¹ See for a more elaborate discussion and rejection of cessationism: Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ‘The Category of Miracles and the Claims to Cessationism’, in *Spirit and Salvation, A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World 4* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 371–75.

¹² See for a more elaborate discussion of this: Hans Burger, ‘Foundation or Perspective? On the Usefulness of Formation and Epistemology’, in *Sola Scriptura. Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Scripture, Authority and Hermeneutics*, ed. Arnold Huijgen, Eric Peels, and Hans Burger, *Studies in Reformed Theology 32* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), 56–78.

to an exegesis of John's prophetic commission in Revelation 10, resulting in parameters to evaluate Christian prophets today. These parameters will be compared to publications of the above-mentioned prophets Emma Stark and Matthew Helland to test the usefulness of these parameters for the evaluation of contemporary Christian prophets. The listed sub-questions will help to follow this approach and will be discussed separately below.

What characterises early Christian prophecy in the New Testament? (Chapter 2)

To answer this question, I will follow Moisés Silva's discussion of the Greek word προφήτης (prophet) in the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDNTE)*. This involves a four-step exploration of:

1. Its general use and meaning;
2. Prophets' appearances in Acts;
3. Instructions about prophets in Pauline epistles; and
4. John's relation to early Christian prophecy.

In the second and third steps (and in the following chapter concerning the exegesis of Revelation 10), I will engage with different commentary series when available, namely: *Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament (CNT)*; *The New International Commentary on the New (or Old) Testament (NICNT or NICOT)*; and *The Word Biblical Commentary (WBC)*. The first and second series give respectively voice to a more Reformed and Evangelical interpretation of the Bible. The last series pays more attention to the original Hebrew or Greek text.

Next to these commentary series, I will use for this thesis the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* edited by G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson and *An Introduction to the New Testament* by D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo.

For the discussion about John and early Christian prophecy, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* by Adela Yarbro Collins, and *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* and *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* by Richard Bauckham will be my main sources.

I will conclude this chapter by deriving from this exploration what it means to be a Christian prophet in the New Testament. This will include a preliminary definition of a prophet but also his role in the church and what is learned about prophetic behaviour and experiences.

What can we learn from Revelation 10 about Christian prophets today? (Chapter 3)

In this chapter, an exegesis of Revelation 10 will be presented. This involves an introduction to the Book of Revelation, followed by an interpretation of Revelation 10, culminating in parameters for Christian prophets and a discussion of how this can look like today. The interpretation of Revelation 10 will focus on John's commission as a prophet and how this is influenced by the allusions to Amos 1:2, 3:7-8 and Ezekiel 2:8-3:3.

How is prophetic ministry defined by contemporary prophets Stark and Helland? (Chapter 4)

Stark's and Helland's understandings of being a prophet today are derived from their publications. For Stark: *The Prophetic Warrior* and *Becoming the Voice of God* and for Helland: *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice* and *Power Evangelism: Just Do It!* To structure this, I will use Jos Colijn's model BBBE:¹³ Believing, Belonging, Behaving and Experiencing, which will be further elaborated on in Chapter 4.

What can we learn from the comparison between biblical parameters and the prophets Stark and Helland? (Chapter 5)

This chapter brings the results of the previous chapters together: the parameters derived in Chapter 3 will be compared with the description of contemporary prophets in Chapter 4. This will also include a biblical and cultural reflection on the differences. This chapter will conclude with a review of the used parameters and what further can be learned about Christian prophecy today.

In the conclusion of this thesis, I will answer the research question of this thesis using the results of the different sub-questions. The first two sub-questions will help to come up with biblical parameters, while the latter two will help to gain further insight into Christian prophetic ministry today.

¹³ J.A.A. Colijn, 'Testing the Waters: Infant Baptism as a Case Study for Doing Reformed Theology Interculturally' (Amsterdam, PThU Amsterdam - Groningen, 2023), 18–22.

2. EARLY CHRISTIAN PROPHECY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Before we can evaluate contemporary Christian prophets with biblical parameters, we need to study the Christian prophets in the Bible. We will do this with the help of Moisés Silva's discussion of the Greek word προφήτης (prophet).¹⁴ Below, we will first look at the general meaning and use of this word in Scripture (§2.1) because prophecy in the New Testament was understood in light of the Old Testament. This becomes clear in the discussion about prophets in Acts (§2.2) and in Pauline Epistles (§2.3). Because there is little information in the New Testament about Christian prophets, we will continue our discussion by comparing John and Revelation to the phenomena of early Christian prophecy to see where they complement each other (§2.4). To conclude this chapter, what it means to be a Christian prophet in the New Testament is summarised (§2.5).

2.1. Meaning and use of προφήτης (prophet)

Silva points out that προφήτης (prophet) is a composition of the preposition προ (before) and the verb φημί (to say). Using this preposition with this verb gives the first a spatial sense rather than a temporal one.¹⁵ In early writings, it was often used for “someone who has the oracular gift or authority to speak in the name of a god.”¹⁶ The latter is another way of describing a prophet as the spokesperson of a god, just as Gert Kwakkel derives from Exodus 7:1 in which Aaron is called Moses' prophet (אֲרֹנָה) – προφήτης is the standard translation of the Hebrew (אֲרֹנָה) in the LXX and in this way became part of the Christian vocabulary.¹⁷ (In the Old Testament, prophets were also involved in intercession and worship, but their main task was to pass on God's word.)¹⁸

Receiving revelation

¹⁴ Silva, 'Προφήτης', 161–74.

¹⁵ Silva, 'Προφήτης', 161–62.

¹⁶ Silva, 'Προφήτης', 162.

¹⁷ Gert Kwakkel, 'Prophets and Prophetic Literature', in *The Lion Has Roared: Theological Themes in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*, ed. H.G.L. Peels and S.D. Snyman (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 1–2.

¹⁸ Kwakkel, 'Prophets and Prophetic Literature', 3.

Both Kwakkel and Silva state that the etymology of נְבִיא is disputed.¹⁹ Therefore, Kwakkel states that “the identity and task of the persons called נְבִיא ‘prophets’ must be inferred from contextual data.”²⁰ According to 1 Samuel 9:9, prophets were also called seer (הַאֲזִי) but prophets like Elisha were called ‘man of God’ (אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים).²² The latter title probably refers to a close or special relationship with God.²³ This close relationship was likely essential for prophets to function as God’s spokesperson because they had to know God’s will personally (in a way that others could not).

The title of seer could help understand how prophets received insight into God’s plans because the Old Testament only states that prophets received their revelations through dreams and visions (although it is likely that their proclamation involved the prophet’s rational thinking leading to the different styles in prophetic books.)²⁴ Dreams and visions are probably both visual means of communication. The first is likely a private and inner experience when asleep, while the latter was experienced when awake and could be noticed by bystanders (see Daniel 10:7). The visual aspects of dreams and visions and that they are primarily personal experiences, may explain why Habakkuk says that he will look what the LORD will say within me (the translation of יָיִ ‘within me’ is debated but the church fathers understood this as “a reference to the internal reception of the divine communication”).²⁵

That God spoke to prophets through dreams and visions is supported by Numbers 12:6-8. Moses is also called a prophet in Deuteronomy 18:18 but God speaks to him face to face. Because of some exclusive position, God communicates to him more directly. This may explain why dreams and visions are not mentioned during Jesus’ earthly ministry by Luke because of Jesus’ close relationship with his Father.²⁶

Proclaiming revelation

¹⁹ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 2; Silva, ‘Προφήτης’, 162.

²⁰ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 2.

²¹ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 1.

²² Silva, ‘Προφήτης’, 164.

²³ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 2; Silva, ‘Προφήτης’, 163.

²⁴ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 7–8.

²⁵ Thomas Renz, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 268–69.

²⁶ See Bart J. Koet, ‘Why Does Jesus Not Dream? Divine Communication in Luke-Acts’, in *Dreams and Scripture in Luke-Acts: Collected Essays*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 42 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 11–24.

Although “prophets depended on God for receiving their messages”²⁷ through visions and dreams, they were actively involved in the way they shared their messages with people around them – whether they did this orally or in written form. As spokespersons of God, the purpose of receiving revelation was to share God’s messages with the people around them. These messages concerned the present of the hearers, often in light of God’s blessing in the past and warning for His future judgement because of current unfaithfulness.²⁸

True prophets

One more aspect has to be addressed here because God’s people had, next to true prophets, also to deal with false prophets and prophets who claimed to be sent by other gods.²⁹ A close relationship with God was already mentioned as a characteristic of prophets and seems decisive in Jeremiah’s distinction between true and false prophets in Jeremiah 23:18 and 22. It “suggests that admittance to God’s council was the privilege of the true prophets. God allowed them to be involved in his heavenly deliberations and let them into his secrets.”³⁰ However, this criterion is not helpful because it is hard to check.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22, on the other hand, states that prophecies coming true is a criterion to test whether it comes from the LORD. However, according to Jeremiah 18:7-10, fulfilment of prophecies depended on the response of the addressees.³¹ There seems to be tension between the fulfilment as a criterion to test a prophetic word or that its fulfilment depends on the response of the addressees (for instance, Jonah and Nineveh). Even more, prophecies did not always concern the future and, when they did, it was not always practical to wait for their fulfilment (like in 2 Chronicles 20:1-30). Therefore, it is likely that in practice prophecies had to be compared with authenticated prophecies of the past (see also, Deuteronomium 13:1-3 and Jeremiah 28:8-9) but also required spiritual discernment.³²

Kwakkel points out that the Old Testament speaks of ‘sons of the prophets’ (בְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים), for instance in 2 Kings 2:3. This could refer to some sort of prophetic school but also to a group that had a prophetic ministry as their profession (see also Amos 7:12-15).³³ Such groups, led

²⁷ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 6.

²⁸ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 5; Silva, ‘Προφήτης’, 165–66.

²⁹ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 8.

³⁰ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 7.

³¹ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 5–6.

³² Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 9.

³³ Kwakkel, ‘Prophets and Prophetic Literature’, 3–4.

by prophets like Samuel or Elisha (see 1 Samuel 19:18-24 and 2 Kings 6:1-7), could have helped to protect sound prophecy. However, Amos 7:12-15 shows that God's choice to send a prophet does not depend on such groups.

προφήτης in the Gospels

In the Gospels, *προφήτης* mainly refers to Old Testament prophets to prove who Jesus was but also because they are an example of how they were rejected and often killed.³⁴ Jesus is called a prophet by the people, like Elijah or Jeremiah.³⁵ Although it is unclear why the people thought of Jesus as a prophet, it could be because he spoke with authority or because of the signs He performed. Silva argues that because of warnings against false prophets in the Gospels, "there must have been a great number of Christian prophets in the area of Syria and Palestine."³⁶ This is an interesting remark, for it demonstrates that there "must" have been Christian prophets – it makes no sense to warn for *false* prophets when *all* prophets have to be rejected.

2.2. Prophets in Acts

According to Silva, the great number of Christian prophets could explain why prophets often appear in Lukan writings (both in his Gospel and Acts).³⁷ Here, we continue by discussing the appearances of Christian prophets in Acts but first, we will look at Pentecost.

Pentecost

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter refers to Joel's prophecy to explain what happens after the Holy Spirit is poured out. It is important to understand that his reference to this particular passage is a response to the bystanders who said that they (the gathered group of believers on which the Spirit was poured out) were drunk. Peter first states that it is too early to be drunk. Then he starts explaining what is happening: it is a prophetic manifestation. As I. Howard Marshall points out, prophecy was sometimes accompanied by very strange behaviour (see 1 Samuel

³⁴ Silva, 'Προφήτης', 168.

³⁵ Silva, 'Προφήτης', 169.

³⁶ Silva, 'Προφήτης', 170.

³⁷ Silva, 'Προφήτης', 167. See Luke Timothy Johnson for a discussion about the prophetic character of Luke-Acts and its call for prophecy as a way of life characterised by a) being led by the Spirit, b) speaking God's Words, c) embodying God's Word, d) Enacting God's vision, e) witnessing despite rejection, in: Luke Timothy Johnson, *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011).

10:5-6, 10:10-13, 19:20-24).³⁸ Marshall also points out that Peter's citation inserts 'they will prophesy' at the end of verse 18, underscoring the effect of the Spirit.³⁹ The significance of these prophetic manifestations may be clarified as follows: "Inspiration of prophets was a sign of the presence of the Spirit and thus of God's activity and presence with his people; visions were associated with prophecy, and dreams are also included as the working of the Spirit."⁴⁰ This shows that the outpouring of the Spirit was accompanied by prophetic manifestations and raised the expectations of prophetic revival – after it was extinguished in the post-exilic period.⁴¹

However, this does not mean that every manifestation of the Spirit should be identified as a prophetic ministry. (Although some scholars argue that Paul is presented as a prophet in the Book of Acts, like Arco den Heijer.)⁴² The point is that all believers received the Holy Spirit and were led and empowered to be a living testimony of Christ – and this could include prophetic manifestations like dreams and visions. Also, the prophet's close relationship with God as characteristic of a prophet (see §2.1) became available for all believers.

The prophet Agabus

Although the prophet Agabus is only mentioned twice in Acts, he is the only one who clearly ministers as a prophet. In Acts 11:27-30 he arrives in Antioch, with a group of prophets from Jerusalem, and prophesies that a famine will hit the entire Roman Empire (and Luke mentioned that this was fulfilled, probably as a testimony to Theofilus). His second appearance is in Acts 21:8-14 when Paul is in the house of Philip in Caesarea. Agabus arrives from Judea and prophesies that Paul will be arrested by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

One interesting aspect is that Agabus' performance in Acts 21 resembles that of Old Testament prophets. First, because he also performs symbolic actions to prophesy in Acts 21:11.⁴³ Second, he continues by introducing his verbal prophecy with the words: 'thus says the Holy Spirit' –

³⁸ I. Howard Marshall, 'Acts', in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 533–34.

³⁹ Marshall, 'Acts', 534.

⁴⁰ Marshall, 'Acts', 533.

⁴¹ Silva, 'Προφήτης', 167.

⁴² Arco den Heijer, *Portraits of Paul's Performance in the Book of Acts: Luke's Apologetic Strategy in the Depiction of Paul as Messenger of God*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 556 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021).

⁴³ F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 401; Marshall, 'Acts', 597.

a variant of the Old Testament prophetic formula 'thus says the LORD'.⁴⁴ This is a very significant element of Agabus' performance because it shows that there may be development (the focus shifts from the LORD to the Spirit) in prophesying but fundamentally there is some continuity.

Besides this, John van Eck points out that Agabus' prophecies show that God is still actively involved in working towards the coming of His Kingdom and that prophets spoke on God's behalf for the here and now.⁴⁵ This last element is especially clear from the context of Agabus' prophecies. In Acts 11, the believers immediately responded to the prediction by organising some relief fund for the believers in Judea – although it is not explained to us how they understood that Judea would need this extra help.⁴⁶ In Acts 21, Paul accepts the prediction and persists in going to Jerusalem, while his companions try to convince him otherwise. This shows that prophecies about the future addressed a present situation and required discernment for its application. And, although Agabus claimed that his prophecy in Acts 21 was inspired by the Spirit, it seems that Paul and his companions were free to determine how to interpret this prophecy.

Other prophets in Acts

Besides Agabus, Acts 21:9 mentions that Philip's daughters prophesied – or functioned as prophets. Remarkably, these daughters did not prophesy over Paul like Agabus – it is only speculation that this would mean that Agabus had more authority or did receive more accurate prophecies than others.

Further, only Acts 13:1-3 and 15:32 speak of Christian prophets. The first speaks of prophets and teachers in Antioch and continues by stating that during some religious practice (λειτουργούντων),⁴⁷ the Holy Spirit revealed His will to the believers. It seems likely that prophets were part of the local church leadership together with some teachers.⁴⁸ This would show that Paul's ministry (and that of Barnabas) was not initiated by their own ambitions (or of some fanatic sub-group within the church) but based on authoritative inspiration by the Spirit and confirmed by the leadership of this church in Antioch.

⁴⁴ John van Eck, *Handelingen: de wereld in het geding*, CNT (Kampen: Kok, 2003), 450.

⁴⁵ Van Eck, *Handelingen*, 259–60.

⁴⁶ Bruce, *Acts*, 230–31.

⁴⁷ Marshall, 'Acts', 583–84.

⁴⁸ Bruce, *Acts*, 244.

The second is about Silas and Judas who are sent to Antioch after the Council in Jerusalem concerning gentile believers. They are called 'leading men' (ἄνδρας ἡγουμένους) in Acts 15:22 but prophets in 15:32 when they encourage the believers in Antioch. The elders and apostles in Jerusalem had already permitted them to speak to the believers (Acts 15:27). That is why it seems plausible that Luke adds that they were prophets and had, therefore, the authority to speak to the believers in Antioch and did not only depend on the permission from the apostles and elders.

Acts 13 and 15 show two things. First, it seems that prophets speak with authority so it gives weight to what is spoken or decided. Second, what they declare is authoritative but in agreement with the decisions of apostles, elders, and teachers. Thus, prophets *share* authority within the Church but their authority is of a *different* kind.

2.3. Prophets in Pauline Epistles

Silva agrees with this latter conclusion that prophets operate together with other ministries but in their own way (1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11).⁴⁹ Paul's instruction about prophets in these two epistles will be discussed here.

1 Corinthians: Prophets and the gift of prophecy

Paul's instructions about prophesying in 1 Corinthians are part of a larger instruction concerning church meetings.⁵⁰ In 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40, Paul's main argument is that there must be unity in diversity because the one Spirit works these different gifts in the believers for the edification of the church.⁵¹ For the sake of the present discussion, the focus will be on the role of prophets in church gatherings – and the related gift of prophecy. It could be argued that the gift of prophecy was available to all believers⁵² or only given to prophets⁵³ but here it suffices to state that prophets at least exercised the gift of prophecy frequently.

⁴⁹ Silva, 'Προφήτης', 170.

⁵⁰ D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, '1 and 2 Corinthians', in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005), 417.

⁵¹ Roger Dean Anderson, *1 Korintiërs: orde op zaken in een jonge stadskerk*, CNT 52b (Utrecht: Kok, 2008), 186.

⁵² Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Revised Edition, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 660.

⁵³ Anderson, *1 Korintiërs*, 174.

Roger Dean Anderson and Gordon D. Fee do agree that Paul's understanding of prophecy must be understood in light of the Old Testament.⁵⁴ (Prophecy in the Old Testament was discussed in §2.1 and this showed that its distinctive feature was passing on divine revelation by a prophet to other people.) Anderson and Fee also agree that the gift of prophecy is related to the gift of discernment – whether about a prophecy's application or origin.⁵⁵ Considering that testing the origin of a prophecy is not always practical⁵⁶ and the discussion about Agabus above, it is most likely that Paul was speaking about discerning the application of a prophecy.

Next to discerning prophecies' application, Paul remarks that prophets should speak one at a time; the one who prophesies must stop when someone else receives a revelation (ἀποκαλυφθῆ; 1 Corinthians 14:30). Paul concludes that the prophets control their spirit, which means that prophets are in control whether they speak or not.⁵⁷ Although some sort of ecstatic state could be related to prophesying (considering the manifestation at Pentecost), this is not related to sharing a prophecy but rather to the way it is spontaneously received.⁵⁸ Thus, spontaneously receiving a prophecy demonstrates again that a prophet depends on God to give him a message. But being in control when prophesying shows that a prophecy was first received before it was actively proclaimed.

That prophecy is about sharing revelation is not immediately clear from 1 Corinthians 14:3 in which prophecy is characterised as strengthening, encouraging and comforting. This could be about the content of prophecy⁵⁹ but – more likely in line with Paul's line of argumentation – prophecy had this effect because it is intelligible.⁶⁰ That prophecy is about sharing revelation becomes clear from 1 Corinthians 14:20-25. In short, Paul argues “prophecy, with its intelligibility and revelatory character, ... functions as the sign of God's approval, of God's presence, in their midst.”⁶¹ Still, the revealing aspect of prophecy will lead the unbeliever to repentance.⁶²

⁵⁴ Anderson, *1 Korintiërs*, 175; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 660.

⁵⁵ Anderson, *1 Korintiërs*, 176–77; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 660–61.

⁵⁶ See, §2.1.

⁵⁷ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 771.

⁵⁸ See also, §2.4.

⁵⁹ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 726–29.

⁶⁰ Anderson, *1 Korintiërs*, 203.

⁶¹ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 757.

⁶² Anderson, *1 Korintiërs*, 210.

What does this mean for prophets who are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28-29? According to Gordon D. Fee, Paul's focus is not the ranking of or instructing about certain ministries and gifts, but these ministries – along with some *charismata* and other services – are mentioned together to show the diversity within One Body of Christ.⁶³ He continues to argue that the first three are ranked for their role in the 'founding and building up' of the local church.⁶⁴

The above discussion shows that prophets were at least those believers who shared prophecies regularly in the church. These prophecies contained (at least) divine revelations that could edify believers and convert unbelievers. Possibly, such prophecies were received in an ecstatic state but, certainly, proclaimed when the prophet was in control. The ranking of prophets among different ministries, next to listing some *charismata*, shows that prophets have a role in building up the church – while other believers "only" receive a gift to edify other believers.

Ephesians: Prophets as part of the gift of Christ

Paul's instructions about the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:11) are related to his teachings about God bringing people from every nation into 'one new man'. To achieve this unity, Christ gave different ministries (including prophets) to build up His Church – overcoming false teachings.⁶⁵ Prophets are also mentioned in Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5. These verses are part of Paul's discussion of the mystery of the incorporation of Gentiles in Israel that was revealed to apostles and prophets (2:11-3:5). In 2:20 Paul states that apostles and prophets are the foundation for God's house (with Christ as the cornerstone) because they were the first to receive revelation from God that was "crucial in establishing the basic outlines of the meaning of what God had done in Christ, particularly in the admission of Gentiles into God's people."⁶⁶ From this, it becomes clear that Paul is not giving general instructions about Christian prophets here.

The role of the gift of Christ in Ephesians 4:11 is different because prophets and other ministries are given so that Christ's Body may be equipped and eventually reach its fullness in Christ. Thus, prophets in 2:20 are foundational and historic for the church, while in 4:11 they are equipping Christ's Body in the present that is still going on.

⁶³ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 683.

⁶⁴ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 685–86. See also, Anderson, *1 Korintiërs*, 190.

⁶⁵ Frank S. Thielman, 'Ephesians', in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 819–20.

⁶⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014), 153.

The question remains whether Christ's gift contains ministers⁶⁷ or ministries⁶⁸. The line of reasoning in the text agrees more with the latter: the focus is not on who is given as a certain minister but that Christ gives to the Church what it needs to grow and mature (Ephesians 4:13-16).⁶⁹ In practice, this means that some believers will fulfil a certain ministry, however, the focus in Ephesians 4 is not on who is given but on equipping the church by these ministries.

This purpose is formulated in verse 12 in a threefold way:⁷⁰

1. πρὸς equip the saints
2. εἰς works of service, and
3. εἰς built up the Body of Christ.

Considering the different prepositions (πρὸς and εἰς), Paul's argument that Christ's whole Body is involved in its growth (verse 16), and his use of 'mature' or 'complete' concerning all believers (τέλειον; verse 13), it seems likely that the first is the task of the given ministries and the other two are the results of this equipping.⁷¹ This would mean that Christ gave ministries to the Church to help it grow in all its diversity. The particular role of prophets (or any of the other ministries) is not further explained and we can only speculate what this includes – but it seems likely that prophets equipped the believers in a way that was distinct for their ministry (to complement the other ministries).

2.4. Early Christian prophecy and the Revelation of John

The above discussion gave some insight into the ministry of Christian prophets in the New Testament. However, this was based on only a few New Testament passages. Therefore, we will continue by discussing the phenomena of early Christian prophecy in relation to the author of Revelation because Silva states that prophets take a very prominent role in the book of Revelation.⁷² Silva argues that the author himself was part of a group of prophets (based on Revelation 22:9), while he refers to David Hill who states that Revelation uses Apocalyptic

⁶⁷ Lambertus Floor, *Efeziërs: één in Christus*, CNT (Kampen: Kok, 1995), 151; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 249.

⁶⁸ Lynn H. Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 266–67.

⁶⁹ Cohick, *Ephesians*, 266–67.

⁷⁰ Cohick, *Ephesians*, 270; Floor, *Efeziërs*, 153.

⁷¹ Cohick, *Ephesians*, 271; Floor, *Efeziërs*, 153–54.

⁷² Silva, 'Προφήτης', 173.

literature “but lacking most characteristic features of that genre, may justifiably, and probably correctly be regarded as prophetic in intention and character.”⁷³

Revelation as prophecy

Revelation is often identified as a Christian apocalypse. An important reason for this is that apocalypse (ἀποκάλυψις) is the first word of this book. However, this word could also be related to Paul's instructions about prophets in 1 Corinthians 14:30, when a revelation is made (ἀποκαλύπτω) to a prophet, others should be silent and this prophet should share his prophecy. Therefore, it seems unlikely that John is explaining the genre of his book in 1:1 but rather its divine origin.

Nevertheless, Revelation shares a lot of characteristics with other apocalyptic literature. John J. Collins defines an apocalypse as “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”⁷⁴ Hendrik R. van de Kamp derives characteristics of apocalyptic literature for its form, content and function. About the form he lists: pseudonymity, visionary form, symbolism, an angelic interpreter and written form. Concerning its content: eschatology, dualism, pessimism, and determinism. Its function would be to present the eschaton to happen soon.⁷⁵ It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to evaluate all these characteristics separately. Therefore, we will focus on the lack of pseudonymity – although the lack of one characteristic is not enough to reject a specific genre.⁷⁶

Pseudonymity allowed “an author ... to ‘prophesy’ the course of intervening history after the fact, and thereby enhance both the authority and the credibility of its message.”⁷⁷ On the one hand, such a review of history could be irrelevant for John because he wrote Revelation after the decisive deliverance through Jesus' suffering had already taken place.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the lack of pseudonymity could also be explained by the conviction of Christians that the

⁷³ Silva, ‘Προφήτης’, 173.

⁷⁴ John J. Collins, ‘The Apocalyptic Genre’, in *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 14.

⁷⁵ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring: profetie vanaf Patmos*, CNT (Kampen: Kok, 2000), 12–13.

⁷⁶ David Edward Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC 52a (Nashville: Nelson, 2008), lxxxviii.

⁷⁷ John J. Collins, ‘Apocalypticism in Early Christianity’, in *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 272.

⁷⁸ Collins, ‘Apocalypticism in Early Christianity’, 272.

eschatological age⁷⁹ had arrived and “gave rise in early Christianity to a new outpouring of prophecy and lent new authority to prophetic utterances. For that reason, John did not need to enhance his authority by presenting his work as the revelation of Enoch or Baruch, but could claim authority in his own name.”⁸⁰ This shows a significant difference between “ordinary” apocalyptic literature and Revelation and could explain why J.J. Collins states: “Revelation is presented not only as apokalypsis, but also as a prophecy (1:3; 22:6-7), and its author is properly regarded as an early Christian prophet.”⁸¹ Therefore, we will now continue by discussing the author of Revelation.

John and prophetic circles

Adela Yarbro Collins first states that it is not possible “to link the book of Revelation with historical persons, with figures of the early church who are known to us today.”⁸² Therefore, she continues by investigating John’s “relationship and the relationship of his book to the phenomenon of early Christian prophecy.”⁸³ Despite her first statement about John’s identity, her study can still teach us more about John and Christian prophets in general.

Some scholars identify John as being part of an anti-Roman sect or Jewish-Christian conventicle but Yarbro Collins rejects such theories as being the result of hasty conclusions and a lot of speculation.⁸⁴ Another view is to link John to some circle of prophets of whom he was possibly their leader. In this view, ‘servants’ in Revelation 1:1 is often understood as referring to prophets. These prophets would then pass on the revelation and guard its message (Revelation 22:18-19). In other words, this view includes a distinction between the first receivers (the prophets) and the ultimate addressees (the church). Also, the interpretation of Revelation 22:6b and 22:16 is important: the first would support the latter which is explained as that revelation is given to a certain group (‘you’ is plural in Greek in 22:16) who receives it

⁷⁹ See also the discussion about Pentecost in §2.2.

⁸⁰ Collins, ‘Apocalypticism in Early Christianity’, 272–73.

⁸¹ Collins, ‘Apocalypticism in Early Christianity’, 271.

⁸² Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 34.

⁸³ Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 34.

⁸⁴ Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 35–37.

for the church.⁸⁵ Yarbro Collins rejects this idea and states that it “is thus not given to others ‘for’ the congregations, but to them, and is ‘about’ them.”⁸⁶

However, Richard Bauckham argues that it could be possible that John had in mind such prophetic circles as the ones who would mediate his book to the assemblies but also study it further for they were possibly familiar with the traditions that Revelation made use of.⁸⁷ He admits that there is not much information about circles of Christian prophets but that it could be derived from the Christian apocalypse: Ascension of Isaiah.⁸⁸ Bauckham points out that it is very likely that “the emphasis on corporate prophetic experiences is so strong in the Ascension of Isaiah that it must reflect something about the Christian prophetic experience in the Ascension of Isaiah’s community.”⁸⁹

Bauckham explains further that Christian “prophets delivered oracles which were given to them by God in the worship meeting.”⁹⁰ Besides this, whether during church gatherings or not, “early Christian prophets seem also to have received visionary revelations which they conveyed to the church later in the form of a report of the vision.”⁹¹ Therefore, it is likely that John would usually share his visions orally among his fellow-prophets but sent a written report of his visions from Patmos to them so that they could share it with the assemblies.⁹² In other words, there must be “no doubt that John had remarkable visionary experiences, but he has transmuted them through what must have been a lengthy process of reflection and writing into a thorough literary creation which is designed not to reproduce the experience so much as to communicate the meaning of the revelation that has been given him.”⁹³

Prophetic authority

Yarbro Collins concludes from Paul’s ministry and his argument in 1 Corinthians 14 (and the Didache) “that the authority claimed by John may differ in degree from that of some early

⁸⁵ Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 37–39.

⁸⁶ Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 39.

⁸⁷ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 83–86.

⁸⁸ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 86–89.

⁸⁹ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 89.

⁹⁰ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3.

⁹¹ Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 3.

⁹² Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 89–90.

⁹³ Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 3–4.

Christian prophets, but that it was similar in kind.”⁹⁴ Further, Yarbro Collins argues that John’s Revelation could only have its effect when he claimed divine inspiration others accepted.⁹⁵ In other words, other believers or prophets must recognise something of John’s experience and revelation, otherwise they would not believe it had divine origin.

Bauckham elaborates more about John’s revelatory experiences when he discusses the passages about the Spirit in Revelation. He “distinguishes the references to the seven Spirits from the references simply to the Spirit. The latter concerns the activity of the Spirit through the Christian prophets within the churches.”⁹⁶ Bauckham explains the statements of ‘being (carried away) in the Spirit’ by referring to other literature and explains that these are references “to the Spirit as the agent of visionary experience.”⁹⁷ It is important to understand that the Spirit only give the conditions to receive a visionary experience rather than to give the content of these visions.⁹⁸ He continues by stating that “even more than a claim to visionary experience, these four references to the Spirit are a claim that his prophecy is divinely inspired.”⁹⁹

In short, the above has shown that Revelation was shared by John as a prophecy, while he himself could be identified as an early Christian prophet and probably as a member of a circle of Christian prophets. The authority of John depends on the divine origin of his prophecy. The experience of receiving divine revelation was expressed by John as ‘being in the Spirit’, a state caused by the Spirit that enabled the prophet to receive a visionary experience.

2.5. Conclusions: Characteristics of Early Christian Prophecy in the New Testament

This chapter contains a discussion of the meaning of the Greek word προφήτης, the appearances of and instruction about Christian prophets in the New Testament, and the relation between early Christian prophecy and the Revelation of John. From this discussion, it can be derived that a prophet is best defined as God’s spokesperson who shares divine revelation with other people. Here follow the most distinctive characteristics of what this means.

⁹⁴ Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 39.

⁹⁵ Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 145.

⁹⁶ Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 115.

⁹⁷ Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 116.

⁹⁸ Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 116.

⁹⁹ Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 117.

Being a Christian prophet

A prophet only shares a prophecy when it is revealed to him by God. Such a message could reveal something about the present, past, or future, or even about the secrets of the heart. However, the purpose of prophecy was not to gain divine knowledge but rather to know what God wanted to address in the present situation. How one becomes a prophet – and receives the authority to speak on God's behalf – has not become clear in the above exploration. In the following chapter, this will be addressed elaborately when John's prophetic commission in Revelation 10 is discussed.

The role of prophets within the church

The gift of prophecy was related to the gift of discernment. This discernment had, most likely, to do with discerning the application of the prophecy. This discerning was done by the audience of the prophecy so that a prophet could not force their audience to do something.

In this way, prophets served the church by giving them direction by sharing divine revelation. Besides this, prophecies had the effect of encouraging believers and bringing unbelievers to conversion. Therefore, prophets seemed to be involved in building up the church – alongside other ministries like teachers and apostles – and were working together with or were part of the church's leadership.

In short, prophets (as a group or individually) belonged to the Body of Christ and sometimes to the leadership of the church as well. Although they had the privilege to share God's revelations, their audience was free to discern the application of their prophecies.

Prophetic behaviour

Prophecies were received during a dream or vision. Paul mentions that such a revelation could be received spontaneously, while from Revelation it becomes clear that this likely involves a state of 'being in the Spirit' that enabled the prophet to receive such a visionary experience. On the other hand, Paul instructs that prophecies are shared when the prophet is 'in control of his spirit'. This is also shown by John's literary composition which describes his visionary experience. That John gives an account of his experience also shows that the "natural" place to prophesy is among fellow prophets or believers.

Experiencing of being God's spokesperson

The discussion in this chapter did not give much insight into how this privilege and responsibility was experienced. The next chapter about John's prophetic commission in Revelation 10 will give us more insight into such an experience.

3. JOHN'S PROPHETIC COMMISSION IN REVELATION 10

This chapter contains an exegesis of Revelation 10 which describes John's prophetic commission. This exegesis starts with an introduction to the Book of Revelation (§3.1). Then a detailed exegesis of Revelation 10 follows (§3.2). To conclude, parameters for what it means to be a Christian prophet will be presented, including a reflection on their meaning for prophets today (§3.3).

3.1. An introduction to Revelation

Historical context of Revelation

The first eleven verses of Revelation contain a lot of information about this book: it is called both a revelation and a prophecy but also has the form of a letter. In the previous chapter, it was already addressed that Revelation was likely a prophecy that was closely related to apocalyptic literature.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, this letter-form of Revelation evokes a response in the present by the audience,¹⁰¹ while it also required discernment for its application (for instance, Revelation 13:18). This seems closely related to what characterises prophecy.¹⁰²

Interestingly, Van de Kamp concludes his discussion about the genre of Revelation by stating that it is presented as both a prophecy and a letter. The latter does not only identify his audience but also involves them in its message.¹⁰³ This gives us not only a reason to identify a possible third genre but can also give us more reason to identify it as a prophecy. As discussed in Chapter 2, prophecies addressed a present situation with divine revelation. So the letter form evokes a certain response in the present and may support that it is a prophecy. Prophecy is not (only) about giving insight through divine revelation but rather is divine communication that

¹⁰⁰ Although not primarily prophetic, Carson and Moo – just like Michael J. Gorman – argue that Revelation fits in a blend of genres – including prophecy; see, D.A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, 'Revelation', in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005), 713–16; Michael J. Gorman, 'What Are We Reading? The Form of Revelation', in *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness - Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011), 12–29.

¹⁰¹ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 16.

¹⁰² See §2.5.

¹⁰³ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 16.

helps the believers in their present situations. Besides this, prophecies required discernment for their application (Chapter 2), this also holds for Revelation (for instance 13:18).

Besides these genres, the author identifies himself as John and states that he writes to seven churches in Asia. In the middle of the second century, this John was identified as one of the Twelve Apostles – some disagreed, mainly for lack of apostolic claims and because of differences with the Gospel of John.¹⁰⁴ Although the author makes no apostolic claims, his lack of elaboration on his identity while claiming prophetic authority suggests that they must have known this John and would accept his authority.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, it is important to realise that there is no other John known to us who takes up the role of prophet and writer.¹⁰⁶ It could be concluded that arguments against apostolic authorship are not strong enough to “make it impossible for the same person to have written both the fourth gospel and Revelation.”¹⁰⁷ Regardless of John’s possible apostleship, the claims of the authority of the Book of Revelation seem not to depend on it but rather on its divine origin – as claimed in Revelation 1:1-3 and 22:6.¹⁰⁸

The seven churches that are addressed by John could come from practical reasons because their cities are located along main roads in John’s days.¹⁰⁹ Besides this, John ministered as an elder in Ephesus at the end of his life according to some traditions.¹¹⁰ It is plausible that his involvement in the churches in this region caused him to send his revelatory experience to them but the book itself only states that it is by divine command that he sent it to these churches.

The early church dated Revelation in the reign of Claudius (41-54 AD), Nero (54-68 AD), Domitian (81-96 AD), and Trajan (98-117 AD). From these, the dating during Domitian reign is the oldest and seems the most favourable.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the date will affect the issue of Christian prophets – except when one desires to test whether John’s prophecies are fulfilled. Therefore, we continue by giving an overview of Revelation as a whole.

¹⁰⁴ Carson and Moo, ‘Revelation’, 700–1.

¹⁰⁵ Carson and Moo, ‘Revelation’, 702.

¹⁰⁶ Van Houwelingen, ‘Perspectief voor Jeruzalem’, 142.

¹⁰⁷ Carson and Moo, ‘Revelation’, 705.

¹⁰⁸ Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 38.

¹⁰⁹ Carson and Moo, ‘Revelation’, 712.

¹¹⁰ Van Houwelingen, ‘Perspectief voor Jeruzalem’, 141.

¹¹¹ Carson and Moo, ‘Revelation’, 707–12.

An overview of Revelation

The overview of Carson and Moo is comparable to that of Bauckham.¹¹² A significant detail in Bauckham's overview is that his overview shows the interconnectedness between succeeding sections in the Book of Revelation. For instance, in his overview 8:2 belongs to the seven trumpets, while 8:1 and 8:3-5 belong to the part about the seven seals. Another interesting detail is that the last promise in the seven messages to the churches in Asia in 3:21 seems to anticipate Christ's own victory and enthronement in Revelation 5.¹¹³

The following overview is based on the above-mentioned overviews and a study of the Book of Revelation.¹¹⁴

Verses	General segments	Prophetic inauguration	Judgement-series	Spiritual battle and victory
1:1-8	Prologue			
1:9-3:22	Vision of Christ and His messages to the seven churches			
4:1-5:14		Vision of heavenly throne room and revelation of the sealed scroll		
6:1-17			Announcements of judgements at the breaking of the seals	
7:1-17		Sealing of the 144.000		
8:1-5			Breaking of the last seal and announcement of the next series of seven	
8:6-9:21			Description of judgements at the sounding of the trumpets	
10:1-11:14		John's prophetic commission		
11:15-19			Sounding of the last	

¹¹² See Carson and Moo, 'Revelation', 697–700; Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 21–22.

¹¹³ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 6.

¹¹⁴ See also §3.2.

			trumpet	
12:1-14:20				Vision of the battle between God's people and the first presentation of the evil powers
15:1-4			Introduction of the last series and declaration of the victory of the faithful	
15:5-16:21			Plagues of judgement are poured out on earth	
17:1-19:10				The harlot Babylon and her fall
19:11-21:8				Transition from the harlot to the bride
21:9-22:5				The bride descends from heaven as the New Jerusalem
22:6-22:9				Completing the parallel harlot-bride and anticipating the epilogue
22:10-21	The epilogue			

Others may present a different overview but these will likely only vary in detail. The above overview demonstrates that the Book of Revelation is composed as a whole. This means that it does not contain all kinds of independent visions but rather presents one dynamic message that moves forward to God's final victory over evil and the presence of His reign on earth. This single vision presses forward with numbered seals, trumpets and plagues but is also delayed with interludes of hope. The first describes judgement that is inevitably coming, while the second shows that there is hope for those who will be faithful to the Lamb and give glory to God. Another important theme is shown by the parallel between the two cities: the harlot and the bride. The first has to be judged so that the second can come.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ This idea is in different ways supported by, among others, Van Houwelingen, D. Holwerda, and Bauckham; see, Van Houwelingen, 'Perspectief voor Jeruzalem', 155; D. Holwerda, *De Schrift opent een vergezicht: gebundelde bijdragen tot de exegese van het Nieuwe Testament* (Franeker: Uitgeverij Van Wijnen, 2019), 488; Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 5.

Different approaches to Revelation

Even though the overall message of Revelation above seems quite clear, its fulfilment is highly debated. Steve Gregg discussed four distinctive approaches (historicist; preterist; futurist; idealist) that are often used to interpret Revelation and its fulfilment.¹¹⁶ Gregg's discussion of these approaches to Revelation shows that all have some advantages and disadvantages but these do not affect the issue at hand: deriving biblical parameters for Christian prophets. Considering the above overview of Revelation, it seems preferable to understand Revelation as one message instead of about succeeding events in history or the future – whether this concerns the fall of Jerusalem,¹¹⁷ the fall of Rome,¹¹⁸ or a later or repeated fulfilment. Because of the purpose of this thesis, we will continue by discussing what we can learn from what is presented to us in Revelation itself.

3.2. Exegesis of Revelation 10*Literary context of Revelation 10*

Essential for the role of Revelation 10 in the rest of the Book of Revelation is the issue of whether the scroll in this chapter is the same as in Revelation 5. Difficulty with this understanding is that in Revelation 10 not always the same Greek word is used to refer to the scroll: βιβλίον is always used scroll in Revelation 5, while in Revelation 10 both βιβλίον and βιβλαρίδιον have the strongest manuscript support.¹¹⁹ Arguments that support the identification of the scroll in Revelation 10 with the one in Revelation 5 are that βιβλίον and βιβλαρίδιον are synonyms (and no manuscript uses one form of βιβλίον to refer to the same scroll in Revelation 10)¹²⁰ and that both Revelation 5 and 10 strongly allude to Ezekiel 2:8-3:3.

The difference between Revelation 5 and 10, a sealed and opened scroll,¹²¹ is a weak argument against this identification because it is clear that the scroll is opened after Revelation 5. That

¹¹⁶ Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views, Revised & Updated* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2013), 13.

¹¹⁷ D. Holwerda, *Uit Egypte heb Ik mijn zoon geroepen: de kern van de Openbaring aan Johannes* (Kampen: Kok, 2006), *Egypte*, 7–13.

¹¹⁸ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 338–83.

¹¹⁹ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 243.

¹²⁰ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 243–44.

¹²¹ David Edward Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, WBC 52b (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 570; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, Revised Edition, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 202.

βιβλαρίδιον in 10:2 has no definite article is a stronger argument,¹²² however, it is likely that the listeners to the reading of Revelation were still expecting to hear something about the scroll. It had been introduced dramatically and then opened without revealing anything about its content, while the Lamb sacrificed His life for it (see Revelation 5-8).¹²³

Besides this, Revelation 4 strongly alludes to Ezekiel 1 while Revelation 10 strongly alludes to Ezekiel 2-3.¹²⁴ This would mean that Revelation 10 is part of a larger inaugural experience. Also, other prophetic callings consisted of “an overwhelming theophanic vision followed by God’s verbal commissioning with the prophet (cf. 1 K. 22; Isa. 6).”¹²⁵ Such a relationship between John’s vision of the heavenly throne room and his consummation of the scroll is very helpful for us here. The judgement sequences are then preceded and interrupted by John’s prophetic inaugural visions in which he is involved (Revelation 5:5, 7:13, 10:8).

This inauguration shifts from a vision of God’s heavenly throne to the commission of the prophet – of which the first determines the nature of the second.¹²⁶ From Revelation 5 and 7, it becomes clear that John’s prophetic office is related to the ingathering of the saints from every nation. John’s commission involves the eating of the scroll, meaning that he both has to proclaim God’s message but also symbolises as a prophet this message for the church: obeying God’s call to proclaim His will.¹²⁷

In short, the nature of John’s prophetic commission is determined by his whole inaugural experience but is also paradigmatic for the church. It is not about getting knowledge about the end-times but requires a response in obedience towards God.

Structure of Revelation 10

Key elements in Revelation 10 are the mighty angel and the little scroll that appear in verses 1-2a. Besides this, there is the repetition of ‘placing/standing upon the sea and upon the land’ (verses 2b, 5 and 8). These repetitions are accompanied by some verbal act and, together, they seem to divide this chapter into three sections which each concludes with some form of

¹²² Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 570; Mounce, *Revelation*, 202.

¹²³ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 244.

¹²⁴ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 243–44.

¹²⁵ Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 111. See also, Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, WBC 28 (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1994), 20.

¹²⁶ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 38.

¹²⁷ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 266; David E. Holwerda, ‘The Church and the Little Scroll (Revelation 10,11)’, *Scholia et Homiletica* 34(1) (1999): 161.

proclamation. The first section (verses 2b-4) concludes with the sealing of the sayings of the seven thunders – a prohibition of proclamation in the present. The middle section (verses 5-7) concludes with a reference to what is proclaimed to the prophets – in the past. The last section (verses 8-11) concludes with the command to prophesy – a proclamation from now on.

Detailed exegesis of Revelation 10

Below follows a step-by-step exegesis of Revelation 10 that starts with a translation of the Greek text¹²⁸ after which an interpretation follows. Each part of this section begins with a translation of the Greek text.

10:1-2a Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, who was clothed with a cloud and [a] rainbow was upon his head, his face was like the sun and his feet were like pillars of fire; he held in his hand an open little scroll.

Καὶ εἶδον “introduces a new vision narrative”¹²⁹ of which the contrasting ‘mighty angel’ and ‘little scroll’ are key elements.¹³⁰ The identity of the little scroll was already addressed above and is most likely the same scroll as the one in Revelation 5. David Edward Aune states that ἠνεωγμένον (opened) means that the scroll is unsealed and not that he lay unrolled in the hands of the angel.¹³¹ This seems a logical consequence of breaking the seals after Revelation 5 but does not explain why βιβλαρίδιον is used instead of βιβλίον (or another variation). But who is this mighty angel?

Some manuscripts leave out ἄλλον (another) so that John just describes that he saw a mighty angel – Van de Kamp, therefore, identifies this angel with the angel that announces the little scroll in Revelation 5:2.¹³² Robert H. Mounce argues that ἄλλον ἄγγελον could also be interpreted as ‘another angel, a mighty one’ – comparable to ‘another horse, a fiery red one’ (ἄλλος ἵππος πυρρός) in Revelation 6:4.¹³³ Then ἄλλον ἄγγελον does not distinguish the angel in Revelation 10:1 from the one in 5:2 but rather from the seven angels with the trumpets – just as in Revelation 8:3. However, because this angel is described as a deity (see Exodus 13:21-22, Psalm 104:3, Revelation 1:16 and 4:3), some conclude that this angel represents God, Christ

¹²⁸ See appendix A for a detailed analysis of the Greek text.

¹²⁹ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 338.

¹³⁰ D.E. Holwerda, ‘The Church and the Little Scroll’, 150.

¹³¹ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 558.

¹³² Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 243.

¹³³ Mounce, *Revelation*, 201.

or 'the angel of the LORD'.¹³⁴ This seems speculative, however, it articulates the divine authority that this mighty angel represents because of the One who has sent him to John.

10:2b-3 He placed his right foot upon the sea, and [his] left upon the land; and cried with a loud voice, just like a lion roars. When he cried out, the seven thunders spoke [with] voices of themselves.

The angel plants his feet both upon the sea and the land, indicating his colossalness that symbolises great authority.¹³⁵ Even more, when he speaks it sounds like the roar of a lion and the seven thunders respond with their own voice. The seven thunders most likely refer to 'the voice of God' in Psalm 29:3-9.¹³⁶ The relationship between the roar and thunders may be clarified with Amos 1:2 in which the LORD roars and gives His voice. Interestingly, the plural form of 'gives his voice' (יָתַן קוֹלָו) is usually translated as 'to thunder'.¹³⁷ In other words, this verse describes that the LORD's "roar resounds like thunder."¹³⁸ The point is that divine judgement is announced, "Yahweh's voice, as mediated through his prophet Amos, announces death to his enemies."¹³⁹ This is likely the meaning of this roar and thunders in Revelation 10:3 as well.

10:4 When the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write [it] down. Then I heard a voice from heaven that said, 'Seal what the seven thunders spoke and do not write them down.'

John wants to write down what is said, implying that it is intelligible. However, he is both commanded 'to seal up' and 'not to write down'. The latter suggests that the first must be understood as to keep it secret and not as something that will later be revealed.¹⁴⁰ Therefore, it is unlikely that this is an allusion to Daniel 12:4 and 9 because Daniel has to seal his visions so that they could be revealed later and does not have to keep them secret forever.¹⁴¹ (While the allusion to Daniel is stronger in Revelation 22:10.)

¹³⁴ G.K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, 'Revelation', in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2007), 1116.

¹³⁵ Mounce, *Revelation*, 203.

¹³⁶ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 559; Beale and McDonough, 'Revelation', 1116; Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 245; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 203.

¹³⁷ Douglas K. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC 31 (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 301.

¹³⁸ M. Daniel Carroll R., *The Book of Amos*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 123.

¹³⁹ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 301.

¹⁴⁰ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 562.

¹⁴¹ Mounce, *Revelation*, 204–5.

Again, Amos may help us to understand this verse. Amos 3:8 shows that a “true prophet cannot ignore Yahweh’s voice any more than sensible people can ignore the roar of a lion”¹⁴² or “the inevitability of the word of catastrophic judgment ... spoken by the sovereign Yahweh”¹⁴³ through a prophet. These may respectively explain John’s compulsion to write down what the thunders are saying and that there would be no more hope when he had written down these judgements (assuming that what is said is about judgment based upon Amos 1:2 and 3:8).

Clearly, the sealing shows that we do not need to know the content of the sayings – comparable to Paul’s experience in 2 Corinthians 12:4.¹⁴⁴ However, this sealing probably has meaning to the audience of Revelation. It shows that John’s main prophetic task concerns gathering people from all nations into God’s royal priesthood so that they will be saved from God’s wrath – instead of focussing on the inevitable judgement of these nations.

10:5-6 Then the angel, whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land, raised his right hand to heaven. And he swore [by] the [One] living until the ages of ages, who created the heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it: ‘There will be no more time!’

After the sayings of the seven thunders are sealed, the focus goes back to the mighty angel who takes an oath.¹⁴⁵ Swearing by the Living One and the Creator is meaningful when facing severe persecution, for only He can promise life in life-threatening situations and ensure that both the beginning and end of times are in His control.¹⁴⁶

He takes an oath while he raises his hand, a stance comparable to the angel in 1 Chronicles 21:16.¹⁴⁷ Also, taking an oath in the Old Testament included sometimes the raising of hands but often with the LORD as the subject (for instance, Deuteronomy 32:40).¹⁴⁸ An even more striking parallel is Daniel 12:7 – except for the difference that it answers the question ‘how long’ with that it will take three and half times.¹⁴⁹ Although the breaking of the seals in Revelation 6-8 slowed down the coming judgement and even led to another series of seven, it is now announced that there will be no more time. Thus, “the fulfillment of the prophetic vision

¹⁴² Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 325.

¹⁴³ Carroll R., *Amos*, 227.

¹⁴⁴ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 246.

¹⁴⁵ Mounce, *Revelation*, 205.

¹⁴⁶ Mounce, *Revelation*, 206.

¹⁴⁷ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 564.

¹⁴⁸ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 563–64; Beale and McDonough, ‘Revelation’, 1117.

¹⁴⁹ Mounce, *Revelation*, 205.

‘will not delay’ when the appointed time arrives for its execution”¹⁵⁰ but this will also be the time of the vindication of the martyrs’ blood (Revelation 6:10).¹⁵¹

10:7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound the trumpet, then God’s mystery will be accomplished as it was proclaimed to His servants, the prophets.’

This verse relates to the previous verse because it clarifies when ‘there will be no more time’: God’s plan will be fulfilled when the seventh trumpet is blown. Revelation 11:15-19 shows that this plan involves the Messiah’s reign over all the earth, including the condemnation of rebellious nations and rewarding faithful believers.¹⁵² This agrees with John’s above-mentioned prophetic task derived from Revelation 4-5 and 7. Besides this, establishing God’s kingdom requires judgement on established kingdoms that oppose God.¹⁵³ However, the revelation for John and the message for the church focuses on giving hope to persevere in the faith despite persecution; exhortation when believers tend to walk away from faithfulness to the Lamb; and encouragement to testify about the Lord’s eternal reign (even with words of judgements that bring people to repentance)¹⁵⁴ so that people will be drawn from the nations into the royal priesthood of saints.

The believers are ensured of the fulfilment of God’s plan by alluding to Amos 3:7. It shows that a prophet’s authority rests in God revealing His plans to them,¹⁵⁵ for they were granted access to God’s council (סוד) and heard what God wanted to say to His people.¹⁵⁶ (Although God shared His plans through his spokespersons, He did not depend on them, nor obliged to share His plans with them.)¹⁵⁷ In other words, prophets declared what God had already decreed.¹⁵⁸ Thus, the purpose of the allusion in Revelation 10:7 is to confirm that God will fulfil his plan of establishing His Kingdom.

¹⁵⁰ Beale and McDonough, ‘Revelation’, 1117; See also D.E. Holwerda, ‘The Church and the Little Scroll’, 150; Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 206.

¹⁵¹ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 246.

¹⁵² Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 247–48.

¹⁵³ See also §3.1.

¹⁵⁴ D.E. Holwerda, ‘The Church and the Little Scroll’, 154.

¹⁵⁵ S.D. Snyman, ‘Amos, Prophet of God’s Justice’, in *The Lion Has Roared: Theological Themes in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament*, ed. H.G.L. Peels and S.D. Snyman (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 18.

¹⁵⁶ Carroll R., *Amos*, 224–25.

¹⁵⁷ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 325.

¹⁵⁸ Carroll R., *Amos*, 225.

10:8 Then the voice that I heard out of heaven spoke again to me and said, ‘Go, take the little scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing upon the sea and the land.’

After the seven thunders, the focus turned to the oath of the mighty angel first but now shifts to the little scroll in his hand.¹⁵⁹ Mounce states that “[a]lthough the syntax of v. 8 is awkward [see Appendix A], the meaning is quite apparent.”¹⁶⁰ He also explains that this voice of heaven indicates authority because John would not dare to approach such a mighty angel.¹⁶¹ The command to take the scroll will in the following verses lead to its consummation and finally to the command to prophecy.¹⁶²

10:9-10 Then I went to the angel [and] said to him to give me the little scroll. And he says¹⁶³ to me, ‘Take and eat it up. It will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’ Then I took the little scroll out of the hand of the angel, and I ate it up. It was in my mouth sweet as honey. And when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

The angel also tells John to take the scroll but adds that he has to eat it.¹⁶⁴ The sweetness of the scroll seems to be an allusion to the sweetness of God’s Word (Psalm 19:11; 119:103).¹⁶⁵ However, “[t]he precise reference for eating the scroll is clearly Ezek. 2:8-3:3.”¹⁶⁶ Ezekiel’s instructions in these verses are like a test, “he is to be totally open to the voice of God and then act upon his instructions without reservation.”¹⁶⁷ The “combination of commands, ‘Eat this scroll,’ and ‘Go and tell,’ [that] illustrates the nature of prophetic inspiration.”¹⁶⁸ Daniel I. Block deduces from Ezekiel’s experience what a prophetic calling entails.¹⁶⁹

¹⁵⁹ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 248.

¹⁶⁰ Mounce, *Revelation*, 208.

¹⁶¹ Mounce, *Revelation*, 208.

¹⁶² Meredith J.C. Warren, ‘Tasting the Little Scroll: A Sensory Analysis of Divine Interaction in Revelation 10.8-10’, *Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies, University of Sheffield, UK* 40(1) (2017): 109.

¹⁶³ λέγει is a historical present and could also be translated as ‘he said’. In this passage this present tense is used to add to the dramatic experience described.

¹⁶⁴ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 248; Mounce, *Revelation*, 208–9.

¹⁶⁵ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 248.

¹⁶⁶ Beale and McDonough, ‘Revelation’, 1117.

¹⁶⁷ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 123.

¹⁶⁸ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 126.

¹⁶⁹ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 130–31. See also William Hugh Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, WBC 28 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1986), 31–32; Herrie van Rooy, ‘Ezekiel, Prophet of the Glory of the Lord’, in *The Lion Has Roared:*

1. God alone calls a prophet and defines his tasks;
2. The prophet is convinced of the sovereignty of the One who sends him;
3. He needs empowerment by the Holy Spirit;
4. Through consummation, the message needs to affect him first so that he also becomes the revealed message;
5. The prophet is also equipped to fulfil his calling;
6. Faithfulness to the divine King is more important than the “success” of one’s ministry.

Leslie C. Allen points out, the mystical side of Judaism was mainly inspired by the vision of Ezekiel 1.¹⁷⁰ These Jewish “mystics focused their attention on the startling vision that opens the book of Ezekiel ... to re-create Ezekiel’s experience and ascend in the Chariot to explore the heavens, or the Chambers of which Heaven was supposed to consist.”¹⁷¹ This could explain John’s strong dependence on Ezekiel’s visions *and* what spiritual practices led to a spiritual state enabling him to receive God’s visions.¹⁷² Also, Tom Wright argues that Paul likely was familiar with and experienced in such traditions.¹⁷³ Therefore, it seems at least plausible that John was involved in such practices.

Nevertheless, the command to eat “led to a real act (although within a visionary experience), which in turn symbolizes the complete appropriation of prophetic revelation. John is to assimilate the content of the scroll before communicating it to others. Every true prophet of God knows the absolute necessity of this crucial requirement.”¹⁷⁴ Meredith J.C. Warren discusses this consummation of the scroll elaborately and links it to hierophagy “the eating of otherworldly things.”¹⁷⁵ John gains the ability and knowledge to prophesy through hierophagy.¹⁷⁶ Warren continues by arguing that taste is a private and intimate experience through which John is uniquely appointed as God’s spokesperson.¹⁷⁷

Theological Themes in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament, ed. H.G.L. Peels and S.D. Snyman (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 131–32.

¹⁷⁰ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 44.

¹⁷¹ George Robinson, ‘Jewish Mysticism: Emanations of the Eternal’, in *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York, New York: Atria paperback, 2016), 370.

¹⁷² See also §2.5.

¹⁷³ Tom Wright, ‘Damascus’, in *Paulus een biografie*, trans. Zwany Kamerman (Franeker: Uitgeverij Van Wijnen, 2019), 60–64.

¹⁷⁴ Mounce, *Revelation*, 209.

¹⁷⁵ Warren, ‘Tasting the Little Scroll’, 102.

¹⁷⁶ Warren, ‘Tasting the Little Scroll’, 112.

¹⁷⁷ Warren, ‘Tasting the Little Scroll’, 113–14.

The meaning of the sweetness and bitter effect of the scroll is understood differently: the fulfilment of God's plan is sweet but its prelude is bitter;¹⁷⁸ the tastes represent the content of his prophecy;¹⁷⁹ or the tastes represent the effect of John's message for his audience: sweet for those who listen and bitter for those who refuse God's Word.¹⁸⁰ Warren's view that the bitterness was not negative but that it implies a positive effect – because in antiquity people were convinced that “bad-tasting remedies are more effective in delivering cures”¹⁸¹ – seems speculative. More likely, John's equipment for his prophetic commission includes preparation for both positive and negative experiences – whether these experiences are caused by the content of the message or by the way people respond to it is hard to decide. Besides this, it is noteworthy that the bitterness is not just a taste but the effect of the scroll on John's stomach. This could imply that John not only has to understand and experience this bitterness, but also be personally affected by the message.

10:11 Then I was told, ‘It is necessary for you to prophesy again concerning peoples, nations, tongues, and many kings.’

This verse opens with a plural form that could mean ‘they told me’ because it refers to both the mighty angel and the voice from heaven,¹⁸² or ‘I was told’ as an ‘indefinite plural’.¹⁸³ Either way, the point is that John's prophetic commission comes from God. ‘It is necessary’ (δεῖ) gives John's commission a divine compulsion.¹⁸⁴ This resembles the pattern that has already become clear from Amos 3: the “cause and effect pattern of YHWH who has spoken and the prophet who has to prophesy the very words YHWH has spoken.”¹⁸⁵ In the heavenly throne room, John saw something of God's plan to establish His Kingdom and the ingathering of a multitude from all nations. Now, he is equipped to proclaim God's message and be involved in the establishment of God's Kingdom through this proclamation. John is ordered to prophesy again (πάλιν). This suggests that John had prophesied before,¹⁸⁶ rather than being about John's turn to prophesy.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the intention of this commission is not to identify John's

¹⁷⁸ Mounce, *Revelation*, 210.

¹⁷⁹ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 248.

¹⁸⁰ Beale and McDonough, ‘Revelation’, 1118.

¹⁸¹ Warren, ‘Tasting the Little Scroll’, 114–15.

¹⁸² Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 249.

¹⁸³ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 573; Mounce, *Revelation*, 211.

¹⁸⁴ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 573; Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 249; Mounce, *Revelation*, 211.

¹⁸⁵ Snyman, ‘Amos’, 19.

¹⁸⁶ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 573; Mounce, *Revelation*, 211; Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 266.

¹⁸⁷ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 249.

earlier prophetic activity but rather to recognise the divine origin of his prophetic message and call.

The next question regarding this commission is about the interpretation of προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ ('to prophesy about/concerning' or 'to prophesy to/against'). Arguments for 'to prophesy to' are the use of the preposition ἐπὶ in Revelation 14:6 and 22:16,¹⁸⁸ and because "John's message to the nations is primarily one of judgment."¹⁸⁹ However, the more neutral 'to prophesy about' could be advocated because prophets' intentions are about repentance – even when they announce judgment.¹⁹⁰ Besides this, "John's prophecies from chapter 11 do not take the form of addressing nations and kings directly, as Ezekiel's do (25:2-3 etc.)"¹⁹¹ and even these oracles against the nations in Ezekiel 25 could have been announced primarily among God's people in exile to encourage them.¹⁹² Considering also that John's prophecy is addressed to the church (Revelation 1:3-4), the most likely interpretation is 'to prophesy about'. This means that John's prophecy is both a warning and an encouragement for the believers to remain faithful to the Messiah and His calling. Thus, prophecies addressed primarily believers but could concern the nations and, when publicly proclaimed, work as a testimony.

The 'peoples, nations, tongues, and kings' refers primarily to Daniel 7:14, 17, and 24.¹⁹³ Mounce points out that this fourfold list occurs five times in Revelation but then with 'tribes' instead of 'kings'. He argues that this might "suggest that God's word through the prophets takes precedence over the highest rank of human authority."¹⁹⁴ Contrary to Ezekiel, John is commanded to prophesy about foreign nations which could give rise to the expectation of a positive outcome of this prophetic mission – and agree with the visions of the multitude from among the nations that are purchased by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 5:9 and 7:9).

The meaning of Revelation 10

¹⁸⁸ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 249.

¹⁸⁹ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 573–74.

¹⁹⁰ D.E. Holwerda, 'The Church and the Little Scroll', 154.

¹⁹¹ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 265–66.

¹⁹² Daniel Isaac Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 28.

¹⁹³ Van de Kamp, *Openbaring*, 249.

¹⁹⁴ Mounce, *Revelation*, 211.

Reading Revelation as one message rather than a chronological description of different historical events, as was advocated above,¹⁹⁵ helped to come up with the exegesis above – especially the relationship between Revelation 4-5 and 7 and 10. Revelation 4-5 shows that God is King over all of creation but also that the blood of the Lamb bought people from every nation to reign with the Messiah. The first requires the judgement of those who oppose His Kingdom. The latter gives hope that a multitude from all the nations will be gathered to worship God and be with Him forever – and this is reinforced by the heavenly vision in Revelation 7. The question of how this will be accomplished on earth where the church is suffering is “answered” when a mighty angel comes down from heaven with a little scroll.

The roar of this angel is answered by the sayings of seven thunders – of which the content remains hidden from us. Nevertheless, the angel takes an oath that ensures the believers that God holds to His plan to establish His Kingdom on earth, including people from all nations, as was announced to the prophets. The third and last part of Revelation 10 shows John's calling as a prophet for the sake of the ingathering of the people into God's Kingdom. Obviously, this interpretation of Revelation 10 transcends what John could have accomplished. Probably, John's commission describes John's call but also functions as a message for the churches – which could also explain why John has to become God's message by consuming it.

This prophetic commission of John and the church is different from the commission of the apostles in Luke 24:45-49. First of all, the believers in the seven churches could hardly all be witnesses of Jesus' suffering and resurrection like the apostles. Secondly, the call is prophetic which suggests that John and the church testify of Jesus' heavenly council that will be executed on earth. Thirdly, this testimony depends on Jesus' suffering and resurrection but is given a deeper dimension because prophets witness Jesus' glory and power in heaven. The Church is called to know what must happen (Revelation 1:1) and to testify about this because this could have eternal consequences (Revelation 22:7 and 12).

Although such testimonies could include announcements of judgment, their purpose would be to bring people to repentance. This will likely happen when prophecies come true because people have to acknowledge that God made known to them the course of history. This is comparable to Luke's testimony of Agabus' prophecy as a testimony of the Spirit because his prophecy came true (Acts 11:27-28) and to Ezekiel who is told that he will be recognised as a prophet “when his prophecies come true” (Ezekiel 2:5).¹⁹⁶ This prophetic ministry is a testimony that Jesus is alive and reigns the earth from heaven because the prophetic message

¹⁹⁵ See §3.1.

¹⁹⁶ Van Rooy, ‘Ezekiel’, 132.

comes from God's council. Nevertheless, not every believer in the Body of Christ will function as a prophet and not every prophet will have the same part in this mission (and have the same authority). Still, united with the rest of Christ's Body, prophets will be part of fulfilling the Church's mission.

3.3. Parameters for Christian prophets

Above, the meaning of Revelation 10 is discussed. Here, we will focus again on what it means to be a Christian prophet and to prophesy (over nations). First, we will discuss what the above exegesis adds to the conclusions in the previous chapters about Christian prophets. Then, a list of parameters of what it means to be a Christian prophet will be presented. This chapter will conclude by discussing what these parameters teach us about Christian prophets *today*.

The importance of Revelation 10 for parameters about Christian prophets

It was discussed that prophets received revelations through visions and dreams. Revelation 10 clarified that these visionary experiences can include both visual and auditory elements, as well as tastes and feelings. Further, John's prophetic call as described in Revelation 10 is most likely part of a larger inaugural experience in which he witnesses what happens in God's heavenly throne room (Revelation 4-5 and 7) – reflecting something of the close relationship between God and prophets. This pattern is similar to Old Testament callings of prophets (especially Isaiah, Ezekiel and Amos) and demonstrates several things.

This inauguration includes an overwhelming vision of God that forces on the prophet a sense of awe for the One sending him. Besides this, the manifestation of God's sovereignty over all the earth is significant for two reasons. First, to prophesy over a nation as God's spokesperson, the Sender must have the authority to decree something over that nation. Second, next to having the authority to decree something over a nation, God has the authority to call for himself a prophet – reinforcing awe for God but also the compulsion to prophesy.

The similarity between John's and Ezekiel's inauguration could be explained in several ways. First, callings are more or less universal but every prophet receives his own calling. This supports the idea that John's prophetic authority is similar to other Christian prophets but different in degree.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, the command to prophesy over nations and kings in Revelation 10:11 does not hold for every single prophet – although this commission is also a

¹⁹⁷ See §2.4.

calling for the church – because the authority of a prophet depends on the task God gives a prophet.

Second, it could be that during a meditation on (or imagination of)¹⁹⁸ Ezekiel's vision, John came 'in the Spirit' and received Christ's revelation. This does not mean that a prophet forces God to speak to him but that a prophet could (sometimes) prepare himself to hear from God. Also, Habakkuk 2:1 and 2 Kings 3:14-15 indicate that prophets intentionally "opened themselves" for God's revelations. It is more likely that a prophet does this when he is already appointed as God's spokesperson. Nevertheless, John is commanded to prophesy again (πάλιν) which could mean that he was already some sort of prophet. Even when he was not a prophet, he was possibly familiar with meditation practices to intentionally be open to receive visions – but very likely he did not expect to receive the Revelation (demonstrating God's sovereignty again). Third, it is likely John included in the composition of his visionary experiences allusions to traditions that he and his audience were familiar with.¹⁹⁹ This shows that a prophet could receive an overwhelming vision but was still 'in control of his spirit' when he passed on this revelation – although possibly including all kinds of symbolic images.

The intention of the prophetic commission in Revelation 10 was primarily to encourage the believers to remain faithful to the Lamb and to fulfil their callings. Besides this, prophetic ministry could also lead people from all nations to repentance. This latter may not be immediately effective but only after prophecies come true so that people will acknowledge and honour the Living God (see also Ezekiel 2:5 and 1 Corinthians 14:22-25). An idea of the "success" of these prophetic testimonies could be derived from Matthew 28:18-20. In short, Jesus commands the Eleven to disciple 'all the nations' (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) by baptising and teaching people from these nations. Thus, it is likely that the prophetic testimony concerns nations and when they come true, people from such a nation will either fear or curse God (Revelation 11:13 and 16:21).

Next to the throne room vision, the consummation of the scroll is characteristic for both John and other prophets (in some form or another, see for instance Jeremiah 1:9-10, 15:16 and Ezekiel 2:8-3:3). This consummation can be identified as hierophagy (the eating of otherworldly things) and symbolises that prophets personally receive their message when they are granted access to God's heavenly council – which give them also the responsibility to share it with others (see also Jeremiah 23:18 and Amos 3:7). Besides this, the consummation also

¹⁹⁸ See for a discussion about the sanctification of the imagination, Richard J. Foster, 'Meditation', in *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (London: Hodder, 2008), 29–31.

¹⁹⁹ Bauckham, *The Book of Revelation*, 3–4.

equipped the prophet for his task. Therefore, not only the prophet's calling but also its fulfilment depends on God – a prophet cannot operate on his own initiative.

Biblical parameters for Christian prophets

Revelation 10, together with the previous chapter, showed that a prophet is best defined as 'a person who is called by God to be His spokesperson and is sent to share prophecies with other people after these messages are revealed to him most likely through visions and dreams.' This can further be divided into the following parameters – structured by the dimensions of believing, belonging, behaving, and experiencing from the BBBE-model.²⁰⁰ The Bible references in these parameters are the result of the findings in this thesis so far and are not necessarily exhaustive.

1. Believing: A prophet is called by God alone to be His spokesperson;
 - a. God is the initiator to call and send someone as His prophet (Revelation 10:1-2, 8-11; also, Ezekiel 2:8-3:3),
 - b. A prophet's authority is derived from God's sovereignty as is reflected in the complete inaugural experience including a vision of the heavenly throne room (Revelation 4-5 and 10; also, Ezekiel 1-3),
 - c. This throne room vision shows that God reigns over all creation and has the authority
 - i. To speak over nations, peoples, and situations (Revelation 10:11),
 - ii. To call for Himself a prophet – with a certain task – who needs to obey Him (Revelation 10:8-11),
 - d. When God called a prophet, He also equipped this prophet to fulfil His task (Revelation 10:8-10; also, Ezekiel 2-3),
 - e. God is, therefore, not dependent on prophets – and their prophecies – but rather they confirm that God will do what He has decreed (Revelation 10:7; also, Amos 3:7),
 - f. Prophecies originated in visionary experiences – visions and dreams – that included seeing, hearing, feeling, and tasting (Revelation 1:1-3, 10:1, 10:8-11; also, Numbers 12:6),
 - g. Prophecies revealed divine knowledge – about the past, present, future, or something else – with the purpose of addressing a present situation (Revelation 1:1-4a, 1:11, 1:19 but mainly the discussion in Chapter 2),

²⁰⁰ Colijn, 'Testing the Waters', 18–22.

2. Belonging: A prophet is God's spokesperson for His people;
 - a. A Christian Prophet's audience is primarily God's people, i.e. the believers in the church (Revelation 1:4, 1:11; also, Acts 11:25-28, 1 Corinthians 14:20-25, 14:29-31),
 - b. Prophets equip the Church by giving them directions through divine revelations (Ephesians 4:11-13, Acts 11:28-30, 21:10-14),
 - c. Prophecies can also encourage believers – to remain faithful to Jesus and to fulfil their calling – or be a testimony of Jesus to unbelievers by revealing divine knowledge (Revelation 1:1-3, 1:19, 5:9-10, 7:1-17; also, 1 Corinthians 14:20-25, Acts 11:28, 21:10-14),
 - d. Prophecies require discernment for their application (1 Corinthians 12:10, 14:29-31, Acts 11:28-29, 21:11-13),
 - e. Prophets themselves belong to the church and cannot claim obedience or force their audience to do something – although they have the privilege to share divine knowledge (Revelation 1:9; also, Acts 21:11-13, 1 Corinthians 14:29-31),
 - f. Prophets also cannot force the nations to believe in God because this depends on whether the unbelievers will acknowledge that a prophecy comes from God. When a prophecy contains future prediction this acknowledgement could sometimes happen only after its fulfilment (1 Corinthians 14:20-25, Ezekiel 2:5, 33:33),
 - g. Prophets also belong to the nations and that is why a prophet could be deeply affected by a revelation – especially when it included judgement on the nations and his fellow humans (Revelation 10:8-10),
3. Behaving: Prophets receive revelation when 'in the Spirit' and share these prophecies when 'in control',
 - a. Prophecies were likely received during a state of being 'in the Spirit' that enabled the prophet to receive his revelatory experience: visions and dreams. Although Scripture is not exactly clear what such a state means, at least it enabled a prophet to experience things that were impossible without the Spirit (Revelation 4:2; also, 1 Corinthians 14:30),
 - b. Prophecies were shared when a prophet was 'in control'. This means that a prophet can choose his own words – and even symbolic language and actions – when he passes on the revelatory experience (Revelation 10:4; also, 1 Corinthians 14:29-32, Acts 21:10-11 and John's allusions to (prophetic) traditions in Revelation),

- c. Most likely, these prophetic revelations or proclamations happen during meetings of prophets or believers – it is even possible that John was accompanied by believers who took the Revelation to the churches in Asia (Revelation 1:3, 1:11; also, 1 Corinthians 14:29-33, Acts 11:25-29, 21:8-12 and the discussion about prophetic circles in §2.4),
 - i. Such meetings and revelatory experiences included perhaps meditations on Scripture because of strong allusions to Ezekiel in Revelation and extra-biblical information (Ezekiel 1-3; Revelation 4-5, 7 and 10; also, Habakkuk 2:1, 2 Kings 3:14-15),
4. Experiencing: The revelatory experience was overwhelming and intimate,
 - a. The inauguration experience of prophets (often) includes an overwhelming vision of God's sovereignty that compelled the prophet to proclaim God's message (Revelation 4-5, 10:1-2, 10:11; also, Ezekiel 1),
 - b. The prophetic message was (often) consummated and internalised by the prophets before they prophesied. This shows that receiving revelation is a personal and intimate experience of the divine (Revelation 10:8-10; also, Jeremiah 1:9-10, 15:16, Ezekiel 2:8-3:3),
 - c. Being a prophet means, therefore, to have the privilege of being intimate with God but also the responsibility to share His message (Revelation 10:11; also, Amos 3:7, Jeremiah 23:18).

Christian prophets today

Believing

All the aspects of the first dimension are more or less universal. In Chapter 2, it was also discussed that there was both continuity and development between Old Testament and Christian prophecy. Although this raises the expectation that prophets continue to minister in the Church today in the same way, such ministries depend on God's initiative to call them into His service. Also, their task and equipment to fulfil this task depends on God. Even their message would also not be something they could know themselves but is revealed to them and address a situation today.

Belonging

From the second dimension, parameters 2.e and 2.g relate only indirectly to belonging and indicate that contemporary prophets would identify themselves with their audience: the believers, the nations and other people. Further, this parameter shows that contemporary prophets' primary audience would be the church which they would serve by giving divine

directions (2.a-b). For instance, it is imaginable that a sound Christian prophet would have predicted a pandemic (COVID) would hit the world and that people would have to live in isolation. If the believers had accepted such a prophecy, they could have taken precautions to ensure fellowship as believers during this pandemic (2.e). If these prophecies were proclaimed publicly in some way, the believers could testify that God had given them divine knowledge and helped them through this pandemic period (2.c and 2.f). Besides this, it would also encourage the believers to hold on to their faith in God (2.c).

Next to directions for believers, prophecies can also be about judgment. As addressed in the above exegesis, the purpose of such prophetic judgements was repentance and giving glory to God. New Testament support for such prophecies is found, among others, in Revelation 18 and 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10. Although the latter seems to refer to eschatologic judgement at the Parousia, the interpretation that Matthew 24 and Revelation 18 include references to the fall of respectively Jerusalem and Rome, advocates the idea that there will be judgements on nations before the Parousia. Reasons for such punishments would be that nations or people refuse to acknowledge God and Jesus' testimony (2 Thessalonians 1:8 and Revelation 16:9) and the persecution of Christians (Revelation 18:24). These judgements can also be addressed to believers themselves when they become unfaithful to Christ (Revelation 2:4). This reflects continuity and development from Old Testament prophecy that concerned God's people in light of His covenant (Isaiah 1:2a) or kings and nations that mistreat God's people (Moses). This leads to two additional parameters:

2.c.I. Prophecies can include judgment on believers and the church for unfaithfulness to Christ (Revelation 2:4),

2.c.II. Prophecies can include judgement on the nations and people for rejection of God and persecution of Christians and the church (Revelation 16:9, 18:24).

Not every illness, death, catastrophe or war is necessarily a punishment from God and, even when it is, there could be other explanations as well (as Stefan Paas addresses concerning Old Testament prophecies about the exile when reflecting on contemporary climate change).²⁰¹ Therefore, prophecies help to understand the developments in this world – next to reflection on Scripture and developments in this world (because the Spirit is poured out on all believers). This also requires discernment about the (meaning and) application of a prophecy (2.d).

²⁰¹ Stefan Paas, *Vrede op aarde: heil en redding in deze tijd* (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum Uitgevers, 2023), 327–28.

Whether events in this world are punishment or not, the starting point is that we live ‘under an open heaven’ and God is involved in this world to fulfil His plans.²⁰²

To return to the issue of the ‘belonging’ of Christian prophets, a few things must be addressed. First of all, the prophet’s equipping of believers (2.b) could imply some position of leadership. However, in most churches today, the prophetic office is not a (distinct) office. Reasons for this could be the “prophetic” movements like the Montanists²⁰³ and the Anabaptists’ Munster rebellion²⁰⁴ in church history. However, to reject the possible existence of a Christian prophet today would limit God in His means to communicate with His people. Still, there is a tension between parameter 1.a and the prophet as a formal leader. Especially when a prophet is sent by God to announce punishment on the church because of unfaithfulness, it is likely that the church (and its leaders) would not accept such a prophet to lead the church. A prime example is Martin Luther – although not a prophet but still prophetic in some way. On such an occasion, a prophet still has the responsibility to lead God’s people by sharing divine revelation (4.c) but not because of a formal position within the church. Nevertheless, when a prophet’s prophecies have come true, it is likely that (some of) the believers will look for him to lead the church (2.f).

2.b.I. Prophets are leaders within the church, whether formal or not, when God commissions them (Revelation 10:8-11; Ephesians 4:11-13, 1 Corinthians 12:28).

Behaving

Just as with the first dimension, the different aspects of the third parameter are more or less universal because it is likely that prophets today are only able through the Spirit to receive revelations (3.a), while it is still undesirable that they should prophesy ecstatically (3.b).

However, parameter 3.c is more challenging to translate to today. Because prophets gained a bad reputation during church history, the appearance of a group of prophets will be considered suspicious – especially in traditional churches. Still, such a group could possibly be a safeguard against all kinds of imaginative “prophecies” of a lone ranger. Nevertheless, if prophets could only operate in groups, this would violate the sovereignty of God to send prophets when and how He chooses (1.a). Therefore, parameter 3.c is not a strict parameter.

²⁰² Richard J. Mouw and Sander Griffioen, ‘Under and Open Heaven’, in *Pluralisms and Horizons: An Essay in Christian Public Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 171–73.

²⁰³ Henk Bakker, ‘De Carthaagse kerk’, in *‘Ze hebben lief, maar worden vervolgd’: radicaal christendom in de tweede eeuw en nu* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2005), 47–49.

²⁰⁴ Herman J. Selderhuis and Peter Nissen, ‘De Zestiende Eeuw’, in *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, ed. Herman J. Selderhuis (Kampen: Kok, 2010), 249–50.

Parameter 3.c.i also is not a strict parameter. Although it could be argued that (corporate) meditations could help to open yourself to receive revelations *from God*, there is no direct biblical support for this (Habakkuk 2:1 and 2 Kings 3:14-15 only hint at this). Besides this, it seems that meditation and contemplation are spiritual exercises that have been lost in many Christian traditions while it seemed “natural” for many biblical persons to encounter God in this way.²⁰⁵ Therefore, this parameter is not so much a criterion for contemporary prophets but a reminder that this needs further research when biblical meditation is advocated by contemporary prophets. We will return to this in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Experiencing

The parameters of the fourth dimension seem also universal. There is no reason that, when a prophet today receives an overwhelming vision of God's sovereignty and consummates God's message, that the prophet is not compelled to obey God's command (4.a), that this is not a personal and intimate experience of the prophet (4.b), or that this is not experienced as both a privilege and (eventually) a responsibility (4.c).

²⁰⁵ Jos Douma, *De ontmoeting: 12 uren met Jezus* (Utrecht: Kok, 2012), 13–14.

4. CONTEMPORARY PROPHETS

In this chapter, a description of the contemporary prophets Emma Stark and Matthew Helland will be given. This description contains a discussion of their publications about being a Christian prophet and is structured according to the different dimensions of the BBBE model. Colijn developed this model as a tool to organise his empirical data for his research on infant baptism.²⁰⁶ From the 19th century on, the dimensions of believing, belonging and behaving were already used in different research fields like psychology or sociology of religion, sociological research of ritual, or theology.²⁰⁷ “In the last decades, special attention has been claimed for the aspect of ‘experience’ in religious psychology.”²⁰⁸ Therefore, it is likely that these four dimensions will also be useful for the description in the present chapter.

Concerning the first dimension of ‘believing’, a distinction can be made between ‘believing that’ something is true and ‘believing in’, which is more about relationship and trust.²⁰⁹ The first will be used to describe what Stark and Helland believe that prophecy and prophets are about, and the second who they believe in that gives prophets their authority.

‘Belonging’ is the second dimension. It can be about being a member of a certain group but also about identifying yourself to others or a group.²¹⁰ Below, the focus will be on the relationship between prophets (and their prophecies) to the rest of the Church.

The dimension of ‘behaving’ is about “rites, practices, traditions and morality in personal and communal life.”²¹¹ The description of contemporary prophets will focus on how prophecies are received and shared by prophets.

‘Experiencing’ is the last dimension and is fundamental for human existence but goes beyond what is empirically measurable and concerns someone’s perceptions of themselves, God and other people.²¹² In the description below, the discussion focuses on these perceptions concerning prophetic calling and authority.

²⁰⁶ Colijn, ‘Testing the Waters’, 18.

²⁰⁷ Colijn, ‘Testing the Waters’, 18–19.

²⁰⁸ Colijn, ‘Testing the Waters’, 19.

²⁰⁹ Colijn, ‘Testing the Waters’, 19–20.

²¹⁰ Colijn, ‘Testing the Waters’, 20.

²¹¹ Colijn, ‘Testing the Waters’, 20.

²¹² Colijn, ‘Testing the Waters’, 20.

This BBBE model will be applied on Stark (§5.1) and Helland (§5.2), while each section starts with an introduction of the publications of each prophet. Testimonies and examples in their publications will only be referred to for clarification of their standpoint. For the sake of the comparison in the next chapter, I will conclude by presenting comparisons and differences of their main ideas (§5.3).

4.1. Emma Stark

Stark leads, among others, the Global Prophetic Alliance (GPA) that equips believers, especially in the gift of prophecy.²¹³ The GPA's activities include, for instance, personal check-ups, evangelism and international gatherings.²¹⁴ Here, we will focus on two of her publications: *The Prophetic Warrior* and *Becoming the Voice of God*. In the first, Stark advocates a lifestyle full of the power of the Spirit,²¹⁵ which goes beyond the topic of Christian prophets sometimes but will still be helpful to understand her views on prophecy. The second, Stark challenges Christians to become part of the second wave of the prophetic movement.²¹⁶ For the sake of the scope of this thesis, I will focus on what she teaches about being a prophet and not on what this prophetic wave is about.

Believing

Stark starts by describing how Jesus is enthroned in heaven on Ascension Day and that His rule is supreme over every other power.²¹⁷ However, based on Ephesians 4:8, Stark argues that Jesus gives gifts (mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4) to the believers,²¹⁸ so that they may have dominion over the earth as God's children, just as it was before the Fall (Genesis 1:28).²¹⁹

²¹³ Emma Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God: Next-Level Training for Prophetic People* (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Destiny Image Publishers, 2023), 296.

²¹⁴ Emma Stark, *The Prophetic Warrior: Operating in Your True Prophetic Authority* (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Destiny Image Publishers, 2020), 282.

²¹⁵ Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 23–30.

²¹⁶ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 5–8.

²¹⁷ Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 33–38.

²¹⁸ Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 38–39.

²¹⁹ Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 110–12.

Concerning prophets, this means that they are God's spokesperson who "are *like God* to people; [and] speak whatever message God wants [to be] said" (based on Exodus 6:28-7:2).²²⁰ Therefore, "God's words in His mouth have the same weight as God's word in our mouths."²²¹ Such a message could be about the future by speaking the future into being.²²² Even more, based on Amos 3:7, Stark claims that God limits Himself to prophets who listen to Him.²²³ She adds to this a personal testimony about a vision of heavenly books from which prophecies were removed by angels because there had been no prophet who had listened and these things had, therefore, not been fulfilled.²²⁴

Stark further states that Christian prophets are defined by the Old Testament and three additional New Testament elements: prophets are foundational for the church (Ephesians 2:19-20), are a leadership gift themselves (Ephesians 4:11-12), and have a task to the nations (Revelation 10:11).²²⁵ Stark adds to this that a true prophet equips other prophets, otherwise the prophet lacks authority.²²⁶ This means that you can be trained to minister as a prophet, however, Stark strongly defends that only God can call you as a prophet.²²⁷

Belonging

Stark believes that prophets are foundational for the church and should equip others to prophesy – as mentioned above. She also states that prophets direct God's people to build God's Kingdom and call them to remain faithful to God.²²⁸ Although prophets do this as God's representatives,²²⁹ they need to take responsibility when their prophecies are weighed or do not come true.²³⁰

²²⁰ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 120.

²²¹ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 161.

²²² Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 249; Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 119.

²²³ Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 88.

²²⁴ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 26.

²²⁵ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 16–21.

²²⁶ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 58.

²²⁷ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 76.

²²⁸ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 41, 90.

²²⁹ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 235.

²³⁰ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 128–31.

Besides this role within the church, Stark presents several testimonies that show how sharing revelations convinces unbelievers that God is real.²³¹ However, all these are personal encounters and no examples of nationwide prophetic revelations. Nevertheless, Stark states that prophets are responsible for the nations (and the church) as ‘covenantal watchdogs’ and can accuse the nations when they break the covenant, worshipping other Gods, allowing injustice, wrong military alliances, and mistreating immigrants and foreigners.²³²

Behaving

In *The Prophetic Warrior*, Stark presents a list of the twelve ways in which God can speak to us. This list consists of different ways of having impressions or visions within you, or different ways of seeing and experiencing things in the spiritual world outside you – including seeing demons.²³³ This list is mainly about how God can speak to us, however, Stark argues that Christians do not need to *receive* a prophetic word but can *perceive* a prophetic word because the Spirit lives inside Christians.²³⁴ Through intimacy with God, Christians can prophesy for a long time whenever they want.²³⁵ Sometimes, this could lead to a general prophetic word that is biblical but not based on revelation.²³⁶

In *Becoming the Voice of God*, Stark goes deeper into discussing three ways that prophets receive revelations and share these with others. The first, she calls a ‘nabi prophet’ – based on the Hebrew word for prophet (נָבִיא). The related verb *naba* (נָבָא), Stark understands as ‘to bubble up’ or ‘to flow’ words.²³⁷ Therefore, Stark argues that “profound fellowship with the Spirit [1 Corinthians 6:17] ... enables a *naba* abundance of words to flow out of you.”²³⁸ The second is called a ‘seer prophet’ – derived from the title seer (in Hebrew: רֹאֵה or הֹוֶה). She explains that this kind of revelation is about seeing but a better word is ‘beholding’ – a revelatory experience that includes feeling, sensing, tasting and smelling.²³⁹ The last is called a ‘watchman prophet’ – based on Ezekiel 3:17. The focus of this form of prophecy is warning

²³¹ For instance, Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 45–46.

²³² Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 234–44.

²³³ Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 201–35.

²³⁴ Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 133–34.

²³⁵ Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 135, 163.

²³⁶ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 208–9.

²³⁷ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 101.

²³⁸ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 102.

²³⁹ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 107.

of the dangers of the enemy and identifying the roots of evil.²⁴⁰ It also involves a lot of intercession – spiritual warfare.²⁴¹ Nevertheless, the main function of this sort of prophecy is “revelation, intercession, and proclamation.”²⁴²

Stark also explains what complete prophetic words look like:²⁴³

- It starts with a revelation about the past or something else
- that leads to clarity about the present or interpretation of its meaning
- to forthtelling about the future or an application about working out its meaning.

Experiencing

The perception of being called as God’s spokesperson is best expressed as something you are “whether you like it or not, and whether we are comfortable with it or not!”²⁴⁴ Also, Stark states that prophets need to fear the Lord so much that he speaks “whatever God asks, no matter the cost.”²⁴⁵ Therefore, Stark argues that prophets need divine encounters to remain faithful to their calling.²⁴⁶ In other words, being a prophet is both a privilege and a responsibility. Still, “[i]t is often only after what a prophet has said has come true that they are then listened to.”²⁴⁷

4.2. Matthew Helland

Helland, born in Chile, lives with his family in Amsterdam where he has founded two churches. They lead one congregation and work together with Scharlaken Koord (scarlet cord). The RUAH School of Prophecy was founded in 2020 and operates in 8 different countries.²⁴⁸

The focus of the discussion about Helland will be on his publication *Hearing and Seeing God’s Voice*. The purpose of this book is to grow in a two-way relationship with God so that God’s

²⁴⁰ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 109–10.

²⁴¹ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 111.

²⁴² Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 112.

²⁴³ Stark, *Prophetic Warrior*, 260–62.

²⁴⁴ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 124.

²⁴⁵ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 173.

²⁴⁶ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 136.

²⁴⁷ Stark, *Becoming the Voice of God*, 115.

²⁴⁸ Matthew Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God’s Voice: The Power of Prophecy* (Amsterdam: RUAH Media, 2023), 249; Matthew Helland, *Power Evangelism: Just Do It* (Haarlem: Arrowz Publishing House, 2020), 151.

Kingdom will be established on earth when we share God's words.²⁴⁹ Additionally, Helland's publication *Power Evangelism* – about “using prophecy, healing, deliverance and the presence of God to share the Gospel”²⁵⁰ – will be used when it touches on authority and sharing revelations.

Believing

Based on John 10:27, Helland states that God speaks to us today because He is a loving Father.²⁵¹ This means that prophecy is about speaking “forth God's words because we have a relationship with him. This is why prophecy in its most basic form is simply testifying about Jesus and strengthening, encouraging, and comforting others (Rev. 19:10: 1 Cor. 14:3).”²⁵² This basic form is close to what Helland defines as the ‘Spirit of prophecy’ – the level of prophecy that is for everyone. The second level, the ‘Gift of prophecy’, is for every believer and can be developed. The highest level is the ‘Ministry of prophets’ that transcends the Gift of prophecy and includes training believers, also prophesying over nations and foretelling. Only some Christians are called for this office.²⁵³

Helland further states that prophetic words do not come “from our rational mind, but from our spirit.”²⁵⁴ Therefore, a prayer life is important for prophets because this is the reason for “God to entrust them with his secrets, for they are truly his friends (Amos 3:7).”²⁵⁵ In this way, prophets “can literally call God's thoughts from the heavenly reality into existence here on Earth.”²⁵⁶ Concerning authority, Helland states that this is given to all believers – just as before the Fall (Genesis 1:26-28) – because of Jesus' sacrifice that opens the way for believers' intimacy with the Father.²⁵⁷ “Like the prophet Ezekiel, then, we are empowered to speak into people's lives and situations and to see that what seemed hopeless and dead come to life (Eze. 37:1-14).”²⁵⁸

²⁴⁹ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 23.

²⁵⁰ Helland, *Power Evangelism*, 17.

²⁵¹ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 25.

²⁵² Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 64–65.

²⁵³ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 73–87.

²⁵⁴ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 63.

²⁵⁵ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 86.

²⁵⁶ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 85.

²⁵⁷ Helland, *Power Evangelism*, 80–82.

²⁵⁸ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 113.

Belonging

Helland states that prophecy helps people by speaking God's thoughts and plans over people's lives.²⁵⁹ Even more, referring to 1 Timothy 4:14, Helland states: "Prophecies can release and activate gifts in our lives. They can bring forth and call things into the life that God has put inside of us. ... Prophetic words always require a piece of responsibility, obedience, and action from us as well."²⁶⁰ Before prophecies require a response, they "must be evaluated and tested against the Bible."²⁶¹

Next to strengthening believers, prophetic words also touch unbelievers in their hearts because of God's love,²⁶² besides showing that He is real and revealed something that the one prophesying could not know.²⁶³

Behaving

Based on the Hebrew words *nataph* and *naba*, which he argues to mean respectively 'to drip' and 'to flow or stream',²⁶⁴ Helland concludes: "As we open our mouths, we can trust God to fill it. God's words may begin as a small drip and eventually form a steady, prophetic stream. Jesus said that when we believed in him, we should have a river of living water flowing out of us (John 7:38). This river is God's life and his words flowing out of us."²⁶⁵ That is why he argues that an intimate relationship with God increases the chance of prophesying correctly.²⁶⁶ Helland also lists 38 exercises to develop the prophetic gift, among others *lectio divina* and imagining approaching God's throne room (Hebrews 4:16 and Revelation 4).²⁶⁷

Helland further states that God speaks through the Bible, through nature or circumstances, but also through impressions, images, visions and dreams inside you – or when others share them

²⁵⁹ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 67–70.

²⁶⁰ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 46.

²⁶¹ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 77.

²⁶² Helland, *Power Evangelism*, 17.

²⁶³ Helland, *Power Evangelism*, 117.

²⁶⁴ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 156.

²⁶⁵ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 156.

²⁶⁶ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 77.

²⁶⁷ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 205–24.

with you.²⁶⁸ In this way, we can know God and obey Him by building God's Kingdom according to how He calls us.²⁶⁹

Experiencing

Because of this last statement, logically Helland states that a prophet's "lifestyle involves always being connected to God so that hearing and seeing him is normal in everyday life."²⁷⁰ More in general, Helland challenges believers to just encourage and edify others while sharing what they feel God wants to say.²⁷¹ In this way, they can overcome the fear of making a mistake and obey what "the Bible already tells us we can do."²⁷²

4.3. Conclusions

To conclude this chapter, here follows a brief discussion of the most distinctive elements of the above description that require specific attention in the next chapter – unless otherwise noted.

Believing

Stark and Helland argue that a prophet must be trained and, likely, train other believers to become prophets – although Stark and Helland state that a prophet must be called (by God alone) without elaborating on what this means or how such a calling is received. Further, Stark and Helland define 'forthtelling' as a fundamental element of prophesying (Ezekiel 37:1-14 supports this according to Helland). Concerning the authority of a prophet (or the use of any gift of the Spirit as a believer), this is derived from the idea that Jesus' sacrifice reestablished the creation order: believers are again given dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). However, to fully discuss the "effect" of Jesus' sacrifice goes beyond the scope of this thesis. A difference is that Stark refers to Amos 3:7 to point out that God limits Himself to prophets, while Helland argues that this verse shows that prophecies are received through intimacy with God.

Belonging

²⁶⁸ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 32–53.

²⁶⁹ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 193–97.

²⁷⁰ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 110.

²⁷¹ Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 167.

²⁷² Helland, *Hearing and Seeing God's Voice*, 155.

Stark and Helland argue and testify about prophecy being an encouragement for believers and a testimony for unbelievers. Besides this, Stark argues that the ministry of prophets is foundational for the church and Helland argues that prophecies activate callings into believers (1 Timothy 4:14). Stark also addresses prophets' responsibility as 'covenantal watchdogs' that can even lead to accusations against nations.

Behaving

Although Stark and Helland present their own lists of ways in which God speaks to us, their publications and testimonies often refer to prophetic words 'bubbling up' from within you. Therefore, the next chapter will specifically address this characteristic understanding of words 'bubbling up'. Further, Stark distinguishes between the different roles of prophets (*nabi*, watchman, seer) which raises the question of whether these are biblical.

Experiencing

Stark elaborately argues that prophets are compelled (by divine encounters) to speak God's words – even though this may be uncomfortable. Helland simply points out that all believers have a task in this world: to obey God's command in the Bible to proclaim God's Kingdom in words and deeds.

5. COMPARISON BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY PROPHETS AND BIBLICAL PARAMETERS

In this chapter, threads from the previous chapters come together. First, we looked at Christian prophets in the Bible and John's prophetic commission in Revelation, which culminated in biblical parameters for Christian prophets. After that, a description of contemporary prophets Stark and Helland was given. Here, this description will be compared with the biblical parameters. These parameters are derived and discussed in §3.3. In the following comparison, references to particular parameters that are discussed are put in the footnotes.

This comparison consists of a discussion of comparisons and biblical explanations of the differences (§6.1). Then, cultural explanations for the differences are discussed (§6.2). In the conclusion, lessons from this discussion will be summarised (§6.3).

5.1. Evaluating contemporary prophets

A prophet was first defined in §3.3 as 'a person who is called by God to be His spokesperson and is sent to share prophecies with other people after these messages are revealed to him most likely through visions and dreams.' This definition was then divided in line with the four dimensions of the BBBE model and particular parameters were defined per dimension. Below, these parameters are compared with the description of Stark and Helland in Chapter 4 by discussing different themes that demonstrate the most significant differences.

Believing

Spokesperson

Revelation 10:8-11 with 1:1-4a shows that a prophet is called by God alone to be His spokesperson by sharing divine revelation to address a present situation. This is recognised in Stark's and Helland's publications that state that prophets respectively are God's spokesperson and entrusted with His secrets (Amos 3:7). Stark adds to this that prophets are *like* God to people based on Exodus 7:1-2. However, it is clear from this passage that the relationship of Moses-Aaron as god-spokesperson resembles that of God and prophets.

Authority

The relationship between John's commission and his larger inaugural experience in Revelation 4-5 showed that a prophet's authority rested in God's sovereignty over all creation. That is why it makes sense that God can call John as prophet to proclaim His decrees over the nations as is described in Revelation 10:8-11. Stark agrees that God's throne in heaven is supreme over all other powers. However, both Stark and Helland believe that because of Jesus' sacrifice, God's children are given dominion over the world again (Genesis 1:26-28). It goes beyond the scope of this thesis to fully discuss the restoration of men's dominion over the world. Nevertheless, Scripture does not seem to support a relation between this possible restoration and prophets' authority.

Forthtelling

Prophets address a present situation by sharing divine revelation about the past, present, future, or something else.²⁷³ Although Stark and Helland would not deny this, prophecy as speaking the future into being (forthtelling) is a prominent theme in their publications. This understanding is possibly derived from their understanding of believers' dominion over the earth.

Besides this, Stark derives from Amos 3:7 that prophecies have not come true because prophets did not listen (and did not proclaim these prophecies). This is opposite to what the exegesis of Revelation 10:7 and its allusion to Amos 3:7 showed. Namely, that God did not depend on prophets but that their proclamation of God's decrees should ensure their audience that God will fulfil His plan.

Helland refers to Ezekiel 37:1-14 to support prophecy as forthtelling. Verses 4-10 seem to support Helland's claim but the following verses show clearly that Ezekiel's instructions are symbolic, he "only" has to declare what God decreed to do in the future.

Being trained and training others

Revelation 10:8-10 (together with Ezekiel 2-3) showed that God equips a prophet for his task. This disagrees with Stark's and Helland's understanding that prophets must be trained – Stark even claims that prophets' authority depends on the ability to train others. It could be wise for a prophet to have fellowship with other prophets – or other believers – but nowhere in the Bible do we find an example of someone who is *trained to prophesy*²⁷⁴ or that a prophet's authority depended on training prophets.

²⁷³ See the discussion in §2.2.

²⁷⁴ See also the discussion about 'True prophets' in §2.1 and 'John and prophetic circles' in §2.4.

Belonging

Prophets in the church

Revelation 1:9 and 1 Corinthians 14:29-31 show indirectly that prophets belong to the church and do not stand above the church so that the believers are free to discern applications of their prophecies. The Book of Revelation, together with 1 Corinthians 14 and Ephesians 4, showed that prophets encourage and equip believers to fulfil their calling and remain faithful to God.

Helland adds to this that prophets also activate callings into believers based on 1 Timothy 4:14. However, 1 Timothy 1:18 contains instructions for Timothy to live according to prophecies made about him. Therefore, it seems likely that there was a prophecy about Timothy's gift or ministry, then the elders confirmed this as God's will and laid hands on him to appoint him (comparable to Acts 13:1-3).²⁷⁵

Stark states that prophets are foundational for the church based on Ephesians 2:19-20. However, the discussion of this passage showed that this is not a general instruction about prophets. Instead, these verses speak of the revealed mystery that all believers form one nation in Christ.²⁷⁶

Prophets and national responsibility

When it comes to prophecies concerning the nations, Revelation 10:8-10 shows indirectly that a prophet could be deeply affected when internalising God's message about his fellow humans. Thus, prophets are only humans who pass on God's message.

This is different from Stark's claim of prophets who operate as 'covenantal watchdogs' concerning the nations, even resulting in accusations against the nations. It is likely that nations and people someday will have to give an account when they persist in rejecting God (Revelation 16:9; 18:24). However, accusations about military alliances (as Stark advocates) only make sense in a Christian theocracy – or Old Testament Israel. More likely, prophets would accuse the church when it supports unjustified wars in the name of Christ.

1 Corinthians 14:20-25 states prophecy could cause unbelievers to convert when they hear these revelations. John's commission also raises the hope of a positive response from people from the nations when prophecies come true (in light of Revelation 4-5 and Ezekiel 2:5). Stark and Helland testify several times about how people are touched when revelations are shared

²⁷⁵ See §2.2.

²⁷⁶ See §2.3.

but never about how this works on a national level. This can be explained by their focus on forthtelling a nation's future into being instead of passing on God's decision for that nation.

Behaving

Hearing God

Prophecies are proclaimed revelations which were received when being 'in the Spirit' (Revelation 4:2). Such a state enables a prophet to receive visions and dreams.²⁷⁷

Both Stark and Helland list several ways in which God can speak to believers. These can be related to some form of a visionary experience – except when these are about speaking through the Bible, natural circumstances, or other people. Therefore, it seems that Stark and Helland were too enthusiastic in distinguishing between these experiences.

Helland also states that several meditational exercises can help to grow in the prophetic gift. No matter the claim of growing in a gift, such meditational exercises seem comparable to spiritual exercises of Jewish mysticism that John was possibly familiar with – partly explaining his strong resemblance to Ezekiel's visions.²⁷⁸

The only questionable visionary experience that Stark describes is the seeing of demons in the spiritual realm – next to Jesus and angels. Perhaps a prophet may receive a revelation of evil powers about a certain situation (like John in Revelation) but to explicitly see where there is a certain demon,²⁷⁹ seems extreme and lacks biblical support. This attention to demons by Stark may be the result of her focus on spiritual warfare. She even derives from Ezekiel 3 the role of watchman prophet who watches out for the Enemy. However, Ezekiel's task as a watchman is to warn people of the consequences of their sins when God reveals them to Ezekiel.

Prophetic word flow

Next to the role of a watchman prophet, Stark distinguishes between a seer and a *nabi* prophet. Again, she seems to be too eager to make distinctions. Although these titles are sometimes used next to each other, in 1 Samuel 9:9 it is mentioned that they are titles for the same office.

Stark's understanding of a *nabi* prophet is closely related to her most prominent form of prophecy, namely to just open your mouth and let prophetic words bubble up (based on the Hebrew verb נָבֵא). Helland advocates the same form of prophecy and even advocates a

²⁷⁷ See also §2.1 and §2.4.

²⁷⁸ See exegesis of Revelation 10:9-10 in §3.2.

²⁷⁹ For instance in a church's creche; Stark, *The Prophetic Warrior*, 213–15.

development from dripping to a flow of words – referring to respectively *נָטַף* and *נָבַח*. Stark and Helland argue that this flow from within is possible from the Spirit living inside believers, contrary to the Old Testament prophets.

However, it seems inconsistent to explain a New Testament form of prophecy with Old Testament words. Besides ‘to bubble’, *נָבַח* could also mean ‘to announce’, ‘to be called as a prophet’, or ‘to be in a prophetic trance’.²⁸⁰ This shows that Stark’s and Helland’s understanding of *נָבַח* is debatable. Also, *נָטַף* could mean ‘to (cause to) flow’ or ‘to prophesy ecstatically’.²⁸¹ Thus, Helland’s advocated distinction between dripping and a flow of words is not supported by these words.

Prophesying on purpose

According to Revelation 10:8-11 and 1 Corinthians 14:29-32, prophesying happened ‘in control’ after a revelation was received – explaining also John’s literary creation about his visionary experience. Being ‘in control’ means that a prophet freely chooses when and how he shares his message.

This partly agrees with Stark’s and Helland’s claim about intentionally opening your mouth to prophesy. However, ‘bubbled up’ ‘prophetic’ words are (sometimes) without revelation or partly from God. It could sound biblical – especially because Stark and Helland advocate Bible study a lot – and possibly the Spirit can work through this, however, it is not biblical prophesying.

Experiencing

Compelled to prophesy

John’s prophetic commission in Revelation 10:8-11 (in light of his throne room vision in Revelation 4-5) shows that a prophet is compelled to prophesy by God’s glorious sovereignty. Being a prophet gives the privilege to stand in God’s presence but also the responsibility to proclaim God’s message.

Stark agrees with this by stating that a prophet must fear the Lord so much that he proclaims His message no matter the consequences. She argues, therefore, that prophets need divine encounters to fulfil their task.

²⁸⁰ Johann Jakob Stamm and Walter Baumgartner, eds., ‘נָבַח’, in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, by Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner, trans. M.E.J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 659.

²⁸¹ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, ‘נָטַף’, in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Johann Jakob Stamm and Walter Baumgartner, trans. M.E.J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 694.

Helland does not address such an overwhelming visionary experience. Nevertheless, he testifies that he almost died at his birth and was also diagnosed with cerebral palsy but that he was healed through prayer.²⁸² Such an experience could also compel him to minister like he does. Besides this, he advocates that all believers are welcome to hear their Father's voice but have to obey Scripture as well – resembling both aspects of John's inaugural experience.

5.2. Cultural reflection of prophecy

The differences addressed in the comparison above will be discussed here from a cultural perspective.

Certainty in a complex world

Paas lists several aspects of how Western society today differs from a couple of generations before us. Life in the past was harder and shorter; social hierarchical differences were more prominent and required obedience; violence was a necessary pedagogical element of everyday life; and there was little control over life.²⁸³

The larger 'control over life' today could explain Stark's and Helland's focus on prophecy as a flow from within that you can control. Prophecy in this way gives a sense of autonomy and self-control – both prominent elements of contemporary Western culture that are challenged by its complexity (giving more reasons to aim for control).²⁸⁴

Helland calls encouraging and comforting in itself one of the basics of prophecy, while it was discussed that it is rather the effect of prophecy according to Paul²⁸⁵. Helland's understanding of prophecy could be reinforced by the lack of social hierarchy and an (almost) complete rejection of pedagogical violence. What is left is to encourage who you are or want to be.

Nowadays, "it takes younger generations [like Generation Y and Z] much longer to self-identify and live as adults."²⁸⁶ These generations have both the privilege and the pressure to find out who they are and what to do in life – because the opportunities are endless.²⁸⁷

²⁸² Helland, *Power Evangelism*, 87–89.

²⁸³ Paas, *Vrede op aarde*, 167–73.

²⁸⁴ J.H. Roeland, *Selfation: Dutch Evangelical Youth Between Subjectivization and Subjection* (VU Amsterdam, 2009), 52.

²⁸⁵ See §2.3.

²⁸⁶ Ruth Perrin, *Changing Shape: The Faith Lives of Millennials* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 5.

²⁸⁷ Perrin, *Changing Shape*, 27–33.

Therefore, they can use every encouragement to keep on track with their life and not drown in the opportunities of this complex modern world. This could be a reason why people want to hear from God through prophets for clarity – although Stark and Helland admit that not everything they say comes from God.

Collective self-orientation

Western culture is characterised by a prominent self-orientation as addressed by J.H. Roeland.²⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the experience of the individual is formed by an external force, a mass orientation “towards happiness: which is thought to be found in pleasant and wonderful experiences” within us.²⁸⁹ This means that the popularity of prophetic phenomena may (among others) be inspired by trends in Western society. Stark and Helland satisfy the desires of believers for personal experience by training them in prophecy, while these desires are formed by a cultural movement.

Counter-institutionality

Charles Taylor addresses the issues of authority and responsibility – because society would be unliveable without them.²⁹⁰ The necessity of authority and responsibility also holds for groups of Christians but the question is how one becomes part of such a group. Many people do not become part of a religious group because they agree with the confessions of the larger institution.²⁹¹ They rather become involved because of a spiritual practice that draws them in – while such practices were (only) extras in the past, they have become the potential door to the larger organisation.²⁹²

This could explain why prophecy is strongly promoted by Stark and Helland. As mentioned above, it is understandable that the comforting and encouraging element of prophecy satisfies a need in an increasingly complex world but also answers to the mass orientation towards experiences within that lead to happiness. Also, claiming to speak a word directly from the Spirit bypasses the institutional authorities and structures – which could be a threat to personal freedom and autonomy.

²⁸⁸ Roeland, *Selfation*, 51.

²⁸⁹ Roeland, *Selfation*, 53–55. See also, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; Londen, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 8.

²⁹⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 479.

²⁹¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 514.

²⁹² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 515–16.

5.3. Conclusions

To conclude this chapter, the lessons from a biblical and cultural discussion of Christian prophecy today will be summarised.

Insights from the comparison

In general, the biblical parameters helped evaluate Stark and Helland. Most differences between these parameters and Stark and Helland came from a broader understanding of prophecy. It seems that they tried to explain their experience in biblical terms that sound appropriate, while it resulted in dubious use or interpretation of Bible passages.

Believing

There was agreement that prophets must be called by God but Stark and Helland argued that a prophet must be trained as well. Also, according to Stark and Helland, prophets' authority comes from the believers' dominion over the earth because of Christ's sacrifice that restored the creation order of Genesis 1:26-28 (which goes beyond the scope of this thesis to fully discuss here), instead of resting in God's sovereignty over all creation. Stark and Helland also argued that prophesying could be about creating the future into being – without proper biblical support.

Belonging

The dimension of belonging was only indirectly derived from the role of a prophet, namely that prophets belonged to the church and fellow humans – but this was not specifically addressed by Stark and Helland. It is, therefore, questionable whether the dimension of belonging on its own makes a big difference in evaluating prophets.

Nevertheless, there was agreement that prophets encouraged believers to fulfil their calling and remain faithful to God. However, the responsibility towards the nations showed differences because Stark's opinion about this showed that she considers every nation to be in covenant with God like Old Testament Israel.

Behaving

From Revelation 10 (and also 1 Corinthians 14), it was derived that prophets receive revelations first in some spiritual state and, afterwards, proclaim this divine message when 'in control'. Stark and Helland would agree with this but argue that, since Pentecost, prophecy often 'bubbles up' from the Spirit within believers. Their reference to the Hebrew verbs נָבֵא and נִטַּן to support this seems invalid and the result of inconsistent reasoning.

Further, only Helland mentions meditation as a spiritual practice that helps with prophesying. This was not a strict parameter because there does not seem clear biblical support for it. However, because Helland also links meditation with prophecy, it could be interesting to research this possible relation more.

Experiencing

There was a lot of agreement between the parameter and Stark's opinion about being compelled to proclaim God's decrees as a prophet because of overwhelming encounters with God. This was only in general addressed by Helland because he argues that every believer can know God intimately but has to obey Scripture as well – including prophesying.

Insights about biblical prophecy today

The cultural reflection above showed that contemporary prophets are probably driven by 'control over life' in an increasingly complex world. Besides this, contemporary prophecy seems to satisfy a culturally driven desire to find happiness within ourselves that also bypasses institutional religion – leaving personal freedom and authority intact.

Interestingly, prophecy has the potential to go against a society that is self-orientated. This is not true when prophecy is mainly about learning to personally hear God's voice and let yourself be comforted by the prophetic words of others. However, biblical prophecy is not self-orientated but community-orientated. This means that believers would need to depend on each other. Although the Spirit is poured out upon all believers (Acts 2), some are given as prophets (Revelation 10; 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4) who pass on God's revelations to the believers – next to sermons of pastors and so on.

There could be a danger of claiming too much authority within a church because of the gift of receiving revelations for the church. However, this could be overcome by giving them, like Moravian bishops, "only ... a consultative voice in decision-making."²⁹³ This means that prophets would only pass on revelations and leave the discernment for its application over to the audience. In this way, teachers, pastors and other believers can decide what to do with such revelations. Then, the Body of Christ would edify each other with their different gifts.

²⁹³ Leo J. Koffeman, 'Ordained Ministry', in *In Order to Serve: An Ecumenical Introduction to Church Polity, Church Polity and Ecumenism: Global Perspectives* (Zürich/Münster: LIT Verlag, 2014), 123.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In Chapter 1 the research question of this thesis was formulated as follows:

What can we learn from a comparison of Christian prophecy in the Bible, especially John's prophetic commission in Revelation 10, with publications of Christian prophets Emma Stark and Matthew Helland for developing biblical parameters to evaluate contemporary Christian prophets, who claim the authority to share direct messages from God?

The following chapters answered four sub-questions and will be summarised below, which will culminate in answering the above question. After this, further research opportunities will be discussed.

6.1. Answering the sub-questions

New Testament prophecy (Chapter 2)

First, it was discussed what characterised early Christian prophecy in the New Testament. This showed that Paul understood prophecy in light of Old Testament prophecy, clarifying that prophets were God's spokesperson who proclaimed God's message to people. These messages were received through visions and dreams and contained divine revelations to address a present situation. Although these prophecies came from God, the addressees were free to discern how they applied them.

All this is recognised in the appearances of the prophet Agabus in Acts and in the instructions of Paul's epistles. Further, Paul's instructions and John's relation to Christian prophecy showed that prophets received revelation when they were in a spiritual state (being in the Spirit) but shared these revelations when they were in a normal state (in control of their spirit). Also, prophets seem to have ministered in groups or circles but not independent of other believers, which they served to build up the church.

John's prophetic commission (Chapter 3)

After this general discussion about Christian prophets in the Bible, an exegesis of John's prophetic commission in Revelation 10 gave a lot more insight into what it means to be called as a prophet. First of all, the consummation of the little scroll showed again that a prophet needs to receive revelation before he can prophesy. The relation between the throne room vision and

John's commission in Revelation 4-5 and 10 demonstrated that a prophet's authority rests in God's sovereignty alone. This overwhelming experience explains why a prophet is compelled to prophesy over nations and kings (Revelation 10:11). On the one hand, it shows that God has the authority to decree things over nations and kings. On the other hand, a prophet has to obey God's call when He commands him to proclaim these decrees. From John's call, it became also clear that prophets encourage believers to fulfil their calling and remain faithful to God. Prophecies could also lead people to repentance (after they come true). Therefore, a prophet is often recognised as such after his prophecies come true – partly clarifying why a prophet needs an overwhelming vision to be prepared for his task concerning the nations.

Because a prophet's call depends on God's sovereign choice alone, God may decide to call prophets to serve the church today as well. They could encourage believers to fulfil their calling and remain faithful to God. They could also help the church by sharing divine revelation about local or nation-national (future) events so that the church can prepare itself – and such prophecies become a testimony for unbelievers. Such prophecies could also involve judgment on believers because of unfaithfulness and on other people because of rejection of God and persecution of Christians (Revelation 2:4; 16:9; 18:24).

This shows that a prophet will probably function as some sort of Christian leader. However, this does not have to be a formal position, especially when a prophet is sent to address unfaithfulness by believers. A prophet's authority depends on God's call and not on recognition from their audience – which sometimes only comes after their prophecies come true. This also means that a prophet today needs to be equipped by God to fulfil his task.

Contemporary prophets (Chapter 4)

The publications of Stark and Helland showed similarities with what was derived from John's commission. However, there were also differences. First of all, Stark and Helland argued that a prophet must also be trained to become a mature prophet. They also argue that prophecy includes forthtelling, i.e. speaking the future into being. This could be related to their belief that all believers have received dominion over the earth again (Genesis 1:26-28) because of Christ's sacrifice. Stark goes so far as to claim that God limits Himself to prophets who listen to Him and proclaim His plans so that they come true (based on Amos 3:7).

Further, Stark argues that prophets have a responsibility towards the nations as 'covenantal watchdogs', meaning that they can accuse nations when they diverge from God's covenant. Helland argues that prophets not only encourage believers but even release gifts into believers' lives (based on 1 Timothy 4:14).

Stark and Helland both share a list of how God can speak to you. These include different forms of dreams and visions, however, their publications show that they primarily understand prophecy to be about a flow of words bubbling up from the Spirit within a believer. Stark also distinguishes between different roles of prophets that relate to how they receive and proclaim revelations.

Stark states that a prophet needs divine encounters to fear God above everything else and fulfil his task. Helland does not mention such an experience but focuses on believers in general who have the privilege of hearing from God but must also obey Scripture by proclaiming God's Kingdom.

Evaluating contemporary prophets (Chapter 5)

The differences between the definition of Christian prophets in Chapter 3 and that of Stark and Helland in Chapter 4 could be explained by the latter's dubious use and interpretation of the Bible, resulting in a broader understanding of what prophecy is.

This is recognised in Helland's reference to Ezekiel 37 to support the idea of prophecy as forthtelling. Ezekiel 37 shows that the instructions to prophecy dead bones to come alive are not about forthtelling but symbolic instructions for Ezekiel's proclamation of what God will do with the people of Israel. Another example is Stark's reference to Amos 3:7 to claim that God limits Himself to prophets. Revelation 10:7 alludes to Amos 3:7 and in the exegesis of Chapter 3, it was addressed that it rather indicates that prophets' proclamation of God's decrees ensures believers these decrees will come true. Stark's and Helland's understanding of New Testament prophecy as words 'bubbling up' from the Spirit within believers is also the result of doubtful reasoning. The discussion in Chapter 5 showed that supporting this New Testament form of prophecy with Hebrew words for prophesying seems inconsistent, while their understanding of these Hebrew words is debatable.

Besides this biblical evaluation of the differences, cultural explanations for the differences were discussed – which also gave insight into the popularity of prophecy today. This showed that people experience the pressure of the opportunities in life today and long for control. This could explain, on the one hand, Stark's and Helland's teachings about controlling the prophetic-process by claiming that prophecies flow from within and could be uttered whenever one desires – instead of waiting on revelations from God. On the other hand, it could explain why people are open to direct messages from God because it could give them a sense of certainty in their complex lives – which also reflects a decreasing appreciation of institutional authorities.

The cultural reflection also gave reasons to think that biblical prophecy could compensate for a mass self-orientation in society. Namely, by giving room in the church for believers whom God wants to use as His spokespersons – next to and different from pastors and teachers – the Body of Christ can be an example of mutual edification. These prophets would then have the freedom to share God's revelations without claiming any application. The discernment for its application will be done by other believers (or prophets). Especially when these revelations concern future events, a proper response could help serve each other better or even prevent judgment. These revelations may also help believers to understand what is happening around them or be an encouragement because it shows God's involvement in their lives. Besides this, prophecies could also be a testimony to nations and other people – especially when prophecies are fulfilled. Whether such testimonies are accepted or not is not in the hands of the prophets, or believers in general – but that does not excuse them of being witnesses among the nations.

6.2. Answering the research question

This research showed that John's prophetic commission clarified a lot about the authority of prophets to share messages from God. Their authority did not belong to the Christian prophet but to God who is sovereign over all creation. A Christian prophet functions only as His spokesperson and cannot force his audience to respond in a certain way.

This shows significant differences with contemporary prophets like Stark and Helland – although there are also similarities. These differences include that they advocate that prophecies can flow from the Spirit within. This lacks the required revelation that leads to the proclaimed prophetic message. Besides this, prophecy as forthtelling seems to have no biblical support. Also, Revelation 10 shows that prophecies function as an assurance of the fulfilment of God's plan and not as a condition for their fulfilment. To evaluate Stark and Helland on their understanding of being a Christian prophet, these parameters were sufficient.

These parameters can be summarised as follows:

1. God is responsible for calling a person as His prophet, i.e. His spokesperson. God will also define the task of this prophet while giving the prophet the power to fulfil this task as well. The prophet's prophecies address the present situations of their audience.
2. A prophet addresses primarily Christians, equipping and encouraging them to fulfil their call and remain faithful to Christ. Such prophecies could also be a testimony to nations and unbelievers – especially when these prophecies come true. Prophecies could also include judgment because of the unfaithfulness of believers, or because of rejection of God or persecution of Christians by nations or other people.

3. A prophecy is received in a certain ecstatic state described as 'in the Spirit'. This means that a prophet cannot receive revelations in his own strength (but could involve some form of meditation or another spiritual exercise). On the other hand, a prophecy was shared when 'in control' so that the prophet articulated the revelation in his own way at his chosen moment.
4. The urge to proclaim God's message is caused by an overwhelming vision of God's sovereignty – that was (often) part of a prophetic inaugural experience. The consummation of God's message gave prophets a sense of responsibility to share this message but was also a privilege because it reflected intimacy with God.

6.3. Opportunities for further research

Now the research question is answered, there is room to evaluate what further research opportunities are.

Research methodology

The BBBE model was used to structure the parameters and comparison in this research. In general, this model was useful – as is clear from the answer to the research question in §6.2 – but there is room for improvement.

It was mentioned in Chapter 5 that the dimension of 'belonging' was difficult to derive. Further research could aim to create a clearer picture of this dimension concerning Christian prophets. Doing so would possibly lead to a parameter that is even more fruitful for evaluating Christian prophets today.

Concerning 'behaving', two parameters were derived that did not get a lot of attention in the comparison. One was about prophetic ministry among a gathering of prophets or believers. Further research could give more insight into the possible relation between prophetic circles that were discussed in Chapter 2 and Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:29-32. This could help to better define a parameter about the behaviour of prophets and how their authority or influence is controlled. The other parameter was about the relationship between prophecy and meditation (or other spiritual exercises). Helland's publication seems to hint at such a relationship and further research about spirituality in the first century could enlighten the possibilities and risks of such a relationship.

Next to elaborating on these two dimensions, the research could be conducted differently when resources are available. In a larger research, it would be possible to conduct interviews, surveys

and field research to collect empirical data about how different contemporary Christian prophets carry out their ministries in practice and how people who visit their conferences, trainings and so on think about their experiences.

Research focus

The focus of this research was on Christian prophets. However, this thesis showed that Stark's and Helland's teachings are about training other believers to prophesy. This also shows that they distinguish between prophecy by prophets and ordinary believers. Further research could clarify whether there is biblical support for such a distinction and how this influences the parameters derived in this thesis. Also, Stark and Helland claim that believers are given dominion over the earth again because of Christ's sacrifice. In this thesis, it was argued that this does not agree with what can be derived from Scripture about the authority of Christian prophets. However, further research could give more insights into the belief of Stark and Helland and whether or not this affects the authority of prophets defined in this thesis.

In Chapter 3, it was mentioned that John's call in Revelation 10 also symbolises a call for the church. Further research could present more ideas of what the prophetic call for the church means for how prophets work together with other believers. For instance, it could be that prophets share a revelation during a gathering of believers. If the gathered believers discern that its meaning and application affects their nation, it could be that all believers – whether they are prophets or not – proclaim this message to people from their nation, which could in the end function as a testimony that God reigns over that nation.

APPENDIX A: ANALYSIS OF THE GREEK TEXT OF REVELATION 10

Below follows the analysis of the Greek text of Revelation 10. The Greek text presented below comes from the Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*. For the analysis below and the translation presented in Chapter 4, also Murre, *Lexicon Bijbels Grieks* and Hensels, *Nieuwtestamentisch Grieks* are used. When additional sources are used, these are mentioned in the footnotes.

verse	Greek text	Analysis of the underlined verb
1	Καὶ <u>εἶδον</u> ἄλλον ²⁹⁴ ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν <u>καταβαίνοντα</u> ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ <u>περιβεβλημένον</u> νεφέλην καὶ ἡ ²⁹⁵ ἴρις ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς ²⁹⁶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς στύλοι πυρός,	aor-ind-act – 1st-sng (ὀράω) pr-prt-act – acc-msc-sng (καταβαίνω) pf-prt-m/p – acc-msc-sng (περιβάλλω)

²⁹⁴ ἄλλον is missing in three manuscripts from the ninth century or later and in the Koine tradition proper (M^K). The omission of ἄλλον (another [angel]) seems to be a later correction because it is not clear who the first ‘mighty angel was’ – possibly the one in Revelation 5:2.

²⁹⁵ ἡ is missing in three manuscripts of which one is a second correction Codex Sinaiticus is from the fourth century (X), while the other two are from the ninth century or later, but also in the larger number of manuscripts with the commentary on Revelation by Andreas of Caesarea (M^A) and the Sahidic tradition. The reading including ἡ seems to be the more difficult one because then it reads ‘the rainbow upon his head’, while it is not clear where this rainbow refers to – maybe Revelation 4:3. Therefore, this reading must be considered in the exegesis.

²⁹⁶ τῆς κεφαλῆς is found in Papyrus 47 from the third century (P⁴⁷) and X, and several manuscripts from the tenth century and later but also in the majority text. In the Codex Alexandrinus (A) and Ephraemi (C) from the fifth century, it reads την κεφαλην instead. The only difference between these readings is that the variant in two manuscripts is an accusative instead of a genitive after the presupposition ἐπὶ. In both cases, especially with the genitive, ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν / τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ is most plausible interpreted as ‘upon his head’; see also, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 548.

2	καὶ ἔχων ²⁹⁷ ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ βιβλαρίδιον ²⁹⁸ ἠνεωγμένον. καὶ ἔθηκεν τὸν πόδα αὐτοῦ τὸν δεξιὸν ²⁹⁹ ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, τὸν δὲ εὐώνυμον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,	pr-prt-act – nom-msc-sng (ἔχω) pf-prt-m/p – acc-nt-sng (ἀνοίγω) aor-ind-act – 3rd-sng (τίθημι)
3	καὶ ἔκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλη ὥσπερ λέων <u>μυκάται</u> .	aor-ind-act – 3rd-sng (κράζω) pr-ind-m/p – 3rd-sng (μυκάομαι)

²⁹⁷ ἔχων has an alternative reading (εἶχεν) in M^A, the entire Latin tradition and the Harklensis text. The difference between the above and the variant is that the first is a present participle, while the latter is an imperfect indicative. Just as the previous and following participles, it is likely that this participle describes the angel at the beginning of this chapter. However, in that case the participle here should have been an accusative and not a nominative. It seems, therefore, that the later traditions interpreted this participle as starting some new action and even reinforced this by changing it in an indicative. Nevertheless, considering the participles in its context, it seems likely that John saw something (the action at the beginning of verse 1) and then describes what he saw (using participles). From the second half of verse 2 the image that John saw and describes will start to “move”.

²⁹⁸ βιβλαρίδιον is found in an uncorrected X, and in A, and a second correction of C but also in two manuscripts from the ninth and tenth century. The alternative reading βιβλίον is found in an uncertain reading of P⁴⁷, several manuscripts from the tenth century or later, and M^K (but also in some manuscripts of the Vulgate and with some Church Fathers). The alternative reading βιβλιδάριον is found in an uncorrected manuscript of C and several manuscripts from the eleventh century or later, and M^A. The alternative reading βιβλάριον is only found in one manuscript from the tenth century – considering this lack of evidence, this alternative is not further discussed here. For clarity, according to Murre βιβλαρίδιον and βιβλιδάριον are diminutives of respectively βιβλάριον and βιβλίδιον; the latter two are both diminutives of βιβλίον which is a diminutive of βίβλος (meaning ‘book’); see, Murre, *Lexicon Bijbels Grieks*, 319. βιβλίον could have an old date but it depends on the reading of Papyrus 47 which is uncertain, however, this date could be supported with the use by the Church Fathers. Without an early date, this alternative reading could be explained as a correction to link this βιβλαρίδιον with the βιβλίον in Revelation 5:1. The reading above βιβλαρίδιον is only supported by five manuscripts of which three are relatively early. The alternative βιβλιδάριον has support of many manuscripts – including the larger number of manuscripts with the commentary on Revelation by Andreas of Caesarea – however, it has only one early witness. This shows that βιβλίον and βιβλιδάριον are the most preferable – βιβλαρίδιον is found in less manuscripts and its meaning is more or less comparable to that of βιβλιδάριον. Considering that the reading of βιβλίον most likely is a correction to link this ‘small scroll’ to the ‘scroll’ in Revelation 5:1. This link may be defended from the allusions to Ezekiel in both passages, however, the possible use of different words for the same scroll should be discussed in the exegesis. Aune, however, argues that βιβλαρίδιον should be considered the original reading rather than βιβλιδάριον because the suffix -ιδάριον is classical, while -αρίδιον is post-classical. He also advocates that the diminutive suffix -ιον = -ίδιον = -αριον. Thus, Aune argues that both βιβλίον and βιβλαρίδιον are diminutives of βίβλος. See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 549 and 558. His argument suggests that the word in this verse has the same meaning as in Revelation 5:1, however, it does not explain why a different word with the same meaning is used – and, therefore, still requires elaboration in the exegesis.

²⁹⁹ τὸν δεξιὸν is missing in C. This omission would only mean that ‘right’ (in: his right foot) is left out, while this ‘right foot’ is also implied by the following εὐώνυμον (left) [foot].

	καὶ ὅτε <u>ἔκραξεν</u> , <u>ἐλάλησαν</u> αἱ ³⁰⁰ ἑπτὰ ³⁰¹ βρονταὶ τὰς ἐαυτῶν φωνάς.	aor-ind-act – 3rd-sng (κράζω) aor-ind-act – 3rd-sng (λαλέω)
4	καὶ ὅτε ³⁰² <u>ἐλάλησαν</u> αἱ ἑπτὰ ³⁰³ βρονταί, <u>ἤμελλον</u> ³⁰⁴ <u>γράφειν</u> , καὶ <u>ἤκουσα</u> φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ <u>λέγουσαν</u> . <u>σφράγισον</u> <u>ἃ</u> ³⁰⁵ <u>ἐλάλησαν</u> αἱ ἑπτὰ ³⁰⁶ βρονταί, καὶ μὴ αὐτὰ <u>γράψῃς</u> ³⁰⁷ .	aor-ind-act – 3rd-sng (λαλέω) impf-ind-act – 1st-sng (μέλλω) pr-inf-act (γράφω) aor-ind-act – 1st-sng (ἀκούω) pr-prt-act – acc-fmn-sng (λέγω) aor-imp-act – 2nd-sng (σφραγίζω) aor-ind-act – 3rd pl (λαλέω) aor-sub-act – 2nd-sng (γράφω)

³⁰⁰ αἱ is missing in an uncorrected manuscript X and two manuscripts from the tenth and eleventh century. This omission would read ‘seven thunders sounded’ instead of ‘the seven thunders sounded’. The omission makes sense because the article would imply that these seven thunders (βροντή) and their voices (φωνή) refer back to voices and (or, like) thunders in Revelation 4:3, 6:1 and 8:5. Therefore – and because the omission is not supported by many manuscripts – it is likely that his omission is a later correction.

³⁰¹ ἑπτὰ is missing in P⁴⁷ – suggesting that it is not about *seven* thunders but just about thunders. This variant is not followed because of the lack of evidence – although the same manuscript does not read ἑπτὰ in verse 4.

³⁰² ὅτε has an alternative reading (οσα) in X (and with two Church Fathers). In P⁴⁷ it is read as ηκουσα οσα. The above means that ‘when’ the thunders spoke or had spoken, John wanted to write their sayings down – possibly after the thunders were finished. The variants explicitly state that John wanted to write it down ‘as long as (he heard)’ the thunders speak. However, the evidence for these variations is not strong and also Metzger considered it an exegetical rewriting; see Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 670.

³⁰³ ἑπτὰ is missing in P⁴⁷ – the same as in verse 3.

³⁰⁴ ἤμελλον is και ημελλον αυτα in P⁴⁷. The variant would read ‘and I was about to ... them’ while the above reads ‘I was about to’. The variant has little support and seems a correction of the lack of accusative what John intends to write down.

³⁰⁵ ἃ has an alternative reading (οσα) in P⁴⁷, X and a manuscript from the eleventh century. The above means that John has to ‘seal *what* the thunders have spoken’, while the alternative reading suggests that John has to ‘seal as long as the thunders are speaking’. This alternative reading seems to be caused by the alternative readings at the beginning of this verse – which do not occur in many manuscripts.

³⁰⁶ ἑπτὰ is missing in the uncorrected manuscript P^{47*} and in C. See also earlier in this verse and verse 4.

³⁰⁷ μὴ αὐτὰ γράψῃς has μετα ταυτα γραφεις as alternative reading in M^A. The above means ‘do not write them (down)’, while the alternative means that John must seal what he wrote about the thunders were speaking; see also, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 549.

5	Καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος, ὃν εἶδον ἐστῶτα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἤρην τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ τὴν δεξιάν ³⁰⁸ εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν	aor-ind-act – 1st-sng (ὀράω) pf-prt-act – acc-msc-sng (ἴστημι) aor-ind-act – 3rd-sng (αἶρω)
6	καὶ ὤμοσεν ἐν ³⁰⁹ τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ὃς ἔκτισεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ³¹⁰ καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ³¹¹ , ὅτι χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται,	aor-ind-act – 3rd-sng (ὀμνύω) pr-prt-act – dat-msc-sng (ζάω) aor-ind-act – 3rd-sng (κτίζω) fut-ind-md – 3rd-sng (εἰμί)
7	ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ ἐβδόμου ἀγγέλου ³¹² , ὅταν μέλλῃ σαλπίζειν,	pr-sub-act – 3rd-sng (μέλλω) pr-inf-act (σαλπίζω) aor-ind-pas – 3rd-sng (τελέω)

³⁰⁸ τὴν δεξιάν is missing in A M^A, but also in the Vulgate, the Philoxeniana text, and some manuscripts of the Bohairic tradition. The raising up of the right hand seems to be implied even when it 'right' is omitted because of 'taking an oath' in the following verse; see also Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 550.

³⁰⁹ ἐν is missing P⁴⁷, an uncorrected manuscript of X* and several other manuscripts not older than the tenth century, and als M^K. The omission of the presupposition makes it possible to understand the opening of this verse as 'he swore to ...'. The reading above means 'he swore by ...'. Therefore, the omission seems to be the more difficult reading and suggests that the presupposition ἐν is later inserted. See also, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 550.

³¹⁰ καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ is missing in A and M^A. This omission of 'and the earth and the things in it' seems an accidental omission because of the threefold formulation of what the Living One has created.

³¹¹ καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ is missing in an uncorrected manuscript X, and in A and some other manuscripts dating from the tenth century (and also in one Syriac and in the Sahidic; and also with one Church Father. Just as the previous omission (of: and the earth and the things in it), the omission of 'and the sea and the things in it' seems to be accidental. See also, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 550; Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 671.

³¹² τοῦ ἐβδόμου ἀγγέλου has in C an alternative reading: εβδομου αγγελου. In P⁴⁷, X and one manuscript of the eleventh century has του αγγελου του εβδομου. The meaning of these variations are more or less the same as the above and do not have strong support in many manuscripts.

	καὶ ἐτελέσθη ³¹³ τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὡς εὐηγγέλισεν τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους ³¹⁴ τοὺς προφήτας.	aor-ind-act – 3rd-sng (εὐαγγελίζω)
8	Καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἦν ³¹⁵ ἤκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πάλιν λαλοῦσαν ³¹⁶ μετ' ἐμοῦ καὶ λέγουσαν ³¹⁷ . ὑπάγε	aor-ind-act – 1st-sng (ἀκούω) pr-prt-act – acc-fmn-sng (λαλέω) pr-prt-act – acc-fmn-sng (λέγω) pr-imp-act – 2nd-sng (ὑπάγω) aor-imp-act – 2nd-sng (λαμβάνω)

³¹³ ἐτελέσθη has an alternative reading in two manuscripts dating from the tenth century, and in M^A: τελεσθη. The above is 'aor-ind-pas – 3rd-sng (τελέω)' and the variant only differs in that it is a subjunctive instead of an indicative. It seems that many copyists understood that this verb was related to the conjunction ὅταν (this conjunction must be accompanied with a subjunctive – in this case, the verb μέλλη). However, this verb is the main clause of the sentence, so that it cannot be a subjunctive and relate to ὅταν. Aune further argues that this aorist has a future sense because of the temporal clause ὅταν and the future subjunctive μέλλη. He also adds other reasons for a future sense, like the several reflections of Hebrew language; see Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 550–51.

³¹⁴ ἑαυτοῦ δούλους is found in A, C, P, and several late manuscripts (around the tenth century), and M^A. An alternative reading εαυτου δούλους και is found in P⁴⁷, an uncertain reading in Papyrus 85, and in X, but also in two manuscripts from the tenth and eleventh century and the Sahidic tradition. Another alternative reading δούλους αυτου is found in three manuscripts from around the tenth century, and also in M^K. The above can be translated as 'servants of himself' (meaning, 'his servants'), the first variant as 'servants of himself and [the prophets]' (Aune advocates an exegetical use of και, resulting in 'his servants, that is, the prophets'; see Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 551), the last variant as 'his servants'. The above has older and more support in the manuscripts, so that this seems the most likely to be original – and also, the meaning does not differ that much (especially considering the possible exegetical use of και).

³¹⁵ ἡ φωνὴ ἦν has an alternative reading φωνην in several manuscripts around the tenth century (one has την φωνην), in a first correction of the Vulgate, and with two Church Fathers. The support for this alternative reading is, therefore, not that strong and can be translated as '(the) voice [I heard]', while the above reads like 'the voice that [I heard]'. In other words, in the alternative reading, the voice is the accusative of 'I heard', while in the above text it is nominative in a distinct clause of the sentence. All in all, the meaning of the sentence remains more or less the same.

³¹⁶ λαλοῦσαν has as an alternative reading λαλουσα in one manuscript from the tenth century and in M^K. In the text above, λαλοῦσαν is a participle accusative and is a more difficult reading than the nominative in M^K. Therefore, it is likely that the variant is a later correction. See also, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 551.

³¹⁷ λέγουσαν has as an alternative reading λεγουσα in one manuscript from the tenth century and in M^K. The discussion here is the same as with λαλοῦσαν earlier in this verse.

	<p><u>λάβε</u> τὸ βιβλίον³¹⁸ τὸ <u>ἠνεωγμένον</u> ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ <u>ἐστῶτος</u> ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.</p>	<p>pf-prt-m/p – acc-nt-sng (ἀνοίγω) pf-prt-act – gen-msc-sng (ἵστημι)</p>
9	<p>καὶ <u>ἀπῆλθα</u> πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον <u>λέγων</u> αὐτῷ <u>δοῦναί</u>³¹⁹ μοι τὸ βιβλαρίδιον³²⁰. καὶ <u>λέγει</u> μοι· <u>λάβε</u> καὶ <u>κατάφαγε</u> αὐτό³²¹,</p>	<p>aor-ind-act – 1st-sng (ἀπέρχομαι) pr-prt-act – nom-msc-sng (λέγω) aor-inf-act (δίδωμι) pr-ind-act – 3rd sng (λέγω) aor-imp-act – 2nd-sng (λαμβάνω) aor-imp-act – 2nd-sng (κατεσθίω) fut-ind-act – 3rd-sng (πικραίνω)</p>

³¹⁸ βιβλίον is found in A, C, and several manuscripts from around the tenth century, and also in the Vulgate and a part of Old Latin witnesses. The alternative reading βιβλαρίδιον is found in X and P, and also in two manuscripts from around the tenth century. The alternative βιβλιδάριον is found in one manuscript from the tenth century and the majority text. And the alternative reading βιβλάριον is found in only one manuscript from the tenth century – therefore, just like in verse 2, this alternative is not further discussed here. βιβλίον and βιβλαρίδιον both have old witnesses, while the βιβλιδάριον has the support of the majority text. As discussed above in verse 2, these words can have the same meaning. Still, it must be kept in mind during the exegesis why possibly different words are used in the same text – that likely refer to the same book or scroll.

³¹⁹ δοῦναί has as alternative reading δος in three manuscripts from the ninth century or later, and M^A. δοῦναί in the text above is ‘aor-inf-act (δίδωμι)’, while the variant is ‘aor-imp-act – 2nd-sng (δίδωμι)’. The text above uses the infinitive that must be understood as an indirect discourse, while the variant seems to be a later correction that makes it direct speech; see also, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 552.

³²⁰ βιβλαρίδιον is found in an uncertain reading of Papyrus 115, a corrected manuscript C, and two manuscripts dating from the ninth century or later. The alternative reading βιβλίον is found in P⁴⁷, X, and several manuscripts around the tenth century and in the entire Latin tradition. The alternative βιβλάριον is found in an uncorrected A and a manuscript from the tenth century – again, this alternative has not much support. The alternative reading βιβλιδάριον is found in several manuscripts from around the tenth century and the majority text. In this case, βιβλίον seems to have the strongest support of the older manuscripts, while βιβλιδάριον has the support of the majority text. Again, these words can have the same meaning but the use of different words must be elaborated on.

³²¹ καὶ κατάφαγε αὐτό has a different order αὐτο και καταφαγε in P⁴⁷ and Paprus 85, also in an uncorrected manuscript X, and in a manuscript from the eleventh century. This transposition in words has not very strong support in manuscripts and does not affect the exegesis.

	καὶ <u>πικρανεῖ</u> σου τὴν κοιλίαν ³²² , ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ στόματί σου <u>ἔσται</u> γλυκὸν ὡς μέλι.	fut-ind-act – 3rd-sng (εἰμί)
10	Καὶ <u>ἔλαβον</u> τὸ βιβλαρίδιον ³²³ ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ ἀγγέλου καὶ <u>κατέφαγον</u> αὐτό, καὶ ἦν ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκόν καὶ ὅτε <u>ἔφαγον</u> αὐτό, <u>ἐπικράνθη</u> ³²⁴ ἡ κοιλία μου ³²⁵ .	aor-ind-act – 1st-sng (λαμβάνω) aor-ind-act – 1st-sng (κατεσθίω) impf-ind-act – 3rd-sng (εἰμί) aor-ind-act – 1st-sng (φάγω, or ἐσθίω) aor-ind-pas – 3rd-sng (πικραίνω)
11	καὶ <u>λέγουσίν</u> ³²⁶ μοι·	pr-ind-act – 3rd-pl (λέγω)

³²² κοιλίαν has an alternative reading in A, one manuscript from the tenth century, and a marginal reading in the Harklensis text. The alternative reads 'heart' instead of 'stomach'. The evidence for this alternative reading is not strong and is not in line with its context in Revelation 10.

³²³ βιβλαρίδιον is found in A, C, and several manuscripts from around the tenth century, and also M^A. The alternative reading βιβλίον is found in uncorrected but uncertain reading of P⁴⁷, X and also two manuscripts from the tenth and eleventh century, and M^K, and the Vulgate and a part of Old Latin witnesses. The alternative reading βιβλίδιον is only found in a corrected version of P⁴⁷ – and will, therefore, not be part of the further discussion. The alternative βιβλιδαριον is found in four manuscripts dating from around the tenth century. And the alternative reading βιβλάριον is found in only one manuscript from the tenth century – and will, just as in the previous verses, not be part of the following discussion. βιβλαρίδιον seems to have the best support from both old and many manuscripts.

³²⁴ ἐπικράνθη has the alternative εγεμισθη in an uncertain reading of Papyrus 115, X and two manuscripts from the tenth century or later, but also in a marginal reading in the Harklensis text, and with three Church Fathers. ἐπικράνθη is the 'aor-ind-pas – 3rd-sng (πικραίνω)' while the alternative is the same but then from the verb γεμίζω (to fill). This alternative makes no sense in the sentence except when the following insertion is considered as well – then the meaning of the text remains more or less the same.

³²⁵ μου is followed by πικρίας in a second correction of X, two manuscripts from the tenth century or later but also in a marginal reading in the Harklensis text, and with two Church Fathers. The above text means something like 'it became bitter in my stomach', while the insertion (including the previous alternative reading) means something like 'it filled my stomach with bitterness'.

³²⁶ λέγουσίν has the alternative reading λεγει in several manuscripts dating from the ninth century or later, and in M^A, but also in a majority of Old Latin witness, the whole Syriac tradition, the Sahidic tradition, some manuscripts of the Bohairic tradition, and with two Church Fathers. The only difference between the above text and the alternative reading is that the first is plural and the latter singular. This alternative reading is clearly a correction of the plural form, that is the difficult reading. Aune argues that this is an impersonal plural that was not only used in this way in Hebrew and Aramaic text but also in Greek texts of Jews and Christians; see, Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 552–53.

	<p>δεῖ σε</p> <p>πάλιν προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ³²⁷ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς.</p>	<p>pr-ind-act – 3rd-sng (δεῖ)</p> <p>aor-inf-act (προφητεύω)</p>
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³²⁷ λαοῖς καὶ is followed by ἐπι in two manuscripts from the tenth century, and M^K, and also in the Harklensis text. This variant has no early witnesses and seems most likely a typo – there seems to be no reason for such an extra presupposition.

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