

The “Spirit of Prophecy” (Rev 19:10) in the Light of Second Temple Jewish Usage

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Introduction

The phrase “spirit of prophecy” occurs only once in the entire New Testament, and it is in Revelation 19:10. It appears to signify that the prophetic gift was still manifested in the time of the New Testament and in the latter days of the Church. But how can we understand the Jewish tradition through several statements from Jewish literature that prophecy ceased earlier?¹ Can the understanding and use of “spirit of prophecy” within Judaism be of help to us as we interpret and apply the “spirit of prophecy” in the book of Revelation?

In this study, I intend to engage in a literary-historical and exegetical investigation of “spirit of prophecy” in order to be able to present evidences of the use and understanding of the phrase “spirit of prophecy.” In doing so, the study will confirm or deny prophecy’s continued existence, during the intertestamental and the New Testament.

¹ 1 Maccabees 9:27 laments that in the second century’s Maccabees time, prophets ceased from appearing among them (*aph’ hēs hēmeras ouk ōphthē prophētēs autois*). Other rabbinic tradition from Tosefta states that Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were the last of the prophets and the Holy Spirit ceased (*Sotah* 13:2-4).

Prophecy in Jewish Tradition

Decline of Prophecy During the 2nd Temple Period

In Jewish tradition, prophecy is closely associated with the Spirit. At times, the Holy Spirit is identified with the spirit of prophecy.² Indeed, there was a strong emphasis on Spirit-inspired prophecy.³

According to Jewish tradition, prophecy “ceased” because of the sin of Israel (cf. Zech 13:2-6). Its “cessation” is connected with the departure of the presence [Shekinah] from the temple, which presages its doom and destruction—thus, identifying Jeremiah as the last of the prophets (*Pesikta Rab Kahana* 13:14).⁴ Elsewhere, it is reported that the Holy Spirit ceased after Malachi. Tosefta, *Sotah* 13:2, reads, “When Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the last of the prophets, died, the Holy Spirit ceased in [from] Israel.”⁵ The absence of the Holy Spirit from the Second Temple is also referred to in the Babylonian Talmud *Yoma* 21a. Without any surprise, the cessation of prophets came along with the departure of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the author of Maccabees laments “so there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them” (1 Macc 9:27).

Nevertheless, it seems clear that cessation does not mean complete disappearance. As *Yoma* 21a notes, even though the Holy Spirit departed, the Jews still availed themselves of the *Bath Kol*, a term for a voice from Heaven.⁶ Thus, Tosefta *Sotah* 13:3-4 further assures: “When Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the last of the prophets, died, the Holy Spirit ceased in [from] Israel. Nevertheless, a Bath Qol was heard by them: it

² Joseph Jacobs and Ludwig Blau, “Holy Spirit,” <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/7833-holy-spirit>. Of course, rabbis acknowledged “they [Holy Spirit and spirit of prophecy] were not one and the same. In some places they are explicitly distinguished” (Frederick E. Greenspahn, “Why Prophecy Ceased,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108/1 [1989], 44). For instance, in Targum Isaiah 41:13, “who established the holy spirit in the mouth of all the prophets, is it not the LORD?” they are related, yet the relationship is clearly more cause and effect than identity (ibid).

³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 678.

⁴ The midrashic statement is from https://www.sefaria.org/Pesikta_D'Rav_Kahanna.13?lang=bi. The statement is confirmed by Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Meridian, 1957), 403-404, citing the complaint from Lamentation 2:9 that after the destruction on the temple, prophets found no vision from the Lord; see also Greenspahn, 38.

⁵ Parallels of this statement are found elsewhere (*Sanh* 11a; *Yoma* 21b), attesting its widespread notion and acceptance.

⁶ Literally, daughter of voice, thus, “small/little voice,” most likely compared to the full strength of the Holy Spirit.

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once happened that the sages entered a house in Jericho and they heard a Bath Qol, saying, ‘There is a man here who is worthy of the Holy Spirit, but there is no one in his generation righteous.’ Thereupon, they set their eyes upon Hillel.” In other words, there was an absence of prophets during a period of time. This is evident from 1 Maccabees 4:46, “and [the Maccabees] stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until a prophet should come to tell what to do with them.” Then in Maccabees 14:41, “The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise.” The author of the Maccabees likely asserts that at the time following Judas Maccabee’s death “prophecy is a thing of the past and perhaps of the future but not of the present.”⁷

Josephus’ statement about the absence of an exact succession of prophets, after Artaxerxes, can be equally construed in the same manner: “It is true, our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time,” (Josephus *Against Apion* 1.41). As a matter of fact, biblical texts, such as Psalms 74:4, state there were times when it was said there were no prophets. Wisdom of Solomon 7:27 goes further to affirm that there would be prophets in every generation: “Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets.”⁸

Jassen correctly concludes “the identification of continued prophetic traditions in Second Temple period Judaism presupposes that classical prophecy as represented in the Hebrew Bible never disappeared completely. Scholars have long debated the question of the attenuation of prophecy in the post-biblical period.”⁹ Diversity in Judaism must be taken into consideration when talking about the cessation or disappearance of prophecy. That diversity has to do with the diverse forms of Judaism and rabbinic periods, thus reflecting multiple modes of religious piety.¹⁰

⁷ Benjamin D. Sommer, “Did Prophecy Cease? Evaluating a Reevaluation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115/1 (1996), 32.

⁸ Cf. Philo, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres*, 259.

⁹ Alex P. Jassen, *Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and Revelation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 11.

¹⁰ Alex Jassen, “Prophets and Prophecy in the Qumran Community,” *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 32/2 (2008), 299.

“Spirit of Prophecy” in the Targums

Bruce D. Chilton has emphasized the importance of the Targums for the study of the New Testament.¹¹ He aptly states that Christian theology shares its origins with Early Judaism. Therefore, it cannot be fully appreciated without reference to its matrix.¹² The phrase “Spirit of prophecy,” [*rûah nêbû’â*]¹³ occurs frequently in the Targums, which characteristically associate the Spirit with the prophecy.¹⁴ Targum Isaiah 61:1 reads, “the prophet said, a spirit of prophecy before the Lord is upon me.”¹⁵ In Targum Onqelos on Genesis 41:38, Pharaoh is said to have found only in Joseph a man possessing the “spirit of prophecy,” obviously referring to the divine inspiration to Joseph as he advised the Egyptians to store up grain for the upcoming famine in the land.¹⁶ In Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Numbers 24:2, it is reported that Balaam raised his eyes and saw the Israelites, “then the Spirit of prophecy from before the Lord rested upon him.”¹⁷ It is noteworthy that in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Number 11:25, 26, 29, Ernest G. Clarke renders the same targumic phrase *rûah nêbû’â* as “prophetic spirit,” reading, “and he [God] increased some of the prophetic spirit (*rûah nêbû’â*) which was upon him, but Moses, not lacking any, and gave (it) to the seventy men, the elders. And it happened when the prophetic spirit (*rûah nêbû’â*) rested on them, they prophesied without ceasing.”¹⁸

These statements from the Targums do indicate that the NT may share the same use and understanding of the phrase. It is equally important to state that these occurrences describe the role of the Spirit who moves/inspires a person to prophesy, thus making him a prophet, with a particular message to a particular audience.

¹¹ Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), xxv-xxviii.

¹² *Ibid.*, xxvii.

¹³ For these references, the Hebrew Bible simply has *rûah*.

¹⁴ J. R. Levinson, “Holy Spirit,” *Dictionary of the New Testament Backgrounds*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley Porter (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2000), 510. This is true for both Targumim *Onkelos* and *Pseudo-Jonathan*. In *Pseudo-Jonathan*, “spirit of prophecy” occurs eleven times (*ibid.*).

¹⁵ Translation is from Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*.

¹⁶ Translation is from Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988).

¹⁷ The translation is from Ernest G. Clarke, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Numbers* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995). See also on Numbers 27:18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

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Prophecy in the Qumran Community

A study on prophecy in the Qumran community which was done by Alex Jassen, in his article “Prophets and Prophecy in the Qumran community,” argues that prophecy never ceased from the Qumran community.¹⁹ The Qumran community viewed itself as the heir to the ancient prophetic tradition.²⁰ Jassen analyzed the explicit prophetic language in the Dead Sea Scrolls, that is, the hymn in the column 12 of the Hodayot (1QH^a 12:5-13:4):²¹ “You have revealed yourself to me” (12:6, 23). Barstad goes further as to state that Qumran was saturated with prophecy.²²

“Spirit of Prophecy” in Pseudepigraphic Literature

The “spirit of prophecy” is manifested through Jacob blessing Levi and Judah. As Jubilees 31:12 reads, “And a spirit of prophecy came down upon his mouth. And he took Levi in his right hand and Judah in his left hand.”²³ Even Rebecca, is said to have had the “spirit of truth,”²⁴ another phrase which is undoubtedly akin to the “spirit of prophecy.” Jubilees 25:14 reads “and at that time, when a spirit of truth descended upon her mouth, she placed her two hands upon the head of Jacob and said. . .”²⁵ In another instance, the “spirit of truth” is contrasted with the “spirit of error” (Testament of Judah 20:1). Interestingly, Testament of Judah 20:5 goes on to state that the “spirit of truth” testifies to all things and brings all accusations, which provides a striking parallel to Jesus’ statement in John 16:8, “and when He [Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin.”

¹⁹ Jassen, “Prophets and Prophecy in the Qumran Community,” 299-334.

²⁰ Jassen, *Mediating the Divine*, 6.

²¹ Jassen, “Prophets and Prophecy in the Qumran Community,” 311-318.

²² Hans Barstad, “Prophecy at Qumran?” in *In the Last Days: On Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic and its Period* (ed. K. Jeppsen, K. Nielsen, and B. Rosendal; Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1996), 104, quoted by Jassen, 2.

²³ Unless otherwise stated, the pseudepigraphic text used in this paper is from James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985). R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), also has “the Spirit of prophecy,” for Jubilees 31:12.

²⁴ The phrase “spirit of truth” was well known in ancient Judaism as demonstrated by its multiple attestations. For instance, John 16:13, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

²⁵ Manuscript Ethiopian C reads “holy spirit,” (FN b on Jubilees 25:14).

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Testimony of Philo

The phrase *to pneuma tēs prophēteias* (or *to pneuma prophētikon*) is not found in Philo. Nevertheless, Philo affirms that Moses announced the Sabbath through “God-sent inspiration” (*theophorētheis*, *De Vita Mosis* 2.264,²⁶ strikingly close to 2 Timothy 3:16, *theopneustos*). Philo goes on to connect prophecy under the guidance of the Spirit in *De Vita Mosis* 2.265, “I need hardly say that conjectures of this kind are closely akin to prophecies. For the mind could not have made so straight an aim if there was not also the divine spirit guiding it to the truth [*ei mē kai theion ēn pneuma to podēgetoun pros autēn tēn alētheian*],” which is also a striking parallel to Peter’s statement in 2 Peter 2:21-21.

Prophecy in Josephus

Louis H. Feldman, in his article, “Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus,” attempts to answer the question “how does Josephus explain the apparent discrepancy between the view that prophecy had ceased with the destruction of the First Temple and the fact that it apparently continued up to his own day?”²⁷ Josephus’s statement about the ceasing of succession of prophets after Artaxerxes in *Against Apion* 1.41 is worth quoting: “It is true, our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets [*dia to mē genesthai tēn tōn prophētōn akribē diadochēn*] since that time.”

In Feldman’s view, Josephus “speaks not of the cessation of prophecy as such but rather of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets . . . hence the statement of those who claimed to be prophets thereafter [i.e., after the time of Artaxerxes] no longer had the same sure authority.”²⁸ In other words, for Josephus, only biblical prophets wrote canonical books, other prophets did not, and they were not capable to.²⁹ By his statement in *Against Apion*, Josephus affirms the closure of the canon,³⁰ while he acknowledges the continuation of prophecy. He clearly

²⁶ Philo *De Vita Moses* 2.264 (trans. F. H. Colson, LCL 6:582-583).

²⁷ Louis H. Feldman, “Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 41/2 (October 1990), 387.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 400.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 401-402.

³⁰ H. S. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (New York, NY: Ktav, 1968), 79.

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uses “prophecy” loosely.³¹ Thus, God granted John Hyrcanus the gift of prophecy (*War* 1.68-69; *Ant.* 13.299-300). Josephus, in his role as a historian, regarded himself as a prophet (*War* 1.18), a Jeremiah-like prophet (*War* 5.391-393), and a predictor with a certain message from God (*War* 3.399-40). Elsewhere, Josephus reports possible cases of prophecy and prophets, one of which was Jesus, son of Ananus.³² These prophets greatly resembled biblical prophets and were regarded as genuine by thousands.³³

Prophets and Prophecy in Early Rabbinic Tradition

Sommer’s remark that “claims that prophetic behavior existed among the rabbis are misleading,”³⁴ needs some further assessment. In fact, rabbis apparently pronounced quite the opposite. R. Abdimi “from the day the Temple was destroyed the prophetic gift was taken away from the prophets and given to the Sages,” and Amemar admits the superiority of a sage in comparison with a prophet because of the wisdom the sage has (*Baba Batra* 12a). It seems, then, that some claim of that sort was perceived among the sages.³⁵ In this sense, Kohn notes “the rabbis believed that the prophetic office had been granted to them, at least in part.”³⁶ At times, that prophetic activity even included the supernatural ability of prediction.³⁷ Thus, Rabbi Johanan b. Zakkai is said to have predicted that Vespasian would be an Emperor (b. *Gittin* 56a-b).³⁸

³¹ Feldman, 402.

³² Jesus, son of Ananus, made a genuine prophecy, “A voice from the East, a voice from the West . . . a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house,” (*War* 6.301). This prophecy is confirmed by Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 30.

³³ Sommer, 34.

³⁴ Sommer, 44.

³⁵ Cf. the less complimentary note in *Baba Batra* 12b that “prophecy was taken away from the prophets and given to fools and children.” As Cohen, 124, remarks, this statement should be understood in the sense that every now and then a person who claimed to be a prophet arose.

³⁶ Erik Kohn, *The Pauline Metaphors of the Holy Spirit: The Intangible Spirit’s Tangible Presence in the Life of a Christian* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 17. For Greenspahn, 47, rabbis laid claim on the prophetic mantle.

³⁷ Kohn, 17.

³⁸ See also John S. Kloppenborg, “Evocatio Deorum and the Date of Mark,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124/3 (2005), 431, fn. 39.

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The claim seems to be in line with the account in Tosefta, *Sotah* 13:3-4: “Nevertheless, a Bath Qol was heard by them: it once happened that the sages entered a house in Jericho and they heard a Bath Qol, saying, ‘There is a man here who is worthy of the Holy Spirit, but there is no one in his generation righteous.’ Thereupon, they set their eyes upon Hillel.”³⁹ Hillel was worthy to warrant the return of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Of course, it could not happen even with Hillel because of the persisting sins of his generation.

But with the *Bath Qol* perceived as a lesser form of prophecy, and the *Bath Qol* seemingly in his favor, the battle for religious authority appears to have been on the side of Hillel and subsequently his school. “Rabbi Abba said that Shmuel said: For three years Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagreed. These said: The *halakha* is in accordance with our opinion, and these said: The *halakha* is in accordance with our opinion. Ultimately, a Divine Voice [Bath Qol] emerged and proclaimed: Both these and those are the words of the living God. However, the *halakha* is in accordance with the opinion of Beit Hillel,” (*Erub.* 13b). Such a pronouncement supports the claim of some source of prophetic authority in the opinion of the school of Hillel.

Elsewhere, a recognition or claim of prophecy is attested. For instance, Rabbi Johannan states “if one rises early and a Scriptural verse comes to his mouth, this is a kind of minor prophecy,” (*Berak.* 55b). Tobit 4:12 links the Jews with prophets, “we are the children of the prophets,” a statement reiterated in the Talmud “if they [Jews] are not prophets, yet they are the children of prophets,” (*Pesah.* 66a). Jewish religious leaders could identify themselves with what Peter told them that at the very moment he was preaching, the time had come for them to recognize, “You are the sons of the prophets,” (Acts 3:25).

Jewish tradition set to forty-eight the number of prophets who wrote down their prophecies, provided their prophecies are in accordance with the Torah of Moses, and only prophecies required for subsequent generations were written down:⁴¹

Were there no more prophets than these [forty-eight]?—Is it not written, How there was a man from Ramathaim-Zophim, [which we

³⁹ Levinson, “Holy Spirit,” 508.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ See Abraham Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud: The Major Teachings of the Rabbinic Sages* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1975), 123.

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interpret], one of two hundred prophets [zophim] who prophesied to Israel?—There were actually very many, as it has been taught, ‘Many prophets arose for Israel, double the number of [the Israelites] who came out of Egypt,’ only the prophecy which contained a lesson for future generations was written down, and that which did not contain such a lesson was not written (*Megillah* 14a).

So, how do we explain the prophetic claim of the sages? At least, as Sommer calls it, the prophetic claim was a “transformation of prophecy that resulted in the end of the forms of divine communication found in the Hebrew Bible.”⁴² That is, the transformation was done in the form of exegesis/interpretation of Scripture.⁴³ While claiming the prophetic mantle, the sages reduced the prophets to preachers and exegetes.⁴⁴ That likely being the case, we can understand the favorable view on the school of Hillel in matters of scriptural exegesis.

Additionally, we should not fail to talk about Jewish eschatology in relation to prophecy in the Second Temple Period. Jews looked forward to a renewal of prophecy in the messianic age when the redeemer arrives.⁴⁵ The atmosphere in Israel would change in future age.⁴⁶ The prophecy of Joel 2:28 (NIV) clearly played a pivotal role in the conception of that view:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said, “In this world [only] individuals have prophesied, but in the world to come all Israel shall become prophets.” It is so stated (in Joel 3:1), “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh so that your sons and your daughters and your elders shall prophesy, etc.” (Numbers Rabbah 15:15).

The prophetic restoration (Joel 2:28) is equally tied up with the ministry of the returned Elijah (Mal 4:5).⁴⁷ The fulfillment was confirmed and strongly preached by Peter in Acts 2. As Daniel J. Treier rightly states: “Rabbinic tradition also interpreted Joel 2 eschatologically

⁴² Sommer, 36.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁴ Greenspahn, 47.

⁴⁵ Sommer, 47. See also Craig Evans and Jeremiah Johnston, “The Testimony of the Spirit in the Biblical Literature,” in *The Testimony of the Spirit: New Essays*, edited by Douglas Geivet and Paul K. Moses (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 41.

⁴⁶ Koonsmo, 17.

⁴⁷ James Kugel, “Two Introductions to Midrash,” *Prooftexts* 3 (1983), 136.

as Peter did.”⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, Peter affirms that rabbinic eschatological interpretation was not wrong as he adds “You are the sons of the prophets,” (Acts 3:25). What differentiates Peter from the rabbinical view was that Peter saw it fulfilled in his day.

Summary: Prophecy after the Prophets

Based on the foregoing analysis on the Jewish view of prophecy, “claim that prophecy ended . . . merely serves to mark a distinction in prophetic status. While prophecy does not cease, it is transformed to such an extent that later prophetic writings are unfit for inclusion into the sacred history.”⁴⁹ As George Robinson says, prophecy predates the men we think of as the prophets.⁵⁰ Both Jews and early Christians believed in the eschatological restoration of prophecy. The difference was that early Christians saw its actual fulfillment in the day of Pentecost.

Testimony of Jesus and Spirit of Prophecy in Revelation

The foregoing discussion clearly demonstrates that the phrase “spirit of prophecy” was commonly used around the time of the NT and was not unknown to it. Having that in mind, we are now ready to deal with the use and understanding of both the phrases “testimony of Jesus,” and “spirit of prophecy” in Revelation 19:10.

Testimony of Jesus

What does this phrase mean? The expression “testimony of Jesus” (*marturia Iesou*) occurs six times in the book of Revelation (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10 [twice]; 20:4). Two grammatically possible explanations concerning its meaning have been put forward. “He who has the spirit of prophecy will witness to Jesus” or “He who has the witness of Jesus will

⁴⁸ Daniel J. Treier, “The Fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: A Multiple Approach,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 40/1 (1997), 18-19. *Deut. Rab.* 6:14 (on Deuteronomy 24:9) is given as a specific midrash text to support.

⁴⁹ Alex P. Jassen, “Prophecy after ‘the Prophets’: the Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of Prophecy in Judaism,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Context: Integrating the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Study of Ancient Texts, Languages, and Cultures*, ed. Armin Lange, et als. (Leiden: Brill, 2011),” 585.

⁵⁰ George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York, NY: Pocket Books, 2000), 288. The example of Eldad and Medad in the time of Moise is given (Numbers 11:26-30).

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prophecy”?⁵¹ The first view takes *marturia Iēsou* as an objective genitive and interprets it as man’s witness to Christ.⁵² For his objective genitive view, Aune finds support from Revelation 6:9; 11:7; 12:11 and 17:6, which according to him, “unambiguously emphasize that the testimony is borne by Christians, presumably about Jesus and explicitly about Jesus in 17:6.”⁵³

But Pfandl reacts:

A study of the word *marturia* in the Johannine literature, where it occurs twenty-one times, indicates that it is used fourteen times in a genitive construction that is clearly subjective: for example, John 1:19; 3:11, 32, 33; 5:31; etc. The objective idea of “witness about” or “witness to” in John’s writings is consistently expressed by the preposition *peri* (about, concerning) with the verb *martureō* “to witness, testify.” He never uses the noun *marturia* (testimony, witness) with an objective genitive construction by itself. For example, John 1:7, “To bear witness to the light” [*martureō + peri*]; 5:31, “If I bear witness to myself” [*martureō + peri*]; 1 John 5:9, “He has born witness to his Son” [*martureō + peri*].⁵⁴

The second view takes *marturia Iēsou* as a subjective genitive, the testimony of Jesus is His self-revelation, i.e., His own testimony.⁵⁵ In this sense, the phrase is connected with the “spirit of prophecy.”

Spirit of Prophecy

From Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, it is the Holy Spirit who gives the gift of prophecy to a prophet. In other words, a prophet is the one who has the gift of prophecy. Moreover, the parallels between Revelation 19:10 (“I am your *fellow servant*, and *of your brethren* who

⁵¹ Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1989), 59. Scholars, such as Leon Morris, *Revelation*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1987), 218, and Beale, 947, advocate for both meaning here.

⁵² So Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 349; Aune, 1039. The CSB (Holman Christian Standard Bible) on Revelation 19:10 reads, “the testimony about Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

⁵³ Aune, 1038.

⁵⁴ Gerhard Pfandl, “The Remnant Church,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 (1997), 220-21.

⁵⁵ John Sweet, *Revelation* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 280; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 349.

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have the testimony of Jesus. . . . For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” and Revelation 22:8, 9 (“I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets”), clearly indicate that (1) testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, and (2) a prophet is the one who has the spirit of prophecy.

Commenting particularly on *to pneuma tēs prophēteias*, Aune clarifies the phrase suggests that “the Spirit is chiefly characterized by prophetic manifestations, . . . should probably be understood as ‘the prophetic Spirit,’ i.e., the power that allows certain individuals to have visionary experiences and gives them revelatory insights not available to ordinary people.”⁵⁶ In this, *to pneuma tēs prophēteias* as *prophētikon pneuma* “prophetic spirit,” denotes the activity/role of the Spirit in inspiring and moving certain individuals, who are now known as prophets. Peter likely has this notion in mind in 2 Peter 1:21, “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” The Armenian version has “for the testimony of Jesus is the Holy Spirit which is in the prophets.”⁵⁷

Thus, the synthesis that he who has the spirit of prophecy will convey Jesus’s own testimony⁵⁸ can be further explained in three inter-related points:

- (1) “The message attested by Jesus is “the spirit of prophecy.”⁵⁹
- (2) The ‘spirit of prophecy’ is understood by John’s readers in terms of the Holy Spirit who inspired all prophecy, through the prophets.⁶⁰ In other words, it is equal to “Spirit-inspired prophecy.”⁶¹
- (3) “The testimony given by Jesus is the substance of what the Spirit inspires Christian prophets to speak.”⁶²

⁵⁶ Aune, 1039. So also Eduard Schweizer, “*pneuma*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:449.

⁵⁷ H. C. Hoskier, *Concerning the Text of the Apocalypse I-II* (London: Quartich, 1929), 526, quoted in Beale, 948, fn 39.

⁵⁸ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-11: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 377.

⁵⁹ Thomas, 377.

⁶⁰ Mounce, 349; also Thomas, 377; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 276.

⁶¹ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 675.

⁶² Thomas, 377; also Beasley-Murray, 276.

Conclusion

Acknowledging that prophets occupy a prominent place in the writer’s vision of the church,⁶³ John identifies himself with the prophets (22:9). Together with the apostles, prophets are told to rejoice (18:20). Both the blood of the saints and that of the prophets are avenged (16:6), and reward is given to them (11:18).

The understanding of “spirit of prophecy” in the book of Revelation is not different from its understanding during the Second Temple Judaism. Bauckham reaffirms what we have seen so far, that around the NT times, the Spirit is known especially as the spirit of prophecy, the Spirit who speaks through the prophets.⁶⁴ Both in the Christian Church and in the Jewish faith, the prophetic spirit or the spirit of prophecy was expressed in the words of individuals charged with the gift of prophecy.⁶⁵

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⁶³ J. H. Bernard, “Prophets and Prophecy in New Testament Times,” *The Biblical World* 25/2 (February 1905), 122.

⁶⁴ Richard Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1993), 160; see also E. Sjöberg, “*rúah*,” in Palestinian Judaism, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 6:381-383.

⁶⁵ H. B. Swete, “The Prophets in the Christian Church,” *The Biblical World* 26/3 (September 1905), 203.