“The prophet was an individual who said no to his society, condemning its habits and assumptions, its complacency, waywardness, and syncretism. He was often compelled to proclaim the very opposite of what his heart expected. His fundamental objective was to reconcile man and God. Why do the two need reconciliation? Perhaps it is due to man’s false sense of sovereignty, to his abuse of freedom, to his aggressive, sprawling pride, resenting God’s involvement in history." Abraham Heschel, The Prophets

**The witness in every age**

Quadratus, 1st century:

“Among those that were celebrated at that time was Quadratus, who, report says, was renowned along with the daughters of Philip for his prophetical gifts. And there were many others besides these who were known in those days, and who occupied the first place among the successors of the apostles. And they also, being illustrious disciples of such great men, built up the foundations of the churches which had been laid by the apostles in every place, and preached the Gospel more and more widely and scattered the saving seeds of the kingdom of heaven far and near throughout the whole world.” Eusebius, Church History of Eusebius, Book 3, Ch 37

Ignatius, 2nd century:

"And I pray for all among whom I spoke, so that they may not keep (the blame) as a testimony against themselves. For even if some desired to deceive me in a merely human way, the Spirit is not deceived, for it is from God. For it “knows whence it comes and whither it goes” and exposes secrets. When I was with you I cried out, I spoke with a loud voice, God’s own voice: “Pay attention to the bishop and the presbytery and deacons.” Some suspected me of saying this because I had advance information about the division of some persons; but he for whom I am in bonds is my witness that I did not know it from any human being. The Spirit made proclamation, saying this: “Do nothing apart from the bishop; keep your flesh as the temple of God; love unity; flee from divisions; be imitators of Jesus Christ as he is of his Father”. I did what I could as a man devoted to unity." Letter to the Philadelphians (from the Apostolic Fathers by Jack Sparks)

Irenaeus, 2nd century:

"In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages, and bring to light for the general benefit the hidden things of men, and declare the mysteries of God, whom also the apostle terms “spiritual,” they being spiritual because they partake of the Spirit…” Against Heresies

Justin Martyr, 2nd century:

“For the prophetical gifts remain with us, even to the present time. And hence you ought to understand that [the gifts] formerly among your nation have been transferred to us.” Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, 2nd century

Tertullian, 2nd/3rd century:

“But from God—who has promised, indeed, “to pour out the grace of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, and has ordained that His servants and His handmaids should see visions as well as utter prophecies”—must all those visions be regarded as emanating, which may be compared to the actual grace of God, as being honest, holy, prophetic, inspired, instructive, inviting to virtue, the bountiful nature of which causes them to overflow even to the profane, since God, with grand impartiality, “sends His showers and sunshine on the just and on the unjust.” A Treatise on the Soul, Ch 47

Anthony the Great, 3rd/4th century:

"And with many groans he spoke as follows: 'O, my children, it were better to die before what has appeared in the vision come to pass.' And when again they asked him, having burst into tears, he said, 'Wrath is about to seize the Church, and it is on the point of being given up to men who are like senseless beasts. For I saw the table of the Lord's House, and mules standing around it on all sides in a ring, and kicking the things therein, just like a herd kicks when it leaps in confusion. And you saw,' said he, 'how I groaned, for I heard a voice saying, “My altar shall be defiled.”' These things the old man saw, and after two years the present inroad of the Arians and the plunder of the churches took place, when they violently carried off the vessels, and made the heathen carry them; and when they forced the heathen from the prisons to join in their services, and in their presence did upon the Table as they would." Life of Anthony by Athanasius

Augustine, 4th/5th century -  The location of the graves of two martyrs was revealed to Augustine in a vision:

“Then didst Thou by a vision make known to Thy renowned bishop the spot where lay the bodies of Gervasius and Protasius, the martyrs (whom Thou hadst in Thy secret storehouse preserved uncorrupted for so many years), whence Thou mightest at the fitting time produce them to repress the feminine but royal fury.” Augustine, Confessions, Book 9, Chapter 7

Barsanuphius and John the Prophet, Desert Monastics of the 6th century:

"When they heard this, they neglected to send a supplication, and the former bishop seized the metropolitan diocese and reassumed office by means of a royal decree to the magistrate. When great commotion and confusion ensued in the city, they sent another letter to the Old Man (Barsanuphius), entreating him about this. He declared the following to them. "You were wrong in neglecting to inform the emperor, and God despises negligence. nevertheless, in the name of the Lord, I tell you that, even if he should reach the gates of the city, yet he shall not enter it. For God will not permit him to do this." After the Old Man had said this, the magistrate forcefully entered the city in order to fulfill the royal decree, so that everyone was filled with worry and fear. Suddenly, however, rumor spread about the emperor’s death and all the expectations were dispelled. So the former bishop left [Byzantium] without success, having spent in vain all of his money, just as the Old Man had predicted. For the inhabitants, on the other hand, the prophecy was confirmed in the events themselves. Indeed, according to the word of the Lord: “Whatever was bound on earth was also bound in heaven.” Letter 803, Letters of Barsanuphius and John

Hildegard of Bingen, 12th century - sought for wisdom and prophetic insight:

"Listen: there are certain ways in which you are turning from God. The times in which you live are as frivolous as a gossiping woman. These times, too, tend towards a hostile injustice which strives to destroy the justice in the vineyard of the Lord. And yet, after these times even worse times will come, in which the true Israelites will be scourged and the Catholic chair of Peter will be shaken through erroneous teaching. And, therefore, the last times will be filled with blasphemies against God, much like a decomposing corpse. The vineyard of the Lord smolders with sorrow. Times are coming that are stronger than those which have gone before. The justice of God will raise itself up somewhat and the injustice of the clergy and religious will be recognized as thoroughly despicable. And yet no one will dare to raise a sharp and insistent call for repentance. Nevertheless, other times then stand before us: the kingdom of the Church will be dissipated; people in clerical and religious life will be torn to pieces as though by a wolf and driven from home and homeland. Very many of them will then move into a kind of solitude, and in deep and heartfelt contrition they will lead a life of poverty and humbly serve God. In relation to the justice of God, the first times are filthy; the next times are downright loathsome. The times that follow them will move a little bit towards justice, but they will in turn be followed by times that will tear everything to pieces like a bear, and these times will pile up treasures of injustice. But the further times will show the mark of manly strength: all who wear the episcopal colors will hasten the first dawning of justice with godly fear, modesty, and wisdom. The princes, too, will be of one mind and, like warriors, they will hoist the banner of peace against the times that have run astray into the greatest errors. God will destroy and wipe them out according to divine wisdom pleasure." Letter 6, Hildegard to King Konrad III

Thomas Aquinas, 13th century:

That prophets of the Old Testament and prophets of the New Testament are very different in function

“The prophets who foretold the coming of Christ could not continue further than John, who with his finger pointed to Christ actually present. Nevertheless as Jerome says on this passage, "This does not mean that there were no more prophets after John. For we read in the Acts of the apostles that Agabus and the four maidens, daughters of Philip, prophesied." John, too, wrote a prophetic book about the end of the Church; and at all times there have not been lacking persons having the spirit of prophecy, not indeed for the declaration of any new doctrine of faith, but for the direction of human acts. Thus Augustine says (De Civ. Dei v, 26) that "the emperor Theodosius sent to John who dwelt in the Egyptian desert, and whom he knew by his ever-increasing fame to be endowed with the prophetic spirit: and from him he received a message assuring him of victory." Summa Theologica, Treastise on Gratuitous Graces, Questions 171-182

- "Afterwards, when that success was rendering Maximus terrible, Theodosius, in the midst of his perplexing anxieties, was not drawn away to follow the suggestions of a sacrilegious and unlawful curiosity, but sent to John, whose abode was in the desert of Egypt,— for he had learned that this servant of God (whose fame was spreading abroad) was endowed with the gift of prophecy,— and from him he received assurance of victory. Immediately the slayer of the tyrant Maximus, with the deepest feelings of compassion and respect, restored the boy Valentinianus to his share in the empire from which he had been driven. Valentinianus being soon after slain by secret assassination, or by some other plot or accident, Theodosius, having again received a response from the prophet, and placing entire confidence in it, marched against the tyrant Eugenius, who had been unlawfully elected to succeed that emperor, and defeated his very powerful army, more by prayer than by the sword. Some soldiers who were at the battle reported to me that all the missiles they were throwing were snatched from their hands by a vehement wind, which blew from the direction of Theodosius’ army upon the enemy; nor did it only drive with greater velocity the darts which were hurled against them, but also turned back upon their own bodies the darts which they themselves were throwing." Augustine, The City of God, Book 5, Chapter 26

John Ruusbroec, 14th century:

"It is beneficial for a person in this state to give himself to various kinds of reflections and particular exercises, so as to preserve his strength and live long in virtue. From this transport of restlessness a person is sometimes caught up in the spirit above the senses. There he is told in words or shown in images and representations some truth which he or others need to know or some event which is still to come. This is what is called revelations or visions. If it is a matter of corporeal images, a person receives them in his imagination; an angel may bring this about in him through the power of God. If it is a matter of intellectual truths or spiritual representations in which God reveals himself in his fathomless being, then a person receives them in his understanding and may formulate them in words insofar as they are expressible in this way." The Spiritual Espousals

"The persons upon whom he works in this way have no need of revelations or of being caught up above their senses. for their life. their abode. their conduct. and their being are already in the spirit. above their senses and above their sensibility. It is there that God shows them what he wills as being necessary either for them or for other sons. Nevertheless God could. if he wished. deprive such persons of eir external senses and interiorly reveal to them strange images and future occurrences in many different ways. Now in accordance with this light Christ wills that these persons go out and walk in the light. The enlightened person will. then. go out and examine his state and his exterior and interior life to see whether he hears a perfect likeness to Christ according to both his humanity and his divinity. for we have been created in the image and likeness of God." The Spiritual Espousals

John Wesley, 18th century:

"I do not know whether I ever saw a human face look so beautiful; sometimes it was covered with a smile, as from joy, mixing with love and reverence; but the tears fell still though not so fast. Her pulse was quite regular. In about half an hour I observed her countenance change into the form of fear, pity, and distress; then she burst into a flood of tears and cried out, “Dear Lord; they will be damned! They will all be damned!” But in about Eve minutes her smiles returned, and only love and joy appeared in her face. About half an hour after six, I observed distress take place again; and soon after she wept bitterly and cried out, “Dear Lord, they will go to hell! The world will go to hell!” Soon after, she said, “Cry aloud! Spare not!” And in a few moments her look was composed again and spoke a mixture of reverence, joy, and love. Then she said aloud, “Give God the glory.” About seven her senses returned. I asked, “Where have you been?”-“I have been with my Saviour." “In heaven, or on earth?”-“I cannot tell; but I was in glory." “Why then did you cry?”-“Not for myself, but for the world; for I saw they were on the brink of hell.” “Whom did you desire to give the glory to God?”-“Ministers that cry aloud to the world; else they will be proud; and then God will leave them, and they will lose their own souls.”" Journal of John Wesley, recounting the vision a 15 year old girl had of warning to turn to Christ

Jonathan Edwards, 18th century:

"Some of the true friends of the work of God’s Spirit have erred in giving too much heed to impulses and strong impressions on their minds, as though they were immediate significations from heaven to them of something that should come to pass, or something that it was the mind and will of God that they should do, which was not signified or revealed anywhere in the Bible without those impulses. These impressions, if they are truly from the Spirit of God, are of a quite different nature from his gracious influences on the hearts of the saints: they are of the nature of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and are properly inspiration, such as the prophets and apostles and others had of old; which the ¢ apostle distinguishes from the grace of the Spirit, 1 Cor, xiii." Marks of the Spirit of God (Ultimately Edwards lands on expecting a diminshment of the gift in favor of works of love and the increase of knowledge, but nonetheless, he recognizes their presence and operation)

William Law, 18th century:

""There is therefore no degree of delusion higher than that which is evidenced by those who profess to teach from the divinely inspired Scriptures that the immediate, continual illumination and working of the Spirit in men’s hearts ceased when the canon of Scripture was complete. To deny the present prophetic gift in the Church is to deny also that very manifestation of Christ today to His own which the Scriptures teach is the only means to the reality of gospel Christianity. Is this not a denial of the very heart and power of the Christian faith? The fulfillment of Christ’s promise, “I will manifest myself to you,” brought the power of His presence through the Holy Spirit into the early church. “And with great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection, and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” Christ was surely living His life through these early members of the church who were aptly described as “these who have turned the world upside down.” We need faith to expect as real a fulfillment of Christ’s promise for today!" The Power of the Spirit

AW Tozer, 20th century:

"Hearts that are "fit to break" with love for the Godhead are those who have been in the Presence and have looked with opened eye upon the majesty of Deity. Men of the breaking hearts had a quality about them not known to or understood by common men. They habitually spoke with spiritual authority. They had been in the Presence of God and they reported what they saw there. They were prophets, not scribes, for the scribe tells us what he has read, and the prophet tells what he has seen." The Pursuit of God

**Texts from which we draw understanding for the historic use of prophecy**

**Didache** - late 1st century

This was an early church document that served as a series of instructions on spiritual/church/community life. The first part consists of juxtaposing the way of life with the way of death. The second part deals with specific practices with in church/spiritual life (food, baptism, prayer, fasting, eucharist, etc...) and church governance. Chapters 11-13 it deal with apostles and prophets.

Some Examples:

There is to be a level of reverence for those who are gifted among you:

“Every apostle who comes to you should be received as the Lord.”

But the spiritual gifts should never be used as an excuse to make money, but should be taken care of:

“And when the apostle departs, he should receive nothing but bread until he finds his next lodging. But if he requests money, he is a false prophet.”

“And whoever says in the spirit, 'Give me money,' or anything else, do not listen to him. But if he says that it should be given for others who are in need, let no one judge him."

(This is an incredibly important point. The purpose of giftedness was not to establish a ministry or a platform, but to love and serve the people.  Love is more concerned about the needs of others than of yourself.)

Character proves the person:

“And not everyone who speaks forth in the spirit is a prophet, but only if he has the kind of behavior which the Lord approves. From his behavior, then, will the false prophet and the true prophet be known.”

To be gifted means to practice what you preach:

“And every prophet who teaches the truth, but does not do the things he teaches, is a false prophet.”

Bishops and deacons will function in prophetic ministry:

"Appoint for yourselves, then, bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord-men who are unassuming and not greedy, who are honest and have been proved. For they also are performing for you the task of the prophets and teachers.”

**Shepherd of Hermas** - 2nd century

A series of visions and parables regarding the spiritual life – ethical and moral lessons and instruction in the Christian life. A lot about righteousness and repentance. It was instructive in the same way Pilgrims Progress was and is instructive. Much of this was written as a series of conversations between the Shepherd (author) and an angel. Was considered canonical by some early church fathers. In book 2, commandment 11, an angel is seen giving the Shepherd instructions for prophetic ministry.

The Shepherd asks how to tell between a false prophet and a true prophet:

“Sir,” I (Shepherd) said, “how then will a man know which of them is a prophet and which is a false prophet?”

“Hear,” he (the angel) said, “about both prophets, and in the manner that I am going to tell you, you can test the prophet and the false prophet. By his life you test the man that has the divine Spirit.”

The qualifications of a prophet who should be listened to (1 Timothy 3):

* The one who has the Spirit from above is gentle and quiet and humble
* Refrains from all evil and worthless desires of this age
* Makes himself more needy than all other men.
* When asked, gives no answer to anyone. – he is not manipulated to prophesy. The temptation comes when people offer money, favor, or something in return.
* Neither does he speak by himself, nor does the holy Spirit speak whenever a man wishes to speak, but he speaks when God wishes him to speak.
* This one only speaks as the Lord wills:
	+ “So whenever the man who has the divine Spirit comes into an assembly of righteous men who have faith in the divine Spirit, and a prayer is made to God by the assembly of those men, then the angel of the prophetic spirit which is assigned to him fills the man, and that man, having been filled by the holy Spirit, speaks to the group as the Lord wills. 10. So in this way the divine Spirit is known.”

The characteristics of a false prophet:

* That man who thinks he has the spirit elevates himself
* Wishes to have a seat of honor
* He is bold and shameless and talkative
* Lives in great luxury and in many other pleasures
* “Accepts pay for his prophesying. And if he does not receive, he does not prophesy.”
	+ This is vitally important. Prophetic ministry is a gift, and gifts are freely given and must be freely used. When payment is tied in tothe operation of the Holy Spirit, men and women are tempted to manipulate the moment for the hope of gain.
* He says that a false prophet tells you things that you want to hear:
	+ “And that false prophet, having no power of a divine spirit in himself, talks to them in response to their questions and their evil desires, and fills their souls just as they themselves wish. 3. For since he is empty himself, he gives empty answers to empty people. For whatever is asked, he answers according to the emptiness of the man who asked.”
* The path to discerning between the two is intimacy with God and knowledge of Scripture:
	+ “So those who are strong in the faith of the Lord, having put on truth, do not associate with such spirits, but refrain from them. But those who are double-minded and repent often, practice soothsaying like the heathen, and by their idolatry bring upon themselves greater sin.”
* It is by the lifestyle of both that you will see the true from the false:
	+ “You have before you the life of both kinds of prophets. By his deeds and life test, then, the man who says he is inspired.”

The Shepherd ends the teaching on how to recognize a truly gifted person and someone who is in it for their own gain by using the analogy of throwing a stone in the air. If you throw a stone up in the air, the stone itself is harmless. But when it falls down it can cause great pain. Small things have no power, but when they come from above they have great impact. The difference between a true and false use is the impact upon the person. We are not be fearful of the false use of a gift, but look to the true. A rock on the ground does not harm you.

Present day considerations for application

* How do we grow? By growing in love, character, and integrity.
* How do we recognize those God is using:
	+ Not concerned with building his/her own ministry.
	+ Will not be concerned about money.
	+ Will not use their ministry as a platform to sell you something (the outworking of this is usually, “You need this desperately and only I can give it to you.”)
	+ Will consistently adopt a position of humility, not criticism. – humility is this: recognizing that without God I am nothing.
	+ When insulted responds in love.
	+ Does not tear others down in order to make him/her look better
	+ Will teach you and help you.
	+ The truly gifted person should look to become redundant.

**Constitutions of the Holy Apostles** - 4th century

The Apostolic Constitutions are a collection of 8 works detailing early church life and organization, moral conduct, church discipline and worship. The work was compiled and written between 350-400AD. It teaches on the nature of spiritual gifts. It was considered a compilation of what had been handed down from the Apostles. Book 8 deals primarily with the nature of spiritual gifts.

It is up to God to determine gift, destiny, and call. We give our lives to God, but he determines everything else:

“And to be a Christian is in our own power; but to be an apostle, or a bishop, or in any other such office, is not in our own power, but at the disposal of God, who bestows the gifts. And thus much concerning those who are vouchsafed gifts and dignities.”

The primary gift is the gift of being delivered to Christ:

“…there is no man who has believed in God through Christ, that has not received some spiritual gift: for this very thing, having been delivered from the impiety of polytheism, and having believed in God the Father through Christ, this is a gift of God.”

The disposition of one who receives a spiritual gift ought to be humility, and not exaltation:

“…if among you also there be a man or a woman, and such a one obtains any gift, let him be humble, that God may be pleased with him. For says He: “Upon whom will I look, but upon him that is humble and quiet, and trembles at my words?”

It should be a natural expectation that the gifts of God would flow in the life of the believer:

“With good reason did He say to all of us together, when we were perfected concerning those gifts which were given from Him by the Spirit: “Now these signs shall follow them that have believed in my name: they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall by no means hurt them: they shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

**Conferences of Cassian** - Abba Nesteros, later 4th century

John Cassian was an incredibly influential man in the 5th century. He traveled throughout Egypt learning the spiritual life from the Desert Fathers and Mothers near the end of the 4th century, and chronicles their teachings in his two main works the Conferences and the Institutes. These works informed the Church on the nature the spiritual life for centuries and laid the foundation for the widespread practice of Christian monastic communities. In Cassians' second conversation with Abba Nesteros (Coneference 15), Nesteros lays out the reasons for God's distribution of gifts in the church.

The reasons for gifts

Healing

“The first indeed is for the sake of healing, when the grace of signs accompanies certain elect and righteous men on account of the merits of their holiness.”

Edification of the church

“The second when for the edification of the church or on account of the faith of those who bring their sick, or of those who are to be cured, the virtue of health proceeds even from sinners and men unworthy of it.”

The foundation is love:

“Paul says, “I show unto you a still more excellent way.” By which it is clearly shown that the height of perfection and blessedness does not consist in the performance of those wonderful works but in the purity of love.”

The more excellent way Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 12 is the way of love.

That we should not primarily strive for gifts or elevate those who operate in a gift, but pursue purity:

“Wherefore we never ought to admire those who affect these things, for these powers, but rather to look whether they are perfect in driving out all sins, and amending their ways…”

That to operate in a gift is to be moved by compassion and a humble posture:

“And so these men gave no credit to themselves for their power of working such wonders, because they confessed that they were done not by their own merits but by the compassion of the Lord and with the words of the Apostle they refused the human honour offered out of admiration for their miracles: “Men and brethren, why marvel ye at this, or why look ye on us as though by our own power or holiness we had caused this man to walk.”

The life of following Jesus is not primarily about learning to operate in a gift, but in learning to love:

“By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love to one another.” He says not: “if ye do signs and miracles in the same way,” but “ if ye have love to one another ;” and this it is certain that none but the meek and humble can keep.”

Cassian wrote that Nesteros taught that when Jeasus said “Come and learn of Me,” he did not teach them “…to cast out devils by the power of heaven, not to cleanse the lepers, not to give sight to the blind, not to raise the dead…” But rather, Nesteros says,  “…says He, learn this of Me, “for I am meek and lowly of heart.”

*Other recommended reading for the historic use of the gift of prophecy*

Athanasius Life of Anthony, Chapters 35-38, Anthony teaches on the nature of heavenly visions and the nature of demonic visions

50 Homilies of Macarius the Great, talks at great length on the nature of the spiritual life and spiritual giftedness

Homilies on the Prophet Ezekiel by Gregory the Great - Chapters 1-3 deal with the gift of prophecy at great length (https://www.ctosonline.org/patristic/HS.html)

Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Treastise on Gratuitous Graces, Questions 171-182

**Some examples of prophecy in use in history**

Anthony the Great - prophesying the coming Arian controversy:

"And with many groans he spoke as follows: 'O, my children, it were better to die before what has appeared in the vision come to pass.' And when again they asked him, having burst into tears, he said, 'Wrath is about to seize the Church, and it is on the point of being given up to men who are like senseless beasts. For I saw the table of the Lord's House, and mules standing around it on all sides in a ring, and kicking the things therein, just like a herd kicks when it leaps in confusion. And you saw,' said he, 'how I groaned, for I heard a voice saying, “My altar shall be defiled.”' These things the old man saw, and after two years the present inroad of the Arians and the plunder of the churches took place, when they violently carried off the vessels, and made the heathen carry them; and when they forced the heathen from the prisons to join in their services, and in their presence did upon the Table as they would." Life of Anthony by Athanasius

Gregory Thaumaturgus – the call prophesied over his life:

"In those days, the Bishop of the Church of Amaseia was Phaidemos. He was endowed by God with the gift of prognostication; and through the power of this gift of his, he perceived what treasure was hidden in the soul of St. Gregory the Wonderworker. He thus immediately began thinking about how to persuade him to accept ecclesiastical office, so that such a virtuous man should not waste his life by not working for the good, and to the benefit, of the Church. The intentions of the Bishop, however, were made known to Gregory the Great, and he tried in every way to flee. To this end, he even fled into the wilderness at times. For all of his efforts and despite various machinations, Phaidemos could not succeed in advancing Gregory to the Priesthood. The latter took care, with a thousand watchful eyes, lest he be unexpectedly ordained by the ever-vigilant Bishop. And in the two of them, there was an equally diligent eagerness, though aimed at opposite goals; that is, Phaidemos, on the one hand, wanted to ordain Gregory, while Gregory, on the other hand, wanted to avoid Ordination. Phaidemos understood that, through Ordination, Gregory would be exceptionally devoted to God. Gregory, however, was fearful that, on account of the cares and responsibilities of the Priesthood, there might arise in his life an impediment or some unbearable burden that would distance him from what was, according to the philosophy of Christianity, his sacred task. To accomplish what he so desired, Phaidemos, moved inwardly by some Divine passion, came to the following conclusion regarding his course of action. He decided that he would ordain Gregory, in spite of the latter's wish! Thus, without taking into account the distance that separated him from Gregory (a journey of three days on the road), but looking up to God, he reasoned to himself: ”At this moment, he and I stand before the All-Seeing God, Who sees us both. Moreover, distance in no way impedes the power of God.” Rather than lay his hands on the head of the physically-absent Gregory, he set forth his hand and affirmed in writing his decision to ordain Gregory; and reading the appointed prayers, he thereupon sent this written affirmation to Gregory, ordering him not to disobey his command. Thereby, Phaidemos dedicated Gregory to God and assigned him to a certain city, which up to that time was under the domination of the delusion of idolatry, only seventeen of its citizens being Christians, out of the large number of inhabitants in the region.\* So it was that the great luminary, St. Gregory the Great of Neocaesarea, furtively entered into the rank of the Priesthood; however, the formal part of the Ordination, the laying of hands by the Bishop on the head of the ordinand and so on were later canonically performed." (Excerpt from The Evergetinos, Vol 4, Ch 27

Gregory the Great – the call revealed by an angelic visitation:

"The Blessed Gregory, who wrote the Lives of the Saints of Italy in the form of a dialogue, and who became Patriarch [Pope] of Rome, was, prior to becoming a Bishop, a monk at, and later Abbot of, the Monastery of St. Andrew, known as Klioskaire.” One day, as the Saint was sitting in his cell and working on some calligraphy, a poor man approached him. As a true servant of Christ, Gregory summoned his cell~attendant and ordered him to give the pauper six solidi; the cell-attendant did as he was bidden. Not even an hour elapsed before the same poor man came back to the Saint and said: ”Have pity on me, O servant of the Most High God, for I have lost much and you have given me only a small amount.” Gregory immediately summoned his cell-attendant and said to him: "Brother, go and get him another six solidi.” The brother carried out the Saint's command. Taking the additional amount, the poor man then departed. A little later on that same day, the pauper visited Gregory for a third time, saying: ”Take pity on me, O servant of the Most High God, and give me more alms, for I have lost a great deal." Once again the Saint summoned his steward and said to him: ”Brother, give this man another six solidi ." ”Believe me, Father," replied the brother, ”we do not have even one solidus left in the treasury." The Blessed Gregory said to him: ”Do you not have any vessel or article of clothing to give him?” ”Dear Father,” answered the brother, "we have no other vessel than the silver dish on which our noble lady“ sent us a few moistened pulses, as is her custom.” The servant of God said to him: ”Go, brother, and give him the dish." The steward did as the blessed man ordered him. Taking the silver dish, together with the twelve solidi, the poor man departed. When Gregory became Patriarch, as is customary for Patriarchs, he ordered his Sacellarius\*\*\* to invite twelve poor men to dine with him. The Sacellurius carried out this order. But when the guests were seated at the table, it appeared to the Patriarch that they were thirteen in number. Gregory summoned the Sacellarius and asked him: ”Did I not order you to invite twelve men? Why, contrary to my will, have you invited thirteen?” When the Sacellarius heard this, he became frightened and said: ”Believe me, Reverend Master, they are but twelve.” For no one else except the Patriarch saw the thirteenth. While they dined, the Patriarch looked at the thirteenth man, who was sitting at the end of the table, and lo, his countenance assumed different forms: at one time he appeared gray-haired, at another time youthful. When they rose from the table, the blessed Gregory let all of the others go, but the thirteenth man, who appeared so remarkable to him, he grasped by the hand and took into his private quarters, saying to him: ”I adjure you, by the great power of God, who are you? And what is your name?” The man replied to him: ”And why do you ask me my name? It, too, is remarkable. I am the poor man who visited you at the Monastery of St. Andrew. You gave me twelve solidi and a silver dish, on which the blessed Sylvia, your mother, sent you pulses. ”Know, therefore, that from that day, when you patiently provided for me, the Lord decreed that you should become a Primate of His Church, for which He shed His own blood, and be the successor of Peter, the Chief of the Apostles, since you emulated the virtue that he displayed when, in the simplicity of his heart, he distributed to the poor what was offered by the Christians of Jerusalem, according to the need of each. The Blessed Gregory then asked him: ”And how is it that you know that the Lord then decreed that I become Patriarch?” The man replied: ”Because I am an Angel of the Lord Almighty, and this is why I know. For at that time the Lord sent me to you to test your intention, whether you gave alms out of love for mankind or for the sake of display.” When the blessed man heard this, he was filled with fear, for he had never seen an Angel thitherto, and up to then he had been looking at him and conversing with him as if he were an ordinary man. The Angel said to him: ”Do not be afraid, for the Lord has sent me to remain with you as long as you are alive, and whatever you wish, ask it of the Lord through me.” When St. Gregory heard this, he fell on his face to the ground and worshipped the Lord, saying: ”If the All-Merciful Lord has shown me such a multitude of mercies, for this small and insignificant intention of mine, as to send His Angel to be with me forever, then What glory shall they be vouchsafed Who adhere to His commandments and perform acts of virtue? Truly does Scripture say that ’Mercy exalteth itself above judgment’ (St. James 2:13) and that ’He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord’ (Proverbs 19:17).” Excerpt from Evergetinos, Vol 3, Ch 46

Hildegard of Bingen – prophesying direction to a king who asked her for prophetic direction:

"Listen: there are certain ways in which you are turning from God. The times in which you live are as frivolous as a gossiping woman. These times, too, tend towards a hostile injustice which strives to destroy the justice in the vineyard of the Lord. And yet, after these times even worse times will come, in which the true Israelites will be scourged and the Catholic chair of Peter will be shaken through erroneous teaching. And, therefore, the last times will be filled with blasphemies against God, much like a decomposing corpse. The vineyard of the Lord smolders with sorrow. Times are coming that are stronger than those which have gone before. The justice of God will raise itself up somewhat and the injustice of the clergy and religious will be recognized as thoroughly despicable. And yet no one will dare to raise a sharp and insistent call for repentance. Nevertheless, other times then stand before us: the kingdom of the Church will be dissipated; people in clerical and religious life will be torn to pieces as though by a wolf and driven from home and homeland. Very many of them will then move into a kind of solitude, and in deep and heartfelt contrition they will lead a life of poverty and humbly serve God. In relation to the justice of God, the first times are filthy; the next times are downright loathsome. The times that follow them will move a little bit towards justice, but they will in turn be followed by times that will tear everything to pieces like a bear, and these times will pile up treasures of injustice. But the further times will show the mark of manly strength: all who wear the episcopal colors will hasten the first dawning of justice with godly fear, modesty, and wisdom. The princes, too, will be of one mind and, like warriors, they will hoist the banner of peace against the times that have run astray into the greatest errors. God will destroy and wipe them out according to divine wisdom pleasure." Letter 6, Hildegard to King Konrad III