

AN EXEGETICAL ASSESSMENT OF JOEL'S PROPHECY (JOEL 2:28-32): ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE CHARISMATIC-PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

It is a well-known fact that Christianity in Nigeria have grown in alarming proportions in the last five or more decades as a result of the Pentecostal-charismatic phenomenon of prophecy and speaking in tongues. There is no nominal renunciation of God, no public or blatant atheism, no boastful impiety in the country. Nevertheless, there exists within the Nigerian Church a deadlier heresy, namely, keeping God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit as a sign, but paying no allegiance to Him as King. People generally worship God possibly in outward form, but they practically know nothing of the subduing and directing power of godliness. The plethora of unfulfilled prophecies and false speakers in tongue has led many adherents of the Christian faith to disillusionment, with a yearning for a fresh touch of the Holy Spirit. This paper re-reads the prophecy given by Prophet Joel from a postcolonial critical perspective. It concludes that there is doctrinal "Babel" and liturgical confusion characterizing the charismatic-Pentecostal practice of Christianity in Nigeria. The paper also assesses critical ways of controlling such theological excesses.

Key Words: prophecy, Pentecostalism, church, Idahosa, Nigeria, Eastern

I. Introduction

As an important part of our introduction, the text of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) is presented below both in transliterated Hebrew and in a modern translation:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29 and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible the LORD hath said, 32 and it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the remnant shall be those whom the LORD doth call.

The book of Joel stands second in the collection of the Twelve Prophets in the Hebrew canon. The name *yo'el* meaning Jehovah is God seems to have been common as one finds a

dozen other persons bearing it at various periods of Biblical history. Tradition has it that the book was divided into chapters by Cardinal Hugo in 1250 CE, and into verses by Robert Stephens in 1551 CE. Although the book begins on a pessimistic note, it concludes on a very bright refrain including remarks noted in the *pericope* which as observed, was the original ending of the book.

Apparently, the Prophet's pessimism turned into optimism as he envisioned an era in the socio-spiritual life of Israel when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh, such that sons and daughters, old and young, citizens and aliens would be caught up in an overwhelming outpouring of the Spirit – a promise reiterated nearly 850 years later by the Apostle Peter in his Pentecostal address in Jerusalem in AD 33.

The Church in Nigeria generally confesses the name of Jesus as honourable and potent. The Holy Spirit is the bond that unites believers to God the Father. Yet the Church in Nigeria can hardly be said to be in community (Owete & Iheanacho 2008:75). Although they have umbrella bodies like Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), the associations cannot account for the differences of interpretation of Charismatic-Pentecostal teachings of the Bible, particularly of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28ff). This is what this article is set to address. For instance in Nigerian Charismatic-Pentecostal circles there is no nominal renunciation of God, no public or blatant atheism, no boastful impiety. Nevertheless, there exists within the Nigerian Church a deadlier heresy, namely, keeping God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit as a sign, but paying no allegiance to Him as King (Igboh 2016:160-173). People generally worship God presumably in the anointing of the Holy Spirit but possibly in outward forms, but they practically know nothing of the subduing and directing power of the Holy Spirit (Parker 1994:71-74). Moreover, as Nwaomah (2012:103-104) has observed:

It is theologically absurd to see anointing...as a magic wand that makes everything possible. For if biblical anointing is seen as the invocation of the presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit to work in the life of a believer, it is curious to assume that the Holy Spirit can be so abused to be invoked into a car, a house, electronic equipment, fruits, placenta, application letter, handkerchiefs, real estate, and so on, all in the name of *charismatic-Pentecostal* religion (italics mine).

This atmosphere of some churches in Nigeria is more to be dreaded than any intellectual or cognitive difficulty of a theological kind – dead consciences, prayer-less prayer, mechanical liturgies – these are the impediments which overturn the chariots of progress. In the opinion of one commentator, you find the right government where you find the right God (Parker 1994:31). Where God is enthroned, rulers and magistrates are not only humans wearing the gown, but are also rulers and magistrates in the sense of excellent conduct, a high sense of justice and righteousness, sovereignty and authority exercised from a true sense of responsibility, accountability, and community (Parker 1994:208-9).

II. Methodology

This article employs the use of exegetical-critical methodology in analysing the problem as well as in the re-reading of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32). This forms the basis for

critically assessing the potentials of this pericope in undergirding a sustainable and proactive Charismatic-Pentecostal movement in the country.

As part of our methodology, the article employed the use of oral interviews during which individual respondents were asked to evaluate the charismatic-Pentecostal movement in Nigerian churches.

III. Exegetical Overview of Joel's Prophecy

The name Joel means the Lord He is God. Not much is known about Joel's native place or of the period in which he prophesied. However, internal evidences suggest that he could have been of Judaic origin, and he prophesied immediately following the Babylonian captivity in the 5th century (Ahiamadu 2001:65-70).

Biblical scholars, like Harrison (1979:874-882) generally agree to a two part division of the book: the plague of locusts (Joel 1:1-2:17) and the vision of the outpoured Spirit of God (Joel 2:18-3:21). The second chapter (Joel 2:1-17) seems to go over the same ground as the first chapter, and can also be divided into two parts. For instance, chapter 2:1-11 synchronizes with 1:2-12; while 2:12-17 synchronizes with 1:13-20. The former part in both cases is chiefly descriptive of the calamity, while the latter part is more hortatory. The second part advances our understanding of the destructive phenomenon of the earlier part. For whereas in 1:2-12 the attention is fixed on the devastation, in 2: 1-11 it is the devastator, the locust that is particularly described. Similarly, the tone of the description of the phenomenon in 2:12-17 is more intensely religious "Rend your hearts, not your garments" (Joel 2:13). Finally, it is to be noted that it is at the close of this section that we get the first reference to external nations: "Give not your heritage to reproach, that the nations should use a by-word against them; wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God" (Joel 2:17).

The locust plague referred to in Joel's prophecy heavily impoverished the land apparently in the days of King Joash of Judah. It was of such a magnitude that it provided the suitable context in which the prophet positioned his call for deep contrition and national repentance, not unlike what the priestly writer declared in 2 Chronicles 7:14 "If my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and would forgive their sins and heal their land"

Evidently, the people had been guilty of drunkenness and inattentiveness to the admonitions of the servants of Yahweh. It is instructive to note that Joel emphasized the same trumpet-blowing in Zion as a symbol of a universal call to repentance prescribed in the Torah (Num. 11:33ff). Yahweh the God of Israel had sent judgment against the inhabitants of Judah using famine, pestilence and war as a means of purging the society and getting rid of the rebellious and apostate, and leaving only a remnant. The lowing of cattle and of livestock generally could be heard all over the land because the greeneries all through the land have dried up. The draught left both humans and animals in dire need of sustainable means of livelihood. Of special significance is the multi-faceted invasion of the land by locust-plague like that of a strange but strong army sent to waste all available means of livelihood in a land.

All of these calamities came upon the land in order to elicit the kind of contrition and brokenness necessary to avert further disaster and anger of the Lord. Certainly there would

be the dawn of God's wonderful era, but it must never come until their day has been turned into darkness, their beauty turned to ashes, their rejoicing into mourning and their liberty into captivity. Therefore, the prophet was drawing the attention of the people to the causes of their collective calamity or captivity to which they have been plunged while at the same time he was also asking the Lord to please show mercy to them (cf. Joel 1:16-20). He foresaw that in order to induce a change of heart and of attitude of the people generally, certain role-agents must be called into play.

First, the priests and ministers of God must blow the trumpet and summon the people to the place of congregational prayers and fasting. The ministers on their part like trumpet-blowers would continually cry to the Lord urging the Almighty to show mercy to His own people. Meanwhile, the elders, children, bridegroom, bride and suckling must individually and collectively demand divine deliverance, forgiveness, healing, refreshment and restoration. In return the Lord's response would be guaranteed as Joel's prophecy promises to bring about new harvests of grain, new wine and oil. "And my people shall never be ashamed" (Joel 2:26-27). With the coming of grains would also come the replenishment of the land by both human, animal and creatures of the field generally. As part of an on-going restoration project, the Lord would restore to them all the things both of the olden days and of all the new things which were necessary to empower them both materially and spiritually.

Second, the inhabitants of the land would be carnally buoyed up by means of increasing returns of food, drinks and clothing; the Holy Spirit would yet be poured out on them all. Each one of them would along with members of their own families be filled with the Holy Spirit and with the fire of revival "burning" in them (Joel 2:28-30). The judgement of God upon a sinful world symbolised by "the sun turning into darkness, and the moon into blood" would precede the final judgement of rebellious nations (Henry 1994:956). God's people would by no means escape the judgment of God. Nevertheless, they would be overtaken by the blessings of the Almighty as only those "who shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Joel 2:31-32).

This brings to mind the statement of Peter on the day of Pentecost referred to in Acts (2:17) apparently citing Joel's prophecy and relating same to the Church age. There are the further words of Peter in his address in the porch of the temple "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ" (Acts 3:19-20). The order set forth here is important: first repentance and turning to God; second, seasons of refreshing from His presence; third the return of Christ. Here is the promise of revival "seasons of refreshing" before the return of Christ – and it is as definite as the promise of the return itself.

The latter half of Joel 2 from which Peter quoted on the Day of Pentecost applies primarily to the time of Israel's national restoration. It relates to a day when Israel has responded to the call of the Lord (Joel 2:12-17) and her people have turned to Him with all their hearts. He will then have pity upon them and cause that they should be no more a reproach among the nations (Joel's 2:18-19). After He had driven away from them "the northern army" (2:20), He would bless their land by restoring the former and the latter rain in that "the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil (2:23-24), and

they would know that the Lord was in the midst of them (2:27). Henceforth, the Lord promised to pour out His Spirit on all flesh in the familiar prophecy quoted by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:17ff; Joel 2:28ff).

IV. Brief History of Charismatic-Pentecostal Movement in Nigeria

A history of charismatic-Pentecostal movement in Nigeria certainly transcends our national boundaries (McCain 2010:88-89). Space would not permit a detailed account of the history of the movement in Nigeria, let alone around the globe. Suffice it to say that in the Christian church, Pentecost marked the anniversary of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The first group of 120 disciples of Jesus Christ including the apostles and women who followed Jesus were praying in the Upper Room in the city of Jerusalem. It was from the fortieth day after the resurrection and ten additional days after Christ's visible ascension. On that particular fiftieth day, the Holy Spirit descended on all of them and they were all filled with the Spirit of God and began to prophesy and speak in new tongues (Acts 2:1-11). This was the first occurrence of such a tremendous outpouring of the Holy Spirit on disciples particularly in that first century apostolic era.

During the Patristic period which spanned from the second through the fourth centuries, the Church struggled with the controversies that trailed the Deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit (Berkof 2015:56-94). These issues were settled in various Church synods or councils including the Council of Nicea and that of Constantinople in 351 and 451 CE, but not in a final sense as various dissent groups continued to prefer Monism to Trinitarianism. Moreover, the conversion of the Roman *Emperor Constantine* early in the fourth century added impetus to the quest for a sound doctrine of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet it provided a caveat for nominality rather than spirituality in the membership of the Church. In other words, the Church remained formal, liturgical and sacramental with the Patristic fathers and Scholastics playing key role in steering the ship of doctrine and praxis through the mists of the dark ages until the time of the reformation in the sixteenth century (Cairns 1998: 89; Qualben 1986:97; Falk 1993:25).

The events of the protestant reformation was spear-headed by Christian luminaries like Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and several others. Although the focus of the Reformers was primarily the sacramental errors of the Catholic Church which dominated the Western hemisphere, they were undoubtedly guided by the Holy Spirit. It is instructive to note that a re-enactment of the events of Pentecost in Acts 2 is considered normative for all Christians throughout the Church age. This is true for Evangelicals as it is for charismatic-Pentecostals. A practical example is the upsurge of Pentecostalism beginning from the Azusa street experience of evangelical charismatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1901 in the United States of America (Synan 1984:835). It was symptomatic of a new move of God towards global evangelism and evangelicalism. By 1906 the Spirit-infilling phenomenon re-occurred in Los Angeles during the revivals led by William J Seymour who incidentally was a noble and notable Blackman. On this occasion several worshippers witnessed a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit reminiscent of the events in the book of Acts as people spoke in new tongues and prophesied (Synan 1984:836). Indeed there began a global move of the Holy Spirit not only in the United States but also in Brazil and other parts of the world including Nigeria. The Western part of Nigeria witnessed in Lagos

a Pentecostal move that led to formation of a church known as Church of Jesus Christ in the 1930s. On the Eastern flank of the country, the charismatic-Pentecostal phenomenon began in Port Harcourt in the premises of the Faith Tabernacle Congregation led by one Mr. Wogu – an employee of the Nigerian Ports Authority. Brother Wogu (as he was then popularly called) and three of his friends (all of Igbo/Umuahia extraction) had been meeting regularly to fast and pray for a fresh touch of the Holy Ghost. They stood firmly on the word of God in Joel 2:28ff and Acts 2:1-11, and waited on the Lord until they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. They became inspired and illuminated, and the evidence was that they spoke with new tongues, prophesied and preached the Word of God with extraordinary boldness and courage.

When this new spiritual practices became unbearable to the other church members of the Faith Tabernacle family, the practitioners were expelled from the Church and so they separated themselves and formed a nucleus calling themselves a “prayer group” until 1939 when they now received assistance from a Pentecostal denomination in the United States known as Assemblies of God (Synan 1984:837). This first contact with a global Pentecostal movement gave birth to Assemblies of God Nigeria in 1939.

By 1966 the movement had spread to several parts of Eastern Nigeria and the Mid-West including Benin City. This rapid spread was however halted by events of the Nigerian civil crisis in 1967. Paradoxically, the hostilities of the civil war heightened the quest by young Nigerian soldiers for divine guidance and protection during and after the war in 1970. Some of them had been faced with the certainty of death in the battle-fields and pledged the rest of their lives to the service of God should they survive the war. These are the ones who poured into the churches at the end of the war to share their testimonies, but with a serious determination to serve God. Most of them started preaching as evangelists and others travelled overseas to acquire theological trainings to enable them preach and teach God’s Word as a way to social and spiritual security and divine favour. Thus the Christian Church in Nigeria and particularly the charismatic-Pentecostal movement witnessed an unprecedented era of revival during the immediate post-war years in the 1970s.

By the 1980s the term “Charismatic” began to enter the picture when newer Pentecostals began to emerge in the mainline churches including Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Methodists. Credit would be given to international evangelistic associations like those led by Billy Graham, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagen, Reinhardt Bonke and T.L.Osborn to mention a few for an extensive preaching of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, similar credit would go to Assemblies of God Nigeria for providing succour to indigenous evangelists and preachers like Benson Idahosa in Benin city, Chiedozie Mba in Enugu and Onitsha, Geoffrey Numbere in Port Harcourt, Mike Okonkwo and Ozioma Ezekiel in Lagos, Aba and Umuahia as well as several others (including the present author) some of whom were persecuted and ex-communicated from the mainline churches initially (Ahiamadu 2013:270). Consequently, the number of African Independent Churches (AICs) increased from just a few before the civil war to several hundred after, including the Church of God Mission, the Riches of Christ Church, the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, the Redeemed Church of God, Christ Embassy Church, the Synagogue Church of all Nations, the Mountain of Fire and Miracles, the Eternal Life Bible Church and others too numerous to mention. Some of these Churches have today opened up mission branches in

other parts of Africa and few of them have extended their branches to Asia, Europe and North America (Gerrie ter Haar 2013:31-34).

The charismatic-Pentecostal denomination in Nigeria places a strong emphasis on the role of Spirit-baptism in daily life and ministry. An experience of Spirit baptism is regarded as one which should interest every “born-again” child of God. The Apostolic activities in the book of Acts 2:1-16 which should fulfil Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) formed the primary points of emphasis during church services. Those who believed the messages were enlisted as candidates for instantaneous baptism of the Holy Spirit. They were made to desire spiritual gifts, particularly of prophecy and speaking in tongues. To achieve this goal, “converts” were brought into classes where they were taught the importance of searching the Scriptures daily for spiritual support and for the miraculous in their yearning for God and for spiritual and moral transformation.

Furthermore, constant reading of Scripture and careful meditation on the Word of God would presumably enable a Christian to experience the power of and anointing by the Holy Spirit (Reymond 2000:405ff). Unfortunately, there was not any uniformity in the way and manner of interpreting and applying the Scriptures (Johnson 2012:58ff). So everyone interpreted and applied the Scriptures as it seemed good in their own eyes, much like what happened in the period of the Judges in Israel when the absence of kings in Israel meant that everyone did what was right in their own eyes. Thus an attitude of self-sufficiency favourable to individual illumination by the Spirit as well private interpretations of the Scripture swept through the charismatic-Pentecostal movement in Nigeria and led to many ludicrous interpretation and application of Scriptures (Ahiamadu 2011: 1-17). The result of this is the attendant doctrinal “Babel” and the liturgical confusion that have bedevilled the charismatic Pentecostal movement in Nigeria. In recent times the movement has experienced some unwarranted pan-theistic, polytheistic, and primordial sentiments characteristic of most traditional religions in Africa (Owete & Iheanacho 2008:152). The result is that the boundary lines between the various religions in Nigeria – African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity and Islam is being attenuated steadily on a daily basis. Whether or not this is a healthy development in Africa, albeit Nigerian charismatic-Pentecostalism is beyond the scope of the present article.

Meanwhile a close reading of Joel’s prophecy is now to be attempted.

V. A Close Reading of Joel’s Prophecy

What follows is an attempt to re-read Joel’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) keeping in mind four critical indices of plenary sense of Scripture (holism), comparing Scripture with Scripture (inter-textuality), bringing the context of the Scripture into dialogue with the context of the reader (inter-contextuality), and a maximalist view of Scripture (transcendence). Briefly stated, this is what elsewhere is described as re-reading the text using a postcolonial critical hermeneutics (cf. Abogunrin 2005:240-279; Adamo 2015:31-52; Ahiamadu 2012; Dube 2000; Gugelberger 1995).

wühäyâ ’aHârê-kën

And it shall come to pass afterward,

This era marked the high point in the entire prophecy, preceded by the devastation and desolation caused by the locust plagues; but now followed by a new development. Later in Joel 2:29 the afterward is paralleled by “in those days”. Using an inter-textual index the days in question might be during or after Joel’s own lifetime. The land would be devastated in consequence of the drunken activities of its inhabitants who wittingly or unwittingly ignore God and his commandments (Joel 2:1-11; cf. Isa. 10:5-7; 13:4; Jer.25:9; 43:10; Jos. 5:14; Ps. 68:7, 17; Hab. 3:8-9). Secondly, the occurrence of the threatened desolation of the land elicited the repentance needed for Yahweh to intervene in the affairs of the nation. Repentance, mourning, fasting and prayers for the land stirs up Yahweh’s compassion (Joel 2:12-17; Lev. 23:24; 25:9; Num. 10:10; Jos.6:4-5; 2 Chro. 30:2, 4, 13, 23-25; Mic.2:5). In practical terms, the land would be desolate and would provoke the saints to gather together in deep contrition interceding for the land. Thirdly, the repentance and return of the people to God would stir up his jealousy, such that He would cause development to spring up in the land such as was prophesied in Joel (2:18-27).

ešPók 'et-rûHî `al-Kol-Bäsär
That I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh;

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh marked Judah’s opportunities of enjoying what hitherto had been the exclusive privilege of a few pilgrims in the wilderness during the Exodus (see Num. 11:16-17, 23-24). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit began with Moses, and then it impacted on the seventy elders of Israel in the wilderness. More than four hundred years later, Joel prophesied of a national experience of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

wüniBBü'û Bünêkem ûbünôthekem
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy

It announced the prospect of Spirit-baptism for and prophesying by all peoples who serve the Lord. Their sons and daughters would prophesy and speak in unknown tongues. Moreover, everyone who called upon the name of the Lord would experience spiritual power able to rescue him or her from prevailing apostasy and moral declension. Using the inter-contextual index of our postcolonial critical hermeneutics, we discover that the same impact the Spirit had on Moses as an individual, and which it had on the congregation of Israel in the wilderness as a result of the Spirit’s presence in the lives of the seventy elders who helped Moses administer the camp, was the same impact Joel’s prophecy envisaged for the renewed community of God’s people as a result of the universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit initially on the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. The heart and essence of Spirit baptism and prophecy is therefore spiritual and social transformation.

ziqnêkem Hälömôt yaHälömûn BaHû^orêke^om hazenoth yireû
Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

Each one of the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem including the servants and maidens mentioned in Joel 2:29 would experience Spirit baptism in as it were the fire of God

burning in their bones. This wave of the Holy Spirit activities among the people would sweep across the length and breadth of the entire nation impacting both old and young with a vision of brighter future. It marked the end of misery and the commencement of reconciliation of the people to Yahweh their God from whom all blessings flow, and whose jealousy over them as His treasured possession had been aroused by their deep contrition as previously mentioned (Joel 2).

wünä|taTTî mô|ptîm Baššäma^oyim ûbä'ä^orecDäm wä'ëš wütî|márôt `äšänhašše^omeš yëhâpëk lüHö^ošek wühayyärë^oHlüdäm lipnê Bó' yôm yhw(ä^odönäy) haGGädöl wühannôrä'

And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day the LORD hath said.

In summary, the fortunes of Judah's and Jerusalem's inhabitants would contrast with the fate of the surrounding nations who hitherto had been used as instruments of cruelty and coercion in the country. While Judah and all its inhabitants would be kept safe in the face of raging storms of devastation and destruction brought about by the locust plagues, the nations would be confronted by a catastrophe from which they would hardly escape. The signs of the coming catastrophe are enumerated; first, blood, fire and smoke which would serve as grim tokens of the destructive war that Yahweh was waging against the enemies of His people.

wühyä Köl 'äšer-yiqrä' Büšëm yhw(ä^odönäy) yimmälë and it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered Kî Bühar-ciyyôn ûbirüšäla^oim Ti|hyè pülêfâ for in Mount Zion and in Jeruselem there shall be those who escape, Ka|'äšer 'ämar yhw(ä^odönäy) ûba^oSSürîdî^om 'äšer yhw(ä^odönäy) qörë' as the LORD has said, and among the remnant shall be those whom the LORD doth call.

It is interesting to note that the outpouring of the Spirit and the ensuing spiritual revival of the nation of Judah and Jerusalem occurred simultaneously with the judgment inflicted upon the heathen nations “for the evils they had inflicted upon the Chosen people, and elements of the house of Israel which were scattered abroad would be returned to their ancestral home in triumph over their erstwhile enemies” (Harrison 1989:881). This triumph included clean air, freedom of movement, green environment, and a sustainable agricultural and livestock industry. Finally, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:1-11) sealed the outpoured blessing of the Lord in the material plane!

Therefore, the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32) signified an apocalyptic age in which the future world judgment would transcend an imminent national catastrophe (Harrison 1989:876). Some have interpreted the locust plague to mean the antagonistic forces against Judah which included the Edomite, Egyptians, Philistines and Phoenicians. Although Joel prophecy forecloses a captivity of Judah and Jerusalem (Joel 2:28-3:1), their deliverance was a foregone conclusion. Hence anyone who calls upon the

name of the Lord gets instant deliverance from whatever held him or her captive. It is this eschatological motif in Joel's prophecy that could also be found in post-exilic prophecies like Ezekiel's and Zechariah's. As in all post-exilic prophecies, prosperity and peace returns to the land only as men and women, young and old, maidens and servants become receptive to divine mercy and instructions.

God would pour out His Spirit in such a manner that humans would be possessed in that day of prophetic insight into the divine nature and purpose (Joel 2:28ff), needing no one to interpret for them as in former times (Heb. 8:11). In consequence, the true worshippers of God would experience no fear when the Day of the Lord approached, for their situation would be established on the basis of grace through faith (cf. Rom. 10:13). Joel's prophecy was clear on the point that only the remnant of Israel that was faithful to God would be saved, not the House of Israel in its entirety (Joel 2:32).

It is generally agreed that the charismatic-Pentecostal movement traces its root to Joel's prophecy through the eschatological representation of it by Apostle Peter in Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2). The Prophet's acute vision of the divine purpose for humanity coupled with his remarkable eschatological interpretation of the divine apocalypse was also cited by the Apostle. The latter saw the wonderful happenings on the day of Pentecost as a literal fulfilment of some of the dramatic utterances of Joel (Acts 2:16ff).

VI. Prophecy Guarding A Sustainable Charismatic-Pentecostalism

It is a truism that the Church in Nigeria is where it is today because of the work of the Holy Spirit. This is not a treatise on Church History, but benefits from insights from the history surrounding the Nigerian church. By 1970 the holy fire of Pentecostal-charismatic movement lit in the late '30s and early '40s had gathered momentum that propelled the Nigerian church into several trajectories including the emergence of several African Independent Churches led by prominent Nigerian Charismatic preachers like Benson Idahosa, Ozioma Ezekiel, Chiedozi Mbah, Geoffrey Numbere, William Kumuyi, and Enoch Adeboye to mention a few (Owete & Olusakin 2013:213ff). Through the tireless efforts of these preachers in the proclaiming of the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, the Holy Spirit permeated the community of Nigeria as it did in Korea (Yonggi Cho 1989:67). Today the Pentecostal-Charismatic phenomenon is being carried into various aspects of the Nigerian socio-cultural life including education, community service, cable network and cyberspace. Several institutions of learning including Universities have been built and run by church groups including Covenant University, Otta. Structures for the emergence of new cities in the Lagos environs have also been put in place known today as prayer-cities belonging to charismatic churches such as the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Apostolic Faith, and the Four-square Gospel Church to mention a few. Most of these churches have regular telecast programmes of Gospel messages using face book, YouTube and twitter handles. Others like the Christ Embassy and Synagogue church of all nations exploit cyberspace technology in the dissemination of their messages. Even in Catholic circles this fact is acknowledged as a very significant development in the Nigerian church community. However, the Pentecostal-charismatic movement in Nigeria have taken

advantage of the various new developments in communication science, but more still needs to be done to bring it to the level of popular availability.

No one can be saved without being empowered by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Even after someone is saved, he or she cannot have a steady victorious life of faith and spiritual growth unless he or she keeps growing in the Word through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements in Nigeria have veered off the path of divine guidance into a path where wealth and affluence is replacing godliness and probity. Although Bible Study is announced every week, but only very few members attend. The leaders are even the worst offenders. Yet we know that constant reading of Scriptures and careful meditation of the words would eventually enable a Christian experience the influence of the Holy Spirit.

It is also regrettable that the Pentecostal-Charismatic movements in Nigeria have taken the matter of “individual illumination by the Holy Spirit” too far (Johnson 2012:58). Several ungodly acts such as nudity during service, immoral acts such as having sex with potential spouses to anoint them for fruitfulness in marriage, and robbery of church funds have been committed in the name of being led by the Spirit. The case in Lagos where one Reverend King burnt a member of his church to death for fornication is still very much in the memory of Nigerians.

Interestingly, the New Testament fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy was on the day of Pentecost, hence every manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Church is described as Pentecostal. The day marked the formal inauguration of the church on earth. Some theologians would argue that the events which occurred on that day of Pentecost in Jerusalem was of a unique nature and applicable only to the first century church, and should not be regarded as the standard for the church at all times. They argue that every inauguration of an era was often characterized by special features such as earthquakes, fire and billows of smoke as well thunderous noise. The giving of the law at Mount Sinai (Exo. 19; Heb. 12:18-21) was one example, and Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4; 4:31; 8:17; 10:44-46; 19:1-6) was another.

This is not a good place to make arguments on theological questions. In my opinion, what characterized the beginning at Pentecost day could still characterize the whole church age. For instance, during the era of the law we notice several revivals occurring under Ezra/Nehemiah, Josiah, and Hezekiah to mention a few. In each of the aforementioned cases we find that revivals did occur only when a renewed emphasis was given to the laws of Moses. In Acts of the Apostles, we observe that Philip the evangelist brought about revival in Samaria by the act of his renewed emphasis on the in-filling of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8), as also did Peter in Caesarea (Acts 10) and Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19). According to Dispensationalists, we are still in the Church age and revival in the church might still occur once emphasis is rightly placed on the importance of the in-filling of the Holy Spirit for individual members of the Christian churches. Thus a re-enactment of Pentecost is possible today (Ahiamadu 1992:4-6).

VII. Conclusion

The charismatic-Pentecostal movement is today being carried into the telecasts, Cable Networks with face book, You-tube and Twitter handles which affords vital

communication links between the charismatic-Pentecostals and their audiences in Nigeria's major cities and all over the world through Cyberspace technology. Examples include the churches like the Synagogue Church of all Nations, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Assemblies of God Nigeria and the Omega Power Ministries to mention a few of them in Nigeria. These are churches which have taken advantage of these new technological and scientific innovations to reach out to their Nigerian and international audiences.

The Christian Church in the first century was inaugurated by the Holy Spirit personally and corporeally, and we are living in the era between that first coming of the Holy Spirit and the impending second coming of Christ. Had it not been for the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth today, the nefarious activities of the anti-Christ would have been more conspicuous, injurious and devastating to the Church (2 Thes. 2:6-8). The Holy Spirit permeates the society through the proclamation of the Gospel of grace (Nwaomah 2012:9-11). As in the early Church, no one can be saved today without believing in the name of Jesus, empowered by the Word of God and filled in the Holy Spirit. Even those who have been saved in this way must maintain their sonship and fulfil their stewardship through a steady, victorious and fruitful Christian living made possible through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Yonggi Cho 1989:67-68).

This is the direction the charismatic-Pentecostal movement should be heading to in Nigeria. The present trend where everyone interprets the Scriptures as it seems good in their own eyes have resulted in lots of doctrinal "Babel" and liturgical confusion, and has led to the criticism of Nigeria charismatic-Pentecostalism as one which is "growing several miles wide but only a few inches deep". The time to deepen the roots and re-enact a Biblical charismatic-Pentecostalism in Nigeria is now!

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