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Prof. Mumo Kisau, Publisher, Vice-Chancellor, Scott Christian University.

Agnes Makau-Olwendo, Editor, Lecturer, Scott Christian University

Dr. Sammy Linge, Lecturer, Scott Christian University

Dr. Lucia Ngei, Lecturer, Scott Christian University

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CONTRIBUTORS

ARTICLES

Bernard T. Ayoola, (PhD, Calvin Theological Seminary) is a Minister of the Word in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He is the executive director of African Resource Center of West Michigan.

Adesina A. Olubitan, (PhD, University of Ilorin) Lecturer, Department of Religions, History and Heritage Studies, Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Agnes O. Adeyeye, (PhD, University of Ilorin) Lecturer, Department of Religions, Faculty of Arts University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

Caleb O. Ogunkunle, (Ph.D. Department of Religions), University of Ilorin, Ilorin.

The Revd Capt Benjamin Kibara, (BTh, UNISA) he is licenced in the Diocese of Butere in the Anglican Church of Kenya, where he is Executive Secretary for Education and Training. Ben also serves as BUILD ACK's Country Director from a Nairobi base, and it is Chair of the Western Region Education and Training Committee for the ACK.

The Revd Dr Jeremy ('Jem') Hovil (ThD, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa) he is licenced in the Diocese of Bath & Wells in the Church of England. He is a long-term associate mission partner of BCMS-Crosslinks and Executive Trustee of BUILD Partners, serving churches and institutions across East Africa.

BOOK REVIEW

Enock Okode , (PhD in Biblical and Theological Studies (New Testament) from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 2019, an MA in Biblical Exegesis, from Wheaton Graduate School, a Bachelor of Theology , from Scott Christian University (SCU), 2004.) He taught at Pwani International Christian College from 2005–2007. He was on study leave between 2014 and 2019. He is currently a lecturer at Scott Christian University.

PUBLISHERS' FORWARD

Prof. Mumo Kisau

AJET continues to publish articles that discuss contemporary issues in theology and invites readers and writers to participate in sharing the academic thoughts and Christian ministry experiences.

The first article discusses the problem of evil and how this is viewed by the Yoruba Christians in Nigeria. The reader should be able to see the sequence of the articles here, moving from the need to integrate faith and learning, to leadership in Africa, moving on to dealing with life crisis through the healing ministry of chaplains and on to now to how a community in Africa deals with suffering meted out by evil. The author of this fourth article, while empathising with Yoruba philosophy of evil, brings the biblical view of sin and the possibilities of disobedience being the root of such evil; and provides the solution found at the cross of Christ.

The second article deals with the question of poverty and the role that Church should play in alleviating the scourge meted by it. The author argues that "the Church should change her behaviour towards the society by taking the challenge to carry the society's cross, i.e. alleviation of poverty".

The third article is born out of the authors' experience in the effectiveness of In-Service Theological Education contextualized in Butere Diocese of the Anglican Church, Kenya. The authors provide data that proves there is a correlation of in-service Theological training and church growth.

The fourth article examines Jonah 3:1-10 and relates its teaching to Pentecostalism in Africa. The author is of the opinion that "... much has not been mentioned on fasting, which was a crucial aspect of the solemn assembly that took place in the city of Nineveh after the preaching of Prophe Jonah" This article adapts the Historico-exegetical method and exegetically explains related words.

The book review captures the overview of benefaction and patronage in the New Testament. The reviewer states that the author of *Benefaction and Patronage in Leadership: A Socio-Historical Exegesis of the Pastoral Epistle* examines how the benefaction and patronage systems might have influence the leadership that Paul admonishes in Pastoral Epistles which the author of the book supports.

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EDITORIAL

Agnes Makau-Olwendo

AJET is pleased to publish quality articles to enrich the readers' theology and practice. Our contributors come from all over the world.

Benard Ayoola who focuses on contextual theology and writes on "personification of evil in the Yoruba indigenous churches" He argues that , "... Yoruba Christians evaluate evil according to the role it fulfills in society". He asserts, "For the Yoruba, the problem of evil is not a religious but a moral dilemma because God stands far above human moral evaluation. The implication is that "good" and "evil" are the terms we use to express our approval and disapproval of life outcomes.

The author helps the reader understand this concept from the Yoruba point of view coupled with his theological reflection.

Adesina A. Olubitan, and Agnes O. Adeyeye co-authored the article on "The church's moral obligation towards poverty alleviation in Nigeria" Their article contributes to an important facet of practical theology in the church today. They argue that the church should have significant social themes related to the transformation of the society. i.e. alleviation of poverty.

Benjamin Kibara and Jem Hovil write on the influence of Theological education on church growth by using the case study of *In-Service Theological Education* in Butere Diocese of the Anglican Church, Kenya (ACK) and they provide a response from their experience in training leaders from a specific Kenyan region.

Caleb O. Ogunkunle contextualizes the teaching Jonah 3:1-1 in the context of Nigeria pentecostalism and development. He argues . " .. fasting is an effective means of bringing about revival as it was done in the time of Jonah and in contemporary Church."

This AJET issue concludes with a review of Nathan Nzyoka Joshua 's Book *Benefaction and Patronage in Leadership: A Socio-Historical Exegesis of the Pastoral Epistles*. The reviewer states that " Joshua offers a stimulating socio-historical reading of Pauline Epistles that enriches our understanding of such Pauline concepts as good deeds, loyalty, salvation, and godliness"

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A RE-READING OF JONAH 3:1-10 IN THE CONTEXT OF NIGERIAN PENTECOSTALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

Caleb O. Ogunkunle

Abstract

Pentecostalism, as a movement in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular is a force to reckon with in African Christianity. Some of the key elements of Pentecostalism include speaking in tongues, prophecy, spiritual healing, vision, and revelation among others. However, much has not been mentioned on fasting, which was a crucial aspect of the solemn assembly that took place in the city of Nineveh after the preaching of Prophet Jonah. This paper examines Jonah 3:1-10 in the context of Nigerian Pentecostalism and development. Historico-exegetical method is adapted. Historically, literatures on Pentecostalism and fasting are reviewed. Exegetically, related key words in the text are explained with the use of Hebrew Lexicon and Bible Commentaries. It is discovered that fasting is an effective means of bringing about revival as it was done in the time of Jonah and in contemporary Church. Also, many contemporary Church leaders encourage members of their congregation to participate in any fasting programme with the aim of preparing them for spiritual revival. The paper concludes that fasting is an integral part of Nigerian Pentecostalism and recommends that it should be promoted among Christians for revival in Nigerian Christianity.

Key words:

Jonah 3:1-10, Nigeria, Pentecostalism, Christianity, Development

Introduction

Pentecostalism is the third force to reckon with in Christianity – Catholic being the first force and Protestant being the second (Akangbe, 1997:10). Currently, Pentecostalism is a major force to reckon with in the world in general and Nigeria in particular. It has attracted a great number of adherents among Christian Nigerians and made converts among non-Christians as well. While Orthodox or Protestant church appeared to be inadequate in meeting the needs of the people, Pentecostalism addresses

"itself to poverty, hunger, barrenness, fear of demons, diseases, tyranny, tribalism, family curses, inherited woes and the like" (Akangbe, 1997:11). It is obvious that "Pentecostal experience and spirituality have penetrated into almost all Christian denominations" in Nigeria (Ukpong, 2008: 165). Ukpong notes further that:

Pentecostalism cannot be ignored in Nigeria. The future of our Christianity depends on how the church can incorporate its positive impact and eliminate its negative impact. There is need for a proper theological investigation of Pentecostal values and methodologies from the authentic and perennial witness of Christian in their cultural contexts. Pentecostalism should be seen as a vital movement of the ecclesial renewal, and never as an isolated religious phenomenon (2008:186-7).

Pentecostal phenomenon is a common feature in most Christian denominations in Nigeria. Consequently, the evolution of 'prayer warriors' and some other charismatic groups in several churches in virtually all denominations in Nigeria are the effects of Pentecostalism. Some of the beliefs and practices of Pentecostal churches include prophecy, speaking in tongues, worship, divine healing, prayer and fasting among others. However, while so much has been written on prophesy, speaking in tongues and divine healing among others, very little has been written on fasting as a key ingredient of Pentecostalism. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to re-evaluate the role of fasting in the growth and development of Pentecostalism in Nigeria by choosing two of the prominent denominations namely: the Redeemed Christian Church of God and the Living Faith International Church, also known as Winner's Chapel.

Key Issues from the Book of Jonah

Jonah, whose name means "dove" was the son of Amittai (Jon 1:1). He was a Hebrew and a believer in Yahweh (Jon 1:9). He was from Gath Hepher (2 Kgs 14:25), a town in the tribe of Zebulun (Jos 19:10, 13). Jonah lived when Jeroboam II of the Northern Kingdom was king (2 Kgs 14:23-25). Perhaps, the book of Jonah has been criticized more than any other books of the Bible. In other words, critical scholars such as Good (1981:39), Miles (1975:168-81), Wolff (1978:40) among others have denied the authenticity and historicity of the book. Good argues that the story of the book is "fictional and

that the psalm in chapter 2:2-9 is a later insertion" (1981:39). Beyer is of the view that the book of Jonah is a "prose poem not history" arguing that the literary aspects of the book disqualify it from consideration as a factual account" (1912:4, 9). Hauser classifies the book of Jonah as a "caricature, the work of a skillful narrator who uses the element of surprise to unify his plot". He states further "the writer has progressively and deliberately destroyed Jonah's credibility, making him one who strikes out too readily at the world when it does not suit him" (1985:36-37). Wolff rejects the book of Jonah as "history, calling it a poetic fiction comparable to Jesus' parable of the prodigal son" (1978:40). Pfeiffer in his case states that "the story of Jonah is neither an account of actual happenings nor an allegory of the destiny of Israel or the Messiah (cf. Matthew 12:40) it is fiction – a short story with a moral" (1941:587).

Therefore, the submissions of the above named scholars are summarized as follows: One, that it is not possible for the great fish to swallow the prophet even though, it has been established of giant white sharks and sperm whales that are big enough to horses (Hannah, 1985:1462-23; Nicolaides 2017:12-13). According to Wolff, "the passage about the great fish is without question, work of the imagination" (Wolff, 1978:40). Two, that the size of Nineveh (3:3) and its population (4:11) are questionable. They opined that the author simply made use of exaggeration to communicate his points (Hannah, 1985:14, 63 & Fretheim 1977:64-65). Three, that it is not possible for the beasts of Nineveh to fast, cry out to God and turn from their wicked ways (Jon 3:8). Incidentally, the fact that animals are described as sharing human experiences is not limited to Jonah 3:7-8; the prophecy of Joel also refers to beasts engaged in moaning and suffering (1:18), they pant for God (1:20), and are being instructed not to fear past devastation of crops (2:20) (Woodard, 1991:10). And finally, that the rapid growth of the vine (Jon 4:6) is incredible and thus a simple exaggeration, (Hannah, 1985:1464 & 1471).

Obviously, the issues raised in the book of Jonah have equally led to different interpretations given by different scholars. Three of the interpretations include: mythical, historical and allegorical or parabolic interpretation (for details of each interpretation, see Robinson, 1926: 83-87 and Boer, 1973: 45-47). Fretheim in his discussion of Jonah: fact or fiction concludes:

Perhaps the best we can do is call it [Jonah] a satirical, didactic (or theological) short story. It has no exact counterpart in the Old Testament or in known literature

from the ancient Near East. All suggestions of present must thus remain somewhat on the speculative side. Nevertheless, there is some value in the kind of exercise in which we have engaged in this chapter, because it enables us to say with some probability what the book is not. In any case, what is important in such study in the end is whether it has contributed to elucidating the message of the book (1977:72).

The hermeneutical approach adopted in this paper is Evangelical-Pentecostal theology where the canonicity of the scriptures is fully accepted, and much emphasis is placed on the word of God. Therefore, I am in support of the authenticity and historicity of Jonah on the following grounds: One, known cities, such as Nineveh (1:2; 3:2-4, 6-7; 4:11), Tarshish (1:3; 4:2), and Joppa (1:3) are mentioned in the book. Two, Jonah was a historical character and the author of the book. He was said to be a prophet from Gath Hepher (2 Kgs 14:25) who lived in the reign of a historical person, Jeroboam II of whom no one has ever questioned his existence. Three, Jesus Christ recognized the historicity of Jonah (Mat 12:41; Lk 11:29-30, 32) and called him a prophet (Mat 12:39). Jesus based His call to repentance in His day on the validity of Jonah's message of repentance (Mat 12:41; Lk 11:29-32) (Hannah, 1975: 1464). Also, Jonah was one of the four Old Testament prophets whose ministries were referred to by Christ (Mat 12:41; Lk 11:32). The others were Elijah (Mat 17:11-12), Elisha (Lk 4:27), and Isaiah (Mat 15:7).

Exegesis of Jonah 3:1-10

The book of Jonah contains God's dealing with the city Nineveh, the capital of Assyria which was a wicked that was due for the judgement of God. The book has four chapters. Chapter one deals with Jonah's commission and disobedience. Chapter two of the book deals with Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish. Chapter three is centered on the obedience of Jonah while chapter four is on Jonah's reaction to the conversion of the Ninevites. Jonah 3, which is the focus of this paper is sub-divided into three sections namely, the re-commissioning of the prophet (3:1-2), the obedience of the prophet (3:3-4), and the conversion of the Ninevites (3:5-10) (Hannah, 1985: 1468-9).

Jonah 2 ended with God commanding the fish to vomit the prophet on the dry land of Nineveh. Jonah 3:1 begins with the word of God that came to Jonah the second time. The Hebrew word *dabhar* is a masculine noun which

means a word or speech and it is used about 394 times in the Old Testament (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 1979: 182). As the word of God, it is the divine communication in form of commandment, prophecy or words of help to his people. In this context, it was the specific commandment given to Prophet Jonah to arise, go and declare to Nineveh. Similar instruction was given to other prophets as in Isa 38:4; Jer. 1:4; Ezek. 3:16; etc. The Hebrew verb *qum* is a hollow verb and it means to arise or stand up (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 1979: 877). The city of Nineveh is described as being great three times in the book (1:2; 3:2; 4:11). This probably is to include the main city and its environs.

Jonah 3:3-4 contains the obedience of the prophet to the commandment of God. Unlike what happened in chapter 1 when he went the opposite direction. This time, he obeyed and went to Nineveh. Interpreting the phrase "going a day's journey," Hannah is of the view that "Jonah did not travel into the city for a whole day before preaching. Instead, it means on the first day he entered the city he began preaching" (1985:1469). The content of the message is "yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The Hebrew verb *haphak* means to turn or overturn. In this context, it is used as Niphil perfect which means be overturned or overthrown (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 1979: 246). Jonah declared the message for three days. The fact that Jonah gave allowance of forty days before judgement of Nineveh speaks of the grace and mercy of God. In other words, the people were given the opportunity before the judgement would come on them.

Jonah 3:5-10 contains the conversion of the Ninevites. Obviously, the message of Jonah spread through the city. The people accepted it and believed God. The Hebrew verb *aman* means to confirm or support. In Jonah 3:5, it is Hiphil perfect plural meaning that the people of Nineveh put their trust in God; they believed in Him just as Abraham did in Gen 15:6 cf. Exod. 14:31; Num 14:11; 20:12; Deut. 1:32; 2 Kgs 17:14; 2 Chron. 20:20 etc. (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 1979: 52-3). Secondly, the people of Nineveh responded to the message of Jonah by proclaiming a fast. The Hebrew verb *qara'* means to call, proclaim, announce or read. In this case, they announced a fast of 1 Kgs 21:9, 12 and Jer. 36:6 (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 1979: 894-6). The Hebrew word for fast is *som* and it is a masculine noun. *Som* is a declaration of public observance of fasting as in 1 Kgs 21:9, 12; 2 Chron. 20:3; Ezra 8:21 and Jer. 36:9 (Brown, Driver, Briggs, 1979: 847). On hearing the announcement of judgement by Jonah, the Ninevites proclaimed a fast, repented and thereby averting the day of judgement. Fasting, in this context, is a symbol of inward contrition and humiliation (1Sam 7:6; 2 Sam 1:12; Neh. 1:4; Zech. 7:5).

Fasting, for the people of Nineveh was a catalyst for their repentance and turning to God. Every living thing in the city, that is, humans and animals abstained from food. Usually, national fasting was called during times of extreme crisis, such as plague, military threat or death of a king. For example, Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast because the kings of Moab and Ammon were planning a campaign against Judah (2 Chron. 20:1-29). Also, Joel foresaw the coming of the day of Yahweh; therefore, he exhorted the people to sanctify a fast and called a solemn assembly (Joel 1:14; 2:15). He proclaimed that if the people would truly repent in mourning and fasting, then God would be gracious and postponed the day of judgement (Joel 2:12-14) (Hartley, 1980: 758-9).

The response of the people to the message of Jonah was dramatic as they put on sack cloth that is, coarse cloth as in Gen 37:34; 1 Kgs 21:27; Neh. 9:1; Est 4:1-4; Lam 2:10; Dan 9:3; Joel 1:8. Sackcloth which is either a loose garment like sack or a piece of similar material is fastened round the body (Brown, Driver, Briggs 1979:974). Sackcloth has a long history as articulated by Cohen. It was used by mourners and those who wished to express contrition. It was worn in such a way as to leave the breast free for beating. In Gen 34:34, Jacob garbs himself in sackcloth to mourn for Joseph whom he supposed has been slain by a wild beast of Gen 37:1. As a garment of grief and self-abasement, sackcloth was sometimes the dress of the prophet who preached a message of repentance, Rev 11:3; 2 Kgs 1:8, Mat 3:4 (Cohen, 1980:2:882).

The message of Jonah also had a great impact on the king of Nineveh who put off his royal robe and put on sackcloth and sat in ashes. The response of the king showed that he was contrite and believed in the message of the prophet. He made an edict that allowed everybody in the land including animals to fast. The involvement of animals in mourning rites was partially known in the ancient world in Judith 4:10 which says:

Both they, and their wives, and their children, and their cattle, and every stranger and hireling, and their servants bought with money, put sack cloth upon their loins.

Jonah 3:9 shows that the people of Nineveh were fully aware of their evil and wickedness (Nah 3:1, 3-4). Thus, the fear of the judgement of God was a major factor in their repentance. They believed in the grace and mercy of God who is capable of reversing the threat to destroy Nineveh. As a result

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of the action of the people, God did not bring about the judgement threat on them. Two Hebrew verbs are used interchangeably in this passage. The first one is *sub* which is used four times in Jonah 3:8-10. It means turn back, return, or repent (Brown, Driver, Briggs 1979:996-8). The second verb is *nihan* which in the Niphal form means be sorry, console oneself (Brown, Driver Briggs, 1979: 636-7). But, various English versions such as the *Revised Standard Version*, here translated *nihan* as repent and this has created some difficulties in translation (Alexander 1988: 124-5). The point here is that God did not carry out as a result of the repentance of the people. Hannah notes:

Nineveh's repentance delayed God's destruction of the city for about 150 years. The people evidently fell into sin again, so that later the city was destroyed, in 612BC (1985:1470).

Obviously, the repentance expressed by the Ninevites was rooted on fasting of which everyone in the community was involved. Again, this corroborates the fact that fasting has a great impact on the adherents of Christianity. Fasting is a means of seeking for divine intervention in one's challenges of life – physically, spiritually, financially, amongst others.

Fasting is following the example of Jesus Christ and other great men in the Bible. Jesus Christ fasted for forty days in the wilderness in preparation for His earthly ministry (Mat 4:2); Moses also fasted forty days on Mountain Sinai to receive the law from Yahweh and guidance in the wilderness Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:9 and Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout Judah to seek the Lord when the sons of Moab and Ammon came to make war against him (2 Chron. 20:3). Fasting, which is a spiritual discipline is found both in the Old and New Testaments and it is of a great importance in Christianity. It is the source of spiritual power and it is carried out for various reasons in the Bible. It is an expression of repentance as discussed in Jonah 3:1-10 and Joel 2:12-13. It is a desperate plea for God's intervention when in danger (Est 4:1-4). It is a sign of mourning and sorrow for sins (Dan 9:3). It is a means of averting danger (2 Chron. 20:3; Jer. 36:9; Joel 2:23; Ezra 8:21). It is a means of humbling oneself before God (Lev 16:29-31; Num 29:7). It is a means of knowing the mind of God (Acts 13:2-3).

Historical context of Pentecostalism in Nigeria

Pentecostalism has its root in various aspects of 19th century fundamentalism in America (Ward, 1994: 502-5). Akangbe (2009:8-9)

highlights four main reasons for the rise of Pentecostalism in North America in the late 19th century as the lukewarm attitude of the orthodox churches, the rise of industrial revolution that produced moral decadence and labour related problems, the birth of Holiness movement, and the repulsive attitude of the then leading American orthodox leaders. The history of Pentecostalism in Nigeria can be traced to the years between 1915 and 1930 when series of spiritual movements or Aladura churches emerged in the southern part of the country especially in the south west. The movement became popular as it strived in the inadequacies of the orthodox church to meet the needs of the people as it addressed itself to poverty, hunger, barrenness, fear of demons, diseases, tyranny, tribalism family curses, inherited woes and the like (Akangbe 2009:11). Therefore, the movement attracted a great number of adherents among Christians in Nigeria and also made converts among non-Christians. Three of these movements that have metamorphosed into indigenous denominations are Christ Apostolic Church; Church of the Lord (Aladura); and Cherubim and Seraphim Movement.

The explosion of Pentecostalism in Nigeria can be dated between 1950 and 1970 when there was struggle for independence on the one hand, and the negative effects of civil war on the other hand. There were challenges bordering on "deprivation, disorganization and defectiveness of the system as proposed in the social deprivation theory" (Ukpong, 2006:12). Unfortunately, needs of the members in the mainline/orthodox churches were not met as missionaries in these churches failed to address the type of questions the Africans raised for them; witch craft, demon possession, haunting by evil spirits, the cult of ancestors, the use of protective charms, talisman, socery and traditional dancing form of worship ant shrines (Ukpong, 2006:10).

The father of neo-Pentecostalism in Nigeria was the Archbishop Benson Idahosa who formed the Church of God Mission International in 1968 with the headquarters in Benin-City (Isiramen, 2010:307). The middle of 1980 recorded the establishment of several other Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria; three of them include: Living Faith Church; Deeper Life Bible Church; and Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries. Some key features of Pentecostalism in Nigeria include; literal interpretation and application of the Scriptures, aggressive evangelism, emphasis on visions, dreams. Prophecy, speaking in tongues, miracles, divine healing, prayer and fasting among others. (Fatokun, 2018: 94-102).

Fasting as a key ingredient of Pentecostalism

Fasting is a key ingredient of the Aladura Movement in Nigeria vis-à-vis the Pentecostal Churches whose belief in the efficacy of fasting is in line with the teaching of Jesus in Mark 9:29 "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting" (cf. Mat 17:21). Comparing fasting in the mainline Churches with the Aladura Churches, Fatokun says:

Unlike in the past in the mainline Churches where fasting and praying was mostly restricted by a number of Christians to Lent session, the Aladura Churches, at the same time of their emergence, brought in a new attitudinal approach to fasting with much prediction for the old testament prophets fasted lives (2018:99).

Fasting, all along has occupied a significant position in Pentecostal theology in Nigeria. It was reported of Garrick Braide in 1916, during his mobile revival crusades, he emphasized amongst other things "conversion, destruction of idols and magical powers, faith healing, periodical long prayer and fasting, and abstinence from alcoholic drinks" (Fatokun, 2018: 90).

Ositelu, the founder of Church of the Lord (Aladura) experienced the reality of evil in his life in particular and in the society in general. He overcame the challenges that confronted him through disciplines of prayer and fasting with the use of Psalms. Therefore, much emphasis has since been placed on the importance of fasting and prayer in the denomination. (Ogunkunle, 2000: 237 & Fatokun, 2018: 94).

Also, Christ Apostolic Church as a denomination recognizes fasting as a key ingredient to aid prayers. Articulating this position for the denomination, Alokan says:

Like Jesus Christ, the leader of the Church led by Joseph Babalola, David Olubayo and Isaac Akinyele undertook a series of fasting along with long praying for the sustenance of the Church. The practice is in keeping with the belief that great issues could be resolved with prayers along with fasting; that in such occasions, as with Jacob of the Bible, prayers and tears are always effective weapons (2019:327).

He states further that members of the Church are expected to fast at least every Wednesday and Friday of a week. If the fasting is partial, it may

last from morning to around mid-day. But if total, it may be for a day from morning to evening, or even 3, 7, 10, 14, 21, 40 or more days. He notes that great revivals have occurred in the church through fasting exercise (Alokan, 2010:328).

One person who has placed so much emphasis on fasting is Daniel Olukoya, the founder of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries. Listing the guidelines to follow to "unseat the strong man (the devil)" who is working against one's marriage, work, house, family, finances, among others; he has made fasting as number one on the list. The first of the five steps to take is "Have three days fasting and prayer using Isaiah 49:24-26". (Olukoya p.146; Aiyegboyin 70).

Pentecostalism in Nigeria and National Development

In the light of the exegesis of Jonah 3:1-10 and the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, the focus at this juncture is to examine the contribution of Pentecostalism in Nigeria to national development with emphasis on the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Living Faith Church, that is, two of the leading Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria.

A. The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)

The Redeemed Christian Church of God was founded by Rev. Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi who was a leading prophet in the Cherubim and Seraphim Church. He started the Church in 1952 with a 12-member prayer fellowship called *Ogo Oluwa* (Prayer Band). He made it known to group of few individuals during a U. S. A. trip that Pastor E. A. Adeboye was to succeed him after his death. On 2nd November 1980, Rev. J.O. Akindayomi passed on to glory and in line with what he said earlier, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye took up the mantle of leadership in February 1981.

Through Pastor E.A. Adeboye, several innovations and programmes have been introduced to the Church and these programmes have helped in the rapid growth and development of the denomination. Two of the programmes are the monthly Holy Ghost Service and the annual Holy Ghost Conventions, both programmes holding at Redemption Camp, Kilometre 46, Lagos-Ibadan express way. It has been noted that some six million people were in attendance in one of the conventions and about two million people attend the monthly Holy Ghost Service (Daniels, 2017: xxxv-vi). Currently, the RCCG has spread to over 192 countries, with over 32,000 parishes in Nigeria

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alone. There are at least 732 branches in the UK and Ireland. Utilizing evangelism as a core tool along with Church planting, the Church is spreading rapidly in each of the continents of the world (Daniels, 2017: xl-xlii). Describing the RCCG, Andrew Rice says it is "One of (Africa's) most vigorously expansionary religious movements, a homegrown Pentecostal denomination that is crusading to become a global faith" (Daniels, 2017: xxxix).

Doctrinally, the church recognizes the presence and reality of evil in the world and believes that the devil seeks to the downfall of humans through sickness, sin and death. So witches and sorcerers and their innumerable unclean spirits are representatives and agents of the devil who govern and direct their actions. The duties of these spirits are to steal, kill and destroy (Ukah, 2003: 205). Describing the background of Adeboye in the light of his understanding of demonic powers, Ukah says:

As a native of Ifewara, Adeboye is not an alien to metaphysical power of malign forces, for in this small town of Osun State, witches and wizards blast about their membership of evil group. Even diviners attest to the fact that the evil forces of this village are head above others in the domain. As a young man, he had been afflicted by the fear of dark powers and forces which were claimed to terrorize indigenes of his town. Thus, he had patronized local medicine-men who claim to prepare powerful anti-witchcraft charms in order to metaphysically protect himself from evil powers from his village. These personal experiences partly inform Adeboye's teaching on demonology and deliverance from dark forces (2003: 204-5).

Perhaps, it is in this context that the Church has placed so much emphasis on teaching on deliverance from demonic possession and attacks through serious prayers. Ukah notes that "spiritual warfare is a constant theme of serious teachings and rituals in RCCG, a fact that connects the church to its Cherubim and Seraphim roots where the same emphasis is clearly spelt out" (2003: 205).

The place and significance of fasting in RCCG is best understood in the testimony and writing of Pastor Adeboye who referred to fasting as one of the enhancers. Other enhancers are pleasing God, salvation, faith, service,

tithing and sowing (Daniels, 2017: 162-201). Fasting, according to Adeboye, is a faith booster and a spiritual activity that a Christian must engage in regularly in order to grow. It is going without food for a whole day or two or three to completely cleanse the body. Fasting is a means of preparing the ground for greater and spiritual exercise. (See, *Open Heaven*, Volume 17, May 20, November 13 & 20, 2017 cf. Daniels, 2017: 185). Recently, Adeboye was asked by one of his sons "Daddy, now that you are over 70, will you stop fasting?" He replied: "the moment I quit fasting, you can begin to expect my departure because I have resolved never to relax. As far as I am concerned, the day I cease to be relevant, I go" (Daniels, 2017: 185).

B. Living Faith Church Worldwide

Living Faith Church Worldwide also known as Winners' Chapel International is one of the fastest growing Pentecostal churches in Africa. It has a network of churches in over 300 cities, in all states in Nigeria and in other continents of the world. The church started through the 18-hour vision which her founder, David Oyedepo saw in May 1981 where he received a mandate from God to liberate the world from all forms of satanic oppression through preaching with emphasis on faith in God. The church was originally called Liberation Faith Hour Ministries. On 17th September 1983, both David and Faith Oyedepo were ordained and commissioned as Pastors of the church by Pastor E. A. Adeboye (Falaye, 2017: 1). The strength of the church is on receiving special mandates from God. There are specific mandates with dates for the take-off of key events of the church:

The Liberation Commission	-	10th May 1981
Teaching Ministry	-	22nd May 1981
Church Ministry	-	11th December 1983
Publishing Ministry	-	7th April 1985
Word of Faith Bible Institute	-	1st September 1986
Foreign Mission	-	25th January 1995
Education Mandate	-	25th October 1999 (Oyedepo, 2012: 14)

The educational mandate is divided into three parts namely, the Kingdom Heritage Model School – which is made up of the Primary Schools of the Church; the Faith Academy, which is made up of the Secondary Schools of the church; and the University which is made up of Covenant University,

Ota, and Landmark University, Omu-Aran both in Nigeria and another University in South Africa.

Doctrinally, the church, like other Pentecostal Churches, recognizes the presence of evil in the world through the activities of Satan and its agents. Therefore, in order to liberate humans from all forms of satanic oppressions, much emphasis is given to prayer and fasting which is believed to open humans up to revelations in the scriptures (Ps 119:18; Isa 58:8-10; Lk11:2-4; Deut. 8:13) (Oyedepo, 2012: 156). Oyedepo identifies three prayer boosters namely, fasting, praying in the Holy Spirit, and personal testimonies. According to Oyedepo, the purpose of fasting is for the release of power and that fasting is a spiritual device that empowers an individual with unction needed to deal with the issues confronting him or her (Oyedepo, 1998: 78). He states further:

When we are in a fast, we are not begging or struggling with the devil to leave; we are connecting with heaven, for the release of power to send the devil packing from our environment. That is why during a fast, you must have periods of separation to study and fellowship with the word of God (1998: 78).

Educational development:

Education is not only the best legacy, but it is also an excellent means of national development, even as the earlier missionaries had made use of it. Omotoye (2011:269) observes that:

One of the major strategies for conversion by the Christian missionaries since 19th century was the introduction of Western Education in Nigeria. The main line churches like the Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and Catholic established primary, secondary and of recent universities in different parts of the country.

The Pentecostal churches as represented by the Redeemed Christian Church of God and Living Faith Church International are making great impact in the educational development of Nigeria. The Redeemed Christian Church of God has both primary and secondary schools spreading across the nation and also the Redeemers University in Ede, Osun State. One of the specific mandates of the Living Faith Church International is education at all levels.

The primary arm is called the Kingdom Heritage while the secondary is called Faith Academy. These schools are found all over the nation. The Church has two universities in Nigeria: namely Covenant University Ota, and Landmark University, Omu-Aran. The third University is in South Africa.

The only challenge is the affordability of the schools by ordinary Nigerians including members of the Pentecostal churches. In other words, unlike the missionary schools, which were established with almost free tuition fees for the purpose of conversion and attracting members; the school fees in the contemporary mission's schools is beyond the reach of ordinary citizens of the nation.

Employment/Empowerment/Economic development:

The educational institutions highlighted above, and other business ventures of the churches provide employment opportunities for thousands of Nigerians. It has been noted that the Living Faith Church International pays salaries of 18,000 employees in Nigeria alone (Falaye, 2017: 3). Several thousands of Nigerians also empowered financially through their small-scale businesses during the special programmes of the church such as the monthly Holy Ghost services; Annual Holy Ghost Conventions; and Shiloh among others. In addition, the Redeemed Christian Church of God has business ventures that empower her members. Omotoye (2011:270) notes that the Redeemed Christian Church of God established the Jubilee Development Foundation in 2002, in order to enlighten and mobilize its members for economic empowerment and development and the church is in partnership with at least four community Banks, namely: Haggai Community Bank, New Life Community Bank, Ore-ofe Community Bank, and Sunrise Community Bank. Also, the Redeemed Christian Church of God has social responsibility drive to banish unemployment and social vices from the society. One of the platforms to achieve this goal is through RISE-an acronym for Redeemed Initiative for Skills and Empowerment. With this programme, different congregations in the denomination have organized free skill acquisition and empowerment programmes for youths and unemployed members of the Church together with other people in the community (Dumo, E.; Hanafi, A. & Akinkahunsi, T. 2019:22-23).

Political involvement:

Even though, the leadership of these two Pentecostal Churches does not belong to any political party, yet their blessing is sought for by political

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leaders from time to time. For example, the former president Olusegun Obasanjo regularly attended the Holy Ghost programmes at the Redemption Camp. President Muhammadu Buhari has been attending the Holy Ghost Night since 2011. It is of interest to note that in 2015 and 2019 general elections, a Senior Pastor in the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Pastor Yemi Osibanjo has been elected as Vice-President alongside President Muhammadu Buhari. This, perhaps has shown that Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria have crucial and pivotal roles to play as far as Nigerian politics is concerned.

Spiritual development:

The spiritual development is understood and appreciated in the context of the reality of evil forces in the society which make individuals including Christians to feel insecure and afraid of the future. Human fears include fear of uncertainty, fear of not being able to take care of oneself or family, fear of losing one's job among others. It is in this vein that Pentecostal churches are making significant contribution to the spiritual development of their members through spiritual services including night vigils. They organize deliverance and healing services for members where the pastors and anointed individuals have special and powerful prayer sessions. The prayers are centered on breaking of curses and ancestral covenants, and against demonic attacks. Usually, hands are laid on the individuals to whom prayers are made in such service, Freeman observes:

For someone going through such a healing ceremony it can be a very powerful experience – suddenly finding themselves at the centre of a crowd of praying or chanting people, all focusing on them, supposedly channeling the divine healing force into their body and soul. Often simply accepting the possibility that Jesus might be able to help them opens a mental door out of preceding blackness (2015, 7).

At the end of the service, the individuals are believed to have received spiritual help and deliverance as noted from testimonies that accompany the service.

Conclusion

This paper, written from the biblical perspective has brought to light some salient facts: One, Pentecostalism is a powerful force in Christianity, and it has been connected with various great revivals from one generation to another since the time of prophet Jonah who preached to the people of Nineveh. Two, the declaration of the word of God has a significant place in every revival and consequently in Pentecostalism. In Nineveh, it was the word of God through Jonah that brought about the great revival in the city and this has been the case since then till date in the history of Christianity. Three, fasting is a powerful weapon that has been used in Pentecostalism down through the ages. The king and people of Nineveh declared a fast as a sign of repentance when the message of Jonah got to them. Similarly, the leadership of Pentecostal Churches in the contemporary Nigerian society especially, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adebayo and Bishop David Oyedepo, have taught so much on fasting as demonstrated in their writings. Thus, fasting is seen as a catalyst for the Pentecostal movement in the nation. Finally, Pentecostal Churches have contributed greatly to the educational, economic, political and spiritual developments of Nigeria.

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