

African Pentecostalism and politics: Reading Luke-Acts in its political, sociological and religious contexts

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This article seeks to bring out the functionalities of the promise of the Holy Spirit by Jesus, the risen Lord, to his new community in Luke-Acts. It queries the need for such promise within the religious, sociological, and political environment of the 1st century Palestine as against the dominant power of the empire. The article carefully acknowledges that the fulfilment of the promise in Luke-Acts marked the creation of a different kingdom whose aim was to subvert the empire's existing political, religious, and sociological power. By implication, it is believed that such a subversive phenomenon displayed in Luke-Acts could have both direct and indirect consequences on African Pentecostalism as it engages in its articulation of the same promise in the modern political world.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The article falls within the biblical and sociological context of the early church and proposes that African Pentecostalism reads the meaning of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts holistically. It will enable the African church to engage in evangelism, politics, and social issues to change the world positively in a subversive manner.

Keywords: Lukan Jesus; Luke-Acts; community; communalism; sociological; religious; political; African Pentecostalism.

Introduction

The person of the Holy Spirit is believed to be the vital agent in transforming the theological conception of the early Jesus community. The belief of the early Christian community in the reactivation of the kingdom of David was a resonated phenomenon within this community as scripted in Luke-Acts. The Magnificat flourished with the same premise that the essence of the coming of the Messiah was for the dethronement of the ruling empire power and the enthronement and the restoration of the kingdom of Israel with the re-establishment of the throne of David (Lk 1:51–52). Jesus in Luke-Acts is seen as the fulfilment of the Old Testament promise to the nation of Israel as explicit in the prayer of Simon, the priest:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel. (Lk 2:29–32, KJV)¹

With this reading in mind, the newly formed community perceived that the restoration had already begun, but this hope seemed to have been punctured unexpectedly during the suffering of their Master. Fortunately, according to Luke, the revitalisation of the hope of the community was reignited at the resurrection of Jesus and the promise of the *pneuma agios* to the new community.

The hope of the restoration is further reminiscent of the interrogative framework posed by the disciples, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' (Ac 1:6). Such hope was within the backdrop of the era of the new kingdom that was about to emerge and Jesus as the emancipator of the new Israel from the dominant power of the Roman Empire. The empire that the Jewish people believe had exerted undue influence on the people. A general belief among the people was the expectation of the theocratic kingdom that God will rule over his people (Punt 2012:1–3). One may ask how the disciples read the Old Testament text within their community and what was their initial thought on the function of the promise of the Holy Spirit by Jesus. It is imperative from the text that the disciples were expecting a different religious, economic,

1. Except otherwise stated, all the quotation from both the Old Testament and the New Testament is derived from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (RSV).

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sociological, and political system other than what they contextually experienced at that time, *a different kingdom* with a different ideology.

Using *a communal reading hermeneutic*, this study seeks to establish that the newly formed Jesus community in Luke-Acts integrated within their subconsciousness the promise of the Holy Spirit to serve as a transforming agent that would empower the new community to establish a different kingdom other than the empire. The flare of Pentecostalism is to be witnessed in the present-day church, especially in Africa. The use of Pentecostalism in this context is unrelated to a particular denomination but is used holistically to mean the Holy Spirit. The usage is synonymous with the movement of the Holy Spirit within the ecclesia in Africa.

Communal reading in Luke-Acts

Luke-Acts has experienced various reading cultures and nuances in recent times such as Holy Spirit (Shelton 2000), Luke's use of Scripture (Johnson 2002; Mallen 2008), and early Christian culture (Hebert 2016). Many interpretations have been granted to provide the interpretative schemata that would be of benefit to the faithful community of believers. A communal reading of a given text provides the readers with several functions as they involve in their interpretation of the biblical text and such functions are imbued with the idea of communal identity. Johns (2012: 22–23) in her opinion emphasises some of the basic functions of reading a biblical text within an enclosed community, and some of these functions according to her are that, firstly, it allows the biblical text to be made handy to the faithful; secondly, it provides an opportunity to the readers to acknowledge the presence of the divine in their midst; and lastly, it enables the community to discern the Bible as the authentic word of God that speaks directly to the contextual situation of the community (Johns 2012:17–25). To Van der Walt (2014:1–18), communal reading of a biblical text involves looking at a given text using a multi-dimensional apparatus that can activate the communal interest to discern their experience from the text of the Bible.

One of the most potent functionalities of the communal reading of a text is witnessed within its application of multidimensional approaches as emphasised by Van Der Walt (2014:19–50) which include ideological reading and intercultural components embedded within the reading text. Van Der Walt's application to the communal reading of the biblical text is made up of different tapestries that spiral as a given community engages in the biblical reading and contextualisation of the text. But beyond this, there is more rhetorical inclusivism that resides within the text which the reading community has to invoke for their benefit. The appropriation of the text provides a milieu through which the community integrates their experience as the fulfilment of the reading text. The faith community does not only engage in reading the Scripture, but it allows the readers to respond to the text. Thus reader's response becomes as

important as reading the text itself. Without a response, the need to engage in the text becomes useless and without any accretion to the reading community. Here the processes of recitation, *recontextualisation*, and *reconfiguration* of the biblical text become the ultimate suppositions of the faith community as they read the text rhetorically (Etukumana 2012:43; Robbins 1996a:41). Before we proceed, let us illustrate this in one of the texts in Acts where we believe the process of rhetorical reading was paramount to the early Jesus community as they engaged in the interpretation of the biblical text. Stronstad (1984:32–34) believes that the author of Acts asserts that the disciples of Jesus in the Lukan community in Acts believed that the event in Acts 2 is a direct fulfilment of what was earlier prophesied by the Old Testament prophet, precisely in Joel 2:28–29 (3:1–2 LXX). The text in LXX reads:

And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out of my Spirit (*pneumatōs*) upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. And on my servants and on my handmaids in those days will I pour out of my Spirit.

While its quotation in the Lukan community in Acts 2:17–18 (RSV) reads as follows:

'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.'

The notion of Jesus' community in Luke-Acts regarding the event provides grounds for them to see themselves as the ones whom Joel's prophecy was meant for. By employment of the rhetorical process of *recitation*, which 'is the presentation of speech or narrative or both, either from oral or written tradition, in words identical to or different from those the person has received' (Robbins 1996b:103). According to Luke, Peter recited Joel with a slight difference with the incision of the name of God 'θεός' instead of 'I' as in Joel and some other minor differences (Evans 1993:213). Another instance in which the community recited the text is by using the phrase 'And in the last day it shall be' instead of 'And it shall come to pass afterward' as scripted by Prophet Joel. This provokes questions as to the intention of the community in reciting this prophetic text using this manner of rhetoric. Another rhetorical method employed by the Lukan community in Luke-Acts is the process of *recontextualisation* of the ancient texts. By *recontextualisation*, we mean 'a process of presenting a quotation from a Biblical text without any indication of the existence of such a word or statement in any written text elsewhere' (Robbins 1996a:45–46). *Recontextualisation* of the text is not found in the manner in which the quotation is rendered by the community, but it is

found in the context of the emanation of the promise. That is the reason for the reading in Acts 2:33:

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear.

This text within the context of this interpretation shows that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is done by Jesus Christ and not the Father. By implication, the recontextualisation of the text of the Old Testament prophecy of Joel by the Lukan community in Acts seems not to link the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts to God as acknowledged in Joel 2:27 but to Jesus as in Acts 2:33. More so, in LXX, the use of *all flesh*, according to Fitzmyer (1998:252–253), is referring to the people of Judah but the interpretation of the Lukan community transposes the use of all flesh to include all the nations and all humanity without boundary. Evans (1993:223) adds that the recontextualisation of the text from the Old Testament prophetic texts by the Lukan community ‘tie together themes linking Jews and Gentile. Both belong to the tent of David; both are working together to restore it’.

Again, the Lukan community in Luke-Acts was able to use the theory of rhetoric of reconfiguration to read the text of the Old Testament within their community. *Reconfiguration* of a given text is retelling a situation in a text in a way that makes the later event seem new with respect to the old event (Etukumana 2012:47; Robbins 1996a:50). The community that reads the text has in its rhetorical domain the mandate of reconfiguring the old text and making its content fulfil in their context. Through the reading and recounting of the story within the older text, the older text becomes a foreshadowing of the new one. The Lukan interpretation and reading of the Old Testament explicate the fulfilment of this prophecy. Within this reading community, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts was believed by the community to be the archetype of the old promise (Stronstad 1984:58). Therefore, according to Luke, the Lukan community is enshrined with an unabated view that the Pentecost marked the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise and that the new world has emerged from the old one. The beneficiary of the promise, therefore, stood a chance of becoming the leaders of the new kingdom as seen from the aspiration of the disciples in Acts 1:6 (Esler 1996:60–61). A careful reading of the text in Acts 1:1–6 in conjunction with Acts 2:17–18 optimistically provides, as well as explicates, the intention of the Lukan community, as they read and interpreted the text of the Bible and applied it to its community. With the fulfilment of the promise of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the Lukan community energetically, without doubt, claimed the fulfilment of the new dispensation of events where Jesus and his disciples would rule over the affairs of humanity. Thus, the concept of the new kingdom was launched through the reading of the text and the fulfilment of the promise of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Using the application of a communal reading as entrenched with all the necessary rhetorical functions, the disciples of

Jesus in Luke-Acts were able to see a different kingdom with different political, religious, sociological and economic outlooks from that of the empire. The reign of the new kingdom will emphasise mercy, love, and care for the poor in contrast to the empire. The Lukan community in their interpretation of the account of the prophetic rendition in the context of the Old Testament and the promise of the Lukan Jesus in Luke 24 and Acts 1 provided them with an ambience through which they could view the future of their world. In this context, the *kerygmatic* interpretation of the Prophet Joel’s text provided the early Lukan Christian community with the basic function of Lukan pneumatology (Evans 1993:218–219). The function of using such a rhetorical reading within the Lukan community during its time, and the way they went about responding as a result of the reading of the text call for proper investigation to enable us to establish how they understood the place of the promise of the Holy Spirit in their context as different from what God intended for them. The narrative of the community was centred on the function of the Holy Spirit as a motivating agent that would negotiate the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. The event they (disciples) believed to have its fulfilment as a result of the Pentecostal experience. Similarly, Yoder (1994:114) provides a striking point by asserting that ‘What in the Hebrew Scripture is a universally presupposed fundamental concept becomes in the New Testament a new reality with the gift of the Holy Spirit’. The new reality lies in the sense that the disciples’ interaction with the Holy Scripture and the experience of the Holy Spirit provided them with the opportunity of fulfilling the writing of the Old Testament Scripture.

Holy Spirit as a ‘political’ motivator in Luke-Acts

The curiousness in the voice of the Lukan community calls for investigation as to their reason for raising such questions concerning the restoration of the nation of Israel in Acts 1:6. Asking their master whether he was about to restore the kingdom to the nation of Israel means that they were looking for a political kingdom and earthly one other than spiritual and *heavenly*. It is the opinion of this article that the author of Luke-Acts wrote his work with political aspiration in contrast to Conzelmann (1993) in his *Die Mitte der Zeit* who believes that the author’s intention was not political but theological. Esler’s (1996:61) view is very crucial by alluding that the author of the Luke-Acts believes that the new community in Luke-Acts has social, economic, and political implications. By all indications, the disciples in the Lukan community misconstrued the purpose of Jesus’ coming into the world. Of course, they were people battered and shattered by different rhythms of political, religious, and economic manipulations. For them to ask, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’ (Ac 1:6) entails that the disciples were perhaps aware of the *time* limit of the rulership of the Gentiles over the land of Palestine. Luke’s use of time in his writing embodied within its text the dialectic sense. Perhaps, the disciples remembered the early discussion made in Luke

21:24 where the occupation of Jerusalem is said to be *kairos* [opportune time] on the part of the Gentile nations. This *opportune time* for the Gentile to occupy the land of promise is said to be *kairoi ethnon* [times of the Gentiles] (Sharp 2002:264). The Greek word *ethnos* is the term used by the Jews to describe non-Jewish people and it is often used in plural form. The usage delineates the people who are not Israel. Both the Old Testament (LXX) and New Testament translators use different nuances to translate the word *ethnos*. Words such as Gentile, people, nation etc. are often used (Brownrigg 2002:95). The usage in the Lukan text has a political undertone attached to its meaning.

The communal understanding of Jesus' statement in Luke 21:24 simply implies that the people of the Gentile nations are using the *opportune time* to occupy Jerusalem politically with high implications on religious, economic, and socio-cultural activities, and as such the opportune time is expected to elapse or expire. Wright (1992:267–268) observes that the idea of Israel towards other nations was that one day the God of Israel will destroy other nations and set up his kingdom that will be forever.

There was certainty on the part of the disciples to differentiate between *kairos* and *chronos*; when they asked Jesus in Acts 1:6 they refused to use the *kairos* for time, rather, they used *chronos*. There is not much difference as to the meaning of the terms *kairos* and *chronos* and their relationship within the text of the NT. Both words are sometimes used interchangeably. Sometimes the difference is easily detected based on the content and context of the text as argued by Chenderlin (1982:49–50). Using *chronos* in asking the question enabled the disciples, who were mainly Jewish, to attribute the rightful ownership of *time* for the occupation of Jerusalem to themselves. Stott (1991:40) believes that when Jesus informed them of the coming Spirit, they were all elated as they believed that the coming of the Spirit would mean the establishment of the kingdom. Therefore for the disciples to raise this question, was not out of order. The Lukan community believed the time to establish the kingdom has come and it is now as the outpouring of the Spirit was about to take place. Regarding this, Stott (1991:40) further comments:

When God establishes the kingdom of the Messiah, they said, he will pour out his Spirit; this generous effusion and universal enjoyment of the Spirit will be of the major signs and blessings of his rule, and indeed the Spirit of God will make the rule of God a living and present reality to his people.

However, Stott, in agreement with John Calvin, believes the question that was put to Jesus by his disciples was in error; as the use of the verb *restore* is the major verb of the sentence (Stott 1991:41). Calvin (1585) further posits that the usage of this verb implies that the disciples or the Lukan community were looking for a political kingdom. Fitzmyer (1998:201) observes the community desired to witness the ultimate

fulfilment of the promise of a restoration of Israel's kingdom. The language of Luke flourished with political expectations and called attention to the fact that the disciples of Jesus at this point were not looking for a spiritual kingdom but the physical one. They were expecting a system that would help in raising the supremacy of Israel against and above all other nations on earth and perhaps subject them to the rulership of the nation of Israel. A typical example of this assertion is found in Luke 22:28–30 where the disciples believe that they are going to rule over the entire humanity. At this juncture, the disciples thought that Jesus would be enthroned on the throne of David alongside the disciples. This statement of Jesus in Luke 22:28–30 elucidates one of the reasons that the disciples were not relenting in their expectation of the earthly kingdom. The text in Luke 22:28–30 reads:

You are the men who have stood by me faithfully in my trials; and now I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father conferred one on me: you will eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. (New Jerusalem Bible)

The attitudes of the Lukan community before the outpouring of the Spirit indicate their interpretation of the statement of Jesus affected the way they focused their attention. Stein (1992:249–251), commenting on the Lukan text in Luke 22:28–30, adduces that the use of language in this text is synonymous with making the covenant which Luke expresses in 22:20. Unfortunately, Stein seems not to have any interest in the latter interpretation of the message of this text by the Lukan community in Acts. Rather, he believes that what was in the mind of the early disciples was an eschatological kingdom. What is the meaning of the eschatological kingdom and when would such a kingdom be established defile Stein's attention.

With all the indication, it points to the fact that the disciples in the Lukan community misread and misunderstood the plan of Jesus as regards the outpouring of the Spirit. Surprisingly, the kingdom is not what they expected it to be. The Spirit here must make them witnesses of the Christ events in all the parts of the world.

In the course of waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit, one could still detect the apostles' belief in the political kingdom of the Messiah. The practice of the disciples depicts them as forming a 'miniature kingdom' within the empire. It was a type of microcosm whose identity was far from that of the empire. The exercise of power and authority within this microcosm community was a reflection or preview of the kingdom of Christ. In preparation for the establishment of this kingdom, the disciples had to make sure that everything was set for its beginning. The first such preparation was to fill the place of Judas using the ballot box and Matthias won the elected position (Ac 1:15–23). One wonders what was in the mind of Peter when he stood up and called for the election of a new member to fill the vacant space created by the death of Judas. From the communal interpretation of the Old Testament text in Psalm 69:25 (68:26 LXX), one can infer that

what was in the mind of Peter as he called for an election to fill the gap was that the kingdom of God will not be without the 12 pillars of the apostles. The purpose of the psalter was meant to remind YHWH of the desolation of Judah and the need for its rebuilding (68:36–37 LXX). The Lukan community was making all the preparations for the fulfilment of this prophecy. Sadly, scholars of Luke seem not to have an interest as to why Matthias was chosen but how he was chosen. This was done in anticipation of the 'restoration' of the kingdom of Israel as in Psalm 68:36–37 (LXX). There is no place within the text of the New Testament that Peter was instructed by the Spirit to do so, rather he did so with anticipation that such was one of the criteria for the fulfilment of the said promise. Thus, the Holy Spirit as a political motivator was a misconstrued concept within the early Lukan community in Acts before the coming of the Spirit himself.

Holy Spirit as a subversive agent in Luke-Acts

The efficacy of the Spirit and its purpose within the Luke-Acts created a different community that was contrary to what was earlier expected by the disciples. It was after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the disciples realised that the said kingdom must first begin in the hearts of humanity and not the throne of the empire. This concept was to permeate all the facets of human endeavours: economic, social, religious, and political. Luke informs us that immediately after the outpouring of the spirit, the disciples began to devote themselves to the study of the Scripture and breaking of bread, prayer, and fellowship (Ac 2:42). This fellowship created by the power of the Holy Spirit led to the creation of *communism of believers* whose interest was for *the community of common goods* within the community (Esler 1996:50). Karl Marx has always been acknowledged as the one who theorised the theory of communism but unfortunately, it was the early Jesus community in Luke-Acts that first practised communism in its true nature. The Jesus community based its communal ethos on the divine principle but that of Marxist deters itself from the principle of God and that was why it could not succeed. The notion of communism in this article does not speculate that all individuals' belongings were owned and controlled by the Ecclesia, rather there was commonness in sharing their needs for common goods of all believers (2:44–45; 4:32–35; 4:36–5:11; and 6:1–6; Wolton 2008:110). The purity of heart and the enthronement of Jesus in the heart of human beings became the motivating factor and the concern of the community. The rhetorical nuance changed from the restoration of the kingdom of Israel to the restoration of the kingdom of God in the heart of men and women. Restoration of the kingdom of Israel replaced by the kingdom of God in the heart of believers has socio-political and ethical implications. Repentance (*metanoia*) became the order of the day and the only passport through which one could gain entry into this newly established kingdom (Ac 2:37–41). The apostolic kerygma was full of the need for human beings to turn from their evil ways and follow God. This was how the Holy Spirit subversively

changed the hearts of people from evil to God and from the empire to the kingdom of God and his Christ. The apostolic emphasis on the coming kingdom of God became the prerogative of their day-to-day preaching. The only qualification for one to enter was a change of heart from evil to God. The nature of change that the Lukan community preached was a change that was holistically witnessed in the life of individuals and the community who confessed the name of Jesus. It is through the Spirit within the community that the disciples were able to differentiate themselves from other people and they were affecting the empire by no little means. Their attitudinal, character, which was exhibited by the Lukan community after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit earned them the title *Christians* because they had been with Jesus Christ and they belonged to him. Luke reports that it was in Antioch that followers of Jesus were first called *χριστιανους*, which 'means of Christ'. It means that the disciples' conduct was quite distinctive from that of the other people in the empire and that earned them this title (Ac 11:19).

It was the lifestyle of the community that influenced the whole empire. The political, economic, religious, and social life of the empire was distorted by the messages of the followers of Jesus. One of the areas in which the new community in Acts affected the lives of the people was in the area of caring for the poor. The poor were those that the empire could not cater for, but they found succour in the Christian community. This observation prompted Esler (1996:198) to conclude that caring for the poor was a Christian invention and not what was known in the Greco-Roman empire. The Lukan community is entrenched within their communal ethos of the need to care for the poor as one of the motivating effects of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. By caring for the poor during their time, the community was able to speak to the conscience of the empire using subversive rhetoric (Esler 1996:198–199).

The rich members of the community were the source of funds and meals for the poor. In Luke's eyes, wealth was likely to have been unjustly acquired (Lk 16.9), and if its possessors did not distribute at least some of it to the poor in this world they faced the prospect of eternal punishment in the next. This teaching was a radical challenge to the deeply held beliefs in his Hellenistic milieu, where the ruling elite not only treated the lower orders unjustly and with contempt, but congratulated themselves on doing so.

The same notion was earlier held by O'Toole (2015:12) that the Lukan community aimed at 'challenging a world that was dominated by materialism...'. Many people who came to Jesus could see the distinctiveness that existed within the community of those who believed in Jesus. Women were given respect as humans and the sick were cared for. Salvation was not relegated to an abstract domain but it was something that the people experienced; even demons were able to testify that the apostles were preaching the way of salvation (Ac 20:10–12; O'Toole 2015:12–13).

The transforming power of the Holy Spirit led the Lukan community to great accretion that enabled them to be mature in doing that which the Holy Spirit appointed them. This maturity provided grounds on which they were able to discern the voice of God from the voice of human beings (Ac 4:19). They were able to know that sometimes the voice of the people is not the voice of God. Green (2002:266) in his opinion believes that transformation into the likeness of Jesus was the sole aim and the goal of the Lukan community as they preached the good news about Jesus. With the power of the Spirit, they were able to turn their world upside down in a subversive manner so that they may transform it to God (Ac 17:6). The Spirit energised the believers so that they were able to transform the political, religious, economic, and social world of their time. The activities of these men and women who were filled with the power from on high were summarised by the words of the Jews in Thessalonica: 'The people who have been turning the whole world upside down have come here now' (Ac 17:6 [NJB]). Their communal life was of great challenge to the empire and functioned as the greatest engine of the growth of the church.

The Lukan community and African Pentecostalism: A hermeneutical reflection

The comparison of the Lukan community with that of the present-day church, especially in Africa, seems to have much in common in viewing it from its religious position. On the one hand, the Spirit that was given to the early Lukan community is very much present in the church today. On the other hand, early Pentecostalism aimed at the rejuvenation of the doctrinal endowment of the Holy Spirit as the only means through which the church can be heard and known in the present world (Kalu 2008:4–5). This belief had brought tremendous growth to Christianity and provided a vehicle through which 'African's quest for power and identity through religion' (Kalu 2008:3) was displayed. The Holy Spirit is adroitly redesigning the emblem of the church and its movement (Kalu 2008:8). Kalu in his attempt to differentiate Pentecostalism from the other Christian groups sombrely places Pentecostalism within a denominational mould while at the same time using Pentecostalism and Pentecostal interchangeably. It is based on this belief on the part of Kalu that he provides the major characteristics of the movement within its operational domain. The initial move on this belief was welcomed with indignation and scepticism from many quarters within Christianity. The move has a resemblance to that of the early movement in the Lukan community that the Holy Spirit was seen as the only author of human salvation. In this regard, Kalu (2008:19–22) acknowledges the fact that the newly revived Pentecostalism is embellished with different characters which include preaching, prayer, and standing on the word of God as the church's sole authority. It was reinventing of the message early held by the Reformation Fathers of *Sola Scriptura* that the church in Africa became a means of changing its community (Kalu 2007:7–8).

The Lukan community in the Acts was aiming at redirecting the 1st century religious group to the need for rebirth and trusting in Almighty God. The current Pentecostalism seems indefatigable in pointing to present-day Christianity's need of depending upon the Holy Spirit and the Scripture. As a result, Kalu (2007:13–15) believes that the new movement's emphasis was on the need for the church to uphold the tenet of the biblical teaching and total dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit. The need to implicitly deter from existing tradition became onerous and diatribe, as every new Christian who experienced the touch cried for a change. Breaking away from the old tradition became a norm as alleged by Burgess (2015:41), that 'Pentecostalism in Nigeria emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century as a renewal movement within mainline mission churches to break free of Western missionary control and cultural dominance'. The same notion is witnessed in the work of Frahm-Arp (2010:1–10) who in the context of South Africa believes that during the apartheid era, most influential people that fought against apartheid political hegemony in South Africa came from Pentecostal or Charismatic churches.

The witness of Pentecostalism is very factual and functions within any political landscape in Africa. Before the movement of Pentecostalism in the sixties and seventies, Christians regarded the political environment as a 'no-go area' but with the increase in the population among the Pentecostals, the political view of the church began to shift from non-participation to participation (Burgess 2015:42). With the understanding that public space polity is breeding corruption and socio-economic malady and the Pentecostals saw themselves as the agent of change which can be used to change the political environment or the public space for the better through the power of the Holy Spirit called for its involvement in polity (Burgess 2015:42). The observation of Kalu (2003:10) seems very crucial at this point in rejuvenating the place of Pentecostalism in politics and its 'radicalised' ideology of the traditional church. This implies that the evolution of Pentecostalism geared and encouraged all born-again Christians and those filled with the Holy Spirit to participate in politics. Initially, Politics was once thought to be the domain of unbelievers. However, with the coming of Pentecostalism in Africa and especially in Nigeria (Onongha 2018:377–378) and South Africa, coupled with the recent hermeneutical reading of the biblical texts, many Christians changed their view towards politics. The outcome of such an interpretation is that the spirit-filled believers in Christ should engage in the issue of politics in public space (Burgess 2015:43). Since then the political space of African polity began to saturate many Christians. There is resonated rhetoric of the Holy Spirit as the enabling power of involvement in the political decision of the African people. This rhetoric is a reflection of the early Lukan community in Luke-Acts. The initial expectation of the early community in Luke-Acts was that the Holy Spirit would be a means through which the disciples of Jesus would rule over the political,

economic, and religious space of the empire (Ac 1:6). The same notion is seen in the Christian involvement in the political space in Africa.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to examine the role of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts using a communal reading. It was found that communal reading of a text involves ways in which a given community sees a text and interprets it to suit their context. Through the use of communal reading of Luke-Acts, it was discovered that the early Jesus disciples in Luke-Acts misconceived and misconstrued the place of the Holy Spirit and its function with the new community in Luke-Acts. The presence of the Holy Spirit within the Lukan corpus has invited different nuances other than what the disciples initially believed. The Spirit empowered the disciples to understand that their primary duty was to establish the kingdom of God in the heart of people through their preaching and by so doing subversively changed the empire through their different actions. As a result, the disciples were able to feed the poor and care for the people that the empire neglected as a means of establishing the kingdom of God.

Over the years, the African churches especially within the Pentecostal and Charismatic circle had utilised and reinterpreted the early Christian text to claim its content as asserting the right of Christians to participate in political affairs in modern Africa. Interpretation of the Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit in Africa has boosted and provided an ambience for Christians to exercise their right as humans in the modern political space in Africa. However, can we say that the Christians' involvement in political, economic, and sociological space has created different scenarios better than what they met? Does the Holy Spirit function as the agent of change in the life of the believers in Africa as they are involved in different spheres of human endeavours? We have discovered that the disciples in Luke-Acts were not involved in politics in their time, yet they changed their political world through their lifestyle. Christians in Africa are expected to claim the promise of the Holy Spirit as a means of changing the heart of humanity to obey Christ and his word through their various actions to humanity. When the church engages the world politically, socially, and economically, it helps in fulfilling its missional and prophetic mandate to the world.

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