

Larry R. McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), paperback, xiv + 122 pp., ISBN: 9780981965123, US\$ 12.95.

This book is Pentecostal in content and presentation. It is powerful. It is revolutionary. It is worth keeping a copy of *Joel and the Spirit: The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic* in one's personal library. The perceptive work of Larry R. McQueen is a very handy exposition of the Spirit in Joel. The author considers selected portions of the New Testament with regards to their allusions to Joel's prophecy concerning the Spirit of God. Furthermore, he evaluates the Pentecostal understanding of the Spirit as prophesied by the prophet Joel. It is a clearly written, concise volume. Originally published by Sheffield Academic Press in 1995, McQueen's *Joel and the Spirit* was written for the Master of Theology thesis requirement at Columbia Theological Seminary. The publication of the thesis makes this significant work of McQueen available for a wide audience.

The first chapter serves as an introduction. Here, McQueen describes the issues in Pentecostal hermeneutics. He describes the current discussion of the role of the Pentecostal experience to the practice of biblical interpretation. He reviews the contributions of Cheryl Bridges Johns, Rick D. Moore, Roger Stronstad, Arden C. Autry, Timothy B. Cargal and Jackie D. Johns to Pentecostal hermeneutics (2-5). The author presents the context of his research within the tension of the modernist and the fundamentalist paradigms against that of the postmodern and the Pentecostal hermeneutics. It is important to understand his introduction first so the setting of his research can be appreciated by the reader. He also strongly argues for the literary unity and the post-exilic dating of Joel (6-11).

McQueen works his way through Joel as a book and at the same time shows consciousness of its prophetic genre in chapter two. The thesis that he is advancing in terms of this chapter called, "The themes of Joel and the Promise of the Spirit," is that the literary framework of the book is divided into three sections: "Lamentation" (1:1-2:17); "Salvation" (2:18, 32); and "Judgment" (3:1-21) (12-18). He points out that "lament," "salvation" and "judgment" are genres that Joel used and also expanded to accomplish the purposes of his oracles (18-22). Using these genres, the author argues that the themes of "The Day of Yahweh" and "Zion" are developed in Joel (23-31). In addition, he

expounds on the notion that the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit of God is Yahweh's response to the lament of his people (31-36).

In the next chapter, the author surveys the notion of the outpouring and reception of the Holy Spirit that is in accordance to the promise of the prophet Joel. This chapter deals with the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in the New Testament. McQueen demonstrates how the prophecy of the coming of the Spirit has been appropriated in Luke-Acts. In particular, the second chapter of Acts uses Joel 2:28-32 as the explanation of the Pentecost event (37-49). At the same time, the author also offers his analysis of how the Apostle Paul alludes to Joel's prophecy, which reflects the eschatological tension that is associated with the Holy Spirit (50-58). Moreover, he also notes that John, Hebrews and the Petrine epistles echo Joel's themes (58-64). In other words, the idea of the Spirit's coming as highlighted by Joel is a major New Testament theme.

Chapter four expounds on spiritual insights about the way Pentecostals adopts the book of Joel in their faith and practice. The continuity of highlighting "lament," "salvation" and "judgment" as interpreted by Pentecostals is well illustrated. McQueen uses a song that became a favorite among Pentecostals to validate the popular level of appropriating Joel's prophecy (71). The substantial amount of footnotes that he uses in this chapter, utilizing both the older and more recent accepted Pentecostal publications as well as the research of contemporary Pentecostal scholars, shows the reflective nature of the Pentecostal people who believe in the promised Holy Spirit according to the prophet (69-102). It is noteworthy that McQueen brings a reminder of the Pentecostal understanding of "praying through" (70-72) and "tarrying" (72-73) as well as "groaning" (73-75) in connection with lament in Joel.

The concluding chapter is like an epilogue. It is descriptively titled, "The Book of Joel: Confessions of a Pentecostal Reader." The author admits that the inquiry he has done on Joel is "an intentional reflection on Pentecostal hermeneutics (104)." McQueen "approached this study as a classical Pentecostal with the intention of allowing [his] Pentecostal tradition and experience to impact [his] methodology and conclusions" (104). Hence, this concluding chapter has completed a circle and questions what influence the author's "Pentecostal experiential presuppositions had on the *initial* reading of the book of Joel" (104). He justifies the validity of "sectarian hermeneutic" and "the text-reader dialectic" (104-106). The text of Joel makes him "re-

evaluate” (106) his union with God, and he has opened up himself to “prophetic hermeneutic of the Spirit” (108) in his study of the prophet.

It is known that Pentecostals have been ridiculed as chaotic when speaking in tongues during church services. They have been criticized for bad hermeneutical practice in interpreting Holy Spirit passages in the Bible. They have been told that their pneumatology is poorly articulated because it has been dictated by experience. They have been associated with extreme emotionalism rather than correct understanding of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Perhaps, these previous charges are true. However, Pentecostals have matured. Over one hundred years of existence has given them time to ponder their encounter with the Spirit of God, which they claim as fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. The work of McQueen is a good example of serious Pentecostal reflection about their experience of the Holy Spirit.

There is something valuable when reading an academic thesis such as *Joel and the Spirit* that brings “edification,” “exhortation,” and “comfort.” Borrowing the preceding loaded words from the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:3 in the King James Version prompts the reviewer to pause, contemplate and apply what has been learned in reading McQueen’s book. “The Cry of a Prophetic Hermeneutic” (the volume’s subtitle) is really about the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal encounter of the prophetic and is meant to be just what Paul declares: “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” Pentecostals have appropriated the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days as prophesied by Joel as a source of “edification, and exhortation, and comfort.”

This volume is not only written in an academic fashion, but it is also powerful in its testimonial features. It is a book that one can read again and again and get insightful ideas and food for thought every time it is read. McQueen brings many insightful and challenging ideas about the Pentecostal reading of Joel’s prophecy. His book is also thought provoking, making the reviewer reflect on what Pentecostal spirituality is all about. It is a balanced demonstration of what Pentecostal scholarship offers to complement the Pentecostal experience. This title will not only benefit Pentecostals but also non-Pentecostals. This new edition published by CPT Press is a welcome reissue of a compact book that offers much towards a better understanding of the Pentecostal experience and hermeneutics.

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