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The Role of Pentecostal Worship in Virtues Development

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INTRODUCTION

As the readers may already know, this author grew up in Pentecostal tradition, and I know that one of the primary characteristics of Pentecostalism is worship. I agree with what Robert Mapes Anderson said, "*The heart of Pentecostalism is the worship service.*" In the same sense, Daniel Albrecht strongly believes too that the Pentecostal service lies at the heart of the Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality. The fact that how important is worship in Pentecostal tradition draws my attention. It makes me to raise a question, "How significant is worship in the Pentecostal community?" or let me put it in more active question, "What is the role of Pentecostal worship in community?" Daniel Albrecht notes about the significance of Pentecostal worship that the Pentecostal rites both dramatize and vitalize the spirituality of a community.

R. Jerome Boone agrees, believing that "the Pentecostal revisioning of the Christian life has been transmitted primarily through two key components of the Pentecostal movement: its community and its worship."

On another hand, my attention is also drawn by a paper that was initially delivered by Paul W. Lewis in the twenty-second annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 1992. In that paper, he proposed *A Pneumatological Approach to Virtue Ethics*. He firmly believes that God is the origins of the virtues, and the virtues can be accessed if we are in relationship with God. It is the Holy Spirit that mediates the virtues from God to man. The virtues can be developed by God only through the Holy Spirit's work. The work of the Holy Spirit can be experienced in and through three avenues: community, Bible, and the self.

Espousing those two interests, worship and a pneumatological approach to virtue ethics, I come up with a question "How is the role of worship to development of virtues?"

In exploring and answering the question, mainly I was influenced by Lewis' pneumatological approach. In addition, my walk with God and the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ may contribute insight to the discussion. However, deeper theological and biblical discussion about worship will be beyond our discussion.

There are two kinds of worship: common worship and personal devotions. A common worship is that it is the worship offered by the gathered congregation, the Christian assembly. Personal devotions on the other hand, usually but not always occur apart from the physical presence of the rest of the body of Christ. Indeed, the relationship between common worship and personal devotions is important, because common worship and personal devotions depend on each other. However, the subject in this article would be common worship and development of virtues. The reason I concentrate only on common worship or public corporate worship is because I assume that three avenues of the role of the Holy Spirit, community, Bible, and the self are found in public corporate worship service.

It is not my intention to depict the process of worship of Pentecostals, because the discussion will not be based on every aspect of ritual in Pentecostal worship. Technically when the term "*Pentecostal worship*" is used, it refers to whole package of worship in typical Pentecostal church. In general, as Daniel Albrecht has identified, there are three primary rites in a process or forms within the service of Pentecostals/charismatic church: the rite of worship and praise, the rite of the pastoral message and the rite of altar/response.

METHODOLOGY

This article uses qualitative methods that emphasize the value-laden nature of research and seeks answers to various questions that emphasize how social experiences are created and given meaning, especially by reviewing literature with reference to appropriate sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Meaning of Pentecostal Worship

The discussion should not go any further without addressing the question of what we mean by Pentecostal worship. However, I notice that much of what is written about worship is directed toward liturgical contexts, or what has been termed the "mainline" denominations. Comparatively little has been written to address specifically pentecostal and charismatic traditions. Perhaps this is partially due to the tendency of Pentecostal writers to pay attention more on experience rather than theorizing experience.

Bob Sorge, for instance, has listed fourteen definitions of worship, but after that he commented:

"These definition are all very good and give us much insight into worship; yet they all seem to fall short somehow. I once heard my father my

father-in-law, Morris Smith, says, "Real worship defies definition; it can only be experienced."

How true this is, for worship was never intended by God to be the discussion of textbooks but rather the communion with God experienced by his loved ones. Certainly this tendency does not justify me not to present a definition of Pentecostal worship.

In the early seventies, the General Board of Education of the Church of God felt that there was a great need for a book on Pentecostal worship. Based on this felt need, seven persons were selected to write a chapter on the subject. Pentecostal Worship is the title of the book. Cecil Knight, the editor, defined the Pentecostal worship in quite long definition.

Worship is a 24-hour-a-day, 7-days-a-week experience with God... With Pentecostals a street, a kitchen, a garage, or a factory can be an altar, a temple, a synagogue, or a church. Prayer, praise, singing, and Bible-reading are to be normal activities in the home, on the job, at school, in the park, on vacation, at any hour of every day.

The born-again believer's environment should make worship a normal, natural thing. He/she is to live in an attitude of prayer, walk in the fullness of the Spirit, keep a song in his heart, meditate upon the Word, love his

brother and the lost, serve his fellowman, and share the good news with all his contacts.

Then regularly on Sunday and during the week he should join in fellowship with other believers to receive instruction in the Word, share what God is doing in his life, invite new prospects to the fellowship to win them to God, lift one another's burdens, contribute to worthy projects, do the will of God in his own life, help to win the lost world to Christ, and pray that God's kingdom will come.

Look carefully at the definition above. This definition gives an impression that there is no line, which separates between worship in church buildings and outside of church buildings. Worship should be a natural and normal thing. It is Pentecostal worship that is expressed and experienced a 24-hour-a-day, 7-days-a-week. It needs to be noted that the key point of Pentecostal worship is to experience God. The word 'experience' implies that the presence of God is perceived as real.

It might be concluded from the definition above that Pentecostal worship is following the New Testament's worship, as E. Kasemann notes, Sacred times and places are superseded by the eschatological public activity of those who at all times and in all places stand 'before the face of Christ'

and from this position before God make the everyday round of so-called secular life into the arena of the unlimited and unceasing glorification of the divine will. At this point the doctrine of worship and Christian 'ethic' converge.

However, while it is true that every sphere of life provides Pentecostals with the opportunity to glorify and serve God, it would be a mistake to think that worship in Pentecostals is simply synonymous with ethics. Ethics is considered as 'fruit' of worship.

Furthermore, while it may be the logic of Pentecostal teaching that sacred times and places are superseded, it is still valid to ask whether there is any special significance in the gathering of community together. What is the purpose of gathering believers in Pentecostal and how does it relate to the service believers are to offer to God in everyday life?

The Purpose of Pentecostal Worship

D. Petersen says, "The purpose and function of Christian gatherings is not simply 'worship' but edification of the congregation through the various ministries provided by the Lord himself. Even specifically God-directed activities such as prayer and praise must be for the building up of God's people." However, Alistair Brown suggests that many charismatics would

feel uncomfortable with the emphasis on the essential benefit to the congregation of meeting. They also worship God for the sake of God alone.

In other words, Alistair Brown points out that Pentecostal worship emphasizes the essential benefit to the congregation of meeting and worship for the sake of God alone. Certainly I agree with Brown, but I feel that these emphasis are inadequate to say what is going on in Pentecostal worship. I prefer to use Bob Sorge's explanation. He divides three general spheres in which our worship services minister.

There is the vertical aspect of worship, the level in which the worshiper communicates with the Lord; there is the horizontal aspect of worship, the level in which the worshiper communicates with others in the congregation; and there is the inward aspect of worship, where the worshiper is personally affected by the worship service.

This dynamic of worship presents three directions, which actively involve God, community, and individual. I contend that these three directions; vertical, horizontal, and inward, are wrapped by the single most important goal of Pentecostal service, that is a personal encounter with the Spirit of God. As Daniel Albrecht says, "For Pentecostals, the entire field and the drama that emerges within the ritual matrix is aimed toward an encounter."

Distinctiveness of Pentecostal Worship

Pentecostal aims, values and other characteristics are not in themselves peculiar. Regarding our discussion, Pentecostal worship cannot be utterly unique for its eclectic amalgamation of a variety of traditions. The editors of the Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movement have correctly noted, "each of the [Pentecostal] characteristics... has appeared before in the rich and colorful tapestry of Christian spirituality through the ages. But the combination is new." Cecil B. Knight states that the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit that makes Pentecostal worship different. The central focus of the service is not the sermon or the music, but the moving of the Holy Spirit.

Alistair Brown enlists the distinctiveness of Pentecostal/charismatic worship:

- Sense of the Presence of God.
- Release of the Spirit-filled Life
- Emotional Expression of Worship Allowed, Even Encouraged
- Worship that is Varied and Unpredictable
- Worship that Includes Direct Ministry to Each Other
- Emphasis on the 'Now' Experience of God
- Development of Virtues
- The Meaning of Virtue

To discuss about the development of virtues, it is useful to begin with a definition of virtue. There are three possibilities, which are often suggested that virtues are dispositions to act in certain ways, that they are skills, and that they are traits of character.

Gilbert C. Meilaender, in his book *The Theory and Practice of Virtue*, argues that virtues are not simply dispositions to act in certain ways, "Virtuous states do not correspond perfectly with a disposition to any set of act, in addition, the virtuous act may be achieved without the virtue." The key argument is strongly stressed by Meilander that in many cases of virtuous act may be achieved without the virtue. Further he argues that virtues are like skills which are learned and still more like traits of character which "not only suit us for life but shape our vision of life, helping to determine not only who we are but what world we see."

In certain extents, I may agree with Meilander. In the sense that in talking about virtue we cannot neglect the external influences, but what is needed to initiate virtues? Donald Mackenzie affirms that we need creation to initiate virtues. As Donald Mackenzie states:

"What is needed to initiate Christian morality is not ethical synthesis (Plato), or disciplines (Aristotle), or inhibitive control (Stoics), or culture

(Goethe), or development (Spencer), of 'the fulfillment of a capacity given in human nature itself' (Green), but creation. All the others are needed once we get a beginning; but a beginning is imperative, otherwise man is left within the circle of his own impotence."

God through the Holy Spirit, according to Mackenzie does creation process. He calls the Holy Spirit as 'God exerting moral creative power.' In this sense, virtue will be best viewed as disposition to virtuous acts.

We notice that in this understanding the Holy Spirit plays a primary role in an initiation of virtue. I think it will be suitable to refer *A Pneumatological Approach to Virtue Ethics* by Paul W. Lewis. I agree to use his definition of virtue, because it will fit our discussion. Therefore, when the term 'virtue' is used in this paper, [It means] to emphasize that the decisive factor of moral foundations is found in being rather than doing. Or in other words, the kind of person one is logically and existentially more important than what she does or why she does. A moral act is dependent upon the moral state of being that shows forth itself in acts and goals.

How do Virtues Develop?

According to Lewis the Holy Spirit guides us from the lack of virtue to the source of all virtues, that is God. By this relationship the Holy Spirit

produces the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) which are basically the virtues. It is important to note that this relationship is experienced only within being a 'child of God.' As he states, "Virtue can be a foundation only set by relationship with the virtue-giver--the infinite source of all virtues." Therefore, it is correct to say that the virtues that we are discussing about are part of the Christian life.

Since all virtues are originated from God, so development of virtues is not independent process. God is involved in developing virtues through the Holy Spirit. Lewis clarifies, "These virtues, as part of the Christian life, are developed with time, perseverance, and endurance as granted by God only through the Holy Spirit's work."

In developing virtues, the Holy Spirit works through three avenues: community, Bible, and the self. Through this means, the Holy Spirit brings us to ethical understanding.

As We Worship

Edward Norbeck, anthropologist, has noted two types of rituals in so-called primitive societies that have counterparts in the rites of Christendom. These are crisis rites that occur during important times in the community (birth, death, puberty, war, famine), and cyclic rites that are periodically repeated for the maintenance of group life.

Following Edward Norbeck, William H. Willimon notes that each Sunday's worship is a kind of cyclic rite. This is a time to gather and be reminded of who we are. Doubtlessly as we worship together periodically, our ethical views are shaped and developed. As William H. Willimon observes, Inattention to the community's particular myth and ritual is one of the first signals of community disintegration. Part of that disintegration is due to a breakdown of the ethical structures and standards members have a right to expect from their group because without these no one knows what is expected or how to act.

As it is mentioned previously that the Holy Spirit works through three means: community, the self, and Bible, to bring us to ethical understanding. These three avenues are dynamically involved in worship and the Holy Spirit is actively working through them to transform believers. Perhaps it will be helpful if the dynamic of development virtues in worship service is sketched as following:

The position of the Holy Spirit is in the very center and essential for Pentecostal worship. It is also true in terms of Christian life formation. The Holy Spirit has accesses to work into the community, Bible, and the self. Therefore, it is correct to say, "the objective dynamic of Christian Ethics is the Holy Spirit, or God exerting moral creative power."

Community

Susanne Johnson observes, "The church not only does formation but also is a spiritually formative community. By its nature, it is ecology of spiritual guidance and formation." The fact that as human beings, we are influenced and formed, explicitly and implicitly, by the communities in which we live makes Christian formation in the community of faith an imperative.

Regarding the work of the Holy Spirit through community, Lewis proposes that there are two frames of reference that help showing the Holy Spirit's role of the church; the diachronic nature of the church and the synchronic nature of the church. Furthermore, he insists that a pneumatological approach to virtue ethics does not limit itself to the church as the community context for virtue, but looks to the transcendent divine Trinitarian community.

In a certain sense, we can say that the key point of the diachronic nature is a transmission of values from the past and the key point of the synchronic nature is to communicate a concept of reality or worldview from the present community. Above all, the Divine community is the basis for all behavior and existence.

As the community gets together in worship, the formation process is dynamically working. Values from the past and a concept of reality from the present community are being communicated. How are these aspects being communicated? It is arguable to say that these all are communicated

through story or narrative. Susanne Johnson defines that a story is a metaphor for reality, as she says, "The structure of narrative is not the exact structure of reality nor identical with it, yet narrative is the primary way we mediate and express our sense of reality. Put another way, we use story as an extended metaphor for reality." In terms of accommodating the diachronic and synchronic nature of the church together in the thesis of narrative, it is preferable to state what James Gustafson identifies as narrative.

Narrative function to sustain the particular moral identity of religious (or secular) community by rehearsing its history and traditional meanings, as there are portrayed in Scripture and other sources. Narratives shape and sustain the ethos of the community. Through our participation in such a community, the narratives also function to give shape to our moral character, which in turn deeply affect the way we interpret or construe the world and events and thus affect what we determine to be appropriate action as members of the community. Narratives function to sustain and confirm the religious and moral identity of the Christian community, and evoke and sustain the faithfulness of its members to Jesus Christ.

In a worship setting, the story is manifested through dramatizing the story in liturgy, through singing, testifying, preaching and praying. By all components in worship the church gives practical spiritual guidance. I may

agree with what Susanne Johnson notes, we go to church to hear its Story and to be changed by hearing. By repeatedly dramatizing the plot, by introducing us to all the believers the many twists and turn, the Church draws us into, the surprises, struggle today suggest that human character is best understood as formed, as unfolded, and as revealed in narrative.

However, I contend that the narrative itself is not enough to change and mold the moral agent in producing certain practices. MacIntyre recognizes that relationships are necessary for practices. As he says, every practice requires a certain kind of relationship between those who participate in it. Now the virtues are those goods by reference to which, whether we like it or not, we define our relationships to those other people with whom we share the kind of purposes and standards which inform practices.

In the light of what MacIntyre has said, I strongly agree with L. Gregory Jones' argument that a *relationship or a friendship with the Triune God, the Divine community, provides a distinctive shaping to moral life*. In other words, a narrative that is unfolded by community will develop virtues and good practices when it is installed in the context of friendship with the Divine community. This is the distinctiveness of the Christian story.

As far as Pentecostal is concerned, the active involvement of the Divine community in developing characters will be interpreted as the involvement of the supernatural. Furthermore, this is the distinctiveness of Pentecostal transformation. Samuel Mathai rightly states,

The pentecostal/Charismatic transformation is difference because of the involvement of the supernatural...The Pentecostal devotee has to be baptized into the Holy Spirit which is a supernatural rite of passage to have the capacity to touch his spirit with the Spirit of God. The speaking in tongues, dreams and visions, word of knowledge, and interpretations during the worship reinforce and enhance the transformation of the spiritual man. The transformation is from the earthly to heavenly. Surrender, submission, obedience, meekness, resignation, and prostration are some of the qualities being transformed into the inner man during this liminal period. In essence, this is a time of self-abasement and a preparation to reintegrate to the dominant structure.

The Self

According to Lewis there are two independent aspects to the self; the moral development of person and the ability to decide upon the present information and knowledge to formulate an action. In talking about

worship both aspects are stimulated, but I would like to point the second aspect called the will.

The act of the will implies a decision, and this act of decision has ramifications upon the conscience. Jesus Christ is the center of the conscience, therefore whatever divorces the self from Jesus act contrary to the conscience.

Obviously the will may be influenced by any part of worship as we worship together. Nonetheless, in Pentecostal worship there is one segment of rites, which I believe, plays a significant role in influencing the will. That is an altar service.

The altar's moment gives a chance for the self to express personally an I-Thou relation to God. It is a moment when "the Spirit personally and forcefully communicates to the self and the self alters its ways." The altar is a meeting place which the congregation symbolically meets their God. The altar rail is a place of communion between the human and the Divine. It is like the table of communion where this dual-axis of meeting happen.

Daniel Albrecht rightly observes that coming to the altar normally means to come metaphorically to a ritual center for sacrifice. Most of the time this is the moment when the self makes a decision and a spiritual commitment. It is correct to say that the altar service is contemplation. Contemplation is a time to "actively cultivate docility before...God." It is a time to receive

what is beyond one's command. Moreover, often this is also a place when spiritual, psychological, and physical healing takes place.

Bible

Lewis views the Bible, alongside the community and the self, as another medium through which the Holy Spirit conveys virtue to the individual. As far as the moral agent is concerned, "the experience of God through the text takes three forms: the spoken word, preaching (or in some way the kerygma), the written word, the Bible, and the word experienced."

In the Pentecostal worship setting, these three forms can be found. The Pentecostal preaching appeal to the affective more than to the rational. They utilize narrative form most often. One distinct feature of pentecostal preaching is the preacher expects a dialogue with the congregation by affirming of what is being preached. The congregation freely voices an "Amen" or "Hallelujah." This affirmation represents the receptivity of the congregation to obey God's word.

Sometimes in the transition time, one will read certain verses from the Bible which is related with the following segment of worship such as the praise and worship service, and offering. The intention of reading the Bible is to comfort or to challenge, to edify or to exhort.

I am not sure what Lewis meant by the experience word, but the term 'mysticism' leads me to 'charismatic word'. Charismatic word(s) refers to as "gifts," "utterance," "word," "prophecies," "message in tongue," "word from the Lord." Aside from the room for error that may occur in these kind of words, nonetheless charismatic words are potentially edifying. In addition, this is a sign that the Holy Spirit comes upon a congregation in personal and tangible way. This is also perceived as enriching.

CONCLUDING REMARK

In conclusion, this author would like to say that Pentecostal worship plays a significant role in developing virtues. Primarily it is not because of the ritual itself, but because the Holy Spirit who mediates the virtues to mankind from God is given opportunity to control the worship.

It is apparent that in Pentecostal worship the Holy Spirit creatively and dynamically works through community, the self, and Bible to develop virtues. The moral agent is shaped and changed through unfolded narrative in the context of friendship with the Divine community.

Further, each individual is allowed, even encouraged to express and experience the intimacy of *I - Thou relationship*¹ through every segment of

¹ Editorial note: The *I-Thou* dialogical relationship was promoted notably by Martin Buber, a Germany philosopher. (cf. Buber, I and Thou)

worship, particularly the altar service. The worshiper is sacrificing him/her 'self' to be living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

The Holy Spirit is freely to speak the Word through preaching, Bible reading, and charismatic words. These all are operated to communicate God's will. People are comforted, challenged, guided, exhorted, and ultimately to be transformed in likeness to Jesus Christ.

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