A Pneumatological Approach to Virtue Ethics

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Pentecostalism in Asia, the west (western Europe and North America), and the rest of the world, has been typified as emotional, worship-oriented, and emphasizing the spiritual gifts. This tends to be true, and in most cases, it was a corrective to the more cognitive, liturgical ecclesiastical approach which did not demonstrate the *charismata*. Initially, the early Pentecostals used their theological, pastoral, and educational energies to refute antagonistic responses mainly from other Protestant groups who reacted negatively to the perceived emotionalism, and lack of proper theology of these Pentecostals. Unfortunately, many of the Pentecostals who came from a strong holiness tradition with an emphasis on high moral lives and ethical behavior were drawn into the debates over the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, and tongues. Thereby, essentially neglecting whole fields of theological and ethical inquiry from a Pentecostal perspective. Today, many within the Pentecostal circles do not know the importance of certain issues from a Pentecostal perspective, and frequently, just assume an Evangelical stance. Pentecostals are Evangelical in theology, but Pentecostals are distinct from Evangelicals. Pentecostal theology and ethics must be and is more than a pneumatological veneer on Evangelical theology. Although there has been some recent works in ethics by Pentecostals,[2] still few have addressed this in modern Pentecostalism. It is the goal of this essay to propose a broad framework by which a Pentecostal ethics can be seen, which is open to both western and Asian influences, and also incorporates a holistic approach which simultaneously emphasizes the Spirit-led self in a spiritual community led by the Spirit through the word of God. It is hoped that this essay will open avenues of dialogue between Asian, and western (and other cultural groups) Pentecostals in future ethical discussions.

Introduction

The task before Christian ethicists is very difficult for we are frequently tempted to relativize ethics to fit our own differing cultural and religious traditions. The ultimate source for Christian ethics must be God and the work and life of His son, Jesus Christ, being mediated presently to humanity by the Holy Spirit.[3] In the appropriation of ethical behavior and judgment, the Christian lives in the tension of discerning a proper ethical life from the Bible, from one's own personal community, and from one's own conscience. This tension reflects the Christian balance, that is, the struggle and discipleship involved in following Christ. There have been and are groups that

overemphasize one or more of these strands to the exclusion of the others.[4] It is important that the role of all three is equally emphasized and used for the foundations of a Christian ethic.

The purpose of this essay is not to provide a comprehensive system for understanding virtue ethics, but to suggest a basic framework and to propose some thoughts and ideas that might contribute to future dialogue. With this in mind, this essay will focus upon a discussion of the nature of virtue or character ethics, the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the virtues, and the three facets of mediation by the Holy Spirit in Christian ethics: the community, the self, and the Bible.

What is "Virtue Ethics"?

The Christian ethicist focuses upon three reference points: the universal message, the contemporary situation, and the moral agent. In the last two decades, there has been an "increasing interest among Christian ethicists in the significance of the moral agent and in the question as to how the kind of person one is bears upon the kind of decisions one makes."[5] Of course, the field of virtue ethics is not a late twentieth century phenomenon, but rather it has a strong historical tradition. Virtue as a moral quality has been known since the Greco-Roman period. In fact "all the classical ethical systems centered around virtue."[6] Virtue was related to health by the ancient Greeks, but virtue seemingly went into oblivion when the classical Greek philosophers devalued health as a virtue. Virtue ethics, as Alasdair MacIntyre espouses in his book *After Virtue*, was a major ethical theory from the Greeks to the Enlightenment, but the Enlightenment upset the "applecart," and virtue ethics became a secondary theory. MacIntyre might be a little bit too pessimistic, since the concept of the "conscience" and the virtues have maintained a strong hearing within the western church, but he is right in his belief that, generally, the role of the moral agent has been greatly neglected within the western context.[7] Recently, H. Richard Niebuhr, Alasdair MacIntyre, Stanley Hauerwas and others have contributed to a revivalistic interest in the moral agent and virtue as a foundation for ethics.[8]

Likewise, in the two major branches of Asian thought, Indian and Chinese, there have been some manifestations of a virtue-oriented ethics. However, the most obvious articulation of virtue-orientation in Asian thought is within the Chinese Confucian tradition. Confucius the founder, and Mencius, Confucius' most important early interpreter, expressed the importance of the proper dispositions and virtues of the person. The later Neo-Confucians also expressed the importance of the moral agent and the virtues. Generally, throughout the history of Chinese thought, the fate of the moral agent and the virtues in ethical thought was greatly dependent upon the waxing and waning of Confucianism.[9] This is not to say that all strands of Confucianism emphasized a virtue-oriented approach, since many have tended to follow a deontological form of filial piety with an emphasis on parental or state obedience, and others are utilitarian in that they are virtuous only because it relates to goals of corporate or familial needs and norms.[10] In any case, in the last fifty years or so, Chinese thought has followed two forms of materialism. The dialectic materialism of Marx/Lenin/Mao in mainland China, and the possession/ monetary form of materialism found in other dominant Chinese societies like Taiwan and

Singapore. In fact, several Asian countries have bemoaned the lack of virtues in modern Asian society and have sought to rectify this situation.[11] This awareness has brought a renewed interest in Confucian thought in the Chinese world, and the need to be virtuous. So, in Chinese thought as well as western thought, the virtues have been heavily neglected until fairly recently.

In both western and Chinese thought, duty-based ethics and the goal-based ethics had and have overridden virtue-based ethics. In the course of time, duty-based and utilitarian/goal-based theories have taken the central task of moral theory to be the establishing and justifying of fundamental moral principles or principles of human conduct which would guide both individual and communal choice. Instead of completely ignoring virtue, however, some duty-based deontologists and goal-based teleologists have argued respectively that virtues or virtuous acts are either obligatory or goal-oriented.

When the term "virtue" is used, I mean 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 is logically and existentially more important than what she does or why she does it. A moral act is dependent upon the moral state of being that shows forth itself in acts and goals, or as Paul Philibert states,

> [c]haracter denotes the readiness for good action that comes to determine the dispositions of the moral agent. Persons possess inclinations to behave one way rather than another, and the cumulative force of these inclinations expresses their character.[12]

For Aristotle, virtues are "dispositions" which both render that which possesses the virtue good and enable that which possesses the virtue to perform its function well. Thus, to use one of the classic illustrations, "sharpness" is the virtue of a carving knife, because a knife exists for cutting, and a "good knife" is one that cuts well. Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* develops a number of illustrations: the eye, a horse, etc. Since virtue is intrinsically related to choice, and since its presence (or absence) establishes how well (or poorly) one performs his or her "function," it has generally been believed that virtue can, at least partially, explain action. Scholars like Philippa Foot[13] believe that if we can understand what a thing is, and *ipso facto* what its function is, then we can understand how it should be judged--whether or not it is "good." Further, virtue is related to function and evaluated upon its performance of that function. The problem comes in with humanity. Are women and men "good" when they perform their appointed function well? What is the function of humanity? Even within Christian circles this is a difficult sphere of consideration. Different Christian traditions have answered this question in a variety of ways.[14]

The moral agent is influenced, internally and/or externally. Some authors such as Stanley Hauerwas, James McClendon, Jr., and, Gilbert Meilander espouse the idea that this influence is based upon a community of character, most notably the church,[15] while others do not focus upon a certain community, but still promote the importance of character and the resulting theological perspective, such as James Gustafson.[16] For a

Christian virtue ethics, there must be the divine impact, which acknowledges the Bible, the community of faith, and the self within the development of a person's character.

As to virtue ethics, there is a certain "integrity" to this ethic. If a definition of an ethical theory in general is the reasoned ordering of the dimensions of moral activity--the moral agent, the action, and the consequences of that action--then a focus on the moral agent eliminates distortion or manipulation of circumstances or rationalization of deeds. The task of the virtue ethicist is then to become the sort of person who has certain dispositions to respond to certain situations in characteristic ways which illustrate the essence of true humanity, which is "true" only when in relation to God. It is therefore not surprising that an ethic which focuses neither on moments of great anxiety and uncertainty as in situational ethics nor on duties, obligations, and dilemmas as in deontological or teleological ethics, but on "the continuities (and) the habits of behavior that make us who we are" should ascend to the forefront as a primary ethical theory.[17]

In this essay, when I speak of an ethic of virtue, I mean to speak of an ethic which locates being prior to doing, an ethic for which the virtues are dominant and have intrinsic value. Character is the summation of the individual virtues within a virtue ethic. Further, it is an ethic for which all discussion of moral principles, duties, and goals are derived from the virtues and are secondary, yet still important. So, virtue, deontological and teleological ethics can be seen as a triad with virtue as the final authoritative ethical form.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in Virtue Ethics

Within virtue ethics there is a debate concerning the origin of the virtues. The first question of the origin of the virtues concerns the source of the virtues. Initially, where do the virtues come from? If they are a natural response to some form of duty, then duty is primary and the virtue ethic enterprise has been undercut. If the virtues are an attitude or posture which is appropriated in order to facilitate some activity or achieve some desired result or affect a particular response, then, in any case, the virtue is not foremost, but the desired result. For the virtue to be primary it must be a "disposition" or a "tendency" to act in a particular fashion in a particular situation. If "being" precedes "doing," then the virtues must always be "starting points," they cannot be a means to an end. A pneumatological approach to virtue ethics finds the origins of the virtues in God.[18] If the virtues are based upon God himself and if we are in relationship with God, then we have access to the virtues. Being a "child of God," permits us to do "child of God" activities and have "child of God" goals. Further, it is the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth (John 14:26, 16:13), including the virtues and the resulting virtuous activity. John 16:8-10 states that it is the Spirit who convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, pointing away from sin to righteousness as the state of being righteous. That is, sin is the demonstrable separation of the foundation and source of virtues within a person; whereas righteousness is the infusion of the divine presence in a person. The Spirit convicts the world of judgment positively to the Christian for Christ is victorious and judges the "prince of this world;" and negatively to the non-Christian as followers of the "prince of this world" for they sit under judgment, thereby, a positive and negative reinforcement of the divinely inspired virtues. The Spirit guides us from the lack of virtue to the source of

all virtues, producing in us by this relationship the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22-23), the virtues.[19]

The second question of origin concerns the apprehension of the virtues. How are the virtues acquired? Most solutions offer circular explanations. To have virtue requires that one be virtuous, but to be virtuous, one must have virtues. The traditional solution to this dilemma is that virtues, like skills, habits, or dispositions, are observed in a role model, observed to be positive, cultivated little by little, until gradually, they are perfected. Virtue can be a foundation only set by relationship with the virtue-giver--the infinite source of all virtues. It is the Holy Spirit that mediates the virtues from God to humanity. As the Holy Spirit distributes the virtues to humanity--such as those called the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)--humankind can receive or reject the virtues. These virtues, as part of the Christian life, is developed with time, perseverance, and endurance as granted by God only through the Holy Spirit's work.

There is also a problem in relation to the coherence of the virtues: the compatibility of distinct virtues, their level or degree in a hierarchy of virtues, and the existence and role of a master virtue. All of these are intimately related and represent difficult obstacles which must be overcome before an ethic of virtue may be universalized. The practical question raised here is in a situation of conflict, which virtue decides? The story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is an excellent example. Bonhoeffer in the midst of the Second World War was left with the dilemma: either he was to work with his family and help organize the assassination of the tyrant Hitler or he was to remain true to his calling as a minister and a pacifist and not to be a participant in his family's conspiracy to kill Hitler. The former position showing the virtues of loyalty and dedication to overcoming oppression, while the latter position demonstrated the virtues of steadfastness and the sanctity of life.

This kind of tension is usually overcome through the employment of a hierarchy of virtues or a "master virtue." Often a virtue such as love is chosen to unite the virtues and determine the appropriate balance or degree of virtue for the given response in a particular situation.[20] How can the master virtue regulate the other virtues without falling away from disposition-oriented virtue ethic and into an implicitly teleologically-oriented virtue ethic? The secondary virtues are no longer first order dispositions; they are now second order means to achieve a given end.

A pneumatological approach finds the coherence of the virtues in God himself. If God is the unifying element of the virtues, then none of the virtues are secondary. As the Holy Spirit distributes differing gifts, but is the same Spirit, so also, the Holy Spirit distributes the different virtues to each self, and the self reflects the activity of this relationship whether positively or negatively. Furthermore, all of the virtues are infinitely part of God's essence, so only through the Holy Spirit is it possible to resolve the dilemmas. The virtues cannot be truly discerned apart from God. Several have noted how that goodness (or any other virtue) ontologically or substantively is related to God. As several virtues are attributed to the essence or nature of God (love, goodness, holiness, etc.), so, God is

the unifying element of the virtues. I think God is the source of virtue and the virtues, and likewise the virtues are virtues because they are related to God.

A note should also be made about virtues in regards to culture. The virtues mentioned above are universal, and divine. However, there are those who have focused on cultural virtues.[21] Whereas sin or vices can be universally, culturally or personally applicable, so also for the virtues. We must recognize that some idealized virtues are, in fact, cultural, and are not universal; yet, they may be Divinely inspired contextualizations of universal virtues.

Aspects of the mediation of virtue ethics for the Christian

As stated above, foremost in the realm of the mediation of the virtues is the role of the Holy Spirit. There are three avenues through which the Spirit's influence can be felt: the community (Matt 18:15-20, 1 Cor 3:1-17, etc.), Bible (2 Tim 3:16, 2 Pet 1:20-1, etc.), and the self (John 6:44, Rom 8:1-17, etc.). The Holy Spirit brings us into all truth (John 14:26, 16:13), he works through these three means to bring us to ethical understanding and moral development.

The Community

In spite of the agreement among prominent scholars on the importance of virtue ethics, many virtue ethicists like Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair MacIntyre differ in their emphasis concerning the primary community. Christian ethics at its foundational level must come to grips with the usage and importance of communities for ethical development. Although a person is a member of several communities, like the family and the academy, I will only discuss two which are directly related to our discussion.

A pneumatological approach to virtue ethics sees the transcendent divine trinitarian community as the primary community of every Christian. As Jürgen Moltmann states Christ's work incorporates all who receive Christ into the Trinity.[22] We as believers are declared to be the children of God (John 1:12); heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). We are now incorporated into the divine community, which is reflected within the social model of the trinity.[23] It is the Holy Spirit which brings the self into the trinitarian community by the work of Jesus Christ (John 16:13-5). This new community for the Christian is the basis for all behavior and existence. However, as Paul himself notes, it is difficult to live completely in accordance with the trinitarian community, when the non-trinitarian community still maintains a hold on a person's ethical patterns (Rom 6-7). The ethical behavior is supposed to be based upon our new family, the Trinity, but it wars against the old behavioral ways and standards.

A second type of community espoused by Hauerwas, John Howard Yoder, and others, is the church.[24] The Bible is full of references to the Christian community and its importance, as the titles "the bride of Christ" (Rev 21:9) and "the body of Christ" (1 Cor

12:27) demonstrate. There is little doubt that the Christian's view of virtue is based upon the context of the church. The Holy Spirit reveals himself to the Christian community as promised. A pneumatological approach emphasizes the presence and work of the Spirit in and through the church (1 Cor 3:9-17; Eph 2:18-22). There are two frames of reference that help show the Holy Spirit's role of the church. The first is the diachronic nature of the church. The Holy Spirit has worked through the ages of the church and has revealed himself throughout the span of the church. In every age, there has been a faithful remnant that has maintained a balance between the work of the Spirit, study of the scripture, and an open community of faith. Tradition plays an important role in the receptivity to the Holy Spirit's work. As Thomas C. Oden and Clark Pinnock have both noted, tradition was and is helpful in safeguarding the Christian in theological and hermeneutical endeavors, but it sometimes can be based upon human precedents or a situational cultural norm and not upon the apostolic "rule of faith," the reality of a godly remnant and the Holy Spirit's work.[25] It is within a community of faith balanced with the scripture and divinely-led consciences that contemporary ethics can be addressed. These traditions can focus the community's attention on the sacraments and upon their relevance for the modern world while providing a deep-felt continuity with the past. Further, as an aspect of tradition, the Spirit's work can be seen in the saints of the past. Their writings, and sermons affect ethical behavior today as much as in the past. As there are Old Testament prophets, so also are there great people of faith in the history of the church. Their work has greatly impacted the church universal in their insights, and their fervor, as well as in their mistakes. It is through the work of the Spirit that a member of the community hopes to discern the Spirit's work through tradition and the saints.

The second aspect of the nature of the church is its synchronic nature. The members of the church are part of a local body which fellowships and reflects the Spirit's work corporately. The local body is the means by which the Christian participates in the rituals of the sacraments of initiate, water baptism, and of continued growth, the Lord's supper. These rituals with others are formative in the Christian life in that they help transform someone into a member of a local body, and with the whole community of faith historically and universally.[26] Likewise, accountability and authority is localized so that all should be ethically responsible. The church has three foci which is necessary for the development of the spiritual life of and within a church. Inwardly, the community of faith is where the Christian is nurtured and discipled, but also is held accountable for her actions. Further, the minister who is an extension of that local body, admonishes, exhorts, encourages and guides the church into a deeper walk with God, which includes a greater virtuous life. The Christian is a part of the community, participating, growing individually and corporately to edify the whole "body of Christ." The church must also look upward in worship. Worship in the church fosters unity, humility and spirituality. Perspectival changes take place within the corporate body of the church as they come together in worship. The form and function of worship is integral to the spiritual and virtuous development of the church body, individually and corporately. The church must also look outward in mission or witness. One function of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, if not the function, is empowerment to witness. This focus and witness by necessity promotes a church "for others." Without this form of focus, the church truncates all access to the Spirit infused virtues which are prevalent within the Good Samaritan.

Furthermore, the individual and the church recognize that they are part of the church universal. The Church universal is the designation for all the redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ. The unity of the church must rest solely on the lordship of God, his son, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, that is the triune God. It is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that there can be unity to the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:1-9). As Oscar Cullman emphatically states, "Apart from the Holy Spirit, no ecumenism is possible!"[27] This is the constant possibility even with the current diversity in Christianity. The church universal will transcend denominational boundaries, yet it will also exclude some from every "group" that bares the name Christian. For to be a Christian is a matter of ontological reality, not a matter of cultural or social disposition. It can also include those who are not part of a living or local Christian community of faith. In any case, God provides the unity through the Holy Spirit, and not necessarily through a human organization. This helps the Christian realize that the Christian and his ethics are part of a much greater whole. As part of a larger reality, the Christian must refuse to be limited to his own cultural-historical situation.

The Self

A pneumatological approach to virtue ethics is not only concerned with the Spirit's presence in the community, it also focuses on the Spirit's work in the individual self. Although the community is important, the self as a moral agent is still an integral part of ethical behavior as was clearly noted by Ezekiel (chs. 18, 33), and others. The self learns partially through the community and the Bible, but there are some independent aspects to the self. These will be discussed as synchronic and diachronic elements both internal and external to the individual.[28] One aspect is the moral development of the person which is diachronically internal. Lawrence Kohlberg, Eric Erikson, Fritz Oser, and James Fowler have demonstrated that the person develops through sequential moral stages.[29] For these developmentalists, humans develop through stages and in each stage different attributes or abilities evolve. Donald Capps in his reflection on the thought of Erikson, has proposed that the eight stages of Erikson (e.g., trust vs. mistrust) can correlate to the pre-Gregory the Great eight deadly vices and their corresponding virtues. The self in each stage has the possibility to either revel in virtue or fall into vice.[30] In each stage, the virtue can be cultivated in the individual by communities, discipleship, and the Bible. Kohlberg's work emphasizes the moral development of the individual, yet it is divergent in many ways from a Christ centered ethics. For instance, as opposed to Kohlberg's proposal, the Christian life does not seek or promote the moral autonomy of the self, nor is true justice possible apart from God.[31] Whether the developmentalists findings are accepted or not, they show the self in development and the growth of an individual, internally. This type of developmental process is likewise reflected in Wesley's view of sanctification. Sanctification is the constant awareness of sin, the need for movement away from sin, and the process of movement toward God.[32] This process is begun and completed by the Holy Spirit.

A synchronic internal aspect of the self is the ability to decide upon the present information and knowledge to formulate an action. The concept of the being preceding doing, implies a decision.[33] This is a semi-autonomous act of the self, whose source is the

will. It is not completely autonomous because of the natural limitations of the person, but autonomous in that each person is a free moral agent. This act of decision has ramifications upon the conscience. The conscience acts as the alarm that alerts the self of actions and attitudes which are incongruous with a certain mode of being (e.g., Rom 9:1). Any movement away from that which allows for unity of the self is contradictory to the conscience and ultimately to the self. Since the center of the conscience is Jesus Christ, whatever separates the self from Jesus acts contrary to the conscience.[34] The conscience is the seat for the receptivity of the Spirit's work to make a person more whole and holy. Yet, the conscience can be seared (I Tim 4:2), weak (1 Cor 8:7, 12), corrupted (Titus 1:15), and guilty (Heb 10:22). The remedy is drawing near to God through the "blood of Jesus Christ" (Heb 9:14, 10:22), which is only possible through the Spirit (1 Cor 12:3).

Further, ethical behavior can be immediately impacted by an I-Thou personal relationship with God, where the Spirit personally and forcefully communicates to the self and the self alters its ways. This demonstrates the external synchronic feature of the self. In Pentecostal circles, this is often adhered to especially with such phrases as "the Lord told me" or "thus saith the Lord." When divinely authentic, this is a viable means of immediate communication with God, and it can, and often does, have immediate and eternal effects. The Holy Spirit can and does immediately impact a life which becomes instantaneously transformed.

An important practical application of these concepts occurs in the diachronically external method of discipleship. The focal area where the virtues are purposefully developed and nurtured into the individual by others is discipleship. The priority of discipleship is noted by the prominence that is placed upon the verb "making disciples" among the participles in the Great Commission of Matt 28:19-20. Discipleship is the foundation for the imitation of Christ (1 Cor 11:1), to live in relationship with God. Discipleship also imparts a moral vision and a new hope which will guide a Christian into Jesus inspired decision-making.[35]

Although *conformitas Christi* (conforming to Christ) is logically prior to *imitatio Christi* (imitating Christ), both Christ's work in us and our response are necessary and desirable for proper discipleship. Ultimately, the self is to reflect and is to be as Christ, and his moral life, communally situated, becomes an extension of the trinitarian community.[36] This ethical development of the self by the infusing of the virtues happens through the penetrative work of the Holy Spirit directly and indirectly instantaneously and through time.

The Bible

A pneumatological virtue ethics does not replace the Bible with the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, but rather views the Bible with the community and the self as formative in the Spirit's virtues-directed work within the individual. It seems to me that if God "reveals" himself in the person of Jesus Christ, then God must have provided a means to preserve this salvation for humanity to receive God into their lives. The Holy Spirit by theological necessity provided this by the canon through the church by means of human

language, both written and spoken to communicate this message. The need for revelation, which emphasizes uniqueness, precludes the possibility for acceptable religious pluralism. This salvific message is recorded in the Old Testament (the inception) and New Testament (the incarnation), centering all history upon the character of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, inasmuch as God is omniscient, I can only "know" truth in an I-Thou relationship with God. As God is all-knowing, I, as a new member of the trinitarian community, have access to this knowledge within the limitations of God's will, purpose, and relationship. It is in this setting that the gifts of word of wisdom and knowledge should be seen. Jesus as our example of what a human could and was supposed to be, "knew the minds of men" (John 2:24-5). Further, there are several occasions when Jesus foreknew events, like his own death (Matt 16:21, Mark 10:32-4, etc.), and he knew the thoughts of others (Luke 7:39-40, Matt 9:4 etc.). However, this experience for the Christian must never contradict scripture, since God's witness will never contradict itself.

God granted Jesus authority as Jesus exalted the Father (Phil 2). Thus, as Jesus is reflecting the authority and revelation of God, the Bible also reflects the authority as it reflects Christ. These writings which makeup the Bible were declared to be authoritative by the early church, and they are still seen as authoritative. It is presently declared authoritative to the individual: socially and historically--within a church, propositionally and doctrinally--within the truths expressed in the Bible, and existentially--within my own experience of God through the text.

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--mysticism. These all wrestle with each other and combine to awaken the Christian to God, while jointly preserving him from misleadings.

The role of biblical hermeneutics is to take these first century A.D. and earlier documents and interpret them in the light of today. If the message of the Bible in the given form is now culturally inadequate, and inadequate to me, does it not imply a neglect of God to have an adequate revelation, or vehicle for the continuance of this revelation? If there is something that both cultural anthropology and history should teach us, it is that people despite tremendous cultural differences are not fundamentally different from each other at the most basic level. People always have the same existential questions. They are all in a fallen state, they eat, drink, sleep, hope, dream, love, etc. So, there must be some correlation between the first century and twentieth century humanity (e.g., sin and God). However, it is important to realize that as much as hermeneutics and biblical interpretation are essentially cognitive, the Holy Spirit also works in the reader existentially, emotively, and, at times, intuitively through the text.

One misguided direction that many have taken to the Bible is that it is a law book. The Bible and its texts were never intended to set a line of demarcation for holiness. Rather the Bible was given to show the direction for which holiness should be employed in respect to the people. What was holy or Godly was dependent upon where the people were at the present time on a holy-unholy continuum. Thus, showing the need for

progressive revelation. For instance, as the Decalogue was adhered to by the first century Jews, then Jesus had to set up the new "order of holiness" in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5). Therefore, the Bible provides the guide toward God, but not the guidelines alone. It is only through the Spirit-led endeavor that the Bible "awakens" and shows its ethical foundations to the Christian.

How does the Spirit work with the Community, the Self and the Bible?

The Bible provides parameters and points to holy living, while guiding the way to God. As the community gives substance and practicality to ethics, the self in an I-Thou relationship with God, and through the parameters of the Bible, fleshes out its ethical behavior. In spite of the three mediating components, if it were not for the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, the three would splinter: The Bible would became a book like any other, the community of believers would lapse into relativism, and the self would become uncertain and isolated. With the Spirit, humanity can be and act ethically with certainty, assurance and even joy, meanwhile tempered in the knowledge and grace that we are still learning and growing.

The ultimate source of virtue ethics is God. The relationship of self to this source is threefold. This is, in James McClendon, the three strand sense, which states that all three are necessary to make a coherent whole.[37] First, the self has an I-Thou relationship with God through the indwelling Spirit. Second, the self is in relationship to a Spirit-filled community, where individuals reflect the I-Thou relationship. Third, the self develops virtue only in the context of relationships, namely the community, God, and the past self. All, however, are authenticated by the self's reflection on the Spirit-inspired Bible. The self is informed by "virtue" synchronically by the immediate work of the Holy Spirit and diachronically by the Spirit's developmental work through life.

Outside of a relationship with God, the self follows the anthropomorphic line of moral development, such as proposed by Kohlberg. However, upon conversion (i.e. an I-Thou relationship with God) a new orientation for moral development occurs, the theocentric. Although this person is still in sin, he has established the new I-Thou relationship. In so doing the new moral development stages conflict with the old moral development stages and causes realignment toward Capp's virtues. Sin tries to bring vices into the forefront, but a continued I-Thou relationship with God via the Holy Spirit, sustained with the Bible and the Christian community, wars against it.

The self had been made incomplete from the fall. All virtues are natural in humanity, since the *imago dei* is humanity's (finite) capacity to relate to God (the infinite). A person's capacity toward the virtues is natural, but because of the broken relationship with God these virtues are now truncated. Therefore, fallen humanity has access to the virtues by nature of his inborn capacity, but, not to the proper extent without being in relationship in the trinitarian community. It is only in the Christian fullness of faith that the virtues can become complete.

The unifying point for the virtues is God mediated by the Holy Spirit. All eternal virtues flow out of him. God is where all infinite virtues meet. Different virtues are merely extensions of the unifying character of God. These virtues benefit the self, the community, and God, if in the proper context. The three are indivisible in terms of benefit, as the Spirit uses all three to train up and develop the children of God.

Virtuous action flows from the virtue, as the self is diachronically and synchronically informed. Actions are dependent upon a relational/ substantive virtue base. It is within the framework of discipleship that virtue is cultivated. Discipleship is developmental by nature and reflects the perceived nature of reality, made real in the I-Thou relationships.

Conclusion

It is important that Pentecostals articulate an adequate ethic. One purpose of this essay is to promote the necessity for future dialogue within Pentecostalism, and Christianity as a whole, on the role of the Spirit in the ongoing ethical life of a believer. It is important that Pentecostals come to a deeper understanding of Christian ethical life through the dialogue. Further, Pentecostal ethics can not be divorced from the work of the Spirit through the baptism of the Spirit or *charismata* within a person's life. Thus, a ramification is the need for a more fully thought-out expression of the fruit of the Spirit (i.e. virtues) in relation to the gifts of the Spirit and the baptism of the Spirit. In other words, Pentecostals need to ask the question: what is the relationship between the empowerment for witness often accompanied by the charismata and the ethical life of the believer? I am convinced that there is a relationship, but what becomes apparent from 1 Corinthians (especially 12-14) and other texts of the New Testament is that the "demonstration" gifts (e.g., tongues, interpretation) were operating regardless of the ethics practiced in the lives of the believers. Then, what is the nature of this relationship and how does it influence the ongoing life of the believer?

One aspect of a Pentecostal ethic is the awareness of the immediacy of the Trinity's role within the ethical behavior of the believer. Although orthodoxy is aware of the three persons of the Trinity's joint role within a person, in theological discourse it is the Holy Spirit who mediates the virtues from God to humankind. This mediatory work of the Spirit works through three avenues: the Bible, the community and the self. None of these three are final authorities within themselves, and each by the Spirit's authentication certifies the others to the believer. The interrelationship of these three provides the checks and balances needed within the life of a Christian. In fact, these three are inseparable, and necessary to a believer's ethical walk, otherwise a believer who overemphasizes one avenue above the others will fall into solipsism, collectivism, or biblicism, each of which will ultimately be detrimental to Christian faith and practice. It is through the Spirit's work immediately in the self, through the community and by the Bible that the believer is led into a greater ethical life. Further, it is important to keep in mind the diachronic and the synchronic aspects of the self and the community, and the parameters of the biblical text. It is not enough to be aware of the three. A person must also be aware of the historical, present and divine, and thus future, aspects of all three avenues. Christians base their ethical decisions upon the foundations of the past, looking with a divine

expectation for the future in order to better abide in the present. However, in spite of one's access to the virtues, a person fails and falls into vice, so that final aspect that echoes from a Christian virtue ethic is that "God forgives."

Footnotes

1. This essay is a revision of a paper of the same title presented at the November 1992 Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies held in Springfield, Missouri, USA on the campus of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary.
2. E.g., Murray Dempster, "The Church's Moral Witness," *Paraclete* 23/1 (1989), pp. 1-7; and Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward a Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992).
3. The "how" of the Holy Spirit's work in the person has been a greatly neglected area of study, James Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989), pp. 16-21.
4. A similar problem was noted when groups overemphasize a certain aspect of theological authority without proper balance, (i.e., Roman Catholic toward authoritarianism, Eastern Orthodox toward traditionalism, and Protestantism toward biblicism). Hans Küng, *Theology for the Third Millennium*, trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Anchor, 1988), pp. 47-63.
5. Edward Leroy Long, Jr., *A Survey of Recent Christian Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 101.
6. James Drane, *Becoming a Good Doctor* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1988), p. 162.
7. Alsdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).
8. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); MacIntyre, *After Virtue* and other works; Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) and other works; and many others including Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Gilbert Meilaender, *The Theory and Practice of Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984) and Michael Slote, *From Morality to Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
9. James Feibleman, *Understanding Oriental Philosophy* (New York: Mentor Book, 1976), pp. 79-174, especially pp. 172-74.
10. H. G. Creel suggests that Confucian thought is fundamentally utilitarian, H. G. Creel, *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung* (New York: Mentor Book, 1953), pp. 39-44, 75-6.
11. There is a great amount of literature on modern communist thought in China, and modern Chinese materialism. An interesting perspective on modern Chinese

thought in Asia from a business/economic perspective is found in John Naisbitt, *Megatrends Asia* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 58-72.

12. Paul Philibert, "The Motors of Morality: Religion and Relation," in *Moral Development Foundations,* ed. Donald Joy (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), p. 106.
13. Philippa Foot, "Goodness and Choice," in *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays on Moral Philosophy*, pp. 132-47; see also Sarah Conly, "Flourishing and the Ethics of Virtue," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XIII Ethical Theory: Character and Virtue*, eds. P. French, T. Uehling, H. Wettstein (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p. 86; and Edmund Pincoffs, *Quandaries and Virtues* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1986), pp. 6-7, 97-99.
14. Aladair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).
15. Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*; James McClendon, Jr., *Ethics: Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986); and Meilander, *The Theory and Practice of Virtue*.
16. James Gustafson, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, vols. 1 and 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 1984).
17. Gilbert Meilander, "Virtue in Contemporary Religious Thought," in *Virtue -- Private and Public*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 7-8.
18. There has been some discussion as to whether the virtues are essentially or volitionally a part of God's nature. In either case, God still is the source of virtue.
19. Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit are virtues, but this list is not necessarily a complete one.
20. E.g. Joseph Fletcher, *Situational Ethics* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966) and Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics*, paperback ed. (New York: Seabury, 1979).
21. Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
22. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 69-96.
23. A good survey on the recent work on the social model of the Trinity is John O'Donnell, "The Trinity as Divine Community," *Gregorianum* 69 (1988), pp. 5-34.
24. See note 11; also see John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 63-72.
25. Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity--What?* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990), and Clark Pinnock, "Tradition can Keep Theologians on Track," *Christianity Today* 27 (Oct. 22, 1982), pp. 24-7.
26. The pioneer work on the transformational aspects of ritual is Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); see also Daniel Albrecht, "Pentecostal Spirituality: Looking through the Lens of Ritual," *Pneuma* 14 (1992), pp. 107-25; Eliot Deutsch, "Community as Ritual Participation," in *On Community*, ed. Leroy Rouner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), pp. 15-26; and Tom Driver, *The Magic of Ritual* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).
27. Oscar Cullman, *Unity through Diversity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), p. 16.

28. On the importance and the neglect of the internal and external division of the Holy Spirit's activity in the person see William Alston, "The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit," in *Divine Nature and Human Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 239-52.
29. Some of the major works of these developmentalists are: Eric Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959); idem., *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982); James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and The Quest for Meaning* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981); Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); idem., *The Psychology of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984); Fritz Oser, "Religious Dilemmas: The Development of Religious Judgment," in *Moral Dilemmas*, ed. Carol Gibb Harding (Chicago: Precedent, 1985), pp. 175-90; Note that Reuven Feuerstein agrees with the process of development, but he does not think that there are separable stages rather there is a more organic progression, Howard Sharron, *Changing Children's Minds: Feuerstein's Revolution in the Teaching of Intelligence* (London: Souvenir, 1987).
30. Donald Capp, *Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), and *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).
31. Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character: A Christian Educator's Alternative to Kohlberg* (New York: Paulist, 1981).
32. Donald Joy, "Toward Christian Holiness: John Wesley's Faith Pilgrim," in *Moral Development Foundations*, ed. Donald Joy (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), pp. 207-32; This is not to say that Wesley would have suggested that sanctification was a natural process from birth, rather his progressive view of sanctification is a similar process to the moral developmentalists.
33. Soren Kierkegaard and the existentialist movement emphasizes (and many say overemphasizes) the role of decision in the self.
34. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: MacMillan, 1955), pp. 242-45.
35. Joe Trull, "The Right Thing to Do: How Do You Decide?" *Theological Educator* 45 (1992), pp. 74-6.
36. L. Gregory Jones, *Transformed Judgement: Toward a Trinitarian Account of the Moral Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), pp. 121-58.
37. James McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986), pp. 62-7; although he does not necessarily suggest these three avenues.