

GOD'S SPIRIT AND THE SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP - THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS

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"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeking such as these to worship him. God is a spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24)

Rev. Chairman, The Moderator Rt. Rev. Ledo, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. When I was invited to give this keynote address the greatest dilemma I faced was how a Historian of Religion can give a keynote address at a theological consultation. However, after further reflection I realised that it could be a fruitful intervention and interaction. For theologians are often too busy thinking about God and how to define faith in Him, propagate it and defend it that they are likely to ignore the dynamics of religious life surrounding them. They may also overlook popular theology that informs the lives of ordinary people. Since History of Religions goes beyond the normative in Christianity or any other religion to the developing peculiarities in religious traditions, I consider my task this morning to delineate some of these developments within the

context of our theme: *God's Spirit and Sunday Worship, The Challenge of Charismatic Movements.*

These developments are indeed a challenge to the Theologian as they formulate faith, belief and practice for a new generation and in different cultures. One of the greatest challenges to the church today, especially the Roman Catholic Church and Churches of the Reformed tradition is the wave of Charismatic renewal. It is expressed through the development of new Churches, para-Church fellowships and organizations and indeed 'Charismatic Reform Movements' within Mainline churches many of which pose the sort of problems Reform Movements pose in Ghanaian politics.

I believe the word 'challenge', which is what I (again as a historian of religion) would consider the quest of the Theme for this consultation, is apt. For often developments that seem to deviate from the norm are seen as a threat or dismissed as irrelevant. A threat calls for measures of defense and attack. Such response is however a recipe for confrontation. The attitude of irrelevance and dismissal on the other hand leads to complacency and can become the ingredient of nominalism. But a challenge (often wrongly confused with threat) means self-examination and appraisal. It is self-critique in the light of the 'other' phenomenon. It requires laying aside the prejudices of polemics and apologetics in order to access and assess the space of the phenomenon, to understand it and formulate response to it that builds and strengthens one's own tradition.

Thus by 'challenge' we mean that there must be self-examination to see the strengths and weaknesses revealed by charismatic renewal Movements. Steps can then be taken to remedy situations of weakness. Indeed the sort of 'attractions' that Charismatic Churches wield for the large number of people who leave the mainline churches to join them

provides a checklist of challenges to the mainline churches. The polemics of these movements also indicate what they think are their strength in contrast to the mainline churches. Their attempts to 'legitimize' by adopting some mainline beliefs and practices reveal the strength of mainline churches. The word 'challenge' therefore must invoke a positive attitude that looks out for new opportunities that would enhance Sunday worship in the mainline churches.

Around this very word 'challenge' is built the more theological words "God's Spirit", Sunday Worship and Charismatic Movements.

GOD'S SPIRIT

God's spirit I believe refers to the Holy Spirit, which leads us to acknowledge the Grace of God in Christ. It is a spirit of truth. It is free, spontaneous and powerful and marks the dynamic presence of God. Probably within the context of our theme it is best described by the words of John Macquarrie. He (1977, 333) states that "The Holy Spirit then is God's coming o man in an inward way to enlighten and strengthen him; it is the awakening in man of the realization of his Kinship with Being, an awakening brought by Being itself that is already immanent in man. When we say that the work of the Spirit is to 'enlighten and strengthen,' we have in mind his typical activities of revelation and Grace." The awakening to revelation and grace is what leads to worship.

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Most authors trace the meaning of the word 'worship' to the notion of 'worthiness', which invokes a positive response of expressive reverence and adoration. In the Christian context, worship is the response of the redeemed sinner to the salvation wrought by the Grace of God in Christ. This response in Christian theology is only possible by the work of the Holy

Spirit who enables human beings to believe in and trust Christ. It is therefore an act of gratitude by the redeemed invoked by the realisation of the very act of Grace.

The nature and goal of Christian worship therefore calls for true worship shaped not by human desires but by God's self-disclosure. Central to worship is the sacrifice of praise to God and if worship should meet the needs of people then that need should be adequate expression of praise and adoration. Since it is an encounter with God's salvific act, worship must be edifying in that it must lead to an increase in love, trust and loyalty to God and love for one's neighbour. It must strengthen, inspire, challenge and teach the Christian.

Three important elements of Christian worship are therefore firstly its structure that must reflect the Word and Sacrament, which are the very acts of Grace that invoke worship. Secondly its theology must reflect praise and thanksgiving and thirdly its ethics must be concerned with Christian conduct in the world.

Worship therefore is essentially a dialogue in which God speaks to his people and they respond in adoration and praise, confession of sin and re-affirmation of faith and giving towards His work. Worship must involve intense communication and communion between God and his people

All these concerns are essential to the shape of liturgy in worship so as to make it a true offering of thanksgiving to God. God must be worshipped in a way that God and not any human being teach. Right worship must therefore be faithful to the Bible. Which provides guidelines for right public, corporate worship. But it must also respond to the spirit of God which moves the worshipper.

Some prototypes for Liturgy are found in the Bible. One of the key Biblical paradigms for liturgy is Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship (koinonia), to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Though this verse does not necessarily dictate the order of every service it is judged appropriate in its components for public corporate worship service and therefore suitable for Sunday, which is the time when the people of Christ gather to worship God.

The stress of the theme on Sunday worship I hope does not betray the concern that some charismatic practices can be restricted to other gatherings of the people of Christ. That is some people accept parts of the phenomenon. Their concern however is whether all Charismatic practices can be part of the most formal congregational gathering of the church, the Sunday Worship service. This of course signals an attempt to contain the phenomenon or even marginalise it from the mainstream of church activity. The problem however is that Charismatics themselves think that genuine worship of God must be applicable on all occasions and the most formal occasion, Sunday must rather be one of heightened expression of worship.

Moreover, each of the items listed in Acts and I Corinthian 14 suggest an order. The individual items in this order are variously described at other places in the Bible as proper acts of worship. These detailed Biblical descriptions of acts of worship inspire Charismatics to respond to God in like manner. But then who are the Charismatics?

CHARISMATIC MOVEMENTS

A theological definition of charismatic identifies them as people or corporate groups who emphasize a personal experience of conversion crowned by the baptism of the Holy

Spirit. They therefore believe in a resultant manifestation of Charismatic gifts or fruits of the Holy Spirit. (I Cor. 12-14) As Asamoah-Gyedu (1994, 47) notes "Their name derives from the fact that they hold their activities under the dynamic influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Their name derives from the fact that there is an emphasis upon direct revelation and individual experience of the Holy Spirit which for every believer must be manifest in the 'speaking in tongues' and the visible and practical exercise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit like healing, teaching, seeing visions, prophecy, exorcism, interpretation of tongues, etc.,".

In Africa, the Charismatic Movement is expressed in three types of Church denominations namely the African Independent Churches, Classical Pentecostalism and what is more contemporary and known in Ghana as the Charismatic Ministries. (Dovlo, 1992). There are also fellowships. These types of the Charismatic movement however vary considerably in their interpretation of charism and in their praxis. In this paper the samples of conduct of Sunday Worship chosen belongs more to the third group, the Charismatic Ministries. However some items of liturgy in Charismatic Ministries find expression in the earlier two groups.

In the rest of the presentation I will review Sunday Worship as observed in the Charismatic Movement and how this reflect their understanding of the Spirit of God. I will then reflect on how these challenge mainline churches. My knowledge is drawn mainly from our own local situation in Ghana. But the indicators are that this Charismatic Renewal is a worldwide phenomenon that has much in common since its sense of ecumenism defies geographical barriers.

SUNDAY WORSHIP AMONG CHARISMATICS:

Charismatic worship is based on the prototype found in Acts 2:42 and Paul's prescription to the Corinthians that "...When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation a tongue or and interpretation. All these must be done for the strengthening of the Church." (I Cor 14:26)

Charismatics in worship invoke the Holy Spirit and stress a freer and more emotional worship and the experience of healing during services. What is distinctive about their worship is its spontaneous and vibrant liturgy. These result in wider and more vigorous participation in worship. Often Charismatics are said to have no liturgy. There must however be a distinction between formal books of liturgy and liturgy as an order or pattern, which is performed. Though unwritten and oral there are clear patterns in Charismatic worship. The main thing however is that their order of service is simple and flexible enough to encourage spontaneity and change but at the same time not necessarily nor always disorderly.

Sunday Worship among Charismatics incorporates various components including the following:

- a. Bible Study
- b. Praise and Worship
- c. Corporate prayer
- d. Preaching (Ministry of the Word)
- e. Speaking in tongues and Prophecy
- f. Witnessing
- g. Altar Calls
- h. Healing and Deliverance
- i. Anointing

j. Thanksgiving through offering etc.

Though all these elements may be incorporated into Sunday worship each of them can form the focus of a particular Sunday worship so that it may be designated as a Sunday devoted to a Healing Service, Anointing Service or a Service of Praise or a Prayer Festival etc.

Each of the above items can constitute a thesis in its own right. But for reasons of time we will draw of only four of the above items for illustration, namely 'Praise and Worship', Corporate Prayer, Preaching, Tongues prophecy and Revelation, Healing and Deliverance.

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

One of the innovative practices of Charismatic renewal especially in contemporary times is to stress that worship is founded on the praise and adoration of God and rather than see the entire worship service as such, a large part of the liturgy should reflect this. Thus through song backed by both Local and foreign instruments, Praise is offered to God extensively. Church members freely sing the local choruses or missionary hymns to new melody and dance. They can also make a din justified with Psalm 100.1 "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord."

The joyful noise is full of songs of Praise. This according to Agordoh (1998,99) has led to a situation where the Music in Sunday Morning service which is about 20.4% of the total time in mainline churches is around 75% in the New Churches. As he further notes (ibid., 170) "Owing to the shortness of the lyrics and the simplicity of the language which worshippers understand, worshippers are bound to participate more meaningfully than in the Older Mission Churches". He had

earlier noted that "While (in the older Mission Churches) song-texts are inherited from the parent churches and are mostly biblical Song texts in the new churches are either biblical or the result of the people's religious experience."(ibid., 116)

Dancing is an integral part of the worship service in Charismatic Churches and finds scriptural support for Charismatics in Ps. 149:3 "Let them praise his name with dancing." David dancing before the Ark of God is also a favourite inspiration though the dance did not take place in the formal setting of the Temple. Dance is a discursive language and a way of communicating one's feelings. As Davies (1978, 25) puts it "Dance is, as it were, sacramental in that it consists of visible physical movements which are at the same time the outward expressions of what Isadora Duncan called 'the sentiments and thoughts of the soul.'"

Apart from praise, there is also time for "worship". During the time of worship, songs of worship are sung. They are more solemn than songs of praise as there are no clapping of hands, drumming or dancing. A "Prayer of worship" follows this. Prayers are said in worship, praise and thanksgiving to the true God. Both hymns from the Church's hymnal and local choruses are used for this purpose. Worship has space for a period of silence. During this period the worshippers are asked to "keep silent before the Lord" for a few moment.

In a recent research for an M.Phil Degree, Rev. Gbekor (1998, 154) notes that Many People claim that their Souls are uplifted into the presence of God during the time of praise and "worship." It is believed God speaks to his people individually and as a group during this time hence the silence. In some cases people claim they receive prophecy or revelation at this time. Often such prophecy comes through 'tongues'.

TONGUES PROPHECY AND REVELATION

Prophecy normally comes when after a period of worship the congregation is called to be silent before the Lord. Often the prophecy comes in 'tongues', as do prayers at times. In the former case the prophecy must be interpreted. Speaking in tongues per se has its own controversies, which are compounded by its use during Sunday worship. The gift of speaking in tongues is a form of prayer and self-edification of the user and needs no interpretation. Thus during corporate prayer, people speak in tongues without any interpretation. However, as prophecy, speaking in tongues that carry a message must be interpreted.

PRAYER

Prayer is an essential element of Charismatics. Many independent Churches are literally praying churches and some have earned the name 'Pray for me Churches'. More time may be devoted to prayer at Sunday Service and rather than the Pastor alone offering prayer, prayer is everyone's prayer. Prayers during Sunday worship are therefore not restricted to listening to someone else pray. The congregation is invited to pray and urged to do so vocally leading to a din of several voices in praise and supplication. The prayers are also mostly for prayers of praise. But the use of prayer is also prognostic and for protection apart from being petitionary.

PREACHING

Preaching in Charismatic movements clearly addresses realities that members face in every day life and involves a more practical than intellectual exegesis of scriptures and expressions of faith. They are not theological lectures but application of Biblical interpretation or at times misinterpretation to every day life.

The flexibility of preaching is enhanced by the fact that Charismatic Churches do not have Lectionaries, which they must stick to or follow on Sundays except on occasions of celebration. They therefore address what is current at any time at the expense of a systematic exposition of the word of God. But the advantage is that the sermon addresses the real issues that people are facing week by week. The Gospel is thus contextualised for them and made relevant.

There is a strong element of reprimand in sermons for those who do not live by the will of God. But at the same time, many sermons can be and are often an expression of hope and counsel toward a better fulfillment in life.

The language of sermons is plain and conform to the Calvinist teaching that in preaching, Language should be used in communicate thought, not to impress the hearer with the speakers learning. But the sermons are also often loaded with punchlines and questions to which members of the congregation respond. Sermons are normally in storytelling form. This style is Familiar to the African and enables a retentive memory of the 'Message'. (Dovlo,1998,61). Indeed often the sermon is referred to as the 'message'. The word is potent symbol of God speaking to his people in worship and prophetically. This also encourages the belief that the word has the power to heal during the service. But often times Charismatics during the Sunday service may also resort to certain ritual act of Healing and deliverance.

HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

Healing and Deliverance is therefore another variance in Charismatic worship on Sunday. The practice brings alive the very notion of Grace that invokes worship and in a sense is conceived as justifying the continued Grace of God that demands praise and adoration rather than seen as serving

human purposes. Thus for the Charismatic it will be difficult to convince him that the Spirit and Grace of God should not be allowed to flow on the very Day that that is reserved for his worship. As Davies. (Ibid. 26) argues "In the New Testament there is an interconnected series of concepts relating to salvation. These include healing, cleansing and restoration to perfection. Thus if worship celebrates salvation it is difficult to exclude healing as part of worship." This is however against a background which even among Charismatics raises questions about the theology of deliverance especially the insistence of some Charismatics that without deliverance there is no salvation.

FELLOWSHIP

One of the results of the vibrantly corporate nature of Charismatic worship on Sunday is that *koinonia* is often achieved. Prayer and *Koinonia* form the links between worship as liturgy and as the lived expression of Christian devotion. As we have noted elsewhere in many of the Charismatic Churches there is a very high sense of participation even at the regular Sunday service. The Charismatic Churches encourage *interaction*. This makes members of the congregation involved in worship. Interaction occurs at various times of Charismatic worship. For example, leaders of the service make such remarks as: Do you hear me?: they also call for gestures, "wave to Jesus", "Wave to the Holy Ghost". They also call for complimentary interaction among those present. The Pastors ask everyone to greet their neighbour and compliment them on the way they look...This is all seen as a practical reflection of the love and bond in Christ. (cf. Dovlo,1998,61)

On the contrary, an over cerebral liturgy may lack intimate fellowship. This may occur especially in the cities where congregations are normally large and draw their

membership from diverse people. In such cases there is the risk loosing one's unique praise of God during worship. Certainly Kiononia expressed through the exchange of peace but throughout the Charismatic service a sense of corporate unity is often generated and not only in a brief moment.

It must be borne in mind that the Sunday service is the most formal meeting of the Church and for most congregation members it is the only meeting. This is because when they may not belong to any other group. Often in Ghana today we lump them together as Osofo and Catechist group but this is more often for purposes of fundraising than ministering to them.

Generally the liturgy of Charismatic movements is unique as it's aimed at making worship meaningful and reviving. Worship is physically and psychologically as well as spiritually fulfilling. They are ecstatic long joyful services with sacraments such as anointing, Agape etc. What Rosaline Hackett (1980:218) notes, regarding Independent Churches may be applicable to the Charismatic movement is general. That is "The liturgy is a conscious attempt to construct an oasis of salvation, a 'pocket of purity' in the midst of a corrupting, sinful world".

Nevertheless the main accusation levelled at Sunday worship service of Charismatics is that it is devoid of order and discipline. This is because of its noisy nature especially during praises and corporate prayers. Further there is a level of self-abandonment especially during the time of praises and worship. This may lead to not only kneeling but also prostration and some rolling on the floor. In some churches people blow whistles as if they were attending a soccer match or on a more traditional note as if they are the *Avlesi* (entertainers in the Yewe cult) of the Charismatic movement. These are phenomenon that some Charismatics even acknowledge as extremities. Unfortunately they are often used to stereotype Charismatic worship.

Again the celebrative nature of Charismatic worship on Sunday can easily slip into amusement and entertainment. The problem then arises as to whether God's spirit is part of the proceedings. Dance and Gestures, for instance may become manifestations of the flesh rather than a meeting of Body and Spirit in praise. The result is the question is raised as to whether emotionalism is confused with spirituality in Charismatic worship so that preachers who can shout, speak in a special tone, jump or make other body movements can be regarded as spiritual regardless of the content of the message they preach.

In spite of such criticism as Atiemo" (38-39) cautions "...whatever the reservations are held against the charismatic way of worship, its potential strengths and actual contributions cannot be ignored...(and) it will be unfair to say that the charismatic experience is significant only in psychological or the cathartic effect it has on the worshipper. It has rather restored to the centre of the liturgy genuine praise and worship and a deep awareness of the Transcendent. It is not anthropocentric; it is rather profoundly theocentric."

This position is supported by Hocken (1982,125) who sees Charismatic worship as "a deeper recognition of the worthiness of God and Jesus His son to receive praise and glory and honor (Rev. 4.11; 5. 9-10). He argues that "Charismatic worship manifests the important truth that praise is first of all a corporate gift whereby God's people are empowered to proclaim His glory and to experience the presence of God in the power set loose by vigorous praise. This sense of the importance of Volume in praise, which is neither a sheer glorification of noise, nor a rejection of Paul's warning against mere noisy gong and clanging cymbals (Cf. I Cor. 13:1), recognizes a wholesome and liberating quality about

full blooded praise of God that has overcome the timidity of reticence and a one-sided equation of silence with closeness to God. Charismatics have rediscovered the concept of "ministry unto the Lord", which has priority over all ministry to men."

In fact the pneumatological emphasis of Charismatics makes it difficult phenomenologically to deny that God's Spirit is absent from their worship. This is rather what they emphasize. As Asamoah-Gyadu (1994,50) notes this is what accounts for "A flow of praise from within the believer. Charismatic worship manifests praise as a corporate gift in which God's people are given a new power by the Holy Spirit to proclaim His glory and to experience His presence in the power set loose by vigorous praise." That is where the challenge of Charismatics lies.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge thrown to Mainline Churches by Charismatics is that their worship is dull, unstimulating and in our African context foreign. This accusation is not restricted to African Charismatic Churches. White (1989:58-78) has proclaimed that Reformed liturgy is "the most cerebral of the western traditions...overwhelmingly cerebral". People have said worse things, which I dare not repeat here though I know I will not run the risk of being lynched.

But I would rather pose these challenges as a series of questions.

1. Are there aspects of worship that must be maintained in order to be faithful to God's self revelation and are there aspects that must be reformed according to historical needs of different times and places?

2. Should Sunday worship be reduced to an academic or social exercise or is it an experienced event a celebration fete a joyful experience of an encounter with the resurrected Christ?
3. Does not the over-formalization and restriction of Sunday worship suggests that worship is something that takes place in Church on Sunday.
4. Do the ways that worship is embodied connect with the intended receivers or fail to communicate with them?
5. Can a single service be all things to all people or liturgical variations will invoke different people at different times and serve all.
6. Is it possible that a form of worship that has become fixed can no longer express what was originally intended especially if it becomes idolized.
7. Indeed explanations will be offered for how liturgy of the older Churches does the very things that the Charismatics claim to be doing. However, it is one thing offering theological explanation. It is another thing if the people actually experience it. Do they feel uplifted?
8. Are those gathered to worship made aware of the reality of God's presence or this is expressed only in words?

9. How can worship be made to function to create fellowship?
10. Is Worship hostile to emotion?

FACING THE CHALLENGES

Fortunately facing the challenge of the Charismatic Movements has already begun in the works of many mainline theologians and in consultations such as this. What is needed mostly is to translate this effort into the liturgical life of the Church something which mainline theologians often fail to do.

The current trend is the call to reconcile how the spirit of God moves in both streams of the body of Christ during the Sunday worship.

Setri Nyomi (1993, 19) citing Wallace Alston identifies six characteristics of Reformed worship as:

1. Reformed worship is focused upon the praise of God, not on the experience of the worshipper.
2. It testifies to the centrality and authority of the Bible in Christian faith and practice.
3. It emphasizes the importance of personal and corporate prayer.
4. It emphasizes the singing of Psalms and other hymns which depend heavily on the Bible for their content.
5. Reformed worship emphasizes the importance of preaching as a means of Grace.
6. It reflects the importance of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper in Christian life and faith.

Certainly the little but well known description that we have offered of Charismatic worship would suggest that they are not too deviant. The problem of difference is therefore partly the performative symbols of worship.

The good advice of Rev. Dr. Livingston Buamah (1992,9) is that the operation of the Holy Spirit must not be stereotyped. He points out the Biblical imagery of the Spirit as dew, as well as wind and fire to show that there is variation in its manifestation and just as it can be vigorous it can equally be soothingly solemn. He writes "Worship that is strictly solemn and Reflective (meditative) can be rather rigid, frigid and inhibitive (repressive). Worship that is purely celebrative can become trivial and thus degenerate into mere merry-making. The word of God which demands of us to be reverent, sober and reflective before God is the same word which summons us to come to his presence with singing and to enter his courts with praise of make a joyful noise to the Lord." They are complementary, the former helps us to grasp and to revere God's awesome presence and power. The celebrative on the other hand helps us to reach out and to hit the heights of joy that the victorious life in Christ offers us."

Since worship is a response to God the response can assume many forms. What is important is the appropriateness of the response. As Arnold Bittlinger has argued (1982,11f) Charismatic renewal as an opportunity for worship. "Where the Holy Spirit is at work, there can be a fresh experience of worship as a conversation with God, in which God speaks with his people and his people with him. When those participating in worship are set free to be themselves, it becomes possible to introduce creative elements..." Indeed 1 Cor. 14:26 gives room for every worshipper should make his own contribution. But certainly there must be control so that corporate worship does not degenerate into chaos.

Thus is the response to the Phenomenon that the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) recommends. SECAM declares that "But liturgy is also the answer of the local community to God's love. It gives place to spontaneous expressions of praise and to personal petitions. We may reveal our emotions and feelings like the men and women, the adults and the children of the Gospel. There is a place for prophecies, speaking in languages, chanting and dancing. All this can open our hearts to God's presence and grace. But all things should be done decently and in order (1Cor. 14) God is not a God of confusion but of peace (1Cor.14:33)." (19 ,46) Calvin also accorded discipline as a mark of worship.

The problem however is that learning from the Charismatics does not simply mean reconciling or incorporating their practices adhoc into mainline Sunday worship. Rather the challenge is to inquire about what needs, aspirations and feeling in the spirit invoke the Charismatic response and whether such can be answered by other forms and symbols of worship generated by and within the older traditions.

Faithfulness to the Spirit of God, which is dynamic, defies a monolithic structure of worship. "Faithfulness to the Reformation requires that its tradition keeps reforming and in doing so has to listen to the witness of other Christian Traditions."()

But in all this we must remember that worship is an attitude in life not an act restricted to a given time on a specific day at a specific place. Sunday worship is its highest model and it will be reflected in all other times of worship. If alive and spirit filled then it will bring the same to the entire

life of Christians as individuals or as the corporate body of Christ.

Thank you.

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