

RESPONSE TO LUIS FELIPE NUNES BORDUAM
AND SVETLANA KHOBNYA
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Luis Felipe Nunes Borduam and Svetlana Khobnya wrote about the power of the Holy Spirit to which I would like to respond in the lenses of pastoral praxis and reflection. The two writers, whom I believe have many years of experience and exposure in ministries, have raised concerns on the views on the power of the Holy Spirit. The articles described respectively are about the Pentecostalism in Latin America and the human togetherness as initiated and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Pneumatology is an important Christian dogma, which is foundational to the Christian stance especially with the Protestant Wesleyan holiness understanding. A common understanding regarding the power and work of the Holy Spirit is typically tied with the manifestations of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (e.g. exorcism, glossolalia, healing, miracles, wonders). In Southeast Asia, it is estimated that Pentecostalism has been around for more than 100 years from the time the Pentecostal missionaries came to countries such as Malaysia, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Philippines and Singapore among others.¹ Borduam presented Pentecostalism in South America who seemed to emphasize the manipulable power of the Holy Spirit rather than His sanctifying work answering the question, “Power for what, after all?” Borduam employed Paul Freston’s interpretive waves of Pentecostal movements in the 20th century, namely: (1st) Classic Pentecostalism ascribed to the baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by glossolalia, a power seeking experiential encounters lacking in real progressive transformation; (2nd) Deuteropentecostalism (divine healing movement), and (3rd) Neo-Pentecostalism (autonomous Pentecostalism) emphasizing pragmatic prosperity theology stressing the Holy Spirit’s power and submission to “financial sacrifices” (tithes and offerings) to yield material wealth. Borduam argued that neo-Pentecostalism (post-Pentecostalism by Paul Siepierski) seemed to reduce the Holy Spirit’s function to mere metaphysical identification of evil spirits and exorcism. He also presented another movement - social theologies (e.g. liberation theology) that favored systemic problems over individual conversion and transformation. “After all, power for what?” is a question Borduam asked stressing the Holy Spirit’s important work of sanctification, a result of an intimacy with Christ and commitment to God’s work. He ultimately argued that purity of heart and singleness of devotion due to the intimacy with Christ were results of both instantaneous and progressive sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The article’s conclusion geared towards the historical pioneer work of Pentecostalism in South America seen to be lopsided giving more weight on spiritual manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s gifts than His sanctifying work that leads to holy living and unconditional loving.

Khobnya posited hermeneutical considerations on the Holy Spirit’s work to the Christian community. The arguments focused on the Holy Spirit’s role establishing communal togetherness, the enabling communal togetherness found in the NT revelation and fulfillment, and the enabling of human togetherness surveyed in the Gospels, Acts, Paul, and other NT books. Khobnya argued that human togetherness is made possible through the reconciling work of the Holy Spirit amidst alienation caused by distancing due to unavoidable circumstances (e.g. COVID). He argued that the Spirit of togetherness is fulfilled in Christ using the intertextual

¹ Dave Johnson, Pentecostal Missions in Southeast Asia, *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 25 no. 1 (2022), 1-3.

narratives describing the fulfillment of the outpouring of the Spirit prophecies in the OT. Khobnya pointed out in the Gospels the Holy Spirit's role reflected in Jesus' ministries and expounded on the expansion of God's family in togetherness through the power of the Spirit (Acts 2) depicting the congregating of the early disciples who received the promised Spirit as a body of witnesses. He stressed on their waiting for the promise in Jerusalem and the reception of restoration of communication with one another, signifying the inclusive attitude especially of those of other cultural circles - a result of the Spirit working in the early churches' followers of Christ. Khobnya posited that the call to loving togetherness, read from Paul's epistles, emphasized the indwelling, empowering, and experiencing of the Holy Spirit resulting to interrelatedness due to this pneumatological encounter projecting the kingdom of God here on earth illustrated from other books of the NT. Khobnya concluded with the emphasis on the enablement of the Spirit in continuing the story of God, fulfilled in Christ's life, death, and resurrection in restoring human identity and making togetherness a possibility in uniting nations who practice inclusivity thriving in loving togetherness.

Reflecting on Borduam's claim on "Always *being* before *doing*" (p.8), I accede with his proposition on the clarity of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit resulting to wholeness yielding to personal faithfulness and character formation (*being*), which then progresses to passionate service for God's greater glory and honor. As a minister working with the Body of Christ ministries (mostly independent and Pentecostal churches and some evangelical groups)² and with local ecumenical council composed of mainline churches,³ I seem to observe that those who are in the charismatic renewal (Roman Catholic and Episcopalian Anglicans) and independent Pentecostal churches, are passionate for their mission and display deep desire for the spiritual gift manifestations especially the gift of speaking in tongues, manifestations of healings and miracles, and exorcism. I have quite similar observations in my own country and in some Asian short-term mission exposures in Macau, China, HongKong, and Malaysia. A case in point is Bernadette Chang's experience regarding her desire of having the gift of tongues and how it influenced their students in *Fons Vitae* with their charismatic renewal.⁴ The *doing* results in addressing the challenge of socio-cultural transformation in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another illustration on the importance of *being* before *doing* can be deduced from Chung Soon Lee's article *The Pentecostal Face of Korean Protestantism: A Critical Understanding* that described the tremendous church growth in Korea coming from Pentecostals, which he associated with Shamanism.⁵ The emphasis was on experience not on doctrine. These experiences, perhaps quite similar with other Asian countries, does not much emphasize on the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, as argued by Khobnya, rather the desire to experience and practice the power entrusted by the Holy Spirit yielding to an addictive desire. These could also

² This Body of Christ organization is known as the Trinidad Evangelical Association of Ministries and Members (TEAMM), mostly composed of indigenous independent Pentecostal churches.

³ The ecumenical council is known as La Trinidad Ecumenical Council of Churches (LTECC) composed of the Roman Catholic, Episcopalian Diocese of the North Central Philippines (Anglican), United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Southern Baptist Church, Conservative Baptist Church, Lutheran Church in the Philippines, Wesleyan Church, and the Church of the Nazarene.

⁴ Bernadette Chang, "The Charismatic Renewal in Taiwan": A Witness from a Young Chinese Woman, *International Review of Mission* 75 no.298 (1986), 132-136.

⁵ Chung Soon Lee, "The Pentecostal Face of Korean Protestantism": A Critical Understanding, *Asia Journal of Theology*, 20 no. 2 (2006), 399-417.

reveal the double-edged result, there are Pentecostals (tongue speakers) who are spiritually gifted but whose lives do not manifest godly living. On the other hand, non-Pentecostals who yield too much on the intellectual rationalism display spiritual stuntedness and seem to display low spiritual vitality. On both instances, we might have affirming ministry experiences. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians points to the problematic spiritually gifted church and urges the believers to live holy lives. But this does not limit the emphasis and locus of Pentecostal praxis in Asia which include prayer, healing, and evangelism.⁶ The purity of heart and intentions, when one is entirely sanctified, as Nazarenes teach, results to character formation towards Christlikeness. Being filled with the Holy Spirit yields to fruitful Christian testimony and ministries that brings glory to God.⁷

Khobnya's point on the work of the Holy Spirit laying the foundation of human togetherness (p.12) is evident in spiritual revivals historically experienced in the Asian context. Most places in Asia having an animistic background would attest to the need of some sort of religious experience as their means of having communicated with the divine, which then leads to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit yielding to personal and communal conversions. The Gospel of Mark appeals to the reality of such events pointing to Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to perform healings and miracles yet pointing people to Himself as their salvation. A case in history, like the Nias revival in Indonesia is an example, in which a study was conducted by Julia Theis Dermawan who claimed that "Pentecostalism is relevant to the need of Asian people because it takes seriously the supernatural dimension of human existence. It is relevant to Asian worldviews."⁸ She further posited that the signs and wonders in the power of the Holy Spirit are needed among Asian people but cautions as well that the experience of salvation should not be neglected.⁹ Having observed the fastest growing ministries in the Philippines and even in our locality are the Pentecostal Christians which seem to appeal to the animistic experienced families,¹⁰ especially among tribal people who are now believers of Christ as a family, which if further observed, inclusive of their clans due to their collectivist worldview. The Church of the Nazarene, I suppose, already practices the human togetherness as observed in the various levels of gatherings where preachings involve the sanctification of believers during their interlocking local church assemblies, district assemblies, general assemblies, local church camps, zone camps, district camps, men's and women's conferences, district camp meetings, leadership and clergy gatherings, and the like, exemplifying the human togetherness bonded by the love of God where the Holy Spirit works to sanctify those who desire to live holy lives and who live entirely set apart who's ready to do respond to the will of the Father for ministry and service locally, nationally, regionally, and globally.

⁶ Joseph Rommel L. Suico, Pentecostal Churches in the Philippines, *Studies in World Christianity*, 10 no. 2 (2004), 229. Julia Theis Dermawan, A Study of the Nias Revival in Indonesia, *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6 no. 2 (2003), 253-257; Lee, "The Pentecostal Face of Korean Pentecostalism," 411; Wonsuk Ma, "Doing Theology in the Philippines": A Case of Pentecostal Theology, *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 8 no. 2 (2005), 215-233.

⁷ Galatians 5:22-23

⁸ Julia Theis Dermawan, A Study of the Nias Revival in Indonesiano, 262.

⁹ Ibid. 263

¹⁰ See Julie C. Ma, "When the Spirits meet the Spirits: Pentecostal Ministry among the Kankana-ey Tribe in the Philippines" (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000), 213-231; and Julie C. Ma, 2 (2003),

I would like also to contend that there are Pentecostals (tongue speakers) who are living Christlike lives as well who yield to holiness and living a sanctified life, whose lives affirmatively impact communities.¹¹ I have hoped the authors of the articles presented some appreciative points regarding Pentecostalism since the Church of the Nazarene somehow have similar grounds on the Holy Spirit's work in the believers' lives regarding holiness.¹² Working with various Pentecostal groups from the Assemblies of God, Church of God, Foursquare, Bethel, Cathedral of Praise, and other independent Pentecostal churches, I noticed that there are those who teach about living holy lives and who preach about Christlikeness but minister's differently in their call for consecration. There were also genuine transformation experiences documented in Asian revivals which usually is correlated with exponential church growth and mass evangelism.¹³ The Pentecostal experiences of others also testifies of the social and environmental reforms it influences.¹⁴ A consideration of some positive views regarding Pentecostals are also important in order to help them refocus from the spiritual gift manifestations excesses and extremes and lead them to the emphasis on sanctification and holy living, and to lay the foundation of genuine corporate fellowship in the power of the Holy Spirit picking up from the imprint of indigenous cultural collectivism especially in the Asian socio-cultural perspectives.

¹¹ This was also articulated by Wonsuk Ma, "Doing Theology in the Philippines," 223.

¹² Stan Ingersol and Wesley D. Tracy, *Here We Stand* (Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2002), 189-190; Dean G. Blevins, Stanley J. Rodes, Terry S. Sowden, James W. Spear, and David P. Wilson, *Church of the Nazarene Manual 2017-2021* (Missouri: Nazarene Publishing House, 2017), 17-19.

¹³ Gani Wiyono, "Timor Revival": A Historical Study of the Great Twentieth-Century Revival in Indonesia, *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 4 no. 2 (2001), 269-293; Dermawan, A Study of the Nias Revival in Indonesia, 247-263. See also some important sections in Luther Jeremiah Ocuener, The Manila Healing Revival and the First Pentecostal Defections in the Methodist Church in the Philippines, *Pneuma*, 31 no. 1 (2009), 66-84; Shen Yifan, Chinese Christianity in Theological Reflection, *Missiology*, 13 no. 3 (1985), 281; For study of correlation of church growth with Pentecostalism see Hong Young-gi, The Backgrounds and Characteristics of the Charismatic Churches Mega-churches in Korea, *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 3 no. 1 (2000), 99-118.

¹⁴ Conrado C. Lumahan Sr, Evangelical/Pentecostal Solution to Gambling in the Philippines, *Journal of Asian Mission*, 4 no. 1 (2002), 121-140; Kok-Weng Chiang and Geoffrey Tan, A Pneumatological Eco-theology from an East Asian Confucian Perspective, *The Asia Journal of Theology*, 26 no. 2 (2012), 3-24