

Varieties.... but one God: Challenges to Pentecostalism in a Global Context

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1. Introduction

As we witness the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in the world, we are being challenged to consider how we develop the theological and pastoral education for our constituencies. On one side, we want to uphold that which unites us in the Christian faith. On the other side, we are aware of the cultural variety and contextual diversity reflected in various Pentecostal communities across the globe. This presumably healthy tension between concurrence and diversity, between structure and charisma, affects our understanding of theology, our ethical convictions as well as the way we engage in practical ministry. The purpose of this paper is to suggest ways that honor both, the call for unity as we find it for instance in John 17 and Ephesians 4, as well as the need for particular expressions of faith; or as we read in 1 Cor. 12:4-7, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.”¹

As this is the first WAPTE consultation, allow me to be somewhat reckless. Instead of presenting you with a well focused and concise study, as you might expect from a Swiss theologian, I will venture to present a firework of ideas and suggestions in order to illustrate the scope and challenges of a global alliance of Pentecostal educators. If I may venture the comparison, my paper will be more akin to Edward Elgar’s *Enigma Variations* than to Maurice Ravel’s *Bolero*.

Before we will look at some particular issues where global Pentecostalism presents challenges that an institution like WAPTE will have to deal with, let me invite you through a historical reflection that will pay attention, first, to the development of theological thought and then to the nature of religious language.

2. Historical Reflections

a. Development of Theological Thought

Most Pentecostals, when asked what would shape their theology, would answer without hesitation, “the Bible”. At first thought, it would seem sensible to assume that reliance on the same text would result in a unified point of view.² The same Bible for all

¹ All Bible quotations in this paper are from the New Revised Standard Version.

² This idea is, of course, the reason for the establishment of creeds, confessions and statements of fundamental truths.

would naturally result in explicating the same theology for all. However, history shows us that different contexts have brought forth various theological emphases and these have served the people of God facing various circumstances as well as different needs.

A first example can be seen in the different religious perception of the Jewish people some 2800 years ago. Samuel Terrien in his book *The Elusive Presence*³ masterfully illustrates that the Israelites had two very distinct ways of living with their God. There was a marked difference between the religious practices of the south and those of the north. There were the people from Judah in the south, who lived close to the temple and saw God, as it were, with their spiritual eye. Their religious experience found its expression mostly in celebration and worship. The believers encountered God in forms of devotion that took place in the majestic rooms of the temple, richly decorated and filled with the heavy smell of precious incense. From the psalms we learn that choirs were singing responsorially and music was played with a variety of instruments. The people clapped and danced. The great temple was a place where God was worshiped and experienced as being present in splendor. Whereas if we look to the north, for instance to the people of Ephraim, we see a religious practice that was not so much informed by the eyes but rather by the ears. Their understanding of God's presence in their life was more one that came through their hearing of God's commandments and living according to his decrees. It was a faith that primarily found an ethical expression. "Thus says the Lord", proclaimed the prophets in the country side. Faith was based on a theology that mainly relied on the ability of God's people to hear what the will of God was. Whereas the people of Judah appropriated their faith, very much like Pentecostals today, by means of what they saw and experienced, the context of the people of Ephraim for instance, dictated a different approach, one that was focused more on what they heard. Nobody, however, would deny that the faithful genuinely experienced God in both places and that both expressions of faith were legitimate given the different circumstances and possibilities in Israel at that time.

Another example of theological diversity became apparent around the year 50 AD. It happened when Jewish Christians in Jerusalem heard that gentiles had come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and that the Holy Spirit had confirmed their faith by gifting them in similar ways as he did with the believers on the day of Pentecost. The stories recorded in Acts chapters 10 to 15 beautifully illustrate how different theologies can develop without negating core values and truths.⁴ In fact, the deliberations at the Council of Jerusalem became a paradigm for Pentecostals to value the experiences of Spirit Baptism of others in other parts of the world.

If we pay attention to the course of church history we find further examples of how different theologies developed. In late Antiquity we notice two different emphases. Whereas Western Christians developed a theology that was evolving around concepts such as the Trinity, the Eastern Christians were more concerned in expressing their theology based on their understanding of true worship and deification, a notion related to sanctification.

And the story goes on, during the Reformation there were core issues that were affirmed, such as *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, and *sola scriptura*. But Luther, Zwingli and Calvin were very different kind of people with different backgrounds and interests. Luther was an Augustinian friar, Zwingli a Christian Humanist and Calvin a

³ Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence; Toward a New Biblical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978), 7. Reprinted as paperback by Wipf and Stock Publishers in 2000.

⁴ Interestingly, Peter had to learn that abstaining from eating impure food was not to be considered as an essential to faith. He had no biblical precedent that he could rely on. But he gave in after seen a vision, being prompted three times to be obedient to God and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

lawyer. All three were not able to avoid that their proclamation of the Good News was free from political considerations. Luther fought the enthusiast, Zwingli the Anabaptists, and Calvin those who had a different opinion.⁵ However, nobody would question the contribution of these men and the theological significance of the Reformation. Later, we see significant new theological developments by the Pietistic and Wesleyan theologies,⁶ and the story goes on.

Our concern today is whether we notice different developments among Pentecostals in a global context. And if we do so, the question presents itself: what does this mean for an institution like the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education?

If we look back at our examples we discover in the history of Israel a theological variance of worshipping in an urban environment as opposed to a rural one. The example of the early church illustrates that faith in God is not restricted to a particular cultural context or intellectual approach. The difference between the Eastern and Western Church shows us that one can be theological from a conceptual point of view, but also by considering spirituality and worship as the beginning of a sound faith. The history of the Reformation indicates that the proclamation of the Gospel can easily be influenced by ulterior motives. And the example Methodism provides, shows us what can happen if the Good News is brought to the lower classes in an understandable and practical way. Just as we saw theological variance through the centuries we can also notice different theological emphases among Pentecostals across the globe today.

b. The nature of Religious Language

Besides the changing face of theological endeavor, there is also another variant in Christian education. That variant relates to the nature of language. Western cultures have, due to the influence of Greek philosophy and the Enlightenment, developed a strongly analytical strain in their thinking. Eastern and Southern cultures, on the other hand, have a more organic way of communicating, due to their oral and synthesizing cultures. This expresses itself by means of a rich depository of narrative traditions and a frequent use of poetic language.

From a linguistic point of view, religious language is mostly metaphorical in nature.⁷ How else could one describe, illustrate and try to explain the mighty acts of God, except by speaking in ways that go beyond human analysis and point further. How could one express self-transcending experiences, except by using metaphorical descriptions like “the Lord is my shepherd”, “wells of salvation”, “you are the salt of the earth” or “baptized in the Holy Spirit”. It lies in the very nature of religious language that descriptions are made that point beyond the human, namely to a surplus that is attributed to God. And that can best be done by using metaphors. Hence it does not surprise that linguists have estimated that the Bible is to more than 70% narrative, poetic and metaphorical in nature.⁸

⁵ Calvin’s condemnation of Servetus was officially because of their disagreement on the Trinity. However, Servetus also had different opinions on the depravity of man and predestination.

⁶ Key issues would be a turn from formal to individual piety as well as a focus on God’s prevenient grace and man’s free will.

⁷ For more on the nature of religious language cf. Jean-Daniel Plüss, *Therapeutic and Prophetic Narratives in Worship*, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity, vol. 54, Bern, Peter Lang, 1988.

⁸ The estimates vary. It is illuminating to look into Study Bibles, NIV and NRSV for instance, and read the notes, essays and commentaries relating to various books and the language they use. Sometimes the poetic character of a text is formatted differently in order to show that, for instance, not only a prophet is speaking, but that he is speaking poetically.

Whether and when Scripture is to be understood literally or metaphorically has been an ongoing debate ever since the interpretation of texts began. The Jews have traditionally considered a metaphorical reading of the Torah as a legitimate way of studying the precepts of the Lord. In Christianity the debate between the Alexandrian school, favoring metaphorical readings, and the Antiochian school, favoring a literal approach, was an ongoing activity.⁹

Ironically, it was the highly rational approach of scholasticism with its emphasis on philosophy and dialectic reasoning that moved the proponents of the Reformation to go back to Scripture. The desire to go back to the roots motivated the humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam to publish a Greek New Testament. Luther, Zwingli and Calvin focused on a more literal reading of the Bible. But “literal” meant different things to these reformers.

For Zwingli it was a focus on the text in the original Hebrew and Greek. Nothing should stand between the text and the reader. Furthermore, he applied a rather pragmatic rule stating that if the Bible did not explicitly say something then it neither needed to be believed nor practiced. In addition to that, Zwingli favored a pneumatological reading of Scripture.¹⁰

For Luther a literal reading meant to read Scripture, New and Old Testament, christologically. One could say that Luther was concerned with authorial intent. The Holy Spirit would reveal Christ in the text that could be read plainly. A plain reading, however, would include the use of metaphors and other figures of speech.¹¹

For Calvin, reading the Bible literally meant to take into consideration the ongoing process of God’s revelation through Scripture. Difficult passages did not need to be explained away allegorically, they simply reflected the fact that divine revelation had not yet been fully appreciated due to historical circumstances.¹² Accordingly, the creation story in Genesis did not need to be considered as a scientific account; rather God accommodated his revelation to human understanding at that time and the creation account revealed the wisdom and glory of God’s creative power.¹³

These few examples illustrate, that what has become known as a literal approach to the understanding of the Bible (mostly developed among North-American Protestants), cannot be identified with the Reformation teaching of *sola scriptura*. It was an independent development. It was a development that was nurtured by positivism, the growing division between natural and social sciences, the rise of empirical thought, dispensationalism and the Princeton school of biblical interpretation advanced by proponents like Charles Hodge.

⁹ Interestingly, both schools have brought sound correctives to theology as well as forms of Christian thought that were considered unorthodox: for Antioch, Arianism (the Son of God as inferior to the Father) and Nestorianism (disunion between the human and the divine nature in Jesus Christ), for Alexandria, Apollinarianism (that Jesus had a human body, but a divine mind) and Eutychianism (that the human nature of Christ was overcome by the divine).

¹⁰ Huldrych Zwingli, *Die Klarheit und die Gewissheit des Wortes Gottes*, in *Huldrych Zwingli Schriften I*, Zürich, Theologischer Verlag, 1995, 101-154.

¹¹ Eric J. Swenson, *Luthers Approach to Holy Scripture* (<http://www.holytrinitynewrochelle.org/yourti83313.html> accessed July 1, 2010) quoting Gordon Isaac, *The Changing Image of Luther as Biblical Expositor in Ad Fontes Lutheri: Toward the Recovery of the Real Luther: Essays in Honor of Kenneth Hagen’s Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Timothy Maschke et. al., Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 2001, 72, 20.

¹² Karen Armstrong, *The Bible: A Biography*, New York, Grove Press, 2007, 167.

¹³ Robert Sturdy, *John Calvin on Creation, Materiality, and Accommodation*, <http://trinitypastor.wordpress.com/2009/01/14/john-calvin-on-creation-materiality-and-accommodation/> accessed July 1, 2010.

Now what does that have to do with the challenges of Pentecostal education on a global scale? Just as we have come to appreciate varied developments of theological thought in the first part of our historical reflection, we now get a hunch that religious language and the interpretation thereof cannot be put into a box. Whereas Western Pentecostals, due to substantial Evangelical influence, have up to recent times been preoccupied by a focus on literal interpretation,¹⁴ Pentecostals from the global South are more acquainted with an organic use of language that includes literal speech, but is rich in metaphorical and narrative expression. This is the case because Asian and African cultures cherish a vibrant tradition of poetic speech. Their communication is in many ways metaphorical. We can put the challenge also positively. The global phenomenon of Pentecostalism allows for a fresh appreciation of the richness of religious reflection on experience and biblical interpretation. We face a truly Pentecostal challenge, namely to read between the lines as it were, and to listen to what the life-giving Spirit has to say, rather than to limit ourselves as it were to the deadening letter or a binary code.

Let us now look at some concrete examples that will most likely challenge the World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education. I suggest that we look first at theological issues, before we pay attention to ethical challenges and lastly move to practical considerations.

3. Theological Issues

One theological issue that has recently gained prominence among Pentecostals is the need to develop a Pentecostal ecclesiology.¹⁵ Missionary fervor and eschatological urgency meant that an understanding of what church is has not been at the forefront of our theological discussions. To that one can add a Western preoccupation with an individualist emphasis. Stephen Hong lamenting disunity in the church describes it as follows,

Christians today view their faith as a private matter—something between the individual and God. “Receive Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior,” we invite people, starting them immediately on the road to an individualistic Christian existence. As Christians focus on “personal growth,” there is an understanding that the Church exists to help “me” live out “my” personal relationship with my Lord. Even the practices of the Church that must be done corporately—such as congregational worship—end up being, a thousand individual experiences of worship. Communion, for example, in most modern Evangelical and Pentecostal churches is a private experience as we lift our hundreds of little cups individually. In many churches, rather than all partaking at the same time, each person eats his piece of bread and drinks his little cup of juice as the trays are passed down each row, making “communion” a moment of personal one-on-one time with the Lord. What a distance between our

¹⁴ New avenues in biblical interpretation by Pentecostals have been introduced in the past decades. An overview of Pentecostal approaches to the interpretation of the Bible is given by Keith Warrington in *Pentecostal Theology. A Theology of Encounter*, London, T & T Clark, 2008, 180-205. see also W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation. An Integrated Approach*, Peabody, Ma. Hendrickson Publishers, 1991; Kenneth Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community*, London T & T Clark, 2004 and CTP Press, 2009; and Amos Yong *Spirit, Word, Community: Theological Hermeneutics in a Trinitarian Perspective*, Eugene, Or. Wipf and Stock, 2002.

¹⁵ Cf. Contributions by Veli Matti Krärkkäinen, Simon Chan, Wolfgang Vondey, Keith Warrington and others.

individualistic experience at the Lord's Table and Augustine's understanding:

In this loaf of bread you are given clearly to understand how much you should love unity. I mean, was that loaf made from one grain? Weren't there many grains of wheat? But before they came into the loaf they were all separate; they were joined together by means of water after a certain amount of pounding and crushing. Unless wheat is ground, after all, and moistened with water, it can't possibly get into this shape which is called bread. In the same way you too were being ground and pounded...Then came baptism and you were, in a manner of speaking, moistened with water in order to be shaped into bread. But it's not yet without fire to bake it. So what does fire represent? That's the chrism, the anointing. Oil, the fire-feeder, you see, is the sacrament of the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

This individualist emphasis could be continued by referring to frequent self-focused teaching on Spirit-Baptism, talk about one's "personal prayer language" and individual charismatic gifting. It is evident when one hears testimonies relating to personal prophecy and material blessing. And it is often painfully obvious when someone is asked to say a prayer in a gathering and that person starts like "Lord, I thank you" rather than "Lord, we thank you" analogous to the use of the first person plural in the Lord's Prayer.

There is indeed a crisis with regard to the communal dimension of the church. The Bible though teaches us corporate dimensions when it speaks of the church as the "Household of God", the "Body of Christ" and the "Temple of the Holy Spirit". This fragmentation of Christian life is a Western malaise, but there is hope coming from Asian and African Christians. In those cultures a strong communal emphasis is important. Moreover, in a missional context, a corporate identity is essential to Christians in a predominantly non-Christian context; especially if their conversion to Christ implies a rupture of familial and communal bonds. So there is a positive challenge coming from global Pentecostalism: the rediscovery of the communal nature and significance of the Church as a visible sign of God's Kingdom.

Another theological challenge relates to our understanding of the Lord's Supper. Many classical Pentecostals have adopted a Zwinglian/evangelical stance towards this church ritual, oftentimes in juxtaposition to catholic and sacramental high church practices. The celebration at the Lord's Table is considered as an ordinance, emphasizing the remembrance of what Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross in compliance to Jesus' command "do these in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:23ff.).¹⁷ If we pay a closer look however, at the way Pentecostals celebrate the Eucharist, we notice that there is an express expectation of God's presence during the partaking of the bread and wine. This is also evidenced when allusion is made that the Lord did not only die for our sins but also for our infirmities, thus pointing not only to the salvific but also to the healing dimension of

¹⁶ Stephen Hong, *Reversing a Downward Spiral*, APTS D.Min. Research Paper, Baguio City, Philippines, October 2009, quoting Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 227; in Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 29.

¹⁷ There are however, notable exceptions among Pentecostals with an Anglican, Lutheran or Episcopal background. These Pentecostals may well speak about Communion as an ordinance, but their theological understanding is by no means Zwinglian.

this celebration in the Lord's presence. In that sense the Eucharist can be spoken of as having a sacramental dimension. The challenge before us is then a truly Pentecostal one, to discover the deeper dimension of God's work: in Christ's name and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

4. Ethical Challenges

Whether I am in Costa Rica, South Africa, India or the Philippines, I am amazed at the media presence of evangelical or Pentecostal ministries wherever I go. Considering the contents of the broadcasts I often wonder about the message that is conveyed to the audiences in these and other lands in the two thirds world. If it is not a proclamation on success and prosperity, it is often a message that addresses moral ills like abortion, divorce, homosexuality, pornography or moral relativism. The Good News is certainly the same to all people in this world, but the message by which it is conveyed will vary considerably. In view of this, I ask myself, what would the sensibilities of a world alliance like WAPTE be?

Besides facilitating networking, establishing educational goals as well as promoting accreditation standards, WAPTE could encourage reflection on pressing ethical issues that Christians face. Such an organization would be in a perfect position to do that. My contention would be that different issues are pressing in different places and that we as Pentecostal educators have the moral obligation to exercise discernment and act accordingly. In Africa for instance homosexuality is not a big issue nor is abortion an option to speak against in China. Why? Because African mores are strongly heterosexual and because abortion in China is not a choice, it is a reality imposed by the government.

Let me provide you with two ethical issues that Pentecostals should urgently address; issues that have found little attention so far. The first relates to domestic violence. A recent UNICEF report on "Domestic Violence on Women and Girls" published in 2002¹⁸ addresses in no uncertain terms the magnitude of the problem. We are talking here about physical abuse, sexual abuse and rape, sexual abuse of children, psychological and emotional abuse, forced prostitution and the list goes on all the way to forced "suicide" or homicide of widows for economic reasons. Although domestic violence is a worldwide phenomenon, it is more prevalent in some cultures than in others. In Asia and Africa domestic violence is more common than among developed countries in the West.¹⁹ The problem is further compounded if speaking out on domestic violence is considered a social taboo. That is where the problem reaches Christian churches. Pastors and educators do not draw attention to the reality existing in their own ranks. The intolerable is being tolerated; in many cases there is a wall of silence. A global Pentecostal theological network could be useful in two ways, first by sifting out regionally irrelevant discussions from those that are of the essence, and secondly, by encouraging education on burning issues.

A second illustration of ethical significance is with reference to pastoral authority and power. In some areas of the world Pentecostal pastors have felt a definite calling to the pastoral ministry and have accordingly sought an appropriate theological and pastoral education. In other areas, the call to the ministry is often coupled with dynastic succession or an autocratic claim to leadership.²⁰ One could add to that the fact that pastors have

¹⁸ <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest6e.pdf> accessed July 1, 2010

¹⁹ Various statistics are available, for instance the report by the World Health Organization in 1997 <http://www.who.int/gender/violence/prioreng/en/index.html> accessed July 1, 2010

²⁰ Cf. for instance Michael Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century*, Grand Rapids, Mich. Eerdmans Publishers, 2008, 210.

traditionally been highly respected, especially in Asian and African cultures. It follows that pastors sometimes fall prey to an abuse of their authority and power. They may exercise authority for their own benefit and privilege. They may speak about living by faith, but use this argument to justify the fact that there is no financial accountability. They may claim spiritual authority, but in fact they control and manipulate people. Instead of ministering in humility and with grace, they claim rights and establish independent congregations with an ease that has neither a biblical nor a historical precedent. Instead of feeding the flock they may be tempted to exploit the respect and trust they receive from their parishioners. It is in this context that most harm is being done when a person of authority abuses those who look up to the minister with trust and submission. The sexual abuses of minors by priests and teachers in boarding schools, sports associations, Boy Scout organisations etc. are presently examples of exploitation of authority that rightfully generate a lot of public uproar. But one could also focus on fiscal exploitation or manipulation by fear. It is tragic that the ministers who have traditionally been recipients of high respect sometimes abuse the very people to whom they should be an example of integrity and trust.

Now why should I mention the abuse of ministerial power at a WAPTE conference? The reason is twofold. First, setting up accreditation standards is important for Pentecostals, ensuring a solid theological education across the globe. At the same time, however, is it in the hands of such an association like WAPTE to pay attention to the moral fabric of Pentecostal ministers. Obviously, it cannot function as a watchdog, barking every time when moral failure becomes apparent. However, it can take its prophetic role seriously and speak up against the abuse of power. That is where working relationships and consultations are important.

Secondly, we owe it to world Christianity that a group like WAPTE is sensitive to the topic of proliferation of churches and denominations.²¹ In the light of the biblical mandate for unity and the fact that most independent churches are either Pentecostal in nature or similar in spirituality, an organization like WAPTE could be a living statement against the proliferation of independent churches and denominations. Furthermore, it could voice a warning and be a witness against post-denominational Christianity.

These few comments have simply served the purpose to highlight that a Pentecostal alliance for networking, consultation and cooperation in achieving accrediting standards also has important ethical mandates to answer to. The last point mentioned, namely the difficult issue of pastoral power brings us to ecclesial challenges and practical considerations.

5. Practical Considerations

Before, we mentioned the individualist emphasis in Western Christianity and the shallow ecclesiology that it produces especially among the evangelical and Pentecostal churches. So far, calls to be attentive to a more biblical teaching of the church with a focus

²¹ The growth of denominationalism within the last 100 years is closely related to Pentecostal activity and has brought a proliferation of churches from about 1500 in 1900 to more than 33'000 in 2000 and probably more than 40'000 by the year 2010. Of these some 740 denominations are clear-cut classical Pentecostal. The schools and institutions that WAPTE is potentially aiming at would however include many thousand independent churches. Although it is difficult to ascertain exact figures, it is nonetheless clear that Pentecostals are a major player in world Christianity. They are challenged to take ecclesial responsibility. On statistics see for instance: David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson et. al. eds. *World Christian Trends AD 30 – AD 2200 Interpreting the annual Christian megacensus*, William Carey Library, 2001, 7, 287, 302.

on community, interdependence and sharing, have met with little success.²² A global association like WAPTE has the possibility to approach the issue from another angle, namely by considering the meeting of different cultural traditions. Let me illustrate my point by referring to the difference between Western guilt based conscience that focuses mostly on sin in contrast to Eastern and Southern understanding of conscience based to a large degree on an experience of shame.²³

Christians in the West are very rational about their wrong doings. Sin is almost exclusively seen as the condemnation of specific behavior of a person. There are all kinds of articulations of sin such as: original sin, moral sin, deadly sin, sin out of ignorance, sin of omission, unforgivable sin etc. In these examples an individual has to come to terms with his or her response to a given transgression. The corrective is something the individual can do. Often times in the form of a confession, a “quick fix” so to speak.

In contrast, Christians in the East and South have much more an awareness of misdeeds having social consequences, hence there is an emphasis on shame, because any wrong doing is not just a personal mistake; rather, it has an immediate bearing on the community. In order to correct the situation some form of healing must take place. It is a process that involves others and may take time.

Now, it is obvious that the Bible uses a whole array of vocabulary to speak about what we commonly denote as sin. And nobody would argue that an awareness of sin is not essential in the theological understanding soteriology. However, what oftentimes is being overlooked is that the Bible has a lot to say about shame too. In the Garden of Eden the result of wrong doing is a transition from shamelessness to shame (compare Gen. 2:5 with 3:7-10). In the prophetic books God punishes his people by shaming them (e.g. Jer. 9 + 48; Ezek. 16:53, Hab. 2:16) in the New Testament Jesus shames his opponents (Lk13:17; Mt. 23) and Paul speaks about sin in terms of bringing shame (Rom 3:23; 6:21-23) and he uses shame in the context of social control (1 Cor. 5:1-6 + 6:1-6; 15:34; 2. Thess. 3:14).

The issue here, however, is not whether the concepts of sin or shame hold the better cards, whether one notion is more biblical than the other. As a matter of fact, shame cultures do have an understanding of sin as well. I mention these differences in order to make another point. Globalization, as witnessed in the creation of a worldwide alliance for Pentecostal education, has a lot of positive potential; one of them being the fact that when one Christian culture has somehow painted itself into a corner, another one can provide a way out. In view of an overemphasis on individual sin and salvation, our brothers and sisters in the majority world can teach us that healing from sin and shame happens not only before God, but also in the communal network. The church as a community is the locus of salvation, not just the heart of the individual. Western pastoral theology may be enriched, if there is a new opening to the communal dimensions of faith.

Finally, I would like to mention a consideration of a different sort. It is pastoral in the widest sense of the word. What if the board of directors of WAPTE consider themselves not just as executives but also as pastors and teachers?

Setting up a network for the promotion of theological education and accreditation standards inevitably deals with issues of effectiveness and excellence. WAPTE will be measured by the results it yields, both on the academic level as well as in the churches, among denominations and on the mission fields. This reminds me of the role universities

²² The problem is no new in the evangelical context, cf. Michael Griffiths, *Cinderella with amnesia. A practical discussion of the relevance of the church*, London, Inter-Varsity Press, 1975. Other reminders for Pentecostals to pay renewed attention to the role of the church as a community have come from the Latter Rain Movement, and more significantly, from Catholic, Orthodox and Lutheran dialogue partners.

²³ For a concise overview see articles on *Shame* and *Sin* in William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen eds. *Global Dictionary of Theology*, Downers Grove, Ill, Inter-Varsity Press, 2008, 813-827.

have. They too are being measured by the success they show. Is the output of qualified graduates high enough? Is the teacher/student ratio economical? Do the subjects taught cover all the bases? But are universities successful if they comply with standards, but cannot make significant advances in research? Just as the universities must make allowance for free research that is not tied to a specific goal, so it is also with a worldwide theological association; it must allow institutions to have room to navigate in uncharted waters. It will be a cruise that will maneuver between freedom and responsibility. It will be a steersmanship between critical reflection and constructive work.²⁴ The challenge can also be put in heuristic terminology. Will such an association foster curiosity in its network? Will there be room for discovery apart from the dictates of educational outlines and programs? Matthias Wenk, states in an article entitled, “Do we need a distinct European Pentecostal/Charismatic approach to theological education?”:

*... only an educational model that also provides room for curiosity, as one aspect of love, is free from the pressure to be practical. It is learning and encountering God for God's sake and not for one's ministry sake. Thus curiosity as one motivation for theological education guarantees the learner to be continuously open and surprised by God...*²⁵

This is the ultimate challenge of education, to be motivated by love and curiosity. May those involved in WAPTE consider themselves in the role of pastors and teachers. May they be not only administrators but also mentors, encouraging others to learn for the love of God, not just for the requirement of various institutions or in order to achieve certain standards. In other words, a teacher is only then a good educator if he goes beyond academic requirements and if his personal life testifies to the truth of the message that is conveyed; if it is evident that the teacher loves God.

6. Conclusion

What I have attempted, is to provide historical and linguistic reasons for diversity as well as comparisons between ideas that are generally attributed to the North and the West with values common in the East and the South. If anything has become clear in this presentation, it is the fact that we cannot limit the confines of our knowledge, although it lies very much in human nature to pigeonhole everything one comes to know. So WATPE is bound to exercise a balancing act. On the one side it is given the task to provide criteria and set standards; in a manner of speaking it will pigeonhole. But on the other side, it is challenged to benefit from variety.

This brings us back to the quote from 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.”

When we hear these verses we tend to think in terms of the charisms as particular gifts that the Spirit of God activates in the church. However, the horizon Paul has in mind is larger. It includes not just gifts, but also services and a variety of activities. Moreover,

²⁴ Veli Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pentecostal Theological Education in a Theological and Missiological Perspective* in *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* Vol. 30, 1, 2010, 49-62. “It is very difficult for the leaders of the movement to see the invaluable asset that committed, responsible critical academic work brings to the movement.” 57.

²⁵ Matthias Wenk, *Do we need a distinct European Pentecostal/Charismatic approach to theological education?* in *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, vol. XXIII, 2003, 65.

the emphasis on unity in this passage is clear. All of these come from the triune God, who in his grace equips the church to an all encompassing ministry. This idea is also clearly reflected in 1 Peter 4:10 "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received." This then is the promise of God to the church, and certainly also to any Christian world alliance. The variety is a testimony to God's graceful nature. We can therefore conclude that variety is a God given challenge. We are called to be good stewards in these contexts. Ultimately we come full circle in this balancing act, for we are aware that God is one and that our stewardship will pay attention to the unity we are called to; so that everything we do is to be for God's glory and the benefit of humankind.