

Pentecostal Theological Education – for the 21st Century

Dr. Keith Warrington

Vice-Principal and Director of Doctoral Studies
Regents Theological College, England

presented 23 August 2010
at the World Alliance *for* Pentecostal Theological Education Consultation
Stockholm, Sweden

Overview

Introduction

- Would Jesus have sent his disciples to a modern Bible College?

Pentecostals and theological education –

- the past
 - short courses
 - focussed on training for pastoral ministry
 - anti-intellectual
- the present and future
 - the increasing recognition of the importance of teaching
 - the redeeming of the mind and scholarship
 - the value of exploration
 - contextual training

Pentecostals and the Academy

Important factors in the learning journey of the student

- The necessity of a context for spiritual formation
- The provision of a place for the Spirit
- The students
 - Their journey before they come to College
 - Their intended destination after they leave College
 - Determine the appropriate syllabus
- The teachers
 - Motivate teachers to learn
 - Teach with application
 - Communicate effectively
 - Be enthusiastic
 - Adapt to the audience
 - Be creative and strategic

Conclusion

The Reading

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...

You are the salt of the world...you are the light of the world...love your enemies...pray like this, ‘Our Father who art in heaven’...don’t be anxious about life”.

And Peter said “Do you want us to take this literally or should we contextualise it for first century pre-modern non-Westernised Jews?”

Andrew said, “How many books did you use for that lecture and have you included them in your bibliography with full references?”

James said, “Is this coming up in the exam at the end of the semester?”

Philip said, “Do you want us to memorise *all* these points?”

Matthew said, “Can you go over the third point; I didn’t have time to write it down”

Bartholomew said, “When you said that we should be lights in the world, did you mean that we be like candles in the world or searchlights or these new halogen bulbs?”

Judas said, “Do we *all* have to do this?”

John said, “I’m sorry, I think I dozed off; did I miss anything”

Thomas said, “I’ve got some questions”

Thaddaeus said, “Is it coffee time?”

One of the Scribes asked, “Jesus, what were your aims for this lecture?”

One of the Pharisees asked, “Jesus, what were your proposed learning outcomes?”

Herod asked, “Jesus, has this been passed by the Jerusalem University validation board?”

Pilate asked, “Jesus, does this compare favourably academically with the teaching in the Academy at Rome?”

Hudson Taylor said, “You didn’t mention missionaries”

Isaiah said, “You didn’t mention me”

Paul said, “What, no tongues?”

And Jesus...wept

Introduction

Jesus had a very clear agenda when he set up his learning programme...to create disciples. Having established who he wanted to train and what he wanted them to be trained to do, he set about training them efficiently and teaching them content that was relevant in a style that was appropriate. Who are we creating in our programmes and are we succeeding?

Most Bible Colleges have already considered these issues and continually revisit them as part of their ongoing development in meeting the needs of their students and constituencies. The timing of this conference is significant as the questions we are asking are being asked by others in the Church.¹

Pentecostals and theological education - the past

▪ **Short courses**

For most of their existence, Pentecostal Bible Colleges have been the venues for short term preparation for ministry, not places for exploration and contemplation. Studies were not expected to last for longer than 2 years and were often much shorter, the teachers often being successful or experienced ministers or evangelists.

▪ **Focus on training for pastoral ministry**

The major purpose for the establishment of such Colleges was to prepare people for evangelism and leading churches rather than for objective enquiry and development of Pentecostal scholarship.² McClung writes of study conducted there as, “more experiential than cognitive, more activist than reflective, more actualized than analyzed”.³ Also, in the early days of Pentecostalism, there was a strong belief in the imminent return of Jesus and therefore to engage in

¹ Ruthven, J., “Are Pentecostal Seminaries a Good Idea?”, *Pneuma* 26.2 (2004) pp. 339-345 Yung, H., “Critical Issues Facing Theological Education in Asia”, *Transformation* (Oct - Dec. 1995) p. 1 (pp. 1-6).

² Maachia, F.D., “The Struggle for Global Witness: Shifting Paradigms in Pentecostal Theology”, in Dempster, M.W., B.D. Klaus and D. Petersen (eds.), *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999).p. 9 (pp. 8-29).

³ McClung, L.G., “Salvation Shock Troops”, in Smith, H.B., (ed.) *Pentecostals from the Inside Out*, (Wheaton: Victory, 1990) pp. 81-90 (86).

extended periods of study was felt to be inappropriate.⁴ Similarly, in the (positive) quest for evangelism and pastoral leadership, education has generally suffered; while church growth has emphasised the status of the pastor/preacher, the teacher has often been marginalised. Kennedy makes the valid point that “Pentecostals have historically focused their attention on missionary projects rather than on establishing research institutions”⁵.

▪ **Anti-intellectual tendencies**

In an interesting empirical investigation, Kay demonstrates that, as recently as 1999, 36% of UK Pentecostal ministers had not received any formal theological training while only 10% had gained a degree in theology.⁶ This reflects the anti-intellectual tradition that has existed in Pentecostalism for much of its history. In recent years, there has been considerable discussion by Pentecostals concerning the role and development of Bible Colleges and Christian education⁷ and in some areas of the world, there has been a resurgence in the growth of Pentecostal Bible Colleges and scholarship.⁸ However, in other regions, this has

⁴ Wilson, L.F., “Bible Institutes, Colleges, Universities” in Burgess, S.M., Van der Maas, E.M., (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) p. 373 (pp. 372- 380).

⁵ Kennedy, J.R., “Anti-Intellectualism”, in *Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity* (ed.) Burgess, S., (London: Routledge, 2006) pp. 35-39.

⁶ Kay, W.K., “Sociology of British Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements”, in Burgess, S.M., Van der Maas, E.M., (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) p. 1081 (pp. 1080-1083).

⁷ Warrington, K., “Would Jesus have sent his disciples to Bible College?”, *JEPTA* 23 (2003) pp. 30-44; Tarr, D., “Transcendence, Immanence, and the Emerging Pentecostal Academy”, in Ma, W., Menzies, R.P., (eds.) *Pentecostalism in Context. Essays in Honour of William W. Menzies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) pp. 195-222; Robeck, C.M.Jr., “Seminaries and Graduate Schools”, in Burgess, S.M., Van der Maas, E.M., (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) pp. 1045-1050; Ferris, R.W., (ed.) *Renewal in Theological Education: Strategies for Change*, Billy Graham Center: Wheaton College (1990); Lee, E., “What the Academy needs from the Church”, *AJPS*, 3.2 (July 2000); pp. 311-318; Hittenberger, J.S., “Toward a Pentecostal Philosophy of Education”, *Pneuma*, 23.2 (Fall 2001) 217-244; Dovre, P.J., (ed.) *The Future of Religious Colleges*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (2002); Johns, C.B., *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy Among the Oppressed*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) pp. 111-140; Kay, W.K., “Pentecostal Education”, *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 25.2 (2004) pp. 229-239; Sepúlveda, J., “The Challenge for Theological Education from a Pentecostal Standpoint”, *Ministerial Formation*, 87 (1999) pp. 29-34.

⁸ Wilson, “Bible...”, pp. 375-379; Espinosa, G., “Bible Institutes, Spanish-speaking”, in Burgess, S.M., Van der Maas, E.M., (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) pp. 38-381; Hunter, H.D., “International Pentecostal-Charismatic Scholarly Associations”, in Burgess, S.M., Van der Maas, E.M., (eds.) *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) pp. 795-797; Hedlund, R.E., “Critique of Pentecostal Mission by a Friendly Evangelical”, *AJPS* 8.1 (2005) pp. 83-84 (pp. 67-94); Sun, B., “Assemblies of God Theological Education in Asia Pacific: A Reflection”, *AJPS* 3.2 (2000) pp. 232-241; Daniels, D., “Live so can use me anytime, Lord, anywhere

not been reflected, Sepulveda, for example, describing Chilean Pentecostals as still exhibiting a “strong anti-theological, anti-academic prejudice”.⁹ Similarly, Hedlund cautions against this tendency among some Indian Pentecostals¹⁰ as does Ayuk of Nigerian Pentecostals,¹¹ Larbi acknowledging that African “Pentecostals would like to hide behind closed doors and pray instead of presenting the gospel at the open market of ideas”.¹² This propensity is often most espoused where the leaders are less educated as well as where the perception of ministerial success is viewed as being solely or significantly due to the Spirit.¹³ Furthermore, in general, Pentecostals have preferred to live in contexts dominated by exclamation marks rather than questions marks. However, there have been significant developments in Pentecostal education.

Pentecostals and theological education - the present and future

- **The increasing recognition of the importance of teaching**

The concept of teaching in Pentecostalism is being increasingly recognised as crucially important to its wellbeing. This is particularly the case in regions where revival has been a prominent feature for the past decades; there, the concern is that a rapidly growing Church may implode as a result of shallow biblical traditioning. Although theological reflection in the early decades of Pentecostalism was often defensive, intermittent and narrow in scope, the more recent decades have seen a marked increase in scholarship and exploration by Pentecostals of issues relating to their theology, spirituality and history. Bowdle encourages this development, noting that “Jesus is Lord of learning”.¹⁴

(sic): Theological Education in the Church of God in Christ, 1970-1997”, *AJPS* 3.2 (2000) pp. 295-310; Hittenberger, J.S., “Globalization, ‘Marketization’, and the Mission of Pentecostal Higher Education in Africa”, *Pneuma* 26.2 (2004) pp. 182-215; Palmer, M., “Orienting our Lives: The Importance of a Liberal Education for Pentecostals in the Twenty First Century”, *Pneuma* 23.2 (2001) pp. 204-206.

⁹ Sepulveda, J., “The Challenge for Theological Education from a Pentecostal Standpoint”, *Ministerial Formation*, 87 (1999) pp. 29-34 (29); Wilson, “Bible...”, p. 374.

¹⁰ Hedlund, “Critique...”, p.89.

¹¹ Ayuk, A.A., “Portrait of a Nigerian Pentecostal Missionary”, *AJPS* 8.1 (2005) pp. 133-136 (pp. 117-141).

¹² Larbi, E.K., *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001) p. 447

¹³ Pagaialii, T., “The Pentecostal Movement of Samoa: Reaching the Uttermost”, *AJPS* 7.1 (2004) pp. 273-275 (pp. 265-279).

¹⁴ Bowdle, D.N., “Informed Pentecostalism: An Alternative Paradigm”, in *The Spirit and the Mind. Essays in Informed Pentecostalism. To honor Dr. Donald Bowdle. Presented on his 65th Birthday*, (ed.) Cross, T.L., Powery, E.B., (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000) pp. 12, 13-15 (pp. 9-19);

- **The redeeming of the mind and scholarship**

Historically, there has been a fear of the intellect by Pentecostals with regard to the interpretation of Scripture. Indeed, for much of its history, the notion of a "Pentecostal scholar" was an oxymoron and Pentecostals engaged in a pre-critical engagement with the text (and many still do).¹⁵ For example, the willingness to interact with the text whilst benefiting from some of the twentieth century methods of biblical interpretation has only in recent years been accepted by some Pentecostals.¹⁶ A number of reasons may be adduced for this tendency:

- It has partially resulted from the historical roots of Pentecostalism, which mainly attracted adherents from the working, and therefore less well educated, classes. Furthermore, early Pentecostals were opposed by other denominations, which were often populated by more professional, and better educated, people.
- It has also resulted from the belief that the Spirit is the sole interpreter of Scripture; any competitor to his role has been viewed with suspicion. Consequently, there has developed a reticence to credit the mind with significant value as far as interpretation of the Scripture is concerned for fear that it might militate against the work of the Spirit who has been given to lead believers into truth.
- It has also been prompted by the fact that those who were engaged in critical biblical analysis for much of the twentieth century were reflecting liberal and rationalist perspectives relating to the inspiration of the Scriptures and the person of Christ, whilst exhibiting antagonism to the idea of a miracle working God and a charismatic Church, inspired and empowered by the Spirit. Because of the provenance of such individuals, it was largely assumed that the fruit of their labour was to be ignored or condemned.¹⁷ Thus, they were rarely interacted with and the notion of significant biblical analysis was to lie dormant for most of the Pentecostal era. Because, of this, Pentecostals lacked training in using literary analytical tools and they retreated into the artificial

Bundy notes that in early Pentecostalism in Norway, there was much evidence of theological dialogue, even of controversial issues (Bundy, D.D., "Historical and Theological Analysis of the Pentecostal Church in Norway", *JEPTA* 20 (2000) p. 82 (pp. 66-92).

¹⁵ Cargal, T., "Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy", *Pneuma*, 15.2 (1993) p. 179 (pp. 163-188).

¹⁶ Rice, F.B., "The Holy Spirit and the Intellect", *Paraclete*, 10.3 (1976) pp. 3-7.

¹⁷ Hammer, R.R., "From Atheism to a High View of Scripture", *Paraclete*, 16.1 (1982) pp. 16-18.

security of assuming that they had the truth and that, because they relied so much on the Spirit as their guide, no further discussion of the text was needed.

However, it is precisely a careful use of the intellect that has increasingly been recognised by most Pentecostals as holding significant value for its development and protection from error.¹⁸ This is demonstrated by the development of graduate and postgraduate education for Pentecostals worldwide¹⁹ and a recent flurry of academic journals²⁰ dedicated to issues of interest to Pentecostals. Pentecostals are increasing redeeming the concept of scholarship, enabling and encouraging those who have been so gifted to engage in it for the benefit of the Church, the development and training of leaders²¹ and the exploration of truth.²² It is now much more acceptable to acknowledge that one's intellect is God given and that it can be used for the glory of God in the context of teaching and research.²³ Allied with the Spirit, a powerful combination is anticipated.

- **The value of exploration**

Colleges are increasingly recognising that they are not meant to be places where sacred Pentecostal dogmas are safeguarded at the expense of encouraging students to think about their beliefs. Learning needs to be more than simply receiving and reproducing information. It is the exploration of truth (not simply of key concepts

¹⁸ Bundrick, D., "Ye need not that any man teach you", *Paraclete*, 15.4 (1981) pp. 15-17; Gear, S.D., "The Holy Spirit and the Mind", *Paraclete*, 18.4 (1984) pp. 25-30.

¹⁹ Brooks, M.P., "Bible Colleges and the Expansion of the Pentecostal Movement", *Paraclete*, 23.2 (1989) pp. 9-17; Tarr, D., "Transcendence, Immanence, and the Emerging Pentecostal Academy", *Pentecostalism in Context*, (eds.) Ma, W., Menzies, R.P., (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) pp. 195-222.

²⁰ *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Theology, Australian Journal of Pentecostal Theology, Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association, Journal of Pentecostal Theology, Pneuma, Pneuma Review, Spirit and Church* plus online journals.

²¹ Pandrea, R., "A Historical and Theological Analysis of the Pentecostal Church in Romania", *JEPTA* 21 (2001) pp. 128-129 (109-135).

²² Ma, W., "Biblical Studies in the Pentecostal Tradition: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow", in Dempster, M.W., B.D. Klaus and D. Petersen (eds.), *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999) pp. 57-64 (52-69); Bowdle, "Informed...", pp. 9-10; Brenkus, J., "A Historical and Theological Analysis of the Pentecostal Church in the Czech and Slovak Republics", *JEPTA* 20 (2000) p. 63 (pp. 49-65); Jacobsen, D., "Knowing the Doctrine of Pentecostals: The Scholastic Theology of the Assemblies of God, 1930-1955 in Bays, D., "The Protestant Missionary Establishment and the Pentecostal Movement" in Blumhofer, E.L., R.P. Spittler and G.A. Wacker (eds.) *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999) pp. 90-107.

²³ Hollenweger, W.J., "Pentecostalism and Academic Theology: From Confrontation to Cooperation", *Epta Bulletin*, 11. 1 & 2 (1992) pp. 42-49; Nañez, R.M., *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds? A Call to Use God's Gift of the Intellect* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

of one's cultural or religious heritage). If a learning process exists solely to transmit and reinforce a cultural and theological heritage, it cannot empower the learner to think creatively, reflect independently and articulate transparently; it cannot ask the awkward questions for fear of what answers may be raised.

It is a positive sign that Pentecostals are exploring their own histories objectively. This sometimes results in painful discoveries but it demonstrates an integrity and readiness to be less polarised and polemical in maintaining one's distinctive Pentecostal views. Increasingly, study is dialogical and contextual - far removed from the programmed memorisation of biblical texts to undergird particular doctrines felt to be important to the Pentecostal constituency concerned. Instead of seeking to indoctrinate students with pre-determined ideas or truths, Pentecostal Colleges are becoming centres where learning is facilitated and enquiry is encouraged in a Spirit-inspired context where commitment to integrity, transparency and authenticity is prized.

At the same time, whereas Pentecostal theology was taught using textbooks written by Evangelical authors, which in some areas (the role of women in ministry, supernatural phenomena, the inerrancy of the Bible) tended to gradually move Pentecostal students away from their traditional values, students are guided in their exploration whilst benefiting from literature written by Pentecostal scholars.²⁴

- **Contextual training**

College faculties are becoming more interested in offering education that meets the needs of students, including church leaders,²⁵ rather than follow a programme of study that was relevant for previous eras and offered solutions for questions that were asked by earlier audiences.²⁶ They are becoming more aware of the need to formulate syllabi that reflect the needs of their students' future vocations rather

²⁴ Thomas, J.C., "Pentecostal Explorations of the New Testament: Teaching New Testament Introduction in a Pentecostal Seminary", *JPT* 11.1 (2002) pp. 120-129.

²⁵ Hathaway, M.R., "Trends in Ministerial Training", (EPTA Conference paper, Brussels, 1980) pp. 16-27.

²⁶ Jurgensen, H., "Theological Trends and our Pentecostal Commitments", (EPTA Conference paper, Brussels, 1980) pp. 28-49.

than an unchanging framework of learning.²⁷ Theology is increasingly being applied and only taught if it is able to be applied. As such, since the 1950's and increasingly, the 1980's, Pentecostal College's curricula have been determined by Pentecostal faculties, even when the qualification receives university or governmental accreditation. My own College has sought to apply at least two components to their programmes of learning that relate to this issue. Thus, they have emphasised the *applied* nature of their training, choosing to only offer a BA in Applied Theology on the undergraduate track. The other element stressed is the *variety* of tracks that students may concentrate on, depending on their future aspirations.

The Church and the Academy

A symbiotic partnership needs to be strengthened between Colleges and church constituencies who send students there in order to maximise the learning process for all concerned, recognising the different emphases and expectations stressed by each. The fear of being marginalized from the training of future leaders should cause all involved in Pentecostal College education to reconsider that which they are offering and its relevance. The local church often functions as a hermeneutical context for the learning and practice of the student. It can provide the College with the knowledge as to whether it is providing that which the churches need; the Academy must never forget that it is the servant of the Church (not its replacement) and that as such, it must prove its value by helping the Church.²⁸ Discussions between leaders of each institution therefore ought to take place regularly for the purposes of listening to each other, understanding each other's priorities and to celebrate the fact that God has gifted each to the other. Practical measures can be undertaken to facilitate support frameworks for the benefit of both; this demands time, patience and sensitivity but will ensure that they do not miss each other on the way. The danger otherwise is that there will be a clash of priorities without the opportunity to recognise the value of the emphases of both the Church and the Academy.

²⁷ Macchia, "The Struggle...", p. 9; Flattery, G.M., "Accreditation of Pentecostal Colleges in Europe", (EPTA Conference paper, Brussels, 1980); Petts, D., "Classroom Methods and Theological Education" (EPTA Conference paper, Brussels, 1980) pp. 50-55.

²⁸ Dresselhaus, R., "What Can the Academy do for the Church?", *AJPS* 3.2 (2000) pp. 319-323.

Syllabi therefore need to be envisaged that reflect the needs of society and the Church as well as students, rather than reflecting a model of the past that is assumed to be normative but is rarely tested. Both groups need to talk to each other with ears open wide. At the same time, Colleges ought to proactively consider ways of supporting learning and training processes that may be taking place in the churches while celebrating their strengths for they have great value in “promoting deep knowledge, careful research, and critical evaluation of thought” and do not, by default, restrict charismatic expression.²⁹

Important factors in the learning journey of the student

- **Form a context of spiritual formation**

From earliest times, some Pentecostals and others have spoken in disparaging terms of Bible Schools, describing seminaries as “cemeteries”, lampooning the degrees earned and questioning their relevance or necessity. Although these comments have often been exaggerations, nevertheless, some Colleges have lost their expectation of the supernatural, their spirituality has been less clearly Pentecostal and they have been less vocational.³⁰ This has been in part due to the personalities and gifts of those who have functioned in educational contexts but also due to the fact that spirituality is the result of personal discipline, not facilitated by the lecturer. At the same time, students enter Colleges today with considerably more unhelpful “baggage”, having experienced more dysfunctional lifestyles than their peers in earlier days. Furthermore, many have not benefitted from an adequate spiritual formation in their local church prior to entering College; they come immature, damaged and lacking the wholeness that would have enabled a positive experience from the start. All these present challenges to the College. Because of this context, it is even more important that Pentecostal Colleges provide a context for proactive spiritual formation.³¹

²⁹ Castleberry, J.L., “Pentecostal Seminaries are Essential to the Future Health of the Church”, *Pneuma* 26.2 (2004) pp. 346-354 (351)

³⁰ Tarr, D., “Transcendence, Immanence, and the Emerging Pentecostal Academy”, in Ma, W., Menzies, R.P., (eds.) *Pentecostalism in Context. Essays in Honour of William W. Menzies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) pp. 206-207, 211-212 (pp. 195-222).

³¹ Wenk, M., “Do we need a distinct European Pentecostal/Charismatic approach to theological education” *JEPTA* 23 (2003) pp. 61-62 (pp. 58-71).

There is a danger that theology can be taught in the absence of a spiritual framework. However, as Hudson notes, education and training for ministry cannot be in the context of “a disembodied spirituality”.³² In this respect, it may be appropriate to re-visit the topic of “the call of God”, once the normal reason for people applying to Bible Colleges in order to encourage the value of recognising the role of God’s guidance in the determining of one’s destiny.

The learning experience must feed in to the spirituality of the student, transform character, impart vision as well as provide the opportunity to learn.³³ This must start with the teachers themselves, McKinney encouraging “faculty to model a desire for continual spiritual renewal”.³⁴ It is often the lasting impact of the life of a teacher that affects students more than the information they have gained from the lectures. Also, the occasions where encounters with God are more likely, including corporate worship, need to be centralised in the curriculum.³⁵ Regular opportunities should be timetabled to gauge the spiritual “temperature” of the College (students and faculty) and to re-visit the frameworks in place for development of the spirituality of the community (personally and corporately).

- **The provision of a place for the Spirit**

The best sermon is the one that may be defined as prophetic, that is to say, it includes a particular word or becomes a personal word from God to the listeners. Even though the preacher may not be cognizant of it, the individual hearer may receive it as a specific communication from God.³⁶ In the pedagogical process that occurs in Pentecostal Colleges, there needs also to be an involvement of the Spirit and recognition that the learning journey is a holy one in which the Spirit is

³² Hudson, D.N., “It’s not what we do: it’s the way we do it. Uncomfortable thoughts for a lecturer in a residential Bible College at the turn of the century”, *JEPTA* 23 (2003) pp. 45-57.

³³ McKinney, E.L., “Some Spiritual Aspects of Pentecostal Education: A Personal Journey”, *AJPS* 3.2 (2000) pp. 253-279; Alvarez, M., “Distinctives of Pentecostal Education”, *AJPS* 3.2 (2000) pp. 282-293.

³⁴ McKinney, “Some...”, p. 262.

³⁵ Hittenberger, J.S., “Toward a Pentecostal Philosophy of Education”, *Pneuma* 23.2 (2001) p. 223.

³⁶ McKay, J., “When the Veil is Taken Away: The Impact of Prophetic Experience on Biblical Interpretation”, *JPT* 5 (1994) pp. 28-29.

present as the great Teacher.³⁷ Anderson calls for a “renewed focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in terms of learning and spiritual formation”.³⁸

Hudson warns, “The ultimate irony is that the Spirit, that blows wherever he wills, has been codified, systematised and analysed”³⁹ whereas, more importantly, he needs to be experienced and encountered. This need not be identified only in worship settings but by an awareness that he is speaking through the lecture, the learning journey, the learners, the teachers, the questions, the probing analysis and the silence. This calls for a particular type of learning environment. Teachers need to be Spirit-led learners and model Spirit-controlled lives; they also need to recognise the Spirit’s presence in the lives of their students, facilitating the students’ exploration of the Spirit; finally, they need to give the Spirit the opportunity to be a guide and dialogue partner in the learning process.

That which is fundamental to Pentecostalism is a personal, experiential encounter of the Spirit of God.⁴⁰ Pentecostals aim to know God experientially, whether it is via an intellectual recognition of his being or an emotional appreciation of his character.⁴¹ It is this that best identifies the Pentecostal heartbeat. Christenson describes Pentecostalism as “Christianity standing on tiptoe, expecting something to happen”.⁴² Hollenweger deduces that Pentecostalism is best expressed as

³⁷ Johns, C.B., “The Meaning of Pentecost for Theological Education”, *Ministerial Formation* 87 (1999) pp. 42-47.

³⁸ Anderson, B.A., “Missional Orientation and its Implications for Pentecostal Theological Education”, *JEPTA* 26.2 (2000) p. 145 (pp. 134-136); Hittenberger, J.S., “Toward a Pentecostal Philosophy of Education”, *Pneuma*, 23.2 (Fall 2001) 217-244.

³⁹ Hudson, “It’s not what we do...”, p. 49.

⁴⁰ Kärkkäinen, V.-M., “‘The Re-Turn of Religion in the Third Millennium’: Pentecostalism and Postmodernities”, (EPCRA Conference paper, University of Uppsala, 2007) p. 5; Zegwaart, H., “Christian Experience in Community”, *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 11 (Feb. 2002); Albrecht, D.E., *Rites in the Spirit. A ritual approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) p. 10; Gee, *The Pentecostal...*, p. 30; du Plessis, “Golden...”, p. 194; Nichol, *Pentecostalism*, p. 55; Anderson, G.L., “Pentecostals believe in more than tongues”, Smith, H.B., (ed.) *Pentecostals from the Inside Out*, (Wheaton: Victory, 1990) pp. 53-64 (55-56); Asamoah-Gyadu, J.K., “An African Pentecostal...”, p. 314; Coss, T.L., “A Proposal to Break the Ice: What can Pentecostal Theology offer Evangelical Theology?”, *JPT* 10.2 (2002) pp. 49-58. For a non-Pentecostal Roman Catholic enquiry of the relationship between power, experience and the Spirit, see Cooke, B., *Power and the Spirit of God: Toward an Experience-Based Pneumatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). In it, he describes himself as someone who is in search of an experience-based pneumatology.

⁴¹ Anderson, *An Introduction...*, p. 256; Kärkkäinen, *Spiritual...*, p. 50; Semple McPherson, *This...*, p. 713; Spittler, “Spirituality...”, 1097; Spittler, “Spirituality...”, p. 1096.

⁴² Christenson, L., “Pentecostalism’s Forgotten Forerunner” in Synan, *Aspects...*, 27.

providing an opportunity for believers to engage in “an adventure in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and each other”.⁴³

However, the Spirit is in danger of being marginalised and his ability to change the lives of believers is being overlooked. Our Pentecostal DNA suggests that we desire encounters with the Spirit but our Pentecostal praxis indicates that such encounters are narrowly focussed; in truth, most Pentecostals do not anticipate they will encounter God often or much. Pentecostal Colleges need to embrace this challenge, explore and reflect the remarkable Spirit to their students so that they can encounter the teacher of truth and develop their relationship with him with consequences that are potentially world changing.

- **The students**

Their journey before they come to College

Teaching in Bible Colleges is best offered when it has been appropriately contextualised in the life settings of the students.⁴⁴ Thus, it is important to offer a learning environment for students that takes into consideration their previous experiences, spiritual journey and cultural distinctives.⁴⁵ The road travelled in the educational process needs to reflect the road already travelled by students whilst enabling their level of consciousness to be raised to encompass vistas relevant to them though, as yet, not experienced by them.

Such education calls for a more individualistic, intensive and dynamic approach that may not be easily replicated in a pre-determined format which includes set reading and set notes and that assumes a static pedagogy within carefully defined limits. However, the best teacher responds to the prior experience of the students or stimulates their curiosity, then goes to the subject and applies it.

⁴³ Hollenweger, “Past...”, pp. 43-45.

⁴⁴ Anderson, A., “The ‘Fury and Wonder’? Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality in Theological Education”, *Pneuma*, 23.2 (2001) 287-302; Wanak, L., “Theological Education and the Role of Teachers in the 21st century: A Look at the Asia Pacific Region”, *Journal of Asian Mission*, 2.1 (2000) p. 11 (pp. 3-24)

⁴⁵ Warrington, “Would...”, pp. 39-41.

Their intended destination after they leave College

Before a learning journey is determined, it is also valuable to determine the intended outcome as anticipated by the learners. To try to meet the individual aspirations of students is a challenge but one that must be explored carefully to facilitate a relevant and empowering learning journey. It means that one may need to consider offering different learning journeys, providing core and elective modules that are relevant to each student, as far as possible. In the process, students may be incorporated as partners in the learning journey in which the teacher is a guide and fellow traveller though not exclusively an authoritative determiner of the destination or the road to be travelled or the views or detours on the way. Without the institution of such a contextualized theological education, there is the danger that syllabi will address issues that are absent from the lives of those who are taught from them.⁴⁶

Oprah Winfrey writes, “We have to steer **our** true life’s course...whatever **our** calling is in life. The whole purpose of being here is to figure out what that is as soon as possible, so you go about the business of being on track, of not being owned by what your parents said, what society said, what other people think...your role is to exceed other people’s expectations and be defined by your own”. Pentecostal educators need to embrace the challenge of helping students fulfil their dreams and achieve their objectives; , they are to be facilitators in the process. But they cannot facilitate if they are ignorant of the dreams of those in their care.

Determine the appropriate syllabus

Once the outcome has been determined, the syllabus may be developed to ensure that the learning outcomes can be achieved and the aspirations of the students fulfilled. The prospective pastor may be more interested in exploring such issues as cohabitation, genetic engineering and gender distinctives while the scholar, teacher or evangelist will have different interests and quests. What must not occur is that we be so rooted in the educational status quo that we do not provide a dynamic response to contemporary questions facing different students that are

⁴⁶ Anderson, A., “The ‘Fury and Wonder’: Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality in Theological Education”, *Pneuma* 23.2 (2001) pp. 287-302.

centrally important to them because of their future trajectories. The question for teachers thus could increasingly become not so much “how/what should I teach?” but “how/what should my students learn?” That itself is based on the prior questions, “What do they need to learn?” and “What have they learned thus far?”. What one is considering here is a personal development plan that is partly based on one’s pre-College development as well as one’s post-College destination. This demands much more personal involvement on the part of the College but will result in a much better personal fulfilment of visions and vocations.

Similarly, our mode of lecturing should vary depending on the training that is being offered. Thus, if we are training disciples, the mode of lecturing is less appropriate; the model of disciple maker is better, and that will involve a different framework of learning. Three concepts dominate Western university education, namely, *critical and evaluative* examination, *disciplined* research and *orderly* systems of learning offered in a framework of teaching and critical enquiry.⁴⁷ Though valid and laudable concepts, they may be less relevant for some vocations than for others. Pentecostal educators need to be alert to the danger of offering a core curriculum that is static and not appropriately contextualised to the journey of our students thus far and their development thereafter.

- **The teachers**

- ***Motivate teachers to learn***

- Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804) was an American Statesman who wrote these words, “Some give me credit for being a genius. All the genius I have is this – when I have a subject in mind, I study it profoundly. Day and night it is before me. My mind becomes pervaded with it...the effort which I have made is what people are pleased to call genius. It is the fruit of labour and thought”. Teachers must model that they are learners too and work hard at their craft. To be a scholar, one can only be a scholar. Although not all teachers are destined to be scholars exclusively, they need to aspire to be the best that they can be in their chosen discipline and thus act as role models for anyone watching. Michelangelo (1475-

⁴⁷ Kelsey, D.H., *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans (1993) p. 13; Farley, E., *The Fragility of Knowledge*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press (1988) pp. 4-5.

1564), the Italian painter and sculptor wrote, “If people knew how hard I work to gain my mastery, it would not seem so wonderful at all”

In learning, educators also need to be listeners, learners as well as teachers,⁴⁸ askers of questions not just providers of answers, indulging in dialogue with fellow learners, not functioning only in a teacher-pupil, expert-novice relationship but also in a Learner-learner relationship. The role of the teacher is not to be an expert who gathers together ever-increasing knowledge, some of which may be imparted to the listener; rather, they are to be facilitators, learning as they teach. Kierkegaard (1813-1855) said, “If God held all truth in (the) right hand, and in (the) left hand held the lifelong pursuit of it, (God) would choose the left hand”. An enthusiastic pursuit of one’s subject is crucial to the learning journey.

Teach with application

There is a great danger that education has spawned a new breed of people...professional listeners. Even this is speculative if the maxim is correct that “a lecturer is a person who speaks in someone else’s sleep”. It is estimated that at any one time, only 25% of an audience is actively listening to a preacher; are lecturers likely to achieve better results? If the lecture involves people being talked at, the lecturer won’t be listened to. Teaching must involve interchange, taking into consideration the contexts of those present. Anna was just six years old; she loved playing school. “Why not play Sunday school?” asked her mother. “No”, said Anna, “All we do there is sit and listen. We don’t learn anything”. If lectures involve sitting and listening, we are living in a dream world if we presume that students always listening, let alone learning. Lectures must be much more than simply spoken books; in fact, if a lecture simply repeats information that is already included in a multiplicity of books, it is surely advisable and cheaper to buy the books.

⁴⁸ cf. Harkness, A.G., “De-schooling the Theological Seminary: An Appropriate Paradigm for Effective Ministerial Formation”, *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 4.3 (2001) pp. 150-151 (pp. 141-154).

Plueddeman⁴⁹ devised the rail fence model of education. As a rail fence is made up of two rails held together by fence posts, so also educators must incorporate two metaphorical rails in their education methodology. The top rail equals truth; the lower one equals life and the role of the educator is to facilitate constant interaction between them both. Truth without life will result in deadness while life without truth will result in simplistic and short-lived experience. Harkness similarly speaks of the need of having a “praxiological agenda”.⁵⁰

Interestingly, Jesus taught wisdom (and how to develop it) more than he imparted information (and how to enlarge it); “how” more than “what” was of interest to him - “why” more than “when”; who you are more than what you know; who you can become more than what you can retain. Closely allied to the content of his teaching was its context. The content was imparted in the context of praxis and practising - less knowledge and more know-how; less information and more application, less intensive data presentation and more inspiration and transformation; no notes and handouts but hands-on-experience; less cerebral and more personal development; less intellectual and more intuitive; not just the impartation of information but the directing of self activity; pragmatic not idealistic; not only giving what he thought the person ought to know but also giving what the person was capable of receiving (Mk. 4:33; Jn. 16:12). Jesus is the best paradigm of brilliant pedagogy.

Groome comments on the two main terms used to describe Jewish teaching methodology. Both (*yārâh*, *yāda*) may be used to define the concepts of teaching and informing others. However, the latter carries with it the notion of learning via experiential encounter with a given subject.⁵¹ Rice, building on these perspectives, suggests Pentecostal educators should encapsulate their teaching in experiential

⁴⁹ Plueddemann, J., “The Real Disease of the Sunday School: Rail Fence Analogy for Curriculum Design”, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 8.2 (1972) pp. 88-92.

⁵⁰ Harkness, “De-schooling...”, p. 152.

⁵¹ Groome, T.H., *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980) pp. 139-151; Becker, M., “A Tenet under Examination: Reflections on the Pentecostal Hermeneutical Approach”, *JEPTA* 24 (2004) pp. 38-39 (pp. 30-48).

and dynamic forms.⁵² This will demand creativity on their part and even asking their students how they learn best and adapting to their requirements.

Thomas Fuller (1608-1661), English minister and writer, wrote, “The great end of life is not knowledge, but action”. Much earlier, Seneca (4BC - 65AD), the Roman poet and statesman, said, “As long as you live, keep learning how to live”. Truth without life and application will result in deadness while life without truth will result in simplistic and short-lived experience; both are necessary. However, while Colleges excel in the appropriation of truth, they need to be careful that they do not assume that truth on its own will become life – it must be strategically and intentionally applied. When Jesus taught, he did not simply speak but also he demonstrated his message (thus, he did not simply offer facts about demons but demonstrated by action what they were and how to deal with them).

In this respect, Lebar⁵³ is right when he concludes that a student’s “growth is determined not by what he hears, but by what he does about what he hears”.

Communicate effectively

Be enthusiastic

Norman Vincent Peale wrote, “If you are not getting as much from life as you want to, examine the state of your enthusiasm”. The written and spoken word will always be a poor second to the living voice that is enthusiastic, interactive and transformational. With reference to education, Alexander⁵⁴ speaks of the role of the “living teacher” as being crucial in the early Church. Consequently, lectures should be positively anticipated by tutors and students, interesting, and enjoyable. Encourage fellow teachers to be creative; refuse to be average in your teaching; work hard to earn the ears of your students; listen to yourself; get others to listen to you and comment on your style and delivery; be spontaneous; introduce variety (uncertainty) into your learning journey and style of teaching.

⁵² Rice, M.L., “Pneumatic Experience as Teaching Methodology an Pentecostal Tradition”, *AJPS* 5.2 (2002) pp. 295-296 (pp. 289-312).

⁵³ Lebar, L., Plueddemann, J., *Education that is Christian*, Wheaton: Victor (1989) p. 166.

⁵⁴ Alexander, L., “The Living Voice. Skepticism towards the Written Word in Early Christian and in Graeco-Roman Texts”, *The Bible in three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, (eds. Clines, D.J.A., Fowl, S.E., Porter, S.E.,) Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (1990) p. 244 (pp. 221-247).

Adapt to the audience

Jesus was sensitive to the needs of his audience. He taught his disciples in bite sized morsels of teaching, easily digestible, but also provided learning opportunities in the context of continuous mission activity. He didn't teach in a vacuum; he only taught that which they needed to know at any given moment and he presented it often in snack form; and when they were full, the feeding stopped.⁵⁵

The crowds, disciples, the opposition, enquirers - each were dealt with differently. Thus, in a situation of fear aroused by a storm, he taught about trust (Matt. 8:23-27). When the disciples felt alone and insecure, he taught them about the role of the Spirit as helper (Jn. 14:1-17). He sparred with Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-21) in a highly articulate, complicated and verbally stylish, question and answer session that would have probably been too sophisticated for the disciples. In the following narrative (4:1-26), Jesus aroused a woman's curiosity, displayed supernatural knowledge about her and led her to himself through pictures of water and worship. To the Pharisees and their scribes, he offered acted dramas to help them in their voyage of discovery. The question to be addressed consistently is how one can apply aspects of his pedagogy to current teaching styles.⁵⁶

Teaching in Pentecostal Colleges is often determined by the length of modules and lectures; it is a constant challenge to ensure that students receive that which is right for them. In order to teach them in ways that ensure that the teaching process is best achieved, it is useful from time to time to reconsider the teaching programme (the times of the teaching sessions, the time of day, the locations, setting, length of time of the teaching, seating arrangements, light and heat). This might involve a paradigm change away from learning how to teach, to learning more about learning in order to teach.

⁵⁵ See further Collinson S., "Making Disciples: An Educational Strategy for Use Beyond the Time of Jesus", *Journal of Christian Education*, 43. 3 (2000) pp. 15-16 (pp. 7-18); Stevens, R.P., "Marketing the Faith – A Reflection on the Importing and Exporting of Western Theological Education", *Cruce*, 38.2 (1992) p. 17 (pp. 6-18).

⁵⁶ See further Collinson S., "Making Disciples: An Educational Strategy for Use Beyond the Time of Jesus", *Journal of Christian Education*, 43. 3 (2000) pp. 15-16 (pp. 7-18); Stevens, R.P., "Marketing the Faith – A Reflection on the Importing and Exporting of Western Theological Education", *Cruce*, 38.2 (1992) p. 17 (pp. 6-18).

Be creative and strategic

- Draw up an institutional educational philosophy, a mission statement
- Request each tutor to draw up a personal educational philosophy
- Aid your faculty to develop their knowledge and skills
- Have a 5 year *blank-canvas* day when you re-visit all you teach and do and see if it can be improved
- Consider parallel tracks to fulfil the aspirations of the students
- Have annual reviews; ask “why do we do this?”, “could we do it better?”
- Identify your goals as an institution and target how they may be achieved
- Share good praxis with each other, in and outside your institution
- Have students participate in the development of your vision and mission
- Give yourself permission to dream

Conclusion

At the *Teaching Research and Development Network* annual symposium on May 15, 2002, at the University of Manchester, the keynote speaker was Professor Charles Engel. His underlying proposition was, “the twenty first century will witness an escalation in the frequency and gravity of changes that will affect society world-wide”. Change is here to stay and educationalists must be prepared to embrace this fact, including the challenges and the potential. How we deal with it will define our future. The evidence of how successful we may be in this regard will be identified by how much we have been willing to change ourselves before we seek to change those who come and learn with us and from us.

John Amos Comenius (1592-1670) was a Christian educator (the first who popularised pictures in teaching) who has been described as the first modern educator. He lived much of his life in poverty though was highly respected in Europe. Wisely, Sweden asked him to reform their schools and England asked him to set up a research College. His major work was entitled *The Great Didactic*. On the title page, he wrote his objective - *To seek to find a method of instruction, by which teachers may teach less, but learners may learn more*. This must always be our aim.