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DISTINCTIVES OF PENTECOSTAL EDUCATION¹

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Traditionally, Pentecostals have been looked on as theologically uneducated. Surprisingly when one looks at Pentecostal history and theology, one finds clear theological and practical commitments that have shaped and kept the movement alive and strong for more than a century. Some may argue that Pentecostals do not have a clear structure of theology, and that they have borrowed their theology from other existing Christian traditions. While this interpretation could be defended to a certain point, nevertheless the fact is that Pentecostals have been able to establish themselves in a variety of models, but clearly united under one common experience, the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.

In this paper I try to identify those educational and theological elements that have served to consolidate the Pentecostal movement, historically. My argument is that the Pentecostal movement has completed its first century of Christian service, successfully, due to a solid biblical and theological spirituality. And that these elements are observed in the curricula of the different educational programs among most Pentecostal schools.

In my observation I also offer a reflective contribution to the most accepted indicators of success in Pentecostal ministry. I also try to identify some of the most relevant commitments of Pentecostal education. They eventually generate a clear distinctive of what should be the ultimate goal of Pentecostal education.

It is well known that Pentecostal history underwent a heterogeneous background, particularly in the early stages while the movement was consolidated.² For some, Pentecostalism emerged as a movement of

¹ An earlier version of the paper was presented during the First Annual Meeting of Asian Pentecostal Society, May 1999 in Daejeon, Korea.

² A thorough report about Pentecostal origins can be found in Everet A. Wilson, "They Crossed the Red Sea, Didn't They? Critical History of Pentecostal

protest, against the rigid structures of the Christian organizations of the time.¹ Some also suggest it was a movement of the poor and the outcast trying to fight their way through the ecclesiastical organizations.² There are even those who introduce it as a revolutionary spiritual model.³ The fact is that it originated humbly, and the movement had the capability to endure adversity. Now, at the beginning of the Twenty-first century, the Pentecostal movement has become the largest among all the Protestant families. According to David Barrett, by 1992, Pentecostals numbered 205 million.⁴ Such a tremendous growth has been, in part, ignited at Bible schools⁵ that always operated beyond their human and financial

Beginnings," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, eds. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1999), pp. 85-115.

³ For a broader spectrum on early Pentecostalism development, see Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 35-46. See also, Russell P. Splitter, "Theological Style among Pentecostals and Charismatics," in *Doing Theology in Today's World*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), pp. 285-295.

⁴ See for instance, Frank D. Macchia, *Spirituality and Social Liberation: The Message of the Blumhardts in the Light of Wuertemberg Pietism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1993), pp. 25-34. See also Donald Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), pp. 37-52. Also Donald Dayton, "The Rise of the Evangelical Healing Movement in Nineteenth Century America," *PNEUMA* 4 (Spring 1982), pp. 12-19.

⁵ See, Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), pp. 80-95. See also, Henry P. Van Dusen, "The Third Force of Christendom," *Life*, 9 June 1958.

⁶ And that is not to mention the independent and charismatic Pentecostals in the mainline churches. Altogether these groups numbered some 420 million in 1992, or 24.5 percent of all the world's Christians. Indeed, by the 1990's the Pentecostal movement has become the second largest family of Christians in the world, exceeded only by the Roman Catholic Church. For a more extensive view on this subject, see David B. Barrett, "The Twentieth-Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal in The Holy Spirit, with Its Goal of World Evangelization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 12:3 (1998), pp. 119-29. Also see Vinson Synan, *The Spirit Said, "Grow"* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1992), pp. 37-39.

⁷ It was not until the middle of the 1970s, that most graduate seminaries, among the Pentecostal families were duly organized. The Church of God Theological Seminary (Cleveland, Tennessee) was established in 1975.

resources. These educational centers were capable of producing committed workers for the ministry, and well organized theologically. Let's take a glance at some of those educational commitments.

1. Historical Pentecostal Educational Commitments

As a movement of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals have identified and established theological, doctrinal and practical commitments that serve them as foundation, and as a source of strength and unity. Some of those have been firmly incorporated as educational commitments. Most Pentecostals would agree that the following commitments could be found within the foundations of Pentecostal theological education.⁸

First, Pentecostal education is passionate for God. It pursues intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Second, Pentecostal education aims towards the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the life of the students. It seeks for a radical dependency on the Holy Spirit both inwardly and outwardly.

Third, Pentecostal education is rooted in sound biblical doctrine. It develops a worldview and lifestyle of holiness, consistent with the teachings of the Scriptures.

Fourth, it also aims towards efficacious service and academics. This is reflected in men and women of integrity in all areas of responsibility and service.

Fifth, Pentecostal education is also dynamic, critical and creative. It is aware of contemporary issues that affect the world and the environment. It also aims to speak the truth in love.

Finally, Pentecostal education is also missiologically involved. Grant McClung has suggested that Pentecostalism by its very nature is intrinsically missiological.⁹ By nature, Pentecostals first expression of commitment to Christ is the need to share their spiritual experience with others. There are many cases of ministers who immediately after their conversion decided to enter into the ministry, even without any training.

⁸ These six elements can be found in the Catalog 1998-2000 of the Asian Seminary of Christian Ministries, 102 Valero Street, Makati City, Metro Manila 1200, Philippines.

⁹ L. Grant McClung, Jr., "Salvation Shock Troops," in *Pentecostals From the Inside Out*, ed. Harold B. Smith (Victor Books, 1990), pp. 81-90, and "Try to Get People Saved. Revisiting the Paradigm of a Urgent Pentecostal Missiology," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism*, pp. 30-51.

This is obviously inappropriate, but still it reflects the level of commitment among Pentecostals, especially if they have experienced a supernatural event with the Holy Spirit. It is such supernatural experience that eventually accounts for that intrinsic missionary thrust of a Pentecostal.

The above-enumerated commitments suggest that Pentecostal education may offer a balance between the cognitive, competence, and the affective domains of education for Christian service. In a recent publication, Jonathan Lewis tried to match the desired outcome of theological education with its methods and context. He offered three identified domains that must head the educational enterprise. An attentive observation of these domains will help to understand the commitments of Pentecostal education to theory and praxis in a balanced application and relevance. According to Lewis,

- (1) *Cognitive*¹⁰ outcomes are produced through *formal* methods in a *school* context.
- (2) *Skill* outcomes are produced through *non-formal* methods in the *workplace* context.
- (3) *Affective* outcomes¹¹ are produced through *informal* methods in a *community* context.

In the same article, Lewis suggests that the best theological training models combine all three domains, use all three methodologies intentionally and provide all three contexts together. He also suggests that if ministry training is to be effective, this will also need to focus on¹² the true objective of educational training—godly and effective servants. A thorough analysis of Pentecostal education will clearly reveal a strong relationship with these three domains as pointed out by Lewis. The result could be observed through a continuous growth and development, throughout the entire past Twentieth Century, on a local, regional, and global levels.

¹⁰ Italics are mine.

¹¹ Jonathan Lewis, "Matching Outcomes with Methods and Contexts," in *Training for Cross-Cultural Ministries*, ed. Jonathan Lewis, ed. Occasional Bulletin of the International Missionary Training Fellowship 98:2 (Wheaton: WEF, October 1998), pp. 1-3.

¹² Lewis, "Matching Outcomes," pp. 2-3.

2. Pentecostal Education Is Ministry Oriented.

Those who argue that Pentecostals are more practical oriented than the Evangelicals, also suggest that the Evangelicals are more cognitive oriented than Pentecostals. Therefore an issue of a balanced theology emerges. Those who polarize the issue of theory versus praxis within the Christian movement fail to see what actually happened. Pentecostals added to the body of Christ a dimension that for centuries had remained dormant. It is not really accurate to say that Pentecostals polarized the Christian movement. On the contrary, they sought to correct the historical imbalance that the Church has suffered throughout the modern and contemporaneous age, even to this point in time. The Pentecostal movement brought instead, integration between theory and praxis in its approach to its hermeneutic and theological methodology.

Grant McClung has characterized Pentecostal theology as “a theology on the move.”¹³ He acknowledges that Pentecostal theology has often acted now and theologized later and has been more experiential than cognitive, more activist than reflective, and more actualized than analyzed.¹⁴ This acknowledgement reveals the present serious level of commitment to the cognitive basis for ministry among Pentecostals, and at the same time undercuts the argument utilized by non-Pentecostals in their contention concerning the supposed Pentecostal lack-of-cognitive discipline. What McClung is actually suggesting is that Pentecostals were able to activate a legitimate spiritual domain in the Christian movement that had suffered from neglect.

It is true that in the beginning the Pentecostal movement lacked formal theological training. Objective historical research will reveal that the reason for this had to do with the cultural background of the people who started the movement. The movement did not start among the theologians or scholars of that time. It took those humble communities of believers to experience a new wind of spiritual revival to start the movement.

Consequently, it took several decades for these communities to develop their theological schools, and yet, they were able to shake the

¹³ McClung, “Salvation Shock Troops,” p. 86. See also Jonathan Chao, “Foreign Missions and Theological Education,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 9:1 (Fall 1972), pp. 1-16. Also see L. M. Cannell and W. L. Liefeld, “The Contemporary Context of Theological Education: A consideration of the Multiple Demands of Theological Educators,” *Crux* 27:4 (December 1991), pp. 19-27.

¹⁴ McClung, “Salvation Shock Troops,” p. 86.

entire Christian movement with their passion and spirituality. It is therefore unfair to accuse today's Pentecostals of lack of cognitive discipline in doing theology. It shows a certain lack of sensitivity to the historical method to expect formal theological education among those early Pentecostal communities given their sociological origins. In the natural course of development Pentecostals have now come of age, and a new wind of theological discipline has emerged. This is absolutely normal and legitimate. The movement is now on the move shaping its theological foundations and especially in the area of hermeneutics.

3. Indicators of Pentecostal Education

A cogent philosophy of Pentecostal education comes from a biblical understanding of the gospel, the theology of the church, and the mission and task of theology. These indicators supercede denominational and theological boundaries. According to Duraisingh,¹⁵ the major weakness of traditional theological education is that this has neglected the vital aspects of ecclesiology and mission. Consequently he calls for reaffirmation of the apostolate as the singular true design for the existence of the church. For Duraisingh mission is not one among many functions of the church, instead the church is a function of God's mission. If the church is the instrument and expression of the kingdom, then the goal of theological education is to form people in congregations so that they can participate in God's local and global mission.¹⁶

Pentecostal education is not interested in offering purely academic programs. It aims to prepare students mentally, emotionally, spiritually and practically. This means making provision for their personal and spiritual growth, for the development of their ministerial gifts, and for the acquisition of those practical skills they will need in their future life and service. It also aims to prepare students for the stress and shock of serving in cross-cultural contexts.

¹⁵ C. Duraisingh "Ministerial Formation for Mission: Implications for Theological Education," *International Review of Mission* 81:1 (January 1992), pp. 33-45.

¹⁶ Duraisingh "Ministerial Formation for Mission," pp. 33-45.

3.1. Mentoring Orientation

The primary task of mentors is equipping—enabling, mobilizing, and training. They are to equip the body so that the members are the primary agents of ministry, and mentors accomplish most of these elements. Traditionally, Pentecostal leaders have served as the main source of leadership formation by setting themselves as example.

3.2. Community Orientation

In the context of Pentecostal education, community is born out of solitude with God who frees the body of believers from competitiveness and disciplinary self-absorption so that they can share, learn, and encourage one another. They are no longer afraid to be vulnerable. Instead they are able to share caring, and mentoring relationships with one another. Christians are no longer controlled by their busyness and heavy workloads. On the contrary, they make time to celebrate, enjoy, and worship with one another.

Concerning this subject, Lois McKinney observes that when Christians experience community life, institutional and societal norms no longer control them. They have recognized their negative values, and have begun, instead, a journey toward community. She also observes that this is still a long and difficult journey of hope,¹⁷ but people can be changed, and even structures can be transformed.

3.3. Emphasis on the “Priesthood of All Believers”

In Pentecostal education the goal of ministry is body development for effective Christian service. The church and its ministry are both the object and context for theological training.

For a Pentecostal, to serve in the world is more than the expression of oneself through one’s particular vocation. The gospel must shape the Christian’s speech, action and lifestyle. The congregation must let its life, thinking and labor be guided by the principle that ministry is not found in

¹⁷ Concerning the transformation of impersonal structures into community life, see Lois McKinney, “From Loneliness Toward Solitude and Community” in *With an Eye on the Future*, eds. Duane Elmer and Lois McKinney (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1996), pp. 87-92. Also see Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson, *Listening for a Change: Oral Testimony and Community Development* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1995), p. 78.

the fact that Christ works with us. It is founded, rather, that the believer works with Christ by using the spiritual gifts given to him or her by the Holy Spirit.

In Pentecostal education, a deeper understanding of ministry is not enough. There must be an intentional equipping for ministry even if it means the adoption of new strategies, new ideas, or new commitments. Christian service is dynamic and aims to implement the practical meaning of the New Testament's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. This must be executed thoroughly. It must be the spiritual breath of all believers. Under this category, every Christian has a ministry, which, under the endowment of the Holy Spirit, he or she must fulfill. The Bible clearly teaches that each Christian is a priest of God in his or her own right, with all the privileges and the responsibilities of God's priest (1 Pet 2:9, 10). He or she believes that the Holy Spirit has gifted him or her with special abilities for service (1 Cor 12:11). The believer is then to discover, develop and use these gifts as a priest of God in the service of Christ's church. The Apostle explicitly states that each believer is a unique creation in Christ Jesus with specific, before-hand-ordained ministry to accomplish (Eph 2:10).

In his approach to the corporate ministry among Pentecostals, Peter Hocken has suggested that it was central to the spiritual genius of the Pentecostal movement that all participants had an equal dignity. That the Holy Spirit was poured out on "all flesh," not just upon ordained clerical flesh, not just educated degreed flesh, not just aristocratic propertied flesh.¹⁸ In Pentecostal education, suggests Hocken, the least educated, the least affluent, those with no social status, all could be equally train for Christian service. They all could be recipients of the spiritual gifts; all could become instruments of the Lord in word and act.¹⁹ This is a truth amply demonstrated since early Pentecostal history.

4. The Natural Development and Exercise of Charismata

Pentecostals conclude, using standard Evangelical hermeneutics, that all the elements of the New Testament's ministry and experience may be hoped for, sought, and expected today since none of them permanently ceased when the apostolic age ended. Those elements now available for

¹⁸ Peter Hocken, "Cecil H. Polhill—Pentecostal Layman," *Pneuma* 10:2 (Fall 1988), pp. 129-37.

¹⁹ Hocken, "Cecil H. Polhill," p. 138.

the believer are (a) the post-conversion Spirit-baptism, as seen in Acts 2:1-4; 8:14-17; 10:44-46; 11:15-17; and 19:1-6. Another element is (b) *glossolalia* (not understood as *xenolalia* utterance) given primarily for private devotional use; (c) interpretation of tongues, when the gift is manifested as part of the charismatic “liturgy” (1 Cor 14:26-28); (d) prophecy, understood as a spontaneous utterance in one’s own language which expresses the heart of God to the gathered community of the Spirit for the purposes of edification, exhortation and comfort (1 Cor 14:3). Other charismatic elements available are (e) gifts of healing through prayer and the laying on of hands; (f) deliverance from demonic influences in the authority of the name of Jesus; and (g) words of knowledge, understood as supernatural exposure of information to nurture individuals and the body of believers.

In the context of Pentecostal education the spiritual gifts are also observed in a missiological perspective. The missiological purpose of the Pentecostal experience is clearly observed in the context of the New Testament (see Acts 1:8). Therefore the issue of spiritual formation in Pentecostal education must be seen and interpreted in a missiological appurtenance. Pentecostal spirituality is not simply a matter of inwardness. There is also the outward dimension of spirituality, experienced in Christian service. There is no place for a dichotomy between heart and mind or between mind and service. Christians must develop what Bosch calls a “spirituality of the road.”²¹

5. Indicators of Success in the Pentecostal Community

The following set of indicators may help to understand and measure success within the Pentecostal community. They are seen as the natural outcome of the primary Pentecostal reality of being baptized in the Holy Spirit and a dedicated and committed life to Christ. These indicators can be identified as (a) obvious numerical results in ministry (quantifiable results), (b) clear evidence of church growth and ministerial growth, (c) a living exercise of charismata, (d) dynamic preaching, (e) overall

²⁰ For more information on this subject see J. I. Packer “Pentecostalism ‘Reinvented’: The Charismatic Renewal,” in *Pentecostals From the Inside Out*, pp. 146-48.

²¹ David J. Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road* (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1979), p. 100. See also David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991), p. 496.

prosperity, (f) a passionate Christian lifestyle following after the principles of the Word of God, and (g) a strong missionary orientation.

Of special note as indicator is genuine Pentecostal preaching or witnessing which is powerful, anointed, and passionate. It is expressed as a divinely driven communication based on the truths of the Scripture. Pentecostal preaching comes from the heart of the preacher straight to the heart of the listener. It provides wholesome spiritual nourishment for God's people and conviction to the unbeliever.

A second noteworthy is militant evangelism. Pentecostal education provides its students a paradigm for the blending of the believers under the ultimate goal of winning the lost, with all the other ministry activities.²² Hence, in counseling, preaching, organizing, promoting, visiting the sick, or any other ministries, Pentecostal education's focus on seeking and searching for the lost remains central.

6. The Character of Pentecostal Education

Wayne Kraiss has proposed four elements that should characterize Pentecostal education.²³ First, Pentecostal educational institutions must be places of compassion and love. He argues that a true Pentecostal campus is a place where Christ is reflected in the style of administration, teaching, counseling, conflict management, and personal leaving. The fruit of the Spirit, such things as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness should characterize these institutions.²⁴

Second, Pentecostal education must be Christ-like in forgiveness. Kraiss also suggests that the goal of Pentecostal education is to model something before the students, which they may never see in the world. It

²² Concerning the issue militant evangelism as an instrument of social transformation, see Joseph R. Suico, "Pentecostalism: Towards a Movement of Social Transformation in the Philippines," *Journal of Asian Mission* 1:1 (March 1999), pp. 7-19.

²³ Wayne Kraiss, "The Case for Pentecostal Schools," in *Educational Handbook of the Church of God* (Cleveland, TN: General Board of Education, 1998), pp. 59-72. His paper was presented at the Church of God REACH 21, Church of God Ministries conference at Lee University, on January 9, 1998. Wayne Kraiss is President of the Southern California College.

²⁴ Kraiss, "The Case for Pentecostal Schools," pp. 65-67.

is to show them how a Christian community resolves conflicts and demonstrate mercy. It is to show them how to forgive.^[25]

Third, Pentecostal education must be committed to build people. According to Kraiss, Pentecostal educators are people who see with eyes of discernment, who call forth the best from within a person. They are people who look beyond the idiosyncrasies of the present and see with eyes of faith what *can be*, not just what *is*.^[26]

Fourth, Pentecostal educators are peacemakers. If the role of the Holy Spirit is to witness to Christ and help God's people to become more Christ-like, and since Christ was the Prince of Peace, then it seems logical that a Pentecostal institution is a place where peacemakers serve. As Kraiss adds, nothing is more inconsistent with who the believers are, than turmoil, dissention, and strife. Nothing is more out of character with a Pentecostal institution than factions and strife. Hence, peace is something Pentecostals make. This is not something they should expect to be handed to them.^[27]

7. The Role of Reflection in Pentecostal Education

Reflection is another element that must be seriously addressed at this point. Education in the Pentecostal context must address more than simply the transmission of information but has to do with *praxis*.^[28] Pentecostal education has the function of forming persons who can serve after the model of Jesus' ministry.^[29] It appeals to the life outlook; the clarification and strengthening of convictions and beliefs that provide personal identity and order and penetrate professional activities and Christian service. In light of this need for reflection in the educational process, Hough and Cobb propose a new leadership paradigm to lead the

²⁵ Kraiss, "The Case for Pentecostal Schools," p. 70.

²⁶ Kraiss, "The Case for Pentecostal Schools," p. 70.

²⁷ Kraiss, "The Case for Pentecostal Schools," pp. 70-71.

²⁸ On the issue of *praxis* as a model of education and social transformation, see Jackie D. Johns, "Yielding to the Spirit: The Dynamics of a Pentecostal Model of Praxis," in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism*, pp. 70-84.

²⁹ Cf. Ted W. Ward, "Servants, Leaders, and Tyrants," in *Missions and Theological Education*, ed. Harvie M. Conn and Samuel F. Rowen (Farmington, Michigan: Associates of Urbanus, 1984), pp. 19-40.

church. This leadership functions as “practical theologians.”³⁰ These individuals are engaged in “critical reflection of church’s practice.”³¹ Without such reflective leadership the church will lose its identity.

On the other hand, Pentecostal education should be understood in the context of its historical development. After a Century of uninterrupted growth; the Pentecostal community, in the 21st Century has become more extensively networked. Thus it is imperative that a far greater attentiveness must be given to the needs and expectations of its constituency. The Pentecostal community must be served through multiple models of ongoing contact and interaction³² between the educational curriculum and the community of faith. Even at the seminary level, faculty and staff must forge healthy working relationships with pastors and lay leaders in local congregations, social agencies, and other Christian entities so that the students may have access to the life of the community beyond the classroom activity.

This model of educational process conveys a very Pentecostal distinctive. It emphasizes a learning environment where there is a continual interaction with the community of faith. Therefore, a broad mentoring network fosters accountable relationships within the larger perimeter of the Christian community.

Lastly, as Pentecostal educators participate in many and varied educational organizations, this activity offers remarkable resources for the further development of spiritual formation, leadership and administrative skills, depth of perception and study, pastoral passion, and technical abilities.³³ This enhancement has enabled the Pentecostal church to enter into the third millennium and meet the multiple responsibilities of a post-modern society. Pentecostals are now able to reach the urban poor, the upper class, the university world, the

³⁰ See the exchange between Schubert M. Ogden, “Christian Theology and Theological Education,” in *The Education of the Practical Theologian: Responses to Joseph Hough and John Cobb’s “Christian Identity and Theological Education”* (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1989), pp. 21-36, and Hough and Cobb, *Christian Identity*, pp. 113-129.

³¹ Ogden, “Christian Theology and Theological Education.”

³² C. F. Robert and W. Ferris, *Renewal in Theological Education: Strategies for Change* (Wheaton, IL: Billy Graham Center, 1990), p. 141.

³³ See Don S. Browning, “Globalization and the task of Theological Education in North America,” *Theological Education* 23:1 (1986), pp. 43-59.

intellectuals, and the secular humanists.³⁴ A good number of those converts are also becoming committed to cross-cultural service.

³⁴ See Emerito P. Nacpil, "Philippines: A Gospel for the New Filipino," in *Asian Voices in Christian Theology*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1976), pp. 117-45 (117). Also see Lois McKinney, "New Directions in Missionary Education," in *Internationalising Missionary Training: A Global Perspective*, ed. William D. Taylor (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1991), pp. 241-50.

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