

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION PENTECOSTAL THINKERS IN ASIA

This issue of the journal concludes the ninth year of its service, and there are many reasons why we should be thankful to the Lord for its continuation and modest contribution it has made to the world of Pentecostal studies. In its formative years, the significant leadership of Dr. William W. Menzies as one of the founding editors was critical. He successfully demonstrated how the western church can truly “empower” churches in the South and the East to its maturity in reflective thinking. Readers and the editors alike owe a great debt to this committed Pentecostal scholar. This is also the time to acknowledge the leading role of the new co-editor, Dr. Joseph Suico, for the future issues. At the same time, I now assume an associate role. This may be the best time to share something that I desired so seriously and yet not realized during my editorial years.

Often “traditioning” has been a major topic among Pentecostal academia: how one generation faithfully hands down their theological and spiritual tradition to the next is crucial to the continuation of any tradition. Recent history of Nazism and Communism informs us that they built their ideological minds among the youth for the survival or even growth of their movements. Incidentally, this is biblically sound, as every people of God, including children and youth, are to engage in theological reflection. Pentecostals have paid good attention to this dynamic group, often brushed aside as “kids” who require care of adults, by including them in the experience of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, children are often urged to pray for baptism in the Holy Spirit and exhorted to commit their lives to the Lord (whatever it may mean to them). It is, therefore, natural to hear that many missionaries and ministers in the West surrendered their lives to the Lord's work in their youthful ages. The Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade (BGMC) is an extremely successful missionary program among youngsters in the US Assemblies of God. They do not only learn what mission is about, but they actually participate in mission.

And this journal has received generous financial assistance from the BGMC funds. Korea presents another example: The younger generation, from elementary to high school students, is the major force for summer short-term missionary work. Pentecostal churches join this trend.

However, how the next generation is encouraged to be theological reflective is another matter. It is true that not everyone is to think theologically. However, we need to be intentional in nurturing such an environment so that those who are gifted or interested will begin to develop their “aptitude” in their early years.

When I received a research paper done by a high school student in the Philippines on the topic of speaking in tongues, I was looking for everywhere if there is any publication to which I could send the piece. It was too rare to receive such a piece to ignore the potential of the next generation. My searches for an appropriate platform resulted in futility: Although there are many Christian “kids” publications, they are mainly “for” the children, but not “by” them. During this period, I further learned that many Bible teachers in Christian schools throughout the world may have such studies done by their students.

One option I contemplated was to publish a special issue of such a collection. This would require the solicitation of worthy studies all over the world. Another idea was to publish the collection as a regular issue of the journal. The third option was to include such studies in our regular journal publication. In any case, I had to struggle with a serious issue: How such “amateurism” will affect the professional and academic nature of the journal.

Is it too wild for this generation to create such a platform for the next generation for their theological reasoning? I personally hope that there will be a systematic and intentional program to encourage the development of young minds. Such program will significantly enhance the “traditioning” of Pentecostal theology and spirituality to the next generation. Then they will not only learn the content of our traditioning, but also the methods of doing it. The future can only be better in this way.

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