

**Theological Education in the Majority World:  
A Pentecostal Perspective  
The Role of the Holy Spirit in Theological Education**

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**Introduction**

Jesus Christ gave the church a mandate, which is to go and make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey what he commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). However, Jesus also knew that without the presence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the church would not be able to carry out its mandate (Acts 1:8). It is reasonable to surmise that Jesus' mandate to the church is integrative; it consists of both the content of the gospel the church should preach and the power to practice and embody the gospel; it integrates and interweaves both belief and action, doctrine and application, theory and practice; it is holistic and non-reductionistic.

There are two crucial aspects to the mandate Jesus Christ gave to the church and the church's endeavor to embody its mandate. The first aspect is that the church is sent to the world, a world populated by diverse groups of people with their religious, social, cultural, political and economic, historical and spiritual dynamics. The second is that the church is made up of the very same people drawn from these diverse contexts who are sanctified and transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel. It is in these contexts that the church is required to preach and embody the gospel – requiring the church to remain faithful to its biblical mandate while discerning the temporal and spatial shifting contours of its immediate local context.

With the church as the primary setting of God's activity in the world, it is necessary to inquire about the role of theological education in the general scheme of the church and its place in the world. Although the New Testament did not anticipate the proliferation of Bible colleges and seminaries, the overall purpose of theological education should be conceived as helping the church to fulfill its mandate. As a reflection of the church's mandate, theological education needs to be comprehensive, which means that the formation and training of leaders and ministers should pay attention not only to the *what* of theological education but also to the *how*. It is in this latter sense that the role of the Holy Spirit in theological education comes to the front. What is the role of the Holy

Spirit in theological education, or more specifically, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in a Pentecostal theological education with respect to the mandate of the church and its engagement in the Asian world? What are the departure points for conceiving a Pentecostal theological education in Asian contexts today? How does a Pentecostal theological education conceive the role of the Holy Spirit in its design and practice?

In the remaining sections of this article, I will argue that a Pentecostal theological education in the Majority World should be conceived as a bridging enterprise between the role of the Holy Spirit as presented in the pneumatology of the Bible (mainly in the New Testament) and the social, cultural and religious contexts and underlying worldviews of the people of the Majority World. Moreover, I also contend that a Pentecostal theological education should be conceived not as an isolated entity but as a partner and servant of the local church—helping the church to train and develop its leaders and ministers. These leaders and ministers are then capable of reading and interpreting its biblical mandate in light of the challenges and issues of the local church’s immediate context. This chapter will conclude with a few thoughts on the practical implications of New Testament pneumatology for conceiving the role of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal theological education in the Majority World.

### **The Role of the Holy Spirit—Biblical Perspective**

It is not in the purview of this chapter to present a comprehensive discussion of the role and function of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. However, a short summary is necessary to frame the remaining discussion and flesh out the implications for Pentecostal theological education. The Old and New Testaments depict the Holy Spirit in diverse roles and functions. The Holy Spirit is active in creation—both in its origin and maintenance (Gen 1:2, Psalm 104:30, Psalm 138, Job 33:4). He is a source of insight (Gen 41:38), wisdom, knowledge and understanding (Exod 31:3, Isa 11:2), empowerment (Judges 15:14, Acts 1:8), illumination and conviction (John 16:8), inspiration and guidance (Ezek 11:5, John 16:13, Acts 11:12), prophecy and visions (Joel 2:28), character formation (Gal 5:22-25) and prophetic discernment (1 Corinthians 12:1-9).

The Holy Spirit is also the indwelling presence of God among his people (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). It is also the Holy Spirit who has inspired the writing of the Scriptures and guided their interpretation and application in the lives of the people of God (2 Peter 1:20-21, John 16:12-13, Acts 15). One central facet that is significant for imagining a Pentecostal theological education is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the beginning of the church. This role serves as overarching framework for guiding every attempt of theological education. As the Scriptures witness, Christ is conceived through the

Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18) and initiated for ministry through the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16). He ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:28, Luke 11:20), died and resurrected through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11).

In summary, the Holy Spirit is a giver and sustainer of life, creator, revealer, companion, sender and gift-giver.<sup>1</sup> He is the source of the spiritual power of believers and of the church. The Holy Spirit speaks, guides, calls and empowers. The Scriptures witness that the pervasive presence of the Holy Spirit fills both the background and foreground of God's action in the world through the church. It is not an exaggeration to say the design, implementation and purpose of the discipline of theological education in our time cannot afford to ignore the role of the Holy Spirit from its practice and goal. Pentecostals in the world might not have a problem accepting the scriptural witness about the role of the Holy Spirit at face value; however, epistemological and philosophical commitments that underlie theological education and the logic of institutions and their constraints often work against the best intentions of Pentecostalism. In the following sections, I will explore the functions and roles of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent implications for the conception of a Pentecostal theological education in the contemporary Majority World. Though these implications touch on diverse themes I will narrow down my discussion to issues related to the relationality of the Holy Spirit to the Bible, theological educators and their students, the church and its immediate context in Asia.

### **The Relationality of the Holy Spirit**

The primary implication we draw from the brief perusal of the biblical data about the role of the Holy Spirit is concerned with the relationality of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is relational (John 14:16)—he acts upon and through human beings and their relations (Matt 3:16, Matt 10:20, Acts 5:32), revealing the finished work of Christ, equipping and empowering the church (1 Corinthians 12:1-11). While the NT uses metaphors like wind, fire, oil and dove to speak about the Holy Spirit, and while the Hebrew and Greek terms for spirit (*ruach* and *pneuma*) can mean breath, wind or air, it is crucial to understand that the Holy Spirit is a person—he is knowable (John 14:17), he teaches (John 14:26), he guides (Matt 4:1, John 16:13, Acts 8:29, 10:19), he grieves (Eph 4:30), he chooses and decides (Acts 13:2). The Holy Spirit acts through human relations embedded in concrete historical situations; therefore, he cannot be reduced into impersonal entity or energy field with no agency or will.

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew Lord, "The Holy Spirit and Contextualization." *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4 no. 2 (2001), 201-213.

The personhood of the Holy Spirit comes into sharp distinction in Asian contexts where the underlying religious worldview and conception of the divine is either divergent or is formulated differently than the biblical understanding. For instance, speaking of the Holy Spirit within an Indian context, Satyavrata comments that “the Holy Spirit is not just any spirit and must not be confused either with the human spirit or with an impersonal monist conception of spirit such as Brahman in Hinduism.”<sup>2</sup> A similar conclusion, albeit from different contexts, is reached in the works of Dave Johnson and Naoki Inoue. Johnson, in his study of the Waray people in the Philippines, found out that the place of the Holy Spirit in the cosmology of the Waray is divergent from the biblical revelation.<sup>3</sup> Inoue, in his comparative study of the pneumatology of Jürgen Moltmann and the spirits (*kami*) in Shintoism, concludes that the Spirit and the *kami* are essentially different from one another.<sup>4</sup>

The relationality of the Holy Spirit has further implications for Pentecostal theological education. It turns the focus away from the curriculum, institutional concerns and other pressing matters that dominate the practice of education to the important but often-neglected ingredient of theological education—student-teacher relations. Student-teacher relations constitute the bulk of interpersonal interactions in theological schools and serve as the perfect arena where ministerial training and formation can be embodied. The NT affirms that the Holy Spirit acted in the relationships among Jesus and the disciples, among apostles, the church as the family of God and the body of Christ (refer to 1 Corinthians 12-14). The stories of the relationships between Moses and Joshua (Numbers 27:18), Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:16), Paul and Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6-7) also reveal the involvement of the Holy Spirit. Taking a cue from these relationships, it is not unrealistic to anticipate the role of the Holy Spirit in student-teacher relations in contemporary theological schools.

The precedence of a focus on the spirituality and relationships of educators and students helps Pentecostal schools to overcome the false dichotomy between the academic/theoretical/professional and the spiritual/practical/formational goals of theological training that characterizes much of the theological enterprise. Wonsuk Ma, in his reflection about *Theological Education in Pentecostal Churches in Asia*,

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<sup>2</sup>Ivan Satyavrata, *The Holy Spirit: Lord and Life-Giver* (Cumbria UK: Langham Global Library, 2012), 127.

<sup>3</sup>Dave Johnson, *Theology in Context: A Case Study of the Philippines* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 69-73.

<sup>4</sup>Naoki Inoue, “Spirit and Spirits in Pantheistic Shintoism.” in *Interdisciplinary and Religio-Cultural Discourses on a Spirit-Filled World: Loosing the Spirits*, ed. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Kirsteen Kim and Amos Yong (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013), 55-68.

argues that, while earlier Pentecostalism is known for its anti-intellectualism, the academic community today needs to avoid the pitfall of Christian scholasticism.<sup>5</sup> Theological educators should be familiar not only with the objective doctrinal and historical facts about the Holy Spirit, but they must be familiar with the experiential encounter with the Holy Spirit in the present. It is a call to be unapologetically academic and unashamedly spiritual. It is not only what educators know but who they are as people of the Spirit that influences the formation and training of tomorrow's church leaders. Bridges notes that "young people coming to our schools deserve professors who model a genuine Pentecostal lifestyle with consistency and integrity . . . we are responsible to create an atmosphere of faith and the presence of God through our teaching . . . we must exhibit a current Pentecostal lifestyle and experience."<sup>6</sup>

Considering the biblical presentation of the Holy Spirit as a source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and other important gifts, Pentecostal educators are not only tasked with the intellectual development of students but with the affective and behavioral development of students. Consequently, beyond the transmission of theological and doctrinal facts, the practice of Pentecostal educators includes mediating a Spirit-filled life through mentoring, coaching, discernment and helping students grow in their understanding of their calling and ministry. Therefore, the task of training the leaders and ministers of the church cannot bracket out the relationality of the Holy Spirit from student-teacher relationships. A continuous and consistent awareness and experience with the Holy Spirit is a necessity for modeling a Spirit-filled life and providing a holistic and non-reductionistic theological training for the servants and leaders of the church.

A classroom at a Pentecostal theological education should be an arena where the free movement of the Holy Spirit is expected and exercised. In this case, the role of theological educators overlaps with those of teachers, evangelists, prophets and apostles—discerning the leading of the Holy Spirit in the context of student-teacher interactions and mediating the process of formation and disciple-making. On the practical side, theological schools need to mimic the practices of the NT church in order to create a space and dynamics where the presence of the Holy Spirit becomes a reality. These practices include a regular gathering for prayer, fellowship, intercession, and mission (Acts 1-2; specifically, Acts 2:42-47), fasting and worship (Acts 13:1). Thus, for the role of the

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<sup>5</sup>Wonsuk Ma, "Theological Education in Pentecostal Churches in Asia" in *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives – Regional Surveys – Ecumenical Trends*, ed. Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namssoon Kang, Joshva Raja (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 729-735.

<sup>6</sup>James Bridges, "Assemblies of God Schools and Scholars for the 21st Century." *Enrichment: Journal of Pentecostal Ministry* 4 no.4 (1999), 94-97.

Holy Spirit to be realized, it requires intentionality to incorporate regular practices into the design and implementation of Pentecostal theological education.

### **Perspectives on the Status and Authority of the Bible**

The brief perusal of the role of the Holy Spirit as depicted in the Bible implies that Pentecostal theological education should have a distinctive view of the Bible—that the Bible is neither only a historical document about the people of Israel or the ancient church nor a book of great literary value, but an inspired word of a living God for every generation. This view is consistent with Jesus’s view of the Scriptures and the Bible’s self-presentation (Matt. 22:31, 2 Tim. 3:16) and is closer to the literal understanding of the Scriptures that characterizes Pentecostals in the Majority World. Pentecostals are “people of the book”, consequently the theological education of Pentecostal leaders and ministers should not subtract or ignore the active and dynamic role the Holy Spirit played in the origin, development, interpretation and application of the Bible. Archer argues that Pentecostal hermeneutics is built around three interrelated pillars: the *Holy Spirit* animating the *Scriptures* and empowering the *church*.<sup>7</sup> This is not to insist that theological institutions replicate the use of the Bible in Pentecostal churches in a classroom but to recognize that the same Holy Spirit who empowers Pentecostal preachers is also involved in the theological inquiry that happens in the classroom.

This is also not to imply that a mere consent to the authority of the Bible without considering its practical implication is enough, nor is it a call to abandon a serious investigation of the Scriptures. Rather, it is to subsume the entire field of inquiry of theological education to the perspectives and dynamism of the Holy Spirit and the authority and primacy of the Bible. This commitment to the Bible is not unique to Pentecostals. Craig Keener’s<sup>8</sup> summary of representative theologians and Bible scholars of the past and the present shows that such a view is shared by the wider world of Christian traditions. The faithful perspective that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the writings of the Scriptures in the past but is active in the exegesis and hermeneutics of the Scriptures in the present should be kept alive in Pentecostal theological education. While this view is prevalent in Pentecostal churches and their sermons, educational institutions still need to fully embrace it. Potential reasons for

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<sup>7</sup>Kenneth Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community*. (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2009), 261-64.

<sup>8</sup>Craig Keener and Amos Yong, *Spirit Hermeneutics: Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 13-14.

such divergences between the practice of Pentecostal churches and their theological education institutions could include the following: first, the fact of Pentecostal educators being formally educated in institutions (secular or Christian) whose philosophies of education were not informed by Pentecostal experience or theology; second, Pentecostal educators' adoption of pedagogical and philosophical models that have less or no room for Pentecostal perspectives and experiences.<sup>9</sup>

Training leaders and ministers who are in sync with the Pentecostal tradition and churches requires upholding a high view of the Scriptures. Such a view also serves as a critique and corrective of the legacies of the excesses of theological educational models that have emerged within western theological traditions and through mission and colonialism found their ways into theological education in the Majority World. Such excesses include the modern biblical studies and hermeneutical approaches that have either undermined the authority of the Bible or decoupled and objectified the study of the Bible from the immediacy of the Holy Spirit, thereby failing to integrate theology and spirituality and failing to draw practical implications for current ministry and church life. The biblical witness of the role of the Holy Spirit, however, does not allow the modern theological development of decoupling the Bible from the spirituality of the church and ministerial formation.

The practical implication of the recognition of the active role of the Holy Spirit in the reading and interpretation of the Bible is that while the Bible is read and studied in a classroom, it is equally valid to explicitly recognize the authority of the Bible and submit to its critique of the beliefs and practices of theological educators and students and the underlying worldviews students bring into classrooms. This implication also includes the centrality of the Bible not only as a source book for theology but as an integral part of Pentecostal spirituality and ministerial formation. As noted by Cecil Robeck, "Jesus Christ continues to speak to us directly, through the written Word and by the Holy Spirit."<sup>10</sup> It is a must to preserve the voice of the word and the Spirit in Pentecostal theological education.

### **Contextual Theological Education**

In the first council of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15), the church was caught in a theological dispute whether the new Gentile converts

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<sup>9</sup>Jeffrey Hittenberger, "Toward a Pentecostal Philosophy of Education." *Pneuma* 23 no.1 (January 2001), 217-244. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157007401X00186> (accessed August 26, 2020).

<sup>10</sup>Cecil Robeck Jr, "The Church" in *Pentecostals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Identity, Beliefs, Praxis* ed. Corneliu Constantineanu and Christopher Scobie (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 141-57.

should follow the Jewish laws and traditions. The background for this debate is that after Paul and Barnabas came to Syrian Antioch from Asia Minor completing their first mission, some men came from Judea and were teaching the Gentile converts in Antioch they needed to be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15:1). In the controversy of the inclusion of Gentiles into the people of God and the ensuing debate, Barnabas and Paul were selected to present the dispute to the apostles in Jerusalem. In the deliberation and subsequent letter sent by the council, the apostles reflected on their own experience of God giving the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles and performing wonders and signs through the hands of Paul and Barnabas. Moreover, they discussed the Scripture in light of their experiences and made a decision that recognized the role of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28), which enabled them to overcome the impasse, resolve the dispute and provide an opening for the adaptation of the gospel into a Gentile culture. Reflecting on Acts 15, J. C. Thomas has highlighted the crucial roles of the community, the Holy Spirit and the Scripture that help the church to move forward when facing new questions in new contexts.<sup>11</sup> This leads us to the third implication that states that a Pentecostal theological education should take the local context of the church seriously and in its entirety.

The active and dynamic role the Holy Spirit played (Acts 10, Acts 15) in empowering the disciples to cross boundaries serves as a paradigmatic precedent for Pentecostal theological education. Three critical features emerge from this role of the Holy Spirit. First, the gospel travels across cultures (from Jewish to Gentile cultures) and second, the adaptation of the gospel is directed and mediated by the Holy Spirit. Third, the contextualization of the gospel into a new culture does not necessitate the total abandonment of the old culture (or tradition) nor the total embrace of the new one. These features will not resolve the inherent tension that resides in the two extremes of such endeavor—either dogmatically applying the Bible and tradition literally or uncritically subsuming the gospel into local contexts, resulting in the loss of its distinctive power. As long as the gospel travels and the church finds itself in new cultural and social contexts, conflict and tension will remain at the forefront of the encounter between the gospel and local cultures.

In its two millennia of existence, the church has been held in this constant tension with frequent failure to depend on the Holy Spirit's role in resolving the conflict. The result often has been a church alienated from the social and cultural world of its members. However, a successful resolution demands an openness to the dynamic and ongoing presence of

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<sup>11</sup>J. C. Thomas, "Women, Pentecostals and the Bible: An Experiment in Pentecostal Hermeneutics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2.5 (January 1994), 41-56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/096673699400200504> (accessed September 07, 2020).

the Holy Spirit without whose empowerment the gospel becomes either a prisoner of the past with no relevance to the present or a prisoner of the present detached from its original context.

A few words about contextualization and contextual theological education are required here to delineate the discussion about the role of the Holy Spirit. Bevans defines contextual theology as a way of doing theology that takes into account two realities:

The first of these is the experience of the past, recorded in Scripture and preserved and defended in the church's tradition. The second is the experience of the present or a particular context, which consists of one or more of at least four elements: personal or communal experience, "secular" or "religious" culture, social location, and social change.<sup>12</sup>

In Christian theology around the world, the issues surrounding contextualization of the gospel and the relationship between the gospel and culture is complex and entangled with an unending current of concerns about culture, worldviews, language, socio-economic factors and so on. In her review of the term "contextualization" and its evolution, Theresa Chai lists ten different terms used in relation to it but with tangential treatment of the role of the Holy Spirit and with few references to the contribution of Pentecostalism to the ongoing debate.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Lord also commented on the limited treatment of the role of the Holy Spirit in the literature on contextualization.<sup>14</sup>

However, by focusing on the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism in its short history has managed to bypass these complexities and plant the seed of the gospel into diverse cultural settings around the globe. Pentecostal churches have been at the forefront of contextual mission before the emergence of contextual theology. Though several sociological and psychological explanations are offered, the sole factor in the growth of Pentecostalism is the emphasis on the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of signs and wonders. As Andrew Lord states, "the Holy Spirit is essentially the contextualizing Spirit."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Stephen Bevans, "What has Contextual Theology to Offer the Church of the Twenty-First Century?" in *Contextual Theology for the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Stephen Bevans and Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2012), 3-17.

<sup>13</sup>Theresa Chai, "A Look at Contextualization: Historical Background, Definition, Function, Scope and Models." *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 18 no.1 (February, 2015), 3-19.

<sup>14</sup>Lord, 202.

<sup>15</sup>Lord, 203.

The story of Peter entering the house of Cornelius (Acts 10) is an illustration of the role of the Holy Spirit in contextualizing the gospel. The Holy Spirit prompted Peter to overcome his own misgivings and cross religious and cultural gulfs to present the gospel in the context of the household of Cornelius. As the outcome of that encounter shows, the Holy Spirit is an active presence who makes it possible for believers to bridge underlying cultural and religious gulfs and contextualize the gospel. The biblical story of the first-century church (Book of Acts) and the contemporary witness of Pentecostalism in the world converge on the fact that contextualization is an inherent feature of the Christian faith. The missional propensity and emphasis on experience enables Pentecostalism to contextualize quickly and bypass the cultural, traditional and institutional constraints that often hamper the missionary activities of non-Pentecostal churches. As Harvey Cox observed, Pentecostalism is “a religion made to travel”<sup>16</sup> resulting in highly diverse and myriad expressions of the faith. What is unique to contextualization in the Pentecostal tradition is its emphasis on the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit in adapting the gospel to cultural contexts.

The goal of Pentecostal education then becomes the development of ministers and leaders who help the church to successfully translate and adapt the gospel to its specific social and cultural contexts in Asia. What kind of Pentecostal theological education maintains the active role of the Holy Spirit in the contextualization of the gospel? Though there are many ways to answer this question, the core of the answer revolves around the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit. This means that a Pentecostal theological education should be a Spirit-mediated contextual education, producing locally relevant, missional and prophetic graduates guided by the biblical witness of the message and the power of the gospel and the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

This envisioning of the role of the Holy Spirit in theological education includes taking the local context seriously and engaging with its questions and challenges. Anderson, speaking of theological colleges in South Africa (and in many other places in the world), laments that they “were answering questions that no one was asking and worse, not answering questions that most people were asking.”<sup>17</sup> In this regard, Pentecostal theological education has the task of equipping church leaders and ministers in Asia in discerning the voice and direction of the Holy Spirit to address the religious, cultural and socio-economic

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<sup>16</sup>Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: the Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1995), 102.

<sup>17</sup>Allan Anderson, “The ‘Fury and Wonder’? Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality in Theological Education” *Pneuma* 23 no.2 (2001), 287-302.

challenges prevalent in Asian contexts. This implies that the gospel is not conceived as a closed system of belief but an open system that takes different forms and expressions depending on the leadership of the Holy Spirit. For this to materialize, Pentecostal educators need to depend on the active and dynamic role of the Holy Spirit, ensuring that the leaders and ministers trained are capable of interpreting the gospel for their local contexts.

One particular aspect of Pentecostal theological education remains to be discussed before closing this section. The discussion above has focused primarily on the encounter between the gospel and the empirical reality of cultures and societies that serve as a locus for theological inquiry. However, Pentecostalism, with its supernatural worldview, has found a natural home in the cultures of the non-western world, which are characterized by supernatural worldviews and deep interconnection between the material and the spiritual world. It is this supernatural dimension of local contexts that Pentecostal theological education needs to make explicit and create an arena for the activity of the Holy Spirit. A truly contextual education in the Pentecostal tradition takes the supernatural worldviews of the majority of the world seriously and engages them by depending on the presence of the Holy Spirit. This includes equipping church leaders to discern and deal with demonic possession, sickness, spiritual bondage and societal structures and practices that serve as the channels of the demonic world, and not shying from the power encounter that infuses the social and cultural life of people. Traditional theological education has the tendency to bracket out the supernatural from the purview of theological inquiry; however, Pentecostal theological education should keep the dynamic role of the Holy Spirit in focus and provide a holistic education.

### **The Centrality of the Church**

One area where the role of the Holy Spirit in theological education can be reimagined is the role the Spirit played in the birth of the church and the implication thereof for the relationship between the church and the academy. God has made the church the epicenter of his activity in the world. Although the NT did not anticipate the proliferation of Bible colleges and seminaries, the overall purpose of theological education should be conceived as helping the church to fulfill its mandate. Traditionally, Pentecostal Bible schools and seminaries remained close to the church in their orientation and practice; however, the increasing pressure to upgrade to university levels and adopt a more secular educational approach comes with the risk of widening the gap between theological education and the church. Such fissures did not help the

church in the West and Pentecostal theological education must take heed to prevent its potential divergence from the Asian church.

Not only have secular pressures to upgrade widened the church-theological education gap, western theological models of education—because of historical developments like colonialism, mission and the global supremacy of capitalism—have a disproportional influence in the global landscape of theological education. However, the decline of the church in the West, and its cultural entrapment, should serve as a warning against uncritical adoption of western theological education models in the Majority World.

The alternative to strong professionalization and secularization of theological education and the unintended consequence of fissuring the relationship between the academia and the church is to keep the goal and practice of Pentecostal theological education centered on the church. Wonsuk Ma argued that “a well-designed, church-based lower level ministerial formation is still the bedrock of Pentecostal growth.”<sup>18</sup> A similar observation is stated by Kärkkäinen when he argues that “the establishment of Pentecostal churches all around the world might not have been possible” without church-based Bible schools and biblical colleges.<sup>19</sup> It is this nexus between Pentecostal theological education and the church that serves as the arena where the Holy Spirit is anticipated to function.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

#### **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Theological Education—Pentecostal Approach**

As we have discussed briefly in the previous sections, the role of the Holy Spirit in theological education is not dissimilar to what is presented in the pages of the Bible. The role the Holy Spirit played in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and in the birth and life of the church serves as a framework to reflect and conceive his role in theological education today. Jesus gave the church a mandate to continue the work he started and then empowered the church through the Holy Spirit. The purview of theological education is therefore tied to the mandate Jesus gave the church. This mandate necessitates that the enterprise of theological education should intentionally make the role of the Holy Spirit explicit and central to its design and practice. The question of the role of the Holy Spirit then becomes a question about the role of theological educators and

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<sup>18</sup>Ma, 734.

<sup>19</sup>Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Epistemology, Ethos, and Environment: in Search of a Theology of Pentecostal Education” *Pneuma* 34 no.2 (2012), 245-261. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157007412X639889> (accessed April 4, 2019).

their relationships with students, the status of the Bible and its interpretation, the centrality of the church in theological education and emerging contextual issues that provide an arena for the anticipation of the Holy Spirit.

The biblical witness of the role of the Holy Spirit maintains that the Spirit is like a wind who blow where he wills. It is important to keep in mind this characteristic of the Holy Spirit when reflecting about his role in theological education today. This aspect of the Holy Spirit makes it possible to anticipate his activity in diverse contexts and multiple ways. But it also makes it difficult to speak of the Holy Spirit in definite and limiting ways, since it contradicts his fundamental nature. The short history of Pentecostalism in world Christianity reveals that the emphasis on the Holy Spirit is the most important factor for the global spread and renewal of Christian traditions across the globe. This emphasis on the Holy Spirit should remain at the center of theological education in the Majority World.

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