

## Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World Editorial Introduction

by Rick Wadholm Jr.

### Introduction to the Series

Long overdue are extended engagements assessing the history and constructively proposing a future for Pentecostal theological education, let alone in the various contexts of the Majority World.<sup>1</sup> This volume would hope to be a first of several in a series to address such issues. As a matter of orientation, a brief explanation for the terms “Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World” seems perhaps necessary (or at least helpful).<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that not all may agree with the following terms as they are defined, but they are offered in hopes of a charitable reception toward thinking more clearly

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<sup>1</sup>As only several examples of those addressing this need and their proposals of varying ways of addressing such, see Allan Anderson, “Pentecostal-Charismatic Spirituality and Theological Education in Europe from a Global Perspective,” *PentecoStudies* 3.1 (2004): 1-15 <https://www.glopent.net/pentecostudies/online-back-issues/2004/anderson2004.pdf/view> (accessed December 23, 2020); Wonsuk Ma, “Pentecostal Theological Education in Asia,” in Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja, (eds.), *Handbook of Theological Education in Global Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Regional Surveys, Ecumenical Trends* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2010), 729-735; Mookgo S. Kgatle, “Integrating African Pentecostalism into the Theological Education of South African Universities: An Urgent Task,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74.3 (2018), 1-8 <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/5130/11498> (accessed December 23, 2020); Amos Yong, *Renewing the Church by the Spirit: Theological Education after Pentecost* (Eerdmans, 2020).

<sup>2</sup>For a brief summary of the development of global Pentecostal theological education see William K. Kay and Rick Wadholm Jr, “Higher Education,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Global Pentecostalism Online*, edited by Michael Wilkinson, Conny Au, Jörg Haustein, and Todd M. Johnson doi:[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-3807\\_EGPO\\_COM\\_032483](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589-3807_EGPO_COM_032483) (accessed December 23, 2020).

about ways we may better do what we sense we are called to do in Pentecostal theological education in our Majority World contexts.

The term “Pentecostal,” particularly as it relates to theological education, functions in one sense adjectivally to describe theological education being facilitated with Pentecostal ethos and praxis (not to mention by Pentecostal educators and affiliated institutions) as a grounding and/or orientation. However, defining “Pentecostal” itself as a label remains a complicated affair as it is sometimes used for those denominations or fellowships which self-claim as “classical Pentecostal.” “Classical Pentecostal” often refers to those fellowships tracing origins to the Azusa Street Revival (1906-1909)<sup>3</sup> and confession of “Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues” (or similar such language identifying tongues as sign of the baptism in the Spirit).<sup>4</sup> The label “Pentecostal” is used by others to include groups which emerged as part of the so-called “neo-Pentecostal” movements from the second half of the twentieth century. By still others, it is applied to diverse movements and churches globally which confess and practice the continuation of the gifts of the Spirit (among other expressions of spirituality and worship). Some others prefer labels such as “Charismatic” or “Renewalist.” For clarity, the term “Pentecostal” as used in this volume pertains first and foremost to those movements within “classical Pentecostal” fellowships but is also more inclusive of the global Spirit-movement with emphasis upon the baptism in the Holy Spirit and charismatic expressions as pertaining to the life of the Spirit. In this fashion, while it is directly related to the claims of “Classical Pentecostals,” it is also open toward those who may express the Spirit filled life in other ways, but with emphasis upon the charismatic life of the Spirit in the midst of the community.

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<sup>3</sup>A claim which has been demonstrated to misconstrue the role of Azusa as if it were essential to the emergence of the global movements which seemed to have various localities of origin even as Azusa was pivotal for numerous fellowships/movements, see Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 35-38.

<sup>4</sup>Such a label reflects a rather stringent and narrow definition which is better affirmed in the classical confession of the Full Gospel message about Jesus: saving, sanctifying, healing, baptizing in the Holy Spirit, and coming soon as King. The “sanctifying” pertained to the confession of the Azusa Street Mission and the emerging Wesleyan-Holiness fellowships as a five-fold Full Gospel message, while the “four-fold” Pentecostals fellowships did not include such within their core confession.

“Theological education” may be conceived in much broader terms as inclusive of discipleship within the local church, for instance, yet it is used in this volume regarding formal engagement within higher education that is specifically targeted upon theological development and discipleship within the academic disciplines. This volume takes up the narrower approach in seeking to address those persons, institutions, and organizational bodies concerned with the graduate/post-graduate levels of theological education with the intent of a following volume more specific to the undergraduate (bachelor’s and certificate levels) of higher education that is also deemed as a formal approach to “theological education.” We are hoping to also include a third volume on non-formal theological education, which is critical for the continuance of the global Pentecostal/Charismatic (PC) revival.

“Theological education” thus pertains to such issues as ministerial, ecclesiological, biblical, missional, and theological disciplines broadly. We understand that some may prefer the term “ministerial training” because it implies a greater focus on praxis whereas “theological education” can imply more of a focus on the cerebral, a connotation that we certainly do not mean to imply here. PC education has always been and must continue to be missionally focused. As Dave Johnson argues in his article here, scholarship must serve the Church (61). To do any less would mean the forfeiture of Christ’s mandate of teachers in the Church (Eph. 4:11-12).

The term “Majority World” is used instead of other labels which have been applied to similar contexts (but with their own histories): “Third World,”<sup>5</sup> “Developing World,”<sup>6</sup> or “Global South.”<sup>7</sup> The “Majority World” label (as all labels) fails to precisely address issues which may be pertinent to the various contexts both deemed geographically relative, but also culturally and/or socio-economically relative (even if in other geographical locales). This label allows for

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<sup>5</sup>“Third World” seems too political a label from the Cold War era that described those nations not either aligned with the West (“First World”) or Communism (“Second World”).

<sup>6</sup>“Developing World” seems to maintain something not far removed from notions of the colonizers and the colonized with the “Developed World” being the ideal aim for assessment of all other peoples and nations.

<sup>7</sup>“Global South” seems to misplace emphasis upon geography as if that is determinative for classifications.

considerable fluidity in application and serves the purposes for the overall trajectories of this volume in assessment of and proposals for diverse such contexts where a majority of the world find themselves (and particularly a majority of the Pentecostal world).

This terms also avoids the pejorative tendency of pitting the “West versus the rest,” implied in the western/non-western and other such terminology. It also avoids the somewhat geographical inaccuracy of “Global South,” which, while truly noting the stunning growth of the Church in the southern hemisphere, obscures the stupendous growth of the church in places like China, South Korea, the Philippines, and Iran, for example, which are north of the equator.

### **Summary of the Volume**

The collection of essays included in this volume represent a diverse authorship globally as seeking to represent the subject matter. The opening contributions by Gary Munson (1), Vee J. Doyle-Davidson (2), and Amos Yong (3) offer introductory observations and underlying theological and socio-cultural underpinnings for better engaging Pentecostal theological education in the Majority World. Munson provides a helpful first foray into recognizing various social and cultural influences upon graduate level Pentecostal theological education in the Majority World, While Doyle-Davidson, provides a more specific contextual referent in Asian contexts for non-Western students by tracing out a number of potential barriers in such contexts. Yong concludes this introductory section with a theological approach rooted in the narrative experience of Pentecost as root for reimagining and re-engaging what Pentecostal theological education in the Majority World might actually have to do with “Pentecost.”

Dave Johnson (4) and Josfin Raj (5) each carry the conversation into areas of advancing research engagement and maturation that may be

imported, local or glocalized<sup>8</sup> and make good use of the tools available in each context. While there are specific examples provided of such developments in varying Majority World contexts (particularly Asian) among our various Pentecostal seminary/graduate/post-graduate institutions, there are calls for further such developments globally by our institutions and scholars with the Pentecostal traditions.

The three chapters by Daniel Topf (6), Peter White (7), and Jeremiah Campbell (8) provide histories and prospective futures in several Majority world contexts across regions of Africa and Latin America. Such work provides an initial tracing of the past toward issues which each context may need to address in looking toward an even more fruitful future for Pentecostal theological education. These chapters serve to remind the readers that each context has its own stories and opportunities where the very theological basis for the modes, approaches, and reasoning toward advanced education varies and needs to be revisited for better Spirit-filled contextualizations.

A volume such as this, seeking to address Pentecostal theological education would be remiss to not have a contribution speaking to the role of the Holy Spirit in theological education. Temesgan Kahsay (9) provides just such an essay that seeks to consider ways in which the Spirit has and ought to be more directly engaged through the educational processes. The volume is rounded out by the chapter of Dean D. O’Keefe and Jacqueline N. Grey (10) that provides some biblical theological reflections drawn from the exilic and post-exilic texts of the Old Testament as bases for reflecting upon Pentecostal practices in conversation with Scripture.

The labors reflected in this initial volume are offered toward generating conversations and reflections upon the ways we have engaged, we might yet engage, and we ought to engage in the task of theological education as Pentecostals within the Majority World. There

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<sup>8</sup>In educational terms, this may indicate ways of intentionally thinking globally while acting locally or as intentional ways of sharing educational resources (personnel, research tools, etc.) with other contexts that functions with recognizing shared authority rather than domination by one entity over another; see Ching-Yi Tien and Paul C. Talley, “‘Think Globally, Act Locally’: ‘Glocalization’ in Taiwanese Higher Education,” *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 3.15 (2012), 124-130, and Fay Patel, “Deconstructing Internationalization: Advocating Glocalization in International Higher Education,” *Journal of International and Global Studies* 8.2 (2017), 64-82.

is much to be gained in furthering these conversations as we seek to address the many challenges and opportunities which stand before us.<sup>9</sup> It is hoped that these contributions will indeed spur on further engagement globally as we further advance the mission of God through the equipping of workers for kingdom living and proclamation of the reign of God in Christ Jesus.

Your feedback on this volume would be most helpful as the future volumes take shape and the conversations expand. If you review this book in a journal, please send us a copy at [apts.press@apts.edu](mailto:apts.press@apts.edu), or share it on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). You can also reach me personally, Rick Wadholm, at [wadholm@gmail.com](mailto:wadholm@gmail.com) or my co-editor, Dave Johnson, at [dave.johnson@agmd.org](mailto:dave.johnson@agmd.org). You can also connect with us through the publisher's website, [www.aptspress.org](http://www.aptspress.org).

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<sup>9</sup>For a similar discussion happening on a broader scale, see the World Study Report on Theological Education 2009 prepared by the World Council of Churches Edinburgh Study Group: "Challenges and Opportunities for Theological Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/challenges-and-opportunities-for-theological-education-in-the-21st-century-world-study-report-on-theological-education-2009-draft-full-version-edinburgh-2010-study-group> (accessed February 11, 2021).

## **Social and Cultural Influences Shaping Graduate Level Pentecostal Theological Education in the Majority World**

by Gary Munson

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), French West Indian political philosopher and author, describes western educated Africans as having entered a “zone of non-being,” drawing from his conviction that authentic being must arise from within a cultural heritage.<sup>1</sup> The context of Fanon’s comment is that western educated Africans during the colonial period existed between cultures. They had left their home culture for the purpose of education, and in doing so had incorporated foreign ideas and ways of thinking into their own. So, their condition was that they were not authentically western nor were they any longer authentically African, since they had adopted new thought patterns based upon a foreign cultural heritage. Majority World theological scholars and students may encounter a similar challenge. Upon graduation, Majority World scholars who received their education in westernized graduate schools of theology are expected to translate the Christian message, learned within a western paradigm of thought, into their own cultural setting and heritage. Those who once encountered their home people from an inherently emic perspective may become etic observers and perhaps even critics. This paper examines the influence of culture on graduate level education in Africa and the Majority World.

The approach often pursued in establishing graduate level educational centers in Majority World contexts has often been to transplant western institutional paradigms into a new home. The assumptions behind this approach seem to be two: 1) human ways of knowing can be universalized; and 2) because biblical truth is itself

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<sup>1</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles L. Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 8.

universal, all cultures should understand and apply it in similar ways. However, we should consider that while there are certainly universal scriptural truths, they are drawn from culturally embedded forms and transmitted to culturally embedded humans.

Douglas Jacobsen writes, “Today, two-thirds of the world’s Christians live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. . . . The inherited language of Christianity, steeped in the western cultural tradition, is no longer adequate for describing the beliefs, values, practices, and affections of the global Christian community. New voices are waiting to be heard.”<sup>2</sup> While it is true that Majority World authors are being published in greater numbers, the question remains, “Are they being heard?”

An example of one of the hinderances to conversation across cultural differences would be the following: western society and culture prioritizes the financial aspect of relationships to such an extent that other issues have often been submerged. Western culture often understands financial accountability as being equivalent to “good character.” We will discuss this issue in greater detail later, but at this point it is important to consider the implications of the prioritization of financial matters over other aspects of relationships. Regarding the unheard voices mentioned by Jacobsen previously, the question one might ask is, “What would be necessary for the Majority World to fully enter a conversation with western academics?” Habermas argues that a true conversation can only occur among those who consider and treat one another as subjects. For Habermas, the inherent *telos* of a conversation is to reach understanding and is based upon a symmetrical relationship among the participants that he terms, “pure subjectivity.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, conversation partners must participate on a level playing field. True conversation takes place under conditions of equality. One of the hinderances to this kind of conversation is the existence of power differentials. If an American or European ministry values their financial contribution toward ministry in a Majority World context above the

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<sup>2</sup>Douglas Jacobsen, *Global Gospel: An introduction to Christianity on Five Continents* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), xv.

<sup>3</sup>Jurgen Habermas, “Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence,” *Inquiry* 13 (1970): 371-373.

contribution of their local partner, they hinder true conversation because the two partners are not on an equal footing.

Such a conversation quickly becomes a relationship of domination in which the parties only truly express or hear one viewpoint. The center of gravity of Christianity may be moving South, but power remains embedded in the North. People understand power in this context, not only in terms of financial resources but also in terms of capacities for publishing, the existence of respected academic centers, academic gatekeepers (peer reviewers), and therefore, the ability to set the range of acceptable theological expression. How would a Majority World scholar gain access to the dominating side of the conversation? They must attend a recognized academic institution (preferably located in the West) and they must think and communicate within the academic norms of the West. Majority World scholars must also express ideas that can find their way into peer reviewed publications and their writing must be within the dominant theological paradigms. Further, they must attend conferences, be members of scholarly and professional organizations, and, of course, they must couch their thoughts and arguments in appropriate propositional terms.

### **Narrative and Theology**

Robert Pazimiño, in a popular text on Christian teaching, makes the statement that, “much of the Bible gives information about God in purely propositional form, but not every passage does so.”<sup>4</sup> Well-known Pentecostal university graduate programs are using this text. A Majority World Christian student/scholar would likely be confused or perhaps even amused at such a statement. No doubt there are differences of opinion on this matter, but when reading through the Christian Bible it is difficult to find more than a small percentage of its contents that can be reasonably understand as presenting theology in “purely propositional terms.” However, to many conservative Christian scholars of the West, to whom Pentecostalism has often hitched its theological and educational wagon, such declaration is an acceptable statement of

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<sup>4</sup>W. Pazimiño, *Basics for Teaching for Christians: Preparation, Instruction, Evaluation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 40.

fact. The epistemological preference of the West for propositional expression of thought has tended to dominate the academic pursuit of theology worldwide.

When Clarke writes about “liberating the text from the hegemony of Western dominance,” he is not only referencing the content of biblical interpretation but the methodology of approaching the text as well.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Clarke develops his study regarding Pentecostal theology in Africa from the viewpoint that, “theology is a cultural construct emanating from the struggle between faith and practice and is reflective of the cultural, historical, economic, and socio-political context arising out of life in community.”<sup>6</sup> Majority World theologies are often drawn from narrative readings of Scripture, and to create space for their hearing, the preference for propositional thinking must be widened.

Support of a truth claim from narrative is based upon a correspondence between narrative and actual or idealized life experience. The characters in the story act in ways that provide lessons and ethical warrants for the reader. African theologian Orobator writes, “Our aim is not to quote chapters and verses from the Bible to prove or support our positions but rather to refer to the Bible to learn from the experience of our ancestors of faith. How did they experience God? How did they express their experience in words and actions?”<sup>7</sup> Africans often transmit stories, which are an integral part of African life. They communicate knowledge from one generation to another through orally transmitted stories, proverbs and sayings.

African, and many other Majority World contexts, are much more comfortable with transmission of knowledge through stories, parables, proverbs, dances and music than are western cultures. In this regard, Majority World cultures are closer to the cultures reflected in the Bible. When western theological voices claim dominance over Majority World voices, the conversation may lose something important. The cultural gap between theological formulations and expressions of biblical knowledge preferred in the West, on the one hand, and the original context of that

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<sup>5</sup>Clifton R. Clarke, *Pentecostal Theology in Africa* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 33.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 34.

<sup>7</sup>Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 7.

knowledge on the other, raises important questions concerning the universality of the resulting interpretations. A possible way forward in overcoming the hegemony of western dominance over Christian theology might be by engaging in conversation with Majority World scholars based upon principles of intersubjectivity. One challenge to leveling the field among international scholars, and entering a healthier conversation, is the negative perception of oral cultures on the part of the western academic community.

### **Narrative and Orality**

Orality, illiteracy, superstition and myth remain packaged in a negatively perceived pre-enlightenment darkness in much of the West. John Taylor writes, “Christianity has become as a daylight religion of reason and reasonableness set over against the darkness of superstition.”<sup>8</sup> The preferred self-understanding of much of westernized Christianity is that it has brought the light of the Gospel into the darkness created by the demonic superstitions present in traditional belief systems. They have largely accomplished this through a process of social transformation from orality to literacy.

Walter Ong writes, “More than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness.”<sup>9</sup> At this point in Ong’s discussion he is emphasizing that writing detaches communication from its author, and therefore, its original context. The author of a written document may not be questioned or challenged in the same manner that a speaker might be. Ong continues his argument by stating that writing is a technology and that, “Technologies are not mere exterior aids but also interior transformations of consciousness, and never more than when they affect the word.”<sup>10</sup> As Ong describes the interior transformation produced by literacy, he affirms it as “fostering abstract and analytic thought.”<sup>11</sup> Orality, by contrast, fosters holistic and

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<sup>8</sup>John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amid African Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 5.

<sup>9</sup>Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 1982), 77.

<sup>10</sup>Ong, *Orality*, 81.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

integrative thinking. Literate cultures tend toward propositional argumentation, whereas, oral cultures prefer narrative forms.

Following the trajectory of Ong's thoughts, oral cultures transfer knowledge differently than literate ones, affecting both form and content. Transfer of knowledge through oral means involves several key factors that differentiate it. First, the oral audience is known and close at hand, whereas the writer's audience is always unknown and at a distance. Large quantities of abstract concepts require written communication, whereas, oral communication is suited for a relationally-based transmission of values. The quantity and nature of biblical studies that fill the library shelves of western seminaries could not have developed in oral cultures. The sort of biblical study often preferred in the West, comparing specific wording of one verse with another, the study of specific word forms, and the comparison of word use frequencies is not possible in strictly oral cultures, nor preferred among cultures closer to their oral roots. Oral cultures employ styles of communication normally associated with poetry by cultures in which written forms dominate. Those from the propositional communication style predominating in Western settings often consider poetry as artistic and casual.

Ong describes the transforming of consciousness associated with chirographic forms of communication in terms of movement toward greater exactness, analytics, and enlarged capacity for abstract thought.<sup>12</sup> But this transformation has a corresponding cost as well. There is also a corresponding loss of comprehensiveness of thought, the relationality of personal, direct communication, and reduction in the ability to effectively transmit values from one generation to the next. Change from orality to literacy involves both gains and losses. Greater ability to process abstract concepts and increased analytical exactness, comes with loss of an organic connection between the writers and their communicative context. It also negatively influences the intergenerational transmission of values.

Pentecostalism in the Majority World has prospered within cultures far more closely associated and comfortable with oral forms of learning and knowing than western graduate programs normally engage. Clarke writes, "The hermeneutical tools the African Pentecostals employ are not

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<sup>12</sup>Ong, *Orality*, chapter 4.

philosophical and rationalistic but are rather far more pragmatic in applying the Bible to people's daily lives."<sup>13</sup> Thus Pentecostal theology in Africa has largely developed from the bottom up as a response to the lived experience of Pentecostal Christians. The grass roots character of Pentecostal theology has significant explanatory power as to why Pentecostalism has grown rapidly worldwide and especially in the Majority World. Pentecostalism's development within a matrix of lived experience more so than the academy has created a prioritization of theological content through narrative (testimony) that remains capable of expressing the spiritual dimension of life familiar to Majority World settings.<sup>14</sup>

### Making Disciples

Paolo Freire is well known for his work to bring literacy to oral cultures in his native Brazil, as well as other South American nations. Cheryl Johns suggests that Pentecostals should take seriously Freire's methods of education and his method of conscientization toward the goal of developing a Pentecostal catechesis. Johns writes,

There is at present a need to place into dialogue Freire's conscientization process involving the cognitive-critical dimension and aspects of Pentecostalism involving the oral-affective dimensions, in order to develop an educational paradigm for Pentecostal catechesis which would lead to a more holistic model for personal and social transformation. Such a model would provide 'equal rights' for the oral and affective dimensions of persons yet would not negate the valuable role of developing critical awareness through cognitive literary means.<sup>15</sup>

Those creating curriculum in graduate theological education would profitably explore the concept of bringing the oral-affective dimension into conversation with the cognitive-critical for application in graduate theological education in Majority World contexts.

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<sup>13</sup>Clarke, *Pentecostal Theology*, 68.

<sup>14</sup>See Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press 2010), 7. See also Estrelita Y. Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2011) 28-60.

<sup>15</sup>Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy Among the Oppressed* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock 2010), 22.

Freire's work among the rural people groups of Brazil included building awareness that their poor economic circumstances were the result of oppression by the wealthy landowners, but also the hope of overcoming that oppression through learning, in that case, literacy.<sup>16</sup> Freire's literacy campaign was hugely successful and his methodology became quite influential. Freire developed what could be called a problem-solving methodology, but it went both deeper and wider than normally understood by this terminology. Conscientization is deeper than normal problem solving in that it reaches to the depth of life circumstance and begins at the level of the suffering of the learners. It is also wider in that Freire intended to move learners through long-standing life barriers into a new experience of freedom and self-determination.<sup>17</sup>

As explored in Johns' discussion, Freire did not have an adequate place for religion, or the work of the Holy Spirit, in his underlying ideology. However, the similarities between Pentecostal theological training and Freire's literacy training are too significant to ignore. Both address life issues of those living in poverty and experiencing issues of oppression. Both represent praxis-based processes involving human transformation. And both address needs of those living in Majority World contexts. Freire's work incorporates a strong sense of the subjectivity of learners and their ability to direct their own lives, make their own choices, and thereby escape oppression. The critique of Freire's work has often focused upon the fact that the impetus to seek freedom arises from those who lead a community into conscientization but are themselves from elsewhere. Thus, there is a component of elitism that is unescapable in Freire's thought. Another prominent critique of his thought is that Freire, drawing from a Marxist paradigm, incorporates a *praxis*-based epistemology that leaves humanity at the mercy of its own truth-making capacity.

To overcome these difficulties, Johns moves from Freire's thought through liberation theology by way of the contributions of Schipani into a Pentecostal appreciation of the Hebrew concept of *yada* (knowing in

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<sup>16</sup>Described in Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

<sup>17</sup>Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy Among the Oppressed*, 13-20.

the context of relationship and experience).<sup>18</sup> In this manner, Johns is able to provide a bridge between the cognitive-critical dimension of western culture and the oral-affective dimension present in many Majority World contexts. Johns' purpose is to build a conceptual foundation for a Pentecostal catechesis, but in doing so she also provides a cognitive structure potentially applicable to Pentecostal graduate level education in the Majority World.

David Bosch began a journey down this pathway when he discussed what he termed an epistemological break between contextual theologies and others identified as traditional theologies. Bosch distinguishes between these two sorts of theologizing by their sources. Traditional theology, according to Bosch, is essentially a top-down elitist enterprise that has dominated the theological enterprise in the West from the time of Constantine. Contextual theologies, by contrast, are theologies from below, developed from among the marginalized.<sup>19</sup> Pentecostal theology as it has developed in the Majority World, often among the poor and marginalized, could embrace oral and contextual theological forms and thereby champion the bondage breaking, freedom producing, liberating work of the Holy Spirit. As Pentecostalism becomes comfortable in its own skin, so to speak, it will further distinguish its own unique forms of theologizing. Globalizing pressures are ubiquitous, but their dehumanizing influences must be acknowledged and addressed. Addressing the human condition of the marginalized and the poor is one of the possibilities opened by the "from below" nature of Pentecostal theology.

### Converts or Proselytes

In a 2004 article, Andrew Walls raised the issue of whether the purpose of evangelism is to produce proselytes or converts.<sup>20</sup> His discussion points out that those who seek to make proselytes require them to conform to external standards of behavior, whereas converts

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<sup>18</sup>Johns, *Pentecostal Formation*, 40.

<sup>19</sup>David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 423.

<sup>20</sup>Andrew F. Walls, "Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis over Conversion in the Early Church," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, no. 1 (2004), 2-6.

internalize the Christian message. In so doing, they bring to bear the transforming power of the Gospel upon the individual, society, and culture. Converts must “turn their processes of thought toward Christ, think Christ into the intellectual framework of their time and place,” and, “into the patterns of thought they have inherited, into their networks of relationship and their processes for making decisions.”<sup>21</sup> Along a similar trajectory, Walls writes in a previous article, “Such deep translation needs the sustained exercise of corporate examination (individual insights, however brilliant, are inadequate), and steady discrimination. Deep translation is necessary to deep mission.”<sup>22</sup> Authentic Christianity requires converts, not proselytes. But what is meant by conversion?

According to Ricoeur, the answer to the question, “Who am I?” can only be answered by the telling of one’s life story.<sup>23</sup> Identity, for Ricoeur, is best understood as narrative identity. The narrative approach allows for two essential aspects of identity: 1) change over time; and 2) the combining of the concordant with the discordant.<sup>24</sup> Ricoeur uses the Latin term *ipse* for identity of the type that changes over time. A person is a baby, a child, a teenager, a young adult, a spouse, a parent, an elderly person, and yet all of these are the same person. Ricoeur develops his concept of identity in terms of narrative. In any human identity there are things that seem to fit and things that seem out of place. Narrative allows for both the concordant and the discordant to be combined into a person’s identity. Narrative identity is a useful way in which to understand identity within the Christian context of conversion. Conversion involves change from one way of living to a new one. Narrative more adequately expresses the transformational power of the Holy Spirit in human life than does analytical discourse.

The Pentecostal tradition of giving one’s testimony is a way of expressing one’s identity to others. Testimony functions as an invitation to the hearer to share an analogous experience. It is an invitation for the

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<sup>21</sup>Walls, “Converts,” 6.

<sup>22</sup>Andrew F. Walls, “Christian Scholarship in Africa in the Twenty-first Century,” *Transformation* 19, no. 4, (2002), 217.

<sup>23</sup>Paul Ricoeur, “Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator,” In: *Facts and Values*, ed. Doerer M.C., Kraay J.N. (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Library, vol 19, 1986), 121-132.

<sup>24</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 140-168.

hearer to join the one telling their story on a journey together into a new world. For Majority World Pentecostals, the new world the convert is about to experience is not so much defined by scriptural propositions as it is by biblical stories. But the Pentecostal contribution goes further. On a journey into unknown territory, a person needs a guide and so Pentecostals apply John 16:13 on a very practical level; the Holy Spirit will guide the Christian into truth. Africans, as do many other Majority World Christians, conceptualize truth as experiential and often encountered within the context of relationship. It is at this point that Johns' suggestion that the Hebrew concept of *yada* is the appropriate manner of knowing for the Pentecostal becomes especially helpful.<sup>25</sup>

#### African Pentecostalism as a Context for Majority World Graduate Studies

Asamoah-Gyadu, a leading Ghanaian theologian and Director of Graduate Studies at Trinity Theological Seminary (Legon, Ghana) writes,

There are three main reasons why pneumatic Christianity has become the religion of choice in contemporary non-western Christianity, which includes Africa and the African diaspora: (1) its emphasis on personal transformation wrought by the Holy Spirit; (2) its emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit with specific manifestations that make worship both a heartfelt and body-felt experience; and (3) the interventionist nature of charismatic theology, which is seen in healing, deliverance, and prayer for breakthroughs in life. The bottom line in all three of these factors is the critical importance of religious experience as of both personal and corporate value for religious people.<sup>26</sup>

This explanation of the reception of Pentecostal forms of Christianity across Africa and the Majority World is instructive, among other reasons, because of its emphasis on the role of experience.

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<sup>25</sup>Johns, *Pentecostal Formation*, 40.

<sup>26</sup>J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013), 6.

Asamoah-Gyadu informs the Christian world that African Christians seek to experience the reality of the Kingdom of God in everyday life and that the Spirit-filled, Pentecostal sort of Christianity is providing the kind of religious experience they seek.<sup>27</sup> Pentecostal graduate level education in Majority World contexts must seek ways to engage students in praxis-based theological reflection that discovers answers to the questions asked within those settings.

Another issue raised by Asamoah-Gyadu is an emphasis on personal transformation wrought by the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup> The kind of personal transformation envisioned by African Christians is not limited to spiritual formation, although the depth of prayer and worship present in African churches reflects an ongoing and growing dimension in that area. Personal transformation also involves transformation of life regarding having sufficient resources to care for family and community, and to relieve suffering. This author has travelled widely in Africa over many years and lived in Ethiopia for about nine years. During that season he saw numerous men, women and children suffer or die of conditions for which treatment would have been readily available in the West. Personal transformation in Africa is not limited to character development, it can be also be recognized in healthy children with sufficient nutrition and necessary medical care. Educational opportunities, sufficient clean water to drink, bathe, and wash clothes, and freedom from political and economic domination also evidence personal transformation. Thus, engagement with social and even political issues is an essential aspect of ministry preparation in the Majority World.

Finally, Asamoah-Gyadu mentions the interventionist nature of charismatic theology that addresses issues of healing, deliverance, and breakthroughs in life. Traditional African belief systems share a common understanding of the integration of the natural and spiritual dimensions. Whereas, within western cultural, and especially academic contexts, the spiritual dimension is associated with superstition, backwardness, mythology, and non-reality. In African contexts the spiritual dimension

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

remains entirely real, and human life involves regular interaction between the natural and spiritual dimensions. Based upon the naturalistic worldview of the Enlightenment, western theology has developed along a trajectory that largely discounts or ignores the spiritual realm. Although the Bible affirms (as in John 4:24) that God is Spirit, and every Evangelical Christian would affirm that God is real, the spiritual dimension in Evangelical theology generally seems to have fallen into the category of the unseen, and therefore, the unreal. A strong impetus for the growth of Pentecostal Christianity among Majority World nations has been its affirmation of, and at times direct confrontation with, the spiritual dimension as evidenced by divine healing, deliverance, and miraculous breakthroughs.

In a strong and influential manner, Ogbu Kalu, a leading voice in African Christian studies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, discusses the influence of globalization on Majority World contexts. One point he emphasizes is the importance of not attributing every positive change in Africa to Westernizing influences arriving on the continent. He writes, “It could also be said that those who use modernity and globalization discourses to substantiate externality tend to use data from urban contexts, and by neglecting the realities of rural areas where most of the population live in the Two-Thirds World, they fail to explain the appeal of the Pentecostal spirituality.”<sup>29</sup> Kalu points toward several important issues in the first section of his monograph. First, the modernity and globalization discourses emphasize the transformation of life in the Majority World through technology, communication, and scientific advancement. The examples most often used in international development discourse that support such claims are drawn from the westernized major cities across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Kalu’s point is illustrated by the population distribution of Ethiopia. According to the website [www.worldometers.info](http://www.worldometers.info), the population of Ethiopia in 2021 is 114,963,588, making it the second most populated nation in Africa.<sup>30</sup> About five million Ethiopians currently live in or near the only major city, Addis Ababa. As reported by the Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book, about 80% of Ethiopians live in

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<sup>29</sup>Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 12.

<sup>30</sup>“Worldometers,” <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ethiopia-population/> (accessed June 1, 2021).

rural areas.<sup>31</sup> Based upon my personal observation and research during years traveling and living in Ethiopia, a strong argument can be made for the influence of globalization on major urban centers, however, in terms of the life experience of about eighty percent of the population living in rural communities, that influence is often overstated.

How does this impact graduate Pentecostal education in Africa? Western forms of thought, education and theology taught in graduate programs largely located in urban centers across Africa, inadequately serve the growing number of Pentecostal churches and believers located in non-urban areas. Graduate theological education often takes a pragmatic approach by locating campuses in urban centers. Technological resources are more readily available, qualified students are more numerous, qualified professors are more available, there is greater accessibility and higher comfort for foreign faculty, and a strong central location with appropriate facilities makes financial sense. However, theological education will inevitably be shaped by its environment. Westernization and urbanization necessarily influence theological reflection in ways quite foreign to rural African contexts.

A second issue raised by Kalu is the problematic of the attribution of “progress” or “advancement” in Africa to external influences. The discourse of modernity and globalization emphasizes the value of external influences. Thus, the answer to food crises in Africa is the Green Revolution that combines chemical fertilizer with genetically modified seed to produce higher crop yields. From the side of organizations such as the Sasakawa Foundation that has been instrumental in extending the Green Revolution of Norman Borlaug to Africa, wherever these methods are used crop yields are increased and food is more available to growing populations.<sup>32</sup> From the side of the farmers of Africa, chemical fertilizer and genetically modified seed require financial resources to purchase, but there is little money available to subsistence farmers. The largely unintended social consequence of such programs is that many respected, land owning farmers transform into workers employed by large

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<sup>31</sup>“Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book,” <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ethiopia/> (accessed June 1, 2021).

<sup>32</sup>Some helpful websites related to the Sasakawa Foundation’s work in Africa may be found at: <https://www.saa-safe.org> and <https://www.gatesfoundation.org/where-we-work/africa-office/Sasakawa-Africa-Association>.

corporate farms.<sup>33</sup> From the farmer's perspective it is simply another way that international corporations and other monied interests are dominating local life.

Unfortunately, the same globalizing forces that are at work in the case of international economic development may influence Christian and Pentecostal educational initiatives as well. This is what lies behind Kalu's concern that the Pentecostal discourse ought not attribute the work of the Holy Spirit among all nations to simply being an extension of what happened in America at Azusa Street in 1906. If that narrative persists, Pentecostalism is standing in solidarity with theories of western dominance. Kalu is resisting that reversion to a time before the hard-fought theological battles engaged by such African theologians as Bediako, Pobee and Mbiti who, along with others, carved out a narrative that gives value to traditional African belief systems by suggesting that God was already present and working in Africa before the missionaries arrived.<sup>34</sup> That trajectory of thought leads to the perception that perhaps the traditional African belief systems prepared the hearts of Africans to receive true biblical Christianity reflected in Pentecostalism, and provides the fertile soil within which African Pentecostal Christianity is flourishing today. One narrative devalues African history and culture, whereas the other creates a pathway for the continuity of African Christian identity, and thus, provides a foundation for continued expansion of Christianity in Africa. If highly trained theologians, educated in a western style graduate school, should return to their home villages, they may experience what Fanon described as entering a zone of non-being, because they have become foreigners to their own people.<sup>35</sup> How can Pentecostal graduate level education in the Majority World avoid this very complex and unfortunate conundrum?

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<sup>33</sup>The author received this information through a personal interview with Arafayne Asmelash, a field worker for the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority in 2004 in Addis Ababa.

<sup>34</sup>Kwame Bediako (1945-2008) a leading Ghanaian theologian and founder of Akrofi-Christaller Institute for Theology, Mission and Culture in Akropong, Ghana. Bediako authored several major works including *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995). John S. Pobee, Ghanaian theologian and author of several works including *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979). John S. Mbiti, Kenyan theologian and author of several works including *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>35</sup>See the reference to Fanon on page one of this article.

## Theologians that Serve the Majority World

On a strategic level, several issues are of concern. First, Africa is one example of the need for highly trained indigenous theologians to develop theologies that address the life experiences of Majority World Christians. If Pentecostal theology in Africa is home-grown from below, then that must be the place for trained theologians to begin. Graduate curricula in theology can, and often already do, incorporate African theological voices alongside theologians of the West. However, there must be a greater level of respect given Majority World theological writing and movement away from the over-valuation of the theological reflection of the West.<sup>36</sup>

Ties between graduate level institutions and local ministry are essential to ensure the connections that will overcome the concerns expressed by Fanon. Culturally rooted authenticity is an antidote to the “zone of non-being.” A depth of honest reflection on the part of those who have been highly educated in the West regarding the value of Majority World ways of knowing and sharing knowledge is essential to the way forward. We should value the relational aspects of Majority World societies equally with preference for rationalism so prevalent in the West.

On a methodological level, Pentecostal theological graduate education can embrace a conversational style of presentation over lecture and can implement approaches following the Hebrew concept of knowing expressed in *yada*. Johns directed her work toward the development of Pentecostal catechesis, but the principles described in her work can easily be adapted to graduate level theological education. This short study indicates placing knowledge and learning back into an experiential and relational context would be the direction for growth. This may mean carving out significant time in curriculums, in order to develop student capacity to explain theological concepts in vernacular, and engaging appropriate learning styles such as narrative, proverbs, music, riddles, allegory, and local art forms. western graduate schools

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<sup>36</sup>A welcome and positive example of support for Majority World scholars is Fuller Seminary’s Global Research Institute. <https://www.fuller.edu/school-of-intercultural-studies/center-for-missiological-research/global-research-institute/>.

can emphasize oral presentation skills and methods, that value the transmission and learning of theology orally as well as through literary means.

### **Final Thoughts**

Imposing western dominance by virtue of a financially based power differential decontextualizes, and therefore, dehumanizes biblical and theological knowledge. Further, such a power differential damages the possibility of real conversation. There is a great need for an intentional leveling of the playing field, development of an attitude of serving the nations through creating and strengthening opportunities for graduate level theological education in the Majority World, and a willingness to do the hard work of partnership. True partnership allows for learning on all sides. Walls writes, “There are vessels for the Tabernacle that must be made of African gold and curtains for the Tabernacle that requires [sic] African cloth. And their manufacture requires dedicated Christians to pursue scholarship that unites spirituality and theological education.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Andrew F. Walls, “Spirituality and Theological Education,” *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology*, XVI, no. 3 (2011), 12.

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