

# A Comparative Study of Pentecostal and Non – Pentecostal Theological Education in South Africa: Spirituality and Academic Theology

Moses Hobe

University of South Africa

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8080270>

Received: 01 August 2024; Revised: 13 August 2024; Accepted: 21 August 2024; Published: 18 September 2024

## ABSTRACT

South Africa's theological education is diverse, with both Pentecostal and Non-Pentecostal institutions providing different approaches to spiritual formation and academic theology. Although the majority of people, Christian and non-Christian alike, have a strong understanding of spirituality, Pentecostals are relatively new to the term "spiritual formation." It is about living a practical Christian life, which consists of intimate existential knowledge of God motivated by a genuine love for God. As a result, commitment to the Lord includes involvement and living in the world around one for the glory of God. Theological education on the other hand, is the training that aims to prepare individuals for professional church ministry. According to Scripture, before regeneration, we were all "dead in trespasses" and sins (Ephesians 2:1). If spirituality and academic theology are necessary components of theological education, then understanding how they are integrated in Pentecostal and Non-Pentecostal institutions is crucial for effective theological education. As a result, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of spiritual practices in shaping students' theological understanding and to contribute to our understanding of the complex relationship between spirituality, academic theology, and leadership development in South African theological education, in order to establish a more thorough and successful way to forming spiritual/ pastoral leaders in the Pentecostal context.

**Keywords:** Spiritual Formation, Theological Education, Spirituality, Pentecostal Spirituality, Christian Spirituality

## INTRODUCTION

This study is approached from a Classical Pentecostal tradition. The "term 'Classical Pentecostal' has been used by American writers, to distinguish between the 'original' and older Pentecostal churches and newer 'Neo-Pentecostal' churches and Charismatics" (Anderson 1992:7). The classical Pentecostals are very active and growing phenomenon in South Africa, and played a significant role in the emergence of some newer groups (Anderson 2005: 69). "The rise of Pentecostalism at the dawn of the twentieth century released a spiritual dynamic that has continued to expand and evolve new forms which have increasingly influenced the church and the world" (Roy 2017:202). The classical Pentecostals, which had their origins in the US at the beginning of the century, have since grown to the largest family of Protestant Christians in the world (Burgess & McGee 1989: 219 – 220). In South Africa, there are three oldest Pentecostal churches, namely the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), the Full Gospel Church of God (FGC) and the Assemblies of God (AOG). According to Hofmeyr & Pillay (1994:193) "all began as independent missions, at first mainly to black South Africans, and steadily grew into fully – fledged denominations."

Anderson (1992:7) refers to them as the Pentecostal mission churches, so called because of their origins in predominantly white ‘mission’ churches, and also known as ‘classical Pentecostal churches’. According to Stuebing (1999:47) pastoral training is increasingly impacted by the academic world, which expects a high level of scholarship in pastoral training.

In this study, “non –Pentecostal” refers to the mainstream of churches such as, Dutch reformed church of South Africa (NGK), Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) and the Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA), which do not emphasize the charismatic gifts and practices that are characteristic of Pentecostalism, such as speaking in tongues, healing and prophecy. Some of these churches, however may contain charismatic components or individuals within them, but they are not classified as classical Pentecostal churches such as the AFM, FGC and AOG. Though their particular institutions may have various emphases and approaches to theological education, these churches are noteworthy in this study because of their shared distinctives in the following:

- Emphasis on reformed theology and confessionalism.
- Focus on ministry formation and church leadership development.
- Development of contextual and practical theology.
- Dedication to social justice and transformation.
- Embracing an ecumenical approach to theological education.

According to Tennet & Walls (2007:165) a common problem that plagues most attempts to define and characterize Pentecostalism is that the emphasis is often placed on the distinctive of Pentecostal faith and experience rather than on the broad agreement between Pentecostals and Evangelicals. One of the disadvantages of this is that many Christians live in isolation from one another, and their knowledge they have of their fellow believers is often informed more by prejudice than truth (Roy 2017:ii). Pentecostalism shares in a basic Christian experience in many of its aims, values and features to other Christian traditions as well. Pentecostal churches are theologically orthodox. On the great foundational and fundamental truths of the word of God they are in complete agreement with other evangelicals. This includes faith in the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible. It is the experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit that has made Pentecostal people different from other evangelical Christians. And according to Cettolin (2006:42 – 43) Pentecostal spirituality does however bring a unique emphasis on the initiative and work of the Spirit in the believer. Therefore this study takes a critical look at the present Pentecostal theological education processes, with a focus on spiritual leadership development, by trying to learn from the emphasis on church unity and ecumenism, working towards greater unity among Christian denominations and traditions in South Africa. As a result, the aims of this study are as follows:

- To investigate the correlation between spirituality and academic theology in Pentecostal and non – Pentecostal theological education.
- To compare and contrast how these traditions integrate spirituality and intellectual discipline.
- To identify optimal practices and opportunities for improvement in Pentecostal theological education.

To Smith (2017:78), “in what Browning calls historical theology, we take the questions raised by our examination of our practices to our normative texts, and try to determine what those texts really imply about our practices.” Life’s problems that limit our action shape our questions Browning (1991:56). This is the interpretation of specific, theory – laden behaviours that calls into question what we should actually be doing (Browning 1993:48). As a result, this article raises the following questions:

- How do Pentecostal and Non-Pentecostal institutions integrate spirituality and academic theology into their curriculum and pedagogy?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

- What are the consequences for theological education and leadership development?

## Spirituality

The need for a definition of spirituality is necessary at this point in time before we could detail what Pentecostal spirituality is all about. According to (Köstenberger 2011:67) spirituality is a word with almost as many definitions as there are people using it. It is a buzzword that is popular both in Christian circles and in the larger general culture. Hagberg and Guelich (1995:2) in Cettolin (2006:26) warn that ‘spirituality’ may be the most ambiguous term in our time: “For those in the church, some take the term for granted, some rigidly define it, and others seldom give it a thought. In broader circles, spirituality has come to mean an urge or power within us that drives us toward meaning for our lives.’ In the words of Schmidt (2008: xii) when *Spirituality* first appeared in the seventeenth-century France, it carried both positive and negative connotations whereby one referred to the personal relationship with God leading to a holy life, but also to a fanatical behaviours suggesting an unbalanced personality. Carson (1994:387) observes that “spirituality is a person – variable synthetic theological construct. Köstenberger interprets Carson statement as meaning that “one must always inquire as to what components enter into the particular construct advocated or assumed by a particular writer and what components are being left out.” Defining spirituality (Demarest & Matthew 2010: 194) declared that:

The word spirituality is a noun isn’t found in the Bible, but it’s closely related to the Christian use of the word spiritual (*pneumatikos*). Christian belief has always maintained that humanity images God in the fact that we are “embodied spirits.” In effect, all of humanity fits into the category of “unceasing spiritual beings” and this spiritual condition is what makes humanity uniquely special to God.

According to Cettolin (2006: 26) “although the English term ‘spirituality’ may have been originally coined by Roman catholic theologians to refer to a mystical relationship with God, it is now commonly used to refer to a whole range of approaches existing in different branches of the church that allow a more personal and life transforming relationship with the God revealed in Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.” Martsolf and Micky (1998) in Holmes (2005:28) mentions five central features of spirituality which may offer a helpful place to start in understanding spirituality:

- **MEANING:** the ontological significance of life; making sense of life situations; deriving purpose in existence.
- **VALUE:** beliefs and standards that are cherished; having to do with truth, beauty, worth of thought, object or behavior; often discussed as ‘ultimate values’.
- **TRANSCEDENCE:** experience and appreciation of a dimension beyond the self; expanding self – boundaries.
- **CONNECTING:** relationships with self, others, God and the environment.
- **BECOMING:** an unfolding of life that demands reflection and experience; includes a sense of who one is and how one knows among other things.

Schmidt (2008: xiii) continues to say that “by whatever name, spirituality has traditionally been associated with theology.” And to him (Schmidt) theology is disciplined reflection on Christian faith. The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1991:484) defines spirituality as “a state of deep relationship to God.” It is important to note that the dictionary offers the following to differentiate spirituality which I consider worth noting:

## Orthodox (Greek) Spirituality

According to the Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1991:485) “the creation of a school for catechumens in Alexandria in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century stimulated an intellectual and speculative type of spirituality. It owed much to Philo, who sought to combine Judaism and Platonism. This led to a dualistic view of matter and spirit, scriptural allegorism, the method of abstraction in apophatic attitudes and in a tendency to think dialectically. To this was added a Christocentric view by Athanasius (296 – 373) completing what Irenaeus had emphasized beforehand, of the recapitulation of humankind’s purpose in Christ. There is a strong asceticism, influenced by desert fathers such as John Cassian (ca. 360 – 435), Evagrius (ca. 346 – 399), and John Climacus (ca. 570 – 649), who considered the monastic model of *apatheia* as the ideal.”

Elwel (1991:486) further notes that “this is not the apathy of the Stoics, but the fiery love of God, that both burns up human passions and possessiveness and flames in living desire for God. Orthodox piety is also deeply liturgical in its dispensing of the sacraments and the celebration of the church calendar, which frames the whole year with its commemoration of all the stages of the savior’s earthly life in ministry. There is a strong contemplative element in the tradition of hesychasm (*hesicha*, “quiet”). “Prayer without ceasing” goes back to the contemplative life of the desert fathers, but it was richly developed by Symeon the New Theologian (949 – 1022).”

## Western Medieval Spirituality

Gregory the Great (540 – 604) is the father of medieval spirituality. He systematized Western monasticism, and developed the imagery of the vision of God. To experience this, he emphasized the need of purity of heart with the associated virtue of humility. Practical service was another Western trait of Gregory’s teachings. Isidore (ca. 560 – 735) bishop of Seville, and the Venerable Bede (673 – 635) developed Gregory’s idea further, with stress on reading (*lection*), meditative memory (*meditation*), prayer (*oratio*), and practice (*intento*) as guides for the spiritual life in the dark ages of the barbarians. Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580 – 662) was the first to give expression to the Catholic tradition of the three ways to God (purgation, illumination, and union). The High Middle Ages (1000 – 1300) was primarily concerned with monastic reform, the clash between scholasticism and the contemplative life, and role of the laity in the church. An intensely affective expression of spirituality was promoted by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153). And his followers. The imitation of Christ was aroused by the example of friars, notably Francis of Assisi (1181 – 1226) and his followers, Bonaventure (1221 – 74) and Raymond Lull (1235 – 1315). The Late middle Ages (1300 – 1500) was marked by a dramatic change of mood to one of pessimism in Western life with famines, plagues, intellectual sterility, and skepticism, and the break-up of feudal society. Individual mysticism deepened, although regional associations of mystics were discernible, the Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1991:485 – 486).

## Modern catholic Spirituality

According to the Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1991:486) “more than anywhere else, the founders of the tradition of modern Catholic spirituality are the Spanish mystics. Ignatius of Loyola (1491 – 1556) was the founder of the Jesuits and author of The Spiritual Exercises. Teresa of ‘Avila (1542 – 91) were Carmelite reformers. In France there was sharp conflict between the more rationalistic views of men like Bossuet and the quietest views of Francis F?nelon (1651 – 1751). Before him the great influence on French spirituality was Francis of Sales (1567 – 1715), who followed the combined influences of Ignatius and Teresa. Sales focused on the spiritual needs of the laity. A more theological emphasis on spiritual renewal of the clergy was made by Pierre de Brulle (1575 – 1629), who founded the Oratory for that purpose in 1611.”

### **Caroline (Anglican) Spirituality**

England, the spirituality of the Anglican Church is associated with the Book of Common Prayer. Although “Caroline” refers to the reign of Charles I and II, it is still characteristic of much Anglicanism today. Its balance between the contemplative life of prayer and the vocal liturgy of communal prayer is the genius of its spiritual continuity in the life of the church, the Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1991:487).

### **(Protestant) Puritan spirituality**

While the Reformation of Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) and John Calvin (1509 – 64) developed into classical Protestantism, subsequent reforms of Puritanism, pietism, and Methodism were distinct, and sometimes divergent. To Luther the essence of spiritual life could be sustained on the actualization of the Ten Commandments, as the Lord’s Prayer, and the Apostles’ Creed. Calvin is a much more sophisticated spiritual guide, and in the third book of his institute he has left rich teaching on the spiritual life. He gave his own distinctive alternative to the catholic model of purgation – illumination – union with the biblical themes of justification – sanctification – glorification. It was out of Calvinist teaching that Puritan spirituality developed in England and later in New England. It focused on the centrality of the Word of God and its preaching, the preparation of heart to receive the Word, the need for a godly walk and accountability to God, and the strength and watchfulness required in pilgrimage and conflict. The heavenly hope of believers enabled them to anticipate heaven while still on earth, the Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1991:487).

### **German Pietism**

In reaction to the sterile theology of Lutheranism in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, pietism was somewhat anti – intellectual and reactionary. Phillip J. Spener (1635 – 1705) was its classical exponent, although Johann Arndt (1555 – 1621) was its founder. Arndt’s True Christianity was widely read as an inspiration for “a new life.” August H. Franckle (1663 – 1727) was the organizing genius of the lay movement. Both Spener and Franckle practiced their devotion in the establishment of poor schools, orphanages, farms, printing shops, and other enterprises, the Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1991:487).

### **Methodism and Modern Holiness Movements**

John Wesley (1703 – 91) who lived and died an Anglican priest, founded the Methodist movement. While preaching was the main emphasis of his ministry, he developed hymnology with his brother Charles as an investment of spirituality, and developed class organization as a means of instruction. The aim was to achieve Christian perfection/scriptural holiness. The Keswick convention was established in England in the late 1800s to promote the message of victorious Christian living, the Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1991:487).

### **Pentecostal Spirituality**

While the above forms of spirituality noted by the Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (1991:484) are helpful, their suggestion fail to explain what Pentecostal spirituality is all about in greater detail. Historically, Pentecostal spirituality as a protest against reformed spirituality can, and must be dated before the Pentecostalism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Pentecostal movement emerged out of intense Wesleyan – holiness and reformed evangelical revivals of the late nineteenth century, as well as from the early 2<sup>th</sup> century Azusa Street experience (Phiri 2009:56). Writing about Pentecostalism Elwell (1991:487) declared:

Pentecostalism, beginning in the early part of this century out of the holiness teaching, and the more interdenominational charismatic movement since World War II have been significant renewal movements.



The release of self-consciousness, the exercise of touch, the emphasis on spiritual gifts, the strong awareness of the satanic and need for exorcisms, the ministry of all believers – these have marked the character of its spirituality.

Pentecostalism shares in a basic Christian experience in many of its aims, values and features to other Christian traditions as well. Pentecostal spirituality does however bring a unique emphasis on the initiative and work of the Spirit in the believer (Cettolin 2006:42 – 43). As Martin Luther is the fountainhead of Lutheranism, John Calvin of Reformed Theology, and John Wesley of Methodism, so Charles F. Parham stands as the fountain of Pentecostalism (Stronstad 1988:1). Stronstad further asserts that Charles F. Parham bequeathed to the Pentecostal movement its definitive hermeneutics, and consequently, its definitive theology and apologetics. In Parham's report we find the essential distinctive of the Pentecostal movement namely:

- The conviction that contemporary experience should be identical to apostolic Christianity.
- The separation of the baptism in the Holy Spirit from sanctification as Holiness movements had earlier separated it from conversion/incorporation.
- And that speaking in tongues is the indisputable evidence or proof of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The Pentecostal theology and spirituality can be described as an embodiment of hope that, coupled with faith and hope, conquers the obstacles (Kärkkäinen 2006). Pentecostal spirituality's beliefs and practices shape each other in an enduring, mutually conditioning relationship akin to the relationship between knowledge and lived experience Stephenson (2009:46).

### **Christian Spirituality**

Having seen that Pentecostalism shares in a basic Christian experience in many of its aims, values and features with other Christian traditions it is significant in this section to focus on Christian spirituality. In answering the question what is Christian Spirituality, Howard (2008:16) distinguishes between the three levels of meaning with reference to the Christian tradition:

- At the level of practice: Christian spirituality is a lived relationship with God. We actually live it out. In practice, a relationship God. Thus we can speak spirituality as describing the character of our actual, lived relationship with God through the Spirit of Christ as describing our practice of relationship with Christ.
- At the level of dynamics: Christian spirituality is the formulation of a teaching. Therefore this level often involves the development of models of understanding and synthesizing the dynamics of how relationship with God works.
- At the level of academic discipline: this level identifies the use of the term to refer to the formal study of the first and second levels. Hence we may speak of the academic field of Christian spirituality, which reflects systematically on lived experience of Christ and the formulations surrounding that experience.

Pointing the way forward, Carson (1996) in (Köstenberger 2011:68) helpfully list the following necessary components part of a distinctively Christian spirituality:

- Spirituality must be thought of in connection with the Gospel.
- Christian reflection on spirituality must work outward from the centre (spirituality must not become an end in itself).

- At the same time we should be rightly suspicious of forms of theology that place all the emphasis on coherent systems of thought that demand faith, allegiance and obedience but do not engage the affections, let alone foster an active sense in the presence of God.
- Nevertheless, what God uses to foster this kind of Gospel spirituality must be carefully delineated [Carson emphasizes the spirituality of the word].
- Finally, such Work – centred reflection will bring us back to the fact that spirituality, as we have seen, is a theological construct.

Köstenberger (2011: 68) declares that no discussion of Christian or biblical spirituality can be legitimately be divorced from the gospel of salvation in Christ alone and the coming of God’s kingdom in his person and work. Köstenberger further argues that there are two foundational components in arriving at the biblical understanding of spirituality. The first such aspect is union with and abiding in Christ. The second element is the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Foundations of Christian Spirituality**

According Howard (2008:36) gives us the fundamental pattern or “foundations” characterizing Christian relationship with God in general, foundations that support our practice, our understanding of the dynamics of the divine – human relationship, and our formal study of Christian spirituality:

1. Christian spirituality refers to relationship with God as lived in practice, as people formulate an understanding about the dynamics of lived relationship with God, and as a formal discipline of academic study that investigates that relationship.
2. Christian spirituality is distinct from mysticism in that mysticism addresses special experiences of the presence of God, whereas spirituality addresses the entirety of the relationship. Spirituality is distinct from spiritual theology in that spiritual theology tends to focus on the individual’s growth toward perfection. It differs from sanctification in that it is not the investigation of a doctrine, but of a lived relationship. Spirituality differs from religious studies in that it does not attempt a scholarly neutrality; spirituality is somewhat engaged. Finally, Christian spirituality differs from spiritual formation in that spiritual formation looks toward the means of maturity, whereas spirituality explores the whole of the life.
3. Christian spirituality appears in a variety of forms. There are different forms of lived spiritual practice based on the differences in personality, geography, situation, and the like. Spirituality takes on different forms of formulation when groups of people collect around ways of understanding the dynamics of relationship with God (for example, the Lutheran approach to spirituality). The academic discipline of Christian spirituality can take on different forms as distinct expressions of the aims and methods of the discipline are expressed.
4. Scholars and practitioners of Christian spirituality currently have a tendency to approach relationship with God from the perspective of describing actual life, to emphasize experience, to explore the corporate aspects of a relationship with God, to permit careful study and personal transformation to influence one another, and to use a variety of disciplines in the exploration.
5. Although we may see a wide range of diversity in Christian spirituality, this diversity is built upon a few foundational principles. Christian spirituality is rooted in the sacred text and teachings of the Christian faith. It assumes the reality of God and spirit. It acknowledges the fullness of human experience. Our understanding of Christian spirituality is constructed in terms of the real relationship between God and humans, the possibility and actuality of God and humans sharing lives. It brings us to the recognition that the God – human relationship is ordered to be a relationship of love.

Lastly a vibrant and full – orbed spirituality, as exhibited by Jesus, involves active engagement with the

world on mission for God and as empowered by the spirit Köstenberger (2011: 71).

### **What is Spiritual Formation?**

The challenges facing theological education include the need for balance between academic, spiritual, and practical dimensions or the need to balance head, heart and hands issues (Cole 2007:169). Spiritual formation, without regard to any specifically religious context or tradition, is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite “form” or character (Willard 2012:19). Howard (2008:295) further note that spiritual formation refers to the process by which communities and individuals become more fully conformed and united to Christ, especially with regard to maturity of life and calling, whereby it does not focus on appearance, politics, or particulars. Rather responding to the gracious work of God, it involves the intentional and ongoing Godward reorientation and rehabilitation of human experience itself, expressed in the concrete realities of everyday life. Lindbeck (1988:287– 288) defines spiritual formation non-theologically, to accommodate different religious traditions, saying it is “deep and personally committed appropriation of a comprehensive and coherent outlook on life and the world” then he specifies its Christian form as dispositions and capacities for speech, feeling, and action, which are distinctive of Christianity and also shaped deeply by culture, personal history, and genetic constitution.

Dobbins (2004:31) sees Spiritual Formation as a process that begins with conversion. The speed and intensity with which it proceeds will be determined by the degree to which we expose our hearts to scripture and submit our wills to the Lordship of Jesus, truly becoming His disciples (John 8:32). Therefore the product of spiritual formation is a growing Christ – likeness in us (Galatians 4:19). In addition, however (Logan 2007:174) says it is crucial to recognize that spirituality is virtually about developing a relationship. Glerup (2010:249) asserts that spiritual formation is directed by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of conforming disciples to the image of Jesus as the Spirit indwells, fills, guides and empowers people to live their faith. To Logan this is why discipleship (the lifelong process of following Jesus Christ and becoming like Him, i.e., “transformation” as a result) is a vital aspect of spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is about the practical Christian life, the habit of personal existential knowledge of God motivated by deep love for God (Logan 2007:173). Snelling (2015:11-12) defines transformation as follows:

Spiritual transformation is the process by which Christ is formed in us. It is an organic process that goes far beyond mere behavioral tweaks to deep fundamental changes at the very core of our being. In the process of spiritual transformation the spirit of God moves us from behaviors motivated by fear and self-protection to trust and abandonment to God, from selfishness and self-absorption to freely offering the gifts of the authentic self, from the ego’s desperate attempts to control the outcomes of our lives to the ability to do God’s will even when it is foolishness to the world around us.

Dobbins (2004:31) further describe it this way: “Theologically, spiritual formation is part of the believer’s sanctification, a continuing work of grace that transforms us through the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). Put in more practical terms, sanctification is God’s provision for healing believers from the hurts of their past and delivering them from habits and other aspects of their carnality that hinder the expression of Christ in their attitudes and behavior.”

### **Christian Spiritual Formation**

Schmidt (2008: xiii) suggests that the word spirituality derives from the Latin spiritus, but the concept goes back to the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Schmidt (ibid) continues to highlight that spiritus was used to translate the Greek pneuma, which the New Testament authors had earlier used for the Hebrew ruach. According to Howard (2008:268) the term formation brings to mind shaping and modeling, influencing the development of a potential into a completed actual. Howard then goes on to say that Christian spiritual formation refers to similar shaping process with reference to our relationship with God. Understood in this



way, “spiritual formation” is first of all, above all, and throughout the shaping (i.e., “forming”) work of the divine Holy Spirit, carried out according to the will of God the Father, for the purpose of conforming us to the image of Christ (Averbeck 2008:28).

To Horton (2006:672) Christian formation is the process and product of motivating, nurturing, and internalizing values, priorities, perspectives and responses that are from God. While 63 there may be slight differences in the above definitions it is noteworthy to consider that the source of spiritual formation is God. This is nicely put in context by (Willard 2012:22) that Christian spiritual formation is focused entirely on Jesus, its goal is an obedience or conformity to Christ that arises out of an inner transformation accomplished through purposive interaction with the grace of God in Christ. Christian spirituality is any spirituality which sees God in Jesus Christ (Schmidt 2008: xvi).

### **The Task of Christian Spiritual Formation**

According to Howard (2008:282) the task of spiritual formation can be a process that involves a series of acts and attitudes that together integrate the context, agents, aims and means of formation. This process such steps as:

- Gaining a clear vision of the aims of spiritual formation. This is accomplished in a general way by acquiring a knowledge of the greater glory of God and the ultimate aim of spiritual formation however defined. But the vision must move beyond the general to the particular. What would the ideal rule of God look like in my life (or our life), right now here and now? What are some realistic proximate aims of spiritual formation?
- Cultivating a strong determination not to give up the process of growth even if things don't seem to work.
- Nurturing community support to facilitate Godward re-orientation and re-habitation.
- Identification – where i/we may be suffering from deformation, disorientation, wrong habituation. What must I put off, what must we put on – not just generally, but here and now.
- Selecting disciplines, practices, rules, circumstances, relationships, experiences, and the like, through which one hopes to introduce or reinforce a new and Godward orientation/habit.
- Giving careful attention to the nuances of one's own context such that selection and revision are made in light of one's own real situation.
- Implementing an intentional program of activities (or leaving off certain activities).
- Experimenting with and revising the ongoing process

### **Theological Education and Pentecostal spirituality**

In an article entitled “Lessons from the Past: what our History Teaches Us,” (1999: 84 – 91) William W. Menzies reminds us that the Pentecostal movement was born in revival and that it was in Topeka in Charles Parham's Bible school that the theological identity of the modern Pentecostal movement was established on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1901. Menzies articulates the important role of education filled those early years. From 1901 until 1914, many churches and missions were established. These produced an army of spirit – baptized believers with a burning passion to proclaim the message to the world. The purpose of Pentecostal education in a Pentecostal institution is not only to train students to remain faithful to the inspired word of God, the tenets of faith of the organization and the traditional lifestyle and practice, but to equip the students to function in Pentecostal power with the operation of spiritual gifts flowing through them and the congregation McKinney (2000:258).

This section therefore will reflect on the relationship between the experience of Holy Spirit which

determines Pentecostalism and theological education. It is arguably important to know what is the way forward in dealing with the interface between theological education as an academic endeavour and the experience of the Holy Spirit. The scholar of global Pentecostalism, Allan Anderson (2004:187) claims that 'If there is one central and distinctive theme in Pentecostal and charismatic theology, then it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Wood in Kilpatrick (1998) said:

It is critical that in the classroom you deal with hermeneutics, exegesis and the like, but at some point we've got to pray students through to an experience that will give them...empowerment and help them to expect that a gateway in their own prayer life will open as they yield to the Spirit and speak as He gives utterance.

Gary McGee (1991: 203 – 206) states than an “ openness to the fullness of the Spirit’s work as portrayed in the Book of Acts and as articulated in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 established the paradigm of Pentecostal spirituality.” Theologian Russell Spittler (1988: 409 – 413) makes the observation that, “ much Pentecostal success in mission can be laid to their drive for personal religious experience, their evangelistic demand for decision, the experiential particularism involved in every baptism of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostal preaching is a call to personal experience with God – nothing less.”

Asamoah – Gyadu (2017:4) defines Pentecostal education as “any conscious attempt to impart knowledge regarding the Gospel of Jesus Christ in order to ensure that Christians grow in the grace of God and the maturity of the Spirit. Therefore in its narrow sense Pentecostal theological education is formalized through the work of seminaries and Bible schools and its main aim is to train Christian leaders and pastors for the work of the ministry.” A century ago Pentecostalism was a grassroots movement that focused on experience rather than learning and had few resources for theological research. Today, many prominent theologians come from Pentecostal backgrounds, and what is more, reflection on the movement has had deep theological impact – not only on Pentecostal theologians but also ecumenically (Kim 2017:22). McKinney (2000:256) writes that:

Pentecostal spirituality has played a major role in the rapid growth of the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostal ministers touched by the Spirit are unafraid to come against the dark side of spirituality, recognizing that the arena in which ministry takes place includes combating the activity of Satan. Anointed Pentecostal teaching is required in the class room, and while the Spirit and the word combat and diffuse any efforts to thwart the effectiveness of the teaching/learning experience there are times when teacher and student must take the authority given them by Christ and rout the enemy forcibly.

Having pondered on the Pentecostal educational spirituality and development we can conclude in the words of McKinney (2000:278) that an education in a Pentecostal institution does not carry with it an either – or option as it relates to the academic and the spiritual. it is like the old song of yesterday, “Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage...You can't have one without the other.” knowledge, skills, and techniques are important, but the student must be touched by the Spirit and prepared as a spiritual person to be able to function as a Pentecostal in the real arena in which ministry takes place. Keener writes (2001:18) “the Holy Spirit, like the Father and the Son, is not just a doctrine, an idea, or an experience to be tagged on the other doctrines and experiences of our Christian life. He is the God who has invaded our lives with his transforming presence.” In the final analysis Asamoah – Gyadu (2017:17 – 18) says, theological education and Pentecostal spirituality must help us to achieve the following educational objectives:

- First, theological education must help to deal with uncertainties surrounding the presence of the risen Christ. We learn that the Lord, through the abiding presence of His Spirit, is willing to walk with us amidst the uncertainties of life. What the Spirit of God does is endow people with gifts required for their calling. Theological education exists to help nurture these gifts of grace for the constructive building up of God’s people into maturity so that as Paul says, they are not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. The Holy Spirit works to sustain, nurture, probe and challenge the Christian church

in ways that accomplish Jesus Christ's agenda for the world.

- Second, in theological education, we learn that Jesus Christ is willing to stay if we are willing to invite Him. Through the Spirit, Jesus who is in the Father comes to dwell within each disciple (John 14:23) and by that presence transforms each individual into a temple fit for God's dwelling. This indwelling must be desired as part of theological education. Without this indwelling or infilling, people may know who God is on paper but they cannot experience His worshipful presence in their Christian lives as living reality. The presence of the living Christ fills those who hunger and thirst after fellowship with Him.
- Third, through theological education, we learn that we can have guaranteed fellowship with the Jesus who broke bread and warmed the hearts of the disciples. That was a sign of fellowship. The recurrence of the Spirit's impact upon individual lives keeps the truth from becoming dead tradition; the persistence and cumulative effect of His work historically recorded guards men from extravagances and mistakes.

According to Asamoah – Gyadu (2017:20) the chief mission of the Spirit is presenting Christ and making Him known to the world. He continues to confront the world with the person of Jesus through our proclamation of Him as Lord so that what we teach will serve the interest of the people of God, the church. I therefore agree with Asamoah – Gyadu that it is possible to redeem Christian education from the clutches of those who have turned it into a mere academic exercise devoid of any spiritual experience and power.

### **The Essence of Ministerial Training**

Thomas (2008:22) refers to 'ministry formation' as "the holistic approach in education, by which students receive experiential training, reflective – practice learning, community interactions and dialogue skills, awareness of and commitment to personal spiritual formation, intellectual academic development and the ability to integrate various disciplines effectively to fulfill the ministerial task. It is all about preparing men and women to meet the challenges and demands of Christian ministry successfully by providing a firm base through the academic, spiritual and ministerial aspects of theological training." Again, preparation for ministry needs to be reconciled as engagement in ministry (Gibbs 2005:185). Gibbs continues to clarify this fact by saying that, if mission is the mother of theology, then our theological development must best take place within a mission environment, in churches and agencies that are involved in the cultures encountered in the community they serve. This is basically what Green (2014:5) calls the "Integration of faith and learning."

This integration according to him (Green) seeks, in various ways, to inform – and transform – the various disciplines of the academic curriculum with insights drawn from a Christian worldview. The following assertion by (Wegert 1998:1) is relevant in this regard:

It has been generally assumed that preparing students for ministry includes more than educating them in theology, including certain skills such as preaching, counseling and training them in methods of church growth. One primary reason for this is that the New Testament's criteria for church leadership centre more on the extent of the minister's personal likeness to Christ than on any other factor.

The above then means that the essence of theological training must be to prepare our students to engage their communities, serve the church and society. "Thus a real challenge facing formal theological education is not just plurality of the field that is dispersed and lacks material unity in its various disciplines, but there is also the underlying need to integrate head, hands, and heart into a holistic process of formation" Fiorenza (1996: 318 – 341) in (Logan 2007:171). In this regard I think it is appropriate to consider what Thomas (2008:54) citing the Asia Theological Manual for accreditation (2000) noted with regards to the general

objectives for an accredited theological institution:

**Academic Formation:**

- To facilitate a comprehensive knowledge of the scriptures and an understanding of Christian theology.

**Ministry Formation:**

- To equip students for a ministry in the church by adequate knowledge of cultural, socio – economic and political issues.
- To instill a vital vision for evangelism, missions and social service and action.

**Spiritual Formation:**

- To cultivate Christian life and experience.
- To equip students spiritually, mentally, physically, emotionally, morally and socially.

But on the same breath we should take into consideration what Gibbs (2005:186) said, that: “leaders will grow in a more holistic manner, intellectually and experientially, when their learning context challenges performance and creates risk.” According to Gibbs it is important to note that the same challenging environment will also bring hidden personality issues to light as the emerging leaders work through stressful situations. Mvula (2006:5) quoting Bruce. J Nicholls’s manifesto on the renewal of evangelical theological education declares that, “to this end, we must establish multiple modes of ongoing interaction between program and church, both at grassroots and official level....our programs must become manifestly of the church, through the church and for the church.”

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

According to Kretzschmar (2006:338) “the value of Christian spirituality for Christian leaders is that it creates an overall interpretive framework, or umbrella, within which reality is perceived.” Therefore in the words of Castleberry (2004:347) “in order to stay focused on their particular mission, seminaries must regularly recognize their strengths and face up to their shortcomings.” Theology ought to provide a foundation for faith and ministry not just be seen as an acquisition of concepts and theories that need to be analyzed and explained (Kasera 2015:5). In connection with the above we could conclude that a completed course of theological training does not guarantee ministerial success. The one who is called for ministry must display a desire (1 Timothy 3:10), qualifications which are visible to the Church (1 Timothy 3: 2-7) as well as acceptance by the people of God (Acts 20:37). Ogunewu (2008:74) declares that “Pentecostalism as a force within Christianity holds a lot of prospects for the future. The fact that it is expanding as a denomination indicates that there will continually be a need for trained ministers within the movement so as to be able to cope with its rapid expansion. Consequently, it might be safe to postulate a bright future for theological education within the movement. However, there are major challenges which need to be tackled by leaders of the movement.” Ogunewu (ibid) mentions that the first concerns which comes as a challenge is the adequacy of the Pentecostal programmes of theological education. For any programme of education to achieve worthwhile result, it must be adequate both in quantity and quality. Quantity wise, it means that the content must be comprehensive, while quality wise, it must contain purely relevant and authentic information. The content must be rich enough to be able to transmit the required knowledge to the learner. There is also the need for the teacher to be qualified, be conversant with relevant methodologies and possess the ability to transfer this relevant knowledge to the learners. It is only when this is done that the required objectives could be achieved. The ultimate aim of theological education is the production of capable leaders, such as would be able to produce committed Christians. Our concern in Pentecostal educational institutions must be the product of our schools. what must they be? What must they be able to do?

We must never be satisfied that we help our students successfully master academic programs. “The real test of the effectiveness of a Pentecostal institution is how the product is able to function in Pentecostal ministry” McKinney (2000:278). A certain tension exists between academic integrity and spirituality, especially when education does not seem to further Christian spirituality (McKinney 2000:253). Having looked at theological education and Pentecostal spirituality, we are left with the question of coordinating the two with the art of using theology for spirituality. Howard (2008:61) is therefore asking a relevant question in this regard: “How do we take the terms, categories, tasks and fruits of theology and relate them meaningfully to those of spirituality so that theology serves as a valuable resource for our exploration of relationship with God?” Howard concludes by saying, since the function is to provide a somewhat unifying view related to a traditional community, our job is to appropriate this function within the context our – of our own community. He (Howard 2008:61-62) further gives four specific ways we can do this:

- First, because theology reflects deeply and carefully on themes that are especially relevant to our understanding of relationship with God, we are wise to reflect on the big themes of Christian spirituality in dialogue with theologians and how we view God’s transcendence and immanence will significantly shape not only our academic theories of spirituality, but also our personal congregational habits of drawing close to God.
- Second, because theology presents general frameworks for interpreting relationship with God as a whole, we are wise to evaluate those theological frameworks within which we see relationship with God. Whether we admit it or not, we are all theologians to a certain extent. a whatever level of sophistication, our history in the faith provides us with a set of control beliefs – an integrating factor that serves to make sense of our spiritual world. by doing theologically informed spirituality, insights from history, psychology, personal experience, and so on can be placed into a dialogue with a big picture presented and corrected by those who have gone before.
- Third, theology nourishes and sustains spirituality. Theology, by addressing the hard questions of God and by presenting the big picture of God, constantly inspires, feeds, and challenge relationship with God, this is true whether we are thinking of spirituality as lived relationship, reflected dynamics, or formal study. Theology confronts us with aspects of the things of God we have not considered. Think of theology as a formal way of acting out your fascination with the Beloved. Allow theology to pull you into God. One who never studies theology can conveniently avoid facing what it may mean to live in the presence of God as God really is.
- Finally, theology functions as a critic of spirituality. Theological categories are used to determine an approach to relationship with God that is or is not authentically Christian. Theology is also frequently employed to help evaluate religious experience: for example, repeated visions of a powerful being who acts cruelly or who encourages self – destruction would be rightfully questioned concerning their divine origin. This picture of God simply does not fit with traditional theology (Howard 2008:61- 62).

Though according to Anderson (2001:287) it is difficult to determine how “spirituality,” because of its very nature, might be “educated” in doing theology in theological education it is my conclusive appeal that Pentecostal theological educators take serious the relevance of Pentecostal pneumatology to spirituality and spiritual formation of their students, whether we are engaging in biblical studies, theological anthropology, church history, missiology, soteriology, epistemology, ecclesiology or theological methodology, that has to be done with pneumatological imagination so that we bring some freshness in doing academic theology. And finally that emphasis within the Pentecostal leadership context will be on the striking of balance between the spirituality of the leader as well as his/her intellectual abilities and ministerial skills. By learning from the shared distinctives with Non-Pentecostals, Pentecostal theological education can enrich its curriculum, praxis, and ministerial formation, contributing to a more vibrant and effective expression of



Christian faith in Africa. The goal and aims of Pentecostal education in the words of Anderson (ibid) is not to create an educated elite that often has lost touch with ordinary people.

### Further Research

Since the Pentecostal denominations in South Africa share a number of similarities, experience, distinctives and challenges it would be appropriate that the contextual frame work for partnership could be fostered for cooperation, information sharing and possibly the establishment a united Pentecostal University with a comprehensive curriculum in different educational disciplines to cater for their growing vast constituencies and educational needs.

### REFERENCES

1. Anderson, A.H.2004. An Introduction to Pentecostalism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 187.
2. Asamoah – Gyadu. 2017. Pentecostal Journal of Theology and Mission, Vol2, No 1: [http://digitalshowcase .oru.edu/pjtm/1](http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/pjtm/1)
3. Browning, D. S. 1991. A fundamental practical theology: descriptive and strategic proposals. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 55 – 74.
4. Browning, D. S. 1993. A Fundamental Practical Theology. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
5. Carson, D.A. 1994. When is spirituality spiritual? Reflections on some Problems of Definitions. JETS 37.387.
6. Castleberry, J.L. 2004. Pentecostal Seminaries are Essential to the Future and Health of the Church. PNEUMA: The Journal of the society of Pentecostal Studies, 26, (2): 346 – 354.
7. Cettolin, A.U. 2006. AOG Pentecostal Spirituality in Australia: Australian College of Theology: (Thesis – Dmin)
8. Demarest, B. & Matthew, K.J. 2010. Dictionary of everyday theology and culture. USA: Navpress.
9. Dobbins, R.D. 2004. The spiritual formation of the minister: A growing concern. Enrichment Journal. Fall. Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God, p. 30 – 41.
10. Elwell, W. 1991. The concise evangelical dictionary of theology. USA: Baker Book House.
11. Fiorenza, F.S.1996. Thinking theologically about theological education, in theological perspectives on Christian formation: a reader on theology and Christian education, ed. Jeff Astley, Leslie J, Francis & Colin Crowder, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, p. 318 – 341.
12. Gibbs, E.2005. Leadership next. Changing leaders in a changing culture. USA: Inter – Varsity Press.
13. Green, J.D.2014.An Invitation to academic studies. USA: P&R Publishing Company.
14. Holmes, P.R. 2005. Becoming more human: Exploring the interface of spirituality, discipleship and therapeutic faith community. UK: Paternoster Press.
15. Horton, D. 2006. The portable seminary. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House
16. Howard, E.B. 2008.The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality. USA: Brazos Press.
17. Kärkkäinen, V. M. 2006. “March forward in Hope”: Yongi Cho’s Pentecostal theology of Hope. Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies. Vol 28, No.2.
18. Kasera, B.M. 2015. Educators and Community: The need for deliberate spiritual formation amongst theological educators. Kwa Mhlanga: Mukhanyo Theological College.
19. Kilpatrick, J. 1998. The News & Information Service, #186, September 2: [news@ag.org](mailto:news@ag.org)
20. Köstenberger, A.J.2011. Excellence: The character of God and the pursuit of scholarly virtue. USA: Crossway.
21. Kretzschmar, L. 2006. The Indispensability of Spiritual Formation for Christian Leaders. Missionalia, 34:2/3, Aug/Nov. p. 338 – 361.
22. Martsof, D. S & Mickley, J.R. 1998. The concept of spirituality in nursing theories: Differing world – views and extent of focus. Journal of advanced nursing 27, 294 – 303.
23. McGee, G.B. 1991. Pentecostals and their Various Strategies for Global Mission: A Historical

- Assessment, in *Called and Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective*, Pearbody, MA: Hendrickson, pp 203 -206.
24. McKinney, E.L. 2000. *Some Spiritual Aspects of Pentecostal Education: A Personal Journey*. Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies, 253.
  25. Menzies, W.W.1999. *Lessons from the Past: What our History teaches us*, Enrichment 4;4:pp 84-91
  26. Ogunewu, L. 2008. *Charismatic Movements and Theological Education: Past, Present and Future*. Ogbomoso Journal of Theology, Vol XIII (2). pp 58 -83.
  27. Phiri, J.K. 2009. *African Pentecostal spirituality: a Study of the Emerging African Pentecostal Churches in Zambia*. University of South Africa: (Thesis – PhD).
  28. Schmidt R, H. 2008. *God seekers: Twenty centuries of Christian spiritualities*. USA: Wm.B Eedmans Publishing Co.
  29. Smith, K. G. 2008. *Academic writing and theological research*. RSA: South African Theological Seminary Press.
  30. Smith, K.G. 2013. *Integrated Theology: Discerning God’s will for our world*. RSA: South African Theological Seminary Press.
  31. Spittler, R.P. 1988. *Implicit Values in Pentecostal Missions*, *Missiology* 16: pp 409 – 413).
  32. Stuebing, R.W. 1999. *Spiritual formation in theological education: a survey of the literature*.
  33. Stronstad, R. 1988. *Trends in Pentecostal Hermeneutics*. *Paraclete* 22,. no.3. pp 1-12. Sun, B. 2000. *Assemblies of God theological education in Asia Pacific: a reflection*. *AJPS*.3/2.pp. 227 – 251.
  34. Tennet, C. T. & Walls, A.F 2007. *Theology in the context of world Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.
  35. Thomas, J.2008. *The church ministry formation in protestant theological education: The contemporary debate in Kezala, India*. PhD Thesis, The school of Humanities, institute of Theology: The queen’s University of Belfast,
  36. Wegert, W.E. 1998. *Seminary student spiritual formation: recommendations based on a review of scripture and a survey of evangelical seminaries*; DMin Thesis: Liberty Baptist Theological seminary.