

**Theological Education and Training among British Pentecostals and Charismatics – A  
Discussion Paper for CTE  
(Dr R. David Muir, February 2015)**

Contemporary Christian mission and witness brings its own challenges and opportunities, not least because of the multiplicity of moral visions and ideological narratives competing for hegemony privately and publicly.<sup>1</sup> At the turn of the century, theologian Colin Gunton was bemoaning the fact that ‘relatively fewer students than was the case even a quarter of a century ago will be studying theology as a way into ordained ministry’.<sup>2</sup> Today, of course (as the Church of England and others are coming to terms with), most denominations are struggling to recruit sufficient numbers for the ministry. For Pentecostals and Charismatics, these challenges are no less acute; and in many respects they can benefit from the experience (and expertise) of the more established churches and their institutional resources.

In this paper, I make no real distinction between Pentecostals and Charismatics: I make the assumption that all Pentecostals are Charismatics, but not all Charismatics are Pentecostals. And I further recognise that Pentecostals are not just located in Black Majority Churches, as many of them belong to the older white Pentecostals denominations ('classical' Pentecostals). Having stated that, what I have to say applies equally to black and white Pentecostals and Charismatics outside the mainline denominations, as they often share many of the same reservations about theological education.

What I want to do in this brief discussion paper on theological education is to draw attention to three areas. Firstly, to indicate in a very general sense something of the current need for theological education for Pentecostals and Charismatics; secondly, highlight aspects of the nature (and diversity) of current provision; and lastly offer some provisional thoughts about the way forward to stimulate further discussion and research.

Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, like any other church and congregation, engage in some kind of teaching programme, ministerial training/education. There is a sense in which all didactic activities –Sunday School teaching, Bible Studies, sermons, ‘exhortations’, testimonies, and biblical literacy’ teaching – can be thought of as

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<sup>1</sup> Narratives of religious certainty and transcendence, like all other ‘grand narratives’, no longer hold positions of hegemony in our postmodern and post-Christian culture. The view popularised by Jean-François Lyotard in characterising ‘postmodern’ as ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’ poses a number of challenges (and dare I say opportunities) to how we do Christian theology and missions today. (See his *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1984.)

<sup>2</sup> See Colin Gunton’s “Doing Theology in the University”, Colin Gunton, Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (eds.), *The Practice of Theology: A Reader*, London, SCM Press: 2001, p.442.

exercises in ‘theological education’. And all Christians are ‘theologians’ of one sort or another in that they all try to articulate, contemplate, live in, and with, the Trinitarian mystery, reality, and economy of God’s plan of redemption.

In this broad sense, theologians like Paul Tillich would affirm that all Christians are ‘theologians’ not only because they are able ‘to receive spiritual knowledge’, but also because they have been grasped within the Church ‘by the Divine Spirit’ and ‘affirm that Jesus is the Christ’.<sup>3</sup>

And this is more so the case when we consider that *all* Christians are called to bear witness and to be ready ‘to give an answer’ for their hope in Christ (I Peter 3:15), as well as to exercise what Macquarrie refers to as the ‘universal and quite fundamental ministry of all Christians’ to participate in ‘the ministry of reconciliation’ (2 Corinthians 5:18).<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary Pentecostals and Charismatics would certainly agree with the two views above, even though they would recognise the need for formal theological education/ministerial training with appropriate qualifications from reputable higher education universities and institutions. However, when we consider the early decades of the Pentecostal movement we see that this was not always the case.

Given what we have now come to view as ‘emblematic of the Charismatic renewal’<sup>5</sup> and its Pentecostal antecedents, i.e., glossolalia, faith healing, prophecy, the working of miracles and other charismatic manifestations, it is not surprising that a perennial tension continues to the present day when it comes to Pentecostal/Charismatic piety and practice and its study and exploration in universities and higher education institutions.

If education (especially higher education in liberal arts settings) is fundamentally about freedom of thought and inquiry, or the intellectual aim of ‘the seeking of truth by disagreement and discussion’,<sup>6</sup> then a number of methodological and epistemological conflicts are bound to arise between a Pentecostal/Charismatic self-

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<sup>3</sup> See Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, Middlesex, Pelican Books: 1962, pp. 123-124.

<sup>4</sup> John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, London, SCM Press: 1966, pp.375-376.

<sup>5</sup> Edward D. O’Connor, CSC, (ed), *Charismatic Renewal*, London, SPCK: 1978. In his Introduction he recognises that the Pentecostal movement is ‘perhaps the most vigorous religious movement of this century’, but views these ‘emblematic’ features as ‘bizarre phenomena’.

<sup>6</sup> Colin Gunton, Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (eds.), *The Practice of Theology: A Reader*, London, SCM Press: 2001, p.421. In his concluding essay ('Doing Theology in the University Today'), Gunton refers to the ‘two ends’ the university is dedicated to: the ‘intellectual’ and the ‘practical’, the latter being the demands of modern governments ‘to train personnel for the complex social and economic structures of the modern world’.

understanding (experience) and the secular and so-called ‘scientific’ (explanation) approach to reality.

In the formative decades of the Pentecostal movement, there was a reluctance to privilege theological education. Indeed, in many quarters there was outright antipathy/animosity towards what was perceived to be the fruits of ‘theological education’, namely, a liberal theological mood emerging from the nineteenth century questioning the inerrancy of Scripture, the God of miracles, and the dynamic power for mission evidenced in Spirit baptism.<sup>7</sup> For Pentecostals, this resulted in a ‘dead church’; powerless to reach the ‘unsaved’ and spiritually ill-equipped for the ‘end time’ mission to usher in the Kingdom. Gripped by an eschatological urgency, Pentecostals had little time, or desire, for the kind of theological education emerging from what they saw as ‘liberal’ academies and seminaries. What they wanted and prized above all, however, was a thorough knowledge of the Bible. According to Kay, this was primarily to ensure doctrinal conformity to the ‘fundamental truths espoused by their denomination’.<sup>8</sup>

Historically, this has left something a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ among many Pentecostals when it comes to formal theological education. Ironically, we see early Pentecostal pioneers like William J. Seymour attending Charles Parham’s Bible School (albeit sitting outside the classroom, with the door ajar to conform to ‘Jim Crow’ legal and cultural dictates of the day) to acquire a basic biblical education, on the one hand, while the British Pentecostalist Alexander A. Boddy, on the other hand, has the privilege of a theology degree from the prestigious Durham university (UK) and is ordained by the renown New Testament Scholar Bishop J.B. Lightfoot.<sup>9</sup> Here, of course, education is a function of both race and class: Boddy was an English aristocrat; Seymour, the son of former slaves.<sup>10</sup> And in Pentecostal historiography the theme of race, and to less extent class (notwithstanding Robert Mapes Anderson’s thesis<sup>11</sup> identifying Pentecostalism as a movement of ‘the disinherited’), was recognized by

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<sup>7</sup> Pentecostals and Charismatics believe that Acts 1:8 ('But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you...') has particular resonance for their understanding of charismatic gifts and power for ministry and evangelism. Commenting upon the theology of the nineteenth century and the approach of the preceding century to the subject-matter of theology, Karl Barth argued that God became ‘humanized’; and that this process of ‘humanization’ meant ‘if not the abolition, at least the incorporation of God into the sphere of sovereign human self-awareness’, making Christianity and the subject-matter of its ‘final’ claims relative and provisional. See Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its background & History*, London, SCM Press: 1959 (new edition, 2001, with an Introduction by Colin Gunton), pp.69-70.

<sup>8</sup> William K. Kay, *Pentecostals in Britain*, Glasgow, Paternoster Press: 2000, p.202.

<sup>9</sup> See Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*, Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson: 1997, p.343.

<sup>10</sup> The life and theology of Bishop William J. Seymour is excellently portrayed in Douglas J. Nelson’s PhD thesis (“For Such a Time as This: The Story of Bishop William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival”, Birmingham, May 1981).

<sup>11</sup> See Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism*, New York, Oxford University Press: 1969.

the Memphis gathering of Pentecostals in 1994 as a critical factor informing their organizational development and institutional relationships.<sup>12</sup>

Although there was an ambiguous and ambivalent relationship in early Pentecostalism to ‘formal education’ and theological training, that is not to say that Pentecostals were not interested in ‘ministerial education’. Indeed, centres for training and ministry formation were established quite early among the leading denominations like the Church of God in America, the Assemblies of God, and Elim Pentecostal Church.

According to Kay, these centres which have blossomed into liberal arts colleges have been ‘generated by a sequence of historical factor’s: first, the protection of doctrine, then the formation of denominations with accredited ministers, and then the training of such ministers in line with the denominational norms, and finally the flourishing of genuine higher education’.<sup>13</sup> It could be argued that this sequence of historical factors correspond to the three stages of development in ‘Pentecostal biblical hermeneutics’. According to Archer, the trajectory is as follows: first, there is the ‘pre-critical period’ (1900-1940s); this is followed by the ‘modern period’ (1940s -1980s); and finally, the ‘contemporary period’ (1980s through the present).<sup>14</sup> Needless to say that the reality of Pentecostal biblical hermeneutics did not always follow this linear periodization.

Over the last three decades we have witnessed something of a proliferation of Bible schools, colleges, and ministerial training institutions. This proliferation signals both the personal and denominational need for ‘education’ and ‘training’ for ministry and mission, especially to address some of the challenges of urban ministry identified in *Faith in the City* report and the requisite balance needed in ministry formation between candidates ‘whose gifts are other than academic’ and those ‘who received the conventional academic training’.<sup>15</sup> Generally, it also says something about the importance and significance of theology and related subjects as a way of introducing students to traditions of scholarship and intellectual discourse.

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<sup>12</sup> In October 1994, leading Pentecostals gathered in Memphis, Tennessee, to reflect on their shared history and racial tension. It was an *inter* and an *intra*-Pentecostal attempt at ‘truth’ and ‘reconciliation’ about racism in Pentecostalism, leading to the production of a Racial Reconciliation Manifesto.

<sup>13</sup> William K. Kay, *Pentecostalism*, London, SCM Press: 2009, p.300.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth J. Archer’s “Hermeneutics” in Adam Stewart, *Handbook of Pentecostal Christianity*, Illinois, Northern Illinois University Press: 2012, pp.112-113.

<sup>15</sup> See *Faith in the City: A Call for Action by Church and Nation (The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas)*, London, Church House Publishing: 1985, p.67.

The figures at Table 1 show the number of students at Theological and Bible Colleges over the last two decades; Table 2 figures show the number of students taking courses with institutions registered with UCAS.<sup>16</sup>

**(Table 1) Students at Theological Colleges and Bible Schools 1993-2006**

Date	Total no. of students
1993	5,800
2001	7,400
2003	7580
2006	8280

Source: Religious Trends (7) 2007-8

**(Table 2) Number of students accepting places on Theology or Religious Studies courses at establishments registered with UCAS**

Date	Total no. of students
2001	1143
2002	1085
2003	1094
2004	1156
2005	1224
2006	1217
2007	1258
2008	1368

Source [www.UCAS.org.uk](http://www.UCAS.org.uk)

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<sup>16</sup> UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admission Service).

For some, this may be seen as a false dichotomy in ministry formation. However, it does highlight the importance and necessity of appropriate and contextual ministerial training, recognizing that ‘ministerial gifts’ are diverse (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11) and need not lead to ‘a flight from theology’.

Given that theology is a ‘function of the Christian Church’<sup>17</sup>, and that God has throughout the centuries equipped His Church richly in this regard, the report adopted a judicious (a quintessential Anglican ‘middle’ way some might argue) approach worthy of note for all institutions engaging in theological education and ministerial training:

The Church requires competent theologians, as much as it ever did, and must continue to make provision for their recruitment and training. The question being asked here is about the importance given to academic criteria in church life generally and in ministerial training in particular. If we are now being able to see not just the possibility but the necessity of presenting and receiving the Christian faith in forms other than that of a doctrinal package, we may be able to begin to take seriously schemes for accrediting ordained ministers on other than academic criteria.<sup>18</sup>

Today, there is an attempt to bring most of the main HE institutions up to the same standards as a typical secular liberal arts university. Looking at what is provided in the main denominational institutions we see a greater uniformity in the curriculum offered, the method of study and the entry qualifications.

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<sup>17</sup> See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol.1, Welwyn, Herts, James Nisbet & Company Limited: 1953, p.3. Here Tillich argues that theology moves back and forth between ‘two poles’ as its systematization tries to satisfy ‘two basic needs: the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation’. There will always be a lively philosophical and theological debate as to the efficacy of Tillich’s ‘method of correlation’, but few would doubt the enormity of the challenge posed in what he sees as the perennial question that confronts the Church and institutions engaged in theological education in preparing ministers and leaders to witness in the modern world. And the challenge is this: ‘Can the Christian message be adapted to the modern mind without losing its essential and unique character?’

<sup>18</sup> Op. cit., p. 67.

**(Table 3) Sample Profile of Current Provision**

Institution	Church/Denominational Affiliation	Partners/Validating Body	Typical Qualifications	Fees: £ <sup>19</sup>
School of the Prophets Academy of Learning	Ruach	No higher education partners	Certificate in Practical Theology (Unvalidated)	300
Believers' College	New Wine Church, Woolwich	No higher education partners	Certificate (Unvalidated)	80
Institute of Theology & Counselling	New Testament Assembly (NTA)	Roehampton University	Certificate in Applied Theology	300 per module
London School of Theology	Interdenominational	Middlesex University	BA, MA, PhD	7,696 <sup>20</sup>
Cliff College	Interdenominational	University of Manchester	Cert Th., BA	
Mattersey Hall	Assemblies of God	University of Chester		6,400
Leadership Centre <sup>21</sup>	New Testament Church of God (NTCG)	Lee College (USA), Pentecostal Theological Seminary (USA)	NTCG Ministerial qualifications for ministerial/leadership office	60-700
Regents Theological College	Elim Pentecostal Church	University of Chester	BA, MA, PhD	6,930
Spurgeon's College	Baptist	Manchester University, University of Chester	BA, MA	7,570
Redcliffe	Methodist	University of Gloucestershire?	BA	6,000
Queen's Foundation	Interdenominational	Durham University, Newman University	BA, MA	4,980
Canterbury Christ Church University	Anglican	Validating body with numerous national and international partners	BA, MA, PhD	9,000
Roehampton University	Interdenominational	Validating body with numerous national and international partners	FdA, <sup>22</sup> BA/BTh, MA PhD	9,000
Christ Redeemer College	Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)	Middlesex University	Diploma, BA	6,000

<sup>19</sup> The fees are primarily for undergraduate courses.

<sup>20</sup> The £7,696 includes £700 for the Middlesex University registration and £51 Student Body fee.

<sup>21</sup> The Leadership Centre, Northampton, is primarily an education centre to enhance the ministerial training and qualifications of its leaders. The Centre has been running for seven years under the leadership of Phyllis Thompson and now has a Heritage Centre. The Roswith Gerloff archives and papers are housed at the Leadership Centre; the Centre is responsible for organising the Oliver Lyseight Annual Lecture. The lectures address critical issues in Pentecostal theology and practice. In 2013, Dr Keith Warrington addressed the quest for Pentecostal theology; and this year Rev Joel Edwards offered an insightful critique on Pentecostalism and the 'prosperity gospel'.

<sup>22</sup> FdA is the new Foundation degree in the Arts. This is a 2 year course. At Roehampton University, Ministerial Theology is the first FdA on offer, catering for over 80 students predominantly from Pentecostal and Charismatic backgrounds. Roehampton University has the largest number of African and Caribbean students doing Ministerial Theology in the country.

The political economy of higher education now means that colleges offering theological education for ministry formation are becoming highly competitive. Students who want to study Religious Studies & Theology have a wide choice from a number of old and new universities. At Leeds, Durham and London (Kings's College) students can opt for a range of modules covering the full menu of subjects covered in systematic theology; many of these students will come to these courses with no faith or confessional interest, but merely want to deepen their study of the humanities with its religious and philosophical underpinnings. At Leeds University, for example, students study *Theology* within the broader humanities framework (particularly with Philosophy and Classics). In trying to promote Leeds as the place to study, the *Prospectus* informs students that the department of *Theology & Religious Studies* is 'principally interested in asking whether, and why and how religion matters to public life', as well as the fact that students will benefit from being taught by 'people who have an international reputation in their field' and are 'recipients of prizes and awards in both teaching and research'. Institutions like Christ Redeemer College (a Redeemed Christian Church of God college) and Christ College (a London-based independent HE institution recently validated by Canterbury Christ Church University)<sup>23</sup> started off by offering pathways to degree qualifications through a combination of business, leadership/counselling, and theology modules.

With the recent growth and development of African (and Caribbean) Pentecostal and Charismatic churches (as well as 'charismatic expressions' in the established churches), there are new demands for a range of theological education provision. In London alone, which accounts for the largest concentration of congregations and ministers from the denominations affiliated to the theological institutions listed in Table 3, we see significant numbers of students from Pentecostal and Charismatic backgrounds doing undergraduate and post-graduate theology/ministerial theology courses at places like the London School of Theology, Spurgeon's College, Christ Redeemer College, and Roehampton University. In a recent press release (November 2014), Roehampton University advertised itself as 'the largest UK university provider of theological education for students from African and Caribbean majority churches'. With a total of six academics actively researching issues related to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches (along with global Christianity, and Public Theology & Community Engagement) and more than 120 students from these churches, Roehampton appears to be the university of choice for a significant number of students doing courses in Theology & Religious Studies/Ministerial Theology in an

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<sup>23</sup> Christ College (based in south-east London) now benefits from the theological resources of Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) under the leadership of Professor Robert Beckford, the UK's leading Black theologian and documentary filmmaker. Beckford was at Queen's College, Birmingham, for a number of years before moving to Goldsmiths College and then to CCCU in 2014.

ecumenical learning environment.<sup>24</sup>

Earlier in the discussion, I hinted at what I referred to as the political economy of higher education, i.e., the regime of charges and tuition fees, internal and external competition, ‘value for money’, module and credits transfer, and research and public profile of the university.<sup>25</sup>

In the final part of this discussion I want to raise a number of issues around theological expectations, the teaching and learning experience, qualifications and the way forward.

Given the diversity in provision and variability in academic standards and accreditation, one is forced to raise questions about the future of theological education for Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and those concerned with ministerial training.

The proliferation of institutions involved in theological education and ministerial training is, undoubtedly, both a cause for celebration and concern: celebration in that there is a growing desire among lay people and those in a variety of Christian ministry and leadership positions for forms of formal theological education and ministerial development; a concern in that the proliferation brings with it inherent quality assurance challenges.

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<sup>24</sup> The University of Roehampton offers various qualifications from foundation to master’s level in Christian Ministry, Christian Theology and Religious Studies. Three of the university’s four founding colleges were established by Christian groups. Southlands College was founded by Methodists in the 1870s, Digby Stuart College by Roman Catholics also in the 1870s, and Whitelands by Anglicans in 1841. It currently has three Pentecostals working in its Ministerial Theology department; and under the leadership of Andrew Rogers it recently conducted high profile research into BMCs (called ‘new’ BMCs, ‘nBMCs’, in its report *Being Built Together: A Story of New Black Majority Churches in the London Borough of Southwark, June 2013*) in the London Borough of Southwark, probably the largest concentration of African churches in the world outside of Africa.

<sup>25</sup> It could be argued that the new political economy in education in general, and in theological education/ministerial training in particular, amounts to what can be termed the ‘commodification of education’ where it is determined and conditioned by market forces. In this regard, we see the Resourcing Ministerial Education Task Group of the Church of England Archbishops’ Council getting to grips with the sort of resource management issues that medium-to-large size business and corporations have to wrestle with; issues like reviewing ‘the effectiveness and value for money of the Church’s investment’ in ministerial education, and defining precisely what ‘effectiveness of investment’ looks like, along with so called ‘objective evidential means’ to measure effectiveness. While this mirrors the language one typically encounters in shorter MBA courses, this is the reality of the current education environment; and theological colleges and higher education institutions that don’t take cognisance of this are doomed to failure (closure). Survival now means business rationalisation and making ‘the business case’ for certain types of programme of study and ministerial education to equip people to serve the Church in the modern world of pluralism, mixed economies of educational provision and declining numbers of individuals training for the ministry. In this political economy of higher education provision understanding your ‘market share’ and doing your ‘market research’ are critical success factors. It is certainly true, as J.J Jackson muted decades ago, that ‘Market research will not reveal the Kingdom of God, which does not come by observation.’ (See his *The Sociology of Religion: Theory and Practice*, London & Sydney, B.T. Batsford: 1974, p.27). But it is becoming equally true that without some attention being paid to such management and sociological tools, ministerial education and effective mission are put at risk.

The new Common Awards in Theology, Ministry and Mission bring a degree of efficiency, rationality, economies of scale and standardization to theological education and ministerial training. Developed primarily for the Church of England and its partners under the auspices of Durham University, the Common Awards bring under one umbrella educational programmes of over 20 theological and ministerial educational institutions that were previously validated by 19 universities.<sup>26</sup>

What can we expect from a person at the end of a BA Honours programme of study in Theology and Religious Studies? I suspect that one would assume that they understand the importance of religion and theology, and its place among other intellectual disciplines. For those undertaking ministerial training they will be engaged in incarnational theology – attempting a judicious balance between theory and practice, or what Laurie Green referred to as an ‘inextricable unity of action and reflection’.<sup>27</sup> In short, ministerial theology students, are expected to be reflective practitioners, using theory/theology and experience to engage with the problems and challenges of Christian ministry and mission. To a large extent, the QAA guidance goes a long way in reflecting this, along with many of the generic skills and qualities expected of ministerial theology student and those studying humanities subjects.

The QAA subject benchmark statement for Theology and Religious Studies gives an indication of what can be reasonably expected of a graduate in the subject in terms of their knowledge, understanding and skills at the end of their studies. The subject should provide students with the opportunity to engage in the two-fold exercises of:

- exploring the religious thought of one or more traditions so as to understand each in its integrity and diversity, and grasp its integrative role in relation to life styles, practices and ethics;
- analysing the historical, social, philosophical, cultural and artistic role of religion or belief systems in diverse contexts.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the above, there are particular ‘qualities of mind’ that students are expected to acquire and display. There are nine in all. The following is a summary of three of them:

- The ability to understand how people have thought and acted – and continue to think and act – in contexts other than the student’s own ; how beliefs, doctrines, traditions and practices have developed within particular social and cultural contexts; and how religious traditions have changed over time and continue to evolve in the contemporary world.

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<sup>26</sup> See the *Preface to the Common Awards in Theology, Ministry and Mission*, October 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Laurie Green, *Let's do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology*, London and New York, Bloomsbury: 2012, p. ix.

<sup>28</sup> QAA Subject Benchmark Statement: Theology and Religious Studies, October 2014 (UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards), section 2.4.

- Sensitivity to the problems of religious language and experience, and to the issues of multiple and conflicting interpretations of language and symbols, texts and traditions. Simplistic, literalising or doctrinaire explanations are less likely to be advanced by a student of theology and religious studies.
- The ability to employ a variety of methods of study in analysing material, to think independently, identifying tasks, set goals and solve problems.<sup>29</sup>

These qualities, regarded as ‘intellectual skills and competencies’, not only signal to the student what is expected of them, they also inform potential employers about the academic and personal qualities of a theology and religious studied graduate. Additionally, it signals to educational institutions and providers the level and quality of teaching and learning they have to provide to produce the intended outcome.

With these kinds of quality assurance demands (and the rigor inherent in the inspection framework to monitoring compliance especially for those institutions seeking validation from established universities), there is bound to be something of a ‘survival of the fittest’ in operation, as institutions compete for students. The reality is that some institutions just won’t crack it; they will go under not just because they can’t provide the teaching and learning to produce the intellectual skills and competencies students need in the modern world, but because (like other ‘goods’ and ‘services’ in the economy) students will seek out alternatives that will enable them to (‘compete’) progress effectively into teaching or research for higher degrees.

In respect of Black Majority Churches (BMCs), this poses a number of issues. Because many of the leaders in these churches are theologically ‘untrained’, the existence of a plethora of Bible schools and training taking place in them ‘gives churches the impression that they are preparing their leaders for ministry’. However, according to Sturge, most of what is on offer is nothing more than ‘fools goal’ – i.e., people ‘engaged in costly study for certificates or qualifications that go unrecognised elsewhere, or be granted doctorates or degrees after only one year of study’.<sup>30</sup>

Today, Pentecostals and Charismatics are receiving theological education and ministerial training in a variety of educational environments, including confessional and ecumenical ones as seen from the sample of providers in the chart above. Before its sad demise in 2002, a

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., section 3.2.

<sup>30</sup> See Mark Sturge, *Look What the Lord has Done! An Exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain*, Bletchley, Scripture Union: 2005, p.167. As a former General Director of the African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance (ACEA) Sturge was in a good position to see the benefits (or a lack of it) of theological education and ministerial training in Pentecostal and Charismatic churches first hand. One gets the impression that he was disappointed with what he saw in some of these churches and the way the theological institutions were failing to ‘produce the kind of leaders suitable for the BMCs’ in the 1990s. There is the suggestion of ‘setting up our own’ institutions to address this ‘deficit’ and what is often characterised as ‘a dogmatic approach to ministry’ in many of these churches and organisations.

number of Pentecostal leaders benefitted from the ‘intercultural theological education’ provided by the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership (CBWCP) in Birmingham. Under the leadership of people like Walter Hollenweger, Roswith Gerloff, Patrick Kalolombie and Joe Aldred, the Centre provided a safe space for Pentecostals and Charismatics to do and develop aspects of their theology and spirituality.

At CBWCP, Pentecostals and Charismatics rubbed shoulders with Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists and others in an environment of mutual trust, respect, and shared ministry experience and challenges. Pentecostals were able to study their history and traditions, articulate and reflected upon their ‘charismatic experiences’, while at the same time learning about the function of higher criticism and other hermeneutical tools and approaches to ‘the Word of God’. Pentecostal leaders like Bishop Martin Simmonds of the First United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic) and Prophetess F.N. Onyaku-Opukiri of the Born Again Christ Healing Church were among the first graduates of the Centre. The same can be said for the work and mission of Queen’s Foundation. Queen’s is known as the interdenominational institution where ‘Black Theology’ was developed and sustained as a serious theological discipline. It appointed Robert Beckford in the early 1990s as the first lecturer in Black Theology in the UK. Out of the work at Queen’s and CBWCP came the UK’s first Black Theology Journal in 1998 (*Black Theology in Britain: A Journal of Contextual Praxis*)<sup>31</sup> and the numerous publications of Anthony Reddie on Black Theology and related themes. Queen’s is still one of the few places in the UK where there is a tradition of ministerial training and development in Black Theology, and where students are encouraged to critically engage in this theological discourse and to pursue it at post-graduate level. Its recent appointment of Dulcie McKenzie as tutor in Black Theology, Ministries and Leadership continues to build upon the work started by John Wilkinson in the 1980s.

Experiencing ministerial training and theological education in an ecumenical setting has a number of benefits, not least the opportunity to study with, and learn from, Christian brothers and sisters who are equally concerned with serving ‘the people of God’ where they are called and from the ecclesial tribe in which they find themselves. This experience can be both enriching and humbling as pastoral and ministerial joys and challenges are shared (and problems often solved), as people bring their collective insights, wisdom and experience to bear on common pastoral problems and encounters. Places like the London School of Theology, Roehampton University and Spurgeon’s College do this extremely well.

As one of the main institutions catering for the largest group of leaders from the African and Caribbean churches, Roehampton University has uniquely pioneered a two-year Foundation degree in Ministerial Theology. This foundation degree in the arts (FdA) is designed for people engaged in ‘any form of Christian ministry (paid or unpaid)’. As a workplace-based practical

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<sup>31</sup> The journal has been renamed *Black Theology: An International Journal*.

degree, the FdA is designed to help students become more theologically reflective about their ministry. Students who successfully complete the FdA can decide to convert this into an honours degree in Ministerial Theology, earning them the Bachelor of Theology (BTh). The flexibility of the programme, along with the academic and pastoral support provided, is proving very attractive to large numbers of Pentecostal pastors and leaders. With historic connections with the Anglican, Methodist and Catholic Church, and a teaching staff representing a wide cross-section of Christian life and experience, Roehampton University offers what is probably one of the best models for the future of theological education and ministerial training. An integral part of the course is the training and development of Mentors; ministerial theology students are assigned a Mentor for the duration of their training.

With the establishment of the Common Awards and the academic rigour stipulated in the QAA<sup>32</sup> subject benchmark statement, theological education and ministerial training can only improve. There will be raised expectation all around, providing quality assurance in teaching and learning to make a qualitative difference in the student experience. I believe this will serve Pentecostals and Charismatics well, enhancing their ministry and, hopefully, transforming the communities they serve. Of course, appropriate qualifications are needed in all professions and vocations. While many Pentecostal and Charismatic ministers and leaders are qualified in other fields and professions, I believe theological education is imperative if they are to effectively fulfil the ‘Great Commission’ in contemporary society in partnership with other Christians. Indeed, one would struggle to engage in a meaningful way with the ethical, political and cultural challenges we face today without some formal training in theology and religious studies. Theological training allows us to speak to, and participate in, our ‘common culture’ in ways not too dissimilar to what we witness of St Paul in Acts 17.

Recognizing that Christian theology is a vast ocean, entering via the small streams of our own traditions and ecclesiology is not a bad place to start, so long as we don’t stop there. Pentecostals and Charismatics certainly have a lot to offer in ministerial theology and ministry formation, but they can also derive great benefit from other Christian traditions. According to Hollenweger, mainline churches can learn from Pentecostals without trying to become Pentecostals; they can find their own ‘charismata’ because ‘charismata of oral cultures’ are present in all churches even though they are mostly ‘suppressed’.<sup>33</sup> I often come across Pentecostals who tend to think that the Spirit of God only started to ‘move’ again in 1906 with the Azusa Street phenomenon. Tell that to the ante-Nicene and the post-Nicene fathers, the Desert Fathers and Mothers, or to Calvin and Luther and other servants and faithful witnesses down the ages. One would like to think that encountering live Christian traditions and preparing for ministry in an interdenominational environment would disavow us of some of our prejudices and ecclesiological blind spots.

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<sup>32</sup> QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education).

<sup>33</sup> Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*, Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers: 1997, p.399.

So what does the future look like for theological education and ministerial training for Pentecostals and Charismatics? What should they do and encourage? I want to suggest three things briefly by way of an observation, a question and some recommendations.

Firstly, there is definitely a new enthusiasm among Pentecostals and Charismatic for leaders to be better trained and ‘equipped for the ministry’. This is both desirable and necessary if these congregations are to grow and continue to be ‘salt and light’ in their communities.

There was the notion (slightly overstated in my view in respect of Pentecostals) that Pentecostals and Baptists are ‘frustrated’ by national churches ‘partnership with the political state’ and that the ‘ecumenical vision is hard to envision’ for these groups.<sup>34</sup>

But things are changing. And the amount of Pentecostals, especially those from African and Caribbean churches, opting for interdenominational institutions of higher education is bound to inform and influence how they ‘do ministry’.

Secondly, there is the controversial question as to the appropriate level of formal qualifications needed for ‘ministry’. I suspect this will largely depend on what we mean by ‘ministry’, as well as the level and scope envisaged. In his most recent work, Robert Beckford argues for greater political engagement and theological training for leaders in Pentecostal churches. He argues for a minimum qualification of a BA (i.e., in theology, religious studies/ministerial education) for ordination; he also wants the larger denominations to introduce ‘mandatory educational development’ for new and existing clergy, as well as a clear demarcation line between ‘earned’ and ‘honorary’ degrees to reflect theological competence.<sup>35</sup> To a large extent the anecdotal trend among Pentecostal leaders is moving in that direction. And if there is to be the development of what Adedibu calls the ‘repository of scholars and writers to espouse and articulate the theological underpinnings of BMCs while avoiding the potential drift from the Pentecostal ideal’, then the question of qualifications and training becomes more critical.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, let me say a few things about the way forward by way of a few recommendations. One of the things that the former Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr Rowan Williams) and the Archbishop of York (Dr John Sentamu) set in motion was a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Black-led (Pentecostal) churches and the Church of England. I had the privilege of drafting this document with Rev Sonia Barron and Bishop Dr Joe Aldred. The MOU can be seen as a good model of ecumenical partnership; it recognises the areas of shared mission, partnerships, and unity that already exists between the two denominations and

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<sup>34</sup> See Brian Haymes, “The Baptist and Pentecostal Churches” in Paul Avis (ed.) *The Christian Church: An Introduction to the Major Traditions*, London, SPCK: 2002, p.129.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Beckford, *Documentary as Exorcism: Resisting the Bewitchment of Colonial Christianity*, London and New York, Bloomsbury: 2014, p. 194.

<sup>36</sup> Babatunde Adedibu, *Coat of many Colours: The Origins, Growth, Distinctiveness and Contributions of Black Majority Churches to British Christianity*, Gloucester, The Choir Press: 2012, p. 249.

wants to develop and strengthen these. In giving substance to the desire for greater unity and partnership, the MOU outlined a commitment to theological education and leadership development thus:

- To develop partnership agreements and protocols for the Church of England to share its experience and expertise in theological training and ministry formation with Black-led churches and training institutions;
- To work together by way of mutual learning to discover effective strategies for leadership development.<sup>37</sup>

One would like to hope that in the field of theological education and ministry formation that Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and denominations would tap into the resources and experience of the Church of England, especially with the new curriculum and ministerial training available in the Common Awards validated by Durham University.

Younger Pentecostal and Charismatic leaders and pastors want, and are seeking, the kind of theological education and ministerial training that will enable them to be effective communicators of the Christian faith today. In the Black Church manifesto there is a specific recommendation to address this issue; it calls for Black Majority Churches to ‘collaborate with each other and partner with higher education institutions to provide theological education for its leaders’.<sup>38</sup> In the past, some Pentecostal students wasted a lot of time and money going to institutions and graduating with qualifications that had little or no transferable value in the wider academic world. The theological challenge Aldred spoke of facing the Black Church is one that still affects Pentecostals and Charismatics in general: there is still a fear of ‘academic theological studies’.<sup>39</sup> Pentecostal leaders, especially denominational leaders, need to encourage bridge-building, as Aldred recommends, between the church and the academy. In some circles, this is being done through Black Theology and Contextual Theology.

Although there is a seductive tendency to privilege certain types of theological education and ministry formation, there can be no doubt that in our pluralist and postmodern world all Christian leaders and those who ‘feel the call of ministry’ would benefit from a theological education producing the ‘intellectual skills and competencies’ stipulated in QAA subject benchmark statement noted above. With its emphasis on such ‘generic skills’ as ‘empathy and imaginative insight’, ‘commitment to life-long learning’, the ‘ability to attend to others and have respect for others’ views’ and the ‘ability to engage critically with the meaning of documents and recognise that meanings may be multiple’, one cannot help but to see how critical theological education and proper ministerial training are to the effectiveness of those

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<sup>37</sup> See *Memorandum of Understanding Between the Church of England and British Black (African and Caribbean) Led Churches*, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> *Black Church Political Mobilisation— a manifesto for action*, London, NCLF: 2015, p.6.

<sup>39</sup> See Joe Aldred, “The Challenges Facing Black Church leadership” in Joe Aldred and Keno Ogbo (eds.), *The Black Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, London, DLT: 2010, p. 225.

in Pentecostal and Charismatic church called to ministry and for the health and efficacy of the Church in carrying out God's mission in the modern world.

Dr R. David Muir was former executive director of Public Theology & Public Policy at the Evangelical Alliance. He has taught theology and history in a number UK universities and higher education institutions, including Goldsmiths College, London Metropolitan University, Christ Church Canterbury University and the Centre for Black and White Christian Partnership. He has PhD from King's College, London University, in Black/Political Theology & Pentecostalism and currently lectures in Ministerial Theology at Roehampton University.