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‘Production of Knowledge’ as a Vocation of Pentecostal Theologians at the Postmodern Turn: Nurturing Research Culture Among Pentecostal Theological Educators in India

by Josfin Raj

Introduction

The Global Survey on Theological Education conducted by the World Council of Churches in partnership with the Institute for Cross-Cultural Theological Education in Chicago and the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity in Boston provides a promising finding that there is an unprecedented growth seen in Pentecostal/Charismatic theological education at the global level.¹ It is interesting to see this growth among the Pentecostal theological institutions and educators in India who are involved in serious research on pertinent issues. To this emergent context of theological research education, the writer examines current trends within the Pentecostal theological education and tries to provide guidelines for nurturing a research culture² at the postmodern turn. The Postmodern turn in theological education is characterized by the

¹“Growth is seen in Evangelical and Pentecostal/Charismatic theological education; decline is seen in mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions.” in “Global Survey on Theological Education” <https://www.globethics.net/web/gtl/research/global-survey> (accessed June 20, 2019). Also see *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970 – 2020: Society, Religion, and Mission* (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary: Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 2013), 13.

²Research culture refers to a pattern of basic assumptions about research. ‘Research culture’ is used in this article to reflect upon imbibed educational culture which focuses on research. The article is oriented toward the advanced theoretical research level of education such as postgraduate or doctoral research. Subrata Chakraborty, “Creating a Culture of Research in India,” *The Hindu Business Line* (August 24, 2017, updated January 09, 2018) <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/creating-a-culture-of-research-in-india/article9830350.ece> (accessed January 10, 2019).

implication of postmodern tenets in the research education.³ For the same reason, this paper mainly argues that production of knowledge should be considered as one of the prominent vocations of Pentecostal theological educators, particularly in the Indian context.

Theological Research Education in India at the Postmodern Turn

Generally, there is a clear difference in the way theological research is done in the Global South and Global North. The Euro-American context developed their research mainly in line with the university setting with disciplinary specification. But theological research in the Indian context started in relation to Christian mission and among the 'open public'.⁴ Gnana Patrick states this difference clearly thus:

The important point to be noted here is that Indian theological researches, unlike those in the west, situate themselves in response to social transformative concerns related to poverty, patriarchy, caste, marginality, etc., and the topics for researches are those emerging out of these realities. In this sense, Indian theological researches are bound by contextual realities of life and shaped by intentionality of pastoral praxis. As a consequence, Indian theological researches do not enter sufficiently into the theological fields of specialization as Euro-American researches do.⁵

During earlier periods of Christian history of India, both Catholic and Protestant missionaries such as Robert de Nobili, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, the Serampore Trio⁶ and so on significantly contributed to theological research.⁷ They played an important role in triggering both

³The phrase 'Postmodern turn' in this article is used to refer to theological research trends in India directly or indirectly influenced by postmodern tenets. See the section 'Predicament and Possibilities of Postmodern Turn in Indian Theological Research Education' in this article for further discussion.

⁴Gnana Patrick, "Future of Theological Research in India," in *Theological Research in the Global South: Prospects and Challenges* ed. P. G. George (Serampore: SATHRI, 2015), 128.

⁵*Ibid.*, 129.

⁶Joshua Marshman, William Carey, and William Ward are considered as the Serampore Trio who worked as a catalyst for the establishment of Serampore College, Calcutta.

⁷Patrick, 129.

secular and theological researches.⁸ However, in the second part of the 19th century *Ashram*-based theologizing gained popularity and Indian Christian theology is the outcome of this movement.⁹ This *Ashram*-based theologizing and further developments in theological research opened a new path for theological education in India. The following section will inform about the current status of theological research education in the postmodern climate of India.

Context of Theological Research Education in India

There are three main streams that regulate theological research education in India at present.¹⁰ The first stream is the Senate of Serampore College (University), one of the chief catalysts for theological education and research in India.¹¹ They have various research organizations working under them like the Board of Theological Education Senate of Serampore College (BTE-SSC),¹² South Asia Theological Research Institute (SATHRI) and Senate Centre For Extension and Pastoral Theological Research (SCEPTRE). The second stream is the more evangelically driven Asia Theological Association (India) (ATAI). It is an accrediting body or agency comprising of 160 plus theological institutions offering various degrees.¹³ According to their official website, there are only two institutions offer doctoral

⁸The foreign missionaries conducted researches in relation to language studies with the main intention of translating the scripture into vernacular language and communicating the gospel with local people. Their studies on Hindu philosophy were driven with a purpose of refutation. They also introduced western educational systems in India which unfortunately bifurcated ministerial training with secular scientific studies.

⁹*Ashram* is an anglicized Sanskrit word to refer to a *guru* (teacher) who resides with his family and disciples with a purpose of imparting knowledge. However, in Christian theology, important people in this movement like V. Chakkarai, A. J. Appasamy and P. Chenchai used this idea to share the indigenous Christian theology. See Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (1969; repr., New Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), 110-184; John S. Thannickal, *Ashram: A Communicating Community* (Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity, 2011).

¹⁰Though this classification has its own limitations, perhaps, I find it is easy to understand the context of the theological education in India.

¹¹Senate of Serampore College (University) is located in West Bengal. For more details visit their official website <https://www.senateofseramporecollege.edu.in/> (accessed July 20, 2019).

¹²Board of Theological Education Senate of Serampore College is established by the National Christian Council of India. For more details <https://btessc.org/> (accessed June 20, 2019).

¹³For more details visit ATAI's official website <https://ataindia.org/> (accessed June 20, 2019).

degrees and thirteen institutions that offer M.Th. programs. The third stream is secular universities such as Martin Luther Christian University (Meghalaya), Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS, Allahabad), Mysore University, Andhra University, Madras University, and others. They function under, mainly, the department of Philosophy and Religious Studies and sometimes connect with theological institutions providing certificates recognized by the University Grant Commission (UGC).¹⁴ Their theological articulation is more secular in nature. The entrance of secular universities to theological research is the recent development of theological education in India.

After the independence (1947), theological research was directed to the economic and political concerns of the country from an indigenous *Ashram*-based model.¹⁵ In the 1960s the theological orientation shifted to marginalized people groups such as the Dalit, tribal people and other weaker sections of the society.¹⁶ Liberation theologies in the other parts of the world also influenced the theological research orientation. This shift is understood as one of the aftermaths of postmodern thinking. The postmodern turn helped theological articulations to record divergent polyphonic discourses within the theological research.¹⁷ Most of the time, such researches challenged the traditional pattern of the research education. Currently, there are new ground-breaking researches happening mainly from the Senate of Serampore, ATA and secular streams in relation to people's experience, public theology and other areas of research. A later stage of this paper will analyze how these three

¹⁴The UGC, however, was formally established only in November 1956 as a statutory body of the Government of India through an Act of Parliament for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of university education in India. For more details <https://www.ugc.ac.in/> (accessed July 20, 2019).

¹⁵See P. D. Devanandan, *Preparation for Dialogue: A Collection of Essays on Hinduism and Christianity in New India*, eds. Nalini Devanandan and M. M. Thomas (Bangalore: CISRS, 1964). Also M. M. Thomas, *Christian Social Thought and Action—A Necessary Tragedy*, in M. M. Thomas *Reader: Selected Texts on Theology, Religion and Society* (1943), ed. T. Jacob Thomas (Tiruvalla: CSS, 2002).

¹⁶For more details of the history and development of Christian theological reflection in India see my book *Inclusive Christ and Broken People: Towards a Dalit Christology in the Light of the Early Church Faith Confession* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2018), 25 fn 142; Samuel Amirtham, "Some Trends in the Development of Theological Education in India," *India Journal of Theology* 25, no. 3-4 (July-December, 1976): 197-209.

¹⁷J. Andrew Kirk, "The Postmodern Condition and the Church's (Co)mission," in *Mission and Postmodernities: Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series* ed. Rolv Olsen et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2011), 23-24.

streams hamper Pentecostal theological research education. Meanwhile we will discuss more deeply how the postmodern turn helped theological research education.

Predicament and Possibilities of the Postmodern Turn in Indian Theological Research Education

It is a herculean task to sum up the tenets of postmodernism and its impact upon theological education at the research level. However, postmodernism plays a major role in modeling and structuring current theological research, which focuses on liberation and contextual theological reflections. It considers knowledge as a social construct or a product of a community.¹⁸ Hence, postmodernism encourages polyphonic discourse in educational practices. There is no strict disciplinarity in the postmodern research. This celebration of plurality of voices, for better or worse, has affected Indian theological research. Perhaps the postmodern turn in the theological education at a global and national level brings both positive and negative contributions.

Polyphonic Discourses

In the past, till the enlightenment period of the West, knowledge was understood as 'divine'. Religious truth claims always bypassed the rational thought pattern. When rationalism and humanism started to flourish, knowledge became 'given'. This became the base of the modern thought pattern which narrated the 'objectivity or absoluteness of truth'.¹⁹ To this wider context, postmodernism entered. In short, modernism broke with tradition; postmodernism breaks with modernism.²⁰ The postmodern turn makes a claim for the plurality of truth. In the words of Knud Jørgensen, "Principles are replaced by preferences. . . . There is no privileged civilization or culture or belief, only a multiplicity of cultures and beliefs. The grand narrative of human progress of modernity has been transformed into the numerous small

¹⁸Rajan Gurukkal, "An Introductory Outline of Knowledge Production in Pre-colonial India," *Indian Journal of History of Science* 51 no. 1 (March, 2016): 9-21.

¹⁹Ernst Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions* (1971; repr. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 51.

²⁰Knud Jørgensen, "Foreword," in *Mission and Postmodernities: Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series* ed. Rolv Olsen et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2011), viii.

stories of peoples and cultures.”²¹ “The sense of universal knowledge and objectivity is questioned or neglected.”²² Theological research has also undergone radical change in the approach and by the way research is done at the postmodern turn. For instance, the emergence of liberation and contextual theologies is a reaction to the metanarratives of the western dogmatic theologies. Theologies from the margins, public theology and so on open new avenues for theological researchers, which is also the result of the postmodern turn that we live in. It is in this context that Pentecostal voices can also get authenticity and validity among other voices.

Knowledge, Power and Hegemony

The major postmodern philosophical understanding on educational research is driven by the motto of ‘production of knowledge’. Those who are able to access or produce knowledge are powerful in the society. Sometimes, this knowledge-power leads to hegemony over the ‘knowledge-less’ persons or community. In the modern period, knowledge through education was the privilege of the elites of India. They monopolized knowledge for the exploitation and oppression of the weaker sections of the country. Felix Wilfred writes that in the globalised context, the knowledge is handled by the few and exclusion of the many is the characteristics.²³ He adds, “At a time when knowledge is sought as a means of power—economic, technological, etc. —there is the trend to monopolize is for one’s benefit. . . .”²⁴ But the postmodern trend gives avenues for the marginalized peoples to be involved in the production and distribution of knowledge. There is no one who can be the custodian of the knowledge; knowledge becomes decentralized. The voices of the weaker or marginalized can be resonating in the research activities. Therefore, Wilfred suggests that, “By making higher education accessible to more and more segments of people, Christian institutions will also try to make up for the imbalance created in inter-human relationships by modernity. Making available higher education for those at the margins is to empower them and create leaders among them.”²⁵

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Felix Wilfred, “Rethinking Christian Identity in Global Process: Implications for Asian Christian Higher Education,” *Jeevadhara: A Journal of Christian Interpretation* XXXIII, no. 193 (January 2003): 37.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

This is not true if theological education becomes unaffordable for the people at the margins.²⁶

Research Culture

Currently theological education has vibed/thrived with research culture in which mainline research-oriented studies are encouraged to 'produce knowledge'. Modern research culture is mainly "founded in modernity's self-motivated, self-directing, rational subject, capable of exercising individual agency"²⁷ whereas "postmodernism's emphasis is on "the inscribed subject, the decentered subject constructed by language, discourses, desire and the unconscious. . . ."²⁸ In the current Indian theological research, production of knowledge with particular intention is spread through journals, books, monographs etc. However, literature production does not promise the development in qualitative research.²⁹ Subrata Chakraborty narrates that "[i]n India, publications happen due to individual initiatives, often driven by survival or promotional needs rather than being drawn out of purposeful collective effort. The difference, thus, is 'want to' versus 'have to', propeller being 'individual need' rather than 'common zeal'."³⁰ The research culture of production of knowledge must be regulated with strict guidelines.

After having a brief survey of Indian theological research, we can summarize that serious theological research is undertaken by evangelical, ecumenical and secular educational institutions. There are also scholars who contribute and partake in the production of knowledge with much vigour and seriousness. This wider context must be kept in mind before we analyze current Pentecostal theological education. If Pentecostal scholars are not taking advantage of this situation, the voice of the Pentecostalism and Pentecostal scholarship will be diminished or silenced with the heavy materials produced in these knowledge factories.

²⁶Pentecostals who come for theological education are mainly first-generation Christians from independent churches who do not financially support their studies.

²⁷Robin Usher and Richard Edwards, *Postmodernism and Education* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 2.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Subrata Chakraborty, "Creating a Culture of Research in India." *The Hindu Business Line* (August 24, 2017 updated January 09, 2018)

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/creating-a-culture-of-research-in-india/article9830350.ece> (accessed January 10, 2019).

³⁰*Ibid.*

General Overview of Pentecostal Theological Research in India

Indian Pentecostalism is the outcome of numerous revival awakenings across India. There are several historical evidences to affirm that Pentecostalism or charismatic awakenings took place in India even before the Azusa Street revivals or even before western Pentecostalism reached India.³¹ Indian Pentecostals can also impress others about the earliest beginning of theological education/training in India. In 1922, Mount Zion Bible College, Mulakkuzha and Mizpeh Bible College, Thrissur were founded in Kerala. John H. Burgess opened Bethel Bible Institute (now known as Bethel Bible College) at Travancore in 1927, which was the first permanent Assemblies of God Bible College outside of the United States. Hebron Bible College of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC) at Kumbanad started in the year of 1930.³² These are some of the earlier Pentecostal Bible colleges in India.

At present we have very few Pentecostal theological seminaries offering recognized postgraduate and doctoral level programs. Faith Theological Seminary (FTS), Manakkala, New Theological College (NTC), Dhradhun, Bethel Bible College (BBC), Punalur, Church on the Rock Theological Seminary (COTRTS), Vishakapatnam, New Life Biblical Seminary (NLBS), Cheruvakkal, New India Bible Seminary (NIBS), Paippad, and Ebenezer Theological Seminary (ETS), Vengoor offer postgraduate programs under either Senate of Serampore or Asia Theological Association (ATA).³³ Among these, FTS and COTRTS offers Ph.D./D.Th. programs and other offer M.Th. programs in various

³¹Stanley M. Burgess, "Pentecostalism in India: An Overview" *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4, no. 1 (2001), 87. For example Pentecostalism emerged in South India during 1860s by the leading of John Christian Arulappan. Allan H. Anderson, "Precursors to Pentecostalism in South India: John Christian Arulappan (1810-67) and the Christianpettah Revival," https://www.academia.edu/6068814/Precursors_to_Pentecostalism_in_South_India_John_Christian_Arulappan_1810-67_and_the_Christianpettah_Revival (accessed June 20, 2019).

³²Roger E. Hedlund, *Quest for Identity: India's Churches of Indigenous Origin: The "Little Tradition" in Indian Christianity* (New Delhi: MIIS/ISPCK, 2000), 86.

³³FTS and NTC [through Nav Jyoti Post-Graduate and Research Centre (NJPGR)] offer postgraduate programs under the Senate of Serampore. The rest of the colleges are under ATA. The list is collected mainly from <https://btessc.org/> and <https://ataindia.org/> websites. Therefore, there is a chance that I have missed some of the Pentecostal seminaries that are seeking for recognition of their postgraduate programs. There are other Pentecostal institutions which offer postgraduate programs which are not accredited or affiliated to any recognized educational body.

disciplines.³⁴ In addition to this, there are other Pentecostal seminaries offering ministry doctorates and undergraduate programs like M.Div., B.D., B.Th. and so on. The following section evaluates current trends in Pentecostal research education in India.

Perils/Issues for Contemporary Pentecostal Theological Education/Educators in India

Pentecostal theological schools were established in India for short term courses to equip students for ministerial training. The observation of L. F. Wilson is true to early Indian Pentecostal education. He writes, "Emphasis was placed on the mastering of doctrinal positions and the memorization of scripture rather than on critical thought or scholarly research."³⁵ Therefore, Pentecostal training in the earlier period was isolated from other mainline church theological education. Now we have grown to offer advanced theological research programs. With an exclamation mark, Roger Hedlund writes, "Pentecostals today are included among the theologians of India!"³⁶ Let us identify some of the perils that current Pentecostal research education faces.

Labeling the Pentecostal Community as Superficial or Emotionally-Driven

Among mainline Christianity, the Pentecostal community is isolated for various reasons. This trend is also seen in theological education. Hedlund notes the experience of Pentecostal theological students at ecumenical and evangelical colleges that "Pentecostal beliefs and practices have been ridiculed in ecumenical and evangelical classrooms. In some colleges Pentecostal students were objects of faculty gossip and discrimination."³⁷ The Pentecostal community among the mainline churches was branded as a community of emotionally-driven people

³⁴Collected from their official website <https://ftseminary.wordpress.com/doctorate-in-new-testament/> (accessed July 20, 2019) and <https://cotr.in/admission/programme-offered/ph-d-missiology/> (accessed July 20, 2019). However, according to ATA official website COTRTS is not listed among PhD offering institutions. COTRTS might have started the program and is waiting for ATA accreditation.

³⁵F. Wilson, "Bible Institutes, Colleges, Universities," *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements: Revised and Expanded Edition*, eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Edward M. Van der Maas (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 377.

³⁶Hedlund, 87.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 86.

groups. Though this ill reputation is slowly changing,³⁸ we do not hold an authentic Pentecostal voice as such. The Pentecostal community is branded with the image of being a superficial and emotional one. This challenge comes from the mainline churches' attitude towards the Pentecostal community. More than this, we have challenges from mainline theological academics, which are discussed below.

*Ecumenical-Evangelical-Secular-Denominational
Extravagant Commitments*

As shared above, Pentecostal beliefs and practices were rejected by mainline churches. Pentecostal students had to face perils in pursuing studies in the mainline church-driven institutions.³⁹ At this point, however, the ecumenical (Senate of Serampore) and evangelical (Asia Theological Association) affiliating and accrediting bodies accept Pentecostal institutions and educators. Some of the prominent mainline seminaries render the service to Pentecostal educators.⁴⁰ This agrees with the remark of Hedlund that "[r]ejection has changed to acceptance. . . . Pentecostal success has occasioned academic recognition."⁴¹

Ecumenical or evangelical collaboration with the Pentecostal academy for research education has far-reaching effects in the way Pentecostals are involved in the research. I would argue that unique Pentecostal theological deliberations are hampered by evangelical and ecumenical commitments. The same concern is shared by Finny Philip:

In India, theological colleges/institutions are accredited to either Serampore University (started by William Carey, but now controlled by liberal/liberation stream) or Asia Theological Association (an evangelical stream). Most of the Pentecostal colleges are part of ATA but most of the faculty comes from Serampore or ATA stream and does not have a Pentecostal outlook. Although they are Pentecostals, their thinking has been moulded by either liberal theology or non-charismatic evangelical orientation. This is reflected in the courses offered by Pentecostal colleges, they are general

³⁸Rajeevan M. Thomas and Josfin Raj S. B., eds. *Pentecostalism: Polyphonic Discourses* (New Delhi: ISPCK/NLBS, 2019).

³⁹Hedlund, 86.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 88.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 87.

courses which any evangelical seminary in the West might offer.⁴²

In a nutshell, Pentecostal research education was infringed upon by the ecumenical and evangelical framework. We uncritically follow 'evangelical' or 'ecumenical' directions in our Pentecostal theological deliberations. Perhaps, these frameworks have colonized most of the Pentecostal education and Pentecostal theologies in the Indian context. In short, Pentecostal theological institutions' dependency upon ecumenical or evangelical recognition eventually resulted in a sloppy and spurious way of Pentecostal knowledge production rather than its being genuine and authentic.

Popular/Traditional Pentecostal Concept of Ministry

In general, ordinary Pentecostals in India have an aversion towards higher theological education, which involves research-oriented training. Such knowledge acquirement, for them, is a waste of time, energy and money. Wilson observes that "A residual belief that spirituality and higher education are basically incompatible has limited the support of Pentecostals for higher education throughout their movement's history."⁴³ Wonsuk Ma observes that ". . . the image of a 'successful' Pentecostal minister is stereotyped as the pastor of a large congregation."⁴⁴ In addition, Wilson writes, "Pentecostal ministers with limited educational credentials have continued to enjoy places of prominence, which seemingly proves that formal education is unnecessary or even harmful."⁴⁵ Therefore, many Pentecostal scholars had to be content with ecclesial or missional work and could contribute less to cultivate a Pentecostal research culture.

Lack of 'Indian Pentecostal' Scholarship

⁴²Finny Philip, "Pentecostal Theological Education: Filadelpia Bible College India," *The Pneuma Review: Journal of Ministry Resources and Theology for Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministries & Leaders* (October 18, 2016) <http://pneumareview.com/pentecostal-theological-education-filadelpia-bible-college-india/> (accessed 2 June 2019).

⁴³Wilson, 373.

⁴⁴Wonsuk Ma, "Theological Education in Pentecostal Churches in Asia," in *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives-Regional Surveys-Ecumenical Trends*, eds. Dietrich Werner, et al. (Bangalore: ATC, 2010), 734.

⁴⁵Wilson, 374.

As we have seen, Pentecostal scholarship is hampered by ecumenical-evangelical commitments, and therefore no authentic Pentecostal scholarship could be nurtured in the Indian context. We have hundreds of doctorate holders in the Pentecostal community, but they couldn't nurture an Indian Pentecostal scholarship. The observation of Finny Philip is true: "Indian Pentecostalism has not achieved the theological vigour of North American and European Pentecostalism."⁴⁶ We depend upon Euro-American Pentecostalism or ecumenical and evangelical literature for our research. Though there is much Indian Pentecostal literature that is produced, the lamentation of Finny Philip—"We don't have good theological study materials available. Everything has to be imported"⁴⁷—echoes in our ears.

However, during the 1990s, there was an attempt to establish the National Association of Pentecostal Theological Institutions (NAPTI) with a view to nurture Pentecostal scholarship in India. The vision was emphatically stated in their manual as: "We must create our own hermeneutical principles and philosophy for our own situation."⁴⁸ However, this networking is not happening as expected.⁴⁹ Though we have a number of qualified Pentecostal educators, there is no common platform for their interaction and to produce knowledge.

Further, the lack of a Pentecostal research center or institution is another challenge that we face in India to nurture Indian Pentecostal scholarship. Pentecostal theological educators had no other options but to depend upon either Euro-American institutions or evangelical/ecumenical institutions to do their research studies. There is very rare institutional support for any research carried out on Pentecostalism within India. The promotion of a Pentecostal institution would spontaneously trigger the research culture among the Pentecostals in India. In this way Pentecostals could produce unique research projects.

Southern Concentration of the Colleges/Seminaries

Another issue Pentecostal education faces is the geographical concentration of the Pentecostal theological institutions. It is clear that

⁴⁶Philip, "Pentecostal Theological Education: Philadelphia Bible College India."

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸P. J. Titus, "The Necessity of NAPTI in India Today," *National Association of Pentecostal Theological Institutions Manual* (Andhra Pradesh: Jyoti Press, 1994), 3.

⁴⁹NAPTI later became the National Association for Theological Accreditation (NATA) in 1997. However, the momentum that NATA generated was abruptly lost due to the untimely demise of Rev. Dr. P. J. Titus in 2004.

the Pentecostalism nourished in the northern part of the country is distinct from that of the south.⁵⁰ However, the postgraduate Pentecostal colleges are concentrated in the southern part of India, especially Kerala. In the list of ATA and Serampore Pentecostal theological educational institutions NTC, Dehradun is the only one located in North India, which offers postgraduate level education or above. It makes clear why Hedlund addresses South India as a "bastion" for Pentecostal theological education.⁵¹ In addition, we find that among the major Pentecostal educators in India, the names of the south Indians are prominent. Although it may not directly affect the research culture of Pentecostal education, there is a chance of demeaning northern Pentecostal discourses and also 'bias' from a southern perspective.

Facile Postgraduate and Doctorate Holders

Since independence, with the rapid development of Indian Pentecostal education/theological articulation, there has been a concomitant increase in the number of research studies, resulting in doctoral dissertations and in the publication of many volumes and articles in various theological journals. As Hedlund rightly pointed out, "Indian Pentecostal theologians have been trained in some of the world's finest universities."⁵² It is another peril within the Pentecostal education that there are theological educators who pursue pseudo-colleges which will provide M.Th. and Doctoral degrees without rigorous research work. Although many Pentecostals are pursuing strenuous research, the pseudo-degree holders cannot be involved in the mainstream theological discourses. Perhaps the educational degree is merely a flamboyant title along with their name. It is also probable that they are not exposed to serious and strenuous research studies. "Lamentably, once a research degree is awarded, I have noticed the yearning to do more research ebbs. In other words, research has to rise beyond the step of instrumentality, to create and sustain its own culture."⁵³ It is disappointing to listen to the so-called well-educated who publicly ridicule theological education and

⁵⁰Shaibu Abraham, *The History of the Pentecostal Movement in North India: Unfolding its Social and Theological Contexts* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprint, 2017).

⁵¹Hedlund, 81.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 87.

⁵³Vinay Kumar Srivastava, "The State of Research Culture in Indian Universities," *Social Change* 47, no. 1 (March, 2017): 107. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0049085716681914> (accessed June 20, 2019).

research activities. The result of this situation is that we have fewer quality theological educators. It is a sad state that some theological institutions provide postgraduate and doctoral degrees without accompanying serious research. Distinctively, this article makes a clarion call to (aspiring) Pentecostal educators and theological institutions to nurture a research culture even from the beginning of one's theological education.

To summarize, we have seen a number of perils and possibilities of Pentecostal research education in India. The following will attempt to respond to this situation.

Fostering Research Culture and Production of Knowledge

We have seen pertinent issues of Pentecostal research education in the Indian context. As theological educators, we cannot bypass such struggles, but must respond with suitable guidelines and strategies. This section will expound on the need for the research culture that we are aiming at and how production of knowledge would help us to inculcate research culture among the Pentecostal theological educators.

Need for Research Culture: Some Biblical Insights

Scripture encourages us to partake in the writing and production of literary works that are relevant for the edification and education of communities. We have biblical examples for nurturing research culture. Two volumes of Luke give us a lucid sample of the charismatic early church's research attitude (Luke 1:3-4).⁵⁴ In addition, the extensive writings of Paul are to be noted for the literary contribution of Paul for the first-century community.⁵⁵ At the end of his life, he left with some parchments for writing and some books for reading (2 Tim. 4:13). His encouragement to Timothy to continue in reading (1 Tim. 4:13) is another example. Further, the Johannine writings stand alone in the total writing style of the New Testament. If anyone analyzes the literary genre of the Gospel, Epistles and Revelation of John, we find a group of people involved in the research. They wrote extensively in the context where there was no modern facility for writing and printing. They wrote to

⁵⁴Jeffrey S. Hittenberger, "Toward a Pentecostal Philosophy of Education," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 23, no. 2 (Fall, 2001): 221.

⁵⁵Josfin Raj, *Pauline Corpus: A Paradigm for the Effective Christian Journalism in Contemporary India*. (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2013).

encourage, edify and educate the communities of faith and outsiders. This scriptural appeal has serious implications in the Indian Pentecostal context of theological research.

Production of Knowledge as a Christian Vocation or Ministry

As shared in the issues of Pentecostal theological education, Pentecostal ministry has revolved around the church and does not give adequate attention to the academy. However, we must reorient our view about theological education and research. Patricia B. Licuanan, an educator, recommends that theological education must be considered as a vocation. Her words are noteworthy in our context:

Christian educators should view their work not simply as a job, not even simply as a career but as a vocation. One could have a good job, a successful career but lack a vocation – a deeper calling, an investment of one's being. A vocation is a commitment that sustains people, that brings growth and pride and love. While there may be some pain and definitely a lot of hard work, work in our Christian colleges and universities must for the most part be viewed not as duty or self-sacrifice but as springing from love and bearing fruit of joy and fulfillment.⁵⁶

In the context of theological education, production of knowledge should be considered as one among the theological vocations or the theologians' vocation in the postmodern turn. The research culture has to be inculcated and nourished among the researchers in our institutions and world-class research methodologies should be followed.

The postmodern turn, in a sense, is a blessing for the Pentecostal community to nurture research culture. Wilfred writes: "Since knowledge leads to emancipation, it is viewed as something sacred. . . . Knowledge is said to derive from the divine light. Modernity was a departure from [the] tradition of sacredness and freedom."⁵⁷ The remaining section expounds this promising idea and draws possible benefits of doing the same.

⁵⁶Patricia B. Licuanan, "Vocation of Christian Educators: Christian Responsibility in Academia," *Jeevadhara: A Journal of Christian Interpretation* XXXIII, no. 193 (January 2003): 24.

⁵⁷Wilfred, 39.

Nature and Characteristics of Production of Knowledge

First, the research culture that Pentecostal educators must cherish in India is critical in nature. Patricia B. Licuanan writes: “Christian educators have to be and should help their students to be a critical voice, demanding the best of our government, our institutions, our culture, ourselves.”⁵⁸ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen brings us two uses of the term *critical*. The first meaning is the contribution of modernism which he states is “something like ‘tearing apart’ or ‘breaking down’ beliefs dearly held, as in radical forms of biblical criticism.”⁵⁹ The second meaning is contributed by postmodernity, which gives “more constructive meaning of *critical*, meaning something like ‘sorting out’ or ‘weighing’ between various opinions, options, viewpoints. On the way to a confident opinion or belief, the intellectual capacities are put in use to ensure that one’s opinion is justified in light of current knowledge, experience, and wisdom.”⁶⁰ To sum up, nurturing critical voices in research culture must be one of the premier mottos of Pentecostal theological research. This culture must be imparted to the upcoming generation of Pentecostal educators.

Second, Indian Pentecostal theological educators must cultivate a qualitative research culture. Though there are allegations about Indian secular researchers in relation to its quality,⁶¹ it is partially true with theological research in India. There has been a certain amount of theological literature produced by Indian theological educators. It is encouraging to see that Indian theological works are being published in international publications and journals and being globally accepted. This trend must be sustained as the production of knowledge becomes the catalyst to enact this research culture. Quality assurance must be uncompromising activity within the research culture that we cherish.

Third, Pentecostal educators must follow a research culture which is sensitive to the cultural context. Instead of uncritically depending on the ecumenical/evangelical framework, they can nurture distinctive ways of doing research. By nurturing indigenous and contextual research culture,

⁵⁸Licuanan, 25.

⁵⁹Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Epistemology, Ethos, and Environment”: In Search of a Theology of Pentecostal Theological Education,” *Pneuma* 34, no. 2 (January, 2012): 253.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Subrata Chakraborty, “Creating a Culture of Research in India.”

we could develop a true Indian Pentecostal identity. It also must be directed towards involvement in the developmental process.⁶²

Fourth, production of knowledge must be a 'holistic' approach. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen argues that a 'holistic' approach in Pentecostalism is an adaptation from the postmodern trend.⁶³ This approach incorporates every aspect of human existence and interactions. There is no difference between sacred and secular. One of the proposals of Paul W. Lewis is noted as a holistic package, that is: *orthodoxy*, right belief; *orthopraxis*, right action; and *orthopathy*, right experience, affections or passion.⁶⁴ The production of knowledge must be directed in these three dimensions to be holistic in approach.

Finally, production of knowledge must take 'democratic' in practice. It is not an individual think-tank that produces expertise and knowledge, rather it must recognize the community involvement. As stated elsewhere, knowledge is a social product. To achieve this goal, there must be a nexus between theological educators, pastors, believers and outsiders. The products of theological research should be workable within them.⁶⁵ Further, theological education must not deprive anyone on the basis of gender, caste, color, economic status and so on.

Purpose of Production of Knowledge

The postmodern context provides Pentecostals the opportunity to recapitulate our view on theological education. On the one side, production of knowledge would nurture the research culture among Pentecostals, especially theological educators, while on the other side we have long term benefits. The following section will list these long-term benefits of the production of knowledge.

An Authentic Indian Pentecostal Theology

Why have Pentecostals not emphatically stated theologies in India? As elsewhere shared, Pentecostal theology and literature are mainly imported or translated from Euro-American countries. That means that

⁶²Amirtham, 205.

⁶³Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Mission in Pentecostal Theology," *International Review of Mission* 107 no. 1 (June, 2018): 14.

⁶⁴Paul W. Lewis, "Explorations in Pentecostal Theological Education," *Asia Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 10, no. 2 (July, 2007): 168.

⁶⁵Kenneth O. Gangel, "Delivering Theological Education That Works," *Theological Education* 34 no. 1 (Autumn, 1997): 1-9.

what we claim of Pentecostal theology in India is, perhaps, an uncritically imported western Pentecostalism and its theologies. Gnana Patrick notes that, “Theological research is an integral part of the process of theologizing.”⁶⁶ Pentecostalism could cherish its unique way within the wider theological discourses.

William K. Kay writes, “The challenge facing Pentecostal education concerns its identity. If it is true to itself, it will develop forms of teaching, formation, curriculum and resources that are experiential and flexible. If it accepts the dictates of evangelicalism, it is...in danger of losing its distinctiveness.”⁶⁷ Hence, it is necessary to nurture a Pentecostal research culture to articulate a more genuine ‘Indian Pentecostal theology’. It will also help us to become independent from Euro-American scholarship. Hedlund points to this fact, referring to Paul A. Pomerville, as he sees “*indigenous* Pentecostals as an emerging ‘third force’ in world Christianity whose theology and witness respond to issues outside the scope of traditional western considerations.”⁶⁸ This will help fulfill the vision of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen that “Pentecostal scholarship has the potential of overcoming that weakness [indoctrination] and aim at building a community of thinking and reflection in which the gifts and insights of many colleagues are cherished. When done in the community, theological reflection and education becomes an exercise in formation.”⁶⁹ In that sense, there is a vast scope for theological educators to develop a distinct Indian Pentecostalism as follows.⁷⁰

First, by reflecting upon the Pentecostal heritage or resources including history, doctrine, culture, practices, traditions, issues and so on. Finny Philip also shares similar concerns: “there is little development in Pentecostal thinking or reflection about the Spirit experiences in our [Pentecostal] communities.”⁷¹ Second, by developing a Pentecostal perspective to look at non-Pentecostal church related issues, which can

⁶⁶Patrick, 124.

⁶⁷William K. Kay, “Pentecostal Education,” *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 25, no. 2 (August, 2004): 4.

⁶⁸Hedlund, 87.

⁶⁹Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Pentecostal Theological Education in a Theological and Missiological Perspective,” *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, 30:1 (2010): 58-59.

⁷⁰There are already scholars utilizing these resources and producing literature. Still more works in this direction are needed. See V. V. Thomas, *Dalit Pentecostalism: Spirituality of the Empowered Poor* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Company, 2008).

⁷¹Philip, “Pentecostal Theological Education: Filadelfia Bible College India.”

also be considered as inter-denominational research in relation to doctrine, practices, and mission strategy. A third locus would be a social avenue in which we develop a Pentecostal framework to respond to socio-economic, religious and cultural issues of the people. By envisioning this, Pentecostals can distinctively inculcate an authentic Pentecostal voice in the mainstream theological discourses.

A Healthy Christian Community Building

On the one side, Pentecostal theologians and theological institutions have advanced and penetrated into mainline theological education while, on the other side, at the popular level, there remains an aversion towards 'theological' education within the Pentecostal folk. It is an obstacle for many to enter into theological research. If this situation continues, eventually Pentecostals will lose their theological coherence and remain as a shallow Pentecostalism. Therefore, this paper would challenge Pentecostals to conscientize among the ordinary Pentecostals the importance of the production of knowledge for the fruitful existence and continuation of the Pentecostal community in India.

We must heed the words of Joshuva Raja that "Theological education as a process does not occur in a vacuum rather it occurs in the context of the Church and society."⁷² The research culture of production of knowledge can serve the church in a meaningful way. For example, Julie C. Ma and Wonsuk Ma suggest that "scholars can begin to produce materials that are pastor-friendly in language and subject matter. By 'translating' their existing scholarly work into popular versions, pastors, lay leaders and Bible school students will greatly benefit from such contributions. Such partnership will bring churches and theological schools closer to the healthy future of Asian Pentecostalism."⁷³ In this way, the Pentecostal scholarship would serve the church.

Sustainable Advanced Community of Researchers

To envision an advanced community of researchers, we must maintain academic excellence. "Christian educators should possess high

⁷²Joshuva Raja, "Relevant and Effective Theological Education in the Twenty First Century India," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 60, no. 1 (Spring, 2005): 115.

⁷³Julie C. Ma and Wonsuk M., *Mission in the Spirit: Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 241.

standard academic credentials and accomplishments...” notes Licuanan. She further expands this notion and writes:

Two important points should be raised in relation to academic excellence and faculty scholarship. The first has to do with the range of types of scholarship and research which our faculty might pursue: basic research or the scholarship of discovery; scholarship of integration; scholarship of application and the scholarship of teaching. The second important point is for academic excellence to be grounded in the mission and vision of the institution and not simply driven by competitiveness or external measures.⁷⁴

When production of knowledge becomes the culture of theological educators, it makes them more responsible than before. As we have seen, their researches were not appropriate to inculcate a Pentecostal identity, since they simply published their dissertations. When Pentecostal educators connect with the church, their writings will be more concrete and authentic. Nexus with church and academy is beneficial for both. That is to say, when the wide gap between the academy and the church is mended, there is a radical growth in the flourishing of research culture and healthy community of believers. Hedlund also anticipates that, “In India, emerging young Pentecostal theologians from Kerala have the prospect of pointing indigenous theology in new directions.”⁷⁵ Pentecostal scholars are able to understand current trends within Pentecostalism and respond to them theologically. They can conscientize the community of believers to respond to the issues that they are facing.

Responding to Social Concerns

Gnana Raj proposes that theological teachers should play the roles of pastor, scholar and activist.⁷⁶ I would like to emphasize on the third role—activist. It is true that Pentecostal theological educators must be aware of, and responsibly respond to, their surroundings. Their works also should reflect beyond the boundaries of the church. It is the need of the hour to interact with realities beyond the church facilities. This helps

⁷⁴Licuanan, 23.

⁷⁵Hedlund, 88.

⁷⁶Gnana Raj, “Effective Seminary Faculty: A Trilogy of Roles,” *Journal of NATA* 2, no. 2 (Nov. 2012): 32-43.

the Pentecostal community to stand with its own unique identity and viewpoint. By this we should never intend to be divided or separated from the wider Christian community, but we should have our own identity as we step into the society.

In the process of knowledge production, a theological educator is involved in interacting with church-scholars-society as the main framework. By this, we will overcome the possible danger of theological isolation. Three parties are benefited! Further, we become a corrective force. Hedlund writes, "Some theologians discern in Pentecostalism a potential corrective function."⁷⁷

Afterword: Vision, Hope and Aspiration

By seeing the growth and influence of Pentecostal theological educators of India, Kärkkäinen's vision of "building a community of thinking and reflecting colleagues"⁷⁸ and the early Pentecostal theological educators' vision of "our own hermeneutical principles and philosophy for our own situation,"⁷⁹ are coming into fruition. India can claim soberly trained Pentecostal theological educators, who are able to foster original research practices now. However, what we lack is a 'distinct Indian Pentecostal touch'. This paper is the result of such thinking to inculcate a research culture among Pentecostal educators of India that spontaneously brings out distinct Indian Pentecostal theological articulations.

Pentecostal institutions must align together giving a platform for the Pentecostal educators to interact, nurture and publish meaningful Pentecostal scholarship. They can also fiscally and physically promote Pentecostal scholars in their research endeavors. Another suggestion would be that teaching institutions must be upgraded to research institutions or research centers.⁸⁰

As Pentecostal educators, we must cherish and imbibe the research culture within the upcoming generation of Pentecostal theological educators and must remain aloof from the danger of theological elitism. We must also be encouraged to be actively involved in the production of Pentecostal journals, monographs and other literary works.

⁷⁷Hedlund, 87.

⁷⁸Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Pentecostal Theological Education in a Theological and Missiological Perspective," 58.

⁷⁹Titus, 3.

⁸⁰By developing research centers, we are not discarding the ministerial training at the undergraduate level.

As a Pentecostal community of believers, we must be willing to accommodate and cooperate with the ministers whose call is to serve the church from the academy. Many from the community should arise to be involved in the process of the production of knowledge.

By this, we could fruitfully foster a research culture among the Pentecostal theological educators of India.

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