

The centenary of Assemblies of God in South Africa: Historical reflections on theological education and ministry formation

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The Assemblies of God (AOG) celebrates its centenary in 2017. The paper aims to show the historical development of theological education and ministerial training and formation in this denomination. It starts by showing how internationally AOG embraced the Bible Institute movement as a way of evangelism, church planting and growth from the early decades of the 20th century after the birth of the Pentecostal Movement. Then there is a South African scenario, lamenting the de-emphasis of the importance of theological education, though there was emphasis on evangelism and missional endeavours on the grassroots. The research unfolds the development of institutions from 1949 to the present. All in all, 10 institutions are identified and briefly explained, some of them with their demise. The article concludes by historical reflections on what was taught and identifies the gaps by suggesting that the Pentecostal curriculum should be relevant to the context of Africa by embracing inclusivity: Hidden Curriculum, Gender Studies, Inculturation and Liberation ideals and renaissance of pneumatology.

Introduction

It is important to note that this paper examines theological education on a broader Assemblies of God (AOG) tradition, regardless of its diversified cohorts – splinter groups since 1964. To begin with, Peter Watt, the current Executive Chairperson of AOG Southern Africa and one of the very few academics in AOG, concludes his book, *From Africa's Soil: The Story of the Assemblies of God in Southern Africa* (1992), with a serious comment regarding training. After historical traces of this movement, he highlights:

Unlike in the American Assemblies of God, no Assemblies of God Bible schools were established for the training of ministers in South Africa. (p. 198)

This leaves any South African church historian with a question of why missionaries who benefitted hugely from the Bible school education in their home countries did not see the necessity of establishing similar institutions on their missionary fields. However, it is noteworthy that Watt (1992:198) mentions James Mullan's emphasis of the doctrine of priesthood of all believers, as one reason for this passiveness towards theological education. This legacy continues even after one hundred years of the existence of AOG in South Africa. The bottom line remains that theology is important in church development.

Mugambi (1989:69) defines theological education as the institutionalised process through which the theologians of a particular religion are trained. Theological education is a process which teaches, trains, instructs and equips Christians with tools of critical examination of Christianity and interpretation of its meaning to them. Basically, theological education is understood as a training that primarily aims at equipping trainees or students with ministry skills for effective community services.

The international picture

The spirit of the time, that is, between 1882 and 1962, was the emergence of the Bible institutions and colleges in North America and elsewhere. The spread of the evangelical movement (including Pentecostals) during the time can be positively attributed to this movement. This is confirmed by Witmer (in Hakes 1979):

Bible institutes-colleges have contributed much to evangelicalism at home and abroad. They have given preparation to half or more of all Protestant missionaries from North America, and have helped to shape the lives of many eminent Christian leaders ... (p. 379)

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It is known that AOG internationally embraced theological training as a way of ministerial formation and missionary expansion, regardless of Pentecostal reservation towards education elitism. Generally, Pentecostals perceive education, especially the formal theological education with suspicious eye. 'Theology has been consistently understood as the antagonist of spirituality' (Pillay 1994:140). John Bond (in Clark & Lederle et al. 1989) justifies this:

Theology follows experience. First comes the act of God, then follows the attempt to understand it. Pentecostalism was born out of experience ... Truth must be experienced, otherwise it is not valid – a mere form of religion without power. Pentecostal thinking opts for the dynamic rather than for what seems to be formalized and tightly structured. (p. 135)

South African Pentecostal scholar, Allan Anderson sketches this reservation and passiveness that there has been a tenuous relationship with a theological education and Pentecostals have spoken of a 'dead intellectualism' that sometimes stifles the Spirit-filled life. (2006:244)

The secular ideologies, especially theological liberalism, of the 19th century that spilled over into the 20th century, when Pentecostalism was born, created reservation of this kind for the new Spirit movement. It is true that the sentiment continued for almost a century. However, the orbit is turning around, where even Anderson (2006) mentions one famous Pentecostal leader, Hollenweger, who:

traces the changes from a disdain for academic theology to the emergence of Pentecostal academics who must be listened to. Most Pentecostals perceived of academic scholarship as anti-spiritual, and their Bible Schools produced a 'crude rationalism' and 'form of fundamentalism'. (p. 245)

The Division of Foreign Missions (DFM) of AOG in United States championed and promoted Bible schools as a way of enhancing the indigenous churches in the mission field. Its notable field secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean region, Melvin Hodges, published a paper in 1953. It was titled 'Indigenous Church'. This paper reinforced the concept of national responsibility. This responsibility would come through theological training of indigenous leaders. The sentiment that prevailed during the 1950s AOG was the ministerial formation through theological training in the indigenous context:

Beyond mere lip service to local initiative and leadership in each of the Assemblies of God fields, the DFM gave priority to training programs, especially the development of Bible institutes. By 1960 there were 61 of them, more than those of any other Protestant mission agency at the time, an achievement that on occasion brought the DFM rare recognition from outside the movement. (Wilson 1997:53)

This scenario was not observable in South Africa as this paper would like to point out. In the other parts of the world, AOG engaged robustly with theological training. To such an extent that:

As the years passed an increasing proportion of US Assemblies of God missionaries were engaged in leadership training. In the 1970s it was estimated that half of all DFM missionaries were teaching at least part-time in a national Bible institute, in addition to their other leadership preparation functions. (Wilson 1997:54)

Easter (2013:2) points to the fact that 'Like other Pentecostal movements, the Assemblies of God established institutions dedicated to theological, doctrinal and practical commitments'. The Bible schools became the growth spurt for AOG in the Third World. The mission field was enlarged as a result of the role of these institutions. This was painted clearly by J. Philip Hogan in a newsletter that 'These Bible schools are the heart of the modern missions. It is in these areas of our work that foreign help is most needed and is the least dangerous' (*Global Conquest*, November 1959). Theological education, regardless of its perceived shallowness, had been a locus of AOG all over the world. This is also confirmed by Sun (2000:234) that 'The growth in the number of churches and the number of theological institutions for training leaders was connected.' In the same vein, Sun further attests that:

Early Pentecostals made evangelism their first priority, a task into which they put a great deal of effort. Despite their dread of education, they saw the training of workers as the key to evangelism. So, a growing interest in Bible institutes began in the United States. It soon carried over to the mission field. (p. 234)

The preceding brief survey informs us that in the United States one can deduce that theological training was treated with a deemable respect. This is pointed out by Sun (2000):

The Assemblies of God, U.S.A., founded in 1914, had a strong commitment to establish indigenous churches in every country. From the beginning they believed the national worker was the key to the evangelization of every mission field and to the development of a strong self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating national church. That is why theological training has been, and continues to be, the heart of Assemblies of God foreign missions strategy. For years the Assemblies of God has led all evangelical missions agencies in the number of foreign theological institutions. (p. 228)

The South African picture

Assemblies of God in South Africa started both as a missionary and an indigenous church. In 1914 when the AOG was birthed in Hot Springs, Arkansas, a team of three applied for membership and this was accepted in 1917. Immediately, 'Turney registered the name Assemblies of God with the Department of the Interior in Pretoria' (Watt 1992:21). This development qualifies the AOG as a historically missionary church.

After 1921 with the passing on of Turney, the influx of missionaries from United States, United Kingdom and some Scandinavian countries shaped the ecclesial image of the AOG in South Africa. It was only in 1925 that the American AOG recognised the South African District of the AOG, with J.H. Law (American) as the chairman and C.J.H. Bennet (British) as the secretary. More autonomy was given around 1932 when American AOG reorganised South African AOG as a national church.

As mentioned earlier, AOG in South Africa never prioritised theological education as a career path for ministerial formation. In the words of the American missiologist and

ecclesiologist, Peter Wagner, their dictum was 'Never allow educational requirements to substitute for spiritual gifts as the basis for ordaining new ministers' (in MacClung 1986:132).

It is impossible, if not difficult, to write history of AOG in South Africa, without any mention of Nicholas Bhengu. After conversion, he studied at Dumisa Bible School (1934–1936). This college, known today as Union Bible Institute (UBI), was run by South African General Mission, which later became Africa Evangelical Fellowship, later to merge with other agencies to form the Society of International Missions. During the years of studies, he befriended Alfred Gumede and Gideon Buthelezi (Chandomba 2007:62) – these three played a pivotal role in embryonic metamorphosis of AOG in South Africa. This 20th-century Pentecostal leader received some formal theological training and learned under Fred Suter (Bond n.d.:59).

The racially mixed missionary church emphasised church planting through evangelism more than any other means. The international trend in AOG for Bible schools as instrument for expansion in the mission field was not a primer. However, it looks like Nicholas Bhengu and few other missionaries had in mind the importance of theological training. This opens the historical reflections on this topic.

Pilgrim Bible School

There are few sources that inform that the early attempt of theological training is the less styled monograph by Maphanga (1997). In the Introduction, he pens down:

In 1950, he and Pastor Gumede opened our first Bible School, called the Pilgrim Bible School. He planned this while he was in America to further his education in 1949, but he could not continue due to the illness of his first wife Mylet. This Bible School was held at South End, Port Elizabeth. It was well attended by the saints and members from other churches. Unfortunately, it lasted for three years because of the riot which started in October 1952. Because of the burning issue for lost souls, he was compelled to leave the Bible School with other tutors, Pastors: Alfred Gumede, Japhtha Dlamini, Dewinston Manzana; Sisters: Violet May Hillary and Mabel Siga who conducted secular studies. (p. xi)

Chandomba (2007:63) also mentions that Bhengu 'opened the Pilgrim Bible School in Port Elizabeth in 1950 ...'. It is also referred to in passing if not one sentence, for example, 'In 1950 Bhengu opened the Pilgrim Bible School in Port Elizabeth ...' (Anderson 2000:90–91). Roy (2017:128) also mentions that 'in 1950 Bhengu opened the Pilgrim Bible School'. Sources mention this school, then the consequent sentences or paragraphs elaborate on Bhengu's evangelistic endeavours. The Nicholas Bhengu Theological College Polity Notes in reference to Bhengu mention:

He was one of the teachers, along with Dlamini, Gumede and Miss Violet Hillary – a lady that had followed him from Swaziland as Secretary of his newly established Back to God Crusade. (n.d.:4)

It looks like this school was short-lived and did not contribute significantly to theological education or ministerial formation

in AOG. In its short span of life, it deserves a mention in historical development of theological education in AOG. The Polity Notes mentioned above give some curriculum information of the college:

We have records of the curriculum of that Bible School, which included Bible Doctrines, Church History, Child Evangelism, and Bible Introduction; among others. These courses reveal further what he regarded as important for the church. (n.d.:4)

Many of the earlier generation of black AOG enrolled at Union Bible Institute (UBI), for example, William Makinana, Abel Matroshe, Ben Mookapilo and many others. The maturing church experienced some form of proliferation, therefore it was difficult to set up ministerial requirements. There was a time when UBI was thought of as an AOG institution.

South African Bible Institute

In 1949, an American couple, John and Earlene Garlock, established a Bible school in Brakpan, East Rand. This was called the South African Bible Institute (SABI) and was pegged to the Brakpan Assembly of God. The Bible school was located at 106 Germains Avenue between 1951 and 1952, until it was moved to Rand Colliers early in 1953. Paynter (2017) in the current Brakpan Assembly of God Fellowship website informs us:

Together with David Newington, John Garlock trained many young people for the ministry. The students of SABI assisted the missionaries with the evangelistic work at the mine compounds. (p. 5)

Those involved as staff of SABI included Stephen and Bernice van der Merwe, Leslie Nelson and Vernon Pettenger. Unconfirmed records logically conclude that this college articulated into African Bible Training Institute (ABTI) in Witbank, championed by Fred Burke.

African Bible Training Institute

To understand a bit of history here, a personal letter received from Dr Paul Alexander sent to me quotes:

The Assemblies of God in South Africa historically suffered from similar divisions as were evident in the wider society and the imposition of Apartheid. However, they did manage to conduct a General Conference each year which was attended by all sectors of the Fellowship. Because of the restrictions imposed by Apartheid for many years this took place on the farm owned by Fred Burke a veteran American missionary.

In 1949, Fred Burke, an American missionary who arrived in 1924, established ABTI in Spring Valley, Witbank. The first students were Jan Viljoen, Beryl Keevy and P. Malan from Brakpan. As Alexander suggests, also confirmed by Dr D. Lephoko, that I interviewed telephonically, the school and the conference centre in Witbank fell under the spell of *Groups Areas Act*. This was one of the most notorious pieces of racial segregation legislations. According to this act, urban areas were to be divided into racially segregated zones. Spring Valley farm was declared a white area. The AOG periodical, *The Pentecostal Evangel* (1959) reported this:

The African Bible Training Institute located at Witbank, Transvaal, South Africa, will have to be relocated, according to a recent decision of the South African government. Missionary Fred Burke, principal of the school, writes, 'For many months there has been some uncertainty concerning the future of the school. This is due to the policy of the government in South Africa of separating the Africans from the white people and establishing "African states."' (p. 15)

Now, in common with many other institutions all over this country, we have been given notice that we must move our school by June 1961. A place must be found where the students can stay in a native reserve but white teachers must live across the boundary in the 'white area' and cross over daily to teach in the school. This, of course, means that we will have to close the school at Spring Valley. (p. 15)

While the denominational history was taking shape within the apartheid state, a new Bible college was being established in Rustenburg around 1962. Some residential students of ABTI were transferred to Rustenburg, while few went to UBI to complete their studies. One of those was Rev. James Moleko of AOG, who I had the privilege of interviewing to get more accurate history of this transference.

From 1962, ABTI constituted itself as the All Africa School of Theology as a correspondence college that filled in the gap for many years. The objective of Fred Burke was to build capacity for African Initiated Church leaders through correspondence studies. The school existed for many years and the retired or departed generation of many black AOG leaders studied there. In 1989, the college amalgamated with Hebron Bible College, and in 2000 the name was changed to Hebron Theological College. This college, though training numerous AOG leaders, does not have any relationship with AOG or any of the sister denominations.

African Bible College turned Southern Africa School of Theology (Rustenburg)

A year or two after the establishment of African Bible College (ABC) in Rustenburg, the AOG, in particular, the year 1964 was marked with pain in its history. There emerged an inevitable first *afscheidings* [secession]. John Bond (n.d.), who was also an eyewitness to the developments that led to this split, in his undated monograph of memoirs details it as follows:

In 1964 the Americans split away, taking a number of black churches with them out of the Assemblies of God. In all, 15 missionary couples left us and two single ladies, a total of 32 missionaries. (p. 193)

The Americans led by Morris Williams constituted themselves under the name 'International Assemblies of God' (IAG). Until today, the AOG and IAG exist side by side as two denominations with no *synergy* or *symbiosis*, except in some international requests as the two communions are members of international structures above their national delimitations.

The establishment of ABC in Rustenburg was prior to this secession. There is today an older generation of AOG ministers

who trained there prior to and consequent to 1964. One of these was Rev. James Moleko, who was interviewed for piecing together this article. It was initially called African Bible College and later Southern Africa School of Theology (SAST).

This college was led by James Stewart and Phil Coleman from the United States. The notable Africans who made up the college leadership were Maurice Ngakane and Hosea Motsepe. The female leadership, though not academically, was a certain Mrs Masondo from Brakpan. Stewart led the college for many years. Since its inception, ABC and later SAST had become a concrete space for IAG ministerial formation. Unlike the broader AOG in Southern Africa, the Americans endeavoured some ministerial formation for their pastors and leaders. Located in the beautiful campus on the western verge of the city of Rustenburg, the college has a long history of training many ministers and workers for IAG.

By the seventies, the AOG internationally embraced theological training as a way of ministerial formation. There was already an established correspondence course known as the International Correspondence Institute (ICI), based in Belgium. Like many AOG institutions around the world, ABC accredited itself to ICI and changed the name to SAST. This was in 1977. Rev. Elijah Nkabinde who was a principal of ABC for many years mentioned in our conversation that this name, SAST, was influenced by the geopolitical circumstances of the time. The college was in the erstwhile Bantustan of Bophuthatswana, and 'Southern Africa' was an appropriate generic name to suit both South Africa and Bophuthatswana without any legal repercussions. The ICI course called Missions Orientation was the one that became a core for satellite campuses because it articulated into a Bachelor's degree. In essence, ICI was designed for ministry trainees outside the United States. It was embraced overseas and grew extensively. Sun (2002) confirmed the extent and impact of ICI:

Since its beginning in 1967, more than 9.5 million students across the world have enrolled in ICI evangelism, Bible study, and degree programs. In 1993, ICI changed its name to ICI University, and in 2000 merged with Berean University to become Global University. (p. 237)

In the formative years of the Bible school movement worldwide, entrance and admission was not based on the high school pass mark. This is confirmed by Witmer (in Hakes 1979):

The great majority of students in the early days were admitted without high school preparation. Many were mature persons in their twenties and thirties. (p. 381)

In North America this was not a problem as people received learning in their mother tongue. Those who went through ABC or SAST entered without any matric requirement. English was the medium of instruction and administration. Students conversant with English acted as interpreters for those whose English fluency and eloquence was low. Rev. Mochechane informs me that those with higher acumen left the college to go to other institutions of higher learning. The multiple choice of ICI was not serving their academic potentials.

In South Africa, critical analysis of teaching content is a crucial measurement of learning goals. The level of education at ABC was far below the standard. This resulted in people like Elijah Mahlangu leaving after two years to go to the University of the North (Turfloop); and Sam Mnguni, did part-time studies with the University of South Africa (UNISA). Regardless of these shortcomings, ABC and SAST represented the pragmatic ministerial formation, not only for IAG but also for other AOG family churches, Baptists and other classical Pentecostal denominations such as Apostolic Faith Mission, Full Gospel Church of God, including some Charismatic groups. Despite government accreditation and rhetoric processes, this institution had stood the test of the time. Like the counterparts in North America and elsewhere, it played a crucial role of the time as Witmer (in Hakes 1979) points out:

But in spite of their unconventional academic standards, these schools met a need and were successful in training many hundreds of servants of Christ. (p. 381)

Theological College of South(ern) Africa

Immediately after the departure of the Americans, AOG embarked on the establishment of correspondence institution known as the Theological College of Southern Africa. This was championed by John Bond, the pastor in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1965, after realising the vacuum existing in the area of ministerial formation. This institution existed as a correspondence college to train men and women for the ministry. The role of the All Africa School of Theology became minimal in AOG's vigorous growth journey of the sixties and the seventies.

In 1971 the college moved to the Johannesburg area and became a residential (full-time) college for several years. Later, the name was changed to the Theological College of Southern Africa (TCSA) and in 2001 it was moved back to Zimbabwe where it is currently based.

The college was nomadic and was always ministered to by the local pastor from a local church as a base. In 2000 it was taken from Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa where administration was *overseered* by the Cornerstone Assembly of God in Pietermaritzburg. Consequently, the name was changed to Theological College of Southern Africa.

At that time the new South African government was tightening screws on registration and accreditation of all private service providers in areas of capacity building. The college was moved to Johannesburg, and through the leadership of Dr Thomas Resane, embarked on accreditation processes under Further Education and Training (FET) Act. The government requirements were too high and complex for the college. It was finally decided to geographically relocate the college to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

The Theological College of Southern Africa currently operates three centres of learning in Zimbabwe: Bulawayo, Harare

and Gwanda. Bulawayo is the main centre. In 2011 the entire curriculum was revised and the entire teaching methodology as well as all the course material was overhauled to bring TCSA up to date with the latest trends in educational technology while maintaining its thoroughly biblical foundations. Additional centres will soon be opening in South Africa and the United States. In the United States, TCSA operates under the name of International Center of Theological Studies.

Over the past 46 years TCSA has successfully trained countless pastors, teachers, evangelists and other church leaders. Many of its graduates have gone on to earn higher degrees at seminaries and universities all over the world. Alumni from this institute are in leadership positions in many different denominations and groups in many different countries. The records show that the institution played a pivotal role in ministerial formation not only for AOG, but also for other ecclesiastical traditions.

As AOG grew exponentially under the ministry of Nicholas Bhengu, ministerial formation took a different form and approach. This is well described by Dubb (2001):

The recognition of ministers and their functions, and the organization of the local assembly, are loosely determined by certain fundamental beliefs. The first of these is the belief in a 'gifted ministry' rather than in a trained professional clergy. Recognition of ministry by the movement depends on the 'evidence' a person has shown within his local assembly of possessing a God-given gift, of charisma. Training is then optional and additional – though usual in the case Africans with limited education. (pp. 14–15)

However, the TCSA was raised to address the gap that was developing as a result of this notion. The founder, John Bond, who was a theology graduate of UNISA valued the importance of ministerial formation and training, hence, the in-context training through this college.

Lebaka Bible School to Northern Transvaal Bible College to African Bible College

The following information on this institution is provided by its alumnus (1970–1972), Dr Doedoe De Gama. The history of this college is beautiful and ambitious; however, it had a sorrowful tragedy at its demise.

Lebaka Bible School

The college was established around 1966 in the village of the Balobedu tribe in the kingdom of the Rain Queen Modjadji; Duiwelskloof (today's Modjadji's Kloof). It was attached to Lebaka Mission Station in Lebaka Village, run by Miss Ruth Williamson, a Canadian Missionary from Christian Trinity, East Detroit, Canada. Among the teachers were Elijah Maswanganyi, Mack Mabitsela and Alfred Seale – ministers in the AOG. These three were the graduates of the then African Bible College in Rustenburg. Mack Mabitsela and Alfred Seale later withdrew from AOG to form the Emmanuel Assemblies in 1976.

Canadian Missionaries (Jack Muggleton and Ruth Williamson) of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) who were the affiliates of AOG South Africa agreed to move Lebaka Bible School to Lenyenye, some 20 km from Tzaneen and 50 km east of Lebaka, with greater potential and exposure to attract more students. It would be accessible as it would be along main routes to Phalaborwa and Bushbuckridge in the East and Tzaneen and Pietersburg (today's Polokwane) in the West.

Northern Transvaal Bible College (NTBC)

The school opened in 1970 and was renamed Northern Transvaal Bible College with regional as opposed to rural villages focus. Jack Muggleton became the first Principal of the NTBC. Maswanganyi, Mabitsela and Seale continued to teach at NTBC. The late Miss Jane Manabile, also a graduate of ABC (Rustenburg), was a matron and teacher. The late Miss Freda Grossen, of Elim/Emmanuel Mission, also taught at the college. Others who were Principals at the College were, among others, Muggleton (1970); Bill Kirby – a British AOG Missionary (1971); and Carl Verhulst (1972).

Africa Bible College (ABC)

Northern Transvaal Bible College (NTBC) was renamed Africa Bible College (ABC), around 1980. This was under the principalship of Delpert. The curriculum was typical of the then Evangelical-Pentecostal approach. It included Bible Doctrines, Biblical Studies, Pastoral Studies and Christian Education, with special emphasis on practical assignments in the form of evangelism and outreach to the neighbouring villages.

Like other private institutions after 1994, this college grappled with government accreditation processes. It eventually succeeded in receiving a provisional accreditation for a Diploma in Theology. However, this was later withdrawn as a result of failure to acquire full accreditation. Student numbers dwindled; and the college closed down completely around mid-2000s.

The denominational politics as always disrupts theological education. Around 1981, when the AOG split, the ABC, which was owned and overseered by Canadian Missionaries (PAOC), also pulled out of the AOG and joined the Assemblies of God Fellowship (AGF). The college then served AGF churches as well as Emmanuel Assemblies and others. No AOG student ever enrolled at the college again. It must be mentioned that because of the apartheid policy, the college only admitted Africans.

The other challenging issue outstanding is the college property. Most buildings are still standing unutilised as a result of a raging battle for ownership between the AOG and the Canadian Mission (PAOC). The original great vision ended sadly, but its legacy cannot be erased. Hundreds have been trained for ministry at the college; many of these are still serving God in the AOG, AOG Fellowship, Emmanuel Assemblies, Apostolic Faith Mission and other churches including some para-church ministries.

Christ for Africa Institute turned Africa School of Missions (Johannesburg to White River)

There is some scanty information from the memoirs of Chas G. Enerson (n.d.:148–149) that Costa Mitchell, the pastor in AOG in the 1980s, established Christ for Africa Institute in Johannesburg. This was in 1982. 'This was subsequently taken over by Paul Alexander, and college moved to White River under the banner of Africa School of Missions' (Enerson n.d.:149). A letter I received from Paul Alexander, now the President of Trinity Bible College in Ellendale, North Dakota, gives much of the information about Africa School of Missions (ASM):

As a historical misfortune, the Assemblies of God in South Africa historically suffered from similar divisions as were evident in the wider society and the imposition of Apartheid. The internal squabbles and splits from 1964, especially of the early eighties, there had never been a serious effort to create a Bible College or even a recognized standard for education of ministers. Lawrence Wilson, a minister based in Alberton bravely provided a ministers training course but it tended to be available only to those in 'The Group'. However, in 1981 an agreement was reached to form an 'Intramural Bible College'. (AF International, the US Assemblies of God had run their ICI program for several years). Paul Alexander, the pastor of Fairview Assembly in Johannesburg at the time offered the facilities of the church for this new initiative. About 12 students were enrolled. Rev. Dudley Reid who subsequently joined New Covenant Ministries played a key role in this initiative.

At about the same time some leaders from the English Fellowship of the Apostolic Faith Mission and others had begun conversations with Mrs Lindsay, the widow of the American Evangelist Gordon Lindsay. The Lindsays were the founders of Christ for the Nations Institute (CFNI) in Dallas, Texas. An agreement was reached that they would sponsor the formation of Christ for Africa Institute, which would be facilitated in the AFM church in Hillbrow where Pastor Raper was the senior minister. Rev. Costa Mitchell, who held a BA from UNISA, was one of a very few Pentecostals who had a formal degree and he was asked to lead this initiative. He persuaded the AOG to close the College being run at Fairview to gain wider support. Christ for the Nations Institute enjoyed some success and probably had about 30–40 students. They eventually secured premises in Parktown near the Johannesburg Hospital. Christ for the Nations Institute provided large format cassette videos and a collection of Gordon Lindsay's books, but support did not seem to be consistent.

By October 1983, Alexander was persuaded to lead an enterprise to be called ASM with the objective of training and releasing men and women into the nations. A leading Christian business man by the name of Gerry Schoonbee bought into this vision, and as a result, he donated a property just outside of White River which was called 'The Good News Centre' at the time. By November 1983 this arrangement was concluded and work began on planning a launch in January 1985.

The work of Christ for Africa Institute lost support and it was agreed to merge the work with ASM on condition that ASM take over both assets (a very old van and some Umatic tapes!) as well as liabilities of which there were some. Transfer options for students were provided, and in January 1985, ASM opened doors to 36 intrepid students.

The Africa School of Mission provided the first major response to the Mozambique refugee crisis, was an innovator in training primary healthcare providers and has had graduates serve in at least 52 nations of the world. The ministry had recently been under the oversight of a ministry called Judea Harvest. The original vision of ASM entered some misunderstanding stage with Judea Harvest. It is unfortunate that after such impact, as per interview with Dr D De Gama, ASM had to cease operations in the middle of 2017.

In a nutshell, the resignation from AOG of both Mitchell and Alexander led to the establishment of autonomous college that is independent from the AOG. The college is mentioned in this paper because of its embryonic formation by the AOG people. It has been in operation, accredited by the government and training many people for the mission field. Unfortunately, ASM also suffered the demise of shutting down completely in 2017. The Judea Harvest cites lack of financial capacity to carry it on.

Cape Theological Seminary to Global School of Theology Western Cape

The Cape Theological Seminary (CTS) is located in Table View, near Cape Town. They are accredited by the Council for Higher Education (CHE), with cessation of this status quo until 2019. They are accredited under the name Global School of Theology (GST). The rationale behind deregistration is because of their partnership with Global University in the United States. The Chairman of the Board of CTS, Rev. Laura Goodrich, on the 10 February 2017 wrote:

GST has always been a US-based corporation operating in South Africa, the South African 'daughter' of Global University (GU) in the USA. GST was accredited on these terms in 2004 and re-accredited in 2009 in the same way, but in 2016 it became clear that the Council of Higher Education was interpreting their requirements in a more nationalistic way than in the past. In order to retain accreditation, they required us to re-write all curriculum written in the USA to be natively South African and written by someone residing in South Africa. They did not permit us to rely on any expertise or infrastructure of GU that exists outside South Africa. This brief summary of their requirements does not do justice to the complexity of the situation, but as it affected us, they really required the South Africa-based GST to stop being a part of the international ministry of the US-based GU, which from our side was just not feasible.

The Council for Higher Education is not happy with foreign curriculum that is not relevant to South African needs. Dr Mochechane and Chris Stubb over a telephone interview confirmed that at the time of writing GST teaches existing students and will not offer the existing accredited programmes to new students. New students are referred for distance study with Global University in the United States.

Students who represent AOG and IAG and the related Pentecostal churches in South Africa will be able to pursue Global University degrees at similar costs to GST's current local fees. Note that the programmes of Global University in the United States are not accredited in South Africa, but they are accredited by the highest government-recognised accrediting association in the United States and are accordingly recognised internationally.

Global School of Theology

The following information is gleaned from interviews with Dr Elijah Mahlangu and Chris Stubb.

What used to be known as ICI ceased in 2004. The other colleges under the oversight of IAG (Durban, Cape Town, and Rustenburg) merged and consolidated to form GST. In a real sense, GST is a South African expression of Global University. It operates from the IAG National Office in Roodepoort, Johannesburg. Because GST is a distance-education programme, all administration is held from the National Office.

Global School of Theology South Africa was accredited and registered with the Department of Education as a private higher education institution under the *Higher Education Act, 1997*. Their current qualifications are recognised both nationally and internationally through relationship with Global University in the United States. It exists to prepare Pentecostal leaders for participation in the Great Commission, through both formal and distance education.

In 2016, the CHE added some extra conditions of accreditation. This was the emphasis on indignity and the national identity of the institution. The CHE did not have any reservation regarding the curriculum, but the administration, which in this case was the simultaneous accreditation with South African entity (CHE) and the foreign institution (Global University). Consequently, GST volunteered surrendering and providing resignation of CHE accreditation to regroup under a new institution to be known as the Southern Africa School of Theology. The current students are allowed to complete their studies, and the new ones come in with this understanding that their ministry training is not accredited. Systems are in process for the new development of the new SAST that will be fully accredited.

Nicholas Bhengu Theological College

The College is named after the founding father of the African work of the AOG in South Africa, namely, Nicholas Bhengu. He conceived the idea of a Bible School as early as 1963. He challenged believers in the Transkei, Eastern Cape, to voluntarily contribute towards the building of a Bible School. In 1966 he spoke to the late Bill Kirby, a British AOG missionary, to go for training at London Bible College. When Bill returned to South Africa in 1969, the School had not yet begun until long after Nicholas Bhengu had passed on.

In 1991, Kirby went to Swaziland at the invitation of Dr Lukhele and others, to open a Bible School. The School later moved to Ladysmith in 1992 and again moved to Henley on Klip (HOK) in 1994. The College now occupies some of the premises of the AOG Centre (1922 Regatta Road, HOK), near Meyerton in the Midvaal area of Gauteng. The College exists to train aspirant ministers of the AOG and anyone wishing to prepare for ministry in any sphere of life.

The courses are offered in contact at HOK, as well as at other sites where a good number of students are able to organise and invite the College to go to them. If sessions cannot be conducted in a regional venue because of few numbers, students are responsible to complete their work at the main venue (HOK). The courses are offered in four blocks of 1 week each over the four terms of the year. Attendance is compulsory. Each session stands alone as a unit. Students may attend sessions of their choice until the four sessions are completed. Each session is governed by the rules in the prospectus of the respective year. Each week comprises, at most, five intensive days (Monday to Friday), from 8h00 to 17h00. Teaching and learning is done through interactive classes, participation in group work and discussions, assignments to be completed overnight and submitted the following morning and later exams. It is an intensive learning programme designed to equip prospective and already Christian workers with some ministry knowledge and skills. It is a theological education that has become functional, training ministers for ministerial tasks, focusing on strategic and technical knowledge (Farley 1983:131–132). It is noted hypothetically that this kind of training reduces emphasis on the broader goals of ministerial formation. Regardless of its limitations, it fills the gap when considering conduct and characters, especially in the areas of ministerial ethics.

Like many church-based institutions in the new democratic dispensation, accreditation with the government is a challenge. Dunsmuir and McCoy (in Naidoo 2015) concur that:

theological education, and ministerial formation in particular, can only seek to form and shape a Christian community – and especially those who are called to lead it – in the knowledge, skills, and values that will best serve its mission in the world. (pp. 38–39)

Reflections on the methodologies

The sociology of education of the time pervaded all educational spheres, including the denominational institutions. The curriculum, methodologies and structures were the imports from the West. This is confirmed by Easter (2013):

Naturally, Pentecostal missionaries from the West, including from within the Assemblies of God, applied their Western approaches of leadership training to higher learning in order to fulfil the Great Commission. Educational methods, curriculum and structures exported from the West became the models by which leadership training would be primarily defined. (p. 2)

This is one of the reasons South African public universities reserved or rejected ICI qualifications. The didactic approach

was deemed academically shallow and the system entrenched the notion of Pentecostals' anti-intellectuality. Nel (2016:2) paints a very informative picture of Pentecostals' general reservation or anti-intellectual spirit:

'Bible school training' consisted of a basic knowledge of the Bible and its focus was on the application of the content of the Bible in the practice of daily ministry. The Bible was used at face value without complicating its historical data and it was literally interpreted before it was applied pragmatically (Barr 1983:27). It avoided any critical or systematic thinking that is associated with theological or academic expertise because such knowledge was regarded by Pentecostals as endangering the individual's faith and corrupting the church (Chan 2000:45). What was needed was only a thorough knowledge of the Bible combined with the anointing with God's Spirit as the prerequisite to qualify to minister as an evangelist or teacher of the Word. It has been suggested that Pentecostal people might have hidden their feelings of theological inferiority behind the impression of their superior spiritual qualities based on their strong faith in the Word of God excluding the necessity of theological reflection. (Morton 2012:113)

The hidden curriculum

In all education formats, the adage of 'monkey see, monkey do' is inevitable. People, especially in Africa, learn by observation. Truth of life including morals, ethics, conduct, etc. is not mostly passed by information, but by modelling. 'One's philosophy of ministry and education also partly determines the hidden curriculum' (McKinney 2000:261):

Very often the 'hidden' curriculum is hidden more from the administrators and faculty members of a school than from the students. That is, the leaders are not aware of what they are teaching by their actions or lack of action. (p. 262)

The 'hidden curriculum' is 'The other things (which aren't written down in any syllabus document) ... They are the less obvious aspects of what we learn at school' (Christie 1996:138). The teachers model certain truths of life such as formal dress, gesticulation, body language, verbal expression, etc. They do these things not realising that students subconsciously absorb and imbibe them. 'The hidden curriculum teaches children about the society they live in: its values, its rules and its power structures' (Christie 1996:139). The moral conservatism or legalistic dictates on teaching and learning environment are powerful tools of the hidden curriculum. The legalism students imbibe at the college can easily be transported to the church life that the graduate will be teaching. These legalistic ideals were transferred by missionaries who did not trust the African moral codes. In most cases, the hidden curriculum is subtle and subliminal. It does not address the needs, but imposes foreign concepts on the cultural norms. The Euro-centric curriculum did not address the African needs:

Since Eurocentric approaches are dominant in the field of theology influencing both the content and the way knowledge is communicated, a strategy within Africanisation would be to explore the epistemic potential of inter-cultural learning, that is respectful of and engage voices and sources from other cultural perspectives. (Naidoo 2016:5)

Hidden curriculum makes students to learn by conforming to the rules; failure of which may bring some unpalatable consequences. As can be expected, this rules out the freedom of the Spirit in the students' lives. The priesthood of all believers, one of the bulwark doctrines in Pentecostal theology, becomes compromised.

Gender bias in theological training

It is well known that Pentecostalism globally has been enhanced and framed by the ministry of Spirit-empowered women (Clifton 2009:171). Within Christian churches, gender-based discrimination has been reinforced by theological perspectives. It is only just less than a half a century ago that women in theological training were given an opportunity like men in ministerial training. It was a universal phenomenon to marginalise women from mainstream theological training. It is worthy to note that, 'Often it is not the theological challenge of women in ministry that we encounter, but the cultural and social forces that inhibit us' (Grey 2008:95).

I have learned through interviews that at ABTI, female students were mostly pastors' wives and only did a 1-year certificate course. The curriculum was mostly Sunday school teaching or working with other women. The same practice continued at ABC and arts and crafts courses were designed for this purpose. As the college also became a spouse-recruiting ground, female students were 'equipped' to partner with their husbands in ministry. There is a predominately masculine culture within the AOG. This culture finds its way into the nature of movement events and public communications and, even more insidiously, into the very structures of church and pastoral leadership.

Theological marginalisation or exclusion of women from ministerial training and leadership has been predominantly based on two Pauline texts (1 Tm 2:11–15 and 1 Cor 14:33–34) and a broader theological position, which sees men and women as being ontologically equal but functionally different. Its basic logic is that 'God designed women to be subordinate to men in role and function' and therefore 'women should not operate in positions of authority over men' (Franklin 2008:14). For example, Piper and Grudem (1991) state that:

we are persuaded that the Bible teaches that only men should be pastors and elders. That is, men should bear primary responsibility for Christlike leadership and teaching in the church. So it is unbiblical, we believe, and therefore detrimental, for women to assume this role. (pp. 60–61)

Complementary to this theological position is the suggestion that women do not have the capacity for effective church leadership (Bridges 1998). The understanding portrayed is that only men have the capacity to lead the church and that women do not. The assumption implicit within this understanding is that leadership does not involve affirming and nurturing behaviours. The relevant theological education should be inclusive and be contextually relevant where women are seen as equal partners and role players in the promotion of Christian faith:

It is critically important to note that an African theological education must contextually take the issues of gender justice very seriously, especially in the African context, to fight against oppressive patriarchal movements. Thus, theological education in Africa must train women and men to fight against the oppression of women by this patriarchal movement until the liberation of women is achieved. Equally so, women must not be trained to oppress and abuse men. Gender justice calls for a partnership between women and men, women and woman and men and men to live together and to promote the human rights and dignity of human gender. Thus, women and men must be empowered to form an African society that is gender liberated. (Mashabela 2017:4)

Inculturation and liberation

For Pentecostals, this may sound heretic. If there is a need for relevance, the curriculum must include these themes as they are the burning issues in and for any theological education in Africa. There is a talk about decolonisation of education, and this cannot take place without the themes of inculturation and liberation:

Inculturation theology is a form of contextualization. The context into which the Gospel is placed in this case is usually the traditional African culture. The non-formal inculturation of the Gospel in the African context is as old as the African church. The preaching and praying and singing of African Christians throughout the history of the African church are forms of the inculturation of the Gospel. Often these forms of inculturation are in the local African language. (Palmer 1994:1, 2)

Inculturation theology is a contextual theology practised within the African context. 'African theology emphasizing inculturation uses an anthropological approach (culture). The buzzword used in this circle is indigenization' (Mashau & Fredericks 2008:119).

Liberation theology had been a scum for the mainstream Western Theology. It had been regarded as too humanistic and secular. However, one needs to understand that liberation theology is an attempt of making theology relevant to the human needs:

Liberation theology, in contrast, is a form of contextualization that places the Gospel in our contemporary African setting. Instead of focusing on the traditional African culture, liberation theology is passionately concerned with rectifying the glaring injustices in our society. (Palmer 1994:2)

It also takes into consideration contextualisation, inculturation, liberation, contextualisation and Africanisation, which are the intertwined concepts of doing theology in Africa:

Contextualisation is defined as the effort to take seriously the specific context of each human group and person on its own terms and in all its dimensions – cultural, religious, social, political, as well as economic and to discern what the gospel says to people in that context, so that the particular needs and hopes of people are addressed and met. (Mashau & Fredericks 2008:119)

For theology or Christianity in general to be relevant, it must reach the needs of the people in all spheres of life.

African thoughts and aspirations must be satisfied. It is therefore, crucial for theological education in AOG to be incultural and liberative in all aspects such as curriculum, hermeneutics and delivery mode. An incessant appeal is for theological education that has the capacity 'to unify theory and practice, critical studies and pastoral concerns' (Thiemann 1991:167). It must encapsulate training that is systematic to utilise the ministry resources towards gaining knowledge and developing skills by instruction and practical activities for effective ministry performance.

Return to the renaissance of pneumatology

The Pentecostal curriculum and studies should not depart or abandon the essence and dynamism of pneumatology in their ministerial training and formation. The emphasis on 'Pentecost' should be at the heart of the curriculum to demonstrate the significance of the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit in the individual or ecclesial communities. In agreement with Stephenson (2013), the Pentecostal studies are a contemporary theology that has moved from restatements of biblical narratives to the consideration of spiritual disciplines in theology to a further articulation of a thoroughly Spirit-oriented theology and eventually pneumatological methodology. The presence of the Spirit in the academy, as promoted by Vondey (2017), should be the goal to be pursued in Pentecostal theological education to engage and participate with and in cultural systems of the world. From the perspective of participation, Pentecostal studies can become indicative of the spiritual presence. This will enable the trainees to interpret the spiritual presence and understand the church mission through the lens of the spiritual presence. This approach (participation) and the realms beyond the immediate tools of ordinary academic inquiry and the idea of the spiritual presence in studies will preserve and sustain Pentecostal distinctiveness.

Conclusion

It is evident that despite some pioneers' reservations regarding theological education, in the past hundred years, the AOG had attempted many endeavours to promote theological education. The international trend and the influence of the Bible Institute movements became a powerful tool for evangelism, church planting and church growth. Socio-political and cultural influences in South Africa interrupted these endeavours. The fundamental truth remains that theological education is necessary for ministerial formation. The schisms and secessions within the AOG in South Africa did not dampen the quest for training and development. In some cases, ministerial training transcended these schisms. Students acquired training from the institutions of other sister or mother church body, without any consideration of these 'walls of hostility' (Eph 2:14). The institutions served, and still do serve, their purposes in developing quality Christian workers. Theological education has the potential to unite, reconcile and normalise the warring factions within the communion unit.

The changing cultural contexts and landscapes demand the changing approaches to teaching and learning in theological studies. The forbears of AOG theological studies transported and imported the western sociology of education that was tinted with some Hegelian idealism of knowing all by self. These teachers undermined the effectual influences of the hidden curriculum. Theologians, like all teachers, teach by modelling more than by verbalising. The 'monkey see, monkey do' principle is powerful in teaching values and shaping character. It is unfortunate that, unintentionally, the products of ministerial formation endeavours, articulated into the educated elite – existentialists who are so self-occupied that pastoral love and care become deemed as dirty works in the docks.

The Pentecostal curriculum can self-correct by becoming gender-inclusive rather than paternalistic. Ministerial training and formation must skill trainees on how to deal with female leadership and how to dispel homophobia in the church. For 'failing to appreciate the complexity and invisibility of what is going on can result in the drawing of incorrect conclusions' (Harries 2016:38). This is like opening a can of worms, but the truth is these issues are with the church and must be addressed. They are not condoned, but must be understood. This can be enhanced by the inclusion of inculturation and liberation ideals as theological constructs to enhance the church's effectiveness in its soteriological messages. This is what is popularly termed 'decolonisation'. The church can be decolonised through theological education. The decolonised theological education in real epistemology and ontology does not ignore African philosophy because this philosophy 'ensures that the teaching-learning encounter deliberates and explores the African experience' (Msila 2016:58).

To crown it all, AOG, after a century of significant and magnificent missional prospects, must retain the renaissance of pneumatology. The Pentecostal pneumatological hallmark is the locus of AOG distinctiveness. The person and the role of the Holy Spirit as the centre of Pentecostal identity should always be at the centre of curriculum activities. The century was full of actions that strove for authentic theological education. The litmus remains the same, as expressed by Naidoo (2016:39): 'Authentic education and formation is a journey, not a predetermined destination'.

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