

“What Makes Pentecostal Higher Education *pentecostal*?”

Jacqueline N. Grey

Alphacrucis University College

jacqui.grey@ac.edu.au



Introduction

A key question raised by the symposium on Higher Education hosted by a Pentecostal institution (Alphacrucis University College) is: “What Makes Pentecostal Higher Education *pentecostal*?” Defining pentecostalism is a highly contested endeavour, resulting in many scholars referring to “pentecostalisms” to reflect the diversity of the global movement.¹ Yet, despite the complexity of the history, cultures, and theology of global pentecostalism there is often a recognizable family resemblance. This commonality is found in the shared emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit and subsequent empowerment of the Spirit for witnessing to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

While early Pentecostals resisted, or were ambivalent to, the development of educational institutions, there has been an increased awareness of the need for critical reflection to guide the development of Pentecostal theology.² Such thinking is fostered in and emerges from theological

¹ Daniel Topf, *Pentecostal Higher Education: History, Current Practices, and Future Prospects* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 3.

² Dean O’Keefe and Jacqueline Grey, “‘Fear God, and Keep His Commandments’: Models for a Pentecostal Pedagogy from Exilic and Post-Exilic Texts of the Old Testament,” in *Pentecostal Theological Education*

institutions. While the number of Pentecostal educational institutions worldwide is unknown, there is an increasing concern for accreditation and external recognition of theological programs to enhance the reputation of pentecostal scholarship.

Congruently, there has been a bubbling of interest in Higher Education among Pentecostal scholars in recent years, seeking to explore the participation and contribution of Pentecostals in educational spaces. The recent publications of three monographs are indicative of this trend: Daniel Topf's *Pentecostal Higher Education* (2021);³ William Kay and Ewen Butler's *Pentecostal and Charismatic Education* (2023);⁴ and, Amos Yong and Dale Coulter's *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education* (2023).⁵ Additionally in 2024, a double issue of the *Pneuma* journal (that is, the journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies) was mostly dedicated to exploring Pentecostal theological education in local and global contexts.

This article will first explore some of the common themes identified in the current literature exploring Pentecostal Higher Education. The themes studied include: the formation of students; the importance of faith-filled faculty; and, a curriculum that seeks truth as led by the Spirit of truth. Yet, as these values are not distinctly Pentecostal a model is proposed based on the five-fold gospel to provide the framework for a unique approach to Pentecostal education. Secondly, this schema of the five-fold gospel is explored. Each tenet is described and applied as an educational priority

in the Majority World: The Graduate and Post-Graduate Level (eds. David Johnson and Rick Wadholm Jr; APTS Press, 2022), 201.

³ Daniel Topf, *Pentecostal Higher Education*.

⁴ William Kay and Ewen Butler, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Education: Renewalist Education Wherever it is Found* (Bloomsbury, 2023).

⁵ Amos Yong and Dale Coulter, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education: Renewing the Christian University* (Baylor University Press, 2023).

for Pentecostal Higher Education. In this way, the values and spirituality of Pentecostalism are deliberately infused into the Higher Education institution.

1. Emerging Themes in the Study of Pentecostal Higher Education

Almost all scholars in the recent discussion of Pentecostal education emphasise the importance of formation. This perhaps reflects the origins of many Pentecostal Higher Education institutions as bible colleges and their strong denominational links. Formation in this context refers to the development of Christ-like character in students. Of course, this begins with faith in Christ and a commitment to the mission of Christ, as emphasised in the study by Topf. Similarly, for Yong and Coulter, the cultivation of virtues and Christ-like character is an essential part of a Pentecostal worldview,⁶ particularly in the light of its origins in the Holiness movement. They describe formation as “an embodiment of dispositions (a *habitus*) in and through charismatic encounters and a sanctifying process.”⁷ The scholarship underscores that the spiritual formation of students occurs within community.

Secondly, the community of an educational institution is mostly influenced by the faculty. Therefore, a faith-filled faculty is imperative for the development of Christian students. Various scholars in this discussion highlight the importance of instructors being a Spirit-empowered believer or refer to teachers and administrators of theological institutions demonstrating and modelling faith in Christ.⁸ The community of faith is a place or space in which students can find

⁶ Yong & Coulter, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education*, 180.

⁷ Amos Yong and Dale Coulter, “Toward a Holistic and Integrative Pedagogy: Furthering the Conversation,” *Pneuma* 46.3-4 (2024): 388.

⁸ William Oliverio and Nimi Wariboko, “Epistemology and Ethics of Pentecostal Theological Education,” *Pneuma* 46.3-4 (2024): 335.

and deepen their commitment to Christ, modelled and encouraged by their teachers and peers, for “the sake of the salvation and human flourishing of the individual and his or her community.”⁹

The faith commitments of staff is vital to prevent possible missional drift.

A third theme that emerges from the current literature is a curriculum that nurtures students to be investigators and seekers of truth. This is a creative and critical task. It requires curriculum that encourages students to engage with current research, to discern methods and agendas in research, and to be an “uninhibited seeker of truth.”¹⁰ This is not to weaponize truth or to participate in culture wars,¹¹ but rather to seek how the Spirit of truth is at work in the world and to participate in the triune God’s mission to restore and further the flourishing of human and non-human creation.¹² Topf emphasises the need for students to have an open mind to engage different cultures and disciplines.¹³

To encapsulate these key themes, an image that is adopted by both Topf, and Yong and Coulter, is that of “head, heart and hands.” This model represents a holistic approach to the educational process through the transformation of the whole person. The head represents the intellect and life of the mind, developed by critical and creative thinking skills but also moral formation. It includes the disciplinary knowledge and expertise of the university required by graduates for professional vocations. Yet, the mind is not separated from the heart, or affections. For Kay and Butler, the image of the heart is necessary as knowledge should combine “the cognitive and affective, reason and emotion, holistically.”¹⁴ For Coulter and Yong the heart

⁹ Oliverio and Wariboko, “Epistemology and Ethics of Pentecostal Theological Education,” 336.

¹⁰ Oliverio and Wariboko, “Epistemology and Ethics of Pentecostal Theological Education,” 337.

¹¹ Mark J. Cartledge “Pentecostal Theological and Higher Education” *Pneuma* 46.3–4 (2024): 365.

¹² Oliverio and Wariboko, “Epistemology and Ethics of Pentecostal Theological Education,” 337.

¹³ Topf, *Pentecostal Higher Education*, 169.

¹⁴ Kay and Butler, *Pentecostal and Charismatic Education*, 41.

represents an openness to transcendence.¹⁵ The final symbol of hands refers to practical engagement and application. This aspect is emphasised in Topf's missional approach that nurtures opportunities for service and development of practical skills. Topf writes that Pentecostal spirituality is "witness-oriented spirituality that includes action and service."¹⁶

Yet, while this model is proposed by in two of the recent monographs and both provide a nuanced description of these categories using the language of Pentecostal spirituality, the model itself is not distinctly pentecostal. In a sense, it could be happily adopted by any Christian Higher Education institution without much modification. While this is helpful to ensure Pentecostalism is situated firmly in the Christian tradition, it misses the opportunity to discover the unique contribution of pentecostalism to the Higher Education space. A distinctive pentecostal approach is important as it instils the values and spirituality of pentecostalism, a significant segment of the Christian community, and offers its unique gifts to the broader church and world. This includes an emphasis on renewal, which recognises the moving of the Spirit beyond the church even to the equipping of students to integrate their faith with their vocation, and to bring renewal to neighbourhoods and nations.

Therefore, emerging from these various discussions, there remains a glaring gap in the literature. This gap is what the editorial to the *Pneuma* issue on Pentecostal Theological Education calls the "basic, age-old questions about Pentecostal education:"¹⁷ What Makes Pentecostal Higher Education *pentecostal*? While the article by Grey and Perry¹⁸ in this dedicated issue of *Pneuma*

¹⁵ Yong & Coulter, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education*, 195.

¹⁶ Topf, *Pentecostal Higher Education*, 161.

¹⁷ Oliverio and Wariboko, "Epistemology and Ethics of Pentecostal Theological Education," 335.

¹⁸ Jacqueline N. Grey & David Perry, "Pentecostal Higher Education in the Australia Context," *Pneuma* 46.3-4 (2024): 470–88.

does raise this question, we only offer some preliminary thoughts emerging from a case study of Alphacrucis University College, that explores the educational practices of experiential learning, integrative curriculum, and holistic training. This paper however is somewhat of an extension of that article, seeking to develop new and specific ways that pentecostal distinctives can be reflected in our institutions of higher learning. That is, what might a specifically Pentecostal – not just Christian – approach to Higher Education offer? What gifts do Pentecostal offer from our own tradition? Not by borrowing Saul’s armour, but by bringing our own choicest five small stones to the contested space of Higher Education.

The proposed model presented here is based on the Pentecostal message of the five-fold gospel. The “fivefold” pattern will be used as an organising model to structure key pentecostal thinking and experiences that I suggest should inform educational priorities and values for Pentecostal institutions of higher learning. This is not the first time the fivefold gospel pattern has been used as an organising structure. It has been utilised by John Christopher Thomas to develop a Pentecostal ecclesiology.¹⁹ Amos Yong also adopts this schema in his exploration of a pentecostal political theology.²⁰

2. A Proposed Model Based on the Five-Fold Gospel

The particular methodological framework that emerged from early Pentecostalism (via Wesleyan Holiness traditions) that expresses key Pentecostal experiences and theological priorities is known

¹⁹ John Christopher Thomas, “Pentecostal Theology in the Twenty-First Century,” *Pneuma* 20.1 (1998): 17.

²⁰ Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Eerdmans, 2010).

as the four- or five-fold gospel message.²¹ The four-fold gospel of Pentecostal theology proclaims Jesus Christ as Saviour, Spirit-baptizer, Healer, and soon coming King. The inclusion of a fifth theme, sanctification, is important to Pentecostal contexts that have emerged from Wesleyan traditions, which is reflective of the Australian situation. Therefore, the theme of sanctification is included in this discussion to complete the five-fold gospel pattern. The five-fold gospel pattern captures the confessional beliefs of early and present Pentecostalism.²² It provides an organizing principle for Pentecostal theology which, according to John Christopher Thomas, is the heart of Pentecostalism.²³ This schema also emphasises the unique values of Pentecostalism, thereby distinguishing them from broader evangelicalism, yet also providing many commonalities with the Christian tradition to which it belongs.²⁴

Yet each theme, or tenet, of the five-fold gospel is not isolated but, as Wolfgang Vondey suggests, are interconnected foundational Pentecostal experiences.²⁵ The five tenets reflect an emphasis on narrative found in the Pentecostal tradition and its resonance with the story of redemption found in Scripture that undergirds the beliefs and formation of believers. The themes unfold in narrative flow, reflecting the unfolding revelation and experience of Jesus, who is at the centre of the gospel message: Christ is the chief agent who saves, sanctifies, and baptises in the Spirit.²⁶ Yet, while Pentecostals do emphasise the importance of conversion (at least in practice) and the foundational experience of new birth in Christ, the framework is not a definitive *ordo*

²¹ Wolfgang Vondey, "The Full Gospel: A liturgical hermeneutic of Pentecost" in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology* (ed. Wolfgang Vondey; Routledge, 2020), 173. See also Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Hendrickson, 1987).

²² Christopher Stephenson, *Pentecostal Theology and Ecumenical Theology: Interpretations and Intersections* (Brill, 2019), 200.

²³ Thomas, "Pentecostal Theology in the Twenty-First Century," 17.

²⁴ Stephenson, *Pentecostal Theology and Ecumenical Theology*, 205.

²⁵ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 23.

²⁶ Stephenson, *Pentecostal Theology and Ecumenical Theology*, 207.

salutis but highlights that all elements are a work of grace.²⁷ Similarly, it is unclear historically how the christocentrism of the five-fold gospel relates to the doctrine of the Trinity,²⁸ however its schema is based on transformative encounters with the trinitarian God. As Vondey articulates, this “Christocentric spirituality clearly accentuates the work of the Holy Spirit as the most essential component of living a Christ-like life.”²⁹ The Spirit, sent by the Father, empowers the church to proclaim the full gospel and continue the mission of Jesus resulting in the transforming of communities and cultures.

In adopting the fivefold pattern to organise theological reflection on Higher Education each theme—Jesus as Saviour, Sanctifier, Spirit-baptizer, Healer, and soon-coming king—is extended to consider implications for Pentecostal education institutions. This paper will particularly explore the outworking of the five-fold gospel as educational priorities. We will extend the theme of salvation to consider the vocational calling of students; sanctification as encouraging personal transformation; Spirit baptism inspiring emphasis on empowering for mission through vocational gifting; the nurturing of humility and compassion as a product of healing; and social transformation that arises from the eschatological hope of Christ’s future kingdom come. These will each be examined in turn to provide a vision for seeing the potential for pentecostal Higher Education, infused with the values and priorities of pentecostal spirituality.

²⁷ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 45.

²⁸ Stephenson, *Pentecostal Theology and Ecumenical Theology*, 201–2.

²⁹ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 15.

2.1 *Jesus Christ the Saviour*

The foundational tenet of the five-fold gospel is that Jesus saves. Faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is at the centre of our Christian beliefs. As modelled by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, the message of salvation in Christ alone is to be proclaimed, inviting others to also call on the name of Jesus (Acts 2:22–36). This theological affirmation is not unique to Pentecostals but is the ecumenical glue that binds Pentecostals to the wider Christian communion.

Yet, in the context of Australian Higher Education, students are not required to profess the Christian faith to study at a Christian Higher Education institution. While the institution may teach from a Christian perspective, a student may not hold the same religious beliefs, though it is likely that the majority of students choose the institution for its religious affiliation. Therefore, it is noted that this foundational tenet can be nuanced to be inclusive and hospitable to students who do not affirm faith in Christ or who are exploring their beliefs. However, how can this tenet be foundational for a Pentecostal institution if students are not required to affirm this belief? While remaining sensitive to non-believing students, it is imperative that the Pentecostal institution maintains its foundations in the Christian faith and that this is reflected in the beliefs and practices of faculty and staff. Similarly, the curriculum must reflect, in various and relevant ways, the affirmation that Jesus Christ is Saviour.

How might this tenet of the five-fold gospel inform Pentecostal Higher Education? The foundational affirmation that “Jesus saves” underscores the dignity of all people made in the image of God. While acknowledging the impact of sin in this world and the brokenness of humanity as image-bearers, this tenet recognises the need for all people to be saved. In the experience of salvation, repentant believers are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and adopted into the family of God. As will be discussed later, the Holy Spirit works in believers to transform them to the image

of Christ (2 Cor 3:18). Yet, the salvation found in Christ is more than personal but looks to the restoration of all creation. Therefore, we can understand faith in Christ as a calling.

All Christians have a common calling to love and serve God. First Peter 2:9 reminds us we are called to be God's people and to declare his praises to all creation. So, believers have a corporate purpose to love and serve God. Yet, we each also have a personal purpose. This is often expressed through the term "vocation" (Latin: *vocare* "to call"). Each person, regardless of their faith, may have a sense of calling; a desire to contribute in a unique way to the flourishing of others and to make a difference in this world. Often a sense of vocational calling emerges from where our gifts and passion meet the needs of the world.³⁰ As Topf asserts, "Beyond calling students into a process of salvation and sanctification, pentecostal institutions of higher education [sic] also have the specific task of preparing their graduates to succeed in the professional world."³¹ In this way, Pentecostal institutions can emphasise the calling of all students; to faith in Christ, and to a vocation that meets the needs of the world. Yet, concurrent to the call of God is participation in the life of God.

The concept of vocation requires the elimination of what has sometimes been called the sacred-secular divide. This historic binary generally refers to the artificial distinction between spiritual work in the church and what was considered non-religious activity in the marketplace. However, an emphasis on vocation assures students seeking to work in business, social sector, and education that their roles are no less spiritual than students seeking ordination. Ensuring integrity and justice in business accounts is no less godly activity than preaching a sermon. Instead, the tenet that Jesus saves affirms the need for the redemption of the whole of society. The Christian

³⁰ Daniel J. Denk, *An Invitation to Joy: The Divine Journey to Human Flourishing* (Eerdmans, 2023), 167.

³¹ Topf, *Pentecostal Higher Education*, 182.

Higher Education institution has a role in aiding student to identify their personal calling, to help them to be agents of redemption and reconciliation in their vocations, and to locate their contribution in the wider mission of Christ's church.

2.2 *Jesus the Sanctifier*

The second tenet of the five-fold gospel framework is that Jesus sanctifies believers. While there are different streams and understandings regarding sanctification that have developed historically in global Pentecostalism—mainly differences between Wesleyan moral perfection and Keswick-Higher Life approaches—there is a consensus that sanctification enables disciples to be conformed to the image of Christ. As a gospel imperative, sanctification results in holistic transformation of the person and greater participation in the life of God. As Coulter notes, salvation is not just making it into heaven and avoiding hell, but is the “transformation of the person into a child of God so that she can reach her complete potential in union and fellowship with God.”³² Christ redeems believers to receive new life as adopted children of God (Gal 4:4–5). Yet the children must grow and learn the ways of the family into which they now exist.

Sanctification at its core is imitating Christ. That is, “to do what Jesus did, to be who Jesus is” to a world in need of redemption and hope.³³ As such, sanctification is also a process of transformation as the Spirit forms Christ in believers. Coulter suggests the analogy of apprenticeship to describe the formation process. An apprentice must unlearn old habits and form

³² Dale M. Coulter, *Holiness: The Beauty of Perfection* (Seymour Press, 2021), 48.

³³ Chris E.W. Green, *Sanctifying Interpretation: Vocation, Holiness, and Scripture*, 2nd Ed (CPT Press, 2020), 31.

new ways practices learnt from the master.³⁴ Slowly, the apprentice implements the ways of the master and is changed for their glory of their master and their own benefit.

As Oliverio and Wariboko write, “Christian theological education is to infuse a kind of spirituality in students that will prepare them to become living imitations of the moral excellences of Jesus Christ within their societies.”³⁵ Coulter and Yong also emphasise character acquisition and the development of virtues reflective of Christ. They suggest focusing on the cultivation of *habitus* that is not only Christ-shaped but shapes and orientates the person toward human flourishing. The formation of godly habits requires believers to expend effort in the process and through the practice of disciplines. Yet, such work is a response to God’s grace and prior initiative.³⁶

Sanctification is also the work of the Holy Spirit. For many Pentecostals, sanctification is a way of holiness. It is an expectation that God would impart this holiness through the Holy Spirit to the life of the believer.³⁷ Holiness is outworked in an ethical lifestyle that witnesses to the unbelieving world of God’s redeeming love.³⁸ While historically Pentecostals have defined holiness by moral injunctions, or mores such as not drinking alcohol, the focus in more recent times is on holiness as love. The moral life is a matter of trying to determine the kind of people we should be and of attending to the development of character within our communities and ourselves. For the Pentecostal Higher Education institution, encouraging personal transformation in the learning process and providing foundations for moral decision-making based on the ethic of love

³⁴ Coulter, *Holiness*, 56.

³⁵ Oliverio and Wariboko, “Epistemology and Ethics of Pentecostal Theological Education,” 335.

³⁶ Coulter, *Holiness*, 114.

³⁷ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 62.

³⁸ Diane J. Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (IVP, 2014), 19.

are imperative to reflect this tenet of the five-fold gospel. Intentional moral formation based on character and virtues toward which we strive enables graduates to cultivate virtuous habits and pursue ideals that can be outworked in their contribution to the world. Adrian Hinke writes, “It is an education model that engages the whole person: renewal of the mind, reordering of the heart, and reviving of the hands.”³⁹ For example, writing from the African context, Jeffrey Hittenberger emphasises the importance of sanctification to produce future graduates who can offer “principled leadership” in the public square for the benefit and hope of communities and nations.⁴⁰ Moral transformation, achieved through the sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit, reminds us of the other priority of Spirit’s activity, which is empowerment for mission.⁴¹

Yet how might moral transformation, or holiness, be cultivated in a Higher Education institution? As the analogy of the apprentice suggests, holiness is primarily modelled to students by the Christian staff of the institution. By demonstrating integrity and godly character in the variety of interactions with students, from administration to teaching, staff can exemplify Christ-like formation. Such intentional behaviour by staff seeks to ensure that while the curriculum is “taught,” Christian virtues are “caught.” Hinke notes the dominant pedagogical model in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament of observed behaviour. As students learn from observing others and imitate their behaviour, it reinforces communal expectations.⁴² These virtues can be modelled to both Christian and non-Christian students. Therefore, demonstrating the fruit of the

³⁹ Adrian Hinkle, “Recovering a Pentecost Approach to Spirit-Empowered Pedagogy,” *Pneuma* 46.3-4 (2024): 369.

⁴⁰ Cartledge “Pentecostal Theological and Higher Education,” 352.

⁴¹ Cartledge “Pentecostal Theological and Higher Education,” 357.

⁴² Hinkle, “Recovering a Pentecost Approach to Spirit-Empowered Pedagogy,” 372.

Spirit also encourages godly character in others as they discover the benefits of freedom in Christ, and challenges them to consider who they are becoming.

2.3 *Jesus the Spirit-Baptiser*

Equipping students to spread the good news of Christ is central to the task of the church and Christian educational institutions. This is reflected in the third tenet of the five-fold gospel, that Jesus is the Spirit-baptiser who empowers believers to witness, expressed in word and deed (including prophetic speech, signs and wonders), and continue the mission of Christ. For Pentecostal educators, encouraging staff and students to seek this empowerment must be a priority. The Day of Pentecost marks the new era of the democratisation of the Spirit. The empowerment of the Spirit is available to all believers, rather than the minority as experienced in the Old Testament. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a permanent presence. Charismatic Catholic Raniero Cantalamessa writes, "...since the time of Pentecost onward the Spirit has been *hypostatically* present, that is, present in person."⁴³ Sometimes referred to as the prophethood of all believers,⁴⁴ the Spirit of Jesus continues the mission of Jesus as the followers of Christ also participate in God's work as Spirit-empowered prophets announcing God's kingdom. What makes this participation prophetic is the discernment of the believer to see what God is doing in the world and to join in this work. That is, seeing a situation from God's perspective is the task of a prophet—and subsequently discerning how to participate in this work of God.⁴⁵

⁴³ Raniero Cantalamessa, *Come, Creator Spirit: Meditations on the Veni Creator* (Liturgical Press, 2008), 47.

⁴⁴ Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke: Trajectories from the Old Testament to Luke-Acts* (Baker: 2012), 86.

⁴⁵ Jacqueline Grey, *She Speaks for God: What Women Prophets in the Bible Reveal about Prophecy* (Baker Academic, forthcoming), 8.

While some Pentecostals are somewhat critical of the description of Jesus as Spirit-Baptiser as it implies a certain passivity of the Holy Spirit,⁴⁶ the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit itself is considered by Frank Macchia as the “crown jewel” of Pentecostal theology.⁴⁷ Despite the various doctrinal debates within pentecostalism, particularly regarding *glossolalia* as the evidence (or sign) of the Spirit, Baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experience in which believers encounter the empowering presence of God subsequent to salvation. Consequently, believers are empowered for mission and for Christian living. While many pentecostal scholars focus on the missionary nature of the Spirit’s outpouring on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), an oft neglected area is the giving of the Spirit for Christian living. This emphasis is reflected in the pentecostal fascination with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly those listed in the New Testament such as 1 Corinthians 12, to which may be added the gifts listed in the Old Testament passage of Isaiah 11.

The Holy Spirit is the gift given at Pentecost and the giver of gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul continually reminds believers that each person is gifted to contribute to the Christian community, which he describes as the body of Christ. The gifts are distributed according to the will of the Spirit, and for the benefit of others. Isaiah 11 describes the Spirit resting on the Messianic agent, who is endowed with spiritual gifts for the task of governance and the work of justice to facilitate the flourishing of the civil community. The gifts of the Spirit are given for God’s people to pursue and complete the work God to which God calls them. Examples of spirit gifting in the Bible include the work of governance (as exemplified in Isaiah 11), the creative and artistic arts (as exemplified in the construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 31), and ministering within the Christian community (as exemplified in 1 Corinthians 12).

⁴⁶ Christopher Stephenson, “Fivefold Gospel and Spirit Christology,” 201.

⁴⁷ Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Zondervan, 2006), 20.

In the context of Higher Education, the empowerment of all believers gives students confidence that they can make a real difference in the world “even if they do not see ministry as their primary vocation in life.”⁴⁸ Daniel Topf writes,

The Holy Spirit empowered early pentecostals to become effective witnesses for Christ, even to the ends of the earth. In the twenty-first century, pentecostals will increasingly be called to bring transformation to all the sectors and spheres within society. Spirit baptism is a call to greater intimacy with God, considering that God’s love has been poured into the hearts of believers through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).⁴⁹

Similarly, William Kay notes that focusing on “the role and power of the Holy Spirit in a changing world has the potential to assist the church as it faces the intellectual challenges of the future.”⁵⁰ The empowerment and gifts of the Holy Spirit applied to vocational activity inside and outside the church by graduates contributes to the proclamation and witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the world.

Similarly, an emphasis on the gifting of the Holy Spirit highlights the significance of a person’s unique contribution to the flourishing of the world. This begins with staff modelling the discernment and deployment of their own giftings to demonstrate the joys and challenges of serving others. Dean O’Keefe notes that pentecostal pedagogy includes an expectation and recognition of “the present-day activity of the Holy Spirit, a radical openness to what God is doing.”⁵¹ Yet, as Paul admonishes in 1 Corinthians 13, spiritual gifts require the foundation of love. The primary motivation for gifted service must be “our reciprocal love of God to others for

⁴⁸ Topf, *Pentecostal Higher Education*, 180.

⁴⁹ Topf, *Pentecostal Higher Education*, 195.

⁵⁰ William K. Kay, “Reflecting as a Pentecostal on Pentecostal Education,” *Pneuma* 46.3-4 (2024): 403.

⁵¹ Dean O’Keefe, “Pentecostal Pedagogy: Spirit-Led Practice,” *Pneuma* 48.1 (2026): 152.

God's glory."⁵² As students are encouraged to discover, nurture and apply their God-given gifts, talents and abilities, they can begin to flourish in their vocational calling beyond simply the utilitarian acquisition of skills for the workforce,⁵³ and to contribute to the healing of the world.

2.4 *Jesus the Healer*

The fourth tenet, Jesus the healer, continues the mission of Jesus through the demonstration of signs and wonders in which sick people are healed, thereby pointing to the redemptive work of Christ, now and in the future. The narrative of Acts models believers praying in faith for healing "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 3:6), often with the laying on of hands (Mark 16:18) or other sacramental practices such as anointing with oil.⁵⁴ In contemporary pentecostal worship services, testimonies of healing are often encouraged. Kimberly Alexander argues that "there is no more distinguishing feature of Pentecostalism than the belief in the power of God to miraculously heal the sick."⁵⁵ However, unfortunately triumphalist reports can sometimes overshadow the reality of ongoing suffering of those not healed in their lifetime. As Vondey writes, "Healing and wholeness are the universal will of God for all creation, even if not always experienced."⁵⁶ This reminds us that while Pentecostals consider healing in the atonement as God's remedy for sickness and physical suffering, it is dependent on the grace of God.⁵⁷

⁵² Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation*, 160.

⁵³ Yong & Coulter, *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education*, 74–77.

⁵⁴ Kimberly Ervin Alexander, "Divine Healing: Sacramental Signs of Salvation," in Wolfgang Vondey (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology* (Routledge, 2020), 260.

⁵⁵ Alexander, "Divine Healing," 257.

⁵⁶ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 115–16.

⁵⁷ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 116.

An emphasis on healing extends the moral imperative founded by Jesus to love God and love our neighbours in practical and embodied ways. This is exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan, by which the care for the physical needs and concern for the restoration of an unknown other is expressed in action. In addition, the posture of humility and compassion from which the Samaritan operates is noteworthy as a virtue for believers and graduates to cultivate. Therefore, the virtues of compassion and humility, as well as teaching vocational skills that incorporate intentional healing practices extend this tenet of the five-fold gospel.

More recently, Pentecostal approaches to healing have incorporated more holistic methods and thinking. Progressive pentecostalism, according to Miller and Yamamori, reflects holistic approaches to social engagement by addressing the needs of community life.⁵⁸ Global pentecostals engage in a range of services to attend to social needs, including food provision, housing shelters, drug rehabilitation programs, and environmental lobby groups among many others.⁵⁹ The Panzi Hospital Bukavu in the Democratic Republic of Congo is an example of Pentecostal approaches to healing through compassionate, holistic care. Supported by the Swedish Pentecostal Mission, the hospital provides psychological and medical treatment for women victims of sexual violence. Pentecostal minister and gynaecologist, Dr Denis Mukwege, received a Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 for his work to end the weaponization of sexual violence.⁶⁰ Such examples provide inspiration for students and staff to also consider their contribution to facilitate healing in the world.

⁵⁸ Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (University of California Press, 2007), 2.

⁵⁹ Michael Wilkinson, "Worship: Embodying the encounter with God," in Wolfgang Vondey (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology* (Routledge, 2020), 124.

⁶⁰ Alexander, "Divine Healing," 264.

Pentecostal healing practices have also recently been extended to include psychological care through counselling and other methods that promote wellbeing and holistic care of others. Many Pentecostal Higher Education institutions provide training in counselling and psychology. These vocations offer the hope of personal and relational healing. Well-being is notoriously difficult to define but generally refers to life satisfaction and a sense of meaning in life.⁶¹ According to Lisa Pedersen *et al*, well-being is “related to giving, rather than being dependent on what is received from others.”⁶² This includes providing emotional and spiritual support for students in their educational journey, particularly for young adult students navigating new responsibilities, independence, and social changes.

Therefore, for the Pentecostal Higher Education institution, encouraging the well-being of its community is imperative. However, wellbeing does not end with oneself but extends to others. This sacrificial love for others is demonstrated by Christ, who laid down his life for us. “And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16). Whenever we see self-giving love in human community, we see imitations of Christ. Christ’s love compels us to seek the healing of this world and thereby see his kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Yet, as “healing is a foretaste of the resurrection,”⁶³ Pentecostals look forward to the ultimate redemption when Christ returns.

⁶¹ Julia Tokarz and Pawel Lowicki, “Religiosity, desired emotions, and well-being – a comparative study of Roman Catholics and Pentecostal Christians in Poland,” *Mental Health, Religious & Culture* 27.1 (2024): 102.

⁶² Lisa Pedersen *et al*, “How do Ghanaian Pentecostal Charismatic Christian university students experience well-being? – balancing the needs of self and others,” *Mental Health, Religious & Culture* 26.1 (2023): 50.

⁶³ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 116.

2.5 *Jesus the Soon-Coming King*

The final tenet of the five-fold gospel is that Jesus will return, the soon-coming King, to consummate God's kingdom. This eschatological hope has already been manifested somewhat in the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost and experienced by some in physical healing as a sign, in the here and now, of the kingdom to come. Eschatology has shaped Pentecostal thinking from the outset as early pioneers identified themselves as a revival movement, the latter rain, precipitating the return of Christ. Despite the early adoption of dispensationalism and subsequent doctrinal debates, "Pentecostal eschatology culminates in an apocalyptic mandate to go and seek the lost, to proclaim the kingdom of God."⁶⁴ Pentecostal theology lives expectantly in a proleptic eschatological tension between the not yet and the already. More recent approaches to Pentecostal eschatology point to the *telos* of salvation in Christ, referencing in roundabout the foundational tenet of the fivefold gospel that Jesus saves, albeit with communal and creational implications.

The *telos* of salvation, found in Jesus as the soon-coming King, looks towards the social transformation that arises from the eschatological hope of Christ's future kingdom come. This eschatological outlook is grounded in a Pentecostal soteriology that is not only personal but cosmic in scope.⁶⁵ Such social transformation includes dismantling structures of oppression, justice for the innocent and persecuted, the overcoming of socio-systemic powers that dehumanise,⁶⁶ and the brokenness of creation restored as it anticipates the redemption of God's kingdom. Yet, such long-term social transformation need not dampen the urgency of evangelisation central to pentecostal mission. Neither should this vision to see the inbreaking of the kingdom of God on earth transform

⁶⁴ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 133.

⁶⁵ Peter Althouse, "Eschatology," in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology* (ed. Wolfgang Vondey; Routledge, 2020), 272.

⁶⁶ Althouse, "Eschatology," 272

society into the church or the world into the kingdom of God, as Vondey warns, but that the church stands in contrast to the world through the worship of Christ the servant King.⁶⁷

How might this tenet of the five-fold gospel inform Pentecostal Higher Education? This final affirmation that “Jesus is the soon-coming King” underscores the hope for the restoration of all creation, human and non-human. To work towards the goal of redemption is to participate in the eschatological foretaste of God’s kingdom. Graduates seeking to steward their calling, gifts, and vocational skills to see God’s will be done here on earth as it is in heaven, demonstrate how believers are to live and work in light of the eschaton.⁶⁸

This reflects the mission of Christ expressed in Luke 4 (adopting the message of Isaiah 61) in which the Spirit-anointed servant announces good news that results in healing, freedom and jubilee. Jubilee is described in the Old Testament as a time of rest, forgiveness, and new beginnings. It is a sabbath of sabbaths. Jubilee is a practice outlined in Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15, in which slaves are released, debts are forgiven, and property is returned to its original stewards. For a whole calendar year, the land is given rest through the cessation of driven work. The community was to instead trust in God’s provision for their daily bread (as Jesus later taught his disciples to pray). It provided a radical recalibration of community life, offering social and economic restoration. Strangers were similarly treated with compassion. The Jubilee presents not only a legal obligation but also offers a picture of redemption, both spiritual and material. Isaiah 61 intends for the messianic redeemer to proclaim freedom for captives and the year of the Lord’s favour as a new era of God’s justice is inaugurated.

⁶⁷ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 147.

⁶⁸ Althouse, “Eschatology,” 276.

Jesus adopted these same words of Isaiah in his programmatic sermon in Nazareth to announce that Jubilee had arrived. In Luke 4:14–20, Jesus proclaimed that he was the fulfilment of the Jubilee promises. Salvation, forgiveness, freedom and restoration—and other expressions of healing—are found in Christ. Pentecost, the “fiftieth day” following the resurrection, is also a kind of Jubilee. The sending of the Spirit of Christ to the church continues the restorative program of Jesus. The Spirit also empowers the community to proclaim the redemption inaugurated by Christ. This Jubilee life overflowed in their daily interactions (Acts 2:42–47). Luke reports that the disciples gathered daily to share their bread. They shared their wealth by giving to the needs of others. The description of their community life is one of freedom, restoration, and generosity.

This programmatic prophetic vision for the repairing of the world, based on Isaiah 61 and Luke 4, is grounded in the justice and righteousness of God. Pentecostal Higher Education must seek within its community of staff and students to promote healing, restoration and generosity. Jubilee living is characterised by a common concern for others. It presents an obligation to respond in compassion to the needs around us and seek to repair the brokenness of the world. This may include helping meet the practical needs of others (including the “stranger” among us), or to shoulder the spiritual burdens of others through support and prayer. While this occurs within the educational community, it prepares students to continue this activity in their future vocations.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the framework of the five-fold gospel presents an exploratory foray into the uncharted territory of what makes Pentecostal Higher Education *pentecostal*. The framework, which emerges from an endemic Pentecostal spirituality has been utilised to consider how christocentric and pneumatological values can be inculcated into the ethos of educational

institutions. The goal is to consider how Pentecostal centres of learning can empower graduates to proclaim the full gospel and continue the mission of Jesus resulting in the transforming of communities and cultures.