

Between Azusa Street and Stingless Death Is Pentecostal Scholarship

The history of Azusa Street running through time would inevitably carry all its memories to forgetfulness if it were not for pentecostal scholars who interrupt its course with new insights and perspectives. Their scholarship, embedded in Spirit-filled life, is a constant reminder that the pious actions that spiritual events enact, though they transform believers, are not born in order to live as *vita activa* alone but also to begin the life of the mind. These are the fundamental structures of spiritual event *qua* existence: experience and interpretation. Scholarship, that measured and learned body of interpretations of men and women, sits between the natality (birth) and mortality (forgetfulness) of events, sacramental events—the manifestation of divine (spiritual presence) in the human, phenomenological realm. This edition of *Pneuma* sits between natality and mortality—literally and metamorphically. Metaphorically because it engages stories about the birth of events and the painful death of six scholars, pointing us to the two poles of earthly existence. Literally, because the first essay in the issue focuses on the beginning of Pentecostalism in the United States, and the last set of six essays are on the lives of pentecostal scholars who have gone into eternity. In between the two classes of essays are four articles, streams of thought, that flow toward the four corners of theological landscape.

The reader is invited to step into these streams, to inhabit the in-between of the Azusa Street revival and the memories of pentecostal scholars who have gone into the triumphant Beyond. In this interspace of beginning and end, past and future, the readers' understanding of the birth and origin of Pentecostalism in the United States would be challenged. This issue of *Pneuma* not only teaches us why we must revisit the history of Azusa Street to fine tune our understanding or interpretation of it but also offers us forms or methods of pentecostal scholarship that carry forward the memories, hopes, and futures of human-divine encounters. Indeed, it also provides evocative tributes to the lives of six pentecostal scholars (Gordon Fee, Bradley Truman Noel, Anthony Palma, Michael Palmer, Russ Spittler, and Roger Stronstad). These men, born after the Azusa Street revival and shaped by the memories of it, lived a good part of their Spirit-filled life through their scholarship. Indeed, situated between the

nativity of Azusa and the mortality of their flesh was their scholarship, which will now live beyond them.

Pneuma is dedicated to choreographing, celebrating, and honoring the in-between of scholarship, always striving with Lady Wisdom at street corners, crying out to the children of Pentecost and Charismata to come to the logos, nomos, and ethos of the call that rang out at Azusa Street and in many other places all over the world. This issue reveals and celebrates the nuances, diversities, complexities, and unfinishedness of pentecostal scholarship and traditions. The first essay in it, "The Beginnings of African American Pentecostalism: The Case of Texas" by J. Gordon Melton examines the early history of Pentecostalism in Texas and its connections to the Azusa Street revival (1906). The role of African Americans in the establishment of American Pentecostalism is well known. Often the history of this role only evokes memories of the Azusa Street Revival and the incomparable William Seymour. But the important role played by Blacks in Texas in the development and spread of Pentecostalism is less known in the larger pentecostal narrative. Melton in his essay brings awareness to the special roles played by Blacks in Texas in the early history of Pentecostalism in North America. "Present from the beginning, they took the lead in spreading the Apostolic Faith and created several of the denominational expressions that shaped the movement. Simultaneously, future inclusion of the account of African Americans in the larger Texas pentecostal story would highlight the key role of Texas in hosting the early expansion of the Apostolic Faith, the founding of the Azusa Street mission, and the spread of Pentecostalism through Texas and the surrounding states." (p. 19)

Selina Stone also brings a fresh perspective to the Azusa history in her essay, "Toward a Holistic Pentecost: Pentecostalism, Embodiment, and Social Justice." Stone demonstrates that the revival was shot through with dualism. On one hand, the participants saw the human body as a holy vessel of and for the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, they did not value all bodies equally; bodies of Blacks and women were not considered to be as valuable as white (male) bodies. She argues that the "pneumatic dualism" continues today in British Pentecostalism and even in the so-called progressive Pentecostalism. In place of pneumatic dualism, she calls for "pneumatic integralism"—a holistic view of the work of God's Spirit among bodies. The journey to pneumatic integralism, according to her, must start with "Pentecostalism drawing on the global roots that make it what it is, especially its African heritage. It is this shift that may move true Pentecostalism beyond the restrictions of modernity and its colonial legacies in a deeper and more consistent way ... The body, in this case, might be embraced and attended to not only in its materiality but also in relation to its social and political identities and experiences" (p. 37).

How might we go about realizing this pneumatic integralism? The next two essays shed light on this goal. One points us toward human communion with God and the other to methodological approaches that will enable scholars to improve their comprehension of the pentecostal experience. Paul K. Moser's essay ("Moral Rapport in Communion of the Spirit") is on divine-human rapport. Such rapport, he argues, "enlivens religious commitment to God in a way that nothing else can, because it enables God to empower the needed enlivening, thereby countering any debilitating complacency and fear" (p. 54). At one level, it seems Moser's essay appears to unduly accent the body and its quest for holiness and thereby to neglect social-justice concerns as it seeks communion with the Spirit. But this would be a wrong conclusion to draw from the essay. He argues that rapport with God also focuses the believer on their social world at large. "Ethics for the common good thus finds a ground in our moral experience, courtesy of God's unique and active moral character of universal love for people, even for enemies" (p. 54).

How might pentecostal scholars understand or study the experiences of pneumatic integralism or rapport with God? How should they describe the essential features, the structure of such experiences or their manifestations? In "Exploring Experience: A Case for Phenomenology in Pentecostal Studies," Truls Åkerlund and John Daniel Andersen offer phenomenology as one possible answer (methodology) to the questions. Though their essay was not written in response to Stone's, their succinct presentation of phenomenology invites any scholar who wants to study pentecostal experiences instead of abstract conceptual schema, who desires to lay bare the objective structures, lived experiences, and characteristics of Spirit-filled life as a distinct mode of Christian existence, to pay serious attention to it. "Phenomenology is especially appropriate for pentecostal theology and research due to the shared emphasis on embodiment, importance of experiences, consistency of appearances, and realism of phenomena" (p. 55).

Finally, Daniel W. Eller and Daniel D. Isgrigg in their "Bibliometrics and Pentecostal Scholarship: A Review of Trends in *Pneuma*" examine the trend in pentecostal scholarship from 1978 to 2022. This essay points out trends and disparities in pentecostal theological research as published in *Pneuma*. In addition to offering excellent quantitative and qualitative insights on the impact of the journal, Eller and Isgrigg offer suggestions for areas of future research given the significant trend in pentecostal scholarship in the fifty-year history of *Pneuma*. Eller's work provides a veritable examination of the in-between site of scholarship, that site between natality and mortality, that venue between the event and its forgetfulness. His verdict is that interpretations that bridge the two sides, that keep memories of events dynamic, relevant, and generative of lived experiences, need to do more.

Yes, there is more work to be done. But when we read the tributes to the six saints who have passed into eternity, we are encouraged, inspired to work harder. The work of scholars is never done. They are pressed by time and resources on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despondent. They always carry around in their mind the work to be done, so that the life of the mind, the gap between the event and forgetfulness will remain open, alive for the next generation, and attentive to the next coming event.

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