

## WHY HAVE SCHOLARS LEFT CLASSICAL PENTECOSTAL DENOMINATIONS?

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One of the big issues in the last several years within Pentecostalism is the distant relationship between Pentecostal scholars and the Pentecostal church. This was especially highlighted in March 7, 2006 by Roger E. Olson's article entitled "Pentecostalism's Dark Side" in *Christian Century* and the response letters found in May 16, 2006 issue of the same journal.<sup>1</sup> It was in these writings and others where concerns were expressed and ultimately some of the factors listed why scholars like Olson left the Pentecostal denominations in which they had participated. This leads many to ask the question: 'Why have scholars left Pentecostal denominations?' In asking this question, there are some definitions and limitations that need to be noted. First, by Pentecostal, I am referring to the classical Pentecostal denominations which include the Assemblies of God (USA), the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the Church of God in Christ, the Open Bible Standard Church, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, and others whose roots go back to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> (and late 19<sup>th</sup>) century. Second, due to the limits of this author, it is mainly limited to the North America classical Pentecostal denominations (primarily from the Anglo Pentecostal denominations'). This is not to say that these

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<sup>1</sup>Roger Olson, "Pentecostalism's Dark Side" *Christian Century* 123 #5 (March 7, 2006): 27-30; and "Letters: On the Dark Side," *Christian Century* 123 #10 (May 16, 2006): 43-4; see also "Three Leaders talk frankly about Pentecostalism: Grading the Movement," *Christianity Today* 50 # 4 (April 2006): 38-41.

<sup>2</sup>Note that although many of the respondents were from the North American Anglo Pentecostal denominations, this issue is likewise noted among Hispanic and Black Pentecostal scholars, David Daniels, "'Everybody bids you welcome' A Multicultural Approach to North American Pentecostalism," in

findings would not also be true elsewhere, but the literature and sources were not known or available to the author. Third, by 'scholar,' I am referring to those who: have attained their terminal degrees, are strongly tied to teaching or training, are noted in publications (whether books or articles), and/or are tied to theological education. Finally, the intention of this study is to glean from the scholars reasons why they left, thus, although related views concerning education and educational pedagogy are important, it is not within the parameters of this paper. Further, the parameters are that they left the classical Pentecostal denominations to go to other denominations (i.e. Mainline, 'third wave' or independents), but remained within Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

For this study, it was intentional to contact and communicate with as many of those scholars as possible. Yet it was only through personal knowledge that these and not others were communicated with. The respondents and other colleagues were asked for additional names of scholars who fit this category; some have yet to respond and others sent information that arrived too late to include in this study. With that being said, this study by necessity will be anecdotal, yet the process involved in this study is that the sources are all primary from personal communications (some going back several years), emails, public lectures, and literature. It was also communicated that any personal communication or email communications concerning their personal situation would be kept anonymous unless otherwise stipulated by them. The below-noted study was careful to follow these parameters unless stipulated otherwise or the information was substantiated publicly elsewhere. Among those who have been researched or communicated with<sup>4</sup> was Allan Anderson (University of Birmingham).

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*The Globalization of Pentecostalism*, Murray Dempster, Byron Klaus, and Douglas Petersen, eds. (Carlisle, UK: Regnum, 1999), 238.

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of completeness I need to mention Hector Avalos who was a former Pentecostal Preacher but is now a self-proclaimed secular-humanist/atheist who is active against the Intelligent Design perspective.

<sup>4</sup> There was an initial list of 30 scholars to communicate with and/or research. Of these, 5 for various reasons could not be contacted (i.e. lack of email addresses, the scholar was deceased, etc.), of the remainder 2 felt they did not fit since they were in Charismatic, not Pentecostal churches and 1 felt that they did not consider the Classical Pentecostal background as extensive enough. This left 22 to directly respond to the questions, 3 replied to the email but did not want to respond to the inquiries: so of the 19 who were communicated with, 12 responded and gave detailed responses to questions. These and others were

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UK)<sup>5</sup>, Gregory Boyd (Bethel Seminary and Woodland Hills Church)<sup>6</sup>, the late David Hubbard (Fuller Seminary)<sup>7</sup>, Walter Hollenweger (formerly of the University of Birmingham, UK)<sup>8</sup>, Ronald A. N. Kydd (Tyndale Seminary, Canada)<sup>9</sup>, Roger Olson (Truett Seminary)<sup>10</sup>, David Reed (Wycliffe College, Canada)<sup>11</sup>, James K. A. Smith (Calvin College)<sup>12</sup>, Miroslav Volf (Yale Divinity School)<sup>13</sup>, Grant Wacker

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researched via internet resources, and looking at biographical or autobiographical sections in their writings (e.g. Prefaces).

<sup>5</sup> Allan Anderson and Walter Hollenweger, eds., *Pentecostals after a Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 15; Allan Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost* (Pretoria, South Africa: UNISA Press, 2000), 1-7; and <http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/aanderson/> accessed Oct 21, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), esp. 21-4.

<sup>7</sup> Timothy Weber, "His Life and Ministry," in Robert Hubbard, Jr., Robert Johnston and Robert Meye, eds. *Studies in Old Testament Theology* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 21-7, esp. 22-23.

<sup>8</sup> Allan Anderson and Walter Hollenweger, eds., *Pentecostals after a Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 16; and David Bundy, "Hollenweger, Walter Jacob," in Stanley Burgess, ed. *International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Rev ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 729.

<sup>9</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Ad Ultimum Terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue (1990-1997)* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 1999), 59, 91, 133; Ronald Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), ix-x; idem., *Healing through the Centuries* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), xi-xii; and <http://www.tyndale.ca/seminary/viewfaculty.plip?id=85> accessed Oct 21, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> James K.A. Smith, "Letters: On the Dark Side" *Christian Century* 123 #5 (March 7, 2006): 43-44.

<sup>11</sup> Vinson Synan, ed., *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), 143.

<sup>12</sup> Roger Olson, "Pentecostalism's Dark Side" *Christian Century* 123 #10 (May 16, 2006): 27-30.

<sup>13</sup> Stanley Burgess, "Volf, Miroslav," in Stanley Burgess, ed. *International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 1179; Kärkkäinen, *Ad Ultimum Terrae: Evangelization*, 59, 91, 133; and <http://www.yale.edu/divinity/faculty/Fac.MVoK.shtml>. accessed Oct 21, 2008.

(Duke Divinity School)<sup>14</sup>, among others. Further, it has been the purpose of this study to be faithful to the perspectives of these scholars, and likewise, to be an assistance to the future interaction between scholars and the Pentecostal denominations.

## FACTORS FOR THE SCHOLARS LEAVING ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM

One of the most prominent factors consistently referred to is the anti-intellectual *ethos* found in Pentecostalism. It is not within the parameters of this essay to detail what has already been delineated elsewhere;<sup>15</sup> however, it is noted that the derivative of this has impacted scholars in various ways. For instance, it was noted by Rick Naiiez that one Pentecostal speaker stated that he with the others in the congregation were to "empty [their] minds and to battle the temptation to think about anything at all. [They] were instructed to refuse to allow reason to get in [their] way and to restrain [their] heads from blocking the route to [their] hearts." (Naiiez 13) The *ethos* has been indicative to 'leave one's head at the door' and sense directly from God. Whereas the emphasis has been keenly observed for Pentecostalism, it should be also noted that anti-intellectualism and related issues are considered a problem of Evangelicalism as a whole, although arguably to a lesser degree.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Edith Blumhofer, "Wacker, Grant," in Stanley Burgess, ed. *International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 1181; and Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), ix-x.

<sup>15</sup> John R. Kennedy, "Anti-Intellectualism" in *Encyclopedia of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity*, Stanley Burgess ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35-39; and Rick Naiiez, *Full Gospel, Fractured Minds?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); for older discussions on this see William Menzies, *Anointed to Serve* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1984), 141; J. T. Nichols, *The Pentecostals* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1966), 230-31; and Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 207.

<sup>16</sup> James K.A. Smith, letter to the editor, "On the Dark Side," 43-44; see also James K.A. Smith, "Scandalizing Theology: A Pentecostal Response to Noll's

A common noted effect listed by various scholars who responded (although not all) is the lack of emotional support. Several of them stated that in many cases their home churches (or churches that they attended while in graduate school) were not supportive of them during their graduate education. Indicative of this was the statement made to this author just prior to his move to the city where he was to pursue his doctoral studies. When he went to his home pastor after the final service his pastor shook his hand and only made one statement, 'Don't come back liberal!' Nañez stated it this way about scholars, who are "cultivating the intellectual soil of others' souls. . . . [they] have had to cut against the grain and paid a hefty price to do so." (Nañez 15) The implication was that we only need to follow the Spirit's guidance and we do not need that 'book learning.' Frequent references to the seminary being a cemetery and those who go to seminary 'lose the fire' are also prevalent.<sup>17</sup> Note, however, that some respondents did not consider this a major factor, or on the contrary felt supported by their local church."

Another concern referred to in various ways is the assumption by scholars, whether perceived or real, was that they would have to prove themselves as legitimate ministers, or prove that they have something to contribute. The assumption that those in academia do not have what it takes to do 'real' ministry or to walk in the Spirit, and therefore their

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*Scandal? Pneuma* 19 #2 (1997): 225-38; from the Evangelical perspective, Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals don't Think and What to do about it* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), and Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> L. Gregory Jones, "Beliefs, Desires, Practices and the End of Theological Education," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 186-7; and Paul Lewis, "Explorations in Pentecostal Theological Education," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 10 #2 (2007): 175; note that although not unique to Pentecostals it is prominent, Smith, letter to the editor, "On the Dark Side," 43-4.

<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, in this author's hearing it has been stated that for those who left the ministry but did not study, it was due to not staying faithful to the 'call' at worst, or God had called them elsewhere. Yet for those who leave the ministry in graduate studies then it has been stated that it was their graduate education that moved the person from God's calling.

training or work as a scholar is not significant or sufficient.<sup>19</sup> Rather, proving oneself in ministry is necessary. It is not unusual in introductions to use a Pentecostal epithet to the scholar's ministry: 'soul winner', emphasizes the 'fire of Pentecost', a 'true' Pentecostal. Those who don't quite fit this "felt pushed out for wasting . . . time on intellectual pursuits rather than becoming a missionary or evangelist." (Olson 28)

Related to this is the presumed disdain for teachers. As Russell Spittler notes, "Abiding anti-intellectualism is one of our flaws. In the Assemblies of God, when you apply annually for credentials, you have to identify your ministry: pastor, chaplain, missionary, evangelist, other. For years, I had to check "other." I was always an "other" because a teacher is not highly respected [so it's not on the list]. If the Holy Spirit is teaching you, why would you have any regard for this or that teacher? There's a kind of theological independence that scoffs at education. Yet you can't do theology without intellect. You can't."<sup>20</sup> Note that even Margaret Poloma's masterful sociological work on the Assemblies of God—USA does not include any substantial detailing of education and educators within the AG, rather pastors, evangelists (albeit due to scandals), parishioners and leadership are highlighted.<sup>21</sup>

## CULT OF PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP

Another concern made by some of these Pentecostal scholars is the 'cult of personality' *ethos*, which appears prevalent within the movement. Or as one respondent stated, Pentecostals are "prone to celebrity-cult." The tendency is that "[t]oo many of us chase after the

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<sup>19</sup> There is a common joke that I have heard in Seminary. 'Those who cannot pastor, teach; those who cannot teach, administrate; and those who cannot administrate, become president.'

<sup>20</sup> Russell Spittler in "Three Leaders talk frankly about Pentecostalism: Grading the Movement," 41.

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Poloma, *The Assemblies of God: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); for a current discussion on the issues see *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3 #2 (2002); and Lewis, "Explorations in Pentecostal Theological Education," 161-76; also see Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 243-9.

man or woman of the hour because of their charisma, technique, or outward apparent success." (Nañez 43) Further as Olson notes, the assumption is that "being Spirit-filled guarantees right behavior. . . . [So] sexual promiscuity and financial misconduct are rampant within its ranks, and little is done about this unless a scandal becomes public." (Olson 29) Just a list of notable Pentecostals of the past, such as A.A. Allen, Jim Bakker, William Branham, Finis Jennings Dake, Benny Hinn, Kathleen Kuhlmann, Aimee Semple MacPherson, Oral Roberts, and Jimmy Swaggart,<sup>22</sup> should be able to convince us of the theological, and/or moral quandaries for those who follow these famous Pentecostal individuals.

Related to this is the allowance to "condone dishonesty on the part of the influential and popular evangelists and ministers." (Olson 29) It is even common within Pentecostal circles to use the phrase 'evangelistically speaking' to refer to exaggerated numbers or unsubstantiated tales. Further, there have even been comments that "[so and so] never told a testimony that God could not do." When concerns were mentioned about these by scholars or others, frequently the statement "Touch not God's anointed" (Psalm 105:15), was used as a response to forbid any criticism. So scholars and others who try to call these ministers to account are disenfranchised, marginalized, or told to be quiet for being 'too critical'. (Olson 29-30)

Indirectly related to this is the concern over denominational leadership. It is not uncommon for denominational leaders to consider themselves 'under attack' by scholars and respond accordingly. As a case in point is the discussion in Cecil 'Mel' Robeck's "An Emerging Magisterium? The Case of the Assemblies of God". It is in this work where one conflict between denominational leadership and scholars on the issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel's* revision of the testimonies of J. Roswell Flower and Donald Gee to come more in line with later

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<sup>22</sup> Without going into all the details, an example in moral concerns (e.g. Jimmy Swaggart), see Edith Blumhofer, "Swaggart and the Pentecostal Ethos." *Christian Century* 105 #11 (April 6, 1988), 333-5; and an example of the theological issues (e.g. Benny Hinn), Randy Frame, "Best Selling Author. Vows Changes," *Christianity Today* 35 #12 (Oct 28, 1991): 44-46: see also Philip Jenkins, letter to the editor. "On the Dark Side," 45 where he notes Philip Jenkins, *Pedophiles and Priests: Anatomy of a Contemporary Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

doctrinal positions was delineated.<sup>23</sup> As Richard Dresselhaus, quoted in Robeck's essay, states, "Across the spectrum of leadership within the Assemblies of God is frequently articulated concern that the academy might be party to compromise on doctrines held as inviolable by the church."<sup>24</sup> Likewise, as Olson reports that a denominational leader told him "If you see a problem among the leaders you should pray to God about it and keep it to yourself; you have no business challenging them or making it public." (Olson 30) As one respondent stated, "The pecking order driven by insecure leadership leads to distrust and an unsafe environment." Perhaps these are factors in why many of the prominent Pentecostal scholars are in non-denominational schools; both due to the opportunities (e.g., the schools value writing and research, so they grant sabbaticals and smaller teaching loads) and perceived academic freedom.

### THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

For those who responded to the survey, some left for theological reasons. The number one reason was the doctrine of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. For those respondents it was not necessarily the issue of the doctrine but the emphasis on 'speaking in tongues' being 'the' initial physical evidence as expressed in some of the classical Pentecostal denominations (e.g. Assemblies of God—USA). Most stated that it could be 'an' evidence, but they could not in good conscience say that it was 'the' evidence. Further, as Robeck's aforementioned essay demonstrates, this doctrine within Pentecostal circles can be a 'hot potato.' One respondent even stated that they were rejected for credentials within the AG USA, because on the ministerial credentials application they put 'maybe' regarding the doctrine of the 'initial physical evidence.'

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<sup>23</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "An Emerging Magisterium? The Case of the Assemblies of God," in *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler*. Wonsuk Ma and Robert Menzies, eds. *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement* 24 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 212-52; on some of the issues related to the abridgement of the testimonies, see Glen Menzies, "Tongues as 'The Initial Physical Sign' of Spirit Baptism in the Thought of D.W.Kerr" *Pneuma* 20 #2 (Fall 1998): 175-89.

<sup>24</sup> Robeck, 248 quoted from Richard Dresselhaus, "What Can the Academy Do for the Church?" *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 3 (July 2000), 319.

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There was one respondent for which the issue of divorce and remarriage did play a role. In their case, it was not an issue of theological disagreement, but rather that the spouse had left them. Within the denomination at that time, clergy were not allowed to divorce and remarry. So although the issue is theological, it was partially the practical outgrowth of the position that led to an exodus.

The third theological issue noted related to those who left the Oneness Pentecostal background (e.g. Gregory Boyd, David Reed<sup>25</sup>). This move was from an Oneness perspective to a Trinitarian one. Further, as noted by Gregory Boyd, the move from legalism toward grace also undercut the notion of the 'Initial physical evidence' and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit where according to Oneness belief "people who have not spoken in tongues are not regarded as having the Spirit and as being saved". (Boyd 23) So, although Boyd expressed a distancing from the Oneness positions, it is not the same as those who left from other Pentecostal traditions.

Aside from these, respondents noted that they did disagree with certain theological positions, but it was not the determining factor for their leaving. For instance, one did not accept a pre-tribulation rapture. Another noted that he had difficulty with the stated doctrinal positions as propounded in the position papers. Further, there was a concern mentioned by one respondent that he differed from many Pentecostals' views of Divine Healing, for him, "God is sovereign, period." Yet, for them these were not significant enough to cause an exit.

### ATTITUDES AND ATMOSPHERE

One concern also cited was the tendency toward legalism. A certain lifestyle was expected which may or may not have a biblical foundation. Gregory Boyd noted that his background in the United Pentecostal Church International (a Oneness Pentecostal church) was essentially legalistic and he "spent a lot of [his] time feeling like God didn't like [him] very much and believing that [he] was in fact going to

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<sup>25</sup> See Gregory Boyd, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992) and David Reed, "Oneness Pentecostalism," Occasional Pentecostal Lecture Series # 10 held in Asia Pacific Theological Seminary, Baguio, Philippines, July 30-August 2, 2002.

end up in hell." (Boyd 22) For many that grew up within the Pentecostal ranks, the 'holiness codes' or certain bans were standard. This element was noted by Spittler when he noted that "In 1988. . . .the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.) . . . voted to lift long-standing bans against certain hair styles, use of cosmetics, and the wearing of wedding bands. To some of the older saints, this appeared as a compromise to founding principles."<sup>26</sup> As was noted by one communication and likewise by Boyd, it was a deeper understanding of grace that was part of their journey out of Pentecostalism. As one current Assemblies of God pastor has publically stated, AG stands for 'Always Guilty.' The freedom of grace led and was the reward for some who exited.

Another concern that has arisen is the concern of Pentecostals being elitist. One respondent noted that "The use of language such as A/G for 'All the Gospel' and 'Full Gospel' is absolute nonsense and is offensive spiritual elitism." Further, to be in such an *ethos* which did not allow for debate or discussion feeds into the problem. Likewise, the emphasis on the 'Pentecostal distinctives' tends toward elitism. In this author's own hearing, there was a lady who once stated "Billy Graham has been greatly used by God, if only he was baptized in the Holy Spirit." The implication was that the Baptism in the Holy Spirit would make Billy Graham qualitatively a better Christian and minister. For many scholars, this flies in the face of personal experiences with many fellow ministers and scholars from various other denominations. As Gary McGee is quoted as saying "It has been easy in recent years to boast about our remarkable church growth abroad and that the AG 'does it best', meaning that there is little to learn from others. . . . But beyond the hype of our self-generated triumphalism, is it possible that the Emperor 'has no clothes'?"<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Russell Spittler, "Maintaining Distinctives: The Future of Pentecostalism," in *Pentecostals from the Inside Out*, Harold Smith ed. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1990), 130-1; the holiness codes background is commonly noted, e.g. Martin Marty, "Pentecostalism in American Piety and Practice," in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, Vinson Synan ed. (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), 220-221.

<sup>27</sup> Gary McGee, personal conversation, quoted in Del Tarr, "Transcendence, Immanence, and the Emerging Pentecostal Academy," in *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies*, Wonsuk Ma and Robert

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Another concern that has come up previously in conversations is that in certain Pentecostal churches or among the leadership, the input of women was not valued.<sup>28</sup> Women tended to be reserved for the traditional and supportive roles, but were not valued for contributions in their own right. This insight in various forms was noted not only by some women, but also by at least one spouse at seeing how his wife was treated. As Poloma has noted, "Official ideology has shown little change, but institutional realities have made it increasingly difficult for women in Assemblies of God ministry." (Poloma 120) Likewise, Cheryl Bridges Johns notes, "Those groups that do allow women ordination have found fewer women seeking to enter the ranks of ministry due to lack of encouragement and institutional support."<sup>29</sup> This can also be stated for female scholars and teachers more specifically.

One respondent was particularly concerned over the atmospheric, theological changes within the Pentecostal church. As he put it, "I saw us lapsing into American pop religion, embracing cultural values of self-centred self-gratification. This showed up in worship style and spirituality. Closely related, was a truncated, sub-biblical Pneumatology which I eventually found I could no longer tolerate after years of teaching Pneumatology, conducting seminars internationally, and preaching widely." This cultural-theological change led this person into a mainline church.

For the sake of completeness, there is also one reason for leaving that should be noted. In one conversation over 20 years ago now, a graduate student colleague mentioned the primary reason for his

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Menzies, eds. *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 11* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 205.

<sup>28</sup> See also the issue dedicated to women in Pentecostalism, *Pneuma* 17 #1 (1995); also see Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 273-6; and Howard Kenyon, "An Analysis of Ethical Issues in the History of the Assemblies of God" (Ph.D. Diss.: Baylor University, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> Cheryl Bridges Johns, "Pentecostal Spirituality and the Conscientization of Women," in *All Together in One Place*, Harold Hunter and Peter Hocken eds. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 165; see also on the National Council of Churches citation of the Assemblies of God USA for the most growth in Women ministers for the decennial report which was actually due to the change in reporting women ministers from the AG, Paul Tinlin and Edith Blumhofer, "Decade of Decline or Harvest? Dilemmas of the Assemblies of God" *Christinn Century* 108 #21 (1991): 684-7, esp. 685.

leaving the Pentecostal denomination of which he was a member was for financial concerns. Within his then current denomination, he would get no financial help for his Bible school and graduate school bills, not to mention the concerns he had for his children's college. However, a mainline Charismatic church would give him a substantial salary, a housing allowance and would take care of his school bills. In spite of these, all other contemporary respondents did not consider this as a concern.

There were some of the respondents who saw their leaving the Pentecostal denomination as not necessarily as being a negative. They saw their leaving as being drawn to something or as part of their journey. In a few cases, they were drawn to a more liturgical or Catholic style of worship. They found meaning and depth in these types of churches that ministered to them individually and to their families. As one respondent put it "Participation in a Catholic charismatic community introduced me to the beauty and power of liturgy and eucharist."

For some who followed the path of David Du Plessis<sup>30</sup>, the journey included a need to be more ecumenical both religiously and racially, and at their time of departure, the denominations that they came out of were not open to such interactions. They saw that their journey lead them into a broader ecumenical or racial reconciliation work. Robeck and Howard Kenyon have noted that this lack of ecumenical/racial

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<sup>30</sup> A helpful study on Du Plessis is found in Rick Howard, "David Du Plessis: Pentecost's Ambassador at Large," in *Spirit and Spirituality*, 271-97; note especially that in this essay Howard dispels the rumor that Du Plessis disassociated himself from the AG, whereas Du Plessis was able to show his expulsion letter from 1962 (later reinstated in 1980); see also Russell Spittler, "Du Plessis, David Johannes," in *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Stanley Burgess ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 589-93; note that even in Pentecostal-Charismatic-ecumenical meetings, certain Pentecostal groups did not participate, Edith Blumhofer, "Charismatics Converge, Diverge," *Christian Century* 108 #25 (1991): 814-5.

concerns has not always been the case,<sup>31</sup> while Russell Spittler and others have expressed a desire to reignite the ecumenical vision.<sup>32</sup>

## REFLECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

It is hard to summarize the issues involved to get at the root of the matter, but there do seem to be some common threads. Probably one of the key areas has been noted above. Pentecostalism did not develop out of a theological movement like the Lutheran or Reformed traditions did. Rather it was a spirituality that formed with a great latitude on various theological positions.<sup>33</sup> So although as some could argue, that there is some theological commonalities, namely on the subsequent experience called the Baptism in the Holy Spirit; its impact and import did span a diversity of theological terrain, especially through the Charismatic Movement and later. As Nañez has noted throughout his work, the supposition was that the Christian Pentecostal life is ministerial and spiritual, but the intellectual life is not necessary or even desired. As such, the scholars find themselves going 'against the grain'. Further, since higher education is not valued as it is in some other denominations, advanced degrees are not required or desired by denominational leaders. As such, many denominational leaders may not know how to deal with or whether to trust these scholars. Something that should be researched in the future is the apparent triad—denominational leaders, popular ministers, and scholars—and the question on how they functionally relate.

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<sup>31</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., "The Assemblies of God and Ecumenical Cooperation: 1920-1965," in *Pentecostalism in Context*. 107-50; and Howard Kenyon, "An Analysis of Ethical Issues in the History of the Assemblies of God" (Ph.D. Diss.: Baylor University, 1988).

<sup>32</sup> Spittler, "Maintaining Distinctives," 128-30; see also Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 249-53, 270-3.

<sup>33</sup> See Steven Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); Paul Lewis, "Reflections on a Hundred Years of Pentecostal Theology," *Cyberjournal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 12 (2003); Martin Marty, "Pentecostalism in American Piety and Practice," in *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, Vinson Synan, ed. (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1975), 205-7; and Russell Spittler, "Suggested Areas for Future Research in Pentecostal Studies," *Pneuma* 5 #2 (Fall 1983): 39.

Further, it can be noted that some current Pentecostal Scholars (e.g. Howard Kenyon, Rick Naiiez , Cecil Robeck, and Russell Spittler) have been cited to 'flesh out' some of the responses. Implied in this is the question, 'Why do some leave while others do not?' Obviously, both sets deal with the same issues, one potential answer could be that 'personal lines' were crossed for those who left, while they were not crossed for those who stayed. Although not a focus of this study, of those who left, many were connected to a denominational school or a local pastorate, which apparently had a strong influence on them. Interestingly, of those cited who currently maintain their classical Pentecostal denominational ministerial credentials, most are either missionaries (e.g. Howard Kenyon and Rick Naiiez) or teaching in non-denominational schools (e.g. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr.). These observations hopefully will be able to push to some future studies in this area.

In light of the above, a few suggestions are in order. First, that there be an ongoing dialogue between scholars and denominational leaders on various issues. (Olson 28) The scholars should take the tact of being 'critically loyal' to the denomination.<sup>34</sup> It is out of love and a deep concern that the concerns are aired. Likewise, the denominational leaders should 'hear' the concerns and listen to the intent (this is not to say that all scholars have a pure heart or air appropriate concerns). It is only as the two work together that the Pentecostal 'brain drain' can diminish and, hopefully as well, the denomination and its institutions can develop stronger foundations. Further, if the current statistics are to be believed, the ratio of Bible scholars and theologians to members of the church is woefully underrepresented in classical Pentecostal denominations. If this large burgeoning force is to take up the mantle of 'numerical' leadership, then theological leadership, maintaining the traditions and safeguarding the faith are likewise necessary. Little of this can be done without the work of scholars.

Related to this is the need to find appropriate forums and venues by which to discuss doctrines, even key ones. I remember when I was in a session with a prominent Pentecostal theologian while in Seminary. The topic was the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. I asked, 'What was the theological connection between the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and Speaking in Tongues?' He responded, "It is a necessary doctrine like the doctrine of the Trinity. Next question." We as

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<sup>34</sup> I am using this phrase as it was used to describe Russell Spittler, Walter Hollenweger, "Critical Loyalty" in *The Spirit and Spirituality* 6-15.

scholars and leaders should find a place to legitimately look at and evaluate these doctrines. This does not mean that they will be changed or dismissed, but without discussion the potential of articulation and explanation is truncated if not lost altogether. Further, "Pentecostal leaders need to pledge never again to subject eager, faithful and intellectually inclined young people to shame merely for asking tough questions about Pentecostal distinctives." (Olson 28-9) In so saying, this does not mean that all such scholars will in the final assessment agree to endorse certain Pentecostal doctrines, yet shame and ridicule will not help keep 'these in line,' and I would argue will not help the church in the long run.

One final reflection can be drawn by this study. Most of the respondents still love Pentecostalism.<sup>35</sup> They love the music, the vibrancy of worship and the passion in general. In a sense, it can be said that 'you can take the boy out of Pentecostalism, but you can't take Pentecostalism out of the boy.' It is partially for this reason that there has been in recent years the 'Pentecostalization' of Evangelicals. Besides the impact of John Wimber and the 'Third Wave', the influence of Pentecostal scholars in non-denominational schools, such as Paul Alexander of Azusa Pacific University, Barry Corey (President) and Leonard Bartlotti of Biola University, Robert Cooley (Former President), Peter Kuzmic and Eldin Villafañe of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Gordon Fee of Regent College, Russell Spittler (Former Provost), Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and Cecil M. Robeck of Fuller Seminary and Amos Yong of Regent University among others, cannot be underestimated. These and the above noted post-Pentecostal denominational scholars with the numerous Charismatic scholars have impacted the theological landscape, especially among Evangelicals. These, plus the influence of contemporary worship songs, have participated in the 'Pentecostalization' of Evangelicals.

It is my hope that this study is both ongoing and beneficial to the Pentecostal church. Just as a pathologist studies dead bodies for the sake of those still living, so also, this study sought to study those who have left with the hope to better enable the current and future scholars and Pentecostals as a whole to better understand each other and work together for the future of the Pentecostal Church.

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<sup>35</sup> E.g. Olson. 30 and Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), ix-x.

LETTER SENT TO THE SCHOLARS

Dear

Greetings from Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines.

I am currently researching the topic 'Why scholars have left Pentecostal Denominations?' It is for the Asia Pacific Theological Association meeting held in Singapore later this year. If you could please answer the following questions and reply to them as soon as you can it would be greatly appreciated. The first set is basic background information to verify your transition. The second part is more personal and as such it will be anonymous in the paper unless you specify otherwise. My email address is [paul.lewis63@gmail.com](mailto:paul.lewis63@gmail.com)

If you know someone else who may fit this category, please let me know.

Thank you for your assistance with this.

Paul W. Lewis  
Academic Dean  
Asia Pacific Theological Seminary  
Baguio, Philippines

BASIC QUESTIONS (Note that for all of the questions below 'Pentecostal' is used to designate all Classic Pentecostal Denominations)

1. Background—
  - a. Did you grow up in a Pentecostal home? If so, were you a Preachers Kid or Missionary Kid? If so, where?
  - b. If you did not grow up in a Pentecostal home, were you 'saved' in a Pentecostal church as a youth or college age?
  - c. In either case, which Pentecostal Denomination were you affiliated with?
  - d. Did you ever carry ministerial credentials for the said denomination?

Lewis, *Why have Scholars left*  
*Classical Pentecostal Denominations?*

- e. With which denomination are you currently affiliated? As a member? Do you have ministerial credentials?
- f. What is your current academic position?
- 2. Questions about the change (Note that this portion will remain anonymous unless you specifically state otherwise)
  - a. What is the primary reason for leaving the Pentecostal denomination?
    - i. Financial reasons
    - ii. Lack of emotional support
    - iii. Theological Reasons
      - 1. On Divorce and Remarriage
      - 2. On the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues
      - 3. Other \_\_\_\_\_
    - iv. Personal Spiritual journey (e.g. felt a leading to a different type of church—Catholic, Mainline, liturgical, etc.)
    - v. Personal circumstances (e.g. Spouse from other denomination)
    - vi. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Aside from the primary reason, what other factors did impact the transition? (pick as many as applies)
    - i. Financial reasons
    - ii. Lack of emotional support
    - iii. Theological Reasons
      - 1. On Divorce and Remarriage
      - 2. On the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the Initial Evidence of Speaking in other tongues
      - 3. Other \_\_\_\_\_
    - iv. Personal Spiritual journey (e.g. felt a leading to a different type of church—Catholic, Mainline, etc.)
    - v. Personal circumstances (e.g. Spouse from other denomination)
    - vi. Other \_\_\_\_\_

For both a. and b. please give specifics if possible.

- c. Please describe some key events that lead to your move:
  
- d. What positive elements do you now feel that you gained from the Pentecostal background?
  
- e. Are there some serious concerns that you may have about the Pentecostal denomination that you came from? If so, what are they?
  
- f. If there is something that you would like to see change for the future in the denomination of your background or Pentecostalism as a whole, what would that be?
  
- g. Other comments?

Thank you very much for your help with this!