***Bosworth Matters***

Date: Friday, April 3, 2020

Website: ffbosworth.strikingly.com

**Remembering Dr. Vinson Synan,**

Historian Extraordinaire of

Pentecostal Church History

*'He inspired me to do my doctoral thesis on F.F. Bosworth'*

**By Roscoe Barnes III, PhD**  
Author, [*F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind "Christ the Healer"*](https://www.cambridgescholars.com/ff-bosworth-16)

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| **Dr. H. Vinson Synan**  (December 1, 1934 – March 15, 2020) |

Dr. Vinson Synan, world-renowned lecturer and author, will undoubtedly be remembered as the premier historian of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. His legacy includes his service as a professor, administrator, editor, and champion of ecumenism. He was also a husband and father.  
  
Synan, who was born on December 1, 1934 in Hopewell, Va., died on a Sunday morning, March 15, 2020, at Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City, Okla. He was 85. He is survived by his wife, Carol Lee Fuqua Synan, and their children. He and Carol were married 59 years.

*Synan's official obituary is located*[*here*](https://www.dignitymemorial.com/en-ca/obituaries/oklahoma-city-ok/h-synan-9085973)*.*

When news of his death appeared on Facebook and other social media platforms, a wave of tributes poured in from friends, family, students, colleagues and church leaders from across the United States and other nations. Many posted selfies and some shared memories. Everyone offered tributes that showed deep respect and gratitude for Synan as a person and scholar.

**F.F. Bosworth Connection**

Unlike many of my friends and colleagues, however, I never had the honor of meeting Synan in person. I never sat in his class as a student and I did not spend hours fellowshipping or holding conversations with him. Yet, his contributions as the premier Pentecostal historian still had a profound impact on my life as a researcher and student of history. In short, it was because of him that I pursued my doctoral work on F.F. Bosworth. I’m convinced that had it not been for his advice, I probably would not have my PhD – or be writing about Bosworth today.

It was in the fall of 2004 when I reached out to Synan with a question about Bosworth and John G. Lake. At the time, I was doing research for a book on Bosworth. When I called Synan's office, he picked up the phone after the first ring, which surprised me. He seemed very interested in my project. He asked if I was working on a degree. I said no and explained that I was writing the book because of my personal interest in the topic. He asked if I had considered doing a PhD on Bosworth. At the time, it had not crossed my mind. But I told him I would entertain the idea. He suggested it would be a good topic for doctoral research. He also recommended Regent as a good school to consider.

Well, that was in 2004. In 2006, I began my doctoral studies with the University of Pretoria. My thesis was titled, ***F. F. Bosworth: A Historical Analysis of the Influential Factors in His Life and Ministry*** (See it [here](https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/26869).).

After completing my oral defense in 2010 and learning I had passed, the school informed me of the two outside examiners who read my thesis and approved it for graduation. To my surprise, one of the examiners was Dr. V. Synan (see document below). When I saw his name, I wept for joy. I don't know if he remembered me or my phone call in 2004, but I felt that I had come full circle: he was part of the beginning and the end of my doctorate.

I should note that I will always be grateful to the Lord for allowing us to connect. There's no doubt that our conversation that day was divinely orchestrated by the Spirit. I am truly humbled by the work that was accomplished as a result of his encouragement and advice.

**‘Pillar’ in Church and Academia**

Synan was a leader in the Pentecostal Holiness Church, where he served as director of evangelism. He published or edited more than 25 books. His many titles included *The Century of the Holy Spirit* and *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States*. Fifteen of his books are related to Pentecostal and charismatic history. Synan was a Scholar in Residence at Oral Roberts University. He also once served as the director of the Holy Spirit Research Center at ORU. In October 2018, the Virginia History Series name Synan to its Historical Hall of Fame.

“The IPHC is grateful for the life of Dr. Vinson Synan,” said Dr. Doug Beacham, general superintendent of the IPHC, in a statement posted on the IPHC website. “No one in our movement has been more influential in global Christianity than him. He was a pillar in the mid-twentieth century move of the Holy Spirit that impacted Christians from nearly every faith family within Protestantism and Catholicism.”

In addition to being a noted author and professor, Synan was a pioneer in Pentecostal research and a trailblazer in establishing a Pentecostal research community. Among other things, he played a role in creating the Society for Pentecostal Studies (SPS), where he also worked as the society’s first general secretary and its newsletter editor.

**Ecumenism in the Charismatic Renewal**

According to Regent University, where he served as dean of the School of Divinity from 1994 to 2006, “One of (his) greatest accomplishments was his dedication in joining with other Christian leaders in opening the door to dialogue, building understanding, and fostering honor and mutual respect among leaders and participants in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.” In the spirit of ecumenism, he worked to build bridges with the Roman Catholics and other faith groups.

“Dr. Vinson Synan was a powerhouse minister who God used to bring His people together and grow His kingdom,” said Pat Robertson. “He was also a world-class scholar who recorded God’s mighty works and trained new generations of ministers as dean of the Regent University School of Divinity.”

In a statement released by ORU, Synan was described as “a leading historian on the Holiness, Pentecostal, and Charismatic movements” who was “recognized for his work as an ambassador and shepherd of the Charismatic movement during the 1970’s and 1980’s.” Dr. William M. Wilson, president of ORU, said Synan had “a tremendous amount of experience in the significant faith movements of our time.” He suggested “the entire Christian world will miss this legend of a man.”

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| [https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-QEjVxKf1lsM/XoNZISAa5QI/AAAAAAAALn0/ct-raEfIkzoVDVJGT7GYc5jqJiDXy5P_QCLcBGAsYHQ/s400/Pretoria%2Band%2BVinson%2BSynan.png](https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-QEjVxKf1lsM/XoNZISAa5QI/AAAAAAAALn0/ct-raEfIkzoVDVJGT7GYc5jqJiDXy5P_QCLcBGAsYHQ/s1600/Pretoria%2Band%2BVinson%2BSynan.png) |
| This document from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, identifies Dr. Vinson Synan as one of the external examiners of my doctoral thesis on F.F. Bosworth. |

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**Related articles:**

“Died: Vinson Synan, Historian Who Saw Breadth of Pentecostalism: In scholarship and ministry, he argued for an expansive and expanding Spirit-filled Christianity across traditions” by Daniel Silliman (*Christianity Today*, March 17, 2020). See article [here](https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2020/march/died-vinson-synan-pentecostal-charismatic-historian.html).

“Dr. Harold Vinson Synan Named to the Historical Hall of Fame” (October 24, 2018). See article [here](https://iphc.org/gso/2018/10/24/dr-harold-vinson-synan-named-to-the-historical-hall-of-fame/).

“Celebrating Dr. Vinson Synan” (March 16, 2020). See article [here](https://iphc.org/gso/2020/03/16/celebrating-dr-vinson-synan/).

“Regent Mourns the Loss of Theologian Dr. Vinson Synan” (March 19, 2020). See article [here](https://www.regent.edu/news-events/regent-mourns-the-loss-of-theologian-dr-vinson-synan/).

“ORU MOURNS THE DEATH OF DR. VINSON SYNAN” (Sunday, March 15, 2020). See article [here](https://oru.edu/news/oru_news/20200315-oru-mourns-passing-vinson-synan.php).

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Reminder: "F.F. Bosworth History" is now on Twitter. Follow @bosworth\_fred  
  
Note: My book, *F.F. Bosworth: The Man Behind "Christ the Healer,"* can be purchased [here](https://www.cambridgescholars.com/ff-bosworth-16) with a **25% discount**. Use the discount code: bosworth25.

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