Globethics Repository



A Full Apostolic Gospel Standard of Experience and Doctrine

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Menzies, Glen W.
Publisher	Asia Pacific Theological Seminary
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-16 11:55:33
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/236568

[*AJPS* 15:1 (2012), pp. 19-32]

A FULL APOSTOLIC GOSPEL STANDARD OF EXPERIENCE AND DOCTRINE

Glen W. Menzies

I. Introduction

In 1914, the American General Council of the Assemblies of God was organized or "constituted." Until 1927 its "constitution" was not a formally organized structure spelled out in a governing document, like the Constitution of the United States of America, but rather a semi-formal way of doing things based in part on various resolutions and documents and in part on habit, more closely resembling the "constitution" of Great Britain, which is a tradition rather than a document.

When the General Council first published the minutes of its first two General Councils – which were both held in 1914 – the minutes were preceded by an "Introduction" that attempted to provide the reader with some context for the account of the General Councils which was to follow. Although this introduction was brief, it attempted to encapsulate both what the Pentecostal Movement was about and what the organizers of the General Council of the Assemblies of God hoped to accomplish by the formation of this new fellowship.

I will not pretend that I have fully digested all the values and aspirations that lay behind this Introduction, but today I would like for us to begin by considering the opening line of that document. It reads: "For a number of years, God has been leading men to seek for a full apostolic gospel standard of experience and doctrine." The comments that follow make clear what is meant by "For a number of years." It explains that fourteen years earlier "the Lord began to pour out His Spirit in Kansas, then in Texas . . . ." Next came Los Angeles, from which this outpouring of the Spirit spread throughout the world.

So, fourteen years into the Pentecostal Movement, when it was important to encapsulate the essence of this movement which the

organizers of the Assemblies of God sought to celebrate and advance by the formation of this new fellowship, the phrase they chose for this purpose was "a full apostolic gospel standard of experience and doctrine." Today I would like to highlight the significance of this phrase, which is also the title of my address. I should also point out that this is a fuller, more complete rendering of the much more common expression "full gospel," a term that used to be widespread but has now largely fallen out of use in the Pentecostal circles I know in America, although I believe it continues to be widely employed in Asia. As we consider the matter of "Pentecostal identity" – to which the theme of this lectureship, "Pentecostal Identity: Reclaiming Our Heritage" points us – I believe it will be helpful to ponder the meaning of "A full apostolic gospel standard of experience and doctrine."

But before we proceed to analyze this potent phrase, I would like to direct your attention to a second expression of identity from the early decades of the Pentecostal Movement. I refer to an abortive attempt to change the name of the Assemblies of God. I have already mentioned that until 1927 the American Assemblies of God was not governed by a formal, written constitution. Since the original goal had been to form a loose fellowship of Pentecostal congregations, only the most minimal organizational structures were desired. While today General Councils occur every two years in the American Assemblies of God, in the early years it was not uncommon to have two or even three Councils in one year. As the years passed and the number of resolutions passed at these various General Councils increased, the patchwork of "combined minutes" from these councils became convoluted and nearly incomprehensible. Also, as the missionary, educational, and publishing enterprises of the Assemblies of God emerged and grew, it became increasingly clear to some leaders that a more formal and more structured organizational framework was needed. John W. Welch was the chief advocate of greater formal structure. Because of this advocacy, in 1925 Welch was not returned to the office of General Chairman, a position he had held from 1915 to 1920 and then again following the death of E. N. Bell, from 1923 to 1925.

Nevertheless, in 1927, after several years of disputation and rancor over the matter, the General Council approved a formal, written constitution. The proposal brought to the General Council by a special committee tasked with that assignment was approved in its entirety, with one notable exception. The new constitution had proposed that the name of the Assemblies of God be changed to the "Pentecostal Evangelical Church." Although the General Council in session

reluctantly agreed that the fellowship needed a more formal structure, changing the name of the fellowship was more than it could bear.

I bring up this abortive name change for two reasons, both of which have some bearing on the issue of Pentecostal identity: First, the proposed name change was part of a larger program of taming the radical anti-institutionalism of the early Pentecostals and moving the Assemblies of God in the direction of denominationalism. The chief question provoked by the drafting of a written constitution was "Does operating under a constitution make the Assemblies of God a denomination? – a vision it had explicitly rejected at its founding. Second is the name itself. An enduring question of Pentecostal identity has been, from nearly the beginning if not the very beginning: Is Pentecostalism a subset of Evangelicalism?

Another more subtle change also took place in 1927: the preamble to the Statement of Fundamental Truths was changed. When originally approved in 1916 the preamble had read:

> This Statement of Fundamental Truths is not intended as a creed for the Church, nor as a basis of fellowship among Christians, but only as a basis of unity for the ministry alone (i.e., that we all speak the same thing, 1 Cor. 1:10; Acts 2:42). The human phraseology employed in such statement is not inspired nor contended for, but the truth set forth in such phraseology is held to be essential to a full Gospel ministry. No claim is made that it contains all truth in the Bible, only that it covers our present needs as to these fundamental matters.

While there was some tinkering with the preamble in subsequent years – mainly by adding a statement that the Bible was "the all-sufficient rule for faith and practice" – the general thrust of the preamble remained unchanged until 1927. In that year, concurrent with the adoption of a formal written constitution, the preamble was altered in a radical way, although the full force of that change was masked by the use of language that allowed the statement to retain its traditional sound and feel. The revised preamble asserted, " . . . this Statement of Fundamental Truths is intended as a basis of fellowship among us (i.e., that we all speak the same thing, 1 Cor. 1:10; Acts 2:42)." Whereas the previous versions of the preamble had explicitly *denied* that the Statement of Fundamental Truths was to serve as "a basis of fellowship," this preamble explicitly *affirms* that it was intended to function in this way. In its original form the preamble sought to limit

what Assemblies of God ministers proclaimed publicly, but not to corral what they believed or to set forth a requirement for church membership. In contrast, the revised version of the preamble aimed for exactly those things. Moreover, all subsequent versions of the preamble have affirmed that the Statement of Fundamental Truths is to serve as "a basis of fellowship."

This new role for the Statement of Fundamental Truths was a stark contrast to the arch anti-creedalism expressed by the founders of the Assemblies of God. That anti-creedal, anti-denominational stance was effectively articulated by the popular slogan: "Although we have not yet achieved unity of the faith, we have achieved unity of the Spirit." While this slogan predates the founding of the Assemblies of God, the slogan was printed on the masthead of early Assemblies of God publications and its essence was explicitly affirmed in the "Resolution of Constitution" passed as the Assemblies of God was founded in 1914. Echoing Eph. 4:3 and 4:13, this resolution claimed that all those gathered were "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, until we all come into the unity of the faith."

Without doubt two different visions of unity and organizational cohesion were expressed in 1914 and in 1927. In thirteen short years the Assemblies of God had moved from a vision of unity rooted in common experience of the Spirit's work in one's life, i.e., the 1914 vision, to a vision of unity and organizational cohesion anchored in doctrinal conformity, the 1927 vision. In 1914, people with holiness backgrounds and theology fellowshipped with those with Reformed identities, not to mention non-Trinitarians, or even "hypnotists" like John G. Lake. The fledgling Assemblies of God avoided drawing lines of separation based on doctrinal differences.

When the Oneness Controversy produced a crisis in 1915 and 1916, it was agreed that some common standards were needed. The adoption of the Statement of Fundamental Truths in 1916 and then the change in 1927 to make this Statement “a basis of fellowship” were each shifts that brought the Assemblies of God further into the orbit of Evangelicalism, which like the Fundamentalism, has tended to mark off its boundaries on the basis of doctrinal orthodoxy.

In the contemporary American context, the Assemblies of God is widely regarded as “the most evangelical” of the various Pentecostal denominations and fellowships. It is one of the largest and probably the most mainstream Pentecostal group in America. It is well developed institutionally, possessing large educational, missionary, and publishing enterprises. At the founding of the National Association of

Evangelicals in 1942 it was the largest of the organizing fellowships or denominations, and two Assemblies of God ministers – Thomas Zimmerman and Don Argue – have served as presidents of the National Association of Evangelicals. While the Assemblies of God never took the name "Pentecostal Evangelical Church" (written with the initial letters capitalized), there is very little doubt that today it is a "pentecostal evangelical church" (written with the initial letters in lower case).

The underlying question of course is whether or not this evangelical character is a legitimate or an illegitimate manifestation of its core Pentecostal identity. Over the years this issue has been raised by a number of smaller Pentecostal fellowships that seem to hold two key convictions: 1) We are Pentecostal; and 2) We are not Assemblies of God. When probed about this, these critics will often cite objections to the institutionalism, denominationalism, formalism, or even creedalism of the Assemblies of God. These are all characteristics that these detractors would also associate with Evangelicalism. So, like it or not, evangelical identity is a factor in the question of Pentecostal identity.

In this rather extended introduction to some key questions about Pentecostal identity I have attempted to establish two poles that define much of the debate. I think it is possible to consolidate these two poles into one overarching question that will frame our conversation today: How does the commitment to "a full apostolic gospel standard of experience and doctrine" relate to the reality of being a "pentecostal evangelical church"?

II. Pentecostal Commitment to the Importance of Being Apostolic

About a year-and-a-half ago I had the opportunity to do some teaching in Armenia and the Republic of Georgia. Although both of these nations were subjected to widespread atheistic indoctrination during the Soviet era, both are also historically Christian nations, at least in a nominal sense. In fact, Armenia was the first nation to embrace Christianity as its official state religion, which happened in the year 301 A.D., a dozen years before the practice of Christianity became legal throughout the Roman Empire. In both Armenia and Georgia, the Eastern Orthodox Church dominates the religious landscape, often opposing or harassing Pentecostal and Evangelical outreach. In

Armenia Eastern Orthodoxy is called the Armenian Apostolic Church, and in Georgia the Orthodox Church is called the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Notice that both formal names contain the word "apostolic."

As I was teaching a group of pastors in Tbilisi, Georgia, one of them made a comment about how the Orthodox leaders would often dismiss Pentecostal pastors and Pentecostal churches as not being "apostolic." I asked him what he said in response. Basically he said, "Nothing much," implicitly accepting the criticism that Pentecostalism is a recent development disconnected from the apostolic Christianity of the first century.

I challenged him not to accept this. Pentecostalism is built squarely on the ideal of representing apostolic Christianity. The earliest Pentecostals more commonly called themselves "Apostolic Faith" than Pentecostal. Painted in big letters on the side of the Azusa Street Mission were the words "Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission." Pentecostalism must be apostolic or it is not Pentecostal at all.

This seemed to come as a new revelation to this Georgian pastor, so I further explained that Pentecostals simply have a different theory of what makes a church "apostolic." The Eastern Orthodox, much like Roman Catholics, claim to be apostolic because they are led by bishops who stand in unbroken succession from the first bishops who were ordained by the apostles. This succession of "pastors of the church," as both Orthodox and Catholic bishops are understood, is thought to guarantee that the true faith will remain protected.

Pentecostals, like other Protestants, reject this concept of what it means to be apostolic because it is clear that a continuous succession of leadership does not guarantee a continuous succession of correct doctrine and spiritual experience. The Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church bears little resemblance to the apostolic Christianity portrayed in the New Testament.

A moment's reflection will illustrate why this is the case. In America there is a common children's game called "telephone." Perhaps this game is played here in the Philippines as well. Children all sit in a circle and one of them whispers some comment into the ear of the child next to him. That child then turns and tries to whisper the same thing into the ear of the next child, who also turns and whispers to the next child, and so on. Usually there is lots of laughing and giggling because the original comment keeps getting changed until it makes absolutely no sense at all. Eventually the circle is completed and someone whispers into the ear of the child who made the original

comment. This child then announces to everyone what was originally said and what ultimately was repeated back to her. The final form of the comment always ends up being completely different from the original. Of course the experience of the Church has been very much like a game of intergenerational "telephone," with the teaching of the Church undergoing wild transformation over the years.

It is for this reason that Protestants in general take a different approach to assessing apostolicity. Protestants consider a church to be apostolic when it proclaims the same truths as the apostles proclaimed. The way to test for this is to compare what one's congregation or fellowship proclaims with what is taught in the New Testament, and then to make corrections as necessary. Thus Protestant churches are to be *semper reformanda* – "ever reforming" – constantly standing vigil to protect "the faith once and for all delivered to the saints," to use the language of Jude 3.

III. The Apostolic Faith: Continuity or Rupture

As I have reflected on my answer to this Georgian pastor, I have felt that while I emphasized an important truth – that Pentecostalism must be apostolic – my answer had still been incomplete. Implicit to the criticism endured by Pentecostal pastors in the Republic of Georgia from the mouths of the Orthodox is the idea that a truly apostolic church cannot be a recent arrival but rather must have existed throughout the life of the Church. This conception of apostolicity is built firmly on the notion of *continuity*. The Orthodox Church is the true church because it is the same church that Christ founded, the same church that the apostles led, and it has existed institutionally in an uninterrupted fashion from the beginning.

In contrast, the Pentecostal conception of its apostolicity is built on the notions of *rupture* and *restoration*. Not long after the close of the Apostolic Age the mainstream church lost its way. Yes, there may still have been a righteous remnant of those who remained faithful, the 7,000 who refused to bow a knee to Ba'al, but as a whole the church ceased to transmit the Apostolic Faith. The connection with the dynamism that originally launched Christianity had been ruptured.

When the restoration came, starting at Topeka and then Azusa Street and moving from there literally around the world, this constituted an eschatological event usually explained in the language of the prophet Joel. The "latter rain" had begun to fall. According to this

paradigm, the "former rain" referred to the initial outpouring of the Spirit in the Apostolic Age, whereas the "latter rain" mentioned by Joel pointed to the renewed outpouring of the Spirit in the twentieth century. Consequently, as the Introduction to the Minutes of the 1914 General Councils puts it, "almost every city and community in civilization has heard of the Latter Rain outpouring of the Holy Ghost."

There was another aspect to the eschatological expectation of these early Pentecostals: the end of the age was at hand. The Introduction to the Minutes of the 1914 General Councils speaks of "the prophecy which has been predominant in all this great outpouring," and summarizes it as "Jesus is coming soon." For the early Pentecostals the linkage between the Pentecostal Revival and the Second Coming was palpable. Just as John the Baptist had been a forerunner heralding the first coming of the Messiah, the Pentecostal Revival was to be a forerunner heralding the Messiah's second coming.

The eschatological nature of these events indicated that nothing of what had happened was the result of human ingenuity, methods, or virtue; it was entirely the work of a sovereign God. While the early Pentecostals valued deep devotion and piety, they did not believe Pentecost had come to them because they were better Christians than their forebears or better Christians than their contemporaries in non-Pentecostal Bible-believing churches. They were simply recipients of divine grace.

If this gracious outpouring of the Spirit was considered a forerunner to the Second Coming, it was also considered a *restoration* of what the Church had once had but then lost. It was as if the Apostolic Age had returned and the intervening period of church history marked by institutionalism, formalism, creedalism, and lack of spiritual power had never existed.

No doubt to some this claim seemed to be warmed-over porridge. Had not the Protestant Reformation amounted to a similar claim? Had not Luther claimed that the Roman Church had become apostate and needed to be restored or reformed? Was not the Reformation slogan *Ad fontes* – "To the sources" – a cry for restoration to New Testament Christianity?

But the early Pentecostals claimed more than the Reformers. They called for a restoration not only of apostolic doctrine, but also apostolic experience. They claimed that the same life and power that animated the Church during the Apostolic Age was once again present in their midst. They claimed it was possible to live the book of Acts in the twentieth century.

Since the Reformation, Protestantism had understood a true church to exist wherever "the sacraments are rightly performed and the gospel rightly proclaimed." Unfortunately this had led to what many early Pentecostals decried as "dead orthodoxy." The problem was not with the doctrine that was taught. The problem was not with the administration of the sacraments. The problem was that, even with those blessings, church life bore little resemblance to the dynamism depicted in the New Testament. Doctrine by itself simply was not enough. Liturgy and sacrament by themselves were not enough. The presence and power of the Spirit were necessary if one was to experience the "full gospel."

IV. "This is That"

One of the reasons the early Pentecostals believed the "apostolic faith" had been restored to them involved the way they read Scripture. While Acts 2 was the primary text, other texts – especially Joel 2 and Acts 10 – were also important.

A key interpretive paradigm was found in Acts 2:16, a verse from Peter's Pentecost sermon. After observing the puzzlement of many Diaspora Jews over hearing their native languages spoken by people from other lands, Peter declares, "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." In this way, Peter maps his own experience and the contemporary experience of others into the framework of Scripture in order to locate an interpretation that can explain those experiences.

A similar "this is that" moment is related in Acts 10 when at the house of Cornelius Peter and his fellow Jews are shocked to observe a group of Gentiles "speaking in tongues and extolling God" (vs. 46). Peter concludes that these Gentiles had received the Spirit just has he and his comrades had on the day of Pentecost on the basis of the similarity of their experiences.

When the early Pentecostals implored Christ Jesus to clothe them with power from on high and then found themselves speaking in tongues, they too had a "this is that" moment. It only seemed reasonable to connect their own experiences with the very similar events recorded in the New Testament.

Ever since the Dead Sea Scrolls first began to be published, scholars have noted the similarities of Peter's interpretation to a kind of commentary commonly called the *Pesher*. Most prominent among the *pesharim* from Qumran are the *Habakkuk Pesher* and the *Nahum*

Pesher. The name comes from the Hebrew word *pesher*, which simply means "interpretation." The expressions *Pishro* ("Its interpretation is . . . .") or *Pesher haDavar* ("The interpretation of the matter is . . . .") occur frequently in these works.

Both the *Habakkuk Pesher* and the *Nahum Pesher* are sectarian works that recount how the Teacher of Righteousness related biblical prophecy to contemporary events. Modern scholars may find many of these interpretations fanciful, but the disagreement is largely over how narrowly to apply ancient prophecies. Habakkuk uses the imagery of a fisherman and his nets to portray great military powers snatching up their helpless victims, who are portrayed in Habakkuk as unsuspecting fish. The *Habakkuk Pesher* makes clear that the Romans are the fisherman described in this prophecy. And just as the fisherman "worships" his nets as the source of his prosperity, so too the Romans worship their own military might as the source of their prosperity.

It is hardly surprising that the Teacher of Righteousness would read Habakkuk this way, finding significance for this prophecy in the events of his day. This is not very different from Martin Luther finding echoes of Paul's conflict with the Judaizers in his own struggle with Rome. Yes, it is true that Luther thought of his situation *paralleling* Paul's conflict, while the Teacher of Righteousness probably believed that Habakkuk prophesied with precisely the Roman armies in his mind, so this comparison is imperfect. Nevertheless, the Teacher of Righteousness was not the crazy person some scholars make him out to be.

As Acts 2 presents the matter, Peter's reading of Joel more closely resembles the interpretation of the Teacher of Righteousness than that of Martin Luther. He argues that Joel foresaw the events that had come upon them, not just that these events were similar to other events that Joel describes.

On the other hand, the relationship that Peter finds between the Gentiles in Cornelius' house and the events that occurred on the Day of Pentecost is primarily one of similarity. Nevertheless, there is also a sense in which Luke portrays Acts 10 as a further fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that the Spirit would be poured out on "all flesh." In the situation recounted in Acts 10, the "flesh" in question is hard-to-imagine Gentile flesh. In a way this must have seemed even more amazing to Peter than what had happened on the Day of Pentecost. God's Spirit had been poured out on those who were generally understood by the Jewish community to stand outside of the people of God.

It is clear that many of the early Pentecostals believed Joel had predicted not only the Day of Pentecost described in Acts 2 but also the modern Pentecostal Movement. Acts 2 represented "the early rain" and Azusa Street represented "the latter rain."[1] While personally I am not prepared to give assent to this interpretation, I understand the rationale behind it.

V. The Triumph of the Vision of Continuity

There is a certain irony in the way Pentecostals talk about how the Apostolic Age relates to the history of the Church that follows. If they are talking to cessationists – those who believe the gifts of the Spirit are not for today – Pentecostals will emphasize continuity: through the centuries the gifts of the Spirit never disappeared from Church life. However, if they are speaking with Roman Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox, or Anglicans, they will emphasize the decline of the Church following the Apostolic Age. Both *continuity* and *rupture* are part of the usual Pentecostal historiography.

In this way Pentecostal historiography resembles a Baptist movement known as "Landmarkism," which claims that the true Church is made up exclusively of congregations that practice believer's baptism. While beginning in the third century most of the Church came to practice infant baptism, according to Landmarkism there has always been an unbroken line of churches that remained true to the apostolic practice of believer's baptism. The name "Landmarkism" comes from Proverbs 22:28, which reads, "Remove not the old landmark," and so Landmark churches were understood to be those that had remained true to the apostolic pattern. As in Pentecostalism, both rupture and continuity are necessary ingredients for this movement's self-understanding. Also, the fact that Landmarkism predates Pentecostalism, beginning in the mid-1850s, suggests that it may have had some impact on the nascent Pentecostal movement.

But it is precisely at this point, in the question of how much to emphasize continuity with the historic Church and how much to focus on rupture with the more immediate past, that the tensions between Pentecostal identity and Evangelical identity come to the fore. It is

[1]Forty years later the paradigm would be adjusted during the so-called Latter Rain Movement. According to this newer paradigm Azusa Street was understood to be Joel's "early rain" while Joel's "latter rain" prophecy was fulfilled in the eponymous revival of the late 40's and early 50's.

clear that at first the motifs of rupture and restoration predominated in Pentecostalism and in the Assemblies of God. The language of "latter rain" and "this is that" demonstrates this. Consider too these comments from 1922 by Daniel W. Kerr, the primary author of the Statement of Fundamental Truths:

> Sacred church history reveals the fact that the church fell. Revelation 2 and 3 prophetically set forth the fall of the church, and its declining condition to the end of the age.[2]

For a fellowship that emphasized the fallen state of the mainstream church, "to the end of the age," as Kerr puts it, it is hardly surprising that it did not have much use for the creeds and the councils of church history. But then the "new issue" of oneness challenged the casual way that the young Assemblies of God approached theological diversity. The fellowship chose to affirm the truth contained in the Nicene Creed and the judgments of the first four ecumenical councils, as did most Protestant denominations. It chose to declare itself to be Trinitarian, even though the word "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible. It chose to align itself with the historic church, over against a more radical Pentecostalism that rejected the entire theological enterprise of the post-Apostolic Church.

While in 1916 the Statement of Fundamental Truths was not yet held to be a "Basis for fellowship," it did launch the Assemblies of God on a more Evangelical trajectory than its previous arc suggested. When in 1927, the Preamble to the Statement of Fundamental Truths was modified and a formal written constitution was approved, this new trajectory was solidified. Finally, when in 1942 the Assemblies of God became a founding member of the National Association of Evangelicals, the Evangelical identity of this Pentecostal fellowship became anchored in stone.

VI. How does being Evangelical affect Pentecostal Identity?

So, we have reached the crux of my lecture today. There is the rather important question: How does being Evangelical affect one's Pentecostal identity? There is also the even more urgent question: Must Evangelical identity eventually eclipse one's Pentecostal identity?

---

[2]Daniel W. Kerr, "The Basis for our Distinctive Testimony," *The Pentecostal Evangel* (Sept 2, 1022), 4.

Both Pentecostals and Evangelicals seek to ground what they say and do in the Bible, so there is no problem there. Both Pentecostals and Evangelicals also lay claim to apostolicity, although in somewhat different ways. While Evangelicals claim their churches are apostolic because they proclaim apostolic (i.e., New Testament) doctrines, Pentecostals claim this and more. In addition to apostolic doctrine we also claim to manifest and to transmit to others "apostolic experience."

Fortunately the Evangelical standard is a subset of the Pentecostal standard. If the Evangelical standard for apostolicity somehow contradicted or disallowed the Pentecostal interest in the recovery of "apostolic experience," then it would not be possible to be both Evangelical and Pentecostal. Happily this is not the case.

The area of greatest tension between Evangelical identity and Pentecostal identity appears to be in the area of historiography. While both Pentecostals and Evangelicals affirm both continuity with the past and rupture, it seems that Evangelicals emphasize continuity more than Pentecostals. This also bleeds over into Hermeneutics. Pentecostals are more comfortable declaring "this is that" than are many Evangelicals. If someone gives a prophetic utterance in church, Pentecostals are likely to proclaim, "this is that" described in the New Testament. Evangelicals will likely avoid making such a clear connection. If someone speaks in tongues, Pentecostals are likely to affirm "this is that" depicted in the book of Acts. Again, Evangelicals may remain skeptical, even if they affirm the possibility of *glossolalia* today. Many Evangelicals are willing to allow New Testament experiences and practices to remain theoretical, whereas Pentecostals feel the need to replicate these New Testament experiences and practices as fully as possible.

VII. Conclusion

So, what should we conclude about the dual identity of the Assemblies of God, a self-described Pentecostal fellowship that manifestly is also Evangelical? Clearly these two identities are pulling the AG, as well as similar organizations, in slightly different directions, but this has been happening from the beginning of its history.

The fears that the founding generation expressed about denominationalism, creedalism, and institutionalism were well-founded, for the Assemblies of God has changed considerably over the years.

But it still retains a commitment to seeking after not only apostolic doctrine, but also apostolic experience.

As the eschatological urgency that gripped the first generation of Pentecostals recedes – we no longer constantly hear the prophetic word "Jesus is coming soon" constantly in our churches – Pentecostals in the future will need to build stronger bridges with the heritage of historic Christianity. We will need to speak more about continuity with the past and less about rupture and restoration. In short, we will need to begin to take church history more seriously. And perhaps that is a way of saying that we will continue to become more Evangelical.

My hope is that as this future unfolds, we will also be able to bring many Evangelicals along with us in pursuit of the life and vitality depicted in the book of Acts so that we may all embrace "a full apostolic gospel standard of experience and doctrine."