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Daniel D. Isgrigg
Oral Roberts University

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THE PENTECOSTAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH: THE THEOLOGICAL SELF-IDENTITY OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD AS EVANGELICAL “PLUS”

History Interest Group

**Daniel D. Isgrigg
Bangor University**

Presented at the 46th Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies

INTRODUCTION

Are Pentecostals simply evangelicals who have had the Pentecostal experience?¹ In recent years, this topic has found its way into the conversation about Pentecostal theology, especially on the academic level.² As Pentecostal scholarship matures, many scholars are interested in not only doing theology as Pentecostals,³ but they are also working toward building a Pentecostal theology reflective of the movement’s true theological identity rather than simply evangelical or Fundamentalist theology plus a doctrine of the Spirit.⁴

¹ For the purpose of this piece, we will work with some very general definitions. ‘Evangelical’ refers to the association of Protestants who placed an importance on conversion, the Bible, the cross and missionary activity that was influenced by Holiness theology. Fundamentalism is the intellectual and doctrinal movement predominantly from Reformed traditions that focused on Biblicism, conversionism, and millenarianism. See David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: the age of Spurgeon and Moody*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2005), p. 23; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

² Larry Sterling, Jr. ‘Are Pentecostals Evangelicals?’ A paper presented at the 2011 meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies (March 2011); Kenneth Archer, ‘The Making of an Academic Pentecostal Theological Tradition: The Cleveland School’. A paper presented at Society of Pentecostal Studies, (March 2016).

³ John Christopher Thomas, ‘Pentecostal Theology in the Twenty-First Century’ *Pneuma* 20.1, (Spring 1998) pp. 3-19.

⁴ Much of the debate about the theological identity of Pentecostalism begins with locating the antecedents that birthed the movement. Donald Dayton’s research locates the movement within Wesleyan holiness tradition. Another approach by Edith Blumhofer, believes that many of the doctrinal characteristics of dispensational premillennialism, subsequence, and healing were all characteristic of late nineteenth century evangelicalism, particularly the non-Wesleyan streams. See Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987). Edith L. Waldvogel, ‘The ‘Overcoming’ Life: A Study in the Reformed Evangelical

As Walter Hollenweger has argued, the heart of Pentecostal theology is best characterized by the literature of the first ten years of the movement.⁵ In light of this, a survey of the Assemblies of God periodical literature of the first decade and a half (1914-1927) will reveal the degree to which evangelical identity was important to the AG’s Pentecostal identity.⁶

EVANGELICAL ‘PLUS’

In the early days, the impetus for evangelical identification was primarily a result of AG leaders who kept a close eye on the modernist controversy.⁷ When E.N. Bell was asked in 1919 where AG churches stood on modernist issues, he argued that all Assemblies are ‘opposed to all radical Higher Criticism of the Bible and against all modernism or infidelity in the church ... They believe in all the real Bible truths held by all real Evangelical churches’.⁸ In Bell’s mind, AG churches were ‘real’ evangelical churches because they opposed modernism. Stanley Frodsham believed the Pentecostal movement was a vehicle where by evangelicals of all denominational varieties could be unified around a core of fundamental truths.⁹ The *Pentecostal*

Contribution to Pentecostalism’, *Pneuma* 1.1 (Spring 1979), pp. 7-19. Donald W. Dayton ‘Pentecostal Studies’ *From The Margins: A celebration of the Theological Work of Donald W. Dayton* Christian T. Collins Winn (ed.) PTMS 75 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishing, 2007), pp. 156-57; Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

⁵ Walter Hollenweger, ‘Pentecostals and the Charismatic Movement’ in Cheslyn Jones Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold. *The Study of Spirituality*. (London, UK: SPCK, 1986), p. 551

⁶ The official organ for the Assemblies of God changed names several times in this period, but they are the same paper. For periodical citations, *Weekly Evangel* will be WE, *Christian Evangel* will be CE, and *Pentecostal Evangel* will be PE.

⁷ For example, in 1916, they were encouraged by the Presbyterian Church’s commitment to ‘get back to fundamentals’ and support of the ‘Fundamentals of the Faith.’ A few years later, in 1919, the *Evangel* published the doctrinal statement from the World Conference on Christian Fundamentals that affirmed the doctrines of inerrancy, the Trinity, virgin birth, sin, substitutionary atonement, premillennial return of Christ and bodily resurrection. The WCCF was the conference from which the adherents became known as ‘fundamentalists’. See ‘Back to Fundamentals’ WE (Sept 23, 1916), p. 7; ‘Doctrinal Statement’ CE (June 28, 1919), p. 8.

⁸ E. N. Bell, ‘Q&A’ CE (Dec 27, 1919), p. 5.

⁹ Frodsham says, ‘What a glorious fellowship I came into. I found Episcopalians, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterians, people from people from undenominational missions, holiness people, and Christian and Missionary

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Evangel even periodically described itself as an ‘Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Missionary’ publication.¹⁰

Despite the growing number of evangelical critiques, AG leaders answered their critiques by showing that the Pentecostal experience was biblical and not outside the bounds of the fundamentals of the faith.¹¹ In 1922, R. E. McAlister described the Pentecostal movement as ‘scriptural, dispensational, evangelical, missionary, aggressive, spiritual, pre-millennial, safe and sane’.¹² The AG believed they shared an evangelical identity because of their mutual rejection of modernism, their affirmation of basic evangelical doctrine, and commitment to biblical Christian living. McAlister explains, ‘Where we differ from evangelical churches in the present day is in the belief that Pentecost can be repeated’.¹³

FUNDAMENTALIST ‘PLUS’¹⁴

Concurrent with first decade of the fellowship, evangelicalism was gradually morphing into Fundamentalism and the AG naturally shifted their language to adopt the label. It wasn’t that

Alliance people by the hundreds had alike received this same baptism in the Spirit, and when we compared notes we found that we all believed the same thing. To a man we stood for the infallibility and verbal inspiration of the Bible. We all believed in the virgin birth, the resurrection and miracles of our Lord that are being denied on every hand by modern churches. We all made much of the atoning blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin. We are all looking for the near and premillennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ’. Stanley Frodsham, ‘We Know The Pentecostal Movement is of God’, CE (Aug 9, 1919), pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ This label was used in several editions in 1917. WE (Nov 10, 1917), p. 9; WE (Nov 17, 1917), p. 8. The label of ‘Evangelical and Missionary Paper’ reappeared in 1926 but omitted ‘Pentecostal’ and disappeared again in 1928. PE (May 5, 1926), p. 3; PE (Mar 24, 1928), p. 5.

¹¹ For example, Stanley Frodsham seeks to answer the critiques of R.A. Torrey, whom he considers ‘friends’ and whom he holds in ‘high esteem’ as a teacher of the fundamentals of the faith. Stanley Frodsham, ‘Why We Know the Present Pentecostal Movement Is Of God’ CE (Aug 9, 1919), p. 4-5.

¹² R. E. McAlister, ‘The Pentecostal Movement’, (May 13, 1922), p. 5.

¹³ McAlister, ‘The Pentecostal Movement’, p. 5.

¹⁴ I am indebted to Zachary Tackett’s research on the occurrences of the fundamentalist label in the periodical literature. Although many of the quotes I also found during in my own research, he was able to document these occurrences with similar conclusions. See, Zachary M. Tackett, ‘More than Fundamentalists: Fundamentalist Influences within the Assemblies of God, 1914-1942’. Paper presented at the 26th Annual Meeting of the Society For Pentecostal Studies (Mar 13-15, 1997); Zachary Tackett ‘The Embourgeoisement of the Assemblies of God:

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the AG adopted fundamentalism as something foreign to their early character, it was just a further identification with their doctrinal identity.¹⁵ Russell Spittler notes that even though they were often adversaries, their approaches to the Bible, commitment to doctrine and opposition to modernism were virtually identical. He therefore concludes, ‘Pentecostals ... decidedly think and act like fundamentalists. Pentecostals are fundamentalistic, even if they were not classical fundamentalists.’¹⁶

The first recorded mention of the Fundamentalist label used to describe the AG came during a 1924 General Presbyters meeting in which Asst. General Superintendent David McDowell boldly proclaimed that Pentecostals were Fundamentalists. This label resonated so deeply with Stanley Frodsham that he published McDowell’s comments in the *Evangel*.¹⁷ McDowell testified, “‘Praise God that I am a Fundamentalist, and that I am a Pentecostal Fundamentalist’” to which Frodsham adds, ‘that is what we all are.’¹⁸ Frodsham further used the label to appeal to *Evangel* readers for support for the paper, which stands ‘one hundred percent towards “Pentecostal Fundamentalism”’.¹⁹ McDowell’s label ‘Fundamentalist Plus’ grew in usage over the next few years, being expressed through several other important leaders. In 1925,

Changing Perspectives on Scripture, Millennialism, and the Roles of Women’. Unpublished PhD thesis, (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, May 1998), pp. 137-50; See also D. William Faupel, ‘Whither Pentecostalism?’ *Pneuma*, 15.1 (Spring 1993), pp. 22-25.

¹⁵ Blumhofer says, ‘The question of whether they were fundamentalist did not preoccupy early Assemblies of God leaders; they simply assumed they were.’ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, p. 159.

¹⁶ Spittler, ‘Are Pentecostals and Charismatics Fundamentalists’, p. 114.

¹⁷ Stanley Frodsham, ‘Fundamentalist Plus’ *PE* (July 12, 1924), p. 4.

¹⁸ Stanley Frodsham, ‘Letter to readers’ (Mar 29, 1924), included in *PE* (April 5, 1924), p. 15.

¹⁹ Frodsham, ‘Letter to readers’ (Mar 29, 1924), p. 15. Frodsham boasted that 50,000 copies of the *Evangel* were sent out every week, which amounted to 41,600,000 ‘pages of Pentecostal Fundamentalist literature yearly’.

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J. R. Flower addressed the students at Central Bible College on the present state of Pentecostalism. He commented,

At this present time we have Modernism on the one hand and Fundamentalism on the other ... We can say like Paul, ‘I am a Fundamentalist of the Fundamentalists, of the strictest sect of the Fundamentalists am I one. But that is not enough... We are Fundamentalists, but we are more than that.’²⁰

Similarly, in 1927 the *Evangel* advertised a correspondence course on Pentecostal doctrine by D.W. Kerr called ‘Fundamentals of the Faith ‘Plus’’.²¹ Kerr remarks, ‘We, as a General Council, are Fundamentalists, but Fundamentalists “plus,” in that, while we stand with all true believers for the “faith once delivered to the saints,” we believe that this faith also includes ... the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with signs following’.²² In the minds of these leaders, Fundamentalism fit perfectly within the core message of early Pentecostals because of its commitment to the belief in pre-millennial eschatology, the authority of Scripture, deity of Christ, bodily resurrection and vicarious atonement.²³

Although AG claimed the Fundamentalists, in 1928 the Fundamentalists declared Pentecostalism to be a ‘menace’ to the church because of their view of tongues and healing.²⁴ Frodsham lamented the decision to ‘disfellowship’ Pentecostals, but vowed to continue to love the Fundamentalists.²⁵ They were convinced that they could win over their critics by

²⁰ J. R. Flower, ‘The Present Position of Pentecost’. *PE*, (June 13, 1925), p. 8.

²¹ ‘Bible Study Course by Correspondence’. *PE* (Feb 12, 1927), p. 15

²² D.W. Kerr, ‘Fundamentals of the Faith ‘Plus,’ CBI Correspondence Course 8, (Springfield, MO, 1926).

²³ Menzies, *Anointed to Serve*, p. 27. See also William Menzies, “Non-Wesleyan Pentecostalism: A Tradition; The Influence of Fundamentalism’ *AJPS* 14:2 (2011), pp. 199-211.

²⁴ S.H. Frodsham, ‘Disfellowshipped’ *PE*, (Aug 18, 1928), p. 7. For a thorough history of the relationship between Pentecostalism and Fundamentalism see Gerald W. King, *Disfellowshipped: Pentecostal responses to fundamentalism in the United States 1906-1943*. PTMS 164, (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publishing, 2011).

²⁵ S.H. Frodsham, ‘Disfellowshipped’ *PE*, (Aug 18, 1928), p. 7.

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demonstrating that they believed in the same fundamental truths as their critics.²⁶ M.M.

McGraw comments, ‘Because a few Fundamentalists have declared the Pentecostal movement not of God, let us not worry ... If there be any doubt about God’s looking upon us as God-sent Fundamentalists, the way to get that doubt removed is to persist in preaching on sin being cleansed from the heart and life.’²⁷ The real pain caused by the Fundamentalist rejection was not that they did not accept their identity as Pentecostals; it was that they were not willing to accept them as Fundamentalists.²⁸

THE PENTECOSTAL EVANGELICAL CHURCH

The clearest move to identify the Assemblies of God with the evangelical movement came in the 1927 General Council when a committee presented a full constitution and revision the *Statement of Fundamental Truths* for consideration.²⁹ The biggest surprise contained in the committee’s proposal was a proposed name change from The Assemblies of God to ‘The Pentecostal Evangelical Church’.³⁰ J. Narver Gortner, the chairman of the committee who led the effort, argued that there had been ‘wide spread dissatisfaction’ with the name of the fellowship. He commented, ‘When the Revision Committee was looking for a name, we wanted to find one

²⁶ Frodsham comments, ‘I do not know of a Pentecostal person anywhere who questions the inerrancy of the Scriptures, or one who doubts the virgin birth, the miracles, the physical resurrection, the Deity, or the efficacy of the blood atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor one who has the slightest sympathy for the unproved theories of the evolutionists that are being propounded everywhere by the “learned ignoramuses” of the earth today.’ Frodsham, Letter to readers Mar 29, 1924, included in PE (April 5, 1924), p. 15.

²⁷ ‘Fundamentalism’ PE, (Oct 27, 1928), pp. 3-5.

²⁸ Eventually the hostility exhibited by Fundamentalists resulted in the Fundamentalist label falling out of use by AG leaders after 1928; instead they reverted to evangelical labels, especially leading up to the formation of the NAE.

²⁹ Although the preamble of the AG constitution was adopted in 1914, the full constitution was not created until a committee was given the task at the 1925 General Council. The committee returned to the 1927 General Council with a full constitution and revision the *Statement of Fundamental Truths* for consideration.

³⁰ ‘Final Report of Revision Committee on Essential Resolutions’ GC Minutes, 1927; ‘A Suggested Name Change’ PE, (Oct 8, 1927), pp. 5-7.

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that would indicate what we are, one in harmony with our real character. And we all agreed that we are Pentecostal people. Then we are evangelical too, we believe in evangelization’.³¹ Many others from the council membership stepped up to add their support of the name as well. Noel Perkin recalls, ‘The new name suggested was considered descriptive of what we are; namely, a Pentecostal church both evangelical in doctrine and evangelistic in spirit’.³² Harold Moss commented, ‘We as a people are evangelical, that is, we have a world-wide evangelical program...But that name is not sufficient as there are other evangelical churches, so we need another name to draw a clear line of demarcation—Pentecostal Evangelical Church.’³³ Evangelical identity was so commonly accepted in those days that F.E. Shelby added, ‘Whether we call ourselves ‘Pentecostal Evangelical Church’ or not, we are that any way.’³⁴ After much debate, the constitution was passed but the name change measure was tabled and was never revisited.³⁵ The proposed name change clearly reveals a high level of comfort with evangelical identity as the AG’s ‘real identity’.

MORE THAN EVANGELICAL, BUT NOT LESS

It is clear that the AG has historically identified with evangelicalism, but how important is that identity today? Margaret Poloma’s recent study of identity among AG ministers

³¹ Members of the Committee included J. Narver Gortner, E. S. Williams, A. G. Ward, S. A. Jamieson, F. M. Boyd. ‘A Suggested Name Change’ PE (Oct 8, 1927), p. 6.

³² Noel Perkin, ‘I Remember’ PE (Jan 19, 1964), p. 9.

³³ ‘A Suggested Name Change’ PE (Oct 8, 1927), p. 6.

³⁴ ‘A Suggested Name Change’ PE (Oct 8, 1927), p. 6.

³⁵ T.K. Leonard argued in rebuttal that the name Assemblies of God was ‘God’s name’ found in the Bible and was given through prayer and revelation. He concluded, ‘God named us the Assemblies of God’. ‘A Suggested Name Change’ PE, (Oct 8, 1927), p. 6; Perkin, ‘I Remember’ PE (Jan 19, 1964), p. 9. However, J.R. Flower also later pointed out that the change proposed in 1927 would have involved a change in the original charter of the council that would have affected the assemblies who were incorporated in that name. It would have officially made the AG a denomination would result in the abandoning of the original principles of independent and associated churches and was ‘repudiated’ on such grounds. See *GC Minutes* (Aug 23-29, 1961), p. 29.

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demonstrates that the AG has consistently defined itself primarily as ‘Evangelical Pentecostalism’.³⁶ In her survey, Poloma found that ‘two-thirds of the pastors responding to the survey self-identified as being Evangelical’.³⁷ She also suggests that a greater identification within the AG with the label ‘evangelical’ has caused ‘seeds of ambiguity’ that is symptomatic of a loss of Pentecostal identity.³⁸ However, she also notes that although AG ministers identified as evangelicals, that identity did not supersede their Pentecostal and AG identity.³⁹ I would argue that because the AG self-identifies as ‘more than evangelical’, her statistics simply are reflective of this integrated identity.

DISFELLOWSHIPING EVANGELICALISM

In the early twentieth century, evangelicals and Fundamentalists ‘disfellowshipped’ Pentecostals like an embarrassing relative from the larger evangelical family.⁴⁰ A century later, a number of Pentecostal scholars are returning the favor by attempting to distance themselves from an evangelical identity. Attempts to cast Pentecostal theology as evangelical theology ‘plus’ have been characterized as a ‘selling of a birthright for evangelical respectability’ and are considered ‘destructive to Pentecostal identity and doctrine’.⁴¹ The AG’s quest to court

³⁶ Margaret Poloma, ‘The Future of American Pentecostal Identity: The Assemblies of God at a Crossroad’, in Michael Welker (ed.) *The Work of the Spirit*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), p. 153.

³⁷ Poloma, ‘The Future of American Pentecostal Identity’, p. 160.

³⁸ Poloma, ‘The Future of American Pentecostal Identity’, p. 164.

³⁹ Poloma, ‘The Future of American Pentecostal Identity’, p. 158. She notes that 85% of AG pastors said that an AG identity was very important or extremely important, 69% said the identity as ‘evangelical’ was very important or extremely important, and 88% said that the identity ‘Pentecostal’ was very important or extremely important.

⁴⁰ Cheryl Bridges Johns, ‘Partners in Scandal: Wesleyan and Pentecostal Scholarship’ *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Jan 1, 1999), pp. 7-23. Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), p. 192.

⁴¹ Cheryl Bridges Johns, ‘The Adolescence of Pentecostalism: In search of a legitimate sectarian identity’ *Pneuma* 17.1 (1995) pp. 3-17. See also Matthew K. Thompson, *Kingdom Come: Revisioning Pentecostal Eschatology* (JPTSup 37; Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2010), p. 51.

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evangelical acceptance is believed to have led to a ‘colonization’ of Pentecostal theology.⁴²

William Faupel is convinced that the Pentecostal movement is at a ‘crossroads’ where two competing visions are present. The first is to see the movement as a subgroup of evangelicalism, which he believes will only lead to the movement becoming ‘rationalistic and stale’.⁴³ The alternative vision is to see the movement as distinct from evangelicalism, with its own mission, hermeneutic and theological agenda, because of its pneumatological orientation. Pentecostal scholars are now doing theology as Pentecostals and are offering constructive pneumatological contributions to the various disciplines within systematic theology.⁴⁴ Kenneth Archer believes that casting Pentecostal theology as evangelical theology ‘plus’ is no longer sufficient. He says, ‘To subsume Pentecostalism into the category Evangelicalism is to exclude aspects of Pentecostalism that are essential to its identity and undermine its capability to present an authentic Pentecostal theology’.⁴⁵

What Archer is advocating is not a Pentecostal theology that is more than evangelical; he believes that Pentecostalism should be (and was originally) distinct from evangelical theology. He believes that the differences are not primarily doctrinal; they are found in the manner and

⁴² Douglas Jacobsen explains, ‘Mainstream evangelicals and Pentecostals were not cultural equals in America, and in this unequal situation, Pentecostals (the culturally weaker partners) could not help but be, in a sense, colonized by the stronger. Mainstream evangelicals theological ideas, attitudes, and methods were soon being imported wholesale into the Pentecostal world, and a new evangelical paradigm of Pentecostal theology quickly began to replace the waning hegemony of Pentecostal scholasticism’. Douglas Jacobsen, ‘Knowing the Doctrines of Pentecostals’ *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism* ed. E. Blumhofer, R. Spittler, and G. Wacker (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 100.

⁴³ Faupel, ‘Whither Pentecostalism’, p. 27.

⁴⁴ Amos Yong, *Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*; Frank Macchia, *Justified in the Spirit*. Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*; Simon Chan, *Pentecostal Ecclesiology* (JPTSUP 38; Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2011); John Christopher Thomas, *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010). Thompson, *Kingdom Come*; McQueen, *Pentecostal Eschatology*.

⁴⁵ Kenneth Archer, ‘A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology’ *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 9.3 (2007), pp. 304-305.

method by which they do theology.⁴⁶ First, Pentecostals have a doxological approach to theology, which is reflected in the way that propositional theology is subordinated to experience, testimony, song and pneumatic expressions.⁴⁷ Secondly, Pentecostals don’t just read the Scriptures; they experience the Scriptures through the Spirit. In contrast to traditional Protestant hermeneutics, particularly the hermeneutics of dispensationalism,⁴⁸ Pentecostals read the Word in conversation with the Spirit and the Community.⁴⁹ Finally, whereas evangelicals are grounded in a modernistic historical-critical methodology, Pentecostals utilize more post-modern and post-critical methods in their contextual and narrative readings of Scripture.⁵⁰ These differences in the manner and method, among other concerns, suggest that evangelical approaches are insufficient to develop a truly Pentecostal theology.⁵¹ Archer therefore believes, ‘Pentecostalism

⁴⁶ Archer, ‘A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology’, pp. 301-314.

⁴⁷ Walter Hollenweger, ‘The Pentecostal Elites and the Pentecostal Poor: A Missed Dialogue?’ in Karla Poewe, ed., *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina 1994), p. 201.

⁴⁸ In dispensationalism, the promises of the Old Testament apply only to Israel and not to the Church, including the latter rain outpouring of the Spirit. Whereas Pentecostals believed the Kingdom of God was present in the outpouring of the Spirit, dispensationalism relegated the Kingdom of God and its benefits entirely to the future. Peter Althouse, ‘Left Behind-Fact or Fiction: Ecumenical Dilemmas of the Fundamentalist Millenarian Tensions in Pentecostalism’, *JPT* 13.2 (2005), pp. 187-207; Althouse, *Spirit of the Last Days*, pp. 24-25; Sheppard, ‘Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism’.

⁴⁹ See Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic For the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture, and Community*; Yong, Amos. *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*. (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2002).

⁵⁰ Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic*, pp. 172-211. See also Bradley Truman Noel. *Pentecostal and Postmodern Hermeneutics: Comparisons and Contemporary Impact*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2010).

⁵¹ Other concerns for Pentecostals found in their critique of evangelical identity include the exclusion of women, reversal on passivism, and social quietism. See Tackett ‘The Embourgeoisement of the Assemblies of God’; Paul Alexander *Peace To War: Shifting Allegiances in the Assemblies of God* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009); Murry Dempster, ‘Eschatology, Spirit Baptism and Inclusiveness’ *Perspectives in Pentecostals Eschatologies*, Peter Althouse and Robbie Waddell (eds.) (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publishing, 2010), pp. 159-160.

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should be appreciated for what it is – an authentically new living Christian spirituality with distinct theological view of reality’.⁵²

IMPLICATIONS

In light of the suggestions made by Pentecostal scholars about the theological, hermeneutical and methodological challenges created by evangelical approaches, the AG seems to be at a theological impasse; either they abandon a historically essential aspect of their identity in order to do theology as Pentecostals or they keep their identity and become theologically irrelevant to the development of Pentecostal theology. However, the presence of this early identification within one of the largest Pentecostal fellowships presents number of issues in regards to the current discussion about the nature of Pentecostal theology.

First, although the AG did not officially change their name to ‘The Pentecostal Evangelical Church’, it is clear to me that the Assemblies of God has always self-identified as such. I don’t see any evidence that the AG was ‘co-opted’ by evangelicalism or Fundamentalism in order to take on a character contrary to its original Pentecostal identity. They saw themselves as a subset of a larger evangelical family that believed in an additional doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Second, this research confirms what has been revealed by other studies of early Pentecostal theology, mainly that there are different characteristics between the finished work and Wesleyan holiness streams of Pentecostalism.⁵³ Finished work streams demonstrate more

⁵² See Kenneth Archer, ‘A Pentecostal Way of Doing Theology’ *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9.3 (2007), pp. 301-14.

⁵³ Kimberly Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing*, JPTS 29 (Bandford, UK: Deo), pp. 5-6; Chris E. W. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of The Lord’s Supper* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012); Larry D. McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology* (JPTSup 39; Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2012). Some acknowledge a third stream in the Oneness tradition. But because of the common roots with the Oneness tradition and the AG, most put them in the finished work tradition.

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evangelical characteristics and are more comfortable in an evangelical identity.⁵⁴ What this research demonstrates is that to some degree evangelical identity was a legitimate part of early Pentecostal identity, even if it only characterized one particular stream (primarily the AG). It would be hard to argue that abandoning that identity serves to make them more Pentecostal.

Third, it seems to me that these early AG leaders would disagree with the premise that their evangelical orientation was harmful to their Pentecostal theology. They believed that Pentecostals and turn of the century evangelicals shared a common theological emphasis on salvation, healing, Spirit-baptism, sanctification and premillennial return of Christ.⁵⁵ Even after being rejected by evangelicals/fundamentalists because of Pentecostal distinctives in the late 1920s, the AG warmly embraced the broader tradition and sought to express the ways in which they were similar despite the differences on the doctrine of Spirit baptism.

Fourth, while Hollenweger and Archer point out that the theology of early Pentecostals was characterized by orality and narrative, it doesn't appear to be the case for early Pentecostals in the AG. Considerable attention was given to both defining and defending doctrine from the very beginning. This characteristic of evangelical identity, though it presents challenges to the task of developing Pentecostal theology today, contributed significantly to the development early Pentecostal theology. This impulse helped produce an early statement of faith, defenses of ‘distinctive doctrines’, responses to doctrinal controversies, Pentecostal histories, an early

⁵⁴ Carrie Judd Montgomery is a good example of finished work theology prior to William Durham and is an important theological link to late 19th Century evangelical theology. See Jennifer A. Miskov, *Life on Wings: The forgotten life and theology of Carrie Judd Montgomery (1858-1946)* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012). See also McQueen, *Toward a Pentecostal Eschatology*, p. 150.

⁵⁵ An example of this is the way in which Pentecostals considered the four-fold/five-fold gospel as the heart of Pentecostal message. Bernie Van De Walle argues, ‘To understand Simpson’s theology is to understand late nineteenth-century American evangelical theology. Simpson’s Gospel was not something peculiar to himself or the C&MA. Rather, in the late nineteenth century, it was the heart of the gospel’. Bernie Van DeWalle, *The Heart of the Gospel: A.B. Simpson, the Fourfold Gospel, and Late Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Theology*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), pp. 22-23.

publishing enterprise, Bible doctrine resources, and strong tradition of Bible school education, all which has been a tremendous contribution to the theology of Pentecostal movement as a whole.⁵⁶

Finally, I agree that if you define Pentecostal theology only in terms of doctrinal expression you fail to capture the movement’s complexity.⁵⁷ As Hollenweger has demonstrated, the Pentecostal Movement inherited a multiplicity of theological traditions: an African spirituality (oral root)⁵⁸, a Wesleyan holiness character (pietistic root)⁵⁹ and evangelical doctrine (Biblicism root).⁶⁰ Even though these three roots have affected the Pentecostal movement as a whole, different streams find themselves affected to varying degrees by these theological identities. One might wonder how different the AG’s identity would have been had they not distanced themselves from holiness Pentecostal groups or remained a part of the Churches of

⁵⁶ Studies on the doctrines of Pentecostalism have primarily focused on AG sources because they published doctrinal material much earlier than other Pentecostal groups. See Christopher A Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology* (New York ,NY: Oxford University Press, 2013); Douglas Jacobsen, ‘Knowing the Doctrines of Pentecostals’ *Pentecostal Currents in American Protestantism* ed. E. Blumhofer, R. Spittler, and G. Wacker (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003); Gerald T. Sheppard, ‘Pentecostals and the Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism: The anatomy of an Uneasy Relationship’, *Pneuma* 6.2 (Fall, 1984) pp. 5-33.

⁵⁷ Walter Hollenweger, ‘The Pentecostal Elites and the Pentecostal Poor: A Missed Dialogue?’ in Karla Poewe, ed., *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (Columbia, SC: [SEP]University of South Carolina 1994), p. 201; Walter Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997).

⁵⁸ Pentecostalism inherited from African spirituality orality in liturgy, narrative theology, testimony and participatory worship. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, pp. 18-19; Walter Hollenweger, ‘The Black Roots of Pentecostalism’ *Pentecostals after a Century*, (eds.) Allan H. Anderson and Walter J. Hollenweger (JPTSup 15; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) pp. 33-44; Estrelida Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2011).

⁵⁹ Wesley’s emphasis on free will and active sanctification were rooted in Catholic ‘free will’ spirituality. Although the theology behind perfection was the catalyst, it was his emphasis on a three stage *ordo salutis* that leaves a theological footprint on Pentecostalism. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, pp. 144-52.

⁶⁰ The third root is the ‘higher life’ evangelical theology of Oberlin and its theological successors, Finney, Mahan, Boardman and Robert and Hannah Whitall Smith. The characteristics of orthodoxy found in the doctrinal emphasis, Biblicism and premillennialism found their way into the Pentecostal ethos through this root. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism*, pp. 181-200.

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God in Christ?⁶¹ Considering the way in which these two roots play a lesser role in the identity of the AG, it is not surprising the AG is predominantly evangelical in character. As Stephen Land argues, a well-rounded Pentecostal theology must include the roots of orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy.⁶² Therefore, I would suggest that it is balance between the roots, not distance from any particular root, which is needed in Pentecostal theology. As Jacobsen points out, each root depends upon, confirms, and mutually criticizes each other in the effort to build a coherent whole.⁶³ In the case of the AG, the evangelical/doctrinal/orthodoxy root is perhaps overemphasized and needs to be brought back into balance in order to better reflect its Pentecostal identity. As the Assemblies of God and its scholars continue to contribute to the field of Pentecostal theology, I suspect that they will likely not focus their efforts on being ‘less than evangelical’. As Gary McGee notes, ‘The greatest hurdle in its path into the twenty-first century, therefore, stands in how successfully it recaptures what it means to be “more than evangelical”’.⁶⁴

⁶¹ There are a couple possible reasons for the departure of the AG from the COGIC. The race factor was certainly present in that era, however, little, if any mention of intentional racial division is expressed in early AG literature. If it was a factor, they did not admit it. What is more likely is that they did not want to identify with Mason’s holiness organization rather than his racial identity. The association with Mason that began in 1910 was prior to the Finished Work controversy. But by 1913, there was a need for a new fellowship that was not identified as holiness. Also, as David Daniels suggests that the COGIC polity could have been a factor with the AG’s early impulse to reject organizational structure. It is likely that all three issues played a role to some degree or another. See David D. Daniels, ‘Charles Harrison Mason: The Interracial Impulse’ *Portraits of a Generation*, James R. Goff and Grant Wacker (eds.) (Fayetteville, AK: University of Arkansas Press, 2002), pp. 254-270.

⁶² Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (JPTSup 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 44.

⁶³ Jacobsen argues, ‘All the diverse versions of Pentecostalism stand to some degree on their own, mutually criticizing each other and confirming each other in complex ways. They are held together by overlapping (but not necessarily identical) concerns, practices and experiences, which, as each separate Pentecostal subtradition illustrates, can be explained in a number of relatively coherent and consistent ways’. Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit*, p. 12.

⁶⁴ Gary McGee, ‘More Than Evangelical’ *Pneuma* 25.2 (Fall 2003), pp. 289-300.

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