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Charisma and Structure in The Assemblies of God: Revisiting O'Dea's Five Dilemmas

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Prologue

> Charisma, in final analysis, is a gift--a breath that is illusive and fragile. She can launch a new institution and breathe life into existing ones. The Assemblies of God, birthed by her spirit, has been renewed by her grace. Whether she will continue to seek and to find a home within the Assemblies of God remains a critical question that only the future can answer (Poloma 1989:243)

Nearly eighteen years have passed since I first launched a sociological study of the Assemblies of God — a research adventure published as *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads* in 1989. My conclusion about the fate of charisma in this rapidly growing Pentecostal denomination was cautious and tentative. Its destiny, despite the gloomy Weberian prognosis on the inevitable routinization of charisma, was then colored by the revitalization of the Assemblies of God (AG) brought about by the rise of the Charismatic Movement during the 1960s and 1970s, bringing Pentecostal experiences to the mainline Christian churches (Poloma 1981; 1989). The Charismatic Movement soon waxed and waned just as did the earlier revival on Azusa Street in Los Angeles (1906-09) that birthed Pentecostalism during the first decade of the 20th century. It was not long, however, before another move of the Spirit, the so-called "Third Wave," crossed the American continent during the 1980s — a move which marked the rise of more contemporary and youth oriented charismatic groups, many of which developed out of the Jesus Movement of the 1970's (Miller 1997; Di Sabatino 1999)[1]. Rumors of a fresh renewal in the early 1990s attracted international attention with the outbreak of the so-called

[1] Although most Pentecostals were wary of both the Charismatic Movement and the Third Wave (just as they were of the The New Order of the Latter Rain Movement of the 1940's), the AG was revitalized by an influx new converts from more recent revivals. The rapid growth of the AG during the 1970's and 1980's, which reached a plateau by the mid-1980's when the renewal crested, can be linked to revitalization movements which originated outside the AG.

"Toronto Blessing" that developed in the Third-Wave sector but soon spilled over into the Pentecostal and Charismatic streams of the larger movement. With its nightly revival meetings beginning in January 1994 attracting pilgrims from around the world, the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship became the epicenter of a fresh revival fire that torched similar gatherings at numerous other North American sites. One such site emerged on Father's Day, 1995, at Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida where the new revival found an inroad into the increasingly routinized and bureaucratized Pentecostal stream of the spirit-filled movement (Poloma 1997; 1998a).

The "Pensacola Outpouring" caused some degree of tension within the Assemblies of God, blurring the boundaries and raising questions about denominational identity. But tension has always found a home within the AG; and, as I have discussed at length elsewhere (Poloma 1989; Poloma and Pendleton 1989), a degree of tension between charisma and structure has been an important factor in accounting for the vitality enjoyed by the AG.[2] (William Menzies effectively presents a case for the AG's ability to live with theological tension in his *Essay* in this volume, demonstrating "continued evidence of a reasonable balance between charisma and organization.) Maintaining a free flow of charisma, however, requires skill not unlike that of a unicycle rider; despite great skill there is always the risk of a fall.

This fear of falling into the abyss of "carnal" unregulated religious experience has commonly caused established Pentecostalism to quench charisma as it sought to protect its emergent structure. Fresh charismatic outbursts seem to find more fertile ground outside organized denominations in the growing numbers of parachurch networks and independent churches. Sociologist Peter Berger was correct in his passing assessment that "religious experiences are institutionally dangerous." Newly formed networks and emerging congregations

[2] As Lewis Coser (1967) convincingly argued over 40 years ago, tension and conflict can have positive institutional consequences. Tension with an outgroup (external conflict), for example, can serve to establish a strong group identity, and Pentecostalism's status as a "third force" within Christianity owes much to the hostility Pentecostalism experienced as a newly emerging sect during the first half of the 20th century. Tension within the group (internal conflict) can also have both positive repercussions, especially for loosely-knit structures such as the Assemblies of God.

appear to have less to risk in embracing fresh experiences than do established sects and denominations. [3]

A tolerance for a moderate amount of tension between charisma and institution, however, is seemingly built into the DNA of Pentecostalism where religious distinctiveness centers on paranormal experiences believed to be generated by Spirit baptism. The inherent tension between what Grant Wacker (2001) has called primitivism and pragmatism—the paranormal working of the Holy Spirit and the organizational matrix that promotes the Pentecostal mission—is rooted in its earliest history. As Wacker 2001:10) succinctly summarizes his thesis:

> My main argument can be stated in a single sentence. *The genius of the Pentecostal movement lay in its ability to hold two seemingly incompatible impulses in productive tension.* I call the two impulses the primitive and the pragmatic.

This tension between charisma (the "primitive") and organization (a facet of the "pragmatic") continues to be central for understanding the Assemblies of God today just as it is to the understanding of its past.

As I have done in my earlier work on the Assemblies of God, I will use the framework developed by Thomas O'Dea (1961) to explore the tension between charisma and organizing religious work by the AG. For each of the five dilemmas, I will identify an issue in Pentecostalism and explore its "core" and "peripheral" dimensions. A *core* value is a central component of the relationship (in contrast to a peripheral issue), an attack upon which threatens the social group (Coser 1956). If attacked, a core value threatens the organization with a single line of cleavage that may have seriously negative consequences. Loosely knit organizations, such as the AG, may actually be strengthened by the tension that develops around multiple

[3] The birth of the AG itself provides an excellent example of embracing risk and dealing with institutional resistance to seemingly unregulated religious experience. Those who reported being Spirit baptized during the first decade of the 20th century, complete with paranormal experiences (especially glossolalia, but also healing, prophecy, deliverance, and miracles) usually (voluntarily or involuntarily) withdrew from what they regarded as "dead denominations." History was to repeat itself throughout the 20th century with the development of fresh charismatic experiences and the splits and schisms resulting from failed attempts to agree on the essence and meaning of such experiences.

peripheral issues, conflict which tends to diffuse an attack on a core issue. Coser (1956; 1967) contends that when stress mounts within a group, making allowance for tension may serve a positive force in "sewing" diverse factions together. Different alliances often made on different peripheral but potentially divisive issues paradoxically can further group integration. The problematic face of conflict arises when a single core issue is made focal and threatens to bifurcate the group.

Some key core and peripheral issues currently facing the AG will be assessed in this article. Using the theoretical light provided by Lewis Coser and Thomas O'Dea as a theoretical framework, the survey data collected from a mailed random sample of 447 AG pastors in early 1999 will be presented and discussed Survey analysis results placed within this theoretical context can be succinctly summarized as follows: *the Assemblies of God has a solid core around which there are varying levels of ambiguity*. The ambiguity that exists on peripheral issues appears to function as a safety-valve mechanism feeding the on-going dialectical interrelationship between charisma and institution building (Eisenstadt 1968). In sum, the AG continues to successfully balance charisma with institutionalization, as it has for much of its history. Institutionalization has not sounded the death knell for charisma, nor has revitalization of charisma brought about organizational anarchy.

O'Dea's Five Dilemmas in the Institutionalization of Religion: Ambiguities and Creative Tension

Thomas O'Dea's well-known "five institutional dilemmas" point to the inherent tension found to some degree in all religious organizations. Each dilemma reflects the "basic antimony" or "fundamental tension" that exists between charisma (that is, the immediacy of direct religious experience) and institutional forces. The ongoing tension between spontaneity and stability that permeates all five dilemmas can be described as "transforming the religious experience to render it continuously available to the mass of men (sic) and to provide for it a stable institutional context" (O'Dea 1961:38). Once free-flowing, non-normative and seemingly chaotic, charisma

must (at least to some extent) be transformed into something that is stable, normal and ordered. Although an important catalyst in the development of all world religions, charisma is usually quenched in favor of the patterned and predictable institutional features of social life. Each of the dilemmas--mixed motivation, symbolic, delimitation, power and administrative order—provides a unique vantage point to explore the working of the Assemblies of God as seen by its pastors.

The Dilemma of Mixed Motivation: Assessing Identity

According to O'Dea's theory, the emergence of a stable structure brings with it the capability of eliciting a wide range of individual motives that follow the ideal-typical state where a charismatic leader is able to generate "single mindedness" (O'Dea and O'Dea 1983). It should be noted that the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement (PCM) has never had a single charismatic leader, similar to Methodism's John Wesley, Quakerism's George Fox, Mormonism's Joseph Smith, or Christian Science's Mary Baker Eddy. As a movement that has democratized charisma, the relationship between a charismatic leader and his disciples described by O'Dea has not been the prime motivating factor. Rather the "single mindedness" of the movement has been energized by a common experience of the Holy Spirit out of which a diffused leadership and organizations have emerged. Countless churches, networks and small sects came out of the particular experiences of the Holy Spirit which were reported in the 19th century, became better labeled and identified in the early 20th century, and spread globally through the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles from 1906-09.[4] It was in 1914 that the leaders and pastors of some of these groups came together in Hot Springs, Arkansas, giving birth to the Assemblies of God, the largest and most influential white Pentecostal denomination in the United States.

Although the dilemma of mixed motivation can be illustrated through the rise of an ordained clergy and the correspondent development of leadership roles (as suggested by O'Dea

[4] Wacker (2001:2) identifies Pentecostals as one of a genre of believers that he calls "radical evangelicals" who emphasized a four-fold gospel of "personal salvation, Holy Ghost baptism, divine healing, and the Lord's soon return." The emphasis of the streams differs somewhat, with Pentecostals putting their focus on "Holy Ghost baptism."

and described in the *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads)*, it can also be assessed through a discussion of religious identity issues found in its distinctive worldview. A passage from Zechariah 4:6 that serves as a motto for the AG provides a succinct statement about Pentecostal identity: "'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty." This simple profession reflects what AG theologian Frank Macchia (1999:16) describes as a "paradigm shift from an exclusive focus on holiness to an outward thrust that invoked a dynamic filling and an empowerment for global witness."

As routinization extracts its due, however, this emphasis on "dynamic filling" and "empowerment" increasingly has shifted from personal experience and testimony to profession and expansion of doctrinal decree. Testimonies of lived experience that empowered early believers take a back seat to a selective reconstruction of AG history and doctrine that often fails to capture the diversity that found expressions in the larger PCM. As Robeck (1999a) has effectively argued in his discussion of Pentecostal identity, Pentecostalism has demonstrated a host of "indigenous entries" including "Oneness Pentecostalism," "World Faith Pentecostalism," "Feminist Pentecostalism," and even "Gay Pentecostalism," all of which have been rejected by the Assemblies of God. The AG has increasingly defined itself primarily as "Evangelical Pentecostalism," or perhaps more accurately as "Evangelicalism plus tongues" (see Menzies' *Essay).* Robeck (1999:5) goes on to state:

> Pentecostals have historically disagreed with one another on what constitutes a real Pentecostal, and as a result, on what constitutes genuine Pentecostalism. The fact may not be easy for some Pentecostals to accept, but it is true nonetheless. Each group seems to want to identify its own specific character as providing the best, if not *the only legitimate identity* for all real Pentecostals. Insofar as their distinctives become all that define Pentecostalism, the real character, contribution, and impact of the whole Movement may be lost.

What appears to happen, particularly in more established classical Pentecostal denominations like the AG, is that the breadth and depth of the PCM is eclipsed as each segment identifies with a single appendage much like the blind men in their respective attempts to describe the proverbial elephant. The essence of Pentecostalism as a "new paradigm" -- with the natural and supernatural engaged in a

dialectical dance -- is compromised by accommodative forces that threaten to dilute Pentecostal identity. As Evangelicals find a prominent place in the American religious Panthenon, some would put aside the "new paradigm" to embrace a modernist religious identity that downplays controversial issues that come with "dynamic filling" and "empowerment."

It should be noted that Spirit-filled Christianity, unlike Christian Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism, is not primarily a reaction to modernity. It has proactively developed certain characteristics which taken together makes its worldview distinct from other forms of Christianity, both of the liberal and conservative stripes. The Pentecostal worldview is experientially centered with followers in a dynamic and personal relationship with a Deity who is both immanent and transcendent. According to Johns (1999:75), "The Spirit-filled believer has a predisposition to see a transcendent God at work in, with, through, above and beyond all events. Therefore, all space is sacred space and all time is sacred time." God is seen as active in all events past, present and future which work together in a kind of master plan. It is a worldview that tends to be "transrational," professing that knowledge is "not limited to realms of reason and sensory experience" (Johns, *ibid.)* Consistent with this transrational characteristic, Pentecostal Christians also tend to be anti-creedal believing that "knowing" comes from a right relationship with God rather than through reason or even through the five senses. Theirs is a God who can and often does defy the laws of nature with the miraculous and unexplainable. Without doubt the Bible holds an important place in their worldview, but for many it is a kind of catalyst and litmus test for the authenticity of personal and corporate experience rather than a manual of rigid doctrine and practices. As Johns (1999:79) succinctly states: "In summary, a Pentecostal paradigm for knowledge and truth springs from an experiential knowledge of God which alters the believer's approach to reading and interpreting reality."

This paradigm is shared by both classical Pentecostalism as well as more recent PCM streams, in which followers reflect the early forefathers and foremothers in their reluctance to embrace particular religious labels. The newer groups together with some classical Pentecostals may self-identify as "charismatic" or as "Spirit-filled" Christians -- and, as products of more recent renewals

are revivals, they are stronger in what Grant Wacker (2001) has called *primitivism* (and often weaker on *pragmatism*). Although the distinction that Menzies makes between Pentecostals and charismatics in his *Essay* as being one over the "enduement of power for evangelism and missions" has some merit, I would contend that "involvement in ministry" is a by-product of Spirit baptism for both groups (see Poloma 1998). The primary distinction I have observed between the two major streams of the PCM in North America is somewhat different expressions of its common core Pentecostal spirituality (Albrecht 1999). At the risk of some oversimplification, differences do exist in both the spirituality and the organizational structures in the two major streams of the PCM. Those who self-identify as "Charismatic" are more likely to be open to a range of paranormal experiences (including prophecy, miracles, healing, and physical manifestations of an altered state of consciousness) as signs of Spirit baptism while most Pentecostals tend to place a doctrinal emphasis on the gift of tongues (as does the AG). Furthermore, established classical Pentecostal denominations (like the AG) tend to have well-developed bureaucratic structures while thriving neo-Pentecostal organizations tend to be non-denominational with members focusing on relational ties expressed in loosely-knit networks.[5]

What can be said about the PCM, regardless of the stream, is that it is more about a distinct spirituality than about religion (Albrecht 1999; Land 1993). Members share a common transcendent worldview rather than particular doctrines, defined ritual practices or denominational involvement. This worldview is a curious blend of premodern miracles, modern technology, and postmodern mysticism in which the natural blends with the supernatural. Signs and wonders analogous to those described in pre-modern biblical accounts are expected as normal occurrences in the lives of believers (Poloma 2001). Johns (1999) asserts that what underlies Pentecostal identity is a Pentecostal epistemology "congruous with the ancient Jewish approach to knowledge" – one that represents an alternative to modern ways of knowing:

[5] The heightened primitivism of neo-Pentecostal spirituality and eschewing of traditional organizational structures has led one British sociologist to make the following wager: "….I would put my money on the old Pentecostal denominations still to be with us, and thriving at the end of the next century. I'm not prepared to put my shirt on the new churches, and don't relish the long-odds on the Renewal" (Walker 2000:ix).

> Pentecostals have an alternative epistemology because they have an alternative world-view. At the heart of the Pentecostal world-view is transforming experience with God. God is known through relational encounter which finds its penultimate expression in being filled with the Holy Spirit. This experience becomes the normative epistemological framework and thus shifts the structures by which the individual interprets the world (Johns 1999:74-75).

The general issue of Pentecostal identity is the core of this analysis – an issue that impacts each of the other dilemmas.

A report of the survey findings on the Pentecostal identity of AG pastors will add details to this brief description of Pentecostal identity and the importance of its worldview in maintaining the dialectical tension between charisma and organization that has been at the heart of Pentecostalism's success. Through data provided by the survey questions, identity issues can be empirically explored to reveal core tenets as well as attendant ambiguities. What does it mean to be Pentecostal (specifically AG) at the turn of this new century? Is there congruence between the reported identity self-perceptions of pastors and the congregations they represent? Is there a goodness of fit between these perceptions of identity and the denominational work performed by national and regional administrative offices? These and other related questions are used to tap the core identity and the ambiguities that exist around it, including the importance of being a member of the AG and Pentecostal and social distance between AG and adherents of other religious worldviews.

Pentecostal Core Identity

AG scholar Everett Wilson (1999) put the question to pen: "What makes a Pentecostal?" Difficulties of providing a simple description are deeply embedded in Pentecostal history. Wilson (1999:88-89) concludes that the social identity of Pentecostal is rooted in a worldview based on the "mystical, the 'supernatural' and the allegedly miraculous" which tended to

stigmatize and marginalize early Pentecostals. For Wilson, being labeled a Pentecostal was the result of more than a confessional act -- it signaled a worldview that separated these believers from other Christians. As Wilson comments:

> Like the proverbial duck, if the person looked like one, walked like one and talked like one -- especially if one were supportive of the beliefs and practices that Pentecostals advanced -- friends and neighbours could assume that he or she in fact belonged. At least the often-sung refrain, "I'm so glad I can say I am one of them" apparently gained favour not just to establish identity or to convince believers that they were with the right crowd, but because adherents gave assent to the Pentecosal way of looking at reality, something about which they may have felt deeply even when their convictions were not overtly displayed (Wilson 1999:88-89).

Although professing to be a Pentecostal certainly does not tell the whole story of AG identity, it is a good place to begin a discussion of single-mindedness. Are pastors still singing "I am one of them," as the denomination has taken a more accepted place in the religious mosaic? For the vast majority of pastors, the answer appears to be "yes." Self-identity can be gleaned from a question which instructed respondents to "indicate how important it is to identify with each of these groups" — Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, Revival/Renewal, Charismatic Movement/Third Wave and Evangelicalism. (See Table 1) Pastors were most likely to report their primary self-identity as being Pentecostal (55% claimed it was "extremely important, with another 33% saying it was "very important"). Nearly identical figures are reported for a personal identification with being a part of "Renewal/Revival," implying a conscious decision to support a revitalization of Pentecostal identity through fresh religious experiences. Reporting self-identification with the Assemblies of God was only slightly less than being Pentecostal and in Renewal/Revival.[6] Forty-nine percent (49%) reported self-identification with the AG as "extremely important" and another 36% said it was "very

6 The mean scores for Pentecostal identification and for identifying with revival/renewal was 3.4 (on a four point scale). The mean score for identification with being Assemblies of God was 3.3.

important."[7] The vast majority of the pastors report to having a religious identity that can be described as Pentecostal and being a member of the Assemblies of God. These same pastors also identify very strongly with the need to be involved in revival/renewal, suggesting that Pentecostalism is largely regarded as a dynamic process rather than a staid structure. These labels of self-identity, however, need to be further explored. Probing into the nature of Pentecostal identity will reveal some of the ambiguities that beset the denomination.

Ambiguity Around the Core Identity

Despite the strong approval of retaining and reviving Pentecostal identity, an old dilemma lurks beneath the "single mindedness" reflected in the pastors' responses. The AG historically has found itself in the paradoxical position of promoting a distinct Pentecostal perspective while seeking a rapport with Fundamentalism and later with a more moderate Evangelicalism, sectors of which have been very critical of the PCM. Within two years after its founding in 1914, the AG's message and mission, as Blumhofer noted (1993:135) "would be held within the boundaries drawn by traditional evangelical doctrines." Its attempt to become "fundamentalism with a difference" (fundamentalism plus Spirit baptism) was not always well received, and Pentecostals, including the AG, became the target of a resolution of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association in 1928 that went on record as "unreservedly opposed to Modern Pentecostalism". It was not until the development of the more moderate National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in the early 1940's that the AG found acceptance in this newly-formed transdenominational conservative network. However support for the NAE by AG constituents was far from universal. Edith Blumhofer reports the critical response of one influential AG pastor to AG membership in the NAE:

> This association is not Pentecostal and many of their speakers who are listed for a convention...not only do not favor Pentecost, but speak against it. This

[7]Although the solid majority figures are being highlighted, the strength of the minority position should not be overlooked. For 16% of the pastors identity with the AG is only "somewhat important" or "not important"; for 14%, being in revival is relatively unimportant; and for 13%, Pentecostal identity is not particularly relevant.

> [cooperating with the NAE] is what I call putting the grave clothes again on Lazarus, while the Scripture says: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (Blumhofer 1993:187).

The old controversy appears to be far from resolved, and it is here that ambiguity surfaces. Clergy remain divided about the threat that Evangelicalism presents to a Pentecostal worldview that provides the AG with its distinct identity. A clear majority (60%) of pastors agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Too many AG churches have stressed a general evangelical identity at the expense of their Pentecostal heritage." Those AG congregations that clearly downplay their ties to the denomination often select a name for the congregation that gives the impression of its being an independent evangelical church. Ritual in such congregations (as will be discussed in a later section) often follows an evangelical format in which Pentecostal practices are discouraged -- or at least their public display is not encouraged.

As can be seen in Table 1, over two-thirds of the pastors responding to the survey self-identified as being Evangelical, a nomenclature that is somewhat less important for most respondents than Pentecostal, AG, and Revival/Renewal identities. The Evangelical label is clearly more important, however, than is self-identity with cousins in the Charismatic/Third Wave sector of the PC movement.[8] Despite the Pentecostal-like worldview of Charismatic/Third Wave churches, only 28 percent of the pastors reported that self-identity as a with these newer streams of the PCM was "extremely important" or "very important."[9] While

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[8] Evangelical identity had a mean score of 3 (on a 4-point scale) while Charismatic/Third-Wave identity scores had a mean score of 2 points.

[9] In North America the term "Pentecostal" usually refers to persons in denominations born out of or having some connection with the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles (1906-09). "Charismatic" applies to those in mainline and newer (often independent) churches which embraced a Pentecostal worldview in the mid-twentieth century or later. In the U.S. some 23 percent of all evangelical Protestants, 9 percent of mainline Protestants, 13 percent of Roman Catholics, and 36 percent of Black Protestants claim to be "Spirit-filled," another appellation for those persons embracing the PCM (Green et al.1997:228). Americans who claim to be Spirit-filled tend to self-identify as Pentecostal (4.7%) or Charismatic (6.6%), but much less frequently as "both Charismatic and Pentecostal" (.8%). It is thus not surprising that these clearly Pentecostal pastors would express some social distance from Charismatics. Despite a world view and theology that is more similar than dissimilar, most persons involved in the PCM are likely to identify with a particular stream of the movement.

self-identifying as Pentecostal and Evangelical is central to the identity of a clear majority of AG pastors, only a minority self-identify with newer streams of the PCM where revitalization and renewal is often accompanied by a range of "signs and wonders" that are strikingly similar to those reported in the history of Pentecostalism (Wacker, 2001).

Further ambiguity may be observed in the response to the question about belief in a dispensationalist interpretation of the Scriptures—a fundamentalist "fundamental" of longstanding tension within the AG. The dispensationalist perspective, popularized in the notes of the Scofield Bible and permeating sectors of Evangelical Christianity, has been used to disparage Pentecostalism as at best delusional and at worst, heretical. As Blumhofer has noted:

> Dispensationalists generally held that miracles had ceased with the Apostles; Pentecostalism thus could not be authentic, for its premise that New Testament gifts would mark the end-times church was false. Rejecting the latter-rain views by which Pentecostals legitimated their place in church history, dispensationalists effectively eliminated the biblical basis for Pentecostal theology (Blumhofer 1993:107).

Reflecting the fact that many Pentecostals did embrace the Scofield Bible (while rejecting its teachings on spiritual gifts in the contemporary Church), 58 percent of the pastors strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "I believe in a dispensationalist interpretation of Scripture." (See Table 5.)

The interface of meaningful ties with the fundamentalists goes back to the earliest days of the AG. As Blumhofer (1993:159) has observed, "The causes espoused by fundamentalists seemed to coincide in meaningful ways with Assemblies of God denominational interests and to offer as well an opportunity for declaring Pentecostal sympathies with doctrinal "fundamentals." It was not long before "right belief replaced right experience," causing even further erosion of AG distinctiveness." The danger that fundamentalism (and its softer evangelical expression) poses for Pentecostal identity has been noted by Cox (1995), Hollenweger (1997), and Spittler (1997), among other scholars. Although the AG can be placed securely within the walls of larger Evangelicalism, there is evidence that such positioning fragments its identity and, as O'Dea's dilemma of mixed motivation suggests, leaves the denomination with possibly dissonant agendas that may not be easy to resolve.

As reflected in figures presented in Table 1, dissonance between what AG ministers say and what they do to live out the common PCM paradigm can be seen in the groups with which they and their congregations are willing to cooperate in promoting issues of common concern. Although over a quarter of the ministers surveyed professed to want strong ties with the Charismatic/Third Wave movement in other sectors of Christianity, a decisive majority would prefer to keep their ties limited to other Pentecostals and Evangelicals. When pastors were asked to indicate the "extent you would like to see the AG cooperate with different religious groups," they were most likely to choose full cooperation with other Pentecostals. Sixty-five percent (65%) of pastors indicated a desire for full support with other Pentecostal churches. Despite paradigmatic differences, over half the pastors (57%) advocated full cooperation with Evangelical churches on issues of common concern. Pastors were much less likely to support full cooperation with associations of Charismatics in mainline Protestantism (26%) or with independent Charismatic organizations (27%).[10] (There was little difference in the acceptance of alliances with non-charismatic and charismatic Protestants – see Table 1).

Clearly there is widespread support for a Pentecostal identity among AG pastors, but the essence of this distinct identity, especially when considered in light of Fundamentalist opposition and Evangelical indifference to Pentecostalism's worldview, is much less evident. Part of the explanation may come from Pentecostalism's success in spreading their once-distinct worldview to the larger Christian church. A popular cessationist position teaching that the supernatural gifts were meant only to jumpstart early Christianity (and then ceased) may have lost ground in many Evangelical circles. This perspective seems to have been found wanting in a post-modern culture that is hungry for spiritual means to counter the inadequacies of materialism and rationalism. Much of the argument about the availability of "signs and wonders: for contemporary Christianity appears to be about semantics and doctrinal statements rather than popular belief. As Jon Ruthven has noted in his review of Wayne Grudem's edited work, *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today?*:

[10] The mean scores for cooperating with various religious groups "on issues of common concern" (on a three-point scale marking none, limited, and full) are as follows: with Evangelicals=2.6; with Pentecostals=2.6; with Independent/non-denominational churches=2.3; with Charismatic organizations=2.2; with Mainline Protestant churches=2.1; with Roman Catholic Church=1.7; and non-Christian religious groups=1.4.

> One is left with the feeling that the whole debate could be resolved by a simple change in labels (not "prophecy," or "a word of knowledge," but "leadings"; not "*gifts* of healing," but "healings"). Here the issue is not so much what God actually *does* today, so long as one avoids identifying these events as "miracles" accrediting new doctrine (Grudem 1999:156).

The real issue underlying the controversy that comes to the surface in Grudem's (1996) collection is *how frequently and how intensely* these events should be expected. It may be that a version of the early Pentecostal worldview is widely accepted by both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostal Christians, but it is a domesticated version that has diluted the original paradigm. As we shall see in the next section, the twin issue of frequency and intensity is not only relevant for dialogue between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals but also points to an identity crisis within Pentecostalism.

In summary, there appears to be single-mindedness about key aspects of AG identity: the overwhelming majority of pastors claim that being AG and Pentecostal are "important" or "very important" to them, with a significant majority claiming Evangelical identity and only a minority self-identifying with the Charismatic/Third Wave streams of the PCM. A convergence of Pentecostal and Evangelical identities is reflected in the pastors' acceptance of a more refined Pentecostal worldview at a time that some Evangelicals are abandoning a dispensationalist hermeneutic that preached against "signs and wonders" for contemporary Christianity. An analysis of how a converging of seemingly dissonant identities translates into theology and religious cooperation reveals some AG fragmentation. Pentecostal support for Fundamentalist theology and for Evangelical alliances (after the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1943) seems to have sowed seeds of ambiguity that continue to this day that prevents established Pentecostal denominations like the AG from being on the cutting edge of the PCM.

The Symbolic Dilemma: Assessing the Prevalence of Pentecostal Experience

The worldview of the early Pentecostals gave not only accorded ideological legitimacy to the paranormal experiences reported in biblical times but restored them to a normative position

in the 20th century western world. Although glossolalia or speaking in tongues became the pivotal experiential doctrine in the AG, accounts of divine healing, prophetic words, miraculous myths, and demonic exorcisms were also part and parcel for the Pentecostal package. More controversial were the strange physical manifestations that generated the pejorative label "holy rollers" ascribed by outsiders to Pentecostal believers who sometimes fell in a faint to the floor, jumped pews, violently jerked and shook, laughed, barked or rolled in the aisles under the alleged influence of the Spirit. Despite the denials of many contemporary cultural Pentecostals about their occurrence in early Pentecostalism, these same controversial manifestations erupted again during the New Order of the Latter Rain movement, spread to the "second wave" as Pentecost came to mainline denominations, and intensified during the contemporary "third wave" revivals (c.f. Wacker 2001; Taves 2000).

A dilemma facing Pentecostal believers from the earliest days of Azusa Street was how to allow the Spirit free movement while controlling excesses judged to be fanatic. This challenge was met by sorting out the more controversial physical responses (often difficult to justify from biblical texts) from less controversial experiences (more readily defined as "biblical") that frequently has accompanied the perceived presence of the Holy Spirit. In the Assemblies of God glossolalia and healing became doctrines while many other alleged expressions of the Spirit's presence were relegated to the realms of fanaticism and heresy. Despite the solid ideological support for revival expressed in pastoral responses to the Pentecostal identity issues already discussed, much ambiguity continues around the incarnation of this ideology. What is perceived to be "extreme" and "fanatical" has fluctuated in AG history, thus contributing to a mixed message about the current streams of revival. This ambivalence about once commonly experienced revival phenomena can be gleaned in reviewing survey data through the lenses of the symbolic dilemma.

At the heart of the symbolic dilemma is ritual -- "the cultic re-presentation of the religious experience [that] is central to the life of the religious group" (O'Dea and Aviad 1983:58). In Pentecostalism, however, the goal was never to simply remember the past but rather to provide a forum for on-going religious experiences. As described at some length in *The Assemblies of*

God at the Crossroads, the report card on this dilemma is mixed, as noted in this concluding paragraph of the chapter titled "Maintaining a Pentecostal Worldview through Ritual":

> The symbolic dilemma is deemed one of the most important in maintaining charisma, yet it is, paradoxically perhaps the most difficult to keep alive. In an attempt to minimize the dangers of both disorder and inauthenticity, some pastors are placing less emphasis on experiences in their services. Opting for set programs, well-times services, and a high level of professionalism, these pastors are often openly critical of "emotionalism" in services. The dilemma is further jeopardized by the fact that some very successful Assemblies of God congregations have exchanged charisma for institutional techniques to promote church growth (Poloma 1989:206).

Core Ritual Expressions within the AG

The debates within the Assemblies of God about choirs and choir robes, printed bulletins, and ritualized services have over the years been increasingly resolved in favor of order and predictability. As noted in Menzies' *Essay*, pragmatic decisions to accommodate multiple services, to make services more inviting for non-Pentecostals, and to deal with time-conscious Americans have produced a ritual in many churches that is indistinguishable from non-Pentecostal evangelical services. Mechanisms used to maintain order are the same ones that stifle the free flow of Pentecostal experiences. Earlier years of distinctive Pentecostal ritual when congregants commonly "tarried," waiting for the Holy Spirit to move in the gathering sometimes with unpredictable results, are the makings of AG history (see Wacker 2001). Some recall this history with fondness and longing; others are more cautious about feared abuses found in unregulated meetings. The result is for the Pentecostal spirit to be unevenly distributed, a story that can be developed from statistics on the personal religious experiences of pastors as well as from pastoral reports about congregational services.

As can be seen in Table 2, the most frequently practiced Pentecostal expression reported by pastors is speaking in tongues or glossolalia. All ministers must sign a document annually when their credentials are renewed certifying to the fact they accept the doctrine of tongues as the "initial physical evidence" of Spirit baptism. Although the doctrine repeatedly has been challenged by those outside the denomination as well as some within, it appears to have strong support among pastors. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the pastors (table 5) agreed with the

statement: "A person who has never spoken in tongues cannot claim to be Spirit baptized." However, there appears to be a significant increase in the number of pastors who do not agree with the AG position on tongues as initial evidence of Spirit baptism. The 16% figure indicating disagreement reported in table 5 is up from the 2 % figure in the 1980s survey. Although increasing numbers of AG congregants do not speak in tongues and a significant percent of pastors disagree with the doctrinal statement, the experience of glossolalia and professing the creed of "initial evidence" continues to be a prerequisite for receiving and retaining AG ordination papers.[11]

The overwhelming majority of pastors in this survey (82%) did report praying in tongues weekly or more, with no pastor reporting not having prayed in tongues this past year. Tongues (at least on occasion) is a nearly universal part of the prayer lives of AG pastors. Pastors are somewhat less likely, however, to use this gift in a church service. Eighteen percent (18%) reported that they never gave an utterance in tongues or an interpretation of a glossolalic word during the past year, with another 36 percent indicating that they did so only a few times. Forty-seven percent (47%) gave expression to glossolalia in a congregational setting more regularly, reportedly giving an "utterance" or an "interpretation" once a month or more. The fact that pastors *pray* in tongues in private ritual but are less likely to use the *gift of tongues* in a corporate setting suggests a dissonance that exists in this expression of Pentecostal identity. Despite a more vocal yet clear minority who have reservations about the *doctrine* of tongues, it appears that the *use* of glossolalia is nearly universal for pastors in private prayer. Its corporate form of expression as "tongues and interpretation", however, is practiced regularly by less than half the pastors surveyed.

Glossolalia, as discussed in both the *Introduction* and the *Essay,* is central to AG doctrinal identity, as reflected in its inclusion as one of the 16 items found in the AG Statement of

[11] Data from the CCSP (Cooperative Congregational Studies Project) found that "40% of churches estimated that half or less of their members has been baptized in the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in other tongues" (Doty and Espinoza, 2000.)

Fundamental Truths. It is, however, only one of many paranormal expressions found in early Pentecostalism or in the larger Spirit Movement within Christianity. Experiences of other gifts and manifestations common at Azusa Street, during the early history of the AG, and during subsequent renewals and revivals are now seemingly few and far between. This narrowing range of Pentecostal experiences was true for the pastors' accounts of their personal experiences (Table 2) as well as for their reports of corporate experiences within their congregational services (Table 3).

Only a minority of pastors regularly experienced prophecy, healing, deliverance or other phenomena believed by many to be signs of the activity and presence of the Holy Spirit. For example, 34 percent claimed to have given a prophecy once a month or more. Forty six percent (46%) reported being a prayer facilitator for a physical healing and 41 percent for a mental and emotional healing. Only 13 percent, however, claimed regular involvement in deliverance from demonic oppression as a result of prayer. Put another way, 66 percent responded that they never or rarely gave a prophecy, 55 percent never or rarely witnessed a physical healing through their prayer, 60 percent were never or rarely a witness to emotional or mental healing, and 88 percent never witnessed deliverance (see Table 2). Other physical manifestations common to contemporary revival meetings outside the AG were similarly less likely to be part of experiences reported by pastors: 94 percent were never or rarely slain in the spirit; 83 percent had never or rarely experienced holy laughter; and 76 percent had never or rarely experienced the bodily manifestation of shaking or jerking, all of which were commonly experienced during the recent revivals.

A similar pattern was found for corporate ritual experiences (Table 3). Tongues and interpretations was reported as a regular experience for only 43 percent of the congregations. While only two percent of the pastors reported that tongues and interpretation (as dictated by Pentecostal protocol) was never a part of their public ritual, for the remaining majority it was an infrequent occurrence. Only 33 percent reported regular experiences of prophecy, a gift that

serves a function similar to that of tongues and interpretations. Both are regarded as inspired words or messages from God delivered to the congregation, with prophecy being a simple message without the glossolalic prelude.

Although prayer for healing was a regular feature of 90 percent of congregational services, less than half of the congregations (41%) provided regular opportunity for sharing healing testimonies. It appears that healing prayer has become a nearly universal ritual in AG churches but that fewer churches include opportunities for testimonials commonly used to encourage and build faith for miraculous healing[12]. The fact that testimonies about healings received were far less likely to be reported than regular prayer for healing may point to underlying ambiguity about healing ritual as well as glossolalia. The frequencies found in Tables 2 and 3 reporting pastoral involvement in the expression of charisma during worship services and the pastoral reports of congregational use of gifts during worship demonstrate how ongoing charismatic practices vary widely within the AG.

Ambiguity and the Ritual Dilemma

The history of AG, as we have already seen, is one of a revitalization movement that emphasizes an experiential baptism distinct from baptism with water. In the words of David du Plessis, a central Pentecostal actor in the Charismatic Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, "God has no grandchildren." Because the identity of Pentecostals is rooted in paranormal religious experiences, their children cannot rely on their parents' experiences to claim Spirit baptism. Many adherents, however, appear to be lapsing into a cultural Pentecostalism that increasingly assumes an Evangelical identity at the expense of Pentecostal experience. This may be demonstrated by the changes in Pentecostal ritual over the decades, particularly the decrease in revival meetings where signs and wonders drew both the faithful and potential converts to be refreshed by Pentecostal experiences. In a recent discussion of the history of Pentecostalism, Everett Wilson (1999:92) emphasized the important role revival plays in the spread of this global movement:

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[12] In reviewing these statistics, I was reminded of a comment made by an AG graduate student in one of my courses during which I was discussing my research on divine healing. The young man commented, "I have heard stories like you are reporting all of my life, but I have never seen one case of such healing in my church. Healing is professed but I have seen little evidence of its being practiced or experienced."

> Whatever success the historian has in identifying the succession of Pentecostal outpourings in the early century, the issue is not 'who begat whom', but who or what brought to life and enthusiasm those many different specimens of Pentecostalism in diverse settings and sequences. A pedigree can show the relationship of each ascending generation to its predecessor, but each new generation still has to be born in reproductive passion. Revivals last not because the movement had an impressive beginning, but rather because periodic renewal keeps the enthusiasm vibrant despite energy-sapping generational, organizational and circumstantial changes.

Revivals, once common in the AG, have gradually taken a back seat to "seeker-sensitive" churches and well-promoted programs, in many sectors of the denomination. They were first banished from Sunday morning time-slots and relegated to Sunday evening church gatherings and summer camps. They increasingly have been replaced by other rituals in many AG churches, lingering only as rumors from a seemingly distant historical past, as fewer pastors and their congregants experience the range of charisma found in early Pentecostalism. When new outpourings of charisma come along that revive the larger PCM, the AG has been reluctant to accept them as authentic moves of God. That isolationist and protectionist mentality has cost them opportunity to participate in charismatic outpourings in other sectors of Christianity.

Blumhofer's (1989:58) observations about the consonant notes found in the New Order (Latter Rain) revival of the 1940s and early Pentecostalism provide some insight for understanding the ambivalence of the AG toward the fresh outpouring of charisma:

> Some first-generation Pentecostals had begun within a decade to bemoan their movement's waning power and had pointed to a future, more copious showers of the latter rain. Consequently, there was even precedent for the eschatological innovation by the New Order advocates. Daniel Kerr, for example, noting a declining focus on healing as early as 1914, had heralded a coming dispensation in which healing would have the prominence accorded to tongues at the turn of the century. As Pentecostal groups had organized and charismatic fervor had waned in some places--or was largely confined to revival campaigns and campmeetings--voices had been raised asserting that the turn-of-the-century Apostolic Faith Movement had seen only the beginning of a revival whose more copious latter rains were yet to come.

While Blumhofer goes on to describe the AG rationale for rejecting the Later Rain or New Order Movement (particularly its rejection of religious organizations and its indictment of "old Pentecost"), the fact remains that the AG has been at times ambivalent and at times hostile to

Pentecostal experiences in other streams of the PCM. The Latter Rain, the subsequent healing revival of the 1950s, and the Charismatic movement of the 1960s and 1970s all, for the most part, occurred outside the Assemblies of God. It had a positive effect on AG growth during this period largely through pastors who risked the criticism of their peers and sometimes censure from leadership for their support of this newer movement

As can be seen in data reported in Table 4, most pastors do seem to be aware that the Pentecostal worldview is in continual need of revitalization. A vast majority (84%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "The AG must actively seek to revitalize its early Pentecostal roots." Very few (5%) agreed that in order to reach the unchurched "the AG must downplay the public use of the gifts of the Spirit" which are believed to accompany baptism with the Holy Spirit. The overwhelming majority of pastors verbally support AG identity as a Pentecostal denomination in which paranormal gifts are openly displayed, even if these manifestations should cause some discomfort for first-time visitors. Moreover, 85 percent of the respondents reported that their congregations are of "one mind" regarding "expressive worship practices" which have at times caused divisions and disagreements in the past.

Despite the verbal acquiescence, there appears to be an unresolved paradox between the widely acclaimed support for revival with an openness to the paranormal gifts and the absence or near-absence of Pentecostal vitality in at least half of the AG churches. With the possible exception of tongues and interpretations (experienced regularly in 43 percent of the congregations included in this study), other gifts and manifestations commonly witnessed in the larger PCM do not appear to be a regular part of AG ritual. The discrepancy between sentiments and behavior – between what people say and what they do – has been long observed by social psychologists (c.f. Deutscher, Pestello, and Pestello 1993; Deutscher 1973) and can be once again seen in the responses to questions about the Brownsville Outpouring and other renewal tributaries. (See Table 4.)

The revival/renewal of the 1990s in North America can be traced to a revival began with the Assemblies of God in Argentina -- a revival that continues into the 21st century. Although it first took form in North America in 1994 (at the then Toronto Airport Vineyard, a Third-Wave congregation) and quickly spread to the United Kingdom (largely in independent "new" or "restoration churches" and Anglican charismatic churches), in 1995 similar revival phenomena found expression in an AG congregation in Pensacola, Florida. Brownsville Assembly of God (BAOG) quickly became a pilgrimage site for Spirit-thirsty Pentecostals and Charismatics alike. Its leaders soon offered a traveling version of the revival as Awake America Crusades began monthly treks to local communities. In June, 1997, the *Pentecostal Evangel ("The Official Magazine of the Assemblies of God")* devoted a special issue to the question "Is America on the verge of spiritual awakening?" – presenting revival updates on 24 AG congregations located throughout the U.S. Full-length articles appeared on the "Golden State" (AG churches Sacramento, Modesto, and Bakersfield, CA); First Assemblies of God in Fort Wayne, Indiana; on The Tabernacle in Orchard Park, New York; Bethel Temple in Hampton, Virginia; and Bettendorf, Iowa Assembly of God. Editor Hal Donaldson (1997:4) acknowledged that this issue is "by no means a comprehensive report. . . [but the churches] featured here are merely representative of congregations across America—large and small, urban and rural—that are recognizing fresh spiritual life." The tone of the issue was affirming of renewal sprinkled with only a bit of caution. As Hal Donaldson (1978:4) offered as editorial comment, "Historians will judge whether the burgeoning revival in America deserves to be dubbed the next great awakening. But signs suggest this is more than a spiritual tremor . . ."

The Response Paper adopted by the General Presbytery in August, 2000, "Endtime Revival—Spirit-Led and Spirit Controlled", appeared to be more cautionary than affirming in its concern about the excesses of renewal. While stating that the "last thing any sincere Pentecostal believer wants to do is to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit," much of the paper was devoted to cautioning against "revival extremes." These two publications – the special issue of the

Pentecostal Evangel and the "Response Paper to Resolution 16" dealing with "Endtime Revival"—demonstrate the ambiguity that readily can be found in the AG about revival/renewal.

The survey data collected from AG pastors about the 1990s revivals reflects this same dissonance. As reported earlier, 86 percent of pastors identify with Pentecostal *renewal* or *revival* (R/R), reporting that being involved in R/R is extremely important or very important to them. Nearly all (98%) were aware of the R/R movement found at BAOG and other congregations in North America through reading articles in AG literature (100%) or in other Christian magazines (86%) and by talking with AG leaders/pastors (72%), with church members (70%), or with other persons who have visited popular R/R sites (86%). The overwhelming majority of the pastors appear to be aware of the current Pentecostal revival and seem to have a single mind about the importance of reviving authentic Pentecostal spirituality. This does not necessarily mean, however, that AG pastors are of one mind about BAOG and the revival of the 1990s. Pastors were evenly divided on the issue as to whether "America is in the midst of a revival similar to the one that gave birth to Pentecostalism." Despite the fact that the national leaders of the AG have given cautious approval and support to the revival at BAOG, the average pastor appears to be reluctant to embrace it.[13]

Nearly all the pastors surveyed support revival in principle and nearly all had heard about BAOG and the R/R movement, but far fewer had experienced this latest outpouring of charisma for themselves. It is noteworthy that despite the verbal assent to the importance of revival, approximately 2/3 *have not* personally checked out the nightly meetings at the BAOG in Pensacola or any of the other AG and non-AG renewal sites which dot the nation. The vast majority have not invited R/R speakers to their churches (67%) nor have they attended an Awake America Crusade sponsored by BAOG in various cities throughout the U.S. (80%). Given this

[13] It was interesting to review the selection of readings found in the 85th Anniversary Edition 1913-1998 of the Pentecostal Evangel, the weekly publication of the AG. An article on Pentecostal revival was reprinted from the July 12, 1924 issue that lamented how "many folks are blind" to the Pentecostal revival that was still in process. The anniversary issue, although published three years after the revival began at BAOG, failed to mention the Pensacola Outpouring (as it is often called) as one of the significant events of AG history.

lack of first-hand contact, it is not surprising that only 30 percent of the pastors report their churches "to be actively engaged in the Renewal/Revival."

In sum, it is clear that most pastors perceive a decline in Pentecostal practices within the denomination. It is noteworthy that 70 percent either strongly agree or agree "the gifts of the Holy Spirit are losing their prominence in AG churches as a whole." They report concern about the loss of Pentecostal power, an embracing of a renewal/revival identity, are informed about the various renewal sites, but surprisingly most have made little effort to check out the rumors of revival for themselves.[14] Being of one-mind around the core value of revival has apparently not translated into an acceptance revival in contemporary dress. Present-day pastors, much like their predecessors, have been reluctant to accept charisma as it has taken flesh in periodic revivals of the latter half of the 20th century. At least among some pastors, revitalization in Pentecostalism is being relegated to doctrine rather than personal experience. Revivals are often acknowledged to be "messy" –even by their supporters. Established Pentecostal denominations like the AG may well prefer the safety of doctrine to the unpredictability of religious experience.

The Dilemma of Delimitation: Doctrine and Pentecostal Experience

The dilemma of delimitation addresses the threat to charisma posed by the relativizing of the original religious message in relation to new conditions. One horn of the dilemma is the danger of watering down the message to fit the times, often rendering commonplace that which was originally a call to the extraordinary. The AG (as may be gleaned from earlier discussion) runs a risk of grabbing onto this horn with its long history of courting non-charismatic Evangelicals who are indifferent and often hostile to the distinct Pentecostal worldview. Primitive charismatic tendencies are tamed as favor is bestowed on more pragmatic ritual and organizations. The other horn of the dilemma is the creation of rigid doctrines and religious

[14] Ambiguity and ambivalence appear to be heightened by the fact that only 6 percent of the respondents did not believe that the denomination is responsible for promoting revival. Sixty percent (60%) of the pastors surveyed believed it was the task of the National Office and another 34 percent reported it was the task of the District Offices to promote revival.

legalisms set up in an attempt to capture and reproduce the charisma of the original movement. As discussed in both the Introduction and the *Essay,* the early founders of the AG were initially resistant to forming any kind of doctrinal statement, but they soon found it necessary to produce a statement of faith, consisting largely of a reiteration of the "fundamentals" drawn up earlier by Protestant Fundamentalists. The stage was set for the replacing of right experience with right belief--a move that tends to water down the distinct Pentecostal worldview where the Spirit of God moves freely, openly, and creatively in the lives of ordinary believers.

During the 1914 founding meeting of the AG in Hot Springs, Arkansas, there was strong resistance to the development of a creedal statement, but the Oneness "heresy" that developed between 1914 and 1916 forced leaders to quickly adopt a creedal statement. Most of the tenets were derived from the Fundamentalist Statement of Truths, with two important additions: tongues as "initial evidence" of Spirit baptism and "healing by the atonement" (see Menzies: *Essay*). The belief in divine healing is not distinctively Pentecostal, being promoted by other sect-like non-Pentecostal groups even at the time the AG creed was formulated. The doctrine of "initial evidence," however, is distinctively Pentecostal and has been embraced to varying degrees by most Pentecostal groups in North America (McGee 2000; Wacker 2001). Accounts of Pentecostal-like revivals that did not promote a doctrine of initial evidence have usually been lost in unexamined historical archives.[15] At its core, however, the AG Statement of Fundamental Truths is basically a Fundamentalist-dispensationalist creedal statement, with "initial evidence" added to the other largely eschatological concerns. Its adoption from Fundamentalism set the stage for the unfolding of the dilemma of delimitation. O'Dea and Aviad (1983:61) described the dangers of delimitation as follows:

> While the dangers of distortion of the faith require these definitions of dogma and morals, once established, the definitions themselves pose the possibility of another kind of distortion. They become a vast intellectual structure which serves not to guide the faith of untrained specialists but rather to burden it.

[15] See Gary McGee (1999) for one such account of the rise of Pentecostalism in India.

In theory, it is the task of the Holy Spirit to ensure that Pentecostalism does not sink into the abyss of contentless mysticism nor encaged in a cavern of rigid doctrine. Pentecostalism in its various faces has continuously needed to balance experience with biblical teachings, describing themselves as both people of the Spirit and people of the Word. At the heart of Pentecostalism is a conviction that the Bible is the inspired word of God. Pentecostals do differ, however, in their hermeneutics with scholarship tending toward an Evangelical rational/propositional theology with some pastors uncritically adding an undefined narrative to the fundamentalist core. Some Pentecostals, as already noted, have "aligned themselves with Evangelicals in their move toward adopting the methods of higher criticism" (Cagel 1993:163). The text is easily reduced to the meaning intended by the author of the scripture without sufficient exploration of the insight that can be gleaned from integrating this hermeneutic with narrative theology. Traditional Pentecostalism, despite its official fundamentalist creed, notes Cagel (1993:164), often placed greater "emphases on the immediacy of the text and multiple dimensions of meaning". It allowed for subjective experiences and subjective interpretations to exist along side the more objective critical-historical-literary methods. Even the doctrine of tongues as "initial evidence" emerged not from the pens of theologians versed in higher criticism but from the accounts told by those who experienced glossolalia and to sought to align this experience with their reading of the Bible.

Today's Pentecostalism is more likely to appear dressed in the rationalism of contemporary American society, devoid of the colorful and emotional accounts that found expression through the anointed preaching and testimonies of its earlier days. As already noted, the seeds for this condition can be found in the early history of the AG as its leaders sought to find acceptance and legitimation from the dispensationalist fundamentalists. As Gerald Shepherd (1984:) noted in his discussion of the "uneasy relationship between Pentecostalism and dispensationalism," embracing Evangelical views "have raised new problems for the identity of Pentecostals--hermeneutically, sociologically, and politically." Other scholars have also cautioned against the

danger of an uncritical wedding of Pentecostalism with Evangelical/Fundamentalist theology. Harvey Cox (1995), for example, noted the paradoxical relationship between fundamentalist Christianity and modernity, cautioning that Fundamentalism is but a crude form of nineteenth-century rationalism that is not compatible with a Pentecostal worldview.

Evangelical rational thought with its propositional truth tends to undermine the importance of religious experiences, the stuff out of which Pentecostalism is made and through which it maintains its vitality. At the same time, it has provided a useful form for professing the faith, one that has common and uncritical acceptance by most AG pastors. The present study of AG pastors as well as an earlier one by Guth, Green, Smidt, Kellstedt, and Poloma (1997) suggest that AG pastors are of a near single-mind on most common theological issues. Of the eight Protestant denominations included in Guth et al's study, the AG clearly is the group in most accord on basic doctrine. This theological core and some attendant ambiguities provide the contents for discussing the delimitation dilemma.

The Bible, Fundamentals, and Orthodoxy

On matters of biblical orthodoxy, AG pastors score higher than clergy in the Southern Baptist Convention, Evangelical Covenant Church, Christian Reformed Church, Reformed Church in America, United Methodist Church, Prebyterian Church in the USA, or the Disciples of Christ (Guth, et al. 1997). On basic biblical beliefs coupled with premillenial eschatology, AG pastors responding to this survey demonstrated almost unanimous agreement. (See Table 5.) One hundred percent (100%) of the pastors agreed or strongly agreed that "there is no other way to salvation but through belief in Jesus Christ," 99 percent believe "the devil actually exists," and 98 percent agreed or strongly agreed that "Scriptures are the inerrant, literally accurate word of God not only in matters of faith, but in all matters." Ninety-four percent (94%) agreed or strongly agreed that the "Bible clearly teaches a 'premillennial' view of history and the future, and 98 percent reported believing "in the immanent 'rapture' of the church.

Widespread agreement on basic Christian tenets, which appears to be stronger in the AG than in other denominations, may be in part due to its tendency to downplay the refinement of doctrine. As AG historian William Menzies (1971:376) observed nearly 30 years ago, the AG "has been surprisingly free of theological controversy, possibly owing to the relative unconcern of the followship with the niceties of doctrinal distinctions."[16] Menzies goes on to state:

> The traditional emphasis has been experiential and practical, not ideological. Absolute trust in the Bible and general agreement on fundamentals of the faith have served to furnish a fairly tolerant basis of fellowship.

Once removed from theological orthodoxy, however, some ambiguities can been seen lurking beneath the surface of the seemingly placid doctrinal waters. As shown before, the survey suggests an ambiguity about a dispensationalist hermeneutic that speaks of a major potential cleavage. While 58 percent reported accepting a dispensationalist interpretation of Scipture, 42 percent rejected this approach. The uncritical wedding of dispensationalism and Pentecostalism by a majority of pastors points to the downside of not wrestling with theological "niceties" within the denomination. A de facto theology has emerged, but one that often suffers from a lack of coherence and relevance in its failure to mirror a clear Pentecostal worldview. Of particular concern in exploring the dilemma of delimitation is the degree to which the "definitions of dogma and morals" within the AG contribute toward maintaining or quenching a distinct Pentecostal identity.

Ambiguity and Dissent on Select Doctrinal Issues

Traditional Pentecostalism has birthed a movement that it has been unable to monitor. The Spirit blows how and where it will, and much of the activity within the past 50 years has been outside of classical Pentecostalism within the so-called Latter Rain, Charismatic and Third-Wave

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16 The interviews conducted with pastors by a team of ORW researchers seem to confirm Menzies' observation about the focus being on the 16 Fundamentals, with little concern for "niceties of doctrinal distinctions." It is significant that while some respondents talked about being "big on sound doctrine," it was largely with regard to issues decided at the 1916 Council. Interestingly, none of the 28 pastors talked about their disagreement with any of the fundamentals of the denomination, not even the somewhat controversial "initial evidence" tenet on glossolalia which insists that speaking in tongues is *the* evidential sign of Spirit baptism.

sectors of the Spirit Movement. Robeck describes the dilemma faced in the wake of an expanded PCM as follows:

> While it is indisputable that the needs of some people are being met in these newer congregations, sometimes the very categories with which they choose to identify suggests a new form of elitism. Older Pentecostals are now being portrayed as *passe'*, while these groups promise that God is on the move in their midst. They are the latest "wave" of what God is doing. Older "waves" have been passed by. As members of the first "wave" of what God is said to be doing in the Church today, Pentecostals must now deal with the same feelings that members of the historic churches had when they were first faced with the claims that Pentecostals were proclaiming the "Full Gospel". For some older Pentecostal groups, this has introduced questions of self-doubt or very human desires to discredit the "new" as not sufficiently up to God's standards (Robeck 1999b:8).

Of significance for this discussion is that many of these newer streams have tended to de-emphasize the importance of glossolalia for Spirit baptism much to the chagrin of some classical Pentecostals.[17] This diminished emphasis on tongues while emphasizing the presence and power of the Holy Spirit has appealed to others outside the larger PCM. Popular American Baptist sociologist/theologian Tony Campolo raises the issue of *How to be Pentecostal Without Speaking in Tongues* (1994) in a book written for a larger Evangelical audience. Campolo joined others outside the Pentecostal camp in re-discovering the power of the Holy Spirit. They adopt and adapt the Pentecostal worldview of Spirit baptism, suggesting that there is more to being a Christian than believing the accepted doctrines and practicing the right rituals. As can be inferred from Menzies's *Essay,* glossolalia as a symbol of distinct Pentecostal identity is being eroded by the influence of the larger Spirit Movement that refuses to accept the centrality of tongues as "initial evidence", causing AG leaders to cling even more to the one plank of doctrine that makes them different.

There has been a growing awareness that the Pentecostal perspective is no longer marginalized but has gone mainstream. As AG scholar Glen Menzies (1998:175) commented:

> [Most Christians once] regarded glossolalia in particular as a token of fanaticism and emotional excess. But due to the eruption of the charismatic movement in the

[17] It is interesting to note the estimate that only 35 percent of Pentecostals speak in tongues. In other words, only one in three members of churches who teach that glossolalia is the "initial evidence" of Spirit baptism actually are glossolalic. Hollenweger (1999:147) comments on this statistic: "If we add to this number those Pentecostal denominations who refuse to subscribe to the doctrine of "initial sign" (for instance, the very strong Chilean movement), the percentage is even higher."

> 1960s and its widespread success in popularizing this Pentecostal understanding of spiritual gifts outside Pentecostal circles, the notion that all of the gifts of the Spirit are available to the contemporary church no longer constitutes a 'distinctive' of Pentecostalism. And while Pentecostals rejoice that in this regard the rest of the church has moved in their direction, this 'success' has only intensified the need for Spirit baptism and evidential tongues to provide distinctive identity and internal cohesion to Pentecostalism.

The logic of the leaders, some of whom are currently proposing tightening up the doctrinal wording to minimize the mental gymnastics that some pastors engage in annually as they check the form to renew their ordination credentials, runs something like this: the key to Spirit baptism is tongues, the key to revival is Spirit baptism, the key to church growth is revival."[18] Without tongues there can be no Spirit baptism, no revival, no church growth. To back down on what is increasingly becoming a controversial doctrine in some sectors of the AG, according to this logic, would insure the AG traveling down a slippery slope of losing its Pentecostal identity and jeopardizing the institutional well-being of this thriving denomination. At the same time that this particular symbol is being sharpened, the use of glossolalia and other experiences that birthed Pentecostalism seem to be waning within the AG.

As discussed earlier, glossolalia remains a litmus test for "true" Pentecostalism for many AG leaders and pastors (at least in North America), but increasingly it is a doctrine held up for scrutiny. While the vast majority (85%) of pastors affirmed the doctrine in their survey responses, a significant minority (16%) expressed disagreement with it.[19] If glossolalia is in fact the "initial physical evidence" attesting to Spirit baptism, how is it that others are experiencing a

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[18] At least some pastors have quietly been neglecting to check the box asking about a belief in tongues as "initial physical evidence" of Spirit baptism, noting that the Constitution and Bylaws do not authorize the collection of such information. Those seeking ordination papers for the first time are the ones who are caught in the most precarious position. Reportedly the Executive Presbytery has added the term "immediate," reading "tongues as the immediate initial physical evidence," to close in on those who have been acquiescing to the words but not the spirit of increasing doctrinal rigidity.

[19] The figure for those disagreeing with the tongues doctrine represents a significant increase over the 2 percent figure reported from a 1985 data set on pastors for the same question (Poloma 1989:40). Also of interest from the results of the study of congregations and pastors in the mid-1980s is the gap between the pastoral and congregational responses to the issue of tongues as initial evidence. At that time, 39 percent of the congregants did not agree with this fundamental doctrine (as compared with 2% of the pastors).

range of Pentecostal-like phenomena without emphasizing tongues? Some answered the question by saying that eventually the Spirit baptized person will speak in tongues, leading to the attempt to assert the word "immediate" before "initial physical evidence." Even more disconcerting to those who would make tongues a litmus test for Spirit baptism is the fact that in many AG congregations the majority of adherents do not report speaking in tongues. Such observations plus an Evangelical hermeneutic have caused a small but growing number of pastors to question the biblical base for the doctrine. Although a majority of pastors appear to support the official position (with no way of determining how many are engaged in personal mental revisions as they acquiesce to this plank of AG doctrine), there is a significant minority opposition movement present in the AG. Those who tackle the issue, however, do so at the risk of their own status as ordained AG ministers.[20]

The doctrine surrounding glossolalia is one of two major issues that has generated controversy over the years that I have been a systematic observer of the AG. The other is divorce and remarriage among AG laity and especially among church pastors. In the congregational survey that provided data for *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, approximately half of the adherents of AG churches reported beliefs that were not in compliance with the stance of the denomination on divorce. The 1973 "Statement on Divorce and Remarriage" clearly proscribed divorce, but left the question of remarriage for adherents to "be resolved by the believer as he walks in the light of God's Word" (Poloma 1989:148-49). While adherents were given permission to discern the issue of divorce for themselves, until very recently divorced ministers were granted no such freedom of conscience about remarriage after

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20 One interesting caveat may be found in a testimony by J. Roswell Flower, the first General Superintendent of the AG, on his Spirit baptism. In the original article appearing in the Pentecostal Evangel in 1933, it is clear that Flower, while clearly believing in the Fundamental about glossolalia, regarded himself as having received the baptism some months before he actually spoke in tongues and *after* leading evangelistic crusades deemed to be Spirit empowered. When the article was reprinted in the *Pentecostal Evangel* in 1993, it was abridged in such a way making it appear that Flower actually spoke in tongues on the occasion of his Spirit baptism that he reports empowered him for the crusades. For an AG defense against critiques of the existing doctrine on tongues, see Bridges (2000).

divorce. Even if the divorce and remarriage occurred before the person's conversion, a divorced and remarried person could not be ordained. (Rumblings could be heard, however, about annulments being granted which have enabled some high ranking ministers to avoid the censure of losing credentials after divorce and remarriage or after marrying a divorced person.) After defeating a similar measure in 1991 and 1997, in August, 2001, the AG General Council passed a resolution that allows divorcees to become pastors *as long as the divorce occurred before their conversion*.

The divorce and remarriage issue has been partially resolved by this recent action of the AG General Council. Significant numbers of pastors appear to be in favor of even more flexibility in dealing with the divorce and remarriage of pastors just as there has been for laity. Pastors responding to the survey reported considerably less support for the official AG position on ministers divorcing and remarrying than at the time of my first pastoral survey in 1985 when only 10 percent of pastors disagreed with AG policy of defrocking divorced and remarried pastors. The present survey found that 43 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Persons who have been divorced and remarried should be permitted to serve as AG pastors." Only 19 percent reported a *strong disagreement* with the statement that would ban divorced and remarried pastors from the ministry, suggesting that most desire increased flexibility in dealing with the thorny issue of divorce and remarriage. Further, only a minority of pastors (23%) would prohibit divorced and remarried persons from assuming leadership in local congregations — a position which further illustrates the denomination's inability to withstand accommodative forces stemming from a widespread acceptance of divorce and remarriage in the larger culture.

Another set of moral proscriptions remain as vestiges from the past where all worldly amusements were shunned by Pentecostals who set themselves apart from the larger world to live "holy" and "separate" lives. Questions were asked on the survey about four practices that represent the last remains of a former extensive behavioral "holiness" standard: drinking alcohol, gambling, dancing, and movies. Attitudes toward such behavior remain fairly strong

among pastors (although sermons are rarely preached on these issues in most urban AG churches). A clear majority disapproved of "gambling, including lotteries" (98%), even "the occasional use of alcoholic beverages" (82%); social dancing (80%); and Christians patronizing "movie theaters" (51%). (See Table 5.)

In a more striking way than in other well-established Protestant denominations, there is an intact seamless robe around Christian orthodoxy in the AG extending even to its particular eschatology and most moral and behavioral taboos. The garment wrapping distinct Pentecostal theology, however, does show some signs of wear. Pastors are seemingly divided on some remnant moral issues that once seemed central to Pentecostal identity--behavior and practices that set Pentecostals aside as a "peculiar people." Attempts to select any doctrinal items, as the leadership has done with glossolalia and divorced ministers, to prevent further slide down what is commonly referred to as the "slippery slope," appears more likely to cause division than to reinforce Pentecostal identity. What seems needed to deal with the slippery slope is not a tightening of doctrinal reins but rather continued flexibility that allows controversy around peripheral issues not central to the larger Pentecostal worldview. Perhaps the best way to deal with controversial issues is to frame them theologically within the "new" Pentecostal paradigm discussed earlier – one that reflects an openness to personal experience and narrative that aligns with Pentecostal identity as a Spirit-led people (Ma 1999).

Spirit baptism, remains a core feature of PCM identity, but increasingly it is not regarded as synonymous with the gift of tongues. Spirit baptism (or "infilling") is often treated as an ongoing process in which Pentecostals of all streams experience the power of God not only for personal pleasure and edification but also for empowerment for service. Power and empowerment cannot be legislated or mandated by doctrinal decrees or denominational edicts, but rather it depends on hospitable terrain that allows the wind, rain, and fire of the Holy Spirit to fall as it will. A fertile environment can be created, but the desired work of the Spirit is in every sense *charisma* or gift --which takes us to the final dilemma, that of power. The

accommodative forces at work in O'Dea's dilemma of power are important for understanding the interrelationship between attempts to enforce doctrinal decrees on pastors and the empowerment sought by early Pentecostals.

The Dilemma of Power: From Pilgrims to Citizens

The theme of accommodation to the larger culture is one that runs through all of the institutional dilemmas, but perhaps no dilemma focuses on a more important facet of accommodation than the dilemma of power. O'Dea and Aviad (1983:63) succinctly describe the dilemma of power as follows:

> Religion cannot but relate itself to the other institutions of society and to the cultural values. Yet such accommodation tends toward a coalescing of religion and power. The alliance of religion and secular power creates a situation in which apparent religiosity often conceals a deeper cynicism and a growing unbelief.

Although the early Pentecostals were not trained in sociology, they seemed to have a natural instinct for the importance of separation from the larger world if their distinct worldview were to be retained. As Blumhofer (1993:142) noted, ". . .early Assemblies of God members professed little interest in contemporary society; they had either not yet glimpsed a broader social world or had consciously turned from it." They began their sojourn as pilgrims, but slowly and steadily moved toward becoming citizens. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the move from an apolitical (once pacifist) stance with a strong sense of Spirit-led destiny to embracing the political agenda of Fundamentalism/Evangelicalism. An eschatology proclaiming a soon-coming end-times, the immanent rapture of the church, and premillenialism that once kept Pentecostals at bay from politics, now seems to undergird a staunchly conservative political agenda (Guth, Green, Smidt, Kellstedt, and Poloma 1997). Spiritual power (empowerment) has, at least for some, reverted into political power.

The Core and the Periphery: Consonance and Dissonance in Political Thought

As the Religious Right began to flex its political muscles during the 1980s and 1990s, the AG struggled with its role in the political scene. Few pastors plunged into partisan politics (although a significant majority of its pastors are self-reported Republicans) but rather they began to speak out on select issues. Based on both congregational and pastoral data as well as other research on conservative religions and politics, Poloma (1989:157) noted a distinction between private morality and public political issues that continues among AG pastors:

> Although the dividing lines are somewhat blurred, it appears that the Assemblies of God is quite concerned about private moral issues, such as divorce, pornography, drug and alcohol abuse, and abortion, that touch on "personal purity." Its leaders, however, are much more reluctant to step into the area of "public issues," including economic problems, social welfare legislation, and international affairs. Most appear not only to oppose political involvements that focus on the public sphere but also carefully to eschew partisan politics.

The increased visibility of and attention paid to the Religious Right has prompted many AG pastors to take a role along side other Evangelicals in politics as well as in theology, a stance that Blumhofer (1989) has linked with the AG's one-sided involvement with the National Association of Evangelicals. Not only are pastors now more likely to express concern over select political/moral issues, but many reportedly expect the judicatory to lead the way in conservative political action. For example, 86 percent of the pastors in the present survey indicated their belief that the National Office should "serve as a political voice to combat homosexuality and abortion," with another 3 percent relegating this task to the District Offices, and only 11 percent indicating such activity should be performed by neither judicatory. Fewer pastors, although still a clear majority, support judicatory action to promote select political candidates. Fifty-nine percent (59%) assigned this task to the National Office and 8 percent to the Districts, with 33 percent replying that such political activity is not appropriate for either denominational administrative office.

Eschatology has always played a role in AG political stances (or lack of them), and the overwhelming majority of pastors continue to support this plank of traditional AG theology. As

we have already seen, AG pastors are nearly unanimously committed to a premillenial eschatology held by their forbearers. While still professing premillenial beliefs that once led their ancestors to resist political activities, the impact and meaning of AG eschatology on pastoral politics has become somewhat fuzzy. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the pastoral respondents, for example, concurred with a statement that is more in accord with postmillennianism than with a traditional understanding of premillennian doctrine: "The Kingdom of God can be built in every institution and sphere of life before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ." For many the coming Kingdom should be facilitated through the Christian Coalition as "a proper channel to use to accomplish political goals" (59% in agreement). While there has been great resistance to ecumenism in the AG (especially dialogue with Roman Catholics and Mainline Protestant organizations), paradoxically the vast majority (91%) would favor interfaith cooperation in politics "even if they can't agree on theology." Finally, underlying a more activist stance on the part of many pastors is a more traditional majority opinion (70%) that "if enough people were brought to Christ, social ills would take care of themselves," a seeming hold-over a once dominant apolitical posture.

AG pastors are being increasingly drawn into an Evangelical political agenda that fails to mirror an earlier Pentecostal understanding of power. As there has been a subtle transition of the AG from being pilgrims to citizens (Blumhofer 1989), there has been a corresponding shift from an emphasis from a reliance on Pentecostal power to that of political power. The passage from the book of Zachariah quoted earlier still can be found on the front cover of each issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." The classic Pentecostal understanding of that passage and the issue of Pentecostal empowerment warrants closer inspection for unpacking the relevance of the dilemma of power for the AG.

Power, Politics, and Empowerment: A Minority Report

The AG serves as a good illustration of the strong correlation that exists between theological conservatism and political conservatism in American politics. The history of

Pentecostalism suggests, however, that this relationship is due more to social class concerns than to Pentecostal spirituality. When the PCM is in its charismatic moment, political agendas seem to loose significance as actual behavior may become (at least for the moment) somewhat radical. In the words of a popular renewal song that became a theme of the so-called "Toronto Blessing," Spirit-filled people will "break dividing walls" -- walls that can be found between men and women, blacks and whites, Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals, old and young, (fill in other categories).[21] According to some Pentecostal historians, dividing walls fell at the Azusa Street Revival that birthed Pentecostalism but were quickly reconstructed during the years that followed. Gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and denomination all became less relevant (at least temporarily) when the power of the Spirit is sweeping over a gathering of people, leaving ecstasy in its wake.[22]

Despite the apolitical stance of the early Pentecostals, many seemed to understand that the Pentecostal experience was meant for service. As discussed in Menzies's *Essay,* tongues, for example, was initially conceived as an infused knowledge of a foreign language for missionary activity. Those who tried to exercise their new language in foreign countries were usually disappointed, but their disappointment did not cause them to abandon glossolalia. Tongues was reconceptualized as a door that opened for the believer a storehouse of spiritual power, with missionaries coming to expect Pentecostal signs and wonders to provide for their necessities and to bring others to the Christian faith. Reports by missionaries then--and now-- affirm this link between Pentecostal power and service. As AG scholar and veteran missionary Douglas

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[21] See the video "Go Inside the Toronto Blessing," an account of the outbreak of revival at the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in 1994 and its effects as reported in 1997. Distributed by Fresh Start Marketing, Inc. Canton, OH.

[22] Perhaps the story of an egalitarian Pentecostalism is but a myth (as some historians have suggested), religious myth can be a powerful propellant for change. What is significant here is that the myth of early equality has been eroded with the aging of Pentecostalism. The vision of God's pouring out his Spirit on all people, as foretold in the book of Joel and reiterated by Peter on Pentecost, often fails to find modern expression. See Cerillo (1997) for an excellent review of different historical approaches to reporting Pentecostal origins.

Petersen (1999:4) describes the situation in a commentary on Macchia's (1999) excellent article calling for a paradigm shift in Pentecostal thinking:

> From its inception, emphasis upon supernatural empowerment for ministry, observes Macchia, rather than academic formation was the motivational force behind the ever-expanding pastoral and missionary activity of the movement. Characterized by the active participation of its members as 'doers' of the word, assessment of Pentecostalism by themselves or others, according to Macchia, usually focused on their enthusiasm, emotional expressions, or exponential growth.

Macchia (and seemingly Petersen) would encourage a shift in emphasis to include the spiritual power underlying Pentecostal missionary activity, particularly the Pentecostal experiences of Spirit baptism and divine healing.

> These spiritual encounter moments serve as a corrective antidote for these distinctive theological beliefs which are traditionally embodied within the uncritical constructs and limits of doctrinal guides. When supernatural experiences are integrally linked together with the person of Christ, Macchia argues, they offer potential for Pentecostals to move beyond a personal experience of self-gratification toward becoming part of a prophetic movement for both spiritual and social liberation (Petersen 1999:4).

The AG's uncritical acceptance of a conservative political stance, at least in the U.S., is not consistent with the nature of the potentially radical Pentecostal experience. The Azusa Street Revival, the event that catapulted the Pentecostal gospel, according to some historical accounts empowered blacks and women long before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. However, this breaking down of dividing walls was short lived as organized Pentecostalism mirrored the same problems of racism and sexism that could be found in the dominant culture.

Sexism, social class inequities, racism, ecumenism and other issues that captured the attention of liberal Protestantism more than a generation ago are slowly finding their way into AG awareness, causing more ambiguity around the core. Some have heard the challenge offered by scholars like Ronald Bueno (1999), a Salvadorean Pentecostal anthropologist, to begin "listening to the margins"--to reflect on Pentecostalism as it has been constructed by

different ethnic groups (see also Daniels 1999). Others are calling for greater openness to women's issues within Pentecostalism, noting how Pentecostalism's success has limited opportunities for women (Blumhofer 1995, Benvenutti 1995, Gill 1995, Everts 1995, 1999, and Poloma 1995). Still others have begun working on the challenge of interfaith dialogue as pioneered by the late David du Plessis (an AG minister, who was once defrocked for his ecumenical activity, known as "Mr. Pentecost" for the work he did to present the Pentecostal worldview to mainline churches) and continued by Cecil M. Robeck, (an AG minister and professor at Fuller Theological Seminary who continues to serve as a Pentecostal representative to international ecumenical gatherings). The isolationist mentality that has made the AG so wary of "ecumenism" has inadvertently cut off the denomination from traditions that could not only provide much-needed insight for developing a truly Pentecostal theology but also from fresh revival experiences. As we have already discussed, the AG has tended to distance itself them from those who are most likely to share its worldview, namely those neo-Pentecostals in mainstream Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and the independent charismatic movement.

There is evidence that the work done by Pentecostal scholars is slowly filtering through some pastors and into the pews, increasing an awareness of the importance of tackling issues beyond the narrow focus of so-called family values. This awareness is not shared by all, thus creating some additional ambiguity around the core of near universally-accepted positions. Seventy percent (70%) of the pastors, for example, agreed that "issues of social concern really get to the heart of the Gospel." After years of encouraging black Americans to join the largely black "sister" organization, the Church of God in Christ, 93 percent of the pastors agreed or strongly agreed that the "AG should actively work to attract persons of color." Support for women's issues appears to be more divisive. Although the AG has ordained women throughout its history, only 72 percent of pastors support women serving as senior pastors. A smaller percent (57%) would support women in leadership positions within the National or District AG government or on local church boards (53%).

Although the Assemblies of God worldwide has done an admirable job of establishing a loosely-knit, cooperative worldwide network that is sensitive to regional and cultural differences, the American church has been relatively homogeneous. The sample of pastors responding to the survey reflects this homogeneity. Only 5 percent (n=20) of the respondents were female; 97 percent (n=415) self-identified as "white." Only one respondent was African American, 2 were Hispanic; 2 were Asian American and 2 were "other". The congregations pastured by these respondents, not surprisingly, tended to be Caucasian, native-born American. Significantly, 6 percent of the congregations were either mostly (3 %) or entirely (3%) comprised of Hispanic Americans. Less than 1 percent were primarily African American congregations and 1 percent, Asian. The survey fails to capture a change seemingly underway in the ethnic composition of the American AG.

Figures on ten year church growth of the Assemblies of God reveal a slight deline in white AG churches from during the decade from 1990-2000 and a noteworthy increase in the number of ethnic churches (which is responsible for the overall increase in the number of churches and adherents claimed by the AG for the past decade).[23] A document from the newly formed Commission of Ethnic Relations, notes in "The Church in Transition" (12/08/2000):

> Change doesn't happen overnight. It occurs in small stages. It is usually so subtle that it goes undetected until we are overwhelmed by it. Because of this we don't always understand the affect (sic) of change and we don't always know how to respond to change. We don't see it happening and when we look back we wonder how we could have missed it and what we should have done.
>
> I say this because I believe the Assemblies of God is now in the midst of what could be the most dramatic change since the founding of our Fellowship in 1914. I also believe we need to recognize and understand what this change means to us as a fellowship of Pentetecostal believers. The change I speak of is not a doctrinal change and it is not a change that poses a threat, but rather an unparalleled

[23] David J. Moore, director of the AG Center for Ethnic Relations provided figures showing an increase of Black (from 111-213); Hispanic (from 1457 to 1885); Native American (168-178), and "other" (from 53 to 125) congregations. "In 1990 ethnic minority congregations and those with no single majority represented 20.2% of all A/G churches. In ten years that has grown to 26.7%. If the current trend remains constant in 2010 they will account for one third of our churches."

opportunity. The change I speak of is a change in the composition of the church. **We are becoming more ethnic minority.**

Pentecostals have been compelled by social forces to accept the increasingly pluralistic nature of American culture, with the AG being a beneficiary of the new waves of immigration that do promise "change the composition of the church." To date, however, the African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and "others" are not found in the mainstream of the American AG polity but are often relegated to "special language districts."[24] The change in composition currently underway in the AG will undoubtedly have repercussions for the power dilemma considered in this section as well as the issue of delimitation discussed in the section that follows.

It would appear, judging from historical accounts of religious isolationism and sometimes racist church policies, that the AG has already lost at least one opportunity to be a catalyst for social change that is consistent with the Pentecostal experience. The jury is still out as to whether it will continue to accept the political agenda of the Evangelical subculture without reflecting on its own Pentecostal heritage or whether it will grant a greater voice to those on the margins of society.

The Dilemma of Administrative Order: Elaboration and Alienation

The final dilemma to be discussed brings us back to the brief history presented in the Prologue of this article — back to the emergence of the Assemblies of God and its transition from a "cooperative fellowship" to a denomination with its complex bureaucratic structure. It also returns us to the dilemma of mixed motivation, the first of the five dilemmas to be addressed and, in many ways, the most significant one for understanding the AG. O'Dea and Aviad (1983:60) present a description of the relationship between concerns about the administrative order and mixed motivation as follows :

[24] The overwhelming majority of respondents, reflecting their Anglo affiliation, either disagreed (61%) or strongly disagreed (28%) with the item stating that these special language districts have been detrimental to the AG. A

> Since it is this structure of offices which becomes the mechanism for eliciting the mixed motivation . . . . and mobilizing it behind organizational goals, the individuals involved come to have a vested interest in the structure as it is, and to resist change and reform, which they tend to see as threatening to themselves. Thus not only can the structure become overelaborated and alienated from contemporary problems, but it can contribute to the alienation of office holders from the rank-and-file members of the group.

As found in our study of the other four interrelated dilemmas, once again the dilemma of delimitation provides a portrait of the AG as reflecting some ambiguity around a solid core.

Charisma does not exist in pure form but requires some degree of organization to promote and protect her spirit. Despite an earlier resistance to organization, the AG is now a well structured bureaucracy. At the top of the flow chart is the General Council of the Assemblies of God, clergy and congregational representatives from all member congregations, which gathers every two-years. The overall administration of the AG is under the direction of the Executive Presbytery, four elected officers (General Superintendent, Assistant General Superintendent, Secretary and Treasurer) who together with various boards, directors, counselors, and committees govern and minister to the needs of the denomination. Growth within the AG has led to a proliferation of programs to mobilize groups and resources. These programs embody those with an evangelistic emphasis, including missions, a drug program, university campus outreach, military and prison chaplancies; those that focus on education, including a division of Christian education, bible and liberal arts colleges, and a publishing house; and service programs adopted by most congregations to provide opportunities for fellowship and learning from cradle to grave (Blumhofer 1989). Buffered between the National Office and the local congregations are the District Offices with bureaus of their own, most of them based on geography but others based on ethnicity or special need (e.g. churches of the deaf). This is the complex organization which attempts to maintain the vision and carry out the mission of the Assemblies of God--an organization which appears to have the respect and support of a vast majority of AG pastors.

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significant minority of pastors most of whom are themselves "on the margin" do seem to recognize the problems presented by the present structural arrangement.

Coherence around the Administrative Core

Whether based on the pastoral survey or an ancillary survey of 250 leaders of regional judicatories, there appears to be solid support for the work being carried out by the national and regional governing structures. AG leaders tended to give high marks to the way the church has met ministry objectives, with only a small minority indicating that denominational effectiveness has decreased over the past five years. These objectives (and the percent indicating disapproval of task performance) included providing resources for spiritual revitalization (2%); expanding overseas mission efforts and ministries (1%); attracting and keeping members in the denomination (14%); attracting ethnic minority members in particular (6%); maintaining high quality of clergy in local churches (7%); keeping unity of purpose within the denomination (10%); creating a financially stable national church (0%); developing an identity as a global church presence (2%); attracting ethnic minority clergy (8%); strengthening the health of local churches (9%); getting judicatories to share resources with one another (7%); and maintaining a denominational identity in local churches (20%). Whether reviewing this report card internally or when comparing it to those of other groups included in the ORW study, the AG administration appears to pass with high marks.

Similar expectations for and satisfaction with the governance of the denomination can be found in the pastors survey. A majority of pastors indicated the following tasks should be primarily the responsibility of the national office:[25] marshal available resources for world evangelism (91%), provide press information on AG for the secular world (89%), serve as a political voice to combat homosexuality and abortion (86%), support seminary and bible colleges (80%), safeguard doctrinal conformity (78%), support denominational liberal arts colleges (72%), develop congregational programs like Royal Rangers, Missionnettes, (71%),

[25] The survey question providing this information asked "Which of the following tasks are best performed by the national office, which by the district office, and which are not appropriate for either denominational administrative office by placing a check for each of them in the appropriate column." The three options were were: National, District, and Not Appropriate.

coordinate missionary activities (66%), promote renewal/revival (60%), serve as a political voice to elect God-fearing candidates to public office (59%), and develop suitable educational resources for local congregations (58%).

The vast majority of the respondents were knowledgeable about the denominational work being done in the realm of missions and evangelism and expressed strong approval of the work carried out by these programs.[26] Approval ratings between "good" and "excellent" were awarded to the Division of Foreign Missions (mean=3.4), followed closely by three other evangelism programs: Teen Challenge, for drug and alcohol addiction (mean=3.1); Speed the Light, for young people (mean=3.2); and Light for the Lost, a more general evangelical support program (mean = 3.2). The vast majority of the pastors also reported being knowledgeable about and gave positive ratings to publications and Christian education programs developed by the national office. The weekly magazine *Pentecostal Evangel* (mean=3.3) and the work of Gospel Publishing House (mean=3) were both rated above "good", with the Division of Christian Education receiving a slightly less high approval rating mid-way between "fair" and "good" (mean=2.5).

Two years after his election to the top church post in 1995, general superintendent Thomas E. Trask noted that he wanted denomination programs to serve churches rather than have churches serve a denominational bureaucracy. Trask told *Charisma* magazine, the major publication for the PCM, "We want to address the needs of the local church and the pastor. We want to be known as servants of the local church" (Ford 1995:62). For the most part, it appears that pastors and leaders give high marks for such effort. At the same time, as with each of the dilemmas, there are areas of ambiguity and potential alienation merit some note.

Administrative Ambiguity and Potential Alienation

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[26] The question providing this information read: "What kind of job are these denominational services/outreach doing? (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Don't Know.)

Given the history of the AG and its resolution not to become a denomination, perhaps it is not surprising that the report card provided by the pastoral survey on the administrative dilemma includes a few lower grades. There is a seeming and possibly increasing alienation among pastors from the National Office, particularly if alienation is measured by decreased attendance at the biannual General Council meetings. Only 40 percent strongly agreed (4%) or agreed (36%) with the statement "I always do whatever I possibly can do to attend General Council meetings." Another statement may provide a key for understanding the seeming apathy toward this once important gathering. Forty-six percent (46%) either agreed (10%) or strongly agreed (36%) that the General Council "does not provide an adequate forum for discussing differing opinions on key issues." Informal discussions with some AG pastors are quick to raise the Pensacola Revival and "initial evidence" as examples of failures to hear differing opinions on these currently hot topics. These pastors have also commented that they prefer to use their time and money going to conferences (very often outside the denomination) which are more relevant to their ministries than those of the AG.

A concern about the AG becoming a denomination in a post-denominational society can also be heard in the pastoral survey. Over half (54%) of the pastors agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the AG needs to "focus more on being a religious network and less on being a denomination." My informal discussions with pastors suggest that many would like the denomination to do more to provide opportunities for fellowship and spiritual growth.
The AG has historically been ambivalent about higher education, and the survey responses may be reflecting current ambivalence--or possibly indifference to the sponsorship of higher education by the denomination. Although a majority of pastors agreed that it was the responsibility of the National Office to provide support for its colleges and seminary, over 40 percent of the respondents did not feel they knew enough about the denomination's colleges in Springfield, MO (where the AG national headquarters is located) to provide a rating, and 38 percent were unable to rate the seminary. The mean ratings for Evangel College, Central Bible

College, and the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary were "fair" (with mean scores of 1.2 and 1.8, and 2 respectively on a 4 point scale). Pastors were most familiar with Berean University, the correspondence course designed to train AG ministers, giving it the highest ratings for the work done in the educational realm (mean=2.3).

Silence, as suggested above in the discussion of AG institutions of higher education, may provide a porthole for discerning dissatisfaction. While fewer than 5 percent of respondents were unable to provide a score card for ministries like Gospel Publishing House, the Division of Foreign Missions, and the Pentecostal Evangel, this form of "no response" was fairly high for the Executive and General Presbyteries. Twenty-two percent (22%) of the pastors were reluctant (reportedly unable because of a lack of knowledge) to rate the job being done by the Executive Presbytery or by the General Presbytery. The mean scores for the Executive Presbytery and the General Presbytery for those who did rate them was somewhere between "good" and "fair," with means of 2.4 and 2.5 respectively.

Despite many comments I have heard over the years about the increased centralization of the AG, such hearsay appears to be the report of a minority (31%). Most pastors strongly disagreed (8%) or disagreed (61%) with the statement that "too much power is being centralized in the National Office." Respondents were nearly divided in whether they used the services provided by the national office, with (56%) either agreeing (51%) or strongly agreeing (5%) that their churches made "extensive use of the services provided by the National Office."
Pastors seem to be somewhat more supportive of their respective district offices than they are of the National Office. Given their dependence on and expectations of the district to provide networking opportunities (including nominations for church positions), they appear more likely to attend their district council meetings than the national General Assembly. Seventy-one percent (71%) strongly agreed or agreed that District Councils "are a good investment of my time." Use of District Office services appears to be strong, with 84 percent of the ministers

strongly disagreeing (26%) or disagreeing (58%) with the statement, "I cannot find any service provided by the District Office that is of particular use to my congregation."

The list of services that the majority of pastors expect from their district offices include the following: opportunities for pastoral fellowship (88%), workshops for ongoing pastoral training (73%), establishment of appropriate networks for pastors (70%), provide resources for smaller churches (68%), provide pastoral/congregational "covering" (64%), developing programs to encourage pastoral spiritual growth (52%), and provide credentials for ministers (51%). The last item is of special interest given the fact that the national office provides the credentials, taking over even more authority after the disagreement between the Louisiana District and the National Headquarters over the Jimmy Swaggart censure in the 1980s. Only 48 percent of the pastors indicated support for the national credentialing of ministers, with one percent indicating that neither judicatory should be involved in this work.

Charisma and Administration

From its inception as a formal organization in 1914, adherents of the Assemblies of God have had a love-hate relationship with institutionalization. Although the leaders of this new religious movement recognized the need for organizing to carry on its mission, they also recognized the perils structure would pose to their fragile new found-gift of charisma. The healthy tension that could be observed over the years in the AG continues today. Many are wary of the threat that administrative offices pose to charisma, but many also trust the Holy Spirit to lead both congregations and denominational administrative offices.

When pastors were asked, "To what extent does the manifest presence (e.g. prophetic leadings, tongues and interpretations, etc.) of the Spirit affect the decision making process of your local congregation?", percent of pastors only 19 percent reported "greatly" with another 54 percent replied "somewhat." Twenty-seven percent (27%), a significant minority for a denomination whose identity is rooted in a worldview that has historically recognized the power of the Holy Spirit, responded "not at all." A clear majority of pastors report that the Holy Spirit

guides the leaders and workers in various bureaus, agreeing (58%) or strongly agreeing (11%) that the "Holy Spirit directly effects the decision making process in most AG administrative agencies". Once again, however, a significant minority (31%) appears to regard the day-to-day operations of the denomination much like they might regard the workings of any secular modern organization.

Summary and Conclusion

> The Assemblies of God structure is sufficiently flexible and tolerant of ambiguity for the continued presence of charisma. The siren of accommodative forces, however, can deafen believers to the whisper of charismatic voices, dreams, and visions. Waiting quietly and patiently for the leading of God is not readily compatible with the contemporary American culture, where instant lottery winners are heroes and fast-food chains a main export. Worldly models of growth and success have subtly made inroads in this denomination that once sought to be separate from the world (Poloma 1989:209).

The Assemblies of God contains a solid core of beliefs and practices, with a healthy level of tension around peripheral issues. Its growing ethnic diversity positions it for an even more visible place in the American religious mosaic of the 21st century. The report cards provided by both the pastoral and judicatory surveys demonstrate a solid core of pastoral support for the administrative functioning of the denomination. Charisma and institutionalization, at least in the minds of a majority of pastors, are still interwoven some 85 years after the AG's founding.

The ambiguity found around the central core for each of O'Dea's five institutional dilemmas, however, provides some guidelines for charting the future. Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by the AG is what might be termed its "identity crisis." There is a need for a paradigm shift – a move away from the old modernist paradigm (embraced in word but not necessarily in deed by earlier leaders) in favor of a new paradigm that could embody and empower the distinctive identity that is AG history and experience. Pentecostalism is more than "evangelicalism plus tongues" and to limit its identity in this way robs the AG of its rich identity.

Globally the PCM has become "third stream" within Christianity that is as distinct from other streams as Catholicism is from Protestantism. (The uniqueness of the Pentecostal Movement is particularly apparent when it is removed from the American culture where it developed and from where it spread and placed within the larger global culture where it is said to account for some one in four Christians.)

If the AG is going to be a major player in the American religious mosaic in the 21st century, it will require a paradigm that can reflect its unique qualities--qualities that fit better a post-modern paradigm than a modern one. Among other things, Pentecostalism has made the common experience of the divine available to a spiritually-starved materialistic culture, taught the meaning of paradox to a Western world steeped in propositional logic, revived a sense of miracle and mystery among people trapped in the cage of rationality, and provided opportunities for catharsis in a civilization fearful of emotion. Increasingly AG identity, however, is expressed in terms of rational doctrine that masques the playful creative Spirit its believers have encountered through the last one hundred years of Pentecostalism's existence. The mixed-motivation generated by the ambiguities in Pentecostal identity lies at the heart of the routinization of charisma.

While new paradigms reflecting a Pentecostal worldview are being embraced by more recent "waves" of the PCM, a significant number of AG pastors and their churches seem to be caught in a web of de facto dispensationalist-evangelical theology and its modern paradigm. These cultural Pentecostals are proclaiming a distinct identity but looking more and more like Evangelicals in their beliefs and religious practices. Despite an overwhelming proclamation of the need to revitalize early Pentecostal roots, the revival at Brownsville Assembly of God and other AG and non-AG revival sites, failed to interest 2/3 of the pastors enough to personally check out any of these events. With an identity shaped more by Evangelical writings than by experiences of their black Pentecostal brothers or their Charismatic cousins, it is perhaps not

surprising that charismatic expressions and experiences are becoming less intense and less frequent at the average Assembly of God.

This failure to develop a consistent Pentecostal theology within an appropriate paradigm has made it difficult to affirm revivals within its own churches and renewal movements outside its boundaries. While some congregations have embraced fresh wind and fire, for the most part the reaction toward the new "waves" of charisma has been to critique and to tighten control on dissonant theologians and ministers who lacked a large congregational power base. The tendency to quench charisma can be most clearly seen in our discussion of the dilemma of delimitation. On one horn of the dilemma we find the watering down of Pentecostal identity due to inevitable accommodative forces; on the other, attempts to control ministers through dogmatic edicts in hopes of making them more "Pentecostal."

Also to be learned from assessing charismatic routinization through the lenses of O'Dea's dilemmas is how accommodative forces have eroded any distinct political voice that could have developed from a well-articulated Pentecostal theology and sense of Pentecostal history. The experiences of the early Pentecostals that challenged the sexist and racist culture of early 20th century America could have paved the way for later disciples to make significant contributions to changes in women's roles and civil rights. Its early pacifist stance could have provided a plank for the peace movement. Its suspicion of rigid denominationalism in the face of a democratized baptism of the Spirit could have provided a platform for ecumenical activities. None of this happened, in part due to the isolation of Pentecostals during the first half of the 20th century. Once they moved across the tracks to a more comfortable lifestyle, contemporary followers lost sight of Pentecostalism's unique identity as a marginalized people upon whom the Spirit released His power and presence in the earliest years of the 20th century. As they made the journey from pilgrims to citizens, AG pastors seemed to take on the political voice of the Fundamentalist-Evangelical church expressed through the Republican Party.

The bureaucratic structure of the Assemblies of God and its programs to serve churches and pastors has, for the most part, been rated well by pastors, especially in the area of missions and evangelism, including publications and church programs. As we have seen, pastors gave high marks to most of these services provided by the denomination. There is some indication, however, that some may feel that leaders have lost touch with the local churches (as reflected in increasingly fewer pastors making attendance at General Council meetings a priority). The reluctance to rate educational facilities and the performance of the Executive Presbytery by pastors is another indication of some estrangement between the National Office and AG pastors.

In many respects the AG educational institutions are on the periphery of the organizational structure, a remnant of the ambivalence Pentecostals have traditionally had toward higher education. This is unfortunate. A long-range proactive approach toward appropriate self-definition could include harnessing some of the leading faculty in AG universities and the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary to help executives to develop a distinct Pentecostal identity that goes beyond the doctrine of glossolalia as "initial evidence." The administrative offices could then be agents of disseminating the information and receiving feedback that would ensure the articulation of Pentecostal identity would always be a dynamic process rather than perceived as a finished product.

The ambiguities reported in this study that exist around near universal attitudes and opinions can be regarded indicators of vitality and catalysts for change within the AG. Tension and ambiguity are signs of life and are often positively functional for organizations. In allowing for the expression of differences and nurturing existing pluralism, the mechanisms of change are set in motion that can revitalize institutions. Since no institution can remain static and survive, some of the minority positions discussed in this paper may serve as catalysts of change that will assure the AG remains true to its mission and identity.

The Assemblies of God is a religion where experience of the mystical is more than a memory, where the pragmatic and the supernatural can dance together in a worldview that

transcends the premodern/modern dichotomy. Its structure and polity is permeable enough to ensure a medium for the charismatic play of the Spirit. Whether it can continue to surf the tension required to balance charisma with effective organization is the question that still begs an answer.

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