

# The Assemblies of God

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## Introduction

If you were asked to identify an Assembly of God church in your neighborhood, I would guess that you could do that rather easily. I happen to serve a congregation near the location of a very large assembly church. For a number of years I watched with interest the outward growth of this congregation. As of today, this particular assembly has "hit the wall" in regard to membership growth and future planning. In fact, after Jimmy Swaggert and Jim Baker tangled with sin and lost a few years ago, the Assembly of God church in our area lost its momentum, and has struggled with stagnant church growth and a failed building program ever since that time.

This paper is not a consummate history of Pentecostalism, the Holiness movement or the Assemblies of God. What this paper attempts to do is to point out some of the many forces that brought the Assemblies into existence, and to set forth their doctrinal positions in one of their publications called, *Our 16 Doctrines*. What is presented is by no means all-inclusive, but hopefully you will gain greater insight about a formidable church body which is close to home.

## Background

"The initial impetus of the Apostolic Faith Movement (in America) was the result of many individual ministers, working independently. But as the number of communicants increased and the movement spread, it became apparent that some form of cooperation was desirable. The advocants of organization faced strong opposition from those fellow communicants who had distressing experiences with the older denominations, but increasingly they encountered problems which could only be solved by cooperation between congregations."

This statement helps to place in perspective the history of the Assemblies of God in the USA. The General Council of the Assemblies of God is the largest of the Pentecostal denominations in the world. We note its appeal to disconnected main line church members as they flock to their giant mega structures, varied fellowship opportunities, large and varied Bible classes, "Spirit filled" churches, children's ministries and smooth Madison Avenue pastors.

When one thinks of the Assemblies of God we are immediately drawn to the Pentecostal movement. The following paragraphs give us a few definitions of the Assemblies of God and Pentecostalism.

## The Assemblies of God

"Assemblies of God is the largest Pentecostal religious denomination in the world. Its official name is the General Council of the Assemblies of God. The church developed from a revival movement during the early 1900's and was organized in Hot Springs, Ark., in 1914.

The denomination teaches that the Bible is infallible (cannot be wrong). It also teaches the fall and redemption of human beings, a life of separation from the world, divine healing through prayer, the return of Jesus Christ and his reign, and the eternal punishment for the unsaved. The church teaches that Christians should seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The initial physical evidence of this comes when people speak in tongues (speak in a language they never learned). Believers are baptized by immersion (dipping into water). The church observes the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

The Assemblies of God churches direct their own local affairs. A general council meets every two years and supervises activities throughout the world in missions, publications, and education. The general council consists of all ordained ministers and a lay delegate from each affiliated church. The denomination is organized into 57 districts, including 10 ethnic districts in the United States and Puerto

Rico. It has about 2 million members. Headquarters are at 1445 Boonville Avenue, Springfield, Mo. 65802-1894.”

A second general definition is offered for Pentecostal churches, from which the Assemblies of God originated.

### **Pentecostal Churches (Introduction)**

“Pentecostal churches are a group of Protestant churches that trace their origins to a religious revival that began in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901. The movement spread rapidly in the United States. Similar revivals took place in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Today, some of the world’s largest and fastest-growing Protestant denominations are Pentecostal.

### **Beliefs and Practices**

Pentecostals claim that all individual Christians should experience “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” Proof of “Spirit baptism” generally comes when the person receives the gift of speaking in tongues—that is, speaking in an unknown language. Pentecostals take their name from the New Testament reference to the disciples speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Pentecostals also believe that they can receive other gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts include the power of physical healing and the abilities to prophecy and to interpret what is said when someone speaks in an unknown tongue. Such gifts are described in I Corinthians 12 and 14.

Pentecostals believe that history will end with the second coming of Jesus Christ. They believe their movement fulfills biblical prophecies of a religious revival before the end of the world. They view evangelism (the spreading of their religious message) as a solemn obligation to prepare the world for Jesus’ return.

Pentecostal worship services tend to be highly emotional and filled with a sense of the wonder and miracle of the Holy Spirit’s presence. The celebration and use of spiritual gifts, as well as prayers for the healing of the sick, are typical practices in many congregations.

However, many Pentecostal churches differ greatly from one another. They differ in size as well as in their interpretations of faith and practice. For example, some Pentecostal denominations are controlled by the individual congregations. Others are led by bishops.

### **Major Pentecostal Churches**

In the United States alone, there are about 30 sizable Pentecostal denominations. Many other small, regional churches identify with the Pentecostal movement, though they do not call themselves Pentecostal churches. In addition, a related movement of charismatic renewal began during the 1960’s. It involved many Protestants and Roman Catholics who claimed to have experienced Spirit baptism.

The earliest Pentecostal churches grew out of the Holiness movement of the late 1800’s. Members of Holiness churches acknowledged the two acts of grace: (1) conversion, or “being born again”; and (2) sanctification, or a “second blessing,” meaning a cleansing from sin.

Charles Fox Parham, an independent Holiness preacher, is believed to have originated the Pentecostal revival. In 1901, people began speaking in tongues at his Bethel Bible College in Topeka. Parham claimed that such speech indicated “true baptism in the Spirit.” He added Spirit baptism to the two acts of grace accepted by Holiness churches. William Joseph Seymour, a Black Holiness preacher, brought the movement to the Azusa Street Apostolic Faith Mission in Los Angeles in 1906.

The first Pentecostal church was the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.). This former Holiness church accepted Pentecostal teaching about Spirit baptism in 1907. Other Pentecostal churches with Holiness

roots include the Church of God in Christ and the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. (See Church of God in Christ, The).

Other Pentecostal churches reject the idea of a “second blessing.” They teach only conversion and “Spirit baptism.” One such church, the Assemblies of God, is the largest Pentecostal church. (See Assemblies of God).

A group of Pentecostal churches known as oneness churches formed out of the Assemblies of God after 1916. These churches reject the traditional trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Instead, they hold that the Bible calls for baptism only “in the name of Jesus.” Such churches include the United Pentecostal Church International and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc.”

Theologically, Pentecostals and Assembly members belong to a group called Evangelicals. The late Heinrich Vogel defined Evangelicals from the Pentecostal point of view in this way:

“Theologically Pentecostals are fundamentalists, holding to the doctrines of the inspiration of the Scriptures, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, his virgin birth, the vicarious atonement, regeneration, sanctification, and the resurrection of the dead. The characteristics that distinguish them from other Evangelicals is their insistence on holiness of heart and life, a baptism with the Holy Spirit, the evidence of speaking in tongues, and faith healing.”

### **Historical Background**

The Assemblies of God churches are an amalgamation (sounds familiar!) from many churches that came out of the Holiness movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Assembly of God historians give the date of birth for their church as April of 1914, in Hot Springs, Arkansas, when a formation of loosely structured churches organized into what was called the General Council. Even with official church organization the General Council did not bind Assemblies into a tight, cohesive unit. “Loosely structured” remains the key phrase even in today’s world.

An assembly historian, Edith Blumhofer, says that many factors contributed to the rise of Pentecostalism in the United States. She traces some origins back to the Civil War when she says:

“At the end of the Civil War, in 1865, Americans faced a new era. Disagreements over reconstruction and civil rights, created unprecedented political and social problems. Major Protestant denominations that had split before the war remained divided. The physical move from the farm to the city, from the field to the factory; the mental move from religious to secular thinking, segregating God from the world at large these changed values and life-styles. At the same time, the arrival of large numbers of Orientals, Catholics, and Jews represented a shift in immigration patterns...Charles Darwin’s books, *Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1870), raised issues that would revolutionize science, divide denominations, and help shape the disciplines we know as the social sciences. Some responded to these new situations by clearly committing themselves to both the verbal inspiration of Scripture and the fundamentalist component in American Evangelicalism and contributed significantly to the Pentecostal heritage.”

Many different people have contributed to assembly thinking in the past 130 years. The following paragraphs introduce us to some of the main players who have contributed to assembly thinking prior to the formation of their church in 1914.

### **Dwight Lyman Moody**

Evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody spearheaded an outreach effort in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with a tireless commitment to the proclamation of God’s Word in New England and Great Britain. After having moved from Boston to Chicago, he came into contact with a group called the English Brethren. The Brethren had their origins in British prophecy concerning the last times. They taught that the second coming of Christ was rapidly approaching.

The Brethren convinced Moody that Jesus’ return was imminent. This view concerning the last times differed greatly from many main line Christians of Moody’s day. Moody considered this truth to be a “second

conversion,” motivating him to change his worldly lifestyle and concentrate on evangelizing the world. Because of his conviction concerning the last days, Moody, the Brethren, and others felt they needed some help from above because their work of evangelizing the world was so overwhelming! As they studied the Scriptures they began to focus on the person and the work of the Holy Spirit. They thought that their study of Scripture revealed that there was a special spiritual power available to them through the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Spirit’s baptism “endued them with power for service,” giving them power for obligatory service in the kingdom. The thought of the Spirit’s power shattered their religious complacency. Now winning souls for Christ took on a new priority. Moody comments:

“If I am not willing to pay the price of this baptism, and therefore am not so baptized, I am responsible before God for all the souls that might have been saved but were not saved through me because I was not baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

By the 1890’s, Moody taught the necessity of a “special enduement with power for service” from the Holy Spirit. Evangelicals such as Moody, Rueben Archer Torrey, A.B. Torrey, and others, stressed the person of the Holy Spirit, contrary to many of their contemporaries who emphasized the Holy Spirit as a power or influence rather than a person. Evangelicals taught that the Spirit was infinitely wise, infinitely tender, that he coveted fellowship and that sin and carelessness grieved him. They also taught that if given the opportunity, he would work in the individual by overcoming sin, calling the believer’s attention to his presence, accomplishing his sanctifying work in the believer’s life. Results of this study were to lead to a greater awareness of the Holy Spirit and a renewed emphasis on the Savior.

In addition to this special enduement, an additional baptism in the Holy Spirit brought more than power to serve; it brought “power to be,” as well. The believer now entered into a new dimension of worship and adoration to his Lord. Some have called this new dimension a “reign of Christ within the soul.” The reign was an essential part of the walk with the Spirit in the life of the Christian. The “power for service” and “a walk with the Spirit” became important points of theology for late 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelicals. It should be noted that many who spoke of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Holiness movement did not mean the same thing as later Pentecostals. Holiness people defined Spirit baptism as the experience of sanctification. Pentecostals would move into tongue speaking as an evidence of the Spirit’s gifts, enabling them to begin, not end, a new kind of Christian living.

Moody did not advocate physical healing as did many other evangelicals. Many said that divine physical healing was essential in the message of Christianity. Included in his theology was the idea of a complete salvation, called “full salvation,” that is, preaching for the body, soul and spirit. The world of which Moody and others sought to convert would receive a full menu of spiritual blessings in the concept of “full salvation.”

D.L. Moody provided some valuable social structures in reaching out to the world. He developed annual retreats which stressed the work of the Holy Spirit; he helped to popularize the individual’s walk in the Spirit with gospel songs; he emphasized active mission themes through his conferences. One of Moody’s lasting influences was his Bible Institute. His Chicago Training Institute (Moody Bible Institute) had as its goal to train men and women, to bridge the gap between the educated clergy and the common man. His institute offered courses in the study of the Bible, (not in Hebrew or Greek), in gospel music and in basic English. After having studied on a daily basis, the students were sent out to spend part of their time in ministry on the streets of Chicago. Dwight Moody’s activity contributed to the evangelical and fundamentalist spirit of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **John Alexander Dowie**

Evangelicals considered themselves to be in the last days, and because of this attitude, often spoke of “a latter rain” which preceded Christ’s return. This “latter rain” would take the form of restoration of New Testament Christianity and Spirit gifts. John Alexander Dowie was a native Scotsman who was raised in Australia. He pastored Congregational churches there until he came to the United States in 1888. During the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893 he began his ministry in Chicago. Dowie claimed to have the gift of healing. He denounced all those who were a part of the medical profession—doctors, nurses, etc. He gathered an international church of about 20,000 in a short time. Dowie’s gift of healing was something new, only about one

generation old in America.

Dowie's faith-healing gathered support in evangelical circles at about the same time that Mary Baker Eddy introduced Christian Science. By the 1890's there were about 30 faith homes, most of which ministered to the sick by offering lodging, instruction and prayer. Dowie's outspoken manner made him quite conspicuous among a growing trend of faith healers.

Over a period of time Dowie's followers organized into a new church body called the Christian Catholic Church. More than 6,000 people joined Dowie in Zion, Illinois. Dowie taught his followers to disavow doctors, drugs, tobacco, liquor and pork products.

Dowie was intrigued with New Testament restorationist themes, so he became, along with other church leaders, part of a group called Restorationists. In fact, Dowie declared himself to be Elijah, The Restorer, in 1901. By 1904 he proclaimed himself to be an apostle, and expected an orderly restoration of all the New Testament gifts along with the revelation of 11 new apostles. Before his dreams came true, he was deposed because of financial mismanagement and his unusual interpretation of Scripture. After Dowie was removed from office both he and his followers gradually faded from view. Those who remained would eventually move into Pentecostalism because they saw in it the fulfillment of Dowie's restorationist dreams.

As time passed, other groups who longed for restoration broke from main line churches and formed Christian bands or unions. Their goals were to express the apostolic faith and to experience apostolic New Testament experiences not found in main line congregations. Dowie, who stimulated interest in restoring apostolic Christianity, made an important contribution to the Pentecostal heritage.

### **John Wesley**

John Wesley is credited with the founding of Methodism. He was born the son of nonconformist parents, his father an Anglican pastor in the Church of England. While Wesley did not live in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, his leadership in Protestant Christianity during the 1700's influenced many in the theology of personal faith and practical good works. Wesley was sensitive to two traditions in English religious life; 1) the importance of the organized church, with its rules and regulations; and 2) the vitality of Puritan inward religion, with its focus on a direct relationship with God.

Wesley was educated at Christ Church College at Oxford University, graduating as a priest in 1728. In 1729 he became a fellow at Lincoln College at Oxford, where he became a spiritual advisor to small groups of students who helped each other with study, devotions and practical good works. They were ridiculed by other students as a "Holy Club," "Bible Moths," and finally, "Methodists."

The practice of being accountable to each other in small groups for spiritual life would become the model upon which Wesley would structure his Methodist movement.

John Wesley became a missionary to Georgia from 1735-1737. While returning home, he was influenced by a German group called the Moravians, who stressed personal faith and disciplined Christian living. Contact with the Moravians caused Wesley to experience a spiritual crisis that was resolved in 1738 when his heart was "strangely warmed", about his personal faith.

Wesley began to assume more of a leadership in the evangelical revival starting about 1739. He, along with another evangelist, George Whitefield, began to preach in the open air. "Field preaching" was used extensively, drawing large crowds.

What was Wesley's contribution to the Holiness movement and to Pentecostalism? John Wesley's teaching of perfectionism included the idea that a person could be freed from the desire to sin through an experience of perfect love. There were two common characteristics of Wesley's doctrine; one was, "entire sanctification," and the other was a "crisis experience." (conversion to faith). Both of these concepts were a part of the Holiness movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

1) A "crisis experience" was necessary for Wesley. Professor Panning speaks about the way the Holy Spirit operated for Wesley and his followers, and how the Spirit might interrupt a very sober church service with a "crisis":

"For them, however, the word is impersonal and objective. It is merely a first testimony. The real purpose of the word is to draw from man's spirit a second testimony that is subjective and immediate,

the result of direct intervention by the Holy Spirit. It is the aspect of the Spirit's intervention which makes this witness so "sure" for them. It is also this activity of the Spirit that accounts for the unique value that is placed on the "testimonials" of those who are willing to get up and share publicly what they feel the Holy Spirit has done for them.

"Perhaps it is not to be wondered at the staid and sedate Church of England did not take too kindly to a Wesleyan type of service in which the Holy Spirit threatened at any minute to interrupt their formal liturgical service. Though an ordained Anglican clergyman, Wesley was not particularly welcomed, in Anglican churches. To reach the masses, therefore, he had to resort to preaching in open fields, under groves of trees, in barns, in all manner of unchurchly settings. In these surroundings the lack of liturgical emphasis seemed to be of little or no barrier at all."

2) Entire sanctification is defined as:

"...commonly called 'the second blessing.' Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth from all sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in His holy commandments blameless."

Panning also comments about "entire sanctification," or the "second blessing:

"Wesley and all holiness bodies believe that entire sanctification is a "second grace," separate from and subsequent to the first grace of justification (conversion). It is the "second grace" that make salvation sure for them."

Wesleyan methods moved to America in the form of the camp meeting. By 1867, established churches were in disagreement with the revivalists about the value of these meetings. Many churches believed a less emotional response was preferable. The results of these differences separated Holiness people from revival people, paving the way for independent revival groups to pursue other theological themes without the restrictions and persecutions of established churches.

Changes continued to take place. Instead of teaching a gradual sanctification, as Wesley taught, some began to advocate the possibility of instantaneous perfection. The view that instantaneous perfection was possible also separated people from the established Holiness movement. Wesley had taught a "two-stage way" of salvation: 1) conversion, and 2) sanctification. Conversion would be the experience of coming to faith and sanctification was defined as:

"Distinct in time and content from conversion; also called 'baptism of the spirit' or 'second blessing.' known as the Wesleyan understanding of sanctification. Sanctification at a definite fixed time."

Methodism became leery of spontaneous sanctification. But as the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, more and more people were leaving Methodist churches, as well as other established churches, seeking more instantaneous experiences through the baptism of the Holy Spirit which evidenced itself in tongue speaking. Baptism of the Holy Spirit was used by Holiness groups to designate the experience of sanctification. Now it was being changed to be an additional or different experience. Conservative Methodists sought to establish personal piety and faith experiences as important in their faithlife, but splinter groups sought additional ways to confirm their faith. To offset the back door losses from their churches, Methodist leadership urged their members to affirm their loyalty by bringing their search for holiness under the supervision of their denomination. Some listened. Others left the church and formed their own Holiness missions and organizations. Wesley's legacy of personal piety and holy living were being reworked and expanded from the "second blessing." (Sanctification, perfect love, Christian perfection, second blessing, baptism of the Holy Spirit). Holiness thinking moved from the Wesleyan tradition to a different level, urged on by those who advocated radical restorationist thinking.

### **Charles Fox Parham**

Charles Parham was one of many Americans concerned about holiness and spiritual power. Born in Iowa in 1873, Parham spent much of his life in eastern Kansas, where he began preaching in 1889. He taught that holiness was a second definite work of grace and divine healing was a part of the atonement. Parham

gained a local reputation for a divine healing ministry as well. He was educated at Southwestern College, at Winfield, Kansas. After graduating he pastored in Eudora, Kansas, but was unhappy with the state of established churches, or as he called it, “the narrowness of sectarian churches.” He decided to be free from religious affiliations, setting out to experience the Apostolic faith.

In 1898, Parham and his wife Sarah, opened a healing home in Topeka, Kansas, striving to conduct interdenominational services while reaching out to all who entered his mission. He continued to search the Word, and as he did this, the work of the Holy Spirit began to occupy more of his time. He made visits to other missions (Dowie’s Zion and A. B. Simpson’s Christian Mission Alliance), but found them unsatisfactory.

In the summer of 1900, Parham and his followers spent some time in a mission community led by Frank Sanford at Shiloh, Maine. Parham was very impressed with Sanford’s approach. Originally a Freewill Baptist, Sanford began his own ministry and declared himself to be Elijah the Restorer. He opened a Bible School named The Holy Ghost and Us. Parham studied for six weeks at this school. The school clearly impressed Parham. It had one text, the Bible, and one teacher, Sanford. Sanford stopped his teaching process whenever there was a new truth to be learned about the Holy Spirit. The group was encouraged to study the Spirit’s truth through Sanford and then pray until it became a part of their lives. Like others of his day, Sanford highlighted the Holy Spirit and sought out an experience of Spirit baptism.

In the fall of 1900 Parham returned to Topeka and established a similar Sanford Bible school. About 40 students enrolled. Parham stated his purpose for the school:

“Not to learn these things in our heads only, but have each thing in the Scriptures wrought out in our hearts...that every command that Jesus Christ gave should be literally obeyed.”

Blomhofer says:

“The school was a classic example of the independent faith ministries of the day: “No one paid board or tuition; the poor were fed; the sick were entertained and healed; and from day to day, week to week, and month to month, with no sect or mission known source of income back of us, God supplied our every need. The students studied together (with Parham as the only teacher and the Bible as the only text), assembled often for worship and prayer, and engaged in evangelism throughout the city.”

Soon Parham gave his students the assignment to search out Biblical evidence for the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They set out to find a uniform initial evidence of baptism in tongue speaking. While many radical views had been presented by Parham’s peers, none had proposed uniform evidence.

Other religious leaders had referred to the baptism as a purifying or empowering work of the Holy Spirit. There were various views on evidence of the baptism: R.A. Torrey, a respected evangelist, agreed that tongues might be an evidence of Spirit baptism, but he did not specify a uniform evidence. Dwight Moody said that the baptism of the Spirit would be evidenced by a desire:

“To learn more about Christ; a love for the Bible and a desire for spiritual knowledge and experience; disinterested love. “You shouldn’t be looking for any token,” Moody had advised. “Just keep asking and waiting for power.”

Parham was unhappy with the lack of agreement from his peers on the matter of evidence for Spirit baptism. He viewed this lack of agreement as a hindrance to the promotion and learning of baptism in the Spirit.

Parham set the stage for foundational truths of Pentecostalism through the studies of conversion, sanctification, healing and the premillennial return of Christ. Unlike many other holiness leaders, Parham had separated himself from the second definite work of grace. Rather than teaching a two-stage way of salvation (conversion, sanctification), he taught a three-stage way; (conversion, sanctification, Spirit baptism, or tongue-speaking).

Parham’s students, under the influence of Parham, believed that the baptism in the Spirit clothed the believer with power for service. They also agreed that the Biblical evidence for Spirit baptism was always speaking in tongues. A distinct Pentecostal flavor was created in the ranks of a religious culture who accepted, to a point, Parham’s teaching. Parham would declare that the doctrine of Spirit baptism evidenced by tongues meant that the apostolic faith had been fully regained.

For two years Parham struggled to maintain his ministry. Only after a remarkable healing of Mary

Arthur of Galena, Kansas, did his ministry reach a turning point. Meetings were conducted in a tent, and later, in a warehouse, attracting up to 2,000 people. Many were saved, healed and Spirit-filled. Press coverage increased and many young evangelicals were attracted to Parham. After the Galena revival, Parham and his apostolic faith bands traveled throughout Missouri, eastern Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. They announced their arrival by parading down main street with a banner, "Apostolic Faith Movement."

In 1905, Parham started another Bible school in Houston, Texas. The school was supported by free-will offerings and by the Apostolic movement. Once again, the only book that was studied was the Bible. Subjects were expanded to cover conviction, repentance, conversion, consecration, sanctification, healing, the Holy Spirit, prophecies and revelation. Among the students was a black Baptist holiness preacher, William J. Seymour. Within a year he would lead the Apostolic movement in Los Angeles, California.

### **William Seymour**

Interdenominational religious groups were active in Los Angeles at the turn of the century, praying for an evangelical awakening through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

William Seymour was invited to pastor a black Holiness mission in Los Angeles. Seymour began advocating Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues which fostered his removal from the black Holiness mission. He then moved to a private home and to a large vacant building on Azusa Street. Services were held day and night. For the most part, the media and curious onlookers rejected this strange religious sect which uttered strange unintelligible sounds. This "free advertising" by the press also attracted the curious who came looking for God in earnest. The Azusa Street revival sought souls around the clock, and the Spirit's presence could be felt in all, its clamoring.

Seymour set forth salvation in three stages: believers were saved, then sanctified, and finally Spirit-filled. Not only did these three stages take place in sequence, but the final stage was predicated on a mandatory sanctified life.

Seymour stated:

"The baptism of the Holy Ghost is a gift of power upon the sanctified life; so when we get it we have the same evidence as the disciples received on the day of Pentecost in speaking in new tongues."

Three themes were prevalent in the Azusa Street revival: 1) cleansing through the blood of Christ; 2) restorationism; 3) unity (a rejection of denominationism).

Cleansing through the blood of Christ placed an emphasis on confession and restitution. As people waited for the Spirit in baptism and tongues, they made amends for past sins; repaying old debts, apologizing for harsh words, replacing stolen goods. These actions were necessary before Spirit baptism could take place.

Seymour advocated and carried out that "old-time religion," based on restoration themes from the New Testament church. Speaking in tongues was an essential part of that restoration. Spontaneous worship resulted in the experience of the Holy Spirit, who in turn, would lead the worshipers to a greater knowledge of Christ. Seymour did not encourage Spirit baptism to be an end unto itself. Christ was to be the end result of Spirit baptism.

Early Pentecostals promoted nondenominational fellowship rather than the creation of new denominations. Emphasis was on "love, faith, unity, and victory through the atoning blood of Christ."

### **Pentecostal History 1906-1914**

From 1906-1914 Pentecostalism gathered momentum throughout the country. G. B. Cashwell brought Pentecostal teaching to the south. Through his efforts the Pentecostal Holiness Church united as Pentecostal; A.J. Tomlinson's Church of God became Pentecostal; H.G. Rogers and M.M. Pinson, two Pentecostal ministers, were won over to Pentecostalism, and would later bring some southern Pentecostals into the Assembly of God. Charles H. Mason, along with co-founder of the Church of God in Christ, Charles Jones, received his baptism of the Spirit at Azusa. After returning to Memphis, Tennessee, he was instrumental in leading many Church of God in Christ members to Pentecostalism. Charles Parham had accepted an invitation by Dowie to Zion, Illinois. After Dowie was deposed, Parham set up a Pentecostal center at Zion, gathering many gifted men and women for the movement.

Another influential leader, W. H. Durham, taught a two-way stage of salvation instead of the three-stage



way of salvation taught by almost all of Pentecostalism at that time. Under the influence of the Baptists, he regarded conversion and sanctification as simultaneous; the second-stage included Spirit baptism, with the speaking in tongues. He is considered by Pentecostals to be the original theologian of the American Pentecostal movement. Even today there are disagreements between Pentecostals regarding a two-stage or three-stage way of salvation. The Assemblies of God follow Durham and continue to teach a two-stage way of salvation.

A group called the Christianity and Missionary Alliance began to oppose Pentecostal theology. After attending a Pentecostal revival in 1907, many of the influential Alliance leaders accepted Pentecostal teaching. The legacy of A.B. Simpson's Alliance was that they did not agree totally with the idea that tongues were the only evidence of the Spirit's gifts. There could be others gifts in addition to tongues. The Alliance enriched the Assemblies by training many who were evangelism minded. Many of these leaders became leaders of the Assemblies and imparted a great outreach mindset to the newly organized church.

Many Pentecostals did not belong to the organized church, but worshiped in their own independent missions and churches across the country. Resistance to central authority was a part of the character of the early Pentecostals. They were opposed to what they perceived and had experienced with other denominations, dead denominational forms. By 1913, thoughtful leaders began to recognize that some type of organization was necessary to guard the movement from error and aid its growth.

Pentecostalism was not without its critics. Some reports were circulated regarding Pentecostal fanaticism; some argued that Pentecostals were fabricating speaking in tongues and had never received Spirit baptism; many Pentecostals found it difficult to remain in churches where they were looked upon as unusual or different.

"The devil is raging, the saints are shouting, and God is working," wrote editor Eudorus N. Bell. Some Pentecostals felt threatened by the "raging," while others were confident that the "shouting" was victorious."

As a result of criticism, the movement fell on difficult times. Pentecostal missionaries were at times unfaithful to their callings; others went to foreign missions without home support; still others traveled to foreign mission fields without language training, thinking that they could communicate in tongues alone.

In the United States Pentecostal Bible schools occasionally relied on tongues, interpretations and prophecy as the basis for their instruction. The Azusa Street Mission moved toward black outreach only. Charles Parham's leadership was rejected because of often reported sexual wrong doings. The movement was fragmented and was in need of reform in doctrine and conduct.

### **E.N. Bell**

A call for reform came from southern Pentecostals about 1913. It led by an older, more experienced, well-educated man, by the name of E.N. Bell. Bell was from Texas, and after his Spirit baptism, he became associated with a number of younger men who rejected Parham's leadership. In addition to his leadership qualities, Bell was influential with his pen, and assumed editorial responsibilities of *The Apostolic Faith* newspaper.

Bell began to favor the term, "Pentecostal," over the existing movement's name, "Apostolic Faith." Bell's new group came into contact with other independent Pentecostals to form a loosely knit organization called "the Church of God in Christ and in unity with the Apostolic Faith movement." By 1913 its ministerial list included 352 names, and its name was shortened to "The Church of God in Christ."

At a camp meeting in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, Bell decided to merge his newspaper, *The Apostolic Faith*, with another Pentecostal paper called *Word and Witness*.

The Church of God in Christ was a loosely organized group with no binding authority, a "gentlemen's agreement," as it was called. Some wanted more organization to reduce the possibility of the formation of splinter groups and cliques. A General Council was called in April of 1914 to "The Saints Everywhere" for the purpose of greater organization. Five reasons were presented for the Council: 1) unity (reduce divisions in names and doctrines); 2) stabilization (conserving work; building up); 3) effective mission outreach; 4) legal chartering of the movement; 5) the consideration of a Bible school to train Pentecostals.

The call to Hot Springs hit a nerve among many Pentecostals. By 1914, many conservative Pentecostals

were raising questions about Pentecostalism; others were concerned about the effects of a centralized authority. E.N. Bell argued that abuses would be eliminated and efficiency would be promoted by incorporation. Bell argued the results of incorporation would expand and improve publications, enhance the coordination of mission outreach and enhance educational opportunities. In spite of some hesitation, the council callers moved on towards organization.

Over 300 people arrived at Hot Springs; 128 of them were ministers. Five centers of Pentecostalism were represented who would have a significant effect on the development of the Assemblies of God: 1) The Christian and Missionary Alliance; 2) Dowie's Zion; 3) Chicago's various missions; 4) Parham's Apostolic Faith from Texas; 5) the Alabama-based Church of God in Christ.

When the smoke cleared from the Hot Springs meeting, the following arrangements had taken place: 1) the rejection of denominational organization. In its place was the agreement of voluntary cooperation which would not affect congregational self-government; 2) local Assemblies would be referred to by the general Scriptural name, The Assembly of God; 3) representatives of local congregations would make up the General Council of the Assemblies of God; 4) the purpose of the Assemblies was "to recognize Scriptural methods and order for worship, unity, fellowship, work and business for God, and to disapprove of all unscriptural methods, doctrine and conduct." 5) delegates decided to incorporate under the name, "General Council of the Assemblies of God." 6) a statement of faith was not adopted. Agreement on the basis of the Bible as the "all-sufficient rule for faith and practice" was accepted; 7) E.N. Bell remained the general chairman; 8) J.R. Flower remained as the secretary-treasurer; 9) a 12 member council was selected to serve a one-year term; 10) Bell's *Word and Witness* was selected as the official publication of the Assemblies; 11) validating credentials for incoming ministers was given to Howard Goss, a former Parham assistant; 12) two schools were recommended for training facilities—one at Union, Mississippi, and the other at Findlay, Ohio.

Many prominent Pentecostal names came to Hot Springs; they were already major contributors to the Pentecostal movement—E.N. Bell, F.F. Bosworth, J.R. Flower, Cyrun Fockler, Howard Goss, D.C.O. Opperman, E.N. Richey. Five others who attended would later serve the Assemblies as chairmen—E.N. Bell, A.P. Collins, J.W. Welch, W.T. Gaston, Ralph M. Riggs.

Edith Blomhofer says about the Council:

"In this modest setting, a concern for the conservation of a revival combined with a vision for its expansion ultimately to shape the Assemblies of God."

This overview of the early history of the Assemblies is not a complete picture. It has been an attempt to outline the rise of Pentecostalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the formation of the Assemblies of God churches in 1914.

In the next section doctrinal statements of the Assemblies are reproduced from a document which is called *Our 16 Doctrines*.

## **The Assemblies of God—Our 16 Doctrines**

### A Paraphrased Version of Statement of Fundamental Truths

#### **1. The Bible is Inspired**

The Scriptures of the entire Bible are verbally inspired of God. It was not just the ideas that were inspired; even the choice of words was inspired as the original writers were moved by God to write what He wanted then to say. We therefore believe that (1) the Scriptures are God's revelation of himself to mankind. (2) they are infallible (never wrong), and (3) they are the divinely authoritative guide for our faith, belief, and manner of living. (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:21).

#### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

If we do not agree that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and is therefore infallible and authoritative, we have no dependable standard on which to base our lives. Instead of having a guide that is fixed and reliable, everything becomes relative and uncertain. However since God does not change as do the shifting shadows (James 1:17), we can be certain that His truth also remains steadfast, enduring all time, generations, and cultures.

#### **Formula of Concord, Part I: Epitome**

“We believe, teach and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written, Ps. 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” And St. Paul says in Gal. 1:8, “Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.”

Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times.”

#### **2. One True God**

There is one true God. He has revealed himself as having always existed without any outside cause or agent bringing Him into being (Isaiah 43:10). He is the Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1) and the one who redeems, saves, or rescues mankind from sin and its painful consequences (Isaiah 43:11). God has further revealed himself as a single Being (Deuteronomy 6:4) consisting of three interrelated persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19, Luke 3:22). This concept of one God or Being of the three persons is called the Trinity.

#### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

It is contrary to the clear statement and meaning of Scripture to speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three gods or as three modes in which the One God has revealed himself. Through the centuries such false teachings have created division and devastation in the church. Though the concept of a “three in One” Trinity has no parallel in the human work, it is absolutely scriptural and essential to a proper understanding of the multifaceted nature of God. Other Scripture references support the nature of the one true God and the relationship between the three persons: Zechariah 14:9; Matthew 1:21-23, 11:25-27, 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 1:1,2,14,18,29,49, 5:17-30,32,37, 8:17-18, 14:16-17, 15:26, 17:11,21; Acts 2:32-36; Romans 1:1-3,7, 12:11; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 15:24-28; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Philippians 2:8-9; Hebrews 1:1-13, 7:3, 12:2; 1 Peter 1:8, 3:22; 1 John 1:3-4, 2:22-23, 3:8, 4:1-5,10,14; 2 John 3,9; Revelation 1:13, 17, 4:8-11, 5:6-14, 7:9-10.

#### **The Augsburg Confession: Article I**

We unanimously hold and teach, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Nicea, that there is one divine essence, which is called and which is truly God, and there are three persons in this one divine essence, equal in power and alike eternal: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. All three are one divine essence, eternal, without division, without end, or infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, one creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible. The word “person” is to be understood as

the Fathers employed the term in this connection, not as a part or a property of another but as that which exists of itself.”

### **3. The Lord Jesus Christ is Fully God**

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has always existed. He too is without beginning or end (Revelation 1:8). In order to complete His earthly sacrificial mission, He became human by being born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31,35). He lived a perfect life, absolutely without sin (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22). While on earth He worked many miracles through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:22, 10:38). In order to restore fallen mankind, He died on the cross as a substitute for the sins of every person (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He was raised from the dead by the supernatural power of God (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 6:14,15:4). Since His resurrection He has been exalted (honored), and is seated at the right hand of God (Acts 1:9,11,2:33; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3).

#### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

The supernatural birth of Jesus, His sinless life, His working of miracles all give proof that He is the divine Son of God who came to earth in human form to give himself as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. No death of a natural human could provide forgiveness of sin (salvation) for the entire human race.

Knowing that Jesus came from God, and actually is God, and returned to God’s presence after His death and resurrection assures us that our salvation and restored relationship with God is not only logical, but a true reality.

Comments: “Fully God” explained, but “Fully Man not explained as well.

#### **Formula of Concord: Epitome, Article VII, 11**

“The first ground is this article of our Christian faith: Jesus is true, essential, natural, complete God and man in one person, inseparable and undivided.”

#### **Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration: Article VII. 1**

“The first is this article of our faith: That Jesus Christ is essential, natural, true, complete God and man in one person, undivided and inseparable.”

### **4. The Fall of Mankind**

Mankind was created good and upright; for God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” However, mankind by willful choice, ignored God’s instructions...choosing to engage in what they knew was wrong and evil. As a result, mankind fell from innocence and goodness and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:17, 3:6; Romans 5:12-19).

#### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

The fact that mankind fell from its original innocence and moral goodness is ignored by humanistic philosophies which teach that the human race can be improved and moral imperfection removed through education. The truth is that mankind apart from God is fallen or morally defective. The Bible teaches that mankind is destined to remain fallen until his tendency toward evil thoughts and deeds is reversed through accepting of the salvation provided in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s Son. Education can improve a person intellectually and socially, but belief in the saving work Jesus Christ is the only lasting means that can improve a person morally. Salvation restores the relationship with God that was broken with the fall of mankind.

Comments: “Importance of this Doctrine.”

“The bible teaches that mankind is destined to remain fallen until his tendency toward evil thoughts and deeds is reversed through accepting of the salvation provided in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s Son.”

1) original and actual sin watered down (Genesis 8:1; Romans 7:18; Mark 7:21-22; Romans 8:7; John 3:6; Psalm 51:5)

2) impossible for anyone to accept or choose Christ (Ephesians 2:1; Romans 8:6-7; John 15:16; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Colossians 2:13-14; Ephesians 2:4-5)

### **Augsburg Confession: Article II**

It is also taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mother's wombs and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God. Moreover, this inborn sickness and hereditary sin is truly sin and condemns to the eternal wrath of God all those who are not born again through baptism and the Holy Spirit.

Rejected in this connection are the Pelagians and others who deny that original sin is sin, for they hold that natural man is made righteous by his own powers, thus disparaging the sufferings and merit of Christ."

## **5. The Salvation of Mankind (\* one of four cardinal doctrines)**

Salvation is deliverance from spiritual death and enslavement by sin. God provides salvation for all who believe and accept His free offer of forgiveness. Mankind's only hope of redemption from the fallen sinful state is through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son-blood that was shed as Jesus died on the cross. (The account of the crucifixion of Jesus is recounted by four of His contemporaries Matthew (chapter 27), Mark (chapter 15), Luke (chapter 23), and John (Chapter 19).)

**The Experience of Salvation** is received as a person (1) repents before God for his sins and sinful nature or inclinations, and (2) believes or has faith in the fact that the death and resurrection (supernatural restoration to life) of Jesus Christ removes and brings forgiveness for his sin. In response to placing faith in God's love and freely given salvation, one experiences, the washing of regeneration (or spiritual rebirth), the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, and is declared righteous (right with God). Regeneration, renewal, and justification (justified, or make right with God) are words describing what happens at salvation. At the moment of salvation a person becomes heir to God's promised hope of eternal or everlasting life (Luke 24:47; John 3:3; Romans 10:1-15; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11,3:5-7).

**The Evidences of Salvation.** The inner evidence of salvation is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit giving on the assurance that God has accepted him (Romans 8:16). The outward evidence, visible to others, is a life of righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:12). In other words it is living a life totally committed and pleasing to God.

### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

The restoration of relationship between God and fallen mankind is the central message of the Bible. The entire story from Genesis through Revelation points to a God who loved fallen mankind so much that He gave His Son to die that those who believe in Jesus Christ and His work of providing salvation might have never-ending spiritual life. Every true Christian experiences salvation and becomes a new person in Christ. Without this doctrinal truth, all other doctrinal statements are empty and without meaning. More importantly, without this experience, one's life is empty and without real meaning.

### **Apology of the Augsburg Confession: Article IV, 98**

"...Therefore we are accounted righteous for Christ's sake when we believe that God is reconciled to us because of him. Acts 4:11-12, "This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." But only faith takes hold of the name of Christ. Therefore we are saved by trust in the name of Christ, not in our works..."

## **6. The Ordinances of the Church**

Some churches use the term sacraments instead of ordinances. Sacraments, however, carries for or many people the idea that a spiritual work takes place in a person when the sacrament is received or experienced. The Assemblies of God chooses to call water baptism and holy communion ordinances because they are religious practices ordained or established by Jesus himself.

In fulfilling these spiritual duties Christians are reminded of an important work that has already taken place in the heart of the believer.

### **Baptism in Water**

The ordinance of baptism by immersion in water (not sprinkling) is commanded in the Scriptures (Mark

16:16). All who repent and believe on Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord are to be so baptized. This act of baptism symbolically declares to everyone that the old sinful life and life-style of the baptized believer died with Christ at salvation and a new spiritual being has been raised with Christ (in His resurrection) to live a new life. (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47-48; Romans 6:4).

### **Holy Communion**

The Lord's Supper or Communion, consisting of bread and the fruit of the vine (grape juice), is a memorial of Christ's suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:26). In eating and drinking the symbols of Christ's suffering and death, the believer expresses his awareness that through salvation he, (1) have been made right with God, and (2) shares the divine nature of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4). The ordinance also looks forward to Christ's second coming (1 Corinthians 1:26) for it is reminder to proclaim the Lord's death "until He comes!"

### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

Water baptism and Communion are not simply religious customs. Both embody the central message of the Christian faith. Water baptism is a one-time event in which the new believer announces publicly that he is now a child of God who has identified with Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection. Communion is a periodic (often monthly reminder that the believer has received his free salvation through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both ordinances focus regular attention on the central truth of Christianity.

Comments: 1) Baptism and the Lord's Supper are "ordinances," without real spiritual meaning; merely "practices," "spiritual duties."

2) Baptism: a) immersion only; b) repentance required; c) a dedication to God for greater spiritual service; d) a person profession of faith; e) no infant baptism; f) faith and forgiveness not mentioned.

3) Lord's Supper: a) grape juice used; b) a "memorial," not a sacrament; c) elements are "symbolic"; d) faith and forgiveness not mentioned.

### **The Augsburg Confession: Article XIII**

It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God's will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith."

### **Large Catechism: Baptism, 21-31**

"In the same manner, and even much more, you should honor and exalt baptism on account of the word, since God himself has honored it by words and deeds and has confirmed it by wonders from heaven. Do you think it was just a jest that the heavens opened when Christ allowed himself to be baptized, that the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and that the divine glory and majesty were manifested everywhere?"

I therefore admonish you again that these two, the word and the water, must by no means be separated from each other. For where the word is separated from the water, the water is no different from that which the maid cooks with and could indeed be called a bathkeeper's baptism. But when the word is present according to God's ordinance, baptism is a sacrament, and it is called Christ's baptism. This is the first point to be emphasized: the nature and dignity of this holy sacrament.

In the second place, since we now know what baptism is and how it is to be regarded, we must also learn for what purpose it was instituted, that is, what benefits, gifts, and effects it brings. Nor can we understand this better than from the words of Christ quoted above, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." To put it most simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit and purpose of baptism is to save. No one is baptized to become a prince, but as the words say, to "be saved." To be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil and to enter into the kingdom of Christ and live with him forever.

Here you see again how precious and important a thing baptism should be regarded as being, for in it we

obtain such an inexpressible treasure. This shows that it is not simple, ordinary water, for ordinary water could not have such an effect. But the word has. It shows also (as we have said) that God's name is in it. And where God's name is, there must also be life and salvation. Hence it is well described as a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water, for through the word baptism receives the power to become the "washing of regeneration," as St. Paul calls it in Titus 3:5.

Our know-it-alls, the new spirits, assert that faith alone saves and that works and external things contribute nothing to this end. We answer: it is true, nothing that is in us does it but faith, as we shall hear later on. But these leaders of the blind are unwilling to see that faith must have something to believe—something to which it may cling and upon which it may stand. Thus faith clings to the water and believes it to be baptism in which there is sheer salvation and life, not through the water, as we have sufficiently stated, but through its incorporation with God's word and ordinance and offered it to us so that we may grasp the treasure it contains.

Now, these people are so foolish as to separate faith from the object to which faith is attached and bound on the ground that the object is some thing external. Yes, it must be external so that it can be perceived and grasped by the senses and thus brought into the heart, just as the entire gospel is an external, oral proclamation. In short, whatever God effects in us he does through such external ordinances. No matter where he speaks indeed, no matter for what purpose or by what means he speaks—there faith must look and to it faith must hold. We have here the words, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." To what do they refer but to baptism, that is, the water comprehended in God's ordinance? Hence it follows that whoever rejects baptism rejects God's word, faith, and Christ, who directs us and binds us to baptism."

#### **The Augsburg Confession: Article X**

"It is taught among us that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received. The contrary doctrine is therefore rejected."

#### **Large Catechism: Lord's Supper, #32**

"Now, the whole gospel and the article of the creed, "I believe in the holy Christian church, the forgiveness of sins," are embodied in this sacrament and offered to us through the word. Why, then, should we allow this treasure to be torn out of the sacrament? Our opponents must still confess that these are the very words which we hear everywhere in the gospel. They can say that these words in the sacrament are of no value just as little as they dare say that the whole gospel or whole God apart from the sacrament is of no value."

#### **7) The Baptism in the Holy Spirit (\* one of four cardinal doctrines)**

The word *ghost* in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century King James Version of the Bible meant only what we today understand by the word *spirit*.

All believers are entitled to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and therefore should expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Some references in the Bible speak of "the Holy Ghost and fire." Fire, an image commonly associated with the Holy Spirit, suggests the purging, cleansing action, and real of the Holy Spirit which continues the work of spiritual growth begun at salvation.)

The baptism in the Holy Spirit was the normal experience of all believers in the early Christian church. With the experience comes the provision of power for victorious Christian living and productive service. It also provides believers with specific spiritual gifts for more effective ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31).

The baptism is separate from salvation and follows the new birth experience (Acts 8:12-17, 10:44-46, 11:14-16, 15:7-9). With this baptism come such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence of God (Acts 2:43; Hebrews 12:28), an intensified commitment to God and

dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for or His Word, and for or those who have not yet become believers (Mark 16:20).

### **Importance in this Doctrine:**

Emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a major focus of the Pentecostal movement. Some non-Pentecostals have felt that Pentecostals stress this doctrine and the person of the Holy Spirit to the neglect of the other members of the Trinity (God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ) and of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, for example: salvation and sanctification. But a survey of the teaching curriculum and general literature published by Pentecostal groups shows a balance that matches the emphases of Scripture. We believe after centuries of neglect, Pentecostals have brought back into the Christian experience an appropriate emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

### **8. The Initial Physical Evidence of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

The baptism of Christians in the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in other tongues (unlearned languages) as the Spirit of God gives them audible expression (Acts 2:4).

This form of speaking in tongues is basically the same as the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4-10,28). The difference is the purpose and use. (The manifestation of tongues can be observed in the life of every Spirit-filled believer at the initial infilling. The audible expression of tongues should also continue to function in the Spirit-filled believer's personal prayer life. However the gift of tongues (sometimes called "messages in tongues") operates publicly, usually in congregational settings. This gift is followed by the gift of interpreting tongues. Both are given to individuals within the church. Their purpose is for the spiritual benefit of the individual and the congregation.)

### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

Some non-Pentecostal Christians teach that Christ-like character and the fruit of the Spirit are better evidences of the Baptism than speaking in tongues. They believe the Baptism experience occurs at the time of salvation, without the manifestation of tongues. The Pentecostal position maintains that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and is separate from salvation. The belief is based on the five instances of such infillings recorded in the Book of Acts (chapters 2,8,9,10,19). From these passages and personal experience the Assemblies of God holds firm that the biblical pattern of the Baptism is a separate work following salvation. It is always accompanied initially with the audible expression of tongues. While it is true the Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian at the time of salvation to convict of sin and point the person to Christ, this work of the Holy Spirit is different from Baptism. Sadly, many Christians because of anti-Pentecostal teaching, fear, or lack of understanding, never open themselves to receive this wonderful gift. To some non-Pentecostal Christians the idea of speaking a language one has not learned is disturbing if not frightening. But to the millions of Pentecostals who have spoken in tongues under the impulse of the Holy Spirit-it is a precious gift. And like a gift, it must be received before its value and usefulness is personally realized. This is only accomplished through a cooperative human vessel who fully yields to the Holy Spirit and opens himself to His Spirit Baptism, signified with tongues.

### **Smalcald Articles: Part III, Confession, 3**

In these matters, which concern the external word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external word comes before. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts—that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the word and therefore, judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken word according to their pleasure.”

Comments: 1) Faith must be present before a person receives the Spirit is not Scriptural

“...The Spirit's call to a man is an offer of all the blessings of the new life in Christ. The Spirit's purpose is to get us to believe the truth...But just how does one begin to believe? Because neo-Pentecostals give an inadequate answer to this vital question, an answer which in effect turns the Gospel into a new law, we need to take a closer look at Scripture's answer. Pentecostals make much of receiving the Spirit...But to them receiving the Spirit means something quite different from what it does to us. Scripturally speaking, to receive the Spirit means simply to say “yes” to his Gospel invitation; in



other words it means to believe. To believe and to receive the Spirit are essentially one and the same thing as to reject the Spirit and to not believe are the same thing. For the Pentecostal, however, one follows the other. Before a person can receive the Spirit he must have faith. The basic error of their doctrine is the attempt to make faith a required accomplishment for obtaining the reward of the Spirit.”

2) Pentecostal teaching on Spirit baptism.

“How does one get filled with the Holy Spirit? The answer is by being baptized in the Holy Spirit as Jesus’ disciples were baptized in the Spirit on Pentecost day and as other Christians were subsequently. Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit is to be received twice, once in conversion and again in Spirit-baptism. In conversion a Christian merely receives the Spirit, in Spirit baptism he fully receives the Spirit and is thereby for service in the church.”

“...In water baptism the Spirit is the agent; in Spirit baptism Christ is the agent. Every Christian has been baptized by the Spirit into Christ (that is conversion) but not every Christian has been baptized by Christ into the Spirit. Thus the distinction is made between receiving new birth and receiving Spirit baptism.

|                              |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| New birth                    | Spirit baptism     |
| The agent: The Spirit        | Christ             |
| The means: The atoning blood | The Holy Spirit    |
| The result: The new birth    | Power for service” |

3) Pentecostal proof passages for Spirit baptism:

Acts 2:35, Acts 8:4-25, Acts 9:17, Acts 19:1-7, Acts 10:45-46, 1 Corinthians 12-14

“The false interpretation which charismatics give to these passages become apparent when one recalls what Scripture teaches about the work of the Holy Spirit. He calls me by the gospel, enlightens us with his gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in the faith. The Spirit’s work in the life of the Christian is an *ongoing* work. After initially receiving him when he calls us by the gospel, we continually receive him as he enlightens, sanctifies and keeps us. Remember too that the gifts with which he enlightens us “differ according to the grace that is given us,” Romans 12:6. Some receive gifts which are not given to others. So also in apostolic times. When some received the Holy Spirit, they were given the gift of tongues, such as the apostles, Cornelius and the Ephesus disciples. When others were filled with the Holy Ghost, they did *not* receive that particular gift, notably the 3,000 baptized on Pentecost day. But all received the gift of faith, faith to believe, faith to hope and to love...

Charismatics, therefore, see speaking in tongues as a must if a Christian is to have the assurance that the Holy Spirit has truly come to him. And therein lies a key to the understanding of the charismatic’s way of thinking. He must have a sign, an outward sign, or he cannot be sure. The sign is one that involves the believer personally. That means that his assurance is based upon something subjective, something personal and experiential within him, rather than something objective. Suffice it for now to point out that where the scriptural teaching of objective justification is correctly understood and believed, no need exists for assurance based on something within. A Christian’s assurance is based upon the sure promises of God, not upon the ambiguity of personal feeling or experience., The only sign a Christian really needs is the sign of the cross and of the empty tomb of Christ. You can always trust God. You cannot always trust your feelings or even your experience.”

4) a summary statement of the basic errors of the charismatic movement:

- “1. The insistence that the promise of the Holy Spirit includes extraordinary spiritual gifts which are to be actively sought by the Christian.
2. An emphasis on the Holy Spirit and his work which tends to de-emphasize the importance of Christ and his work for our salvation.
3. The claim that the baptism in the Holy Spirit involves a second grace-work of the Holy Spirit in addition to conversion and sanctification for which a Christian must qualify on the basis on certain

conditions.

4. A denial of the means of grace by making Spirit baptism a supplement to the means of grace, a supplement by which the Spirit equips Christians for service.
5. A confusion of evangelical truth which suggests that a Christian must seek the Spirit before the Spirit will fully come to the Christian.
6. The emphasis on experience as a basis of the assurance of God's favor. (This was the fundamental error of the Schwaermer in Luther's day.)
7. A disregard of the scriptural principles of fellowship which makes the baptism in the Spirit a sufficient basis for fellowship with other Christians. (cf. ALC Pastor Morris Wogen's boast that he fellowships with priests and nuns who are charismatics; Christian News, July 24, 1972, p. 1)."

## **9. Sanctification**

Sanctification is an act of separating ourselves from evil and identifying with things that are good, upright, and morally pure. It is a process that takes place as Christian's devote themselves to God (Romans 12:1,2; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:12). Scriptures teach that we are to be holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). For "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Living in holiness is possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.

A Christian is sanctified as he identifies with Christ, and accepts in faith His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. Sanctification is a daily acknowledgment of our union with God through His son Jesus. As this identification occurs it is only natural for the Christian to offer every portion of his life to the control of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:1-11,13,8:1,2,13; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:12,13; 1 Peter 1:5).

### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

Salvation is not the end of a Christian's spiritual growth. Although we are declared holy or sanctified at salvation, there is still much spiritual growth to be experienced. As the believer submits himself to the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, he is progressively transformed toward a divine nature, like that of Christ. This doctrine is important because too many Christians stop growing spiritually after salvation, or even after entry into a Spirit-filled life at Baptism. But God's design for each believer is that the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23), and the character traits of a Christ-like life, be more obvious each day.

Comments: The constant references of yielding oneself to God

### **"Formula of Concord: Epitome, Article II, Free Will, 11-12 Antitheses Contrary False Doctrine**

"Likewise the teaching that while before his conversion man is indeed too weak by his free will to make a beginning, convert himself to God, and whole-heartedly obey God's law by his own powers, yet after the Holy Spirit has made the beginning through the preaching of the word and in it has offered his grace, man's will is forthwith able by its own natural powers to add something (though it be little and feeble) to help, to cooperate, to prepare itself for grace, to dispose itself, to apprehend and accept it, and to believe the gospel.

"Likewise that after his conversion man is able to keep the law of God perfectly and entirely and that this fulfilling constitutes our righteousness before God whereby we merit eternal life."

## **10. The Church and its Mission**

The Church as described in the Bible consists of all people who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ includes all Christians and has no boundaries as to age, race, gender, or denomination. It is the body of Christ, the dwelling place of God through the Holy Spirit. Christ is the Head of the Church. He has made every provision for the fulfillment of "the Church's" Great Commission (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). Each Christian is an integral part of that Church. The names of all true believers (Those making up the Church) are written in heaven (Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:22; Hebrews 12:23).

God's purpose concerning mankind is (1) to seek and to save people who are lost in sin (Luke 19:10), (2) to be worshipped by, all mankind (Revelation 19:10, 22:9, and (3) to build a unified body of believers mature in faith and knowledge like his Son-Jesus (Ephesians 4:12).

Therefore the priority reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God as a part of the Church is:

1. To be an agency of God for evangelizing the world (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).
2. To be a corporate or unified body in which man may worship God (1 Corinthians 12:13).
3. To be a channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Corinthians 12:28, 14:12).

In fulfilling this three-fold mission of the Church, members of the Assemblies of God are taught and encouraged to be baptized in the Holy Spirit according to the New Testament pattern. Through this experience believers: evangelize in the power of the Spirit with accompanying supernatural signs (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 4:29-31; Hebrews 2:3-4); worship God in an added dimension (1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 1 Corinthians 12-14); and respond to the full working of the Holy Spirit in expressing the fruit, gifts, and ministries as in New Testament times in order to build up the church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:28, 14:12; Galatians 5:22-26; Ephesians 4:11-12; Colossians 1:29).

### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

The important role of the Church (all members of the body of Christ) in God's dealing with mankind is accepted by all born again Christians. But the local church is too often less appreciated and understood. Some professing Christians, not finding a local church to their liking, choose to practice an isolated and independent Christianity. Unfortunately, they disobey the specific command of God that believers should not fail to assemble together with other believers (Hebrews 10:25). Watching a church service on television or listening to a sermon on the radio will not suffice. God's design for His people is worship, edification, and encouragement in the company of other believers. This doctrine is vital to a well-rounded Christian life.

Comments: 1) Baptism in the Spirit helps to define the spirituality of the Christian. A greater experience is necessary.

2) What happened to church fellowship?

### **Large Catechism: Creed, 51-55**

"This is the sum and substance of the phrase: I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possess a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessing it possess. I was brought to it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's word, which is the first step in entering it. Before we had advanced this far, we were entirely of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ. Until the last day the Holy Spirit remains with the holy community of Christian people. Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the word. By it he creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in the fruits of the Spirit.

Further we believe that in this Christian church we have the forgiveness of sins, which is granted through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through the comforting words of the entire gospel. Toward forgiveness is directed everything that is to be preached concerning the sacraments and, in short, the entire gospel and all the duties of Christianity. Forgiveness is needed constantly, for although God's grace has been won by Christ, and holiness has been wrought by the Holy Spirit through God's word in the unity of the Christian church, yet because we are encumbered with our flesh we are never without sin.

Therefore everything in the Christian church is so ordered that we may obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and through signs appointed to comfort and revive our consciences as long as we live. Although we have sin, the Holy Spirit sees to it that it does not harm us because we are in the Christian church, where there is full forgiveness of sin. God forgives us, and we forgive, bear with, and aid one another."

### **Smalcald Articles: Part II, Article II, 15**

"...This means that the word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel."

## **Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration, Article XII, 95-96**

“From our exposition friends and foes may clearly understand that we have no intention (since we have no authority to do so) to yield anything of the eternal and unchangeable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and outward harmony. Nor would such peace and harmony last, because it would be contrary to the truth and actually intended for its suppression. Still less by far are we minded to whitewash or cover up any falsification of true doctrine or any publicly condemned errors. We have a sincere delight in and deep love on our part to do everything in our power to further the same. We desire such harmony as will not violate God’s honor, that will not detract anything from the divine truth of the holy gospel, that will not give place to the smallest error but will lead the poor sinner to true and sincere repentance, raise him up through faith, strengthen him in his new obedience, and thus justify and save him for ever through the sole merit of Christ, and so forth.”

## **11. The Ministry**

Involvement in ministry in response to a divine call is scripturally ordained in the Bible. It is a provision of our Lord for the threefold purpose of leading the Church in: (1) evangelization of the world (Mark 16:15-20), (2) worship of God (John 4:23-24), and (3) building a body of believers conforming to the life of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16).

### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

An important New Testament teaching is “the priesthood of all believers.” All Spirit-filled believers in a local Pentecostal assembly should be prompted by the Spirit to minister to or edify the rest of the body in some way. But new believers must be discipled or trained to minister and serve. So God has provided that there be spiritual leaders who teach and lead the congregation to serve (minister to) spiritual and material needs both in and outside the local church. These specially ordained ministers today include pastors, evangelists, and teachers of the Word. They should be recognized as Christ’s gifts to the Church (Ephesians 4:11) and given appropriate respect and appreciation. This doctrine is important because the success any assembly has in fulfilling its mission depends to a great degree on Holy Spirit anointed leadership.

### **The Augsburg Confession: Article V.**

“To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the gospel. And the gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.”

## **12. Divine Healing (\* one of four cardinal doctrines)**

Divine healing from God is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided in the Atonement (Christ’s suffering and death for our reconciliation with God). Healing is a privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:16-17; James 5:14-16).

### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

The spectacular spread of the Pentecostal message and the growth in the number of Spirit-filled believers can be attributed to a great degree to God’s miraculous intervention in the lives of hurting people, those suffering from emotional, spiritual, and physical pain. Many in the Assemblies of God have personally experienced God’s healing touch. Some have been restored from near death is an appointed experience for every human being (Hebrews 9:27). Though we cannot explain why some are healed while others are not, God knows all and does all things well according to a purpose only He knows. The fact that some are not healed does not destroy the fact that God can and does heal. In every Pentecostal congregation are those who have received God’s supernatural touch of healing.

Comments: 1) refer to information from doctrines 7 & 8.

2) deliverance from sickness a part of Pentecostal teaching

Professor David Valleskey, in the Bible class program, *Gifted to Serve*, presents the following outline regarding the “gift of healing” today:

“A. As compared to the gift of healing in the New Testament times:

1) only believer healing;

- 2) sometimes a gradual and partial healing;
- 3) only for those who seek it;
- 4) some healed, others not;
- 5) no power to restore life;
- 6) often glorify the “healer” instead of God.

B. How the Lord generally heals (cf. Psalm 50:15; James 5:14-15)

C. Special gifts of healing possible today? Let us consider the evidence:

- 1) of bible history: only certain periods;
- 2) of the purpose for such a gift (Hebrews 2:3-4); authenticated the apostles and their message;
- 3) of the history of the church; not present for most of its history;
- 4) of the gift of “healing” today as compared with this gift in bible times: in general, the two are not identical.”

4. The place of suffering in the Christian’s life

The false claim of present day “healing” churches and certain television preachers: those who are “in Christ” should be perfect in souls and in body since the curse of sin has been removed.

The truth:

no more condemnation, but still sinners (Romans 7:18ff); perfection only in heaven; our bodies, too, are still a part of this sinful world, subject to weakness and illness.

Genesis 3:16-19—becoming a Christian doesn’t deliver—a woman from the pangs of childbirth; a man from tilling soil filled with thorns and thistles; men and women from sickness and death (cf. The following examples of believers who suffered illnesses; Isaac; Job; Trophimus, 2 Timothy 4:20; Epaphroditus, Philippians 2:27; Timothy, I Timothy 5:23; Paul, 2 Corinthians 12:7)

Bodily perfection to occur only after the resurrection

I Corinthians 15:49 - “just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

Philippians 3:21 - “(the Lord Jesus Christ) will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself.”

Why illness and suffering?

Romans 8:18 - to remind us that our final redemption is still in the future;

Isaiah 43:2 - to help keep our trust centered in the Lord;

Psalm 119: 67, 71; Hebrews 12: 5, 11—at times to lead us back to the Lord

2 Corinthians 12: 9-11—to make us more effective servants of the Lord.

Conclusion

In sickness:

Pray for healing;

Ask others to pray;

Persist in prayers;

If no healing, trust that the Lord’s good purposes and will (Matthew 26:39) for you are still being served (Romans 8:28)

Pray to be like Paul:

“I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Philippians 4:11)”

### **13. The Blessed hope (\* one of four cardinal doctrines)**

All Christians who have died will one day rise from their graves and will meet the Lord in the air. Christians who have not yet died will be raptured or caught up with them, to be with the Lord. Then Christians of all ages will live with God forever. The scriptural truth of the Lord’s soon return is “the blessed hope” (Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Titus 2:13).

**Importance of this Doctrine:**

This doctrine is very important because it provides a primary motivation for witnessing and living a holy life. For the believer, the return of Christ for His redeemed is a blessed hope indeed! The translation or “snatching away” of living Christians, commonly called the rapture (“to catch up”), will bring an end to suffering, pain, hardship, and difficulty. We as Christians will then be with the Lord forever. Though the body is not alive between death and resurrection, the soul does not sleep but is consciously alive in the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

For the sinner, however, the Rapture is anything but a blessed hope. To be left behind will involve indescribable suffering as God judges a rebellious and disobedient world. God desires that all mankind should ask forgiveness and be restored to fellowship with himself. He places this burden for the lost and their waiting eternal punishment on the hearts of those who already know His love and salvation. It is for this reason that a primary mission of the Church is evangelizing the world, seeking to save as many as possible from the judgment to come.

#### **14. The Millennial Reign of Christ**

The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of all Christians, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on the earth for 1,000 years (Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 24:27,30; Revelation 1:7, 19:11-14, 20:1-6). This millennial (1,000-year) reign will bring the salvation of Israel as a nation (Ezekiel 37:21-22; Zephaniah 3:19-20; Romans 11: 26-27) and the establishment of universal peace (Psalm 72:3-8; Isaiah 11:6-9; Micah 4:3-4).

#### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

It sometimes seems that Satan has the world so enslaved in his grasp that conditions have no chance of improving. But God is not dead, as some skeptics claim. He has declared that world conditions will become increasingly bad before He comes for His own and begins the sequence of end-time events. Knowing this we do not lose hope as sin, crime, and natural disasters increase year after year. God’s Word has predicted what we are seeing, but His Word also tells us that in the end He is the Victor. The Millennium will demonstrate that God’s reign and government is perfect. It will replace all the failed systems of human government.

Biblical prophecy indicates that Israel as a nation has a continuing place in God’s plan for the end times. We believe that at some future time the hearts of Jews will turn in large numbers to the Messiah who died for them and for all mankind.

#### **15. The Final Judgment**

There will be a final judgment in which the wicked dead—those who have died without accepting Christ’s salvation—will be raised and judged according to the way they lived. Anyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life (the recorded list of people who received Christ’s forgiveness), together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, will be sent to everlasting punishment in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (sulfur), which is the second death (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 19:20, 20:11-15, 21:8).

#### **Importance of this doctrine:**

God is a God of love. But He is also a just God. He cannot allow sin and wickedness to go unpunished. One false teaching suggests that all people, whether righteous or wicked, will eventually be saved. But this is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. This doctrine is important because it reminds all humans that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), that there is a judgment of everlasting punishment waiting the devil, his cohorts, and all people who have not accepted God’s gracious provision of salvation.

#### **16. The New Heavens and the New Earth**

“According to God’s promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell and reign forever” (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21,22).

#### **Importance of this Doctrine:**

In the midst of our daily struggles and difficulties we are encouraged by the promise of what God has prepared for His faithful followers. Jesus told His disciples, and made the promise to all generations of Christians, “I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me: (John 14:2-3).

After the Millennium (1,000 year period), all Christians will dwell forever with God and have access to a beautiful, restored universe. This doctrine is important because it assures us of our future abode in a world far better than this one.”

Comments: Unscriptural doctrines taught in doctrines 13-16 include the millennium, physical Israel will be saved and the rapture.

### **Augsburg Confession: Article XVII**

“The return of Christ to judgment”

It is also taught among us that our Lord Jesus Christ will return on the last day for judgment and will raise up all the dead, to give eternal life and everlasting joy to believers and the elect but to condemn ungodly men and the devil to hell and eternal punishment.

Rejected, therefore, are the anabaptists who teach that the devil and condemned men will not suffer eternal pain and torment.

Rejected, too, are certain, Jewish opinions which are even now making an appearance and which teach that, before the resurrection of the dead, saints and godly men will possess a worldly kingdom and annihilate all the godless.”

The sainted Professor Becker speaks about the millennium:

“Even people who reject the whole doctrine of the millennium are in the habit of speaking of the “thousand year reign of Christ” in connection with this chapter. Those who deny the millennium are often accused of not believing the words of John here. In answer we often say that the words must be understood figuratively. But this is that John says not one word about a thousand-year reign of Christ, either literally or figuratively.”

### **Conclusion**

It is obvious by their confessions that the assemblies fall short of teaching the Word in its truth and purity. While we labor in the kingdom may we continue to thank our Lord for his gracious guidance in Word and sacrament.

Let us come before our Lord, asking for his forgiveness and for his blessings. Our legacy is not who we are but who he is—the eternal God of grace. May we proclaim him as we teach, preach, study and confess his holy name, today and always.

Let us join in song to salute our gracious Lord by singing with the gift of tongues and voices the blessings of the Trinity.

### **Thy Strong Word (CW, 280. vs. 5-6)**

Give us lips to sing thy glory,  
Tongues thy mercy to proclaim,  
Throats to shout the hope that fills us,  
Mouths to speak thy holy name.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
May the light which thou dost send  
Fill our songs with alleluias,  
Alleluias without end!

God the father, light creator,  
To thee laud and honor be.  
To thee, light from light begotten,

Praise be sung eternally.  
Holy Spirit, light revealer,  
Glory, glory be to thee.  
Mortals, angels now and ever  
Praise the holy trinity!





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