

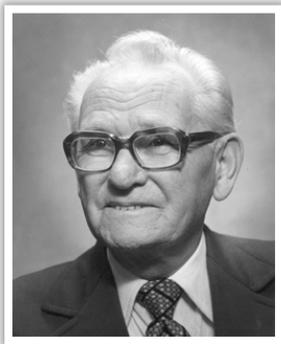
ALSOM

THE 142 - ASSEMBLIES OF GOD HISTORY, MISSIONS, and GOVERNANCE INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES - **Module 5 - Middle and Later Development of the AG**

From the 1950's onward the influences of the broader church world and of American culture began to increasingly impact the Assemblies of God, with both positive and negative results.

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT and the ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

SADLY, Because of the influence of Fundamentalist Dispensationalism, In the 1940's and 1950's, some people in the General Council viewed the World Council of Churches (WCC) as the body that would probably become a so-called "world super-church," the scarlet woman of Revelation (which is a gross sectarian misinterpretation of the Scriptures). Under this narrow sectarian influence, the AG condemned the ecumenical movement. *However, many in the AG rejected this condemnation.*



Originally from South Africa, David du Plessis became a goodwill ambassador for Pentecostalism. He spoke to ecumenical circles, sharing his testimony in places where Pentecostals were not allowed before. Du Plessis was able to spread the word about Spirit baptism to people who would not otherwise have heard about it. There was still enough fundamentalist influence in the AG to cause David du Plessis to lose his ministerial credentials for his ecumenical activities.

Thankfully, Du Plessis's AG ministerial credentials were restored before he died.

The AG and Pentecostals have now been active in interdenominational, ecumenical dialogue and joint ministry for several decades.

Roman Catholic - Pentecostal dialogue has spanned six phases since 1972 and covered issues such as evangelization, baptism, discipleship, and community. The sixth and current round is focused on the role of charisms in the church.

Numerous AG pastors, missionaries, and scholars have been engaged in theological dialogue with Catholic, Orthodox, and various Protestant denominations for almost 50 years.

Pentecostals in Ecumenical Dialogue

The Assemblies of God and other Pentecostals have now been active in interdenominational, ecumenical dialogue and joint ministry for several decades. AG participation in Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue began in 1972.

- Assemblies of God - Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., Rev. Jerry Sandidge, President Mark Hausfeld (AGTS), Rev. Thomas D. Pratt, and numerous other AG pastors, scholars, and missionaries
- Church of God - Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns, and others
- Pentecostal Holiness Church – Rev. Dr. Harold D. Hunter
- Foursquare Gospel Church, Church of God of Prophecy, etc.

THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT and the ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

- Beginning in the 1960's, people in the mainline churches began receiving the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and experiencing many spiritual gifts and healings.
- "Charismatic" - from "charismata", a Greek word meaning "gift", as in gift of the Spirit.

- Episcopalians - Dennis and Rita Bennet
- Catholics – Duquesne University and other places, Father Francis Macnutt and others
- Quakers – Gerald Derstine
- Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans
- Large renewal movements began in the mainline denominations, usually sanctioned and encouraged by the denomination’s hierarchy.
- Those charismatics who entered the Pentecostal churches brought a tremendous breath of fresh air and new life, their priests and pastors adding much needed theological depth and breadth to Spirit-filled teaching
- Today, over 300,000,000 people in all denominations identify as Charismatic Christians, speaking in tongues and/or moving in supernatural life. The majority of those are Roman Catholic.

MEDIA MINISTERS and SCANDAL

Capitalizing on the Charismatic movement, several media ministry empires sprang up in the 1970’s – 1980’s. Most of the largest ministries were led by AG ministers.

These had been preceded in the 1950’s-1960’s by Rex Humbard, Oral Roberts, and others on television.

Pat Robertson / CBN (The 700 Club)



Paul and Jan Crouch (TBN)



Jim and Tammy Bakker (PTL)



Jimmy Swaggart



The scandals in the 1980’s associated with well-known media ministers such as these did tremendous damage to the reputation of the Pentecostal movement and the Assemblies of God.

The Crouches, Bakkers, and Swaggarts were all affiliated with the AG.

Although Pat Robertson never suffered a catastrophic scandal, his forays into politics and prophecy and his comments on current events increasingly damaged the credibility of the Pentecostal / charismatic movement.

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD COMMISSION ON DOCTRINAL PURITY

To address issues that arose affecting biblical doctrine and lifestyle, the AG created what it called the Commission on Doctrinal Purity.

This group of pastors, church executives, and theologians prepared position papers on difficult issues that troubled the church. Some of the topics they have addressed include ...

- Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Restoration of Apostles, Baptism in the Holy Spirit
- Creation, Divorce and Remarriage, Gambling, Homosexuality, Ordination
- Role of Women in Ministry
- Drugs, Racism, Secret Societies, Use of Alcohol
- Etc.
- *Some of these topics (and others) are no longer Position Papers! They have been demoted.*

At any given time, the membership on the Committee has been a mixed bag of pastors, bureaucrats (gatekeepers), and scholars. They are usually chosen by whoever happens to be holding the executive offices at any given time and tend to reflect the beliefs of those individuals.

Commission members usually have widely varying levels of education and formation. The best AG scholars have never been included in a meaningful way.

The Position Papers vary greatly in quality and importance ...

1. Some are of much higher quality than others (as to accurate scholarship, argumentation, writing),
2. Some are on far more important subjects (Abortion) than others (Secret Societies),
3. Some represent a far broader consensus in the Christian church (Racism) than others (Gambling),
4. Some represent a far broader agreement in the AG (Homosexuality) than others (Wine).
5. Some represent a growing consensus, others a shrinking consensus or even a position that is now a minority position that has simply not been brought up for a vote for an official change ...

EX: Divorce and Remarriage ... a great majority of AG scholars and ministers had already changed their belief before the Position Paper and GC CBL regarding Divorce and Remarriage were changed.

EX: Abstinence from Alcohol - scholars, missionaries, ministers & laity hold a variety of opinions.

EX: Creation ... Young Earth Creation (YEC) position has long been declining among evangelicals and among AG scholars and students, while the Old Earth Creation (OEC) and Evolutionary Creation (EC) positions have been growing among evangelicals and AG scholars and students.

EX: Eschatology ... There are no dispensationalist professors in any of our AG schools

EX: Israel ... Like many other evangelicals, Pentecostal scholars and ministers are no longer blindly supportive of Israel. The suffering of the Palestinian Arab Christians, and the opposition of the Israeli society to Jewish conversions to Christ, are increasing concerns.

“Many of us have been concerned for some time about the proliferation of these Position Papers.” – Dr. William Menzies, AGTS Professor, 1983.

AG ministers and members are NOT required to agree with the Position Papers.

Memphis Miracle and Memphis Manifesto - Pentecostalism Addresses Its Own Racism

Pentecostal Leaders and the Assemblies of God Address Racism in the Movement- The Memphis Miracle



In 1994 African-American and Caucasian leaders met to chart a course for reconciliation between the races. Those in attendance agreed to commit to the Memphis Manifesto.

At one point in the service the Anglo leaders began washing the feet of the leaders of color.

The mostly white Pentecostal Fellowship of North America (PFNA) was dissolved, and a new organization formed that is more inclusive of Pentecostal / charismatic denominations and churches of color

(Black, Hispanic, and so forth), the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA).

Memphis Manifesto

The Memphis Manifesto was an agreement to work for evangelism and missions in justice and holiness, in spiritual renewal and empowerment, and in reconciliation of all Christians, regardless of race or gender.

RECENT GENERAL SUPERINTENDENTS of the ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

Dr. George O. Wood - 2007-2017

- Born in China to AG missionaries.
- Graduated with a Bachelor's degree from Evangel University, and a Master's degree from Fuller Theological Seminary.
- Also holds an earned doctorate, a law degree, and is licensed to practice law in California and Missouri.
- Chairman of the World AG Fellowship.
- Chairman of the World Pentecostal Fellowship.
- Has overseen renewed growth in the US AG.
- Lead the Fellowship in a vision to ...
 - Passionately proclaim, at home and abroad, by word and deed Jesus as Savior, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, Healer, and Soon Coming King.
 - Strategically invest in the next generation.
 - Vigorously plant new churches
 - Skillfully resource our Fellowship
 - Fervently pray for God's favor and help as we serve Him with pure hearts and noble purpose
 - Promote renewed emphasis on Bible engagement and study throughout the Fellowship
 - *(Dr. George Wood remains the Chairman of the World Pentecostal Conference and the representative for the U.S. AG in many interdenominational and political situations.)*



Doug Clay - 2017 to the Present

- Graduated from Central Bible College.
- Served as General Treasurer of the US AG, 2008-2017.
- Previously served as Ohio District Superintendent, National Youth Director, Ohio DYD, and as a Pastor and Youth Pastor.



Assemblies of God Missions Overseas Missions Work

American missions work overseas was greatly influenced by the following:

- Setting up educational institutions
- Missionary doctors
- Translating the Bible
- Teaching literacy
- Women missionaries
- Student volunteers

WHILE MANY EMPHASIZE MISSIONS MINISTRY IN THE SPIRIT'S POWER ...

And while that has been a cornerstone of AG and Pentecostal growth overseas, there were other **ESSENTIAL** aspects to this success.

Early Missions Hardships

- Early missionaries went to the field for undetermined lengths of time.
- Before going overseas, early AG missionaries signed a pledge in which they promised to endure hardship for the sake of the gospel.
- Some spent decades on the field without a break.
- Monetary support was not steady and often very little.
- When home, missionaries stayed in homes provided by the Assemblies of God.
- *Early missions hardships were very similar to early pastoral hardships in the U.S.*

The Indigenous Principle in Missions

Western colonial empires affected American foreign missions by giving missionaries access to areas that had been closed to Christianity.

The "Indigenous Principle" said that churches / fellowships of churches should be founded in a colony or nation that would soon be "Self-supporting, Self-governing, and Self-propagating." Indigenous leadership was to be raised up, trained, and released to lead and govern the church(es) as quickly as possible.

In many evangelical missions efforts the goals of the indigenous principle were not achieved because of failure to see missions work as the founding of a national church.

The Assemblies of God adopted the indigenous principle from its earliest days.

The national fellowships (such as, the Assemblies of God of Nigeria, etc.) were organized as soon as possible as "fraternal" fellowships to the U.S. AG. That is, independent general council's in each nation, governing themselves, not controlled by the U.S. AG, but cooperating with our missionary efforts.

Missionaries encountered problems as they tried to plant truly indigenous churches in the field.

- A uniform way to write some of the national languages was needed.
- The Bible had to be translated into many local languages.
- Indigenous peoples had to be taught how to read their own languages.
- National preachers had to be trained.
- Self-governing churches had to be set up.
- Missionaries had to win and disciple converts so they could build their own churches.
- Teaching materials, song books, training books, and tracts needed to be produced in the national language.

THE DOCTRINE OF “CLOSURE”

Assemblies of God missionaries in the early years had no formal education but learned the language and culture of the areas where they ministered.

Many missionaries were motivated to endure the hardships of missionary work because of their belief that Christ could not return until all nations had heard the gospel (closure).

Others were motivated by the belief that Christ could return at any moment and they had to reach as many people with the gospel as possible as quickly as possible.

THE DOCTRINE OF “CLOSURE” – The mission of evangelizing the nations must be completed, “closed,” before Christ can return.

This is based on a common misunderstanding of Christ’s words in the Sermon on the Mount that says this means every single people-group on the entire planet must hear the gospel before Christ can return. This ignores the best interpretation of Matthew 24:14, as well as the facts that some “nations” ceased to exist before Christ’s First Advent and some have ceased to exist between Christ’s Sermon on the Mount and this present day, all without ever hearing the gospel of Christ.

AGAIN: Some people-groups that existed on the planet in the days of Christ and the Apostles have ceased to exist as identifiable ethnic/national groups between then and now, without ever hearing the gospel.

IF Christ’s words actually meant what many people, including advocates of the “closure” philosophy, think they meant, then Christ’s words have already failed.

(Christ’s words have actually been fulfilled since the First Century church; see Appendix 1.)

This belief in “closure” directly contradicts the doctrine of “imminence” – that Christ could return at any moment (that is, Christ’s return is “imminent”).

Belief in “closure” is not well known among most AG pastors and people, but it is believed by many in missions in the AG and other churches. It is an erroneous doctrine based on a misinterpretation of Scripture.

Today’s Missionary Support

Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) was once called the Division of Foreign Missions (DFM).

AGWM as regularly changed the ways in which missions faith promises, income, and budgets are structured and budgeted.

- **Missionary Itineration** - By the 1950s, itineration in local churches by furloughed missionaries became the most common way to promote missions for the following reasons:
 - It increased interest and support among local churches.
 - It built lasting relationships between churches and missionaries.
 - It made missions personal to local congregants.
 - It prompted missions giving in every age group.
 - *It allowed local churches and pastors to hear from the Holy Spirit as to which projects and missionaries they should or should not support.*

- Missionaries return to the U.S. at least every 4 years to rest and itinerate ... visiting supporting and non-supporting churches in order to build relationships, share news, and solidify their support.
- AGWM carefully calculates every missionary's total budget so that they have more than enough funds to live and minister.
- For simplicity's sake, only this total budget amount is shared with pastors and churches as the "amount needed." The details of a missionary's budget are considered confidential by AGWM.
- **A missionary's budget will include ...**
 - an appropriate salary and housing, as well as funds for ...
 - ◆ health insurance,
 - ◆ retreats,
 - ◆ all travel costs for councils / meetings / training events,
 - ◆ funds for various emergencies that might arise, and
 - ◆ the cost of advanced degrees such as masters and doctoral degrees (if approved by AGWM),
 - ◆ and retirement accounts.

SADLY, very few US AG pastors or staff have such benefits ...

1. Most US AG pastors and staff are bi-vocational – they work secular jobs as well as pastoring.
2. Many churches do not pay for health insurance, retreats, seminars, training, costs for attending district or general council, travel costs, retirement accounts, emergency funds, etc.
3. Almost no churches pay all the costs of their pastoral staff bachelors, masters, or doctoral degrees.
4. **AND YET, these churches, even those with bivocational pastors and staff, do pay for those things for the missionaries they support because funds for these things are built into every monthly support offering the church sends to AGWM for the missionary (if AGWM has approved those items).**

AGWM has set an excellent standard for how a minister should be supported.

Biblically, a local church's top material / financial priority is the proper care and development of their pastors. This comes first.

SO, local assemblies should adopt the standard AGWM has set and provide all of these things for their pastoral staff as the top financial priority of the local church.

This standard is clearly, explicitly taught in Scripture. It is a command of Scripture for the local church.

Significant National and International Events Profoundly Affected the Assemblies of God ...

World War I

- The Assemblies of God took a **pacifist** stand on World War I because they believed the end was near.
- The war made travel uncertain and risky.
- Passports were difficult to obtain.
- The war caused more expense and red tape for travelers.
- After the war, prices rose, making it difficult for missionaries to afford housing overseas.
- Many new missionaries could not get approval to go to the field until financial support could be secured.

The 1918-1920 Influenza Epidemic

- The great pandemic of the "Spanish" Flu came in 4 waves worldwide from 1918-1920.
- From 20 million to 50 million people died worldwide.
- 675,000 died in the U.S.
- Vaccines and effective therapeutic medical care were not available.
- The AG and the Pentecostal movement experienced deaths just like the general population.
- The AG cooperated with government orders for masks, limited gatherings, etc.

- Revivals, crusades, local churches, etc. were normally shut down when the government requested it.
- Missionary travel, at home and abroad, was significantly affected.

Missions and Education

“Wherever Assemblies of God missionaries have gone, they have established some kind of systematic training program almost immediately.” — J. Philip Hogan, Executive Director, Division of Foreign Missions for over 20 years.

The AG worldwide has **over 300** training institutes, colleges, universities, and seminaries.

Many nations now require accredited institutions for the training of ministers.

Most Majority World people value education above all things.

They see education as their only way up and out of poverty, ignorance, and oppression.

Many of our sister AG fellowships around the world are insisting that their leaders have accredited advanced degrees ... masters, doctorates, etc.

If such advanced biblical / theological degrees cannot be obtained in their own nation, they will travel to other lands to pursue advanced education.

Some of our national churches actually have a better educated Executive Leadership than does the US AG.

In your lifetime, numerous national AG fellowships in the Majority World will have a better educated ministry than the US AG. This has not “killed revival” or slowed the growth of the AG church in those nations.

Given that the U.S. AG is older and far more affluent than our sister AG Fellowships in other nations, it is to our shame that we have not advanced farther in the education of our ministers.

Ongoing Issues Being Addressed in AG Missions: World Missions and U.S. Missions ...

Numerous institutional questions of accountability, transparency, and inequality of value and priority have been recognized as needing to be addressed and changed: ...

- **Need for More Accountability beyond AGWM**
 - Accountability to Districts / Networks
 - Accountability to local churches
- **Need for More Transparency**
 - Finances – use of designated funds
 - Missionary budgets – what is in there? What are we paying for?
 - Do supporting pastors & churches have ANY visibility / access into missionary budgets?
- **When Problems Arise on the Field with Missionaries, Projects, and Offerings from Churches ...**
 - Missionaries and projects – do districts and local churches have any role to play at all?
 - Missionaries – do districts and local churches have any role to play at all?
- **National church issues – doctrine, practice, splits, ...**
 - Do districts / networks and local churches have any visibility, access to information, etc.?
- **Inequality between AGWM and AGUSM**
 - As organizations – promotion, prominence, funding, rules, freedoms, restrictions, etc.
 - Individual missionaries – World and US
 - Promotion, emphasis, privileges, finances
 - Missionary accountability conflicts - AGUSM and Districts - what is the district / network role and authority versus that of AGUSM
- **Three-tier mentality of kingdom “importance”**
 - AGWM missionaries as heroes –
 - Every story in Scripture is intentionally written to show that no human in the story is a hero, and that only Yahweh / Jesus is the Hero of the story

- It is patently false that leaving a pastorate in Green Pond, Alabama for one in London, Rome, or Monaco makes one a hero.
- Local church pastors / staff as second class - less important than AGWM missionaries
- AGUSM missionaries as third class: underappreciated, underfunded, lack of respect, lack of support, and lack of promotion from Pastors, churches, and district offices.
 - AGUSM includes Chi Alpha, Chaplains (military, industrial, hospital, others), Teen Challenge, Church Planting, etc.
 - *NOTE: You may have noticed in your course textbook that it contains no significant or detailed information about AGUSM ministries. It was all about AGWM ministries. This is indicative of this problem.*

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRUCTURE and ETHOS of the ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

LIBERTY and DIVERSITY in UNITY

There has always been diversity of perspective on some matters in the Assemblies of God. One area where this is true is eschatology.

The General Council Bylaws lists some doctrines and practices that are not approved of, including some positions on eschatology.

After listing those disapproved eschatological perspectives the Bylaws then “recommends” that if a minister does hold those disapproved perspectives he or she refrain from preaching or teaching them. However, the language does not initially “require” that the minister refrain from teaching or preaching a “disapproved” perspective.

The language is as follows: ...

ARTICLE IX. DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES DISAPPROVED

B. LIST OF DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES DISAPPROVED

Section 3. Eschatological Errors

(Paragraphs “a” through “d” then list so-called “errors” ... Restitution of All Things, Date-Setting, Post-Tribulation Rapture, Amillennialism) ...

- e. Credentials jeopardized if made an issue.** We recommend that those ministers who embrace any of the foregoing eschatological errors refrain from preaching or teaching them. Should they persist in emphasizing these doctrines to the point of making them an issue, their standing in the Fellowship will be seriously affected (Luke 21:34–36; 1 Thessalonians 5:9,10; 2 Thessalonians 1:4–10; Revelation 3:10,19,20).

In other words, ministers have a significant degree of liberty in the eschatological positions they hold.

Problems should only arise if a minister teaches or preaches a “disapproved” position to the point that it becomes an “issue” in the church, for which he is then asked to cease emphasizing that position, but instead he refuses counsel and persists in emphasizing that perspective.

The influence of dispensationalism on the AG made a preaching/teaching emphasis on the any-moment “imminence” of Christ’s coming the primary intent of our doctrine of eschatology. That is demonstrated in Paragraph C. of Section 3. Eschatological Errors:

- c. Post-Tribulation Rapture ...** ... it is recommended that all our ministers teach the imminent coming of Christ, warning all to be prepared for that coming, which may occur at any time, ...”

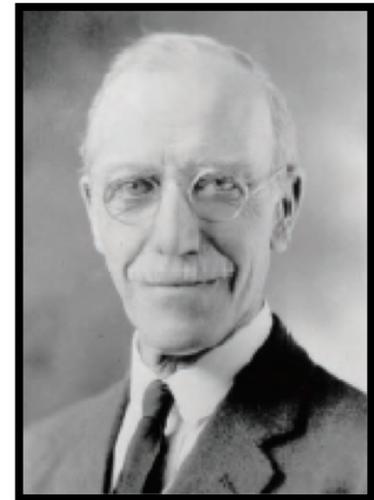
However, as seen above, the belief by some in the principle of “closure” - that Christ cannot return until every people-group (nation) has had gospel witness - is directly opposed to the General Council Bylaws “recommendation” that our ministers teach the “imminent” coming of Christ.

This is yet another example of why the AG has always had to permit some liberty and diversity within unity, some divergent perspectives in some areas of doctrine and practice.

This is reflected in the following article by a Professor Glen Menzies and President Gordon Anderson of North Central University of the Assemblies of God. In it they describe the eccentric eschatological views of AG founder and author of the Sixteen Fundamental Truths, D. W. Kerr: ...

“D. W. Kerr and Eschatological Diversity in the Assemblies of God,”

Dr. Glen Menzies and President Gordon Anderson, NCU of the AG, *Paraclete*, Winter, 1993.



Daniel Warren Kerr was one of the most influential founding fathers in the Assemblies of God. “The statement of Faith approved at the 1916 Council was largely the work of D. W. Kerr,”¹ yet he held a most unusual view of the Rapture and Tribulation, one which even in his own day was eccentric and which has never become popular. Moreover, since he believed in two raptures and that at least part of the Church will go through the Tribulation, it appears that according to the Assemblies of God Bylaws he held to what is now a disapproved doctrine.

Surprising? Not really, when one understands how and why the Assemblies of God was formed and the way the founders viewed the role of doctrine in relation to the mission of the church. In a nutshell they believed that unity of purpose is more important than unity of doctrine, and that the Movement would be well served by allowing latitude in some doctrinal issues, as long as those issues did not become divisive.

CONCLUSION

Daniel W. Kerr believed in the imminence of the blessed hope, the rapture of the saints. While he believed in the rather unorthodox theory of at least two Raptures separated in time by 7 years, he did not divide the church by promoting this view. Following his lead, the Assemblies of God has wisely never insisted on absolute uniformity in these peripheral doctrinal matters or it would have excluded men such as D. W. Kerr from its ranks.

As we approach the end of the 20th century and look back on more than 70 years of Assemblies of God history, it seems we can be helped again by D. W. Kerr and our founders. They organized for a mission—to evangelize the world—and they held to a few doctrinal fundamentals, leaving room for alternate opinions as long as those holding them did not become divisive. Today we face the specter of the organization itself replacing the mission, and doctrinal litmus tests returning us to the debilitating controversies our founders wanted so much to avoid. Let us reaffirm again our fundamentals. Jesus is coming! Be ready, preach His imminent return, and evangelize the world until He calls us home.

For Pentecostals “unity of the Spirit” has always been more important than “unity in the faith.” Maranatha!

A DIVERSE and PLURALISTIC FELLOWSHIP

- The founders desired a flexible Fellowship, not a rigid denomination, a Fellowship united by experience and mission as much as doctrine.

- Depending on the local and regional cultures, on the prevailing religious environment, and many other factors, the Assemblies of God has always varied from one part of the U.S. to another.
 - Northeast, North Central, Southeast, Mid-America, Northwest, West Coast ...
 - Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Fundamentalist, Holiness, UNCHURCHED, ...
- Styles of music, worship, preaching, ministry emphases, ethos, atmosphere, and even doctrinal emphases have always varied greatly among assemblies and across the nation ...
 - High Church, Evangelical, Hymns, Gospel Songs, Camp Meeting, Emotional Preaching, Content Teaching, Shouting-jerking, etc.
 - Peaceful, Fighting, Respect for Authority, Rebellion, Discipleship, Revivalism, etc., ...
- **No one can look at their own personal, local experience and say “This is what ALL of the AG has always been like.”**
- **SOMETIMES, those with a narrow sectarian experience, especially if influenced by fundamentalism, become very narrow in their expectations of what the AG CAN or CANNOT BE. Especially as other “WAYS OF BEING AG” invade their region of the nation (their “territory”).**
- Ministers and local churches should always “push back” against anyone, even denominational officials, who try and tell them that there is ONLY ONE WAY to be an Assemblies of God believer, minister, or local church.
- **INSTITUTIONALIZATION: The process by which any organization or religious denomination gradually removes variety, diversity, and grassroots liberty from the grassroots and assumes the authority to redefine “genuine” organizational or denominational purity into uniform, one-size-fits-all requirements.**
- **The inevitable organizational process of institutionalization must always be resisted in favor of the original vision of our founding fathers and mothers for our Fellowship: A network of variety, diversity, and liberty on most issues, united by a commitment to God’s word, the Spirit’s power, evangelism, and discipleship.**

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION of INFLUENCES

- Publishing and mail distributed all influences around the U.S.
- Healing and Restorationist emphases were universal
- Eschatological expectancy was widespread
- Dispensationalist influence was widespread, *heaviest in South and Southwest*
- Keswick / Higher Life influence strongest in Northeast, upper Midwest, West Coast
- Holiness Movement influences strongest in the South
- Theological tradition from which people came heavily influenced their doctrine and practice ...
 - Methodist – holiness, hierarchical organization,
 - Baptist, Presbyterian – Keswick, progressive, congregational
 - CMA – Keswick, Presbyterian, healing, missions

GENERAL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION - ARTICLE II

“The General Council of the Assemblies of God is a cooperative fellowship based upon mutual agreements voluntarily entered into by its membership and shall be known as a fellowship of churches and credentialed ministers.”

The Assemblies of God has never been a monolithic, completely homogeneous “church.” It has always been a diverse, pluralistic, cooperative Fellowship or network of sovereign local churches.

The Local Church

“General Council affiliated churches are deemed to be sovereign, autonomous, self-governing, and self-determining bodies which have, by their sovereign, self-determining action in making application for and

receiving recognition as a General Council affiliated church, entered into an agreement with the Fellowship to be amenable to the General Council and district council in matters of doctrine and conduct.” — **Article VI, Section 4**

When a local assembly is a sovereign General Council assembly, it's many prerogatives include ...

1. Wholly owning its own property (*the property is NOT owned in whole or in part by the district or General councils unless they have invested money in the property*) ... Buying, selling managing all of its property as it sees fit.
2. Governing its own affairs ... Handling its own finances, determining its ministries and meetings, electing local officers, calling its pastors, etc., without authoritative direction from the district or General councils.
3. Chartering with the state and adopting or changing its own Constitution or Bylaws.
4. Hiring, firing all of its employees, contracting with its pastors, setting standards for membership, and exercising church discipline on its members as it sees fit.

The local church may adopt a polity (government / bylaws) of its own choosing ...

1. Pastor-led - provides the Pastor great liberty in following his vision for the church, with the aid of appointed Elders.
2. Elder-led - the group of Elders, which includes the Pastor, lead and govern the church as equals.
3. Overseer Model - the Pastor leads the church, assisted by Elders and Deacons, but overseen by a group of outside ministers.
4. Congregational Model (the only model involving very much “voting” by the congregation.
5. PAC Model (Parent Affiliated Church) - the Parent church determines everything.

The local church may participate ***however it sees fit*** with the missions, ministries, departments, and initiatives of the district and General councils.

The local pastor and church ***are not required to support*** any particular missions, ministries, departments, and initiatives of the district and General councils.

A pastor and church should reject pressure from denominational officials or departments to support denominational efforts unless the pastor and leaders of the local church sense the confirmation of the Holy Spirit that this is indeed God's will.

The Assemblies of God is *a relational network of ministers and churches, a cooperative Fellowship with liberty and diversity*, **NOT a rigid denomination that can pressure or coerce participation and financial support.**

There are certain minimal requirements that a local church Bylaws must meet to be approved by the GC. Some districts/networks require things that other districts do not require.

In other words, something perfectly fine in the Illinois District may be FORBIDDEN in the West Texas District.

SO, if you think that God is calling you to certain districts ... *you might want to check it out.*

USUALLY, a sovereign GC church can change its local Bylaws as it wills.

Historically, district councils have no authority to seize property that is paid for and owned by a local assembly.

FALSE SAYINGS / CLICHES USED TO INTIMIDATE, PRESSURE, OR SHAME pastors and local churches ...

1. “Cooperative fellowship means that once you join the fellowship you are obligated to cooperate (i.e., with everything).” ***This is categorically wrong, historically, legally, and in every other way.***
2. “If you don't ... (insert pet litmus test here) – Have SS – Give to Missions – Have Sunday Night Svcs – Have RR and GM – ... You're not really AG.” ***This too is categorically wrong, historically, legally, in every way.***

Intimidation, pressuring, and shaming may be effective in coercing some pastors and churches into supporting denominational projects, departments, and missions, **but they are unbiblical and ungodly.**

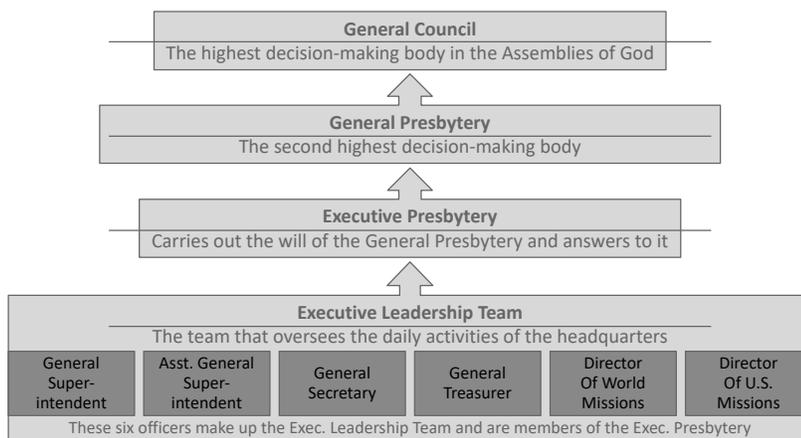
Ministers and local churches should carefully guard their liberty and sovereignty, and reject attempts by officials, fund raisers, and others to shame or intimidate them into cooperating with anything for which they do not have the Spirit's leading and sufficient personnel, time, and money.

DEFINITIONS OF FREQUENTLY USED WORDS ...

- **Ecclesial**—describing the affairs and activities related to the church
- **Sacerdotal**—relating to the affairs or activities related to the clergy
- **Ordinances** – a word for Holy Communion and Water Baptism for people who are afraid to say “**Sacrament**”
- **Initial Physical Evidence** – the first empirically measurable behavior indicating that one may have been baptized in the Holy Spirit
 - Originally, the favored phraseology was “the sign of Spirit baptism,” because “sign” is a biblical concept and word.
 - “Physical” – empirically measurable
 - “Evidence” – a fact or proof of a truth
 - *“Physical” and “evidence” are words of modernism and science, not Bible words.*

GENERAL COUNCIL ORGANIZATIONAL FLOW

Organizational Flow



© 2010 - 2012 Global University

Visual 163

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE PRESBYTERY (EP)

- General Superintendent
- Assistant General Superintendent
- General Secretary
- General Treasurer
- Executive Director of World Missions
- Executive Director of U.S. Missions
- Eleven additional members who do not hold office (Their authority and responsibilities are solely as members of the Executive Presbytery when it is in session.)

EFFORTS TO RAISE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS and CLAIMS MADE BY MINISTERS

GENERAL COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE IX. DOCTRINES and PRACTICES DISAPPROVED

Section 13. Accountability in Educational Attribution

a. Attribution. In order to maintain our testimony of quality and integrity in educational credentials before the Church and the world, and to minimize the possibility of our ministers and churches being victimized by, or supporting, or perpetrating frauds in education or credentialing, we maintain certain standards for the attribution of degrees, certifications, and titles.

(1) *Attribution by ministers.* Our ministers shall refrain from listing, promoting, or attributing to themselves or others any degrees or titles conferred by institutions or organizations having, at the time of conferral, a formal accreditation status less than that of our appropriately corresponding Assemblies of God institutions (whether our institute, regional university, or seminary levels).

(2) *Attribution by the General Council.* No media, ministry, department, arm, or employee of the General Council shall list, attribute, or promote for any person, any degree or title conferred by an institution or organization having, at the time of conferral, a formal accreditation status less than that of our appropriately corresponding Assemblies of God institutions (whether our institute, regional university, or seminary levels).

(3) *Attribution by local churches.* We strongly encourage our ministers, boards, and churches to take great care to ensure that all ministers and church employees have actually earned the legitimately accredited education, training, and certification, as defined above, which they claim by their titles or degrees (such as counselor, therapist, doctor, and so on).

(4) *Attribution accepted.* All previously earned or conferred degrees prior to August 2007, from any institution whatsoever shall be fully accepted and grandfathered in.

b. Intentional failure to comply. Intentional refusal to comply with this ethical standard for educational credentials constitutes perpetrating a fraud upon the church and the world, personally and in the good name of the Assemblies of God, and the General Council disapproves of such practices.

GENERAL COUNCIL BYLAWS

ARTICLE VII. MINISTRY

Section 15. Integrity in Educational Credentials

- a. **Continuing education encouraged.** Our ministers and churches are encouraged to seek continuing education, discipleship, spiritual formation, and training opportunities of all kinds, of all degrees of difficulty, of their own initiative or in cooperation with the district council and the General Council, but with great care always taken to properly understand and honestly describe all such training, certifications, degrees, and titles.
- b. **Using adequately accredited institutions.** Because of the many questionable institutions offering unaccredited or deficient training and education, and since the General Council, our General Council schools, and our regional Assemblies of God universities are committed to achieving and maintaining the highest standards of accreditation in education, we strongly encourage our ministers to meet their continuing education needs either through endorsed Assemblies of God institutions or through other reputable institutions having accreditation status at least equivalent to that held by our own regionally and nationally accredited schools, and to consult the district council or General Council offices if they have questions in these matters.

Almost all of the heresies, false teaching, bad practices, and unbiblical ministry philosophies that often plague the Pentecostal movement and the Assemblies of God are due to inadequate education and spiritual formation. Poor education is the main reason AG ministers and parishioners are often unable to recognize bad teaching when they see it and hear it.

APPENDIX 1. The Gospel Preached to All Nations (Matthew 24:14) - What Does This Mean?

The most succinct explanation of the correct understanding of Matthew 24:14 is found in the writing of pastor and scholar, Dr. Sam Storms: ...

8. *Worldwide preaching of the gospel (v. 14)*

How could this possibly have occurred in the period 33-70 a.d.' It may at first seem strange, but "fundamental principles of interpretation lead us to bear in mind contextual clues: the time indicator ('this generation'), the audience (the disciples who ask about the temple), the specific concern (the destruction of the temple), and the harmony of the preceding signs with the first-century experience. All of these should dispose us to seek a first-century fulfillment of this verse" (Gentry, *The Great Tribulation*, 44). Note two important facts:

a. The words "whole world" (NASB) are a translation of the term *oikoumene*, which literally means an inhabited area, a standard term at that time for the Greek world, then for the Roman Empire, and subsequently for the then known world. The same Greek word is used in Luke 2:1 – "Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth" (*oikoumene*). In Acts 11:28 we read that "one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar." Again, in Acts 24:5, "For we have found this man (Paul) a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." As Gentry notes, "a surface reading of these texts suggests global events. Yet we know these 'world' events happen within the Roman empire of the first century" (44). The reference to the "nations" also indicates that the point is not that every geographical area on the globe must be covered but that all the nations, i.e., Gentiles, must be reached. Did this occur? This leads to the second point.

b. Writing before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Paul says to the Colossians:

" . . . the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth" (1:5b-6).

Again, Paul refers to the gospel ...

" . . . that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister" (1:23).

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Romans 1:8; cf. 10:18).

Thus, prior to 70 A.D. the inhabited earth had indeed heard the gospel, precisely in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24, as that phrase was used in that day and as it was used by the Bible's authors.

If we do NOT interpret and understand *oikoumene* in this way, and we insist on imposing on *oikoumene* (inhabited world) our 21st Century meaning of "the entire planet", then the Bible is definitely in error in all of the places referenced here.

END MODULE 5

PROCEED TO MODULE 6 - (Serious Challenges Present and Future)