
Endtime Revival–Spirit-Led and Spirit-Controlled

A Response Paper to Resolution 16

*This statement was adopted by the
General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God on August 11, 2000.*

As the writer of Ecclesiastes noted, there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Generations come and go. Revival movements come and go. Hunger for more of God comes and unfortunately wanes. Some people prefer the routine over the unexpected. Others desperately want to see something unusual, something that has never happened before.

Revival Extremes

In times of revival God often reminds the Church of neglected truths. When this happens, it is easy for extremes to develop. Some will reject the revival of a doctrine, while others in their zeal will go beyond the teaching of Scripture. Both extremes are harmful and bring reproach on the cause of Christ.

Revivals from Azusa Street (early 20th century) until now have witnessed unusual and unexpected human responses to God’s presence. Maria Woodworth-Etter, whose evangelistic ministry began in the 1880s and continued past the founding of the Assemblies of God in 1914, reported of her early ministry, “Men and women fell and lay like dead.”¹ She had never seen anything like it and didn’t know what to do when they fell. She concluded that it was God’s power at work. Yet the physical response never became a hallmark of her ministry, to be organized, planned, and deliberately repeated. When it happened, she acknowledged it as a work of the Spirit.

In some cases, the current revival is experiencing manifestations that seem to follow certain individuals or ministries and come to be expected as proofs of God’s special presence. Such expectation, when human repetition mingles with supernatural visitations, robs God’s children of the manifold variety and freshness of God’s genuine work that unmistakably confirms His presence.

Media Impact on Revival

Revival today is both the beneficiary and victim of modern communication media and technology. Whereas revivals in the first quarter of the 20th century were described in time-delayed newsletters or reported by observers who traveled elsewhere with their eyewitness accounts, today’s revival happenings are broadcast live, or recorded and edited to better publicize the event. To compete in the visual world of television, the dramatic physical aspects are often publicized on the screen while the inner work of the Holy Spirit in saving souls and changing lives is not as visible or spectacular. Yet these are the real reasons for God’s power at work. High-profile evangelists must never replace God’s priorities with human priorities.

Unfortunately, some Pentecostals and charismatics have come to think of revival in terms of the number of people falling to the floor, shaking or laughing uncontrollably, or demonstrating a variety of other human responses reported in media favorable to the revival. The presence of such physical reactions is sometimes viewed as evidence of spirituality or of God’s choice of blessing a certain ministry with His presence. That may or may not be the case.

Quench Not the Spirit

The last thing any sincere Pentecostal believer wants to do is to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit. We know full well that Paul meant what he said when he wrote to the Thessalonians, “Quench not the Spirit.” But two verses later he admonished, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19,21, KJV). So we do not take lightly the twofold responsibility of letting the Holy Spirit anoint and move as He pleases while at the same time obeying the command to judge and discern. If prophecy supposedly prompted by the Holy Spirit is to be judged (1 Corinthians 14:29), then physical responses purported to be the work of the Holy Spirit

¹ Maria Woodworth-Etter, *A Diary of Signs and Wonders* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 1916 reprint) p.37.

can and should be judged. But judgment in such matters must always be with the mind and spirit of Christ. We do not wish to disfellowship sincere believers who unknowingly slip into excesses—if they are teachable and listen to the discerning judgment of the body of Christ with which they choose to identify.

In the years since its founding, the Assemblies of God has seen the need to make statements about revival “manifestations,” according to its understanding of Scripture. As these apply to current revival reports, we affirm and give biblical reasons for our concerns. Yet above all, we reaffirm our desire not to hinder any move of the Spirit. If it is of God, we cannot and do not wish to stop it. If it is of man, it will in time fail, but we are advised by Scripture to discern with the help of the Holy Spirit who seeks to bless the church with lasting spiritual growth. We therefore call for careful discernment in the following areas, which have demonstrated excesses and abuses that do not follow biblical teaching or example.²

Deviant Teachings Disapproved

God is certainly moving in the hearts and lives of people desiring His presence and praying to see His power changing lives and reclaiming that which Satan has stolen or destroyed. But along with the genuine move of the Spirit often come teachings and practices which, if not discerned and corrected, will turn the genuine move of God into shallow and misguided emotional displays. Within teachings that add to or depart from biblical truth, there is usually a kernel of truth that gets buried under the chaff of human additions and unusual interpretations of Scripture. Though we dare not inadvertently quench the Spirit’s work in changing lives and calling the church back to its first love and passion, we must speak out with words of caution when departure from Scripture threatens the ongoing life and stability of local churches. We find cause for concern in the following areas.

1. The overemphasis on identifying, bestowing, or imparting spiritual gifts by the laying on of hands and naming, supposedly by prophecy, specific gifts. The spiritual gifts are gifts of the Spirit, distributed as He “gives them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Corinthians 12:11). When the Spirit empowers the gift He bestows, there is no need for anyone to assume the Spirit’s role. As the Holy Spirit inspires the operation of the gifts, the identification and confirmation will be obvious to all without assistance from humans who would share some of the glory. The greatest tragedy of such a practice is a misguided human prediction, appearing to be a prophetic utterance, that leads a believer to expect abilities and an endowment he may never have. Paul says that gifts were bestowed through the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6), but the biblical record neither names a specific gift Timothy received nor implies that Paul or elders had imparted the gift. The Holy Spirit bestows the gifts, not the minister who prays the prayer for empowerment. Caution in naming specific gifts is advised until the Spirit confirms such a prophecy by the supernatural manifestation of the promised gift.

The Assemblies of God cannot control false doctrine and practices outside its own constituency. But it does encourage its members to exercise extreme caution and avoid the abuses that discredit and bring shame on the cause of Christ.

2. The problematic teaching that present-day offices of apostles and prophets should govern church ministry at all levels. It is very tempting for persons with an independent spirit and an exaggerated estimate of their importance in the kingdom of God to declare organization and administrative structure to be of human origin. Reading in the Bible that there were apostles and prophets who exerted great leadership influence, and wrongly interpreting 1 Corinthians 12:28³ and Ephesians 2:20 and 4:11, they proceed to declare themselves or persons aligned with their views as prophets and apostles. Structure set up to avoid a previous structure can soon become dictatorial, presumptuous, and carnal while claiming to be more biblical than the old one outside the new order or organization. Proponents of apostles/prophets leadership stop too soon in their reading of the Ephesians 4 passage, overlooking the high calling of every office and minister of the Church: “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, *to prepare God’s people for works of service*, so that

² The 1949 General Council of the Assemblies of God, in Seattle, Washington, adopted a resolution disapproving the doctrines of the New Order of the Latter Rain. The minutes of that Council record that after brief debate the resolution was adopted with an overwhelming majority. The resolution dealt with many of the following issues.

³ “And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28).

the body of Christ may be *built up until we all reach unity in the faith* and in the knowledge of the Son of God and *become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*. Then we will *no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming*. Instead, *speaking the truth in love*, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:11,12, italics added).⁴

In Ephesians 2:20, Paul is talking about the historical fact of Jews and Gentiles having come together to form the Church. The aorist participle in verse 20 is best translated “having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone”—a past occurrence. The reference to apostles and prophets in Ephesians 3:5 speaks of their role in recording the inspired Scriptures as a past occurrence. The leadership of the local church, according to the Pastoral Epistles, is in the hands of elders/presbyters and deacons. These are the last of Paul’s epistles. There is no indication in these last writings of continuing offices of apostles and prophets, though the ministry functions still continue.

Prophets in the New Testament are never described as holding an officially recognized position as in the case of pastors and evangelists. They spoke prophetically to the body for edification and admonition. When they prophesied under the inspiration of the Spirit, their ministry was noted. They could indeed have been called prophets without designating them as filling an office. A self-proclaimed prophet who dropped into a local church setting would certainly have been suspect until he was better known. And to guard against such abuses, Paul taught that all prophetic utterances should be tested by the Body (1 Corinthians 14:29). The humility that Paul taught and modeled should be a primary character trait of every spiritual leader. We affirm that there are, and ought to be, apostolic- and prophetic-type ministries in the Church, without individuals being identified as filling such an office.

The Shepherding Movement, a term not used as frequently now as earlier, is still a practice with close ties to the apostle/prophet excesses described above. The random and wrongful substitution of mutually appointed apostles and prophets to replace existing divinely appointed and duly chosen leadership is a circumstance open to abuse. In the past the shepherding teaching led to an artificial pyramid system of accountability, with each person responsible to a personal shepherd.⁵ The shepherd in turn is accountable to another shepherd for his guidance, accountability, and control. Although the example of Paul mentoring young Timothy is a good pattern for today, there is no biblical basis for a network requiring every believer to have a personal shepherd. The pastor, as shepherd of a local church flock, along with the spouse, can deal with even the most personal matters. The pastor in turn has a district superintendent, chosen for the position through a divinely blessed process, from whom help can be sought when needed. But to seek randomly, and with a sense of obligation, for someone to be a personal shepherd is not biblical. God-ordained leaders, chosen by Spirit-led colleagues seeking to build and edify the body of Christ, have the needed maturity, stability, and gifting by the Spirit.

3. The practice of imparting or imposing personal leadings by means of gifts of utterance.

Instances of Spirit-prompted personal advice, contrary to common sense yet definitely of divine origin, are so infrequent that recklessly giving personal prophecies soon becomes an abuse in the body of Christ. Though Paul and Barnabas were rightfully set apart by the Holy Spirit for an unspecified work (Acts 13:2), the two still had to hear the Spirit’s direction for their specific assignments. Their call was heard by the gathered believers while worshiping and fasting, and all present, including Paul and Barnabas, were obviously persuaded that it was indeed the Spirit speaking. If the “prophesied” words are from God, the Holy Spirit will also confirm the reality to the heart of the one set apart for the Spirit’s work.

4. Wresting and distorting Scripture through interpretations that are in opposition to the primary meaning of biblical passages. The following teachings all have an element of truth in them, but as currently taught they are plagued with misleading and unbiblical elements and should be carefully avoided. In some instances a word or phrase is taken from Scripture, so it has the sound of biblical authenticity, but the application is a human creation rather than biblical truth. Many of them are reappearances of earlier departures from biblical truth, and in the future they could resurface as supposedly new revelations with different names.

⁴ For further insights on the biblical pattern of leadership ministry in the church, see “The Ministry of the Body of Christ,” position paper of the Assemblies of God (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1974).

⁵ See “The Discipleship and Submission Movement,” position paper of the Assemblies of God (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976).

Kingdom Now or Dominion theology. The thought that God's kingdom can come on earth with a little help from humankind is intriguing to those who advocate this approach to impacting society. Rather than scoffing at the promise of Christ's imminent return (2 Peter 3:3,4), this errant theology says that Jesus will not return until the Church takes dominion of the earth back from Satan and his followers. By taking control, through whatever means possible, of political, ecclesiastical, educational, economic, and other structures, Christians supposedly can make the world a worthy place for Christ to return and rule over.⁶ This unscriptural triumphalism generates other related variant teachings.

Manifest Sons of God and Joel's Army. These are some of the names used to describe those who have caught the vision of the Kingdom Now and are actively at work seeking to overcome the opposition and declaring Christians who hold a biblical understanding of Christ's imminent return at any time to be cowardly for not joining the "anointed," as they sometimes call themselves. Without question, the Old Testament Book of Joel includes many endtime references. But the great and powerful army in Joel 2 is one of terrible locusts, an instrument of judgment on Israel. After Israel's repentance, the army of locusts is destroyed by the Lord. Only after this destruction of the instrument of judgment does the promised revival come. "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (Joel 2:28). It is a complete misinterpretation of Scripture to find in Joel's army of locusts a militant, victorious force attacking society and a non-cooperating Church to prepare the earth for Christ's millennial reign.

Spiritualizing Biblical Events and History. There is certainly nothing wrong with finding parallels between historical biblical events and the application of biblical truth to life today—for edification and encouraging spiritual growth. But when those events are forced into a strained application of endtime events, thinking Christians should be on the alert. The Bereans of Acts 17:10,11 were commended because they "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things [that Paul was teaching] were so." A teaching announced as the revelation of a new truth should be checked out very carefully. Pentecostals have become accustomed to anointed and dynamic preaching. But hearing a teacher speak with authority and self-confidence does not make the teaching true. It must always line up with Holy Scripture. Personal charisma is no substitute for biblical authority.

The Prosperity Gospel. The preaching of a prosperity gospel has increased giving to some programs, both legitimate and less than legitimate. God does bless faithfulness, but the blessing is not always financial gain. There are spiritual principles of sowing and reaping, but to draw money from the poor to support an affluent personal lifestyle is unconscionable. If we one day will have to give an account of every idle word (Matthew 12:36), it seems reasonable that we will have to account for every dollar solicited by dubious methods. A biblical teaching should be applicable in every neighborhood, culture, society, and country of the world.⁷

Birthing. Another example of a kernel of truth being pushed beyond propriety is the teaching that believers must "birth" new Christians into the Kingdom. Paul used the parallel very appropriately when he wrote to the Galatians, "My dear children,...I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" (Galatians 4:19). But when the parallel is vividly described with the imagery of a mother in the process of delivery and believers are encouraged to intercede lying in the physical position of a mother giving birth to a child, truth is abused.

Generational Curses. It is true that Scripture speaks of the sins of the fathers being visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9). In two of the three passages the visitation is targeted at those who hate God. We also know that heredity and environment do pass some things on to descendants. But the Old Testament passage should be read in the light of the work of Christ on the cross. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find any reference to this concept. Believers today do not live under a personal curse, even though the fallen creation around us still groans and suffers (Romans 8:22), awaiting the restoration of all things. Strong emphasis on a generational curse binds rather than delivers believers. Outside the body of Christ, there may be evidence of a generational curse, but for believers it is broken at salvation, even though there may be some natural traits or behavior patterns we must deal with through the help of the Holy Spirit.

⁶ This false teaching is treated in detail in "The Kingdom of God as Described in Holy Scripture," position paper of the Assemblies of God (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1990).

⁷ For a previous study on problems with the prosperity gospel and positive confession, see "The Believer and Positive Confession," position paper of the Assemblies of God (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1980).

5. Excessive fixation on Satan and demonic spirits. “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4, KJV). There is a devil. He is working desperately as his opportunity of opposing God’s eternal plan is fast coming to a close. But he is no more powerful today than he has ever been. God is always in control and our emphasis should be on His omnipotence rather than on the evil work of oppressing, disturbing, destroying, and even possessing those who willingly play with Satan’s trinkets and give themselves to his control. Satan can never take possession of the child of God, though he may tempt and oppress. Believers cannot be demon possessed.

Fighting and exorcising demons is exciting activity. It attracts attention. Again, there is a kernel of truth. There is demon possession—not in everything that is amiss, but certainly in special instances that must be dealt with. Yet God in His wisdom has provided the tools for those special needs. While there may indeed be princes of darkness on assignment against cities, there is no biblical evidence that every city or geographic entity is ruled by a demon. The Holy Spirit may give a Spirit-filled believer the word of knowledge that a demon is in control of a person who needs deliverance. And in situations of strange behavior, the Spirit discerns for the Spirit-filled believer the source of the activity. But to conclude that every sickness, injury, birth deformity, and negative personality trait is caused by a demon is a misreading of Scripture. Sin has left its mark on the world, yet not in the form of a demon wherever we turn that must be named and exorcised.

We are engaged in spiritual warfare. “The devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). But that message was not given to frighten believers into going to extremes in making every daily activity a major struggle with the devil. As we put on the full armor every Christian should wear in spiritual conflict, we are promised that we will stand against the devil’s schemes (Ephesians 6:11-17). Covered by the blood of Christ and wearing our armor, we can then concentrate on the assigned task of going into all the world with the gospel. There may be some intense combat along the way, but the One who goes before us has already overcome.

Discernment of Physical “Manifestations”⁸

Some people defend strange physical responses as the irresistible power of the Holy Spirit at work. However, that is often a fleshly response to the consciousness that God is present. Discernment is absolutely essential. Correction of such abuses should be appropriately handled. An overly exuberant but sincere believer can be gently counseled. There will be times, though, that a carnal response must be dealt with immediately so that the genuine move of the Spirit is not quenched by unseemly “manifestations.”

Some critics have contended that a physical response must be found in Scripture to give it legitimacy. But we do not claim that God can only heal diseases specifically mentioned in Scripture. There are enough instances of supernatural healing, and the promise that God can heal all diseases (Psalm 103:3), for us to believe God can heal the newly found disease that was never before known. Likewise, there are instances in Scripture when the Spirit moved upon people so they were in an otherworldly or supranatural condition.

God can do things today that are not recorded in Holy Scripture, but human responses should not be acknowledged as marks of spirituality or made a pattern for religious experience.
--

Paul included a humble reference to such a supranatural experience in his second epistle to the Corinthians: “Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses” (2 Corinthians 12:1-5). John had an “in the Spirit” experience on the Isle of Patmos: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice” (Revelation 1:10). The Old Testament prophets also had encounters with God’s presence that caused them to do and say unexpected things. If the Spirit moved on people in biblical times, He can do so today, and as He chooses. But physical responses not explicitly normative in Scripture must be tested and discerned whether they be of God, of human reaction, or of a spirit seeking to discredit the genuine work of God. If

⁸ The biblical use of the term “manifestation” (1 Corinthians 12:7) refers to a supernatural or miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. Today, however, popular usage applies the term to human physical responses to God’s presence.

they do not have a biblical parallel, they should not be seen as evidences of spiritual perfection or patterns of normative spiritual experience.

Excessive Fascination With Physical “Manifestations.” No single physical response (apart from the biblically repeated Spirit-prompted utterances in tongues) is indisputable evidence that the Holy Spirit is responsible for the visible reaction. God’s presence is not always in the wind, the earthquake, the fire⁹ (1 Kings 19:11,12). Sometimes it is in the still small voice. God may use the dramatic to get the attention of believers intent on other things, but the Spirit-filled Christian, with a current experience, should always be listening for the whisperings and nudging of the Spirit. There are times when the Spirit desires to say, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Judging the Human Response. Just as Scripture tells us a prophecy must be judged (1 Corinthians 14:29), so should an unusual physical response be judged. Is the physical demonstration the result of the Spirit’s conviction resting heavily on a sinner? In revivals of earlier centuries, conviction has led sinners to groan, to weep, and even to scream as the fear of eternal damnation gripped the soul. Such “manifestations” seem entirely appropriate, if they are sincere expressions leading to conversion.

Judging the physical response experienced by believers is more difficult. A religious experience is often accompanied by emotion and is sometimes an expression of deep emotional needs. Yet to seek out a revival event just to have an emotional experience falls short of the divine mission to change lives and make believers more Christlike. Does the human response edify both the individual and the congregation? Does it glorify God and encourage others to move closer to the Lord? In telling of their experiences, whether real or simulated, do the recipients expect to be admired and applauded? Or do they testify of changed attitudes and a growing desire to please the Lord in every way possible, to surrender all for Christ, to bear whatever cross He asks them to carry? Is there an expressed determination to lay aside carnal desires and pursue holiness? Is the joy expressed a divine joy of relationship with deity or is it delight in one’s own experiences and abilities? The judging of “manifestations” should be by those present, as in the case of judging prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:29).

We must admit that an omnipotent God could place gold fillings in teeth and gold dust on individuals. But can such events be empirically demonstrated?¹⁰ If it is for a sign to those present, the reason for the sign should be evident. But to run after such signs and wonders makes us little more than the Pharisees who came to Jesus asking to see a sign from heaven (Mark 8:11). The same attitude should guard believers, no matter what the unnatural sign might be. Judging from a distance on the basis of secondhand reports is dangerous.

Manifestations and Ministry. The prophet Isaiah had an unusual experience of the presence of the Lord (Isaiah 6). First, there was a vision, a revelation of the majesty and holiness of God. Isaiah’s initial reaction was to give glory to God. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). But immediately on the heels of that declaration came a crushing sense of unworthiness, of sinfulness. “ ‘Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ ” (Isaiah 6:5). If we really experience the presence of God, no matter how good our lives may seem to us, they look despicable alongside the holy presence of God. There is no merit in any of us apart from the merit of Christ. Genuine confrontation with God results in deep humility.

God does not leave in self-condemnation those who have paid the price to experience His presence. He immediately gives an assignment, some Great Commission task to be executed. To Isaiah, God said, “Go and tell this people.” The message wasn’t an easy one to deliver, but Isaiah obeyed. Obeying the voice of the Lord should follow the special experience of God’s presence. Yet the Spirit-filled believer who walks in the Spirit moment by moment can hear and respond to the still small voice without a mountaintop emotional experience every time God gives directions. Such a mountaintop experience may be just the prescription to rekindle holy passion that has waned, but to seek only to have more like experiences without answering the call to be up and doing the work of the Kingdom is counterproductive. Revival has a higher purpose than making the saints feel better.

⁹ However, God was responsible in this instance for the phenomena of wind, earthquake, and fire.

¹⁰ Valid healings can be confirmed and verified by medical records. Adherents of some religions claim to have seen strange appearances of Jesus, Mary, and symbols of the death of Jesus. Without empirical confirmation, we are skeptical of such reports. Unconfirmed reports of unbelievable happenings in revival services discredit rather than advance the cause of Christ. Throughout the New Testament physical healings were the supernatural evidences of God’s presence and working.

A Word to Pastors of Local Churches

As you hear unprecedented revival reports from other churches, it is natural to wonder why God is moving in such a spectacular way elsewhere but not to the same degree in your church. It is natural to wonder, “What is wrong with our church?” “Haven’t we prayed and asked God for revival?” “Are we for some reason being bypassed in what God is doing today?” More dangerous is the response, “We have been experiencing God’s presence and don’t want or need anything more.” You are called to be faithful where you are, keeping your eyes on Jesus, not on the public attention others are experiencing. Keep the following advice in mind and heart as you seek in unity with your congregation to be the church God wants you to be.

1. God may be accomplishing the spiritual growth He desires for your church at this time. He loves every individual for whom He sent His Son to die and the Father desires that every member of your congregation draw closer to His Son.
2. Out of envy or feelings of less worth, don’t criticize churches experiencing visible revival activity. Be patient and faithful to your call. God is able to move in His way, at His time, and where He chooses. Be open and preparing for His supernatural move.
3. Be faithful in preaching the Word and encouraging membership to expect God’s presence and power in a greater way. Every believer should desire and seek a closer walk with our Lord.
4. Don’t allow those who have visited other scenes of God’s seemingly spectacular move to persuade you or your people to merely copy the activity observed elsewhere. Seek God for His special move according to the needs of your church. A carbon-copy “revival” is likely to be man-made.
5. Use caution in publicizing supernatural healings or other miracles that cannot be authenticated. Pentecostals know for certain that God can and does heal. We know that faith is encouraged and strengthened by testimonies of supernatural healing. But when a claim of healing is made and critics prove later that no significant and lasting change followed, the cause of Christ suffers. Charges of fraud, lying, and deliberately misleading in order to enhance one’s ministry only hurt the Christian witness. If a person sincerely testifies of personal healing and then suffers a setback, the premature testimony cannot be charged to the pastor or evangelist, which would reflect negatively on the testimony of the church in the community.
6. Do not invite speakers to fill your pulpit out of a desire just to see “manifestations.” There has been enough manipulation that casts doubt on the genuine work of the Spirit. Choose your pulpit guests wisely. Going outside the list of recognized Assemblies of God credentials holders can bring undesired teachings and example.
7. Do not point accusing fingers at those who may not heed these admonitions.
8. When you do observe and confirm the presence of wrong doctrine and/or practice, you have a responsibility to speak out in the right way. Concern should first be expressed to those involved in the error. If the concern is rejected or not answered, district leadership should be made aware of the situation. “In a multitude of counselors there is safety” (Proverbs 24:6, NKJV).
9. Some of the teachings and human responses described in this paper as concerns of the Church will in a few years, if the Lord delays His return, be forgotten or remembered only as passing fads. Some will reappear under new names. And there will likely be new teachings like these that begin with a kernel of truth but then move to extra-biblical excess. Discernment is needed, not so much on the labels and names, as on the actual teachings and human responses. The Lord is faithful to guide and protect His people as they seek only to build His kingdom and to give all the glory to Him, refusing to take any for themselves.
10. Reports of souls saved and lives changed should never justify wrong theology and practices. Yet Paul said about the false prophets who were causing him and his ministry frustration, “Christ is proclaimed in every way whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice” (Philippians 1:15-18). But Paul obviously wanted Christ to be proclaimed from right motives and with biblical integrity. So do we.