

**An Analysis of the Developing Ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God
in Australia**

Submitted by

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Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to describe, analyse and assess the developing ecclesiology of the Assemblies of God in Australia (AGA). In chapter one, after reviewing the sparse literature on pentecostal ecclesiology, we turn to a contemplation of ecclesiological method. We note that some of the typical approaches, including biblicist and *communio* ecclesiologies, are idealist in orientation, since they contemplate the church in abstraction from its concrete, socio-historical and cultural identity. In chapter two we develop an alternative method, building particularly on the insights of Joseph Komonchak and Neil Ormerod, who argue that the object of ecclesiology is not ecclesial ideals but, rather, the set (or sets) of experiences, understandings, symbols, words, judgements, statements, decisions, actions, relationships, and institutions which distinguish the group of people called “the Church.” This leads to a concrete methodology that is derived from the explicit and implicit ecclesiology apparent in the history of the church. It also recognises that the church is a social reality as well as a divinely ordained community and, therefore, that the ecclesiologist needs to incorporate the insights of both the disciplines of theology and sociology. A large part of our discussion in chapter two is thus concerned with the nature of the interaction between these various disciplines.

The method outlined in these early chapters forms the basis of our exploration of the ecclesiology of the AGA in chapters three to five. In line with our methodological construction, each chapter begins with the narrative of particular periods in the movement’s history, focusing especially on times of ecclesial transition and development. These narrative sections not only tell a story that has, largely, remained untold, but they also seek to draw out the explicit and implicit elements of AGA ecclesiology. In each chapter, narrative is followed by analysis which, firstly, clarifies central aspects of the developing ecclesiology and, secondly, attempts to assess what has been gained and lost in the process of ecclesiological change.

With regard to the content of these chapters, chapter three treats the development of early pentecostalism, and the transition from unstructured and loosely knit faith mission communities to congregationally structured churches. Chapter four analyses

the institutional formation of Australian pentecostalism, focusing particularly on the formalisation of the AGA. Of concern during this period was the relationship between churches and centralised bodies, as well as the roles and responsibilities of church leadership. Chapter five then treats the developments in AGA ecclesiology that accompanied the charismatic revival of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, as well as the institutional changes that occurred due to the rapid growth of the movement. In the concluding chapter six, we summarise our research, and intimate potential trajectories for the AGA as it moves into the twenty first century. In the light of our analysis and assessment, we also make some suggestions for ecclesial self-reflection.

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Chapter One: Research Purpose and Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

From their humble beginnings at the turn of the twentieth century, pentecostal and charismatic movements have grown to such an extent that statistician David Barrett notes that, “the sheer magnitude and diversity of the numbers involved beggar the imagination.”¹ According to Barrett, in the year 2000, these movements encompassed a worldwide total of “523 million affiliated church members, . . . found in 9,000 ethnolinguistic cultures and speaking 8,000 languages.”² While Barrett’s methods have been debated,³ it cannot be denied that the growth of pentecostalism has been remarkable. It has become commonplace to speak of the “globalisation of pentecostalism” and, in the light of successive pentecostal and charismatic revivals, to describe the twentieth century as “the century of the Holy Spirit.”⁴

The global growth of pentecostalism has been reflected in the Australian context, with the movement in this country growing to over two hundred thousand people during the course of the century.⁵ According to the National Church Life Survey (NCLS),

¹David Barrett, “Global Statistics,” *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 284.

²Barrett, “Global Statistics,” 284.

³Gary McGee challenges Barrett’s analysis by observing that his classification of pentecostals and charismatics “garners together a bewildering array of indigenous churches reflecting varying degrees of syncretism along with classical Pentecostal and Charismatic constituencies” (Gary McGee, “Pentecostal Missiology: Moving Beyond Triumphalism to Face the Issues,” *Pneuma* 16, no. 2 (1994): 275-281).

⁴See, for example, Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Murray Dempster, Byron Klaus, and Douglas Peterson, *The Globalisation of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1999); David Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2001).

⁵These statistics are somewhat difficult to quantify. According to the National Church Life Survey (‘NCLS’), the number of people associated with pentecostal churches in 2001 totalled 194,592, with an average weekly attendance of 141,700. It can be argued that this estimate understates pentecostal numbers. The records of the Assemblies of God, the largest Australian pentecostal denomination, suggest that in “May 2000 the Assemblies of God in Australia had 859 churches and 155,247 constituents.” In comparison, the NCLS figures for the Assemblies of God total only 104,600. There is, of course, a good chance that the Assemblies of God is overstating its constituency. At the same time, it is also possible that the NCLS figures are incomplete, since their results only encompass participating churches. Notable among the types of churches sometimes absent from NCLS surveys are independent congregations and non-English speaking churches, and a relatively high proportion of pentecostals fit within these two categories. Also missing are some of the largest churches in the country who do not participate in NCLS. David Barrett estimates that there are 250,000 pentecostals in

weekly attendance at pentecostal congregations is second only to the Roman Catholic Church, eclipsing all other protestant affiliations.⁶ In recent decades, at a time when other Australian churches have experienced stagnation or decline, and when the constituency of many denominations is ageing, Australian pentecostal churches have continued to grow rapidly, particularly among young people.⁷

As we shall establish in this thesis, pentecostalism is a movement of churches, which share a common identity based on the experience and doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit, evidenced by, or associated with, the gift of tongues. The movement is made up of various fellowships as well as independent congregations. In Australia, the largest of these is the Assemblies of God, a fellowship which incorporates approximately seventy five percent of all pentecostal churches.⁸ In his book, *The Apostolic Revolution: The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia*, David Cartledge provides a description and explanation of the growth of this pentecostal fellowship. He expresses the triumphant mood of the Assemblies of God in Australia (AGA), declaring:

The Assemblies of God in Australia is a classic example of what can happen to any Christian movement that has the courage to change. This movement made the transition from an ineffective democratic religious system to

Australia although, as we have already observed, his statistics may be overstated. It is not, however, the purpose of this thesis to clarify statistics. In whatever manner they are enumerated, it is apparent that, along with global pentecostalism, the movement in Australia can be said to be thriving, at least insofar as numerical growth is concerned. For further information, see J. Bellamy and K. Castle, "2001 Church Attendance: Occasional Paper No.4," *National Church Life Survey* (February 2004): available online, <http://www.ncls.org.au/default.aspx?sitemapid=2231>, accessed 13 May 2004; Natalie Kerr, *Report on 2001 Church Census Figures, to AoG National Executive* (Melbourne: National Office, Assemblies of God in Australia, 2001).

⁶ Peter Kaldor, John Bellamy, Ruth Powell, Merilyn Correy, and Keith Castle, *Build My Church: Trends and Possibilities for Australian Churches* (South Australia: Open Book, 1999), 16.

⁷ In respect to church growth, see Appendix 1, The Growth of the Assemblies of God in Australia, Chart 1 & 2. In respect to the average age of church constituency, it is noteworthy that the Australian church as a whole is ageing when compared to the general population. While only 10% of all Australians are aged over 60, 33% of church attendees are within the same category. This is a worrying trend for many churches, but one that is being defied by pentecostal assemblies, which continue to maintain an age profile in line with Australian society as a whole. See Kaldor, Bellamy, Powell, Correy, and Castle, *Build My Church*, 31-32.

⁸ Calculated from statistics in Bellamy and Castle, "2001 Church Attendance," 5.

leadership by God appointed apostolic ministries and the dramatic results are now a matter of record.⁹

While numerical success has been the focus of pentecostal self-congratulation, it is important to notice Cartledge's mention of the ecclesiological changes that have occurred within the movement. As a member of the national executive of the AGA during the last three decades, Cartledge attributes the movement's growth to changes in church authority structures, initiated by the executive, and adopted by the movement as a whole. Growth has been accompanied by ecclesiological change, and whether, as Cartledge argues, this growth is a consequence of these changes, or change has been necessary in response to growth, what is certain is that the pentecostal church in Australia has undergone rapid and radical transition. Commenting on the changes that have occurred, Mark Hutchinson makes the wry observation that, "for those people who think they are still working in the tradition of Smith Wigglesworth, P.B. Duncan and C.L. Greenwood, things have changed."¹⁰ Hutchinson goes on to suggest that a paradigm shift has occurred within the pentecostal movement in Australia, a shift bought about by the influence of the charismatic movement in the 1960s and 70s, a slow embrace of the Word of Faith movement, as well as the changing context and culture of Australian society.

This paradigm shift constitutes the impetus behind the research of this thesis. Our purpose is to document and assess the nature and extent of the ecclesiological changes that have occurred within pentecostalism in Australia, specifically within the AGA.

It is a reflection that is well overdue. Pentecostal culture has a reputation (deserved or otherwise) for its reluctance to engage in the task of critical reflection,¹¹ and this reluctance is particularly acute in Australia. One aspect of the above-mentioned triumphant mood within Australian pentecostal assemblies is the critique of criticism itself, and a relentless insistence on positive thinking. This culture, derived from the fundamentalist response to the liberal takeover of institutions of higher learning, and

⁹ David Cartledge, *The Apostolic Revolution: The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Sydney: Paraclete Institute, 2000), back cover.

¹⁰ Mark Hutchinson, "The New Thing God is Doing: The Charismatic Renewal and Classical Pentecostalism," *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* 1 (1998): 5-21, 17

¹¹ Russell Spittler once suggested that the phrase "Pentecostal studies" is oxymoronic (Russell Spittler, "Suggested Areas for Further Research in Pentecostal Studies," *Pneuma* 5 (1983): 39-57).

expressed in “word of faith” and “prosperity” doctrines,¹² is apparent in the writings of the national president of the AGA, Brian Houston, who declares that “negativity is an enemy to life.”¹³ There is no doubt that negative thinking can be self-perpetuating, as can a positive attitude, but the greater danger occurs when a particular culture confuses “negativity” with “criticism”, and rejects critical thinking altogether. What is needed is the valuing of what might be termed “faithful criticism” (or, rather, “faithful critique”). The larger problem is ecclesiological – there is no “place” for teachers in the movement, those whose calling involves inquiry. While such inquiry is vital in a context that has become traditional or stagnant (since traditionalism can be the route to social irrelevance),¹⁴ critical reflection is even more important in a community that has undergone or is undergoing rapid transition. In times of cultural or institutional change, it is necessary to discern what is being gained, and what (if anything) is being lost in the process of change. This is particularly important in times of ecclesiological transition, since the church is, amongst other things, constituted by the Christian tradition, and affirmation of this tradition is essential if churches are to continue to maintain their Christian identity. This affirmation does not demand slavish adherence to past ideas and practices, since, as Stanley Grenz and John Frank suggest, Christian tradition itself is “characterised by continuity and change, as the faith community, under the guidance of the Spirit, grapples with the interaction between scripture and the particular challenges of changing situations.”¹⁵ But, while ecclesiological transition is essential in the changing Australian church and social context, it is equally important that this transition be understood and critically

¹² The prosperity gospel is the idea that financial prosperity is one of the promises of faith. See chapter 5.2.3 & 5.3.5 of this thesis.

¹³ Brian Houston, *Get a Life* (Sydney: Maximised Leadership, 1999). This perspective is apparent in the chapter headings of this book: Negativity is an enemy to life: Negativity reflects inner defeat: Negativity always justifies itself: Negativity chooses your friends: Negativity will distort your life: Negativity magnifies and distorts the truth: Negativity makes harsh judgements and unfair statements: Negativity Negates the power of life: Negativity Affects the Generations: Negativity limits the present and sabotages the future.

While it is true that Houston’s primary target here is social nihilism, the affect of this sort of message on the culture of a movement has been to deny the importance of academic critique and self-reflection. Chapter Five of this thesis provides further insight into the impact of this culture in the AGA.

¹⁴ Douglas Hall suggests that “traditionalism” tends to “conceive the of the real task of theology as being to present intact” the received traditions of the church. This fails to recognise the contextual nature of those very traditions, and ignores the fact that the our present context has changed dramatically (Douglas Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 269.

¹⁵ Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville: Westminster John Know Press, 2001), 119.

assessed, so that the movement can determine what is going forward, positively and negatively, in redemption or in decline.¹⁶

1.2 Survey of literature on Australian Pentecostalism

Insofar as self-reflection is measured in terms of research and publication, there is presently very little ongoing contemplation on the changing ecclesiology of pentecostalism in Australia. There have, however, been a few historical works, which provide a degree of insight into the nature of Australian pentecostal churches. The first significant historical reflection was Barry Chant's *Heart of Fire*, which was published in 1973 with the aim of cataloguing the emergence of early pentecostalism in this country.¹⁷ The work is significant because it was the first serious attempt by Australian pentecostals to tell their own story. Updated in 1984, it remains the most important Australian pentecostal history published to date, although it is little more than a survey, narrating the story of ten or so different pentecostal fellowships, and providing biographies of thirteen pentecostal pioneers.

In 1999 Chant completed his doctoral thesis, entitled "The Spirit of Pentecost: Origins and Development of the Pentecostal movement in Australia, 1870-1939."¹⁸ Although not yet published, this thesis builds on the author's earlier work, detailing the origins and ethos of pentecostalism prior to the institutional developments that occurred in later decades. It is often assumed that pentecostalism has its roots in the USA, particularly the Azusa Street revival,¹⁹ and that Australian pentecostalism simply mirrors its American counterpart. In contrast, Chant argues that there is little evidence that early pentecostalism was imported, and his thesis is concerned to explicate the ways in which Australian pentecostalism differed from its "overseas

¹⁶ See Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), 52-55.

¹⁷ Barry Chant, *Heart of Fire* (Unley Park, South Australia: The House of Tabor, 1984).

¹⁸ Barry Chant, "The Spirit of Pentecost: Origins and Development of the Pentecostal movement in Australia, 1870-1939," (Spirit of Pentecost, PhD dissertation, Sydney: Macquarie University, 1999).

¹⁹ This is the view of many pentecostal historians, including Robert Owens, "The Azusa Street Revival: The Pentecostal Movement Begins in America," *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, ed. Vinson Synan (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 39-68, and even some Australian historians such as Dennis & Gwen Smith, *A River Is Flowing* (Adelaide: Assemblies of God in Australia, 1987), 16. As such it forms part of the assumed reality of Australian pentecostal history which is being countered by the rising scholarship.

cousins.”²⁰ This uniqueness includes local leadership, a middle class rather than poor constituency, and a unique role for women in ministry, with “the first Pentecostal church being pioneered and pastored by a woman, Sarah Jane Lancaster, and over half of the assemblies established prior to 1930 brought into being by women, and often led by women as well.”²¹ Despite these local differences, early Australian pentecostalism retains the global pentecostal emphasis on premillennial eschatology, with Chant observing that the most popular theme of pentecostal preaching and teaching was the second coming of Christ. Also, as with pentecostals worldwide, Chant notes that the experience of the Spirit is central to the Australian pentecostal self-understanding: “The person with an experience, Pentecostals have argued over and again, is never at the mercy of one who has only an argument.”²² Although Chant is not writing ecclesiology, his thesis contributes to our understanding of the pentecostal church in Australia, and will thus be taken up in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

In 1987, Dennis and Gwen Smith published *A River is Flowing*. The book was commissioned by the AGA, and was presented to the movement’s biennial conference. The fact that the movement deemed it important to write its history is testimony to the changes that were occurring. Earlier pentecostals, imbued with premillennial fervour, did not conceive of world history lasting to the end of the twentieth century, and so would not have seen any point in writing a history. Unfortunately, the work was undertaken by AGA pastors with little background in historiography, and the result is a cursory and uncritical account of the AGA narrative.

The only other book of any note that focuses on pentecostal churches in Australia is David Cartledge’s *The Apostolic Revolution*. As we have already observed, Cartledge has been a member of the national executive of the AGA for nearly three decades, and this book operates as a defence of the ecclesial changes that have occurred during this time. In sum, Cartledge describes the history of pentecostalism in Australia in terms

²⁰ Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 38.

²¹ Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 523-542.

²² Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 41.

of an original revival (1900 to 1930s),²³ a decline brought about by institutionalisation (1930s to 1970s), and a second revival driven by the so-called apostolic revolution (1970s to present). He suggests that this latter revival resulted from the appointment of an apostolic leadership in 1977, which dispensed with the bureaucratic congregationalist church structures adopted by pentecostals as they institutionalised, and replaced these with apostolic structures that gave church authority to the senior pastor. His description and argument goes further than Dennis and Gwen Smith, by inferring a shape and interpretation of AGA history. We shall address Cartledge's description and analysis in chapters four and five of this thesis. For now, it is enough to observe that there are alternate ways of narrating and assessing these AGA transitions.

Other historical and ecclesiological sources for Australian pentecostalism exist in the form of journal articles and magazine publications, and we shall consider the nature of these sources in our methodological construction that follows in chapter two of this thesis. What this survey has shown is that there is considerable work to be done in contemplating the ecclesiology of Australian pentecostalism. In particular, there has been no systematic ecclesiological study undertaken. The purpose of this thesis is to write an ecclesiology that can assist the pentecostal church in Australia (and beyond) to reflect upon its nature and mission in these times of transition. Given this purpose, the question that arises is, How does one go about doing that? What does or should a pentecostal (or any) ecclesiology look like?

1.3 Selective Survey of Literature on Global Pentecostal Ecclesiology

The lack of an articulated pentecostal ecclesiology is not simply an Australian problem: globally, as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen observes, "Pentecostals have written surprisingly little on ecclesiology."²⁴ This situation is changing, and in what follows

²³ What constitutes a "revival" is widely debated, especially by historians focusing on the various streams of Christianity that were birthed in the Great Awakening and the theology of Jonathan Edwards. For our purposes, the term is understood broadly in reference to various spiritual awakenings that have had a noteworthy impact on the church (see 3.3.1 of this thesis).

²⁴ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Church as Charismatic Fellowship: Ecclesiological Reflections from Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18 (2001): 100-121.

we shall draw on the insight of some of the more prominent pentecostal ecclesiologies, including: the biblical ecclesiologies of Michael Dusing and Melvin Hodges, the trinitarian ecclesiology of Miroslav Volf, and the ecumenical ecclesiology arising from the formal dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and pentecostalism. Not only do these approaches represent the available pentecostal conceptions of the church, but their methods are also typical of the approaches to ecclesiology more generally, which tend to be either biblically focused, theological (drawing particularly on trinitarian notions of *communion*), or dialogical and ecumenical. Our immediate purpose in this analysis is not to write book reviews but, rather, to draw from the method and insight of these various ecclesiologies. Consequently, where it is considered important, we shall pursue some matters that are stimulated by their writing, but which may be tangential to their own conclusions.

1.3.1 Michael Dusing and Biblical Ecclesiology

Perhaps the most common approach among pentecostals is to conceive of the church in primarily biblical terms. This reflects the protestant heritage of pentecostalism and, more specifically, the close association between pentecostals and evangelicalism.²⁵ In *Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Michael Dusing's article, "The New Testament Church," adopts this evangelical approach to ecclesiology as normative."²⁶

Ironically, the article entitled 'Church, Theology of the' in *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* is written by charismatic Catholic theologian Peter Hocken (Peter D. Hocken, "Church, Theology of the," *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002)).

²⁵ Most pentecostal churches in the North America would consider themselves to be "evangelical", and the Assemblies of God in America is a member of the Evangelical Alliance, and a foundational member of the National Association of Evangelicals. Yet there is some tension between the experientialist nature of pentecostal spirituality and more the more conservative evangelical approaches to theology. This has led some pentecostal scholars in the USA to critique the categorisation of pentecostals as evangelicals (e.g. Walter Hollenweger, "Critical Tradition of Pentecostalism," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992): 7-17). In Australia the distinction between evangelicals and pentecostals is more explicit, since denominational evangelicalism is dominated by the reformed, conservative, and anti-charismatic orientation of the Sydney Anglican Diocese (See Stuart Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia: Spirit, Word and World* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), chapter 8. Nonetheless, David Bebbington outlines four hallmarks of evangelicalism: conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. (David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History From the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989)). Taking this broader definition enables pentecostals to adopt the evangelical identity.

²⁶ Michael Dusing, "The New Testament Church," *Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective*, ed. Stanley Horton (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1994), 525-550.

The title derives, first, from the assumption that ecclesiological method is chiefly served by an analysis of the New Testament and, secondly, by the assumption that the pentecostal church represents the restoration of New Testament ecclesiology. The article proceeds along the standard lines of evangelical methodology. Dusing begins by defining and contextualising the Greek term for church (*ekklesia*), and then explores the meaning of various biblical concepts and metaphors used by the biblical writers to describe the church, including “people of God,” “body of Christ,” and “temple of the Spirit.” He also explores common ecclesiological themes from a New Testament perspective, including the relationship between the local and universal church, the church’s missionary purpose in proclaiming the kingdom of God, the functions of ordained and lay ministry, church structure, and the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The pneumatological character of the New Testament church is also explored, as is its relationship to complementary metaphors such as the priesthood of all believers. While focusing primarily on the New Testament documents, Dusing does include a brief history of the church after the apostolic period, which he portrays as a history of institutionalisation and decline. His historical survey mentions various attempts to reform the church, in each case to be applauded since they “sought to rid the Catholic Church of its vice and corruption and return it to the pattern and principles of the New Testament Church.”²⁷

There is much that is of value in this largely exegetical approach to the task of ecclesiology, since the scriptures stand as the primary witness to the contours of Christian faith, and as the principle authority grounding church doctrine. As modelled by Dusing, nonetheless, there are various methodological inadequacies in what can be labelled as “biblicist” ecclesiology. One of these weaknesses is the assumption that twentieth century pentecostalism can be described as “The New Testament Church.” It is an assumption that derives from the restorationist orientation of pentecostalism. While we shall seek to understand this outlook in chapter three of this thesis, it is an inadequate foundation for ecclesiological method. In addition to its failure to account for the cultural and social distance between the early and twentieth century church, it also misunderstands the ecclesial diversity and development that is apparent in the

²⁷ Dusing, “The New Testament Church,” 530.

New Testament writings, and posits a relatively flat and idealised early ecclesiology.²⁸ Dusing does admit that, in respect to church structure, “no complete pattern of church government is specified in the New Testament, . . . variety met the need,”²⁹ but his analysis ignores this diversity by minimising the importance of structure, and instead locating ecclesiology primarily in the New Testament metaphors and ideals. This gives rise to the postulation of “a” New Testament ecclesiology, rather than an analysis of the developing and diverse conceptions and actualisations of the early church. These developments were apparent in the transition from Judaic to Hellenistic Christianity in the book of Acts, as well as the transition from the loosely structured communities arising from Paul’s early missionary work, to the more formalised churches revealed in the pastoral epistles.³⁰

Underplaying the diversity and development of an idealised early church, and emphasising the spiritual dimension of ecclesiology, leads to an entirely negative reading of the institutional developments that occurred in subsequent centuries. As we shall argue in more detail later, this is sociologically inadequate, since it ignores the temporal necessity of institutional development, and the social benefits that can be derived from the establishment of social structures. Dusing describes the Catholic tradition as authoritarian, corrupt, secularised, and traditional, in comparison to the various revivalist movements, including pentecostalism, which have supposedly restored the biblical ideal of the charismatic church.³¹ It goes without saying that this perspective fails to do justice to the work of the Spirit within Catholic and other mainline churches, and that it also fails to remember the “works of the flesh” evident in the history of pentecostalism.

Dusing is not the only pentecostal to adopt this approach to ecclesiology. In 1953, American Assemblies of God missionary, Melvin Hodges, published a book entitled *The Indigenous Church*.³² It is essentially a practical manual for missionary church

²⁸ See James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1977).

²⁹ Dusing, “The New Testament Church,” 550.

³⁰ See Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*; Ben F. Meyer, *The Early Christians: Their World Mission & Self Discovery* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1986).

³¹ Dusing, “The New Testament Church,” 532.

³² Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church: A Complete Handbook on How To Grow Young Churches* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1976).

planting, based on the principle that indigenous churches should be working toward the goal of autonomy, becoming self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting. The text was revised in 1976 and, in the following year, Hodges published a related ecclesiology entitled *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective*.³³ Methodologically, the book follows the biblicist approach outlined above. Like Dusing, Hodges is restorationist in orientation. He is critical of the institutionalisation that occurred in the church after the New Testament period. He also argues that pentecostals emphasise the authority of the scriptures, and locate their ecclesiology in a pattern of biblical principles that is fixed for all times.³⁴

We have already documented the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, but what is noteworthy about Hodges' analysis is his emphasis on the missionary priority of the church. According to Hodges, the nature of the church is grounded in its mission. This is derived from the "great commission" (Matt. 29:18-20), and entails the proclamation of the kingdom of God.³⁵ This missionary priority gives rise to the affirmation of indigenisation and thus, even though Hodges emphasises the universal applicability of the biblical pattern of church life, he is also able to account for contextual diversity. While Hodges' methodology has little to offer this thesis, his missionary emphasis is noteworthy.

All of this is not to say that analysis of the scriptures is unimportant for ecclesiological method. Rather, it is important to recognise that biblical exegesis is only one of the tasks of ecclesiology and, further, that hermeneutics is a complex discipline. It is not the purpose of this thesis to set out a biblical hermeneutic or theological method, an undertaking that I have already attempted in an earlier thesis ("Pentecostal Theological Method, 2001)."³⁶ With regard to the former, in that paper (amongst other things) I surveyed the recent pentecostal discussion of biblical hermeneutics, which suggests that pentecostals do not approach the biblical text searching for the objective, rational or propositional truth that can supposedly be

³³ Melvin L. Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, Missouri: Gospel Publishing House, 1977).

³⁴ Hodges, *Church and its Mission*, 17.

³⁵ Hodges, *Church and its Mission*, 65-70; 75-165.

³⁶ Shane Clifton, "Pentecostal Theological Method: A Colourful and Creative Approach," (Pentecostal Theological Method, BTh Honours Thesis, Sydney: Sydney College of Divinity, 2001).

discovered by historical-critical exegesis.³⁷ Instead, pentecostals see scripture as a narrative that facilitates, mediates, and points to experience of, and relationship with, God.³⁸ This mediation of relationship is seen as possible because pentecostals perceive a similarity between their own experience and that of the charismatic characters of the biblical narrative.³⁹

This approach to the text shares a certain resonance with the emerging postmodern worldview,⁴⁰ which rejects purely rational conceptions of truth, and instead highlights the superiority of non-rational and relational ways of knowing.⁴¹ Nonetheless, pentecostalism cannot accept either the tendency of postmodernity to nihilism,⁴² or a complete capitulation to subjectivity and pluralism. Spiritual experience and relationship are necessarily subjective and diverse, but the operation of this diversity within the context of the Christian community, past and present; of the prophetic challenge of the biblical narrative; and of the reality of the work of the Spirit, each in dialogue with each other, minimises the dangers of purely subjective interpretation. Stated another way, pentecostals posit a hermeneutical spiral which moves from the experience of the Spirit in the community of faith, to the text of scripture, and back again, to the experience of the Spirit in the community of faith.⁴³ Exegetical reflection using evangelical, historical-critical techniques will form part of the movement from the experience of the Spirit in the community of faith to the reading of the text, ensuring that community experience is critically evaluated. As exegesis is only part of the process of biblical hermeneutics, the reading and application of the

³⁷ See Scott Ellington, "Pentecostalism and the Authority of Scripture," *Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 9 (1996): 16-38.

³⁸ See Mathew Clark, "Investigation into the Nature of a Viable Pentecostal Hermeneutic," (Pentecostal Hermeneutic, DTh Dissertation, Pretoria: Unisa, 1997), 188.

³⁹ John McKay, "When the Veil is Taken Away: The Impact of Prophetic Experience on Biblical Interpretation," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 (1994): 17-40.

⁴⁰ See Gerald Sheppard, "Biblical Interpretation after Gadamer," *Pneuma* 16 (1994): 121-141 and; Jackie D. Johns, "Pentecostalism and the Postmodern Worldview," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 7 (1995): 73-96.

⁴¹ This of course should not deny the importance of rational knowledge. Douglas Hall argues that, while Christian theology is primarily concerned with relational knowledge, the knowledge of God as "Thou", nonetheless there still exists a continuity between knowing, in the rational sense, and relational knowledge. (Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 369-388).

⁴² Gerald Sheppard, "Pentecostals, Globalization, and Postmodern Hermeneutics: Implications for the Politics of Scriptural Interpretation," *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: a Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Byron Klaus and Douglas Peterson. Murray Dempster (Carlisle: Regnum Books, 1999), 290.

⁴³ See the model proposed by John C. Thomas, "Women, Pentecostals and the Bible: An Experiment in Pentecostal Hermeneutics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 (1994): 41-56.

text is allowed to be creative, colourful, and community specific, in a manner that is both continuous with, and different from, past readings.

This latter point has particular importance for ecclesiological method since, as the scriptures are read as narrative rather than proposition, the story of the church is understood as the continuation of the biblical narrative. Thus, as Grenz and Franke assert, “the Spirit appropriates the biblical text so as to fashion a community that lives the paradigmatic biblical narrative in the contemporary context.”⁴⁴ N.T. Wright describes this process of community formation using the analogy of a Shakespearian play in which the actors are required to create a missing fifth act for a five-act play.⁴⁵ In this scenario, the first four acts do not tell the actors what to do and say but, rather, they enable the actor to identify something about the nature and mission of the narrative in which they are participating.⁴⁶ The actors are thus required to work out the fifth act for themselves, based on the authority of the first four acts. The final act should be consistent with the developed characterisation of the previous acts, but would not repeat verbatim the earlier parts of the play. In the same way, the scriptures can be understood as a play or narrative, with various subplots and alternate perspectives, whose story the Spirit-empowered church is called to continue in the context of global twentieth century society.⁴⁷ This suggests that the biblical task of an ecclesiology will be to consider the ways in which particular communities have conceived of their participation in the continuation of the biblical narrative. Dogmatic assertions will be unhelpful and, instead, the ecclesiologicalist will explore and critique the manner in which faith communities appropriate, develop and contextualise biblical themes and metaphors, in different stages of their historical development, and in different cultural and social contexts.

⁴⁴ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 91.

⁴⁵ N. T. Wright, “How Can the Bible be Authoritative,” *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991): 7-32.

⁴⁶ See also Richard Heyduck’s use of Wright’s analogy, in Richard Heyduck, *The Recovery of Doctrine in the Contemporary Church* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2002), 52-55.

⁴⁷ Wright’s analogy works as follows - 1st Act Creation, 2nd Act Fall, 3rd Act Israel, 4th Act Jesus, 5th Act New Testament through to 2nd coming of Christ. His categorization of the various Acts is perhaps insufficiently nuanced, since it fails to allow for the ‘unity in diversity’ within the biblical narrative itself, and the complex history of the Church since its formation in the New Testament narrative. It also forgets that the New Testament presents the “actors” with an insight into the “play’s” conclusion. Nonetheless, the analogy provides useful vision of the notion of scripture as narrative.

Consequently, in this thesis, rather than take an exegetical approach, our analysis of the scriptures seeks to arise out of the story and self-understanding of Australian pentecostalism itself. Rather than pre-defining what pentecostalism should think, we are interested in discerning and critiquing the manner in which Australian pentecostals have actually used the scriptures to establish their ecclesial identity and inform their practice.

1.3.2 Miroslav Volf and Trinitarian Ecclesiology

The more important thing to note about the biblicist approach to the task of ecclesiology is that theological method is much more than simply analysis and systematisation of scripture. Evangelicals tend to assume that contextualisation is simply the task of communicating biblical propositions to contemporary culture, but this fails to recognise the role that tradition, culture, praxis and experience play in theological formulations. One of the more prominent theological conceptions of the church today is “*communio* ecclesiology,” an approach which conceives of the church in terms of trinitarian communion, and which has found currency with theologians from almost all church traditions. Although pentecostals have not often gone beyond either a scripture-focused or otherwise pragmatic approach to contemplation of church,⁴⁸ an important ecclesiological resource for pentecostals is provided by Miroslav Volf in his book, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*.⁴⁹ The text itself is intended to serve the so-called “free churches,” which are defined by Volf as “those churches with congregationalist church constitutions,”⁵⁰ including pentecostal assemblies. Volf himself was raised in a pentecostal church

⁴⁸ Grant Wacker attributes the pentecostal movement’s success during the twentieth century to an ability to balance idealist/primitivist and pragmatic impulses (Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001). Similarly, Amos Yong suggests that “pragmatism is a feature of global Pentecostalism, since, the experience of the Spirit’s presence both leads to an expectation of the Spirit’s activity and precipitates corresponding activity on the part of the devotee so that he or she is obligated to get in step with what the Spirit is doing. The experience of the divine presence is not the be all and end all, but rather the beginning of life in the Spirit, bearing the fruits of the Spirit, doing the work of the Spirit.” (Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000)).

⁴⁹ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church As the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁵⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 9. He notes that the label, free churches, can also be a designation given to “those churches affirming a consistent separation of church and state,” although Volf uses the term primarily in reference to the congregationalist structure.

and, while he does not write for pentecostals alone, his pentecostal heritage informs his analysis.⁵¹ Furthermore, the potential contribution of Volf's ecclesiology for pentecostalism does not result simply from his understanding of the free church tradition, but also from his much broader theological and ecumenical grounding. In *After Our Likeness* this is expressed in his trinitarian theology, and his dialogue with the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church traditions. If the pentecostal church is to contemplate its ecclesiological identity, it will need to do so in dialogue with the broader church community. Given the significance of Volf's work for pentecostal ecclesiology and, more specifically, for the theological parameters he provides in evaluating the concrete situation of pentecostalism in Australia, we shall spend some time summarizing his argument, as well as raising some questions about his conclusions and method.

After Our Likeness is comprised of two parts, the first being a critical analysis of the ecclesiologies of the Roman Catholic theologian, Joseph Ratzinger (chapter one), and Orthodox theologian, John D. Zizioulas (chapter two). While Zizioulas is perhaps an obvious choice as a theologian within the Orthodox tradition, one wonders whether Roman Catholic theology is well represented by Ratzinger, who is a controversial figure within Catholicism itself. Volf is aware of this potential criticism, and yet his response, that Ratzinger provides "one incontestably 'not un-Catholic' ecclesiology,"⁵² is somewhat unconvincing. Nonetheless, the more important aspect of Volf's argument is his construction in the second part of the book, which develops his trinitarian suppositions and ecclesiological implications. Since this construction is developed in dialogue with, but not reliance on, Ratzinger and Zizioulas, we shall focus on this second part.

Definition and Identification of the Church

Volf defines the church as "the anticipation of the eschatological gathering of the entire people of God."⁵³ This definition is informed by an analysis of the

⁵¹ See his biography, set out in Miroslav Volf, "Speaking Truth to the World," *Christianity Today* 43, no. 2 (1999): 35.

⁵² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 31.

⁵³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 128.

eschatological orientation of biblical ecclesiology, and also from the eschatological ecclesiology of Jürgen Moltmann,⁵⁴ as set out in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*.⁵⁵ Moltmann's ecclesiology can be seen as the practical application of his earlier works, *Theology of Hope*,⁵⁶ and *The Crucified God*.⁵⁷ In the former text, Moltmann had argued that eschatology was more than simply the epilogue to Christianity, but was instead the “medium of Christian faith, . . . hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present.”⁵⁸ *Theology of Hope* focuses on the resurrection and Christ's future, and the paradoxical implications of this future for the present.

In *The Crucified God* Moltmann sought to develop a theology of the cross. Drawing on the paradox between crucifixion and hope, he sets out a dialectical theology, highlighting the cross and resurrection, death and life, the absence of God and the presence of God. In particular, Moltmann emphasises the identification of Christ with us in our godforsakenness. He takes as his point of departure the final words of Christ recorded in the Gospel of Mark, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” (Mark 15:34). This leads to the affirmation that at the centre of Christian faith stands the suffering of a passionate Christ and a crucified God. The soteriological implications go beyond the traditional protestant emphasis on justification and atonement from guilt, to include the solidarity of God with us in our world of suffering. Hence we are not abandoned by God in tragedy, but are met by a compassionate God who understands our suffering and, more than this, by the triune God who actually enters into our situation of godforsakenness.⁵⁹ For Moltmann, the

⁵⁴ *After our Likeness* is based on Volf's *Habilitationsschrift*, which was supervised by Jürgen Moltmann.

⁵⁵ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977).

⁵⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967).

⁵⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1974).

⁵⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 2.

⁵⁹ At this point Moltmann (as well as many modern theologians) challenges the long history of Christian affirmation of the impassive God, an idea which is derived from the deduction that passivity and vulnerability is incompatible with omnipotence, and hence that only creatures are passive. Moltmann's response is that God is passive by the choice of his passionate love. That God, especially in Christ, chooses to suffer with humanity (Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1981), 21-30). This argument has become modern orthodoxy, although some might suggest that it derives from a misunderstanding of the impassivity of God, which need not be equated with incapacity to care, or feel, or love, but instead expresses the idea

cross and the resurrection are the focal point for trinitarian thinking. The pathos of the Father forsaking the Son - who is raised and united with God by the power of the Spirit - is the foundation for his trinitarian theology which he outlines in *Trinity and the Kingdom of God*.⁶⁰ It is the development of this eschatological, social trinitarianism that ultimately informs Volf's ecclesiology. Since the church is eschatologically defined, and "the future of the church in God's new creation is the mutual personal indwelling of the triune God and of his glorified people,"⁶¹ then such a communion is not only an object of future hope, but also the church's present experience.⁶²

Before going on to set out his particular understanding of the trinitarian communion and its implications for ecclesiology, Volf begins with a discussion of ecclesiality, the identification of the church. Since Volf defines the church in terms of an eschatological ideal, it is necessary to answer the question as to how the church can be identified in the present. According to Volf:

Wherever the Spirit of Christ, which as the eschatological gift anticipates God's new creation in history (see Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:14), is present in its ecclesially constitutive activity, there is the church.⁶³

This raises the question as to how one identifies "ecclesially constitutive activity," which leads Volf to a discussion of the externally identifying features which disclose something essential about the church. Avery Dulles observes that the problem of false churches is as old as Christianity itself and, traditionally, ecclesiality is grounded in the marks of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed: one, holy, catholic and apostolic.⁶⁴ The difficulty, according to Dulles, is that "most would admit that the four attributes signaled in the creed may be taken as criteria, but these four attributes are differently understood."⁶⁵ These differences are largely a result of a focus on

that since God is not affected or controlled by creaturely suffering, he is thereby able to redeem humanity from this bondage. It seems to me that both sides of the debate arrive at similar conclusions.

⁶⁰ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*.

⁶¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 128.

⁶² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 129.

⁶³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 129.

⁶⁴ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 124.

⁶⁵ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 137.

either objective or subjective conceptions of the conditions of ecclesiality. The institutional church has tended to locate unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity in the objective status of the Roman Catholic (or Orthodox) church. It locates unity in submission to the magisterium, catholicity in the universal adherence to the church's creed and law, holiness in the sanctity of the mass (rightly performed), and apostolicity in the legitimate succession of pastors in the line of Peter.⁶⁶ In comparison, protestants, and in particular the free churches, have tended to locate the marks of the church in the subjective conditions of faith. From this perspective the unity and catholicity of the church are grounded in shared faith, which leads to personal and ecclesial holiness. Apostolicity is considered to be a reference to the authority and witness of the apostles, and consequently, refers to the primacy and authority of the scriptures for church life and doctrine. As Moltmann notes, when commenting on the four marks, "they are made by faith, and unless they are made in faith they lose their meaning."⁶⁷ Volf, while avoiding the debate about the meaning of the terms "one, holy, catholic and apostolic," seeks an approach which mediates between the two poles.⁶⁸ He thus locates the identification of the church in a "consistently communal occurrence in which the objective and subjective conditions of ecclesiality appear as two dimensions of a single process."⁶⁹

Free Church Ecclesiology: Gathered in Christ's Name

Following the free church tradition, Volf takes Matt. 18:20 as his point of departure, arguing that "where two or three are gathered in Christ's name, not only is Christ present among them, but a Christian church is there as well."⁷⁰ It is an intriguing choice exegetically, since the passage is primarily concerned with sin and discipline (Matt. 18:15-20), and in this context is framed by parables of grace (the lost sheep in verse 10-14, and the unmerciful servant in verse 21-25). The church is mentioned incidentally, and very little information is given out of which an identification of the church might be discerned. Most biblical commentators do not even mention

⁶⁶ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 127-128.

⁶⁷ Moltmann, *Church*, 337.

⁶⁸ Whether he succeeds is debatable. To prefigure our conclusions, Volf's ecclesiology tends toward an ecclesial individualism and idealism which is essentially subjective in orientation.

⁶⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 135.

⁷⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 136.

ecclesiology in their discussion of Matt. 18:20, and it is even suggested by Robert Gundry that “Matthew writes two or three rather than the church,” thus implying that the two or three do not constitute the church.⁷¹ It is also noteworthy that this passage is chosen above Matt. 16:18, which is the only other mention of *ekklesia* in the gospels,⁷² and which likewise mentions “binding and loosing,” but seemingly relates this ecclesiological authority to Peter rather than the gathered two or three.⁷³

This is not to say that Volf’s usage is completely inappropriate. We have already argued above for a more Spirit-empowered communitarian hermeneutic, and in this manner, Volf’s focus on Matt. 18:20 derives from the prominence of this passage in shaping the free church community. He is also able to show that the passage is not without ecclesiological importance in the broader Christian tradition.⁷⁴ There is no doubt that, exegetically, he is reading too much into the specific text, but this is countered by the fact that he is using this passage as an outline for an overall reading of New Testament ecclesiology. It is also a response to earlier Catholic over-readings of Matt. 16:18.

On the basis of the gathering of two or three in Matt. 18:20, Volf first identifies the church as an “assembly.” Exploring the New Testament use of the term *ekklesia*, he notes that it is generally used to refer to the concrete act of assembling in the local congregation.⁷⁵ That Paul usually employs the plural when referring to more than one church (e.g. the churches in Galatia; Gal.1:2) supports this idea, and prioritises the local assembly.⁷⁶ Where *ekklesia* does have a wider reference, Volf argues that it describes an eschatological assembly,⁷⁷ and thus the local church is “the real

⁷¹ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), 368.

⁷² To be precise, *ekklesia* is not used in Matt. 18:20, but rather in 18:18. Volf assumes this context in his exegesis.

⁷³ It is obvious why the free church tradition would choose to focus on Matt. 18:20, and the Roman Catholic Church Matt. 16:18. The free-church interpretation of this latter passage is that Jesus’ declaration relates to Peter’s confession rather than to Peter personally. Clearly, this interpretation is also subject to contention.

⁷⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 135-136.

⁷⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 138.

⁷⁶ See also Peter O’Brien, who suggests that the biblical priority lies with the local church, and notes that, “the notion of a unified provincial or national church appears to have been foreign to Paul’s thinking” (Peter T. O’Brien, “Church,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Ralph Martin and Daniel Reid. Gerald Hawthorne (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 124.)

⁷⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 139 – See also O’Brien, “Church,” 125.

anticipation or proleptic realization of the eschatological gathering of the entire people of God.”⁷⁸

Secondly, Volf’s exegesis of Matt. 18:20 suggests that it is a condition of ecclesiality that the church assemble in the name of Christ. This leads him to tie the identification of the church to doctrinal specifications, since a Christian church must be “built on the Jesus Christ attested by the apostolic writings.”⁷⁹ Volf focuses on a christological doctrinal minimum, however the role of doctrine is more significant for ecclesiology than Volf’s reductionism allows. Further explication of the nature and role of doctrine may have provided him with a better means of conceptualising the relationship between the local church and churches or the universal church. In common with most conceptions of free church ecclesiology, Volf gives priority to the local church, which, he argues, “stands on its own spiritual feet because the whole Christ is present in it through the Spirit.”⁸⁰ This is contrasted to the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, which assert that the presence of Christ is mediated by the bishop and sacramentally determined relations with the larger church (a position which denies ecclesiality to protestantism as a whole).⁸¹ In contrast, the free church assertion that the presence of Christ is mediated through the Spirit in the gathering of at least two or three Christians leads Volf to conclude that there is no middle ground between the local church and the universal, eschatological assembly.

This raises an issue that is central to the investigations of this thesis. Volf’s problem is not just the debatable assertion that New Testament usage of *ekklesia* is generally local. Indeed, as Schmidt observes in his investigation into the definition of *ekklesia*, the understanding of the term as a reference to either the universal, city-wide, or gathered church, differs according to the interpreters’ denomination.⁸² Nor is the issue only that Volf relies too heavily on a single term, rather than a range of other

⁷⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness* 140 & 145.

⁷⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 146.

⁸⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 155.

⁸¹ This has been the stated position of the Catholic Church since the separation that occurred as a result of the protestant reformation. It remains a hindrance to ecumenism, although Vatican II “gave a certain limited recognition to churches and ecclesial communities not in union with Rome as being of salvific value for their members” (Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 143).

⁸² K. L. Schmidt, “Ecclesia,” *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985), 487-536.

biblical metaphors that might lead to broader conclusions (such as “body of Christ”). The theological issue is the ecclesial individualism that results from this local church focus. He attempts to soften this individualism by the suggestion that the openness of every church toward all other churches is an indispensable condition of ecclesiality.⁸³ Yet, were such a condition applied to Volf’s own free church tradition, the rampant denominationalism which has been an historical reality within protestantism, and that results from a rejection of other church traditions, could be said to deny ecclesiality to almost all free churches.

It is our suggestion that the answer to the seeming problem of the relationship between the local church and the universal church can be found in the methodological integration of orthodoxy and orthopraxy in the constructions of ecclesiology: the doctrinal and missional dimensions of the church.⁸⁴ As Bernard Lonergan observes, doctrine facilitates “pluralism in the unity of faith,” since it establishes the ecclesiality of local churches in agreement with the whole church and, at the same time, provides a means of expressing local identity, since doctrine arises in the particularities of historical and geographical context.⁸⁵ Similarly, the missional nature and orientation of the church headed by Christ and empowered by the Spirit necessarily draws the focus of ecclesiology from the local church alone to the wider church community. By definition, the “sending” of Christian mission takes the church beyond the local assembly, conceptually and practically.⁸⁶ The local church cannot fulfil the mission of the church on its own and, therefore, the missiological identity of the church demands an ecclesial unity that is more concrete than the notion of the eschatological assembly. On the other hand, mission is contextual, and thus necessitates diversity, and allows for local, national and denominational difference and freedom. The assertion that the church exists in diversity and unity arises from its missiological nature.

⁸³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 156.

⁸⁴ See my argument in Clifton, “Pentecostal Theological Method,” 58-65.

⁸⁵ Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 117.

⁸⁶ This idea relates to Craig Van Gelder’s suggestion that “we need to develop a missiological ecclesiology” (Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 36). See also Darrell Guder, *Missional Church: A Theological Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998).

The ecclesial significance of both doctrine and church mission stands as an implicit critique of Volf's exclusive focus on the autonomy of the local church. In subsequent chapters, we thereby explore the meaning and significance of both, especially insofar as they inform the relationship between Australian pentecostal congregations and the broader church in ecumenical context.⁸⁷

Trinitarian Ecclesiology

Having (in his Chapter IV) discussed ecclesiality and the interrelationship between the local church and the universal church, Volf goes on to consider the relationship between the individual person and the local church. This discussion and, in particular, his relational understanding of personhood, will form the lead-in to his trinitarian ecclesiology. In this chapter he is searching for a mediating point between what he says is the false dichotomy of the so-called protestant and Catholic understandings of salvation and communion. In this dialectic, protestantism tends to make the individual's relationship to the church dependent upon her/his relation to Christ, while Catholicism tends to make the individual's relationship to Christ dependent upon how they relate to the church.⁸⁸

The critique of protestantism is particularly telling for the free church tradition. Again drawing on Matt. 18:20, Volf notes that Christ's presence is promised, not to the believing individual alone, but to that individual through the congregation.⁸⁹ Faith is mediated through the church, and is ecclesially shaped, since the content of faith involves doctrine, a doctrine whose function is relationship with Christ and the community of the church. Nonetheless, Volf also argues that protestantism's *solus Christus* must be preserved, since the church cannot give a person faith. *Fiducia* is exclusively in Christ through the gift of the Spirit of God,⁹⁰ in contradistinction with the traditional Catholic position. This mutually determinative understanding of faith and the church leads Volf to emphasise the ecclesiality of salvation, a position which

⁸⁷ See chapter 4.3.2 & 5.2.3.

⁸⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 159. Volf takes this well-known dichotomy from Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*. Edinburgh: Clark, 1928. 24.

⁸⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 162.

⁹⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 163.

enables him to criticise the individualistic soteriology of much of the free church tradition. As Volf observes, “Salvation is communion with God and human beings, nor can it be otherwise if the church is to be the proleptic experience within history of the eschatological integration of the entire people of God into the communion of the triune God.”⁹¹

This social understanding of salvation has implications for anthropology and ecclesiology which take their cue from modern trinitarian dialogue. Volf notes that he has adopted “the general features of the social model of the trinitarian relations as proposed especially by Jürgen Moltmann,”⁹² and for this reason we need to briefly engage with Moltmann’s reconstruction of the doctrine of the trinity.

Moltmann’s trinitarian theology was driven firstly by critique of the traditional conceptions of the impassive, immutable God. His controversial affirmation that God is passive arose in the context of his conversion experience in the aftermath of World War II, and his insight, while reading the scriptures as a prisoner of war, into the suffering of God in Christ.⁹³ For him, it was the passible God, the God who allows himself to be affected by his creation, who reveals his love for the creation through the history of his trinitarian self-revelation. Methodologically, this is the now famous “turn toward history” in trinitarian theology, which derived from Rahner’s classic declaration that “the ‘economic’ trinity is the ‘immanent’ trinity and the ‘immanent’ trinity is the ‘economic’ trinity.”⁹⁴ However Rahner is interpreted, for Moltmann, this focus on the economy meant that contemplations of the trinity should begin with “the history of the reciprocal, changing, and hence living relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.”⁹⁵ This trinitarian history is soteriological, and includes mutual, non-hierarchical participation of the three persons of the Godhead in the sending of the Son, the surrender of the Son, the exaltation of the Son, and the future of the Son.

⁹¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 174.

⁹² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 198.

⁹³ See Moltmann’s “personal meditation” in Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1997), 1-8.

⁹⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Seabury, 1970), 22.

⁹⁵ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 64.

In taking this economic starting point, Moltmann is particularly critical of what he terms “Christian monotheism,” the genesis of which he locates with St Augustine and his psychological analogy of the trinity.⁹⁶ Moltmann’s chief protagonist, however, is Karl Barth, who had argued (along with most theologians throughout the church’s history) that the doctrine of the trinity, rooted in revelation, begins with monotheism, the unique essence of the one God.⁹⁷ Barth was also troubled by the use of the word “person,” which in connection with the term “personality” hinted at tritheism.⁹⁸ While he was willing to affirm it, given the importance of its traditional heritage, he preferred to see it replaced with the expression “mode of being.”⁹⁹ Moltmann accused Barth of modalism,¹⁰⁰ and while the specifics of this debate go beyond the scope of this thesis (Moltmann himself has since been accused of tritheism¹⁰¹), Moltmann’s accusation is more than simply theoretical, but has practical consequences.

Moltmann argues that “the notion of a divine monarchy in heaven and on earth, for its part, generally provides the justification for earthly domination – religious, moral, patriarchal or political domination – and makes it a hierarchy, a ‘holy rule’.”¹⁰² In contrast, Moltmann’s notion of the divine society emphasises mutuality, self-giving and equality, and for this reason his social doctrine of the trinity has implications for liberation theology, feminism and, in our case, ecclesiology.¹⁰³

⁹⁶ See Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 16. For a more pointed critique of Augustine’s influence on Western Theology generally, and trinitarian theology particularly, see Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 31-48. Others suggest, however, that Augustine’s psychological analogy has been misunderstood by some modern critics of this ancient analogy (See Michel R. Barnes, “Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology,” *Theological Studies* 56, no. 2 (1995): 237-251). For a more positive analysis and reclamation of the psychological analogy, see Anne Hunt, “Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology,” *Theological Studies* 59, no. 2 (1998): 197-219, and; Neil Ormerod, “The Psychological Analogy for the Trinity: At Odds with Modernity,” *Pacifica* 14 (2001): 281-294.

⁹⁷ See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1936), Vol 1:1, 400-406.

⁹⁸ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 403.

⁹⁹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 412.

¹⁰⁰ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 139.

¹⁰¹ See Ted Peters, *God As Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in the Divine Life* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 109. The criticism is, that the notion of perichoresis is insufficient to secure the unity of the Godhead, particularly with Moltmann’s focus on the three centres of activity.

¹⁰² Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 192.

¹⁰³ For liberation theologies appropriation, see Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, (trans.) Paul Burns (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988). For a feminist appropriation, see Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); and Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992).

Having surveyed the triune history of the Son as revealed in the scriptures, Moltmann considers the distinctions and unity (in that order) between the Father, Son, and Spirit. In respect to the meaning of the term “person” in trinitarian reflection, he argues (with Augustine and the Western tradition) that the persons are determined by their relations and are not simply individual centres of consciousness, but (against Barth) that the persons are nonetheless unique, and non-interchangeable. According to Moltmann, “it is impossible to say: person is relation,”¹⁰⁴ a position that he says is basically modalistic (Barth’s triple self-repetition of God). Persons do not merely exist in their relations, they realise themselves in their relations. This means that the persons are not static, but “open” to each other by nature, and to creation by choice, by self-limitation and by entering into our pain.¹⁰⁵

He then maintains their unity by dispensing with the metaphysical language of substance, exploring instead the notion of *perichoresis*, which he defines as:

the circulatory character of the eternal divine life. The Father exists in the Son, the Son in the Father, and both of them in the Spirit, just as the Spirit exists in both the Father and Son. By virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, and dwell in one another to such an extent, that they are one.¹⁰⁶

The result is a social picture of God, three divine persons in interpersonal relationship, a fellowship of love, whose unity does not precede their distinction, but instead consists in perichoretic communion. For Moltmann, the trinity makes no use of the notions of rule or power, but rather exists in the equality and mutuality of the divine persons. Furthermore, as Richard Bauckham observes, “Moltmann proposes that the trinitarian fellowship of the three divine persons is a model for true human community, which is both to reflect and to participate in God’s own trinitarian life.”¹⁰⁷ It is this correspondence which, although not fleshed out by Moltmann himself, Volf considers with regard to the nature of the church.

¹⁰⁴ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 172.

¹⁰⁵ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 173-174.

¹⁰⁶ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 175.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

Volf notes that “the thesis that ecclesial communion should correspond to trinitarian communion enjoys the status of an almost self-evident proposition. Yet it is surprising that no one has carefully examined just where such correspondences are to be found.”¹⁰⁸ Volf himself finds these correspondences in various places. Philosophically, he suggests that trinitarianism provides an answer to the problem of the relation of the one and the many.¹⁰⁹ Volf also locates the ecclesial correspondence of trinitarianism in the sacrament of baptism, since “through baptism in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God leads believers simultaneously into both trinitarian and ecclesial communion.”¹¹⁰ Perhaps more importantly for protestant churches, ecclesial correspondence to the trinity can also be located biblically in passages such as the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17:21, “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” This New Testament witness is likewise implied in the ecclesial headship of Christ and grounding in the Spirit for the purposes of fulfilling the Father’s will.

Volf goes on to observe the limits of this trinitarian ecclesiology, in particular the analogous nature of any correspondence between God and humanity. He also notes the eschatological orientation of his analysis, which recognizes that the church cannot image the triune God perfectly this side of the eschaton.¹¹¹ Yet, since the church is understood as a foretaste of the future ideal, these limits do not prevent correspondence, indeed, they encourage the pursuit of the ideal.

As we have already observed, Volf’s trinitarian theology is derived from Moltmann’s social doctrine of the trinity. Even more explicitly than Moltmann, he argues for a departure from the metaphysical language of the early Christian tradition, stating that “it is advisable to dispense entirely with the one numerically identical divine nature

¹⁰⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 191.

¹⁰⁹ Here Volf is drawing on the philosophical categories of Parmenides (reality is timeless, unchanging, unified) and Heraclitus (everything is flux, and war is the universal creative and ruling force).¹⁰⁹ The former gives precedence to the one over the many, a view that argues that where multiplicity rules, chaos ensues, and must be universalised, totalised and globalised. For the latter, the rule of unity is seen as oppressive, and must be detotalised, decentralised, and individualised. This philosophical construct can find its application in the diverse structures of the church, and Volf suggests that the answer to this dialectic is found in the reciprocal diversity and unity of the trinity. For a fuller discussion on this philosophical debate and the explication of a trinitarian response, see Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993).

¹¹⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 195.

¹¹¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 198-200.

and instead to conceive the unity of God *perichoretically*.”¹¹² Similarly, he also argues against conceiving of personhood as pure relation, agreeing with Moltmann that “person and relation emerge simultaneously and mutually presuppose one another.” Volf argues for the centrality of “relation” in conceiving of “person” but, at the same time, emphasises personal distinction, which is derived by mutual self giving. Taking his cue from the repeated statements in John’s gospel that “the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (John 10:38; 14:10-11; 17:21), Volf develops the notion of *perichoresis*, saying:

in every divine person as a subject, the other persons also indwell; all mutually permeate one another, though in so doing they do not cease to be distinct persons, . . . since persons who have dissolved into one another cannot exist in one another.¹¹³

For Volf, the triune God is a non-hierarchical, mutually indwelling communion of three persons, whose unity is not derived from their one substance or the monarchy of the Father, but from their perichoretic mutual interiority.

In reflection of the triune God, Christians are constituted as persons by their relationships with Christ and with one-another. This developing personhood can be understood as salvation, and hence salvation is necessarily ecclesial. Although no strict correspondence can exist between the divine and human persons, since humans cannot be mutually interior or indwelling, yet Volf argues that because “the Son indwells human beings through the Spirit, . . . *the unity of the church is grounded in the interiority of the Spirit*.”¹¹⁴ In other words, through the mutual indwelling of the Spirit, humans can be empowered to love and to selflessness, and “can embrace or ‘enter empathetically’ into the other.”¹¹⁵ In so doing the Christian community becomes a mirror of the triune God. Such a community will be categorised by mutual self-giving and receiving in such a way that the uniqueness of each person is not lost, but enhanced.

¹¹² Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 203. Italics in original

¹¹³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 209.

¹¹⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 213. Italics in original.

¹¹⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 211.

In following Moltmann's critique of traditional conceptions of the trinity, Volf is also critical of centralised ecclesiologies, arguing that "the strictly hierarchical structure of the church derives from the systemic dominance of the one and from the precedence of the whole."¹¹⁶ Since, for Volf, the trinity contains no notion of hierarchy or subordination, ecclesial unity mirroring the trinity should likewise be non-hierarchical, proceeding not from the monarchy of the "one-[man!]-rule, . . . but by a polycentric and symmetrical reciprocity of the many."¹¹⁷ This critique of hierarchy stands as another reason for Volf's prioritisation of the local church. Given that "every local church is a concrete anticipation of this eschatological community,"¹¹⁸ then trinitarian correspondence is primarily directed at the local church. According to Volf, since the perichoretic mutual interiority of the divine persons can only correspond to personal relationships, the trinity "cannot serve as a model of *interecclesial* unity."¹¹⁹ One might respond by noting that the same Spirit that facilitates the intraecclesial relations should also be sufficient to facilitate interecclesial relations.

On this basis, Volf goes on to suggest that hierarchical structures and authoritative leadership styles which generate "dependency, helplessness and servitude" are open to critique and change, and "the more a church is characterized by symmetrical and decentralized distribution of power and freely affirmed interaction, the more will it correspond to the trinitarian communion."¹²⁰ Such a church will be charismatic, constituted not by the bishop or ordination, but through Christ acting in the gifts of his Spirit. These gifts will be universally distributed,¹²¹ since Christian ministry is the task of the whole church, the priesthood of all believers, not just the ordained officer.¹²² Furthermore, according to Volf, this universal distribution of charismata implies "common responsibility for the life of the church,"¹²³ an idea which is suggestive of the democratisation of the church as found in most free church structures. This is not to deny the place of ordination. For Volf, while ordination is

¹¹⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 214. (see Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*; Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 191-192).

¹¹⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 217.

¹¹⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 203.

¹¹⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 213.

¹²⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 192, 236.

¹²¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 229.

¹²² See 1 Cor. 14:26, as well as the body metaphor in 1 Cor. 12.

¹²³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 230.

not ecclesially necessary, it is nonetheless institutionally important. It arises out of the organisational needs of the local community. This leads Volf to describe ordination as “a public reception of a charisma given by God and focused on the local church as a whole.”¹²⁴

Altogether, Volf’s book has much to contribute to ecclesiological reflection. Of particular importance is the effort to develop an ecclesiology that is grounded in the free church tradition. Also of value is his understanding of the ecclesially constitutive role of doctrine, his contribution to the meaning of divine and human personhood, his stress on the ecclesial nature of salvation, his attention to the issues surrounding the interaction of the local and universal church, his critique of oppressive church structures, and his emphasis on the priesthood of all believers.

The social conception of the trinity provides a powerful image, one that can be applied to a variety of ecclesial situations and contexts. As Grenz notes, there is now almost ecumenical consensus about the social view of God and, as John Gresham observes, “this provides the strange sight in the pluralistic world of contemporary theology, of protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, liberation, feminist, evangelical and process theologians agreeing on a particular trinitarian model of God!”¹²⁵ This is ecumenically and ecclesially significant since, according to Walter Kasper, all the ecumenical dialogues undertaken by the Roman Catholic Church:

converge in the fact that they revolve around the concept of *communio* as their key concept. All dialogues define the visible unity of all Christians as *communio*-unity, and agree in understanding it, in analogy with the original trinitarian model, not as uniformity but as unity in diversity and diversity in unity.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 249.

¹²⁵ John Gresham, ‘The Social Model of the trinity and Its Critics’, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46/3 (1993):327 (cited in Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 6).

¹²⁶ Walter Kasper, “Present Situation and Future of the Ecumenical Movement,” *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Plenary 2001*. (2001): article online, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_2001117_kasper-prolusio_en.html, accessed 15 December 2001, II.

The challenge, as Kasper goes on to suggest, is that “on closer inspection, different understandings are hidden behind the term. The common concept of *communio* has different meanings and thus calls forth different expectations and projected goals.”¹²⁷

Critics of social trinitarianism argue that Moltmann (and others) are in danger of advocating pantheism or tritheism. Moltmann himself adopts the label “panentheist,” in an attempt to find a middle ground between pantheism and a God radically separate from creation.¹²⁸ The issue in contention is the tendency for social trinitarian theology to dispense with the traditional conception of trinitarian relations. Volf would eliminate the language of “substance” altogether, arguing that “understanding the unity of God by way of the one substance of God seems unavoidably to establish the precedence of the one God before the three persons, and thus also to threaten the triunity of God.”¹²⁹ This might be the case if “substance” is understood in the materialistic sense of Tertullian, as the three persons of the triune God being “made from the same ‘stuff’.”¹³⁰ But the Christian tradition has, since Athanasius, had a more nuanced understanding of *homoousios* and *substantia*, one that is summarised by Lonergan with the axiom, “that all that is said of the Father also is said of the Son except that the Son is Son and not Father” (vis-à-vis the Spirit).¹³¹ This definition is essential to christology and trinitarian theology, since it maintains the deity of the Son and the Spirit, and the oneness of the triune God, while simultaneously allowing space for relationality and sociality in the Godhead. Critics go on to say that Volf’s particular formulation of social trinitarianism, when applied to the church, leads to the very ecclesial individualism that he was seeking to avoid. This is apparent especially in his affirmation that there is no middle ground between the local church and the eschatological universal assembly.¹³²

¹²⁷ Kasper, “Ecumenical Movement,” II .

¹²⁸ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 19.

¹²⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 202.

¹³⁰ Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 250.

¹³¹ Lonergan, “Origins of Christian Realism”, *Second Collection*, Ryan, W. and Tyrell B. (eds), Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974, p.244, cited in Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 251.

¹³² See Avery Dulles, “Review of *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*,” *First Things* 87 (1998): 50-52, and; David S. Cunningham, “Review of *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*,” *Theology Today* 57 (2000): 122-125. Cunningham states: “Much of this problem results from following Moltmann’s account of the trinity as three (individual?) persons who are held together (only?) by perichoresis. This approach has lately fallen under significant critique; it is little more than our modern, individualistic notion of personhood, given a “kinder, gentler” character by an insistence on mutual cooperation. It evades the really revolutionary claim of trinitarian theology-that

More could be said, but the specific details of these trinitarian debates are beyond the scope of this thesis, except insofar as they pertain to our understanding of the church. Unlike Volf, most advocates of social portrayals of the triune God continue to affirm the traditional language of substance, arguing that the social doctrine of the trinity is complementary to traditional trinitarian formulations. The various *communio* ecclesiologies, derived from social portrayals of the triune God, provide a means of conceptualising unity and diversity in the church, and stimulating mutual self-giving which, modelled on the triune relations, is the ground of church unity. As modelled by Volf, trinitarian ecclesiology also provides an important critique of oppressive and destructive structures that have found their way into the life of churches of all persuasions.

There are, nonetheless, various problems with ecclesiologies modelled primarily on social trinitarianism. *Communio* ecclesiologies generally fail to adequately differentiate between divine and human persons and relationships. Admittedly, Volf mentions the limits to the ecclesial / trinitarian correspondence, but he does not seem to take these limits into account in his subsequent analysis. The assumption that the church can be modelled on the relationship of the trinity is idealistic, and this idealism leads to conclusions that are insufficiently concrete. Trinitarian models of the church seem to say little more than that the “church should not be authoritarian and oppressive.” While, no doubt, this point is well worth making, one might conclude that it is so broad as to be of little value to the actual practice of ministry. This is born out by Walter Kasper’s observations of the different understandings lying behind the ecumenical consensus on *communio*,¹³³ and by the fact that theologians, such as Joseph Ratzinger, John Zizioulas, and Miroslav Volf, can write trinitarian ecclesiologies supporting Catholic, Orthodox and free church structures. If a similarly conceived ideal can support such diverse realities, then it must be asked,

the divine persons do not merely have relations but are relations. In Volf’s account, persons can only be “in relation”; the only alternative, he seems to assume, would be undifferentiated unity. (He does not explore Thomas’s development of subsistent relations in ST I27-29, but instead follows Ratzinger in repeating the abbreviated *persona est relatio* of I40.) Volf’s trinitarianism thus tends toward a vague modalism (the uniqueness of the persons as defined by their “roles”) or a weak tritheism (each divine person as a distinct subject). In the resulting account of human personhood, relations are merely entered into by individuals, which is an inadequate description of divine personhood, despite the claim of the book’s subtitle.”

¹³³ See above quotation, and Kasper, “Ecumenical Movement,” II.

How well grounded is that ideal? Volf implies that it is the differences in their trinitarian constructions that results in these diverse ecclesiologies but, in fact, it is likely that the ecclesial structures themselves helped to determine these trinitarian conclusions. Whether or not this is the case, the radically different nature of the ecclesial conclusions suggests that there are other factors than the doctrine of the trinity determining their ecclesiology. Trinitarian communion is ecclesiologically important, particularly ecumenically, but it is clearly only one element of a systematic ecclesiology.

It is not social trinitarianism itself that is the primary concern, but the weight that is given it in Volf's construction. Just as his almost exclusive focus on Mat. 20:18 might be seen to be too narrow for a discussion of biblical ecclesiology, the thesis that ecclesial communion should be derived primarily from correspondence to the trinity also seems to have an unduly narrowing effect on ecclesiological reflection. As mentioned previously, contemplation of the nature of the church should involve reflection on the mission of the church, since her mission is integral to her being.¹³⁴ This broader missiological understanding of the church might raise questions about Volf's local church priority. Similarly, while our conception of the church will be informed and driven by the eschatological ideal, ecclesiology is also concerned with human community as it is. The early church, in its establishment of ecclesial structures, such as apostleship, eldership, the diaconate, and the Jerusalem Council, took this reality into account, as did most traditional ecclesiological constructions. In so doing, these recognised that the church, as a divinely instituted human community, will necessarily require institution, structure, leadership and hierarchy. Terence Nichols suggests that the problem of Moltmann (and other social trinitarians such as Volf) is that they understand the term "hierarchy" as the equivalent of dominance, and they are hampered because they can find no middle ground between hierarchy as domination and absolute equality.¹³⁵ The critique of authoritarian oppression,

¹³⁴ To be fair to Volf, he does consider the missiological tasks of the church elsewhere. See Miroslav Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program: The doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (1998): 403-423. However, in *After our Likeness* he goes as far as noting that "the outside world and the church's mission are only in my peripheral vision" (p.7), a statement that indicates a false distinction between the mission and being of the church.

¹³⁵ Terence Nichols, *That All May Be One: Hierarchy and Participation in the Church* (Minnesota: Liturgical, 1997), 277.

dependency, helplessness and servitude is valid and important, but this critique need not deny the ecclesial importance of institutional structures.

Volf, finally, notes that “the idea of a correspondence between church and trinity has remained largely alien to the free church tradition.”¹³⁶ This is certainly true for pentecostalism. For the purposes of this thesis, it thus seems methodologically problematic to attempt to write an Australian pentecostal ecclesiology using language and concepts completely unfamiliar to pentecostals themselves. Furthermore, although pentecostals are relatively egalitarian, and have consistently affirmed the notion of the priesthood of all believers and the empowering and gifting of the Spirit for the entire congregation, strong charismatic leadership has also been a hallmark of pentecostal churches. If, as I have argued elsewhere, theological method should combine orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy,¹³⁷ then the suggestion that church structures should be non-hierarchical, based on the purely theoretical models of social trinitarianism, is inadequate. As we shall observe in subsequent chapters of this thesis, the growth of the pentecostal movement in Australia has resulted in increasing hierarchy, and a move away from the sorts of congregationalist and democratic structures endorsed by Volf’s free church and social trinitarian ecclesiology. While this growth is certainly not self-justifying, neither are the attendant institutional and hierarchical developments necessarily evidence of a decline in pentecostal spirituality. This means that an Australian pentecostal ecclesiology will need to take into account the claims (à la Cartledge) that congregationalist structures had become bureaucratic and unwieldy, and that stronger and more hierarchical ecclesial structures were essential to facilitate the mission and growth of the church.¹³⁸ *Communio* ecclesiology will be but one of the categories forming this analysis.

1.3.3 The Roman Catholic / Pentecostal Dialogue

A third methodological approach to the task of ecclesiology is dialogical. Indeed, ecumenical dialogue is central to Volf’s argument, since his free church ecclesiology

¹³⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 196.

¹³⁷ Clifton, “Pentecostal Theological Method,” 58-65.

¹³⁸ See Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 209-214.

is developed in discourse with the formulations of Catholic and Orthodox thinkers, although an isolated text cannot be said to be truly dialogical. Yet insofar as we are dealing with his key text rather than his professional life, Volf can only present his reading of Ratzinger and Zizioulas, and neither of these authors is given the right of reply to either his interpretation of their own work, or Volf's own construction. Dialogue necessarily involves "reciprocal relationship, and the "experiencing" of one another."¹³⁹

An example of dialogical ecclesiology in pentecostal context is the long running dialogue that has been undertaken between the Roman Catholic Church and representatives of pentecostalism. This dialogue has progressed through four stages over two decades, including; *The Stage of Mutual Introduction: The First Quinquennium* (1972-1976), *The Phase of Contra-Positions: The Second Quinquennium* (1977-1982), *The Search for Common Identity: The Third Quinquennium* (1985-1989), and *The Potential of Mutual Cooperation in the Christ-given Mission: The Fourth Quinquennium* (1990-1997).¹⁴⁰

What is extraordinary about this dialogue is not only its duration and the ground that was covered, but the fact that it was undertaken at all, since pentecostals have long been suspicious of ecumenism in general, and the Roman Catholic Church in particular.¹⁴¹ Amos Yong suggests that this suspicion arises, first, because pentecostals believe that the unity of the church should be spiritual rather than visible. This perspective is ecclesially problematic for pentecostals since, as Yong suggests, it has its roots in post-reformation individualism and the related rejection of institutions, and has not only resulted in an anti-ecumenical stance, but has led to fragmentation

¹³⁹ Paul D. Lee, "Pneumatological Ecclesiology in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue: A Catholic Reading of the Third Quinquennium (1985-1989)," (Pneumatological Ecclesiology, Rome: Dissertatio ad Doctoratum in Facultate S. Theologiae apud Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae in Urbe (Angelicum), 1994), I.1.5.4.

¹⁴⁰ These descriptive titles for each phase of the dialogue have been borrowed from Lee, "Pneumatological Ecclesiology," 2.2.-2.5. They have also been used by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Ad Ultimum Terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue (1990/1997)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999).

¹⁴¹ The same can perhaps be said of Roman Catholicism, which is not a member of the World Council of Churches, and which has traditionally regarded pentecostalism as a sect. Having said this, the Catholic Church has a longer history of ecumenical involvement than does pentecostalism.

within pentecostalism itself.¹⁴² The second reason given by Yong for pentecostal suspicion of ecumenism is that pentecostals have felt that the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches are “liberal,” and even representative of last days apostasy.¹⁴³ This perspective is largely a result of ignorance, and is slowly breaking down, as the pentecostal movement enters the mainstream. This is apparent in the longevity and friendliness of the Roman Catholic/ Pentecostal dialogue, which itself is indicative of the transitions that are occurring within pentecostal self-understanding.

The dialogue has been wide-ranging, beginning not with the purpose of discussing ecclesiology, church structures or “imminent structural union,”¹⁴⁴ but with the objective of contemplating the shared concerns of “prayer, spirituality and theological reflection.”¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, even without an explicit ecclesiological agenda, the discussion is ecclesial, since “dialogue participants have sought to represent their church’s positions faithfully.”¹⁴⁶ The groundwork laid in the first decade of discussion enabled the dialogue to progress to the subject of ecclesial unity in the third stage of discussions, and missiological unity in the fourth.

This thesis cannot hope to explicate or even summarise a twenty year dialogue, and indeed this task has been done by others.¹⁴⁷ For our purposes, it is enough to briefly

¹⁴² Amos Yong, “Pentecostalism and Ecumenism: Past, Present, and Future,” *The Pneuma Review* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 36-47.

¹⁴³ Yong, “Pentecostalism and Ecumenism,” 37. This view is illustrated by a quote taken from one of the more conservative Assemblies of God organisations: “Many Assemblies of God pastors of my acquaintance, although warned by many of their brethren of the ecumenical spirit behind these people and movements, have to date chosen not to take heed. Now, finally, many of them will be challenged face to face by the glaring fact that their leadership are prepared to identify their denomination with Roman Catholicism and to join with this false religious system in world evangelisation. It is simply staggering that Brian Houston could align the Assemblies of God in Australia and Hills Christian Life Centre with an organisation that pronounces anathema on reformed Christian beliefs, such as faith, scripture and Christ alone, is responsible for the martyrdom of millions of his fellow saints, argues for purgatory, Mary as co-redemptrix, and confess sainthood and a salvation found only within her precincts!” Michael Claydon, ‘Decade of Decline’, *Christian Witness Ministries*, <http://www.Christian-witness.org/archives/cetf1997/decade.html>, accessed January 2003.

¹⁴⁴ “Final Report of the International Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1976),” *Pneuma* 12, no. 2 (1990): 85-96, point 4, 85.

¹⁴⁵ “Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1976),” point 4, 85.

¹⁴⁶ “Perspectives on Koinonia: Final Report of the International Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1985-1989),” *Pneuma* 12, no. 2 (1990): 117-142, point 12, 119.

¹⁴⁷ This includes the printing of the Final Reports, as well as the numerous articles and thesis’ that have been published during and following the dialogue, and even a book by Kärkkäinen, *Ad ultimum terrae*.

The Final Reports for the four Quinquennium’s of the dialogue have been printed in *Pneuma*, “Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1976),”; “Final Report of the International Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1977-1982),” *Pneuma* 12, no. 2 (1990): 97-116; “Roman

mention the results of the third phase of the dialogue, insofar as they relate to pentecostal ecclesiology. Given the title, “*Koinonia*,” the third phase was intended to be “a reflection about ecclesiological self-understanding.”¹⁴⁸ This theme was derived from the agreement that *koinonia* amongst Christians is rooted in the trinitarian life of the Father, Son and Spirit, which is “the highest expression of the unity to which we together aspire.”¹⁴⁹ Both pentecostals and Roman Catholics agreed that the Holy Spirit is the source of *koinonia*, but they differed in their understanding of the nature of initiation into Christian fellowship (baptism), and the means of sustaining that fellowship. Many of the differences arose from the pentecostal focus on the personal experience of faith, which was challenged by Roman Catholic participants for its individualism, and the Roman Catholic focus on communitarianism, which was challenged by pentecostal participants for its institutionalisation. The pentecostal participants in the dialogue distinguished pentecostal ecclesiology by, (1) rejecting infant baptism, since baptism must be a response to personal faith, (2) emphasising discipleship and personal holiness as opposed to sacramental mediations of grace, (3) stressing the charismatic nature of the church, and the involvement of all believers in church ministry, including administration of the sacraments/ordinances, and (4) preferring congregational and/or presbyterial church structures that are seen to facilitate common responsibility for the church.

We have already touched on most of these concepts in our discussion of Volf, who himself participated in the dialogue. Other pentecostal participants were also stimulated to ecclesiological reflection. Notable among these has been Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, whose doctoral dissertation was published in two volumes, *Spiritus Ubi Vult Spirat: Pneumatology in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1989)*

Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1985-1989),”; “Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness: The Final Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1990-1997),” *Pneuma* 21 (1999): 1-51. These reports were also published in the *Catholic Information Service*, 32 (1976):32-37, 55 (1984):72-80, 75 (1990): 179-191, 97 (1998/I-II):38-56.

¹⁴⁷ In pentecostal journals, this includes: Jerry L. Sandidge, “A Pentecostal Response to Roman Catholic Teaching on Mary,” *Pneuma* 4 (1982): 33-42; Jerry L. Sandidge, “Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue: A Contribution to Christian Unity,” *Pneuma* 7 (1985): 41-60; Jerry L. Sandidge, “Consultation Summary: A Pentecostal Perspective,” *Pneuma* 9 (1987): 96-98; Kilian McDonnell, “Improbable Conversations: The International Classical Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue,” *Pneuma* 17 (1995): 163-174; Kilian McDonnell, “Five Defining Issues: The International Classical Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue,” *Pneuma* 17 (1995): 175-188.

¹⁴⁷ Kärkkäinen, *Ad ultimum terrae*.

¹⁴⁸ “Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1985-1989),” point 9, 118.

¹⁴⁹ “Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1985-1989),” point 29, 123.

and *Ad Ultimum Terrae: Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in the Roman Catholic Pentecostal Dialogue*.¹⁵⁰ In 2002 Kärkkäinen also published *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*,¹⁵¹ which is a comparative ecclesiology that seeks to draw on the contribution of various ecclesial traditions and theologians. These three works reveal the fruitfulness of the dialogical approach to ecclesiology. Although Kärkkäinen notes the lack of an explicit pentecostal ecclesiology, it is the comparison with alternate traditions that enables him to identify significant and unique elements of pentecostal self-understanding. This leads him to emphasise the pneumatological orientation of the church. He also suggests that pentecostal spirituality has “almost from the start appreciated fellowship language over ‘institutionalised church’ (as Hierarchical structure)”¹⁵² and, consequently, is principally concerned with the universality of Spirit gifting, and the active participation of the whole congregation in the life and ministry of the church.

Our purpose now is methodological. As Kärkkäinen suggests, the contribution of the pentecostal movement to the understanding of “church” in ecumenical context is limited by the lack of explicit ecclesial self-reflection. The report of the original dialogue on *Koinonia* noted similarly that:

One of the difficulties we faced in our discussions was the historical difference between the development of the doctrine of the church in Roman Catholicism and in the various pentecostal traditions. Roman Catholics have a centuries-long tradition of ecclesiological reflection; the pentecostal movement is less than a century old and has had little opportunity to engage in sustained theological reflection on ecclesiology.¹⁵³

While dialogue can draw out self-understanding, it nonetheless requires a pre-requisite theological reflection and, presently, this puts pentecostals at a disadvantage

¹⁵⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus Ubi Vult Spirat: Pneumatology in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue (1972-1989)* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Gessellschaft, 1998); Kärkkäinen, *Ad ultimum terrae*.

¹⁵¹ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

¹⁵² Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, 75.

¹⁵³ “Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1985-1989),” point 11, 119.

in ecumenical discussion. For pentecostals, this is made all the more difficult by the diversity of the pentecostal movement. The Catholic researcher into the third phase of the dialogue, Paul Lee, asks, “What is it meant by calling pentecostalism a “movement” and not a denomination?”¹⁵⁴ Lee highlights the term “movement” because it suggests the diversity of the pentecostal churches, but the term also has ecclesiological significance. The dialogue report notes that “Roman Catholics consider the establishment of denominations which result from the lack of love and/or divergence in matters of faith as departures away from the unity of the one church.”¹⁵⁵ While this critique is aimed at the separation that occurred after the reformation, and that includes pentecostalism, it can be argued that pentecostal adoption of the term “movement” is also a critique of denominationalism. This critique arises from the priority given to the autonomy of the local church and the rejection of centralised denominational structures. It does give rise to the diversity (fragmentation?) which Lee is highlighting, but the understanding of “movement” as “co-operative fellowship”¹⁵⁶ may in fact provide a better framework to ecumenical endeavours than the Roman Catholic search for structural unity. Unlike the protestant state churches which emerged from the Reformation, pentecostalism is from its birth global and yet local.

Be that as it may, Lee goes on to ask, “If it [pentecostalism] is a movement, is it useful or valid to talk about ecclesiology at all? If the pentecostal movement is a cluster of denominations of various origins and theologies, who or which denomination(s), then, can officially represent the movement?”¹⁵⁷ The answer to the first question is to recognise that pentecostalism is a movement of local churches, which suggests that it might be better to talk about pentecostal ecclesiologies. Having said this, pentecostal churches have formed movements which, while continuing to prioritise the local church, nonetheless share common ecclesiological assumptions. We can then respond to Lee’s second question by observing that movement representatives can participate in dialogue on behalf of their churches.

¹⁵⁴ Lee, “Pneumatological Ecclesiology,” I.1.3.

¹⁵⁵ “Roman Catholic/Pentecostal Dialogue (1985-1989),” point 34, 124.

¹⁵⁶ See “Philosophy of the Assemblies of God,” *NSW Assemblies of God 2001 Ministers Manual* (Camden: Assemblies of God, 2000), 4.2.

¹⁵⁷ Lee, “Pneumatological Ecclesiology,” I.1.3.

It is clear that the dialogical approach to ecclesiology is invaluable, although the challenge for pentecostal participants in such dialogue is that few pentecostal movements have developed an explicit ecclesiology. This is certainly the case for pentecostalism in Australia, which has undergone substantial ecclesiological transition in recent decades. This has occurred for largely practical and pragmatic reasons, and has not been accompanied by ecclesiological reflection. This thesis, in its attempt to develop an Australian pentecostal ecclesiology, might then serve pentecostal self-understanding, and thereby set the stage for constructive ecumenical dialogue in this country.

1.3.4 Other Pentecostal Ecclesiologies

Apart from the books mentioned above, there have been few other pentecostal tomes concerned explicitly with ecclesiology from a pentecostal perspective. There have been a number of articles in pentecostal publications addressing ecclesiology. There have also been an increasing number of books and journal articles explicating pentecostal history and theology, which contribute to pentecostal self-understanding, and which are therefore relevant to pentecostal ecclesiology. We shall draw on these various sources when we consider the narrative of pentecostalism in Australia.

1.4 Summary

In this chapter we have observed that the rapid growth of the pentecostal church in Australia has been accompanied by ecclesial transition. These changes have occurred for largely pragmatic reasons and, as we noted in our review of the literature on Australian pentecostalism, they have not occurred in interaction with critical ecclesiological reflection. The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to this reflection, by describing and analysing these ecclesial transitions.

This purpose raises the methodological question as to how this analysis might be undertaken. We noted the contributions of Michael Dusing, Melvin Hodges, Miroslav Volf, the Roman Catholic / Pentecostal dialogue and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. Among other things, the review of these works suggests that pentecostal ecclesiology will

need to take into account a number of elements. This includes: the manner in which pentecostalism has appropriated the biblical portrayal of the church; the charismatic nature of the church and the ministry of the whole congregation; the process of institutionalisation; the importance of “assembly” and the relationship between the local church and other churches; the nature and function of ecclesially constitutive doctrine; church structures and authorities and the function of ordination; the impact of ecumenism and ecumenical dialogue; and the missionary priority of the church.

In reviewing these various authors, we have considered three types of ecclesiological method - biblicist, theological (drawing on the example of *communio* ecclesiology), and dialogical. The prerequisite to the latter, dialogical approach, is an explicit ecclesiological self understanding. This is not provided by either biblicist or *communio* ecclesiologies, which posit an idealist understanding of the church, but are not grounded in the context of concrete church praxis. While the scriptures, and theological notions such as *communio*, will inform ecclesiology, it is clear that an analysis of particular church communities will need to take into account the narrative and self-understanding of those communities. Our purpose in the next chapter is to construct an ecclesiological method capable of facilitating this task.

Chapter Two: Construction of a Concrete Ecclesiological Method

2.1. Introduction: The Implications of a Heuristic Definition of Church

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the biblicist and *communio* approaches to ecclesiology provide invaluable resources for the construction of an Australian pentecostal ecclesiology but, among other things, they suffer from an idealism which insufficiently accounts for ecclesial praxis. The dialogical approach, on the other hand, requires an ecclesiological self-understanding that has not yet been developed by Australian pentecostals. An alternative approach is suggested by Joseph Komonchak, in *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, and developed by Neil Ormerod in various articles.¹⁵⁸ Komonchak and Ormerod are schooled in the transcendental method of Bernard Lonergan, and propose an ecclesiology that is grounded in the concrete narrative of the church.

Perhaps the most important distinction between the various approaches to the task of ecclesiology, relates to the choice of definition of the term “church,” since this definition drives the subsequent methodology. In the case of both the biblicist and *communio* models, the definition of “church” is idealised, framed by the ideal of first century Christianity, or the ideal of an eschatological, perichoretic community, reflecting the triune God. Nicholas Healy, labelling these idealist approaches as “blueprint ecclesiologies,” suggests that the result is the tendency to “reflect upon the church in abstraction from its concrete identity.”¹⁵⁹ This leads to a lack of explicit analysis on the church’s institutions and praxis. When institutions and praxis are considered, the “perfect” nature of blueprint ecclesiology leads to an inevitably negative assessment, since the real cannot match the ideal.

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology* (Boston: Boston College, 1995). Ormerod’s articles include, Neil Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry: Systematic Perspectives,” *Pacifica* 10 (1997): 333-351; Neil Ormerod, “System, History and the Theology of Ministry,” *Theological Studies* 61, no. 3 (2002): 432-446; Neil Ormerod, “The Structure of a Systematic Ecclesiology,” *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 3-30.

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 26.

In comparison to idealist definitions, Komonchak defines the church heuristically, noting that:

The object of ecclesiology may be described as the set (or sets) of experiences, understandings, symbols, words, judgements, statements, decisions, actions, relationships, and institutions which distinguish the group of people called “the Church.”¹⁶⁰

This heuristic definition leads to a concrete methodology. Concrete ecclesiology will include the ideal, insofar as that ideal can be shown to be central to the symbols that constitute the church. It will also include an explicit analysis of the church’s self-understanding, institution and praxis. The implications for ecclesiological method are wide-ranging.

2.1.1. Which Church? Ecclesiology Focused on the AGA

If the church is defined heuristically, as Ormerod observes, the first question that arises is, “To which Church are we referring?”¹⁶¹ The assumption of an idealized ecclesiology is that a theology of the church should focus on those ideal elements that are common to all churches, since the ideal is necessarily universal. This gives rise to distinctions between the invisible and the visible church. Ecclesiology focuses on that which is supposedly essential to church, and disregards or minimises the importance of institution and praxis. As we have already noted, the result is an abstract ecclesiology. This is nowhere more apparent than in the example of trinitarian, *communio* ecclesiology, which is used to understand realities as diverse as the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and pentecostal churches.

While ecclesiology may focus on the idealised church, it is equally acceptable and, given our heuristic definition, even necessary, to focus on the data of a particular church or movement of churches. In our case, the churches under consideration are

¹⁶⁰ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 57.

¹⁶¹ Ormerod, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 6.

pentecostal assemblies in Australia. Given the diversity within pentecostalism, we shall explore the emerging pentecostal movement as a whole until the late 1920s, and then limit our analysis to the Assemblies of God in Australia (AGA), which formed during the 1930s. In restricting our focus to the AGA, not only are we seeking to make our task manageable in scope, but we are also recognising that the AGA is the largest and most influential pentecostal fellowship in Australia.¹⁶² The conclusions reached in studying this fellowship are likely to be applicable to other Australian pentecostal churches and fellowships, since the AGA has played a prominent role in the organisations that have united the various pentecostal movements in recent decades, including the Australian Pentecostal Ministers Fellowship and the Australian Christian Churches.¹⁶³

The question that then arises is, What will an ecclesiology grounded in the concrete narrative of the AGA look like? According to Komonchak and Ormerod, it will include the following: (1) a narrative structure, (2) a history of explicit or implicit ecclesial reflection, (3) historical judgement, and (4) theological and sociological explanation and assessment. In what follows we will explicate these tasks in relation to the research methodology that will be adopted in this thesis.

2.1.2. Narrative Structure: The Importance of History for Ecclesiology

A concrete ecclesiology will, firstly, “tell a story of the Church from its origins until the present, with perhaps intimations into the future.”¹⁶⁴ This means that the ecclesiologist will need to narrate the history of the church under consideration. This is a potentially controversial assertion. Idealist ecclesiologies tend to divorce the task of theology from history or, otherwise, to appropriate the insights of history in an *ad hoc* fashion. We shall return to the problems of “theological purism” when we consider the ecclesiological significance of the discipline of sociology. For now, it is enough to reiterate our critique of the abstraction that results from any ecclesiological analysis that ignores history. Furthermore, even *ad hoc* appropriation of church

¹⁶² It is also important to note my own affiliation is with the AGA. I am an ordained AGA minister, and teach at Southern Cross College, the national AGA ministry training college. This affiliation also influences my choice to investigate AGA ecclesiology.

¹⁶³ See chapter five of this thesis for further details on these organizations, which were formed after 1980 in an effort to create unity among pentecostal churches and movements in Australia.

¹⁶⁴ Ormerod, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 6.

history creates the potential for distorted analysis. In the example of Volf's free-church ecclesiology, he repeatedly appropriates the "voice of the 'first baptist,' John Smyth (1554-1612)."¹⁶⁵ But we are given little insight into the historical context in which Smyth's ecclesial understanding arose. Similarly, Volf makes only incidental reference to the historical context of democratisation in Western society, even though it is likely that this context was more important for free church ecclesiology than was biblical exegesis, or a particular understanding of the trinity.¹⁶⁶ Without a systematic appropriation of historical insight, ecclesiology is unlikely to understand its object; the "set of experiences, understandings, symbols, words, judgements, statements, decisions, actions, relationships, and institutions" called "church."

Since the church is realised historically, understanding the narrative of the church will involve reflection on the first century church described in the scriptures.¹⁶⁷ It will also involve reflection on the history of the church from the New Testament to the present. This makes systematic ecclesiology, in its totality, an overwhelming task. Of course ecclesiology is not done in isolation, and the ecclesologist, focusing on a particular context, will necessarily assume and draw on the work of others.¹⁶⁸ This means that, for the purposes of this thesis, we shall focus our attention on the narrative of emerging Australian pentecostalism and the AGA, all the while recognising the link to the broader heritage of the church. Since an adequate history of the AGA has not yet been published, a sufficient (though not exhaustive) articulating of its narrative is one of the contributions of this thesis.

It is also noteworthy that a narrative structure to ecclesiology is well suited to pentecostal self-understanding. As observed in the previous chapter, pentecostals have not defined themselves institutionally (as in Catholicism), or propositionally/doctrinally (as in evangelicalism), but narratively. As Scott Ellington observes, "it has been widely argued in emerging pentecostal theology that pentecostalism is an orally based, narratively expressed tradition, and that testimonies of what God has done in the life of the individual believer and the local community of

¹⁶⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 23.

¹⁶⁶ See our analysis in chapter three.

¹⁶⁷ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 49.

¹⁶⁸ Lonergan describes this appropriation of the work and understanding of others as "belief." Bernard Lonergan, *Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 41-52.

faith form an integral part of pentecostal worship and faith.”¹⁶⁹ We have seen that, in relation to biblical hermeneutics, pentecostals perceive a similarity and continuity between themselves and characters in the biblical narrative, a worldview that is significant, not only for the reading of scripture, but for ecclesiological self understanding. To again borrow Wright’s analogy,¹⁷⁰ the idea that we can understand ourselves as participants in the final act of a five act play means that self-understanding will come from the telling of our interpretation of the earlier acts of the play, as well as from the narration of our continued role in that story.¹⁷¹

2.1.3. History of Explicit or Implicit Ecclesial Reflection

While the “story” of the church is historically important, the ecclesiolgist is equally (or even more) interested in the way in which the historical church has understood its story. As Ormerod notes, “the history of Church ultimately becomes intelligible only by including a history of theological reflection upon the Church.”¹⁷² This history will include reflection upon historical perspectives on ecclesiological ideals and symbols, as well as the manner in which these ideals and symbols interact with praxis. That is, the ecclesiolgist is concerned with the interaction between the actual history of the church, and the history of reflection upon the church. Since, as we have argued previously, theology will involve the interplay between orthodoxy and orthopraxy, it is just as likely that the praxis of church will inform the ideals and the symbols of church, as it is for the ideals or symbols to inform the praxis.

It is also possible that self-conceptions that arise within a particular story can be divorced from the facts of that story, or at least, that some facts will be remembered and others forgotten. In this respect, sociologists and theologians alike have noted the epistemological importance of the symbolic. Peter Berger suggests that symbols are

¹⁶⁹ Scott Ellington, “The Costly Loss of Testimony,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16 (2000): 48-59.

¹⁷⁰ See chapter 1.3.1.

¹⁷¹ Wright, “How Can the Bible be Authoritative.”

¹⁷² Ormerod, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 7.

the primary means by which individuals acquire transcendent meanings.¹⁷³ In discussing Berger's insight, Don Grant notes that:

Individuals therefore constantly seek out broader meanings capable of encapsulating and integrating their disparate experiences of work, family and community. Such broad meanings are usually evoked by symbols that can be reduced neither to the world of facts nor to the interior subjective state of an individual.¹⁷⁴

Berger's work has been particularly concerned to develop the importance of religious symbols, and focused on the universal meanings that religious symbols evoke. As Grant observes, the discipline of sociology subsequently distanced itself from the search for universal meaning, instead noting the contextual nature of symbolism, in which symbols are seen to contain meaning for particular communities. Since the meaning of religious symbols can alter over time and, similarly, alter from community to community, the task of sociology (insofar as it is interested in social identity derived from community symbols) is to identify social variants in symbolic meaning. In respect to the tasks of theology and ecclesiology, Paul Tillich suggests that a symbol points to, and participates in, a reality beyond itself, and therefore "grows and dies according to the correlation between that which is symbolized and the persons who receive it as symbol."¹⁷⁵ He notes that the truth of a religious symbol is not related to the truth or otherwise of the empirical assertions about the symbol but, rather, "a religious symbol is true if it adequately expresses the correlation of some person with final revelation."¹⁷⁶

This distinction between the actual narrative, and the symbolic interpretation of that narrative, is particularly pertinent in pentecostalism. Pentecostals have tended to have a restorationist impulse, looking to "restore the primitive or original order of things as

¹⁷³ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

¹⁷⁴ Don II Grant, "Symbols, Stories and Practices: New Empirical Directions in the Study of Religious Meaning," *The Sociological Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (2001): 233-260.

¹⁷⁵ Paul Tillich, "Texts: God as Being and as Living," *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries*, ed. Kline Taylor (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 166.

¹⁷⁶ Tillich, "God as Being," 167.

revealed in Scripture, free from the accretions of church history and tradition.”¹⁷⁷ Restorationists tend to be ahistorical or, when contemplating history, they “often remember selectively,”¹⁷⁸ using history to serve a purpose. In this manner, history for pentecostals has been used symbolically, and this usage will say something about the self-understanding of the church.

With regard to the narrative structure of ecclesiology, this means that the ecclesial narrative will tell the story of the “experiences, words, judgements, statements decisions, actions, relationship and institutions” of the church,¹⁷⁹ as well as the self-understanding of that story. This self-understanding is often mediated by the symbolic, particularly insofar as these symbols are expressed by formal and informal doctrinal positions, which (we have argued in chapter one) are ecclesially constitutive. Further, given the informal nature of many pentecostal sources, this self-understanding may well be implicit rather than explicit. But, as Komonchak suggests, “a notion of the Church can be recognized even when the Church has not been made the object of explicit attention.”¹⁸⁰

Telling the story of the AGA, and the self understanding of that story, is a complex task. This is not only because very little academic research into the movement has yet been undertaken, but also because of the nature of pentecostalism itself. As mentioned above, its restorationist inclinations have meant that the movement has been ahistorical, or otherwise selective and pragmatic in its recollections. This is exacerbated by the millennial fervour of pentecostalism’s early years, since the idea that “Jesus is coming back tomorrow” is not conducive to the writing or collection of historical sources. This means that much of the material available to the researcher is oral in nature, either because it has not been documented at all and is retained in people’s recollections, or otherwise, what is documented is in the form of testimony or sermon.

¹⁷⁷ Edith Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1993), 12.

¹⁷⁸ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 13.

¹⁷⁹ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 57.

¹⁸⁰ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 68.

Discussing historiography in the context of American pentecostalism, Everett Wilson notes that writing its history is made complex by the experiential nature of the revival, which is difficult to encapsulate and chronicle.¹⁸¹ The experiences that are related are often supernatural and emotional, and there are very few testimonies of “natural” experiences, such as a long recovery wrought under the care of a doctor, or even unhealed sickness. This is not because these things didn’t occur, but because they didn’t constitute testimony. Consequently the researcher is left with the problem that taking these experiences at face value will yield entirely subjective results, and yet, “confining the account only to the empirical facts and social theory acceptable to the academy” strips the movement of its dynamic and self understanding.¹⁸² Furthermore, Wilson notes that the ahistorical nature of the movement results in confused chronology and “an anachronistic mixing of later developments and figures in descriptions of the ‘early days’.”¹⁸³

This is not to say that the story will be impossible to tell. Researchers into Australian pentecostal history have at their disposal movement publications, such as *The Australian Evangel*, the printing history of which spans the entire history of the AGA, as well as various other journals, conference reports and executive minutes.¹⁸⁴ In addition, there exists a wealth of oral history that is currently being recorded through the interview efforts of the Pentecostal Heritage Centre at Southern Cross College. None of these sources set out a systematic, critical ecclesiology. Instead, they are subjective, pragmatic, and sporadic, and thereby require a careful and humble treatment that balances empirical historiography with a certain sympathy to the movement’s self-understanding. It also means that no telling of the story can claim to be conclusive.

¹⁸¹ Everett Wilson, “They Crossed the Red Sea, Didn’t They? Critical History and Pentecostal Beginnings,” *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Byron Klaus and Douglas Peterson Murray Dempster (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), 85-115.

¹⁸² Wilson, “They Crossed the Red Sea,” 89.

¹⁸³ Wilson, “They Crossed the Red Sea,” 92.

¹⁸⁴ Whilst the collections of these journals have been difficult to obtain, the Australasian Pentecostal Heritage Centre, of which I am a participant in the researching and writing of this thesis, is in the process of establishing a complete collection.

2.1.4. Historical Judgement

As R.G. Collingwood notes, “sympathy” is more than an emotional attachment, it is a necessary mode of understanding for historically-rooted traditions.¹⁸⁵ “Sympathy” to the perspectives of the pentecostal community, therefore, is not to be equated with naïvety. Nor is it to be ideologically driven, as might be the premise in ecumenical dialogue, since participants are required to adopt the perspective of the group they represent. Instead, the ecclesiologist will present a critical narrative that “recognises perspectives and interests, agendas and polemics in its sources.”¹⁸⁶ In this manner, the task of the ecclesiologist is to do more than simply tell the story of the church. In addition, it is necessary to make judgements about that story. As Lonergan suggests, the task of the theologian is to assess what is “moving forward in particular groups at particular times,” positively and negatively, in decline or redemption.¹⁸⁷ This has implications for the way one tells the story of the church, since the focus of the narrative will, where possible, be upon transitions. Change can be said to be the one constant for all of life, and this is particularly true for revivalist movements. Prolonged focus on revival leads to an expectation of continued change, and this has led Hutchinson to comment that pentecostal and charismatic movements in Australia have developed a culture of change. He notes that, in the 1970s, the movement “sought to ‘flow into the new thing that God is doing’. And when that new thing faltered in the early 1980s, there was the new thing after that, and the new thing after that.”¹⁸⁸

In a context of continuous change, defining periods of transition will be somewhat artificial. Nonetheless, for the sake of narrating the story and facilitating critical assessment, we shall analyse three key periods of transition. In chapter three we will consider the currents of globalising voluntarist religion in the midst of which pentecostalism was born, as well as the emergence of pentecostalism in Australia to the late 1920s. In chapter four we consider the institutional formation of the AGA,

¹⁸⁵ See R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, revised edition, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1994.

¹⁸⁶ Ormerod, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 6.

¹⁸⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 178.

¹⁸⁸ Hutchinson, “The New Thing God is Doing,” 14.

from the 1930s to the 1960s. In chapter five we finalise our narrative from the 1960s to the turn of the twenty first century, by recounting changes to the AGA resulting from the impact of the charismatic and church growth movements.

2.2. Theological Engagement with the Social Sciences

To explain and assess what is “moving forward,” ecclesiology will need to take into account both theological and sociological constructs and critiques. Theological assessment will involve a dialectic engagement between the church under investigation and the broader ecclesiological reflection of the church in ecumenical context. It will take into account the various ecclesially constitutive elements that we discussed in our methodological survey in the previous chapter, including the appropriation of the Scriptures, the charismatic orientation of the church, the process of institutionalisation, the relationship between the local church and other churches, the nature and function of doctrine, church structures and authorities, and the missionary priority of the church.

If, as Komonchak argues, “the object of ecclesiology may be described as the set (or sets) of experiences, understandings, symbols, words, judgements, statements, decisions, actions, relationships, and institutions which distinguish the group of people called ‘the Church’,”¹⁸⁹ then theologians will need to incorporate the human sciences into their analysis. This is because the church is a single reality with multiple dimensions. It is both a divine and human institution,¹⁹⁰ and therefore ecclesiology will need to appropriate the discipline of sociology if it is to properly understand its object.

Not all would agree with this position, arguing instead that theology is a self-contained discipline that stands above (and even against) the human sciences.¹⁹¹ But

¹⁸⁹ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 57.

¹⁹⁰ Not, as Roger Haight suggests, “a social reality, on the one hand, and a theological reality on the other hand... (in which) these two dimensions of the church are quite distinct.” (Roger S. J. Haight, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” *Science Et Esprit* 43 (1993): 253-280).

¹⁹¹ John Milbank takes this position, although I shall respond to his critique of theological use of the social sciences in our subsequent discussion of liberation theology and its use of conflictualist sociology.

this critique of the theological appropriation of the social sciences, which echoes Barth's critique of natural theology, fails to take into account the range of the sources that inform the task of systematic theology. In challenging this "methodological purism," Clodovis Boff observes that even what he calls "first theology" - contemplation of the triune God - is mediated by philosophy, tradition, reason and culture. This mediation is equally (or more) important when contemplating what he calls "second theology" - humanity, church and society - since the latter is social in its very nature.¹⁹² The only way to avoid this conclusion is to argue that the object of ecclesiology is an ideal (either biblical or eschatological), and even then one is on shaky ground, since an ideal society is still a social reality, and can only be understood as such.

Apart from conservative, biblicist theologians, few would argue that theology, and in particularly ecclesiology, is necessarily antithetical to the social sciences (except Milbank). Even Volf, with his idealised eschatological trinitarian ecclesiology, agrees that "theology needs help in understanding the social shapes of a pilgrim church."¹⁹³ The issue is not whether theologians should use the social sciences, but how they should use them. Volf's own response is telling in this regard:

A theologian should be ready to learn, even to be told what to learn, but should never give up the prerogative of ultimately deciding when and from whom help is needed and how best to use it. So I make no apologies for a piecemeal and occasional appeal to social scientists, . . . treating them in *ad hoc* fashion.¹⁹⁴

Whether this is an adequate way for theologians to appropriate the social sciences is widely debated. This is not only because piecemeal appropriation of the social sciences cannot hope to provide a systematic understanding of ecclesial society, but because the discipline of sociology itself is not a simple, unified science, that can be "dipped into" for the purpose of providing a single, objective analysis. Gregory Baum criticises theologians for doing this very thing, arguing that they too often fail

¹⁹² Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987), 24-25.

¹⁹³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 5.

¹⁹⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 5.

to take into account the various, sometimes competing, approaches of different schools of sociology. This is particularly important since the different schools are based on different assumptions and values. It is therefore imperative that the theologian wishing to appropriate sociological tools understands the nature of these assumptions, and the values which undergird analysis.¹⁹⁵ Similarly Boff critiques what he describes as the “faulty articulation (or semantic mix) of socio-analytic mediation,”¹⁹⁶ whereby theologians appropriate sociological categories with “a certain ignorance with respect to the particular epistemological identity of a given discourse.”¹⁹⁷ The result will be a naïve, or otherwise biased reading of society, since it is likely that the choice of sociological discourse will be determined by the way in which the resulting data “fits” theological suppositions, rather than by knowledge of sociological method and values.

2.2.1. Which Sociology?

If theologians are going to appropriate the social sciences, it is clear that they will need to consider what the social sciences are, what they claim to study, and how these aims can be assimilated into the theological task. In the following section of this chapter we will outline the purpose (or definition) of sociology, and assess the alternate approaches of social scientists, especially their assumptions understood in the light of a Christian worldview. We will then conclude by drawing on the work and logic of Neil Ormerod to posit a way forward for theological appropriation of the social sciences, which can help in our understanding of the church and churches and, in particular, the AGA

Sociology is the study of what is called “society,” although what “society” is is not necessarily self-evident. Roy Bhaskar observes that it is often assumed that society is nothing more than “a construction of thought,”¹⁹⁸ since society (supposedly) consists simply of collected individuals, and is thus nothing more than “a group.” Yet this

¹⁹⁵ Gregory Baum, “Sociology and Theology,” *Concilium* 1, no. 10 (1974): 22-31.

¹⁹⁶ Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 27.

¹⁹⁷ Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 28.

¹⁹⁸ Roy Bhaskar, “Societies,” *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*, eds Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collier, Tony Lawson, and Alan Norrie (London: Routledge, 1998), 206-243.

conception fails to take into account the structures that enable individuals to relate to one another, which enable individuals to become a group and, more importantly, that shape individual behaviour. These structures, which comprise repeated patterns of behaviour and human relations in all their multifarious constructions, are “society” and “societies” and, contrary to nominalist individualism, are “real” by virtue of their impact on both the individual and the group. Of course society does not stand on its own, apart from the individuals that constitute it, “but equally, once created, it is encountered by the individual both as an alien facticity and as a coercive instrumentality.”¹⁹⁹ In other words, social structures both determine and affect individual behaviour and identity, and are, at the same time, themselves determined by and transformed by human behaviour. Sociology therefore involves the reflexive study of these social structures and their relation to the individual.

If the church is understood to be more than a theological construct and is, as we have argued, a concrete reality, it is readily apparent that it is a social reality. Contrary to the voluntarist conception of the church, wherein the church is understood as simply the gathering of saved individuals, it is clear that church social structures, in all their various conceptions, shape individual Christian behaviour and identity and, at the same time, are shaped by, and potentially transformed by, those same individuals. It is thus obvious why ecclesiology should incorporate sociology, whose object is not individual soteriology (although it has implications therein), but the ecclesial social structures in interaction with which that soteriology is lived out. Having said this, as Clare Watkins observes, “both ecclesiology and sociological theory should alert us to the danger of oversimplifying the complex reality of the Church. If we are to remain primarily theologians, we must fully appreciate the Church as a peculiar sort of organization.”²⁰⁰ This means that not only will theologians need to take into account ecclesiological constructs in addition to social theory, but they will also need to contemplate the assumptions of the particular social theory that is being applied to help understand the church, since these assumptions will have theological significance.

¹⁹⁹ Bhaskar, “Societies,” 213.

²⁰⁰ Clare Watkins, “Organizing the People of God: Social-Science Theories of Organization in Ecclesiology,” *Theological Studies* 52, no. 4 (1991): 689-711, 693.

In *Elements of a Social Ethic*,²⁰¹ Gibson Winter proposes a typology for the social sciences, which categorises sociology into four distinct methods: positivism, functionalism, voluntarism and intentionalism. It is a typology that is widely used, and similar categorisations can be found in the theological discussion of the social sciences by authors such as Gregory Baum²⁰² and John Milbank.²⁰³ The typology essentially follows the historical development of the social sciences although, as Winter observes, each style persists in various guises into the present,²⁰⁴ so that the debate about which approach should be adopted in particular circumstances (if any) continues to be relevant.

2.2.2. Positivism

As a distinct discipline, the social sciences are a product of the enlightenment and, consequently, the positivist approach to sociology attempts to follow scientific paradigms. This approach understands society as an object that can be objectively and empirically measured. The empirical data will provide the sociologist with a set of paradigms or laws that not only explain the way society works, but that will enable him/her to predict its future. In its early conceptions, enlightenment sociologists, such as Herbert Spencer and William Sumner, applied Darwinian paradigms to their understanding of society. They developed evolutionary-type “laws”, knowledge of which would facilitate control of social development. Winter catalogues examples of some of the disastrous applications of this so-called knowledge in various national social policies, particularly economic applications.²⁰⁵ For our purposes it is enough to note the philosophical limitations of this approach. The greatest difficulty relates to the reduction of society to “object.” As Winter observes:

²⁰¹ Gibson Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic: Scientific and Ethical Perspectives on Social Process* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).

²⁰² Baum, “Sociology and Theology,” 22-31, whose types are: positivist, functionalist and conflictualist (the latter being similar to Winter’s voluntarism).

²⁰³ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1991), who combines positivism and functionalism under the single rubric of positivism, and whose alternative ‘dialectics’ is similar to Winter’s Voluntarism.

²⁰⁴ Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic*, 34.

²⁰⁵ Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic*, 8-9.

Knowledge of society reveals man's enslavement to societal forces. Man ceases to be a subject and becomes an object of calculable forces external to him. Whereas physical science increases man's control of his situation, social science discloses man's bondage to his situation.²⁰⁶

Objectification leads to the false assumption that it is possible to discover universal social laws, and thereby predict social development. It is an assumption that forgets that the human subject is capable of unpredictable creativity, and unpredictable evil. Positivist sociology thereby "neglects that which is most specifically human, that is, questions of meanings and values, from its horizons."²⁰⁷ In the context of ecclesiology, it ignores divine revelation and human creativity, which constitute the mystery of ecclesial reality, and likewise ignores the unpredictable fact of human sin.

It is apparent that theologians, whose primary concern relates to human meaning and value, should be cautious in their use of this positivist approach to the social sciences. Having said this, it is noteworthy that, in Australia, the most prominent sociological research into Australian churches is the National Church Life Survey (NCLS), which adopts this empirical method, using a four-yearly survey to measure ecclesial beliefs and trends. The survey does provide valuable information, yet the ambiguity of its conclusions is readily apparent. For example, the first major publication from this survey, *Winds of Change*, informed us that churches with a literalist approach to reading the bible are more likely to be growing than churches with a less conservative understanding of the text. These literalist churches will, apparently, have a more satisfied and active congregation, who are more likely to be involved in evangelistic and missionary activities.²⁰⁸ Whilst there is no doubt that this is an interesting observation, it raises a number of questions. Is church growth caused by literalism, or are both literalism and growth related to another, indeterminate source? Will a church that adopts a literalist approach to Scripture grow? Is church growth sufficient reason to "value" literalistic bible reading? Does the nature of the questions addressed in the survey suggest an implicit bias in the researcher, whose supposed objectivity is

²⁰⁶ Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic*, 9.

²⁰⁷ Neil Ormerod, "Theology and the Human Sciences: The Contribution of Bernard Lonergan," Unpublished paper, Catholic Institute of Sydney, Sydney, 2002, 6.

²⁰⁸ Peter Kaldor, John Bellamy, Ruth Powell, Marilyn Correy, and Keith Castle, *Winds of Change: The Experience of Church in a Changing Australia* (Sydney: Lancer, 1994), 45-59.

defeated in the limits of the survey? We could go on, but suffice to note that empirical research and the positivist approach to the sociological task will, on its own, be insufficient for the theologian seeking understanding of church society.

2.2.3. Functionalism

A second approach to sociology, functionalism, contemplates the social structures that facilitate a harmonious, stable and integrated society. With this purpose driving the analysis, sociologists, such as Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, look for social structures that facilitate equilibrium, either by maintaining the status quo or otherwise by enabling society to adapt to the changing environment, and then return to a new equilibrium.²⁰⁹ Of particular interest to the theologian is the functionalist analysis of religion, which contemplates religion without reference to metaphysical categories, instead, focusing on the role that religion plays in society. It has been suggested that, amongst other things, religion offers individuals emotional support, security, ethical norms, and collective identity, each of which contribute an essential element to the stability of society.²¹⁰ In narrowing the focus of attention to the ecclesial society itself, the functionalist might observe the ways in which alternate ecclesial structures manage tension and thereby ensure stability. It is readily apparent how such an analysis might be of use to the ecclesiologist, particularly when biblical metaphors such as “the body of Christ” can be understood from functionalist perspective, as intended to bring harmony to a diverse church.²¹¹

Yet functionalism is not without its difficulties. Milbank, who is particularly brutal in his critique of the functionalist approach to religion, observes that “it turns out to be a device for leaving the true content of the one [religion], and the desirability of the other [society], quite unquestioned.”²¹² What is hidden in the functionalist analysis is, as for positivism, an inability to address questions of value. This is readily apparent

²⁰⁹ Gregory Baum, *Essays in Critical Theory* (Kansas: Sheed and Ward, 1994), 143.

²¹⁰ Thomas O’Dea, *The Sociology of Religion* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966).

²¹¹ Ormerod, “Theology and the Human Sciences,” 19.

²¹² Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 76.

in Durkheim's attempt to explain suicide on the basis of sociological analysis,²¹³ or his argument that deviance and crime fulfil a necessary function for social order, that of establishing moral boundaries.²¹⁴ The implication of this analysis is not only that evil can be understood, but that evil is in some sense necessary for human society. There is a difference between saying that human society will always include evil, and that evil is a social necessity. Furthermore, functionalism does not achieve its intention of objectivity, since it takes the subjective assumption that the most important value is social harmony. While Christian theology recognises the need for social cohesion, it is also implicit in the gospel that the status quo is often in need of the sort of critique that functionalist sociology is unable to provide. And this is true as much for ecclesial society, including the AGA, as it is for society as a whole.

2.2.4. Conflictualism

The third approach described by Winter, voluntarism, otherwise labelled conflictualism, is a reaction against the functionalist affirmation of the necessity of the status quo. The conflictualist argues that society is categorised by "conflict of interests, powers and values."²¹⁵ Consequently, society exists in the flux of the tensions between diverse social groups whose interests compete, and it is this competition that leads to social change.

Max Weber is one of the most prominent sociologists of this perspective, and it is noteworthy that his analysis has been applied in various ways to church communities, including pentecostal communities. For example, Margaret Poloma, in her investigations into the Assemblies of God in America, adopted Weber's description of institutionalisation to describe processes that were underway in that community.²¹⁶ According to Weber's investigations into the sociology of religion, social structures are determined by the interplay between charismatic, traditional and bureaucratic

²¹³ Emile Durkheim, "Suicide: A Study in Sociology," *Theology and Sociology: A Reader*, ed. Robin Gill (London: Cassell, 1996), 46.

²¹⁴ Emile Durkheim, "Social Normality," *Emile Durkheim: Selections From His Work*, ed. George Simpson (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1963).

²¹⁵ Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic*, 192.

²¹⁶ Margaret Poloma, *The Assemblies of God at the Crossroads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

authority. In this schema, social change is instigated by the charismatic individual, and subsequently regulated or routinised by structures wielding traditional and bureaucratic authority. The inevitable result in the religious community is the transition from a radical, prophetic society, to a priestly, bureaucratic organisation.²¹⁷ Applying this typology to the Assemblies of God, Poloma concludes that pentecostal stress on religious experience through baptism in the Holy Spirit has, to some extent, prevented the complete routinisation of charisma although, she goes on to claim, the movement is at a crossroads, and the “clouds of institutionalization threaten to quench the sparks of charisma.”²¹⁸ Her reasons for this conclusion are complex, but suffice to note that, excluding divine intervention, Poloma is convinced by Weber’s thesis of the necessary conflict between charismatic and bureaucratic authority, and the inevitability of institutional routinisation.²¹⁹

Appropriation of the conflictualist approach to sociology is also apparent in liberation theology’s notion of class conflict, which is taken from Karl Marx’s classic analysis of the competing interests of workers, in conflict with the owners of the means of production. This analysis posits an inevitable conflict between social classes, and argues for the privileging of the interests of the poor. Critics observe that this priority for the poor is ideological, a fact admitted by liberationists, who respond with the observation that the alternative, functionalism, gives ideological priority to those with political or economic power. The conflictualist unmasking of class ideologies enables the sociologist to choose an ideology, a decision that Christian liberationists, faced with overwhelming oppression, make on the basis of the gospel’s priority for the poor. The difference between the functionalist and this conflictualist approach to the social sciences can be illustrated by the type of question each asks of the social data. Where functionalism would ask, How does this social structure promote social harmony? the conflictualist is concerned with the question, Whose interest does this serve?²²⁰ In the case of liberationists, this leads to the “call to read society from below,”²²¹ and a praxis oriented to advocacy for the interests of the poorer classes.

²¹⁷ See Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon, 1963), chapter five.

²¹⁸ Poloma, *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 243.

²¹⁹ We further explicate Poloma’s analysis in chapter three of this thesis.

²²⁰ Comparative questions taken from Ormerod, “Theology and the Human Sciences,” 30.

²²¹ Baum, *Essays in Critical Theory*, 158.

It is the ability of conflictualist analysis to recognise and unmask ideology that leads Clodovis Boff and Gregory Baum to argue that theologians should prefer conflict sociology to functionalist approaches.²²² The dilemma is that, as noted by Winter, “they [conflictualists] impose upon the social and cultural world a notion of radical disharmony.”²²³ In the case of Weber, institutionalisation, while socially inevitable, is innately negative, since it establishes structures that oppress particular groups. Likewise, Marxist analysis inevitably returns to a functionalist orientation when (or if) the workers gain control of society, a fact that will again mask ideological oppression. In other words, there is no basis in conflictualism for understanding harmony, nor for recognising the importance of social structures and institutions that promote human flourishing.

This raises an important critique of the modern tendency to adopt Weber’s negative view of institutionalisation. As Ormerod observes, the idea of a “necessary evil” is ontologically problematic, and forgets the fact that “institutional forms provide an efficient means to achieve certain recurrent needs within the community.”²²⁴ We should be able to assert that institutionalisation is a valuable and constructive component of human social development. Rather than critique institutionalisation *per se*, we can critique biased expressions of institutionalisation that not only fail to satisfy recurrent needs, but that actually prevent particular individuals or groups from having such needs met.

It is also apparent that conflict analysis is locked into a hermeneutic of suspicion, and the result is an ideological reading that will inevitably find what it seeks – i.e. conflict – even where it doesn’t exist. This is readily apparent in some feminist analysis, which redirects its focus from economic to gender conflict. Carried to its extreme conclusion, this suspicion extends right to the heart of the gospel, as is apparent in Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s explanation of the title of her book, *But She Said*. The title is derived from Fiorenza’s reading of the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman, who came to a seemingly unwilling and Jewish Jesus to request healing for her gentile daughter. According to Schüssler Fiorenza, Jesus is engaged in “religious prejudice

²²² Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, p.57-60 & Baum, *Essays in Critical Theory*, 158.

²²³ Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic*, 193.

²²⁴ Ormerod, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 16.

and exclusivist ethnocentrism.”²²⁵ In her reading, the hero of the story is the woman, who overcomes Jesus’ prejudice with her “but” (Mark 7:24-30, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs off the masters table”).²²⁶ In this example of conflictualist, ideological critique, Schüssler Fiorenza even has trouble finding an altruistic and self-giving motive in the life and ministry of Jesus.

In the search for conflict, we may miss the possibility that institutions and authorities may in fact be working for the good of all. Of course they may not be, but it is important that the method used does not presume, before it begins its analysis, the necessary existence of competing interests.

2.2.5. Theologism

As much as it is important for the ecclesiohistorian to unmask oppressive church structures, s/he cannot surrender to what Milbank describes as “the myth of primordial violence.”²²⁷ For Milbank, the inherent weaknesses of both functional and conflictual (or, in his terminology, “dialectical”) sociology, renders the whole secular sociological rhetoric as incompatible with Christian theology, especially since it is “violent” in its entirety. According to Milbank, functionalism buttresses the violence of the powerful, conflictualism establishes violence as the social norm.

Milbank’s criticisms echo our arguments above. He also highlights the sociological myth of the secular and its “policing of the sublime,”²²⁸ which results in both the marginalisation of religion to the private sphere, and the reduction of religious meaning to sociological categories. He follows the postmodern critique of modern science, in particular the tendency of the human sciences to postulate universal meta-narratives, which become abstracted from the particularity and contingency of

²²⁵ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon, 1992), 11.

²²⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 12.

²²⁷ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 262.

²²⁸ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 101-140.

history.²²⁹ Yet Milbank is not content to adopt the nihilism of postmodernity, which he says is simply another expression of the tendency to an ontology of violence.²³⁰ Instead, he argues that Christian theology, namely Christian ecclesiology, is the only true sociology. Rather than the theologian or ecclesiologist borrowing from the data of social science, Milbank argues that ecclesiology itself should be used to read society, so that “the Christian *mythos*, *logos* and *praxis*” can interpret, and where necessary confront, society and societies in all their historical particularity.²³¹

At this point it seems that we may have come a full circle, with Milbank essentially denying the place of sociology in theological discussion, or rather, replacing secular approaches to the social sciences with an ecclesiological sociology. Boff describes such substitution as “theologism,” the substitution of theological mediation for socio-analytic mediation.²³² There are at least two problems with Milbank’s proposal. Firstly, although he tries to argue that “ecclesiology is rigorously concerned with the actual genesis of real historical churches, not simply with the imagination of an ecclesial ideal,”²³³ his ecclesial sociology necessarily assumes an ideal church, since in reality, not even the church narrated in the New Testament could stand up to the weight of the task he sets it. Nor does the gospel intend that it do so, since only Christ is heralded as model. His argument is thereby rendered self-contradictory. He critiques secular sociology for its abstraction from concrete history, but then puts in its place little more than an ecclesial abstraction.

Secondly, Milbank’s critique of sociology is driven by the rejection of the grace / nature distinction, as is apparent in his assumption that theology can take us “beyond secular reason.” This assumption determines his conclusion, that rational (scientific) constructions are inevitably flawed, and thereby rendered useless.²³⁴ While this may find resonance with postmodern deconstructions of the so-called modern meta-narrative, it is not a position that can be easily reconciled with the Christian doctrine

²²⁹ A critique shared by Winter, whose basic argument is that conflictualism, functionalism, and positivism represent increasing levels of abstraction from the history of human meaning and value. Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic*, 112-118.

²³⁰ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 278-321.

²³¹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 381.

²³² Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 26.

²³³ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 380.

²³⁴ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 208.

of creation, which professes the rationality of the created order. The fact of sin does not deny this rationality, it simply notes the reality that humanity often behaves irrationally. There is thus a difference between saying that the social sciences must be cautious in their claims to having “grasped truth,” due to the irrationality of human sin, and saying that the rational endeavour cannot lead to understanding. On the ground of the affirmation that the universe is divine creation, we shall adopt the former conclusion.

2.2.6. Symbolic Interactionism

Is there any way beyond this impasse? Returning to Winter’s fourfold categorisation of sociological method, his fourth approach, intentionality, focuses on the “intentionalities with which the self-and-world correlation is constituted.”²³⁵ It seeks to take into account concrete relations between the individual and society, recognising that society is the product of human intentionality and that, consequently, individual self-understanding and behaviour are not simply determined by social forces (incorporating the argument of Milbank). At the same time, it also recognises that human meaning and value are socially constituted. This constitution is symbolically constructed, and mediated through the dissemination of religious and cultural worldviews.²³⁶ In addition, intentionalist sociology (otherwise known as the symbolic interactionist approach), attempts to “provide formal criteria for an evaluation of the understanding of man in the various scientific styles.”²³⁷ In other words, it attempts to incorporate both functional and conflictual analysis, but in a way that avoids the value free insistence on maintaining the status quo (functionalism) and the assumption of an ontology of violence (conflictualism).

In developing this approach, Ormerod appropriates Robert Doran’s account of the dialectic tension between “transcendence” and “limitation.” Limitative forces are those which encourage integration and harmony. Transcendent forces are those which stimulate change and development. In society, these two forces exist in dialectic tension, whereby social development occurs by way of the relentless transformation

²³⁵ Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic*, 197.

²³⁶ Ormerod, “Theology and the Human Sciences,” 7.

²³⁷ Winter, *Elements for a Social Ethic*, 87.

of integrators by operators. Operators “transform the present situation in the direction of some normative transcendence.”²³⁸ In so doing, Ormerod draws on the insights of both functionalism, which emphasises categories of harmony and integration, and value-based conflictualism, which provides categories for understanding the operator, and thereby explaining change.²³⁹

The focus on the dialectic tension between transcendence and limitation is a construction not without precedence in the social sciences. David Martin, for example, describes the relationship between transcendence and unity that facilitates development through “a creative balance between necessary stability and destructive openness.”²⁴⁰ As Martin observes, transcendence is based upon a foundation of stability, since it is only possible to go beyond that which already exists. It is readily apparent that all societies contain ingredients for the necessary maintenance of harmony, as well as reflections upon that status quo (explicit or otherwise) that contain the potentiality for transcendence. Martin goes on to note that, for those societies derived under the influence of the “Judaic stem,” elements of both transcendence and unity can be located in their conceptions of God, who both transcends the world (and thereby confronts the world) as we know it, and also establishes the basis for unity through the symbolic mediation of law and doctrine.²⁴¹

Contrary to the “either / or” of functionalism and conflictualism, the operators and the integrators ideally interact in dialectic tension. This is not simply the renewal of enlightenment positivism since, obviously, this dialect can break-down. The possibility of breakdown leads Robert Doran to distinguish between dialectics of contraries and dialectics of contradictories. According to this distinction, “contraries are reconcilable in a higher synthesis, while contradictories exclude one another.”²⁴²

A dialectic of contraries is apparent when transcendent forces for change transform

²³⁸ Ormerod, “Theology and the Human Sciences,” 10. These categories are also explicated by Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Doran’s analysis is itself a development of the work of Lonergan.

²³⁹ There is a difference, however, between the conflictualist understanding of change, and Ormerod’s account. For conflictualism, change is principally the result of the interaction of conflicting interests. For Ormerod, change is the result of transcendent forces. These may include conflict, but will also include other change agents.

²⁴⁰ David Martin, *The Breaking of the Image: A Sociology of Christian Theory and Practice* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1979), 6.

²⁴¹ Martin, *Breaking of the Image*, 6-10.

²⁴² Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 10.

existing symbols and structures of integration and harmony or, conversely, where symbols of integration moderate agents of change. The result, ideally, is harmonious social development. A contradictory dialectic occurs, either, when the forces of change destroy social harmony and generate schism, or where unifying power structures restrict operative forces and entrench the status quo, thereby preventing society from responding to social needs and changing environments.²⁴³

The interaction of individual intentionality with the symbolically mediated values and meanings of society occurs at different levels. It can be conceptualised in terms of Lonergan's notion of the scale of values, consisting of "vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values."²⁴⁴ Vital values are those values essential to life and well-being at its most basic level. These vital values are secured by the social order, within which Doran includes intersubjective spontaneity, technological institutions, the economic system, and the political order. At this social level of the scale of values, intersubjective spontaneity is the primordial base of all human communities, the bonds of family and friendship, which can be understood as the unifying force that is dialectically related to, and transformed by, the technical, economic and political expressions of practical intelligence (the operators).²⁴⁵ Cultural values are the meanings, values and orientations that inform, uphold and challenge social values and structures.²⁴⁶ Once again, these cultural values exist in dialectic tension, with those values supporting social stability representing the integrative pole of culture, and those transforming the status quo, the operative pole. In Doran's analysis, these cultural values emerge from the artistic, literary, scientific, scholarly, philosophical and theological labour of the "cosmopolis,"²⁴⁷ and are thereby dependent upon personal values and integrity. Finally, personal integrity, given the problem of evil, is dependent upon religious values, which impart grace, facilitate individual conversion, and thereby impact culture and society. Doran extends the notion of the dialectical to the level of personal value, since individuals are also categorised by rest and

²⁴³ This raises the importance of recognising the problem of evil in the social sciences, a fact that suggests that, not only does theology need to incorporate the discipline of sociology, but theology itself is relevant to the social sciences. That is, sociology needs theology to enable it to account for the problem of sin and evil. Ormerod, "Theology and the Human Sciences," 14.

²⁴⁴ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 94.

²⁴⁵ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 359-362.

²⁴⁶ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 94.

²⁴⁷ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 497.

movement, and are considered “whole” when their sense of personal identity, their satisfaction with “self,” is appropriately balanced by their capacity to continuously develop maturity and respond to new situations.²⁴⁸ From the perspective of Christian theology, it is noteworthy that salvation can be understood as both event and process, providing the individual with the resources for the personal dialectic of both rest and movement, of self identity established in Christ, and of continuously being made in His image. Social and cultural redemption can be understood in the same dialectic manner.

In bringing together the dialectical tension of unity and transcendence, operating at the different levels of the scale of value, Ormerod, borrowing from the categories of Lonergan, is able to conceptualise an explanation of social development, which can occur in two ways. First, in what Lonergan calls the “creative vector,” changes can flow from the lower levels in the scale of value to the upper levels, from society to culture. This is development that occurs by way of practical intelligence and human creativity, such that new technical, economic or political insights require a reconceptualisation of meanings and values at the cultural level. To avoid the charge of ideology, the cosmopolis responsible for culture will need to critique such social transitions, identifying bias, and the victims of social change and, thereby, facilitating a renewal in the technical, economic and political realm that will restore the integrator operator dialectic.²⁴⁹ Secondly, in what Lonergan calls the healing vector, changes can flow in the other direction. This occurs when new meanings and values emerge, such as Christians would assert is possible in the communication of God’s revelation to humanity, or otherwise in the creative human developments in philosophy, or changes in religious and cultural meaning that occur by way of contact with other cultures.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 41-63. In discussing conversion, Doran brings together Lonergan’s analysis of intentionality with depth psychology and the importance of the psyche. He shows the interplay between the psyche, feelings and values, and the consequent significance of a healthy psyche for decision making and personal integrity. It is an argument that responds to those who (probably unfairly) criticise Lonergan’s “sheer rationality,” by highlighting the role of the psyche and intuition in intentionality.

²⁴⁹ Ormerod, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 19-20.

²⁵⁰ Ormerod, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 20-22.

Once again, this ideal notion of social development is not a naïve evolutionary account of human progress, since affirmation of the problem of evil recognises that social change can (and does) breakdown. This occurs at various levels of bias, including individual, group and general bias. As Doran observes, the greatest difficulty arises in the latter case, where whole cultures are blinded to breakdowns in the unity - transcendence dialectic through unquestioned assumptions of common sense and practical intelligence.²⁵¹ At a macro level, for example, Doran identifies a breakdown that has occurred through the process of globalisation. Here is a situation in which technological developments have facilitated global trade and relations, but where the global cosmopolis has yet to develop a global set of meanings and values that might facilitate integral economic and political social structures. This has direct economic and political outcomes in, for instance, the rise of political violence and economic corruption. Part of the difficulty can be located in the unquestioned assumptions of national political and corporate economic structures, whose habits are so ingrained that global society as a whole is finding it difficult to conceive of alternatives. According to Doran, to date, the cultural response has been dominated by the postmodern denial of rationality and the consequent capitulation to nihilism. Consequently, neither the social nor cultural realm has been capable of realising solutions to the problems arising from globalisation. Doran goes on to suggest that such solutions are dependent upon the meanings and values that can be mediated by Christian theology, which posits an answer to the problem of evil - the cross of Christ.²⁵²

2.3. Application to Ecclesiology

Assuming the sociological nature of ecclesiology, it is possible, as Ormerod has done, to take Doran's analysis of global society, and apply it to the micro level of ecclesiology. The scale of values (religious, personal, cultural, social and vital) becomes a heuristic tool that enables the ecclesologist to talk about the different dimensions of the church. More than any other setting, the church is concerned with religious values, which, mediated by grace, are understood to facilitate personal

²⁵¹ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 371-377.

²⁵² Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 355-386.

integrity. For Christians, personal values are derived from and, in a circular manner, influence, the culture and worldview of the church. Ecclesial culture includes both transcendent and limitative values. Unity is emphasised by traditional affirmations, such as the creedal designation of the church as “one, holy, catholic and apostolic,” as well as unifying metaphors, such as those stressed by *communio* ecclesiologies. At the same time, church culture incorporates transcendent metaphors that encourage ecclesial development, including the accent upon the eschatological orientation of the church, and her missionary nature. These cultural values are mediated by tradition and doctrine, and emerge from the “ecclesial cosmopolis” of theologians, pastors (priests) and artists of various sorts (singers, musicians, poets, writers, painters). This church culture makes way for ecclesial social structures, which likewise can be understood in terms of dialectic, between the integrative intersubjective spontaneity of the church family, and the operative practicalities of technology, economy and ecclesial polity. These structures help the church to contribute to the vital needs of its membership, especially since her culture and structures emphasise the priority of the poor.

As with Doran’s analysis of global society, change in the church can also occur in various ways. In the healing vector, the triune God mediates divine grace, resulting in personal conversion. Transformed persons become responsible for changes in ecclesial culture, which then gives rise to social restructure, and ensures that the church participates in meeting the vital needs of the Christian community. In the creative vector, needs that arise within the community, due primarily to changing context, stimulate developments in ecclesial social structure. This necessitates development in the culture of the church, which in turn transforms individual, and even religious, values.

This general analysis of the scale of values will become clearer when we apply this framework to the specific situation of the pentecostal church in Australia in chapters three to five of this thesis. Before we do, however, it is important that we recognise the reality of ecclesial sin.²⁵³ Even though the church is permeated by grace, as a human institution it is also inevitably subject to the destructive forces of sin. In the

²⁵³ Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, 37.

church, sin can be discerned at every level of the scale of values. Religious values can become distorted, individuals can sin, church cultures can become unauthentic, ecclesial structures can oppress minorities, and churches can ignore the poor. Focusing on the cultural and social level of the scale of values, Ormerod posits four church anti-types that arise from distortions or breakdowns in the interaction between transcendence and limitation. These are: Type 1, classical conservative; Type 2, neo conservative; Type 3, semi-progressive and; Type 4, totally progressive.²⁵⁴

In Ormerod's typology, Type 1, "classical conservative," is the distortion of both the social and cultural dialects in the direction of limitation.²⁵⁵ There is an overemphasis on tradition in church culture, which is maintained because the cosmopolis is, for whatever reason, restricted in its ability to critique the status quo. Ormerod notes that this distortion may incorporate a conception of the transcendence of God, but fail to conceive of the implications of this transcendence for human cultural reality, forgetting that God's transcendence should continually transform culture.²⁵⁶ At the same time, there is rigidity in social organisation, due to an unwillingness to incorporate new solutions arising from practical intelligence. The result of these two distortions is churches that are resistant to change. This resistance is further established by the tendency of classical conservative churches to separate from society, a fact that mitigates against the ecclesially constitutive purpose of mission. Of all the anti-types, this will be the most entrenched. Renewal of the transcendent pole may be rendered by the rise of the charismatic (using Weber's broad conception of the term), or by the new perspective of the next generation. But such renewal is likely to be painful, and may result in breakdowns within the social structure.

The culture and structures of classical conservative churches are often justified by reference to faith claims about the divine origin of the church and its institutions. The difficulty with this perspective is that it fails to recognise that contextual change requires ecclesial development. This is not to say that the church is not divinely instituted. On the contrary, the church, whose head is Christ, is divinely instituted,

²⁵⁴ Ormerod, "Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry," 335-340; Neil Ormerod, "Categories for the Kingdom," Unpublished draft of a book chapter on the topic of Ecclesiology, Catholic Institute of Sydney, Sydney, 2003, 27-31.

²⁵⁵ Ormerod, "Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry," 337. This might be understood as the predominance of functionalist ideology.

²⁵⁶ Ormerod, "Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry," 337.

and charismatically empowered, for the sake of proclaiming in word and deed the gospel of the kingdom of God. This divinely instituted missionary purpose makes creative accommodation to contextual change a central element of the church's identity. Only those elements of church culture that are directly related to the revelation of God through Jesus Christ are permanent. Churches need to distinguish between that which is central to the identity of the Christian church, and that which is particular to the church in specific contexts. The same is true for ecclesial social structures, including church polity and offices. It is difficult to sustain the argument that particular structures, including the offices and functions of the priesthood, were instituted by Christ. On the contrary, the narrative of the New Testament makes it clear that these offices arose in response to the needs of the Christian community, including the need to maintain the integrity of the gospel.²⁵⁷ These structures may be divinely instituted, because they serve the divine purpose at a particular time in history, but this does not make them permanent and unchanging. The only social structures that might be said to be permanent are those that perpetuate ecclesially constitutive cultural values. This might include the sacraments of baptism and communion (or the Eucharist), which mediate and sustain a culture focused on the gospel. Even so, the form of these community events is subject to variation, over time and from place to place.²⁵⁸

Type 2, the “neo conservative” church, “is the distortion of the cultural dialectic in the direction of limitation and the social dialectic in terms of transcendence.”²⁵⁹ As Ormerod notes, at the cultural level this is similar to conservatism and, at the social level, there exists a willingness to adapt to new technologies, new habits in the economy, and new political structures. In comparison to a community characterised by Type 1 classical conservatism, Type 2 distortions are less entrenched, since changes at the social level will influence cultural/theological values in the long run. Either the static culture will ultimately restrict social change, tending toward Type 1 or, more likely, social openness will force cultural change. The problem may be that such change tends to be *ad hoc*, rather than deliberate, and potentially unreflective.

²⁵⁷ Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry Among the First Christians* (Victoria: Collins Dove, 1989), 23.

²⁵⁸ This realisation, which finds precedence in the diversity of ecclesial structures apparent in the New Testament, paves the way for ecumenical discussion, and ultimately, ecumenical unity. It also stands as an ecumenical challenge to churches who fail to recognise other baptisms (e.g. infant baptism) or refuse to share communion (the Eucharist).

²⁵⁹ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 338.

It is noteworthy that Ormerod suggests that pentecostal churches are representative of this type since, he says, they display conservative theology and an innovative community life.²⁶⁰ According to Ormerod, the result is that pentecostal communities “have high turn-overs and mobility, and do not appear to produce long term communities (that is communities extending over more than one or two centuries).”²⁶¹ Although his critique of the long term viability of pentecostal communities is unfair, since the movement originated only at the turn of the twentieth century, we shall nonetheless consider his categorisation of pentecostalism in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Type 3, semi-progressive churches, are the opposite of Type 2 communities. At the cultural level, they exhibit a distortion in the direction of transcendence, and in the social level, a distortion in the direction of limitation.²⁶² A community of this type will be suspicious of authoritative tradition and quick to take on new theologies, yet will maintain traditional social structures and forms. Ormerod suggests that these culturally unstable communities generally lack a grounded intellectual tradition, and will be undiscerning in their appropriation of secular values. An example might be found in certain elements of the Uniting Church of Australia, which is well known for being theologically liberal, and yet continues to maintain traditional social forms. The consequence is a movement that is able to speak to society at the level of public debate, but struggles to attract new-comers to its congregations.²⁶³ As with Type 2, the disparity between a radical theology and conservative social structure is likely to be unsustainable in the long run, and such organisations will either become more conservative at the theological level (and one can discern such forces at work in the Uniting Church today), or otherwise radicalise its social structures, and thereby tend toward Type 4.

²⁶⁰ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 338.

²⁶¹ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 338-339.

²⁶² Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 339.

²⁶³ This analysis could be said to be supported by the data of the National Church Life Survey, which observed that a more radical approach to theology in the Uniting Church has been accompanied by declining church numbers (e.g. See Kaldor, Bellamy, Powell, Correy, and Castle, *Build My Church*, 31-32). Of course, my earlier critique of empirical research might caution against the certainty of such conclusions, and (as with Ormerod and his Pentecostal example), I include this discussion for illustrative purposes only.

Type 4, totally progressive churches, display a distortion in the direction of transcendence at both the cultural and social level. Such a church will eschew traditional church culture, and readily appropriate the latest intellectual milieu. They will also be quick to dispense with traditional structures and forms. An example of such churches might include some of the post-modern missional congregations, which are focused on revolutionising the church, and incarnating the gospel in the current cultural context.²⁶⁴ Unless balance is wrought in both the cultural and social levels, the likely result is the dissipation of such communities altogether.

Finally, it is important to note that imbalance between limitation and transcendence is always a matter of degree. The greater the degree of distortion, the more likely it is that ecclesial society will break down. Extreme distortion at the level of culture will result in cultural breakdown, which can be labelled heresy. “Heresy” is a term that is used by theologians, historians and sociologists in various ways, generally in reference to orthodoxy, and thus in relation to ecclesial authority and politics, although in the context of our argument, it can be understood technically, as a means of describing breakdown in the cultural dialectic between transcendence and harmony. The equivalent extreme distortion at the social level will lead to schism. The ecclesialologist will also need to recognise that societies are fluid, and any attempt to categorise a particular society is historically contingent. This is especially true in the ecclesial setting, where the priority of grace, conversion and personal integrity will establish the latent possibility of healing in situations of distortion or bias. Even in the face of ecclesial sin, the Christian theologian is, therefore, inclined to be hopeful, believing that distortion can be overcome, and that heresy (cultural breakdown) and schism (social breakdown) can be prevented or overcome.

2.4. Summary

Having noted, in chapter one, the tendency for ecclesialologists to focus on ecclesial ideals, this chapter has sought to establish a framework for a more concrete ecclesiology. We have drawn especially from the writings of Joseph Komonchak,

²⁶⁴ See Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the Twenty First Century Church* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2003).

Robert Doran and Neil Ormerod. These theologians are themselves schooled in the theological method of Bernard Lonergan and, before concluding this chapter, it is worthwhile to summarise our methodological framework in terms of Lonergan's method.

In *Method in Theology*, Lonergan establishes eight functional specialities which, he says, encompass the tasks of theological method. The concrete tasks of ecclesiology, set out in the methodological construction above, takes us through the first five of these specialities. The first functional speciality, research, which Lonergan relates to empirical consciousness, entails the search for data. In our case the data of concern is the story of early Australian pentecostalism and the emerging AGA. The second functional speciality is interpretation, which, Lonergan says, is related to intellectual consciousness, and essentially comprises exegesis: understanding the text, judging one's understanding of the text, and stating what one's judgement is. In application to this ecclesiological study, this involves the discerning and telling of the AGA story, including the narrative of self-understanding in the light of an explicit and implicit ecclesiology. The third functional speciality, history, relates to rational consciousness, and makes judgements on what is "moving forward in particular groups at particular times," both positively and negatively, in decline or redemption.²⁶⁵ In relation to the AGA, this will require a search for transitions, and theological and sociological analysis. For this purpose, we shall frame our analysis in terms of the scale of values. The fourth functional speciality, dialectics, relates to moral consciousness, and addresses the "conflicts that arise from the speciality of history, where these conflicts themselves stem from an explicit or implicit cognitional theory, an ethical stance, a religious outlook."²⁶⁶ In respect to ecclesiology, the possibilities arising within dialectics are likely to be determined by ecumenical and dialogical reflection, comparing the story and judgements about the ecclesiology of the AGA to other ecclesial perspectives. Dialectics leads to intellectual, moral and religious conversion or decision, and gives rise to the fifth functional speciality of Lonergan's method, foundations. This task entails reflection about who and what you are for and against, as illuminated by the "manifold possibilities exhibited in dialectic."²⁶⁷ It will

²⁶⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 178.

²⁶⁶ Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 108.

²⁶⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 268.

be based upon consideration of the scale of values, and potential imbalances in the cultural and social dialectics. Lonergan's final three functional specialities, doctrine, systematics and communications, are tasks for the whole church community, in dialogue not only with ecclesial studies such as this one, but with the praxis of the church in its totality.

Were we to be precise, we might observe that we have, at this point in the thesis, already progressed through to the fifth functional speciality, foundations. We have decided, from among the manifold possibilities of dialectics in ecclesiology and sociology, to adopt a concrete ecclesiological method, incorporating social analysis framed around the scale of values. This decision, however, requires us to return to the first functional speciality, research, for the sake of systematically investigating the ecclesiological data of the AGA.

For those unfamiliar with Lonergan's method, a further summary may be helpful. In contrast to idealist or blueprint ecclesiologies, our approach is driven by a heuristic definition of the church, which understands the object of ecclesiology to be "the set (or sets) of experiences, understandings, symbols, words, judgements, statements, decisions, actions, relationships, and institutions which distinguish the group of people called "the Church."²⁶⁸ Since the church is a divine and human institution, in addition to ecclesial and theological ideals, the ecclesiological will need to account for the historical and sociological context of the church. The scale of values, and in particular the dialectics at the level of ecclesial culture and social structure, provides a means of analysing and assessing ecclesial developments.

The object of this thesis is the emergence of early Australian pentecostalism, and the developing ecclesiology of the AGA. Our analysis will consider three major periods of ecclesial transition. As mentioned above, in chapter three we analyse the currents of globalising voluntarist religion into which pentecostalism was born, as well as the emergence of pentecostalism in Australia. In chapter four we consider the institutional formation of the AGA, from the 1930s to the 1960s. In chapter five, we review from the 1960s to the turn of the twenty first century, reflecting upon the

²⁶⁸ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 57.

changes to the AGA that have resulted from the impact of the charismatic and church growth movements.

Each chapter will include both narrative and analysis. We shall begin the chapter with a telling of the narrative of the developing church, seeking in particular to highlight aspects of the narrative that reveal dimensions of explicit and implicit ecclesial self-understanding. Contrary to those who assert a division between the disciplines of theology and history, a concrete ecclesiology will take into account the story of the church. Apart from the ecclesiological significance of the narrative itself, the story of the AGA has not yet been told and, consequently, the history set out in this thesis can make a valuable contribution to understanding Australian pentecostalism. Following the narrative, we shall then move on to an analysis of the story. This analysis shall take into account the scale of values and, in particular, focus on the dialect between transcendence and immanence at the cultural and social level of the AGA movement. The analysis shall consider ecclesiological ideals, in conversation with alternate traditions, as well as potential imbalance between limitation and transcendence, using Ormerod's fourfold anti-types.

In the concluding chapter, we shall summarise our narrative and analysis. We summarise the self-understanding of the AGA, and consider the application Ormerod's fourfold anti-types at each stage of the movement's history. In addition, we shall intimate possibilities for the movement's future. Although it is impossible to predict the future, we can nonetheless ascertain future trajectories, based on existing culture and structure, and suggest potential changes that may bring development to the existing status quo.

Chapter Three: Pre-cursors to AGA - Transition from Faith Missions to Churches, 1800s to 1930s

3.1 Introduction

It is often assumed that pentecostalism, having been birthed with Charles Parham in Topeka Kansas, and brought to the attention of the world by William Seymour and the Apostolic Faith Mission in Azusa Street Los Angeles, is essentially a North American movement that has travelled throughout the globe on the back of American missionary and capitalist expansionism. Yet the reality is much more complex and, as Mark Hutchinson observes, the story of pentecostalism “is far from uni-linear, . . . it is not one thing spreading out, but many mutually-recognisable things coalescing.”²⁶⁹

Writing about Australian pentecostalism, Barry Chant argues against the view that the movement is an American import, instead describing it as “an indigenous movement, enriched by a variety of overseas influences.”²⁷⁰ But this is to overstate Australia’s uniqueness, and to misunderstand the complex nature of the flow of global ideas, particularly those ideas relating to what David Martin describes as the “unsponsored mobilizations of *laissez-faire* lay religion, running to and fro between Britain and North America”²⁷¹ and, we might add, Australia. While Australia is influenced by these mobilisations, it is not simply a recipient of these religious trends, as is apparent in the influence of Australians on the North American religious scene,²⁷² and, as Chant observes, in the indigenisation of these movements into the Australian context. It has become common to speak of this indigenisation as “glocalisation,” a term that emphasises the manner in which the local and the global intersect and remain mutually dependent.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ Mark Hutchinson, “The Power to Grasp,” Unpublished paper, Southern Cross College, Sydney, 2003.

²⁷⁰ Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 103.

²⁷¹ Martin, *Pentecostalism*, 5.

²⁷² For example, John Alexander Dowie was an Australian pastor who migrated to the United States with his healing message. As various commentators note, his teaching was very influential in the development of American Pentecostalism (See Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 22-23).

²⁷³ David Lyon, “Wheels within Wheels: Glocalisation & Contemporary Religion,” *A Global Faith*, ed. Mark Hutchinson and O. Kalu (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1998) 47.

In this chapter, our purpose is to narrate and assess the emergence of early Australian pentecostal ecclesiology. To this end, we begin with a general review and analysis of the currents of globalising voluntarist religion into which pentecostalism was born. We then narrow our focus on to the subsequent development of pentecostalism in Australia, again with a view to describe and analyse the culture and social structures that categorised this early pentecostal understanding of the Church.

3.2 Pre-narrative: The Global Currents of Voluntarist Revivalism

Pentecostal historians and sociologists have catalogued various precursors to the emergence of twentieth century pentecostalism. This includes highlighting the importance of Wesleyan holiness movements, the impact of the restorationist impulse, and the related rise of the faith healing movement.²⁷⁴ These seemingly diverse trajectories of nineteenth century Christianity find their common thread in the “voluntaristic piety” that developed in response to Western modernism and democratisation. They gave rise to the development of interdenominational networks outside of traditional ecclesial and denominational structures.²⁷⁵

The impetus behind voluntarist networks was the conviction that unity in Christ was not structural or doctrinal, but existed between individuals who shared a common relationship with Christ, and a common purpose, generally that of evangelism and the broader tasks of mission. They came together in various non-denominational conferences and bible schools, which facilitated a cross-flow of religious ideas. These ideas, centred as they were on the missionary task, were globalised and glocalised largely by means of the Faith Missions movement.

²⁷⁴ See Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*; Donald Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1987); Charles Edwin Jones, “Holiness Movement,” *International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, Editor Stanley Burgess (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 726-729; Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971).

²⁷⁵ Martin, *Pentecostalism*, 36.

3.2.1 The Great Awakening

The various streams of nineteenth century voluntarism had their genesis in the series of revivals that followed the original fervour (and subsequent waning) of the protestant reformation. Seventeenth century pietism and puritanism (themselves “revivals” of ossifying magisterial protestantism) were followed by the “Great Awakening” of the eighteenth century.²⁷⁶ This revival, which is often read through the theological writings of Jonathan Edwards and the Wesleyan hagiography, marks the beginning of the evangelical movement and, by way of Edwards’ focus on the term, establishes “revival” as a core element of evangelical tradition. The desire for religious awakening and renewal has always been a theme of Christian history,²⁷⁷ but the experience of the Great Awakening, and the cultural embedding of that experience through the treatises of various revival exponents, made the expectation for revival an important part of evangelical identity. Edwards defined “revival” as an extraordinary dispensation of providence, in which people are awakened to the reality of Christ, of their own sin and of His saving grace. This awakening was understood to occur by way of the Spirit, whose work in seasons of revival is extraordinary, not because it is abnormal, but because it is an intensification of the normal work of the Spirit awakening, convicting, and converting the human heart. This intensification relates to the breadth, depth and swiftness of the Spirit’s work, awakening whole communities, young and old alike, revitalising the church, converting unbelievers, and positively influencing society at large.²⁷⁸

In the Great Awakening, the move of the Spirit was also accompanied by intense and sometimes unusual emotional responses in converts, which led Edwards to assert that “true religion lies much in the affections.”²⁷⁹ He defines “affections” as “the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul, . . . which,

²⁷⁶ The link between these revivals is developed by R. E. Davies, *I Will Pour Out My Spirit: A History and Theology of Revivals and Spiritual Awakenings* (Turnbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992), ch.5.

²⁷⁷ Including biblical History. See Jeff Stacey, “Revival in the Old Testament? The Theology of Jonathan Edwards,” *Reviving Australia: Essays on the History and Experience of Revival and Revivalism in Australian Christianity*, ed Stuart Piggin (Sydney: The Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994); Stuart Piggin, *Firestorm of the Lord* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000), ch.25.

²⁷⁸ Jonathan Edwards, “A Narrative of Surprising Conversions,” *Jonathan Edwards on Revival*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 19-22.

²⁷⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. J.E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 27.

perhaps in all nations and ages, is called the heart.”²⁸⁰ This would include love and hatred, joy and sorrow, hope and fear. Earnest religion, says Edwards, expresses itself not only in understanding and rational decision, but also in affectual fervency of spirit, the vigorous engagement of the heart.²⁸¹ This leads Edwards to affirm the experiential and emotional dimension of Christianity, and to observe that:

Universal experience shows that the exercise of the affections have in a special manner a tendency to some sensible effect upon the body. And if this be so, the greater those affections be, and the more vigorous their exercise (other circumstances being equal), the greater will be the effect on the body. Very great and strong exercises of the affections have great effects on the body. And therefore, seeing there are very great affections, both common and spiritual, it is not to be wondered at that great effects on the body should arise from both these kinds of affections. And consequently these effects are no signs that the affections they arise from are of one kind or the other.²⁸²

Edwards’ insight is noteworthy for its holistic approach to spirituality, since he recognises the essential unity of the human person, body and soul. This led him to affirm an experiential spirituality that became important for subsequent revivals, especially those that occurred in twentieth century pentecostalism. Yet it is worth observing the caution in Edwards’ argument, which he develops via negative logic. He argues that experiential effects cannot be taken as a sign either *for or against* revival. Intensity of affections, bodily effects (including falling over), passion and the like, cannot be used to critique religious experience or revival, but neither can they be used to justify a particular spirituality. The issue is not the experience, but rather the effect on the human heart, which is born out in joy and love for God, and which has its fruit in Christian practice. His negative logic is also applied to some of the unsavoury events that were associated with the Great Awakening. The fact that some might be guilty of excess, or even impropriety or hypocrisy, is “no certain sign” that

²⁸⁰ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 24.

²⁸¹ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 27.

²⁸² Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 59.

the Spirit is or is not at work. Revival is worked out in the grace-filled but nonetheless human community that is the church.²⁸³

The experience of the Great Awakening established within certain elements of protestant Christianity a template or *meme* for the ideal Church, which generated a great hunger for revival. Insofar as revival represents the mediation of divine grace into the ecclesial and social situation, it is a hunger that finds its impetus in the Holy Spirit, and that leads to prayer and “openness to the Spirit through whom the living Lord works, and a child-like readiness to do whatever He wishes in us and through us.”²⁸⁴ Commentators have generally been kind to Edwards and the Great Awakening,²⁸⁵ but the same cannot be said for the subsequent revivals of the nineteenth century. Describing what he calls the “evils” of this period, in contrast to the supposed glory of earlier revivals, Iain Murray suggests:

The first of these evils was the sudden growth of new denominations, all claiming to represent true religion. Instead of the few church bodies of 1800, there was, within a short period, what has been called “a sea of sectarian rivalries.” . . . The stage was being set in the West for a growing confusion in which, as Philip Schaff later deplored, “Every theological vagabond and peddler may drive here his bungling trade.”²⁸⁶

Murray blames what he calls “revivalism” for the sectarian rivalries that characterised nineteenth century Christianity, resulting in the bewildering division that continues to trouble the church today. His analysis is based on a distinction between “revival” and “revivalism” whereby the former is understood as the mysterious work of God, and the latter “can be explained in purely human terms.”²⁸⁷ It is a distinction that is based on artificial (and politicised) theological presuppositions, since revival cannot be understood outside of the human dimension, and revivalism, or the human pursuit of

²⁸³ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 54.

²⁸⁴ Yves Congar, *Called to Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 80.

²⁸⁵ Charles Colson comments on the ‘scholarly admiration’ given to Edwards, which results from his theological and philosophical capacity (See the introduction to Edwards, *Religious Affections*, xv.). Revival historians such as Murray and Pigginn tend to be glowing in their praise of Edwards, and far less generous to the key figures in subsequent revivals.

²⁸⁶ Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), 173.

²⁸⁷ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, xix.

revival, finds its origin in the Spirit. We shall return to this issue in our analysis of this “pre-narrative,” but for now it is important to note that the cause of denominationalism was not the hunger for and human pursuit of revival (or to use Murray’s term, “revivalism”) but, rather, ecclesial voluntarism that arose in the context of modern individualism and democratisation.²⁸⁸

3.2.2 The Democratisation of Nineteenth Century Christianity

While the protestant reformation saw a separation between Rome and various national churches, the alignment between the nation state and the national church remained in place until the religious wars of the seventeenth century. As Bruce Hindmarsh observes, in the aftermath of this warfare “the ideal of Christendom went up in flames all across Europe.”²⁸⁹ The subsequent implementation of legislation to facilitate religious toleration made way for the pluralism that was to accompany Western democracies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. W.R. Ward suggests that, in this new situation, the evangelical movement longed “to go behind the present confessional division of Europe into a larger religious unity.”²⁹⁰ The Great Awakening, which was globalised via extraordinary technological developments in travel and communication, occurred within and outside of existing ecclesial structures. This led to the idea that the mystical church could be discerned apart from the ecclesial orders that were incorrectly labelled “Church.” From this perspective the visible church or churches were merely religious organisations, distinct from the “true church.”²⁹¹

In the context of democratising society, this gave rise to free church ecclesiology, with its rejection of traditional authority, organisation and leadership, and its affirmation of egalitarianism and lay empowerment.²⁹² Egalitarianism also led to the

²⁸⁸ See Hutchinson’s review of Murray’s book (*Journal of Religious History*, 22 (1998): 351-353).

Hutchinson also suggests that Murray’s analysis is derived from his commitment to his Presbyterian tradition, and his related rejection of entrepreneurial religion.

²⁸⁹ Bruce Hindmarsh, “Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron? A Historical Perspective,” *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?*, ed. John Stackhouse (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 21. See also Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*.

²⁹⁰ W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 51.

²⁹¹ Hindmarsh, “Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron?,” 32-33.

²⁹² Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 3-16. Also Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*.

tendency to eschew centralised structures, and elevate the priority and autonomy of the local church. Unity was understood in mystical terms, to be derived by way of shared individual spirituality. Traditional “distinctions between the visible and mystical church gave way and was elided into a different distinction *within* the visible church: ... between nominal and true believers.”²⁹³ Described by Fiedler by the seemingly oxymoronic label “individual unity,”²⁹⁴ it was understood to be a secret work of the Holy Spirit that overrode the divisions generated by church order and church doctrine, which were thereby rendered superfluous to ecclesiology. Yet at the same time, church unity was considered to be mutually obvious to the regenerate, who would recognise in each other the religious affections of love (of God and for one-another), and that resulted in sanctified living.

It was also a unity that was to prove idealistic. As Hindmarsh goes on to say, “the oxymoron of evangelical ecclesiology is that while celebrating the spiritual union of all the truly regenerate, the movement itself was dogged by separatism.”²⁹⁵ One revival replaced another, and one denomination, fresh with new spiritual and biblical insight, separated into another. However one judges this voluntarisation of nineteenth century Christianity (and we shall attempt to undertake this task in the next section), the fact is that it became the means of the growth, diversification and globalisation of revivalist, evangelical Christianity.

3.2.3 The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism

Apart from democratisation and the desire for revival, there were other common elements of nineteenth century voluntarism that were also to become important in the formation of pentecostal churches. Donald Dayton, whose pioneering work on the theological roots of pentecostalism has been foundational for pentecostal self-understanding,²⁹⁶ highlights the significance of the revivalist focus on holiness derived from the Wesleyan tradition. In the nineteenth century, “holiness” became the adjective associated with revival (“holiness revivals”), defining the nature and

²⁹³ Hindmarsh, “Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron?,” 35.

²⁹⁴ Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions* (Oxford: Regnum, 1994), 169-209.

²⁹⁵ Hindmarsh, “Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron?,” 34.

²⁹⁶ See Donald Dayton, “Theological Roots of Pentecostalism,” *Pneuma* 2, no. 1 (1980): 3-21. See also his subsequent book of the same title, Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 1987.

focus of revivalist movements.²⁹⁷ The Wesleyan teleological ideal of entire sanctification took on increasing prominence, and came to be understood as a crisis experience facilitated by the Holy Spirit. In this context, the phrase “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” which was to become central to Pentecostal identity, was used to denote the work of the Spirit in suddenly achieving entire sanctification in the believer, imbuing him/her with moral power. As we shall see, it took on additional meanings for Pentecostals.²⁹⁸

Secondly, as Dayton also observes, implicit in the very idea of revival is a restorationist or primitivist inclination.²⁹⁹ In *Restoring the Faith*, Edith Blumhofer argues that pentecostalism was shaped by nineteenth century restorationism, which she defines as “the impulse to restore the primitive or original order of things as revealed in Scripture, free from the accretions of church history and tradition.”³⁰⁰ This impulse prompted an ahistorical outlook in voluntarist movements, and made them anti-denominational although, paradoxically, the ultimate impact was the formation of new denominations with their own traditions and history. Most revivalists assumed that they had restored true Christianity, and that their particular revival would be the last. Consequently they were often unhappy about new revivals instigated by their successors.³⁰¹ As restorationists, they were idealist in orientation, seeking to implement “pure” New Testament Christianity. This idealism acted as a force for change, although, since grounded on a fixed first century ideal, many restorationist movements, beginning in the thrust of revival, tended to become culturally and socially conservative. Once it is believed that a fixed historical ideal has been implemented, then the possibility for continued change is undermined.

The healing movement was the third element of evangelical Christianity that Dayton suggests feeds into early pentecostalism. It is readily apparent how healing relates to the experiential dimension of spirituality that was birthed in the pietist movement and articulated in Edwards’ affirmation of the affections, and is elicited by the notion that the Spirit was restoring the healing ministry of Jesus to the end-times Church. It also

²⁹⁷ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 1987, 65.

²⁹⁸ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), 25.

²⁹⁹ Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 1987, 73.

³⁰⁰ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 12.

³⁰¹ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 113.

supported the idea that Christianity was “evidenced” by physical outpourings.³⁰² Healing became prominent in voluntarist proclamation and praxis. There were healing rallies, healing evangelists, healing homes, and even healing schools. It became common to speak of “healing in the atonement” and, while this was usually justified on the basis of a sometimes simplistic reading of the Scriptures, it is in fact a notion that finds resonance with a holistic anthropology and soteriology. The good news of the gospel is not just for the salvation of the soul, but for the liberation of the whole person. The problem with the faith healing movement was that it placed too much emphasis on the human act of faith rather than the divine grace of healing. It was based on an over-realised eschatology, insisting that complete healing was possible in the present, provided one had sufficient faith.³⁰³ Be this as it may, the emphasis on physical and emotional healing directly challenged the status quo and, in many cases, made space for the operation of divine grace in the life of individuals and the church.

Fourthly, another current within nineteenth century revivalist movements was a focus on millennial speculation. Even Edwards speculated about whether the Great Awakening heralded the prophesied time in which “Christ’s Kingdom shall be everywhere established and settled in peace.”³⁰⁴ Subsequent revivalists likewise tended to assume that their particular experience of the Spirit was testimony to the end of times. While earlier revivalists, such as Edwards, adopted a postmillennial position, believing that revival would make society a better place before the return of Christ, the Civil War and other social problems led to increasing pessimism as to the future of Western society. In this context, restorationists found an interpretative framework in biblical apocalyptic literature, which seemed to them to prophetically explain their present social crises as signs of the rapid approach of the eschaton. This premillennial view of history was promoted especially in the widely distributed writings of John Nelson Darby, who divided history into seven dispensations derived

³⁰² This idea was to influence the pentecostal understanding that Baptism in the Holy Spirit was “evidenced” by the physical manifestation of speaking in tongues.

³⁰³ See Charles Farah, “A Critical Analysis: The Roots and Fruits of Faith Formula Theology,” *Pneuma* 3 (1981): 3-21.

³⁰⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Awakening: Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. C Goen, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), cited in Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 1987, 154.

from his interpretation of Old and New Testament apocalyptic literature.³⁰⁵ The final dispensation would be preceded by worldwide calamity, and followed by rapture of the saints, a seven year tribulation, and the return of Christ for the millennial reign. As we shall observe in more detail later, such eschatological speculation has important ecclesial implications. While it acts as a motivating force for missionary activity, premillennial pessimism has been blamed for the tendency of twentieth century pentecostalism to ignore the social responsibility of the church. As Dwight Wilson observes, “since the end is near, [classical] Pentecostals are indifferent to social change and have rejected the reformist methods of the optimistic postmillennialists and have concentrated on "snatching brands from the fire" and letting social reforms result from humankind being born again.”³⁰⁶ Similar implications will be apparent in the development of Church structures, or lack thereof. There is little point in establishing long term institutional structures in movements that imagine they will end tomorrow. Indeed, questions of ecclesial structure and authority are likely to be raised only when the delay in the expected end-times brings a more realistic sense of perspective.

Finally revival, baptism in the Spirit and pre-millennial urgency all acted as an impetus for missionary activity. This gave rise to the nineteenth century Faith Missions movement, which brought together the various currents of the Spirit (and human religiosity) described above, and globalised as well as indigenised (or glocalised) them. While classical protestant missions developed into denominational forms, with ordained missionaries and a corporate concept of unity, nineteenth century faith missions were distinguished by their independence from the church or denomination.³⁰⁷ Klaus Fiedler traces the beginnings of the faith missions movement to Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission, which was launched in the context of Brethren revival in 1865 and whose model generated missionary activity throughout the world, including twentieth century Pentecostal missions.³⁰⁸ Fiedler catalogues the

³⁰⁵ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 16. See also Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 86-90.

³⁰⁶ Dwight J. Wilson, “Pentecostal Perspectives on Eschatology,” *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley Burgess (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 605. For a more positive analysis of the implications of this worldview for pentecostal praxis, see D. William Faupel, *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought*, JPTS 10, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

³⁰⁷ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 20.

³⁰⁸ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 24.

global currents that informed the theology and structure of faith missions, including revivalism,³⁰⁹ voluntarism and the concept of individual unity (i.e. the mystical unity of regenerate individuals within diverse church organisations),³¹⁰ and the importance of power for service and the holiness movement,³¹¹ all of which have been discussed in our analysis above. As David Bosch observes, the movement was not without its weaknesses:

The romantic notion of the freedom of the individual to make his or her own choices, an almost convulsive preoccupation with saving people's souls before Judgement Day, a limited knowledge of the cultures and religions of the people to whom the missionaries went, virtually no interest in the societal dimension of the Christian gospel, almost exclusive dependence on the charismatic personality of the founder, a very low view of the church.³¹²

These were the dilemmas facing voluntarism in the context of enlightened society generally. The changes wrought in the church and in the mission field brought both positive and negative elements. Fiedler's description of faith missions in Africa in the concluding chapters of his book is noteworthy for its catalogue of continuity and change, as he observes the ways in which the missionaries' theology and ideas of ecclesial structure underwent development in the process of indigenisation.³¹³ The extent to which mission acts as an operative force upon culture and social structure is highlighted in the prominence of women in faith missions. Restorationism and the prevailing social understanding of the role and place of women had meant that most voluntarist movements in the West restricted the rights and authority of women. Yet from the beginning of the faith missions movement, the impetus of the task made space for women in the ministry.³¹⁴ To use Lonergan's categories, the social needs of the mission field resulted in a rethink of long-held cultural attitudes, generating development by means of practical intelligence. As we shall discover, these social and cultural changes were to bear fruit in twentieth century pentecostalism.

³⁰⁹ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 112-124.

³¹⁰ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 169-209.

³¹¹ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 210-271.

³¹² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Missions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991), 333.

³¹³ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 319.

³¹⁴ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 296.

Our discussion thus far has been generalised, both in the grouping of the multitude of nineteenth century religious movements into the single category of “voluntarist Christianity,” and in our ignoring geographic distinctions and our focus on the global, or more particularly Western, currents of protestant Christianity. This has been necessary due to the sheer diversity of movements that formed, separated and came together during this period, but it also highlights the global nature of these religious mobilisations. They represent a bewildering array of voluntarist movements, birthed in revivals, or at the very least the desire for revival, emphasising individual rather than ecclesial unity, restorationist in orientation, ministering healing, preaching the imminent premillennial return of Christ, and mobilising global missionary activity. As the phrase “voluntarist revivalism” implies, it was a period of rapid ecclesial change, although, ironically, the attempted restoration of first century biblical ideals meant that many of these nineteenth century radical movements became twentieth century conservatives.

3.3 Analysis: Transcendence, Transformation and Breakdown

This pre-narrative for the twentieth century story of pentecostalism takes us through the first three stages in Lonergan’s theological method: research, interpretation, and history, the last looking to identify what is moving forward, positively and negatively, in decline or redemption.³¹⁵ In analysing this pre-narrative we are progressing to the fourth stage, dialectics, in which we are seeking to locate the presuppositions and assumptions that are determinative for alternative conclusions about whether a particular historical movement is one of decline or redemption. To use Lonergan’s terminology, we are uncovering “the fundamental conflicts stemming from an explicit or implicit cognitional theory, an ethical stance, a religious outlook,”³¹⁶ all of which lead to different judgements. Our analysis shall consider three alternate approaches or presuppositions: 1) anti-revivalism, which dismisses voluntarism as mere “human religion”; 2) anti-contextualisation, which argues that the church should focus on its traditions and remain separate from the structures and values of general society; and 3) analysis of the scale of values, which affirms the necessary but critical relationship

³¹⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 178.

³¹⁶ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 235.

between church and society, and which attempts to remove pre-judgement, in order to assess the ecclesial data in a way that highlights both strengths and weaknesses, evidences of progress and decline.

3.3.1 Anti-Revivalism

The prominence of “revival” in this pre-narrative suggests that we might begin with Murray’s and Piggins’ observation that what is moving forward negatively is a transition from a Spirit directed hunger for revival to that “Jezebel, revivalism.”³¹⁷ While revival is understood to be an intensification of the Triune God’s normal activity, revitalising the church, converting unbelievers, and curbing the practice of sin in the general community, revivalism is supposedly constituted by “human techniques and programmes designed to foster revival.”³¹⁸ The former is associated by Murray and Piggins with Edwards and the Great Awakening, and the latter with nineteenth century voluntarism which, Murray says, “contains no real element of mystery: psychological pressure, prayer used to create expectancy, predictions of impending results, the personality of the “revivalist” pushed to the fore.”³¹⁹ The result, they say, was a cheapened and oversimplified gospel, which ultimately led to the divisions in the church in the nineteenth century and the proliferation of denominations that continue to separate Christianity today.

Yet as is apparent in our “pre-narrative” above, this explanation and assessment of nineteenth century voluntarism is too simplistic. Firstly it is based on theological assumptions that are grounded in Calvinism, and that consequently result in a negative reading of the tendency for voluntarism to move away from Calvinist theology to Arminianism.³²⁰ Without wanting to engage in the theological particulars of this long running debate, the problem with this analysis lies in the presuppositions which determine its conclusions. The most important of these is the grace / nature

³¹⁷ Stuart Piggins, “A Theoretical Understanding of Revival,” *Reviving Australia: Essays on the History and Experience of Revival and Revivalism in Australian Christianity*, ed. Stuart Piggins (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994), 13-33. See also Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, xix.

³¹⁸ Piggins, *Firestorm of the Lord*, 66.

³¹⁹ Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 381.

³²⁰ See Piggins, *Firestorm of the Lord*, 67, and Murray, *Revival and Revivalism*, 363, who concludes: “We have argued that the change traced in these pages was closely related to the issue of Calvinistic belief” (i.e. the change from revival to revivalism with all its evils).

opposition that predominates in Calvinism, which assumes that the only possible “good” is the mysterious, suprarational and supernatural mediation of divine truth into human history and, therefore, that any human activity is necessarily evil. In Murray’s analysis, the label “human,” or “human techniques,” becomes a denigration. Nineteenth century voluntarism fails because its Arminian theology supposedly elevates human responsibility above divine grace. Furthermore, the “evil separatism” of nineteenth century Christianity seems to prove the point. Not only is this judgement a *non sequitur*, since, as I shall argue below, separatism has other causes, but our own method as detailed in chapter two assumes that, while humans are fallen and bound by sin, nonetheless humanity is also capable of creatively participating in the emergence of the good, the beautiful and the true.

In this context, the traditional Catholic distinction (without opposition) between grace and nature is helpful, since it recognises that humanity is influenced by both grace and sin, and that grace “completes and perfects nature.”³²¹ As Lonergan clarifies, “grace perfects nature, both in the sense that it adds a perfection beyond nature and in the sense that it confers on nature the effective freedom to attain its own perfection.”³²² “Human technique” is thus not judged negatively simply for being human but, instead, is judged on whether or not it is working toward redemption and against evil, or vice-versa. To positively judge human activity is not to deny that that activity is also infused by grace, and it is also not to deny that that activity is human. In this way we conflate the difference between revival and revivalism, since revival is never simply an activity of the divine, and revivalism is not simply human activity. Instead, grace and human activity are at work in both cases to one degree or another. Grace underpins human creativity in so-called “revivalism” (the creative vector in the scale of values), and human activity is confronted by God in so-called “revival” (the healing vector in the scale of values).

We are thus able to affirm the revival orientation that comes to inform pentecostal self-identify, recognising that it acts as a force for change, motivating prayer, evangelism, local and foreign mission, personal holiness, and ultimately facilitating

³²¹ Neil Ormerod, *Grace and Disgrace: A Theology of Self-Esteem, Society and History* (Sydney: E.J. Dwyer, 1992), 8, citing the traditional scholastic axiom.

³²² Lonergan, *Insight*, 767.

social transformation. The associated elevation of the importance of affections and the human experience of the Spirit can also, continuous with the gains of the Great Awakening, be understood as enriching for the church. Christianity is not lifeless doctrine but, rather, an outworking of the affections of the heart and soul of Spirit empowered people. Doran speaks of the importance of “psychic conversion,” which he extrapolates from Lonergan’s affirmation that the human affections are integral to personal authenticity. The affections, which include feelings and values resulting from love in community and of God (similar to Edwards’ notion of heart) “are indications of the relative integrity or inauthenticity of the subject in his or her performance of the operations of intentional consciousness . . . an experience of the very movement of life.”³²³ It is not that affections and experience replace rationality, either for Edwards or Lonergan and Doran, but rather, that the “heart” ratifies the authenticity of “the head” (and vice-versa). While this may sometimes have been forgotten by experiential voluntarist Christianity in the nineteenth and twentieth century, this does not deny the importance of the affective/experiential orientation of revivalism which fed into twentieth century pentecostalism. This is not to say that revivalism played no part in nineteenth century separatism, but it did so only to the extent that it was one of the elements that manifested a distortion in the church’s social and cultural dialectic in the direction of transcendence (Type 4).

3.3.2 Anti-Contextualisation

A second approach to the analysis of our pre-narrative is what can be labelled “anti-contextualisation”: an approach which negatively judges the pre-narrative on the basis of the presupposition that cultural accommodation is syncretistic. From this perspective, voluntarism’s acceptance of the modern critique of traditional culture and structures, its affirmation of modern individualism, its implementation of democratic structures and its resultant pluralism are all examples of syncretism and church decline.

The problem of this “traditionalist” reading is its assumption that the task of the church is to present intact its received traditions, thereby failing to recognise the

³²³ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 85.

contextual nature of those very traditions.³²⁴ In fact, the task of the church is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, a task that is necessarily contextual. If the church fails to listen to its cultural context, it is not only destined to irrelevance, but it also loses the benefit of the insight available from human development (once again assuming that grace and nature are not opposites, and that the Church has something to learn from cumulative human insight). At the same time the proclamation of the Kingdom of God demands that the church not simply capitulate to its context. Instead, it must find the appropriate balance between syncretism and traditionalism, by way of the critical appropriation of contextual insights, and critical challenge of contextual distortions. This is a matter which we shall take up again later, particularly in chapter five of this thesis.

3.3.3 Voluntarism and the Scale of Values

This leads to the third approach to analysing the “pre-narrative” based on the method set out in Chapter two of this thesis. In this analysis, we shall critically assess the relationship between voluntarist Christianity and its social context, particularly the effect of this relationship upon the scale of values constitutive in the ecclesial realm. We shall consider the manner in which the movement was able to balance the cultural and social dialectic between forces of integration and transcendence, harmony and change.

The developments of eighteenth and nineteenth century voluntarism first need to be understood within their cultural context, which was one of rapid change. As is now well-understood, so-called enlightened, modern, society rejected classical culture and its hierarchical structures, which were not only considered to be grounded in non-scientific superstition, but which privileged the elite at the price of individual justice. This new understanding at the level of culture facilitated the remarkable transformation of the social structures of politics, economy and technology. Of particular importance for the church was the process of democratisation, which John

³²⁴ Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 269.

de Gruchy suggests, at its best, can be understood as “an ongoing quest for justice.”³²⁵ Comparing democratic with what he calls “Leviathan” government, Moltmann argues that the latter is based on a negative or pessimistic anthropology, the notion that human beings are wicked by nature and therefore in need of a powerful state to protect themselves from themselves.³²⁶ The Leviathan state assumes that people are not equal and, as Plato argues, that “it is folly to believe that any but gifted elites can rule wisely and well.”³²⁷ In comparison, democratic government assumes a positive or optimistic anthropology, that “ordinary people are competent to make political decisions,”³²⁸ and must be given the freedom to participate in their own destiny.

In practice democracy has rarely achieved its ideal. At its worst democracy can become another form of oppression, allowing truth to be overcome by populism, and facilitating capitalist and popular oppression of poor minorities. Doran argues that the problem has been that, while liberalism correctly identifies the bias (or neglect) of pre-enlightenment society against the constitutive role of distributive justice at the social level, in rejecting the classically inspired political philosophies of the medieval world, liberal democracies tended to be biased against “superstructural cultural values and ... the ground of these values in personal and religious integrity.”³²⁹ The result of this scepticism of culture was the failure to generate the sorts of values necessary to sustain the search for justice that democracy intended to facilitate, leading instead to the dominance of materialistic, anti-intellectual, and nihilistic social structures.³³⁰

It is not our purpose to affirm or dispute Doran’s analysis, except insofar as the changes he describes influenced the church. Indeed, churches could not escape the effect of these revolutionary changes, although they responded in different ways, locating themselves at different points between the poles of “traditionalism” and “appropriation.” The former was the (naïve) attempt to restrict the impact of change on the church, and maintain, intact, traditional church cultures and structures. The

³²⁵ John de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy: A Theology for a Just Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 21.

³²⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1999), 33.

³²⁷ Plato cited by de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy*, 17.

³²⁸ de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy*, 19.

³²⁹ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 474.

³³⁰ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 475.

latter appropriated the enlightenment worldview and social developments, jettisoning existing church traditions and structures. Voluntarist Christianity, whether consciously or unconsciously, tended toward the latter pole, while rejecting the enlightenment devaluation of the supernatural.

Appropriating the insights of their cultural context, eighteenth and nineteenth century voluntarist movements negotiated the problems of the Leviathan church by forming their own voluntary networks, both within and outside of established ecclesial structures. In the light of the increasing awareness in society as a whole that political structures privileged the elite at the cost of the majority of population, it seemed apparent to some churchmen and women that ecclesial structures, similarly, had too often neglected the role of the laity within the church. At its core, voluntarist Christianity was an effort to empower those whom the traditional church had tended to ignore and silence. Describing the pioneering leaders of voluntarism, Nathan Hatch says:

They shared an ethic of unrelenting toil, a passion for expansion, a hostility to orthodox belief and style, a zeal for religious reconstruction, and a systematic plan to realize their ideals. However diverse their theologies and church organisations, they all offered common people, especially the poor, compelling visions of individual self-respect and collective self-confidence.³³¹

This outlook facilitated a questioning of hierarchical and often oppressive structures and authorities, and made way for new ways of thinking about church unity. Unity was always a central concern for voluntarist Christianity. Charles Wesley, Methodist founder, observed in his sermon “On Schism,” “a causeless separation from a body of living Christians’ is ‘evil in itself,’ being a grievous breach of the law of love (the pretences for separation may be innumerable but want of love is always the real cause).”³³² Wesley was not a voluntarist, but a Methodist Anglican, and he hoped for eighteenth century revived evangelicals to remain within their various ecclesial

³³¹ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 4.

³³² Charles Wesley, “On Schism,” Sermon LXXV, 1786, cited in Geoffrey Wainwright, “Methodism’s Ecclesial Location and Ecumenical Vocation,” *One in Christ* 19, no. 2 (1982): 104-134.

settings. He looked for a unity that went beyond structure, authority and doctrine, but that was instead grounded in the shared mystical, yet affectively obvious, regenerative experience of Jesus through the power of the Spirit.

That his goal was idealistic was apparent in the eventual separation of Methodism from Anglicanism, and in the divisions that plagued other Christian movements that held to similar ideals, such as (earlier) the Baptists and (later) the Brethren and the Churches of Christ. The causes of these separations were multifarious. In Great Britain, Anglican hierarchies rejected the spirituality and reform agenda of Wesley and his followers. In America, the Revolution resulted in British authorities, including the Anglican Church, being forced to withdraw, leaving Christians no choice but to restructure their churches. In all places, modern individualism found its way into ecclesial settings, and the inevitable result was separation from traditional structures. It was a period of rapid cultural and social change that the church as a whole struggled to deal with, attempting in different ways to balance its traditional identity with its missionary purpose that demanded cultural relevance. One of the consequences of this development, in the midst of a plural and expansive new world, was the division and denominationalisation of the church. Controversy and schism followed over a “bewildering variety of issues: ecclesiastic authority, racial equality, lay representation, slavery, the status of the episcopacy, the doctrine of holiness, and many others.”³³³ These were all important issues, and many advances were achieved in what can be described as the process of “democratising Christianity.”³³⁴ Yet in addition to certain advancements, the church also experienced the problems of increased heresy at the level of culture, and schism in the social sphere. As Wainwright comments, “we must face up to that nineteenth century fissiparity.”³³⁵

It is nevertheless possible to conclude that the church has benefited greatly from the diversification that resulted from denominationalisation. Church growth theorist, Peter Wagner, calls this “growth by splitting: ... strangely enough, church splits . . .

³³³ Wainwright, “Methodism's Ecclesial Location,” 116.

³³⁴ Note the title of Hatch's *The Democratisation of American Christianity*.

³³⁵ Wainwright, “Methodism's Ecclesial Location,” 116.

have frequently resulted in accelerated growth for both sides of the split.”³³⁶ In the context of Western pluralism and global diversity, it may be argued that a diverse church fulfils the needs of a diverse populace. Yet to applaud schism for the sake of diversity is to adopt a utilitarian reasoning that is antithetical to the sorts of ideals that should ground ecclesiology. The identity of the church is derived from the shared experience of salvation in Christ, and motivated by the mission of proclaiming the unifying message of the Kingdom of God. As Wesley observed perspicuously, since that mission is grounded in human history, it is not good enough to posit a mystical unity that has no concrete implications.³³⁷ What was needed in the changing social situation of the nineteenth century was not schism, but new ways of conceiving unity in the pluralism of faith that were both mystical and concrete.

It might still be argued that the state aligned church, as traditionally constituted, was not capable of facilitating pluralistic unity. In that case revolution and schism was inevitable. This may well be true and yet, as Doran notes, while unjust structures may call for revolution when all else has failed, such revolutions are not without their problems:

If revolutionaries are themselves the victims or perpetrators of the same kind of distortion of these relations that set the conditions calling for revolution in the first place, then the revolution will bring little more than shift of power and privilege and a changing of the guard. Fate, the mounting probability of ever more fixed schemes of recurrence discouraging and even rendering more and more improbable the exercise of both practical and theoretical intelligence and responsible freedom, will continue to dominate the situation after the revolution just as it did before. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to avoid these results under the passion of revolutionary fervour. Now this does not mean that revolution may not at times be morally justified and practically necessary. It means rather that the incorporation of an unfortunately necessary revolution ... is a work of extraordinary delicacy that calls for a moral

³³⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *What Are We Missing: Look Out! the Pentecostals Are Coming* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, 1978), 62. Wagner is describing twentieth century pentecostalism, not nineteenth century voluntarism, yet the logic remains the same.

³³⁷ Wesley, “On Schism”, cited in Wainwright, “Methodism's Ecclesial Location,” 110.

superiority found as rarely in revolutionaries as in their reactionary opponents.³³⁸

Doran is talking about societal revolutions, but his argument is also applicable to the church context. Whether or not one judges that the revolutions of nineteenth century voluntarism were necessary, it is apparent that their consequence was a recurrence or cycle of breakdown that, while facilitating some gains for the church, nonetheless created a new set of problems.

To face up to these problems, we need to understand their cause, which can be seen to result from distortions in the social and cultural dialectics in the direction of transcendence (Type 4 radicalism). As we observed in chapter two, Doran describes social values in terms of the dialectic between integrative and transcendent forces. On the one hand, the limitative pole comprises the intersubjectivity of family and community belonging, which grounds social harmony. On the other hand, the transcendent pole is marked by the social structures arising from practical intelligence that stimulate community development, including economic, technological, and political structures.³³⁹ For change to occur without social schism, transcendent forces of change must be balanced with the integrating bonds of intersubjectivity.

In voluntarism, the emphasis on social development and the restructure of economic and political structures was readily apparent. The implementation of democracy effected radical social change, whose benefits should not be underestimated. As Hatch observes, the greatest achievement of democratised Christianity was the empowering of the laity and the under-classes:

Methodism in America transcended all barriers and empowered common people to make religion their own. Unlike Calvinism, which emphasized human corruption, divine initiative, and the authority of educated clergymen and inherited ecclesiastic structures, the Methodists proclaimed the breathtaking message of individual freedom, autonomy, responsibility and achievement. More African Americans became Christians in ten years of

³³⁸ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 363.

³³⁹ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 181-183.

Methodist preaching than in a century of Anglican influence. Methodism did not suppress the impulses of popular religion, dreams and visions, ecstasy, unrestrained emotional release, preaching by blacks, by women, by anyone who felt the call.³⁴⁰

Nonetheless, in the process of ecclesial democratisation, voluntarism rejected the integrative ecclesial structures and authorities that balanced the social dialectic and that facilitated social harmony. Democratisation readily succumbed to the process of “individualisation”,³⁴¹ and it became common to reject existing church relationships, structures and authorities. This was apparent firstly in the common rejection of the roles of the priest and the theologian. One may be able to make a case that this rejection was necessary, since it can be argued that the pastorate and the academy had become “closed in upon themselves” and “effete.”³⁴² The problem is that the rejection of this intellectual dimension of the church entails the rejection of the element of the cosmopolis that, among other things, is responsible for maintaining the traditional cultural and structural values that promote integration and harmony. The role and responsibilities of the priest and theologian, and the traditions that they represent, should be confronted with transcendent forces of change, but to reject the priest (or pastor) and theologian altogether is likely to result in the sort of bias that Doran ascribes to modern liberalism. While correctly identifying the traditional church’s neglect of the role and responsibility of the laity, in rejecting the traditional function of the priest (pastor) and theologian, the voluntarist democratic church tended to be biased against the cultural values that support the identity, and thereby, the mission of the Church in the long term.³⁴³

In many cases, the problems of traditionalism were replaced by the dangers of populism, as the priest (pastor) and academic is replaced by the charismatic individual, who functions as a quasi “priest and theologian” (or “pastor-scholar” in

³⁴⁰ Nathan O. Hatch, “The Puzzle of American Methodism,” *Church History* 63, no. 2 (1994): 175-189.

³⁴¹ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 40.

³⁴² These descriptions are used by Lonergan when discussing the potential pitfalls of an educated class (Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 99). This is the essence of the argument made by the voluntarists themselves for their rejection of the Priest and the theologian. See Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 27-46.

³⁴³ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 474. Doran is discussing liberal democracy, but his argument is applicable to the situation of democratic voluntarist Christianity.

the language of Calvinist tradition), and whose own prominence and biases distort the very ideals that democratisation was intended to generate.³⁴⁴ As Hatch comments:

The rise of democratic Christianity in the early United States is riddled with irony, unrealistic hope, and unfulfilled expectations. . . . Attempting to erase the difference between leaders and followers, Americans opened the door to religious demagogues. Despite popular acclaim, these leaders could exercise tyranny unimagined by elites in the more controlled environment of the colonial era. Likewise, a deep sensitivity to audience resulted in values of the audience shaping the message's contours. The quest for unity that drove people to discard formal theology for the Scriptures drove them further asunder. . . . The tapestry of American Protestantism is richly coloured with interwoven strands of populist strength and authoritarian weakness.³⁴⁵

These social changes affected, and were affected by, changes in the cultural level of the scale of values. While a missiological church is, necessarily, a church that identifies with its particular context, it can be argued that nineteenth century voluntarism was insufficiently critical of the culture in which it found itself. Where society as a whole rejected classical culture and its foundation in personal and religious values, voluntarist movements similarly rejected traditional ecclesial culture. According to Doran, the cultural dialectic is made up of cosmologically grounded values and meanings at the limitative pole, which emphasise unity, harmony, and tradition, and anthropologically grounded values and meanings at the transcendent pole, which emphasise reason, development and change.³⁴⁶ Voluntarist culture emphasises the important operative forces of transcendent change, such as revivalism, eschatological urgency, and the holiness orientation. Together these values stimulated the church in the task of mission. But these forces for change were not sufficiently balanced by the voice and lessons of church tradition, which incorporates and emphasises various symbols of ecclesial integration. This includes metaphors such as the "body of Christ," and the traditional marks of the church as "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." Consequently, emergent nineteenth century voluntarism can be said

³⁴⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 333.

³⁴⁵ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 16.

³⁴⁶ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 145.

to have been unbalanced in the direction of transcendence at the cultural level. While this enabled church movements to be open to change and focused on cultural relevance for the sake of mission, the cost was the propensity for schism (social breakdown) and the tendency to heresy (cultural breakdown).

One of the constitutive elements of church culture is doctrine, and it is noteworthy that the voluntarist rejection of traditional authorities usually included the rejection of traditionally framed doctrine, and sometimes the idea of doctrine altogether. The intention behind non-doctrinal mystical conceptions of unity was to overcome the confessional differences that plagued Europe and subsequently America in the years that followed the protestant reformation, and that justified the religious wars. This mystical conception of unity assumes that the shared experience of faith can be separated from doctrine and belief. A more rounded apprehension would suggest, rather, that the two go hand in hand. This is because belief, which is mediated socially by way of doctrine, reveals the object of faith, that being the triune God; the Father as revealed through Christ in the power of the Spirit. While the experience of faith, apparent in the affections of the heart, brings about love of God and for the church community, this experience cannot be non-doctrinal. Rather, the experience of salvation generates faith and thereafter stimulates belief in the Scriptures, and in the meaning of the biblical *kerygma* as set out in church doctrine.³⁴⁷ This is not to say that doctrine should be static. While Christian doctrine is grounded on revelation of the Triune God as revealed through the Scriptures, and this revelation is trans-cultural, yet it is mediated to, and understood within, diverse and developing cultural contexts.³⁴⁸ Rather than reject doctrine *per se*, as did many nineteenth century voluntarists, the church would have to find ways of affirming both diversity and the importance of doctrine. We shall take up how this might be possible in the fifth chapter of this thesis, when we consider the rise of the ecumenical movement and its impact upon pentecostalism toward the end of the twentieth century. For now, it is enough to observe that the voluntarist rejection of doctrine opened the door to heresy at the level of culture (i.e. cultural breakdown), and consequently, to social schism.

³⁴⁷ Lonergan distinguishes between faith and belief, where faith is “the knowledge born of religious love” (Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115), and belief is “appropriating one’s social, cultural, religious heritage” (Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 41). In respect to doctrine, Lonergan says that, “Among the values that faith discerns is the value of believing the word of religion, of accepting the judgments of fact and the judgments of value that the religion proposes” (Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 118).

³⁴⁸ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 296.

To conclude this analysis, our argument is that nineteenth century voluntarism can be categorised, using Ormerod's fourfold typology that we described in Chapter two, as a Type 4 radical church distorted in the direction of transcendence at both the cultural and social level. It facilitated and achieved some globally important ecclesial changes, including a spiritual hunger for revival, an emphasis on the empowerment of laity and related egalitarianism, missions orientation, renewed emphasis on holiness, and an holistic gospel message that included physical healing, but was also subject to the unfortunate problem of fissiparity and schism that resulted from the collapsing of the scale of values, so that it became biased against cultural values, especially the intellectual dimension of church tradition. This is the environment into which twentieth century pentecostalism was born, and from which we can discern the roots of its strengths and weaknesses. The challenge for pentecostalism, along with the protestant church as a whole, was to find a solution to the problem of recurrent social breakdown.

3.4 Narrative: The Emergence of Pentecostalism in Australia

Hutchinson's observation that the story of pentecostalism "is far from uni-linear, ... it is not one thing spreading out, but many mutually-recognisable things coalescing,"³⁴⁹ is now readily apparent. Pentecostalism is birthed into a global ferment of religious ideas, uniting them in such a way that the movement was to become a significant force in the transitions of twentieth century Christianity. It is a coalescing that finds its symbolic identity in the experience of the baptism in the Spirit. With its symbolic (if not genetic) beginning on 1 January 1901 at C.F. Parham's bible school in Topeka Kansas, and its popularisation through the 1906 Azusa Street revival, the pentecostal description of the baptism in the Spirit took on more significant meaning than its simple holiness origins, and found resonance with voluntarist movements globally. Associated with the experience of "tongues," the phrase, "baptism in the Spirit," came to represent the various currents of revivalist thinking. Not only did it represent and generate revival, it also gave expression to the importance of religious affections; it was understood as a sign of the end-times; it facilitated holiness; and most

³⁴⁹ Hutchinson, "The Power to Grasp."

importantly, it was seen to empower the individual for mission, irrespective of race, gender or status.³⁵⁰ Its centrality to pentecostal identity resulted in its dogmatisation, as pentecostals cemented its importance by doctrinal formulations. This process is illustrative of Lindbeck's understanding of doctrine as "communally authoritative teachings regarding beliefs and practices that are considered essential to the identity or welfare of the group in question."³⁵¹ It is important to observe, however, that baptism in the Spirit is firstly an encounter engaged by experience and only secondly a doctrine.³⁵²

3.4.1 Globalisation of Pentecostalism in Australia

I have already noted Chant's claim that Australian pentecostalism is not "an American import"³⁵³ but, rather, "an indigenous movement, enriched by a variety of overseas influences."³⁵⁴ This is true to the extent that the religious mobilisations we have described above were a part of the Australian religious experience, although it is better to say that pentecostalism in Australia is an example of the coalescing of the global streams of voluntarist religion, finding glocal expression in the Australian context.

While Australia has a long and rich Aboriginal heritage, its Christianisation began with colonisation in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. British authorities brought with them their largely Anglican tradition, although the fact that the nation was begun as a prison colony did not encourage the religiosity of the general populace, at least in the early days. Indeed, it has become a historical truism to suggest that Australian churches continue to face the legacy of early antipathy to church authority, with writers citing in particular the close alignment of the church

³⁵⁰ This summary of the significance of baptism in the Holy Spirit for Pentecostals is derived from various sources. See, for example, Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*; Faupel, *Everlasting Gospel*, 30-41; Frank Macchia, "Sighs too Deep for Words: Toward a Theology of Glossolalia," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992): 47-73.

³⁵¹ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 74.

³⁵² Where experience generating faith gives rise to the affirmation of doctrine. See Lonergan's distinction between faith and belief (Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 115-124).

³⁵³ Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 39.

³⁵⁴ Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 103.

and the state, and early examples of ecclesial oppression, such as the Reverend Samuel Marsden's appointment as magistrate, and his widespread reputation as "the flogging parson."³⁵⁵ Yet as Ian Breward observes, it is not true to say that Australia was or is "the most godless place under heaven."³⁵⁶ During the nineteenth century churches grew rapidly on the back of European immigration. Given the diversity of migrant religious affiliation, this process was remarkably pluralist, with Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and other denominations all taking a foothold in the nation. This pluralism was enhanced by governor Bourke's Church Act of 1836, which, rather than privileging the Anglican Church, provided subsidies to the various Christian denominations based on the size of their constituency.³⁵⁷

The convict and migrant heritage gave rise to a culture that tended to avow a rigid class system. It has become almost commonplace to speak of Australia as an egalitarian nation, as summed up by Manning Clark's well-known thesis that "Australians lived in a country where neither the historians, the prophets, the poets nor the priests had drawn the maps."³⁵⁸ While the assumption of egalitarianism is no doubt a myth, yet it is true that institutions which affirm the importance of the average person, and reject "snobbery," find resonance with the Australian psyche.³⁵⁹ For this reason, the free church movements, with their affirmation and empowering of the laity, grew rapidly during the second half of the nineteenth century. As Ian Breward observes:

Methodists were best placed to meet these new demands. Lay preachers . . . could edify and convert without the cultural gaps that sometimes hindered communication between clerical gentleman and the lower orders. . . . Methodism of various kinds increased its proportion of the population from

³⁵⁵ An example of this conclusion can be found in John Smith, *Advance Australia Where?* (Sydney, New South Wales: Anzea, 1988), 7-24. For a more positive assessment of Marsden and the importance of early Anglicanism, see Iain H. Murray, *Australian Christian Life From 1788* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 29-48.

³⁵⁶ The common assumption from which Breward derives the title of his book, Ian Breward, *Australia - The Most Godless Place Under Heaven* (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1988).

³⁵⁷ Breward, *Australia*, 19.

³⁵⁸ Clark, Manning. *Manning Clark's History of Australia: Abridged Version* ed. Michael Cathcart (Melbourne, Victoria: Penguin, 1995), 625.

³⁵⁹ See Hugh Mackay, *Reinventing Australia: The Mind and Mood of Australia in the 90s* (Sydney, New South Wales: Angus & Robertson, 1993), 132-138.

5.63% to 13.36% between 1851 and 1901 by its combination of lay preachers, class meetings and circuits and a vigorously evangelistic ethos.³⁶⁰

It was into this free church context that the global streams of revivalism found their way into Australian churches. News of various revivals in Britain and the United States soon reached Australia, and were spread throughout the nation via the pages of various Christian journals and by travelling Evangelists. Robert Evans chronicles various local revivals throughout Australia during the second half of the nineteenth century, especially in Methodist circles, and in this context notes the importance of the holiness movement, of restorationism, and of spiritual experience and the baptism in the Spirit.³⁶¹ Similarly, in Chant's analysis of the religious climate into which Australian pentecostalism was born, he focuses on Christian perfectionism and the related holiness notion of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, as well as the emphasis on the experience and the ministry of divine healing,³⁶² all of which (as we have seen, above) contributed to nineteenth century global voluntarist religion. Yet it would be wrong to assume on this basis that Australia was simply a recipient of these global trends. In fact voluntarist religion flourished in Australia precisely because it resonated with Australian culture, and it grew on the back of local worldview and evangelistic activity. As well as being a recipient of these global religious flows, Australian Christians contributed to their promulgation. This is apparent in the rise to prominence of men such as Alexander Dowie on the global religious scene, who, after commencing a thriving work in Australia, developed a worldwide reputation for ministering healing. Dowie later moved to America, where his millennialist expectations led him to establish Zion City and the Christian Catholic Church, with an estimated membership of forty thousand world-wide.³⁶³ In turn, his healing emphasis had an extensive input into the pre-pentecostal global voluntarism which then took form in Good News Hall in Australia.

³⁶⁰ Breward, *Australia*, 29.

³⁶¹ Evans Robert, *Early Evangelical Revivals in Australia* (Adelaide, South Australia: Openbook, 2000).

³⁶² Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost."

³⁶³ Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 149-178.

3.4.2 Lancaster and Good News Hall

As the twentieth century dawned, and as Parham, Seymour, Wigglesworth and others discovered a new experience of the Spirit in America and England, in Australia similar forces were at work. In 1908, fifty year old wife and mother of five, Sarah Jane Lancaster was baptised in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. Lancaster and her husband Alfred had been active Methodists for many years, and in 1902 she had become interested in healing when, upon knocking on the door of an ailing older gentleman, he read to her James 5:13-15 and demanded that she find elders and pray for his healing.³⁶⁴ With the help of an Adventist pastor, Lancaster learned what she termed “the Scriptural principles of divine healing,” which she set about proclaiming. In 1906 she ordered a pamphlet from England entitled “Back to Pentecost”, which proved to her that “God had never withdrawn or withheld the baptism of the Holy Spirit from His Church”, and which led her to pray that “God would open the heavens and fulfil His promise.”³⁶⁵ Two years later, Lancaster had her spiritual baptism, and discovered that she was not alone in her interest in the Spirit’s fullness.

On New Year’s Eve 1909, Lancaster opened Good News Hall with an all night prayer meeting. She had intended to drive home on New Year’s Day, “but for six weeks such a glorious revival continued night and day, that we never entered our home again.”³⁶⁶ Converting the upstairs section of the building to their home, the Lancasters’ were to live in the Hall for the remainder of their lives. Before long she had gathered a congregation that numbered in the hundreds, and they met throughout the week; Sunday 11am fellowship meeting, 2pm prayer meeting, 7pm gospel meeting, Tuesday 8pm tarrying meeting (i.e. tarrying for the Spirit), Friday 8pm open air evangelism, Saturday 8pm prayer and fellowship. As the mission notice declared, “the sick will be prayed for at every service.”³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Sarah Jane Lancaster, “Editorial: The Divine Truth of Healing,” *Good News* 19, no. 11 (November 1923): 4-5.

³⁶⁵ Sarah Jane Lancaster, “Editorial: The History of Good News Hall,” *The Good News* 27, no. 9 (September 1926): 10-11.

³⁶⁶ Lancaster, “History of Good News Hall,” 10.

³⁶⁷ Every issue of the *Good News* concluded with notices of meetings being held throughout the nation.

In 1910 Lancaster toured Australia preaching the fourfold gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, baptism in the Holy Spirit, divine healing and the second coming.³⁶⁸ Although she continued to travel periodically, Lancaster's was not an itinerant ministry, but a local mission focused around the activities of Good News Hall. Her national impact derived from her personal influence on other itinerants, as well as the publication of the *Good News* journal that she edited. Commenced in 1910, periodically at first, the journal was to become a monthly publication that achieved a circulation of between two and three thousand.³⁶⁹ The journal was in a newspaper type format, incorporating testimonies, reports, spiritual encouragement and teaching articles, whose purpose was set out on its cover:

An Australian Monthly, shewing that Jesus is just the same to-day; Saving Souls from Death; Answering Prayer; Baptising in the Holy Spirit; Healing the Sick; Preparing the Church for His Speedy Return.

The vast numbers of personal testimonies sent in to the editor from pentecostals throughout the nation were concerned with healing, the impact of the baptism in the Spirit, and transformations resulting from salvation. The various "news reports" catalogued the success of evangelistic campaigns (often described as revivals) and the progress of local pentecostal assemblies. There was also a section devoted to foreign missions. The teaching articles were either transcripts of sermons, or otherwise journal articles often reprinted from foreign magazines.³⁷⁰

Chant, who has catalogued and classified the *Good News* teaching articles, notes that the most popular theme was the second coming of Christ.³⁷¹ Taking the premillennialist position, the articles read world events through literalist interpretations of biblical apocalyptic literature. As we have already observed, it was a theme common to revivalist religion globally. They not only understood revival as a sign that the end was nigh, but their restorationism generally incorporated literalistic

³⁶⁸ Lancaster, "History of Good News Hall," 10.

³⁶⁹ According to a report in 1928, thirty six thousand copies were printed on the in-house printing machine the previous year. Sarah Jane Lancaster, "Printer," *Good News* 19, no. 6 (June 1928): 12.

³⁷⁰ This summary is taken from my reading of the journals (1913-1934), held at the Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, and online at <http://goodnews.webjournals.org>. It is also supported by the more detailed analysis of Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 474-478.

³⁷¹ Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 476.

readings of the apocalyptic texts of Scripture, which usually aligned world events with biblical prophecies, on the assumption that the books of Daniel and Revelation referred directly to their time. It may have been a somewhat naïve hermeneutic, but their conclusions need to be understood in relation to their social context. As the humanist promises of the enlightenment project were confronted with the reality of WWI and its antecedents, there was a general feeling in the world that humanity was heading for an apocalyptic end. What distinguishes Christianity is the hope derived from Christ in the midst of such global crises. However this message is understood (whether as naïve or otherwise), its function in pentecostalism was to stimulate the drive to mission. Whatever conclusions are reached about pentecostal ecclesiology, above all, the movement is missionary in orientation.

The other themes in the journal were also common to revivalist religion. The focus was on holy Christian living (prayer, discipleship and holiness), articles explicating the gospel, and teaching on healing. What distinguishes the journal as “pentecostal” is the importance given to the pentecostal theme of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. These included doctrinal affirmations, such as those of the global Pentecostal theologian Donald Gee,³⁷² which defended the Pentecostal conclusion that tongues is the “initial evidence” of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. More commonly, Spirit baptism was given a broader context, as encapsulating the entire Pentecostal worldview. The baptism in the Spirit was understood to be the power for Christian living, evangelism, prayer, transforming holiness, and the miraculous, including healing, prophecy and other gifts of the Spirit.³⁷³ In achieving this power, it was understood as a sign that Christ was coming soon. Thus, as we have already observed, for pentecostals, the baptism in the Spirit stands as a symbol that brings together the various streams of voluntarist, revivalist Christianity.

³⁷² *Good News*, November 1923, January 1924, November 1925.

³⁷³ This broad understanding of baptism in the Spirit is apparent in almost all articles related to the topic. For specific examples see, Sarah Jane Lancaster, “What’s the use of Tongues?,” *Good News*, no. 6 (October 1913): available online at <http://goodnews.webjournals.org/articles/10-1/1913/3537.htm>; F. B. Meyer, “God at Work,” *Good News* 15, no. 1 (January 1924): available online at <http://goodnews.webjournals.org/articles/1-1/1924/3987.htm>; William Durham, “The Power of God,” *Good News* 15, no. 8 (August 1924): available online at <http://goodnews.webjournals.org/articles/8-1/1924/4286.htm>; J. D. Adams, “Baptism in the Holy Spirit,” *Good News* 19, no. 1-5 (January 1928): series.

In the years and decades that followed the establishment of Good News Hall and the publication of the *Good News* journal, many other pentecostals followed Lancaster's footsteps in evangelising the cities and towns of Australia with the pentecostal fourfold gospel. While some foreign evangelists were among them, they did not always relate well to the local pentecostals. The well known American Evangelist and founder of the Foursquare movement in America, Aimee Semple McPherson, travelled to Australia in 1922 under the sponsorship of Good News Hall, but she disassociated herself from Lancaster on arrival, claiming that "there were grave doctrinal differences between herself and Good News Hall."³⁷⁴ We shall return to this issue later, but for now it is enough to note that this concern about doctrine is indicative of the realisation that faith and belief go together; that non-doctrinal unity is in practice no unity at all. While McPherson's ministry was successful largely amongst Australia's evangelical protestants, she was never reconciled with Lancaster. Instead, the Pentecostal message was mostly spread by local Evangelists, many of whom were women. As Chant observes, "over half the Pentecostal congregations functioning by 1930 were established and led by women."³⁷⁵

By 1925 Good News Hall had approximately fifteen affiliated fellowships around the nation, and the journal was also distributed to other like-minded individuals and congregations, such as Methodist ministers Archibald Newton and William Sloane, and the international Salvationist ministers Herbert Booth.³⁷⁶ Such men were able to remain in their denomination and advocate the Pentecostal understanding of the baptism of the Spirit for a time although, as pentecostalism grew and became more obvious and hence more controversial, most protestant denominations required such ministers to "withdraw their Pentecostal practices or withdraw from the ministry."³⁷⁷ In the first seventeen years of its history there were no formal links between Good News Hall and any other pentecostal fellowship, in part because they were anti-organisational, in part because of their faith missions ecclesiology. Neither did they share a common fellowship name, instead taking for their assemblies various biblical

³⁷⁴ McPherson, cited by Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 244.

³⁷⁵ Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 39.

³⁷⁶ See Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 670-673.

³⁷⁷ Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 670.

or missionary titles such as Bethel, Elim, Hebron, The Tabernacle, Four Square Mission, and Good News Hall.³⁷⁸

The movement was held together by a shared cultural worldview, derived from the various streams of voluntarist religion that we have described above, and brought together, and thereby distinguished, by the symbolic function of baptism in the Spirit. Symbols are the primary means by which individuals acquire transcendent meanings.³⁷⁹ As Don Grant notes, “individuals therefore constantly seek out broader meanings capable of encapsulating and integrating their disparate experiences of work, family and community.”³⁸⁰ In relation to Pentecostals, Amos Yong has argued that these broader meanings were captured in the experience and, later, the doctrine, of baptism in the Spirit and glossolalia, which “symbolizes the message of the gospel and is a prototype of its proclamation.”³⁸¹ On the one hand, the baptism in the Spirit was one element of the fourfold gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, baptism in the Spirit, divine healing, and the premillennial return of Christ, around which pentecostal proclamation was based. On the other hand, this fourfold gospel was encapsulated within the symbol of the baptism in the Spirit that set Pentecostals apart, since the baptism in the Spirit was the sign that the “end was nigh,” and was the means of empowering the believer for the mission of proclaiming salvation in Jesus Christ and for ministering divine healing.

The early pentecostal worldview, based on the mission of the fourfold gospel and the symbolic identity drawn from the baptism in the Spirit, is one that both informed and was supported by the loose-knit social structures surrounding the shared message of the *Good News* journal, the unity derived from the circuit ministry of the travelling evangelists, and the common activities of the local assemblies. While these social structures were informal, they nonetheless facilitated the relatively simple needs of this small missionary movement. What is not present in the first fifteen years or so of the movement’s history is the formal institutional structures and authorities that are generally associated with church organisation, and that are usually seen as necessary

³⁷⁸ Names taken from Assembly notices that are listed on the back page of every issue of the Good News.

³⁷⁹ Berger, *Sacred Canopy*.

³⁸⁰ Grant, “Symbols, Stories and Practices.”

³⁸¹ Amos Yong, “‘Tongues of Fire’ In the Pentecostal Imagination: The Truth of Glossolalia in Light of R.C. Neville’s Theory of Religious Symbolism,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 12 (1998): 39-65.

for the long-term survival of the community. Pentecostals, with their belief in the imminent return of Christ, were not interested in long term institutional survival. Instead, early pentecostalism in Australia can be best understood as a Faith Missions movement, although one that was indigenous rather than driven by foreign interests. As Lancaster states:

THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION is NOT another CHURCH (sic). It is the Assembly of those who, throughout Australasia, are seeking to prove that our Blessed Lord is just the same as He was when He commissioned the disciples to “go into all the world”.³⁸²

Just as the Faith Missions movement was born out of voluntarist Christianity, with the priority of sharing the gospel such that unity was sought outside of denominational doctrinal constraints and in the shared fellowship of the proclamation of Christ in the power of the Spirit,³⁸³ so was the model of early pentecostalism in Australia. The movement did not ordain pastors, although some retained such titles from their denominational affiliations. Most simply took the title “sister” or “brother,” and Lancaster herself was known as “mother.”³⁸⁴ The only label of any value was that of “evangelist,” a fact indicative of missionary priority. The ideal of individual unity, outside of creedal formulations, is also apparent. In an editorial in the 1913 edition of the *Good News*, Lancaster comments:

We have no quarrel with any of God’s dear children who differ from us in doctrine, believing that the Father permits these differences that we may receive practice in that greatest thing of all, “Love.” Therefore, praising Him that by His grace our love is greater than our knowledge, we gladly fellowship with all who comply with the essentials of salvation as given in Rom. 10:9, recognising that if the Body of Christ are ever to be of one mind (and they are), the unity can only be achieved by meeting together and enjoying liberty

³⁸² Sarah Jane Lancaster, “Good News Hall,” *Good News* 17, no. 10 (October 1926): 10-13.

³⁸³ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 170.

³⁸⁴ The Baptist minister Gordon Bennett describes Lancaster by saying:, “I have known our Sister, who is affectionately known to many as ‘Mother,’ for over twenty five years: during that time, she has been a gracious, loving and helpful ‘Mother’ to many of God’s children and to many who did not know God.” *Good News* 23:7, July 1932, 18, cited in Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 215.

of the Spirit (2 Cor 2:17), and that means liberty for my brother as well as for me.³⁸⁵

This individualist concept of unity is not only inconsistent, since “the essentials of salvation” are in fact doctrinal, it also tends to mitigate against explicit teaching about the church, its organisation and nature. This anti-organisational tendency was intensified by the faith missions orientation and the urgency of the hour. For early Australian Pentecostals, where the church is mentioned, it is usually in relation to some other topic, such as encouragement to the church to pursue holiness or mission or the like, or otherwise, critiques of traditional churches for not maintaining these “biblical” standards. There are sometimes injunctions to unity, but these are generally addressed to individuals rather than churches or denominations. Where the church itself is the topic, it is spoken of in mystical terms. So, for example, Lancaster talks of the Body of Christ as “that great mystery ... wherein a place in that body is not yours or mine to say.”³⁸⁶ Intriguingly, Lancaster goes on to distinguish between “the body” and “the bride,” the former being that mysterious body that comprises all Christians, the latter, the pure, consecrated minority of the body (i.e. those who were baptised in the Spirit) who would experience pre-tribulation rapture.³⁸⁷ The distinction functions as a call for holiness in the body and as an invitation to the baptism in the Spirit, and yet, neither her portrayal of the body or bride addresses questions of ecclesial authority and structure. She also qualifies this position with the observation that “the manifestation of the Body and Bride, however, is as yet unfulfilled prophecy, about which we cannot afford to be dogmatic,”³⁸⁸ a statement that again reiterates her ideal of non-doctrinal unity.

It was an ideal that was to be sorely tested, and ultimately proved unworkable because, as set out in the analysis section that follows, it was internally inconsistent. As a restorationist in a milieu marked by democratised voluntarist Christianity, Lancaster shared the common view that not only should the (individual interpretation of) Scripture take priority over tradition and creed, but that the latter generally hinders

³⁸⁵ Sarah Jane Lancaster, *Good News* 1:5 January 1913, 7 cited in Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 239.

³⁸⁶ Sarah Jane Lancaster, “The Body of Christ,” *Good News* 1, no. 6 (October 1913): 12-13.

³⁸⁷ Sarah Jane Lancaster, “Editorial Comment,” *Good News* 15, no. 5 (May 1924): 5 and Sarah Jane Lancaster, “Will all Christians Be Translated,” *Good News* 19, no. 10 (October 1928): 2.

³⁸⁸ Lancaster, “Editorial Comment,” 5.

an open and honest reading of the text.³⁸⁹ It was a view that was based on the assumption of the perspicuity of Scripture, especially when read under the inspiration of the Spirit. Stephen Graham observes that the dilemma with this approach to the bible “was its inability to account for differences of interpretation. . . . That they disagreed so vehemently gave them only brief pause as they continued to stress how the Bible was everybody’s book. They found it hard to imagine that anyone could read the Bible differently.”³⁹⁰ In reality, as Gordon Fee observes, “the pentecostal tends to exegete his or her experience.”³⁹¹ While this approach to the Bible stimulates and empowers lay spirituality and ministry, it is problematic when the logic extends to the community-forming function of doctrine.

This individualistic hermeneutic (or non-hermeneutic, since they were seeking to banish the need for human interpretation), led Lancaster to reject trinitarianism. It was an error common to voluntarist movements seeking to replace creed with the Scriptures. In America, the Assemblies of God had been split over the “Oneness” controversy, in which some pentecostals claimed that Jesus was the name of the one God, Father, Son and Spirit, and thereby proclaimed a baptism into the name of Jesus only.³⁹² Yet Lancaster’s position was not a repeat of oneness pentecostal modalism. Instead, she argued that God the Father and the Holy Spirit were one, and that Jesus Christ was God’s Son (a “binity”). She writes:

The Son is inferior both in Dignity and in Time to the Father. Jesus said – “My Father is greater than I.” John 14:28. The term “God” is applied to our Lord as Son of God in a lower degree, as it is also used of men. Ps. 82:6³⁹³

³⁸⁹ When Good News Hall eventually set out its doctrinal statement, the very first clause read: We believe in “The infallible inspiration of the Bible as originally given, and its sufficiency as our rule of faith and practice. Whatsoever is not found written therein is not to be required of anyone as an article of belief.” (Apostolic Faith Mission, “The Doctrinal Basis of the Apostolic Faith Mission of Australasia,” *Good News* 18, no. 7 (July 1927): 18) It was a clause that extended to terminology, included such ‘non-biblical’ terms as ‘Trinity.’

³⁹⁰ Stephen Graham, “‘Thus Saith The Lord’: Biblical Hermeneutics in the Early Pentecostal Movement,” *Ex-Auditu* 12 (1996): 121-135.

³⁹¹ Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991), 86.

³⁹² Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, 141-143.

³⁹³ Sarah Jane Lancaster, *Good News* 1:5, January 1913, 17. Cited in Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 233.

This was essentially a reversion to ancient Arianism, and it was the reason that McPherson, who preached a broadly evangelical message, gave for cutting her ties with Good News Hall (the oneness debate was particularly fierce in McPherson's home state of California). It is noteworthy that, for the sake of ecumenical acceptance, it was necessary for McPherson to be doctrinally exclusive. It was an exclusivity that Lancaster did not share. She happily invited McPherson and others who held Trinitarian views to speak at revival meetings, and she was shocked when these doctrinal issues led to division. In response to McPherson's accusations against her, she states:

No statement was ever made broadcast by any representative of G.N.H. that they believed doctrinally "exactly" the same as the Evangelist. How could they? We do not suppose that any two ministers on Mrs McPherson's platform believed doctrinally "exactly" the same as the Evangelist.³⁹⁴

This logic reveals Lancaster's misunderstanding of doctrine and, while we shall take up the issue of non-doctrinal unity in our analysis section, it is enough to note that the ideal was not only elusive, but also naïve. While McPherson's concerns came from outside the pentecostal movement in Australia, internally, it was the issue of female leadership that was to stimulate the first hints of dispute and, thereby, to generate explicit reflection about church authority and structure. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, neither Methodist nor any evangelical denominations ordained women, a situation that reflected conservative attitudes in society in general. While Faith Missions had long accepted women missionaries, Fiedler observes that:

It is part of faith missions' lore that God sometimes calls a woman to do a man's job. Reports about such work are often given with a twinkle in the eye and in the firm conviction that what this or that woman is doing really is a man's job, and sooner or later that matter will be set right and a man will do it. This attitude, usually shared by women and men alike, ensures that the successor of a successful woman is always a man.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ Lancaster, "Mrs McPherson's 'Open Letter' Answered," *Good News*, 24 October 1922, 1. Cited in Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 244.

³⁹⁵ Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 300.

In addition to the restrictions placed on women in society generally, and in unconscious affirmation of the long history of Christian restriction of the rights and responsibilities allowed women, literalist and restorationist religious movements had often stressed biblical texts that affirmed male headship and explicitly commanded women to be silent in church. The priority of the missionary task had been sufficient to override these restrictions in the Faith Missions movements, at least for a time, while the need for workers prevailed. In addition to the missionary impulse, pentecostal women were empowered by the experience and symbol of baptism in the Spirit, which generated an egalitarian culture that extended to female participation in ministry. While this symbol of female liberation continued to exist in tension with conservative attitudes to women, Lancaster's role as the leader of Good News Hall, and editor of what was then the national pentecostal journal, ensured the continued space for women during the first decades of Australian pentecostalism.

3.4.3 The Formation of the Apostolic Faith Mission

Yet, as the movement grew, the long term viability of the national and global mission of pentecostalism necessitated the development of social structures, and this raised questions of authority, and ultimately of gender roles. In 1923 Good News Hall appointed three male elders, John Cavill, Charles Anstis and Philip Adams, and a nine member council in which Cavill was president, and Lancaster treasurer.³⁹⁶ The reason given by Lancaster is noteworthy:

As God intended, there is no division in the homes of these three elders. Husband and wife stand heart to heart and hand in hand in the love of God, and for the extension of the kingdom. What they will say when they read these lines we know not (*Lancaster had just "waxed lyrical" about their character*). The editor will have to hide until their vocabulary is exhausted; but as, by means of a fellowship tie, we are entering into a closer relationship with many of God's choicest children throughout Australasia, we deem it wise

³⁹⁶ "Notices", *Good News* 9, no.1 (February 1923), 20.

and right that they should know a little of the characters of the elders at headquarters, whose reputation stands just as highly in the commercial world as the religious.³⁹⁷

Despite claims in the same article to not being “another church,” Good News Hall had appointed an eldership to help facilitate links with other pentecostal assemblies, and in so doing, it began the process of transition from Faith Mission to Church. Whilst unstated, the fact that the elders were male was a concession to those conservative forces in culture that advocated male authority. Yet in this concession, Lancaster makes a point of affirming female equality. In her description of Charlie Anstis, she comments on his willingness to submit to Lancaster’s ministry at an earlier revival she had led in a Methodist church:

What! In a conservative building where women might wash the cloth for the Lord’s Table, but were warned not to encroach on man’s prerogative as their superior? Yes, for the Holy Spirit makes the bodies of women His temple, as well as those of men; He speaks and acts through either sex at His own sweet will, declaring that “As many as have been baptised into Christ ... have put on Christ ... there is, therefore, neither male or female, for ye are all ONE in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26, 27).” The capitals are ours, to emphasise a truth which man, proud man, will rarely entertain, for just as Jewish Christians in the days of Paul found it hard to believe the glorious fact that the Christ of God had torn down the middle wall of partition between the Gentiles and themselves ... so to-day the pride of man forbids his acceptance of the grace of God toward those women upon whom He has poured His Spirit, thus making men and women one in Christ.³⁹⁸

As the pentecostal mission formalised its ecclesial structures, the question of women in ministry became more prominent. In 1928, Dr Mina Ross Brawner became affiliated with Good News Hall, and was appointed as national evangelist. Beginning with a gospel tent mission in Sydney, she later travelled to Melbourne, and subsequently spent fourteen months pioneering a church in Ballarat. She then moved

³⁹⁷ Lancaster, “Good News Hall,” 12

³⁹⁸ Lancaster, “Good News Hall,” 11.

on to Brisbane, and ministered in various towns throughout Queensland, either pioneering, or ministering in newly established churches, including Rockhampton, Mackay, and Townsville. She preached in the open air, in halls, in churches, and her ministry was described by others as being “full of the power of the Spirit,”³⁹⁹ (the highest of pentecostal compliments). According to reports and testimonies, she ministered most nights of the week, and saw many souls won to Christ, many people baptised in the Holy Spirit, and many people healed of various sicknesses. In response to the questions that were being raised about the ministry of women in pentecostal churches, Brawner wrote a series entitled “Women in the Word” that was published monthly in the *Good News* from January 1929 to March 1930.⁴⁰⁰ It was an intellectually cogent attempt to reconcile the pentecostal experience of gender equality in the power of the Spirit with a reading of the biblical text that affirmed this experience. Beginning with her testimony to the Spirit’s liberation, she goes on to highlight the conflict between her experience and conservative theology:

Imagine my surprise on being informed by older labourers in the Lord’s vineyard, that I had now come to a very sharp demarcation between the sexes. That a women might preach, or sing, or pray in public (provided she wore a hat), but she must not anoint with oil when praying for the sick; must not hold office as pastor, elder or deacon; must not teach men (only women and children); must not officiate at the Lord’s table nor pass the elements; must not solemnise marriages or administer water baptism. I was further informed that if there was no man present to perform these duties, a women might, in an emergency, do any or all of these things (except solemnise marriages), but, of course, if a man appeared on the scene, she must give way.

Let me put the proposition in plain English – The Divine call, unction, education, natural ability, faithfulness in service, must all be weighted in the scale of sex. And the male sex weighs more in the sight of God and the Church, than all these qualifications plus the female sex! Charging God with

³⁹⁹ Winnie Andrews, “The Brisbane Campaign,” *Good News* 22, no. 10 (October 1931): 10. See also the testimony of Norman Armstrong (APS oral history collection, 2001).

⁴⁰⁰ Mina Ross Brawner, “Women in the Word,” *Good News* (January 1929 to March 1930): 20:1 - 21:3. The series was subsequently published as a book, Mina Ross Brawner, *Woman in the Word* (Dallas, Texas: Christ for the Nations, 1975).

the folly of anointing and equipping His handmaidens for service, and then disqualifying them because they are what he made them - His handmaidens. It was a new idea to me. I must confess to a momentary feeling of impatience at such an archaic viewpoint. “Can it be possible”, I asked myself, “that I, as a women, have less liberty under grace than under law? Can it be that my Lord is less just than my State Government? Or is this only a silly, man-made regulation”.

My sense of justice was outraged, but only momentarily, remembering that I am my Lord’s love-slave, pledged to serve Him in any capacity He chooses, I then and there promised Him to carefully consider the place where He had put me; willing – like the Syrophenician women – to be called even a dog by my master; just so am I my Master’s dog, and with this resolve I opened my Bible to study the status of “Women in the Word”.⁴⁰¹

With this vivid portrayal of the issue at hand, she goes on to develop a holistic and methodological reading of the Scriptures, which affirms her experience of equality and liberation. Her argument was unique for pentecostals in its day, but will be familiar to modern readers. In summary, she narrates a biblical case for the equality of women, from the story of creation to liberation from the female curse through Christ. She also engages in embryonic textual criticism, and responds to conservative readings of the controversial Pauline passages that are used as justification for patriarchy (1 Cor. 14:34-35, 1 Tim. 2:12). She concludes that female equality is a necessary corollary to the liberating gospel of Christ.⁴⁰²

Brawner’s argument was compelling, but the fact that it had to be made, and that fourteen issues of the *Good News* journal were given to its publication, is indicative of a broader issue at work in the movement. As Australian pentecostalism developed, and as it became clear that, although Jesus’ return was imminent, he might not be coming back tomorrow, it also became apparent that the integrity of its mission demanded that it address questions of authority, structure and inter-ecclesial relationships, without which disintegration was inevitable.

⁴⁰¹ Brawner, “Women in the Word,” February 1929, 10.

⁴⁰² Brawner, “Women in the Word,” March, 1930, 10.

In 1926 a South African Evangelist by the name of Frederick Van Eyk arrived in Australia and connected with Lancaster. He proposed to Lancaster that Good News Hall and its affiliated congregations should formalise their ties under the name of the Apostolic Faith Mission of Australasia (“AFM”).⁴⁰³ It was the name of the original Azusa Street mission, and had also been adopted by the South African denomination to which Van Eyk belonged. As our analysis suggests above, for Good News Hall and its affiliates, it had the advantage of encapsulating the nature of the pentecostal movement in Australia up to that time. The following year, the AFM met for their first annual conference at Good News Hall in Melbourne with eighty delegates “from every State in the Commonwealth and also from the dominion of New Zealand.”⁴⁰⁴

The AFM adopted a constitution that facilitated the granting of a Credential of Fellowship for those “converts and adherents” associated with AFM assemblies, credentials which, notably, were aimed at the laity rather than the leadership. The assembly was then permitted to send to the annual conference one voting delegate for the first fifty members, and one for each subsequent fifty. The AFM conference appointed a representative council which was to administer the decisions of the conference in the ensuing year. In 1927 this council included the first President of the movement, New Zealander, John Adams, and the Vice President, Sarah Jane Lancaster, as well as twelve other members. Apart from Lancaster and the secretary, Winnie Andrews, they were all male.

This ecclesial development, which can be understood as representing the transition from Faith Mission to church, was accompanied by new thinking about church structure. Until this point, the conception of church as the mystical body of Christ meant that nothing needed to or could be said about church structure or organisation. As the need for ecclesial reflection arose, the restorationist assumptions established the determinative motif: the “full restoration of the New Testament Church as it existed in the days of the apostles.”⁴⁰⁵ It was not a new motif, but the pentecostal priority given to the book of Acts had enabled the AFM to focus on the universal

⁴⁰³ Lancaster, “History of Good News Hall,” 11.

⁴⁰⁴ Winnie Andrews, “First Annual Conference Report,” *Good News* 18, no. 6 (June 1927): 10-12.

⁴⁰⁵ A. L. Knudson, “God’s Temple,” 20, no. 9 (September 1929): 8-9.

baptism of the Spirit for the purpose of common mission, and to avoid some of the questions of structure and authority that are more obviously developed in Paul's Epistles. It was to Paul's writing (or those writings traditionally attributed to Paul, including the Pastoral epistles), that the AFM turned as they started to develop more formal church structures. Thus, coinciding with the formation of the AFM, *Good News* began to publish articles about ordination, eldership, and the fourfold authority of the offices of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist and Teacher and Pastor (the latter understood as a single office).⁴⁰⁶ In her previous writings on the body of Christ, Lancaster had argued that "the body is an organism, not an organisation."⁴⁰⁷ Only a few years later she was publishing articles that stated that "the church is both an organisation and an organism,"⁴⁰⁸ the latter making it an expression of the life of Christ in each individual, and the former meaning that "each member has his particular duty, power, gift, or function to perform for the common good."⁴⁰⁹ For the first time we see an explicit distinction between the gifts of the Spirit, which are to enable everyone to participate in mission, and the so-called gifts of Christ, which "are officers or leaders, specifically called, authorised, and qualified by Christ, the Head of the Church, to lead, and feed, direct, instruct and discipline the church for its own good and development."⁴¹⁰ Among other things, it was hoped that this would preserve this unity in the faith, and prevent the AFM being "tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine."⁴¹¹

Yet the creation of a more formal basis for fellowship was not without its difficulties, since the formalising of relations created disputes, or rather brought to the surface problems that had been brewing for some time. The first challenge was to establish a doctrinal basis that would facilitate "pluralism in the unity of faith."⁴¹² Much of the debate surrounded Lancaster's rejection of Trinitarian theology, as well as her views on eternal punishment. Along with some other Pentecostals, such as Charles Fox Parham, as well as the Adventists with whom she had long maintained close relations,

⁴⁰⁶ Knudson, "God's Temple"; P. C. Nelson, "Divinely Ordained Ministry," *Good News* 20, no. 11 (November 1929): 5.

⁴⁰⁷ Sarah Jane Lancaster, "By One Spirit," *Good News* 18, no. 7 (July 1927): 10.

⁴⁰⁸ Nelson, "Divinely Ordained Ministry," 5.

⁴⁰⁹ Nelson, "Divinely Ordained Ministry," 5.

⁴¹⁰ Nelson, "Divinely Ordained Ministry," 5.

⁴¹¹ Knudson, "God's Temple," 8, citing Ephesians 4:14.

⁴¹² Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 117.

Lancaster held to an annihilationist position.⁴¹³ As with her Trinitarian conclusions, it was an issue about which she was prepared to accept alternative positions, and she willingly published articles that affirmed the traditional concept of Hell in the *Good News* journal. But in the process of formalisation the AFM, Lancaster would not be forced to accept a doctrinal statement that used the “non-biblical” term trinity or that specified Hell as a place of eternal torment. The result was a doctrinal statement that could be variously interpreted, since it used minimalist and orthodox language when referring to the Godhead, but avoided the term trinity, and simply quoted Scripture when referring to judgement.⁴¹⁴

It soon became apparent that some were unwilling to accept such compromise. In an attempt to settle the issue, Lancaster issued a conciliatory statement that admitted that “in our endeavour to make clearer the wonderful truths of God’s word, we may, from time to time, have used words that have lent themselves to misinterpretation and to misunderstanding of our beliefs.”⁴¹⁵ Yet the attacks against Good News Hall continued, and in subsequent issues of the *Good News* Lancaster was to become increasingly defensive.⁴¹⁶ These problems were compounded when Van Eyk, who was the driving force behind the formalisation of the AFM, was accused of immorality, and asked to return to South Africa.⁴¹⁷ Doctrinal disputes, the accusations against Van Eyk, and the concurrent rise of conservative forces challenging female authority, when taken together, ultimately saw the collapse of the newly formed AFM that had united early Australian pentecostalism. In 1928 the northern AFM churches changed their name to the Assemblies of God, Queensland, and re-formed under a new constitution. In 1929, in Melbourne, a large number of affiliated churches left to join the newly established Pentecostal Church in Australia, which was later to join with a national Assemblies of God. Lancaster was left to pull together the remnant. In 1930 she was appointed as President, a belated formal recognition of the leadership role she had held for two decades. Her death in 1934 saw the end of the AFM, however, and pentecostalism was left to re-organise under

⁴¹³ Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 235.

⁴¹⁴ Apostolic Faith Mission, “The Doctrinal Basis of the Apostolic Faith Mission of Australasia,”.

⁴¹⁵ Sarah Jane Lancaster, “The Spirit of Conciliation,” *Good News* 18, no. 6 (June 1927): 12.

⁴¹⁶ See Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 252-254.

⁴¹⁷ Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 256. Van Eyk vehemently denied the charges, and in 1929 returned to Australia and founded the Foursquare Pentecostal movement. In 1939 he divorced his wife and married Hilda Kajewski, the woman at the centre of the previous allegations.

various other banners, the most significant of which was to be the Assemblies of God in Australia.

3.5 Analysis: From Faith Mission to Church

As in our previous analysis, once again we are seeking to identify the presuppositions and assumptions that are determinative for alternative conclusions, in this case, about whether the historical transitions of early pentecostalism in Australia are to be judged positively or negatively, as movements of redemption or decline. We shall consider three approaches or presuppositions: first, anti-institutionalisation, which negatively reads bureaucratic developments; second, anti-voluntarism, which negatively reads the development of any new denomination; and, finally, analysis of the scale of values, which attempts to remove pre-judgement, and assesses the social data in a way that highlights both strengths and weaknesses and evidences of cultural and social progress and decline.

3.5.1 Anti-Institutionalisation

The first approach to judging the transitions of early pentecostalism can be seen in Margaret Poloma's assessment of a similar transition in American pentecostalism. Utilising Max Weber's categories of charismatic, traditional and bureaucratic authority, and his descriptions of the processes of bureaucratisation and institutionalisation, she observes that "there is a sociological tendency for religious groups to move from a prophetic to a priestly stance, from the free flow of charisma to its routinization."⁴¹⁸ She also adopts Thomas O'Dea's elaboration of Weber, which describes various "institutional dilemmas" that bring about this routinisation; 1) the dilemma of mixed motivation, in which the purpose of the early charismatic is replaced by self-interest; 2) the dilemma of administrative order, which is the tendency for structure to become unwieldy and incapable of change; 3) the dilemma of power, where success creates the tendency for religious leaders to seek secular legitimisation; 4) the dilemma of delimitation, which is the "watering down" of the

⁴¹⁸ Poloma, *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 94.

original charismatic ideal; and finally 5) the symbolic dilemma which is the problem of objectifying the original charismatic moment in routinised forms.⁴¹⁹

In analysing the Assemblies of God in America in the light of these categories, her “evaluation was decidedly a mixed one, as the indicators of some dilemmas reflect the burden institutionalization has placed on charisma but others reflect a healthy tension that allows charisma the freedom to operate.”⁴²⁰ Were we to apply the logic to the narrative of Australian pentecostalism described above, we would conclude that routinisation resulted from each of the above institutional dilemmas. We would say that Pentecostal leaders were beset by mixed motivations, and the result was that their egalitarian spirituality gave way to concern about their “place” and authority. Administrative structures began to restrict the place of women who had been empowered by the original charismatic nature of the movement. Growth and success resulted in the search for legitimisation in ways not conducive to the radical spirituality of early pentecostalism. The prophetic message was diluted. Finally, the Spirit became objectified in the doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit, and in so doing the experience itself lost its “effectiveness to elicit and affect attitudes and emotions.”⁴²¹

Although O’Dea and Poloma recognise that institutionalisation is necessary for the long term success of a religious movement, there is a sense in which it is understood to be a necessary evil: “religion both needs most and suffers most from institutionalization.”⁴²² This negative reading of the process of institutional development is one that was often shared by early pentecostals themselves. As Charles Enticknap lamented in 1935:

How tragic it is that many to-day have lost the vision they had when the glorious fullness of the Holy Spirit came in ... Our only hope for continued usefulness as a movement is in keeping alive the spirit of evangelism. The church must give or it will cease to live. When we settle down to hold an

⁴¹⁹ Poloma, *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 94-98.

⁴²⁰ Poloma, *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 232.

⁴²¹ Poloma, *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 97.

⁴²² Thomas F. O’Dea, “Five Dilemmas in the Institutionalization of Religion,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 1, no. 1 (October 1961): 30-41, 32.

Assembly or a number of Assemblies together, and forget the lost on every hand crying out for the bread of life, we have lost the vision of the great purpose of the Lord in the Church's very existence.⁴²³

As we noted in chapter two of this thesis, the idea of a “necessary evil” is ontologically problematic, and overlooks the fact that institutional forms provide an efficient means to achieve certain recurrent needs within the community.⁴²⁴ In contrast to Poloma and Enticknap, our approach to social analysis assumes that institutionalisation is essential to human community and, rather than critique institutionalisation *per se*, our purpose is to critique biased expressions of institutionalisation that fail to satisfy recurrent needs, and that even prevent particular individuals or groups from having such needs met. In the light of the narrative of early Australian pentecostalism described above, there are a number of obvious problems with adopting an analysis similar to Poloma's reading of the Assemblies of God in America. She begins with the assumption of a pristine pentecostal charismatic experience; “the Assemblies of God was birthed in a unique charismatic breakthrough... the resurgence of early Christian experiences – glossolalia, healing, prophecy, and miracles proved to be a setback to the cold rationality that had engulfed much of Christendom.”⁴²⁵ Without wanting to deny pentecostalism its important contribution to voluntarism and Christianity generally, our pre-narrative makes it clear that there is nothing pristine about the early pentecostal charismatic experience. Pentecostalism is a coalescing of various streams of voluntarism, and its contribution needs to be judged in the light of the movement of this historical trajectory. Poloma's analysis idealises the original pentecostal experience, and judges all further developments on the basis of whether or not they suppress this experience. Yet, as is apparent in our narrative, for all its missionary and spiritual strengths, early pentecostalism was far from ideal, and tended to be individualistic and subject to dispute and division. In fact, it is only because pentecostalism institutionalised that it was able to begin to confront these weaknesses, and develop into a movement that was to make a substantial contribution to Christianity throughout the twentieth

⁴²³ Charles G. Enticknap, “The Supreme Mission of the Church,” *Glad Tidings Messenger* (April 1935): available online, http://aps.scc.edu.au/library/documents/GTM19350401_07.htm, accessed 7 April 2004.

⁴²⁴ Ormerod, “Systematic Ecclesiology,” 16.

⁴²⁵ Poloma, *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 207.

century. Although, as our quote from Enticknap indicates, many pentecostals remained averse to the idea of institutionalisation (ironically, Enticknap himself was one of the leaders in ecclesial institutionalisation in Queensland), Donald Gee in 1938 recognised the value of the institutional process:

They (the Apostles in the book of Acts) insured the continuance of the revival by "government." If I said that in some places they would want to drive me out. But God has opened our eyes to the fact that there is nothing in divine governing to quench the Spirit. God has blessed this movement, as we have recognised the importance of "governments." 1 Cor. 12:28. I was brought up on the thought that all organisation, all government, is fleshy and carnal. I am so glad that God has opened my eyes to see things better than that.⁴²⁶

3.5.2 Anti-Voluntarism

A second way of analysing the historical movement of early pentecostalism in Australia is based on the assumption that the institutionalisation of the movement is negative, not because it routinises the charisma, but because it represents another example of Christian separatism and denominationalism. As we have attempted to “face up to the fissiparity” of voluntarism in our analysis of the pre-narrative to the pentecostal story, there is no need to revisit this issue. Suffice to say, pentecostalism in Australia was birthed into the voluntarist stream of Christianity that, despite its many strengths, was subject to social breakdown. These were Type 4 churches open to change culturally and socially, but inadequately balancing change with cultural ideals and social structures that ensure integration and harmony.

As noted above, pentecostals shared the voluntarist ideals of non-doctrinal unity and, in the early days, people such as Lancaster had close ties with other denominations, while some pentecostal leaders were also affiliated with other existing churches. Yet individualistic approaches to the biblical text and to theological conclusions meant

⁴²⁶ Donald Gee, “Can this Pentecostal Revival be Maintained?” *Glad Tidings Messenger* (March 1938): available online at http://aps.scc.edu.au/library/documents/aegtm19380301_03.htm., Accessed December 2002.

that pentecostals distanced themselves from those who did not share their experience and doctrine, especially with regard to the baptism in the Holy Spirit and, conversely, other evangelicals rejected pentecostals for the same reason. The result was that some pentecostals left their previous denominations, while other pentecostals were forced out of their denominations (and, of course, some people were converted directly into pentecostalism). Schism was not the particular problem of pentecostals, except to the extent that they shared in the heightened schismatic problems of the protestant Church as a whole in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While we cannot applaud the formation of yet another denomination, neither can we dismiss pentecostals for forming their own movement. We can only assess pentecostal ecclesiology within the parameters of the context in which churches such as those that affiliated with the AFM formed and developed.

3.5.3 Early Australian Pentecostalism and the Scale of Values

This suggests a third approach to judging the transitions of early Australian pentecostalism, which recognises that the object of ecclesiology is “the set (or sets) of experiences, understandings, symbols, words, judgements, statements, decisions, actions, relationships, and institutions which distinguish the group of people called ‘the Church’”⁴²⁷ or, in this case, the movement we call Australian pentecostalism. From this perspective we assesses this movement as it stands, without the baggage of the predetermined conclusions that arise from the two approaches discussed above. In sum, our narrative suggests that the story of early Australian pentecostalism represents an ecclesial development from disparate voluntarist movements to pentecostal faith mission to pentecostal church.

This initial movement, from the various streams of voluntarism to the coalescing of these streams in pentecostalism, derives from the experience described by pentecostals as baptism in the Spirit. Pentecostals understand this experience as a gift of God’s grace, mediating, through glossolalic prayer, renewed relationship with the triune God, and facilitating personal transformation in both holiness (moral

⁴²⁷ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 57.

authenticity) and empowerment for mission.⁴²⁸ In terms of the scale of values, this represents a movement in the healing vector (from above); from the gift of God's grace, to renewed religious values and personal integrity, and through such renewed persons, generating revitalization in cultural values and, thereby, promoting the integral dialectic of community at the social level of the church.⁴²⁹

The notion of baptism in the Spirit operates at various levels of the scale of values. As a shared spiritual experience, the baptism in the Spirit acted as the "spontaneous intersubjective base of community,"⁴³⁰ which created harmony in the dialectic tension with other socially operative forces of practical intelligence within pentecostalism. Pentecostal communities, while subject to the same forces of social change that categorised voluntarism (individualism, pragmatism, democracy etc), were nonetheless held together in these changing situations largely through the shared experience of baptism in the Spirit, and the concomitant prayer meetings and evangelistic activities that derived from this experience. Given the unstructured nature of early pentecostal communities, their capacity for integration as a movement rested on the intersubjective experience of the baptism in the Spirit, as well as a shared culture that was promoted throughout the community, by the journals such as the *Good News*, and the travelling ministry of itinerant evangelists.

Baptism in the Spirit was also more than simply a shared experience. It was symbolically representative of the pentecostal identity and worldview and, in this way, functioned at the level of cultural values by enriching self-understanding. The notion of baptism in the Spirit as universally available, and universally empowering for people of all genders, all races, all classes, and all intelligences, was a vital symbol of unity. At the same time, since the Spirit was understood as a sign of the end-times, as facilitating personal holiness, and as empowering for mission, it also acted as a transcendent force for cultural and social change. It was and is the capacity of the experience and symbol of baptism in the Spirit to facilitate balance in the dialectic of

⁴²⁸ This conception of the Pentecostal understanding of the Baptism in the Spirit is well documented. See Frank Macchia, "Sighs too Deep for Words: Toward a Theology of Glossolalia," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 1 (1992): 47-73; William Menzies and Robert Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000).

⁴²⁹ For a detailed explanation of this structure, see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 94-107.

⁴³⁰ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 95.

both social and cultural values that is the key element that has enabled the pentecostal movement in Australia and globally to develop as a “movement.” Even when, in the tradition of voluntarist movements everywhere, structural division ensued, unlike other voluntarist movements, pentecostalism managed to retain its self-understanding as a “movement,” constituted by the shared experience and symbol of the Baptism in the Spirit. As we shall discover in subsequent chapters, the collapse of the AFM did not destroy pentecostalism in Australia. In fact, despite structural divisions, pentecostalism in Australia continued to be identified as a movement throughout the twentieth century and, in 1998, various seemingly distinct fellowships even united structurally under the banner of the Australian Christian Churches, a move that was possible only because of a shared experience and theology of the Baptism in the Spirit.

The theology and experience of Baptism in the Spirit thereby shapes pentecostal ecclesiology. This is noteworthy because pentecostals have often conceived of Baptism in the Spirit individually, as gifting and empowering the individual for service. In fact, however, Baptism in the Spirit is experienced in the church for the mission of the church. As Simon Chan observes, this “means the primary focus of Spirit-Baptism is to actualize our communal life,” even if pentecostalism itself has been hardly aware of this fact.⁴³¹

Of course there is more to pentecostal ecclesiology than just the baptism in the Spirit. The initial gift of grace that mediated this religious, personal, cultural and social experience and symbol resulted in the formation of pentecostal communities. For the first two decades these communities were essentially a Faith Missions movement. They were independent of denomination, eschewed ecclesial structures, and existed solely for the purpose of end-times mission. Consequently, Lancaster initially understood pentecostalism as an organism not an organisation, and Good News Hall, and later the AFM, were self-consciously mission groups and not churches.⁴³²

⁴³¹ Simon Chan, “Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology,” *Pneuma* 22, no. 2 (2000): 180.

⁴³² As Lancaster stated categorically (emphasis hers): THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION is NOT another CHURCH (sic). It is the Assembly of those who, throughout Australasia, are seeking to prove that our Blessed Lord is just the same as He was when He commissioned the disciples to “go into all the world” (Lancaster, “Good News Hall,” 10).

As was common for faith mission movements and for voluntarist Christianity generally, early Australian pentecostalism held to the ideal of non-doctrinal unity. It was an ideal which sought to overcome the divisions of protestant Christianity, but which too often simply facilitated new schism. In fact, it was an ideal that early pentecostalism never realised. McPherson refused to be associated with Lancaster and, while it may be argued that there were many reasons for this refusal, doctrine was central. As we have noted, Lancaster's response to McPherson, that "we do not suppose that any two ministers on Mrs McPherson's platform believed doctrinally "exactly" the same as the Evangelist," was to misunderstand the nature and function of doctrine. Lancaster assumed that doctrinal formulations "fix" belief and prevent diversity. In fact, as Lonergan observes, while doctrines establish religious truth, based as they are on Scripture and church tradition,⁴³³ yet they are also contextual,⁴³⁴ communally constitutive, and serve the purpose of fulfilling the communicative, effective, constitutive, and cognitive functions proper to meaning.⁴³⁵ Rather than requiring everyone to "believe exactly the same thing," doctrine can in fact facilitate "pluralism in the unity of faith."⁴³⁶ To achieve this it will become necessary to establish a basis for distinguishing among doctrines. We shall take up this issue further in the fifth chapter, when we consider the insights of the ecumenical movement, and its impact upon Australian pentecostalism during the latter part of the twentieth century.

While the experience and symbol of the baptism in the Spirit went some way towards facilitating unity, the social needs of the growing Pentecostal community necessitated further ecclesial developments. These needs included the resolution of doctrinal disputes, the organisation and governance of local congregations, local and national leadership structures, and the effective organisation of local and world missionary activity. These social needs called for creative development in the communities cultural values. As we have seen, in a radical departure from previous self-understanding, the movement started to speak of itself as both an "organism" and an "organisation," and to conceptualise a differentiation between the universal experience of the baptism in the Spirit and particular anointing or gifting for particular

⁴³³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 295.

⁴³⁴ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 296.

⁴³⁵ Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 114.

⁴³⁶ Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 117.

functions within the community. This was facilitated by appropriation of the biblical concepts of spiritual gifting and office, especially the fivefold offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher.

The transition from Faith Mission to Pentecostal Church occurred by way of both the healing and creative vectors in the scale of values. From above, in the healing vector, as shared religious and personal transformation led to the development of a unified pentecostal identity and culture, it thereby stimulated moves to unity at the social level. At the same time, from below, in the creative vector, as the social needs of the community were met by the creation of new structures and organisations, these new social situations stimulated new ways of conceiving of the church and its nature and function.

As our narrative shows, this transition was not without its problems. Pentecostalism was birthed out of voluntarist Christianity, and thereby exhibited the various strengths, weaknesses and distortions of these movements. Premillennialism, revivalism, and modern individualism continued to distort pentecostalism in the direction of transcendence at both the cultural and social levels, despite the balancing dimension of the baptism in the Spirit. Pentecostals shared the voluntarist distrust of Christian tradition, the priest and the theologian and, while this facilitated the empowerment of the laity, often the priest was replaced by the priestly charismatic individual. The impact of Van Eyk's loss of reputation upon the AFM is evidence of the problems that arise when too much emphasis is given to charismatic authority. The issues were multifarious, but they found their "weapon" in the Bible, which sadly became a tool of disharmony. This highlights the importance of biblical hermeneutics, doctrine, and the reflective task of systematic theology, for the church. For early Australian Pentecostals, a simplistic view of the Scriptures, while spiritually and devotionally liberating, nonetheless generated constant disputes without mechanism for resolution. If the meaning of Scripture read under the inspiration of the Spirit is always perspicuous, then differences of opinion are simply not acceptable. Ultimately, these issues led to the disintegration of the AFM. Yet, as I have already argued, the centrality of the experience and symbol of the baptism in the Spirit ensured the continuity of the movement, despite the problems.

Before concluding this analysis, there are two issues to address in respect of the nature of the institutional development from Faith Mission to pentecostal church. The first relates to the change in women's roles during this transition. According to Weber, the charismatic religious prophet tended to "allot equality to women,"⁴³⁷ a situation that is usually reversed in the subsequent process of institutionalisation and bureaucratisation. Following this logic, Margaret Poloma describes the situation in the American Assemblies of God by claiming that "the successful institutionalization of the denomination . . . has been accompanied by the professionalization of its clergy and the increasing acceptance of middle-class American values, . . . [which] show little interest in the issue of women's rights."⁴³⁸

It is a logic that seems at first glance to be self-explanatory, yet the question has to be asked, Does applying the label "institutionalisation" actually explain anything? If institutionalisation is understood, not as the negative process of the routinisation of the charisma but rather, as the process that establishes an efficient means to achieve certain recurrent needs within the community,⁴³⁹ then there is nothing inherent in the process that should restrict women. In fact, in the Australian situation, the process of institutionalisation actually embedded the rights of women to equality in church ministry, despite the actual decline in rates of female ordination in the decades following the initial Pentecostal revival. Since ordination was understood to relate to spiritual gifting and the gender inclusive symbol of the baptism in the Spirit, the institutional documents that formed the various Australian pentecostal denominations generally affirmed complete gender equality.⁴⁴⁰ In theory, women could be ordained and function as elders or in other leadership positions in the church. In practice, the movement was unable to escape the influence of the fundamentalist / liberal debate that gained prominence early in the twentieth century. Although pentecostal experientialism led some to classify pentecostals among the liberals,⁴⁴¹ pentecostals

⁴³⁷ Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, 104.

⁴³⁸ Poloma, *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*, 119. For a similar description of the American situation, see Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 175, who says "a gradual process of institutional, emotional and spiritual segregation effectively restricted growing numbers of women."

⁴³⁹ Ormerod, "Systematic Ecclesiology," 16.

⁴⁴⁰ The first constitutional document of the Assemblies of God in Australia does not mention gender as a factor in ordination or ecclesial authority, and women have been ordained throughout the movements history, although in much lower numbers following the death of Lancaster.

⁴⁴¹ Given their radical experiential orientation, their affirmation of women in ministry, and their rejection of some traditional doctrinal formulations.

understood themselves as Christians who affirmed the “fundamentals” of the faith. In this affirmation, they were faced with the fundamentalist rejection of liberal feminism, and insistence on restrictive attitudes towards women, supported by literalistic biblical interpretation. The result was that, over time, fewer pentecostal women were ordained or held leadership positions. Nonetheless, it was not institutionalisation that caused this decline. On the contrary, the possibility of female empowerment was embedded in the egalitarian ideal of the baptism in the Spirit, and also in the formal institutionalisation of the early experience of equality, a fact that was to become significant later in the century.

The final issue arising from the narrative of early Australian pentecostalism is theological, relating to the understanding of the mission of the Church. While the priority given by early Australian pentecostals to mission is ecclesially constitutive, its weakness was the failure to incorporate the social element of the gospel that is contained within the notion of the kingdom of God. If, as the narrative of Luke / Acts suggests,⁴⁴² the mission of the Church is to continue the ministry of Jesus in the power of the Spirit,⁴⁴³ then its proclamation is as much social as it is individual. I shall explicate this position when we return to this issue in subsequent chapters, which cover time periods in which pentecostalism was to develop the social dimension of its proclamation. For now, it is enough to note that, despite a conception of the gospel that left little space for social concern in the pentecostal mission, in 1931, with the onset of the Great Depression, Good News Hall opened a “soup kitchen” which enabled “about 140 to 180 unemployed men to feed each day with both material and spiritual food.”⁴⁴⁴ The fact that this initiative was contrary to the cultural values of early pentecostalism was evident only one year later when, in the face of rising debt, Lancaster was forced to defend the charitable work against the charge that it amounted to the “building-up” of a human organisation and that “the money spent in feeding the unemployed would be better spent in evangelising Victoria, thus building

⁴⁴² As Luke Timothy Johnson observes, “Luke-Acts must ... be read as a single story” (Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke: Sacra Pagina Series Volume 3* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 4).

⁴⁴³ Johnson states that “Luke saw the work of the Holy Spirit as the replication in the lives of the believers of the messianic pattern enacted first by Jesus.” Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles: Sacra Pagina Series, Volume 5* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 1.

⁴⁴⁴ Sarah Jane Lancaster, “Our 21st Birthday,” *Good News* 22, no. 2 (February 1931): 10.

up the “A.F.M.” and (incidentally) bringing in more money.”⁴⁴⁵ Sadly, it almost goes without saying that the charitable dimension of early pentecostal institutions was short-lived (though it is clear that there was an expectation that it would continue among individuals).

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that Australian pentecostalism, as elsewhere, was born into the global ferment of voluntarist revivalist Christianity. Its distinctive experience and theology of the baptism in the Spirit became the community symbol that brought together the various streams of voluntarism: the expectation for revival, the affirmation of the affections and religious experience, including the experience of tongues and divine healing, a holiness orientation, a restorationist inclination, and a pre-millennial eschatology that expected the imminent return of Christ.

The narrative of Australian pentecostalism shows the transition from voluntarist movements to pentecostal faith missions to pentecostal churches. These transitions are stimulated both from above and below. By the gift of God’s grace in mediating the experience and symbol of the baptism in the Spirit, and by the social needs of the community giving rise to creative social and cultural developments.

⁴⁴⁵ Sarah Jane Lancaster, “Amongst the Unemployed,” *Good News* 23, no. 2 (February 1932): 10-11.

Chapter Four: Formation of the Assemblies of God in Australia, 1930s to 1960s

4.1 Introduction

The movement from “voluntarism” to “faith mission” to “church,” described and analysed in the previous chapter, was deflected by the disintegration of the AFM, but this did not spell the end of pentecostalism in Australia. Various fellowships were to arise from the pentecostal churches that had sprung up throughout the nation. The most substantial of these, at least numerically, was the Assemblies of God in Australia (AGA). In this chapter we trace the formation of the AGA, and draw out the explicit and implicit ecclesiological developments that accompanied its creation.

4.2 Narrative

4.2.1 The Formation of the Assemblies of God Queensland (AGQ)

In September 1928 the Queensland pentecostal churches affiliated with the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) Australasia convened the first advisory council of the AFM in Queensland. The meeting adopted the national AFM constitution and appointed its first President, George Burns. Formally an ordained Churches of Christ minister, Burns had a conservative and orthodox theological outlook, invigorated by his experience of the Baptism in the Spirit. His Presidential address to the conference presented what he deemed to be the fundamentals of the pentecostal message; the proclamation of the cross of Christ in the power of the Spirit.⁴⁴⁶

One month later reports of AFM evangelist Frederick Van Eyk’s supposed indiscretions with a young female congregant in Toowoomba had reached the Queensland AFM pastors. Dissatisfied with Van Eyk’s response to the accusations,

⁴⁴⁶ George E. Burns, “We Preach: A Presidential Address,” *Good News* 19, no. 3 (March 1929): 12-13.

they demanded that the AFM Australasia rescind his membership.⁴⁴⁷ Van Eyk had been instrumental in the formation of the AFM, and was the movement's most prominent evangelist, so the publicity attending his fall (or perceived fall⁴⁴⁸) had a devastating impact. The 1929 conference of the AFM in Melbourne denounced Van Eyk and carried through with the rescission of his membership, but the damage to the movement had been done. The second annual conference of the Queensland AFM pastors was held on 4 July 1929, and the decision was taken to separate from the AFM, and form the Assemblies of God Queensland (AGQ). Appointed once again as the movement's president, George Burns gave the presidential address, ironically entitled "The Need of Unity and Love."⁴⁴⁹ The reasons for leaving the AFM are not explicated in the conference minutes, but in addition to the negative publicity arising from the situation with Van Eyk, the Queensland pastors had long been uncomfortable with Lancaster's anti-Trinitarian and annihilationist doctrines.⁴⁵⁰ In a subsequent article published in *The Australian Evangel*⁴⁵¹, Burns clarifies and justifies the separation by observing:

That unity amongst God's saints is desirable and right goes without saying, but let it always be remembered that the "unity" the Lord Jesus prayed for was a "unity in truth." Unity may be obtained at too high a cost. Unity that condones error in doctrine or impurity in life is not the unity for which Christ prayed.⁴⁵²

The main business of the inaugural AGQ conference was to establish the movement's constitution. They did not start the process from "scratch," but brought with them their largely free church backgrounds. Of the main players, the President, George Burns, had formerly been a minister with the Churches of Christ, before being

⁴⁴⁷ Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 294.

⁴⁴⁸ According to Chant, Van Eyk always denied the charges. Chant, "Spirit of Pentecost," 295.

⁴⁴⁹ Assemblies of God QLD, Annual Conference Minutes, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, Brisbane, 4 July 1929.

⁴⁵⁰ As set out in the previous chapter, the establishment of the AFM doctrinal statement generated substantial dispute.

⁴⁵¹ The publication of the Pentecostal Church of Australia. Refer to the narrative below.

⁴⁵² George E. Burns, "Assemblies of God - Queensland," *The Australian Evangel* 4, no. 12 (June 1930): 10.

dismissed from the church after being baptised in the Spirit.⁴⁵³ The Enticknap brothers, William and Charles, were Methodists before experiencing “the Baptism.”⁴⁵⁴ Maxwell Armstrong had been a Salvation Army officer, before marrying a non-commissioned person, thereafter associating with the Methodists before he too joined the pentecostals.⁴⁵⁵ As models, they also had their previous AFM constitution, as well as a copy of the constitution of the Assemblies of God in America.⁴⁵⁶ Apart from the constitutional decisions, which we shall leave aside until we come to the formation of the national fellowship later in this chapter, the first issue addressed was the fellowship’s name. After voting against the proposed “The Foursquare Gospel Church of Queensland,” they adopted the title “Assemblies of God Queensland.”⁴⁵⁷ The Assemblies of God was by then the largest pentecostal fellowship to form in America, and globally, and, while international ties were never to become formal, the use of the name readily identified the movement with global pentecostalism. The Australian churches relied heavily on visiting ministry, and the appropriation of the global brand facilitated international recognition and relationships.

Notwithstanding this attempted new beginning, the AGQ was soon beset by further division. In December 1930 the American pentecostal evangelist, William Booth-Clibborn,⁴⁵⁸ ministered at the AGQ annual conference.⁴⁵⁹ With their blessing, he soon after began an evangelistic campaign in Brisbane, which grew so rapidly that he purchased a tent with a two thousand seat capacity, known as the Canvas Cathedral. The *Canvas Cathedral Coo-ee*, which was the revival journal published by the daughter of “Mother” Lancaster, Leila Buchanan, summarised the nature of these meetings with the slogan, “Master Music, Modern Methods, Matchless Messages: Brisbane’s Burning Bush.”⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵³ Burns, “We Preach.” See also Stan Hunt, *The Assemblies of God Queensland Conference: A Story of Its Formation and Mission* (Queensland: Assembly Press, 1978), 8.

⁴⁵⁴ See Charles L. Greenwood, *Richmond Temple Souvenir: Easter 1939*, (Richmond, Victoria: Asher & Co, 1939); Duncan, Philip B. *Pentecost In Australia* (Sydney: Self Published, N.d.), available online, <http://e-books.webjournals.org/Issues.asp?index=57>, accessed 8 April 2004, 12.

⁴⁵⁵ Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” Appendix 10.

⁴⁵⁶ Hunt, *Assemblies of God Queensland*, 7.

⁴⁵⁷ Assemblies of God QLD, Annual Conference Minutes, 1929.

⁴⁵⁸ Who happened to be the grandson of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army.

⁴⁵⁹ Assemblies of God QLD, Annual Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 15 December 1930.

⁴⁶⁰ Leila M. Buchanan, “Schedule August 2, 1931: Canvas Cathedral Campaigns [William Booth-Clibborn],” *Canvas Cathedral Coo-ee* (August 1931): available online, <http://evangel.webjournals.org/articles/5-1/1931/1621.htm>, accessed 7 April 2004.

Booth-Clibborn's methods were modern, his style was charismatic, and yet his message was theologically conservative. In describing pentecostalism in America, Grant Wacker suggests that "the genius of the pentecostal movement lay in its ability to hold two seemingly incompatible impulses in productive tension, ... the primitive and the pragmatic."⁴⁶¹ The Canvas Cathedral campaign epitomised this genius, with the revivalists utilising modern and energetic music, which included solo items, a choir, and an ensemble of instruments, including an expensive grand piano.⁴⁶² They also broadcast their services on local radio, music and sermons together, an activity which required constant fundraising.⁴⁶³ Booth-Clibborn was clearly an exceptional preacher. His messages were fiery, well constructed, and addressed both to issues of the day, such as the rumours of war, as well as conservative holiness themes. His capacity to hold the attention of a crowd was such that the revival journal carried an advertisement for a meeting to be held during 1931 that read:

ADVANCE ADVICE!?? DON'T DISREGARD DATE Oct.17th Longest
Sermon in History of Brisbane "Will You Sit it out???? 4 hours solid!"⁴⁶⁴

The revival was a time of intense activity for all involved. The *Canvas Cathedral Coo-ee* described themselves as "The Church of a perpetual Revival and Preaching,"⁴⁶⁵ and meetings were held at all hours every day of the week. Booth-Clibborn preached one sermon on the evils of sleep, saying "sleep is a wastrel, an idle time-devourer!,"⁴⁶⁶ yet almost a year into the revival, he and his family were clearly on the edge of burnout. It is apparent that many participants in the revival did not fathom his workload, and when he eventually retreated for a break to a resort in Southport, the *Coo-ee* was forced to defend the time he was spending with his family by noting that he was not idle, but was using the time to study, write articles and

⁴⁶¹ Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 10.

⁴⁶² For a number of months the Canvas Cathedral Coo-ee ran a fundraising campaign to pay for this grand piano, Leila M. Buchanan, "Schedule June 7, 1931: Canvas Cathedral Campaigns [William Booth-Clibborn]," *Canvas Cathedral Coo-ee* (June 1931): available online, <http://evangel.webjournals.org/articles/5-1/1931/1586.htm>, accessed 7 April 2004.

⁴⁶³ Almost every issue of the Canvas Cathedral Coo-ee concludes with the need for donations to cover the cost of the revival's radio broadcast.

⁴⁶⁴ Leila M. Buchanan, "Schedule October 4, 1931: Canvas Cathedral Campaigns [William Booth-Clibborn]," *Canvas Cathedral Coo-ee* (October 1931): available online, <http://evangel.webjournals.org/articles/5-1/1931/1806.htm>, accessed 7 April 2004.

⁴⁶⁵ Buchanan, "Schedule June 7, 1931."

⁴⁶⁶ William Booth-Clibborn, "Awake, Christian Australia," *Canvas Cathedral Coo-ee* (August 1931): available online, <http://evangel.webjournals.org/articles/5-1/1931/1821.htm>, accessed 7 April 2004.

respond to letters he had received.⁴⁶⁷ The impact of his absence upon the revival meetings is apparent in Leila Buchanan's encouragement to the revival's constituency, when she states, "Mr. Booth-Clibborn is taking a much needed rest at Sth Port. Time to prove loyalty."⁴⁶⁸ That such a statement was necessary, especially since preachers of the quality of George Burns and Alex and Leila Buchanan were ministering in his absence, is testimony to the centrality of Booth-Clibborn to the revival campaign. Returning from his holiday, Booth-Clibborn ministered for another year before leaving for America in 1932. By that time he had preached to hundreds of people on a weekly basis, seen over one thousand people commit their life to Christ, followed by numerous people experiencing baptism in the Holy Spirit. During his final year, the Canvas Cathedral Campaign traded their tent in for a building, the Glad Tidings Tabernacle, which gave the fruits of the revival a permanent home.

Hunt describes the Canvas Cathedral as "the greatest religious revival Brisbane has seen."⁴⁶⁹ Yet the glory of revival is always a matter of perspective, and the AGQ would have a very different take on the events. Soon after commencing his meetings, Booth-Clibborn had gathered together the existing pentecostal congregations in the city. As well as the Assemblies of God Brisbane, which had been planted as an AFM congregation by W.A. (Alex) Buchanan in 1926, there was a small breakaway assembly known as the Elim Foursquare.⁴⁷⁰ Despite his earlier ministry at the AGQ conference, and their warm invitation for him to minister in Brisbane and among their churches, when Booth-Clibborn eventually established the Covenant Christian Church (CCC) alongside the revival meetings, he did so independently of the AGQ.⁴⁷¹ The reason for this independence was not theology or doctrine, but authority and control, as well as the desire for the revival to be seen as non-denominational. Not only did this take from the AGQ the valuable networks and impetus that were being established through the revival, but it also took from them some central office-

⁴⁶⁷ Leila M. Buchanan, "Items of Interest: William Booth-Clibborn," *Canvas Cathedral Coo-ee* (August 1931): available online, <http://evangel.webjournals.org/articles/5-1/1931/1770.htm>, accessed 7 April 2004.

⁴⁶⁸ Buchanan, "Schedule August 2, 1931."

⁴⁶⁹ Hunt, *Assemblies of God Queensland*, 9.

⁴⁷⁰ Hunt, *Assemblies of God Queensland*, 10.

⁴⁷¹ The Canvas Cathedral Revival had been sponsored by both the AGQ and an interdenominational mission called the Christian Covenanter Confederacy, which had been founded by Booth-Clibborn's uncle. The newly formed church took a similar name, although remained independent from both organisations.

holders, including their president, George Burns, who afterwards was to leave pentecostalism altogether and return to a Churches of Christ pastorate.⁴⁷²

The AGQ was devastated, and their newly appointed president, Ps Charles Enticknap, opened the 1932 conference by pointing out the great need for “re-construction and consolidation.”⁴⁷³ With the departure of Booth-Clibborn, CCC was also facing the problem of a greatly reduced congregation.⁴⁷⁴ In 1933 the CCC, under the leadership of Alex Buchanan, approached the AGQ about the possibility of reunification and, on the 9 August, the two bodies met together in an attempt to thrash out another united constitution.⁴⁷⁵ The key formal issue related to the sovereignty of the local assembly, a matter that was particularly important to the CCC, since they now owned property. But given that the AGQ constitution already supported the autonomy of the local church, including the assembly’s rights over its own property, the main issues were in fact personal, with both sides bearing grudges related to the circumstances of the original separation. To achieve unification, the AGQ not only required the CCC to “sink their identity, dispense with their present government and reorganise under Assemblies of God principles,”⁴⁷⁶ but also demanded that the CCC “make a full-clearance of past defaults.” Even so, in a united conference held in 1933, it seemed that agreement had been reached. Enticknap (AGQ) was appointed President, and Buchanan (CCC) vice president, of the newly formed body that intended to retain the title Assemblies of God Queensland. But when it came to the practice of actually working together, divisions remained.⁴⁷⁷ By 1935 the AGQ conference noted that “there were some misunderstandings still preventing the consummation of the happy fellowship entered into.”⁴⁷⁸ Buchanan, who was keen to achieve the goal of unity, left the CCC and ministered with the AGQ in Gympie. The question of unity simmered throughout the 1930s, and it was not until the CCC needed a new pastor in 1940 that Buchanan took the position and brought the church under the AGQ umbrella. The

⁴⁷² See Hunt, *Assemblies of God Queensland*, 9; Duncan, *Pentecost In Australia*, 12; Assemblies of God QLD, Annual Conference Minutes, Rockhampton, 22 June 1932.

⁴⁷³ Assemblies of God QLD, Annual Conference Minutes, 1932.

⁴⁷⁴ Hunt, *Assemblies of God Queensland*, 11.

⁴⁷⁵ Assemblies of God QLD, Annual Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 9 August 1933.

⁴⁷⁶ Assemblies of God QLD, Executive Minutes, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, Brisbane, 20 August 1935.

⁴⁷⁷ As Lancaster’s son-in-law, it may well have been that Buchanan also had lingering issues over Enticknap’s public statements about her theology.

⁴⁷⁸ Assemblies of God QLD, Annual Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 21 August 1935.

church changed its name to the Glad Tidings Tabernacle, which had long been the name of the CCC's building.

Meanwhile, desirous of bringing together the pentecostal movement nationally for the sake of a unified proclamation of the fourfold gospel in Australia, the AGQ began discussions with C.L. Greenwood, pastor of Richmond Temple in Victoria, and chairman of a pentecostal movement that went under the banner Pentecostal Church of Australia (PCA).

4.2.2 The Formation of the Pentecostal Church of Australia (PCA)

The PCA locates its origins in revival meetings held at Sunshine, an inner suburb of Melbourne, in 1925-26. Prior to this revival, in 1916, twenty-two year old Charles Greenwood had attracted a small company of pentecostal believers who met regularly for bible study, prayer and fellowship. In the decade that followed, the little congregation began collecting tithes and offerings, eventually purchasing an acre of land next to the Sunshine railway. In February 1925 they held the opening of the new church building, at the same time as the twenty three year old American evangelist, A.C. Valdez, was scheduled to hold revival meetings in conjunction with Good News Hall.⁴⁷⁹

Lancaster probably experienced a sense of *deja vu* with regard to her previous crises with McPherson, since the packed meeting opened, not with Valdez, but with one of the Good News elders being forced to announce that “whispers had got to the ears of the evangelist.” Valdez, who had been closely associated with McPherson's Angelus Temple in California, was unwilling to be affiliated with an organisation that did not adhere to traditional doctrine. Greenwood was present at this soon emptied meeting, and his own attitude to Lancaster is apparent in his recollection:

I looked on the platform and I saw this woman. I knew this woman. . . . She did not believe in the trinity, she did not believe in the personality of the Holy

⁴⁷⁹ Charles L. Greenwood, “The Melbourne Revival,” *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 1 (July 1926): 1; Greenwood, *Richmond Temple Souvenir*, 6.

Spirit. She believed in soul sleep and she did not believe in hell in the sense of eternal torment.⁴⁸⁰

Greenwood followed Valdez to another meeting, and invited him to conduct a service at the new church in Sunshine. After first quizzing Greenwood about the orthodoxy of his doctrine, Valdez agreed, and the very first meeting saw the new building completely filled. Such was the response that Valdez stayed on and ministered in what was to become known as the Sunshine Revival.

It soon became apparent that the Sunshine building was too small, and they moved the revival meetings to the Prahran Town Hall. Valdez decided to form a church out of the revival, which became the PCA. Explaining to those gathered “the truth of church government,”⁴⁸¹ the structure adopted was the standard free church congregationalism that dominated pentecostalism elsewhere. Church government rested with the congregation itself, whose “will” was determined democratically. Members voted on all important church decisions, and delegated day to day responsibility to the elected pastor/(s) and elders, whose positions were voted upon annually.⁴⁸² A Board of Deacons were also responsible for assisting the pastor in church management and maintenance.

Within months the Prahran Town Hall became unavailable, and the flourishing church purchased the Richmond Movie Theatre, which they converted into a hall that seated over one thousand people. Along with other conservative Christian movements, pentecostals shared the view that the “*Sinema*” was a corruptor of young minds,⁴⁸³ and after cleansing the theatre of the demonic,⁴⁸⁴ its conversion into what became known as Richmond Temple was seen as a great victory for the PCA. The original building at Sunshine, which had been used as a church for less than one-month, was retained for the purpose of “tarrying” meetings. Prior to the revival, Greenwood and

⁴⁸⁰ Greenwood, Charles L., “Testimony presented to congregation of Richmond Temple,” Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, 1967, 42.

⁴⁸¹ Greenwood, “The Melbourne Revival,” 2.

⁴⁸² Originally, Richmond Temple voted for its pastor every six months, but this was later to become an annual event.

⁴⁸³ For example, The Pentecostal Evangel, “Twenty Reasons Why Christians Should Not Attend ‘Sinemas,’” *Good News* 21, no. 1 (January 1930): 19.

⁴⁸⁴ Greenwood, Les, “Recollections of Richmond Temple and C.L. Greenwood,” interview by Shane Clifton, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, 2002.

his small congregation had made so much noise in prayer for baptism in the Spirit that neighbours had sometimes complained and, in constructing the Sunshine building, it was decided to build a brick sound-proof prayer room.⁴⁸⁵ Throughout the revival, Saturday “tarrying” meetings were held at Sunshine, and hundreds of people were introduced to the Baptism in the Spirit in that building. By all accounts some of these prayer meetings were loud and chaotic. One woman arrived to investigate the revival, but left the Sunshine building distressed, saying, “I want the Baptism of the Holy Ghost but I cannot stand the noise.”⁴⁸⁶ She was persuaded by Greenwood to return, and later was baptised in the Spirit, “making more noise than the lot of them.”⁴⁸⁷ According to Greenwood, this was not an isolated occurrence.

Many of the early pentecostal ministers in Australia trace their origins to the Sunshine revival. Among them were the Duncan family in Sydney. A committed Baptist family, who already had experience with the ministry of the pentecostal evangelist Smith Wigglesworth,⁴⁸⁸ the Duncans travelled to Melbourne seeking out the move of the Spirit at Richmond Temple.⁴⁸⁹ Receiving the baptism, they returned to Sydney and invited Valdez to hold some revival meetings. Out of these meetings the nucleus of a congregation was formed and, in August 1925, they purchased a new building in Newtown and established the Newtown Full Gospel Assembly. Greenwood and the evangelist “Brother”⁴⁹⁰ Roberts were present at the opening, and helped establish similar congregational structures to those of Richmond Temple, with the church subsequently changing its name to the Pentecostal Church, Sydney. Frederick Duncan was appointed as elder, and was responsible for the church before the appointment of Len Jones, a Methodist minister, who had also been baptised in the Spirit at Sunshine.⁴⁹¹ When Jones resigned from the Sydney pastorate to itinerate in New Zealand and then America, he was replaced by Archibald Brown, another of Richmond’s “sons.” In 1929 Frederick Duncan’s son, Philip, was appointed pastor, a

⁴⁸⁵ Greenwood, “Recollections of Richmond Temple.”

⁴⁸⁶ Greenwood, “Testimony,” 63-64.

⁴⁸⁷ Greenwood, “Testimony,” 63-64.

⁴⁸⁸ Philip B. Duncan, *The Charismatic Tide* (Sydney: Glenburn, 1978), 3-5.

⁴⁸⁹ Duncan, *The Charismatic Tide*, 15.

⁴⁹⁰ Note that every pentecostal had the designation ‘Brother’ or ‘Sister’. For consistency sake I have not used the title, except when I have been unable to discover a persons first name – and then only in the first citation.

⁴⁹¹ Paul H. Duncan, “Reports from the Assemblies - Sydney,” *The Pentecostal Evangel* 1, no. 1 (July 1926): 6-8; Greenwood, “Testimony”, 57; Duncan, *The Charismatic Tide*, 16.

position he held until his retirement in 1979. Together, Richmond Temple and the Sydney congregation formed the nucleus of an expanding PCA that soon included congregations in Adelaide and Orange, which joined after receiving Valdez' ministry.⁴⁹² Another congregation was opened up at Parkes by Roberts and Greenwood. This congregation was to be led for a time by Charles Enticknap. Along with his family, Enticknap had been an active Methodist in the Ingham district before being baptised in the Spirit in 1924. In 1925 he went to Melbourne to investigate the Sunshine revival. After enjoying the ministry of the Spirit, and meeting Valdez and Greenwood, he returned north to Parkes where he took on the pastorate of the new assembly. In 1926 he was responsible for opening the first purpose built pentecostal church building in Australia (excluding Sunshine Hall, which never functioned as a church building).⁴⁹³ Enticknap later returned to Queensland, where he pastored at Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Maryborough, Brisbane and Toowoomba, and was for many years the AGQ president. In Parkes he was replaced by Frederick Duncan.

One year into the revival, Valdez, who was an itinerant evangelist at heart, felt it was time to move on. At that time, Kelso Glover was guest minister at Richmond Temple, and Valdez recommended that the church appoint him as the new pastor.⁴⁹⁴ Glover was one of the rare participants in early American pentecostalism who had an intellectual background and university qualifications, and had been baptised in the Spirit at the Azusa Street revival. Like Valdez, Glover had also been affiliated with Aimee Semple McPherson's Angelus Temple, and had pastored Stone Church in Chicago for seven years before feeling the call to ministry in Australia.⁴⁹⁵ Taken together, his character and experience were to prove invaluable for the imbedding of the fruits of the Sunshine revival in the PCA.

⁴⁹² N. R. Priest, "Reports from the Assemblies - Adelaide," *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 1 (July 1926): 6-7.

⁴⁹³ Charles G. Enticknap, "The Supreme Mission of the Church," *Glad Tidings Messenger* (April 1935): available online, http://aps.scc.edu.au/library/documents/GTM19350401_07.htm, accessed 7 April 2004.

⁴⁹⁴ Greenwood, "The Melbourne Revival," 2.

⁴⁹⁵ See Mark Hutchinson, "That Other Clean Man': Kelso Glover and the Synthesis of Early Pentecostal Hermeneutics," Paper presented to the Spirit and Word conference, Southern Cross College, Sydney, 23 November 2003.

Glover took over the leadership of both Richmond Temple and the emerging PCA movement. He also set up *The Australian Evangel*, which was a monthly publication distributed to congregants in PCA affiliated churches that was modelled on his earlier newspaper, *The Latter Rain Evangel*.⁴⁹⁶ It carried teaching articles that were usually transcripts of sermons, reports from assemblies and missionaries, as well as testimonies of salvation, healing and baptism in the Spirit. The most prominent sermonic and teaching themes included baptism in the Spirit, holiness and Christian living, missions and evangelism, and eschatology.⁴⁹⁷ Among other things, the transcribed sermons are noteworthy for the common practice of the preacher to interrupt his/her own sermon to bring a message in tongues followed by translation. The translated message was usually a first person divine imperative, related to a particular point in the sermon, intended to stir the listener to action. Since these messages were spoken in tongues and translated through the Spirit, almost always in King James English, they carried an authority that went beyond mere human words. To take but one of many examples, in the middle of a sermon entitled “Holiness and Tongues,” Glover (or the Spirit of God?) interjected with:

Tongues and Interpretation: See that thou shalt cherish Mine own holiness. See that thou shalt Cherish Mine own nature. For I shall plant within thee My very own Spirit, and He shall spread abroad within thee Mine own self, and shall cry within thee until I shall fill thee with Myself. Plant Me, yea, sanctify Me in thy life.⁴⁹⁸ [And then the sermon continues in modern English].

It is a practice that implies something of the role of the pastor in early pentecostalism, since there is a sense in which s/he mediates the divine to the congregation. It is a matter that we shall take up in the analysis section following this narrative, since it raises questions both about the nature and purpose of ordination, as well as the potentially sacramental nature of the pentecostal church. For now, it is enough to note that the American, Glover, was not alone in this habit of integrating tongues and interpretation into his sermon. It was a practice continued by his successor, Greenwood, and was common to international speakers such as the renowned

⁴⁹⁶ Hutchinson, “That Other Clean Man.”

⁴⁹⁷ As part of my research, I have reviewed *The Australian Evangel* from its inception in July 1926 to the present.

⁴⁹⁸ Kelso R. Glover, “Holiness and Tongues,” *The Australian Evangel* 2, no. 1 (July 1927): 5 & 12.

pentecostal theologian, Donald Gee from Great Britain.⁴⁹⁹ This reveals the globalising effect of itinerant evangelism upon the culture and practice of early pentecostalism.

In his two year term as pastor of Richmond Temple, Glover succeeded in continuing the impetus of the revival begun under Valdez. In addition to preaching and ministering to a congregation in Richmond with a membership of over three hundred people, and conducting ministry in other PCA congregations, Glover also taught and graduated thirty students from the newly established Victorian Bible Institute. In commenting on the reason for its founding, Glover suggested that “Australia’s greatest need was that of preachers, anointed of God and rightly instructed in the Word, realising that erroneous teachings had greatly abounded and hindered the gospel.”⁵⁰⁰ This was a veiled reference to Lancaster and, in subsequent issues of *The Australian Evangel*, Glover was to repeatedly distinguish the Sunshine congregation from Good News Hall, challenging annihilationism⁵⁰¹ and Lancaster’s distinction between the body and bride of Christ.⁵⁰² Unusually for pentecostal publications, he also published articles affirming the doctrine of the trinity, including the following concise notation that typically combines theology with practical application:

The doctrine that there are three Persons in the glorious Godhead is no cold and unimportant theory, it is a living and life-giving truth. My heart’s desire and prayer for you is that you may regard the God of the Scriptures as a loving Father, as a tender and compassionate Saviour, who gave Himself for your salvation, as an abiding Comforter.⁵⁰³

During his second year of ministry at Richmond, Glover felt God was leading him back to America. Although he had a great love and burden for Australia and the congregation at Richmond Temple, his wife’s father was ill, and it seems that his family were homesick. He resigned in October 1927 and handed the church to

⁴⁹⁹ E.g. See Donald Gee, “The Emotions of God,” *The Australian Evangel* 3, no. 1 (July 1928): 2-4.

⁵⁰⁰ Kelso R. Glover, “Your Future Missionaries and Ministers,” *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 1 (July 1926): 5.

⁵⁰¹ John Carter, “Eternal Punishment,” *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 12 (June 1927): 5 & 12.

⁵⁰² Kelso R. Glover, “Who are the Elect?,” *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 6 (December 1926): 2.

⁵⁰³ Anonymous, Untitled, *The Australian Evangel*, Vol. 3:10 (Apr. 1929):3.

Greenwood,⁵⁰⁴ who was to hold the position until his death in 1969. At one level, it represented a substantial transition. Where Glover was an educated man and a gifted teacher, Greenwood had left high school early and, by his own admission, could barely read or write until after his conversion at age nineteen, when he taught himself to read with a dictionary and the bible.⁵⁰⁵ In many ways, this made Greenwood more typical of pentecostal ministers than Glover, since education had never been a prerequisite for leadership or ordination, which instead was based on evidence of giftedness, in both matters of the Spirit and leadership. Greenwood did have the benefit of three years training under both Valdez and Glover, firstly as an unpaid volunteer, and later as the paid assistant pastor.⁵⁰⁶ By the time of his appointment he had ten years experience overseeing the small congregation at Sunshine, he'd ministered regularly both at Melbourne and various other pentecostal congregations, and so great was the respect for his ministry that the church remained strong (though not without challenges) despite Glover's departure.

In 1934 the Apostolic Church of Australia opened in the vicinity of Richmond Temple, and such was the impact on Greenwood and his congregation that he describes this period as the "one experience in my whole time in Richmond Temple that shook me to my foundations."⁵⁰⁷ The Apostolic Church was founded in Great Britain, and was a product of both the Welsh revival (1904/05) and global pentecostalism.⁵⁰⁸ The movement was essentially pentecostal, but was distinguished by its belief in the fivefold offices of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. For most pentecostal movements, the designation "apostolic" was a reference to the restorationist orientation of the movement as a whole, rather than to an office and authority designated to a particular person. Likewise, prophecy was a function, open to the entire congregation baptised in the Spirit, rather than being attached to a particular office. In contrast, the Apostolic Church ordained Apostles

⁵⁰⁴ Refer to two issues of *The Australian Evangel*, the first with the cover title 'The Sunshine Evangelist, Charles L. Greenwood: The New Pastor at Melbourne' (Vol 2:4 (Oct. 1927)), and the second with the cover title "Farewell! Farewell!!, Pastor K.E. and Sister Glover, Who Sailed for America October 20, 1927" (Vol. 2:5 (Nov. 1927)).

⁵⁰⁵ Greenwood, "Testimony," 30-31.

⁵⁰⁶ Greenwood, "Testimony," 53-54; Fred Tuck, "Reports from Assemblies," *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 6 (December 1926): 6-7.

⁵⁰⁷ Greenwood, "Testimony," 55.

⁵⁰⁸ Weeks, "Apostolic Church"; James Worsfold, *Origins of the Apostolic Church in Great Britain* (Wellington: Julian Literature Trusty, 1991).

and Prophets. The Apostle was given the spiritual and governing authority of the local congregation, which was a marked contrast to the congregationalism that predominated in pentecostalism globally. The Prophet was charged with bringing the prophetic word, both to the church as a whole, and to individuals. The prophetic word, which was used for encouragement, comfort, rebuke and direction, carried divine authority. As one of the movement's founding Apostles, J. Hutchinson, states:

We believe that the Written Word of God is infallible, and given by the Holy Ghost from beginning to end. We also declare that the spoken Word of God given through the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which he has imparted for that purpose is infallible, and of God from beginning to end... If we cannot trust the gifts, what can we trust?⁵⁰⁹

Within one week of opening the Melbourne Apostolic Church, seventy members of Richmond Temple resigned and joined the Apostolics. Greenwood responded by preaching on apostles and prophets, "showing from the Bible that there is no set prophet or set interpreter," and "proving" the fallibility of the prophets from the book of Ezekiel.⁵¹⁰ The church was in a quandary, the elders believing that Greenwood should resign and Richmond Temple adopt the Apostolic "revelation." The deacons shared Greenwood's perspective, and the matter was put to a congregational vote that Greenwood won with a strong majority. All except one member of the eldership resigned and transferred their affiliation to the Apostolic Church.⁵¹¹

Two years later, Greenwood was accused of misappropriation of funds and the intimidation of two members of the congregation. Although both allegations were rejected after formal investigation by Glover, who returned from America for that purpose, Greenwood's renewed frustration with the church's eldership resulted in him restructuring the lines of church authority. He removed the governmental responsibilities of the elders, in particular their authority over the pastor, who was then made responsible directly to the congregation.⁵¹² It was a change that, although Greenwood would never have admitted it, moved Richmond Temple some way

⁵⁰⁹ Weeks, "Apostolic Church," 41.

⁵¹⁰ Greenwood, "Testimony," 55.

⁵¹¹ Greenwood, "Testimony," 55-56.

⁵¹² Greenwood, "Testimony," 67-68.

toward the Apostolic Church's model of spiritual and governmental leadership residing with the pastor (or in their parlance, "the Apostle"), although for the time being, the church retained congregational voting rights. As we shall discover in the following chapter of this thesis, the next generation of pentecostal leaders would adopt a governance that mirrored the Apostolic Church, without the concomitant role of the formal and infallible Prophet (although there was a prophetic push, with ministries such as that of Steve Penny *et al.*).⁵¹³ In the meantime, the PCA, along with the AGQ and the Assemblies of God globally, was at pains to distinguish itself from the "false" teachings of the Apostolic Church.⁵¹⁴

While the arrival from Great Britain of the Apostolic Church was to negatively impact Richmond Temple, other foreign preachers continued to travel to Australia, and the result was the glocalisation of global pentecostal perspectives. In 1927 the famous Yorkshire healing evangelist, Smith Wigglesworth, spent five months on his second tour of Australia under the sponsorship of the PCA. As R.H. Fallon observed, "'Only Believe' was his text for all time and everywhere, and everything he says illustrates and enforces it."⁵¹⁵ It was a message that reinforced key elements of the fourfold gospel and that was supported by countless testimonies of healings in *The Australian Evangel*. His campaigns saw testimony to cripples throwing away their crutches,⁵¹⁶ recovery from cancer, instantly healed arthritis and the restoration of a ruptured heart.⁵¹⁷ Seventy years on, it is impossible to ascertain the veracity of these testimonies, except to say that the evidence was enough to more than satisfy the pentecostals themselves. Pentecostals were not unique in this experience or theology, and nor were they unique in the belief that sickness was a consequence of lack of faith and that reliance on doctors was to trust "man"⁵¹⁸ rather than God.⁵¹⁹ Greenwood was

⁵¹³ See Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*.

⁵¹⁴ Leila M. Buchanan, "Uncertain Sounds: Apostolic Church Error," *The Glad Tidings Messenger* 1, no. 2 (December 1934): available online, <http://evangel.webjournals.org/Issues.asp?index=109>, accessed 7 April 2004.

⁵¹⁵ Dr. R. H. Fallon, "Three Days With Wigglesworth at Melbourne," *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 8 (April 1927): 5 & 11.

⁵¹⁶ Frederick Duncan, "Sydney's Farewell to Bro. Wigglesworth and Sister Salter," *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 11 (May 1927): 5.

⁵¹⁷ H Todd and L Pople, "Personal Testimonies of Two Marvellous Healings at Wigglesworth Meetings," *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 10 (April 1927): 2, 11 & 12.

⁵¹⁸ I have used the gender exclusive term because it was the phraseology of the day.

⁵¹⁹ Hatch describes the popular disillusionment with orthodox medicine that fed the faith healing movement in the nineteenth century (Hatch, 28-30). See also Numbers, Ronald L. and Darrel W.

to put this theology to the test when his 3 ½ year old son Les was taken sick. Greenwood felt the Lord tell him that “this sickness is not until death,” but after weeks of prayer it reached the point where Les could barely breathe. Greenwood relented and took him to the Doctor, who diagnosed him with diphtheria and all but threatened to charge his father with negligent homicide if the boy passed away.⁵²⁰ Nonetheless, Greenwood clung to the “Word” he had received in faith, and three months later the boy recovered, a testimony that is perhaps evidence of the tendency of pentecostals to “supernaturalise the natural.”⁵²¹ Be that as it may, Wigglesworth reinforced the importance of both faith and the healing ministry within Australian pentecostalism. The response of other evangelical Christians to Wigglesworth’s ministry is testimony to the way pentecostals were often received by other denominations. As Duncan observed:

Our son, Paul, attended the morning service of a Baptist Church, where the preacher warned his flock to beware of the awful man named Wigglesworth, now in Sydney. “He breathes on handkerchiefs and beguiles people to believe it will heal them.” We will remember our brother as the “dare-to-believe man,” and as the one who strikes terror to the hearts of the denizens of the pit when he cries: “Come out, you devil, in the Name of Jesus.”⁵²²

In April 1928 pastor Donald Gee, of Scotland, arrived in Melbourne for the annual convention of the PCA. Gee was a key figure in the spread of the pentecostal movement in Great Britain, and was to become known globally for his theological acumen and his balanced approach to doctrinal, pastoral and ecumenical issues. In Australia his ministry focused on baptism in the Spirit, spiritual gifts and holiness, topics he saw as directly related, the former stimulating the latter. In a series of sermons published in *The Australian Evangel*, “Holiness – Sanctification (1) Through the Blood, (2) Through the Word, (3) Through the Spirit,”⁵²³ Gee describes holiness as having both positive and negative dimensions, as sanctification to God’s service

Amunsden, eds. *Caring and Curing: Health and Medicine in the Western Religious Traditions* (New York: Macmillan, 1986).

⁵²⁰ Greenwood, “Testimony”, 45-47.

⁵²¹ To borrow a phrase from Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*.

⁵²² Duncan, “Farewell to Bro. Wigglesworth,” 2.

⁵²³ Donald Gee, “Holiness - Sanctification: Through the Blood, Through the Word, Through the Spirit,” *The Australian Evangel* 3, no. 2 (August 1928): 6-10.

(positive), and as separation from the world (negative). He understood holiness to effected by the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies the believer through His influence, through the responsibility of the believer to act as his temple, through the difficult process of separation, and by uniting the individual with holy people. Gee's constant theme in all his sermons and articles was the necessity for theology to be practical. The practice of holiness thus involves a positive challenge to wholehearted service of God, and a negative challenge against habits such as smoking, the use of make-up and inappropriate attire. The logic against these "sins" derived from the notion that the body is a temple for the Holy Ghost. As with Wigglesworth, Gee's message was not new to an Australia long addressed by the holiness orientation of Keswick evangelicalism. Glover in particular preached wholeheartedly and often on the subject of holiness. The dilemma for the pentecostal church in Australia was that, in less able hands than Glover and Gee, the message of holiness tended towards legalism. Statements such as the following from Warren Fisher were typical:

Many church members in these days are theatre patronisers and attend card parties and dances, and yet have the appearance of goodness.⁵²⁴

It is an issue we shall take up in our analysis, since the cultural and social implications of holiness are ecclesially constitutive.

Gee was also interested in church government. In summarising his initial impressions of the PCA he observed:

Such loyalty to the liberty of the Spirit, coupled with sane government and preparation for the work of the Lord, and, above all, a willingness to receive sound scriptural teaching and the ordering of all things by the principles of the written Word of God, promises well for the future of the Pentecostal testimony in Australia.⁵²⁵

⁵²⁴ Warren Fisher, "Tricks and Snares of the Devil," *The Australian Evangel* 4, no. 5 (November 1929): 11-12, 11.

⁵²⁵ Donald Gee, "First Impressions of Australia," *The Australian Evangel* 2, no. 11 (May 1928): 10-11.

His address to the Sydney conference described the history of the Assemblies of God in Europe. His purpose was to observe that “revival campaigns do not finish when the evangelist goes away, and that is where we feel the benefits of the “Assemblies of God.”⁵²⁶ He was particularly sensitive to the charge that revival, baptism in the Spirit and tongues made pentecostalism a movement bereft of propriety. His arrival in Australia coincided with an article published in the Salvation Army’s *The War Cry* entitled “The Babel and Babble of Speaking in Tongues.” Gee wrote a reply that argued that tongues and the gifts of the Spirit can, and do, go hand in hand with orderly and organised church services.⁵²⁷ It is a defence that is perhaps belied by the “noise” that was often associated with the early days of the Sunshine revival, but that was becoming increasingly true of pentecostal congregations.

The services at Richmond Temple were a blend of the austere and the celebratory. The triune God of pentecostal holiness was met at church by male parishioners in suits, and female congregants wearing hats and long dresses, with no make-up or jewellery in sight. At the start of the service, Greenwood and the elders would march to the front and take their seats on centre stage facing the congregation. Yet the joy of the Spirit was manifest in a hymnody like no other. Gone was the old lady playing an organ. Instead, the grand piano was accompanied by an orchestra with violin and various brass instruments, as well as a choir with a complement of twenty to thirty singers. The singing was accompanied and interspersed with tongues, usually from the congregation, and interpretation, usually from Greenwood. These messages had a reputation for being direct, challenging, and sometimes personal. They were followed by passionate sermons that almost always concluded with an “altar call.” The altar call gave the congregation the opportunity to respond to the comfort, promise and/or challenge of the proclaimed Word, by coming to receive prayer.⁵²⁸ In reality, there was no physical altar, which had long been associated by voluntarist churches with

⁵²⁶ Donald Gee, “Pentecostal Movement in Europe Today,” *The Australian Evangel* 2, no. 12 (June 1928): 5&10-13.

⁵²⁷ Donald Gee, “The Pentecostal Testimony: A Reply to Commissioner Samuel Brengle’s Unfortunate Article in “The War Cry”,” *The Australian Evangel* 2, no. 1 (May 1928): 4-5.

⁵²⁸ This portrayal of the Richmond Temple service under Greenwood is constructed from Greenwood, *Richmond Temple Souvenir*; Greenwood, “Recollections of Richmond Temple”; Sharman, Jim, “Recollections of Life and Ministry in the Assemblies of God,” interview by Shane Clifton, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, 2002; Forbes, George, “Personal Biography and Recollections of the Formation of AGA World Missions,” interview by Shane Clifton, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, 2002.

the formal sacramentalism of the Catholic Church. But the use of the phrase “altar call” for prayer held at the front of the service, and usually led by the pastor, reveals the quasi sacramentalism that accompanied pentecostal spirituality.

The quality of the Richmond service saw Greenwood allocated a Sunday afternoon radio program on 3XY, featuring the choir and a sermon. The irony is that Greenwood did not own a radio prior to 1936, when his son acquired one while he was on a mission trip to India. Like the cinema, the radio was another medium of secular culture that, at least in his early days, Greenwood was firmly opposed to. Nonetheless, for the sake of the gospel, he took to the task of radio preaching with the same delight he had taken in converting Richmond theatre to a church. In the long run, his attitude to the medium was to mellow.⁵²⁹

Apart from midweek meetings, including prayer meetings, ladies meetings and youth groups, the church had two Sunday services, the morning service known as the “Breaking the Bread” Service. The Lord’s Supper was an important element of pentecostal church life. In an article in *The Australian Evangel*, Henry Proctor summarised the pentecostal theology of this ordinance when he notes that “we guard ourselves from the strange superstition called ‘transubstantiation’.”⁵³⁰ Yet he goes on to critique movements, such as the Salvation Army, for neglecting the ordinance. He relates the Lord’s Supper to holiness, eschatology, healing, and the abiding presence of the Lord, and suggests that the Lord is “spiritually present” in the celebration. That, “in the spiritual sense His flesh and blood is to be our daily food.”⁵³¹ There is thus a sense in which Communion for pentecostals is more than simply a remembrance, but mediates spiritually and symbolically the grace of God, through the celebration of the death of the Son in the power of the Spirit.

We have taken the time to review the Richmond Temple history and service because it is indicative of the nature and emphasis of early pentecostal churches. As we have already stated, Richmond Temple was the source of many of the pentecostal churches

⁵²⁹ Greenwood, “Recollections of Richmond Temple”. See also Greenwood’s report in *Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes*, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Brisbane, June 1945.

⁵³⁰ Henry Proctor, “The Lord’s Supper,” *The Australian Evangel* 4, no. 8 (February 1930): 11-12.

⁵³¹ Proctor, “The Lord’s Supper,” 12.

planted throughout Victoria and the nation, and it also provided the movement with a large number of pastors. Its success and prominence in the movement saw it become one of the important models for pentecostal church and ministry, as indicated in Greenwood's leadership role in the PCA, and later, in his leadership of the Assemblies of God in Australia. Few had the luxury afforded by Richmond's size and its requisite antecedents, but to the extent they were able, pentecostal churches intermingled the modern and the spectacular with their conservative, holiness-oriented, culture.

4.2.3 The United Fellowship of the Assemblies of God in Australia (AGA)

In March 1937 Greenwood, Enticknap, Duncan, and various other pastors, met at the Pentecostal Church in Sydney for the "United Conference of the Pentecostal Church of Australia and the Assemblies of God (Queensland)."⁵³² The purpose of the meeting was to provide a basis for the union of the two bodies. As is readily apparent in the above narrative, the personal association of the three key players representing Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, all of whom had links to the Sunshine revival, facilitated natural bonds between the two bodies.

Yet the two movements were not without their differences. While Greenwood, and increasingly Duncan, exercised firm and long term authority in their own churches, and carried clear mandates for leadership of their State bodies, the Queensland churches were both more dispersed and more democratic. While Richmond Temple was congregational in structure, in practice the pastor exercised strong authority. Following the connexional model of Methodism, which was strong in the frontier society of Queensland, the AGQ pastors tended to rotate their tenure. By 1937, Enticknap had led seven different churches, and had spent much time itinerating among the various pentecostal congregations. In comparison, Greenwood and Duncan remained in their local churches, ultimately for many decades. And unlike Victoria and New South Wales, there was no single church in Queensland that dominated the landscape. This was probably as much a consequence of geography as anything else, since Queensland towns were much more spread out than the Southern

⁵³² Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Sydney, March 1937.

States. Overall, the consequence was that the AGQ was a “flatter” and more egalitarian affiliation than the PCA, which was dominated by Greenwood.

Nonetheless, the two movements shared personal affiliation, a common experience of the baptism in the Spirit, a similar cultural worldview, and the priority of evangelising Australia and proclaiming the pentecostal fourfold gospel. This was a missionary emphasis that they believed necessitated national pentecostal unity. As Greenwood stated in his opening address to the 1939 conference:

There could be no doubt now as to the unanimity that prevailed amongst the members of the Executive Presbytery and the General Presbytery. It was possible now to build a splendid Pentecostal work throughout Australia to the glory of God.⁵³³

The United Conference of 1937 was charged with establishing a basis of unity, which would be achieved by drafting a national constitution. They now had at their disposal the constitutional documents for the AGQ, the PCA, and the American Assemblies of God (AGUSA). The first point of order was to decide on a name. By this time, Greenwood had developed close ties with Donald Gee from the Assemblies of God in Great Britain, and he was happy to give up the PCA label for the benefits of informal association with the global Assemblies of God movement. By a large majority, the conference agreed to adopt the name, The Assemblies of God in Australia.⁵³⁴

The central issue was the relationship between the local assembly and the united fellowship. The basic principle of unity was stipulated in Article 2:

The Assemblies of God in Australia is a fellowship of Pentecostal Assemblies in voluntary co-operation, on terms of equality, as self-contained and self-governed Christian Assemblies, uniting for aggressive evangelism, unity, fellowship, order, discipline, and other purposes.⁵³⁵

⁵³³ Greenwood, ‘Chairman’s Address’, Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Melbourne, April 1939.

⁵³⁴ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Sydney, March 1937.

⁵³⁵ Assemblies of God in Australia, United Constitution, 1943, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, Article 2(a).

As a voluntary fellowship of partner churches,⁵³⁶ the United Fellowship was governed by its constituents who met for biennial general conferences. In subsequent decades, this conference was to focus on setting the parameters for doctrine, overseeing ordination and ministerial standards, coordinating national evangelism, and facilitating foreign missions. The governing conference delegated day to day management to various committees, including the Commonwealth Executive Presbytery, which was responsible for the administration of Commonwealth business and conference decisions.⁵³⁷ In the inaugural conference, Greenwood was appointed as the AGA Chairman, and Enticknap Vice Chairman and, together with Duncan who was to become Vice Chairman in 1941 and Chairman from 1945 to 1950, these three were prominent in the AGA Executive, as well as in their home States, for some years to come.⁵³⁸ In addition, the conference appointed a missionary council, as well as a credentials committee, and State based Presbyteries who were responsible for home missions.

Each assembly was given representation in the general assembly. Churches were represented by their pastor, and assemblies with more than fifty members were “entitled to appoint one additional representative for every fifty members or part thereof.”⁵³⁹ The nature of this representation was to come up repeatedly in the biennial conferences and, while the basic principles were to remain unchanged until the 1990s,⁵⁴⁰ the concern about representation is indicative of the authority carried by the conference. More than once it was observed that the AGA was “a theocracy.” In his final address as Chairman in 1950, Duncan noted that the conference followed “the blessed theocratic leadership of the Holy Spirit.”⁵⁴¹ But the theocratic will was discerned by the voting of the delegates and, over the years and decades of the conference, few issues were resolved without vigorous discussion and opposing views. Yet at the end of the day, most were prepared to submit those views to the will of God manifest through the majority decision of the conference, at least until two years later, when the opportunity arose to address the disputed issue once again! So

⁵³⁶ United Constitution 1943, Article 2(b)

⁵³⁷ United Constitution 1943, Article, 12.

⁵³⁸ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, 1939 to 1950.

⁵³⁹ United Constitution 1943, Article 11(a).

⁵⁴⁰ See changes documented in next chapter.

⁵⁴¹ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1950.

frequently were some disputed matters raised that eventually it was decided that a motion defeated three times at general conference could not be raised again for ten years.⁵⁴²

This governance at both the local (congregational) and national level is modelled on the standard free church structure, including the emphasis on “the relative independence of local churches.”⁵⁴³ Local autonomy is central to free church ethos, yet as Volf observes, free churches in united fellowships can only ever be “relatively independent.”⁵⁴⁴ The issue for the AGA was the balance that needed to be achieved between local autonomy and centralised control, since co-operative fellowship necessarily compromises autonomy to one degree or another. According to the AGA constitution, local sovereignty was deemed to end where it affected the United Fellowship, so that the local church was prevented from doing anything that is “injurious to another assembly.”⁵⁴⁵ Apart from excluding from the bounds of what is considered “injurious to another assembly” new church plants within a reasonable distance from an established assembly, no other specific stipulations are included within the AGA Constitution that clarify what might be considered “injurious.” Instead, the matter was left to the practical decisions of the biennial conference and, in between meetings, to the AGA Executive.

Apart from the notion of doing nothing “injurious to another assembly,” there are three other ways in which central authority overrides local church autonomy. Firstly, the agreed doctrinal basis limits or bounds the beliefs of the local assembly.⁵⁴⁶ Secondly, ministerial credentials were controlled by the credentials committee of the United Fellowship.⁵⁴⁷ Thirdly, no assembly could appoint pastors or engage evangelists or itinerant ministers whose credentials were not endorsed by the Commonwealth Executive Presbytery.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴² Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Melbourne, 1959.

⁵⁴³ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 20.

⁵⁴⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 20.

⁵⁴⁵ United Constitution 1943, Article 2(b).

⁵⁴⁶ United Constitution 1943, Article 5.

⁵⁴⁷ United Constitution 1943, Article 17. This is also an Australian government stipulation for those churches wanting their ordination to be recognised by the State.

⁵⁴⁸ United Constitution 1943, Article 19(a).

It was this latter stipulation that was to cause the most angst in AGA conferences in the decades following union. An example was the 1939 resolution that no AGA assembly could invite the ministry of a pastor or evangelist who held to British Israel teaching.⁵⁴⁹ British Israelism advocated the notion that the Anglo-Saxon race is physically descended from the ten northern tribes of Israel that were dispersed after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and that, as a result, Great Britain and her daughter nations (including America, Canada and Australia) have inherited the covenant blessings given to Abraham.⁵⁵⁰ Historically and exegetically it is a notion that is easily discredited,⁵⁵¹ but its frequent use of apocalyptic literature, and its association with the “idea” of Great Britain during and around the time of war, gave it a degree of credibility with some fundamentalist and pentecostal groups. The teaching is interdenominational, and is usually merely an appendage to otherwise conservative orthodox beliefs, but its “persistent danger is the ease with which it justifies and fosters racial pride and prejudice,”⁵⁵² especially extreme pro or anti-Semitism. It is also problematic for international missions, since it is essentially a high version of British imperialism. The AGA motion, which declared British Israelism to be heresy (where this term is understood over against orthodoxy, rather than as the breakdown in the cultural dialectic between transcendence and limitation), restricted the right of AGA churches to accept British Israel preachers, and conversely, prevented AGA ministers from preaching in churches that propagated British Israel teaching. The motion was endorsed by the AGA under protest, and the issue was raised again at the following AGA Conference, where it was argued that each pastor and assembly should be given freedom in “his (sic) beliefs’ in this matter.”⁵⁵³ The motion was defeated, but it highlighted the tension between autonomy and centralised organisation. It was also decided that *the Evangel* should include articles against British Israel teaching, an example of the journal’s role in propagating the decisions of the conference, and thereby defining the edges of AGA culture. The issue eventually led to the schism of the Harris brothers and the formation of what is now the Christian Revival Crusade (CRC).

⁵⁴⁹ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Melbourne, 1939.

⁵⁵⁰ British Israel Teaching continues to find adherents; refer to the website of the British Israel World Federation, <http://www.britishisrael.co.uk/allbooks/o/o.htm>, accessed 17 January 2004.

⁵⁵¹ R. P. Nettelhorst, “British Israelism: A Mirage,” *Quartz Hill Journal of Theology* 4, no. 1 (2002): available online, <http://www.theology.edu/>, accessed 21 January 2004.

⁵⁵² Nettelhorst, “British Israelism.”

⁵⁵³ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1945.

In 1947 the control of the Executive was further strengthened by a remit endorsed by Greenwood that stated:

There be in future loyalty to our co-operative fellowship by our ministers refraining from publicly fraternising with other bodies or leaders of other bodies disruptive to Assemblies of God work – the Executives ... where necessary being the arbiters in deciding such cases.⁵⁵⁴

The motion was passed, but in the eyes of many it seemed to vest too much control in the hands of the executive, who were required to give their approval for any fraternisation. It was also a motion that worked against potential moves toward unity with other pentecostal and Christian bodies. In 1950 the South Australian delegates, who had been working harmoniously with the Elim Foursquare movement, attempted to overturn the motion, and while unsuccessful at that time, in 1953 the motion was rescinded.⁵⁵⁵

This was but one example of the sometimes tension between the Executive and local assemblies. In 1951 a special conference was called due to the “unsatisfactory condition of the Executive.”⁵⁵⁶ The previous Chairman, Ps Irish, had resigned and the Executive had appointed Alex Davidson in his place. Many believed that the Executive had gone beyond their authority in making this appointment, and the special conference was called to resolve the issue. The conference opened with the resignation of the Executive, and new elections were held. Davidson’s re-appointment as Chairman ultimately endorsed the Executive’s actions, and consequently, the conference gave the Executive power in the future to appoint replacements where circumstances dictated.

In 1959 a censure motion was brought by New South Wales delegates against the Executive for the way that they had dealt with “the Hamilton Affair.” In this instance, Charles Greenwood’s son, Elviss, had been charged with having an affair by some

⁵⁵⁴ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Sydney, 1947.

⁵⁵⁵ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, 1950 & 1953.

⁵⁵⁶ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1951.

members of the church he was pastoring in Hamilton. Those that continued to support his ministry left with him to start another church in Charlestown, although the accusations against him were eventually proven, and he thereafter returned to his father's church in Melbourne. The NSW executive felt that the matter had not been handled appropriately by the AGA, due to the influence of Charles Greenwood upon the national executive, hence the attempted censure. The motion was defeated but, once again, this was an example of the sort of local issue that had to be addressed by the centralised body.⁵⁵⁷

Underlying these various issues was a degree of State based parochialism. As Davidson was to observe, a certain "rivalry (friendly of course!) . . . seems to exist between the States."⁵⁵⁸ In reality it was a rivalry that was not always friendly. In 1955 it was suggested that the executive, rather than being elected at the general conference, be made up of representatives from the various States. While this was also a motion that was formally defeated, informally delegates tended to vote-in representatives from their home State, who were then able to address parochial interests and concerns.

From the time of its inception in 1937, and during the following decade embracing WWII, the AGA experienced a period of relative stagnation. A report to the delegates of the 1945 conference noted that the movement commenced with a total number of 38 assemblies, and a membership of 1482 people. In the eight years that followed they were to gain fourteen assemblies and lose ten, and while this represented a small increase in the number of churches affiliated with the movement, the total membership had in fact declined to approximately 1250.⁵⁵⁹ The reasons for this are difficult to ascertain, although some have suggested that such decline was the inevitable result of institutionalisation.⁵⁶⁰ More likely, the cause was the national focus on WWII, which arose at the very time of the formation of the AGA. In times of national crises, populations turn to traditional sources of comfort and

⁵⁵⁷ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Melbourne, 1959; Assemblies of God NSW, Annual Conference Minutes, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, Lithgow, 1958.

⁵⁵⁸ Alex T. Davidson, "Bible College Inaugurated: Greatest Event in Australian Assemblies of God History!," *The Evangel* 14, no. 3 (February 1948): 12-13.

⁵⁵⁹ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1945.

⁵⁶⁰ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 117-126.

encouragement, including churches.⁵⁶¹ But pentecostal congregations were far from traditional, and were further alienated during this time by their negative attitude toward the war and military service. Indeed, their global orientation was to clash with the resurgent nationalism that predominated Australian society during this time.

Both McKernan and Linder observe that most churches and church leaders in Australia supported the theory of a just war and, further, justified and generally encouraged Australian participation in WWI. This included the pentecostals closest free church relatives, such as the Methodists and Congregationalists. Only the few Australian Quakers, along with a minority of individuals within other churches, took the pacifist stand.⁵⁶² By the time of WWII, the attitude of the majority of churches had changed little and, consequently, the AGA and other pentecostals were noteworthy for their stance as conscientious pacifists. During the creation of their constitution, Article 23 was given to the question of military service, and declared that obedience to Christ, the Prince of Peace, and His prohibition against the shedding of blood, meant that:

We, as a body of Christians while purposing to fulfil all the obligations of loyal citizenship, are nevertheless constrained to declare we cannot conscientiously participate in war and armed resistance which involves the actual destruction of human life, since this is contrary to our view of the clear teachings of the inspired Word of God which is the sole basis of our faith.⁵⁶³

McKernan suggests that the principled nature of the pacifist's stance "earned a measure of toleration and respect not accorded to other 'dissenters' in wartime Australia."⁵⁶⁴ Even so, it was not an easy position to take. Greenwood's son Les recalls the widespread criticism he received as an eligible draftee who managed to avoid both war and gaol time through his affiliation with the AGA, and the requisite legal status afforded him through Article 23. Other pentecostals were less fortunate.

⁵⁶¹ For the role the Australian churches played in times of war, see Robert D. Linder, *The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War, 1914-1918* (South Australia: Openbook, 2000); Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches 1914-1918* (Sydney: The Catholic Theological Faculty, 1980).

⁵⁶² McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 144-155; Linder, *The Long Tragedy*, 74-79

⁵⁶³ United Constitution 1943, Article 23.

⁵⁶⁴ McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, 153.

Jim Sharman, who was later to become an ordained AGA minister, but at that time was only loosely affiliated with the movement, was one of many who spent time in military prison for refusing conscription.⁵⁶⁵

For pentecostals, their objection to warfare stemmed not only from their reading of the injunctions and example of Jesus, but also from their holiness theology, with its separationist outlook. A Christian's loyalty was first of all to Christ, wherein "patriotism shrinks as the love of Christ expands in the believer's heart."⁵⁶⁶ In support of the movement's constitutional statement opposing military service, the *Evangel* began to include numerous articles addressing the topic, defending the pentecostal position and responding to alternate arguments.⁵⁶⁷ Yet as the war progressed, the articles in the *Evangel* reveal a change in the prevailing opinion. By 1940, an article entitled "The Attitude of the Christian Towards War" suggested that, while war was a product of human sin, Christians should seek God's wisdom in deciding whether to fight for a just cause, and thereafter follow one's conscience:

He will wait upon the Lord to ask Him what his place is to be in the conflict. He will refuse to take a place assigned to him merely by man. He will be unafraid to take any place assigned to him by God.⁵⁶⁸

After 1940, the *Evangel* published no other article explicitly against Christian participation in military service. Like all publications of the time, the *Evangel* became dominated by the war. Even in seemingly unrelated topics, war analogies abounded, especially in relation to descriptions of the church. The task of evangelism was described as "A Call to Arms"⁵⁶⁹, and the long news section usually entitled "Reports from the Assemblies" was renamed "Reports from Spiritual Battle Stations."⁵⁷⁰ Even more significant, the journal began publishing testimonies from Christian soldiers, including a section entitled "Servicemen Speak."⁵⁷¹ One young

⁵⁶⁵ Sharman, "Recollections of the Assemblies of God".

⁵⁶⁶ John Carter, "The Christian's Attitude to War," *The Evangel* 5, no. 6 (May 1939): 9-11&16.

⁵⁶⁷ E.g. The Pentecostal Evangel, "Our Attitude Toward War and Military Service," *The Evangel* 4, no. 12 (November 1938): 2-3&12; Carter, "The Christian's Attitude to War."

⁵⁶⁸ Paul Prichard, "The Attitude of the Christian Towards War," *The Evangel* 6, no. 2 (January 1940): 5&14.

⁵⁶⁹ A. F. Missen, "A Call to Arm: A Militant Church," *The Evangel* 6, no. 8 (July 1940): 3.

⁵⁷⁰ *The Evangel* 9, no. 8 (1943, July):26-28.

⁵⁷¹ See May to August Editions of *The Evangel*.

man was filled with the Spirit in a submarine,⁵⁷² and the extent of the change in AGA attitudes to war is apparent when Leila Buchanan commented in her editorial that:

There is a definite and thankworthy moving of the Spirit of God among our boys in the various Camps and Battle Stations, and it is our mutual duty to foster and feed the flame which God in His mercy and grace has kindled.⁵⁷³

The question of Christian involvement in military service became a hotly debated issue during the AGA conferences held during the war years. Some wanted the anti-military service article deleted altogether, but others continued to argue against Christian participation in war. In the end a compromise was reached with the insertion of the phrase, “This is a subject of individual conscience,”⁵⁷⁴ to the end of the paragraph on compulsory military service in the constitutional document. It is a curious amendment, since it contradicts its own statement that participation in war “is contrary to our view of the clear teachings of the inspired Word of God,”⁵⁷⁵ and thereby ignores the pentecostal understanding of the perspicuity of Scripture. It is testimony to the inevitable impact of context on the church, even where that church imagines itself to be separate or unsullied by “the world.”

Whether or not warfare was one of the reasons for the relative stagnation of AGA growth during the 1940s, it was a situation that was in part rectified by the movement’s establishment of the Commonwealth Bible College. As early as the Sunshine Revival, pentecostals had been aware of the importance of education for training pastors, evangelists and missionaries who could proclaim the fourfold gospel to Australia and the nations. But the Victorian Institute at Richmond Temple that had been set up in 1926 closed soon after the departure of Glover in 1927, probably because Greenwood and his associates did not have the requisite training or experience for it to continue, and the local church, or even the small numbers of churches that formed the PCA, were unable to garner sufficient resources or students to ensure the college’s continued viability. In 1935 the AGQ invited Henry Wiggins

⁵⁷² Bob Bowen, “Filled with the Spirit in a Submarine,” *The Evangel* 10, no. 3 (February 1944): 5-6&9.

⁵⁷³ Leila M. Buchanan, “From the Editor,” *The Evangel* 9, no. 8 (July 1943): 3-4.

⁵⁷⁴ Assemblies of God in Australia, *United Constitution, 1947*, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, Article 25.

⁵⁷⁵ *United Constitution 1947*, Article 25.

from the Assemblies of God in Wales to Queensland for the sake of establishing a pentecostal bible college. During the next two years Wiggins attempted to get the project off the ground, circulating a letter to pentecostal assemblies and establishing a college in 1936.⁵⁷⁶ But again, student numbers and financial resources proved prohibitive, and ultimately the college was to lapse, with Wiggins instead focusing his attention on pastoring the Townsville assembly. The need for a bible college to train pastors and missionaries was included on the agenda of the inaugural conference of the AGA, and a committee was established at that time to investigate the matter.⁵⁷⁷ It was to take a further eleven years to achieve the desired result but, on 14 February 1948, the Commonwealth Bible College (CBC) was eventually launched. It was to be lauded by Davidson as the “Greatest event in Australian Assemblies of God History!”⁵⁷⁸

There had been countless troubles in locating an appropriately qualified and experienced principal but, eventually, it was decided to appoint the American Assemblies of God pastor, Frank Sturgeon, and his wife Inez. The Sturgeons had spent the previous two years conducting evangelistic campaigns throughout the Australian churches,⁵⁷⁹ and were willing to take on the college while a permanent principal was sought. The College was also temporarily located at Richmond Temple, although, as Enticknap and the Queensland pastors made clear, “the emphasis was on the Commonwealth-wide nature of the College. No parochial outlook shall marr (sic) the unity.”⁵⁸⁰ In 1949 a permanent site was purchased for the college on the banks of the Brisbane river, equipped with rough dormitories and makeshift classrooms.⁵⁸¹ Contrary to Enticknap’s hope, the Victorian assemblies, under Greenwood’s leadership, decided to continue a college at Richmond Temple. The 1949 conference entertained heated discussion about the issue, but it was agreed that the Victorian Bible School could continue to operate, provided it didn’t solicit funds or students

⁵⁷⁶ Assemblies of God QLD, Executive Minutes, Brisbane, 27 April 1936.

⁵⁷⁷ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Sydney, 1937.

⁵⁷⁸ Davidson, “Bible College Inaugurated,” 12.

⁵⁷⁹ Refer to various articles describing the Sturgeon Campaign’s in *The Evangel*: September 1946 in Brisbane, November 1946 in Toowoomba, April 1947 in Newcastle, July 1947 in Parkes, October 1947 in Peak Hill.

⁵⁸⁰ Charles G. Enticknap, “C.B.C. Commencement,” *The Evangel* 14, no. 4 (March 1948): 10-11.

⁵⁸¹ See Philip B. Duncan, “A Big Step in Faith: An Urgent Appeal,” *The Evangel* 15, no. 2 (January 1949): 3-7, as well as the Special Bible College Issue of *The Evangel*, (November 1950).

beyond its State border.⁵⁸² In the 1950 conference, Greenwood was asked about the possibility of closing the Victorian college, and he responded by saying that “it had been in the mind of the Brethren that it [the College] could be turned over to the Commonwealth.”⁵⁸³ In reality, Greenwood’s magnanimity hid the fact that the school had been struggling, having lost students to CBC and to another college that had been established by a “latter rain” church in Melbourne.⁵⁸⁴ But whatever his motives, Greenwood agreed to recommend to the Victorian conference that the college be closed and that the State support CBC; a recommendation that was to be accepted by the Victorian Presbytery. Consequently, from 1951, the AGA had a single college that was to become the focal point for the training, evangelistic and missionary efforts of the movement.

After completing their one-year term, the Sturgeons were replaced temporarily by Leonard Palmer in 1949⁵⁸⁵ and Philip Duncan in 1950,⁵⁸⁶ before James Wallace was appointed as the permanent principal in 1951.⁵⁸⁷ Wallace was born in Scotland, and had been baptised in the Spirit at age fifteen. Closely associated with Donald Gee, he was to pastor various churches in Great Britain, including the church at Doncaster described by Gee as “one of our largest assemblies.”⁵⁸⁸ For some years, the AGA had been asking the Assemblies of God in Great Britain to send them a suitably experienced leader for the new Bible College, and Wallace, along with his wife Margaret, felt called to respond. Only six months after his arrival in Australia, his position as principal of the College, and his leadership capacity, saw him appointed to the AGA Executive.⁵⁸⁹ In 1955 he was elected as Chairman, a position he held until 1959⁵⁹⁰ and, as is apparent in this relationship between the College and the AGA Executive, CBC soon developed a central role in the united fellowship. In 1961 while

⁵⁸² Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1949.

⁵⁸³ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1950.

⁵⁸⁴ Read, Ralph, “Biographical History of Ralph Read,” interview by Benjamin Clark, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre: Southern Cross College, Sydney, 2002. The latter rain movement was a revival movement which began among some pentecostal churches in North America. The movement was rejected by the American Assemblies of God, and also by the AGA. It was to have a substantial impact upon New Zealand pentecostalism, setting the stage for the charismatic renewal in both New Zealand and Australia (Viz Brett Knowles, *The History of a New Zealand Pentecostal Movement* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 2000)).

⁵⁸⁵ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1949.

⁵⁸⁶ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1950.

⁵⁸⁷ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1951.

⁵⁸⁸ Donald Gee, “James Wallace,” *The Evangel* 18, no. 2 (February 1961): 9-10.

⁵⁸⁹ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1951

⁵⁹⁰ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, 1955 & 1959.

conducting ministry in Adelaide during the CBC summer break, Wallace died of a heart attack. He was aged only fifty three, in the prime of his life and ministry. The AGA was stunned by the news, devoting an entire issue of the *Evangel* to mourn his passing and celebrate his achievements.⁵⁹¹ His time as principal of CBC saw the college send out increasing numbers of pastors, church planters, and missionaries. It was during this time that the AGA once again began to experience notable expansion, both at home, where the movement doubled in size in the decade after Wallace's arrival,⁵⁹² and in its missionary activity. It would be claiming too much to say that the college alone was responsible for this growth. This was a period of rapid increase in the Australian population as a whole, and the AGA was also to reap the rewards of immigration, not only in existing "Anglo-Saxon" assemblies, but also in the establishment of ethnic congregations, including a number of Slavic assemblies,⁵⁹³ and Italian churches.⁵⁹⁴ But while CBC might not have been the sole cause of AGA growth, it was responsible for servicing that growth by providing the movement with trained workers.

Among the missionaries sent out in 1950 from the inaugural CBC class were Cyril Westbrook and Morris Hovey. In 1945 the AGA conference had received a request for assistance in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) mission field, and pastor Hugh Davidson was appointed to investigate.⁵⁹⁵ In 1948 Davidson commenced the AGA mission by establishing a base of operations near Maprik. The "first public decisions for Christ"⁵⁹⁶ came on New Years day 1950 and, over the next few months, Davidson established a congregation regularly attended by hundreds of "natives." What he needed was more workers, and Westbrook and Hovey were the first of many to be sent out by CBC.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹¹ See *The Evangel* 18, no. 2 (February 1961).

⁵⁹² See Appendix 1, The Growth of the Assemblies of God in Australia, Chart 1 & 2.

⁵⁹³ The Slavic Church in Melbourne applied for affiliation with the AGA in 1953, Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Melbourne, 1953.

⁵⁹⁴ Mark Hutchinson, *Pellegrini: An Italian Protestant Community in Sydney 1958-1998* (Sydney: Australasian Pentecostal Studies Journal, Supplementary Series, 1999).

⁵⁹⁵ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1945.

⁵⁹⁶ H. S. G. Davidson, "New Guinea Mission," *The Evangel* 16, no. 6 (May 1950): 16-17.

⁵⁹⁷ Davidson, "New Guinea Mission" ; Cyril G. Westbrook, "Wuna Ngai - My Home," *The Evangel* 17, no. 1 (December 1950): 31; George Forbes, *A Church on Fire: The Story of the Assemblies of God in Papua New Guinea* (Mitcham, Victoria: Mission Mobilisers, 2001), 31.

In 1949 it was proposed that the AGA focus its attention on the mission field at PNG, rather than spreading its resources to diverse locations. The motion was deferred, but the vast majority of AGA missionaries and mission funds were thereafter directed to that field. In 1959 the conference did agree to exclusively fund missionaries operating in PNG and India, and to assist people called to other fields by “contacting other societies on their behalf.” Some were concerned that this restrictive policy contravened the church’s mandate to “preach the gospel in all the world” but, although the scope of AGA missions was later broadened, the result of targeting PNG at this time proved to be remarkably successful. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to document the developments of the PNG mission, but suffice to note that, by the fiftieth anniversary celebration, over nine hundred churches had been established to accommodate more than eight hundred different indigenous tribal groups. Forbes attributes this success to radical moves of the Spirit, a church planting focus, education of local ministers through mentoring programs and the formation of the Maprik Bible School, and the establishment of local PNG ecclesial structures. These structures grew out of missionary activity, and gave rise to the first official conference of PNG pentecostals in 1962, and the formation of the Assemblies of God PNG in 1973. This formation involved the Australian missionaries handing over all mission property and governmental authority to the local churches. The missionaries continued to work in partnership with PNG nationals for some time, but by the 1998 Jubilee celebration, all permanent Australian missionaries had left the field. By that time the AGPNG rivalled the AGA in size.⁵⁹⁸

Apart from the field activity of the PNG missionaries, one theological development arising from the missionary context is worth recording. In 1959 representatives from the mission arrived at the AGA Biennial Conference in Victoria requesting that the AGA allow missionaries to baptise polygamous natives. The majority of missionaries were in favour of the request. But Davidson, who had founded the mission, had come with the delegation to protest, and given the conservative nature of AGA theology, it is not surprising that the Australian pastors took Davidson’s view. By a large

⁵⁹⁸ See George Forbes, *A Church on Fire: The Story of the Assemblies of God in Papua New Guinea* (Mitcham, Victoria: Mission Mobilisers, 2001).

majority, the conference passed a motion put forward by Davidson and Duncan that read:

In view of the clear statement of our Lord in Matt. 9.5 that they shall be one flesh and of Paul in 1 Cor. 7.2 let every man have his own wife and let every women have her own husband, this conference rules that our New Guinea Mission Converts shall not be baptised while still living polygamously.⁵⁹⁹

It was an example of distant authorities failing to understand the contextual reality confronting those proclaiming, and those wanting to receive, the gospel. Elements of PNG tribal social structure were built around polygamous relationships, and it was economically and socially punishing for husbands to abandon wives, or wives to leave their husbands. The result of the AGA decision was to effectively alienate polygamous families from the emerging PNG pentecostal church. The missionaries felt that their capacity to proclaim the gospel was diminished.

The issue was overcome by the conversion of some families in polygamous relationships. Their subsequent baptism in the Spirit was reminiscent of the early Judaic Christian experience recounted in Acts 13-14 and, like the early church, this move of the Spirit convinced the Australian pastors.⁶⁰⁰ At the next AGA conference, while explicating their opposition to polygamous marriage, they agreed to allow the baptism of those polygamously united before their conversion.⁶⁰¹ Despite the fact that such persons were to be prevented from taking offices in the church, the carriage of the motion is a remarkable example of the influence of missionary context upon doctrine, as well as the priority that pentecostals continued to give to evangelism and mission, despite their now relatively entrenched theology.

All in all, the formation of the AGA makes for a fascinating narrative. Birthed in revivals, individual congregations came together for the sake propagating the fourfold gospel locally, nationally and in foreign fields. We shall continue the AGA story in

⁵⁹⁹ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Melbourne, 1959.

⁶⁰⁰ Forbes, *Church on Fire*, 121-125.

⁶⁰¹ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1961.

the next chapter, but now we shall attempt to determine what was gained and lost in the process of this ecclesial development.

4.3 Analysis

As our method dictates, the analysis that follows will attempt to draw out those elements in the story of the AGA formation that are either implicitly or explicitly relevant to AGA ecclesiology and, thereafter, to assess what is moving forward, in redemption or decline. This assessment will consider alternate presuppositions that are determinative for different judgements made about the narrative. In particular, our analysis will address the following issues; first, institutionalisation as gain and/or loss for pentecostalism in Australia; secondly, alternate assessments on the importance of local autonomy and; thirdly, judgements as to the appropriate role and authority of the pastor.

4.3.1 Institutionalisation as Central for Pentecostal Success

In the previous chapter we addressed the question of institutionalisation, in particular, the tendency to understand the term as largely negative or, at the very least, as a necessary evil. The common assumption seems to be that although religion desperately needs institutionalisation, it also suffers much from it.⁶⁰² Without wanting to repeat our argument against this presupposition, it is noteworthy that the narrative of AGA formation highlights the benefits that accrued from the institutional developments in Australian pentecostalism.

These benefits are immediately apparent in a comparison of the fruits of the two formative revivals in Melbourne and Brisbane. In the Sunshine revival, Valdez and Glover created the conditions for the long term fruitfulness of the experience of revival. Baptism in the Spirit effected the religious and personal transformations of a large number of people connected to the revival. This became determinative for the

⁶⁰² O'Dea, "Institutionalization of Religion," applied to the Assemblies of God in America by Poloma, *Assemblies of God at the Crossroads*.

development of an ecclesial worldview based on the fourfold gospel and, therein, resulted in the development of social structures connected to the newly established Richmond Temple. This development, which can be understood as a move of the Spirit in the healing vector of the scale of values, was accompanied by institution formation. Valdez established a church, with a congregationalist structure. He brought in Glover, a long term pastor and noted teacher, to embed the ecclesial structures and propagate church culture, particularly through the vehicles of the Victorian Bible Institute and *The Australian Evangel*. In both his sermons and in the journal, Glover explicated pentecostal identity, both positively and negatively. Positively, he taught on Baptism in the Spirit, eschatology, holiness and healing. Negatively, he defined the church against other groups such as Good News Hall, Christian Scientists and even Methodists and other conservative Christian groups, whom he considered brothers in Christ but without the power of the Spirit. Both Valdez and Glover also mentored Greenwood and the Richmond elders, and thereby enabled the church to become independent from their own ministry. The result was a flourishing church that, more than seventy years later, continues to have a congregation of over one thousand members, and that was directly or indirectly responsible for the founding of numerous other pentecostal assemblies in Victoria and throughout Australia. It was also to be a major force in the formation of the AGA.

The results of these institutional developments are noteworthy when considered in comparison to the Canvas Cathedral revival. While originally more spectacular than Sunshine, and effecting larger numbers with the baptism in the Spirit and religious and personal transformation, the long term fruitfulness of the revival was to suffer from its failure to appropriately institutionalise. Booth-Clibborn, hoping for interdenominational impact, chose to reject his earlier association with the AGQ. He did establish a church and governmental structure, but failed to adequately distinguish the church from his own personality and, upon his return to America, the work suffered serious decline. Despite its spectacular beginnings, the church was never to have the impact of Richmond Temple, although once it rejoined the AGQ and the AGA, Glad Tidings Tabernacle was to experience growth and a wider missionary impact.

The benefits of institutional development are even more apparent in the formation of the AGA. As Lloyd Averill was to observe upon the inauguration of CBC, “what one church or one State could not do, a total fellowship proved equal to.”⁶⁰³ From the very beginning all the various pentecostal churches and groups recognised that ministerial training was essential for raising up church leaders, church planters and missionaries. But such an institution is generally beyond the vision and resources of a local church or small affiliation, and neither the PCA nor the AGQ were able to build a sustainable college. CBC was achieved ultimately through the shared vision and effort of the united fellowship of the AGA.

Averill’s observation about the formation of CBC, that “what one church or one State could not do, a total fellowship proved equal to,” can be applied to the various other achievements of the AGA. Its formation enabled the establishment of mechanisms for propagating and sustaining the integrity of the fourfold gospel. These included the fellowship’s doctrinal statements, and the authority structures implemented to reinforce the pentecostal faith and worldview, such as procedures and stipulations for ordination, the oversight of ministry deemed acceptable in AGA churches, and the use of *The Evangel* to propagate culture. Once again, this cultural propagation was achieved in both positive and negative ways. Positively, by setting out AGA doctrine, and publishing articles and testimonies supporting the theology and experience of the fourfold gospel. Negatively, by confronting what was considered the heresy of such movements as The Apostolic Church and British Israelism.

The formation of the AGA also assisted pentecostal missionary efforts. Leadership of what the AGA called “home mission” was delegated to the State Presbytery, who were responsible for encouraging and supervising church planting. On its own, the local church is only able to be that; a local church. It was only through the various united fellowships, originally the AGQ, the PCA and, subsequently the AGA, that attention was drawn beyond the local to the regional, State and National mission. This is not to deny the importance of the local church, and we shall address questions surrounding the relationship between local autonomy and central authority below. But it is to claim that mission extending beyond the local church demands some form

⁶⁰³ Lloyd Averill cited in Hunt, *Assemblies of God Queensland*, 28.

of united fellowship, through which is derived the possibility of stimulating multiple local assemblies. The same logic applies to the task of foreign missions. The remarkable impact of the AGA in the nation of PNG was made possible only by the institutional developments of the united fellowship of the AGA.

Were we to take Poloma's analysis (in her application of O'Dea' theory of routinisation to the Assemblies of God in America), we might agree that much was gained in the process of institutionalisation but argue, nonetheless, that much was also lost. Yet it is not clear that much *was* lost in the process of AGA formation. The generally expressed fear is that routinisation suppresses the original charisma and yet, in the AGA, it can be argued that the original charisma was institutionalised (where this term is neither negative nor positive) in doctrine and through cultural propagation, and thereby reinforced. In the formation of the AGA, the pentecostal movement did not lose its focus on baptism in the Spirit, nor on the spiritual experience of tongues, prophecy or other gifts. It may be argued that the operation of the charismatic gifts became focused on the authority and leadership of the pastorate. While we shall address this particular issue in more detail below, for now it is enough to note that, for the most part, AGA formation is irrelevant to the operation of such gifts. The sovereignty and autonomy of the local assembly is explicit in the AGA constitutive documents, and the central institution functions in a different sphere. It is concerned with broader responsibilities, rather than with the day to day function of the gifts. The AGA impacts the local churches experience of the charismatic only to the extent that it influences the leadership and worldview of the local church, through its control over ordination, pastoral education, and cultural propagation in *The Evangel*. And in these sources there exists little, if anything, that can be said to have suppressed universal participation in spiritual giftedness.

It is enlightening to engage with the literature of the "anti-institutionalisation" school. David Cartledge, for example, describes the period from AGA formation in 1937 to the transitions resulting from changes in the AGA Executive in 1977 as "Forty years in the wilderness."⁶⁰⁴ Cartledge's purpose is to champion the 1977 changes (see the next chapter), and he does so by contrasting the growth of the movement in the first

⁶⁰⁴ The title of Chapter 17 describing AGA formation in Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 117.

forty years with subsequent expansion, suggesting that the former period was a time of “low growth and bad attitudes.”⁶⁰⁵ Statistically the assertion is doubtful. Apart from the period of the war, throughout the decades following AGA formation the movement grew steadily and sometimes rapidly, even if one excludes the impact of AGA missionary activity in PNG. In the period Cartledge describes as one of “low growth,” the number of churches affiliated with the AGA increased from approximately 30 to 150, and its constituency grew from around 1,000 to 9,500.⁶⁰⁶ While for various reasons this growth was to accelerate in the 1980s and 1990s, the period following AGA formation cannot be described as “forty years in the wilderness.”

Nonetheless, Cartledge’s perception of the causes of this “period in the wilderness” warrant comment, not least because they represent something of a “given” in AGA views of their recent history. His first critique is that “internal and external division was rife.”⁶⁰⁷ In reference to the internal division, he cites the problems between the AGQ and Covenant Christian Church, the vigorous nature of AGA Conference debates, and State based parochialism, all of which are apparent in our narrative above.⁶⁰⁸ Yet this internal division is not necessarily a problem of institutionalisation *per se* but, rather, evidence of individual and ecclesial sin that inevitably accompanies the concrete history of all church movements.⁶⁰⁹ Furthermore, “vigorous debate” is a recurrent feature of most Free-Church forms, and many of the instances cited by Cartledge as divisive can, alternatively, be understood as facilitating the process of Spirit-generated healing. The AGQ and Covenant Christian Church ultimately unite. AGA conferences succeed in bringing diverse and sometimes opposed opinions into agreement. The human sin of parochialism is time and again overcome in shared national ventures. No doubt there were times where AGA disputes arose from individual pride and competitive parochial interests. But the fact that AGA structures facilitated discussion and debate and, at least to some degree, resolved tensions and achieved agreement, is testimony to the strength of those structures and authorities. It may be that new mechanisms would become necessary as the movement grew and

⁶⁰⁵ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 124.

⁶⁰⁶ See Appendix 1, The Growth of the Assemblies of God in Australia, Chart 1 & 2.

⁶⁰⁷ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 117.

⁶⁰⁸ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 118-121.

⁶⁰⁹ Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, 11.

open-ended debate became unwieldy. But in its own context, the AGA met the reality of human diversity via democratic structures. The alternative would have been either no fellowship at all or, otherwise, centralised authority and silenced voices.

Cartledge's reference to external division includes mention of the AGA disagreements with Lancaster and Good New Hall, the critique of the Apostolic Church, and the motion restricting public fraternisation with non-AGA bodies without the approval of the AGA Executive.⁶¹⁰ It is a critique that fails to recognise the importance of the cultural level of the scale of values. In each case it can be argued that the integrity of AGA theology and worldview was at stake in these disputes. Lancaster had rejected the doctrine of the trinity. The Apostolic Church had elevated the prophetic word to canonical status. And some AGA ministers were fraternising with British Israel Teachers, and thereby propagating a potentially racist theology. It is simply not good enough to critique a movement for "external division" without recognising that cultural values must be propagated and defended, both positively and, as the need arises, negatively in critique of "heresy." Unity needs to be "owned," - it is not bought unreflectively. As Dr. R.H. Fallon from Richmond Temple commented in 1927:

Unity is mighty, as it brings into agreement the clean and the true. But those who cry "Unity," who are not willing to be true to God and His Word, are a real menace to the church and destructive to the power of the ones who want reality. . . . Separation from darkness and the teachings of darkness is absolutely necessary. No unity can be tolerated with the moderns who would say there is no hell, no sin, no death, no blood, no need of a Saviour. As doctrines of Russellism and Theosophy and Christian Science creep into the Church, yes, even into Pentecost, separation, not unity, must result.⁶¹¹

Once again, this is not to say that individuals, and the AGA as a whole, were not guilty of sin during these disputes. Although the AGQ was to spend considerable time in doctrinal discussion with Lancaster, in Melbourne, Richmond Temple made

⁶¹⁰ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 117-126.

⁶¹¹ Dr. R. H. Fallon, "Special Easter Meetings at Richmond Temple," *The Australian Evangel* 1, no. 11 (May 1927): 3-4.

little effort to engage Good News Hall with dialogue. Instead, there was a clear sense that the two churches were in cultural and social competition. Similarly, neither Greenwood nor anybody in the AGA sought dialogue with The Apostolic Church, and fear of losing constituents was as much responsible for AGA attacks on that body as was its perceived theological heresy. But even this sinfulness needs to be understood in its context, since all parties held to a biblical hermeneutic common to conservative Christianity at that time, which was largely incapable of achieving such dialogue. As we have already noted in the previous chapters, pentecostals would have to find mechanisms for achieving “pluralism in the unity of faith”⁶¹² provided, as Fallon rightly observes in the citation above, a doctrinal basis which was “real and true” was also retained. Otherwise unity is grounded only in the social level of the scale of values, by way of affiliation to traditional institutional structures. And church unity that has no doctrinal basis is doomed to failure. In this light, what Cartledge negatively labels “external division” is the ecclesially constitutive establishment of cultural and theological identity, which is the prerequisite to true unity.

4.3.2 Local Church Autonomy and the Relations among Churches

Cartledge’s strongest critique of the period after AGA formation relates to the relativisation of local church autonomy.⁶¹³ His concern arises predominantly out of a deterioration in the relationship between the AGA Executive and some local churches that occurred in the 1970s. While we will address this situation and its consequences in the next chapter, it is important at this juncture that we consider the alternate presuppositions that are determinative to judgements made in respect of any ecclesial narrative that stimulates questions about the relationship between local churches and the universal church.

Joseph Komonchak, writing from a Catholic perspective, suggests that there are two ways of understanding these relationships. The first “may be called a ‘descending’

⁶¹² Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 117.

⁶¹³ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 133-138.

vision, an ecclesiology ‘from above’.⁶¹⁴ From this perspective, the universal church is “the Church,” which, Komonchak suggests, finds its identity in what is sometimes called “Christo-monism”; the authority of the risen Christ, vested in the Pope and distributed to Bishops and so forth. This vision of the church is hierarchical, and locates the status of the local congregation by way of its relationship of submission to the centralised authorities of “the Church.” The second is an “ascending” view, an ecclesiology from below.⁶¹⁵ In this model, the universal church is constituted by its concrete local realisations, which Komonchak suggests are associated with a Trinitarian or pneumatological view of the church, in which “each local self-realisation manifests the full spiritual reality of communion in Christ’s Holy Spirit, . . . the church universal *is* the communion of local churches.”⁶¹⁶

Generally, Roman Catholic ecclesiology is associated with the “descending vision,” and protestantism, especially free church ecclesiology, with the “ascending view.” But this categorisation is too simplistic and, even among Roman Catholics, the trend of ecclesiology in the twentieth century has been from the first view to the second.⁶¹⁷ There are various reasons given by theologians for grounding ecclesiology in the assembly of the local church. As Kasper suggests, “the starting point must be the Scriptures”⁶¹⁸ and, as we have already observed in our analysis of the free church ecclesiology of Volf (see chapter one), the New Testament generally uses the term *ekklesia* to refer to the concrete act of assembly in the local congregation.⁶¹⁹ Biblical scholarship suggests that the New Testament priority lies with the local church, and that whatever is to be said about the universal church, its ground is “local assembly.”⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁴ Joseph Komonchak, “The Church Universal as the Communion of Local Churches,” *Where Does the Church Stand?*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Gustavo Gutierrez (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 30-35.

⁶¹⁵ Komonchak, “The Church Universal,” 30.

⁶¹⁶ Komonchak, “The Church Universal,” 30.

⁶¹⁷ Komonchak, “The Church Universal,” 31. In Roman Catholic context, refer especially to the public debate between Joseph Ratzinger and Walter Kasper (e.g. Walter Kasper, “On the Church,” *America* 184, no. 14 (April 2001): 8-14). See also to the arguments arising from the Base Ecclesial Communities in Latin America. E.g. Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1986).

⁶¹⁸ Kasper, “On the Church,” 10.

⁶¹⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 138.

⁶²⁰ E.g. Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996), 130-133; O’Brien, “Church,” 124.

Taking the argument beyond the Scriptures, or rather, seeking theological grounds for this biblical priority, Miroslav Volf argues that the local congregation is a “church” in the full sense of the word because it is constituted by the Father through the presence of Christ in the power of the Spirit. This presence is not an abstract universal, but is mediated “exclusively in the concrete assembly.”⁶²¹ His dialogue partner, John Zizioulas, makes a similar assertion, on the basis that “the Eucharist is celebrated at a given place and comprises by virtue of its catholicity all the members of the church dwelling in that place.”⁶²² For Zizioulas, “local” is understood to be geographic in nature, relating to a city. From this perspective it is the city church under the authority of the city’s bishop, as distinct from the parish, that has ecclesiological status.⁶²³ In comparison, most protestant churches, and the free churches in particular, would not share this episcopal conception of the church, and would understand “local” in terms of “assembly” rather than “city,” since the latter is usually multi-centred and thereby comprised of multiple localities. Nonetheless, the ecclesiological ground of the local church is similar. For the Orthodox Church this is the presence of Christ through the Eucharist. For free churches this is the presence of Christ “when two or three are gathered” (Mat. 18:20). Since this gathering is for, among other things, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the conclusion shares a considerable community of meaning.

In addition, David Bosch locates the priority of the local church in praxis, since the local church is the “primary agent of mission.”⁶²⁴ Christ’s presence is mediated in the church and through the church to the world, and this mission is local before it is global, so that “the universal church actually finds its true existence in the local churches.”⁶²⁵ These Scriptural, theological and missiological arguments for the grounding of ecclesiology in the local church can all be summed up in Komonchak’s heuristic observation, that the church “is always first of all a concrete reality, *this* group of men and women, at *this* time and in *this* place, within *this* culture, responding to the Word and grace by which God gathers them into Christ.”⁶²⁶

⁶²¹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 138.

⁶²² John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1985), 247.

⁶²³ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 251.

⁶²⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 380.

⁶²⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 380.

⁶²⁶ Komonchak, “The Church Universal,” 32. Emphasis in original.

This increasingly widespread agreement that ecclesiology is grounded from below in the local church is not yet matched by similar ecumenical agreement as to how the local church should relate to other churches or the universal church. For Volf, the local church “stands on its own spiritual feet because the whole Christ is present in it through the Spirit.”⁶²⁷ There is thereby is no middle ground (i.e. “the Church”) between the local church and the universal church, which is understood as “eschatological assembly.”⁶²⁸ From this perspective, the universal church, the whole eschatological people of God, “is a sum of all local churches in which individual Christians have gathered together.”⁶²⁹ Since the universal church is eschatological, then the local church is independent and autonomous. Accordingly, other churches have no right to intervene in the affairs of the local church, unless the ecclesiality of a particular church is threatened because of distorted confession of the substance of faith or unholy practice.⁶³⁰ These latter exclusions are in fact more complex than Volf allows, since it has to be asked, Who will recognise such distortions? and How does Volf’s individualist ecclesiology allow such problems to be addressed?

At the other end of the spectrum, Roman Catholic theologians, even where ecclesiology is understood as “ascending” from below, usually understand the relationship of the local church to the universal church by way of the universality of the Eucharist, and the related place and function of the priesthood, who are ordained to service in the universal church. The universal church is thus also a concrete reality, by way of apostolic succession and attendant global structures. As Kasper suggests:

The one church of Jesus Christ exists “in and from” the local churches. It exists, therefore, in each local church; it is present there especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. It follows that there can be no local church in isolation, for its own sake, but only in communion with all other local churches. . . . Just as the local churches are not mere extensions or provinces of the universal church, so the universal church is not the mere sum of the

⁶²⁷ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 155.

⁶²⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 139; also O'Brien, “Church,” 125.

⁶²⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 139.

⁶³⁰ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 155.

local churches. The local churches and the universal church are intimately united. They share the same existence; they live within each other.⁶³¹

Zizioulas, speaking from the Orthodox perspective, suggests similarly that the universality or catholicity of the local church is located in the transcendent nature of the Eucharist. The universal church is not the sum of all local churches, but is instead Eucharistically present in all local churches and, consequently, the local church is required to share in the common vision of all other local churches. This common vision is facilitated by structures that encourage universal communion, yet Zizioulas notes that:

All eucharists and all bishops are local in character, . . . and the local church is the only form of ecclesial existence which can be properly called Church. All structures aiming at facilitating the universality of the Church create a network of communion of Churches, not a new form of Church.⁶³²

protestant ecclesiology, particularly from the evangelical and free church perspective, locates the relationship of the local church to the universal church in the shared confession of faith rather than the Eucharist (or Lord's Supper). The nature of this universality post reformation is generally understood in terms of "mystery." As Donald Bloesch proposes, the church needs to pursue "an evangelical Catholicism that seeks spiritual but not organizational unity."⁶³³

It can be argued that each of these perspectives is as much (or more) historical than they are theological. It is no surprise that Roman Catholic theologians, even when championing the local church, continue to emphasise the importance of centralised structures surrounding the Papal office. Likewise, it is readily apparent why Orthodox theologians would draw attention to the authority of the local bishop and, while affirming the eucharistic universality of the local church and the role of centralised structures in facilitating communion, would nonetheless deny that those structures create the universal church, or universally vest authority in the centralised

⁶³¹ Kasper, "On the Church," 12.

⁶³² Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 258.

⁶³³ Donald G. Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 43.

office of the Pope. And there is no need to explain why protestants tend to seek spiritual rather than organisational unity.

We are left with a seemingly irreconcilable impasse. The fact is that whatever the theological argument that supports it, an institutional conception of the universal church is no longer possible⁶³⁴ except, as Volf argues, eschatologically. This does little to facilitate church unity in the present, and the search for “spiritual unity,” whatever that means, achieves little more. Eschatological and spiritual unity are concepts that are so abstract that ecclesial individualism is inevitably the consequence. More to the point, the notions of eschatological and spiritual unity are inevitably used to justify maintaining the divisive status quo.

The solution to this seeming impasse is the recognition that ecclesial structures and relationships are first and foremost derived from the church’s mission, which in summary, is the continuation of the mission of Jesus, the proclamation and realisation of the gospel and, therein, the mediation of grace to the assembled church and, through the church, to the world.⁶³⁵ We can illustrate the implications of this assertion by considering the example of the formation of the Assemblies of God in Australia. Taking as our point of departure the assumptions of an “ecclesiology from below,” we can assert with Bosch that “the church-in-mission is, primarily, the local church everywhere in the world,”⁶³⁶ ministering the gospel to particular individuals and societies in particular places. This grassroots nature of mission means that the local church must have the requisite autonomy for carrying out that mission in its location, and no other local church or centralised structure should be in a position to stand over or against the autonomy of that mission.⁶³⁷ As was apparent in the AGA’s dealing with polygamy in PNG, mission is contextual, and requires diversity and local

⁶³⁴ Unless one is willing to exclude both the Orthodox churches and the various Protestant movements from the definition of the universal Church.

⁶³⁵ We have touched on the nature of the Churches Mission in Chapter two, and will do so in more detail in the next chapter of this thesis. This particular summary is derived largely from Neil Ormerod, “Church: Mission, Dimensions, Structures, Ministry,” Unpublished draft of a book chapter on the topic of Ecclesiology, Catholic Institute of Sydney, Sydney, 2003, 5-14.

⁶³⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 378. The missional nature of the church is now widely accepted. In respect to evangelical ecclesiology, see Van Gelder, *Essence of the Church*; George R. Hunsberger, “Evangelical Conversion toward a Missional Ecclesiology,” *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?*, ed John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 105-132.

⁶³⁷ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 378.

freedoms. It is this logic that forms the basis of the AGA assertion that local assemblies are to be sovereign over their own affairs.⁶³⁸

Nonetheless, in the formation of the AGA, the affiliating churches recognised that “co-operative partnership” was essential for “spreading the gospel and for the edification of the body of Christ.”⁶³⁹ As these previously independent assemblies came to realise, the mission of the local church necessitates relationships with other churches. This is firstly because the local mission is the contextual proclamation of a universal gospel, and this universality is protected by the local church relating to, and mutually submitting to, other churches. In the situation of the formation of the AGA, mutual submission to agreed doctrine, to the AGA Executive, and to theological decisions of the biennial conference, together ensured the integrity of the local proclamation of the fourfold gospel against heresies such as British Israelism.

Secondly, the mission of the local church requires relationships with other churches because that mission extends beyond a particular locality, so that each local church is called to proclaim the gospel to the world; taking the symbolic mandate of the church at Pentecost “to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).” This missionary mandate necessitates ecclesial relationships and centralised structures. Not just “spiritual unity,” but concrete ways in which local churches relate to one-another and work together for the spread of the gospel. In the AGA, these centralised structures facilitated ordination and made possible the establishment of the movement’s bible college, which, in turn, helped in pastoral training, and raised-up local and foreign evangelists and missionaries. The success of the PNG mission can be directly attributed to the partnership resulting from the formation of the AGA fellowship, as well as the subsequent structural developments that were implemented locally in PNG. In terms of the scale of values, we can say that these structures function at both the social and cultural level, both as integrators with their emphasis on unity, and as operators with their missionary purpose.

⁶³⁸ United Constitution 1943, Article 2(b).

⁶³⁹ United Constitution 1943, Article 2(b).

Successful missionary activity, among other things, will involve establishing new churches in new fields, which thereafter take on the requisite responsibilities and rights of local churches everywhere. It can thus be noted that centralised structures arise not only from the necessity of the church's missionary task, but also out of the very success of that task. The dilemma noted by the AGA in the creation of their fellowship is that centralised structures "obviously must mean that the sovereignty of . . . each local assembly ends where it affects the United Fellowship."⁶⁴⁰ Mutual submission relativises local autonomy,⁶⁴¹ but it should not override this autonomy altogether. In fact, for centralised structures to fulfil their missionary purpose, they should enhance the local mission, and it is for this reason that Bosch is adamant that no authority should stand in a position over against a local church.⁶⁴² In the case of the AGA, the centralised authority of the biennial conference, the united constitution and its doctrinal and institutional stipulations, and the AGA Executive, do restrict the local assembly's freedom. But this restriction is not "over and against" the local church, which in fact has a say through representative democracy at the biennial conference in those very structures. Furthermore, these central structures aid the local church by helping to ensure the integrity of its proclamation, and by providing institutions such as the Commonwealth Bible College, and missional tools such as regular itinerant ministry and the publication of the *Evangel* journal.

In this light, critique should be directed not at centralised structures *per se*, but only at those structures which stand over against local autonomy, at least insofar as they may emphasise unity at the cost of mission, rather than unity for missionary purpose. In respect to the AGA narrative, this might include criticism of the (admittedly temporary) period in which the AGA prevented fraternisation with other Christian bodies.⁶⁴³ While this was intended to protect local church doctrine, other mechanisms existed to achieve this purpose, and this particular restriction merely removed the freedom of local assemblies to seek ecumenical relationships and, thereafter, promote the gospel in a particular location. Cartledge makes a similar case against the AGA requirement that itinerant ministry be approved by the AGA Executive. The difference in this case is that itinerant ministry in the local church is theologically

⁶⁴⁰ United Constitution 1943, Article 2(b).

⁶⁴¹ As recognised even by Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 20.

⁶⁴² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 378.

⁶⁴³ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 119, makes this critique

influential for that church, and the issue is thus the need to balance doctrinal integrity with local autonomy. Since doctrine is ecclesially determinative, and since the local church is not without the ability to influence Executive decisions at the biennial conference, it can be argued that this restriction aids the local proclamation of the gospel without compromising local autonomy or preventing the local mission. The benefits of this relativising of local church sovereignty were apparent in the AGA capacity to prevent local churches adopting various heresies.

The AGA might also be critiqued for its treatment of the PNG mission, which was not given the status of “local church” for more than two decades after its inception,⁶⁴⁴ and for occasionally imposing its will without understanding local complexities (e.g. the issue of baptising polygamous natives). Bosch observes that the tendency is for the churches of the West to relate to the “third world” in the superior status of donor / dependent.⁶⁴⁵ Having said this, the reality of newly established churches is dependency, and local autonomy takes some time to achieve. The AGA should be given credit for moving toward equality and mutual submission; training PNG locals for ministry, establishing the AGPNG, giving ecclesial authority to PNG locals, and ultimately leaving the mission field altogether.

We have argued thus far for the priority of the local church, and also for centralised structures that facilitate the local and global ministry of local churches. Yet these centralised structures cannot be said to be the universal church. The AGA itself was not conceived of as “the Church” in any universal sense but, rather, as a fellowship of local churches. Ecumenical unity among all local churches is essential to the proclamation of the gospel since, as Kasper observes, “the division among Christians [is] one of the greatest obstacles to world mission.”⁶⁴⁶ But that unity is only fully achievable in the eschatological assembly,⁶⁴⁷ and in the interim, the local church in the power of the Spirit must pursue unity to the extent that it is possible. The degree

⁶⁴⁴ The AGA PNG was established in 1973, twenty three years after the mission commenced. See Forbes, *Church on Fire*, 380.

⁶⁴⁵ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 381.

⁶⁴⁶ Walter Kasper, *Leadership in the Church: How Traditional Roles Can Serve the Christian Community Today* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co, 2003), 177. Kasper’s sentence is in the past tense.

⁶⁴⁷ Volf’s eschatological understanding of the universal church is correct in this respect; Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 139.

of unity possible will depend on the extent of shared values, both in the cultural and social spheres. Unity achieved at the cost of cultural and social integrity is self-defeating. This means that local churches should seek and protect unity within united fellowships (denominations) in their various constitutions, both for the integrity of the proclamation of the gospel in the local church, and for the sake of facilitating that proclamation to the world beyond the local. These fellowships are not the universal church, but they are proleptic realisations of eschatological fellowship. The same logic also means that local churches should pursue ecumenical fellowship, as should denominational organisations, since disunity in the church is a missiological problem both locally and globally, and since ecumenical fellowship will also protect the integrity of denominational conceptions of the Christian faith. Once again, the extent of this ecumenical fellowship, local and global, will depend upon shared cultural values, including shared doctrine, drawn out in the process of dialogue, and thereafter concretely expressed at the social level in inter-ecclesial relationships and even shared enterprise. We may be unable to achieve the ideal of a concrete universal church in the present, but movements toward that eschatological reality are missiologically vital.

In this respect, while we should applaud the AGA realisation of unity amongst various Australian pentecostal churches, it is important that we critique its ecumenical record. This ecumenical failure is highlighted by restrictions on fraternisation (however temporary), and by repeated attacks against the theology and practice of other Christian bodies. It is of course necessary to confront heresy, and we have already observed that the AGA challenge to Lancaster's anti-trinitarianism, British Israelism, and the Apostolic elevation of the prophetic, were ecclesiologicaly important. But the AGA also engaged in unnecessary and unhelpful criticism,⁶⁴⁸ and in the fine balance between heresy and ecumenical unity, it is perhaps best if critique is self directed, rather than aimed at other Christian bodies. While ecclesial sin must be confessed, we do need to understand that this ecumenical failure was a reality for almost all churches and denominations of the time, which similarly rejected and critiqued pentecostals and each other.

⁶⁴⁸ It is suggested in the previous chapter that this was partially due to the nature of Pentecostal theology and biblical hermeneutics (or lack thereof), which was unable to accommodate different interpretations of Scripture and therefore diverse conclusions.

To conclude this analysis of local church relations with other local churches and the universal church, we can note that there are various presuppositions that will be determinative in judgements made about the AGA narrative. Against the assumptions of those who prioritise the universal church over the local assembly, and also against those who oppose any form of mutual submission among local churches, we have argued that ecclesiology should be grounded on an ascending vision which prioritises the local church. Yet we also recognise that the mission of the local church to proclaim and minister the gospel of Jesus Christ necessitates the mutual submission of local churches and, therefore, the establishment of centralised structures. Ideally these structures would be universal in scope, since the unity of all local churches everywhere is missiologically significant, both for the integrity of the Christian message, and for the sake of proclaiming the gospel to a sceptical world. But such unity or catholicity is only an eschatological reality. In the interim, movements toward unity, both within denominations and ecumenically, that are built upon a shared understanding of the Christian faith, (i.e., shared cultural and social values), are to be affirmed, and understood as proleptic realisations of eschatological unity. Centralised structures are liable to critique when they circumvent mutual submission, and stand over and against the freedom and diversity of local churches in their multifarious contexts. In this light, the formation of the AGA, in its affirmation of relative local autonomy and cooperative partnership, can be understood as a period of ecclesiological progress that strengthened the mission of affiliated churches in their proclamation of the fourfold gospel.

4.3.3 The Priesthood of All Believers and the Role of the Pastor

The third ecclesiological issue arising from the narrative of AGA formation is the role and authority of the ordained pastor. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen suggests that the priesthood of all believers is a central motif of pentecostal ecclesiology.⁶⁴⁹ It is an

⁶⁴⁹ Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, 72; Stephen Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 18.; Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 225; David Morgan, "Priesthood and Prophethood: Towards a Healthy Pentecostal Body," *Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 33 (2004): 1-15.

idea that is common to protestantism in general and the free churches in particular,⁶⁵⁰ and it has recently found its way into Roman Catholic reflection, such that Walter Kasper is forced to contemplate the implications of the priesthood of all believers for the role, authority and status of the “official priestly ministry.” As he asks, “What remains of the ministry?”⁶⁵¹ The same issue arises for pentecostals, although it is arrived at from the opposite direction. Given the assumption of the priesthood of all believers, What is the role and authority of the pastor (if any)? and, What are the consequent implications for our understanding of the nature of the general priesthood?

In the previous chapter we noted that the movement from “faith mission” to “church” in pentecostal communities was accompanied by differentiation between the universal experience of the baptism in the Spirit and particular anointing or gifting for specific functions within the community, including the office of pastor. In the first place, the distinction between the pastor and the congregation was purely organisational. All are baptised in the Spirit and gifted by the Spirit, but some are gifted for the function of congregational leadership. Once this first distinction is made, it becomes apparent that the pastor functions and leads, not only organisationally, in the social dimension of the scale of values, but also in the cultural sphere, promoting and helping to maintain the faith and worldview of the congregation, and in the personal sphere, encouraging personal and religious conversion. The pastor’s role is thereby multi-faceted; organisational and practical, cultural, and spiritual.

This last, spiritual dimension of the pastor’s function incorporates the mediation of the divine to the community. This is a controversial assertion within pentecostalism, especially since baptism in the Spirit and the priesthood of all believers are generally seen to overcome the need for such mediation. Yet whatever the theory, the narrative of the AGA makes it clear that the pastor was prominent in the mediation of the Spirit to the congregation. This was not only in tongues and interpretation, but also in discerning the voice of the Spirit for the sermon, in praying for healing, in leading people into baptism (both water and Spirit), in ministering at the altar, and in speaking “words of knowledge.” It was the fact of this mediation that led the Apostolic Church

⁶⁵⁰ See Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine From the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Epworth, 1960); James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995), 562-563.

⁶⁵¹ Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*, 46-47 & 56.

within pentecostalism to ordain both Apostles and Prophets. From their perspective, the Apostle mediated divine authority and leadership, and the Prophet mediated the insight of the Spirit both personally and corporately.

The AGA rejected these Apostolic Church offices, not only because of the danger of elevating the prophetic to the status of Scripture, but also because of the importance of the principle of the priesthood of all believers,⁶⁵² and the related notion of the “prophethood of all believers.”⁶⁵³ No structure could be established that prevented the congregation from ownership and responsibility for the church, as did the vesting of church government in the Apostle, or that restricted the universal operation of the gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy. What then is the role of the pastor? The answer given by pentecostals is “leadership.” The pastor leads the way in taking responsibility for church government and, in doing so, encourages the whole congregation to also be responsible for the church and its ministry. The pastor, who is prominent in the operation of the spiritual gifts, leads the way in mediating the divine word to the assembly, and also to the world. This leadership encourages the congregation to minister the spiritual gifts, and speak the prophetic word of God to their particular and diverse contexts, in their own way, within the church and to society in general.

This understanding of the role of the pastor is, at first glance, very different to the perspectives of other traditions. For the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, the priest’s role is primarily sacramental, tied especially to the performance of the Eucharist, as well as the other sacraments of the church.⁶⁵⁴ For many protestants, the most important aspect of the pastor’s role is the preaching and teaching of the Word.⁶⁵⁵ However, on closer inspection, it becomes apparent that these different perspectives are matters of emphasis, and when it comes to a fuller explanation of the role of the pastor or priest, there is substantial commonality. Catholic and Orthodox traditions, while prioritising sacramentalism, also recognise that the priest plays a central role in

⁶⁵² Buchanan, “Uncertain Sounds,”; Greenwood, “Testimony”, 55-56.

⁶⁵³ Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1984), 80-81, Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, 72.

⁶⁵⁴ See Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*, 49-63; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 163.

⁶⁵⁵ See the ecclesially constitute role Karl Barth gives to “the Word of God as preached.” (Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1/1:98-111). See also Bloesch, *Church*, 178-188.

“community leadership.”⁶⁵⁶ Most protestant churches similarly affirm both the sacramental and leadership functions of the pastor.⁶⁵⁷ And the pentecostal emphasis on leadership incorporates preaching and teaching, and although pentecostals have tended to ignore and even reject the sacramental understanding of the church and priesthood, it can nonetheless be argued that the pentecostal pastor’s role includes a sacramental dimension.

If, at the most basic level, the sacraments are understood as participating in the mediation of the life and grace of God, then it can be argued that there is an implicit, quasi-sacramental, dimension to pentecostal ecclesiology. Protestant history reveals a tendency to reject the sacraments, not just because they were associated with priestly structures that had been left behind after the reformation, but also because of the so-called “magical understanding of sacrament.”⁶⁵⁸ In free churches, this rejection also coincided with the belief that the individual needed no “objective” mediation to experience divine grace, which was instead received directly through the individual’s faith and obedience.⁶⁵⁹ Pentecostalism inherited this legacy, and has generally been uncomfortable with the term “sacrament” because of its association with liturgical tradition and the seeming restriction of the Spirit within institutionalised forms.⁶⁶⁰ Nonetheless, pentecostalism’s experiential, as opposed to purely confessional orientation, raises the possibility of pentecostal re-appropriation of sacramental insights. Frank Macchia has suggested that baptism in the Spirit and tongues can be understood sacramentally. He says that:

A “sacramental” understanding of tongues seeks to account for the integral connection between the potential depth and breadth of the Spirit baptismal experience and the symbolic expression of tongues. . . . They bring to ultimate expression the struggle that is essential to all prayer, namely, trying to put into words what is deeper than words. They express the pain and the joy of this struggle. They are, in the words of Russell Spittler, a “broken language for a broken body until perfection comes.” As such, tongues edify the soul and

⁶⁵⁶ Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*, 64-68.

⁶⁵⁷ Bloesch, *Church*, 204-211.

⁶⁵⁸ Bloesch, *Church*, 150.

⁶⁵⁹ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 134-135.

⁶⁶⁰ Frank Macchia, “Tongues as a Sign: Towards a Sacramental Understanding of Pentecostal Experience,” *Pneuma* 15, no. 1 (1993): 61-76.

confront the church with a “sacrament” of the presence of God to empower and heal us as we groan in solidarity with the needy and the lost in anticipation of the redemption-to-come.⁶⁶¹

Macchia’s suggestion, that tongues involves sacramental mediation of divine grace to the congregation, is a notion that can be applied to other dimensions of the pentecostal church’s ministry. This includes “tongues and interpretation,” and “the prophetic word,” which are spiritual gifts given in the assembly for the purpose of individual and community encouragement and challenge. Similarly, while pentecostals have generally referred to the Eucharist as “the Lord’s Supper,” and opposed “realist” conceptions of the Supper (i.e. transubstantiation), as the AGA narrative suggests, the pentecostal celebration of this event can be understood as sacramental in nature. As Dr Proctor from Richmond Temple observed in 1930, the Lord’s Supper functions to stimulate holiness, mediate healing, and symbolically constitute the abiding presence of the Lord.⁶⁶²

The main distinction between traditional sacramentalism and the quasi-sacramentalism of the AGA was the pentecostal rejection of the formal liturgical tradition.⁶⁶³ Although in many ways the AGA was culturally conservative, and pentecostal holiness theology was sceptical of modern culture and worldview, nonetheless pentecostal services were characterised by a modern style, with contemporary and vibrant music, and the ready incorporation of new methods of communication. This extended beyond the service itself to the willingness to use modern tools, such as the radio, for the sake of growing the church. This is not to say that AGA churches did not have their own liturgy, even if they would not themselves use the term. This included a pattern of faster and slower songs, the incorporation of “singing in the Spirit,” tongues and interpretation, prophecy, celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the preaching of the word, and the altar call. Taken together, these dimensions of the pentecostal worship service can be seen as liturgical and

⁶⁶¹ Frank Macchia, “Groans Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Tongues as Initial Evidence,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1, no. 2 (1998): available online, <http://www.aps.edu/ajps/98-2/98-2-macchia-frames.htm>, accessed 27 March 2004.

⁶⁶² Proctor, “The Lord’s Supper,” 12.

⁶⁶³ Macchia, “Tongues as a Sign,” 73.

sacramental, although modern in orientation rather than traditional, and subject to change along with modern trends.

Returning to the issue of the nature and role of the pastorate, the AGA pastor plays an important, although not exclusive role, in facilitating the implicit or “quasi” sacramental dimensions of the pentecostal church. In addition, s/he takes a leadership role in propagating the cultural dimension of the scale of values through preaching and teaching, in managing church social structures, and in church planting and missionary activity. This might seem to be too much responsibility for any one person, and indeed it is. But leadership is not about the individual performance of tasks and responsibilities. Instead, leadership involves encouraging community responsibility for all the various ministries of the church. In this manner, the leadership role of the pastor does not contradict the notion of the universal priesthood of all believers. Rather, the pastor as leader encourages universal participation in church life, ministry and mission.

Approaching the same issue from perspective of the congregation, we can note that, the fact that gifts of the spirit and the ministry of each member of “the body” are diverse and distinct does not deny the universality of the priestly function within the church. All believers share in the worship of the triune God and in ministry to one-another. Neither does this diversity circumvent the universality of the prophetic function within the church and to the “the world.” All believers proclaim in their particular contexts the challenge and good news of the gospel. In pentecostal churches, the notion of universal baptism in the Spirit makes it possible for every member of the assembly to give messages in tongues, provide interpretations, and speak prophetically. The administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper is also not restricted to the ordained celebrant, and the congregation is invited to participate in the formation of culture and society. But the pastor does play an important leadership role in facilitating, modelling and encouraging these mediations and activities and, consequently, far from contradicting the priesthood and prophethood of all believers, at its best, the office of the pastorate promotes this universality.

Ordination, then, is not the denial of the general priesthood or prophethood, but the recognition of leadership gifting, calling and responsibility within the context of the

local church. As the AGA constitution specifies, “[ordained] workers shall be those persons evidencing their call and gift of God to preach the gospel by their God given ability.”⁶⁶⁴ Consequently, ordination follows, rather than precedes, the function of ministry. Since, from the perspective of a grassroots ecclesiology, ministry is primarily local, ordination arises out of the local church. This leads Volf to conclude that ordination is “a public reception of a charisma given by God and focused on the local church as a whole, . . . and thereby it always remains bound to a certain local church.”⁶⁶⁵ This conclusion reflects the “ascending vision” of ecclesiology that we argued for above, but fails to recognise the missional necessity that gives rise to local church relations with other churches. Since the pastor is central to these relationships, then ordination, while based in the ministry of the local church, is also the concern and prerogative of the fellowship of churches. In the context of the AGA, this gives the pastor responsibility within the local church, and also within the fellowship as a whole. Conversely, it gives both the local assembly and the broader fellowship the responsibility and oversight of the pastor. This latter responsibility is facilitated centrally through the AGA fellowship’s control of the ordination process, and locally by the congregation democratically choosing the pastor, and reaffirming this choice on an annual basis. On a day to day basis, the pastor is also responsible to congregationally elected eldership. Consequently, we can perhaps critique Greenwood for dispensing with elders at Richmond Temple. But this situation was unique at the time, and we shall raise this question of pastoral authority in the local church again in the next chapter.

How one judges the nature, authority and function of AGA pastoral roles will ultimately be dependent upon theological conviction, especially the weight given to the centrality of the sacraments for ecclesial life. The pentecostal pastor’s role arises out of the institutional and missionary necessity of organisational, cultural, and spiritual leadership and, thereby, touches on every level of the scale of values. Ordination arises out of the local church, and by way of the local necessity of inter-ecclesial structures, extends beyond the local to the fellowship of churches. The role of the pastor is also defined and restricted by the universal conception of baptism in the spirit, and the priesthood and prophethood of all believers. The general priesthood

⁶⁶⁴ United Constitution 1943, Article 18(e).

⁶⁶⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 249-251.

highlights the shared responsibility for worship and quasi sacramental mediation, and the general prophethood highlights the shared task of speaking the word of God to the church and the world.

4.4 Conclusion

There are a number of other ecclesiological issues that arise during this formative period of AGA history. This includes the relationship between the church and society, highlighted by the issue of warfare and the social consequences of “holiness” theology. This issue is also tied up with questions about the nature and breadth of the AGA’s mission, which, up to this time, was largely restricted to the fourfold gospel. These matters arise again in the next stage of the AGA story, and we shall therefore take them up in the following chapter.

In terms of our appropriation of the scale of values, Ormerod has suggested that the cultural conservatism and social radicalism of pentecostal churches is indicative of a Type 2 church, distorted in the direction of limitation in the cultural dialectic, and in the direction of transcendence in the social dialectic.⁶⁶⁶ According to Doran, the cultural dialectic is made up of cosmologically grounded values and meanings at the limitative pole, which emphasise unity, harmony, and tradition, and anthropologically grounded values and meanings at the transcendent pole, which emphasise reason, development and change.⁶⁶⁷ It is true that the AGA had a relatively conservative and traditional understanding of the Christian faith, having taken on much of the fundamentalism and conservatism of holiness Methodism, the Churches of Christ, the Baptists, the Salvation Army, and the other protestant churches from which the AGA pastors and constituency had come. This conservative worldview, which sometimes eschewed reason, was further reinforced by the formation of the AGA fellowship, which emphasised unity and mutual submission, and the relativisation of local church autonomy. These limitative dimensions of AGA culture helped develop and sustain unity, but they were moderated by the invigorating experience and understanding of baptism in the Spirit, as well as the movement’s missionary priority. As we have

⁶⁶⁶ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 338.

⁶⁶⁷ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 145.

seen, the AGA was capable of changing doctrine and culture when it became missiologically and culturally important, such as was the case in dealing with questions of polygamy in PNG, and the issue of military service in the context of the WWII. If the movement was, as Ormerod suggests, unbalanced in the direction of limitation in the cultural dialectic, then this imbalance was not of a radical degree.

In respect to the dialectic at the social level, which Doran suggests is between intersubjectivity, the social integrator, and practical intelligence (politics, economy and technology), the social operator,”⁶⁶⁸ Ormerod is correct in his observation that pentecostals readily appropriate new and modern techniques and structures, leaving the social dimension open to sometimes radical change. Yet it needs to be recognised that this openness to social change is driven by the priority of mission, and the desire to create a church that is contextually relevant. Also, the development of the AGA fellowship was based on, and enhanced, intersubjective relationships among pastors and churches that balanced the operative political forces arising from the movements constitutional developments. Furthermore, the seemingly social radicalism of the AGA coincided with a holiness theology that gave rise to many conservative social practices (e.g. the rejection of the cinema and dancing, and conservative clothing etc.), and created somewhat of a social paradox (maybe even a contradictory dialectic); world-denying and sometimes backward, and yet open to technological innovation.

We can conclude that the period of AGA formation is one of substantial ecclesiological progress, reducing, if not eliminating altogether, the imbalance in both the cultural and social dialectic. The institutional developments of cooperative fellowship gave rise to local and foreign missionary and educational successes that were impossible in the previously loose-knit pentecostal movement. They also gave rise to new issues, including questions about the nature and extent of local church autonomy, and the nature and function of the pastoral office. To determine the long term efficacy of these developments requires us to proceed to the next stage in the movements’ history.

⁶⁶⁸ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 181-183.

Chapter Five: Growth, Controversy and Decentralisation, 1960s to present

5.1. Introduction

The institutional formation that occurred during the formalisation of the AGA has been criticised by some for supposed centralising tendencies and, thereby, a subversion of the autonomous, grass roots nature of pentecostal ecclesiology. The balance between local autonomy and the relativisation of that autonomy for the sake of the broader pentecostal identity and mission was to again become an issue during the 1970s, as the charismatic renewal began to impact the AGA. In this chapter, we consider the tension stimulated by this renewal, and the ecclesiological changes that resulted. The influx of charismatics into pentecostal assemblies was one of the stimulants for rapid growth in pentecostal congregations and, consequently, in this chapter we also consider the impact of this growth upon the culture and structure of AGA churches.

5.2. AGA Narrative: 1960s to Present

5.2.1. The Charismatic Movement as a Catalyst for Change

In 1951, Alec T. Davidson was appointed as Chairman of the AGA. One of the original members of the AGA executive,⁶⁶⁹ Davidson was the pastor of a prominent church in Hamilton NSW, and had been responsible for planting numerous assemblies throughout the Hunter region.⁶⁷⁰ Although James Wallace was to become chairman for a four year period from 1955, Davidson was again appointed to the position in 1959, and was to retain the responsibility for leadership of the movement until his retirement in 1969.

⁶⁶⁹ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Sydney, 1937.

⁶⁷⁰ John Wolfendon, "Pictorial History of the Assemblies of God, Hunter Region," *Assemblies of God New South Wales Archives* (2003): available at Assemblies of God NSW state office.

The AGA continued to grow throughout this period, from fifty assemblies in 1951 to almost one hundred assemblies in 1969.⁶⁷¹ As early as 1955 the challenge of managing this growth led to discussions about the possibility of a full-time chairman and, although the matter was deferred at that time,⁶⁷² it was later observed that:

This conference recognises the urgent need of leadership in the matter of the Home Missions programme, and the channelled co-ordinating of and advancement of our Fellowship in all its various phases. Be it recommended to our assemblies that the appointment of a full-time chairman be expedited.⁶⁷³

The decision to proceed with this appointment was not taken until 1963,⁶⁷⁴ with the main concern being the movement's ability to fund the position. The problem was solved in 1965 with the decision to require pastors to tithe to the movement.⁶⁷⁵ Davidson was thereby freed to resign his pastorate, and took on his full-time responsibility in that year.

As is apparent from the narrative in the previous chapter, the AGA had long been influenced by the Assemblies of God in America (AGUSA), formally, with the fellowship's constitution being framed on the American model and, informally, via the numerous visits of American pastors to the Australian churches, and by the wide circulation of American publications such as *The Pentecostal Evangel*. The appointment of a full-time chairman derived largely from the American example and, in 1967, the AGA decided to send Davidson to the Assemblies of God head office in Springfield. It was hoped that he could learn more about the organisation and structure of the American movement, and return to Australia with recommendations for emulating its success.⁶⁷⁶ At the following conference in 1969, the executive presented a new draft of the AGA constitution which, among other things, delegated additional responsibilities to state presbyteries, implemented new controls and procedures over ordination, and changed the title of "chairman" to "General

⁶⁷¹ See Appendix 1, The Growth of the Assemblies of God in Australia, Chart 2.

⁶⁷² Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Sydney, 1955.

⁶⁷³ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Melbourne, 1965.

⁶⁷⁴ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Katoomba, 1963.

⁶⁷⁵ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Melbourne, 1965.

⁶⁷⁶ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1967.

Superintendent.”⁶⁷⁷ This latter change was the title given to the leader of the AGUSA, and was symbolic of the transition from chairing a conference to leading a movement. The American example also gave rise to the desire to set-up an AGA head office that would facilitate the ever-increasing responsibilities of the AGA and its home and foreign missionary departments.⁶⁷⁸

With Davidson’s retirement in 1969, Ralph Read was appointed as the AGA’s first “General Superintendent.” Read had been associated with Baptist and Methodist churches prior to his receiving the baptism in the Spirit in 1938. It was to be a further ten years before he was to join up with the AGA, assisting the Sturgeons on their evangelistic campaign in 1948 and, afterwards, accepting an appointment to pastor a pentecostal assembly in Orange. He was later to teach at Richmond Temple’s bible college, and thereafter to minister in various AGA assemblies and, for a time, was editor of *The Evangel*. His eight years as General Superintendent were to become tumultuous, culminating in his dramatic resignation at the 1977 conference.

Read’s struggles can be traced to the rise of the charismatic movement that occurred in Australia during the late 1960s and 1970s. At the time, the charismatic renewal was celebrated by the AGA as the “Spreading Flame of Pentecost,”⁶⁷⁹ as mainline churches of all persuasions began to experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by tongues.⁶⁸⁰ Yet the influence of this renewal was two-way, with charismatic leaders having as much impact on pentecostalism as pentecostals were to have on charismatic movements. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to document the various sources and trajectories of the charismatic movement in mainline and independent church circles,⁶⁸¹ but it is necessary for us to take into account the renewal’s impact on the AGA.

⁶⁷⁷ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Yarramundi NSW, 1969.

⁶⁷⁸ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Stanwell Tops NSW, 1975.

⁶⁷⁹ John Garlock, “The Spreading Flame of Pentecost,” *The Evangel* 27, no. 9 (October 1970): 9-11.

⁶⁸⁰ See, for example, Ian Macpherson, “Pentecostal Signs,” *The Evangel* 29, no. 3 (April 1972): 10-12.

⁶⁸¹ For a global summary of the charismatic movement, see Peter D. Hocken, “Charismatic Movement,” *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 477-519. For a description of the charismatic movement in Australia, see Hutchinson, “The New Thing God is Doing,” and for New Zealand, Knowles, *New Zealand Pentecostal Movement*.

In 1970 David Cartledge took on the pastorate of the Townsville Assembly of God that had been planted 46 years earlier by Charles Enticknap. Cartledge had graduated from CBC in 1961 in James Wallace's final year of ministry and, in association with the evangelistic and healing ministry of Norman Armstrong, planted a church in Davenport which "grew to registered status"⁶⁸² (fifty members). Armstrong, who had been ordained by the PCA in 1936, and associated with the AGA thereafter, resigned from the executive of the AGA in 1956 to take up an itinerant ministry position with the Oral Roberts organisation, involving travel throughout Australia with a tent and a "miracle film," praying for the sick and presenting the gospel.⁶⁸³ In taking on this ministry, Armstrong also decided to rescind his AGA credential. Cartledge was later to be highly critical of the AGA for failing to endorse Armstrong's ministry, and for not allowing him to continue to hold his AGA credentials while ministering with Roberts.⁶⁸⁴ Yet the situation at the time was more amicable than Cartledge supposed. In fact, the AGA executive tried to convince Armstrong to remain with the AGA,⁶⁸⁵ and his campaigns continued to be reported prominently in the AGA's *Evangel* in the years to come. His association with Oral Roberts extended his influence to other pentecostal movements and independent churches, and for this ministry at this time some degree of separation from the AGA was necessary. Armstrong's broader ministry became ecumenical in orientation during the rise of the charismatic movement in the 1960s. It was thus through Armstrong that the charismatic renewal first came to impact Cartledge and other pastors within the AGA.⁶⁸⁶

After four years at Davenport, Cartledge moved on to pastor the assembly in Lithgow which, by his own admission, proved to be a difficult and relatively fruitless period in his life. On top of his frustration with his inability to grow the church, his wife Marie became ill with depression. Cartledge felt like a hypocrite; a minister of healing unable to help his own wife. On the verge of quitting the ministry, he attended a

⁶⁸² Cartledge, David, "Biographical History of David Cartledge," interview by Mark Hutchinson, available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, April 1998.

⁶⁸³ Armstrong is here being influenced by the healing ministry of the Word of Faith movement, whose origins are before the charismatic movement.

⁶⁸⁴ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 123-124.

⁶⁸⁵ Assemblies of God NSW, State Executive Minutes, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre, Southern Cross College, Sydney, 30 September 1966.

⁶⁸⁶ See Dean O'Keefe, "Armstrong, Norman L.," *Australian Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (2002): article online, <http://adpcm.webjournals.org/articles/10-30/2002/4086.htm>, accessed 7 April 2004.

camp meeting where New Zealand Assemblies of God (AGNZ) pastor Robert (Bob) Midgley was ministering. Midgley prayed for Marie, delivering her from a demon of depression. Cartledge and his wife danced (literally) with joy and, although much later questions about whether Christians could be demon-possessed would lead him to wonder whether Marie had in fact been delivered or simply healed, at that time the effect of the deliverance was more important than theological precision. This experience was to become the catalyst for the Cartledges' embracing the new move of the Spirit manifest in the charismatic movement.⁶⁸⁷

In the decades that followed, New Zealand pastors were to exercise a significant influence over Australian pentecostalism. For various reasons, not least of which was its earlier openness to the "latter rain revival" of the 1950s, the New Zealand movement was quicker to embrace charismatic renewal than was the more conservative AGA.⁶⁸⁸ Midgley, whose church in Auckland flourished as a consequence,⁶⁸⁹ was closely associated with Frank Houston, whose assembly in Lower Hutt had also experienced rapid growth in association with the charismatic renewal, and who was elected as the AGNZ superintendent in 1966. Both Midgley and Houston, along with other New Zealand pastors such as Phil Pringle, were later to move to Australia where they were to play a prominent role in the transformation of pentecostalism in this nation.

When Cartledge moved to Townsville in 1970, the church had a congregation of sixty, and met in a rundown wooden hall. His first guest preacher was Armstrong, who held a short "crusade"⁶⁹⁰ the success of which resulted in the church moving the

⁶⁸⁷ The details of this paragraph are based largely on Cartledge, "Biographical History of David Cartledge". See also Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 145, and David Cartledge, "Opening of Calvary Temple," *The Evangel* 28, no. 9 (September 1971): 11.

⁶⁸⁸ See Knowles, *New Zealand Pentecostal Movement*, 143-187. The "Latter Rain" was a revival movement that occurred in the 1950s, but that was rejected in the American Assemblies of God for its supposed excesses. While this revival was similarly rejected by the AGA, it had a significant impact on New Zealand pentecostalism, and this in turn established an openness to the charismatic renewal of the 1960s and 1970s, which was to then influence Australia through New Zealand, and the AGA, especially through the Houstons.

⁶⁸⁹ Benjamin Clark, "Averill, Thomas Lloyd Webster," *Australian Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (2002): article online, <http://adpcm.webjournals.org/articles/10-30/2002/4084.htm>, accessed 15 March 2004. Clark discusses Midgley for his influence on Averill.

⁶⁹⁰ This term, which in the present global climate is politically insensitive, was commonly used by Christians in reference to evangelistic or healing campaigns.

“cry-room” to provide space for extra seating.⁶⁹¹ Early in 1971, he invited Midgley for a month long series of meetings, focusing on freedom in worship, expressed through dancing, and deliverance from demonic bondage. The church experienced a rapid influx during and after these meetings and, in the following months, they decided to extend the old building, creating a new auditorium able to seat over 350 people. Late in 1971, Cartledge initiated contact with the Townsville Anglican bishop, and they agreed to invite Sydney Anglican healing exponent, Jim Glennon, to hold some joint meetings. The meetings were held in the local Theatre Royale, and numerous Anglicans and other denominational Christians were baptised in the Spirit.⁶⁹² This is but one example of the ecumenical links that were formed by the charismatic renewal. At the same time, however, the renewal generated a certain degree of tension between some churches. In Townsville, the leaders of a few churches, including the Baptist and Methodist assemblies, rejected the experience and theology of baptism in the Spirit. This was ultimately to the benefit of Cartledge’s Calvary Temple, whose membership was bolstered by an influx of charismatics whose new experience of the Spirit made them either unwelcome or uncomfortable in their former churches.

The Townsville assembly was not the only AGA church embracing charismatic renewal. In the same year that Cartledge began at Townsville, Andrew Evans was appointed as Pastor of the Klemzig Assembly in South Australia. Evans was one of the sons of the prominent AGA missionary, Tommy (TL) Evans, who had served in both India and Papua New Guinea. Following in his father’s footsteps, Evans (Andrew) spent six years in PNG before his wife Loraine became ill with hepatitis C, and subsequently experienced severe bouts of depression. Returning to Australia in 1969, his wife’s gradually improving health enabled him to return to the ministry in the following year, where he took over the Klemzig assembly from Gerald Rowlands. As a missionary, Evans himself had been isolated from the changes impacting the AGA and, to his surprise, he found the church moving in renewal, singing fervently both in English and in tongues (called singing in the Spirit by charismatics), dancing, and falling over during prayer at the altar. His initial determination was to attempt to “quiet the church down,” but in his first year the congregation declined from 200 to

⁶⁹¹ Cartledge, “Opening of Calvary Temple,” 12.

⁶⁹² Cartledge, “Biographical History of David Cartledge”, 12.

150, and Evans realised that it was his conservatism that was to blame. Deciding that the renewal was the work of the Spirit, Evans followed Cartledge's lead in inviting Midgley to run three weeks of meetings in the church. He also began to associate with and work alongside various charismatic leaders. He started with joint meetings in conjunction with the local Methodist church, and later held a series of city-wide campaigns with the independent charismatic preacher, Peter Morrow, who was later to found the New Life movement. These joint meetings, which featured the ministry of prominent charismatics, such as Frank Houston, Jimmy Swaggart, and Yonggi Cho, attracted thousands from throughout the city of Adelaide. The Klemzig assembly, which began to advertise itself in the local newspaper as a "Charismatic Renewal Centre," experienced rapid growth throughout the 1970s and 80s. While their Klemzig building was initially expanded to seat seven hundred people, in 1982 the church purchased nine acres of property in the suburb of Paradise and built a two thousand seat auditorium.⁶⁹³ The church, which became known as Paradise Assembly of God, had flourished as a result of its affirmation and appropriation of the charismatic renewal.⁶⁹⁴

The other church that became prominent during the 1970s was the Mt. Gravatt Assemblies of God in Brisbane. In 1969 Reginald Klimionok was appointed pastor of the Mt. Gravatt assembly that had been planted by students under the supervision of James Wallace at CBC. By 1973 the church had grown from a congregation of 100 to approximately 400, and had built a modern 600 seat auditorium.⁶⁹⁵ Like Cartledge and Evans, Klimionok had also embraced the charismatic movement, and together these three pastors began to agitate for change within the AGA.

In many ways the charismatic renewal was reminiscent of early pentecostalism, and it is perhaps surprising that some AGA pastors were resistant. Baptism in the Spirit and

⁶⁹³ Paul Newsham, "A New Era Has Begun: Moved to Paradise," *The Evangel* 39, no. 11 (November 1982): 12-13.

⁶⁹⁴ This biographical account of Evan's and his involvement in the Klemzig Assembly of God (later Paradise Assembly of God) is compiled from Evans, Andrew, "Biographical History of Andrew Evans," interview by Mark Hutchinson, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre: Southern Cross College, Sydney, September 1999, and Andrew Evans, "Maiden Speech, South Australian Parliament," (May 2002): available online, http://www.familyfirst.org.au/ps_maiden_speech.html, accessed 25 March 2004.

⁶⁹⁵ Reginald Klimionok, "Mt Gravatt Dedicate Beautiful New Church," *The Evangel* 30, no. 2 (March 1973): 10-11.

associated tongues were central to the renewal, and after years of being attacked by other churches for this very experience, almost all pentecostals now felt some degree of vindication.⁶⁹⁶ Nonetheless, some were shocked and concerned that mainline churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, had experienced the baptism. Throughout their history, pentecostals had shared the protestant and free church assumption that the Catholic Church was corrupt, superstitious and virtually beyond redemption. Some even predicted that the antichrist would arise to take control of the papal office. Pentecostals in Australia and globally were therefore shocked to discover that Roman Catholics were suddenly receiving the baptism in the Spirit, and doing so without rejecting the institution of the Catholic Church as a source of grace and revelation.⁶⁹⁷

Many AGA ministers responded to this outpouring of the Spirit with a new openness to ecumenical relationships, and the natural outcome was a detachment of experience from doctrine, and a new “ecumenism of the Spirit.” Gerald Rowland, who had moved from Klemzig to take over the pastorate of Glad Tidings Tabernacle in Brisbane, expressed this sentiment when he argued that the historic antipathy between the various protestant churches and Roman Catholics should be put aside:

We need to break down the walls of isolation and come together for conversations in the spirit of Christian love. We need to discuss the differences in terminology which have caused so much misunderstanding and ill will. Many times we will discover that they relate to important areas in which we actually agree experientially but differ in our attempt to describe and define the same experience. . . . Whilst it is true that we have many areas of variance in our comprehension of God we may still enjoy the unity of the Spirit. We do not have to create this unity. The Spirit has already done this!⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁶ Gerald W. Chamberlain, “Twentieth Century Pentecostalism,” *The Evangel* 27, no. 9 (October 1970): 12-13.

⁶⁹⁷ Garlock, “The Spreading Flame of Pentecost,” 9. For a summary of the global Catholic Charismatic renewal, see T. Paul Thigpen, “Catholic Charismatic Renewal,” *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 460-467.

⁶⁹⁸ Gerald Rowlands, “Catholic-Protestant Relationships Within the Charismatic Renewal,” *The Evangel* 31, no. 11 (November 1974): 10-11.

But some, particularly the older brethren who looked to Ralph Read for leadership, were concerned, not by the impact of the Spirit upon mainline churches, but by the impact of the charismatic movement on the AGA and its doctrine. As early as 1969, Read began to caution the AGA about the ecumenical movement arising from the renewal, noting that “countless evangelicals, once famous in contending for the faith are linking hands with modernists and liberals.”⁶⁹⁹ In a subsequent editorial for *The Evangel*, he summarised his concern as follows:

Just how far should the Assemblies of God go with the “charismatic movement” which now includes almost every shade of religious thought under the sun? It is not surprising that some members of the church are asking if the term “charismatic” does not, in fact, gloss over a multitude of doctrinal errors. Doctrinal position is still important. True, we are in no position to judge the veracity of another’s experience, but we must not compromise our stand upon the Word of God. Clearly then, the movement seems to have brought a new joy and a sense of liberty to people of many persuasions (and God bless them). But the Assemblies of God, while showing Christian charity, must not be hood-winked into ‘joining hands’ with everyone who claims a charismatic experience.⁷⁰⁰

The increasing divergence in AGA opinion came to a head within the AGA over the issues of “dancing, deliverance and prostrations,” and to a lesser extent prophecy. The experience of Townsville, Klemzig and Mt. Gravatt under the ministry of Midgley, Cartledge and others spread through the interweaving charismatic networks to other AGA congregations. These assemblies sought liberation for Christian and non-Christian alike, and began regular prayer for deliverance from demons, which were cast out with sometimes spectacular displays from the person seeking liberation. During “altar” prayer ministry, people experienced the touch of God and found themselves falling over (described as “prostrations”). And the joy felt from the experience of the move of the Spirit was manifest by the congregation dancing during worship and singing in the Spirit. Personal and corporate prophecy was also a prominent element of these charismatic meetings. For participants, this experience of

⁶⁹⁹ Ralph Read, “The Ecumenical Spirit in the Church,” *The Evangel* 26, no. 7 (August 1969): 4.

⁷⁰⁰ Ralph Read, “Editorial: ‘Charismatics,’” *The Evangel* 31, no. 11 (November 1974): 4.

renewal was reminiscent of the early twentieth century pentecostal revival, which they felt had been defeated by religiosity, manifest especially by “endless debates about doctrine.”⁷⁰¹

In November 1972, a special general presbytery was convened to discuss the AGA executive’s concerns. That this was the first such meeting to be called in the history of the fellowship is testimony to the prevailing tension within the movement. The focus of discussion was the deliverance and worship ministry being propagated by the charismatics. In particular, the executive hoped to prevent Trevor Chandler and Clark Taylor, close associates of Midgley, from ministering in AGA pulpits. To achieve this end, they put forward a motion invoking Article 19(a) of the AGA constitution, which prevented assemblies from engaging the ministry of persons not endorsed by the commonwealth executive presbytery. The decision was split down the middle, twenty two delegates voting in favour of dis-endorsing Chandler and Taylor, twenty two against.⁷⁰² Despite failing to come to agreement on this specific matter, the conference engaged in vigorous debate about the charismatic movement as a whole, and the result was an official statement published in the January 1973 issue of *The Evangel* that challenged the charismatic practices of casting out demons, prostration and dancing. The statement argued that, while prior to conversion individuals could be demonised, no Christian “possessed” by Christ and filled with the Spirit could be demon-possessed. Furthermore, “preoccupation with and an over emphasis on demons and their activities” was considered to be both a “folly and a danger.” Prostrations were affirmed as being acceptable “when one is overcome by the power of God,” but the statement went on to note that often “one is caused to fall to the floor as a result of human pressures being exerted upon them.” Consequently, the executive “strongly recommended that all such prostrations other than the genuine operation of the Holy Ghost be rejected, and that attention be given to the demands of decency, modesty, and order as laid down by the Word of God.” Similarly, the statement declared that dancing “should not be promoted.”⁷⁰³ Prophecy, which had

⁷⁰¹ David Cartledge, “Jesus Christ is Alive and Well, And Working Miracles in the Earth,” *The Evangel* 33, no. 4 (May 1976): 5-6.

⁷⁰² Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Special General Presbytery, Ringwood Victoria, November 1972.

⁷⁰³ National Executive of the Assemblies of God in Australia, “Official Statement: Demon Possession of Christians - Prostrations - Dancing Before the Lord,” *The Evangel* 30, no. 1 (January 1973): 5.

always been central to pentecostal churches, was excluded from the statement, although the *Evangel* did print articles cautioning against prophetic excess.⁷⁰⁴

In this condemnation of the renewal movement, the AGA was following the lead of the AGUSA. In addition to the official statement, *The Evangel* began publishing articles against these charismatic manifestations which had been reprinted from the *American Pentecostal Evangel*, and which distinguished between “classical” and “new” pentecostalism.⁷⁰⁵ New pentecostalism “is not a denomination, not a doctrine, but an experience, and can be accommodated within the framework of any doctrinal persuasion.”⁷⁰⁶ Classical pentecostalism, it was argued, recognises that experience of the Spirit leads to “truth” and thereby relates to doctrine, so that “baptism in the Holy Spirit is an experiential doctrine based upon the Scripture and dependent upon man’s faith in and obedience to the Word.”⁷⁰⁷

The tension felt by both sides in the debate simmered until the May 1973 biennial conference. Those pastors agitating for renewal, which included Cartledge, Klimionok and Evans, who together led the movement’s three biggest churches, had ignored the 1972 injunctions and continued to invite “banned ministries” and promote charismatic renewal.⁷⁰⁸ Vigorous conference debate again ensued, with the division such that Read felt there was no alternative but to resign his position. A split in the movement seemed immanent but, as the minutes of the meeting record:

During a time of prayer, a real heart searching move of Holy Spirit took place, as a result of which personal differences and attitudes between brethren were put right and reconciliations were effected.⁷⁰⁹

Read decided not to resign, and was again elected to the position of General Superintendent. Yet the reconciliation achieved at conference did little to resolve the issues, merely effecting an uneasy truce. The conference agreed “neither to promote

⁷⁰⁴ E.g. Bryn Barrett, “Apostolic Prediction,” *The Evangel* 32, no. 6 (June 1975): 10-11.

⁷⁰⁵ Ray H. Hughes, “The New Pentecostalism: Perspectives of a Classical Administrator,” *The Evangel* 33, no. 2 (March 1976): 5-6.

⁷⁰⁶ Hughes, “The New Pentecostalism,” 6.

⁷⁰⁷ Hughes, “The New Pentecostalism,” 6.

⁷⁰⁸ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 128.

⁷⁰⁹ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1973.

nor denigrate” the charismatic manifestations, but this simply resulted in both sides maintaining their existing positions. The members of the executive continued to confront what they understood to be an attack on pentecostal doctrine and values, and an affront to their authority as leaders of the movement. The 1975 conference asked for all AGA pastors to affirm their loyalty, and the October issue of *The Evangel* carried a “declaration of loyalty” which called upon constituents to “declare their dedication pre-eminently to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Body of Christ and to affirm their commitment to the Assemblies of God in Australia.”⁷¹⁰ For their part, those promoting renewal believed they were loyal to the movement (if not to the movement’s executive), especially to what they considered the charismatic heart of early pentecostalism. Their opponents were considered to be bound by doctrine, and their unwillingness to dance symbolic of their need to be freed by the Spirit. The debate had become such that both parties were talking at cross-purposes.

Underlying all this tension was, once again, the issue of local autonomy, and the extent to which the AGA conference and the executive were able to control the local assembly or, more specifically, the pastor of the local assembly. For Cartledge and the “new” pentecostals, the problem was not only the executive’s unwillingness to embrace renewal, but rather its attempt to impose conservative views on the pastor of the local church.⁷¹¹ In the midst of this debate, Ralph Read proposed to the 1973 conference that the AGA purchase a head office and employ some administrative staff.⁷¹² From Read’s perspective this matter had nothing to do with questions of church autonomy, and was simply intended to facilitate AGA administration.⁷¹³ Indeed, at a later date the movement was to purchase a head office, which today houses an administrative staff of more than twenty people. But in 1973, Cartledge and others saw the move as another step toward the centralisation of the AGA and the erosion of local autonomy.⁷¹⁴ The proposal was defeated (or deferred), largely because of the high set-up costs which would have necessitated substantial increases in the funds local churches paid into the movement.

⁷¹⁰ The Executive of the Assemblies of God in Australia, “Declaration of Loyalty,” *The Evangel* 32, no. 10 (October 1975): 9.

⁷¹¹ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 133. That Read continued to be elected during the early 1970’s indicates that the majority of pastors supported Read’s perspective at this time.

⁷¹² Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1973.

⁷¹³ Read, “Biographical History of Ralph Read”.

⁷¹⁴ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 134.

These questions about local autonomy and the cost of centralisation resulted in the conference establishing a restructure committee to investigate the existing structure of the AGA, and to suggest possible improvements. Although the report to the 1975 conference was to affirm the existing basis of fellowship and make few changes, Klimionok was one of the members of the committee, and in his report he comments that:

My feeling is that our Fellowship on the conference level is too “executive” oriented instead of “church” oriented... I believe that unless every activity revolves around the local Ecclesia, the promotion of the same and the autonomy of the same, the Fellowship will just exist and not grow. It seems that some of the Brethren holding office have executive or administrative abilities but have not proven themselves in the area of the local church.⁷¹⁵

This latter critique ignored the fact that the only member of the executive not involved in local church ministry was the full-time General Superintendent, Ralph Read, who before taking the leadership of the movement had in fact successfully pastored numerous local assemblies. Yet the comments were indicative of the nature of the tension then existing within the movement, which was as much about issues of authority and control, as it was about doctrine and the charismatic movement.

Following the 1975 conference, Cartledge felt God tell him that within the next two years the movement would be handed over to the “new” pentecostals.⁷¹⁶ He increased his campaign for change, and approached Evans to stand for the position of General Superintendent at the next conference. But Evans had always been more conciliatory in orientation, and was uncomfortable with the idea of a challenge, and so decided not to stand.⁷¹⁷ Cartledge, however, was determined to bring the issue to a head and, along with Klimionok and some other associates, confronted the conservative pastors by dancing during worship on the opening day of the conference. Read was furious,

⁷¹⁵ Klimionok, Submission to the Select Committee on Structural Review, 1973, cited in Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 135.

⁷¹⁶ See Cartledge, David, “The Transitions Resulting from the 1977 Conference,” interview by Shane Clifton, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre: Southern Cross College, Sydney, August 2002; Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 140; Evans, “Biographical History of Andrew Evans”.

⁷¹⁷ Evans, “Biographical History of Andrew Evans”.

but the guest speaker at the conference was the leader of the world's largest church, the Korean Yonggi Cho, and he shocked the assembled pastors by publicly endorsing the free worship of the "dancing" pentecostals.⁷¹⁸ Although Cho had been invited by Read when the two had met at a world pentecostal congress, he further alienated the General Superintendent by advocating the priority of the local church over any central headquarters:

The local church is the answer. . . . The local church is the lifeline of Christianity, and so the local church should have more sovereign right and power. Headquarters should be something like fellowship. . . . If you are tightly organised, like Catholics, and headquarters start commanding you, then the local church loses the initiative and that is terrible.⁷¹⁹

During the business sessions that followed, a remit was put to the conference that would allow the General Superintendent to choose not to serve in the position on a full-time basis. It was a motion that went completely against Read's intentions for the movement, and when it was carried it was obvious that support for his leadership had declined since the previous conference. When it came time to vote for the position of General Superintendent, Read was the only nomination but, even so, only 58% of the eligible representatives voted for him to continue in the position. Realising he had lost the support of the movement, Read resigned, and in the subsequent manoeuvrings Andrew Evans was elected to the position with 55% of the vote, although this time in a three person contest.⁷²⁰

With Read representative of the conservative pastors, who were concerned with the influence of the charismatic movement on the AGA, and Evans championing the views of the "new" pentecostals, the movement seemed to be in danger of splitting (as was apparent in the closeness of the vote). In a conciliatory move, Evans immediately encouraged the conference to support Fred Buse for the position of assistant superintendent. Buse had long been a supporter of Read's leadership, and Evans' willingness to affirm the opinion of the conservatives by advocating Buse eased the

⁷¹⁸ Cartledge, "The Transitions Resulting from the 1977 Conference".

⁷¹⁹ Yonggi Cho, "Advice to Young Ministers," *The Evangel* 34, no. 3 (April 1977): 2-5, &19.

⁷²⁰ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Melbourne, 1977.

tension. So successful was Evans at achieving unity that by the 1979 conference, not a single pastor or church had left the movement for schismatic reasons, and Evans was unanimously re-appointed to the position.⁷²¹ He was to lead the movement unopposed for the next twenty years, during which time the AGA was to experience phenomenal growth. From 152 churches and less than 10,000 constituents in 1977, by 1997 the fellowship grew to 826 churches and over 115,000 constituents.⁷²²

5.2.2. Church Growth and the Rise of the Mega-church

While it is not possible to explicate the exact source or reasons for this growth, we can suggest a number of factors that contributed to it. In 1994 the Australian National Church Life Survey observed that “the denominational group with the most switchers is Pentecostals,” where “switchers” are those who have transferred denominations in the last five years.⁷²³ Assuming that this trend extends back to the late 1970s and 80s, much of this switching can be attributed to the AGA’s increasing involvement in the charismatic renewal. The new openness to renewal in the AGA that resulted from the 1977 conference coincided with increasing concern by denominational leaders about the continued growth and influence of the charismatic movement in their own churches, and they began to directly oppose the renewal. Many charismatics were left with little choice but to leave their denominations and, while various independent charismatic movements were birthed as a result, the AGA was also to benefit. Also, Methodist charismatics were increasingly uncomfortable with the perceived move toward liberalism that had resulted after the formation of the Uniting Church in 1977 and, over time, many former Methodists were also to find a home in pentecostal churches, including charismatic AGA congregations.⁷²⁴

The charismatic renewal also facilitated church growth by bringing about modernisation. Although the AGA, under the influence of churches like Richmond

⁷²¹ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1979.

⁷²² See Appendix A: Growth of the AGA.

⁷²³ Kaldor, Bellamy, Powell, Correy, and Castle, *Winds of Change*, 226.

⁷²⁴ See Evans, “Biographical History of Andrew Evans”; Ainge, Keith, “The Transitions in the AGA since 1977,” Interview by Shane Clifton, Available at Pentecostal Heritage Centre: Southern Cross College, Sydney, January 2004; Ian Jagelman, “Church Growth: Its Problems and Promise for Australian Pentecostalism,” *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998): 27-40.

Temple, had long enjoyed vigorous and high quality worship services, critics of “classical” pentecostals suggest that, by the 1960s and early 70s, AGA worship was becoming conservative and stale, with churches continuing to use the same *Redemption Hymnals* that had been in place since the movement’s formation. In a symbolic gesture intended to highlight the transition away from classical pentecostalism, Cartledge locked away the old hymnbooks previously used by the Townsville assembly, and appropriated the chorus music of the charismatic renewal.⁷²⁵ Contemporary music became a prominent feature of the AGA, and this freedom in worship was accompanied by a move away from the legalistic holiness that had long been a defining characteristic of pentecostal communities.

As would be expected, changed attitudes to holiness did not occur overnight. The leaders of the 1980s had been brought up under the social strictures of conservative pentecostalism and, even as late as 1990, the executive published warnings against “attending the cinema; fleshly dancing; social drinking; rock music and so on.”⁷²⁶ But the charismatics who flooded pentecostal churches had come from traditions in which women were allowed to wear make-up, and where consumption of alcohol and attending the cinema were not considered sinful. As the next generation of pentecostals came into positions of authority in the movement, these broader social values came to be appropriated by the AGA. Not only was rock music and the cinema to become acceptable, but both found their way into pentecostal church services. Pastors also stopped condemning casual drinking. The charismatic renewal had thus brought pentecostalism much closer to the mainstream of the church and of society in general, and the result of this modernisation was a broader movement capable of attracting a wider constituency, and not just charismatic “switchers.”

There is more, however, to AGA growth than the charismatic renewal alone. Much of the movement’s expansion, including the switching of charismatics who came from diverse traditions with various emphasises and perspectives, was facilitated by Evans’ ability to accommodate and encourage diversity. It was a leadership capacity that began to take structural shape in the constitution of the united fellowship. The 1979

⁷²⁵ Cartledge, “The Transitions Resulting from the 1977 Conference”.

⁷²⁶ National Executive of the Assemblies of God in Australia, “Holiness in the Decade of Harvest,” *The Evangel* 47, no. 3 (March 1990): 3.

conference reiterated the principle of local autonomy that had underpinned the original formation of the AGA. The move away from a full-time superintendent, with the AGA leader himself pastoring a local church, further cemented this priority. In the 1979 conference, a new draft of the AGA constitution was tabled, which removed article 19(a) of the constitution.⁷²⁷ This was the provision that required executive approval for any ministry (permanent or itinerant) in AGA churches, and that had been used to attempt to prevent Chandler, Taylor and other charismatics from ministering within the fellowship. The nature, style, and content of ministry in the local church was thus to be left in the hands of the local assembly. Autonomy was relativised only to the extent that AGA churches and pastors were required to continue to adhere to the AGA doctrinal statement. Since this document contained little more than the broad parameters of Christian orthodoxy, a wide degree of diversity was possible.

The AGA was also to be greatly influenced by the church growth movement. As we have already noted, the 1977 conference featured the guest ministry of Yonggi Cho. Cho was pastor of the world's largest local church that, by 1977, had a congregation numbering more than thirty thousand⁷²⁸ and by 2000, exceeded seven hundred thousand.⁷²⁹ Cho had set up an organisation called Church Growth International,⁷³⁰ the purpose of which was to promote church growth principles and methods. His approach emphasised four dimensions: prayer, evangelism, leadership and a cell structure. In Korea he purchased land and established a "prayer mountain" to enable pastors, leaders and laity to gather and pray for revival. He also implemented leadership training systems, and delegated leadership in the church to both ordained associates and lay cell leaders. The "cell" was a structured home group system that supplemented the Sunday service, and that was characterised by a hierarchical leadership network. Cell leaders (called deacons or deaconesses) reported to district leaders and full-time pastors, who were ultimately responsible to Cho as senior pastor. He also emphasised what he called the "fivefold gospel," which added "the gospel of

⁷²⁷ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1979.

⁷²⁸ Yonggi Cho, "Biggest Little Church in the World," *The Evangel* 34, no. 2 (March 1977): 4-6.

⁷²⁹ Dwight J. Wilson, "Cho, David (Paul) Yonggi," *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 521-522.

⁷³⁰ See Church Growth International website, <http://churchgrowthint.homestead.com/home.html>, accessed 26th July 2004.

blessing” to the traditional pentecostal fourfold gospel (Jesus saves, Jesus heals, Jesus baptises in the Spirit, and Jesus is coming again), and which assumed that material blessing, including financial prosperity, was part of the liberation from the curse:

The reason Christ lived in such poverty while on this earth was so that we could live well and to remove us from the law of the curse. If we do not claim our rightful blessings as children of God, we are wasting the life of poverty which Christ led while on earth.⁷³¹

It is a message that finds its origins in the faith emphasis of early pentecostals, and that can be seen to relate to the pentecostal affirmation of physical healing. While Cho was not the only source of this prosperity message, as we shall see, it was to become an important dimension of AGA self understanding toward the end of the twentieth century.

At the 1977 conference, Klimionok conducted seminar sessions based on church growth principles gathered not only from Cho, but also from the church growth movement that had formed in America under the leadership of Donald McGavran and Peter Wagner.⁷³² McGavran had founded the Institute Of Church Growth, which in 1965 became affiliated with Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.⁷³³ Originally a foreign missionary movement, McGavran and others soon came to apply church growth principles to the mission of the church in America and other Western societies.⁷³⁴ Church growth philosophy included various dimensions. Firstly, it affirmed a “high view” as opposed to a “liberal” conception of the Scriptures, and thereby came to be associated with the various streams of conservative evangelical Christianity.⁷³⁵ Secondly, it prioritised evangelism over social or ethical transformation, arguing that social transformation can only occur after the personal

⁷³¹ Yonggi Cho, “Fivefold Gospel: The Gospel of Blessing,” Website, <http://english.fgtv.com/Gospel/fivefold3.asp>, accessed 15 February 2004.

⁷³² Ron Wilson, “A New Era Begins at Conference 21,” *The Evangel* 34, no. 4 (July 1977): 2-5.

⁷³³ Donald A. McGavran, “Church Growth Movement,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), 241-243.

⁷³⁴ Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology and Principles* (Nashville: Broadman & Holmann, 1993), 54.

⁷³⁵ Rainer, *Church Growth*, 75.

transformation that results from evangelism.⁷³⁶ Thirdly, it emphasised the indigenous local church as the prime vehicle of evangelism and mission. Fourthly, it developed a notion of “seasons of harvest,” which argued that the Spirit readies particular groups at particular times for harvest, and that evangelistic resources should therefore be targeted at receptive people groups, which were understood to be homogenous units (e.g. churches targeting the Italian population in Australia). Finally, it adopted a pragmatic orientation, which focused on practical and measurable consequences, such as church growth measured by means of church attendance. This pragmatism led to the conclusion that churches should utilise “the best insights of contemporary social and behavioural sciences” to achieve local church growth.⁷³⁷ It also extended to theological pragmatism, which despite the priority given to the Scriptures, meant that the “beliefs that receive the greatest attention are those that are directly related to enhancing the growth of the church.”⁷³⁸

It is readily apparent how these church growth principles came to be adopted by the AGA, which already affirmed a conservative reading of the Scriptures, local church autonomy, the priority of evangelism in mission, and a pragmatic orientation that was enhanced by the reduced focus on matters of doctrine following the 1977 conference. Indeed, the phenomenal growth of the pentecostal church resulted in the use of global pentecostalism as a case study for proponents of church growth techniques.⁷³⁹ But once again, the movement of ideas was more than just one way. Not only did pentecostals influence other denominations with ideas for growth, but church growth proponents were to have a substantial influence on the AGA. Klimionok began holding annual church growth seminars, which included speakers such as John Hurston, executive Director of Church Growth International, and Rowland Croucher, Senior minister of the Blackburn Baptist Church.⁷⁴⁰ Cartledge was to lead church growth tours that visited Cho in Korea, as well as other prominent churches in the USA.⁷⁴¹ It is noteworthy that many of the churches visited were not Assembly of God

⁷³⁶ Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970), 21.

⁷³⁷ Rainer, *Church Growth*, 20.

⁷³⁸ Rainer, *Church Growth*, 90.

⁷³⁹ Wagner, *What are we Missing*.

⁷⁴⁰ Anonymous, “Church Growth International Seminar,” *The Evangel* 37, no. 12 (December 1980): 9-12.

⁷⁴¹ David Cartledge, “Church Growth Tour of the U.S.A.,” *The Evangel* 39, no. 4 (April 1982): 14.

congregations but, rather, independent charismatic mega-churches - the label that came to be applied to churches with congregations numbering in the thousands.

In the AGA there were a number of churches that had achieved mega-church status during the 1980s. Cartledge grew the Townsville Assembly to over one thousand people, a remarkable achievement for a church outside of Australia's capital cities.⁷⁴² In Brisbane, Klimionok saw Garden City Christian Church (the renamed Mt. Gravatt assembly) develop a congregation of more than two thousand people. In Adelaide, Paradise Assembly of God grew to a similar size under the leadership of Evans, and since his son Ashleigh took over the Assembly in 2002, the church today claims "an active membership of over 4,500 people."⁷⁴³ In Melbourne, Richmond Temple, which had suffered some decline after the death of Greenwood, recovered under the leadership of Philip Hills, and grew into a congregation with a membership in excess of one thousand. During the late 1970s, the only Eastern city not to boast an AGA congregation on this sort of scale was Sydney, whose churches had been amongst those most opposed to the charismatic renewal.

This situation in Sydney was rectified with the arrival of Frank Houston. In 1976, Houston, whose church in Lower Hutt also numbered in the thousands, and who was then General Superintendent of the AGNZ, felt God call him to leave behind the work in New Zealand,⁷⁴⁴ and plant a church in the Eastern suburbs of Sydney. In New Zealand, Houston had been closely associated with Chandler, Taylor and Midgley, all

⁷⁴² Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 145.

⁷⁴³ See Church Website, <http://www.paradise.asn.au/welcome/ourstory.htm>, accessed 20th July 2004. It is difficult to prove the veracity of these congregational estimates, which are taken from promotional literature of the churches themselves. Nonetheless, for our purposes, it is enough to note that these congregations greatly outnumbered AGA congregation sizes of Australian pentecostal churches in previous generations

⁷⁴⁴ It is impossible for an outside party to comment on the veracity of claims to "the call of God." Since Houston's move to Australia, it has been revealed that there were other family issues that may have effected his decision. One of his daughters became pregnant, and one of his son's was rejecting his father's pentecostal faith. Also, it was revealed in 2002 that Houston had sexually abused a teenage boy, who was a congregant during his time pastoring the Lower Hutt Assembly. Although no criminal charges were laid, the Assemblies of God in both Australia and New Zealand have accepted that the offence occurred, and under the leadership of Houston's son, Brian, rescinded his ministerial credential. The extent to which these personal issues coincide with Houston's 'call of God' to Sydney is difficult to determine. (The personal story of Frank Houston is set out by his wife in, Hazel Houston, *Being Frank: The Frank Houston Story* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1989). The decision to rescind Houston's AGA credential is set out in Wayne R. Hughes, letter from Executive Presbytery, Assemblies of God New Zealand, to Ordained Ministers of the Assemblies of God New Zealand, 2002, available at http://www.Christian-witness.org/active/mail/bh_fh.html, accessed 13 May 2003). Houston was later to contract Alzheimer's, and passed away late in 2004.

of whom had been rejected by the AGA and consequently, despite his leadership of the AGNZ, his intention was to begin an independent church. The first Sydney service was held in July 1977 with a team of nine adults and seven children. After the changes in the executive in 1977, he was convinced by Evans to join the AGA.⁷⁴⁵ At the 1979 conference he was elected to the movement's national executive and, in 1980, he became the NSW state superintendent.⁷⁴⁶ Within four years of commencing the church, the congregation had grown to over one thousand people, with Houston drawing on both the impetus of the charismatic renewal and the church growth movement.⁷⁴⁷ Like Klimionok in Brisbane, he also was to hold regular church growth seminars in conjunction with Yonggi Cho.

Houston's long term impact on AGA ecclesiology derived not only from his promotion of the charismatic renewal and church growth principles, but also from his restructuring of church government and leadership at the local level. Houston did not believe in congregational government and, in the Lower Hutt, had structured his church without formal congregational membership. His reasons for this were largely practical. As the assembly in New Zealand grew, Houston became increasingly aware of the importance of strong leadership. He also felt that, in the context of a larger church, congregational government tended to make the tasks of pastoral leadership somewhat cumbersome. Consequently, he restructured the church, allocating governmental responsibility to the eldership, who were themselves appointed directly by the senior pastor. His reasons for these changes were essentially practical, although he did find biblical justification in the New Testament emphasis on apostolic authority, as well as the priority given in the Scriptures to the function of elders in the local assembly.⁷⁴⁸

When Houston planted the church in Sydney he adopted the same form of church government. As his influence in the movement increased, with the continued growth of his church and his position on the various executive bodies, other churches,

⁷⁴⁵ Evans, "Biographical History of Andrew Evans".

⁷⁴⁶ Assemblies of God NSW, Annual Conference Minutes, Katoomba, 23 July 1980.

⁷⁴⁷ Frank Houston, "Christian Life Centre Darlinghurst, Sydney," *The Evangel* 39, no. 5 (May 1982): 12.

⁷⁴⁸ Houston, *Being Frank*, 124-125.

particularly newly planted churches, began to adopt this model.⁷⁴⁹ In NSW the recommended local church constitution came to distinguish between members and partners. Members consisted solely of the eldership/board and the senior pastor, with the latter given responsibility for board appointments. The congregation were named partners, although this carried no formal authority within the church.⁷⁵⁰ In other states, congregational models were retained, although the authority of senior pastors was strengthened by allocating them the responsibility of nominating the eldership/board for congregational approval.⁷⁵¹

This transition represents a move toward the form of government that had been adopted by the Apostolic Church in the 1930s, and rejected by the AGA during its period of formation (see 4.2.2). In terms reminiscent of this earlier debate, Cartledge describes this transition as “The Apostolic Revolution, the Restoration of Apostles and Prophets in the Assemblies of God in Australia.”⁷⁵² We shall take up this transition in our analysis, but it is also noteworthy that this move away from congregational democracy occurred at the same time as the fellowship was strengthening local church autonomy. The combined effect of both changes was to greatly enhance the authority of the local pastor, especially the pastor of the mega-church.

We have noted that church growth principles were directed at the local church, although under the leadership of Evans the AGA fellowship itself was to adopt similar methodology. This involved firstly the establishment of targets for the movement’s growth, and the implementation of mechanisms for measuring that growth.⁷⁵³ The theme of the 1981 Biennial Conference was “Every Town,” with the goal to establish an AGA congregation in every town in Australia with a population over one thousand. Church planting departments were established in every state presbytery, and in 1983 the conference theme, “Let’s Take the Nation,” was again indicative of the

⁷⁴⁹ Ainge, “Transition in the AGA Since 1977”.

⁷⁵⁰ Assemblies of God NSW, Recommended Local Church Constitution for Incorporation, 2004, Assemblies of God NSW State Office, Windsor.

⁷⁵¹ E.g. Assemblies of God QLD, Recommended Local Church Constitution for Incorporation, 2004, State Office, Ipswich.

⁷⁵² This is the title of his book, Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*.

⁷⁵³ For example, see Jeremy Griffiths, “What is Happening in the Assemblies of God,” *Ministers Bulletin* (January 1985): 5-26.

movement's emphasis. Over the next decade, the AGA consistently exceeded its growth targets for the total number of churches and AGA adherents. Evans also commenced the publication of a quarterly *Ministers' Bulletin*, which was aimed at developing the leadership capacity of AGA pastors, and which supplemented the church growth seminars that were being conducted by all the large churches.

The AGA focus on the local church created other changes in the movement. In February 1978 Cartledge commenced Rhema Bible College at Townsville. This was partially in response to his dissatisfaction with Commonwealth Bible College, which throughout the 1970s had been led by Ralph Read and Aeron Morgan, both critical of the "new pentecostalism."⁷⁵⁴ As Cartledge was later to comment:

A number of pastors said it seemed as if the college had become the conscience of the Movement, and regularly expressed disapproval of either local assembly or national decisions and functions.⁷⁵⁵

It was also Cartledge's intention to instil in students his own charismatic, church growth, and leadership emphasis.⁷⁵⁶ In 1981, after much debate, the AGA Biennial Conference formally endorsed the right of any AGA church to establish local bible colleges which, provided they satisfied certain minimal standards, would be deemed sufficient for ordination.⁷⁵⁷ Immediately following the conference Klimionok commenced Garden City School of Ministries, with studies initially offered by correspondence, and with face-face lectures commencing in 1982.⁷⁵⁸ These two colleges were to be the first of a proliferation of bible colleges which were to be opened in subsequent years, and which were to compete for students through advertising in *The Evangel* and other sources. Evans argues that this proliferation of colleges was one of the key reasons for AGA growth, since it enabled large numbers

⁷⁵⁴ Cartledge, "The Transitions Resulting from the 1977 Conference". Morgan, along with another former CBC lecturer Philip Powell, has since set up Christian Witness Ministries, whose main purpose is to identify heresy and crises within the Assemblies of God in Australia. See website, <http://www.Christian-witness.org/actwelcum.html>, accessed 20th July 2004.

⁷⁵⁵ David Cartledge, *The Chester Hill Miracles* (Sydney: Southern Cross College, 1997), 13.

⁷⁵⁶ David Cartledge, "First Student From Rhema Bible College to Be Ordained," *The Evangel* 39, no. 7 (July 1982): 18.

⁷⁵⁷ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Sydney, 1981.

⁷⁵⁸ Reginald Klimionok, "Institute and Degree Studies in Garden City School of Ministries," *The Evangel* 38, no. 5 (May 1981): 15.

of students to be trained for ministry throughout the nation.⁷⁵⁹ Yet the decision was to have an impact on the national college, which no longer held a central position within the movement. As Cartledge himself observed, “the proliferation of other regional or church based Bible Schools affected enrolments. There was also a growing sense of distance between the national college and the mainstream of the Assemblies of God.”⁷⁶⁰

In 1992 Cartledge himself was appointed as President of CBC in an attempt to rescue the situation that he had helped instigate with the commencement of Rhema Bible College in Townsville. He immediately changed CBC’s name to Southern Cross College, and moved the college from Katoomba to Chester Hill in Sydney. Along with the faculty, he also initiated the attainment of government accredited undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Despite these changes, the college continued to face the challenge of competing with church based colleges, and the question remains: What is the role of a national college in a movement of local churches and local church colleges? Ideally the national college would be involved in mediating standards and facilitating a common curriculum, but the local church priority in the AGA has, to date, worked against this shared effort. It can be argued that the quality of theological and ministerial education has suffered as a result. Most local churches have not had the financial resources necessary to develop high quality, sustainable institutions, and this situation was made more difficult by competition amongst the various colleges. Furthermore, the movement did not establish educational standards, nor implement ongoing review and supervision. Local colleges were subservient to the vision and purposes of a particular local church, rather than the movement as a whole, and following the logic of church growth technique, tended to focus on pastoral skills without the requisite emphasis on the more academic theological disciplines. Often faculty were practitioners, but had few formal qualifications that would equip them for ministerial education. It is a situation that is perhaps changing as a result of the Australian government’s efforts to enforce educational standards, although many of the improvements currently occurring are administrative rather than theological. While this is a matter for our subsequent

⁷⁵⁹ Evans, “Biographical History of Andrew Evans”. This opinion is widely shared. See also Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 143; Ainge, “Transition in the AGA Since 1977”.

⁷⁶⁰ Cartledge, *The Chester Hill Miracles*, 13.

analysis, it is enough for now to note that the nature and status of AGA education both derives from, and in a circulatory fashion propagates, the AGA's move away from doctrinal and theological emphases toward the pragmatic goal of church growth.

AGA World Missions was to experience similar transitions. While its story is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is noteworthy that in 2001 it was decided that the most practical and effective way to facilitate AGA foreign missionary activity was to move away from a centralised system, and to hand responsibility for particular fields to "regional churches," which were either mega-churches or near mega-churches.⁷⁶¹ It is not yet possible to evaluate the effectiveness of this change. But the nature of the change is indicative of the importance of the local church, and in particular the large local church, for emerging AGA ecclesiology.

During the 1980s and 1990s the influence of the mega-church was to extend to all the dimensions of AGA ministry. Members of the AGA executive were (and are) now all pastors of mega-churches. While it was always the case that pastors of the prominent churches were likely to be elected to these offices, prior to 1977 there was less variance in size, and all pastors were given the opportunity to influence the direction and decisions of the movement through (sometimes vigorous) participation in national and state conferences. As the movement grew, it became impossible for the majority of pastors to have any real involvement at these meetings and, over time, the agenda of both national and state conferences was restricted,⁷⁶² so that, by the 2003 conference, the only business conducted was the election of the executive. To some extent this was the inevitable result of the movement's growth, but it is important to recognise the magnitude of this transition. The move away from democracy at the local level has been accompanied by a move away from democracy at the level of national and state fellowship, and the result is a movement now dominated by the mega-church perspectives and concerns. This is apparent in most dimensions of ministry formally facilitated by the shared efforts of the national fellowship, since the tendency is for mega-churches to control national and state departments. Thus, for example, in NSW, Hillsong Church runs the national and state women's ministry,

⁷⁶¹ See Assemblies of God World Mission website, <http://www.aogwm.org.au/default.asp?ContentID=1000377>, accessed 12 June 2004.

⁷⁶² Evans notes that this was the deliberate policy of the Executive, intended to facilitate a 'smoother' running conference. See Evans, "Biographical History of Andrew Evans".

with its internal women's conference, "Colour," now officially endorsed as the focus of the national and state women's department. It also controls Youth Alive (the AGNSW youth ministry department), and Teen Challenge (the AGNSW drug and alcohol rehabilitation arm). Cartledge summarises this transition by saying that "the most amazing factor in the transformation of the Assemblies of God was the recognition of apostolic type ministries at the national level."⁷⁶³ That is to say, mega-church pastors now run the movement.

5.2.3. Hillsong Church and the Influence of the Prosperity Gospel

Of these various mega-churches, the most influential has been Hillsong church. In August 1983, Frank Houston sent his son Brian to pioneer a church in the Hills district of North West Sydney. Commencing with forty five people who had come from the city-based assembly, Hills Christian Life Centre was to become the largest local church in the nation (if the label "local" is still relevant). When Frank Houston retired in May 2000,⁷⁶⁴ he placed the city congregation, still numbering in the thousands, under Brian's leadership, and the two churches were merged into Hillsong Church, described as one local church with "two major worship centres (City and Hills), and a city-wide network of cell-groups."⁷⁶⁵ The church today claims a congregation of over fifteen thousand people,⁷⁶⁶ with the mission:

To reach and influence the world by building a large Bible based church, changing mindsets and empowering people to lead and impact in every sphere of life.⁷⁶⁷

At the time the church was started, the charismatic renewal had begun to wane, although the church retained certain dimensions of the charismatic emphasis, especially a focus on worship. In 1988 the church recorded its first worship album,

⁷⁶³ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 147.

⁷⁶⁴ Andrew McFarlane, "Houston, William Francis (Frank)," *Australian Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (2003): article online, <http://adpcm.webjournals.org/articles/10-23/2002/4731.htm>, accessed 7 April 2004.

⁷⁶⁵ See Hillsong Church Website, <http://www.hillsong.com/church/>, accessed 26th July 2004.

⁷⁶⁶ Once again, the veracity of these numbers is difficult to verify, especially since Hillsong has no formal membership. Questions about the factuality or otherwise of specific numeric claims are irrelevant to our purpose.

⁷⁶⁷ This mission statement appears on most of the Hillsong literature and publications.

which soon developed a national and international reputation, and led to the creation of the annual Hillsong conference. This week-long conference now draws a global crowd in excess of twenty thousand people. As Houston observes, “the heartbeat of Hillsong [conference] is to 'champion the cause of Jesus Christ in and through the local church'.”⁷⁶⁸ It achieves this by an emphasis on what is perceived to be the key elements in Hillsong’s growth. The conference therefore includes streams in music (worship) and the creative arts, pastoral leadership and team building, and youth and children’s ministry. It also includes a business stream, and a program for those involved in social welfare.

Brian Houston’s influence beyond his own church to the AGA movement as a whole began with this Hillsong conference. Not only is this annual conference more than ten times the size of the AGA biennial gathering, but its purpose is deliberately ecclesiological; modelling and teaching small churches how to conduct church for the purpose of growth. The reach of this conference extends beyond the AGA, to pentecostalism in Australia and globally. In addition to this annual conference, Hillsong also developed other networks within the AGA. It has commenced eleven “Extension Services” throughout the city of Sydney, which meet for “local” Sunday morning services, and then come together at Hillsong for Saturday and Sunday evening services and other meetings. These Extension Services are not autonomous, but considered to be a part of the Hillsong “local” church under the leadership and authority of Houston. In addition, there are other churches that, although autonomous, relate to Hillsong church for the sake of mentoring. Originally, these relationships formed when churches were planted out from Frank Houston’s city assembly.⁷⁶⁹ Later, Brian Houston opened this network to other churches, both throughout Australia and globally. Of this network Houston writes:

The Hillsong Network exists to champion the potential of the local church. Our heart for your ministry is to see you step into the full potential of your future. As the influence of the Hillsong Church and its related ministries continues to expand around the globe, we want to be able to further impart to other ministries, and see them equipped and released. By joining as a member

⁷⁶⁸ See Hillsong Church website, <http://www.hillsong.com/church/>, accessed 12th June 2004.

⁷⁶⁹ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 411.

of the Hillsong Network we hope to inspire and resource you in your mission to build your local church. So, join with us. Together we can see something tremendous built for God throughout the world.⁷⁷⁰

This influence was further extended within the AGA in 1997 when Brian Houston was appointed as the movement's General Superintendent after the retirement of Evans. He immediately renamed the position "President," a change that was indicative of the increased emphasis on leadership within the AGA that had occurred since the 1977 conference. He also sought to broaden the AGA by bringing cultural and doctrinal change, and by strengthening AGA ties to other pentecostal groups. We shall take up both these matters in turn.

One of the central aspects of Hillsong Church is a philosophy of prosperity and influence. It is a notion that derives from Cho's "theology of blessing," and that is often maligned for its association with money. In 1999 Houston published a book called *You Need More Money: discovering God's amazing financial plan for your life*.⁷⁷¹ It was a book that was roundly criticised outside of the AGA, both by other Christians such as Tim Costello,⁷⁷² and by the secular media. The *Sydney Morning Herald's* Greg Bearup summarised much of the criticism in an article in the *Good Weekend*, when he observed:

The music is catchy, the mood euphoric and the message perfect for a material age: believe in God and you'll be rewarded in this life as well as the next... God wants you to be rich. . . . Just ask Brian and Bobbie, spiritual leaders of the church where a needle is no obstacle to a camel.⁷⁷³

It will be our task in the analysis that follows to make judgements about the appropriateness or otherwise of this prosperity emphasis, but it does need to be noted that Bearup's summation is something of a caricature. While Houston does affirm the Christian right to financial prosperity, achieved through Christ and the power of

⁷⁷⁰ See Hillsong Church Website, <http://www.hillsong.com/church/>, accessed 12th June 2004.

⁷⁷¹ Brian Houston, *You Need More Money: Discovering God's Amazing Financial Plan for Your Life* (Sydney: Maximised Leadership, 1999).

⁷⁷² Cleary, John, "The Pentecostal Path to Wealth," ABC Radio, Radio National: The Religion Report, September 1999.

⁷⁷³ Greg Bearup, "The Lord's Profits," *Good Weekend* (January 2003): 14-21.

positive thinking (i.e. changed mindsets), he links this prosperity to the purpose of blessing others, especially the “cause of the local church.”⁷⁷⁴ This perspective is perhaps best summed up by another member of the AGA executive, Steve Penny, in his statement, posted on the movement’s website, on what is described as the three AGA core values:

Life is meant to be lived as an increasing adventure in prosperity. God’s intention is to prosper the righteous so that they can demonstrate the power of His Kingdom on earth. Prosperity is not an option but a mandate and responsibility given to all who believe in the authority of the name of Jesus. We are called to show forth the wonders of His increasing Kingdom, and this clearly requires an increasing measure of affluence so that we can have an increasing measure of influence. . . . Life is meant to be shared. The essential core of the Christian life is that of sharing. Prosperity has very little meaning if it does not include the ability to bless others.⁷⁷⁵

One dimension of this “getting to give” philosophy is giving to the local church itself. Indeed, Houston ties the cause of giving directly to the effect of prosperity, affirming that the key to living abundantly is sowing and reaping, tithing and generosity.⁷⁷⁶ In summary, the message is, “give generously (especially to the local church), to receive and live abundantly, to be able to give even more generously.”

It is possible to argue that one of the reasons for this increasing emphasis on money in pentecostalism is the financial pressures on the local church arising from the demands of a growing church ministry. The collapse of the state-church tie in the nineteenth century asked the question of voluntarist churches to which blessing theology is an answer – How does one fund growth and Christian outreach? New buildings, modern equipment and technology, evangelistic and missionary activity, all require financial investment. For Hillsong Church, sales of music, preaching series, and Christian books all contribute to this investment, but the largest investor is the church’s

⁷⁷⁴ Brian Houston, *For This Cause: Finding the Meaning of Life and Living a Life of Meaning* (Sydney: Maximised Leadership, 2001), 151-158.

⁷⁷⁵ Steve Penny, “Assemblies of God in Australia, Core Values,” (2004): Website, <http://www.aogaustralia.com.au/default.asp?ContentID=1002228>, accessed 12 February 2004.

⁷⁷⁶ Houston, *You Need More Money*, 61-86.

congregation, which collects weekly offerings extending into six figures. Whatever the judgement made about the Hillsong emphasis on giving and prosperity, it is impossible in today's capitalist society for any church to shy away from the need for money to conduct ministry. The question then is not, Should the church ask for money? but, rather, How should it ask for it? and, For what purpose should that money be used? In the situation of the AGA it may also be necessary to ask whether or not the rise of the mega-church has distorted its financial needs, and thereby distorted its financial message?

The criticism from outside the AGA, that has arisen due to the association of prosperity with money alone, has led Houston in recent times to use the term "flourishing" instead of prosperity. In 2003 he published a book entitled *How to Flourish in Life: principles for building a thriving productive life*.⁷⁷⁷ Although in this book Houston does not shy away from the value of money as a means of solving human problems, nonetheless he adopts the new term to highlight the idea that life in Christ is a flourishing life in all its dimensions, particularly in the capacity to influence others for the sake of the kingdom of God. Consequently, money becomes only one element of human flourishing, which incorporates blessing in spirituality, health, family, church and community.

Since flourishing encompasses all of life, one of the important developments within pentecostalism has been increasing social awareness. Hillsong is not alone in this emphasis, but its establishment of a social welfare department in the church is testimony to another one of the changes within Australian pentecostalism, and that is the broadening of "mission" beyond simple evangelism to incorporate "influence" and social concern. Thus, for example, Hillsong has established the Hillsong Foundation, whose purpose is:

"Empowering people with opportunities" through a large variety of programs which impact and help prisoners, the sick, single parents, and others needing support, encouragement or training at a particular time in their lives. "Emerge" programs help people break out of a welfare/victim mindset and

⁷⁷⁷ Brian Houston, *How To Flourish In Life: Principles for Building a Thriving, Productive Life* (Sydney: Maximised Leadership, 2003).

connect to their value and potential. Reaching people through one-to-one contact: Drug and Alcohol Services, Foodshare, Street Team, Prison Ministry, Immigration Detention Centres and Community Children's Clubs. Addressing the “meaninglessness of life” culture among youth today. Impacting teenagers through “Shine” – a Christian values-forming program that practically equips and empowers youth to do life better.⁷⁷⁸

This accent on flourishing, especially Christian flourishing in the world, has led to a change in AGA eschatology, one that Houston and the executive attempted to formalise at the 1999 Biennial conference. As we have observed in previous chapters, an emphasis on the second coming of Christ, understood in literal premillennial terms, was one of the central elements of the pentecostal fourfold gospel, serving as an impetus to holy living and missionary activity. It was also an emphasis that fuelled eschatological speculation that sometimes verged on the ridiculous, and that had become difficult to sustain as the movement aged, and predictions time and again proved false. With the broader theological perspective of the charismatics, and with the church growth movement emphasising building projects and “flourishing” in the here and now, talk of the second coming trickled to a halt in the pentecostal “mainline.” By 1995 not a single article in the *Evangel* emphasised the Lord’s return or speculated about the details of end-times.⁷⁷⁹ Furthermore, one of the members of the national executive, John Warwick, publicly stated his belief that the millennium was not a literal period of one thousand years. Originally, the executive hoped to remove reference to the millennium from the AGA doctrinal statements, replacing the existing doctrine with a simple affirmation that “that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again as He promised.”⁷⁸⁰ At regional meetings held throughout the nation to discuss the change, it became apparent that some pastors, particularly the older “classical pentecostals,” would react badly to the proposal. In an effort to avoid disunity, the national secretary, Keith Ainge, proposed that the existing doctrine be retained, but that ordained ministers be allowed to hold a different view, provided

⁷⁷⁸ See Hillsong Church Website, <http://www.hillsong.com/emerge/bin/view.pl?sitename=emerge&page=index>, accessed 24 March 2004.

⁷⁷⁹ Based on review of *the Evangel*.

⁷⁸⁰ This statement is taken from the “What We Believe” section of the Hillsong website, <http://www.hillsong.com/church/>, accessed 12th January 2004.

they don't publicly teach against the established doctrine.⁷⁸¹ It was this position that succeeded at the 1999 conference,⁷⁸² and the movement was left in the curious position of having a doctrine that its ordained pastors did not have to accept. The debate itself made it clear that doctrine still held some importance to AGA pastors, although the conclusion reached clarifies the extent of that concern. The pragmatics of church growth mitigated against doctrinal debate.

There were no other formal doctrinal changes at this time, although it can be argued that the changing worldview of the movement is apparent in the greatly reduced emphasis on pentecostalism's distinctive doctrine on the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s there was a marked reduction in discussion about this doctrine and the gift of tongues in the *Evangel*.⁷⁸³ Furthermore, public reference to the doctrine tended to adopt the charismatic emphasis on spiritual gifts rather than the traditional emphasis on baptism in Spirit evidenced by tongues. In some cases tongues was mentioned, not as *the* evidence of baptism in the Spirit, but simply as one of the gifts of the Spirit.⁷⁸⁴ This is understandable in the context of developing ecumenism, since the pentecostal formulation is sometimes considered to be exclusive. The corollary to the doctrine of baptism in the Spirit evidenced by tongues is the implication that those who don't speak in tongues are not baptised in the Spirit. Historically, pentecostals have distinguished between the universal reception of the Spirit at conversion, and the subsequent baptism in the Spirit evidenced initially by

⁷⁸¹ Ainge, "Transition in the AGA Since 1977".

⁷⁸² Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Canberra, 1999.

⁷⁸³ This change has been traced by Benjamin Clark, "The Spirit-Baptism in the Assemblies of God in Australia," Thesis paper, Southern Cross College, Sydney, 2003.

⁷⁸⁴ The original AGA doctrine on baptism in the Holy Spirit reads, "We believe that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the bestowing of the believer with power to be an effective witness for Christ. This experience is distinct from, and subsequent to, the new birth; is received by faith, and is accompanied by the manifestation of speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, as the initial evidence."

The Hillsong "what we believe" statement on its public website reads, "We believe that in order to live the holy and fruitful lives that God intends for us, we need to be baptised in water and be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to use spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues

(<http://www.hillsong.com/church/bin/view.pl?sitename=church&page=beliefs&showAboutUs=true&howAboutUs=true>, accessed 14 May 2004).

Note that tongues is no longer evidence of baptism in the Spirit, but merely included as one of the Spiritual gifts. Hillsong are not alone in making these seemingly subtle changes to AGA doctrine. The Official AGA website actually adopts the Hillsong phraseology rather than the official doctrine, although it adds reference to tongues as the initial evidence of the Holy Spirit

(<http://www.aogaaustralia.com.au/default.asp?ContentID=1000827>, accessed 12 March 2004).

Similarly, the official website of the Assemblies of God in Queensland excludes any reference to tongues in its statement on the baptism in the Spirit

(<http://www.aogq.com.au/index.cfm?page=whatwebelieve>, accessed 24 February 2004).

tongues. But in the charismatic revival, it became apparent that some charismatics operated in the gifts of the Spirit, even though they did not speak in tongues. For this reason, and for the sake of openness to non-pentecostals, the changes to the phraseology of the doctrine of baptism in the Spirit can be understood as attempts to soften what is otherwise considered divisive language. With the decline in “public forums” for debate, however, these changes to a doctrine that is central to pentecostal ecclesial identity have occurred without public debate and theological reflection.

5.2.4. The Formation of the Australian Christian Churches

The various events and transitions that we have been describing influenced other pentecostal movements in Australia in addition to the AGA. As early as 1978 the impetus of the charismatic movement had enabled the establishment of the Australian Pentecostal Ministers Fellowship, which brought together leaders of various pentecostal and charismatic churches for the sake of increasing trust and unity.⁷⁸⁵ As the relationships amongst these different groups strengthened during the 1980s and 1990s, Brian Houston decided that the time was ripe to formalise this unity with the formation of the Australian Christian Churches (ACC). It was originally intended that the ACC would replace existing fellowship structures, and bring together pentecostal churches under a single banner.⁷⁸⁶ But many within the AGA were reluctant to disband and reform under what would (by necessity) be a broader doctrinal basis. Since the ACC was to include pentecostal and charismatic churches, it would not, for example, require affiliates to believe in the traditional pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Many AGA constituents were also reluctant to throw away their seventy year heritage, and the concomitant AGA social and political structures. Other movements had similar concerns, especially those who had retained congregational and democratic structures. Moreover, many had been formed in implicit distinction from the larger AGA and could not see the advantage of being essentially absorbed into a fellowship which erased such distinctions. Consequently, it was decided to create the ACC as an umbrella organisation, that enabled the retention of existing structures, and that instead created the fellowship at “movement”

⁷⁸⁵ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 157.

⁷⁸⁶ Ainge, “Transition in the AGA Since 1977”.

level. The ACC was launched in 2000 “with an accent on relevance,”⁷⁸⁷ and with the vision to become:

The Public Face of a Growing Church: Australian Christian Churches is an alliance of contemporary churches committed to communicating Christianity within Australian society through vibrant church services, relevant preaching, and practical community care.⁷⁸⁸

To date the affiliation has not realised the hopes of its instigators. While it currently incorporates the AGA, Apostolic Churches Australia, Bethesda Ministries International, and other smaller fellowships and independent churches, some of the more prominent pentecostal and charismatic movements have chosen not to participate. These include Christian Outreach Centre Australia, Christian City Churches, the Christian Revival Crusade movement, and the Foursquare Church. Issues of independence and autonomy, church government, and doctrinal identity have proved to be more important than was originally envisaged by ACC proponents. The impetus of the ACC was also hampered by the moral fall of its second president, Pat Mesiti. Yet whatever happens to the ACC, it is another example of developing unity within pentecostalism in Australia. It is also indicative of the nature of pentecostal churches, focused as it is on the priority of contemporary relevance and social influence.

5.3. Analysis

The various transitions within the AGA since the 1970s have been labelled by Cartledge as “the Apostolic Revolution.”⁷⁸⁹ We shall begin our analysis of this “revolution” by considering two alternative judgements about this transition. The first is the positive analysis by Cartledge, who is a representative of the AGA and an advocate for the various changes. The second is the critical judgement made by

⁷⁸⁷ Mark Vainikka, “Australian Christian Churches Launched With an Accent on Relevance,” *The Evangel Now* (April 2000): 19-21.

⁷⁸⁸ Australian Christian Churches, Website, <http://www.austChristianchurches.com.au/about.asp>, accessed 12th February 2004.

⁷⁸⁹ See the title of his book, Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*.

various foreign pentecostal movements and scholars, who advocate the retention of congregational government in local churches, and democracy in church fellowships. Noteworthy among these critics is the General Council of the Assemblies of God in America. Having reviewed these perspectives, we shall then assess the AGA narrative by taking into account the impact of the various changes at the personal and religious, social, and cultural level of the scale of values.

5.3.1. The Apostolic Revolution: Apostolic Leaders or False Apostles?

Cartledge locates the beginning of the “apostolic revolution” in Australia with the leadership changes of the 1977 conference. He accredits this revolution with the empowering of the local church over against centralised bureaucracies.⁷⁹⁰ He also applauds the defeat of congregational, “deacon possessed” churches, which he claims are reluctant to embrace change, and thereby inhibit church growth.⁷⁹¹ He endorses the requisite “anointing” of the leadership of the senior pastor, formalised in the establishment of “theocratic” church government, i.e. vesting church authority in God-appointed apostolic leaders.⁷⁹² This authority is manifest in the local church, and also in regional, state and national AGA structures, with the mega-church “apostles” taking executive leadership in the movement. For Cartledge, these changes are responsible for the remarkable growth in the AGA during the two and half decades following the “revolution.”

Cartledge justifies these changes on biblical grounds, adopting what he describes as the “principles” of Ephesians 4:11-16, where he locates a fivefold understanding of church offices (Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher). He goes on to explicate the various authorities and responsibilities of these offices. His particular concern is with apostles and prophets, which he argues have been neglected by the church. According to his reading of this passage, the apostle is “appointed by the Lord for leadership of the church at local, regional, national or international levels of influence and responsibility,”⁷⁹³ and the prophet is the “mouthpiece of God.”⁷⁹⁴ For

⁷⁹⁰ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 143-146.

⁷⁹¹ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 210.

⁷⁹² Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 229-290.

⁷⁹³ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 279.

Cartledge, these offices do not deny, but rather facilitate the priesthood and prophethood of all believers.

Either directly or indirectly, various commentators have been critical of Cartledge's conclusions. In 2001 the general presbytery of the Assemblies in God in the United States of America (AGUSA) issued a statement on apostles and prophets.⁷⁹⁵ The reason for this statement was the increasing circulation of new models of church governance similar to that proposed by Cartledge, and propagated by church growth theorist, Peter Wagner, in his series of books on the so-called "New Apostolic Paradigm."⁷⁹⁶ It was a particular threat to the AGUSA, as the points of friction between the headquarters at Springfield and the so-called "apostolic" movement tended to be with the larger "charismatic leadership" churches. Although the reason for this statement was this developing apostolic context, the basis of argument taken by the AGUSA was essentially exegetical. They argued that the New Testament usage of the term "apostle" is two-fold. First, it is used in reference to the unique authority of "the Twelve," who are eyewitnesses to the life, teaching and resurrection of the Lord, and who were called and sent by Jesus to give testimony to these events and to found the church. Apart from St Paul, who was given a unique vision of the risen Lord, and who shared the responsibility and authority of founding the church based on the teaching of Christ, the office of apostle is considered unrepeatable, with the witness of the original apostles continuing through the word of Scripture.⁷⁹⁷ The second use of the term, according to the AGUSA, is the more general, missionary usage, i.e. apostles as "sent-ones." The label "apostle" is used in this way to describe various New Testament missionaries such as Barnabas, Timothy, Andronicus and Junia. It is also used in this manner in reference to the church as a whole, which is missionary in nature, and called to continue the mission of Jesus in proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.⁷⁹⁸ This reading of the New Testament usage of the term "apostle," which is in fact common to protestant exegetes,⁷⁹⁹ leads the AGUSA to

⁷⁹⁴ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 367.

⁷⁹⁵ General Council of the Assemblies of God (USA), "Apostles and Prophets," *Official Statement by the General Presbytery* (August 2001): article online, www.ag.org, accessed 7 April 2004.

⁷⁹⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *The New Apostolic Churches* (Glendale: Regal Books, 2000); C. Peter Wagner, *Apostles and Prophets: The Foundation of the Church* (Glendale: Regal Books, 2000).

⁷⁹⁷ General Council of the Assemblies of God (USA), "Apostles and Prophets," 3-6.

⁷⁹⁸ General Council of the Assemblies of God (USA), "Apostles and Prophets," 2.

⁷⁹⁹ See Ferguson, *Church*, 301-306. Also Bloesch, *Church*, 102.

critique as “false apostles” those who wrongly take, or are given, the title “apostle,” and those who assume that apostolic office gives any individual unique authority in the church, especially over or against the congregation. For the AGUSA, the advocates of the “apostolic revolution” are not only ignoring the Scriptures, but forgetting the important notion of the priesthood of all believers that is central to pentecostalism and its universal conception of the baptism in the Spirit.⁸⁰⁰

The AGUSA is not alone in this conclusion, and various pentecostal scholars have also taken up the issue. Roger Stronstad, the prominent exegete from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, studied the usage of the term “apostle” throughout the New Testament, and similarly observes that, “other than the twelve apostles and Paul, no one else in the New Testament is ever called an apostle, except in the secondary sense of missionary or messenger.”⁸⁰¹ And even this “baker’s dozen” (Paul and the twelve), “do not govern; rather ‘they serve the ministry of the word’.”⁸⁰² He also observes that the emphasis on prophecy in the New Testament relates to its universality, rather than the establishment of any prophetic office as such. Of the current moves to adopt the so-called apostolic paradigm he says:

All too many leaders in the new Apostolic reformation fail to model Christlikeness. For example, in contrast to the reticence of Jesus to identify himself as the Messiah/Christ, and the similar reticence of the writers of the New Testament to identify others than the Twelve and Paul as apostles, the self-appointed apostles in this movement . . . cannot trumpet their “apostolic” gifting, office and/or authority loud enough or far enough. . . . Further, they lust after authority and wealth. In contrast, in the same context where Jesus denied the exercise of authority and lordship to his disciples, he affirmed that he did not come to be served but to serve (as a slave). Also, Jesus, who gave up the splendour of his divine existence (Philippians 2:5), and who modelled a lifestyle of simplicity and voluntary poverty, did not teach, “Blessed are the wealthy” but, rather, taught, “Blessed are you who are poor” (Luke 6:20). The prevalent attitudes in the new apostolic reformation movement – i.e., lack of

⁸⁰⁰ General Council of the Assemblies of God (USA), “Apostles and Prophets,” 11.

⁸⁰¹ Roger Stronstad, “A Baker’s Dozen and Many More: Observations on the Roles of Apostles and Prophets in the New Testament,” Unpublished paper, Summit Pacific College, Canada, April 2004, 13.

⁸⁰² Stronstad, “Baker’s Dozen,” 9.

reticence, and the lust for authority and wealth – could not be further from Christlikeness.⁸⁰³

Mathew Clark, who writes to resist the implementation of the new apostolic paradigm in his own pentecostal movement in South Africa, argues on exegetical grounds for the missionary nature of apostles. While he therefore affirms the continuation of apostolic ministry, he argues, contrary to Cartledge, that this ministry has little to do with ecclesial authority in the church, but rather is a label applied to those in ground breaking, church planting ministries. He then goes on to categorise these modern apostles as “bishops” in the episcopalian sense of the term. For Clark, this implementation of hierarchical structure represents a move to oppressive structures that bind the people of God.⁸⁰⁴ His argument is really another way of saying that the apostolic paradigm contradicts the principle of the priesthood of all believers.

Laurence M. Van Kleek, in his review of Cartledge’s book, restates all of the above criticisms, and also observes that the notion of modern-day apostles is not new. Earlier pentecostals, such as Donald Gee, who Cartledge includes in his list of modern day Apostles, had in fact denounced the establishment of apostolic and prophetic offices.⁸⁰⁵ As we observed in the previous chapter, the AGA had rejected the Apostolic Church precisely because it sought to abolish congregational government and vest authority in apostles and prophets. This rejection was not only because of the danger of elevating the prophetic to the status of Scripture, but also because of the importance of the principle of the priesthood of all believers.⁸⁰⁶ No structure could legitimately be established that prevented the congregation from ownership and responsibility for the church, or that restricted the universal operation of the gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy.

While there is much that is important in these various criticisms, it can be argued that the debate is occurring at cross-purposes. As we have already noted, Cartledge would deny that the offices of apostle or prophet restrict the priesthood and prophethood of

⁸⁰³ Stronstad, “Baker’s Dozen,” 25-29.

⁸⁰⁴ Mathew Clark, “Apostles or Bishops? An evaluation of the “New Apostolic Paradigm” in Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches,” Unpublished paper, Auckland Park Theological Seminary, Johannesburg, South Africa, August 1999.

⁸⁰⁵ Gee, “Holiness - Sanctification,” 6.

⁸⁰⁶ Buchanan, “Uncertain Sounds,”; Greenwood, “Testimony”, 55-56.

all believers, claiming instead that the very purpose of these ministries is to facilitate the universal gifting of the Spirit. It is also apparent that Cartledge's argument is not exegetical, but is derived primarily from his experience within the AGA.⁸⁰⁷ He is arguing on the basis of pragmatism and church growth technique, and his reference to the Ephesians principle and the offices of apostle and prophet is a creative justification for shifts that have already occurred within the AGA for practical, rather than theological, reasons.⁸⁰⁸ We have already noted, in chapter one, that biblical hermeneutics cannot be separated from communal experience and, without wishing to discuss hermeneutics further, it is noteworthy that the AGUSA might similarly be criticised (or applauded) for allowing its experience of congregational government to colour its interpretation of the biblical text. The exegetical critiques of the AGUSA and other foreign pentecostal scholars are valuable, because they help to unmask the biblical weaknesses of Cartledge's justification. Yet they do not respond to the primarily practical reasons for the AGA transitions.

One of the problems of the debate, at least insofar as it applies to the narrative of the AGA, is the focus on the term "apostle." In fact, Australian pastors have almost never referred to either themselves or others as apostles,⁸⁰⁹ and the label "apostolic revolution" is retrospective, applied by Cartledge in the 1990s to events of previous decades.⁸¹⁰ Consequently, the various critiques of apostles and prophets fail to address the underlying issues that gave rise to the changes that occurred in the AGA. These include the impact of the charismatic renewal, questions of unity and diversity, the nature of the local church's relationship with other churches, the role of the pastor and the laity within the church and the movement, issues surrounding church growth, and the need to balance the social and cultural spheres of the church.

⁸⁰⁷ Although he includes a section on "Pentecostal hermeneutics," he argues for an experiential exegesis, and therefore seeks to justify his reading of the text from his experience of the transitions in the AGA. See Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 167-178.

⁸⁰⁸ Ormerod observes that Clement engages in similar justification for the so-called divine origin of the order of ministry. See Ormerod, "Systematic Ecclesiology," 15.

⁸⁰⁹ My review of the AGA literature bears this out (although it is difficult to provide evidence of terminology that is not used!), and Cartledge himself admits as much, Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 393.

⁸¹⁰ Cartledge did speak to the 1989 Biennial Conference of the AGA on the issue of Apostles and Prophets, and in 1991 a three-part write up of his teaching was published. See David Cartledge, "Apostles and Prophets: The Need for Different Ministries," *The Evangel* 47, no. 3-5 (March 1991).

In seeking to move beyond the debate about apostles and prophets, the following analysis will assess the transitions in the AGA by taking into account their impact on the various levels of the scale of values. We shall proceed from religious and personal values, to social values, and finally to cultural values, taking this order of analysis from the timeframe of change that characterises the scale of values. While personal and religious transformation can occur quickly, and social structures develop and change over the short to medium term, cultural transition is measured in decades and even centuries.⁸¹¹ This distinction is vital in the analysis of the AGA, because it allows us to recognise that recent developments in the personal and social dimensions of the AGA are yet to be accompanied by requisite developments in the cultural level of the scale of values. This will enable us to engage in the task of constructive criticism, while recognising that the cultural parameters of the movement are far from settled.

5.3.2. Religious and Personal Transformation of the Charismatic Renewal

The first matter for consideration is the nature and impact of the charismatic renewal. Of course, it is very difficult to analyse and judge renewal and its manifestations. Dancing, singing and even prostrations are spiritual, social and symbolic expressions about which subsequent generations can make little comment, since such things have to be experienced to be understood. As we noted in chapter three, Jonathan Edwards correctly asserts that “true religion lies much in the affections, which have in a special manner a tendency to some sensible effect upon the body.”⁸¹² Edwards, writing three centuries ago, lists many of the manifestations that were present in the global and ecumenical charismatic renewal, but goes on to say that these affections and manifestations cannot be taken as a sign either for or against revival. He also observes that the fact that though some might be guilty of excess, or even impropriety or hypocrisy, this is “no certain sign” that the Spirit is not at work, since revival, and

⁸¹¹ Ormerod, “Categories for the Kingdom,” 10. This differentiation in the timeframe of the scale of values is derived from Lonergan’s analysis of individual, group and general bias. According to Lonergan cultural bias leads to a longer cycle of decline, characterised by the neglect of ideas and the focus on common sense. Lonergan, *Insight*, 226-232.

⁸¹² Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 59.

true religion in the every day, is never perfect, consisting as it does in the interaction of God with fallen humanity.⁸¹³

What we can say is that the fruit of this renewal for large numbers of people from a multitude of Christian traditions included a deeper relationship with the triune God, and reinvigorated faith, which stimulated religious and personal transformation. Furthermore, it can be argued that this religious transformation led to development in the healing vector of the scale of values. People transformed by the Spirit came to recognise the Spirit in others from diverse traditions. Some creative, intellectual and influential charismatics then sought to bring healing to the culture of denominational division that had troubled Christianity for centuries. This was brought about by challenging dogmatism, and through a process of mutual affirmation. This cultural development led to the creation of ecumenical social structures, including charismatic associations and shared events. Amongst the various pentecostal movements, this led to the creation of the Australian Pentecostal Ministers' Fellowship and, later, to the establishing of the Australian Christian Churches. It also led to AGA involvement in ecumenical ministers gatherings and shared community events at the local level. Nationally, it created new links between the AGA and other churches. Globally, it even stimulated such initiatives as the Roman Catholic / Pentecostal Dialogue that extended over a twenty five year period from 1972 to 1997.⁸¹⁴

The fact remains, however, that there are still many points of difference and much misunderstanding between all of the traditions involved in the charismatic renewal. The extent of ecumenical fellowship will depend upon shared cultural and social values, drawn out in the process of dialogue, and thereafter concretely expressed in inter-ecclesial relationships and even shared enterprise. The charismatic renewal did not achieve ecumenically all that was possible to achieve, but it did create concrete moves toward the eschatological reality of the unified church, at the very least enabling some churches to recognise the Spirit at work in other movements.

⁸¹³ Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 54.

⁸¹⁴ See chapter 1.3.3.

5.3.3. Social Change and the Move away from Democracy

Having argued that the charismatic renewal was a period of religious, personal, cultural, and social healing, there were nonetheless consequences of this renewal that require more critical analysis. In the AGA, the renewal was accompanied by rapid growth that necessitated structural change. One of the agents of this change was the logic and practice of the church growth movement, which emphasised practical and measurable evangelism, achieved through the vehicle of an efficient and effective local church. This generated a pragmatic orientation, and while we shall critically assess the implications of this pragmatism when we consider the impact on the cultural level of the scale of values, one of the valuable dimensions of this practical approach to the nature and mission of the church was the willingness to engage “the best insights of contemporary social and behavioural sciences.”⁸¹⁵

In the second chapter of this thesis we argued that the church is a single reality with multiple dimensions, including the theological and sociological. It is a divine and human institution, and by its very nature, it should incorporate the best insights of the human sciences in its thinking about itself. In focusing exegetically on the authority and status of so-called “apostles,” critics of the AGA miss the fact that the changes that have occurred are largely concerned with establishing efficient and effective structures of church leadership and organisation, which at their best are intended to empower the whole church to fulfil its mission to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God. Admittedly, the AGA’s application of the social sciences, in following the church growth movement, has emphasised the practical and tended to reject theory. It has been functionalist in orientation, eschewing conflictualism and ideological critique, and ignoring altogether more complex theories such as symbolic interactionism.⁸¹⁶ This level of theory is part of the cultural sphere, and we shall take up this issue later.

For now, it is enough to note that the AGA did benefit, at least in terms of church growth, by taking into account the insights of behavioural and organisational sciences. AGA churches were able to improve congregational leadership, develop team

⁸¹⁵ Rainer, *Church Growth*, 20.

⁸¹⁶ See chapter 2.2 for an explanation of these different approaches to the social sciences.

leadership and ministry, delegate responsibility, and encourage every congregant to discover and utilise their spiritual gifts both within and outside the church. It may be surprising to critics of the apostolic paradigm to discover that, according to the NCLS in Australia, AGA “attenders are more likely to say that they have a growing sense of belonging”⁸¹⁷ to their local church than are Christians from any other denomination. According to the NCLS, “belonging” is determined by levels of involvement in church, formal or informal roles, depth of church relationships, and satisfaction with the church’s program, all of which can be considered as dimensions of the priesthood of all believers. It is thus noteworthy that this strong sense of belonging has been accompanied by increased emphasis on leadership, and a movement away from congregational government. This suggests that Cartledge may be correct in conceiving of the universal priesthood separately from questions of church government.

Cartledge argues that moves away from democracy caused AGA growth. It is more likely the case that the increased size and number of churches, resulting from the charismatic renewal and church growth emphasis, necessitated structural change, which, in a circular fashion, then facilitated further church growth. At the local level, congregational government became increasingly cumbersome as churches increased in size. Larger churches, which had come to emphasise the importance of leadership, responded to this situation by vesting governmental authority in the senior pastor and the church board/eldership. Smaller churches, especially new church plants, adopted similar structures in anticipation of future growth. This strengthening of pastoral authority in the local church occurred at the same time as the AGA fellowship sought to increase local church autonomy. This is apparent firstly in the rescission of Article 19(a) of the AGA constitution, which had previously given the executive authority over itinerant ministry in the local church. It was also symbolised by the rejection of a full-time superintendent, and the appointment of a local church pastor as leader of the movement. Ultimately, moves away from democracy at the local level were mirrored at the regional, state, and national levels. Regional leaders were to be appointed by the state executive, and although state and national executives continue to be chosen democratically, these positions are almost exclusively held by mega-

⁸¹⁷ Kaldor, Bellamy, Powell, Correy, and Castle, *Winds of Change*, 138.

church pastors, or those from their networks. Since conference debate and discussion has ceased, these mega-church pastors or, to use Cartledge's terminology, national apostles, now effectively control the movement. They determine the nature and content of fellowship gatherings, and oversee, generally within the vehicle of their own churches, the various national ministries such as bible colleges, missionary activities, and social welfare.

The reasons for these changes are practical, arising from the speed and magnitude of the movement's growth. They represent an almost complete transition away from democratic and congregational structures at both the local and fellowship level. As we have noted, Cartledge describes these changes as divinely originated restorations of theocratic and apostolic church order. Clark, in comparison, suggests that this so-called "apostolic" model is episcopalian. He takes an entirely negative reading of the history of the development of episcopalian structures, which he categorises as hierarchical and inherently oppressive. But Clark's critique of episcopalianism overlooks the fact that churches within these traditions have developed various structures of democracy and accountability. Rather than "bottom-up" accountability to the congregation, priests are responsible to regional and global councils of bishops, to the magisterium, and to the tradition of the church. The problem for the AGA is that its new structures contain neither "bottom-up" nor "top-down" accountability. The apostolic model leaves the senior pastor, especially the mega-church pastor, accountable to almost no-one, except "God."⁸¹⁸ In chapter three we cited Doran's observation that revolutions usually "bring little more than shift of power and privilege and a changing of the guard."⁸¹⁹ It could be argued that this is true of the apostolic revolution in the AGA. The senior pastor has become the unquestionable authority in the local church, and the mega-church pastor the unquestionable power in the AGA fellowship, something which is not always to the benefit of either congregations or smaller churches.

⁸¹⁸ Where accountability extends not only to the oft-discussed moral and financial probity of the church, but also to the content of the church's message and mission.

⁸¹⁹ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 363.

Mega-churches

The elevation of the mega-church requires further analysis. In the previous chapter, we argued for an “ascending view” of ecclesiology grounded in the mission of the local church.⁸²⁰ In considering the nature and structure of the mega-church, the question that arises is, To what extent can a mega-church be considered a local church? The difficulty is that the meaning of “local church” is not unambiguous. As we noted, the term “local” has been defined geographically by Zizioulas, referring to the church in the city as distinct from multiple parishes,⁸²¹ and congregationally, as assembly, by Volf and the free churches. Yet, as we argued in chapter four, the term “local” needs to also be understood missiologically.⁸²² The mission of the church to continue the ministry of Jesus and proclaim in word and action the coming of the kingdom of God requires the church and its members to penetrate a particular locality or community. Assembly is the intra-ecclesial dimension of the local church, and multifaceted presence within the community is the missiological dimension. This occurs individually, through community and vocational relationships of church members, and corporately through the variety of local church ministries.

The mega-church, which tends to draw from throughout the city, and which assembles in a particular place, can be understood as a local church within both the city-wide and congregational definitions of “local,” although the congregational emphasis on “gathering” implies a degree of intimacy that is perhaps better achieved in the small church.⁸²³ But missiologically, the description “local church” is problematic. Stephen Fogarty argues that “people travelling to a distant church are less likely to impact their local area with the gospel, their focus is elsewhere.”⁸²⁴ This is not to say that the mega-church does not affect its particular locality, but it is to argue that it has little impact on the various localities of its dispersed constituency, and less impact in these areas than smaller “local” church communities.

⁸²⁰ See chapter 4.3.2, and Komonchak, “The Church Universal,” 30.

⁸²¹ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 251.

⁸²² See chapter 4.3.2.

⁸²³ In arguing that small churches better reflect the emphasis of Congregational Ecclesiology, Pappas and Planting suggest that, “In a big world, the small Church has remained intimate. In a fast world, the small church has remained plain. In a rational world, the small Church has kept feeling. In a mobile world, the small Church has been an anchor. In an anonymous world, the small Church calls us by name.” See Anthony Pappas and Scott Planting, *Mission: The Small Church Reaches Out* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1993), 72.

⁸²⁴ Stephen Fogarty, “More Churches,” *The Evangel* 45, no. 9 (September 1998): 28.

Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, who are seeking to develop alternative models of church for twenty first century western society, claim that traditional models of church have utilised “attractional methodology,” putting on programs and events in an effort to bring “the world to the church.” They argue for an alternate missionary methodology that seeks to “take the church to the world.” This involves the recognition that the church must permeate the local community, individually and corporately. As Frost and Hirsch argue:

The missional church is *incarnational*, not attractional, in its ecclesiology. By incarnational we mean it does not create sanctified spaces into which unbelievers must come to encounter the gospel. Rather, the missional church disassembles itself and seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who don’t yet know him.⁸²⁵

Frost and Hirsch go on to explicitly advocate another church revolution, one that moves away from institutional and hierarchical church structures.⁸²⁶ It is not within our scope to debate their proposition, but we affirm their categorisation of missional ecclesiology as being incarnational in orientation. In relation to the mega-churches, it can be argued that they are by nature attractional, drawing people from throughout the city to the “event” of church. And while “assembly” in the name of Christ and for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is essential for the life and nature of the church, this intra-ecclesial dimension exists also for the sake of the grassroots (local) missional and incarnational proclamation of the kingdom.

This is not to say that the mega-churches have no place within the AGA. Such churches are potentially able to “incarnate” city wide structures in ways that are beyond the capacity of the smaller “local” church, at least small local churches working on their own.⁸²⁷ But it is to argue that a movement based on a grass-roots understanding of the church should not prioritise the mega-church, or enable such churches to dominate the fellowship.

⁸²⁵ Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things to Come*, 12.

⁸²⁶ Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things to Come*, 16.

⁸²⁷ Although a fellowship of small churches might achieve similar effect.

In response to the increasing prominence given to mega-churches, conflictualist sociologists might ask questions such as, Whose interests are served in the mega-church dominance of national and state executive positions within the AGA and in their controlling of the various fellowship ministries?, and conversely, Who is alienated in the process of mega-church empowerment? The problem with these questions is that they assume a certain type of answer. They assume conflict of interests, and that the empowerment of one group, in this case mega-churches and their pastors, necessarily entails the defeat or subordination of other groups, such as small churches and small church pastors.

The scale of values and, in particular, the dialectic balance between limitation and transcendence at the level of society and culture, enables us to approach the same issues in a more nuanced way, and without presuppositions, even if, in some cases, we arrive at similar conclusions. We have noted repeatedly that the social level of the scale of values is ideally characterised by a dialectic between intersubjectivity, the unifying pole, and practical intelligence, the transcendent pole. The rise to prominence of the mega-church can be understood as the result of an emphasis on practical intelligence. Internally, mega-churches are able to achieve efficiencies in the economic, technological and political spheres, and the result is influential, proficient and high quality church services that cannot be matched by smaller assemblies. In the context of the fellowship, mega-churches bring economic, political and technological resources to the operation of AGA structures that are unachievable through and in smaller congregations. The result is improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in the individual assemblies and the AGA fellowship as a whole. Nevertheless, what is potentially lost is the ecclesially vital emphasis on the intersubjective dimension of the church, the recognition that intimacy within the congregation and the fellowship is as much or more important than practical achievements.

The tacit logic of this mega-church priority is that all churches should themselves be seeking to attain mega-church status. This not only ignores the relational community orientation of incarnational, grass roots, local churches, but it is an unrealistic expectation that has created casualties among the pastors of small churches.

Commenting on the pressure placed on small churches to become large churches in his Congregational Church context in the United States, Lloyd Hall says:

Consistent with underlying Congregational principles, the vast majority of our Churches are of a size to effect true community. . . . But there is an unacknowledged irony in our stance. We claim a heritage from the Apostolic Church, an *ekklesia* called out of the world. Yet conference after conference, ministerial meeting after ministerial meeting, suggests – even demands – that we be judged not by the criteria of our Lord and obedience to him but by the standards that an acquisitive and power hungry world would foist upon us.⁸²⁸

The same can be said for pentecostal churches in Australia, which are predominately small to medium sized churches. Under the prevailing culture that elevates the mega-church as the model for success, churches that may be succeeding in creating intimate communities and in incarnating the gospel in their particular location can be judged or, more likely, judge themselves as failures, unless they manage to achieve continued and substantial church growth. In his survey of ten thousand ex-pastors in Australia, Rowland Croucher observed that among “pentecostals there was a significant drop out rate: more leave the ministry than stay.”⁸²⁹ There are various reasons for this high drop-out rate, including the fact that many of those ordained within an entrepreneurial movement such as the AGA are unsuited to the task. But one of the aspects of this drop-out rate is the assumption that success in ministry equates with church growth. It is an assumption that forgets that the church is grounded in the local mission of small churches everywhere, whose success is not measured in terms of numeric growth, but in terms of community formation and obedience to the charge of incarnating Christ and His message of the kingdom in the local community.

Women in Ministry

There is a related aspect to the structural changes within the AGA, and that is the persistent exclusion of women from senior levels of ministry. In chapter three we noted the prominence of women in early pentecostalism. As Chant observes, “over

⁸²⁸ Lloyd M. Hall, “Gathered: The Relationship of Congregational Ecclesiology to the Small and Medium Sized Church,” *International Congregational Journal* 0 (2001): 108-123.

⁸²⁹ Rowland Croucher, “How Many Ex-Pastors?,” *John Mark Ministries* (2002): Article online, <http://www.pastornet.net.au/jmm/articles/8061.htm>, accessed 13 April 2004.

half the pentecostal congregations functioning by 1930 were established and led by women.”⁸³⁰ By 2001, only four percent of senior pastors were women, and there were no women on the national executive, and across the executives of the various Australian states and territories, only one female representative.⁸³¹ On the other hand, women held eighteen percent of the total number of AGA credentials, and up to forty percent of lower grade, subordinate credentials.⁸³² Consequently, although women are heavily involved in ministry within the AGA, this involvement is generally restricted to particular types of ministry (children’s work, youth ministry, assistant pastoring). In particular, women tend to be excluded from positions of church authority.

As is well-documented throughout the Christian church, the AGA are not alone in this situation.⁸³³ Yet the failure of the movement to realise gender equality in ministry is concerning for various reasons. The AGA has a heritage marked by the pioneering ministry of women. When it comes to ministry and ordination, it emphasises the priesthood of all believers and the priority of the Spirit, irrespective of gender. It has embedded female equality in ministry in its constitutional documents. In addition, its continued rhetoric is that, unlike traditional denominations, the AGA is a movement that affirms female equality and liberation. Cartledge goes as far as to claim that AGA encouragement of women in ministry is one of the reasons for the movement’s success.⁸³⁴ Unfortunately, the AGA’s history, theology and rhetoric are not matched by the current reality of female equality in the church.

One explanation for this seeming contradiction is the association of pentecostalism with fundamentalist conservative Christianity. The AGA was formed during the height of the fundamentalist / liberal controversy, and its constituency was largely conservative in orientation. Consequently, the fellowship appropriated many aspects of the fundamentalist worldview, including conservative attitudes to female roles. In

⁸³⁰ Chant, “Spirit of Pentecost,” 39.

⁸³¹ Natalie Kerr, *Report on Women Holding Credentials in the Assemblies of God in Australia* (Melbourne: National Office, Assemblies of God in Australia, 2001).

⁸³² Including “Christian Workers Certificates, and Specialized Ministries Certificates.

⁸³³ The AGA situation firstly mirrors the Assemblies of God in America (see Deborah M. Gill, “The Contemporary State of Women in Ministry in the Assemblies of God,” *Pneuma* 17, no. 1 (1995): 33-36, although the problem is common to almost every denomination.

⁸³⁴ Cartledge includes the AGA empowerment of women in ministry as one of his explanations for growth in the movement (See Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 411).

many ways, fundamentalism contradicted the experiential and spiritual orientation of radical pentecostalism,⁸³⁵ and tension between these two impulses is apparent in the paradoxical situation of female ordination: formalised equality and openness to female ministry in theory, matched by a conservative culture that ends up restricting female ordination in practice. As we observed in chapter three, female participation in (formal) pentecostal ministry in Australia declined during the movement's second generation. It can be argued that subsequent generations of Australian pentecostals, including the post-1977 revolutionaries, will continue to experience the long-term legacy of this conservative culture.

Yet this fundamentalist cultural explanation is insufficient. For the most part, the post-1977 AGA has moved beyond this fundamentalism and conservatism. Why has the movement not experienced a concomitant increase in the percentage of women in positions of authority? Jacqueline Grey suggests the problem is the "mainly masculine, AoG culture,"⁸³⁶ which derives from the present nature of AGA ministry, and the hierarchical power structures that tend to alienate women.

Various recent studies have found support for the position that women and men differ in ministry styles. Edward Lehman suggests men are more likely to use power over their congregations than women, and prefer "rational structure in decision making."⁸³⁷ According to Lehman, women, by contrast, were more likely to attempt to involve and empower their congregants to manage much of the church's business and to prefer decision making by open-ended, unstructured, and inclusive discussions and dialogue, using "intuition" as much as rationality.⁸³⁸ Similarly, the research of

⁸³⁵ Harvey Cox has observed a paradox within the pentecostal *worldview*, which he describes as a "contest between the fundamentalist and the experientialist impulse." Harvey Cox, *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty First Century* (Massachusetts: Perseus, 1995).

⁸³⁶ Jacqueline Grey, "Torn Stockings and Enculturation: Women Pastors in the Australian Assemblies of God," *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*, no. 5/6 (January 2002): online at <http://aps.webjournals.org/articles/4-1/2002/2969.htm>, accessed 14 May 2004. Jim Reiher similarly suggests that there exists within the AGA an "unconscious 'boys club'" which is both structural and cultural. See Jim Reiher, "Do Assemblies of God Churches in Victoria Really Believe in Women's Participation in Church Leadership?," *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*, no. 7 (March 2003): available online at <http://aps.webjournals.org/articles/3-1/2003/4245.htm>, accessed 14 May 2004.

⁸³⁷ Edward C. Lehman, *Gender and Work: The Case of the Clergy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 182-185.

⁸³⁸ Lehman, *Gender and Work*, 184. Studies investigating sex discrimination and female involvement in corporate life in Australia give rise to similar conclusions. According to Joan Eveline and Lorraine Hayden, "Women emphasize cohesiveness. They are much less individualistic and spend time

Barbara Finlay suggests that female ministers are more likely to seek ministry involvement in smaller churches and communities, which reflects “women’s basic desire for strong interpersonal relationships with their parishioners or clients.”⁸³⁹

Before noting the implications of these differing male and female values for the AGA, it needs to be recognised that, in the context of modern feminism, the seemingly stereotypical nature of these conclusions is controversial. It is not our purpose to engage in debates between second and third wave feminism, or the validity or otherwise of sex / gender distinctions, or the significance of biology and socialisation for differences between the sexes. Rosemary Radford Ruether distinguishes between liberal feminism, which stresses the sameness between the sexes, and romantic feminism, which stresses gender differences and complementarity. She goes on to suggest that feminist theology should affirm both positions: with liberalism, insisting that women can demonstrate the same capacities as men (and vice versa), and with romanticism, affirming the notion that values generally associated with femininity have something essential to contribute to male dominated societies. The goal of equal female participation in all levels of society is the drive toward a holistic understanding of social values for men and women, thereby moving individuals and communities beyond the strictures of stereotypically male and female values.⁸⁴⁰

Assuming the affirmation of equal capacity and gender diversity, the implications of the general differences in ministry values between men and women within the AGA are noteworthy. Recent transitions in the AGA have led to increased hierarchy, and have tended to emphasise efficiency and effectiveness in politics, economy and technology, with an attendant diminishment of the importance of intersubjectivity and relationality in the social realm. This is apparent in the shift away from

fostering an integrative culture and climate. . . . Group activities are more highly valued by women than men.” Joan Eveline and Lorraine Hayden, “Women’s Business: Connecting Leadership and Activism,” (Women’s Business, Centre for Women and Business, Discussion Paper Series: The University of Western Australia, 2000).

⁸³⁹ Barbara Finlay, “Do Men and Women Have Different Goals for Ministry? Evidence from Seminarians,” *Sociology of Religion* 57, no. 3 (1996): 311-318. See also the hypothesis of Lesley Stevens, who says women have a ‘different voice’ to men, and that in comparison to clergymen, “clergywomen share an orientation that is relational and centered on care for others.” Lesley Stevens, “Different Voice/ Different Voices: Anglican Women in Ministry,” *Review of Religious Research* 30, no. 3 (1989): 262-276.

⁸⁴⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon, 1993), 102-115.

congregationalism in the local church, and in the increasing influence of the mega-church as the ultimate vehicle of ecclesial politics, economy and technology. Since women tend to value relationality more than the practical elements of polity and economy, they tend to be alienated from these emerging structures, or to be assigned subordinated functions within these structures.⁸⁴¹ The consequence of this alienation is circular. Lack of female involvement in the higher levels of AGA structure leads increasingly to the undermining of intersubjective values, which further excludes women, and reinforces the stereotyping of gender distinctions. The result is not only discrimination against women. The movement itself loses the communal and relational emphasis that might derive from the empowerment of women, and individuals, men and women alike, are prevented from “recovering aspects of our full psychic potential that have been repressed by cultural gender stereotypes.”⁸⁴²

Summary: Social Change and the move away from democracy

In this analysis, we have noted that changed social structures have necessarily resulted from growth in the size and number of AGA churches brought about by charismatic renewal and church growth practice. We have also noted that an emphasis on the importance of leadership has resulted in a move away from democracy at both the local and fellowship level. While this has facilitated church growth, it has given rise to potential problems, including the alienation of the laity, small local churches and women. It has also created a pragmatic orientation that tends to eschew criticism and reject the need to deal with abstractions (i.e. to operate at the level of theory and values). In respect to the dialectic at the social level between intersubjectivity, the social integrator, and practical intelligence, the social operator, these transitions can be understood as bringing about an imbalance in the direction of transcendence. That is, in emphasising economic and political structures and the authority of pastor over the congregation and democratic fellowship, the movement has established dominant groups (e.g. mega-church pastors), and given rise to the possibility of “group bias” and the “shorter cycle of decline.”⁸⁴³

⁸⁴¹ Mega-churches, for example, would deny the charge that women are alienated from their structures. They would argue that women’s ministry is integral to their success. Thus, for example, Hillsong’s Women’s Conference is one of the outstanding features of that particular churches ministry. Yet the prominence of this women’s ministry has not translated into female involvement in the upper levels of leadership in the church and fellowship.

⁸⁴² Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 113.

⁸⁴³ Lonergan, *Insight*, 222-225; Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 181-183.

The structural solution to these problems is not necessarily a return to congregational government, although that is one possibility. Ormerod suggests that the mission of the church can be understood as comprising two elements. The first is intra-ecclesial, concerned with ministry and mediation of grace within the church itself, a ministry that, from Catholic perspective, is considered to be largely the responsibility of the ordained priesthood. The second is the ministry of the church to the world which, again from Catholic perspective, Ormerod identifies as the task of the laity.⁸⁴⁴ For pentecostals these distinctions are, perhaps, too rigid, since intra-ecclesial ministry is the responsibility of the whole body, in the same way that the mission to the world is the task of the whole church, ordained and laity alike.⁸⁴⁵ Yet pentecostals would not deny that intra-ecclesial ministry is made up of diverse functions that require diverse giftings. In particular, some will be gifted with ecclesial leadership, and the vesting of church government in such persons, rather than the entire congregation, does not necessarily contradict the principle of the universal priesthood and prophethood of believers. Congregational government may be a valuable symbol of this universality, but it is not an essential one. If, as we noted in chapter four, universal priesthood is concerned with intra-ecclesial ministry among the assembly, and universal prophethood with the prophetic challenge of the gospel, then there is no necessity that this universality extend to church government and administration.

While it is not our task in this thesis to predict or prescribe, it would not be beyond the realm of possibility for the AGA (unwilling, and as a result of its growth, potentially unable to return to congregational structures) to find alternate mechanisms for generating broader accountability. This would, of course, necessitate some degree of relativisation of local church and senior pastor authority, provided, as noted in the previous chapter, this relativisation occurred for the sake of strengthening the mission of the local church. In other words, if the leadership of local churches are no longer to be made formally accountable to their congregations, as has occurred in the AGA, then it is important for inter-ecclesial structures to be strengthened. As part of this

⁸⁴⁴ Ormerod, "System, History and the Theology of Ministry," 442.

⁸⁴⁵ Writing from Catholic perspective, Fiorenza makes a similar point when he asks, "do not the bishops as Christians also have social and political responsibilities? ... If the Church is the sign of God's presence and kingdom within the world, must not the whole Church exhibit this presence?", Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church* (New York: Cross Road, 1985), 205.

inter-ecclesial development, the AGA might consider facilitating the emergence of a critical, constructive and creative cosmopolis, capable of generating, sustaining and critiquing a cultural worldview that can be said to be contiguous with Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom. As we have noted in chapter two, the ecclesial cosmopolis of theologians, pastors (priests), philosophers, scientists and artists of various sorts (singers, musicians, poets, writers, painters), in dialogue with one another, with Christian tradition, and with the church in its particular context, can hold the church responsible for its ministry and message, provided it is equipped and free to do so.⁸⁴⁶ This observation leads us to an assessment of the changes in AGA culture.

5.3.4. Cultural Change, Pragmatism and the Rejection of Doctrine

In analysing the transition in AGA culture we could take various points of departure. We might begin with the issue of the demonic that was one of the elements disputed within the ranks of the AGA in the early 1970s. There is, however, little to gain in any detailed analysis of this debate. Pentecostals had always believed in the reality of Satan and the demonic, but it had never been a major element of pentecostal proclamation. For a short period of time, the charismatic renewal included prayer for deliverance of demons but, unlike the charismatic expressions of freedom in worship, singing in the Spirit, and prostrations, this focus on the demonic did not last within the AGA. Both Cartledge and Evans were later to claim that they never endorsed the possibility of the demonic possession of Christians, concluding that Christians could be influenced by demons, but not possessed.⁸⁴⁷ Furthermore, the “paranoid universe”⁸⁴⁸ of many of the charismatics who focused on demonisation did not resonate in the long term with pentecostals, whose emphasis on evangelism, church growth, and prosperity tends to generate a more positive approach to Christian living. It is also clear that both sides of the initial debate were closer than might have been supposed at the time. Both asserted the possibility of demonic possession of non-Christians, both asserted that Christians could be influenced by demons in various

⁸⁴⁶ See chapter 2.3.

⁸⁴⁷ Cartledge, “The Transitions Resulting from the 1977 Conference”; Evans, “Biographical History of Andrew Evans”.

⁸⁴⁸ Andrew Walker, “The Devil You Think You Know,” *Charismatic Renewal: The Search for a Theology*, contributors Tom Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright (London: SPCK, 1993), 86-105.

ways, whether possessed or oppressed, and both focused on the personal dimension of the demonic, ignoring the social and structural dimension that has framed much of the modern theological contemplation of the topic.⁸⁴⁹ Distinctions between “possession” and “influence” derive from a corporeal understanding of the demonic that is itself questionable, and that we shall not take up in this thesis.

It is not the theological particulars of this debate about demons that is ecclesialogically relevant, but the nature and consequences of the debate itself. On the one-hand it highlighted the importance of doctrine for “classical” pentecostals, who linked their experience of baptism in the Spirit to the pursuit of a “true” understanding of God. The problem for these pentecostals was their inability to adequately conceptualise diversity and change. This is a perhaps surprising statement, since we have argued in previous chapters that the theology and experience of baptism in the Spirit, as well as the priority of mission, acted within the AGA as forces for change and development. Yet these two change agents existed in dialectic tension with a conservative theological hermeneutic at the cultural level of the scale of values that was largely incapable of conceiving of cultural or doctrinal diversity and development. It can be argued that, as the movement and its leadership aged, by the 1960s the balance between these conservative forces and the transcendent pressures of Spirit baptism and mission had shifted toward a distortion in the cultural dialect in the direction of limitation.⁸⁵⁰ We should not overstate this distortion, since as we noted in chapter two, imbalance between limitation and transcendence is always a matter of degree. In the case of the AGA, while the tendency was toward conservatism in the 1960s and early 1970s, the seeds of change remained. As the narrative shows, when this change occurred, it was both radical and sudden.

With new ideas about demons, and church worship services incorporating wild dancing and singing, it seemed to the classic pentecostals that the charismatic renewal challenged both their doctrine and their social structure. Their response was to reject the renewal, attacking especially its theology. The “new” pentecostals responded to this criticism by prioritising spiritual experience and, at the same time, critiquing

⁸⁴⁹ See, for example, Paul Tillich’s description of angels and the demonic as structures of being, the latter claiming an ultimacy they do not possess. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Three Volumes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1:260

⁸⁵⁰ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 338.

classical pentecostals for being “bound by dead religion and irrelevant doctrine.” As Cartledge was to observe:

Many of the soundest and most Fundamental believers can talk endlessly about doctrine, can debate it, defend it, explain it, propagate it, and anathematise those who disagree, and yet still be unable to demonstrate the fact that Jesus is really alive from the dead with tangible and vital proof today. . . . Religion is embarrassed by an up to date manifestation of God’s ability and power. . . . Religion cannot handle “experience,” even experience which is authenticated by the Word. Instead it places emphasis on knowing the Word as textbook without also knowing the present power of the Risen and Glorified Christ.⁸⁵¹

The tendency for post-charismatic pentecostalism to reject doctrine can be understood and assessed from various perspectives, depending upon the meaning imbued in the term. In what is a well-known taxonomy, George Lindbeck suggests that there are three types of approaches to doctrine, which he describes as either propositionalist, experientially expressive, or culturally linguistic. The first category, propositionalism, conceives of doctrine as “propositions or truth claims about objective realities.”⁸⁵² Lindbeck argues that propositionalism is pre-modern, although, at least in its current incarnation, it is as much a response to modernity as it is premodernity, since doctrinal propositions are understood as objective (scientific) truths. These truths are based either on the certain foundation of scripture, the inspired, infallible and inerrant bible of protestant fundamentalists and some evangelicals, or the authoritative foundation of the church magisterium for certain conservative Catholics.⁸⁵³ While this model rightly affirms the importance of scripture and church dogma, as both Dulles and Ormerod observe, it has been largely rejected within contemporary theology due to its hermeneutical naivety and its questionable objectifying theory of knowledge.⁸⁵⁴ Understood in this manner, doctrine cannot account for contextuality or conceptual development, and tends to be used to set

⁸⁵¹ Cartledge, “Jesus Christ is Alive and Well,” 5.

⁸⁵² George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 16.

⁸⁵³ See Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 23 and; Heyduck, *Recovery of Doctrine*, 24

⁸⁵⁴ Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 49 and; Neil Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation* (New York: University Press of America, 2000), 8.

boundaries, and hence divide the church (consider the denominational disunity of modern Christendom).

Lindbeck's second category, experiential expressivists, which includes theologians such as Friedrich Schleiermacher and the liberal tradition, states that doctrines are "noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations."⁸⁵⁵ This approach to doctrine is also foundationalist, since it refers to the universal religious experience, and the consequence is the marginalisation of doctrine altogether. As Lindbeck notes, "there is thus at least the logical possibility that a Buddhist and a Christian might have basically the same faith, although expressed differently."⁸⁵⁶

Lindbeck's own proposal, the cultural-linguistic model, responds to postmodern critiques of foundationalism, and argues that religion *is* culture and language, that religions are:

a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought. It is not primarily an array of beliefs about the true and the good [contrary to the cognitive propositional view], or a symbolism expressive of basic attitudes, feelings, or sentiments [contrary to the experiential expressivism]. Like a culture or language, it is a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities.

For Lindbeck, doctrines are "communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude and action,"⁸⁵⁷ or similarly, "communally authoritative teachings regarding beliefs and practices that are considered essential to the identity or welfare of the group in question."⁸⁵⁸ The strength of this position is that it highlights the communal and contextual nature of doctrine, which is significant if doctrine is going to be understood as ecclesially constitutive for a unified and diverse church. The dilemma is that Lindbeck's critique of foundationalism leads him to conclude that doctrine has no real

⁸⁵⁵ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 16.

⁸⁵⁶ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 17.

⁸⁵⁷ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 18.

⁸⁵⁸ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 74.

reference, that as cultural linguistic speech doctrine cannot say anything about external, objective reality, and hence what matters is merely how that doctrine functions. But, for doctrinal language to function, it requires real reference, since the function of doctrine relates to faith, and faith, while infinitely more than rational reflection upon data and ideas, nonetheless should not preclude the latter. As Douglas Hall suggests, Christian approaches to the faith that focus entirely on relational knowledge are essentially irrational. He goes on to claim that “Christian spiritualism, from Montanism to present-day charismatic movements, manifests a tendency to eliminate rationality from belief, or even to court the irrational.”⁸⁵⁹ More importantly, for doctrinal development to occur, particularly in contexts where tradition can be said to have become unauthentic, it is essential that the subject can move beyond the cultural linguistic confines of his or her particular tradition, and this is only possible if doctrine can be seen to have real (or unreal) reference.⁸⁶⁰ This is not a lapse into propositionalism, since doctrines must also function within the community (as per Lindbeck), and since doctrines don’t simply refer to an abstract, external proposition, but to the reality of God’s history with creation (including the church).⁸⁶¹

Returning to the post-1977 AGA rejection of the earlier pentecostal doctrinaire tendency, we can, on the one-hand, affirm this stance as a rejection of propositionalist approaches to doctrine. The problem is that this critique of dogmatism did, as Hall suggests, give rise to the tendency to eliminate rationality from belief and, in its stead, prioritise experience and pragmatism. This led to an implicit understanding of doctrine which might be associated with Lindbeck’s second category, experiential expressivism, the consequence of which was the marginalisation of doctrine within the AGA.

⁸⁵⁹ Hall, *Thinking the Faith*, 384.

⁸⁶⁰ Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 203.

⁸⁶¹ Ormerod suggests that Bernard Lonergan’s account of doctrine addresses Lindbeck’s critiques, without deferring to postmodern deconstructionism (Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 200-204). According to Lonergan, doctrines have real reference since they arise out of divine revelation, both in scripture and in church tradition. Yet doctrines are contextual since “each is a product of its place and time and each meets the questions of the day for the people of the day.” (Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 296). Doctrines are also communally constitutive, since they are arrived at through conversion, and consequently can be said to promote conversion. Finally doctrines function, since they will “fulfil the communicative, effective, constitutive, and cognitive functions proper to meaning.” (Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 114). According to Lonergan, the development of doctrine relates to both history and context, and this facilitates “pluralism in the unity of faith,” or as we suggested earlier, the unity in diversity of the church.

Rather than reject doctrine *per se*, the AGA might have attempted to reframe the meaning of doctrine, recognising that doctrine is ecclesially constitutive, but also contextual, and thereby subject to development and revision so that it can meet the exigencies of diverse situations.⁸⁶² Furthermore, they might have engaged in the process of distinguishing between doctrines that are essential for Christian faith, and other beliefs that may be held to be true, but are less important. In ecumenical parlance, these distinctions have been described using the notion of “hierarchy of truths,” which affirms that:

Neither in the life nor the teaching of the whole church is everything presented on the same level. Certainly all revealed truths demand the same acceptance of faith, but according to the greater or lesser proximity that they have to the basis of the revealed mystery, they are variously placed with regard to one another and have varying connections among themselves.⁸⁶³

The notion of a “hierarchy of truths” facilitates relationships between churches, both within denominations and ecumenically. It provides a means of identifying both commonality and difference and, through the process of dialogue, facilitating convergence in previously diverse understandings of the Christian faith. While the “hierarchy of truths” is in fact complex and multidimensional, for the sake of simplicity, we can identify at least three dimensions of ecclesial culture that might be included in this hierarchy. Dogma is that aspect of Christian faith which is considered essential for all Christians and all Christian churches. Dogma may be subject to diverse expression according to the time and place, but its constitutive meaning is “catholic,” and it is normally located in the various apostolic and christological creeds of the early church. Dogma is distinguished from church doctrine, which will be constitutive for particular churches and movements or denominations. Those church doctrines which are not also dogma as such will be held to be true and important by these churches, but will not be considered essential for Christian faith or ecumenical fellowship. For pentecostals, this would include the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which pentecostals hold as being both true and constitutive for

⁸⁶² Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 319-333.

⁸⁶³ World Council of Churches, *The Notion of "Hierarchy of Truths": An Ecumenical Interpretation* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 19.

pentecostal fellowship, but about which they do not condemn or anathematise Christians of different persuasion. In addition to constitutive church doctrines, there is a multitude of other beliefs about God and His creation that constitute the faith of individuals and the culture of churches. It is the integrity of these beliefs that are explored in the tasks of systematic theology. They are developed from dogma and church doctrine, and in interaction with the various sources of theology, including the Scriptures, tradition, reason, culture and experience.⁸⁶⁴ There is great scope for diversity in these beliefs, both for reasons of diverse contexts and differences of opinion that are not considered essential either for Christian faith or church constitution.

The rejection of dogmatism by the AGA was one of the reasons for the movement's growth, since many of the charismatics that joined the AGA came from diverse traditions and theological persuasions. It can be argued that they achieved a degree of "pluralism in the unity of faith" which facilitated growth and created a broader movement.⁸⁶⁵ One of the achievements of the AGA following the 1977 revolution was an openness to "diverse unity." This was apparent when, immediately following the 1977 conference, Evans was able to find a place for both the classical and new charismatic pentecostals. It has also made possible AGA involvement with the various inter-pentecostal and broader ecumenical associations described in our earlier narrative.

Amongst other things, this openness to diversity, coupled with the pragmatism of church growth techniques and the emphasis on mission, also gave rise to an emphasis on cultural relevance. This was apparent in the AGA's accent on contemporary music, its willingness to embrace youth culture and, perhaps negatively, its adoption of prosperity theology. However, the danger for the church in the pursuit of relevance is syncretism.⁸⁶⁶ At its best, the missionary church proclaims a gospel that expresses

⁸⁶⁴ See my discussion of theological method from pentecostal perspective in my honours thesis entitled "Pentecostal Theological Method."

⁸⁶⁵ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 326-333.

⁸⁶⁶ Syncretism is a technical term used in different ways by different authors. Following the 'history of religions' school, which understood the dominant world religions as products of evolution, Hermann Gunkel made what is for many the definitive observation that "Christianity is a syncretistic religion." In comparison, Ben Meyer distinguishes between a 'strong' and 'weak' syncretism. "Syncretism in the strong sense qualifies the kind of religion that has little identity of its own, but is the sum of elements assembled from outside itself. Syncretism in the weak sense qualifies the kind of religion that, having

the revelation of the triune God in ways that are communicable to each culture and context. At its worst, this pursuit of relevant communication risks emptying the gospel of its meaning and its prophetic challenge.

The problem for the AGA was that its search for relevance, and its concomitant rejection of doctrine, ultimately led to a rejection of the value of systematic theology and critical thinking altogether. The AGA suspicion of doctrine and theology is apparent in the tendency to affirm spiritual experience above doctrine,⁸⁶⁷ to alienate theological critics,⁸⁶⁸ to insist upon positive thinking,⁸⁶⁹ and to structure the movement in such a way that theological discussion and debate was silenced. Along with the adoption of church growth principles, the result was the development of a culture of pragmatism.

Of course it makes no sense to deny the importance of the practical dimensions of a church's ministry, as though the mission of the church in proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God need have no real or practical effect on the world or within the church. Nevertheless, it is equally problematic for the church to capitulate to pragmatism. Lonergan, in his discussion of individual, group and general bias, suggests that the latter derives from the capitulation to philosophical "common sense," and leads to a long cycle of decline.⁸⁷⁰ He is here describing decline in society as a whole, but his analysis is equally applicable to a particular society such as the AGA. Komonchak notes that "it is almost of the essence of common sense to be uncritical, unaware of its own limitations. It is impatient if not intolerant of ideas and

a distinct identity of its own, borrows, transforms what is borrowed, and enhances its native identity by this borrowing and transforming." (Meyer, *Early Christians*, 186-196). For our purposes, we are here critiquing the strong sense of syncretism, and will use the term 'contextualisation' for Meyer's "syncretism in the weak sense."

⁸⁶⁷ Tom Smail suggests that this is a characteristic tendency of the charismatic renewal, since most charismatics came from denominations that emphasised doctrine, and for them "charismatic experience had to do with experience of God rather than thinking about God (Tom Smail, "The Cross and the Spirit: Towards a Theology of Renewal," *Charismatic Renewal: The Search for a Theology*, contributors Tom Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright (London: SPCK, 1993), 49-70.)

⁸⁶⁸ Cartledge observes that critics of the transitions in the AGA have been ignored by the AGA Executive (Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 400), and most of these have left the movement.

⁸⁶⁹ As we have observed, positive thinking is directly related to the prosperity gospel. As we observed in chapter one of this thesis, Houston argues that "negativity is an enemy to life," and this critique of negativity becomes a critique of critical thinking, and by extension, of theological criticism. (See Houston, *Get a Life*).

⁸⁷⁰ Lonergan, *Insight*, 225-242.

policies that require it to look beyond the immediate and the practical.”⁸⁷¹ It is possible to suggest that, despite its growth, the AGA is in danger of this sort of pragmatic bias and attendant decline.

Loneragan suggests that the solution to general bias is to be found in the cosmopolis, the artisans, writers, scholars, philosophers and theologians who are responsible for developing and critiquing the cultural values that sustain and enhance social structures.⁸⁷² This is not to say that the theoretical should replace the practical. Rather, the responsibility of the cosmopolis is to ensure the integrity of the cultural values that sustain the practice of the technological, economic, political and intersubjective elements of society.⁸⁷³ Social structures arise out of and serve the meanings and values of culture, and cosmopolitan collaboration ensures the integrity of that culture by critically engaging community practice. The problem for the AGA is that its existing structures mitigate against such cosmopolitan collaboration. The meanings and values driving the practice and structure of church are largely determined by the authority of the senior pastor and, in particular, the mega-church pastor, who has tended to be pragmatic in orientation, focused on the agenda of growing the church. Furthermore, there are few avenues for critical, theological and theoretical engagement. Prior to 1977, the biennial conference itself facilitated vigorous debate and critical thinking. The national bible college also acted as a mechanism for sustaining and challenging church culture and church faith, even if the parameters of this theological reflection were limited by the dogmatic paradigms of conservative fundamentalism. But, as is apparent in the AGA narrative, since 1977 both mechanisms have been largely silenced. Conference debate at national, state and regional levels has been greatly reduced, while the various church based colleges are largely subsumed within mega-churches, and focusing also on the pragmatic goals of church growth.

It is this dimension of the so-called apostolic revolution in the AGA that is most concerning. Doran observes that culture has two dimensions: “the everyday level of meanings and values informing a given way of life, and the reflexive or

⁸⁷¹ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 132.

⁸⁷² Lonergan, *Insight*, 238-242.

⁸⁷³ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 364-371.

superstructural level arising from scientific, philosophic, and scholarly objectifications.”⁸⁷⁴ He also argues that the modern scepticism that predominates in Western society today has led to the undermining of the importance of this superstructural dimension of culture, with the result being the dominance of materialistic, anti-intellectual, and nihilistic social structures.⁸⁷⁵ It might be plausible to make similar critiques of the emerging AGA. That is, that the scepticism of systematic theology and the undermining of the value of theory and critical reflexivity resulting from the pragmatic focus on experience and church growth, has led to a tendency toward materialistic, anti-intellectual, and, if not nihilistic, at least inwardly turned, ecclesial structures.

In the following section we shall consider a number of examples of the problematic impact of this pragmatic orientation for AGA culture, especially insofar as this has impacted the movement’s doctrine and broader understanding of Christian faith. In particular we shall consider prosperity theology, eschatology, the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and what Chant describes as “the musification of ministry.” Recognising that cultural transition occurs over the medium to long term, and that, as a result of the rapid growth and change within the AGA, this transition is likely to still be in process at this time, we shall attempt to locate both the problems and potential strengths of the cultural developments that have occurred.

5.3.5. Prosperity, Eschatology and Pneumatology

One of the more obvious cultural transitions within the AGA is the widespread appropriation of the prosperity message.⁸⁷⁶ In summary, the prosperity gospel is the idea that Jesus became poor that we might become rich, through faith, positively confessed and made real in the act of giving. The cause of giving tithes and offerings to the local church effects prosperity, not only for the sake of personal blessing, but so that the cycle of giving might be repeated. The consequence for the individual and

⁸⁷⁴ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 361.

⁸⁷⁵ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 475.

⁸⁷⁶ This prosperity doctrine is one of the many examples of the globalisation and glocalisation of religion. For a fuller discussion of the globalisation of the faith movement and the prosperity gospel, see Simon Coleman, *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

the church is increasing affluence for the sake of the increasing influence of the kingdom of God. This “gospel of blessing” is problematic and has been the subject of various criticisms, if not often within the AGA itself. It has been labelled by some as the consumer religion of this materialist age, and criticised for losing sight of the cross and Jesus’ priority for the poor. It is accused of forgetting the transcendence and sovereignty of God, suggesting instead that God is subject to the cause and effect manipulations of human faith and giving. It is charged with laying the blame for poverty at the faithlessness of the poor, and for containing no mechanism for prophetic challenge to the wealthy. Further, it is also accused of replacing the selfless Christian motivation for charity with the egoistic motivation of personal prosperity. Finally, the churches propagating the prosperity message are criticised for manipulating givers, and utilising finances not for the sake of the poor or oppressed, but for the sake of the prosperous image of the church itself.⁸⁷⁷

The problem in the AGA is that these issues have not been given an airing, except for the challenge of what Cartledge describes as “a small group of dissenters”⁸⁷⁸ who, he says, have been ignored by the executive altogether, and largely pushed out of the movement.⁸⁷⁹ The AGA no longer retains forums for discussing such issues; nor is there sufficient independence available to those who might be capable of becoming the AGA “cosmopolis” to facilitate discussion on the matter. This not only leads to an almost total absence of criticism from within the AGA itself, but it also prevents the various positive cultural developments that could arise from critical reflection on the prosperity message.

⁸⁷⁷ For a fuller explanation of the prosperity gospel, and its problems, see Allan Anderson, “The Prophetic Message in the Eschatology of Some Charismatic Churches,” *Missionalia* 15, no. 2 (1987): 72-86; Allan Anderson, “Pentecostal Approaches to Faith and Healing,” *International Review of Mission* 91, no. 363 (2002): 523-535; Charles Farah, “A Critical Analysis: The Roots and Fruits of Faith Formula Theology,” *Pneuma* 3 (1981): 3-21; Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels* (Beverly Massachusetts: Frontline, 1985); Dan McConnell, *A Different Gospel* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1990); David Milikan, “Does Jesus Make us Rich?,” *Zadok Perspectives* 80 (2003); H. Terris Neuman, “Cultic Origins of Word-Faith Theology Within the Charismatic Movement,” *Pneuma* 12 (1990): 32-55; Thomas Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright, “Revelation Knowledge’ and Knowledge of Revelation: The Faith Movement and the Question of Heresy,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 (1994): 57-77.

⁸⁷⁸ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 400.

⁸⁷⁹ See the Christian Witness Ministries Website, now based in New Zealand, <http://www.Christian-witness.org/actwelcum.html>

There is, in fact, much that could be retrieved from the prosperity gospel, if recorded in a more nuanced form. This is especially when prosperity is understood in terms of human flourishing. As Francis Schüssler Fiorenza observes, the church has too often understood the mission of Jesus in purely religious and spiritual terms, and consequently related the mission of the church to the supernatural alone, over against any social and political agenda.⁸⁸⁰ This sort of dualism is challenged by prosperity churches, which intuitively recognise that the gospel has implications for human existence in both its natural and supernatural dimensions. In previous chapters we have observed that the missional nature of the church is determined by its purpose of continuing the ministry of Jesus in the proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God. Ormerod suggests that the kingdom can be understood as:

a symbol of total human flourishing, a symbol of life as God originally intended, freed from the distortions of evil. As David Bosch puts it, Jesus' preaching of and action towards the Kingdom launches "an all-out attack on evil in all its manifestations."⁸⁸¹ While Jesus draws upon a variety of metaphors taken from every day life, the reality intended by such metaphors is one of hopes and joys fulfilled, of lives lived to the full, of evil finding no place in the human heart.⁸⁸²

There is an obvious link between this conception of the kingdom of God and Houston's reworking of the prosperity message in terms of "flourishing," evident in his book *How to Flourish In Life: principles for building a thriving, productive life*.⁸⁸³ The message of flourishing can be related to the essential unity of the cross and the resurrection, and the affirmation that God, through Jesus in the power of the Spirit, "can change your world," not only in the future but in the present. Lawrence Nwankwo argues that, at its best, pentecostal prosperity teaching is a "theology of empowerment," one that is having a positive and radical social effect in the third world.⁸⁸⁴ This is contrary to the assumption that the prosperity message ignores and

⁸⁸⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology*, 200.

⁸⁸¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 32.

⁸⁸² Ormerod, "Church: Mission, Dimensions, Structures, Ministry," 7-8.

⁸⁸³ Houston, *How To Flourish In Life*.

⁸⁸⁴ Laurence Nwankwo, "Re-viewing the Prosperity Message in the Light of a Theology of Empowerment," *10th EPCRA Conference. Leuven, Belgium* (1991): article online, <http://www.epcra.ch/papers/belgien/index.htm>, accessed 12 February 2004.

alienates the poor, a fact that is also apparent in the increasing involvement of the AGA in various social programs, whose underlying philosophy is empowerment rather than welfare, as attested by the stated goal of Hillsong's social arm, "Emerge programs help people break out of a welfare/victim mindset and connect to their value and potential." The aim of these programs is to empower people to flourish. This is not to say, however, that the prosperity gospel, even as reworked in terms of human flourishing, should not be criticised for all of the reasons already stated above. But it is to observe that such critiques should recognise the potential strengths of this message of human flourishing.

It is clear that the prosperity message relates directly to the AGA conception of the kingdom of God. The church, birthed in the message and ministry of the Lord Jesus, exists because of and for the kingdom, and its purpose is to proclaim the good news that the kingdom is at hand. At its most basic level, the kingdom of God is "God's rule." This rule is achieved through the defeat of evil and sin at the cross, and the restoration of created perfection (peace, harmony, justice, love) apparent in the first-fruits of Jesus' resurrection and the gifts of the Spirit. Debates about the timing of the kingdom have generally concluded that the kingdom is "now / not yet," realised completely in the future, but nonetheless transformative of the present. Discussion of the scope of the kingdom, its spiritual or natural dimensions, have envisaged a holistic understanding, with the rule of God understood to impact the spiritual and natural realm, the whole person, the whole of society, and the whole creation. Recent discussion has focused particularly on the social and political dimension of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom.⁸⁸⁵

While there is abundant literature on this topic, it is important to simply observe that a church's explicit or implicit conception of the kingdom will be fundamental for its

⁸⁸⁵ The literature on the kingdom of God is abundant, but some of the more prominent writers include, John Bright, *The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon, 1980) (survey of the biblical usage of the phrase); George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959) (drawing out especially the now / not yet nature of the kingdom); John Fuellenbach, *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995) (systematic survey of biblical and theological appropriations of the symbol of the kingdom, concluding that the symbol embraces the restoration of the whole of creation); Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) (drawing out the social and political dimension of Jesus' proclamation, and applying this to a critique of Western, especially American, society).

nature and proclamation. Prior to the 1970s, the AGA shared with most conservative churches the dualistic conception of the kingdom of God as being essentially spiritual. Furthermore, although the kingdom was immanent, in that the outpouring of the Spirit was testimony to Christ's immanent return, it was nonetheless still future. From this perspective, the concern of the church is not with the physical, social, and cultural dimensions of this world, but with the salvation of souls for the next. Even the message of healing, which has a "this worldly" dimension, was understood primarily as testimony to the authority of Jesus and the power of the Spirit, rather than being indicative of the potential for the kingdom to influence or transform society. Immanent premillennialist theology understands this world as essentially irredeemable, and as destined for destruction. On the basis of this worldview, Christians are encouraged to "count as worthless" the material trappings of this world, and "pointless" efforts toward society's transformation; the goal of the church is solely the evangelistic task of saving souls.⁸⁸⁶

Since the 1977 "revolution" in the AGA, changes in both the movement's attitude to prosperity and eschatology are indicative of shifts in its conception of the kingdom. Focus is very much on the manifestation of the kingdom now, and its material as well as spiritual implications. Hutchinson observes that:

Bigger congregations meant bigger churches meant, quite often, that we stopped looking for the millennium and started building for it. And let us not forget that those bigger congregations relied heavily on the after-effects of the charismatic movement. The impact on missions, which was fuelled in the nineteenth century by fervent premillennialism, has been observed in many areas. As one scholar recently noted, the ratio of missionaries to church members is higher in the Christian and Missionary Alliance and amongst the Brethren, which rejected pentecostalism, than among some of the churches which now profess it.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁶ For a fuller discussion of the impact of premillennialist theology upon pentecostal rejection of social ministry, see Murray Dempster, "Christian Social Concern in Pentecostal Perspective: Reformulating Pentecostal Eschatology," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2 (1993): 51-64; Walter J. Hollenweger, "Social Justice and the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement," *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 1076-1079; Wilson, "Pentecostal Perspectives on Eschatology," 601-605.

⁸⁸⁷ Hutchinson, "The New Thing God is Doing," 17.

Hutchinson is here concerned about the impact of changing eschatology on the missionary priority of the movement, an issue that has not yet been addressed by the fellowship itself. Yet there is both development and decline in this change in the AGA understanding of the kingdom. Positively, it has enabled the movement to broaden its understanding of what constitutes mission, and begin to appropriate its social responsibility. Negatively, it has too closely aligned the kingdom with financial prosperity, and with immediate individual blessing. It has forgotten that the kingdom is as much future as it is present, and that the challenge of that future requires the church in the present to “take up its cross and follow Jesus.” If the ministry of the church is the continuation of the ministry of Jesus in proclaiming the kingdom of God, then the church must also be prepared to take the path of the suffering servant. This is unlikely to resonate with a message that links the influence of the kingdom to affluence. Rather, the influence of the kingdom is precisely in confronting the egoism of the individual and of society, which is often manifest in the relentless pursuit of wealth. The mission of the church is to proclaim an alternate vision of human flourishing, grounded in religious transformation that is directed toward God, and toward others. As opposed to financial prosperity, self-giving is at the core of this conception of the kingdom, and identification with the poor and the oppressed is the inevitable result. Of course, identification is not enough. The church’s mission is individual and social empowerment, not the power of prosperity for the sake of affluence, but the power of freedom in Christ and through the Spirit. It is the power to experience the joy of the kingdom, and to take up the challenge of its proclamation, which is to continue the redemptive and liberative ministry of Jesus.

The various changes in the AGA’s understanding of its place in the world, and its requisite eschatological outlook, contain the seeds for a positive development in the movement’s understanding of its mission. They also contain the seeds of a decline toward materialistic, anti-intellectual, and inwardly turned ecclesial structures. The problem is that a pragmatic orientation, accompanied by the rejection of the importance of church doctrine and the critical task of systemic theology, has meant that the AGA has not been able to develop a culture that is capable of effecting and sustaining a mission that is contiguous with Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom.

Apart from prosperity and eschatology, there are other examples of the tendency toward materialistic, anti-intellectual, and inwardly-turned structures in the AGA. Chant argues that Australian pentecostalism has been beset by what he describes as “the musification of ministry.”⁸⁸⁸ He suggests that a focus on music has replaced the priority given to preaching of the Word. He also argues that congregational worship has been substituted by a professional approach to music and song that has turned churches into concerts. Further, he laments the content and style of contemporary pentecostal songs, which he says are often biblically and theologically shallow, focusing on personal aspirations and blessing rather than the gospel. Chant’s paper was delivered to the Pentecostal Charismatic Bible Colleges conference, but was widely criticised as being “old fashioned,” indicative of the inability of classical pentecostals to come to terms with the music and outlook of today’s youth.⁸⁸⁹ The paper did not receive a wider audience, and Chant has been somewhat alienated from the various power structures that are dominant in pentecostal movements in Australia today.⁸⁹⁰ The problem is that Chant has been largely unable to find forums for his concern, which is essentially that pentecostal music is materialistic, anti-intellectual, and inwardly turned. The challenge for the AGA is to find the appropriate balance between the missional drive to contemporary and relevant church music, and the integrity of the church’s proclamation of the message of the kingdom.

Another example of the problems deriving from the pragmatic orientation of “post-revolution” AGA is the shift in the movement’s understanding of, and emphasis upon, the baptism in the Spirit. The search for relevance, as well as ecumenical pressures, has resulted in the movement deemphasising the importance of the baptism in the Spirit, and moving away from the link between this baptism and the evidence of tongues. This change has not been formalised, but is nonetheless apparent in the virtual silence about the baptism in the Spirit and the gift of tongues in movement publications during the 1990s, and in the various rewordings of “what we believe” statements published in AGA promotional documents. The informal nature of these changes has allowed them to occur without debate or discussion. Ian Jagelman

⁸⁸⁸ Barry Chant, “Retuning the Church,” Paper presented at the Pentecostal Charismatic Bible College’s Conference, Canberra, 2000.

⁸⁸⁹ This observation results from my own participation in this conference.

⁸⁹⁰ This alienation is the product of Chant’s willingness over many years to criticise certain elements of Australian pentecostalism. Today, Chant is pastoring one of the most successful of the congregations of Wesley Central Mission in Sydney.

suggests that pentecostal churches in Australia are in danger of adopting the charismatic movement's understanding of tongues, which separates tongues from the baptism of the Spirit, and denies its universality. He goes on to warn the movement that:

If Pentecostal churches allow "Third Wavers" (i.e. charismatics) to penetrate their leadership structures, then the emphasis on the need for a baptism in the Spirit will be subtly undermined, and the spiritual gifts are likely to disappear gradually, as they did in many sectors of the early church.⁸⁹¹

We are not arguing that the articulation of church doctrine should necessarily remain static. On the contrary, we have already observed that doctrine is a product of both divine revelation and historical context.⁸⁹² It not only expresses revealed truth, but it serves the needs of the community, acting as "communally authoritative teachings regarding beliefs and practices that are considered essential to the identity or welfare of the group in question."⁸⁹³ As Lonergan observes, doctrines are contextual since "each is a product of its place and time and each meets the questions of the day for the people of the day."⁸⁹⁴ This means that the expression of doctrines will change according to the time and place, and this facilitates "pluralism in the unity of faith."⁸⁹⁵ The pentecostal doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit was formulated at the turn of the twentieth century, and uses language, such as the modern scientific term "evidence," that may no longer be considered appropriate in postmodern Western contexts. Nonetheless, baptism in the Spirit is central to pentecostal identity, and its understanding of the revelation of God's-self. As we have observed in previous chapters, baptism in the Spirit operates at both the cultural and social level of the scale of values with integrative and operative effect.⁸⁹⁶ It has played a prominent role in the unity among pentecostal churches, and in their missionary activity. In America and globally the baptism in the Spirit and the gift of tongues has been widely discussed, especially within the pentecostal academy, in an effort to cement this central dimension of pentecostal self-understanding, and ensure its continued relevance in

⁸⁹¹ Jagelman, "Church Growth," 36.

⁸⁹² See chapter 1.3.2.

⁸⁹³ Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 74.

⁸⁹⁴ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 296.

⁸⁹⁵ Ormerod, *Method, Meaning and Revelation*, 117.

⁸⁹⁶ See chapter 3.5.3.

contemporary society, and in the context of ecumenical fellowship.⁸⁹⁷ Yet in Australia, subtle changes to AGA conceptions of the baptism in the Spirit have occurred for pragmatic reasons without the requisite theological reflection and debate. If this situation goes unchecked, it may become necessary to ask whether the AGA can remain a “pentecostal” fellowship in any real sense.⁸⁹⁸

5.4. Conclusion

Hugh Mackay makes the following observation about Australian society

For Australian society at large, the last 20 years have been just like that [i.e. subject to unrelenting change]. The so-called Age of Anxiety is in reality nothing more than a symptom of the fact that what we are really living in is the Age of Redefinition. Since the early 1970s, there is hardly an institution or convention of Australian life which has not been subject either to serious challenge or to radical change. The social, cultural, political and economic landmarks which we have traditionally used as reference points for defining the Australian way of life have either vanished, been eroded or shifted.

The story of Australia between the early Seventies and the early Nineties is the story of a society which has been trying to cope with too much change, too quickly, and on too many fronts. Not that there was any alternative: almost all of the most significant changes have been either actively sought, or have been the inevitable consequence of other changes which we thought were desirable. . . . But taken together, the scope and scale of the changes in the last quarter of the twentieth century have been too difficult for most of us to take in our stride. . . . It has been a period in which Australians have been swept along on the tide of relentless change; when we have had to get used to the idea of

⁸⁹⁷ See the numerous treatments of the topic in *Pneuma* and the *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, many of which are cited in chapter 5.2.5.

⁸⁹⁸ If the recently formed ACC is indicative of the AGA’s theological orientation, it is noteworthy that this association already excludes classical pentecostal references to baptism in the Spirit and the gift of tongues from its basis of fellowship.

discontinuity; when we have been forced to reinvent the Australian way of life *on the run*.⁸⁹⁹

It is a description that could just as easily be applied to the AGA. At the religious and personal level, charismatic renewal and the consequent strengthening of inter-pentecostal and ecumenical relationships can be considered instances of the work of God's healing grace among the churches. The AGA has actively sought church growth, and changes in church social structures can be understood as the inevitable consequence of this desirable increase. Similarly, the AGA has been greatly enriched by the diversification resulting from its rejection of fundamentalist dogmatism. Yet it can also be said that the "tide of relentless change" has been such that the AGA has been forced to reinvent its way of being the church "on the run," and the result has been the tendency toward group bias at the social level, and general bias at the cultural level.

In terms of our methodological appropriation of the scale of values, we can categorise the AGA as presently representing a Type 4 church. At the social level, the emphasis on economic, political and technological structures is evidenced by the move away from congregationalism, the vesting of church authority in the senior pastor, and the increasing prominence of the politically influential, economically efficient, and technologically masterful mega-church. The emphasis on these social developments has given rise to a distortion in the direction of practical intelligence, and an undermining of communal intersubjective values. This has led to group bias, which tends to diminish the value of small churches, and alienate small church pastors. It has also resulted in the persistent exclusion of women from senior leadership positions within the movement, who might otherwise have been in a position to promote the communal and relational values generally prioritised by women. At the cultural level, pragmatism and the accompanying denigration of the superstructural and reflexive elements of culture has created a similar imbalance. This is evidenced by the rejection of the importance of doctrine, the unquestioned appropriation of the prosperity gospel, and the subtle but significant changes to the movement's eschatology and pneumatology, all of which has occurred without critical reflection.

⁸⁹⁹ Mackay, *Reinventing Australia*, 17-18.

As noted in previous chapters, these distortions need to be understood as matters of degree. The AGA is not without theological resources at the cultural level, including its now century-long heritage, and its global relationships with pentecostal churches that have more thoroughly explored issues of pentecostal identity. It is possible to envisage the emergence of a constructive and critical cosmopolis within pentecostalism, which would be responsible for developing and critiquing the various dimensions of AGA culture. Furthermore, local church sovereignty and diversity means that mega-church, prosperity culture and structure is not the whole story of the AGA. Finally, despite recent subtle changes to the doctrine of baptism in the Spirit, at the grassroots level the AGA is still pneumatically oriented, and this focus on the Spirit continues to function as an agent for change and unity at both the social and cultural level of the scale of values.⁹⁰⁰

⁹⁰⁰ See our analysis in chapter 3.5.3.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

We began this thesis by noting that the AGA, along with other pentecostal movements in Australia and globally, has experienced dramatic and rapid growth. With its antecedents in nineteenth century voluntarist and revivalist Christianity, the first Australian pentecostal assembly, Good News Hall, was founded in 1908. In subsequent decades, other pentecostal congregations were established throughout the nation and, in the late 1920s and 1930s, these largely independent assemblies began to formalise their inter-ecclesial structures. In 1937 the AGA was formed, with 38 assemblies and a membership of 1,482 people. By 1970, the fellowship had grown to over 100 churches with a constituency in excess of 7,000. By the turn of the twenty first century, the AGA had grown to almost 1,000 churches and 155,000 members.⁹⁰¹ It is the ecclesiological changes that have accompanied this rapid growth that have motivated this thesis. Our purpose has been to document, analyse and assess the ecclesiological transitions of Australian pentecostalism and, in particular, the AGA.

6.2. Summary of Ecclesiological Method

Since the object of analysis is AGA churches, this thesis falls within the rubric of ecclesiology. Yet, methodologically, we have adopted a potentially controversial approach to the ecclesiological discipline. Some theologians will suggest that we have been writing history and sociology rather than ecclesiology, although it is just as likely that both historians and sociologists would distinguish this work from that which normally lies within the traditional parameters of their disciplines. It is these methodological concerns that framed much of our argument in chapters one and two.

⁹⁰¹ See Appendix 1, The Growth of the Assemblies of God in Australia, Chart 1 & 2.

6.2.1. Idealist Ecclesiologies

In chapter one, we considered some of the traditional approaches to ecclesiology. For illustrative purposes, we reviewed the ecclesiologies of various pentecostal scholars, including the biblical ecclesiologies of Michael Dusing and Melvin Hodges, the trinitarian ecclesiology of Miroslav Volf, and the ecumenical ecclesiology arising from the formal dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and pentecostalism. Not only do these approaches represent the current pentecostal conceptions of the church, but their methods are also representative of the typical approaches to ecclesiology more generally, which tend to be either biblically focused, or more obviously theological, drawing particularly on trinitarian notions of *communio*, or dialogical and ecumenical.

As we observed, pentecostal authors adopting the biblically focused method generally understand pentecostal churches in restorationist terms, as the restoration of the New Testament church. The problem is not only that this approach fails to account for the cultural and social distance between the church of the early centuries and that of the twentieth, but that it also misunderstands the ecclesial diversity and development that is apparent in the New Testament writings. There is no single New Testament ecclesiology, and the fact of ecclesiological diversity and development in the New Testament stands as an implicit critique of any attempt to restore ancient church culture and structure. That is not to say that the Scriptures are unimportant for ecclesiology. The story of the church, in all of its historical developments and geographical movements, can be understood as the continuation of the biblical narrative. Thus, as Grenz and Franke assert, “the Spirit appropriates the biblical text so as to fashion a community that lives the paradigmatic biblical narrative in the contemporary context.”⁹⁰² Consequently, the biblical task of an ecclesiologist will be to consider the ways in which particular communities have conceived of their participation as the continuation of that narrative. The ecclesiologist will explore and critique the manner in which faith communities appropriate, develop and contextualise biblical themes and metaphors, at different stages of their historical development, and in different cultural and social contexts. The Scriptures are

⁹⁰² Grenz and Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, 91.

therefore ecclesiologicaly important, but the ecclesiologicalist will need to go beyond the biblicist method.

The second type of ecclesiological method explored in chapter one involves the identification of theological ideals and foundations. In recent decades, one of the more prominent theological foundations for understanding the church has been trinitarian theology, and its derivative *communio* ecclesiology. From this perspective, the “trinitarian fellowship of the three divine persons is a model for true human community, which is both to reflect and to participate in God’s own trinitarian life.”⁹⁰³ Understood in this manner, the very nature of the triune God has implications for the ideal nature and structure of all human communities, and especially for the church.

For Volf, who appropriates and develops the logic of social trinitarianism, the church can reflect the triune God precisely because “the Son indwells human beings through the Spirit, . . . *the unity of the church is grounded in the interiority of the Spirit.*”⁹⁰⁴ In other words, through the mutual indwelling of the Spirit, humans can be empowered to love and to selflessness, and “can embrace or ‘enter empathetically’ into the other.”⁹⁰⁵ In so doing the Christian community becomes a mirror of the triune God. For Volf, such a community will be categorised by mutual self-giving and receiving in such a way that the uniqueness of each person is not lost, but enhanced. Furthermore, “dependency, helplessness and servitude” are open to critique and change, and “the more a church is characterized by symmetrical and decentralized distribution of power and freely affirmed interaction, the more will it correspond to the trinitarian communion.”⁹⁰⁶

There is much that is of value in *communio* ecclesiology, including its emphasis on mutuality and on unity in diversity and, thereby, its capacity to function ecumenically. Yet this advantage also highlights the problems of trinitarian analogies in application to the church. Volf uses social trinitarianism to justify non-hierarchical free church structures. Yet theologians from other traditions, including Volf’s dialogue partners,

⁹⁰³ Bauckham, *Jürgen Moltmann*, 197.

⁹⁰⁴ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 213. Italics in original.

⁹⁰⁵ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 211.

⁹⁰⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 192, 236.

Ratzinger and Zizioulas, use trinitarian theology to justify very different church traditions. If a similarly conceived model can support ecclesial cultures and structures across the ecumenical spectrum, then one is forced to conclude that the model has little impact on the concrete reality of actual churches. The core of the problem is the failure to adequately differentiate between divine and human persons and relationships. Human communities, including churches, are historically grounded, and framed by culture and social structure, none of which is accounted for in trinitarian ecclesiology. In fact, *communio* ecclesiology shares this weakness with biblicist approaches. In both cases, the ecclesiology is idealistic, and tends to “reflect upon the church in abstraction from its concrete identity,”⁹⁰⁷ locating the essence of the church in either the ideal of first century Christianity or, alternatively, the ideal of an eschatological, perichoretic community, reflecting the triune God. The Scriptures, and theological notions of the trinity, may provide useful models and metaphors for conceiving of church unity and diversity, but systematic ecclesiology needs to account for more than just ecclesial ideals.

The final approach to ecclesiology that we considered in chapter one is the dialogical method, a comparative ecclesiology that draws its impetus from ecumenism, and which seeks to highlight the similarities, differences, contributions and potential weaknesses of various ecclesial traditions. Ecumenical dialogue is not only a work of the Spirit in realising the unity of the church, but it also provides participants with a means of clarifying and broadening ecclesial self-definition. Effective dialogue, however, involves the encounter of the pre-existing ecclesiological framework of participants, and this creates a problem for Australian pentecostals, who have not yet formulated an explicit pentecostal ecclesiology. Dialogue forms part of the ecclesiological task, but the very nature of such dialogue necessitates a concrete ecclesiological method capable of drawing out the ecclesial self-understanding of particular church communities.

⁹⁰⁷ Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life*, 26.

6.2.2. Concrete Ecclesiology: theological, historical, sociological

Having reviewed the relatively sparse pentecostal ecclesiological literature, and having critiqued some of the traditional approaches to the ecclesiological task, in chapter two we sought to explicate a method that would enable us to identify and analyse the specific ecclesiology of AGA churches. For this purpose, we adopted Komonchak's heuristic definition of church:

The object of ecclesiology may be described as the set (or sets) of experiences, understandings, symbols, words, judgements, statements, decisions, actions, relationships, and institutions which distinguish the group of people called "the Church."⁹⁰⁸

This definition requires the ecclesiologist to go beyond the reductionism of idealist approaches, and to recognise that the church realises its identity and mission historically. A concrete ecclesiology will (as we have sought to do here) narrate the story of the church, from its origins until the present, with perhaps intimations into the future.⁹⁰⁹ In particular, it will be concerned with ecclesially constitutive history: with the experiences, understandings, symbols, words, judgements, statements, decisions, actions, relationships, and institutions which define and distinguish churches. This ecclesially constitutive history can be identified in the history of explicit theological reflection upon the church and, implicitly, in the story of the church since, as Komonchak suggests, "a notion of the Church can be recognized even when the Church has not been made the object of explicit attention."⁹¹⁰

The affirmation of the historical dimension of ecclesiology is what gave rise to the narrative portions of this thesis. As we have already observed, theological purists may well argue that this narrative, which forms a significant part of chapters three, four and five, falls within the rubric of history and not ecclesiology. Yet such critique is reductionist, since the object of ecclesiology includes historically located ecclesial

⁹⁰⁸ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 57.

⁹⁰⁹ Ormerod, "Systematic Ecclesiology," 6.

⁹¹⁰ Komonchak, *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, 68.

identity, as much as it does biblical and theological ideals. The importance of history in this particular thesis is magnified by the fact that the story of the AGA has not yet been investigated or told in any definitive way. Consequently, the narrational sections of the thesis forms part of the contribution of this work to corpus of academic knowledge.

Having noted the importance of history for ecclesiology, we also observed that ecclesiology involves more than just history. That is, ecclesiologists are concerned with more than just the telling of the story of the church. While they will seek to narrate the history of churches as objectively as possible, they will also make judgements about that history, assessing what is “moving forward in particular groups at particular times,” positively and negatively, in decline or redemption.⁹¹¹ It is this aspect of the task that makes the analysis of the church theological and, as argued in chapter two, sociological. This is because the church is a single reality with multiple dimensions. It is both a divine and human institution and, since this is so, ecclesiology will need to appropriate the human sciences as well as theological categories if it is to properly understand its object. Once again, this is an assertion that is potentially controversial, and that leaves this thesis open to the criticism that it is a work of sociology rather than ecclesiology. But such methodological purism ignores the fact that the church is a human society as much as it is a divinely ordained community. Since we have striven to avoid dealing with a mere abstraction (as distinct from idealist ecclesiologies), it has been necessary for us to incorporate sociology into our analysis.

The difficulty is that, like theology, sociology is not a unified discipline, and different sociological methods are based on particular assumptions, and thereby lead to certain types of conclusions. Consequently, theologians seeking to utilise the tools of sociology in the analysis of church will need to critically examine the assumptions and methods of alternate sociological approaches. For this reason, in chapter two, we analysed some of the different types of sociological analysis, including positivism, functionalism, voluntarism and intentionalism.

⁹¹¹ Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 178.

It is beyond our present purposes to restate this survey of sociological method, except to say that we have attempted to appropriate the insight of various methods. The approach adopted in this thesis has been particularly informed by the writings of Lonerganian scholars, Joseph Komonchak, Robert Doran and Neil Ormerod. We observed that social development occurs in the dialectic tension between transcendence and limitation. Limitative forces are those which encourage integration and harmony. Transcendent forces are those which stimulate change and development. In society, these two forces exist in dialectic tension, whereby social development occurs by way of the relentless transformation of integrators by operators. Operators “transform the present situation in the direction of some normative transcendence.”⁹¹² In highlighting this dialectic tension, we drew on the insight of both functionalism, which emphasises categories of harmony and integration, and conflictualism, which provides categories for understanding the operator, and thereby explaining change. We have, nonetheless, attempted to avoid the false assumptions of both alternatives: against functionalism, by recognising that social harmony may sometimes mask class oppression; against conflictualism, by being careful not to assume that society is necessarily characterised by an ontology of violence.

We also adopted Lonergan’s notion of the scale of values to observe that the dialectic between transcendence and harmony occurs in various communal dimensions. Society can be understood as comprising a scale of values, consisting of “vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values.”⁹¹³ Vital values are those values essential to life and well-being at its most basic level. These vital values are secured by the social order, through the harmony engendered by intersubjective spontaneity (the bonds of family and friendship), and through the transformative nature of technology, economy and politics.⁹¹⁴ Cultural values are the meanings, orientations and worldviews that inform, uphold and challenge social values and structures.⁹¹⁵ Once again, these cultural values exist in dialectic tension, with those values supporting social stability representing the integrative pole of culture, and those transforming the status quo, the

⁹¹² Ormerod, “Theology and the Human Sciences,” 10. These categories are also explicated by Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. Doran’s analysis is itself a development of the work of Lonergan.

⁹¹³ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 94.

⁹¹⁴ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 359-362.

⁹¹⁵ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 94.

operative pole. These cultural values emerge from the artistic, literary, scientific, scholarly, philosophical and theological labour of the “cosmopolis,”⁹¹⁶ and are thereby dependent upon personal values and integrity. Finally, personal integrity, given the problem of evil, is dependent upon religious values, which facilitate individual conversion, and thereby impact culture and society.

In bringing together the dialectical tension of unity and transcendence, operating at the different levels of the scale of values, we are able to conceptualise an explanation of social development. This provides us with a heuristic tool that can be applied to society in general, as well “church societies,” which can also be understood in terms of religious, personal, cultural, social and vital values. The dialectic tension between harmony and transcendence is particularly apparent in churches, which emphasise unity by way of creedal designations of the church as “one, holy, catholic and apostolic,” and through unifying metaphors, such as those stressed by *communio* ecclesiologies. At the same time, the revelation of the transcendent nature of God encourages ecclesial change, as does the accent on the eschatological orientation of the church, and her missionary nature.

The story of the church is much more than just a story of cohesive development, of the balance between transcendence and limitation. In addition to ecclesial development, there is also ecclesial decline. Sin is as much a reality for the church as it is for any human community. With this in mind, we concluded our methodological construction in chapter two by appropriating Ormerod’s four church anti-types, which categorise various types of distortions or breakdowns in the interaction between transcendence and limitation. Type 1, classical conservative, occurs where there is a distortion of both the social and cultural dialects in the direction of limitation.⁹¹⁷ In this type there is resistance to change and an inability to contextualise, which results from an emphasis on fixed tradition at the level of culture, and rigid institutional structures at the social level of the scale of values. Type 2, neo conservative, “is the distortion of the cultural dialectic in the direction of limitation and the social dialectic

⁹¹⁶ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 497.

⁹¹⁷ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 337. This might be understood as the predominance of functionalist ideology.

in terms of transcendence.”⁹¹⁸ This type is culturally conservative but, at the social level, there exists a willingness to adapt to new technologies, new habits in the economy, and new political structures. Type 3, semi-progressive churches, are the opposite of Type 2 communities. At the cultural level, they exhibit a distortion in the direction of transcendence, and in the social level, a distortion in the direction of limitation.⁹¹⁹ A community of this type will be suspicious of authoritative tradition and quick to take on new theologies, yet will maintain traditional social structures and forms. Type 4, totally progressive churches, display a distortion in the direction of transcendence at both the cultural and social level. Such churches will eschew traditional church culture and doctrine, and be ready to dispense with traditional structures and forms.

In respect to each type, it is important to note that imbalance between limitation and transcendence is always a matter of degree. The greater the degree of distortion, the more likely it is that ecclesial society will break down. Extreme distortion at the level of culture will result in cultural breakdown,⁹²⁰ and extreme distortion at the social level will lead to schism. Furthermore, it is likely that churches will alternate among types over time. While Type 1 is the most entrenched, all the other Types emphasise some degree of change, and will therefore be subject to shifts in the balance between transcendence and limitation.

6.3. Summary of Results

The method outlined in chapter two and summarised above formed the basis of our exploration into the ecclesiology of the AGA in chapters three to five. In line with this methodological construction, each chapter began with the narrative of particular periods in the movement’s history, focusing especially on times of ecclesial transition and development. These narrative sections not only related a story that has, largely, remained untold, but they also sought to draw out the explicit and implicit elements of

⁹¹⁸ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 338.

⁹¹⁹ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 339.

⁹²⁰ Which in this thesis has been labeled “heresy.” In this context heresy is not determined over against orthodoxy, and thereby term of politics and authority, but is rather representative of the breakdown in the dialectic of transcendence and limitation at the level of culture.

AGA ecclesiology. In each chapter, narrative is followed by analysis which, firstly, clarifies central aspects of the developing ecclesiology and, secondly, attempts to assess what is moving forward, positively and negatively. This assessment is framed around the scale of values, focusing particularly on church cultural and social values. The analysis is theological, since cultural values require us to consider church doctrine, and to account for the integrative and operative dimensions of ecclesial worldview, much of which is derived from explicit and implicit theological reflection. It is also sociological, since social structures sustain church culture and form the basis of church institutions. The dialectic balance between transcendence and limitation, and categorisation by way of the fourfold anti-types, provides us with a heuristic tool for assessing progress and decline in each stage of the movement's history.

6.3.1. Pre-cursors to AGA, 1800s to 1930s

Chapter three documented the transitions from voluntarism to pentecostal faith missions to pentecostal churches. The emergence of global pentecostalism, in all of its indigenous expressions, entailed the coalescence of the diverse streams of voluntarist and revivalist Christianity by way of the shared experience of baptism in the Spirit. In the nineteenth century, voluntarist movements had been marked by hunger for revival. This emphasis on the individual experience of the Spirit, arising in the context of the enlightenment's affirmation of individual autonomy, gave rise to the democratisation of Christianity and free church ecclesiology. Voluntarism tended to reject traditional authority, organisation and leadership, and affirm egalitarianism and lay empowerment.⁹²¹ It also eschewed centralised structures, and elevated the priority and autonomy of the local church. Church unity, rather than being institutional, was understood in mystical terms, to be derived by way of shared individual spirituality. Described by Fiedler under the seemingly oxymoronic label "individual unity,"⁹²² the "oneness" of the church was understood to be a secret work of the Holy Spirit that overrode the divisions supposedly generated by church order and church doctrine, which were thereby rendered superfluous to ecclesiology.

⁹²¹ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 3-16. Also Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*.

⁹²² Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, 169-209.

Voluntarism saw the rise of bewilderingly diverse church cultures and structures. Yet this diversity tended to be characterised by some common elements. These included a restorationist or primitivist inclination, which involved “the impulse to restore the primitive or original order of things as revealed in Scripture, free from the accretions of church history and tradition.”⁹²³ It also included an emphasis on individual salvation, a holiness orientation derived from Wesleyanism, prayer for miraculous healing, and intense end-time speculation arising from literalistic readings of apocalyptic Scriptures. These four aspects of voluntarist proclamation become known as the “fourfold gospel.”

Voluntarist Christianity needs to be understood in the context of the rapid and wide-ranging cultural and social changes of the enlightenment. Positively, willingness to appropriate cultural and social changes resulted in the missionary expansion of voluntarist Christian movements. It also saw the empowering of voices that had long been excluded from traditional power structures, going some way toward the liberation of oppressed classes, races and genders. Nonetheless, voluntarist Christianity can be understood as a Type 4, totally progressive church, unbalanced in the direction of transcendence at both the cultural and social spheres of the scale of values. While at the cultural level, its appropriation of the worldview of enlightenment individualism, and its rejection of traditional ecclesial culture, facilitated radical ecclesial change, it also gave rise to the persistent danger of heresy (i.e. cultural breakdown). Furthermore, while the incorporation of democratic social structures empowered individuals, it also created controversy and schism over a variety of issues, and gave rise to the division and denominationalisation of Christianity. While understandable in its context, and praiseworthy in terms of individual empowerment, we must, nonetheless, acknowledge its divisive consequences.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, many voluntarist Christians throughout the world experienced the sparks of revival, distinguished particularly by the outpouring of the Spirit and the gift of tongues. Finding their symbolic identity through the envisioning of continuity with the revival that birthed the Apostolic

⁹²³ Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith*, 12.

Church (see Acts 2), they took the label “Pentecostal,” and emphasised the experience and theology of baptism in the Spirit. As a coalescence of the various streams of voluntarism, early pentecostalism incorporated many of the cultural and social dimensions of these movements. It emphasised individual spirituality, rejected tradition and historical doctrinal formulations, and advocated local church autonomy. The notion of “individual unity” minimalised ecclesiological formulation, and hence early pentecostals can be said to have formed faith missions rather than churches.

Like voluntarism, early pentecostalism can be categorised in terms of Type 4 distortion in the direction of transcendence at the level of culture and social structure (culturally and socially radical, and open to heretical and schismatic tendencies).⁹²⁴ Yet the experience and theology of baptism in the Spirit created new means of achieving harmony and unity. The notion of baptism in the Spirit harnessed the voluntarist hunger for revival, an eschatologically-driven missionary priority, and emphasis on lay empowerment and egalitarianism to stimulate the transcendent dimension at the cultural level of the scale of values. Yet, unlike many voluntarist movements, the pentecostal capacity for integration rested on cultural values that derived from the shared experience of the baptism in the Spirit. The codification of this experience into the pentecostal doctrine of the Spirit created a powerful symbol of unity, facilitating universal empowerment for people regardless of gender, race and class and, over time, allowing the unification of previously autonomous congregations. At the social level of the scale of values, the fledgling pentecostal movement inherited the voluntarist emphasis on autonomy, and its early congregations were unstructured and tended to eschew organisation, doctrine and tradition. Yet, once again, their capacity for integration at the social level rested on the intersubjective experience of the baptism in the Spirit, promoted by the various pentecostal journals, and the ministry of travelling evangelists. Over time the result was a transition from unstructured and independent faith mission assemblies to more formal ecclesial structures, and the formation of various pentecostal church affiliations, including the AGA.

6.3.2. The Formation of the AGA, 1930s to 1960s

⁹²⁴ i.e. heresy as cultural breakdown.

In chapter four we narrated the formation of the AGA, in which process the movement took up a number of ecclesially constitutive issues. The first matter addressed during this period was the nature of the relationships among churches, or between the local church and centralised bodies. Following the free church model, the AGA adopted an “ecclesiology from below,” which grounds ecclesiology in the local church, and which derives from the priority of local assembly and the local task of mission. At the same time, the AGA recognised that the mission of the local church gave rise to the requisite priority of united fellowship among churches. Unity in fellowship enabled the local church to ensure the integrity of its doctrine, and to work with others in the tasks of training workers, sending missionaries, and planting churches. This necessarily entailed the relativisation of local church autonomy although, ideally, centralised structures existed not for their own sake, but for the purpose of strengthening the local church. The united fellowship of the AGA was thus considered a fellowship of churches rather than “the” or “a” church.

The second issue addressed in the formalising of the AGA was the role of the pastor, especially in the context of the universal priesthood and prophethood of believers. For the AGA, the primary focus of the pastor’s role was community leadership. While at first glance this represents a substantial distinction from traditional conceptions of the sacramental nature of the priesthood, or from the protestant emphasis on the minister’s responsibility for preaching the word, in fact, the pentecostal emphasis on leadership incorporates these functions. The AGA pastor is involved in spiritual leadership, in community organisation, and in the task of preaching and teaching. Yet these functions are not the pastor’s alone but, rather, s/he is responsible for encouraging the priesthood of all believers in taking on the various internal responsibilities of the church, and motivating the whole church for the prophetic task of proclaiming the kingdom of God. This universality is derived from the pneumatological orientation of pentecostal ecclesiology.

In terms of the scale of values, the pentecostal movement has been described by Ormerod as a Type 2 church, unbalanced in the direction of limitation in the cultural sphere, and transcendence in the social sphere.⁹²⁵ It is true that the formation of the

⁹²⁵ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 338.

AGA formalised a relatively conservative and traditional understanding of the Christian faith. This conservative worldview was further reinforced by the formation of the AGA fellowship, which emphasised unity and mutual submission, and the relativisation of local church autonomy. These integrative elements helped develop and sustain a conservative culture within the AGA, but they were moderated by the invigorating experience and understanding of baptism in the Spirit, as well as the movement's missionary priority. As our narrative revealed, the AGA was capable of developing its culture and changing its doctrine when it became missiologically and contextually important, such as was the case in dealing with questions of polygamy in PNG, and of military service in the context of the WWII.

Ormerod is also correct in his observation that pentecostals have an “innovative community life” that tends toward a distortion in the direction of transcendence at the social level.⁹²⁶ The AGA has shown itself quick to appropriate new techniques and structures, leaving the social dimension open to radical change, and creating the tendency to schism. Yet it needs to be recognised that this openness to social change was driven by the priority of mission, and the desire to create a church that is contextually relevant. Also, the development of the AGA fellowship was based on, and enhanced by, intersubjective relationships stimulated by the shared experience of baptism in the Spirit. This generated some degree of dialectical balance in the social sphere, with the operative forces of change kept in equilibrium by the strong sense of community in the Spirit. In other words, change was possible without schism. Furthermore, the seemingly social radicalism of the AGA coincided with a holiness theology that gave rise to many conservative social practices (e.g. the rejection of the cinema and dancing, and conservative clothing). This created something of a social paradox, possibly even a contradictory dialectic. The AGA was a movement that was world-denying and sometimes backward, and yet open to technological innovation.

6.3.3. Growth, Controversy and Decentralisation, 1960s to present

In chapter five we contemplated the short and longer term impact of the charismatic renewal on the AGA, as well as the movements search for cultural relevance. The movement experienced internal tension related to the impact of the charismatic

⁹²⁶ Ormerod, “Church, Anti-Types and Ordained Ministry,” 338.

movement on pentecostal identity, tradition, and structure. This tension was removed (or at least hidden) by the so-called “apostolic-revolution,” after which the movement experienced remarkable growth that stimulated change at all levels of the scale of values. At the personal and religious level, the faith of large numbers of Christians from all denominations was reinvigorated by the transforming power of the Spirit. The healing impact of this personal transformation was readily apparent in increasing ecumenical openness, generating a broader and more accepting culture in numerous denominations and churches, and stimulating social relationships that would have been unheard of in previous generations.

Despite these benefits of the renewal, we have argued that the AGA has moved toward becoming a Type 4 church, distorted in the direction of transcendence in both the social and cultural spheres. Church growth elicited the need for practical developments. At the social level, the AGA began to move away from congregational, democratic structures, increasing the existing emphasis on the importance of pastoral leadership. New and increased powers were given to senior pastors at the same time as local church autonomy was increased. This allowed for churches to develop rapidly and respond quickly to changes in Australian society, but it also created a danger in terms of a lack of pastoral accountability, either to the congregation or to the united fellowship. This increased hierarchy at the local level was mirrored at the level of the AGA fellowship, where centralised authority was given over to mega-church pastors. These changes created organisational efficiencies. However, we also argued that the dominance of the mega-church is antithetical to the grassroots and incarnational orientation of AGA ecclesiology, and that this has led to the disempowering of various groups within the movement. In particular, the AGA has tended to silence the voices of congregations, small churches and women. The problem with this disempowerment is not, as conflictualists suggest, that institutional authorities serve only their own interests, and oppress those without ecclesial power. On the contrary, those in positions of authority in the AGA have attempted to act with altruistic intent, and have achieved institutional efficiencies that provided benefits to the movement as a whole. The real problem is that the groups that have been disempowered are those that tend to emphasise the intersubjective dimensions of ecclesiology. Their exclusion from institutional structures has led to the prioritising of practical over interpersonal values.

At the cultural level, the pragmatic orientation of the church growth movement has restricted the AGA's capacity to adequately develop its worldview in response to its changing situation. Critical reflection has been eschewed, and the result has been the unquestioned adoption of the prosperity doctrine, which derives from Word of Faith influences and the syncretistic tendencies coinciding with the relentless pursuit of "relevance." Along with other theological transitions, there has also been the loss of long held pentecostal commitments to the fourfold gospel. Rapid change should, ideally, be accompanied by sustained and vigorous critical reflection. This has not occurred within the AGA because, in addition to adopting pragmatism and thereby denying the importance of theory, the 1977 AGA "revolutionaries" rejected outright the perspective of the pre-1970 generation of AGA ministers and, similarly, alienated other voices who might have been capable of stimulating cultural discussion and debate.

6.4. Intimations for the Future of the AGA

The primary aim of this thesis has been to describe and assess the ecclesiological developments that have occurred in the AGA during the course of the twentieth century. Having completed this task, we are now in a position to tentatively intimate some potential trajectories for the movement as it enters the twenty first century.⁹²⁷

In the light of the fourfold anti-types that frame our analysis, we have suggested that the AGA is presently in danger of both cultural and social breakdown in the direction of transcendence. Given that very little of the movement's energies are presently directed at developing its cultural sphere, especially in prioritising the importance of systematic theology in all its historical, biblical, philosophical, pastoral and practical dimensions, the possibility of both localised and fellowship-wide distortions in its proclamation of the kingdom of God, of various types and degrees, increases with time. At the social level, the potential for schism may seem unlikely, given the unity

⁹²⁷ As we observed in chapter one, the future is impossible to predict, given divine and human creativity, as well as the unpredictability of evil. Nonetheless, on the basis of past and present trends, it may be possible for us to intimate some potential future trajectories, and also suggest possible changes.

that has prevailed to date within the AGA, and the unifying moves that are apparent in the formation of such organisations as the Australian Christian Churches. Indeed, one of the factors that has prevented schism has been increasing acceptance of diversity, and minimalist intervention by centralised authorities in the affairs of the local church. Yet in reality, the seeming unity within the AGA may be partially the result of the silencing of disaffected voices. In individual congregations, dissatisfied members may no longer be entitled to speak at annual general meetings, but they are entitled to leave the church. According to the NCLS, pentecostal churches in Australia have the largest “back-door” of any tradition, and attenders are more likely to have left through dissatisfaction than for any other reason.⁹²⁸ This matter should be a concern to the AGA, whether or not “newcomers” continue to outnumber those leaving. In respect to the fellowship itself, reduced debate at national and state conferences may seem to indicate greater unity among pastors and churches.⁹²⁹ On the other hand, this may simply mask the sense of powerlessness and indifference felt by some small churches and small church pastors. The potential impact of this upon the movement in the medium to long term is yet to be revealed.

Having noted these dangers, one remains hopeful for the future of the AGA, since, like all Christian churches, it is a movement that affirms the headship of Christ and is open to the influence of the Spirit. At the level of personal and religious consciousness, the Spirit acts as a continuing source of transformation, empowering individuals to Christ-likeness and motivating them for the missionary task. This spiritual renewal ensures that AGA culture is constantly imbued with the possibility of harmony and development, as Spirit-filled individuals rise to the challenge of sustaining, critiquing and propagating the movement’s self-understanding, even in the face of a predominately pragmatic AGA culture. At the social level, the shared experience of the Spirit in pentecostal churches remains a powerful force for unity, one that has proven time and again to be capable of overcoming the dangers of schism.

We have argued throughout that one of the more pressing needs for the AGA is the facilitation of a critical, constructive and creative cosmopolis, capable of generating,

⁹²⁸ Kaldor, Bellamy, Powell, Correy, and Castle, *Winds of Change*, 199.

⁹²⁹ As suggested by Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 386-392.

sustaining and critiquing the movement's cultural worldview, and stimulating social change. This would involve supplementing the existing authority of senior pastors, especially mega-church pastors, with the input of theologians, historians, exegetes, sociologists, artisans, corporate leaders, welfare providers and the like. For this cosmopolis to be effective, it would need the support of social structures that empower different voices, and that encourage criticism.

While the matrix of existing hierarchical structures in the AGA might seem to count against the emergence of an effective cosmopolis, the seeds for such a development presently exist within the educational bodies of the movement, who already have formed culturally creative organisations, such as the Pentecostal Charismatic Bible Colleges Association (PCBC). PCBC incorporates most of the pentecostal and charismatic ministry training colleges in Australia and New Zealand, with the purpose of facilitating relationships and encouraging scholarship. It presently runs an annual conference, and publishes the *PCBC* journal. In addition, Southern Cross College has established the Pentecostal Heritage Centre (PHC), which aims to create a digital repository of historical sources, including movement periodicals, sermons, minutes of meetings and oral testimony. PHC also created the *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* journal, which is intended to facilitate interdisciplinary, integrative and contextualised pentecostal scholarship.⁹³⁰

Presently, neither PCBC nor PHC has developed an influential constituency within the AGA. To achieve this purpose, it will need to find ways of contributing its insight to a predominately non-academic audience. The situation will also be helped by the increasing importance given to undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications by pentecostals. We noted in chapter five that cultural change does not occur overnight, and it can only be hoped that the influence of the various pentecostal theological colleges, and organisations such as PCBC and PHC, increases in the coming decades. This would be one of the catalysts that would make possible some other changes within the AGA, at the level of both culture and social structure.

6.4.1. Suggested cultural changes

⁹³⁰ Scott Stephens, "Editorial," *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*, 1 (1998):1.

Throughout our study we have noted the extent to which the experience and understanding of baptism in the Spirit is central to pentecostal identity. It impacts every level of the scale of values. As a religious value, it emphasises the possibility of holiness and empowerment, and effects personal transformation. At the cultural level, it is symbolically representative of pentecostal identity, and functions dialectically as both an operator and integrator. The notion of baptism in the Spirit as universally available, and universally empowering for people regardless of gender, race, class and intelligence is a powerful symbol of unity. At the same time, since the Spirit is understood as a sign of the end-times, as facilitating personal holiness, and as empowering for mission, it also acts as a transcendent force for change. At the social level, baptism in the Spirit is a shared experience that grounds pentecostal fellowship. While pentecostal communities have long been subject to the forces of social schism that categorised voluntarist movements everywhere, they have nonetheless been united through the shared experience of baptism in the Spirit. It is the one thing that enables pentecostalism to be considered a “movement,” rather than a bewilderingly diverse and sectarian group of churches.

As discussed in chapter five, the problem for pentecostals is that traditional formulations of baptism in the Spirit have become outdated. In the light of the charismatic renewal, the official doctrine seems narrow and exclusivist. Consequently, Australian pentecostals have tended to shy away from emphasising baptism in the Spirit, especially the historical link between Spirit baptism and the evidential function of tongues. This is understandable, given the increasing ecumenical awareness of pentecostal communities. Yet, the movement is also in danger of losing a key element of its identity, and a prime motivator for its mission. What is necessary is for pentecostals to find ways of ensuring continuity with their heritage and, at the same time, to find new ways of understanding the baptism in the Spirit in the ecumenically affirming context of the twenty first century global church. This task requires more than simple (and undebated) amendments to church “What we believe” statements. It requires critical theological reflection and public discussion, as well as interaction with pentecostal and ecumenical movements globally.⁹³¹

⁹³¹ As we observed in chapter 5.2.5, there is a substantial global literature engaging with the doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit, which might be able to contribute to the AGA’s contemplation of this important pentecostal doctrine.

This reconsideration of pentecostal identity and self-understanding should also extend to the emphasis the AGA presently gives to prosperity. We have already noted, in chapter five, the problems of the prosperity gospel, which can be primarily linked to its misunderstanding of the cross. The movement is in danger of syncretism, of appropriating the materialistic values of the Western society. It is therefore important for the AGA to self-critically evaluate these dangers, especially in the light of the criticism that is being levelled at the movement by the wider church community.

If critically reconceived in terms of human flourishing, it might be possible for the movement to find the appropriate balance between a spirituality that forgets the broader earthly and physical implications of the gospel, and a materialism that forgets the priority of the Spirit. The AGA president, Brian Houston, has already begun to talk in terms of human flourishing, and creative development of this notion might enable the movement to proclaim a vision of flourishing that is not focused on financial prosperity but, rather, on personal and community empowerment as revealed in the biblical portrayal of the kingdom of God.

The rise in prominence of the prosperity gospel is indicative of changes in pentecostal eschatology. The traditional emphasis on the immanent, pre-millennial return of Christ made early pentecostalism critical of material prosperity. Material goods are considered worthless and pointless in the light of Christ's soon return. Yet modern pentecostals, influenced again by charismatics, have largely rejected as ludicrous the eschatological speculations of previous generations. This has not only made space for prosperity emphasis, but has resulted in the move away from an emphasis on eschatology altogether. Early pentecostal proclamations of the immanent return of Christ have been replaced by the rhetoric of building the kingdom and impacting future generations.⁹³² The implications of this development are wide-ranging. The immanent return of Christ has long underpinned the AGA's missionary priority. While we cannot hope for a return to the worldview of previous generations, unless the movement finds new ways of understanding and preaching the return of Christ, it is in danger of losing one of the key elements of its growth and outreach. Once again

⁹³² Houston, *For This Cause*, 164.

this requires theological reflection, and an analysis of the implications of notions of the kingdom of God for the nature and purpose of the church today.

Each of these elements of AGA theology form an important part of the cultural level of the scale of values, and hence help to constitute the movement's ecclesiology. It is readily apparent throughout this thesis that the movement has undergone substantial and rapid ecclesial development, which has not been accompanied by a commensurate measure of ecclesiological reflection. The AGA would greatly benefit from critical thinking and discussion about the changes that have occurred. This thesis contributes to this process, but more public discussion is necessary. In particular, the movement would be enriched by contemplating the ecclesial significance of its emphasis on baptism in the Spirit, and its pneumatological understanding of the church. Presently, the movement needs to articulate what it means to affirm the priesthood and prophethood of all believers in the light of its new structures and new context. Given the move away from congregational government, the AGA needs to find ways of ensuring that it empowers its members, and safeguards the universal responsibility of believers for the church and its mission.

6.4.2. Suggested social changes

In addition to weaknesses in AGA culture, our research has identified certain aspects of AGA social structure that are in need of development. One of the most pressing matters is the nature of its inter-ecclesial relationships. While the autonomy of churches has long been a hallmark of pentecostal self-understanding, and is one of the reasons for the movements success, the AGA is today in danger of ecclesial individualism.

In affirming the post-1977 emphasis on local church autonomy, David Cartledge was critical of what he described as the centralising and bureaucratising tendency of the formative period of the AGA, which he called the "forty years in the wilderness."⁹³³ It is our contention, however, that the deliberations and praxis of this formative period provide substantial insight for the AGA today. Without wishing to repeat earlier

⁹³³ Cartledge, *Apostolic Revolution*, 117.

arguments, we noted that the mission of the church requires local church autonomy, but also requires the relativisation of that autonomy for the sake of the shared task of proclaiming the gospel to the world. The challenge is to create centralised structures that exist, not for their own sake, but for the encouragement and strengthening of mission at the local level. It is vital that church praxis is local and contextual and, at the same time, oriented to participation in the broader mission of the AGA movement and the universal church.

One of the ways for local congregations to participate in the broader mission of the church is to encourage shared ventures in areas such as foreign missions and education. Unfortunately, local church individuality has presently expressed itself in the shift away from a centralised missions department, and in the proliferation of competing church-based bible colleges. In respect to the latter, were these colleges to find effective ways of collaborating, not only would the movement achieve economies of scale and improve the standards of ministerial training, but such shared enterprise would itself stand as a challenge to the tendency to individualism, and become a model for shared mission.

These shared ventures need not work against the underlying affirmation of an ecclesiology from below. Indeed, the problem with the present situation is that resources tend to be controlled almost exclusively by mega-churches, and few institutions exist primarily for the sake of small congregations, although together they form the largest part of the AGA throughout the nation. It is our contention that the elevation of and priority given to mega-churches in the AGA represents a move away from the grass-roots ecclesiology that is central to pentecostal identity and mission. This is not to say that the mega-churches have no place, nor that churches should not grow. It is to argue that small churches, which in a multitude of ways incarnate the gospel and proclaim the kingdom of God in their communities, should be affirmed, prioritised, and resourced. This affirmation needs to become, once again, part of the culture and structure of the AGA. It also needs to penetrate and find constitutional expression in the movement's structures.

In practical terms, this means, firstly, that national, state and regional ministries (e.g. Bible Colleges', Mission Offices and Social Programs such as Youth Alive and Teen

Challenge) should be kept under the supervision of the fellowship as a whole, separate from mega-churches. It also means that small churches, particularly country churches, should be represented on the movement's national and state executive bodies, rather than restricting the control of these bodies to mega-church pastors. Small churches should also be given forums in which they can participate in the direction setting and decision making of the movement. While the size of the movement may prevent the extensive discussions that characterised the national biennial conferences of the early years of the AGA, it would nonetheless be possible to regionalise such forums, and create space for small churches to influence AGA vision, culture and structure. Presently, such regions exist, but they generally function in a top-down fashion. To some extent, they are modelled on existing local church hierarchies, and the authority of the regional apostle, that is, the regional mega or large church pastor. The regional leader is appointed by the state, and determines regional direction, in a manner that is far from being egalitarian and democratic. Unless changes such as these take place, the AGA movement is in danger of being taken over by a small number of mega-churches and so-called apostolic leaders. It is our contention that such an outcome would be detrimental to the grass-roots ecclesiology and missiology of the movement.

Just as small churches and small church pastors need to be affirmed and empowered, so too does the AGA need to empower its women. The impetus for strengthening the female influence in the AGA can be found in the heritage of Australian pentecostalism, with the pioneering role of pentecostal women such as Sarah Jane Lancaster and Mina Ross Brawner. It can also be located in the symbolic authority of baptism in the Spirit, with its affirmation of universal charismatic gifting, regardless of gender. In respect to women in ministry, the AGA needs to live up to its own rhetoric. It claims to affirm complete gender equality in ministry but, in fact, few women are in positions of ecclesial authority. While this may mirror society in general and the wider church in particular, AGA self-understanding makes the present situation disappointing. It is not only the fact that women are being discriminated against, but that the movement as a whole loses the insight that might come from greater female involvement in all levels of AGA operation. Women would bring to AGA culture a greater communal and relational emphasis than sometimes characterises male leadership. Consequently, we contend that providing space for

women in AGA leadership structures could contribute to the resolution of some of the other issues discussed above. Communal and relational emphasis would challenge ecclesial individualism and competitiveness, and contribute to the affirmation of small churches.

Finally, the AGA is to be encouraged to pursue the ecumenical trajectory that finds symbolic identity in the universalism of baptism in the Spirit, and historical impetus in the charismatic renewal. Great strides have already been made. This includes movements toward unity within Australian pentecostalism itself, including the formation of the Australian Pentecostal Ministers Fellowship and the Australian Christian Churches. It also includes greater openness to non-pentecostal churches. More recently, these ecumenical developments have slowed, in tandem with the decline of the charismatic movement in mainline churches. Yet there are still concrete examples of ecumenism to be found. These include the recent involvement of Southern Cross College with the Sydney College of Divinity, the ecumenical association that serves the theological schools of numerous church traditions. Local pentecostal assemblies also remain committed to the various ministerial fellowships that exist throughout the nation. As we have suggested, the ideal of the unity of the whole church is ultimately an eschatological reality. Nevertheless, moves toward unity are to be affirmed as proleptic realisations of eschatological unity. In their association with other denominations, AGA churches will be challenged in their understanding of the gospel and the nature and mission of the church and, in turn, will encourage the developing spirituality of other churches. In doing whatever it can to work with, rather than against, other churches, the AGA will be participating in the healing of ecclesial division which, as Walter Kasper observes, is one of the greatest obstacles to world mission.⁹³⁴

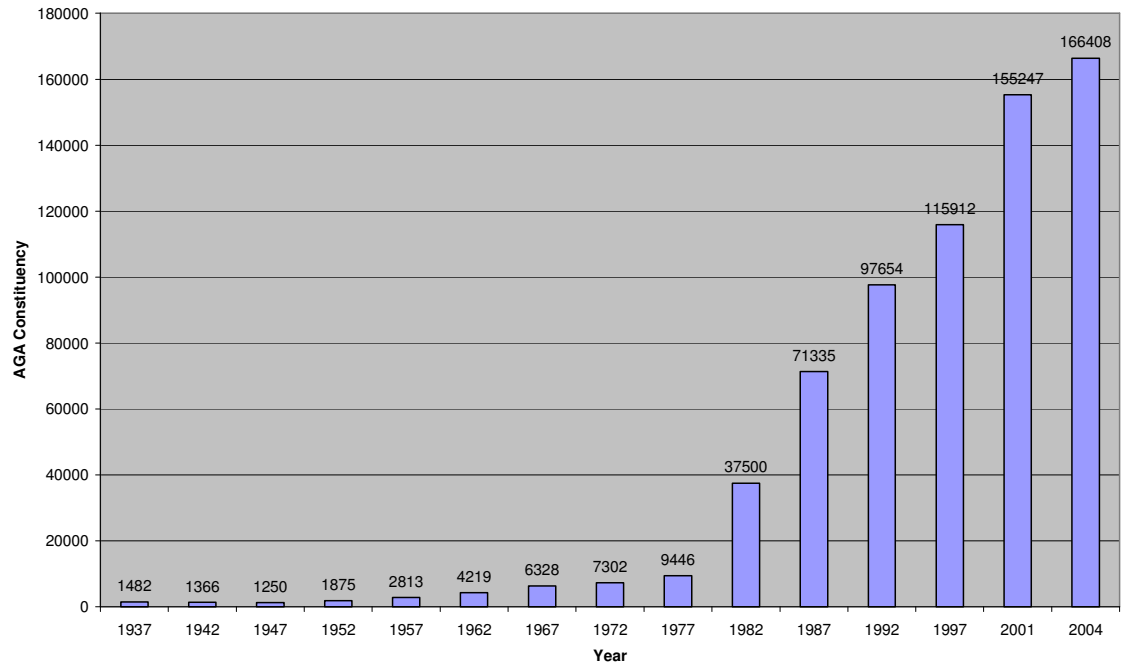
From revivalist voluntarism, to faith mission, to developing church, the story of the emergence of the AGA is fascinating and remarkable. It is testimony to the unimaginable possibilities for communities that prioritise God's Spirit. It is also testimony to the challenges that arise in the context of rapid growth and change. As pentecostalism in Australia enters its second century, it takes with it the insights and

⁹³⁴ Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*, 177. Kasper's sentence is in the past tense.

hopes of its Spirit empowered heritage, as well as the many dangers that confront any movement seeking to proclaim a gospel that is faithful to Jesus Christ and relevant to contemporary society. Despite our identification in this thesis of some of the present problems within the AGA, we believe that the future is hopeful. God has always used passionate and flawed people to preach the gospel, build the church, and transform the world. One dares to hope that the flawed but passionate AGA will likewise continue to be a tool used by the Spirit for the sake of God's kingdom.

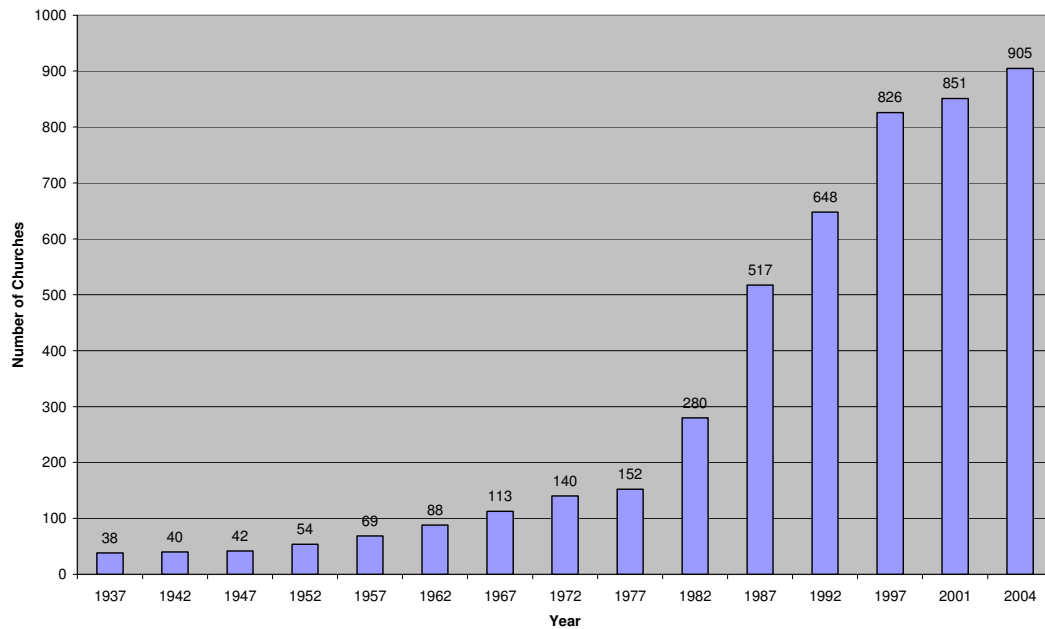
Appendix 1: The Growth of the Assemblies of God in Australia

Chart 1: Growth in the AGA Constituency from 1937 to 2004⁹³⁵



⁹³⁵ For information on the source of data for Chart 1, see comments following Chart 2.

Chart 2: Growth in the Number of AGA Churches from 1937 to 2004



Source of Data

These two charts have been compiled from a number of sources. No detailed records of AGA membership are available prior to 1970. However, in 1945, the Biennial conference reported on the growth of the movement since its inception, noting that the movement commenced with a total number of 38 assemblies, and a membership of 1482 people. By the time of the 1945 report, they had gained fourteen assemblies and lost ten, and membership had declined to approximately 1250.⁹³⁶ During the 1970s the national leadership began recording movement statistics, and these have been compiled by the National Office of the Assemblies of God.⁹³⁷ Since no information was available for 1942 and for the period from 1952 to 1967, we have estimated the details of these dates by assuming that the growth rate was relatively consistent during this time.

⁹³⁶ Assemblies of God in Australia, Biennial Conference Minutes, Brisbane, 1945.

⁹³⁷ Natalie Kerr, *Report on 2001 Church Census Figures, to AoG National Executive* (Melbourne: National Office, Assemblies of God in Australia, 2001).

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