

The Pentecostal Churches

Edited by Scott Shifferd Jr.

History:

- The Handbook of Denominations reports, **“Pentecostalism is a modern American Christian movement that emerged out of the Holiness movement around the turn of the twentieth century.** Two key figures in the genesis of Pentecostalism were **Charles Fox Parham** (1873-1929), the founder of the Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, and **William J. Seymour** (1870-1922), an African American Holiness evangelist from Louisiana. **Through his study of Paul’s letters, Parham became convinced that the gifts of the Holy Spirit that were evident in apostolic times are available to Christians in modern times as well. Of particular interest was speaking in tongues, the first incidence of which occurred at Bethel Bible College in 1901.** Five years later, Seymour, who had studied at Bethel with Parham, led a revival on Azusa Street in Los Angeles that lasted for several months. **Participants experienced a ‘baptism in the Holy Ghost.’ Some were healed of illnesses, while others spoke in tongues.** Thousands from across the U.S. traveled to Azusa Street and carried the message back to their home states.

The movement eventually became known as ‘Pentecostal’ because of the similarity to the first Pentecost, fifty days after Christ’s resurrection, when the Spirit came upon the early Christians and enabled them to speak in unfamiliar languages. There are a great variety of Pentecostal churches, most of which are theologically and socially conservative. In general, Pentecostals are in the evangelical tradition and teach that the Holy Spirit continues to act as it did at the first Pentecost. **Teaching that contemporary Christians can receive the same spiritual gifts that the Apostles did, many Pentecostal churches use the word apostolic in their names”** (Mead, Frank S; Hill, Samuel S.; and Atwood, Craig D. *Handbook of Denominations in the United States. 11th ed.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001. P.265).

- Concerning the Holiness Movement, the Handbook of Denominations states that, **“The Holiness movement grew out of the Methodist Church beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. [...]** One of the key figures in this revival of holiness teaching was the traveling evangelist and writer Phoebe Palmer (1807-74), who experienced sanctification by the Holy Spirit in 1837. She worked tirelessly to bring others to a similar experience of holiness. [...]
- Holiness teaching generally rejects various forms of popular entertainment, such as dancing, movies, popular music, make-up, ornate clothing, gambling, drinking, and smoking”** (Mead, P.161).
- The three largest Pentecostal denominations are **the Church of God in Christ** with a population of 5,500,000 in 15,300 churches (1991), the **General Council of Assemblies of God** with a population of 2,574,531 in 12,055 churches (1999), and the **Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc.** with a population of 1,500,000 in 1,750 churches (1998) (Mead, P.266, 272, 285).

God, Christ, and the Spirit:

- The **“Assemblies of God”** states, **“The one true God has revealed Himself as the eternally self-existent ‘I AM,’ the Creator of heaven and earth and the Redeemer of mankind. He has further revealed Himself as embodying the principles of relationship and association as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. [...]**

The terms ‘Trinity’ and ‘persons’ as related to the Godhead, while not found in the Scriptures, are words in harmony with Scripture, whereby we may convey to others our immediate understanding of the doctrine of Christ respecting the Being of God, as distinguished from ‘gods many and lords many.’ We therefore may speak with propriety of the Lord our God who is One Lord, as a trinity or as one Being of three persons, and still be absolutely scriptural. [...]

Christ taught a distinction of Persons in the Godhead which He expressed in specific terms of relationship, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but that this distinction and relationship, as to its mode is inscrutable and incomprehensible, because unexplained” (“Statement of Fundamental Truths.” *Assemblies of God*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement_of_Fundamental_Truths/>).

- About **the Holy Spirit**, the “Church of God in Christ” (COGIC) also state, “**We believe the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity**, proceeds from the Father and the Son, is of the same substance, equal to power and glory, and is together with the Father and the Son, to be believed in, obeyed, and worshipped” (“What We Believe.” *Church of God in Christ*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net/cogiccms/default/cogic-history/what-we-believe/>).
- The Handbook of Denominations states about **the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc.** that, “**Basic Pentecostal and Holiness doctrine and practice are followed, except for rejection of the trinitarian understanding of God.** [...] Only the King James Version of the Bible is accepted as the true Word of God” (Mead, P.286).
- About **creation and evolution**, the “Assemblies of God” find, “**Genesis 1–3 accurately communicates God’s creation of the heavens and the earth.** Using language that appears to employ both prose and poetry and that contains both literal and symbolic elements, the story is a simple yet beautiful and compelling narrative intended to speak to all humankind. The complexity of creation is such that humans will never fully comprehend it. **But the message that God alone is Creator plainly has been communicated to all who, through the ages, hear and read the Genesis account.**

Our understanding of God as Creator is rooted in a divine revelation of real events that occurred in time and space. Moreover, our understanding of God as Redeemer is rooted in the revelation of God’s dealings with Israel in history and in the historical events of the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. Likewise, the New Testament treats the first Adam as a historical person (Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Timothy 2:13,14). Genesis 2 declares God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life. **This act indicates that humans are distinct from animals and that God did not form Adam from some previously existing creation (1 Corinthians 15:39).**

Some have contended that the first two chapters of Genesis are poetical and are to be taken as parables. But a comparison of poetical references to creation (Deuteronomy 32 and 33; Job 38:4–11; Psalms 90; 104:5–9) shows that the Genesis account is in prose form, though it may contain some poetic language. Even so, however, poetry in the Bible often describes actual, historical events, so the use of poetry does not make this account fictional” (“The Doctrine of Creation.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).

Scriptures: *God:* Gen. 1:1-2, Psa. 110:1, Isa. 9:6, 48:16, 61:1, Mic. 5:2, **Matt.** 12:46-47, 13:55-56, **28:19**, Luke 3:22, John 1:1, 14, Acts 7:55, 10:38, Rom. 8:9, 9:5, 15:30, **2 Cor.** 3:17, **13:14**, Phil. 2:5-8, Col. 1:15-20, Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 1:2, 3:18, 1 John 4:2; *Creation:* Gen. 1:26-27, Exo. 20:11, Matt. 19:4-5, Mark 10:6-8, Luke 11:50-51, Rom. 1:20.

Christ’s Words and the Scriptures:

- The Assemblies “of God” state, “**The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are verbally inspired of God and are the revelation of God to man, the infallible, authoritative rule of faith and conduct**” (“Statement of Fundamental Truths.” *Assemblies of God*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).
- Again, the Assemblies “of God” confess, “**We believe the Bible is the Word of God written; it is the revelation of the truths of God conveyed by inspiration through His servants to us. As such, it is infallible and without error**” (“The Inerrancy of Scripture.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).

- The “Church of God in Christ” (COGIC) says, **“We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and contains one harmonious and sufficiently complete system of doctrine.** We believe in the full inspiration of the Word of God. **We hold the Word of God to be the only authority in all matters and assert that no doctrine can be true or essential, if it does not find a place in this Word”** (“What We Believe.” *COGIC*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net>).
- About **the Holy Spirit**, the “Church of God in Christ” (COGIC) also state, “We believe the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, proceeds from the Father and the Son, is of the same substance, equal to power and glory, and is together with the Father and the Son, to be believed in, obeyed, and worshipped. **The Holy Ghost is a gift bestowed upon the believer for the purpose of equipping and empowering the believer, making him a more effective witness for service in the world. He teaches and guides one into all truth** (John 16:13; Acts 1:8, 8:39)” (“What We Believe.” *COGIC*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net>).

Scriptures: Luke 1:1-3, 1 Cor. 1:1-2, 10, 12:13, 2 Cor. 1:1, **Eph. 2:20, 3:3-5**, Col. 4:16, 2 Thess. 2:15, 2 Tim. 3:16-17 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18), 2 Pet. 1:16-21, 3:15-16, 1 John 1:1-4.

Way of Salvation:

- Concerning **“baptism in water”**, the **“Assemblies of God”** confess that, **“The ordinance of baptism by immersion is commanded by the Scriptures. All who repent and believe on Christ as Saviour and Lord are to be baptized. Thus they declare to the world that they have died with Christ and that they also have been raised with Him to walk in newness of life”** (“Statement of Fundamental Truths.” *Assemblies of God*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement_of_Fundamental_Truths/>).
- The Assemblies “of God” also state, **“In the Assemblies of God we believe baptism in water is to follow salvation (acceptance of Christ and His forgiveness of our sins) as demonstrated in the New Testament. For this reason we urge all new converts to follow the biblical pattern of water baptism in obedience to Christ”** (“Water Baptism.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).
- The **“Church of God in Christ”** (COGIC) state, **“Adam’s sin**, committed by eating of the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, **carried with it permanent pollution or depraved human nature to all his descendants.** This is called ‘**original sin.**’ Sin can now be defined as a volitional transgression against God and a lack of conformity to the will of God” (“What We Believe.” *Church of God in Christ*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net/cogiccms/default/cogic-history/what-we-believe/>).
- The “Church of God in Christ” states, **“Being born in sin**, he needs to be born again, sanctified and cleansed from all sins by the blood of Jesus. **We believe that man is saved by confessing and forsaking his sins, and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and that having become a child of God, by being born again and adopted into the family of God, **he may, and should, claim the inheritance of the sons of God, namely the baptism of the Holy Ghost”** (“What We Believe.” *COGIC*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net>).
- The “Church of God in Christ” state, **“We believe that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, according to Acts 2:4, is given to believers who ask for Him”** (“Statement of Faith.” *COGIC*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net/cogiccms/default/cogic-history/statement-of-faith/>).
- Regarding **the baptism of the Holy Spirit**, the “Church of God in Christ” confesses, **“We believe that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is an experience** subsequent to conversion and sanctification and that tongue-speaking is the consequence of the baptism in the Holy Ghost with the manifestations of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Acts 10:46, 19:1-6). **We believe that we are not baptized with the Holy Ghost in order to be saved** (Acts 19:1-6; John 3:5). When one receives a baptismal Holy Ghost experience, we believe one will speak with a tongue unknown to oneself according to the sovereign will of Christ. **To be filled with the Spirit means to be Spirit controlled as expressed by Paul in Ephesians 5:18-19.** Since the charismatic demonstrations were necessary to help the early

church to be successful in implementing the command of Christ, **we therefore, believe that a Holy Ghost experience is mandatory for all men today** (“What We Believe.” *COGIC*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net>).

- Yet, the “Church of God in Christ” says, **“We believe that the only means of being cleansed from sin is through repentance and faith in the precious Blood of Jesus Christ.**

We believe that regeneration by the Holy Ghost is absolutely essential for personal salvation (“Statement of Faith.” *COGIC*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net/cogiccms/default/cogic-history/statement-of-faith/>).

- Concerning **casting out demons**, the Church of God in Christ state, “It can well be said that the Christian Church believes in Demons, Satan, and Devils. We believe in their power and purpose. **We believe they can be subdued and conquered as in the commandment to the believer by Jesus.** ‘In my name they shall cast out Satan and the work of the Devil and to resist him and then he will flee **(WITHDRAW)** from you.’ (St. Mark 16:17)” (“What We Believe.” *COGIC*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net>).
- About “water baptism”, *COGIC* says, **“We believe that Water Baptism is necessary as instructed by Christ in St. John 3:5, ‘UNLESS MAN BE BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT.’**

However, we do not believe that water baptism alone is a means of salvation, but is an outward demonstration that one has already had a conversion experience and has accepted Christ as his personal Savior. **As Pentecostals**, we practice immersion in preference to **‘SPRINKLING’**, because **immersion corresponds more closely to the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord (Colossians 2:12)**. It also symbolizes regeneration and purification more than any other mode. **Therefore, we practice immersion as our mode of Baptism.** We believe that we should use the Baptismal Formula given us by Christ for all **‘...IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER , AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST.’** (St. Matthew 28:19)” (“What We Believe.” *COGIC*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net>).

Scriptures: Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:16, John 6:53-56, 16:7-13, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:38, 22:16, Rom. 6:3-7, Gal. 5:4, **Col. 2:11-12**, 1 Tim. 2:4, Heb. 6:4-6, 1 Pet. 3:21, 2 Pet. 1:10, 3:9, 1 John 1:5-2:6.

The Church & Church Government:

- Concerning the government of **the General Council of Assemblies of God**, the Handbook of Denominations states, **“The government of the assemblies is an unusual mixture of presbyterian and congregational systems.** Local churches are independent in polity and in the conduct of local affairs. **District officers have a pastoral ministry to all the churches and are responsible for the promotion of home missions.** Work is divided into fifty-six districts in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, including ten foreign language districts, **each with a district presbytery that examines and recommends credentialing of ministers.** The General Council consists of all ordained ministers and lay representatives from local churches. **This biennial General Council elects general officers, sets doctrinal standards, and provides for church expansion and development. The General Superintendent and other general church officers serve at the national headquarters in Springfield, Missouri**” (Mead, P.267).
- The Assemblies “of God” state, “As Paul and Silas established missionary churches, they were careful to appoint ‘elders’ (*presbyteros*) for the leadership of those churches (Acts 14:23). **Paul also summoned ‘elders’ (*presbyteros*) of the church at Ephesus and then addressed them as ‘overseers’ (*episkopos*) who were also to be ‘shepherds’ (*poimaino*), or ‘pastors,’ of the church of God (Acts 20:17,28)**” (“Apostles and Prophets.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).
- Concerning the **“Church of God in Christ”**, **Charles H. Mason** organized a group of ministers who endorsed Pentecostal doctrines, and as the Handbook of Denominations reports, **“With this group, he organized a general assembly of the Church of God in Christ, of which he was named general overseer and chief apostle. Mason remained head of the church until his death in 1961. [...]**

Generally acknowledged to be the largest African American Pentecostal body in the U.S., the Church of God in Christ organization is held to have **its authority in Scripture**. There are presiding, assistant presiding, and state bishops; a general board and a national trustee board; district superintendents; pastors; evangelists; deacons; and departmental presidents. Officers are chosen at a general assembly that meets every four years. [...] The denomination's headquarters are in Memphis, Tennessee, as is the department of publications and a Sunday school publishing house to supply the denomination with literature" (Mead, P.273).

- Regarding **the Church**, the "**Church of God in Christ**" says, "**The Church then is the object of our faith rather than of knowledge**. The name of our Church, "**CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST**" is supported by I Thessalonians 2:14 and other passages in the Pauline Epistles. The word "**CHURCH**" or "**EKKLESIA**" was first applied to the Christian society by Jesus Christ in St. Matthew 16:18, the occasion being that of his benediction of Peter at Caesarea Phillippi" ("What We Believe." *COGIC* 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net>).
- "**The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World** hosts two major conferences annually, to which its constituents come from around the globe to worship God and to fellowship with one another. **The church is headed by a presiding bishop who guides its members spiritually**. There is also an executive board, including an assistant presiding bishop, a general secretary, a general treasurer, and lay directors. The organization's administrator and staff handle its business affairs from general offices in Indianapolis, Indiana" (Mead, P.286).

Scriptures: Acts 14:26, 20:28, Eph. 1:22, 4:11-12, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:18, 2:19, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

Worship and Assembly:

- The Handbook of Denominations reports about Pentecostal churches stating, "**Seeking and receiving the gift of tongues is regarded as a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and in many Pentecostal churches this is a requirement for full discipleship**. Other spiritual gifts, such as healing, love, joy, prophecy, and answers to prayer, also make up Pentecostals' experience of God. **Pentecostals are generally less bound to traditional forms of worship than are other churches, and many have adapted contemporary music for evangelistic purposes**. Pentecostal churches that minimize traditional liturgical practice refer to rites such as a baptism as 'ordinances' rather than as 'sacraments.' The term '**Neo-Pentecostalism**' is often used to describe churches that embrace charismatic practices, such as speaking in tongues, but not the Holiness tradition of the older Pentecostal bodies" (Mead, P.265-266).
- From a description of the work of the Holy Spirit, **the Assemblies "of God"** report, "Does this mean that in our day the outpouring of the Spirit will be void of any demonstrations other than speaking in tongues. **No. Some testify of deep groanings in their spirit, or surges of inexpressible joy. Some experience strong emotions of exhilaration. For many it is as if the deep inner wells of their spirits have suddenly been thrown open, and a torrent of praise bursts forth in exaltation to the Lord. Their hearts overflow with love for Jesus Christ.**

While the ways in which the fullness of the Holy Spirit comes will vary according to the personality of the individual and the creativity of the Spirit, unknown tongues is the one accompanying phenomenon which unites Spirit-filled believers from every land and every generation" ("Questions about Tongues." *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).

- About **the Lord's Supper**, both the "**Assemblies of God**" and the "**Church of God in Christ**" affirm **the Lord's Supper, and yet they do specify when and where they partake of the Lord's Supper**.
- The "**Assemblies of God**" state, "**The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements --bread and the fruit of the vine-- is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter**

1:4), a memorial of his suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:26), and a prophecy of His second coming (1 Corinthians 11:26) and is enjoined on all believers ‘till He come!’ (“Statement of Fundamental Truths.” *Assemblies of God*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).

- Concerning **church music**, “**The Assemblies of God** encourages and practices a wide variety of music for worship and ministry to the Lord. Hymns, anthems, gospel songs, Scripture choruses, children’s songs, and contemporary Christian music—all find a place in our church Fellowship. **Various keyboard, woodwind, brass, string, and percussion instruments are also heard in many of our worship services.** Because no two local church congregations are alike, neither are their music preferences. [...]

The most common source of discontent about church music lies in the generation gap. **Many Christians object to the tempo, cadence, melody, volume, and lyric content of church music that seemingly appeals and communicates to other age levels.** This contrast in style preferences is most obvious at the opposite ends of the age spectrum—teens vs. senior adults. Differing age-level preferences show up in old hymns as opposed to new choruses, choice of special music (traditional sacred music versus new contemporary songs), and **sometimes even the choice of instruments (piano and organ as opposed to synthesizers, guitars, and drums).** [...]

In facing these problems in the church we must understand that music is simply a form of communication and expression toward God. As a means of worship it should assist believers to develop intimate communion with God. Music, never an end in itself, should function only as a conduit to God. And because God looks on the heart and not on the talent or sound of our music, there is generally no particular format or style that is more right or more wrong than others. Everyone in the church, young and old, needs to grasp this truth. **One of the most divisive conflicts a church can experience centers around selfish attitudes of preferred music. It is tragic that something designed to edify and unite the church all too often ends up hurting and isolating segments of the body of Christ.** But it doesn’t have to be that way. An attitude of generosity and acceptance of the music tastes of others is essential” (“Music Styles.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).

- The “**Church of God in Christ**” has an “International Music Department” for the denominations, which presents different choirs (and “praisers”) and an orchestra (“Ministries.” *International Music Department*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net/cogiccms/cogic-music-department/>).
- The “**Church of God in Christ**” also states, “When the words Praise and Worship are mentioned in the arena of Christendom, a few pictures will usually come to mind. **One of which might be the people of God in their particular churches, all over the country on Sunday mornings, lifting their hands, singing, shouting and dancing before the Lord with beautiful smiles on their faces.**

But Praise and Worship goes much deeper and is more than just a Sunday morning lifting of the hands or a midweek service ‘pick me- up’. Praise and Worship is a lifestyle, and this lifestyle must be adopted by every believer in order to truly come into the fullness and richness of the majestic presence of the Almighty God” (“Send Judah First.” *International Music Department*. 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net/cogiccms/cogic-music-department/ministries/send-judah-first/>).

- About **feet washing**, the COGIC says, “**Feet Washing is practiced and recognized as an ordinance in our Church** because Christ, by His example, showed that humility characterized greatness in the Kingdom of God, and that service, rendered to others gave evidence that humility, motivated by love, exists. **These services are held subsequent to the Lord’s Supper; however, its regularity is left to the discretion of the Pastor in charge**” (“What We Believe.” *COGIC* 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net>).
- Regarding **women teaching and ruling men**, the **Assemblies “of God”** state, “**The General Council of the Assemblies of God has recognized from the beginning that ‘the Scriptures plainly teach that**

divinely called and qualified women may also serve the church in the Word (Joel 2:29; Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5),’ and ‘are entitled to whatever grade of credentials their qualifications warrant...’ (General Council Bylaws Article VII, Section 2,k.)

Those who deny a public ministry to women base their position on Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 for women to ‘keep silence in the churches,’ and his instruction to Timothy forbidding a woman to teach or usurp authority over the man, ‘but to be in silence’ (1 Timothy 2:12)” (“The Ministry of Women.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012.

<ag.org/wim/roleofwim/0306_MinistryofWomen.cfm>).

Scriptures: Matt. 6:1-18, 15:1-9, 23, John 4:21-24; Acts 20:7, **1 Cor.** 4:17, 11:2, 17-34; **14,** 16:1-3; Eph. 5:19; Col. 2:18-23, 3:16; **1 Tm. 2:11-12,** Heb. 2:12, 10:24-25, 13:15-16.

Morality:

- Regarding **drinking**, the Assemblies “of God” state, “**First Corinthians 6:19,20 has historically been held in high regard by holiness and Pentecostal Christians.** ‘Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.’ **This and other passages warning against drunkenness have been considered sufficient reason for advocating complete abstinence from the use of alcohol, tobacco, or narcotics**” (“Alcohol, Tobacco & Drugs.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).
- About **abortion**, the “Assemblies of God” confesses, “**Every human life, from conception through death, is therefore to be valued, respected, nurtured, and protected.** Every human life is to be lived in obedience to God and His Word. The Bible describes a moral order to which all persons are responsible. At the end of life, all persons will stand before God to give account for their actions. ‘For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad’ (2 Corinthians 5:10). [...] **The Assemblies of God views the practice of abortion as an evil that has been inflicted upon millions of innocent babies and that will threaten millions more in the years to come.** Abortion is a morally unacceptable alternative for birth control, population control, sex selection, and elimination of the physically and mentally handicapped” (“Sanctity of Human Life: Abortion and Reproductive Issues.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).
- About **homosexuality**, the Assemblies “of God” state, “**When people choose to engage in homosexual behavior, they depart from the God-given nature of sexuality. Their unnatural sexual behavior is a sin against God, who established the order of sexuality** (Romans 1:27). And the social unit they seek to establish is contrary to the divine instruction for the man to leave father and mother and be ‘united to his wife’ (Genesis 2:24). In Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees, He reiterated the order of sexuality that God established in the beginning: ‘Haven’t you read. . .that at the beginning the Creator “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh”?’ (Matthew 19:4,5). He pointed out that the only alternative to heterosexual marriage is celibacy for the kingdom of heaven’s sake (Matthew 19:10–12)” (“Homosexuality.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).
- Regarding the signing of the “Faith in Human Rights Document celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Human Rights Declaration”, the Presiding Bishop of the “**Church of God in Christ**” stated, “Even my critics agree that the documents are focused on preventing and speaking against torture, genocide, and various forms of bondage and oppression. **The fundamental criticism is that homosexual advocates and activists may use the documents to support their efforts to legalize homosexual marriage and other same sex initiatives.** [...]

I am a Bible believing, holiness preacher. I have always been and will always be a loyal and devoted supporter of the doctrines of the Church of God in Christ. **Of course, I oppose gay marriage, I oppose the adoption of children by gay couples, I oppose abortion, I oppose embryonic stem cell research and treatment, I do not approve the practice of homosexuality.** The Bible teaches holiness and righteousness. **But the Bible also teaches justice, peace, compassion for the weak, the poor, and the defenseless** ("The Presiding Bishop's Annual Address." 14 Apr 2009. <cogic.net/pdfs/state-of-the%20church-april-2009-rev-%2011.pdf>).

Scriptures: Matt. 15:19, **Mark 7:20-23**, Rom. 1:24-32, 12:9-15:13, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:16-6:10, Eph. 4:17-6:18, Col. 3-4:6.

Marriage and Divorce:

- The Assemblies "of God" teach, "In the first case, where both husband and wife are professing Christians, neither party is ever to seek a divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10, 11). In the second case (the mixed marriage) the Christian husband or wife should never initiate or seek a divorce from an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12-14). There are only two exceptions that allow for this initiative. A Christian may divorce a spouse only when his/her partner is repeatedly committing the sin of adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9), or if the spouse refuses to live with him/her and departs (abandonment) (1 Corinthians 7:15). Both exceptions present the believer with an option; but never a mandate. A better course whenever grace enables it is to forgive marital infidelity and seek healing in the marriage. This choice is especially desirable in cases where children would be further hurt and the family destroyed through divorce. Abandonment (a long-term physical withdrawal from the home with neglect of the responsibilities, support, and duties required of one partner within a marriage) would also prove the spouse's sinful conduct and could eventually allow for divorce.

Abuse poses another threat to marriages. Thousands of women and in some cases men face serious battering and other forms of abuse from their spouses. God is concerned with the physical safety and well-being of all. He does not look lightly upon such actions within marriage or families. In such circumstances a period of separation without divorce may be justified and useful for the healing of persons. If after serious attempts of counseling and reconciliation the abusing spouse departs (abandonment) rather than turning from actions of abuse, 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 permitting divorce would possibly apply. [...]

The teaching of Jesus seems even more restrictive. He forbade the remarriage of divorced persons, condemning such as an act of adultery (Mark 10:11,12; Luke 16:18). By remarrying, the divorced person commits adultery and also causes the new partner to commit adultery. Jesus, however, made one exception to this rule: marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 5:32, 19:9). [...]

The second exception for the remarriage of a divorced person is found in 1 Corinthians 7:15. When an unbelieving spouse is unwilling to remain in the marriage and initiates a divorce, the believer is set free from the marriage and can remarry if he or she so chooses without committing adultery ("Divorce and Remarriage." *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).

Scriptures: Matt. 5:31-32, **19:9**, Mark 10:5-12, Luke 16:18, 1 Cor. 6:16-18, 7:10-15, Heb. 13:4.

The End Times & Afterlife:

- Regarding **the Millennial Reign of Christ**, the "Assemblies of God" state, "**The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of the saints, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on earth for one thousand years. This millennial reign will bring the salvation of national Israel, and the establishment of universal peace**" ("Statement of Fundamental Truths." *Assemblies of God*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).

- The General Council of the Assemblies “of God” teaches, “**The weight of Scripture supports a pre-Tribulation Rapture. Wherever teaching about the Second Coming occurs in the New Testament, imminence is underscored. To interpose other events before the Rapture does violence to such teaching**” (“The Rapture of the Church.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).
- About the **Final Judgment**, the “Assemblies of God” states, “**There will be a final judgment in which the wicked dead will be raised and judged according to their works. Whosoever is not found written in the Book of Life, together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, will be consigned to the everlasting punishment in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death**” (“Statement of Fundamental Truths.” *Assemblies of God*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).
- Concerning the **Second Coming**, the “**Church of God in Christ**” simply states, “**We believe in the second coming of Christ; that He shall come from heaven to earth, personally, bodily, visibly** (Acts 1:11; Titus 2:11-13; St. Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:30; Luke 21:27; John 1:14, 17; Titus 2:11) **and that the Church, the bride, will be caught up to meet Him in the air** (I Thessalonians, 4:16-17). We admonish all who have this hope to purify themselves as He is pure” (“What We Believe.” *COGIC* 25 Apr 2012. <cogic.net>).

Scriptures: Matt. 24:29-51, 25:31-46, Mark 9:1, 13:24-37, Luke 21:25-36, John 14:1-4, 18:36, Acts 1:9-11, 1 Cor. 15:23-28, 50-53, Col. 1:13, 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11, 2 Thess. 2:1-12, Heb. 12:28, **2 Pet. 3:1-13, Rev. 19-22:5.**

Unique Practices:

- Regarding **healing by the laying on of hands**, the Assemblies “of God” state, “Laying hands on the sick was a common practice in the Early Church. Jesus often laid hands on people before healing them (Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40; 13:13). Paul laid hands on a sick person and he was healed (Acts 28:8). Jesus said concerning His followers, “they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well” (Mark 16:18). [...]

In the Assemblies of God we believe neither the laying on of hands nor anointing with oil is indispensable for healing, for often in Scripture healing takes place without either. But at times the touch of a praying person and the application of oil are an encouragement to faith, and such a practice is enjoined by Scripture (James 5:14-16)” (“Laying on of Hands and Anointing the Sick with Oil.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org/top/Beliefs/topics/gendoct_12_sick.cfm>).
- About **speaking in tongues**, the **Assemblies “of God”** report, “Scripture records that the early believers, upon being baptized in the Spirit, began to glorify God in languages unknown to them but imparted by the Holy Spirit. **Tongues is the same evidence today when believers are baptized in the Spirit. All believers, when they are baptized in the Spirit, will speak in tongues. However, not all will exercise the spiritual gift of tongues in the church assembled for worship.** All will have the evidence, but not all will exercise the public gift of tongues which requires the additional operation of the gift of interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:12,13)” (“Questions about Tongues.” *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).
- The Assemblies “of God” teach, “First let us examine the Scriptures. **On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit fell upon the assembled believers and ‘all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues’ (Acts 2:4).** Later, as Peter was preaching at the house of Cornelius, ‘the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message’ and they were ‘speaking in tongues and praising God’ (Acts 10:44, 46). Again, as the apostle Paul was ministering to the Ephesian disciples, ‘the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied’ (Acts 19:6). It is evident also that Paul himself was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17) and spoke in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:18).

These Scriptures clearly show that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

When the early believers were filled, they spoke in other tongues, and the same holds true today. Millions of believers worldwide share the exact testimony: when they initially were baptized in the Holy Spirit they spoke in unknown tongues. This is the truth which Pentecostals consistently affirm. The prophecy of Joel 2:28, 29, cited by Peter in Acts 2:16, 17, links today's Spirit-filled believers with those who were filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. **The Spirit's fullness, evidenced initially by the phenomenon of speaking in other tongues, is the common experience all celebrate with joy.**

There are those who give testimony to a dynamic and life-changing encounter with the Holy Spirit who have never spoken in tongues. Nevertheless it cannot be said that they are filled with the Spirit in the New Testament sense of the term. There is an essential link between that experience and speaking in other tongues, as pointed out above.

We affirm and teach these truths because they are based upon the pattern from God's Word. **We do not look upon speaking in tongues as a proof of superior spirituality.** It simply is a precious promise written in God's Word and fulfilled in our lives. To ignore it is to miss a great blessing and come short of the New Testament pattern.

All who are hungry for the 'filling' should be encouraged to trust the Lord for the overflowing evidence of that 'filling'; namely, speaking in other tongues" ("Can a person be filled with the Spirit without Speaking Tongues?" *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).

- According to **the Assemblies "of God"**, **"In 1 Corinthians 14 the apostle Paul clearly taught that public speaking in tongues in the assembly of believers is in order only when followed by an interpretation.** It was because of this disorderly practice at Corinth that Paul wrote such statements as 'speaking into the air' (1 Corinthians 14:9), 'stop thinking like children' (1 Corinthians 14:20), 'will they not say that you are out of you mind?' (1 Corinthians 14:23), and 'keep quiet in the church' (1 Corinthians 14:28).

It [was this disorderly practice] that prompted Paul to stress the superiority of prophecy--not to interpreted tongues, but to uninterpreted tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5).

Final responsibility for giving an interpretation of tongues in a public assembly rests with the one who gave the utterance in tongues. The speaker either must be assured that someone else in the assembly will provide the interpretation, or he must be prepared to do so himself (1 Corinthians 14:13, 27-28)" ("Questions about Tongues." *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).

- The Assemblies "of God" confess, **"It does seem almost contradictory that the apostle Paul should make the following statements in successive verses: 'I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue' (1 Corinthians 14:18, 19)"** ("Questions about Tongues." *Assemblies of God USA*. 25 Apr 2012. <ag.org>).